

IDENTITY IN PALESTINIAN LITERATURE:  
EXILE IS THE ANTITHESIS OF HOME

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San Francisco State University  
In partial fulfillment of  
The requirements for  
The degree

Master of Arts  
In  
Humanities

By

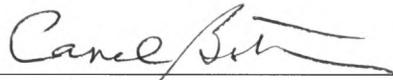
Suheir Michael

San Francisco, California

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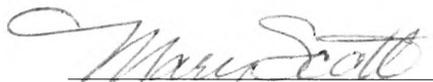
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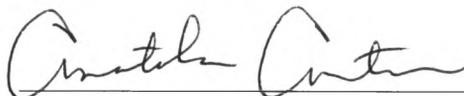
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Carel Bertram  
Professor of Humanities



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Mary Scott  
Professor of Humanities



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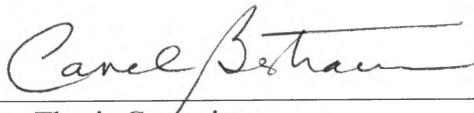
Anatole Anton  
Professor of Philosophy

IDENTITY IN PALESTINIAN LITERATURE: EXILE IS THE ANTITHESIS  
OF HOME

Suheir Michael  
San Francisco State University  
2007

This thesis analyzes Palestinian Literature following the Nakba, or the events of 1948 when Palestine was effaced from the map and the State of Israel was proclaimed. Because hundreds of thousands of Arabs living in Palestine at the time were expelled from their home, and were made refugees overnight, old identities that were rooted in places began a painful alteration. Palestinian writers and poets reflect this situation and are instrumental in charting the struggle to redefine this new place-less self. A focus on two Palestinian authors, the poet Mahmoud Darwish and the novelist Ghassan Kanafani, exemplifies how the Palestinian soul began to deal with the meaning of home and the antithesis of home: exile.

I certify that the Abstract is a correct representation of the content of this thesis.



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Chair. Thesis Committee

DEC. 6. 2007

Date

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Finally, this work is dedicated to the loving memory of my father, Lutfi Elias Hanhan, whose childhood memories he spent at home in Lydda, Palestine before his exile in 1948, inspired me to write this thesis.

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## INTRODUCTION

The Nakba, or “the Catastrophe” of 1948, represents for the Palestinians an event that marked the beginning of their exile from their homeland, Palestine. The Nakba became rooted in their collective memory as it was connected to a specific point in time and resulted in their loss of homeland, and caused the disintegration of their society.

When the State of Israel was proclaimed May 15, 1948, it expelled more than half its Arab population from its acquired territory after the British terminated their mandate over Palestine, and after the United Nations partitioned Palestine into two states, Jewish and Arab: Israel was able to acquire more land by force than what was allotted to it under the partition plan, thus impinging on the territory allotted to the Arabs, and was able to successfully remove these Arabs from its area. This event was to cause the beginning of the Palestinian Arabs move into exile as hundreds of thousands were left homeless and landless as Palestine was denied any national status as it was virtually erased from the map.

The area allotted to the Arabs was annexed by Jordan and Egypt, and became what is now termed the West Bank and Gaza. This catastrophe did not affect just a mass of individuals, but as Albert Hourani claimed in his article *Palestine and Israel* it affected “the greater part of a society.” This catastrophe had a harsh impact on the Palestinians as they were expelled from the only home they ever knew, becoming refugees over night,

without a place to call home: what was formerly Palestine took on a whole new identity as the majority of the land became Israel, a national home for Jews only. \*

This thesis explores the literature that was generated from this harsh reality, one that shocked a people into having to accept their status as refugees, displaced from their homes, whereas before the catastrophe they were firmly rooted, with home defined very specifically. My thesis begins with an analysis of literature written before 1948 by various authors of poetry, which clearly depicts their state of mind in that era as still situated in place. But I will concentrate on the literature written after 1948, which clearly depicts an altered state of mind that resonates with a longing for home, but in a variety of ways, after their expulsion, and centers on exile as the main theme.

Post Nakba Palestinian literature focuses on place and home distinguished from its antithesis, exile. After defining home in opposition to exile, the issue of this post Nakba literature is how to define this home, because it is now a place where you are not. Each author depicts and defines it differently, and by explaining how these two opposites, exile and home, are used in two Palestinian authors, we have the opportunity to study what is really meant by exile and what is really meant by home.

In the post Nakba period, I will focus on two main authors of Palestinian literature, well known throughout the Arab world and beyond, as their writing contains exilic

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\* About 160,000 Palestinian Arabs remained in Israel, and were referred to as "internal refugees". They were under military rule and treated as second-class citizens. Many felt alienated from their national home, as they were considered as non-Jews, falling under different regulations and treatment.

identity as the main theme in their genres. They are: the poet Mahmoud Darwish, and the novelist and short story writer Ghassan Kanafani.

Mahmoud Darwish's poetry emphasizes home from the point of view of an "insider", as he began to write when he still resided on the soil of Palestine although the country had become Israel. His writings show that he felt alienated and estranged from his homeland, which for him felt just as if he were in exile. The poetry explored will fall within the time during his residence in Israel before he left in 1970.

Ghassan Kanafani's novel *Men in the Sun* (1962) is about exile itself. It is written from the personal, emotional, and humanitarian position, which explains what home is for him, that it is, all the things that are missing, or lost emotionally in exile.

The first part of my thesis will explore the literature that was written at the first moment when people began to understand that exile was to be their lot. This section will also give a historical perspective of what was transpiring in Palestine during the time that led up to the Nakba, when it was part of Greater Syria and also within the territories held by the Ottoman Empire. For example, of great importance is that during this period Palestine became the focus for the Zionist aspiration to acquire Palestine as the national home for the Jewish people. Upon the Arabs' awareness of this idea, they began to react to prevent this from ever taking place, but their endeavor was unsuccessful once Palestine came under the British Mandate. What will become evident is that as these events were unfolding in Palestine, poets felt compelled to compose poetry especially devoted to what was transpiring in that area.

The second part of my thesis explores post Nakba literature and suggests how each author's depiction of exile is conceived of as the antithesis of home, although each defines it differently. I will elaborate more on this argument, with each of the different authors, throughout my paper.

The third part of my thesis will be my conclusion, which ties pre and post Nakba literature together and explains its transformation. Before the Nakba, literature centered on inspiring the people and warning the people about Zionism and what that would entail for the Arab inhabitants of Palestine. That is, a national home for Jews in Palestine would affect the Palestinian Arabs personally as it would make them a minority in their homeland, or even strangers in their own land. After the Nakba, literature began to depict this loss of home in contrast with exile. Exile becomes the focal point in literature, as it clarifies their meaning of home, which exile deprives them of. Furthermore, exile becomes an expression of their anxiety of banishment.

Although this thesis is about literature, I also hope to shed some light on the ongoing conflict between the Palestinians and the Israelis, and insist that a people centered on a home will continue to fight and long for it until their objective has been met, "otherwise the peace sought for in this part of the world will never reign, even though it might appear on the surface that the trouble had subsided", as declared in the "Memorandum Submitted to the Government of the United States of America by the Jaffa and Districts Inhabitants Council, Beirut, 11 April 1949" in which the expelled residents in those

towns are pleading to return to their homes and businesses because it is their natural right to return to their home.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 13, Section 2 states that “Everyone has the right to leave any country, including his own, and to return to his country.” But Israel has denied this right to the Palestinians. Therefore, the conflict will never be resolved until the Palestinians are able to live in the only place they will ever consider their home.

## CHAPTER ONE

### POETRY

#### AT THE FIRST MOMENT OF UNDERSTANDING THAT EXILE WAS HAPPENING

O young woman of our homeland! Shed blood instead of tears if you want to cry.  
Sister of exaltedness! Palestine is lost; nothing but blood is left now.  
You will suffer and weep with blood, when weeping tears becomes of no avail.  
Restrain your rancour, people! Give up your hatred and enmity!  
The colonization [of Palestine] has gone too far with none to stand out against it.  
This disease has become grave. You should overcome it with [real] remedies.  
Awake! It is your homeland. Do not let it be sold to the strangers! (1)  
Muhammad Is'af al-Nashashibi (1910)

Muhammad Is'af al-Nashashibi's poem entitled *Filastin Wal-Isti'Mar al-Jadid* (Palestine and the New Colonization) was published in October 1910 in the monthly literary journal, *Al-Nafa'is al-'Asriyya (The Modern Treasures)*. It appeared in the journal the same month of the sale of a very large area of land to the Jewish National Fund. Palestinian poets throughout the area were aware of the influx of foreign Jewish immigrants, and the effects this was having on their country.<sup>†</sup> Of special importance to the poets was the hardships on Arabs in Palestine caused by the Jewish National Fund's (JNF) success in buying land in Palestine for the settlement of newly arrived Jews after the Second Aliya (1904-1914), or Jewish immigration to Palestine. Once the JNF bought and owned any land, it stipulated that the land became the inalienable property of the Jewish people, and that only Jewish labor was to be employed on the agricultural

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<sup>†</sup> See Appendix One for historical background

settlements purchased by the JNF: A tenant would be fined and threatened with eviction if he employs Arab labor on that land. (2)

A large purchase by the JNF, totaling 10,000 dunums (about 2,500 acres), was made in 1910 for land between Nazareth and Jenin, a very fertile area referred to as Marj Ibn ‘Amir, which included the two villages Fula and Al-Fula. The absentee landowner, Elias Sarsuq, lived in Beirut, which was where the transaction took place. The peasants living as tenant farmers on that piece of land tried desperately to prevent the sale, since it would mean their eviction from that land. Prior to the 1858 Land Law, the Ottoman Sultan was the owner of most rural land, but the peasants had the right to cultivate parcels of land and each parcel was of a fixed proportion of the village’s surrounding field; each family group was given a fixed proportion of land, and that right was passed down from father to son. Villagers used the land collectively, and had the right to gather wood, water, and other resources from nearby villages and state land. Grazing lands were held in common also. After the 1858 Land Law, peasants had to register their parcels of land since the law required that all land be registered. But peasants fearing taxes and army conscriptions (military service) didn’t register at all or allowed their land to be registered by town merchants or notables. Thus, land once held collectively on an informal basis now became registered under private landowners, but not always the real owners of the land. Peasants then became tenant farmers living off the land. (3)

