



A Narration Without an End: Palestine and the Continuing Nakba

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Introduction¹

If the past cannot be changed the question is what to do with its legacy.²

Normally when one narrates a story, folktale, or even tragedy of a certain society, they start from the beginning, middle, and carry on until they reach the end. Conversely, the Palestinian narrative of the 1948 Nakba and the ongoing tragedies that befell them ever since, or even before 1948, does not seem to have an end. The 1948 Nakba symbolizes a tragic and devastating event, as hundreds of thousands of Palestinians were forcefully displaced, hundreds of villages destroyed, and a homeland was ruined and lost at the expense of the creation of the state of Israel. What distinguishes the Palestinian narrative from others is that their story continues to be told, albeit with the emergence of new and ongoing catastrophes. Sixty-five years later, as Palestinians seek to narrate their own perspective and understanding of what exactly happened in 1948, they are confronted with an intriguing question of whether their narrative of displacement, exile and degradation has an end.

While narrating their stories, Palestinians render the memory of their homeland and life before and after the Nakba. Traditionally, most of the displaced Palestinians give the impression that in Palestine they lived in paradise, and as the Zionist forces occupied their lands, destroyed their homes and forcefully displaced them, they were turned into refugees whose problem is left without a solution until today. This has become the central theme of narration as Palestine “the lost paradise.” Moreover, the continuous Israeli invasion and encroachment of Palestinian territories, reveals that what took place in 1948 did not end in that year. The on-going nature of al-Nakba is manifested in the continuing colonial occupation with an unprecedented narrative of a society that continues to face the constant demolition of houses, deportation of its people, confiscation of land and the illegal imprisonment of thousands, among other travesties. All these elements create a condition that depicts a unique and traumatic reality of a prolonged and continuous Nakba.

The term Nakba is used to describe the disaster that befell Palestine in 1948, yet the word Nakba is still used today to describe the endless Israeli/Zionist propaganda in employing its racist and degrading policies against Palestinians who according to their version of the story ‘do not exist’. As a result the Palestinians’ side of the story as to how they became refugees in their own lands remains unheard. Nonetheless, recording the oral testimonies of the generation of the Nakba and subsequent generations, reveals the value and power of these testimonies in uncovering historical truths.

Over the past decades Palestinian scholars, such as Edward Said, have emphasized the importance of writing down and recording the voices of Palestinian refugees, which serve as mnemonics in preserving Palestinian memory. In my study, and through interviewing different generations of Palestinian refugees, I studied the different voices, collective and individual memories which construct the Palestinian narrative of the

¹ This book was originally an MA thesis conducted by Zarefa Ali and was supervised by Dr. Rana Barakat.

² Ahmed Sa’di, “Reflections on Representations, History, and Moral Accountability,” in *Nakba, Palestine, 1948, and the Claims of Memory*, Ed Ahmad H Sa’di and Lila Abu-Lughod (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 303.

Nakba. All these stories and collective memories fall under a broader narrative, in which all Palestinians underwent a radical change as they all lost a homeland.

Memory is a volatile concept, and is narrated by someone in the present. Nevertheless, we still use memory as authoritative sources of historical knowledge.³ In the Palestinian case, oral history is an indispensable tool in revealing unexplored aspects of the Nakba. Memory is an essential concept in Palestinian history, because as Palestinians recollect what is taking place in the present, they begin to realize the significance of reconstructing their past. Since many chapters remain missing, or dislocated, from their story, memory plays a crucial role in filling in the pages of the Palestinian story. Following the emergence of oral history as a legitimate source of historiographic data, researchers, and writers; all engage and listen to those Palestinians who have a story to tell.⁴ For instance, a form of commemoration is reflected in the insistence of intergenerational transmission of memory through spontaneous telling and retelling of stories to children and grandchildren.⁵ This shows that within a Palestinian family the essence of 'story telling' lies in protecting these stories from forgetfulness.

The main argument of this study is that the extension of the Palestinian Nakba is reflected in Palestinian narratives which are told from one generation to another without a narrative closure. Nevertheless, what is certain is that we cannot escape memory, or what Edward Casey calls 'public memory' which is attached to a past (normally an originating event) and acts to ensure a future remembering of that same event.⁶ In the process of narrating the Nakba and recurring tragedies, memory is the link tying us to the past and is everywhere evident in the stories of Palestinian refugees and this was apparent throughout my study.

Within the Palestinian narrative some narratives are more prevalent and dominant than others. For instance, the semi-official Palestinian narrative of the Nakba is dominated by the PLO and PA. Despite the fact that Palestinians do not have a sovereign state, an official narrative which calls for the right of return, self-determination and Palestinian struggle for liberation is depicted in the narrative of the PLO. Thus, chapter one of this study examines the official Palestinian narrative in which Palestinian intellectuals and cultural embodiments, such as Edward Said and Mahmoud Darwish, played a fundamental role in the formation of this official narrative. I also argue that the official Palestinian narrative is reflected in commemorations of the Nakba, and particular attention was given to the 64th Nakba day. I found it important to explore the semi-official narrative of the Nakba before beginning with the narratives of different generations of refugees, due to the dominance of the PLO narrative in commemorative festivals of the Nakba which has hindered the emergence of other narratives; notably the narratives of subaltern groups such as Palestinian women. In chapter two, which deals with the narrative of the first generation refugees, the majority of the interviewees were women. This was

³ Ihab Saloul, "The Afterlives of 1948: Photographic Remembrance in a Time of Catastrophe," in *Zoom In* (Netherlands: Institute for Historical Justice and Reconciliation and Republic of Letters Publishing, 2011), 177.

⁴ Laleh Khalili, *Heroes and Martyrs of Palestine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 66.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Edward Casey, "Public memory in Place and Time," *Framing Public Memory* (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 2004), 17.

intentionally done in order to deconstruct the myth that women are incapable of telling history. Chapter two examines the narrative of first generation refugees, who narrated their lives before, and after the Nakba. After the exodus in 1948, the notion of "loss" dominated the recollections of first generation refugees. Moreover, indicators of an on-going Nakba was also investigated in their life stories.

The Palestinian narrative consists of collective memories, remembering and narrating of the conflict that constitutes a key site of the on-going struggle in Palestine.⁷ So the narrative of the Nakba is an accumulation of on-going catastrophes, as one narrative emerges marking the devastation of an entire nation, another narrative is formed complementing the previous one. Hence, the tales told by the second generation refugees complements the unfinished stories of their parents which they pass on to their children who later on add recurring events to their parents' and grandparents' continuous stories of displacement. Chapter three focuses on the stories of second generation refugees, who not only narrated the story of their parents' exodus in 1948, but also enumerated other catastrophic events they have experienced after 1948. Most importantly, the question of return was prevalent in the stories of second generation refugees who demanded the return of what is rightfully theirs. However, as Israel continues to deny Palestinians' right of return, Palestinian refugees continue living in a state of exile and injustice. On the other hand, chapter four addresses the narrative of third generation refugees who affirmed that "we will return". Although implementing the right of return is a sine qua non for achieving a just solution to the Palestinian refugee problem, third generation refugees mention other obstacles which keeps the narrative of the Nakba without an end. Throughout my interviews with third generation refugees the burden of preserving their parents and grandparents memories was brought to light.

While interviewing different generations of Palestinian refugees, it was clear that the memories of the Nakba are continuously reproduced in the stories of the ongoing Nakba. The collective memory of the Nakba is constructed of different catastrophes which restricts Palestinians freedom. Through the intergenerational transmission of the Palestinian narrative it is apparent how the narrative is constructed in chronological order; where the memory of 1948 coincides with the memory of the 1967 Naksa, and the memory of the Intifada. The beginning of this narrative is the Nakba, and is followed by the collective memories of subsequent catastrophes. Yet some historical events did not end in the past, but continue to be evoked in the lives of Palestinians, whereby as one disaster ends another one reemerges and so on.

Some might argue that if a Palestinian state is established and the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations miraculously resulted in a peace treaty, Palestinian state of refuge will end. As refugees will return to their lands and their story of displacement, statelessness and discrimination will end. However, the aim of my research is not to explore how and when the Palestinian narrative will end, but to examine how the construction of memories of the Nakba and other catastrophes have shaped the narrative of the Palestinians. The Nakba is not Palestine's past, it is not a historic event that ended sixty five years ago.

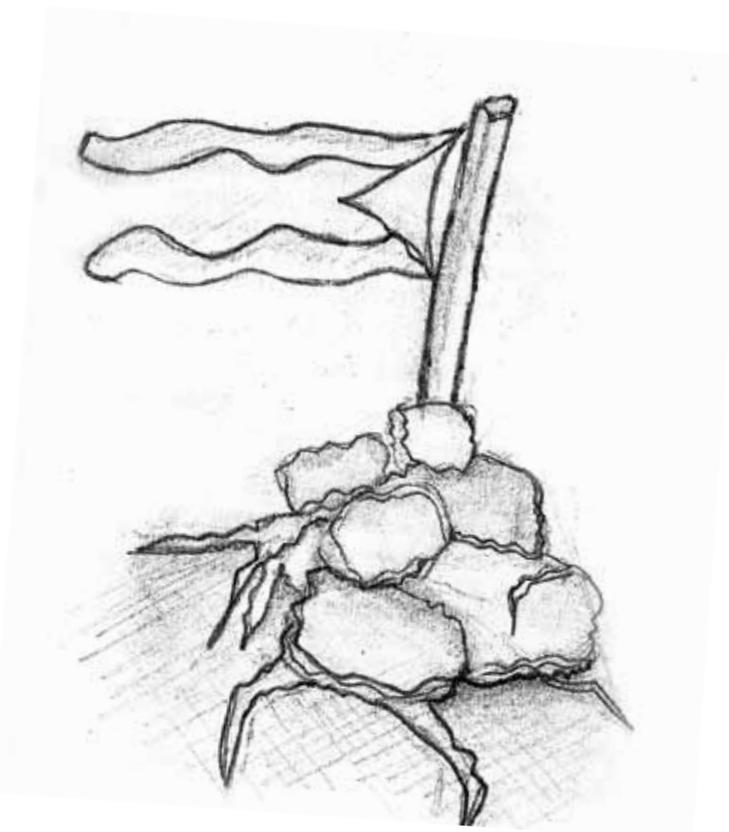
⁷ Nur Masalha, *The Palestine Nakba: Decolonizing History, Narrating the Subaltern, Reclaiming Memory* (London: Zed Books, 2012), 10.

It continues in the stories, memories of Palestinians and in the status quo of the OPT which continues to be subjugated to Israeli invasions, house demolitions and land confiscation.

Needless to say appeals to the past are one of the most common strategies in interpretations of the present. And as Edward Said articulates, "What animates such appeals is not only disagreement about what happened in the past and what the past was, but uncertainty about whether the past is really past over and concluded, or whether it continues, albeit in different forms, perhaps."⁸ Connecting this to the Palestinian case, present events confirm that what took place in the past is not over and concluded. The past continues to reinforce itself in the present, and this unending circle is reflected in the narrative of the Nakba which continues to be told in different forms. Here the role of recording the oral testimonies of Palestinian refugees who survived the Nakba and subsequent generations is an attempt to try and investigate how the continuity of the Nakba has affected the Palestinian narratives of the Nakba.

This study is based on interviews with first, second and third generations of Palestinian refugees conducted from October 2011 to July 2012. The methodology of this study is qualitative, and the sample of this study consists of 22 interviews with three generations of Palestinian refugees. I did not refer to the real names of my interviewees; instead I used pseudonyms in order to protect their identity. In the process of storytelling, there are different types of narrators such as first person narrator, omnipresent narrator and multi- narrators. And the Palestinian narrative consists of multi narrators. By multi narration I imply that we have more than one person narrating the stories of the Nakba, each of whom tells his/her story differently.

Furthermore, the methodology of my study is based on ethnographic fieldwork conducted in various places in the Ramallah area. The interviews I conducted range from Palestinian refugees living in refugee camps such as Al-Jalzoun refugee camp, Qalandia refugee camp, in addition to towns and cities near Ramallah, such as Deir Dibwan, Surda, Ramallah and Birzeit. So the geographic space of my study is areas in or near Ramallah.



CHAPTER ONE

THE OFFICIAL PALESTINIAN NARRATIVE OF THE NAKBA: BETWEEN COMMEMORATION AND PLO DOMINANCE

⁸ Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Vintage, 1993), 3.

64 years ago the name Palestine was erased from the world map, as the Zionist forces and leaders strove to occupy, depopulate and erase Palestine with the intent of replacing it with the newly established state of "Israel". Ever since the 1948 Nakba, Palestinians commemorate the day, the year and the moment, they were forcefully displaced from their lands and were made into refugees dispersed in different parts of the globe. The aim of my research is not to portray Palestinians as victims who are incapable of fighting for their lands and cause, but to argue that in such a long and unequal struggle to speak and to remember is to resist.⁹ Palestinians have for the past 65 years commemorated the memory of their Nakba in various ways, whether from the poems of Mahmoud Darwish, the novels of Ghassan Kanafani, the caricatures of Naji Ali, the stories of Samira Azzam, or in the annual festivals and Palestinian parades. All these commemorative forms, in part, construct the memory of the Nakba as something that can potentially mobilize Palestinians to resist and fight against the Zionist colonization of Palestine.

Although Palestinians have not yet established an independent state, within the narrative and commemoration of the Nakba, a semi-'official' Palestinian narrative is apparent. For instance, in the 50th anniversary of the Nakba the main speeches were delivered by Yasser Arafat, and Mahmoud Darwish, political and cultural embodiment of the nation and national experience, since 1964.¹⁰ Thus a semi-official Palestinian narrative of the Nakba has been in the making since the foundation of the PLO in 1964. Since then this 'official' narrative dominates and overshadows other narratives and experiences through imposing the PLO discourse of the Nakba on Palestinians. This was, or still is, reflected in the commemorations of the Nakba. In this section I examine the official Palestinian narrative, the commemoration of the Nakba and PLO dominance in commemorative practices, with emphasis on the 63rd and 64th Nakba day.

The Official Palestinian Narrative

When the PLO was founded in 1964, an official Palestinian narrative began to emerge. PLO began as small groups of political activists and self-styled "liberators" who sought the restoration of Arab Palestine, through war and the destruction of Israel. Taking armed struggle, both as practice and doctrine was their main means of mobilizing their constituency and affirming a distinct national identity.¹¹ As Palestinians became increasingly restless in the face of explicit Arab inaction, nevertheless, Egyptian president at the time Gamal Abdel Nasser took the lead in endorsing the initiative of a Palestinian lawyer and diplomat, Ahmad al-Shuqayri, to set up the PLO as a nationally-representative organization for the Palestinians in May 1964.¹² Originally the PLO was founded by the Arab League in 1964 as a means in institutionalizing Palestinian energies.¹³ Here it is important to clarify that the PLO was not a government, and

⁹ Rosemary Sayigh, "Product and Producer of Palestinian History Stereotypes of Self in Camp Women's Life Stories," *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies* 13, No 1 (2007): 88.

¹⁰ To read more on the 50th anniversary of the Nakba see Tom Hill, "Historicity and the Nakba Commemorations of 1998," *European University Institute, Working Papers* (2005): 6.

¹¹ Yezid Sayigh, "The PLO and the Palestinian Armed Struggle," *The Middle East Online*, p.1-2.

¹² *bid.*

¹³ Edward Said, *The Question of Palestine* (New York: Vintage Books, 1992), 134.



was without the authoritative means for the disposal of a national government for the propagation of an official version of history for the entirety of the Palestinian people.¹⁴ Nevertheless, PLO was able to reach Palestinians through its newspapers, periodicals, its publishing houses, research institutions and particularly its radio station Sawt Filastin (The Voice of Palestine) which was listened to by many Palestinians.¹⁵ Even though the basic elements needed for the establishment of a government or a quasi state were missing, the PLO was able to enforce its version of the story through its various centered institutions in the Diaspora, especially in Lebanon which was the center of the PLO through fundamental years of struggle after their exodus from Jordan until the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982. For instance, the PLO research center in Beirut underwent many Israeli bombardments, and in 1983 the research center was bombed by Israeli forces and closed down by Lebanese officials.¹⁶

The largest Palestinian political grouping is Fatah, which was dominated by Yasser Arafat. So Fatah is grouped under the umbrella of the PLO,¹⁷ and the PLO began as an armed struggle group with the aim of liberating Palestine. Yet the idea of state building wasn't missing from their agenda. One of the main consequences of armed struggle, involved a process similar to state building. State building in the Palestinian case involved the establishment of quasi-governmental services providing medical care and social welfare to the mass constituent.¹⁸ It was also obvious in the obsessive insistence of the PLO on obtaining from both Arab and non-Arab governments recognition as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people.¹⁹ However, the fact that the Palestinian leadership based its legitimacy on its role in armed struggle against Israel, encouraged the tendency toward "populist politics and authoritarian control."²⁰ Historically speaking, the PLO began as armed struggle groups and its role in armed struggle and resistance was prevalent throughout the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s. But with the passage of time, the "PLO has transformed itself from a national liberation movement into a kind of small town government, with the same handful of people still in command."²¹ Initially, the semi-official Palestinian narrative consists of four essential components armed struggle, liberating Palestine, the right of return and self determination. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, the PLO's official narrative was embodied in cultural and intellectual figures, who supported the PLO's role in armed struggle and fighting for Palestinians freedom, such as Edward Said and Mahmoud Darwish.

Edward Said was one of the most prominent Palestinian intellectuals, whose writings, before the Madrid conference and Oslo Accords, marked the official Palestinian

narrative. Edward Said became a member of the Palestine National Council in 1977. His role in informing a western audience of the Palestinian experience of exile and struggle for self-determination, has indeed facilitated in the construction of a semi-'official' narrative. For instance, in the Question of Palestine Said's support for the PLO was clear as he said, "I myself am greatly impressed with the generous presence in the PLO of values, ideas, open debate, revolutionary initiative- human intangibles whose role, I think, has far exceeded, and has demanded more loyalty than the routine organization of a militant party might have."²² Most importantly Said's vision of peace and self determination is based on the fact that all Arab states have accepted United Nations Resolution 242 as a basis for peace in the region; and the PLO has indicated that in return for a U.S. declaration of support for Palestinian self-determination culminating in an independent state it will create very concrete proposals on peace.²³ Yet one must note that Said spoke to a western audience and endeavored to change the western image of the PLO as a terrorist group. Instead he informed his audience that the PLO represents the political and national aspiration of the Palestinian people. Thus Said promoted the idea of a just solution for the Palestinians based on the establishment of an independent Palestinian state. However his support for the PLO and the Israeli-Palestinian peace process ended after the signing of the Oslo Accords- which will be noted in a moment.

On the other hand, Mahmoud Darwish's poems represent the cultural figure of the PLO's official narrative. Darwish represents the "state" of the Palestinian in the second half of the twentieth century-continuously in exile and under siege: exile from the Galilee to Lebanon in 1948, return to his destroyed village in the Galilee and life as a present absentee, life as a Palestinian citizen of Israel under the military government, departure for exile in the Palestinian diaspora, joining the PLO, the siege on Beirut, life in Tunis, the life of the exile in Paris, residing in Ramallah after the establishment of the Palestinian Authority, and living in Amman.²⁴ His broad personal experience and its connection to so many of Palestinians experiences have established him as a national poet.²⁵ Edward Said even designated Mahmoud Darwish's work "Bitaqit Hawia" (Identity Card) as a national poem. The poem opens as follow:

Record!
I am an Arab
And my Identity Card
Is number fifty thousand
I have eight children
And the ninth
is coming in midsummer
Will you be angry?²⁶

¹⁴ Rashid Khalidi, *Palestinian Identity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 199-200.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Samih Shbeeb, "al-thakira ad dai'a," in *naho sia'ghat riwaya tarikhia linakba eshkaliat wa tahadiat*, ed. Mustafa Kibha (Haifa: Mada Al-Karmal, 2006), .278

¹⁷ Edward Said, *The Question of Palestine*, 157-161.

¹⁸ Yezid Sayigh, "Armed Struggle and State Formation," *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. 26, No. 4 (1997): 18-26.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Edward Said, *Peace and Its Discontents* (New York: Vintage Books, 1995), 4.

²² Edward, Said, *The Question of Palestine*, 145.

²³ Ibid, 196.

²⁴ Almog Behar, "Mahmoud Darwish: Poetry State of Siege," *Journal of Levantine Studies*, Vol.1 (2011): 189- 199.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Said, *The Question of Palestine*, 155-156.



The power of this small poem, which appeared in the late sixties, embodies the Palestinians whose political identity in the world has been reduced to a name on an identity card.²⁷ Hence Darwish's poems portrays Palestinian national identity, resistance, Israeli siege, right of return, and exile. All these elements have been integrated in the official narrative of the PLO. In his poems Darwish combines political activism, poetry, and history in an eloquent way which Palestinians from all over the world related to. And in 1973 Darwish was active with the PLO and established good ties with Fatah's leader, Yasser Arafat. He was active in the PLO until 1993, when he resigned in protest of the Oslo accords.²⁸ The agreement, he believed, "embraced a peace without justice for Palestine and was doomed to failure."²⁹ Just as his friend Said, Darwish was highly disappointed with PLO's concession in signing the Oslo Accords which did not serve justice for the Palestinians. In this study it is not my task to critically read Darwish; but to show how he has played a major role in the construction of this semi-official narrative.