Furthermore, once the JNF owned the land, and it became the inalienable right of the Jewish people, Arabs were prohibited from being hired to work on the land. The only

option for these fellahin or peasants, once their land was sold, would be homelessness and joblessness. Thus, they feared for their fate once that land was purchased by the JNF. They begged the qa'immaqam, the Chief Legal Officer of Nazareth, Shukri al-'Asali, to urge the government to have the absentee-landlord sell the land to them at a similar price. But the government at Istanbul refused on the grounds that "Sursuq had the absolute right to dispose of his property as he chose."<sup>(4)</sup> But al-Asali had still persisted in his effort at preventing the sale, even by refusing to hand over the title deed to the new owner Arthur Ruppin, the head of the Jewish National Fund. Al-Asali had no choice but to submit to the sale when the Turkish Vali in January 1911 overruled him for subordination and expelled the fellahin. That month the new settlement of Merhavia was established. The fellahin resented this greatly as they kept colliding with the new settlers whom they believed had taken their land away from them, "Attacks on the Merhavia by the former cultivators of the land were frequent".<sup>(5)</sup> In May 1911, a Ha-Shomer watchman killed an Arab near the settlement provoking angry protests from the local population, until local authorities came in and took several settlers to jail. <sup>(6)</sup>

This particular area was a historical site as it was believed to be the area in which Saladin fought the crusades in 1187, and where he had captured the fortress erected during the Crusaders period. The Arab press had written about the sale in their newspapers and periodicals, and had daily informed the public about the current situation. Shukri al-'Asali wrote an open letter bitterly critical of Zionism and claiming "historical connections linking the people to the land going all the way back to Saladin, and thus

expelling its original peasant tenants and replacing them with foreigners was treason.” (7) In the end the peasants lost, and were forced off the land which they had tilled for years, to make way for a Jewish colony. Al-Karmil and many other newspapers throughout the Empire reprinted al-‘Asali’s letter and succeeding articles about this incident. Thus, a wide readership became well informed about this, and the spectacle of the peasants forcefully expelled from their land stirred and aroused many, especially the poets, as poetry written during this time depicted this scene.



Figure 1. Muhammad Is'af al-Nashashibi courtesy of PASSIA ([passia.org](http://passia.org))

Muhammad Is'af al-Nashashibi's poem was published the same month of the sale. In his poem he predicts and foresees the fate of all Palestinians if land sales to Zionists continues. The poet seemed to have assumed that if colonization continues on "our homeland" to "the strangers" it would eventually lead to eviction. As Aristotle says

about poets, it "...is the function of a poet to relate not things that have happened but things that may happen," (8).

In 1910, Palestine, part of Greater Syria, was an entity still under the umbrella of the Ottoman Empire. The Arab inhabitants, therefore, didn't consider themselves under threat for several reasons. One reason was that they were a majority residing in an Arab state encompassing other Arab states under the authority of the Ottoman Empire, which at that time was still a relatively strong powerful empire. The second reason was that the Jewish colonies were built in rural areas, and many Arabs living away from these colonies didn't yet associate with them. The peasants on land bought by the Jews were affected the most severely as they lost their livelihood, thus having to resettle elsewhere. The idea of expulsion or the idea of being a minority status on their own land, wasn't yet recognized by the Arabs; but it was understood by the poet explaining the reason for his pessimistic tone in the poem, and for its prophetic urgency to "Awake!"

The poet foresees the disaster that is to come, which explains the reason this poem echoes with anxiety, pessimism and foreboding, "Palestine is lost, nothing but blood is left". The poet felt the Ottoman government was lax about its policy with regards to immigration and land sales when he proclaimed that "The colonization [of Palestine] has gone too far with none to stand out against it."

The poet must have been aroused and compelled to write this poem after reading about the Marj Ibn 'Amir incident in the press, which resulted in the peasants becoming homeless. Home, the poet proclaims, when it is lost to strangers, leads to exile and

estrangement, but it also leads to despair, anguish and death: “You will suffer and weep with blood, when weeping tears becomes of no avail”. He foresees that once exile happens, it is too late to remedy the problem. This accounts for his urgency and his call to “shed blood instead of tears”. He shouts at the people to revolt against “[t]his disease” that “has become grave” and “overcome it with real remedies” by fighting against it, since that is their only hope at saving their country and saving their honor.

The Arabs have sold your dignity, O Valley of Ibn ‘Amr:  
The children of the West are like the offspring of a lioness  
While the children of the East seize each other’s throat...  
Janin, Zar’in, and Beith-Shean are in danger  
And Wasilat al Dahr in confusion,  
Exile is awaiting at the gate-  
So Strangers are warning us  
As they wait lustfully watching us. (9)  
Burhan al-Din al-‘Abushi

A poem written by Burhan al-Din al-‘Abushi , “The Sad Valley”, specifically addresses this particular problem and also depicts the possibility of exile. He addresses the problem that is “awaiting at the gate”, in which the “strangers” are “lustfully watching us” as they “wait” the demise of the country. But in this poem al-‘Abushi mentions the dignity that ties the land to the people; thus when the people lose their land, they also lose their dignity and self-respect, “The Arabs have sold your dignity, O Valley of Ibn ‘Amr”. He not only blames the “children of the West” for their possible exile, but also the “children of the East” for their separatist attitude as they bicker amongst each

other, instead of taking an active role in preventing their country from being sold to “strangers.”

Mislead by our patience with them for some time, they disdainfully tried to steal our country. And so, if we do not prove to them our willingness to die [for our land], I swear they will snatch what is left from our hands.

People! You have been enjoying your sleep, satisfied with humility and a disgraceful life. May God have mercy upon the dead who lived and died honourably.

O Palestine! This situation has lasted too long.

Woe unto my people, are there no more men among them?

Our enemies have gone too far in their iniquity.

Thus, when they found us careless they became more aggressive, looking down upon us and our patriotism.

Palestine! Your children have been unfaithful to you. Living in you has become blameworthy. I wonder, have heaven and earth become sterile? If not, why do they not give birth to great men?

O God! Have mercy upon the distressed land. (10)

Sulayman al-Taji al-Faruqi (1912)

A poem written in 1912 by another poet, Sulayman al-Taji al-Faruqi, warns the “children” of Palestine to be faithful to their land, or else it will be snatched from “their hands.” This poem also ties loss of home with honor, and how honorably men have died for their country in the past and that now there are “no men” willing to fight and die for their country. The poet laments over this disgrace that will befall the country if the “people” who are “enjoying” their “sleep” and are “satisfied with humility and a disgraceful life” don’t rise up against the “enemies” who are stealing “our country”. In this poem, the poet calls for a leader to lead people to fight, otherwise, honor as well as land will be lost.

The poems of these three authors fearfully predict the exile awaiting the Arabs in Palestine if colonization by “the strangers” continues. There is also anger towards the complacency of the people for not taking an active role in preventing land sales. All the poems address land as being associated with honor, dignity, and self-respect: thus, once the land is gone, then everything else is gone also. They also call for strong leadership in uniting the people to revolt against their country’s take over by strangers, since that is the only remedy at preventing their exile.

These poems by Muhammad Is’af al-Nashashibi, Burhan al-Din al-‘Abushi, and Sulayman al-Taji al-Faruqi were written before the Balfour Declaration, and before the Arab Revolt against the Turks. At that time, before World War 1 began, the Arabs were still living in Palestine. It seems that the poets foresaw the future better than the rest of society. Their anxiety had stemmed from the current events taking place around them, such as the land sales by the JNF, which led to the peasants’ eviction, the Zionist Congresses taking place every year, which the press continued to report on, and the Ottoman government’s apathy towards their claim.

In May 1911, several Arab deputies from Jerusalem raised the question of Zionism in the Chamber before the Ottoman Parliament, but most deputies in the Chamber weren’t interested. One deputy after hearing the deputies from Jerusalem speak passionately about the reasons why they wished to curtail land sales to Zionist and immigration, retorted, “Let the speaker publish his words in the official gazette and stop wasting our time!”(11) But the three Arab deputies speculated that eventually if things continued as

so, this potentially threatening phenomenon would inevitably lead to the loss of their homeland.

## ARAB REVOLT AGAINST THE TURKS

The Arabs throughout the Empire were ready to revolt against Turkish authority once World War 1 began. They were secretly meeting and active in societies against the Turks, as Arab nationalism was becoming popular in the consciousness of many Arabs living throughout the Ottoman Empire. They held an Arab Congress in Paris in 1913 attended by twenty-five persons, Christians and Moslems, all from the area of Bilad-al-Sham. They declared that as Arabs they wanted to reform the Empire and to participate in modern civilization. They looked to Europe for help. (12) Already in 1913, thirty-five Arab deputies had sent a letter to Husayn, the Sharif of Mecca of the Hashimite family, telling him in the letter that they were ready to revolt and rise against the Turkish Empire.(13)

Tension between Arabs and Turks culminated when Husayn, the Sharif of Mecca, led a revolt against the Ottoman Sultan. Sharif Husayn and an Arab force fought alongside the Allied forces in the Hijaz on June 10, 1916. (14) He was encouraged by the British who promised Arab independence in return for their help as well as to grant the entire area of Bilad-al Sham to them once the Ottoman Empire was defeated and dismantled. The Arabs in Palestine also participated in the revolt against the Turkish Ottomans since

they too wished to be independent and free from Turkish rule. Therefore, the Arabs throughout the Empire revolted against the Turks, fighting alongside the Allied forces.

#### THE 1915 HUSAYN- MACMAHON CORRESPONDENCE

The Husayn-MacMahon Correspondence was a series of letters sent between Sir Henry MacMahon, the British High Commissioner in Egypt, and Sharif Husayn b. 'Ali, dated July 14, 1915. These promised Arab independence, with Sharif Husayn to become King of Syria, in return for Arab allegiance to the British in fighting against the Turks. Sharif Husayn willingly aligned with the British, and he became the leader in recruiting many Arabs throughout the Empire to revolt. However, Britain had other plans for the area, unbeknownst to Sharif Husayn and the Arabs. (15)

#### THE 1916 SYKES-PICOT AGREEMENT

The Sykes-Picot Agreement of May 1916 was a secret agreement made by Britain and France through their Foreign Ministers, Sir Mark Sykes and Georges Picot. They were to divide Greater Syria between them, thus separating the entire area into five distinct parts: “part was to be under British control, part under French, part to be a British sphere of influence, and part a French sphere of influence, and Palestine would fall into a special category.” (16)

The Arabs were not aware of this secret agreement until after it was revealed by the Bolshevik Government in November 1917 after the Russian Revolution. But of course, after they heard, Arab forces fighting the Turks became disillusioned by this fact. Faysal, the Sharif's son, notified his father saying he couldn't fight anymore after learning this fact. But Sharif Husayn, after getting reassurance from London, cabled his son to continue, which his son did. (17)

### THE 1917 BALFOUR DECLARATION

Unfortunately, for Palestine more bad news came later that would affect it permanently, but which was concealed from the Arabs prior to its inception; this was the Balfour Declaration of 1917. This declaration was previously negotiated with the Zionists, who at the time were under the leadership of Dr. Chaim Weizmann. It was forwarded to Lord Rothschild, an English Jew active in the Zionist movement. (18)

On Nov. 2, 1917 the famous Balfour Declaration was issued by Great Britain sent by Arthur Balfour, the British Foreign Secretary, in the form of a letter to Lord Rothschild:

Dear Lord Rothschild,

I have much pleasure in conveying to you, on behalf of his Majesty's government, the following declaration of sympathy with Jewish Zionist aspirations which has been submitted to, and approved by, the cabinet.

"His Majesty's Government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine, or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country."

I should be grateful if you would bring this declaration to the knowledge of the Zionist federation.(19)

Calling the Arabs of Palestine not by name but referring to them as the non-Jewish communities, sent a message of total disregard to their rights and to their majority status, which at that time was 90 per cent of the population, owning 95 per cent of the land.

Britain wanted to serve its own interest in the region and therefore used both peoples for that purpose. It used the Arabs to fight off the Turks and the Jews to create an imbalance of power in Greater Syria in an attempt to stave off the Arab Nationalism that was fermenting throughout the area. Great Britain also wished to control Palestine primarily for its strategic position. Palestine was valuable to them as it was close to the Suez Canal, of which they wanted full control, and it provided a communication base around the Middle East, which they also wanted to control. Therefore, unlike the Ottoman Turks, who never cared about Palestine except for its religious significance, Great Britain saw Palestine as its lifeline to control the Middle East. Palestine was made the pipeline outlet to the Mediterranean for the oil wells in Iraq. The British also constructed an international airport in Lydda, and a port in Haifa. (20)

## PALESTINE UNDER BRITISH MANDATE

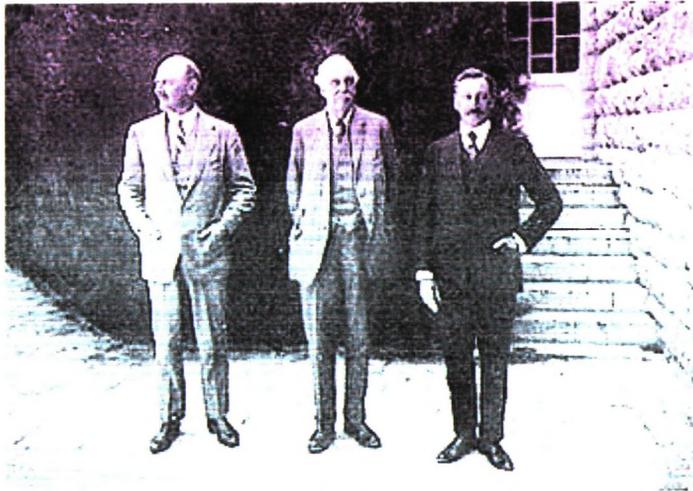


Figure 2. Lord Balfour, Field-Marshal Lord Allenby, and Sir Herbert Samuel, Jerusalem, April 1925 courtesy of PASSIA ([passia.org](http://passia.org))

In 1917, General Allenby occupied Palestine, and it came under the British military regime until 1920. Then in April 1920, Great Britain was entrusted by the Supreme Council of the Allied Powers held at San Remo to be the Mandatory power in Palestine. On July 1, 1920 a civil administration replaced the military regime and an English Jew, Sir Herbert Samuel, became High Commissioner of Palestine.

This intensified Palestinians' reactions to the Mandate, since the Mandate was committed to facilitate the creation of a "Jewish national home", which they, of course, opposed. Three months before, in March 1920, leaders from Syria and Palestine held a Congress in Damascus and declared Faysal King of Greater Syria. They also refused to accept the creation of a Jewish commonwealth, Jewish immigration and the Balfour

Declaration. They refused to accept also the separation of Palestine and Lebanon from Syria. (21) Both Britain and France retaliated against the Congress's decisions by refusing to accept their demands; thus, expelling Faysal from Syria, and dethroning him as King of Syria when the French forces entered Damascus on July 25, 1920. However, Britain then made him King of Iraq, which was under the British Mandate, and Husayn's second son, Amir Abdullah was given Transjordan in return for his promise of not rebelling against the French in Syria.



Figure 3. Map of Palestine and Transjordan under the British Mandate (wikipedia.org)

With the territories of Greater Syria given some sort of independence by the victors as promised in the McMahon-Husayn Correspondence, the Arabs of Palestine found themselves isolated from the rest of the Arab areas as they realized their independence was curtailed by the promise made by the British to the Zionists. The Palestinian's hopes and aspirations for independence were frustrated. They expressed their opposition by

appeals, arguments, demonstrations, riots, strikes and revolt. All to no avail as the Mandatory Government, Great Britain, ignored their demands to end its Mandate and to end its aim of creating a Jewish state on their homeland. Jewish immigration, mostly from Poland, Russia, and other eastern European countries increased, from 84,000 in 1922 to 150,000 in 1929. Jewish land sales increased also, which caused more evictions for the peasants, and more hardship as unemployment increased among the Arabs. This caused great disturbances between Jew and Arab and eventually would lead to outright civil war between the two peoples, as both were engrossed in preventing the other from standing in its way for independence from Britain's control over Palestine.

Palestinian Arabs feared and abhorred the British for restricting their efforts at preventing Jewish immigration, land sales and violence against them, and for arming the Jewish settlements that would lead to well-armed, well-trained Jewish forces, eventually becoming the Jewish army once the Mandate was over. These Jewish forces were the cause of the Palestinians' expulsion prior to the first Arab-Israeli War of 1948, as they terrorized the civilian population into leaving their homes and lands. One example was by the Irgun Zevai Leumi (Hebrew for National Military Organization), the Deir Yassin massacre, in which the members of that military organization brutally murdered 254 innocent civilians from that village.(22) This set the stage for instilling fear among the Palestinian residents in order for them to flee for their life.

After the Balfour Declaration, Palestinian Arabs' reaction towards Great Britain altered. At first they were happy that Britain replaced the Turks, but then they became

angry with the British when they realized that Britain was committed to facilitate its promise of creating Palestine as the national home for the Jews. This is depicted in the poetry written at the time.

A poem written by Ibrahim Baz al-Haddad expresses this gratitude towards the British:

“May Great Britain enjoy everlasting peace and glory. The day in which her forces reached us was an incomparable day. Yet words fail to describe the joy that pervaded Jerusalem then.”(23)

However, once Great Britain committed itself to fulfill its promise to the Zionists with the Balfour Declaration integrated into its charter for Mandated Palestine, the Palestinian Arabs felt deceived and betrayed by the British, since Great Britain had also promised them independence. This is expressed with a sense of betrayal by the poet Wadi’ al-Bustani after the Balfour Declaration in November 1917 became publicly known among the Palestinians.

“We opened our hearts to you, extended our hands; but I suspect that you may turn your back on us. I perceive an increasingly widening gulf separating us, you being on one bank and we on the other.  
In a room in this “Government House” I see concealed a rising palace of  
The “National Home.” (24)  
Wadi’ al-Bustani 1917

The poet begins by proclaiming how the people in Palestine trusted and welcomed the British after they had conquered the Ottoman Turks. But now he is aware of Britain’s

actual intentions with regards to Palestine, and how deceptive the British were. They are ignoring the Palestinians and have separated from them, and have aligned themselves with the Jews in order to fulfill their promise of creating the “National Home”.

The end of the Ottoman Empire had increased all the Arabs’ expectation for imminent national aspirations. This was granted eventually to all of the former areas of Bilad-al-Sham, except Palestine. Great Britain bypassed the Palestinians’ demand for independence and self-government. The Palestinian poet Wadi’ al-Bustani invoked this sense of despondency against the British. He wrote for all Palestinians who believed that as the majority in Palestine, they should have been consulted on this matter and given the opportunity to voice their concerns. But since the British disregarded their just claim over their land they believed to be their rightful home, the Palestinians began to see Great Britain as their enemy, not as their friend.



Figure 4. Aftermath of a Palestinian Demonstration protesting Zionist mass Immigration, New Gate, Jerusalem, 1933 courtesy of PASSIA ([passia.org](http://passia.org))

The Palestinians revolted in 1920 against mass Jewish immigration. In 1936, another revolt and a demonstration throughout Palestine occurred due to the influx of European Jews permitted to enter Palestine because of their persecution in Germany. This caused unrest as the revolt lasted until 1939. (25) The British authorities brought in additional British troops from Egypt and Malta to curb the revolts.(26) But Britain wasn't able to curtail the violence ensuing throughout the area as Jews and Arabs were now in constant strife with each other.

Thus the Balfour Declaration destabilized the country and instigated violence amongst its inhabitants. Two peoples, the Arab and Jew, were demanding a home on the same

space, but it was the Arabs, the indigenous people, who were threatened with dispossession.

#### FEAR BECOMES REALITY AS EXILE KNOCKS AT THE DOOR

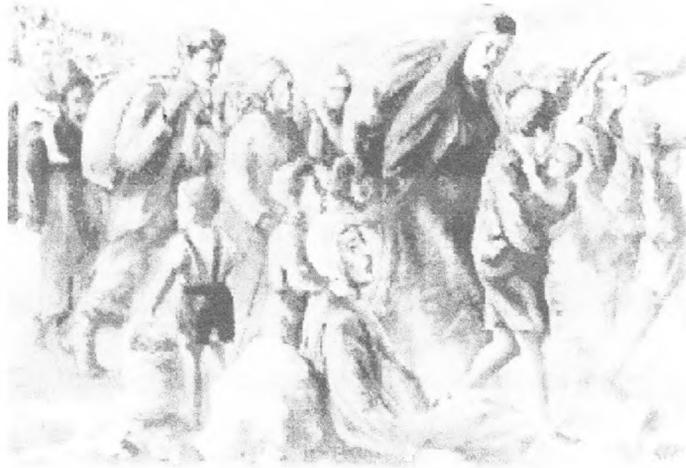


Figure 5. "The Exodus" 1953 by Ismail Shammout (Shammout.com)

By February 1947, Britain had had enough. Its control in Palestine was dwindling as more violence and terror erupted in the region. The notorious Stern Gang, an underground Zionist terrorist mob, did its best to terrorize British soldiers as protest against Britain's policy towards limiting Jewish immigration as stated in the White Paper issued in 1939. (27)

On April 2, 1947 Britain called on the United Nations to bring up the question of Palestine at its next session. The United Nations sent a special committee to Palestine, and they agreed that the best solution was to partition the country into two states, Arab

and Jewish. Jerusalem was to become international area. (See Appendix 5.) At that time, the Jewish population amounted to about 608,000 and owned about 5.67 per cent of the total land area of which only 15 per cent was cultivable (28), yet the Jewish state was allotted more land than the Arab state. The plan was accepted by 33 votes to 13, on November 29, 1947 General Assembly Resolution 181. (29) The Arabs rejected the partition plan and disorders broke out in the country.