After being an advocate for the peace process in the Middle East during the late 1970s and 1980s, Edward Said began to write about the end of the peace process and its failures in the early 1990s. For instance, in one of his articles, Said articulated that the larger problem is the PLO's recent vision of itself, its own history, and its own goals. He further adds that, "Many of us supported the PLO not only when it promised to liberate Palestine, but also when in 1988 it accepted partition and national independence for 22 percent of Palestine."³⁰ After the signing of the Oslo Accords Mahmoud Darwish, member of the PLO executive Committee, following the example previously set by Said, resigned in protest.³¹ Therefore, both political and cultural embodiments of the official Palestinian narrative gave up their decades of support of the PLO, and didn't hesitate in showing their increasing critique of PLO leadership's decisions during the so-called peace Accords.

The historical breakthrough announced by the PLO and Israeli government in 1993 is basically a joint decision to signal a new phase of reconciliation between two enemies; but it also leaves Palestinians the subordinates, with Israel still in charge of East Jerusalem, settlements, sovereignty, and the economy.³² In the Oslo Accords, the PLO was recognized by Israel as the representative of the Palestinian people, and on the other hand the PLO recognized the state of Israel. However the question of Palestinian autonomy remained limited. Oslo included that Israel will allow the vague notions of "limited autonomy" and "early empowerment" for Palestinians in the Gaza Strip and Jericho. Israel will control the land, water, overall security and foreign affairs in these "autonomous" areas.³³ In Oslo, Palestinian leadership had given up on self determination,

Jerusalem and the refugees, allowing them to become part of an undermined set of "final status negotiation."³⁴ The signing of the Oslo Accords in 1993, overlooked many crucial issues which constitute the question of Palestine such as: the Palestinian refugee problem, retrieving Palestinian lands, dismantling Israeli settlements, free movement of Palestinians, and myriad of fundamental unresolved issues.

Many Palestinians were shocked with the outcome of the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations which was sponsored by the US. For instance Edward Said noted that "in the past I spoke out for peace and Palestinian rights and against Israeli practices. All of a sudden the major Palestinian leader, Yasser Arafat, signed an agreement with Israel (under United States sponsorship), and I found myself criticizing the so-called peace, as well as the PLO and its titular head."³⁵ While reading *The Question of Palestine* and *The End of the Peace Process*, I realize that Said changed his mind regarding the PLO's role in liberating Palestine. In the first book he stood with the PLO and supported their struggle for liberation, in the second he severely condemns the PLO and the peace process as he says: "I find myself puzzled as to why both the PLO and the Arab states allowed themselves to get into such an extraordinary stupid position, that is, to sign peace agreements with Israel before even the most limited versions of resolutions 242 and 338 had been compiled with."³⁶ Said had an influential role in mediating the negotiations process between the PLO and the US, yet when the so-called negotiations failed he changed his view, position, and support of the PLO, particularly toward its leader Yasser Arafat.

Although the PLO representatives were negotiating the fate of Palestinians with Israeli officials, they disregarded Palestinian intellectuals, Palestinian refugees and Palestinian political parties' perspective before failing into a carefully planned Israeli trap. The peace process was totally oblivious to the interest of the Palestinian people, in addition to its enchantment of Israel's position by propaganda and political pressure.³⁷ Oslo gave Israelis and supporters of Israel a sense that the Palestinian problem has been solved once and for all.³⁸ Conversely, the outcome of the peace process was far from solving the Palestinian problem. As one of the third generation refugees I interviewed puts it, "When you look at the history of negotiations, it's been twenty years now and like I said before we are much worse off than we were."³⁹

Although Edward Said and Mahmoud Darwish showed their utmost disapproval of PLO's role throughout the peace process, up until 1993 they both had a huge impact in the construction of this semi-official Palestinian narrative. As previously mentioned, in *The Question of Palestine* Said showed his inalienable support of the PLO and even advocated the establishment of a secular democratic Palestinian state and supported the idea of peace between Palestinians and Israelis. Said was also a member of the

²⁷ Ibid, 155.

²⁸ Mohammed Omer, "Opening a Space for Jasmine: Mahmoud Darwish, Poet of Palestine and the World-Washington Report," *Mahmoud Darwish Foundation*, <http://www.mahmouddarwish.ps/etemplate.php?id=47>. Accessed on July 3rd, 2012.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Edward Said, *Peace and Its Discontents* (New York: Vintage Books, 1995), 23.

³¹ Ibid, 5-6.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid, 3.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid, xxiv-xxv.

³⁶ Ibid, 5.

³⁷ Edward Said, *The End of the Peace Process* (New York: Vintage Books, 2000), 5.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Interview with Laila: Third Generation refugee. This interview was conducted on June 11, 2012 in Ramallah in English.



Palestine National Council, and resigned in 1991 because he lost confidence in Yasser Arafat's leadership.⁴⁰ On the other hand, Mahmoud Darwish was a part of the PLO Executive Committee, his activism in the PLO was embodied in his poems and speeches on Palestinian national identity and exile such as "Passport," "Without Exile, Who am I?" and "I Am There". Even though he showed his protest against the Oslo Accords through resigning from the committee, until today his poems symbolize the official Palestinian narrative. Thus both Said and Darwish's work which represent Palestinian experience in exile have contributed in the formation of the official Palestinian narrative through their various works and their personification of the question of Palestine. It is important to clarify that both Said and Darwish did not aim at constructing a semi-official narrative, but their work has been used and manipulated by the PLO to become a part of this narrative. For example, Darwish often spoke about not being a representative, but was one nonetheless; especially as he stood with PA officials during commemorations of the Nakba and delivered speeches. This is a contradiction where Darwish spoke about not being a representative, but his appearance and association with PA and PLO officials have categorized him as one.

63rd Anniversary of the Nakba: "Refugees Revolution"

On May 15, 2011, during the 63rd commemoration of the Nakba, a new form of commemoration took place. As Palestinians from all sides of the Syrian, Lebanese borders courageously jumped off Israeli fences and strove to enter the occupied territories, with the aim of returning to their lands.

The camera followed the movements of a small group of people advancing from the mass of protesters. They were carefully making their way down a hill towards the high fence that closed off the mined field separating Syria from its own occupied territory of the Golan Heights that borders historic Palestine.⁴¹ Most of the protestors were young Palestinians, drawn from the 470,000-plus refugee community in Syria: from Yarmouk refugee camp inside Damascus, from Khan el-Sheikh camp outside it, from Deraa and Homs refugee camps in the south, and from Palestinian populations all over the country.⁴² Despite the shouted warnings from the villagers from Majdal Shams about the lethal landmines installed by the Israeli military right up to the fence, these ordinary young "Palestinian refugees" began to both climb and push at the fence.⁴³ It was a profoundly revolutionary moment, for these hundreds of young people entering Majdal Shams. Waiting, struggling, and organizing for: liberation and return.⁴⁴ What differentiates the 2011 Nakba day from others is that it happened in a revolutionary atmosphere, the Arab Spring. It wasn't a coincidence that Palestinian refugees were allowed to cross the borders from the Syrian and Lebanese side at a time when Arab societies were rebelling against their hegemonic regimes, such as in Syria.

⁴⁰ Mortimer Mildred, "Tribute to Edward Said," *Research in African Literatures*, Vol. 35, No 1 (Spring 2004): 6- 8.

⁴¹ Karma Nabulsi, "Nakba day: we waited 63 years for this," *The Guardian*, 19 May, 2011.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

Before May 15, 2011 Palestinians inside OPT, in the diaspora, and in refugee camps have been calling for an enormous 'march of a million' near the borders in order to liberate Palestine and break all imposed borders between them. Here the role of social media was prevalent, particularly Facebook. Palestinian activists have called on the Internet for a mass uprising against Israel to begin on May 15. A Facebook page calling for a third Palestinian intifada had gathered more than 300,000 members before it was taken down in March after complaints that comments posted to it advocated violence.⁴⁵ However when May 15, 2011 approached thousands of Palestinian refugees, rather than a million, marched toward the borders.



(Figure Number 1 Photographed by Jalaa Marey/Reuters)

Palestinian refugees who marched toward the Israeli borders were from the 3rd and 4th generation refugees, who obviously have not forgotten the injustice done to them 63 years ago. And on May 15, 2011 Palestinians inside "Israel," Palestine, Lebanon, Syria and even Egypt started their non-violent commemoration, however Israel caused another massacre and killed over 20 people, mainly Palestinian refugees on the four borders.⁴⁶ The Israeli forces attacked unarmed, non-violent protesters with great force all military means and equipment. The Israeli military forces even infiltrated demonstrators disguised as Muslim women to arrest and attack civilians.⁴⁷ Despite the Israeli assaults and warnings, Palestinians inside Israel, in the West Bank, near the Syrian and Lebanese borders; commemorated the 63rd anniversary of their Nakba. Young protestors, notably third and fourth generation refugees, took matters into their own hands. They fought

⁴⁵ Ethan Bronner, "Israeli Troops Fire as Marchers Breach Borders," *The New York Times*, 16 May, 2011.

⁴⁶ "Nakba Day 2011 Palestinian Refugee Revolutions," May 16, 2011, <http://occupiedpalestine.wordpress.com>. Accessed on June 24th, 2012.

⁴⁷ Ibid.



for their right of return and were fed up with waiting for Palestinian leaders to demand and implement their right.

It is important to point out that during the 2011 Nakba day, as 3rd and 4th generation refugees sought to enact their right of return, this act didn't catch many by surprise. The PLO has been historically concerned with return as the chief result of liberation.⁴⁸ The right of return has been historically reflected in the speeches and propaganda of the PLO, especially during the 1980s. For instance, during the 1980s, as the PLO developed its political programme, its leaders displayed four approaches towards the relevance of the right of return in the context of a political settlement with Israel: utter disregard of the concept; literal acceptance of Resolution 194; calling for full realization of return in a Palestinian state within territories occupied in 1967; and a method of differentiating between the collective realization and the individual one.⁴⁹ The right of return is a basic principle embedded in the semi official narrative of the PLO. PLO leaders refuse the solution of resettling Palestinian refugees in host Arab countries, because it contradicts with their right of return. This theme has been resonating in the Palestinian diaspora and in refugee camps for decades, as Palestinian refugees insist on retuning and refuse resettlement as an alternative for their right. This doctrine was advocated and represented by young Palestinian refugees, as they literally strove to enact their right of return.

During the 2011 "march of return," third generation refugees upheld the right of return and rejected resettlement. This march confirmed that for the majority of Palestinians, the thought of returning to their homes in Palestine has remained the force driving the contemporary Palestinian struggle and the dream that has become part of the collective memory of shared grief, suffering, and hope.⁵⁰ So this march was a result of the semi-official PLO narrative which has been calling, upholding and fighting for this inalienable right throughout the 1960s and 1980's.

The amount of political mobility during the 63rd commemoration of al-Nakba was profound and unprecedented. For the first time in Nakba commemoration history Palestinians simultaneously enacted their right of return in Haifa and among Palestinians displaced inside Israel, on the borders of Lebanon, Egypt, Jordan, Gaza, and in the West Bank near the Qalandia refugee camp.⁵¹ Despite the Israeli threats and attacks, Palestinians from all sides of the borders defied IDF and marched toward the borders separating them from their villages and homes. On the one hand IDF received these protesting Palestinians with arms and landmines, on the other hand, the weapons the protestors carried were Palestinian flags, the deeds to their home and a young man was even carrying his grandmother who waited 63 years to see her homeland and witness this historic moment. Although Israeli soldiers carried lethal weapons, Palestinians carried a by far more powerful weapon; that is determination to return.

⁴⁸ Edward Said, *The Question of Palestine*, 135.

⁴⁹ Menachem Klein, "Between Right and Realization: The PLO Dialectics of 'The Right of Return'," *Journal of Refugee Studies* (1998):1.

⁵⁰ Jaber Suleiman, "Trapped By Denial of Rights, Illusion of State: The Case of The Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon," *Al-Shabaka* (2012):2.

⁵¹ Karma Nabulsi, "Nakba day: we waited 63 years for this," *The Guardian*, 16 May, 2011.

Despite the bravery of third generation refugees in marching towards an uncertain destiny, there was a hidden propaganda behind this march. Although plans for this march spread all over the social media, including Facebook, there were signs of official support in Lebanon and Syria, where analysts said leaders were using the Palestinian cause to deflect attention from internal problems.⁵² Palestinian protestors would not have been able to reach the borders without the Syrian and Lebanese governments' approval. It seemed likely that President Assad of Syria was seeking to divert attention from his onslaught on the popular uprisings there by allowing confrontations in the Golan Heights for the first time in decades.⁵³ Although the Golan Heights has been under Israeli control since the 1967 war, since that time Syria has never allowed Palestinians to protest or even enter the borders. Hence Palestinian refugees have been used as a tool in order to deflect the worlds' attention from President Assad's aggressive response towards the Syrian revolution.

The fact that protesters made it to the border in Lebanon and Syria raises questions concerning whether those governments had endorsed the actions. Protesters in Lebanon claimed that they received permission from the army to enter the border area near Maroun al-Ras, 'classified as a militarily sensitive region.'⁵⁴ Also Hezbollah was believed to have helped coordinate the march.⁵⁵ The tension between Hezbollah and Israel, after the 2006 Israeli invasion of Lebanon, is hanging by a thread. But the internal and regional problems in Lebanon, since Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon was the center of PLO armed struggle until the 1980s, is much more complicated.⁵⁶

The instability of the regional and internal aspects in Lebanon whether from the tribal disputes or in the Israeli-Hezbollah struggle, have in a way motivated Hezbollah and Lebanese officials to support Palestinian refugees "march of return". Although Palestinians were used again as a tool so as to deflect the world's attention from the internal problems in Lebanon, it was a symbolic gesture in helping Palestinian refugees to implement their right of return.

64th Commemoration of the Nakba: from PLO Perspective and Voice

In 2012, the 64th Nakba day was organized by the PLO department of refugee affairs, as they hung "official" posters all over Ramallah inviting Palestinians to commemorate the memory of the Nakba. On May 15, 2012 thousands of Palestinians marched towards clock square in Ramallah to commemorate the 64th year of cataclysm, as they carried Palestinian flags, black flags inscribed with the right of return and some were even carrying keys to their homes. However unlike the sixty third Nakba day in 2011, which

⁵² Ethan Bronner, "Israeli Troops Fire as Marchers Breach Borders," *The New York Times*, 16 May, 2011.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ For instance Rosemary Sayigh argued that "One cannot understand the current situation of Palestinians in Lebanon without first setting it within the international and regional political frameworks that act on them both directly and indirectly, through official Lebanese policies and unofficial attitudes. International, regional, and Lebanese factors interact to produce a continually deteriorating situation for the Palestinian community, especially its poorest and most vulnerable segment. For more see Rosemary Sayigh, "Palestinians in Lebanon: Harsh Present, Uncertain Future," *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. 25, No. 1 (Autumn, 1995): 37- 38.



was marked as “refugee revolution,” last year Palestinians did not plan or organized a march towards the Israeli borders. As shown in the picture below, “the right of return is a red line that cannot be crossed.”



(Figure Number 2)

In the beginning of May, the PLO department of refugee affairs hung posters in the West Bank which ensured ‘the right of return’. In the poster below, the PLO addresses Palestinians by saying that: “It is your duty, your religion, your belonging, your refusal of injustice, and occupation that requires you to participate and raise your voice aloud: No to occupation, No to imprisonment, and No alternative for a state and the right of return.”⁵⁷ Just from the tone of this poster, it is clear how PLO inflicts its narrative on Palestinians and makes participating in their commemorative festival a ‘national obligation’ upon all Palestinians. The fact that a PLO faction (Department of Refugee Affairs) planned and organized how and when Palestinians were to commemorate the 64th year of Nakba, reveals that the PLO enforces its authoritative role and voice in representing Palestinian refugees and their right of return.

⁵⁷ This statement was translated by the author.



(Figure Number 3)



(Figure Number 4)

As mentioned earlier, the theme of 2012 Nakba day was the 'right of return' which was portrayed in all of the PLO Department of Refugee Affairs' posters. Such as the poster above which indicated "Return is our Right and our Destiny". Nevertheless, the right of return has become an industry which the PLO and the PA have advocated in their semi-official narrative of the Nakba and in the commemoration of the Nakba. So the PA commodified the right of return in order to gain civil society's support for its role in upholding their sacred right. As depicted in the picture below, PA officials were present in the 64th Nakba day, in which Salam Fayyad's stated that, "The right of return is sacred and cannot be abandoned." He also mentioned the upcoming PA elections. This shows the absurdity of this years' Nakba day. Commemorative practices are normally about remembering the past rather than advertising ones political party for elections, yet the PA tends to use Palestinians right of return as a means in gaining Palestinians votes for the supposedly upcoming PA elections.



(Figure Number 5)

In the 2012 Nakba day, contrary to the 63rd Nakba day, a Palestinian uprising did not happen and the commemoration was just like any other commemorative practice, in which PA officials gave speeches and children sang to the national anthem. For instance, Palestinian prime Minister, Salam Fayyad, delivered a speech which ensured Palestinians right of return, human rights and Palestinians right in establishing a state on the 1967 lines. Fayyad stated that, "commemorating the Nakba despite the passing of six decades confirms Palestinians' determination in continuing their national struggle to gain their rights, under the flag of the PLO; its only and legitimate representative which has transformed the tragedy of refuge into an example of national struggle." The fact that PA officials spoke about Palestinian struggle for justice, proves that the PA was asserting an official Palestinian narrative. A narrative that defines the PLO as the 'only' legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, this orientation has been emerging since the 1970s. Therefore, remembering 64 years of injustice and statelessness was being unilaterally presented by the PA. Although the PLO and the PA are not the same, it terms of objectives and circumstances under which they were founded. For instance, the PLO began with the aim of armed struggle and liberating Palestine and consisted of many Palestinian factions including: Fatah, The popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), and The Popular Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (an off shot of the PFLP) among other groups.⁵⁸ Whereas the PA was established in 1995

⁵⁸ Edward Said, *The Question of Palestine*, 159.



with the aim of governing the OPT, and is dominated by Fatah (a faction of the PLO). Yet they have the same audience and they both claim to represent the Palestinian people. This is embodied in the official role they both play in organizing Nakba commemoration festivals. For instance, the PLO organizes Nakba commemoration in the diaspora, especially in refugee camps in Lebanon. On the other hand, the PA along with the PLO coordinates 'official' Nakba commemorations in the OPT.

During the 2012 Nakba day the PA sought to represent Palestinians' side of the story in its own hegemonic point of view, and this version of the story overlooked women's narrative of the Nakba and even refugees. Therefore, in the 64th anniversary of the Nakba the act of remembering the past and subsequent tragedies were being represented from a faction of the Palestinian society rather than its entirety. My goal is to undermine the role the PLO played in armed struggle and liberation of Palestine in the past, but to emphasize how this role has undergone a drastic change ever since the Oslo Accords, and the establishment of the Palestinian Authority, who became more concerned with the establishment of a Palestinian state rather than liberating Palestine.



(Figure Number 6)

Another issue which distinguishes the 2012 Nakba day from 2011 is the Palestinian prisoners' hunger strike. For instance, the poster above indicated that: "occupation+ settlements+ apartheid wall+ imprisonment= the continuation of the Palestinian Nakba." In the morning of May 14, confirmation of a deal between the hunger strikers and the Israeli Prison Authorities (IPA) was heard.⁵⁹ The mass hunger strikers, who had gone 28 days without food, seemed to have succeeded in achieving most of their

⁵⁹ Linah Alsaafin "Nakba Day 2012: Revolution on Hold," *Alakhbar English*, 16 May, 2012. <http://english.al-akhbar.com/node/7392>. Accessed on July 2nd, 2012.

demands, which included three main calls: ending administrative detention, ending solitary confinement and the right to family visit.⁶⁰ This agreement was seen as a victory for Palestinian prisoners who underwent a mass hunger strike in order to force the Israeli Prisoners Authority listen to their demands. These prisoners were fighting for their basic human rights and needs, and in their peaceful non-violent strike, they were able to gain the support of the entire Palestinian community who stood with them in demonstrations demanding their immediate release.

The Palestinian prisoners' hunger strike began in September 2011, in which Palestinian detainees in Israeli jails started a hunger strike to protest their treatment by the Israeli prison services.⁶¹ Under the previously mentioned agreement, which was signed following mediation by Egypt and Jordan, Israel was to end solitary confinement for all prisoners and allow around 400 prisoners from Gaza to receive family visits.⁶² Around 2,500 prisoners joined the hunger strike after it began as a mass protest on 17 April. A handful of prisoners had been refusing food for a longer period. Two, who had been on hunger strike for 77 days, were believed to be close to death, and six others were in critical condition.⁶³ In the afternoon of May 15, 2012 a number of protestors went near Ofer prison in Ramallah and clashes started with Israeli security forces near the prison.⁶⁴ The Israeli army surrounded the protestors from three sides and fired large amounts of tear gas canisters, which forced the majority of protestors to remain at a distance from the Ofer jail.⁶⁵ Accordingly, the 2012 Nakba Day was marked by Palestinian prisoners' hunger strike, as they resisted their unlawful imprisonment. During the 2012 Nakba day ceremony, Palestinian officials referred to the bravery and achievements of Palestinian prisoners, yet again they were being represented through the PA.

Despite the fact that on the national and international scene the PA speaks on behalf of Palestinians and negotiates their fate with Israel and the US, this does not mean that Palestinians approve of such negotiations. For instance, on Saturday, June 30th and Sunday, July 1, 2012 young protestors gathered at Manara Square in downtown Ramallah holding up posters denouncing the PA's act in receiving Shaul Mofaz, former Israeli Defense Minister. The violent repression of demonstrations in Ramallah by Palestinian Authority police reveals the growing unpopularity of the PA's commitment to negotiations with Israel and normalization of the Israeli occupation.⁶⁶ Initially called by the civil society network Palestinians for Dignity, the 30 June demonstration was to protest the decision of the PA president to invite Shaul Mofaz to Ramallah.⁶⁷ Given Mofaz's command of the Israeli occupation forces, and later the Israeli Ministry of

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ "Palestinians detained in Israel Start Hunger Strike," Ma'an News Agency, Tuesday 27 September, 2011, <http://www.maannews.net/eng/ViewDetails.aspx?ID=424063>. Accessed on July 1st, 2012.

⁶² Harriet Sherwood, "Palestinian Prisoners End Hunger Strike," *The Guardian*, Monday 14 May, 2012, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2012/may/14/palestinian-prisoners-end-hunger-strike>. Accessed on July 3rd, 2012.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Linah Alsaafin "Nakba Day 2012: Revolution on Hold," *Alakhbar English*, 16 May, 2012. <http://english.al-akhbar.com/node/7392>. Accessed on June 26, 2012.

⁶⁵ Anna Day, "Nakba Day Protest: LIVE," *Policymic*, May 16, 2012. <http://www.policymic.com/articles/8358/nakba-day-protests-2012-live>. Accessed on June 30th, 2012.

⁶⁶ Jamal Juma, "PA repression feeds flames of Palestinian discontent," *The Electronic Intifada*, 3 July, 2012. Accessed on July, 14, 2012.

⁶⁷ Ibid.



“Defense” during the second intifada, he is responsible for many massacres and kidnappings, such as the use of bulldozers to destroy houses in the Jenin refugee camp in 2003.⁶⁸ As a result, the fact that PA president was even contemplating the idea of negotiating with this Israeli perpetrator created a mass mobilization among youths, especially amongst third and fourth generation refugees. Due to intense pressure from youth movements, political parties and even from within Fatah, the PA postponed the meeting. In spite of that the youth protests went ahead as scheduled.⁶⁹ This mass protest was met by police officers’ aggression who sought to ‘tame’ this protests, as they shoved, kicked, and beat protesters around them.⁷⁰ Not only that but the PA also infiltrated undercover mukhabarat (secret services) using metal chains and batons to beat unarmed protesters, attack journalists, beating women and young people, kidnapping protesters from the street and beating them in regime police stations “is a sign that any veneer of respectability and legitimacy that the PA has worked so hard to attain, is wearing thin.”⁷¹ For instance, one of the women I interviewed for the purpose of my research, Laila is a third generation refugee, was attacked by police officers as she testifies:

I saw a friend being dragged away by four thugs, and immediately went after them, trying to get my body between my friend and the thugs so that they wouldn’t take him. I couldn’t reach them though, and was pushed back more than once. I surged forward again and one thug began screaming at me, showering me with a plethora of insults. I yelled back for the thugs to let my friend go. The same thug drew back his arm and slapped me hard across the face, in broad daylight on one of Ramallah’s busiest streets, shouting “WHORE! PROSTITUTE!”⁷²

The protests which roamed the streets of Ramallah during the end of June and beginning of July, was organized by a youth movement called ‘Palestinians for Dignity’. These protestors constituted, in part, third and fourth generation refugees and the increasing amount of tension between these youths and the PA was profound. As third and fourth generation refugees refuse to co-opt with PA’s dominance in negotiating their fate or even speaking on behalf of them in negotiations with Israeli leaders. Despite PA officers’ assaults whether physical or verbal as shown in the testimony above, Palestinians refuse to be silenced by the PA, as the youth protests proved the PA can no longer control the riots and youth mobilizations who chanted ‘NO NEGOTIATIONS WITH ISRAEL’ [emphasis added].

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Linah Alsaafin, “First-hand: Ramallah protests against Mofaz meeting attacked by PA police, thugs,” *The Electronic Intifada*, Tuesday, July 3, 2012. Accessed on July 4th, 2012.

⁷¹ Juma, “PA repression feeds flames of Palestinian discontent.”

⁷² Linah Alsaafin, “First-hand: Ramallah protests against Mofaz meeting attacked by PA police, thugs,” *The Electronic Intifada*, Tuesday, July 3, 2012. Accessed on July 4th, 2012.

In summary, for the past sixty-five years Palestinians have commemorated a historical event that began in 1948 and remains till this day. Many of the Palestinian people are living the reality of the Nakba today, so the pain of the open wound has not yet healed.⁷³

Despite the fact that Palestinians have not yet established a state, an official narrative dominated by the PLO exists. Some Palestinian intellectuals have directly and indirectly contributed in the construction of this official narrative, such as Edward Said and Mahmoud Darwish, who stood with the PLO’s doctrine in liberating Palestine throughout the 1970s up until the early 1990s. Yet when Fatah’s leader, Yasser Arafat, signed the Oslo Accords on the Washington lawn, both Said and Darwish’s support of the PLO ended. But their work, in part, embody the official narrative of liberation, life in exile and self determination.

The PLO’s semi-official narrative was reflected in the 64th anniversary of the Nakba which was organized by the PLO Department of Refugee Affairs. As Palestinians marked the 64th anniversary of the Nakba, those who delivered speeches in this ceremony were PA leaders such as Salam Fayyad. His speech manifested the ‘official’ Palestinian narrative of the Nakba, as he emphasized “Palestinians right of self-determination in an independent sovereign state.” However, in the Palestinian- Israeli negotiations process, establishing a sovereign Palestinian state and the issue of returning Palestinian refugees to their lands is far from being achieved. As shown in this chapter, Palestinian refugees took matter into their own hands during the 63rd Nakba day, as they organized the return march near the borders of Syria and Lebanon with the hope of returning to their lands.

⁷³ Aziz Abu Sara, “For the Palestinians the Nakba is not History,” *Independent Reporting and Commentary from Israel/Palestine*, 15, May, 2012. <http://972mag.com/for-palestinians-the-nakba-is-not-history/45771>. Accessed on July 5th, 2012.



CHAPTER TWO

THE NARRATIVES OF FIRST GENERATION REFUGEES

The issue of recording the oral history of those who witnessed a catastrophic event and its contribution to the historical record of a country is particularly important in the Palestinian case. According to Palestinians, a great deal of their written sources disappeared or were destroyed as a result of the 1948 war, which wasn't a war in a traditional sense, but was a larger project of ethnic cleansing.⁷⁴ Palestinians have thoroughly sought to rewrite their history with referring to the oral testimonies of Palestinians who experienced life before, during and after the Nakba. Those who survived the Nakba can be described as Jeel Falasteen,⁷⁵ whose stories of displacement presents Palestinians with a broader narrative of what happen to Palestine during the Nakba.

Interviewing first generation Palestinian refugees gave me a better understating of how the story of their Nakba is personally and individually constructed. Most of the interviewees described their life before the Nakba, and highlighted the many lands they owned as a sort of utopian lost paradise. However, after the Nakba they described the story of their displacement and the on-going displacements they've experienced ever since the Nakba, which constitutes an important part of Palestinian history. This chapter analyzes the life stories of first generation refugees, whose testimonies of the Nakba forms a crucial chapter in the Palestinian narrative of the Nakba. While listening and analyzing the life stories of the first generation refugees, indicators of an on-going Nakba will be explored.

Life Before the Nakba:

The basis of this chapter is a set of life stories recorded from October 2011 until May 2012. The first generation refugees I interviewed for this chapter live in Al-Jalazoun refugee camp, Ramallah, Surda and Deir Dibwan, because, as noted earlier, the overall interviews conducted for my study are areas near or in Ramallah. The majority of the people I interviewed for this chapter are women. This was purposefully chosen, because women's side of the story remains on the margins of the broader Palestinian narrative of the Nakba. Nevertheless, I did not use all of the interviews conducted for the purpose of this chapter, because some of the interviewees suffered from an illness and spoke incomprehensibly.

While interviewing six of the 'generation of the Nakba' I got a sense of what their lives were before the Nakba, which was predominated by a 'paradise' theme. Although this is not the focus of my study, I found it important to present a brief summary of their lives before the Nakba, so as to show how the Nakba has fragmented in reality and in a kind of collective imagination, and continues to fragment, the Palestinian society.

Many studies have focused on life during and after the Nakba, as a result, life before the Nakba has been marginalized in Palestinian historiography. Yet some scholars were

⁷⁴ Saleh Abdel-Jawad, "limadha la nastati' kitabat tarikhina al mo'aser dona estikhdam al masader al shafawia," in *naho sia'ghat riwaya tarikhia lil-nakba eshkaliat wa tahadiat*, ed. Mustafa Kibha (Haifa: Mada Al-Karmal, 2006), 26.

⁷⁵ Palestinians usually name generations by relating them to historic periods, hence Jeel Falasteen: the generation formed in Palestine. Rosemary Sayigh, *Palestinians: From Peasants to revolutionaries* (London: Zed Books, 1979), 58.



aware of this lack and relied on oral history to depict life before the Nakba.⁷⁶ And from the interviews I conducted with elder Palestinian refugees, here is how some of them described their lives before the Nakba:

Imm Najih: is a 74 year old woman originally from Haifa and currently resides in Deir Dibwan.⁷⁷ Before she began telling her story, Imm Najih lit up a cigarette and each puff of smoke was as if a memory was being recollected. She describes her life before the Nakba as follows:

We were living the best life, in the heart of Haifa right near the shore. Until today our house still stands..... We [as in Palestinians] were living in peace with the Jews as one family. Those who came from Tel-Aviv were my fathers' customers....we were neighbors, we use to play with them and everything. When my father died in 1947, Jews attended his funeral and were even crying. They were our neighbors, we were living like you people in Deir Dibwan, in solidarity.....In Haifa we were one of the happiest people. We owned many lands. My fathers' house had a brick surface, just like the ones rich people had. We weren't peasants. We had servants and workers who looked after the sheep and cows... We were civilized, Haifa was the center of civilization.⁷⁸

It is important to note that the interview above depicts an urban story, thus the socio, economic and cultural influence of the city of Haifa was illuminated. The composition of Haifa's population is highly diverse. In addition to the Christian, Muslim and Jewish communities in the city, consuls for European community were present in Haifa before World War I, such as French, English and Austrian consuls.⁷⁹ Accordingly, an emerging merchant class which included a large number of Christians, contributed new members of the notable stratum.⁸⁰ This new class was connected to the growing trade with Europe, and many of its members received socio and economic privileges.⁸¹ From Imm Najih's life story, it was clear that her family belonged to the upper class of Haifa.⁸² As she noted that her father was a wealthy merchant and they lived a comfortable life in

⁷⁶ Such as Rosemary Sayigh's, *Palestinians: From Peasants to revolutionaries* (London: Zed Books, 1979).

⁷⁷ Imm Najih refused to be recorded and feared I would publish her interview online. I tried reassuring her that her interview would remain confidential and would never be published online without her permission, yet she refused and insisted I take notes instead. This shows the extent of fear the colonial condition in Palestine has been inflicted on the first generation refugees, who in some cases such as in Imm Najih's, held back while telling their stories and feared of experiencing the Nakba all over again.

⁷⁸ This interview was conducted on October 17, 2011 and was translated into English by the author.

⁷⁹ These resident foreigner community played a significant role in the politics of Haifa up to the outbreak of world war I, both overtly and covertly. The Haifa community had been subjected to the varying politics and cultural influences of competing European interest coming in by way of educational missions, the templar settlement and the trading opportunities provided by European consulates. To read more on the Economic and Social transformation of Haifa, see May Seikley, *Haifa: Transformation of a Palestinian Arab Society in 1918-1939* (London: I.B Tauris Publishers, 1995), 29.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² The Population of Haifa was distributed into three social classes: The class of notables, Christian landowners and commercial strata, and a middle class was also emerging. To see more on the Soci-economic stratification of Haifa, see Mya Seikaly, *Haifa: Transformation of a Palestinian Arab Society in 1918-1939*, 33.

Haifa, she recalled: "The wealth in Deir Dibwan and Nablus is nothing compared to the life I was living in Haifa."⁸³ However, in 1948 her entire world changed and her life in Haifa was to remain nothing but a distant memory.

In essence, Imm Najih referred to the cohesion of the society in Haifa prior to 1948, in which Arabs and Jews were living in peace. However a division between the Arab and Jewish community in Haifa has been escalating since the 1930s,⁸⁴ when all Jews in Palestine and the immigrants that came before, and during 1948, united under the dream of establishing the so called state of Israel.⁸⁵ So Imm Najih sought to clarify that it was not all hatred and disputes between the Arab and Jewish community in Haifa, and at some point they were living in peace.

Zaina: First generation refugee, originally from Al-Lydd. She's 92 years old and currently resides in Al-Tira, in Ramallah. Part of her story of life before the Nakba revolved around harvesting crops, as she describes:

Every day we use to collect sixty five boxes of potatoes. As Omar, Khamis, my sister in-law and myself use to plant three tons of potatoes...besides the lattice, onions, garlic and Salamander we planted. There were many sources of income...My father in-law never hired works, he had us; me, my sister in-law and her kids.... My father in-law owned many lands, he was always preoccupied with his money and land...I use to tell him you want money and work I want to go wherever I want, meaning to weddings. He told me go wherever you want. God bless his soul.⁸⁶

In contrast with the previous interview, Zania's story represents the rural side of the Palestinian narrative, notably peasant's narrative which revolved around agriculture. One of the most common phrases I heard of life before the Nakba is that 'we lived in Paradise.' "It is true that these dispossessed peasants have recalled their homes in Palestine from a present so bleak that their poverty and class oppression there tend to be blurred."⁸⁷ However there is truth in their perception of peasant life as good, for, despite of poverty their lands provided them with all their needs.⁸⁸ Clearly in the Palestinian society agriculture was the main source of income, in which they were able to harvest all their crops which provided them with their basic needs.

⁸³ Interview with Imm Najih.

⁸⁴ During 1936, and the following years of the revolt(1937-1939), Haifa remained a source of active fighters and saboteurs for blowing up bridges, fund raising, smuggling of ammunition and similar activities. The majority were peasants from the villages and workers who knew Haifa well, who lived in the slums. The targets of this revolt were British policy, police and Jewish settlements. Jewish organizations at that phase were concerned with intensifying their armed protection, which the British authorities were helpful with. Mya Seikaly's, *Haifa: Transformation of a Palestinian Arab Society in 1918-1939*, 248-250.

⁸⁵ The Jews wanted the port city of Haifa but without the 750,000 Palestinians who lived there, and in April 1948, they achieved their goal through executing operation 'Scissors'. This operation indicated both the idea of a pincer movement and of cutting the city off from its Palestinian hinterland. For more see Ilan Pappé, *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine* (United Kingdom: One World Publication), 92.

⁸⁶ This interview was conducted on January 8th, 2012 in Al-Tira and was translated into English by the author.

⁸⁷ Rosemary Sayigh, *Palestinians: From Peasants to Revolutionaries* (London: Zed Books, 1979), 10.

⁸⁸ Ibid.



Moreover, as shown in Zaina's story of life before the Nakba, the family household was both production and consumption unit—a family collective. Its size, and the practice of pooling its labor and income, enabled it to survive in bad times, expand in good ones.⁸⁹ Nevertheless in the following section all the generation of the Nakba recalled after the Nakba was 'loss'; loss of income, loss of lands and loss of lives.

Their Lives During and After the Nakba: the Story of the Exodus in 1948:

The use of oral history to document what happened to Palestine during the Nakba is central to Palestinian historiography and in reconstructing the semi-official dominant narrative of the Nakba. Thus, in the process of interviewing eye witnesses of the catastrophe, the individual stories of a refugee who experienced the exodus, falls under a larger collective experience of expulsion. For instance, the stories of refugees who witnessed massacres committed against Palestinians, differs from the stories of those who left due psychological warfare carried out by the Zionist forces. Overall, the life stories included in this section reveals the precarious journey first generation refugees were forced to take, as they were expelled from their homes and headed towards an uncertain destiny of statelessness, loss and poverty.

Imm Hamed: is an 87 year old woman, who is originally from the Lydd and currently lives in Ramallah.

To begin with, Imm Hamed is my friends' grandmother. When her granddaughter and I entered her house, she was surprised to hear that I was interested in documenting her story as she said, "you cannot imagine how glad I am that you came here to listen to my story, if you offered me a kilo of gold or you coming here and listening to me I'd choose the latter."⁹⁰ This shows the extent to which first generation refugees are striving to be heard and acknowledged. She narrates her story of the Nakba as follows:

I'm originally from Al-Lydd... First of all there was a six month strike, people closed their shops. And then the people of Jaffa left in their cars and took all of their furniture along with them. As for the people of Al-Ramle, they took all their Shabab [youths] as captives. In Lydd, the Jewish forces invaded our village and began to shoot everywhere. Those who survived were told to dig and bury those who were killed...Have you ever heard such stories.⁹¹

When asked about the massacre that took place in Lydd,⁹² Imm Hamed described how

⁸⁹ Ibid, 22.

⁹⁰ This interview was conducted on February 1, 2012 in Ramallah in Arabic and was translated into English by the author.

⁹¹ Interview with Imm Hamed.

⁹² During the Israeli attack on the Lydd in July 1948, dozens of unarmed detainees in the Dahmaimash mosque were shot and killed. "Apparently, some of them tried to break out and escape, perhaps fearing that they would be massacred. IDF troops threw grenades apparently fired PIAT(bazooka) rockets into the compound. For more information see Benny Morris, *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem Revisited* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 428.

"it was a very powerful massacre." And when I asked her whether she had witnessed this massacre, she replied "Wila" of course (while crying). She describes her journey of exodus as follows:

We fled because they attacked us in our homes.....They told us to go to the field where we use to collect the wheat. They kicked us out of our homes and kept us outside until noon.....The Jordanian army was present in the Lydd, and when they saw the Jewish soldiers they changed their uniforms so that the Jews wouldn't shoot them.....The Nakba which the people of the Lydd experienced, no one in the world had experiencedWhy did we leave our country? Because of the horror they did in Deir Yassin...When people told us to leave, we simply left because we didn't want what happened in Deir Yassin to happen to us. I was married and had a boy and a girl. We walked until we reached Ramallah...While we were walking, a Jewish soldier approached my uncle, who was carrying 2000JDs, and asked him: Where did you get this money from? They took the money and shot him. I then called for my mother to be careful! They killed my uncle. I thought she fainted, it didn't occur to me she was dead.Yumma Yumma [mother she cried], she didn't wake up she was gone.... We were all dispersed and anyone who fell was left to die; there was no one to treat them. Were there any Arab countries that helped us? Not one Arab country In Lydd my father owned a soap factory...He told us to go and check on the soap factory...As my cousins and I headed to the factory, we found olive oil spilled all over the floor like a river, isn't that just running people's livelihood.⁹³

From Imm Hamed's story the stratagem the Israeli forces followed in order to depopulate the city of Al-Lydd was based on massacres and creating panic among Palestinians residing in these cities and villages. For instance, Sharif Kanaana argued that when one of the suburbs or neighboring villages was attacked by shelling, this caused the inhabitants to head towards the city.⁹⁴ This was then followed by shelling the city and occasional aerial bombardment of the city itself.⁹⁵ Afterwards the Zionist/ Israeli forces executed a large scale massacre in a neighborhood or nearby village, which sent a wave of panic, confusion and mass flight from the cities. This pattern was used for all the major cities: including Lydd.⁹⁶

Witnessing the massacre of Lydd and the murder of her mother devastates Imm Hamed today just as it did sixty five years ago. Her story was full with anger as she articulated "No one in the world, in Palestine, in the Arab countries and the Americas have been

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Sharif Kanaana, *Still on Vacation!* (Jerusalem: The Jerusalem International Center For Palestinian Studies, 1992), 21; 108

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Kanaana further examines how the Palestinians who stayed in Lydd, about one thousand of them, received inhuman treating including rape and starvation. These people were kept within a barbed wire fence where they were kept for several days without food, water or covers. The number of Palestinians killed during the Lydd massacre, including women, children and elders was over 250. To read more on the Lydd massacre see Sharif Kanaana, *Still on Vacation!*, 21;108.



ruined more than the people of Al-Lydd.⁹⁷ The issue of portraying the people of the Lydd as the most victimized people in Palestine and in the world is an exaggeration. This is not to undermine the experience Imm Hamed and other first generation refugees went through during the Nakba, but to highlight how Palestinian refugees tend to boast on whose more victimized than the other.

During her interview, Imm Hamed recalls the taking of Lydd as one of the most devastating experience, because to her the Lydd is "one of the most beautiful places in Palestine."⁹⁸ The notion of loss structured the story of Imm Hamed as she referred to the loss of fortune, family, and a homeland. Although she mentioned the comfortable situation she is currently living in, and was proud of her children who are doctors and architects, she still yearns for her life in Lydd.