Britain declared that she would withdraw from the country by May 15, 1948. On May 14, 1948 the Arab states from Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, Egypt, and Iraq sent their armies into Palestine, and war broke out between the Arab armies and the Jewish forces. On May 22, 1948, the Security Council of the United Nations adopted a resolution calling for a cease-fire. On July 9, 1948, fighting was resumed and a second cease-fire was accepted on July 18. In 1949, Armistice agreements were signed between Israel on the one hand and Egypt, Lebanon, Jordan, and Syria on the other.

As a result of these cease-fire agreements, Israel took 77.4 per cent of the total area of Palestine, instead of the 56.47 per cent allotted to the Jewish state by the United Nations according to the 1947 plan. (See Appendix 3 and 5) By the time the last armistice agreement had been signed, the total number of Palestinian refugees who were expelled to neighboring Arab countries amounted to about 750,000. An estimated 160,000 remained in Israel, representing about 13.6 per cent of the total population in Israel. (30)

One of the reasons the Palestinians rejected the partition of their country was that they constituted 92 per cent of the population and owned 90 per cent of the land. (See

Appendix 4) They saw this as an unfair redistribution of land, since they were the majority and owned most of the land, much of it being fertile and prosperous. Another reason they had rejected the partition plan was that the areas allocated to the Jewish state comprised the most fertile, cultivable land in all of Palestine, while the Arab state was allotted the arid, barren land, which was unreasonable for the Palestinians, since many owned properties and ran prosperous citrus- crop businesses, olive- oil businesses, and many other businesses that were now within the Israeli state. They had the choice of remaining under Israeli authority, or leaving their businesses and homes and moving to the Arab state. The Palestinians couldn't accept this as it was unfair and unjust for them, and only benefited the Jewish state. What ensued afterwards was war between the two, but the Palestinians were ignorant of the superior strength the Jews formed and the help they received from British forces, and foreign countries in massively supplying them with weapons. (31)

The Arabs' inferior strength and lack of modern weapons eventually led to their defeat. The villages and towns in Palestine were not defended by any armies, but were defended by the civilian population refusing to leave their homes, and properties. Eventually, the Arabs' inferior strength led to their expulsion. They were forced to leave their homes, and were forbidden to take anything with them. Some towns and villages signed a peace agreement with the Haganah , a Zionist military force, in which the Arabs were to remain in their homes and on their properties. But the Haganah went against its word and expelled all the inhabitants in the area it had signed a peace

agreement with. (32) Many other villages and towns fled out of fear as the thought of the Deir Yassin massacre overwhelmed them.

However, all the inhabitants of those towns and villages that fled or were expelled had only thought it to be temporary and had anticipated their return once the fighting stopped. But that never happened, as their homes and businesses became the inalienable rights of Israel at the minute Israel was declared a State. More than 400 villages were destroyed, with the intent of ensuring that the Arab population would never return. United Nations Resolution 181, which was accepted by Israel, stated that the 900,000 Arabs were to be protected as the citizens of the new State, but “instead they were expelled, massacred, and uprooted.”(33) And afterwards, General Assembly Resolution 194 of December 11, 1948 gave Palestinian refugees the option of return or compensation, which Israel to this day refuses to implement. (34) Palestine ceased to exist.

The Jewish state was declared on May 15, 1948. Jordan and Egypt annexed what remained of Palestine, and it then became the Jordanian West Bank, and Egyptian Gaza. Thus Palestine was divided into three parts- Israel, the West Bank, and Gaza. The Palestinian Arabs became subjected to the country that claimed authority over them. Their aspirations for independence and autonomy promised to them by the British, and the inalienable right of every citizen living in their homeland, was denied to them. Their dignity and humanity were usurped from them as they became “displaced Arab refugees”. They resented their situation, and blamed everyone for their fate: the British, the Zionist, Jordan, Egypt, and the rest of the Arab world, as they believed they had all

helped in the formation of Israel, and in the annihilation of their existence as Palestinians. Their national aspirations for Statehood, granted to their Arab neighbors- Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, and Jordan- was denied to them. The Nakba, the Catastrophe, became the fate of all Palestinians, thus imbedded in their collective memory as a people suffering the same fate; displacement and dispossession from their homeland.

### THE PALESTINIAN'S FORMIDABLE FATE

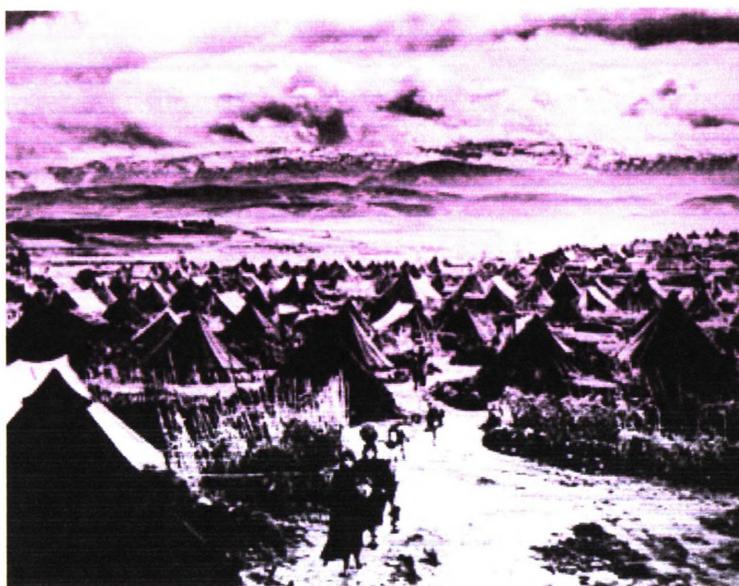


Figure 6. "Tents" Palestinian refugee camp at Nahr al-Barid in northern Lebanon, Winter, 1948 (UNRWA photo) (PalestineRemembered.com)

The Palestinians had left unwillingly from their homes, and their livelihood, but it had never occurred to them they were leaving permanently. But that wasn't the case. Their expulsion became permanent, and their status became that of permanent exiles. Many

were living in abhorrent refugee camps set up by UNRWA (United Nations Relief and Works Agency) in January, 1949, to deal with the Palestinian Refugees, as it vowed to protect the refugees and the rights they had under international law. (35) Whether in Beirut, Iraq, Jordan, or Gaza , the West Bank, or some other country, the Palestinian Arabs faced the same fate and experienced the same tragedy inflicted on them. They were shaken and shocked by this cruel fate imposed on them by colonizers and foreigners forcing them off their homeland. They couldn't understand this predicament that left them homeless and placeless. To the Palestinians, they didn't deserve such a cruel fate, because they were far from the treacherous fate the Jews faced in Europe, especially Germany. They were confused as to why they were the scapegoat for what the Europeans did to the Jews, and why their homeland had to be the safe haven for the Jews when it was the Germans who were the cruelest to the Jews. They couldn't understand why they had to sacrifice their livelihood in order to implement a homeland for the Jews. How could a just solution expel them from their homeland.

Even as late as 1937, during the Palestinian rebellion for independence, the Royal Commission on Palestine said:

"An able Arab exponent of the Arab case told us that the Arabs throughout their history have not only been free from anti-Jewish sentiment but have also shown that the spirit of compromise is deeply rooted in their life. There is no decent-minded person, he said, who would not want to do everything humanly possible to relieve the distress of those persons, provided that it was not at the cost of inflicting a corresponding distress on another people." (36)

The Palestinian Arab's only criticism was toward what Zionism wished to accomplish, because once Zionism's goal was accomplished, the land would cease to be Arab. The Palestinians refused to accept this, but ironically this is what eventually happened.

Their despair and anguish at their situation became themes in literature and poetry. Prior to 1948 poetry depicted a fear of losing home, but it didn't reflect the actual loss of home, therefore pre 1948 literature was void of contrasting home and exile because the Arabs were still rooted in place, and not yet displaced from their home. After 1948, literature transformed as it became the voice of the refugees wailing and waiting to return home as they were in exile. Whether they lived in Israel, the neighboring Arab countries, or afar from both, they felt alienated in their foreign homes, as they longed to return to their rooted home, Palestine.

I will argue throughout the rest of my paper that exile is depicted as the antithesis of home, and that by defining exile in opposition to home, Palestinian literature attempts to depict what home really means to each of the different Palestinian authors.

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OpenDocument

“The Origins and Evolution of the Palestine Problem: 1917-1988

Part 1, 1917-1947 (June 30, 1990)

## CHAPTER TWO

### THE POETRY OF MAHMOUD DARWISH



Figure 7. Mahmoud Darwish courtesy of PASSIA ([passia.org](http://passia.org))

“You have your glory, we have our glory.

Ah, the country where we see only what is not seen: our secret” (1)

Mahmoud Darwish “We Go to a Country”

Mahmoud Darwish was born in the village of al-Birwa, Palestine in 1942, an area near Akka (Acre). His father was a farmer, owning a small plot of land which was his livelihood. In 1948, al-Birwa was attacked by the Zionist armed forces, and eventually was destroyed. During the ensuing attacks, the Darwishes, along with other villagers fled in the middle of night, to nearby Lebanon for refuge, just until the fighting ceased, so they hoped. They then planned to return to their homes. Their refuge lasted about a year,

but when they crossed the border from Lebanon to their village, they found it desecrated and found themselves aliens and refugees on their own homeland. Because they weren't there for the first Israeli census, after the State of Israel was declared in 1948, they were considered "present absent aliens", treated as second class residents, along with the remaining 13 per cent Palestinian population that either remained, or that had somehow crept back into the state after they fled, as the Darwishes did.