Another first generation refugee who is also from the Lydd, Zaina. Zaina recollected the story of her exodus as follows:

We were returning from our field, we had just filled two carriages with watermelons, and someone told us are you crazy! Go home our village has fallen. When the Jews attacked Lydd I was 18 years old, married and my eldest son Al-Abed was one years old.... It was Ramadan, and we were fasting for three days. ...They started shooting towards us, and my brother in-laws son was killed in front of our house, he was seven years old. My youngest brother in-law was 16 years old.... He ran towards a hill; however they were able to capture him and shot him near Al-Nabi Moqdan..... When the Jews arrived I was just about to bake some bread, but when the Jews attacked us they said yallah [come on] get out of here. Where am I supposed to go? If we leave what are we suppose to eat! People were poor....When we left to Na'leen we became beggars for bread. We had nothing with us.....I shouldn't have left, if I stayed on my land it would had been better for me.⁹⁹

As mentioned previously, Zaina began her story with life before the Nakba and described the prosperity they lived in. She enumerated the dozens of olive oil tanks, wheat bags, or the "150 dunums of land" they owned. But after the Nakba she lamented for the loss of everything. Most importantly, Zaina mentioned that "many people were killed in the Lydd" as a result of the massacre. So the Zionist propaganda in emptying the land was based on massacres and implanting fear in Palestinians so as to leave.¹⁰⁰ However, despite the massacre and fear that roamed the city of Al-Lydd, Zaina asserted "I wasn't afraid, and I didn't want to leave."¹⁰¹

⁹⁷ Interview with Imm Hamed.

⁹⁸ Interview with Imm Hamed

⁹⁹ Interview with Zaina.

¹⁰⁰ Saleh Abdel Jawad noted that "Massacres should be viewed as a common phenomenon in nearly every Palestinian village and Bedouin settlement from which people involuntarily fled. Jaffa and Haifa, the major cities and centers of Palestinian intellectual and cultural life, and Lydd were the sites of the most destructive forms of ethnic cleansing. For more see Saleh Abdel Jawad, "Zionist Massacres: the Creation of the Palestinian Refugee Problem," in *Israel and the Palestinian Refugees*, Ed. Eyal Benvenisti and others (Berlin: Springer, 2007), 69.

¹⁰¹ Interview with Zaina.

In Nur Masalha's *The Politics of Denial*, he claimed that in the case of the Lydd and other towns, the order was given by Ben Gurion himself to expel the inhabitants. And between July 11- 12 tens of unarmed civilians were stopped at the mosque and church of the village, all of them were killed. It is estimated between 250- 400 Palestinian were killed in the Lydd massacre carried out by the Israeli Defense Forces, and around 350 died after being expelled from the village.¹⁰²

After being expelled from Al-Lydd, Zaina and her family's first destination was to Na'leen, later on they settled in Al-Amari refugee camp and lived there for over 40 years. When their economic situation improved, they moved to Al-Tira in Ramallah and built a home there. While comparing between her life before and after the Nakba Zaina expressed that, "if I knew I was going to be living in this situation, I would have never left." Feeling guilty for leaving one's land was reflected in Zaina's life story. Moreover, when I asked Zaina if you had the opportunity to return to Al-Lydd, would you? She replied "Al yoom" (if only).

In her life story, Imm Najih narrates the fall of Haifa and the story of her dispossession as follows:

My father was dead, my brother left to Jordan. I was 10 years old. They took one of the most beautiful lands.... People left and were dispersed due to heavy bombardment and explosives by the Zionist forces. Men were killed, houses destroyed...Nothing is left... Yet those who remained profited, they were not stigmatized as refugees. When we migrated to Nablus, they treated us passively. My sisters hated Nablus, they referred to refugees as Jana Al Haywanat [zoo].¹⁰³

From the interview above, the notion of dehumanization was clear, where refugees were stereotyped and discriminated against within the Palestinian society.¹⁰⁴ However, despite the degrading status allotted to the word 'refugee', Imm Najih asserted, "I am proud to be a refugee, the bride of Palestine." In the beginning of this chapter I presented a brief summary of her life before the Nakba, as she described the luxurious life she had in Haifa. Yet after the Nakba everything was gone, and they've been treated as "beggars". In just a few hours their lives have been completely transformed from dignity to humiliation.¹⁰⁵

What distinguishes Imm Najih's story and recollection of the Nakba from others is that she sheds light on how refugees are living in a racist world, where a refugee is labeled as 'inferior'. She gave an example of how they were treated in Nablus, and how even in

¹⁰² Nur Masalha, *The Politics of Denial: Israel and the Palestinian Refugee Problem* (London: Pluto press, 2003), 31-51.

¹⁰³ Interview with Imm Najih.

¹⁰⁴ When Palestinians were dispossessed of their lands, the lives of hundreds of thousands of refugees have been changed. Where they loss a land, prosperity, and status. They also suffered from social isolation in the years that followed the exodus which included lack of respect by host Palestinian communities . Accordingly the social spaces and boundaries that emerged between refugees and the Arab host societies were based on cultural differences such as dialects and traditions. For more see:

Mahmoud A'qil, ain bayat al ma': *mokhaim al laj'in al falastinieen: derasa fi a'lim ijtima' al mokhiyat* (Alquds: al jami'a al falastinia al akadimia lishou'on al dawlia, 1992), 57.

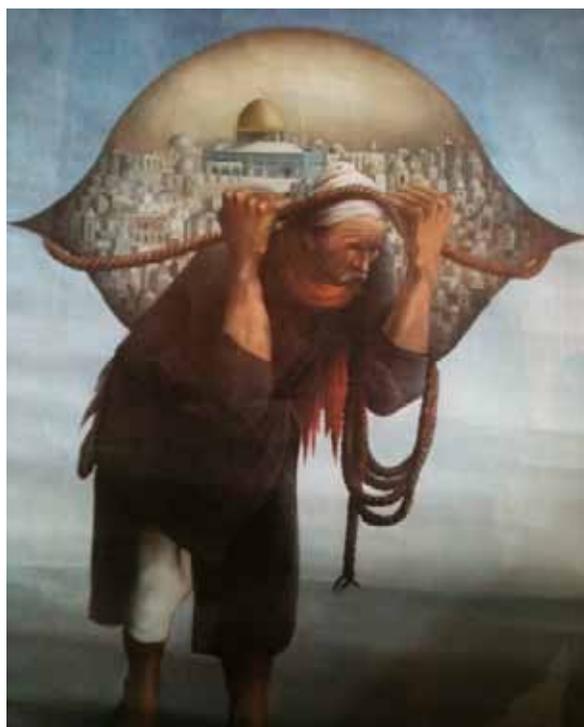
¹⁰⁵ Rosemary Sayigh, *From Peasants to Revolutionaries* (London: Zed Books, 1979), 85.



Deir Dibwan people “stigmatize me”. Palestinian refugees are often treated as passive recipients of aid and are only in need of assistance, rather than as individuals with unique histories and the right to redress.¹⁰⁶ To top it all, international media usually portrays refugees as victims instead of specific persons, a “miserable sea of humanity” where no one has a name or face.¹⁰⁷

Thus, each Palestinian refugee has a unique and different story to tell. For instance, Imm Najih focused on the stereotypical depiction of refugees in the Palestinian society, which is something Palestinians try to overlook when speaking of the 1948 Nakba. I wasn’t even aware of this image until I interviewed Imm Najih who was deeply frustrated with this stigma that has been attached to her ever since she left Haifa, until today. She even told me “Here in Deir Dibwan, people look at me in a degrading way. A stigma exists.”¹⁰⁸

Fatima: is an 80 year refugee women living in Surda. She is originally from Ayn Karim and the first thing I noticed when I entered her house was this painting



(Figure Number 7 “The Bearer of Burdens” painting by Suleiman Mansour)

¹⁰⁶ Cited in Kristine Beckerle, “Pity versus Rights’ Recognition: Rejection of the Victim Label by Palestinian Refugees,” Birzeit University, Working Paper Series, 2011 <http://ialiis.birzeit.edu/userfiles/WPS2011-54>Kristine.pdf. Accessed on January 26, 2012.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Interview with Imm Najih.

Suleiman Mansour drew this painting in 1969, and this painting depicts the journey of the Palestinian people after the Nakba. The Palestinian in the painting is carrying the city Jerusalem upon his back along with the Dome of the Rock,¹⁰⁹ which is an allusion to Atlas in Greek mythology, the Titan who carries the heavens and Earth upon his shoulders. Suleiman’s painting is full with symbols and metaphors, as Mansour epitomizes Palestinian steadfastness, patience and determination to carry the burden of the Palestinian question upon his back and shoulders.¹¹⁰ By hanging this painting on her wall, Fatima conceives this painting as symbolic to her and other Palestinian refugees’ stories.

Concerning the fall of Ayn Karim and the journey of her exodus, Fatima articulated that:

Before the Jews attacked our village, they went to Deir Yassin; subsequently the Deir Yassin massacre took place near the break of dawn...After the massacre happened, my village people went to Deir Yassin and found women and children killed. Shortly after that the Jewish forces attacked our village, Ayn Karim...When they attacked our village, my uncle and father said we should head towards the mountains. We headed west, and stayed there with my aunt for over a month. Yet the Jewish attacks reached us, and we were forced to leave.¹¹¹ So we headed to Bethlehem at 1:00 am and stayed there for a year. I then moved with my in-laws to Surda where we purchased a piece of land and built a home here. I’ve been living here ever since. When my children got older, I took them to Ayn Karim. We went walking, and when we reached Ayn-Karim I showed them my parents’ house and the water spring.....My son was infuriated when he saw our village.¹¹²

Although Fatima and her family strove to escape the Israeli assault on their village, and found temporary refuge until the situation would calm down, the Zionist attacks reached them and they were forced to leave. This reveals the Israeli/ Zionist policy during the Nakba which aimed at preventing Palestinian refugee return.¹¹³ However, as Fatima puts it, “it never occurred to us at the time that we will never return.”¹¹⁴ When they left to Bethlehem for a year, they sought temporary refuge until they would be able to return to their village. Once it was clear that returning to their village was diminishing by the day, they built a new home in Surda, and sought to build a new life along with it.

The stories above represent the narrative of Palestinian refugee women, as four out of six interviewees were women. Due to the exclusion of women’s voice in the context of the Palestinian discourse of the Nakba, as Palestinian women, their stories are both

¹⁰⁹ Mohammed Salem al-gha, “qissat al a’tal al falastini jabal al-mahamel,” donya al-ra’i, 2012 <http://pulpit.alwatanvoice.com/articles/2010/05/03/196999.html> . Accessed on June 28, 2012.

¹¹⁰ Abdullah Abu-Rashid, “alquds fi a’youn al fananin al tashkilin al falastinin,” www.thaqafa.org. Accessed on February 15, 2012.

¹¹¹ In *All That Remains*, Edited by Walid Khalidi he asserts that the attack on Ayn Karim started at 2:00 am on July 18, when the Israelis stormed the height of Jabal Rab overlooking Ayn Karim. At 9:00 am, the village fell without a struggle. *All That Remains*, Ed. Walid Khalidi (Washington: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1992), 237.

¹¹² This interview was conducted on January 26, 2012 in Surda, and was translated into English by the author.

¹¹³ Nur Masalha, *The politics of denial: Israel and the Palestinian refugee problem*, 67.

¹¹⁴ Interview with Fatima.



similar to and different from the Palestinian national narrative.¹¹⁵ The significance of these stories is not what they say about the past, but what they potentially offer to the present and future.¹¹⁶ Women's stories of the 1948 exodus revolved around the fall of their village/city, the journey of the exodus and nostalgia for the past. Thus, women's recollection of the Nakba forms a rich source of national history.¹¹⁷ Their omission would leave us "with an impoverished history unable to explain how, in spite of everything, the Palestinians people struggle has persisted."¹¹⁸ By listening to these women's stories it not only gave them a sense that their stories are an indispensable source of Palestinian history, but also gave me a better understanding of the crucial historical information embedded in their life stories.

On the other hand, the interviews below were conducted with first generation refugee men living in Al-Jalazoun refugee camp. The idea is not to marginalize men's life stories at the expense of women's, but to give Palestinian refugee women a bigger space to speak and deconstruct the stereotype that women are "not recognized as making, knowing history, or capable of telling it."¹¹⁹

Mahmoud: is a 78 year old man living in Al-Jalazoun refugee camp. He is originally from Bayt Nabala and narrates his story of the Nakba as follows:

I'm from Bayt Nabala which is located near Lydd, next to the airport. I remember 1948 as I see you now. When the Nakba happened I was in school, I was in the seventh grade, and it was the last semester. Before the semester ended, Jewish planes invaded the country, as a result people left. In the afternoon we were on our way home from school....And people were leaving. We first left to Shokba. After that we went to Al-Mazra'a al-Gharbia and stayed there for a while. From Al-Mazra'a al-Gharbia we left to Kobar and lived there for five years.¹²⁰

Since Mahmoud didn't elaborate on the circumstances under which they fled, I asked him if there was any direct danger or attacks in his village, he replied:

There was nothing. Our village in particular, people just left....After 20 days of our departure, the Jews entered our village and occupied it. People left out of fear, and because of the Deir Yassin massacre, they were afraid. After 20 days, my brother, whose older than me, and I returned to bring a bag of wheat.... But nothing at all happened....At the beginning people left with nothing, later on they returned to bring some of their belongingsAfter Kobar we left to Al-Jalazoun..... We were properly received in Kobar, they treated us well. We lived in a house for three years without paying rent....There is no racism in this country.¹²¹

¹¹⁵ The Palestinian national narrative and its dominance over other 'subaltern' narratives was discussed in chapter one.

¹¹⁶ Fatma Kassem, *Palestinian Women Narrative Histories and gendered Memory* (London: Zed Books, 2011), 240.

¹¹⁷ Rosemary Sayigh, "Palestinian Camp Women as Tellers of History," *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol.27, No.2 (1998): 57

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Rosemary Sayigh, "Product and Producer of Palestinian History: Stereotypes of "Self" in Camp Women's Life Stories," *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies* 13, No 1, (2007): 88.

¹²⁰ This interview was conducted on April 13, 2012 in Al-Jalazoun refugee camp in Arabic, and was translated into English by the author.

¹²¹ Interview with Mahmoud.

According to Mahmoud's testimony, the people of Bayt Nabala left out of fear and the Jewish forces occupied the village twenty days after its emptying.¹²² The fall of Bayt Nabala reveals that in order to understand the Palestinian exodus, it is important to consider not only a refugees' last day in a village, but also the long cumulative process of harassment and terror.¹²³ The harassment and terror that is meant in this situation is not only Israeli attacks and massacres but also, as Saleh Abdel Jawad puts it, "The residents were also attacked with psychological warfare and propaganda."¹²⁴ The impact of the psychological warfare, as previously mentioned in the work of Sharif Kanaana, was devastating. As many Palestinians fled due to the Zionist whispering campaign and the spread of the news of massacres which created a panic wave among Palestinians.¹²⁵

While listening to Mahmoud's story, I couldn't help but compare his situation to Imm Najih's, who stressed that refugees are stereotyped and gave an example of how she and her family were passively received in Nablus. Conversely, Mahmoud noted that they were properly received in Kobar and there is "no racism in this country." Hence, while telling their stories of the exodus, it is apparent that a generalization cannot be made, where the experience of one refugee differs from the other. In some cases they were well received in host villages, nevertheless in other places they were degraded and perceived as 'inferior'.

Adham: is a 75 year old man living in Al-Jalazoun refugee camp. He is originally from Al-Saqia, and his story goes as follows:

I was ten years old when I left. I remember what happened in our area, but what happened in Haifa, Jaffa I wasn't really aware of.... I wore my backpack and was on my way to school. Right next to our town there was a camp for the British. The Arabs got into a dispute with the British, regarding who will control the camp after the British leave....People were defeated, they fought with primitive weapons. Some had guns, while others fought with swords. We were in the middle of the street, people told us go home, a war is happening. We left and after four-five days they told us that we should send our women and children to Al-Lydd, while the men remained in the village....People resisted for two months. Then people left to Al-Lydd, and after a while the Arab armies entered the Lydd, I was there when that happened. Day and night there was shooting in the Lydd from both sides. The Arab armies assured us that they will provide us with cars, and the Jordanian army transferred people.¹²⁶

Adham suffered from a disability, his arm was amputated. When I asked him "how did

¹²² Bayt Nabala was mentioned in the operational orders for operation Dani. Israeli forces were ordered to attack Bayt Nabala, in which the Arab legion had stationed a second line company of nearly 120-150 soldiers. When the people of the Lydd were expelled from their city on July 13, 1948, many were forced by Israeli soldiers to go to Bayt Nabala. The village fell a few days later, before the end of operation Dani on 18 July. For more see *All That Remains*, edited by Walid Khalidi (Washington: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1992), 366.

¹²³ Saleh Abdel Jawad, "Zionists Massacres: The Creation of the Palestinian Refugee Problem," in *Israel and the Palestinian Refugees*, Ed. Eyal Benvenisti and others (Berlin: Springer, 2007), 69.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Sharif Kanaana, *Still on Vacation!*, 81.

¹²⁶ This interview was conducted on November 17, 2012 in Al-Jalazoun refugee camp, and was translated into English by the author.



you lose your arm?" he replied: "When we left to Al-Lydd I got injured. I don't know if the shooting was from the Jews or from the Arabs' side.....I was injured along with other people. One of them died, the other suffered from minor injuries, and I lost my arm."¹²⁷

After recovering from his injury, Adham along with his family moved to Al-Jalazoun refugee camp. However during the journey of his exodus he noted that "people in Dora wouldn't allow us to drink water from the water spring, and in Jifna they kicked us out... They treated us terribly." He not only faced a life threatening situation in which he experienced a war and overcame a critical injury, but was also unfortunate to deal with Palestinians who received refugees so negatively.

From the stories above, it is clear how the Nakba has led to the dispersion of the Palestinian society in an unprecedented and an unrecognizable way. Palestinians have collectively lost a homeland, and on an individual level they each lost something valuable that cannot be replaced. Therefore, documenting their life stories and incorporating it within the broader Palestinian narrative, is an effort in reconstructing and preserving the past.¹²⁸

Remembrance of the Nakba: Indicators of an On-going Narrative:

As first generation refugees narrated their stories and memory of the Nakba, they not only provided me with historically significant facts of the events of 1948, but also gave me their perception of the past, present and future. Through recollecting the memory of their continuing past, first generation refugees presented different indicators of a continuing narrative.

Moreover, the attempt of appealing to the past and understanding it from a present day perspective reveals how during the Nakba Palestinians who left their homes thought it was only for a short period of time. Today they articulate how ignorant they were for leaving their homes. For instance, Zaina emphasized that when they left "We thought it was a matter of days, a month at the latest and we would return. Yet the matter has prolonged."¹²⁹

All of the first generation refugees I interviewed said that the moment they left their homes, they thought it was temporary. It never occurred to them that they wouldn't return. As Fatima noted, "When we left we didn't even take our house keys with us. We were hoping to return, but hope of return was, and remains, little."¹³⁰ Furthermore, Imm Najih dreams of returning to Haifa, as she expressed how Deir Dibwan "isn't my home, I will not abandon my country. If I had the opportunity to return I would."¹³¹ The notion of a continuing narrative based on the life stories of first generation refugees is represented in their status quo today; as a refugee striving to return to their homeland. So as long as they, and all refugees, are living in exile, their stories will continue to be told

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Ahmad Sa'di, "al-dhakira wa al hawia," in *naho sia'ghat riwayat tarikhia linakba eshkaliat wa tahadiat*, ed. Mustafa Kibha (Haifa: Mada Al-Karmal, 2006), 60.

¹²⁹ Interview with Zaina.

¹³⁰ Interview with Fatima.

¹³¹ Interview with Imm Najih.

without closure.

A fundamental element leading to the continuation of the Palestinian narrative is not implementing the right of return. Refugees' right of return to the part of mandatory Palestine has been the most obstinate block preventing the resolution of the conflict between Palestinians and Israel. Because the right of return affects the essences of its respective history ever since the conflict began, with the prospects of its future.¹³² However no just solution can take place without prioritizing refugees' right of return, and its actual implementation.

Just as disregarding the right of return is a determining factor leading to the continuation of the Nakba, subsequent Israeli invasion also has a formidable impact. For instance, while narrating her story of the Nakba Imm Hamed articulated that "Look at what happened in Gaza how many Palestinians were killed. Look at the situation of the crazy Arabs, how many died in Egypt while they were playing football."¹³³ While telling her story, Imm Hamed gave a chronological description of the Nakba, the six days war, the on-going Israeli invasion of Gaza and ended with the Egyptian soccer riot. This interview was recorded on February 2, 2012, only one day after the riot in Egypt. Although the Egyptian soccer ordeal isn't related to the Palestinian catastrophe, the instability of the region is an important factor leading to the continuation of the Nakba. Thus as the Nakba persists, every new incident is accumulated and is reflected in the Palestinian narrative. Here it is important to note that the Nakba is neither the first nor the only historical event in Palestinian history, as many recurring episodes have emerged since 1948. All these on-going events should be documented and integrated within the Palestinian narrative which is far from having an end.

According to Maurice Halbwachs "We preserve memories of each epoch in our lives, and these are continually reproduced, through them, as by a continual relationship, a sense of our identity is perpetuated."¹³⁴ The memories of the Nakba are imprinted in the minds of the survivors of Al-Nakba. In the process of recollecting the expulsion, stories are continually reproduced from one generation to the next. For instance, some of the first generation refugees narrated their experience of the Nakba in the form of qissas (stories), as Fatima asserts, "because our stories have been passed on to various generations, they have turned into stories which I tell to youngsters."¹³⁵ Nonetheless, according to Fatima the term qissa (story) is an implication to fictional events, therefore a distinction between fiction and history needs to be made. Fatima claimed that "You can go and investigate of the information I provided you with and conclude that it is true.

¹³² Yoav Peled and Nadim N. Rouhana, "Transnational Justice and the Right of Return of the Palestinian Refugees, in *Israel and the Palestinian Refugees*, Ed. Eyal Benvenisti and others (Berlin: Springer, 2007), 142.

¹³³ On February 1st, 2012, 74 people have been killed in clashes between rival fans following a football match in the Egyptian city of Port Said. Scores were injured as fans - reportedly armed with knives - invaded the pitch after a match between top-tier clubs al-Masry and al-Ahly. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-16845841>. Accessed on February 5, 2012.

¹³⁴ Coser, Lewis, Trans, *Maurice Halbwach On Collective Memory* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992), 47.

¹³⁵ Interview with Fatima.



However with the passage of time it has evolved into a story.¹³⁶ Stories can be based on real events, and this should not undermine the value of oral history as authoritative and credible sources. Because collecting peoples' stories and preserving them through oral tradition can help us understand the past and leave a treasure for future generations.¹³⁷ Most importantly, history was made and written based on documenting the oral testimonies of those who witnessed a historic event, and until today history is being told in the form of stories which grabs children's attention regarding their past.

In Fatima's story, the notion of passing on her experience and perception of Al-Nakba to children was reflected in her testimony, as she said "I tell this story to children, who sit and listen to my tale....The story is passed on from one generation to another, and this story doesn't have an end."¹³⁸ This confirms that there are different forms of a continuing narrative, while some enumerated on-going tragic episodes; others recalled the essence of storytelling. As the story of Palestinian exodus is being transmitted to young children who will in the future passed it on to their children. As a result this unending cycle of narration is another indicator to the on-going of the Palestinian narrative. So the narrative of the Nakba is, as Lena Jayyusi puts it, "A narrative of continuity that marks not only the past within the present, as legacy, scar, outcome, wound, etc., but also the past still at work within the present, still actively re-engendering in its own shape."¹³⁹

While recollecting the memory of the past, Fatima commented on the present and future, as she said "today is probably better than tomorrow, who knows what other catastrophe is hidden for us in the future....the Nakba has devastated us and continues until today and tomorrow."¹⁴⁰ On the other hand Imm Hamed asserted, "The Nakba continues until today, it has no limit. Palestine will never be ours again. We lost our country."¹⁴¹ Here the relationship between history and memory is brought to light. The Nakba is a historic event, and a place for collective memory. It binds all Palestinians in a certain point in time which they perceive as "An eternal present."¹⁴²

The continuous Israeli invasions and onslaughts first generation Palestinians are forced to witness and experience until today is an extension of the Nakba. For instance, during his interview, Mahmoud recollected the loss of a son, "Who was killed by Israeli forces, all of my sons were imprisoned."¹⁴³ Mahmoud is reminded of the Nakba when he remembers his son "who was only a freshman at Birzeit University when he was killed."¹⁴⁴

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ "Preserving the Past Through Oral Tradition," Ssortment, <http://www.essortment.com/preserving-past-through->

¹³⁸ Interview with Fatima.

¹³⁹ Lena Jayyusi, "Iterability, Cumulativity, and Presence: The Relational Figurers of Palestinian Memory," in *Nakba: Palestine, 1948, and the Claims of Memory*, Edited by Ahmad H. Sa'di and Lila Abu- Lughod (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 114- 115.

¹⁴⁰ Interview with Fatima.

¹⁴¹ Interview with Imm Hamed.

¹⁴² Ahmad Sa'di, "Al-dhakira wa al hawia," in *naho sia'gat riwaya tarikhia lil-nakba eshkaliat wa tahadiat*, ed. Mustafa Kibha (Haifa: Mada Al-Karmal, 2006), 60.

¹⁴³ Interview with Mahmoud.

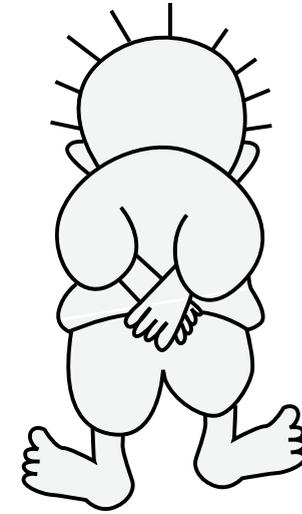
¹⁴⁴ Interview with Mahmoud.

From the stories above, it is clear that first generation refugees experienced the Nakba and the continuing affects of in different modes. They contribute in illuminating the characteristic of the Palestinian narrative of the Nakba which is truly a story without an end.

In conclusion, this chapter shed light on the narrative of the first generation refugees, whose stories are constructed of their life before, during and after the Nakba, in addition to different forms of the continuing Nakba. Most of the interviewees in this chapter are women. The purpose behind doing so is to emphasize the importance of including women's discourse and voice within the Palestinian narrative, thus excluding them would be a near omission of Palestinian history.

The untold story of first generation refugees reveals that in the act of remembering the Nakba, a story of a collective tragedy exists. They all experienced a catastrophic event which is etched in their memories and will never be forgotten. Although each refugee experienced the Nakba differently, they all mentioned continuing forms of the Nakba such as the Naksa, loss of a son, operation cast lead and the unending route of storytelling. Depending on the date of the interview new and on-going catastrophes are being reflected in the stories of first generation refugees. True their stories revolved around the Nakba more than recent events, yet the Palestinian narrative of the Nakba is being iterated endlessly in one narrative after another.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴⁵ Lena Jayyusi, "Iterability, Cumulativity, and Presence: The Relational Figurers of Palestinian Memory," in *Nakba: Palestine, 1948, and the Claims of Memory*, Edited by Ahmad H. Sa'di and Lila Abu- Lughod (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 115.



CHAPTER THREE:

THE STORIES OF SECOND GENERATION REFUGEES

The children of the first generation Palestinian refugees have been raised in different parts of Palestine and of the globe. Their parents' history and story of the Nakba has had a significant impact in shaping their past, present and determining their future. What distinguishes the second generations' stories from their parents' is that their memory of the Nakba consists of 'stories of stories' they've heard from their parents and elders who experienced and witnessed the Nakba in 1947- 1948. Nevertheless, in the narratives of the second generation refugees more catastrophes and causes of flight, they experienced and continue to experience, were apparent. As they mentioned the 1967 Naksa, the 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon and other catastrophes they experienced on a personal level also play a significant role in the construction of their memory. So the Nakba "is not a historic event that ended in 1948, it is a continuous route. Understanding it only as a past event blocks its essences. The path of the Nakba is continuous and takes different forms depending on historical stages. Thus the Nakba is a part of Palestine's present, not its past."¹⁴⁶ This was revealed in the narrative of the second generation refugees as they narrated the continuity of 1948 in different stages.

Despite the fact that second generation refugees did not experience the 1947- 1949 Nakba, the right of return was poignantly embedded in their narratives. Today as Palestinians continue to be denied the right of return to their homeland, the relevance of narratives of Al-Nakba continues to increase.¹⁴⁷ How they, and subsequent generations, ultimately remember and narrate the story of their continuing trauma consists of their personal understanding, analysis and even critique of what happened to their parents in 1948. This chapter discusses the stories of the second generation refugees who tell the stories of their past and other phases of the continuing Nakba which fits within the hypothesis of my study of an ongoing narrative.

How Do Second Generation Refugees Narrate the Stories of their Parents' Dispossession?

In the stories of second generation refugees, how they recollect the story of their exile, along with retelling it in light of the ongoing Nakba is essential. From those who cannot obtain permits to visit their lands, the erection of the Apartheid wall and through denying Palestinians' right of return; Israel continues to transfer Palestinians in various ways. However, as Edward Said puts it:

No human being should be threatened with transfer out of his or her home or land; no human being should be discriminated against because he or she is not of an X or Y religion; no human being should be stripped of his or her land, national identity, or culture, no matter the cause.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁶ Elias Khoury, "al-nakba al-mostamira," *al Nakba mojadadan*, majalat al-dirassat al-falastinia, Volume 89, (Winter 2012):37.

¹⁴⁷ Ihab Saloul, "The Afterlives of 1948: Photographic Remembrance in a Time of Catastrophe," in *Zoom In* (Netherlands: Institute for Historical Justice and Reconciliation and Republic of Letters Publishing, 2011), 176.

¹⁴⁸ Edward Said, *The Question of Palestine*, xlii.



The life stories that form the basis of this chapter were recorded between October 2011, until May 2012. I conducted eight interviews for this chapter with second generation refugees who live in Ramallah, or in villages near Ramallah. Some of them were brought up in Al-Jalazoun refugee camp, Ramallah, and others were raised abroad and carry American or English citizenship.

Each of the second generation refugees I interviewed told his/her individual memory of their parent's exodus, and in these stories the lasting results of the Nakba was engraved in their memory. Although the oral testimonies of second generation refugees consists of invaluable information, with the limitation of my research, I sought to include the climax of their life stories and incorporate it within the continuity of the Palestinian narrative.

Hamza: is a dentist living in Ramallah, and is originally from Deir Yassin. Hamza was the only Palestinian refugee I interviewed from Deir Yassin, so the climax of his story was the massacre as he noted:

I'm originally from Deir Yassin. When my father left he was 18 years old.... First of all my history is deep rooted. Second of all this Nakba has affected us more than anyone else. Deir Yassin is located near Jerusalem, and the location of Deir Yassin has a significant impact on everyone, not only on me. The Deir Yassin massacre was the first massacre that took place in Palestine and resulted in the death of 92, or to be more exact, the martyrdom of 92 people. This massacre had an enormous impact on Palestinians, because as a result of this massacre Palestinians left their homes and were displaced. True a massacre did happen in Deir Yassin, yet the media and radio stations exaggerated the actual event of this massacre, and consequently most Palestinians left their cities and villages because of the war of Deir Yassin. Many children, elders, and women were killed. The number of casualties was 92, 78 of them were from our village and 12 happened to be at Deir Yassin at the time of the massacre. Their names and numbers are available and everything. However, the media had amplified the news of this massacre and terrified the rest of Palestinians. This issue is very provocative, because it wasn't in the interest of Palestinian society at all.¹⁴⁹

As he spoke of the death toll of Palestinians killed in the Deir Yassin massacre, Hamza claimed that the number he provided me with is accurate. So I asked what led him to this number? He replied "My father witnessed the massacre, and the people who were killed their names are registered and everything. An accurate number exists, and I can give you their names."¹⁵⁰ Hamza's father was his main source as to what happened during the Deir Yassin massacre. Although until today the exact number of Palestinians killed in this massacre remains disputable. For instance in a study conducted by Sharif Kanaana, he concluded that the exact number of Palestinians killed in Deir Yassin was

¹⁴⁹ This interview was conducted on October 23, 2011 in Ramallah in Arabic, and was translated to English by the author.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

100.¹⁵¹ Also in Walid Khalidi's Deir Yassin he argued that the number of villagers killed in Deir Yassin was 100.¹⁵²

On the other hand, in Nur Masalha's *The Politics of Denial* he noted that on April 9th between 120- 254 villagers were killed in Deir Yassin.¹⁵³ Although the Deir Yassin massacre is not the emphasis of my study, it was mentioned in all of the interviews I've conducted with second generation refugees; and was considered as the main cause of Palestinian flight. Apparently there is a disagreement regarding the death toll of Palestinians, however Hamza was certain and unquestioned the number his father gave him. Even though there is no doubt that the news of the Deir Yassin massacre was exaggerated whether from the death toll of Palestinians or from the crimes the Zionist forces committed against Palestinians, spreading the news of this massacre and amplifying it in Arab radio stations complies with the Zionist version of the story.¹⁵⁴ This is not to undermine the credibility of oral history in retrieving uncovered or hidden truths, but to emphasize that misconceptions of the past ought to be perceived in the present with an eye of criticism rather than compliance.

Wifqi: is a second generation refugee, who is originally from Anaba, and currently lives in Al-Bireh. He tells his story as follows:

When the 1948 war happened everyone from our village [Anaba] was displaced and left to Ras Karkar. After 1950 they went to Al-Jalazoun refugee camp, and I lived there until 1987.....My parents said they left due to fear, especially after what happened at Deir Yassin. I was born in Al-Jalazoun refugee camp and then I moved to Al-Bireh. However it's not my hometown, it's not the same as living on my land amongst my family. Our family is now dispersed; some are living in Al-Jalazoun, others in Jordan, and America. If we stayed on our land people would have stayed together..... We kept on visiting Anaba¹⁵⁵ up until the year 2000. We use to go there with my father and it's not easy to express what I felt when I visited my hometown. Every time we visited Anaba my father would get extremely sad. His entire life was in Anaba, and whenever he got a chance, he would go and visit his homeland.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵¹ Sharif Kanaana argues that the number of martyrs in Deir Yassin has been a disputable issue among scholars. Based on a Birzeit University project of documenting the number of destroyed villages in 1948, Kanaana interviewed many refugees, including survivors of the Deir Yassin massacre. Based on these interviews he concluded that the number of Palestinians killed is different from the number many authors have mentioned in their studies. As a result with reference to studies on oral testimonies and reviewing the death list of the Deir Yassin massacre; Kanaana concluded that the exact number was nearly 100 martyrs. For more see Sharif Kanaana, *Still on Vacation!* (Jerusalem: The Jerusalem International Center for Palestinian Studies, 1992), 37.

¹⁵² Walid Al-Khalidi, *deir yassin* (alquds: mo'assasat aldirasat alfalastinia, 1999), 150.

¹⁵³ Nur Masalha, *The Politics of Denial* (London: Pluto Press, 2004), 39.

¹⁵⁴ Both Childers and Khalidi spent a great deal of time and effort in order to denounce the Israeli/ Zionist version of the story as to why Palestinians left in 48. The Zionist claim that Arab leaders and kings encouraged Palestinians to leave via Arab radio stations. Both Childers and Khalidi found evidence leading to the opposite direction. To read more see Sharif Kanaana, *Still On Vacation!*, p.10.

¹⁵⁵ To see how Anaba was occupied and depopulated see *All That Remains*, ed. Walid Khalidi (Washington: Institute for Palestine Studies), 289.

¹⁵⁶ This interview was conducted on February 20, 2012 in Al-Bireh and was translated into English by the author.



Wifqi's story consists of his fathers' suffering of living in exile, and his many visits to Anaba. Unlike other Palestinian refugees who were dispersed in different parts of the Arab world, Wifqi remained in Palestine and currently lives in Al-Bireh. Yet the sense of belonging and returning to the land of his ancestors was poignantly expressed in his oral testimony. For example, when I asked Wifqi "if you had an opportunity to return to Anaba would you? He replied Akeed (for sure). Wifqi's memory of the Nakba is comprised of his fathers' story of the exodus in 1948. And this creates a deep sense of belonging, in which a parents' tragedy is transmitted into the memory of their children who although were born in exile are still hoping someday to return to their lands.

During this interview Wifqi's three daughters were present, and I wanted them to join the conversation. So I asked all three if you all had the opportunity to return to your village would you? They all replied yes. And the youngest, who is twelve years old, said "very much, I've only visited Anaba once and I was very young at the time." Although the narrative of the third generation refugees is the premise of the next chapter, the intergenerational sense of a suppressed national identity was common in all three narratives (first, second and third generation). In the Palestinian case, deprived by powerful states of a national identity based on land, they feel an intense subjective affiliation with the disappeared national identification.¹⁵⁷ The fact that Wifqi and other refugees identify themselves with the image of a lost village or city, reveals the power of intergenerational transmission in constructing a national Palestinian identity.

Furthermore, Wifqi mentioned that his father "was interviewed several times; he was even in a documentary film on Palestinian refugees, this was shortly before he passed away."¹⁵⁸ Wifqi's fathers' story is symbolic to every Palestinian who was forced to leave his/her land and live in exile. His last visit can be seen as a farewell visit to his homeland, which profoundly symbolizes the right of return. Therefore Wifqi's father's last interview exemplifies his last and urgent testimony. He sought to pass on his story and memory of the Nakba, before he leaves this life. His last journey to Anaba was even photographed and framed in Wifqi's living room.

Khadeeja: Second generation refugee, who is originally from Anaba. Following the previous interview, Khadeeja is Wifqi's wife and when Wifqi spoke about a documentary film his father was in, Khadeeja added that this documentary:

Includes interviews with three generations of refugees, it was taped in 2000Filming this documentary was an opportunity for me to take my children to Anaba. I even made a condition that I will continue with the film only if I take my children to Anaba. The film was completed, and after two months my father in-law passed away. He was the protagonist of this documentary. There's another tape, besides the one I just mentioned, this one is an older film. This documentary is aired on TV and on foreign channels. There's also interviews that were conducted thirty five years ago, which compares

between the lives of Israelis when they occupied Palestine, and the lives of Palestinians living in refugee camps and in the Diaspora. The comparison was between their livelihoods, their homes and even the tools they use inside their houses....In this interview, Ahmed was a child probably in the second grade, and Wifqi was in the first grade.....Palestinian children spoke about their lands, and of returning. Where on the other hand, Jewish children spoke about the Arabs and how they wanted to deport us all from our lands.¹⁵⁹

Throughout her story, Khadeeja mentioned documentaries they owned which consist of interviews with three generations of Palestinian refugees. This film which was taped in 2000, portrays how stories of the Nakba are being taped and preserved for future generations. During her interview, Khadeeja also showed me a coin dated back from the British Mandate which she keeps in her wallet. The coin was dated from 1935 and was a gift from her father. Preserving Palestinian heritage and memory was at the core of this interview. Whether from filming documentaries, taking pictures, the lease to their home in Anaba, the key to their home and other personal and valuable possessions, Wifqi and his family pertain many forms of commemorating the Nakba and passing on the memory of it. Through preserving all these valuable assets, these Palestinian refugees are fighting against the erasure of their history. Interviewing different generations of refugees, and making a documentary film based on these interviews, reflects how the memory of the catastrophe is preserved and implanted in subsequent generations; who insist on keeping the memory of it alive. Here the importance of narratives is brought to light, not only as a vehicle for transmission of memories but also as the main content of all commemorative practices.¹⁶⁰ The different ways of commemorating the Nakba or Palestine, which was vivid in the interviews above, reflects the significance of clinging on to whatever possession reminding them of their homeland, such as a mural, a key or even a coin.

Allan: English/Palestinian who was born in England to an English father and a Palestinian mother. His mother is a first generation refugee originally from Jerusalem, and he carries his mothers' maiden name which is "Khatib". Based on his mother and grandfathers' stories, here is what he had to say regarding the story of his exodus:

My family is from Katamon in West Jerusalem. They have a long history of settlement in Katamon, in fact my grandfather's house that he built is still there...We were forcefully displaced in 1948.. Particularly in Katamon areas, there were a series of incidents, attacks by the Hagana..Basically in all this chaos, you then have Deir Yassin and you had a whispering campaign...The Hagana and Stern gang....were basically saying that this has happened in Deir Yassin. Everyone knew about Deir Yassin, if you don't leave the same thing will happen to you. And they were shooting at windows and things like that. Now my family, the British told them get out, you'll only be away for two

¹⁵⁷ Rosemary Sayigh, "Palestinian Refugee Identity/ies; Generation, Class, Region. Conference Palestinian Refugees Different Generations but One Identity," Ibrahim Abu-Lughod Institute of International Studies: Birzeit University, 2011, 1. Accessed on February 25, 2012.

¹⁵⁸ Interview with Wifqi.

¹⁵⁹ This interview was unplanned and was conducted after interviewing Wifqi, which was on February 20th, 2012. This interview was conducted in Ramallah in Arabic, and was translated into English by the author.

¹⁶⁰ Laleh Khalili, *Heroes and Martyrs of Palestine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 5.



weeks. The Jews were saying get out we're going to kill you, and the British were saying we'll mediate this in just two weeks you'll be back in your house. I don't know the details but I know we fled out of fear. We left thinking we were going to come back. A very important part of my family's story is how when my family were leaving, they didn't even have time to pack anything, this all happened very quickly. And as they were leaving an aunty of my mother decided to go back to the house and collect a blanket... And so she went back in with my mothers' brother, my uncle. When she came back out she was shot by the Hagana and she was killed in front of the house. It took my family two days to negotiate getting her body, and the British intervened or something.¹⁶¹

On November 1947 the UN put forward resolution 181 which aims at partitioning Palestine into a Jewish state and an Arab state. This resolution designated the city of Jerusalem as a corpus separatum under an international regime administered by the UN.¹⁶² According to resolution 181, the city of Jerusalem was to remain under international protection. However, the Zionist forces such the Hagana violated this resolution, and occupied areas in Jerusalem by force. And as described in Allan's story, those who tried to return and gather some of their essential and necessary belongings were killed.¹⁶³ As noted in the previous chapter, Allan illustrated that when his family left they thought it was only for a couple of weeks. So they left as quickly as they could, and didn't carry anything with them. As a result Allan's mothers' aunt returned to bring some essential belongings, but on her way out she was shot by the Hagana forces. The Zionist strategy was carried out in order to terrify other Palestinians who even contemplated on returning to their homes.