About 160,000 former Palestinian Arabs remained in Israel, and were referred to as 'internal refugees', legally classified as "present-absent aliens". The newly "alienated" Palestinians fell under military rule that constantly kept them under surveillance. With the newly founded state, there came much destruction to the old landscape of historical Palestine. Israel transformed the landscape into an image constructed to fit in with the newly established state. The state destroyed about 400 villages and homes and expropriated all Arab property, under the auspices of the Absentee Property Law that entitled the Israeli custodian of all "absentee property" to sell Arab lands more or less at will. (2)

Even though all the "absentees" fled out of terror and were waiting anxiously to return willingly to their rightful properties, they were forbidden to. Thus, as the property was regarded as "absentee", the state had the right to confiscate the land and claim it as state property. Homes and property formerly owned by Arabs were given to newly arriving Jewish immigrants to reside in. (3)

Ilan Pappé sums this up in his book, [A History of Modern Palestine](#):

“The tragedy of the loss of more villages was further highlighted by the hasty erection of new Jewish settlements on top of the 370 Palestinian villages destroyed in the 1948 war and on the land of those evicted after the war. In July 1949, Ben-Gurion personally supervised a large project to give Hebrew names to all places, mountains, valleys, springs, and roads, etc. in the country. This act of “memoricide” was completed in 1951.” (4)

The intention behind this “act of memoricide” was to erase the land of its previous Arab past. The United Nations Resolution 194 would then become difficult to implement, as it called for the right of refugees to return to their homes, or repatriation. But since Israel immediately razed Arab villages to the ground, changed all villages to Hebrew names, any Arab attempt of returning would become difficult.(5) This was stipulated by the United Nations on Israel that it must abide by UN Resolutions in order to become a member of the United Nations, which it did on May 11, 1949. (6) But Israel never fulfilled this resolution, since all the refugees were forbidden to return and were not given any reparations. The refugees remained stranded in horrible conditions living in UNRWA camps, awaiting their return. Another reason for this hasty reformation is what Paul Ricoeur says in his book Memory, History and Forgetting:

“... the prime danger, at the end of this path, lies in the handling of authorized, imposed, celebrated, commemorated history- of official history. The resource of narrative then becomes the trap, when higher powers take over this employment and impose a canonical narrative by means of intimidation or seduction, fear or flattery. A devious form of forgetting is at work here, resulting from stripping the social actors of their original power to recount their actions themselves. But this dispossession is not without a secret complicity, which makes forgetting a semi-passive, semi-active

behavior, as is seen in forgetting by avoidance (fuite), the expression of bad faith and its strategy of evasion motivated by an obscure will not to inform oneself, not to investigate the harm done by the citizen's environment, in short by a wanting-not-to-know.”(7)

In other words, Ricoeur is claiming that there is a willfully imposed history justified by narratives authorized by higher powers. This “devious form of forgetting” results from intentionally constructed narratives in which forgetting becomes a “secret complicity” at what actually happened. Therefore, whatever had happened in the past is intentionally forgotten, and “a wanting-not-to-know” ensues among the higher powers. Ilan Pappé call this “memoricide”, the murder of the past, since it disclaims the land of any Arab past. Israel eradicated many Arab villages and replaced them with Jewish settlements all having Hebrew names. The new leaders had transformed the landscape of Palestine into a distinctive Israeli landscape by quickly eliminating any signs of an Arab past that identified it with Palestine. Arab villages were razed, and Hebrew names replaced all Arab names. Arab towns and villages that once reverberated with heavy Arab presence were silenced of their past, as Israel desecrated all signs of any distinctive Arab presence. Israel had completely changed the entire region and the new leaders of the Israeli state had stripped the land of its historic being.(8) Again, Ilan Pappé sums this up in his book A History of Modern Palestine:

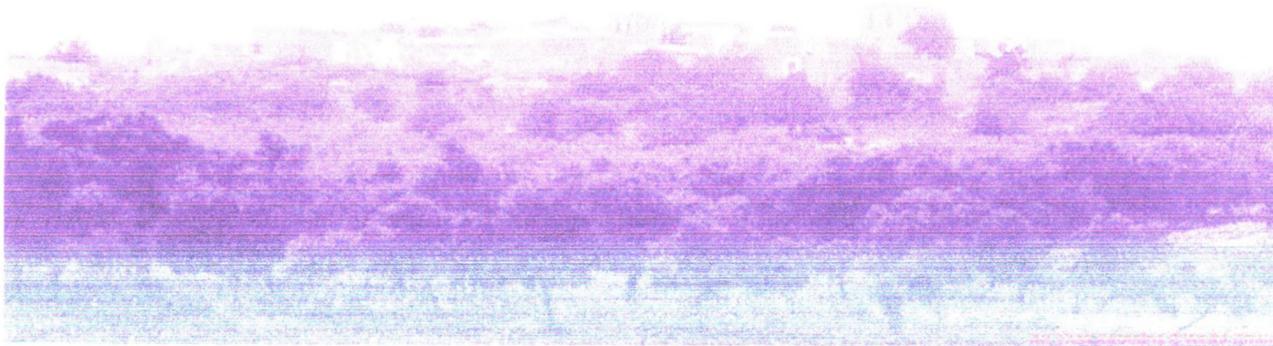
“Half of the villages had been destroyed, flattened by Israeli bulldozers which had been at work since August 1948 when the government had decided either to turn them into cultivated land or to build new Jewish settlements on their remains. A naming committee granted the new settlements Hebraized versions of the original Arab names. Lubyia became Lavi, and Safuria Zipori, although Iteit retained its original name. David Ben-Gurion explained that this was done as part of an attempt to prevent future claim to

the villages. It was also supported by the Israeli archaeologists, who had authorized the names as returning the map to something resembling “ancient Israel.” (9)

Once the new Jewish immigrants resided in what formerly was Palestine, but was now the new State of Israel, it seemed to them that the former landscape had never existed because of their lack of personal memories related to that place, rather, it appeared that the newly transformed landscape with its Hebrew names had always been there.

However, memories from the past were not stripped from the Palestinians as they kept its memories frozen in their minds, as lieu de memoire “sites..in which a residual sense of continuity remains” but “dominated sites...where the living heart of memory still beats.”(10)

#### AFTER, HE REMAINS..



*The village of al-Birwa from a distance. (1928) (AL BIRWA)*

Figure 8. Village of al-Birwa (1928) courtesy of PalestineRemembered.com

“My freedom is not to be as they want me to be,  
but to enlarge my prison cell,  
and carry on my song of the door.” (11)  
Mahmoud Darwish

The Darwishes settled in a village near their destroyed village, Dayr al-Asad, where young Darwish grew up, and attended school. Along with the rest of the Palestinians, they experienced shock, disillusionment, confusion, and alienation. They became a national-minority against their will and were forced to cope with a foreign and hostile reality unable even to utter the word Palestinian, for fear of being arrested or deported. (12) Darwish became aware of his new living environment at a fairly young age when at 8 years old, during the anniversary of Israel’s beginnings, he recited a poem in school that he had written himself, and the reaction to it affected him dearly. He doesn’t remember exactly the whole poem but he distinctly remembers its theme. It was a poem between an Arab boy and a Jewish boy:

“You can play in the sun as you please, and have your toys,  
but I can’t.  
You have a house, and I have none.  
You have celebrations, but I have none.  
Why can’t we play together? (13)

Afterwards, the military governor threatened him that if he continued to write this kind of poetry, his father would be fired from working in the quarry. (14) However, this didn’t deter him from continuing to write provocative poetry which repeatedly got him in trouble with the state as he was frequently imprisoned and forbidden to leave his village.

But what helped him during his time in Israel was joining the Communist Party (Rakah) at age 19, which was the only Party that defended the rights of the Arabs and called for coexistence between Arabs and Jews.

Eventually, he became a very well known poet in Israel, attracting large crowds whenever he held recitations. Presently, he is the poet laureate of the Palestinians throughout the world. After a long struggle living in his homeland, he left Israel for good in 1970, settling in France then permanently settling in Ramallah. He wanted to return to his former village in Galilee, where his ailing mother still resided, but was forbidden by Israel to ever enter that country again. However, he was given permission by the State to visit Galilee once after leaving in 1970, on the invitation of a well known Palestinian author, also residing in Israel, Emil Habiby. (15)

Darwish's poetry holds echoes of memories from a past on a land that once was home, but now has become estranged from him. But for Darwish, his homeland "was only lost to sight, not to the memory." (16)

His poetry depicts the past as home and the present as exile, and by reading it we understand what home means to him. He feels alienated in his home in the present after his home was transformed into Israel, and was effaced of its Arab past. What is prevalent in his poetry is the refusal of his separation from a past that once was and the present that has become. The past and the present were connected, since for him the land of Historic Palestine had stayed the same. He depicts his home in the present, in Israel, as being alienated and estranged from him and how that affected him personally. It

embittered him and left him feeling empty and sad at his predicament. The new leaders imposed strict regulations against the native Arabs and instilled oppressive laws against them. They also refused to acknowledge the Arabs' existence as Palestinians and of their historical roots on what was once Palestine. Instead, they refer to them as non-Jews or Arab-Israeli, without any mention of their identity as Palestinians. What ensued was a deprivation of their actual identity and their actual heritage on their homeland as the native inhabitants. Darwish resists this willful forgetfulness purposely imposed on his true identity as a Palestinian by the new state. His poetry is full of his proud heritage and its ancient roots tied to the land of historic Palestine. Therefore, Darwish depicts home in the past as it once was for him, and home in the present as a deprivation of this home. He feels exiled, even though he still lived on his homeland. The past in his poetry becomes his means of explaining what home means to him, a place he longs for and a place that is his affirmation of his right on this land. The present in his poetry portrays displacement, alienation and estrangement and has turned him into a stranger on his homeland. He depicts this tension between past and present, home and exile in his poetry.

His poem "To My Grandfather" refers to the past in which his grandfather is represented as being deeply rooted on the land:

"Face of my grandfather! Cheerless Prophet.  
What grave sends you forth, wearing a vest the color of rock, stained with ancient  
blood,  
Garbed in a cloak the color of soil?  
Sorrow of a field that holds mortal remains,  
Olive trees and tired wind"(17)

His references to “prophet”, “ancient blood,” and “olive trees” depicts home as being firmly rooted in place with a long heritage. His combination of the cloak and the soil suggest that person and land are inseparable, but the present depicts the field, which holds mortal remains and olive trees, is being full of sorrow.

Comparing Darwish’s poem with another poem, written in 1925, by a Jewish immigrant who had recently arrived in Palestine from Poland, contrasts what home means to both poets.

“I walked in you in the town I left  
In your city, in my town.  
My City that’s behind your back.  
And Myself me, toward you I left.  
And in the city, I have no funerals  
Except of Achad Ha-am, Bialid, Nordau” (18)  
Avot Yeshurun

Avot Yeshurun’s poem speaks of a recent home, “I walked in you in the town I left.” He refers to his home he had left as “My city” and his new home as “the city”, which seems to depict that he still feels an attachment to his previous home more than he does his new home. Also, in his new home he has “no funerals” which means that he lacks having any ancient ties to his new home, “Except of Achad Ha-am, Bialid, Nordau”, who were also European Jewish immigrants that were buried in Palestine.