Bahiya: Is originally from Lydd, and lives in Al-Tira, Ramallah. When I interviewed Zaina, first generation refugee whose oral testimony was covered in chapter three, her daughter -in law- joined the conversation. As I was listening to Zaina's story as to why they left Lydd in 1948, Bahiya added that:

They emptied one village at a time, and they implanted fear, horror and terror in other villages. As a result people were defeated. People were ignorant not like today. Now the terror is a hundred times stronger than it was in 1948, yet people remain. Look at what happened in Gaza, they annihilated them, did they leave? Did they move! No. let us die they declare. Today it's impossible for a person to leave his/her homeland.....People are learning from mistakes made in the past, they wouldn't leave even if their lives depended on it. A country is very valuable to a person....Nowadays people are more aware, and wouldn't leave....In 1948 my relatives, our family dar Saqir, were annihilated.

¹⁶¹ This interview was conducted in Birzeit, in English on May 14th, 2012.

¹⁶² To read more on the UN General Assembly resolution 181 and its impact see Ilan Pappé, *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine* (Oxford: One World, 2006), 31-33.

¹⁶³ According to a study conducted by Badil from the end of 1948 until the end of the Suez Crisis, Israeli forces killed some 5,000 Palestinian refugees who were trying to return to their homes. "From the 1948 Nakba to the 1967 Naksa," BADIL Occasional Bulletin, No. 18, (June 2004): p.1. www.BADIL.org. Accessed on March 6, 2012.

The Jewish forces shot them all. Not one of them was left, except for an old lady and a little girl whose mother was killed right in front of her eyes.¹⁶⁴

It is important to clarify that Bahiya is a refugee from both her parents' and her in-laws' side, and throughout her story she criticized her parents and in-laws' act in leaving their lands.¹⁶⁵ She expressed that "People were ignorant back then not like today,"¹⁶⁶ this clearly shows how Palestinians are leaning for their past and wouldn't repeat the mistakes of their parents. Bahiya was retelling her family's story and history from her own perspective. Nonetheless, she pointed that today Palestinians insist on staying on their lands in spite of the on-going Israeli invasions and attacks.

It is impossible for any Palestinian to pretend that the trauma of 1948, or of on-going dispossessions and forced exiles that have afflicted Palestinians and continues to do so, are no longer essential.¹⁶⁷ Without those memories and history nothing makes more sense.¹⁶⁸ Regardless of the Israeli/Zionist effort to erase Palestinian traces and history, memory comes to aid and restore traces of lost homes, lost lives and most importantly lost stories. The idea of recoding the oral testimonies of second generation refugees is not to investigate what exactly happened to their parents in 1948, but to document how they remember and retell these stories. Moreover, my aim of interviewing second generation refugees is to stress that the events of 1948 is not, and should not be the center of Palestinian history. More recent and subsequent events which second generation refugees have witnessed should also be documented and integrated in the narrative of al-Nakba. And this will be discussed in the following sections.

It is the next generation of refugees who have been making films, organizing the collection of testimonials, trying to grasp the meaning of the Nakba, while at the same time fighting forgetfulness and making public claims on behalf of their parents' suffering.¹⁶⁹ Although some of the people I interviewed mentioned that their parents were interviewed and their testimony of 1948 was included in a documentary such as Wifqi, on the other hand the majority of the interviewees' parents were not. So it is their memory of these untold stories which shed light on their parents' experience of dispossession, as Tareq noted:

¹⁶⁴ This interview was conducted on January 22, 2012, while interviewing Zaina, first generation of refugees. This interview was also unplanned and was translated into English by the author

¹⁶⁵ This was covered in Adel Yahya's *al-lajjoun al-falastiniyoun*, which is comprised of the oral testimonies of first, second and third generation refugees. Based on the analysis of the second generation refugees, their parents' left their lands in 1948 out of ignorance, in addition to lack of judgment in foreseeing the outcome behind leaving.

To read more see: Adel Yihya, *al-lajjoun al-falastiniyoun* (alquds: mo'asassat aldirasat alfalastinia litabadul al-thaqafi, 1998), 33.

¹⁶⁶ Interview with Bahiya.

¹⁶⁷ Omar Al-Qattan, "The Secret Visitations of Memory," in *Nakba, Palestine, 1948, and the Claims of memory* Ed. Lila Abu-Lughod and Ahmad Sa'di (New York: Columbia University Press), 204.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

¹⁶⁹ Lila Abu-Lughod and Ahmad Sa'di, Introduction, in *Nakba, 1948, and the Claims of Memory* (New York: Columbia University Press), 20.



The Nakba for me meant many things. For instance I went to my fathers' house, and at one stage I went to go look for the house, I took pictures of it and sent it to my family. This year I took a video of it and I sent it to all of my aunts, uncles and cousins so they could know about the history of where their grandparents are from.¹⁷⁰

Through taking a video of his grandfathers' house, Tareq sought to retrieve the memory of his fathers' house and share that particular memory with his family members in order to protect it from oblivion; especially in light of the Zionist judiaization of the city of Jerusalem.

Second Generation Refugees' 'Nakbat': Their Individual Experience of Recurring Tragedies:

The narrative of the second generation refugees' is constructed of accumulating tragedies and "Nakbat". This generation has been categorized as Jeel Ma ba'ed Al-Nakba¹⁷¹ 'generation after the Nakba'. The Nakba is the violent moment that has created a rupture that cannot be gaped between the past and the present.¹⁷² It is worth mentioning that all memory work involves a critical relationship between past and present, and between those and the future: what will be, what is to come, what is expected and/or willed.¹⁷³ In the stories of the generation after the Nakba recurring Nakbat they experienced coalesces with their parent's experience of the Nakba. As a result, new narratives are formed which resonate the past and this is told in a different, yet similar, context; that is under the extended Zionist colonization over historic Palestine.

For example, Hamza articulated that:

Although I did not experience the Deir Yassin Massacre, the first Nakba that I had witnessed was in 1967, and I still witness Nakabat until today. Today's Nakba is worse and far more powerful than the previous one. We are all refugees, living under occupation. Do not distinguish between this person is a refugee, that person is a citizen, we are all living under occupation in one cage. All Palestinian society is imprisoned in one big cage along with our president Abu-Mazen. My situation is just like any other citizen who left after 1948 or even after the 1967 Naksa. Massacres are still being perpetrated until today.. We are all in one Ditch.¹⁷⁴

¹⁷⁰ Palestinian/American who's originally from West Jerusalem. This interview was conducted in Ramallah in English on May 17, 2012.

¹⁷¹ Rosemary Sayigh, "Product and Producer of Palestinian History: Stereotypes of "Self" in Camp Women's Life Stories," *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies* 13, No 1, (2007): 91.

¹⁷² Ahmad Sa'di, "Al-dhakira wa al hawia," in *naho sia'ghat riwayat tarikhia linakba eshkaliyat wa tahadiat*, ed. Mustafa Kibha (Haifa: Mada Al-Karmal, 2006), 69.

¹⁷³ Lena Jayyusi, "Iterability, Cumulativity, and Presence: The Relational Figurers of Palestinian Memory," *Nakba: Palestine, 1948, and the Claims of Memory*, Edited by Ahmad H. Sa'di and Lila Abu- Lughod (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 118.

¹⁷⁴ Interview with Hamza.

Throughout his interview, Hamza used the pronoun "we" and identified himself with all Palestinians. When I categorized him as a second generation refugee he became defensive and said "we are all refugees, living in one cage.....under occupation." This claim sheds light on the status of Palestinians despite their legal status. Refugee or not, all Palestinians are forced to lived under the despotism of the Israeli occupation and its continuous assaults. The impact of 1948 is, and will continue to be evoked, in the endless stories of Palestinian refugees; as they enumerate on-going traumas they experience today and will continue to witness in future events.

Most importantly, Hamza expressed that his Nakba began in 1967 not in 1948. Despite the fact that Hamza did not experience the Nakba, how he conceives the memory of the Nakba is based on his own experience and account of subsequent 'Nakbat', starting from 1967 onwards. He also referred to the continuing phases of the Nakba, in which the one that occurs is more devastating than the previous one. Therefore, the importance of storytelling lies in the ability to narrate and bear witness to current tragic events which mirrors the trauma ones' parents experienced in the past.

While documenting the life stories of second generation refugees, one must take into account that not all Palestinians experienced the impact of the Nakba in the same way. It differed for men and women, old and young, rich and poor, "those who stayed and those who left."¹⁷⁵ For instance second generation refugees who were born in refugee camps have different stories to tell than those who grew up outside of these camps. In Eman's¹⁷⁶ story she spoke about her experience of living in Al-Jalazoun refugee camp and the services provided by UNRWA. She emphasized on what she has experienced on a personal level, rather than her parents' story of the Nakba. She noted that: "we were used to seeing Jewish soldiers invade houses in the camp, and gather all the men together.....During the second Intifada, my brother was killed while throwing rocks at an Israeli tank."¹⁷⁷ According to her, the continuing affects of the Nakba is embedded in the loss of a brother and living under poor conditions in Al-Jalazoun refugee camp.

Each Palestinian has a starting point, an individual experience that puts him/her within the broader framework of the Nakba. For example, Samir¹⁷⁸ was born and raised in Ohio; his political consciousness began in 1982, during the Israeli invasion of Lebanon, as he claims: "When I started full scale university in 1982, the war happened. And when the war happened in Lebanon, it over changed my feeling, my emotions, and my motivations to the point where people today tell me you've been working on diesel ever since that time and you didn't turn off your engine."¹⁷⁹ So Samir became politically active for the Palestinians question in 1982. Despite the fact that he was born and raised

¹⁷⁵ Rosemary Sayigh, "Women's Nakba Stories: Between Being and Knowing," in *Nakba, Palestine, 1948, and the claims of memory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 136.

¹⁷⁶ Second Generation refugee who is originally from Lydd. She was raised in Al-Jalazoun refugee camp, and currently lives in Deir Dibwan. This interview was conducted on March 18, 2012 and was translated into English by the author.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

¹⁷⁸ Although Samir is from Al-Bireh and is not a refugee, his father witnessed the Nakba in 1948. This interview was conducted on March 22, 2012 in Ramallah in English.

¹⁷⁹ Interview with Samir.



in the diaspora, his “mental presence was in Palestine,”¹⁸⁰ and in 1994 he settled in Palestine and has written many articles on the Palestinian question and the refugee problem, with taking into consideration that he addresses a western audience.

Nevertheless, all these individual memories fall under what Maurice Halbwachs terms “collective memory,” in which there are many collective memories as groups and institutions in a society.¹⁸¹ However, it is of course individuals who remember, not groups or institutions, but these individuals, being located in a specific group context, drawn on that context to remember or recreate the past.¹⁸² The individual memories of the second generation refugees are used as an apparatus in reconstructing the past, as more recent events and individual tragedies are accumulated and are being included under a broader Palestinian narrative. However these memories are being collectively represented via groups and institutions. In the Palestinian case, the PLO and PA are representing the Palestinian people, refugee problem and the Palestinian narrative and memories of the Nakba.

Sharing Their Memories and Stories with Others:

The stories told by the second generation refugees are essential as they portray a complex narrative that is of a continuing nature. Thus to remember “is essentially to be on your own, even if sometimes you have the illusion of sharing your memories with others. Ultimately, only a description of a crossroads will do-how it happened that your own journey crossed that of so many others.”¹⁸³ The events that took place in Palestine in 1948 have transformed the lives of Palestinians in general, and those who became refugees in particular. How they share and tell their stories of on-going dispossessions is worthy of being heard.

Although the second generation refugees were born in exile, nostalgia for the past united the stories of these refugees. The thought of ‘what their life could have been like if their parents stayed on their lands’ was apparent in Wifqi’s story who articulated: “Although I’m living here (Ramallah), it’s not my hometown, it’s not the same as living on my land with my family. Our family is now dispersed in different parts of the globe.”¹⁸⁴

What was also emphasized in the narrative of the second generation is that each new tale is an echo within the echo, focusing and conjuring the collective predicament through the individual, and ramifying the significance and symbolic meanings of the individual experience through the collective.¹⁸⁵ Through sharing their stories and memories with an audience (that is me) the notion of expressing their own individual experience and

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

¹⁸¹ To read more on Collective memory see Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992), 48.

¹⁸² Ibid.

¹⁸³ Omar Al-Qattan, “The Secret Visitations of Memory,” in *Nakba, Palestine, 1948, and the Claims of memory*, Ed. Ahmad H Sa’di and Lila Abu-Lughod (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 191.

¹⁸⁴ Interview with Wifqi.

¹⁸⁵ Lena Jayyusi, “Iterability, Culmativity and Presence,” in *Nakba, Palestine, 1948, and the Claims of memory*, Ed. Ahmad H Sa’di and Lila Abu-Lughod (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 110.

assimilating it within the broader collective Palestinian tragedy was clear. In the process of gathering threads of Palestinian stories, it is the individuals who remember and who contribute in shedding light on the on-going stories of loss and injustice. For instance, Samir noted that:

The continuation of the Nakba whether it’s called 67, 82, or whether it’s called 87, I do view it as one continuum, and its one continuum that serves my analytical mind as well as I’m writing. I just mentioned I finished Last night my land day article for 2012, and I’m pulling out documents from 1976 reading them and actually saying nothing has changed....So I do see it as a continuum.....Our consciousness is from 1948 onward, whereas we’ve lost a lot of understanding of what was Palestine prior to 1948. I think that’s the negative of the Nakba, because we were overwhelmed we were shocked. This was our 911/ times 10.¹⁸⁶

Samir not only refers to the Nakba as a historic event that ended, but also refers to recurring catastrophes such as Land day in 1976, the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982, and the first Intifada in 1987. He describes the Nakba as a “continuum” that endures till this day. Connecting this with my research question, this continuum of Nakbat is leading to the continuation of the narrative itself. The reality is that the tragedy is continuous and knows no limits whether in place or time.¹⁸⁷ Regardless of the place or time, in OPT there’s always a memory, a catastrophe, a loss reaffirming the ‘presentness of the past’.

While telling their stories, the role of memory in recollecting Palestinian history and reclaiming the return of their houses and property was emphasized, as Allan asserts:

Memory is something you do in the present; it’s a present act of a past event. But the thing with trauma is that it’s on-going, it has repercussions in the future. So in terms of remembering 1948, to be honest with you remembering 1948 is by coming back here and get involved in things and try to make a difference. With this dominant narrative of occupation and statehood, 1948 has been sort of marginalized rhetoric you see here, even though we all know deep down that 1948 is the genesis of everything. And it’s very interesting to come back here.....My reference point is 1948, my grandfather’s house on the other side in Jerusalem. Their house was taken from my family and it should be brought back to my family, and if it’s not given back to my family then there should be a just and reasonable mechanism for compensation.... I want to reclaim the house, that’s the political orientation.....I would say that his memory of Palestine of 1948, my memories of 1948 would be quite similar in the sense that they’re narratives....Memories are always present, I’ve only been here for three years I’m married to a Palestinian....I don’t feel like it’s given greater insight of 1948...I think one of the stupidest things the Israeli government tries to do is try and ban commemorations of the Nakba, but there’s nothing like giving visibility to an event you don’t want to give

¹⁸⁶ Interview with Samir.

¹⁸⁷ Elias Khoury, “Al-Nakba al-mostamira,” *al nakba mojadadan*, majalat al-dirassat al-falastinia, Volume 89, (Winter 2012): 38.



visibility to by banning it..... Memory isn't just about remembering a past, it's about re-negotiating the present..It's not just about remembering a past that's sort of finished, but it's about narrating how that past affects your present.¹⁸⁸

As Allan shared his and his grandfather's story, the act of retuning to Palestine confirms that Palestinian memory is substantial in places and in stories recounted and recorded which shows that far from being a completely ideal construct, narratives that commemorate the past are reproduced and reproduced through the practices of persons.¹⁸⁹ By returning to Palestine, Allan sought to commemorate his mother and grandfathers' memory of 1948 through reclaiming what is rightfully his, his grandfathers' house. As a result lost houses can be portrayed as mnemonics which verifies the right of return in addition to mobilizing the Palestinian community to find a just and reasonable solution towards their plight. However, individuals' memory and story of 1948 varies for each Palestinian. And in the narratives of the second generation refugees how the past reinforces itself in present actualities is also another form reflecting the continuation of the past.

Three out of the eight second generation refugees I interviewed for this chapter were brought up in the diaspora. When they returned to Palestine they began relating their stories with other Palestinian refugees' stories. For instance Tareq claims that: "it was only when I came here that I can see myself in the context of other people who have been dispossessed and other stories of dispossession."¹⁹⁰ On the other hand Allan adds that "You can't divorce me being here from my family's experience in 1948...The memory is not a normal memory, especially when you're remembering it through family stories and narratives."¹⁹¹ Through combining different stories and experiences of recurring dispossessions, the relationship between the past and present, between memory and reality is imprinted in the narratives of second generation refugees who reaffirm the existence of a continuous story of historic injustice.

In conclusion, the story of the second generation refugees constitutes an important part of the Palestinian narrative of the Nakba. It is through their memories and parents' stories of displacement, through their own experience of displacement that stories are collected and are being incorporated in the narrative of the Nakba. Their memory of the Nakba is not entirely constituted of their parents suffering and loss, but rather of how that particular memory reinforces itself in the shape of new and occurring "Nakbat". Throughout this chapter I presented the different experiences of second generation refugees, in which those who were raised in the diaspora had different stories to tell than those who were brought up in refugee camps.

While listening and documenting the stories of second generation refugees, their memory of the Nakba is what infuses their determination to return, as they all stressed on their right of return. Because Palestinians as individuals insist on their right of

¹⁸⁸ Interview with Allan.

¹⁸⁹ Laleh Khalili, *Heroes and Martyrs of Palestine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 88.

¹⁹⁰ Interview with Tareq.

¹⁹¹ Interview with Allan.

return, and that right must be respected.¹⁹² Moreover, the continuity of the Nakba was mentioned in their life stories in different stages and forms. From those who experienced the 1967 Naksa to the Intifada, it is apparent that the Palestinian narrative of the Nakba will continue to be written without an end. Therefore, Al-Nakba is not merely a historical date to be commemorated. It is the collective memory of Palestinians, which shapes their identity as a people.¹⁹³ Al-Nakba is not a distant memory but a painful reality that continues to fester, as the rights of refugees continue to be denied.¹⁹⁴

¹⁹² John Quigley, "The Right of Displaced Palestinians to Return," in *The Palestinian Exodus*, Ed. Ghada Karmi and Eugene Cotran (UK:Ithaca Press, 1999), 151.

¹⁹³ Hanan Ashrwi, "Recognizing Nakba Reaching Peace," *HAARETZ*, 15 May, 2012.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*



CHAPTER FOUR:

**THIRD GENERATION REFUGEES' STORIES:
THEIR MEMORY OF THE NAKBA, AND
THE NARRATIVES OF CONTINUITY**

In the stories of third generation refugees the role of memory in recollecting their grandparents' past and preserving it from oblivion was lucid. As they articulate how they became refugees, they begin to assimilate their stories of continued exile with their grandparents' experience in 1947- 1949. As a result, third generation refugees come to the conclusion that today the situation is far more worse than it was in 1948, with the expansion of Israeli settlements, the construction of the apartheid wall, and the on-going Israeli demolition of villages. They define the Nakba as an endless series of displacement, injustice, and loss of a homeland.

Throughout the stories of third generation refugees, all of those I interviewed carry a college degree, the amount of political mobility and giving voice to their predecessors' stories is brought to light. They all insisted on implementing their right of return, and as one of the women I interviewed, Laila claimed "Refugees will return and it will be a one bi-national state."¹⁹⁵ The majority of the people I interviewed for this chapter affirmed that the "right of return is inevitable, and unquestionable". According to this kind of narrative, it is only a matter of time that Palestinian refugees will return to their lands.

The issues raised in the life stories of third generation refugees are numerous, and are only partially embedded in this study. Nonetheless, "when the individual narratives of pain accumulate, they become not only inescapable, but also impossible to dispel, at least for a few generations. Nowhere is this truer than in the memories of the Palestinians."¹⁹⁶ In this chapter I will combine the memories and stories of the third generation refugees in order to investigate how the memories of the Nakba, along with the accumulation of subsequent events, affects the narrative of the Nakba.

How Third Generation Narrate the Stories of Their Ongoing Displacement:

The refugees I interviewed for this chapter live in Al-Jalazoun refugee camp, Qalandia refugee camp, and various parts of Ramallah. In some cases, third generation refugees heard the story of their displacement directly from their grandparents. In other cases, which will be explained below, their grandparents did not talk much about the past because "recollecting the past was too painful."¹⁹⁷ Nonetheless, the eight third generation refugees I interviewed, narrated the stories of their grandparents' displacement in their own understating of how they were brutally turned into refugees.