When Avot Yeshurun proclaims that his only “funerals” are of recent Jewish immigrants, he is saying that his residency in that city is only recent; therefore, he can’t claim of having ancient roots as Darwish can. Darwish speaks as a native on the soil of

his ancestors, but Yeshurun speaks as an alien on the soil not of his ancestors.

Yeshurun's reference to the three peoples that were buried in the city he lives in the present are a few founders of Zionism who were recently buried in the cemetery in Tel Aviv, a new city in Palestine, founded in 1909. Therefore, what this poem makes clear is that the author, a recent Jewish European immigrant, can't claim of having rootedness in the land of Palestine, and lack of having any personal memories that tie him to the land's past. But Darwish can't distance himself from the land, as soil and person become one. He is firmly rooted in the land of Palestine because of his ancient ties to the land, and his reference to the ghost of his grandfather wearing a vest the color of rock, stained with ancient blood. His reference to "ancient blood" depict his ancestors' long heritage on the land. "Historical time becomes the central dimension to the idea of home"(19) states Theano S. Terkenli in his article "Home as a Region" thus, affirming Darwish's claim.

Darwish's poem "Identity Card" (1964) also depicts ancient ties to a past and responds to the daily harassment ensued from the military governor who refused to even identify Palestinians by name:

"Write down!  
I am an Arab  
And the number of my card is fifty thousand.  
I have eight children  
And the ninth is coming after the summer.  
Does this anger you?  
Write Down!  
I am an Arab.  
I work with comrades of toil in a quarry,  
And I have eight children,  
For them I wrest a loaf of bread,

Clothes and school books  
From the rocks,  
And do not ask for alms at your door  
Or lower myself at your doorstep.  
Does this anger you?  
Write down!  
I am an Arab  
You stole my forefathers groves  
And the land I used to till,  
I and all my children;  
And you left nothing but these rocks  
For us and all my grandchildren  
Yet, will your government take them too,  
As is being said?  
Then write down!...at the top of page one:  
I neither hate others  
Nor do I steal their property,  
But if I become hungry  
The flesh of my usurper shall I eat,  
So beware...beware of my hunger  
And of my anger.” (20)  
Mahmoud Darwish “Identity Card” 1964

This poem describes a past that once was home to his “forefathers” and land that was tilled by him, as it was tilled by his forefathers. In the past, the narrator was dependent on his groves as the source of income which supported his family. But presently, he has only rocks to till since his groves were taken away from him, depriving him of his rightful claim over his forefathers’ land. Now he has to work in a quarry just to “wrest a loaf of bread” to feed his family.

Therefore, he the narrator of the poem is saying that many peasants, the largest population that lived in Palestine, had remained on the land after Israel was declared a

state. Because they were small farmers and lived in rural areas, their livelihood depended on agriculture. But when their land was usurped by the state, and they were made to live in urban areas, their lifestyle changed dramatically. Before, they had lived as small farmers on their land, earning a living off their crops, and now they have to work for others, earning meager wages and just barely feeding their family. For Darwish it seems that the past was once a place that was ideal as it expressed the idea of home as being self-sufficient, and made its residents content.

The narrator of the poem is stating that his “forefathers” tilled the same groves he did, linking his ancestors land with his own land. This was a time he didn’t have to “wrest a loaf of bread” since he and his family had enough to eat. The present for him is full of despair and hopelessness as he is only given “rocks” to till. The present signifies a barren and desolate existence, whereas the past signifies fertility and prosperity. Helplessness and vulnerability develop in him since his future becomes an unknown, forsaken destiny because “even the rocks might be taken away from him by the government” as is being said. His pride of his Arab heritage sustains his integrity as he refuses to “ask for alms” and “neither hates others” nor “steals their property”. However, the “flesh of my usurper” will be eaten if life becomes so unbearable that his only choice is to forcefully resist.

Thus, the poem suggests a past having ancient ties to Palestine, it resonates with a proud Arab heritage, and it evokes the security and wealth once held by Palestinians before the State of Israel was declared. But now in the present, the poem depicts the

hardship endured by the Palestinians living in Israel as they are denied their rights, their identity, and their land. They live as impoverished people on their homeland, in which their property and their identity was usurped by the State.

### THE BELOVED AS HOME

“My homeland is not a traveling bag,  
nor am I a passing traveler.  
It is I who am the lover  
and the land is my beloved. (21)  
Mahmoud Darwish “Memoirs of a Palestinian Wound”

Darwish’s link with the past expresses a deep attachment and a deep longing for home. Since the land now called Israel was constructed on Palestine’s soil, the land itself becomes a “*lieu de memoire*”, inhibiting forgetting (22), and what Pierre Nora describes as dominated sites, “places of refuge”, where the living heart of memory still beats. (23) Darwish invokes this in his poetry as he refers to Palestine as his Beloved.

His poem “A Lover from Palestine” (1966) sheds light on his personal emotional feelings towards a place that is cherished and esteemed by him in which he refers to Palestine as his Beloved, who still lives in his inmost feelings and appears to him wherever he goes, and in whatever he sees. Historical Palestine may have been lost from sight, but not from memory.

Your eyes are a thorn in my heart;

It stings me, yet I adore it  
and protect it from the wind.  
I thrust it deeper and deeper  
beyond darkness and pain,  
so that its wound kindles the lights of lamps  
and makes from my present days a future for her  
[which] is dearer to me than my soul.  
Yesterday, I saw you at the harbour  
traveling without relations or provisions.  
I ran to you like an orphan,  
questioning the wisdom of our forefathers:

    “How can the green fruit grove  
    after being dragged to a prison,  
    an exile and a harbour, remain green  
    in spite of its travels  
    and in spite of the scent of salt and longing?

I saw you on the mountains covered  
with thorny plants,  
a shepherdess without sheep,  
harried amidst the ruins,  
you were a garden for me,  
I, who have been turned into a stranger.  
I saw you in rays of tears and wounds,  
you, a lung in my chest,  
you, the voice of my lips,  
you, the water and the fire for me.  
I saw you at the mouth of the cave,  
hanging the rags of your orphans on a line.  
I saw you in the songs of orphanhood and  
misery,  
I saw you in every drop of the sea  
and in every grain of sand,  
beautiful as the earth,  
beautiful as children  
and beautiful as jasmine.

I swear to you:  
I shall weave a scarf from my eyelashes  
embroidered with verses for your eyes,  
and with your name on it.  
A name when watered  
with the praises of my chanting heart

will make the trees spread its branches again.  
I shall write few words on the scarf  
more precious  
than kisses and the blood of martyrs:  
“Palestinian she was,  
And Palestinian she remains.”(24)  
Mahmoud Darwish “A Lover From Palestine” 1966

He describes his Beloved as “a shepherdess without sheep” and he as an “orphan” who has been turned “into a stranger”, a home that was once “a garden for him” but now is “covered with thorny plants.” But everywhere he sees his Beloved because she still remains his Beloved, even though she was “dragged to a prison, an exile”. She is still beautiful and one day he “will make the trees spread its branches again” thus referring to the soil still loyal to its roots.

Darwish’s poem “Psalm 8” the past still resonates in his memory as everywhere he looks, he remembers Historical Palestine as it was when it was home for him, but now as a stranger, he is alienated from it, and has become an orphan. Darwish can’t relinquish his love from his Beloved, because she is always in his sight. His longing for her agonizes him, that only in death will his Beloved be relinquished from him:

“Why don’t you wash your hands of me  
So that I may stop dying again and again?  
Tell me just the once  
Our love is over,  
So I may be capable of dying and departure.  
Die, so that I may mourn you,  
Or be my wife so that I may  
Know what betrayal looks like,  
Just the once.”(25)

## Mahmoud Darwish "Psalm 8"

Darwish's poem "Psalm 8" doesn't refer to the past, but to the present as he feels alienated from his Beloved. He neither can have her, nor can he feel "wedded" to her since if she becomes his bride, she will still betray him as she presently belongs to someone else. He is in deep distress over his Beloved, and feels separated from her, however he feels hopeless and helpless to end this affair.

### A CLEARLY DEFINED HOME

Darwish's poem "I Belong There" echoes his strong sense of what home means to him: a place in which he can have a normal existence shared with his family and friends inside a house that doesn't feel like a prison cell. He aches to live in his home that accepts him on condition that he belongs there as its native son. This is one of his poems written after 1970, when he had left Israel permanently, yet it resonates with a longing to be able to return to home in which he can feel the security and the carefree existence in which everyone else feels living in their home, but of which is denied to him. Because of his assertion that "I belong there", he lives elsewhere, away from where he really wants to live:

"I belong there. I have many memories. I was born as everyone is born.  
I have a mother, a house with many windows, brothers, friends, and a prison cell  
With a chilly window! I have a wave snatched by seagulls, a panorama of my own.

I have a saturated meadow.. In the deep horizon of my word. I have a moon, a bird's sustenance, and an immortal olive tree.  
I have lived on the land long before swords turned man into prey.  
I belong there. When heaven mourns for her mother, I return heaven to Her mother.  
And I cry so that a returning cloud might carry my tears.  
To break the rules, I have learned all the words needed for a trial by blood.  
I have learned and dismantled all the words in order to draw from them a Single word: Home.(26)  
Mahmoud Darwish "I Belong There"

Darwish's state of mind is centered around a broadly defined home. "The core meaning of rootedness is found in the sense of literally belonging somewhere" (27), and Darwish has a clear conception of literally belonging somewhere, but the place is denied to him. This is exemplified in his having "many memories", "an immortal olive tree", and reference to a place in which he had lived "on the land long before swords turned man into prey." Darwish longs for a sense of stability, he "was born as everyone is born", and he, just like everyone else, deserves to live in their home. The core meaning of home, as Yi-Fu Tuan, a geographer and historian of space, defines it, is "a place where every day is multiplied by all the days before it" (28) and of which becomes the central idea of home for Darwish in this poem. He wants to take his home for granted, and not have to worry about living there, which for him it resembles more of a "prison cell" than of a home. His poem reflects this longing to be able to live in Palestine in which he can resume a normal life on its soil.

Emile Habiby, a Palestinian author who also lived inside Israel, wrote a novel in 1974, The Secret Life of Saeed : The Pessoptimist, that centers on the main character, Saeed,

a Palestinian Arab that miraculously remained in Israel after the Nakba. Saeed becomes loyal and submissive to the State of Israel as a means of survival and of staying on his homeland. He turns into an informant and a collaborator, working for the military officer and for the “Big Boss”, and continuously abiding by their orders. Innocently, Saeed offends the state, and the military governor becomes very angry with him. He concludes that Saeed was disloyal to the state, and may even harbor resentment against the state. The military governor proclaims, that Saeed secretly hopes to “return” to the homeland from the past:

“The big man has come to believe that the extravagance of your loyalty is only a way of concealing your disloyalty. He recalls your parentage and character and regards them as proof that you only pretend to be a fool. If you are innocent, why was it “Yuaad” (“to be returned) you loved, “Baqiyya” (“she who has remained”) you married, and “Walaah” (loyalty to the people and to the homeland) you had as a son? All these names are highly suspect to the state.” (29)

The military governor reacts severely against Saeed, imposing a beating and imprisonment. Confused and bewildered at the military governor’s severe reaction and harsh punishment, Saeed asks him perplexedly, “Has the big man ever stopped to ask why I was born only an Arab and could have only this as my country?”(30)

Saeed, by rhetorically asking the military governor that question, was asserting his right on his homeland in view of the fact that he was born on that land. Although in the past he was subservient and avoided any confrontation that may have upset the state against him, he couldn’t continue with his charade at pretending that his homeland was meaningless to him.

Both authors try to make sense of their dilemma in which as native sons on the land, it is their inherent right to live on it peacefully and freely, but in which the Israelis have denied them that right. Both know where they belong. Darwish asserts “I belong there” acknowledging the fact that where he is isn’t where he belongs, but it is “there” where he belongs, in his country. Saeed asserts that he belongs on that land, in which “this is my country” is his assertion as having the right to live in it as its native citizen. Land is an essential part of their identity.

Darwish’s poetry connects home with the past and exile with the present since the past represents his primordial ties to this home, whereas the present represents alienation and estrangement. His poetry portrays what the pre -1948 poets predicted would happen to the Palestinians once their land was taken away: They would become strangers on their homeland. He has depicted this sense of feeling alienated and estranged from his home, and how sad and sorrowful he feels about not having a place he can feel at home. Ghassan Kanafani will then portray the Palestinians as refugees, and shows what transpired after they were expelled from their homes. He presents the Palestinians as downtrodden and depicts their state after the Nakba as also estranged from home, subjected to exploitation, as they try to cope with their exile, and mourning the loss of their country.

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## CHAPTER THREE

### GHASSAN KANAFANI: THE NOVEL



Figure 9. Ghassan Kanafani courtesy of PASSIA ([passia.org](http://passia.org))

“When she knocks on the door and puts her poor belongings down in the hall, I am enveloped in the smell of the camps, in their misery and deep-rooted steadfastness, their poverty and hopes. Again my mouth is filled with the bitterness that I have tasted year after year until it has sickened me.” (1) Ghassan Kanafani, “Um Saad”

Ghassan Kanafani was born in Akka (Acre) on the northern Mediterranean coast of Palestine, on April 9, 1936. His father was a lawyer, and the family was from an upper-middle class background. During his life in Acre, Ghassan attended a French missionary school. The day of his twelfth birthday, April 9, 1948, the Deir Yassin massacre occurred, and Ghassan refused to celebrate his birthday after that. A month later, Acre was invaded by the Zionist forces, which resulted in the expulsion of the town’s residents. The family escaped first to Lebanon, then to Damascus, suddenly becoming

poverty stricken as they found themselves living in a refugee camp, but anticipating their return to their town once the fighting ends. However, they, along with the thousands of Palestinian refugees hoping to return to their country and homes, fearing that their despair may not end, realized that their exile was to become permanent.

Ghassan, at 16, taught at a United Nations relief school in a refugee camp to support his family, while continuing his own education. He was very aware of his miserable present, living in a refugee camp, as compared to his idyllic past, living at home in Palestine. He yearned for this past “as a means of forging a link between that past and his miserable present.” (2) He realized that their present situation was anything but normal, which influenced his writing greatly as his novel and short stories reflect the misery the refugees went through after their expulsion from their homes.

## THE REFUGEE CAMPS

Expelled by force from their homeland, the Palestinians found themselves destitute and homeless, living as beggars depending on meager handouts in refugee camps created especially for them by the United Nations. The United Nations defined a refugee as “a needy person and his direct descendants, who as a result of the war in Palestine has lost his home and his means of livelihood.” (3) The 750,000 displaced Palestinian Arabs found themselves in makeshift camps, living on the borders of their former homeland. They were dispersed in nearby Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, the West Bank and Gaza-

shocked and dismayed, hoping eagerly for their situation to end and they can finally go home to their normal lifestyle. They were given promises by their Arab allies that this would happen soon, they were given promises by the United Nation that this would happen soon, promises that vowed to protect their rights under international law, but the promises were never fulfilled as year after year:

“[With] our memories of places and times we had known before, rational and good, floating in the space around us and within us, we existed not in the present tense, the tense of reality, but the future imperfect, when next year, next time, next speech, the wrongs will have been righted, the grievances removed, and our cause justified. We lay, as it were, supine under a tree; but, in a world where men will calmly use historical reality to suit their own issues, Godot, for whom we waited, never arrived.” (4)  
Fawaz Turki. The Disinherited. (1972)

Realizing that their situation would remain indefinitely, the United Nations in 1949 established the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) to deal with the Palestinian refugee problem. UN Resolution 194 of December 11, 1948 stated “that refugees wishing to return to their homes and live at peace with their neighbors should be permitted to do so at the earliest practical date, and that compensation should be paid for the property of those choosing not to return and for the loss and damage to property.”(5) This resolution affirmed the right of the refugees to return to their homes or repatriation, but was rejected by Israel even after it made the commitment of implementing it:

“The government in Jerusalem was constantly on the alert lest the international community insist on implementing the commitment it had made to the refugees in Resolution 194. To avert this, the Israeli government began, in August 1948, to execute an anti-repatriation policy, which resulted in either the total destruction or full Jewish take-over of every deserted Palestinian house and dwelling, both in the villages and the urban neighborhoods. In fact, once the UN and the international community lost interest in promoting repatriation, the Israeli government was able to proceed with the take-over of more villages, unhindered by world public opinion.”(6)

The status of the refugee continued as their hope of returning to their homeland became bleak, but their host countries refused to integrate them in the country as it would create problems for that country. Lebanon feared that the mostly Moslem Palestinians would change the delicate religious balance of the country. In Syria, animosity was displayed against the Palestinians as the Syrian workers feared competition in the workplace. Already there was a large underpaid, impoverished class in Syria which needed to keep their jobs, but with the influx of Palestinian refugees desperate for work, the Syrians feared that they might become unemployed if refugees were willing to work for even less pay. Jordan, after it annexed the West Bank, had the largest number of Palestinians living under its rule. However, although the Palestinians were allowed some freedom, they were required to show loyalty to the monarchy. They were constantly supervised and controlled, living subversively on their own land in what remained of Palestine, the West Bank, or in refugee camps close to the border of the West Bank, in Jordan. Egypt, after it controlled Gaza also subjected the Palestinians to harsh policies if they became disloyal to the government of Egypt. The Palestinians in the refugee camps,

living in host countries, refused to be integrated into that society as they held on to their Palestinian identity and hoped of returning to their homeland.

Most of the countries treated the refugees harshly, and all treated them as foreigners. They were employed in the lowest ranks of society, and their status was ridiculed as they felt exploited and oppressed, living in exile, dreaming about their paradise lost, waiting patiently, but “Godot” never arrived.

### MEN IN THE SUN

The camps. Those stains on the forehead of our weary morning, lacerations brandished like flags of defeat, billowing by chance above the plains of mud and dust and compassion. (7) Ghassan Kanafani, “A Present For The Holiday”

Kanafani vividly depicts the refugees’ demoralized and subjugated state. His short stories and novels represent and portray exile in its harshest form as it is everything that home is not. Home is a place in which one feels secure, and where one is established, and sees some value in his world. But living in exile, the refugee doesn’t see any value in his world, but sees himself as downtrodden and homeless, without a livelihood. He lives in a flimsy tent where it’s freezing in the winter, and stifling in the summer. Yi-Fu Tuan claims in his book *Topophilia*: “To be forcibly evicted from one’s home and neighborhood is to be stripped of a sheathing, which in its familiarity protects the human being from the bewilderments of the outside world.” (8)

The Palestinian was stripped of a sheathing, losing everything that belonged to him- his home, his land, and his identity- once he became a refugee living in exile. Kanafani depicted the Palestinians in their present situation, displaced and downtrodden, and depicted their formidable state after they fled their homes. He depicted the humanitarian catastrophe in its raw form as his theme of home is everything that contrasts with exile. His stories portray this sharp contrast of home and exile so as to show the horrible outcome that ensued on the innocent victims, the habitants of Palestine, the people that were victimized as a consequence of Israeli's founding. He examines exile from the personal, emotional, and humanitarian position as this explains what home is for him, for it is all the things that are missing or lost in exile. I will be discussing all the things that are missing, or lost in exile in which he depicts in his novel. To him, exile is loss of security, loss of self-respect, dignity, and honor, and becomes a place in which one is vulnerable, and prey for others to abuse. The characters in his novels live in the past or the future, as the present for them is devoid of any existence as they seek a replacement to their past and long for a future which would fulfill all that is missing in the present.