Wa'ed: Third generation refugee, originally from Sar'a. She carries a Bachelors degree in History and Political Science, and was brought up in Qalandia refugee camp. When I asked her to narrate what happened to her grandparents in 1948, she narrated part of the story as follows:

¹⁹⁵ Interview with Laila.

¹⁹⁶ Omar Al-Qattan, "The Secret Visitations of Memory," in *Nakba, Palestine, 1948, and the Claims of memory*, Ed Ahmad H Sa'di and Lila Abu-Lughod (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), p.193.

¹⁹⁷ Niseen: Palestinian/ Canadian third generation refugee originally from Lydd. This interview was conducted on January 17, 2012 in Ramallah in English.



I'm originally from a village near Jerusalem called Sar'a, which is currently enclosed as a museum. Based on what they say, I consider that the question of Palestine was built on rumors....Foreign regimes persecuted Jews, and it was automatically supposed that all the Jews in the world should find a place where they can gather themselves....From the beginning Palestinians have been under occupation under the Ottoman rule, and British. When the British left, they handed the country over to the Jews... The weapon they literally used was rumors. For instance, what happened in the Deir Yassin massacre, where they killed a couple of Palestinians; yet those who survived such massacres told others what happened. And from one person to another the story evolved. My grandfather did not see the Israelis, he heard what happened and thus became displaced. In 1948 my grandmother gave birth to a baby girl, and when people fled she fled along with them and left her daughter. However she returned and brought her daughter back, because my grandfather swore he would divorce her if she didn't bring her back. Look as I told you, my problem isn't with the Jews, my problem is with the Israelis... People confuse between an Israeli and a Jew...Judaism is a religion just as Christianity, and I respect it. My problem is with the Israeli who took my land, took my home and kicked me out. I became a refugee in my own country.¹⁹⁸

Instead of beginning with the story of her grandparents' journey of exile, Wa'ed began her story with the Jewish question. The founder of Zionism, Theodor Herzl saw the establishment of a Jewish state a solution to the Jewish question. A solution, that is, to the long years of European persecution of Jews.¹⁹⁹ On the other hand, Edward Said argued that "in the most direct way possible, the Palestinian question is the metamorphosis of the Jewish question, the difference that of repetition makers...The resolution of the Jewish question under the constraints of European imperial hegemony, created the question of Palestine."²⁰⁰ The ongoing struggle between the Israeli and the counter Palestinian narrative regarding who is the victim and who is the victimizer plays a central role in the construction of both narratives. As the power to tell the story and to eliminate the counter-narrative is an essential part of the actual military and political struggle over non-symbolic resources such as land and political power, the war over the land, the struggle over the legitimization of sovereign national existence and that over who is the victim and who is the victimizer became inseparable parts of the symbolic and military confrontation between the two collectives.²⁰¹ This struggle has affected the Palestinian narrative, in which Palestinians tend to view themselves as victims. Based on Wa'ed's life story, the question of Palestine was created based on the Jewish

¹⁹⁸ This interview was conducted on March 25, 2012 in Qalandia Refugee camp and was translated from Arabic by the author.

¹⁹⁹ William D. Hart, *Edward Said and the Religious effects of Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 143.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid*, 143- 146.

²⁰¹ Ilan Gur-Ze'ev and Ilan Pappé, "Beyond the Destruction of the Others' Collective Memory: Blueprints for a Palestinian/Israeli Dialogue," SAGE (2003):95.

question and Zionism's attempt to solve it through occupying Palestine.²⁰² She also pointed to a very crucial point. She articulated that her problem is not with the Jews; but with the Israelis who occupied her land. In the Palestinian context and from most of the interviews I conducted with Palestinian refugees, the word Jew is a synonym to Israeli. So Wa'ed sought to clarify and differentiate between both terms, which Palestinians combine into one word, that is Jew.

Ahmed: is a third generation Refugee originally from Bayt Nabala, and currently resides in Al-Jalazoun refugee camp. He narrates the story of his grandfathers' displacement as follows:

It's a long story, but to summarize it based on what my grandfather, God bless his soul, use to tell me: before the Jews attacked them, people would hear about the massacres that were taking place around them and were afraid. Consequently they left and took what they were able to carry with them....Thinking they would return soon. Some took their house keys, other didn't....On the basis that they would return. But the story has prolonged and until today we did not return. I was born in Al-Jalazoun refugee camp, and I have been living there all my life. As you know, the situation inside the refugee camp is devastating....For instance, the services provided by UNRWA are receding.....My grandfather left before the Israeli invasion. No one from my village was killed, they left because they were afraid.²⁰³

Following the previous interview, Ahmed also explained how his grandfather left out of terror. So the Israeli/Zionist method made systematic use of violence and killing, without taking the "classic form of genocide". As a result terror was spread all over Palestine, as massacres and terror became a well planned practice that created a cloud of terror.²⁰⁴ The impact of the massacres and Israeli killing in spreading terror in Palestine was mentioned in both of the interviews above. Comparing Ahmed's story with Mahmoud's, first generation refugee who is also from Bayt Nabala, they both confirmed that Bayt Nabala was emptied before the Jewish forces occupied it.²⁰⁵ And this proves how the collective experience and memory of the fall of Bayt Nabala is accurately being transmitted to third generation refugees.

It is noteworthy to mention that not all third generation refugees know the story of their displacement. In some cases their grandparents didn't like talking about or recollecting the memories of the Nakba. For Instance Niseen is originally from the Lydd and her story of the exodus goes as follows:

²⁰² Edward Said claims that according to Herzl, Zionism was a movement to free Jews and solve the problem of anti-Semitism in the West, later elaborations of this idea took Palestine as a place where the conception was materially fulfilled (after locations in South America and East Africa had been considered and dropped). To read more see Edward Said's *The Question of Palestine*, 1992 p. 23.

²⁰³ This interview was conducted on February 13, in Birzeit and was translated into English by the author.

²⁰⁴ Saleh Abdel Jawad, "Zionist Massacres: the Creation of the Palestinian Refugee Problem," in *Israel and the Palestinian Refugees*, Ed. Eyal Benvenisti and others (Berlin: Springer, 2007), 81.

²⁰⁵ For more see chapter two which covers Mahmoud's story regarding the fall of Bayt Nabala.



I remember my grandparents always telling me that they were forced out of their houses and they couldn't take anything with them. They took what was on their back and they had to move out as quickly as they could. Because all the Jews were taking over and controlling their lives....They ended up in Ramallah...They didn't want the Jews to kill them, they had to save their families....Every now and then they always wished that they were back in the Lydd. Lydd is where were from, it's our origin. It's not every day that we get to go to the Lydd, I personally have only been there twice. I don't know anything about the history of the Lydd... There was a lot of things I didn't know about the Lydd, I was able to go see the church my grandparents went to. And my Grandpa also showed me the house that he lived in, it's still there. He also showed me the school that he went to....I was happy that I got to see where I'm originally from...I know there's something missing, cause I don't know part of the history of the Lydd. My grandma doesn't talk about the Nakba, unless we ask her about it. I can imagine her now if I asked her about it she would probably be screaming...Its something in the past that they don't want to reopen, because if they reopen it, it's too painful.²⁰⁶

When Niseen went to Al-Lydd for a visit, a part of her identity and history was retrieved. In the Palestinian context, having a part of one's history missing is connected with the loss of place. And not knowing much about the past confines one understands of the present. Because the Nakba is "Happening at the moment in Palestine. It is not a historic event to be commemorated; it is as Edward Said articulated, a present continuously threatened with interpretations."²⁰⁷ Although when I interviewed Niseen's grand mother,²⁰⁸ she did not hold back while telling me her story. This can be analyzed as to how first generation refugees feel more comfortable telling their stories to strangers or journalist, than they do with their own grandchildren who in some cases, which will be mentioned in a moment, blamed their grandparents for leaving.

Arij: Third generation refugee who is also from Al-Lydd. Just as in the previous interview, Arij explained how her grandmother didn't talk about her story of dispossession, as she says:

It's rare that my grandparents would talk about what happened to our country in 1948. When I ask my grandmother of the old days she wouldn't talk much. To be honest, I don't know much of what happened to my grandparents in 1948, I don't have the details as to how they became refugees. My grandfather never spoke of it, my grandmother would sometimes speak about the Nakba...As my grandmother recollected the past, she was glad someone was listening to her.²⁰⁹

Withholding painful memories is a common characteristic in the Palestinian story of the

²⁰⁶ Interview with Niseen.

²⁰⁷ Elias Khoury, "al-Nakba al-mostamira," *al nakba mojadadan*, majalat al-dirassat al-falastinia, Volume 89, (Winter 2012):37.

²⁰⁸ Imm Hamed whose testimony was covered in Chapter two, the narratives of first generation refugees.

²⁰⁹ This interview was conducted in Ramallah on February 3, 2012 and was translated into English by the Author.

Nakba. Where those who witnessed the catastrophe of 1948 don't want to be reminded of the painful journey they were forced to endure as they were stripped of their lands. Today, first generation refugees are trying to move on with their lives and recover from the impact of the Nakba. This is one of the reasons why some of the third generation refugees claimed that a part of their 'history is missing', a feature I found apparent in the life stories of those who are originally from the Lydd, such as Nisreen and Arij.

In the process of interviewing third generation refugees I noticed a difference between those living in camps, and those who are originally from Lydd. For instance, leaving their homes in 1948, was an act some of the third generation refugees condemn today, as Wa'ed asserted, "I blame the naïveté of my grandfather..I mean it's your land at least fight for it."²¹⁰ Also Ahmed use to always tell his grandfather, "Why did you leave? Why didn't you fight back?"²¹¹ Blaming their grandparents for leaving their lands in 1948 was expressed in the stories of third generation refugees living in refugee camps. However Wa'ed and Ahmed are the only refugees I interviewed for this chapter who live in refugee camps, thus a generalization cannot be made and this issue requires further exploration and research.

The question of who should be held accountable for the creation of the Palestinian refugee problem is highly controversial. Some blame Zionism as the genesis of the Palestinian question, others blame Britain, Arab countries for not protecting Palestinians, and some even blame Palestinians for fleeing. Although the issue of accountability is disputable among many scholars and common Palestinians, it was always present in my interviews with third generation. Despite the fact that many sides are responsible for the creation of the Palestinian refugee problem as well as for the loss of Palestine, this responsibility is hierarchal. The apogee of the problem is Israel, hence the existential harm that was committed against Palestinians should be acknowledged by those who did that harm, or their successors in power.²¹² Because recognizing the narrative told by the victims of injustice is a sine qua non for reconciliation.²¹³ Without Israel's acknowledgment for its responsibility in the creation of the Palestinian refugee problem, their predicament will continue along with the Palestinian narrative of continued historic injustice.

Based on the interviews above, Palestinians play a minor role in taking responsibility for their plight. However, by saying so, this narrative fits with the Zionist narrative, that the Arab countries and Palestinians themselves are responsible for the creation of the Palestinian refugee problem.²¹⁴ This dominant narrative tends to overlook the Israeli massacres, attacks, psychological warfare and destruction of cities and villages which

²¹⁰ Interview with Wa'ed.

²¹¹ Interview with Ahmed.

²¹² Lex Takkenberg, "The Search for Durable Solutions for Palestinian Refugees," in *Israel and the Palestinian Refugees*, Ed. Eyal Benvenisti, Chaim Gans and Sari Hanafi (Berlin: Springer, 2007), 376.

²¹³ Yoav Peled and Nadim N. Rouhana, "Transnational Justice and the Right of Return of the Palestinian Refugees," in *The Palestinian Exodus*, Ed. Ghada Karmi and Eugene Cotran (Ithaca Press), 145.

²¹⁴ The Zionist mainstream narrative is that Palestinians voluntarily "fled" their villages in accordance with orders given by the Arab armies, ignoring the Jewish call to them to stay put. To read more see Mori Marikos "Zionism and the Nakba: The Mainstream Narrative, the Oppressed Narratives, and the Israeli Collective Memory," *Kyoto Bulletin of Islamic Area Studies* (2009): 89.



were the determining factors that led to the fragmentation of Palestinian society. By saying that one should blame Palestinians, who were forced to leave their lands, for the creation of the refugee question reveals to what extent Palestinians have been unconsciously affected by the mainstream Zionist narrative.

Preserving the Memories of Their Grandparents: Reconstructing Their Grandparents' Stories:

Third generation Palestinian refugees are left with the memories of their past, and are striving to find a just solution for their endless state of exile. 1948 is the starting point, the beginning of a continuous cycle of land grabbing, repression and displacement. Therefore, in the narratives of 3rd generation refugees retrieving those memories, preserving it from 'forgetfulness' and reconstructing their predecessors' stories were at the center of their life stories.

3rd generation Palestinian refugees continue living with the stories and memories of their grandparents. They dream of going back one day, to return to their homes and lands, to reclaim what is rightfully theirs.²¹⁵ For instance, Ahmed claims that:

Living in a refugee camp is tough, it's not easy. I'm one of those people , I don't want to leave the camp unless I return to my homeland.....I will not abandon my land, and my right, no matter what.... What more can I say, it's a Nakba... It was literally a Nakba, I don't know what else you can call it....I will tell my children, and the next generation that this is our land... True at some point we didn't fight enough, but this isn't the land of the Jews, it's our land.²¹⁶

Most importantly, third generation refugees affirmed that it is their obligation to preserve and pass on the stories of their grandparents. Because there are many attempts to erase this memory, as **Malak**: Third generation refugee who was brought up in the US and is originally from Al-Abasia claims:

I think our generation has the most prominent role which is not forgetting, and making sure the generations after us hear what happened and not forget the stories of our grandparents. Some of the stories they say are adventurous and I swear to God are worthy of the best movies ever! But at the same time there is sadness behind them and real truth behind them. History covers all of that, cause I was raised over there and took history my entire life, and I've never once heard about the Nakba till I got here. So with history what happens is that it's one sided, whoever wins gets to write in it whatever they want. So I think it's our role, the third generation Nakba, to make sure that generations after us hear what happened. I'm definitely, when I have kids, I'm gonna tell them I'm really from the Abasia. This and that happened to my grandparents.²¹⁷

²¹⁵ Sami Adwan, "Al-Nakba: The Palestinian Catastrophe Continues," in *Zoom In*, Ed. Sami Adwan, Efrat Ben-Ze'Ve, Menachem Klein, Ihab Saloul, Tamir Sorek and Mahmoud Yazbak (Netherlands: Institute for Historical Justice and Reconciliation and Republic of Letters Publishing, 2011), p 197.

²¹⁶ Interview with Ahmed.

²¹⁷ This interview was conducted in Deir Dibwan on July, 16, 2012 in English.

A dangerous factor which threatens the loss of the Palestinian narrative, as Malak said, is that history is being written by the victors. And as Rashid Khalidi argued "It is a commonplace that history is written by the victors. And it follows that it is more likely to be written about the stronger than the weaker...All these historical biases have complicated the modern historiography of Palestine."²¹⁸ Thus history is acknowledged and is written from the victors' perspective, and this undermines and marginalizes the victims' point of view. Here the role of the grandchildren of first generation refugees lies in telling their children the truth behind these stories and preserving it from the victors attempt to weaken, disregard and erase the defeat's history.

From the stories of third generation refugees, al- Nakba meant many things to them. Some remember 1948 as "loss of land, despair...It's like people are trying to force you out of your homeland. They're trying to erase all of your memories, your origin."²¹⁹ Whereas others remember 1948 as, "The genesis of the Palestinian problem."²²⁰ It is the de facto of the OPT that stimulates these memories and feelings of the Nakba, as well as the memories of their grandparents' suffering. All the interviewees expressed their deep attachment to their homeland and emphasized how proud they are to be a Palestinian refugee, for instance Khaled emphasized that:

I'm proud to be a refugee..The problem with the Palestinian society in the West Bank is that they continue to say this person is a refugee, that person is not. Recently this image has slightly diminished, but it still exists and I still hear it.²²¹

Just as some of the first generation refugees mentioned the stereotypical depiction attached to refugees,²²² third generation also referred to this issue. So with the continuation of the Nakba, Palestinian refugees are yet being stigmatized as 'refugees' which is a reference to 'inferior' or other degrading status. Thus Khaled remembers the story his grandmother told him of how refugees were stereotyped during the journey of their exodus, where "near Hebron, they refused to allow refugees through their lands, thinking they would control their lands."²²³ He connects this story with the status of a refugee today in the West Bank who is yet dealing with the consequences of the Nakba, and is stigmatized with the term "refugee".

Moreover, as I described earlier, the efficiency of the oral source does not lie in the preservation of the past, but in an effort of the teller to give significance to the past from a present day perspective. Memory is not a passive depository, but an active process of creation of meanings.²²⁴ The storytellers of this chapter are the grandchildren of the 'generation of the Nakba', some of whom are retelling the stories told by their

²¹⁸ Rashid Khalidi, *Palestinian Identity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), 89.

²¹⁹ Interview with Niseen.

²²⁰ Interview with Wa'ed.

²²¹ Khaled Third generation refugee, originally from Al-Lydd. This interview was conducted on March 3, 2012 at Birzeit and was translated into English by the author.

²²² Such as Imm Najih, whose story was covered in chapter three.

²²³ Interview with Khaled.

²²⁴ Fatma Kassem, *Palestinian Women: Narrative Histories and gendered memory* (New York: Zed Books, 2011), 3.



grandparents and are reconstructing these stories in light of the many changes that took place whether after 1948 or in 1967. For example Khaled articulated that:

When the 1967 war happened, my grandfather had a truck and loaded everyone in it during the war. My grandmother had 12 children, and in 1967 my grandfather wanted to take them all to Jordan. Many of our relatives were in Jordan and settled there after the 1948 exodus. However, my grandmother refused to go. She said I'm not leaving. She forced my family to come back, if my grandmother hadn't force them to get off that truck I would have been living in Jordan now.²²⁵

Khaled remembers his grandmothers' story of sumoud (steadfastness) as she insisted on staying in Palestine. He is proud of his grandmothers' act in refusing to leave despite the continuing Israeli assault in 1967. He connects this story with his situation today, where he could have been living in Jordan instead of Palestine.

Intergenerational transmission of memories was also reflected in the stories of third generation, where despite the omission of the Nakba in Palestinian curriculum taught in schools,²²⁶ one of the third generation Palestinians feared that her story would be forgotten. So she implanted the memory of her and her husband's village in her daughter who is in second grade, as s she narrates:

My husband is from Anaba, and I always tell my children about our village... If you sit with my daughter she will tell you all about the Nakba and about the idea of return, and how we must return. She narrates this in a way you would think she's an old lady...We have to explain to our children where they're originally from, otherwise the narrative will be lost along with our existence on earth.²²⁷

Preserving Palestinian stories from forgetfulness (collective amnesia) is an issue worth further explanation. The awareness of third generation refugees of telling their children the story of their dispossession, and of their villages stimulates the fourth and fifth generations' prospects for return. When the third generation no longer exists the responsibility of preserving their family heritage and narratives of the Nakba, lies in the memory of their children and grandchildren. The future of the Palestinian narrative, enacting the right of return and putting closure to the Palestinian story, depends on the current and future generation of Palestinian refugees. Therefore, the importance of collective memory and generational transmission is not only in the preservation of the memory of the Nakba, but also in the reproduction of that memory in light of continued stories of Palestinian displacement.

²²⁵ Interview with Khaled.

²²⁶ In the Palestinian curriculum, the Palestinian refugee problem is not mentioned until the fifth and eighth grade. In the Ninth grade, however, the 1948 war and the refugee question were conveyed in only four lines. And in eleventh grade an entire class was allotted to the refugee problem. Nevertheless it did not refer to the crucial aspects of the problem such as the massacres that happened in that 1948. For more see : Ahmed Al-Adarba, "al-lajoun alfalastiniyoun fi almanahij alfalastinia" : dirassat halat fi manhajai al-tarbia al-watania wa al-tariekh, in alminhaj al-falastini, ed. Abdel Rahim Al-Shiekh (Filastin: Mouatin, 2006), 439.

²²⁷ Interview with Wa'ed.

Furthermore, when asked about the meaning of the Nakba, Laila responded that:

It means the continued absences of justice, it means a collective dispossession of an entire people that has been forgotten by their world, ignored, neglected. In some way the world has been complicit to this continued dispossession through its silence.....This goes with the code that Ben-Gurion has said: "The old will die and the young will forget." The old have died but the young didn't forget! And that's evident in third generation of Palestinian refugees who grew up hearing these stories, who grew up learning the names of the villages they're originally from.²²⁸

The Nakba is remembered in different ways and in different places. What is unquestionable is that third generation refugees haven't forgotten the story of their exodus. Some of the third generation refugees I interviewed expressed that they were able to visit their villages/cities. Here is what one of them had to say:

When I went to Al-Lydd, I saw where my grandparents use to live. Their house has been replaced by a building which carries an Israeli flag. This provoked me, because in Ramallah we're living in rent. When we were living in Lydd, we owned a piece of land...After my visit to Al-Lydd I was depressed for three days. Al-Lydd is deserted, neglected and no one is taking care of it. This proves that the Jews despise Al-Lydd...Because of the vicious struggle the Jews met in Al-Lydd, they detest the city. Lyddadwa [people from Al-Lydd] played a huge role in Palestinian resistance.²²⁹

While visiting their places of origin, third generation refugees couldn't stand the sight and reality of their houses which have been replaced and are inhabited by Israeli settlers. It is the stories of their grandparents which invokes these memories and feelings of the ugly reality which they experienced sixty five years ago, and which their grandchildren experience today. Khaled also referred to the prominent role the Lyddadwa played in the struggle for Palestine in July of 1948, in which the war between IDF and Palestinians in Lydd lasted for days before the fall of the city.²³⁰ According to Kahled's own understating of the war of Lydd, he argues that because Lyddadwa resisted the Zionist/Israeli attack on the city, until today Israelis hate the Lydd.

From all of the above, the cumulative effect of memory relocated in the stories of third generation proves that they did not, and will never, forget the beginning of their displacement. They realize the importance of their grandparents' stories, particularly in light of the Israeli/colonial agenda in erasing Palestinian memory. Because the Palestinian memory of the Nakba, " is an essentially privileged and especially powerful way of getting back inside our own past more intimately, of reliving it from within."²³¹

²²⁸ Interview with Laila.

²²⁹ Interview with Khaled.

²³⁰ For more on the fall of Lydd see: Esbeer Munir, *al-lydd fi a'hdai al-intidab wa al ihtilal* (beruit: mo'asassat al dirassat alfalastinia, 2003), 87-95.

²³¹ Edward S. Casey, "Public memory in Place and Time," *Framing Public memory* (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 2004), 17-18.



The Continuity of the Palestinian Narrative and the Right of Return:

In the process of telling their stories to their grandchildren, older generations relay the harsh and oppressive memory of their collective experience to younger Palestinians, many of whom live their own Nakba today.²³² As third generation refugees retold their stories of dispossession, each narrated his/her own continuous Nakba, which verifies that third generation cannot put closure to their grandparents' story of displacement and their on-going story of loss. For instance, Wa'ed asserted that:

As long as we are still living in refugee camps, and as long as refugee camps exist; the Nakba continues. It will not end unless I return to my land. And returning to my land is not enough. I want the Israelis to compensate me for all the years they used my land, my grandparents' land, and my ancestors' land. I know I'm dreaming.²³³

65 years ago when the UN General Assembly set forth Resolution 194, which reaffirmed Palestinian refugees right of return,²³⁴ Israel continues to refuse to recognize, restitute or implement this resolution. Resolution 194 embodies customary law relative to the right of return,²³⁵ thus is binding on all states. And the right of return is one of the most basic principles enshrined in international law convention and treaties such as The Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948.²³⁶ Furthermore, return is also one of the most feasible solutions to end the status of refuge and solving the predicament of refugees.

However, the implementation of this right in the Palestinian case is far more complicated than it is in any other situation. With the passage of time, and with the continuation of the Israeli colonial occupation of historic Palestine, the actual act of returning to their lands seems to be diminishing by the day. On the other hand, Khaled claims that:

The problem is that people do not believe that they will return. I always tell them when you believe in something it will happen. I believe that I will return... Al-Lydd is my right, and my land. When you go to Al-Lydd you will be surprised and shocked with the de facto there. I don't know, because I was born in Ramallah my emotions are mixed up... Because I live in Ramallah, it's hard to imagine living in the Lydd... But the question of return is inevitable... The Jews are digging their graves with their bare hands, there are domestic problems within the Israeli society... I believe we will return to Al-Lydd.²³⁷

²³² Ramzy Baroud, "The Palestinian Nakba: The resolve of memory," *The Palestine Chronicle*, 15 May, 2012. http://palestinechronicle.com/view_article_details.php?id=19298. Accessed on May 18, 2012.

²³³ Interview with Wa'ed.

²³⁴ Lex Takkenberg and Susan Akram, "Palestinian Refugees and their Legal Status: Rights, Politics and Implications for a Just Solution," *Journal of Palestine Studies* (Spring 2002): 20-75.

²³⁵ Ibid.

²³⁶ Article 13 in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that:

(1) Everyone has the right to freedom of movement and residence within the borders of each state.
(2) Everyone has the right to leave any country, including his own, and to return to his country.

²³⁷ Interview with Khaled.

The Palestinian refugee problem is the premises of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict from which all else has flowed over the past half century.²³⁸ Hence, the inextricable link between the right of return and the end of the Nakba was described in the oral testimonies of third generation refugees. Needless to say, putting an end to the Palestinian narrative is not only connected with refugees returning to their lands, it also depends on many unresolved issues such as freeing all Palestinian prisoners, demolishing the Apartheid wall, removing all Israeli settlements, checkpoints, etc.

Moreover, the narrative of the Nakba is "A story of occupation, a story of injustice... In the meantime the Palestinian society is divided and this forms a new Nakba. If the Palestinian society is not united, we won't be able to retrieve one inch of our land."²³⁹ The continuation of the Nakba, as mentioned above, is also because of the internal disputes between Palestinian political parties. Separating Gaza from the West Bank, and the ongoing rivalry between the leaders of Hamas and Fatah is perpetuating the Israeli occupation. And this is reflected in the Palestinian narrative itself which is continuous. For instance Ahmed adds that:

Palestinian leaders, or Palestinian parties, should look into the past. If we go back to the past each Arab county was fighting for its own interest, as a result we lost our county... Today is a repetition of the past... We should learn from mistakes made in the past... The Palestinian story has an end, the solution is simple... No negotiation, no peace, and no PA. How long have we been negotiating with the Jews! Since 1994, and we call it more than one negotiations... At the end the solution is simple, to bring back all of Palestine, from Ras Al-Nafoura to Gaza. What was taken by force can only be restored by force.²⁴⁰

As shown in chapter one, the Palestinian- Israeli negotiation process is also leading to the continuation of the Palestinian story. Until today neither side has agreed on a practical solution for the Palestinian refugee problem. Its treatment in Arab-Israeli negotiations so far reflects the unremitting pressure from the Israeli side for more than sixty five years to ignore, diminish and bury the entire refugee problem it created in 1948.²⁴¹ Yet some of the third generation believe that the refugee problem will be solved once the entire land of Palestine is brought back; from Ras Al-Nafour to Gaza.

Following Ahmed's testimony, **Nada**: Third generation refugee originally from Ayn Karim articulated that:

The Nakba continues as long as its consequences continue. Because People did not return to their lands, lands have not been restored to its people, and no one was able to return to their village. People are yet living in refugee

²³⁸ Rashid Khalidi, "Truth, Justice, and Reconciliation: Elements of a Solution to the Palestinian Refugee Issue," in *The Palestinian Exodus*, Ed. Ghada Karmi and Eugene Cotran (UK: Ithaca Press, 1999), 221.

²³⁹ Interview with Ahmed.

²⁴⁰ Ibid.

²⁴¹ Rashid Khalidi, "Truth, Justice, and Reconciliation: Elements of a Solution to the Palestinian Refugee Issue," in *The Palestinian Exodus*, Ed. Ghada Karmi and Eugene Cotran (Ithaca Press), 221



camps, and some are living outside of the country. It's a continuous Nakba, the Nakba did not only happen when they left their lands, it is all the catastrophes that hit them as a result of the Nakba. As long as new generation refugees are being born and are living a life of refuge, of course it's a continuous Nakba. The status of refuge will end only if we follow International law and implement the right of return.....And through armed struggle of course. What was taken by force can only be restored by force.²⁴²

Just as the previous interview, Nada noted that the status of refuge will end through armed struggle. As they both emphasized "What was taken by force can only be restored by force." They both perceived the Israeli- Palestinian negotiations as futile and will not end Palestinian refugee's stories of dispossession. This shows how third generation refugees not only gave indicators of a continuous Nakba, but also presented their own view of how they thought the narrative and status of refuge would end.

Furthermore, Niseen pointed that "The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is gonna go on, and the narrative is always gonna go on. Even if there was a two state deal, it continues. Because everyone knows there's more to history than what we read, what we see on television and what we learn in school."²⁴³ The intertwined relationship between the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the continuity of the Palestinian narrative of exile was depicted in the stories above. Third generation refugees enumerated different reasons which they consider is leading to the continuation of their catastrophe. For instance Laila adds that:

The ongoing Nakba refers to the on-going occupation policies that is still practiced against Palestinians till this day. Today I just read in the news that Susiya in Southern Hebron received a demolition order for an entire village. All 50 buildings in the village will be demolished. This is still going on till this day and age is completely absurd. This is what is meant by an on-going Nakba.²⁴⁴

According to Laila, the policies the Zionists forces executed in order to expel Palestinians haven't changed since 1947. To think that the Israeli tactic in demolishing houses was only practiced in 1948 is a mere misconception. As emphasized in Laila's life story, demolishing Palestinian villages is yet being practiced until today, such as the new Israeli order to demolish the village of Susiya.²⁴⁵ In spite of the on-going Zionists plan to erase Palestinian villages and landscapes, third generation refugees are fighting against this attempt in making them forget.

For example Malak articulated that:

²⁴² This interview was conducted on July 30, 2012 in Ramallah and was translated into English by the author.

²⁴³ Interview with Niseen.

²⁴⁴ Interview with Laila.

²⁴⁵ Israeli forces on Tuesday June 12, 2012 handed a southern West Bank village demolition orders for each of its 50 buildings, a week after Israeli authorities agreed to halt all construction in the area in response to a petition filed by a settler group. To read more follow:
<http://www.maannews.net/eng/ViewDetails.aspx?ID=494781>. Accessed on June 15, 2012.

The Nakba continues in different stages, because Nakba gets redefined. Back then it meant surviving and going back, now it's become not forgetting.... For instance, when someone says I'm from Jalazoun, not Al-Jalazoun refugee camp. Jalazoun became a name of a village not a name of a refugee camp anymore. So people are slowly forgetting what these places really represent...There is thriving in it which is great, but people are forgetting what it symbolizes which is dangerous....Israel is committing crimes to cover up the crimes they committed in 1948. So at first it was getting everyone out....then it was rebuilding and making sure everyone stayed out. Now it's like making sure everyone forgets, and they're slowly doing that which is scary to say and scary to see.²⁴⁶

The original Palestinian Nakba fragmented Palestine 65 years ago. Its effects continue to be felt everyday in Palestine not as a historic event, but as the outbreak of a process that continues to shape the lives of Palestinians in every corner of today's world.²⁴⁷ Thus the Nakba continues today in different stages where, as Malak claimed, it started with expelling Palestinians, then ensuring that they do not return, and now its reflected in making Palestinians forget. However, Niseen asserted that "we will never forget how the Israelis tortured us and forced us to leave our houses, and no matter what anyone says or thinks the Nakba is never going to end and the narrative is never gonna end."²⁴⁸

In conclusion, recoding the oral testimonies of third generation refugees and incorporating their stories within the Palestinian narrative of the Nakba is imperative. They not only narrate the story of their dispossession and their grandparents' journey of the exodus, but also mentioned how they remember the Nakba and how they reconstructed the stories and memory of their grandparents'. The question of return predominated their narratives as they all affirmed that someday "we will return" and it is only a matter of time until their right is fully implemented. With the ongoing fragmentation of Palestine, the Nakba will continue to be reflected in Palestinian's daily lives. The fact that Laila mentioned in her story a recent Israeli order to demolish an entire village in Hebron proves that the narrative of the Nakba is yet being constructed, and putting an end to a story which is still being written is beyond complicated.

Nevertheless, "The Palestinians abide by the rights of their case in international law and basic justice and demand a return to their homeland and full compensation for their losses; and on the other hand, Israel is adamant in rejecting outright both these proposals."²⁴⁹ Implementing the right of return is difficult, yet as shown in the narrative of the 3rd generation many other obstacles occur besides the question of return such as, the building of Israeli settlements, houses demolition, the on-going of the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations, the Israeli attempt in erasing Palestinian memory which keeps the narrative of the Nakba far from having an end.

²⁴⁶ Interview with Malak

²⁴⁷ Rich Wiles and Nidal Azza, "The Fluidity of Resistance", *Al Majdal* (2012): 4.

²⁴⁸ Interview with Nisreen.

²⁴⁹ Ghada Karmi, "Concluding Vision: A Return to Israel/Palestine?" in *The Palestinian Exodus*, Ed. Ghada Karmi and Eugene Cotran (UK: Ithaca Press, 1999), 243.

CONCLUSION

Oral testimony is one of the greatest sources in Palestinian history that can take us back to the past. Because a great part of our history remains unwritten, oral history serves as a valid source that can resurrect Palestinian memories which Zionism has worked so hard on erasing. As I listened to stories of first, second and third generations of Palestinian refugees, I restored a part of my own history which is continuously threatened with loss.

Reading and analyzing many studies written about the Palestinian narrative of the Nakba, and directly listening to the stories of different generations of Palestinian refugees; are two completely different experiences. One becomes more involved and indulged in a story which is directly being narrating to him/her, and senses the amount of pain, guilt and loss these refugees were forced to experience. What motivated me to conduct this study is the intergenerational transmission of stories of the Nakba, and the idea of comparing their stories of the past with the present. In the process of doing so, the construction of memories of the catastrophes that took place in Palestine in 1948, 1967, 1987, 1992, 1993, 2000, 2008 have contributed in the continuation of their narrative. However, while comparing the event of the 1948 Nakba with the status quo of the OPT, I concluded that not much has changed since 1948. Palestinians are still being deported, killed, stigmatized, houses and villages are yet being demolished, prisoners remain in Israeli cells, land is constantly being confiscated, Palestinians remain without a state, and most importantly refugees' right of return continues to be denied. All these unremitting factors have a formidable effect on the Palestinian narrative of the Nakba, as Palestinians continue to end their story with a comma instead of a full stop.

The reason I choose to interview different generations of Palestinian refugees was to document how each generation narrated the story of the Nakba, and based on their stories I explored indicators of an on-going narrative. Although Palestinian refugees have experienced the Nakba differently, their stories fall under a much broader collective story of loss. What dominated the narrative of first generation refugees was the feelings of guilt for leaving their homes, stigma within the Palestinian society, and loss: loss of family, fortune and of lands. The stories of second generation refugees consisted of the notion of global dispersion, nostalgia, and recurring "Nakbat". Whereas the narrative of third generation refugees was predominated by blame, responsibility, Zionist rumors, UNRWA decline, the right of return and continuing Israeli policies in displacing Palestinians. Throughout the stories of Palestinian refugees, it was apparent that the beginning of this story is the Nakba, which continued through the 1967 Naksa, yet the end remains a question mark.

Although it's been sixty five years since the Nakba, Palestinians continue to remember, commemorate and revive the violent memory of the Nakba. For instance, during the 63rd Nakba day, Palestinian refugees; notably third and fourth generations, in Lebanon and Syria marched towards Israeli borders with the determination of implementing their right of return. This march was known as the 'return march' which led to the martyrdom of nearly 20 Palestinians. However, this march of return was, in part, was a result of the PLO's discourse for the past decades which has been historically concerned with the

right of return. This was described in chapter one, which explored the official Palestinian narrative of the Nakba which has been emerging since the foundation of the PLO in the 1960s. Although Palestinians have not established an independent state, a semi official Palestinian narrative represented by the PLO was evident. Also prominent Palestinian cultural and intellectual embodiments, such as Edward Said and Mahmoud Darwish, have contributed to the construction of this semi-official narrative; as they both were politically active on the international and national stage for the Palestinian question.

As described during the 64th Nakba day, which was organized by the PLO department of Refugee Affairs, PA officials delivered speeches in this festival which ensured self determination, right of return and the right of establishing a Palestinian state. I argued that during the 64th Nakba day, PA leaders sought to impose their version of the story which supposedly represents "all Palestinians". Nonetheless, the PA's inexplicable act in reopening negotiations with Israel was met by an intense Palestinian demonstration which denounced PA's position in hosting the former Israeli defense Minister. Yet the PA responded to these demonstrations, just like its neighboring Arab regimes did, through violence and repression. Therefore, the on-going nature of the Palestinian-Israeli negotiation process, which until today hasn't found a solution for the Palestinian refugee problem, is also leading to the on-going of the Palestinian narrative.

Memory is an inseparable part of the Palestinian narrative which informs recent and future generations of the names of their villages destroyed in 1947- 1949; in addition to preserving their family legacy, scares and stories of the Nakba. Thus memory plays a prominent role in filling in the missing pages in our history, and answers whatever questions one might have regarding life before, during or after the Nakba. The intertwined relation between memory and history was covered in the narrative of first generation refugees, whose stories are constructed of their story of the exodus, their lives before the Nakba and the ongoing phases of the Nakba. As I listened to their stories, I realized that they raised unexplored aspects of the Nakba which has been sort of marginalized in the narratives of the Nakba. Such as the issue of stigmatizing refugees, where two out of the six first generation refugees I interviewed expressed how they were passively received in Palestinian society. While first generation refugees dwelled on the past, a common feature I found in their stories is regret, as they said, "I shouldn't have left". Furthermore, first generation refugees narrated their stories in chronological order beginning with the Nakba, 1967 Naksa, Operation Cast Lead and the Egyptian soccer riot in 2012. What I gathered from the life stories of first generation is that they referred to different forms a continuing narrative. In some stories it was reflected in their status quo as a refugee still waiting to return, in other cases it was envisaged in the arts of storytelling; where one of the interviewees articulated how she narrates her story to children and explicitly explained that this story has no end.

After documenting the stories of first generation refugees, chapter three highlighted the stories of their children, who were raised in refugee camps, Ramallah and in the diaspora. As I listed to their stories, I realized that their narratives and memories of the Nakba are just as important as their parents' stories. Some expressed how "we are all refugees," others assimilated their stories of dispossession with other Palestinian

stories of dispossession. Despite the fact that they did not witness the 1948 Nakba, their account of the 1967 Naksa and other "Nakbat" is crucial in the construction of the Palestinian narrative. Although the 'generation after the Nakba' experienced the effects of the Nakba differently, where some were raise in the diaspora and others in refugee camps, their continuing stories of exile coalesces with the stories of their predecessors and successors. So the stories of the second generation refugees forms a middle ground between their past (stories of their parents) and their future (stories of their children). Some defined the Nakba as a "continuum" and articulated how they still witness Nakbat until today.

I concluded that another determining factor that leads to the continuity of the Palestinian narrative is utter disregard of the right of return. For instance, in the narratives of third generation refugees they claimed that 'the Nakba will not end until I return to my land'. Even though second and third generation refugees were born in exile, they all dream of returning to their lands. Yet the actual act of return was more potently reflected in the stories of third generation refugees, where some of the interviewees asserted that they 'will return'. However, some of the third generations were ignorant of their grandparents' stories of the Nakba, because their grandparents didn't want to be reminded of the dreadful journey they were forced to take sixty five years ago. While other refugees are striving to raise awareness and preserve the stories of their grandparents from erasure, as they insist on the intergenerational transmission of their stories. What was echoed in the stories of third generation is that the right of return is inevitable, however based on their stories, it is clear that many other predicaments which restrict Palestinians ability to put an end to their story. For instance, some referred to the Israeli colonial policies practiced against Palestinians such as village demolition. Others define the continuity of the narrative in the division between Palestinian political parties. Furthermore, some asserted that the Nakba continues as long as refugee camps exist. From the different, yet similar, stories of different generations of Palestinian refugees many on-going events hinders Palestinians ability from putting an end to their narrative.

While reading many studies written on Palestinian exile, displacements and the diaspora, it does not come close to completely portraying what all Palestinian refugees experienced. Through listening to their stories of exile, and terminal loss, I realized that each and every Palestinian refugee has a story to tell and is worthy of being documented. Some of the interviewees mentioned new and intriguing questions which I was not able to fully answer throughout this research. I consider this study a beginning, or a chapter, of a far larger study on the narrative of the Nakba. Because many questions were raised in their life stories, yet due to the fact that this study is a dissertation for an MA degree, I could not cover one third of the interviews I recorded. Another difficulty I faced in this study is that there is no clear cut categorization of refugees as first, second, or third generation refugees. For example, some of the third generation refugees were second and third generation at the same time, where their father was one year old when he left his homeland and their mother was born after 1948. It is also crucial to emphasize the geographic space of my research. I conducted this study in areas near Ramallah, so the intergenerational differences among Palestinian refugees and the indicators of an on-going Palestinian narrative depends on the areas they reside in. In

other words, Palestinian refugees distance or closeness to historic Palestine determines their answers regarding a continuing narrative. Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, Jordan and other areas would most certainly give different reasons they believe are leading to the continuity of the Palestinian narrative. Thus the issue of space also requires further research.

To conclude all that was said earlier, the narrative of the Palestinian people is a narrative of occupation, colonization, injustice, dispossessions, land confiscation, oppression, loss and finally is narration without an end. Even if a Palestinian state was established, and refugees did return, this will not alone change the ugly reality on the ground. As long as the Israeli occupation of Palestine continues, the Palestinian narrative of the Nakba will continue to be told without closure. I tried to prove my argument that all these on-going Israeli policies are reflected in the on-going narrative, through gathering the stories of Palestinian refugees; all of whom have a unique story which I tried to tell it right throughout this study.

Perhaps it is normal for a story to have a beginning and not an end. As Emile Habibi questions, "It's the logical thing for a story to have a beginning and an end. But is that really the rule? And even if it is the logical thing, is it logical in this country of ours?"²⁵⁰

²⁵⁰ Emile Habibi, "The Odds and Ends Women," *Anthology of Modern Palestinian Literature*, Ed Salma Jayyusi (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), 459.

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