Kanafani's novels and short stories describe the anguish and despair following the Nakba. He emphasized the consequences that resulted from this catastrophe, as he believed it important to depict the victims in his writing. As a journalist and editor-in-chief of the new daily in Beirut, *al-Muharrir* [The Liberator], a respected paper read throughout the Arab world, his deep involvement with literature was his means of expressing his thoughts and feelings about an event which he felt committed to, since it

affected him personally. He states that “sometimes I can’t say what I want to say in anything but a story” (9), implying that his stories and novels express his personal belief about an issue which he felt it was his duty as a Palestinian to commit himself to project in any medium possible, whether it be journalistic or story telling, it was the telling of their story that mattered to him the most. Unfortunately, his pen was his weapon which also brought about his death. In 1972, his car was booby trapped and exploded in front of his house as he was ready to leave with his 9-year old niece, Lamees, in the car. Israeli agents claimed responsibility for the attack. (10)

In his novels and short stories, historical events are depicted from the viewpoint of those who have lived through them. What arises from his stories is a clear understanding of the suffering that resulted after the fact. His short story “*The Land of Sad Oranges*” (1958) the narrator, a young child, tries to come to grips with his question of “why we had become refugees.” But he claimed that he was “too young to understand what the story meant from beginning to end.” What followed was the effect of the family’s expulsion from Jaffa after the Jewish forces invaded their city. The story then depicts their ordeal as they leave their city along with others towards Lebanon. The story culminates in the sudden madness of the Uncle’s despair at the thought of being impoverished after losing his citrus orchards, home, and livelihood as he tries to shoot his family and himself. The children then lose their innocence when they realize that now things have changed for them as the narrator concludes that:

“our life had ceased to be pleasant, and it was no longer easy for us to live in peace. Things had reached the point where the only solution was a bullet in the head of each one of us. So we must take care to behave suitable in all that we did, not asking for something to eat even when we were hungry, keeping silent when your father spoke of his difficulties and nodding and smiling when he said to us: “Go and climb the mountain, and don’t come back till midday” so as not to ask for breakfast as they didn’t have enough to feed their children. (11)

Although, Kanafani didn’t scrutinize the reasons behind the Nakba, and had avoided telling the story of the Nakba from “beginning to end”, the story was distinct in that it portrayed what had happened after the onset of that historical event. The Nakba was the cause of the suffering, pain, anguish and despair inflicted on the people as they felt helpless in changing their fate. This story, *The Sad Oranges*, was told from the point of view of a child, who was totally ignorant of the political situation happening in his home, but it showed how that child was able to realize quickly how his life had changed dramatically because of this event. He knew that now his life would cease to be pleasant as it once was, and knew that everything related to his past had changed forever. Instead of indulging into accusations and analyzing the reasons behind the causes of their flight from their home, Kanafani focused on the innocent victims who were banished from their home, and suffered the consequences in which their whole lives had changed forever because of this event.

In his novel *Men in the Sun* (*Rijal fi al-Shams*, 1962), Kanafani depicts his characters in the present as each tries to make some sense of his life now as an exile. The characters desire to go to Kuwait, a place they have no knowledge about but a place they envision

will change their dire situation in the present, and so becomes the focus of their aspirations. The characters consciously reflect on their reasons for undertaking this journey, showing the reader how they are hoping it would change their lives. They envision a future resembling their past, consciously avoiding at thinking about their horrible living situation in the present, as they try to achieve some stability for the future. All four characters in the story are Palestinian and all vary in age, thus depicting the different generations affected by the Nakba.

Abu Qais is the oldest of the three trying to smuggle himself into Kuwait. He leaves behind a wife and two children as he ventured out of his refugee camp to find some work to support his family. After he has lived for ten years in a refugee camp, waiting and hoping to return to his village and his olive trees in Palestine, his friend ridicules his impoverished situation and scolds him for waiting all those years for nothing, living on the meager food rations distributed in the camps. Abu Qais remembers his past when he lived in his village with his family as a time that was very happy and content. In fact he was once a rich man who owned ten olive trees that brought him a substantial livelihood. His village was eventually attacked by the Jewish forces and he was forced to flee from his village and now at the beginning of the novel he lives in a wretched refugee camp, miserable and poor. His older son doesn't attend school anymore and his wife, who had lost her newborn baby right after they fled, has just had another baby which he is unable to support. He still hopes to return to his past life, but knows that will never happen. His friend talks him into leaving his family and seek work in Kuwait, a long distance from

where he is now. He ends up in Iraq trying to negotiate a lower price with a professional smuggler who doesn't care about his poverty nor about his situation, but only cares about getting paid the right price. Abu Qais leaves the professional smuggler's office unhappy and helpless to control his destiny, since that is in the hands of someone else now. Home for Abu Qais means security and stability, a place where family and friends help and care for each other. Home means being in control of your destiny and it means being able to support your family. But that was all in the past as he recollects that past with nostalgia and yearning, but as he becomes conscious of his present, despair and anguish overtake him when he realizes what his present is like:

“He did not know why, but he was suddenly filled with a bitter feeling of being a stranger, and for a moment he thought he was on the point of weeping. No, yesterday it didn't rain. We are in August now. Have you forgotten? Those miles of road speeding through a void, like black eternity. Have you forgotten it?” (12)

He compares his present with his past, and for him to be dead and buried in his village and still remain there, is better than his shame and humiliation in the present:

“Here he was lying thousands of miles and days away from his village and Ustaz Selim's school. The mercy of God be upon you, Ustaz Selim, the mercy of God be upon you. God was certainly good to you when he made you die one night before the wretched village fell into the hands of the Jews. One night only. O God, is there any divine favor greater than that? It is true that the men were too busy to bury you and honor you in your death. But all the same you stayed there. You stayed there. You saved yourself humiliation and wretchedness, and preserved your old age from shame. The mercy of God be upon you, Ustaz Selim. If you had lived, if you had been drowned by poverty as I have, I wonder if you would have done what I am doing now. Would you have been

willing to carry all your years on your shoulders and flee across the desert to Kuwait to find a crust of bread?"(13)

He abhors his present life as that entails nothing but grief and shame, which he wants to change. His only alternative is to leave his family and look for work elsewhere. His journey to Kuwait becomes a substitute and a replacement to his life in the past when he felt secured and rooted in place. Abu Qais sees no value in his worth now since he owns nothing, but feels ashamed and helpless. "A man's belonging are an extension of his personality," writes Yi-Fu Tuan and "to be deprived of them is to diminish in his own estimation his worth as a human being." (14)

The dichotomy between home and exile becomes an issue for Abu Qais as he is well aware of the difference between the two. His sense of the past overtakes his sense of the present. He thinks that by leaving his mud hut and finding employment, it would relieve him of his misery and finally make him feel a worthy human being again. He hopes to replace what he lost with what he will gain in the future. He wants his son to resume his education, he wants to be able to afford to build a decent shack somewhere and he wants to buy two shoots of olives. But Abu Qais's hopes and dreams are shattered when he leaves the professional smuggler's office, unable to pay the high price the smuggler asked for.

The second character, Assad, is younger than Abu Qais. When he enters the professional smuggler's office, he was not too hasty to succumb to the terms set by the

smuggler. His experience with smugglers had left him more cautious at risking a final settlement until the transaction was complete. Apparently, the last smuggler had deserted him before the journey was complete. In Kuwait, Assad hopes to make something of himself, to replace his meaningless existence in the present. He was an activist and was arrested for demonstrating. The guard let him loose and he ran off but was still wanted by the authorities. His uncle, wanting to marry him off to his daughter, agreed to lend him money to journey to Kuwait and find work, in order to support his daughter once they are married. Assad didn't agree to this marriage since it was arranged between his father and his uncle long before, but now he is obligated to keep the promise even after his father died in the fighting in 1948. Having no other support but his Uncle, he accepted his fate unwillingly, even though it felt to him that his Uncle "wanted to buy him for his daughter as you buy a sack of manure for a field". (15) Assad is hoping to find a secured life in Kuwait because he feels he has no future where he is at now. He is forced to marry someone against his will in order to have the money needed to travel to Kuwait for employment.

The youngest of the three wanting to smuggle into Kuwait is Marwan. He is sixteen, therefore, he was fairly young when he fled his home country ten years ago. His naivete', once he tries to negotiate with the professional smuggler, gets him in trouble when he threatens the smuggler that he will inform the police on him if he doesn't lower the price. The professional smuggler smacks him in the face and throws him out of his

office. Marwan then loses all the hope he had that morning when he thought that things would turn out the way he planned it.

He hopes to reach Kuwait to find employment to support his mother and siblings. His older brother had sent him a letter proclaiming that he no longer wants the responsibility of supporting the family, because now he is married. Ten years was enough for him to be burdened with that responsibility. He insists to Marwan that now it is his responsibility to work and support the family. He tells Marwan to quit school, and “plunge into the frying pan like everyone else.” (16)

His father, poor and destitute, living in a mud hut in a refugee camp along with his wife and children, refused to burden himself with the responsibility of supporting his family. He wanted a better life for himself, so his friend offered to marry him off to his lame daughter who had lost her leg during the 1948 war in an explosion. The father agreed since she had a concrete house on the other side of the camp. It is his wish to live in a concrete house, and be financially secure for the remaining years of his life. When his older son stopped sending money, it deprived him of a substantial living. This frightened him. Instead of having to face the burden of supporting his wife and children, he ran off. He divorced his wife, left his children, and married his friend’s daughter and now he is living securely. It then becomes Marwan’s responsibility to support his mother and siblings.

Marwan tries to make some sense of his life now, when he writes his mother a letter that morning before he left to see the smuggler. In the letter he tries to make some sense

of his father's desertion, "His father had certainly done something horrible, but which of us doesn't from time to time?" (17)

His inability to admit to his father's weakness and selfish desires, led him to see his father as a victim; thus, excusing his father's decision to leave and run away from his responsibility to his wife and children. Marwan rationalizes his father's circumstances, and even forgives him for leaving. He wanted to make it seem as if it was a natural thing for his father to desert the family and marry another, in order to live securely in a concrete house. But Marwan wrote that letter in the morning just before he went to the smuggler's office as he felt some sense of hope that his life would change for the better once he reached Kuwait and found employment. But when he left the smuggler's office in disgrace, that hope turned to despair as it became clear to him that reaching Kuwait might be impossible. He then refers to the letter he wrote to his mother that morning as a "silly letter" and becomes angry at what his father did and at himself for trying to make sense of his father's despicable action towards the family.

He loved his father but that "changed nothing of the terrible truth, the truth that proclaimed that his father had fled...fled...fled."(18) The fact of the matter is that his father had deserted the family. This had angered Marwan even more and made him more inclined to get to Kuwait, find employment, and then send money to his mother, "and overwhelm her and his brothers and sisters with gifts till he made the mud hut into paradise on earth and his father bite his nails with regret."(19) Marwan wanted to replace

his miserable life with money, thus believing that once he makes money, he and his family would become happier and this would avenge his father.

But the root of the problem is not monetary, although Marwan believes that it is. The root of the problem is self respect and honor, which was denied to him and which he wishes to restore. This goes back to their expulsion from their home in Palestine. Once that was disrupted, their life became difficult and unbearable. The older child had to quit school and find employment away from his family, he then had the responsibility of supporting his entire family. The fact that the father left the family to marry another, was because he couldn't bear to continue to live in such humiliating dwelling. This was caused also by fleeing his home in Palestine and having to live in a mud hut inside a refugee camp. He wanted to have the security he had at home and the only way this was going to happen was for him to live with someone who owned a concrete house. He couldn't go back to his home so this was just another replacement, which gave him the comfort he missed.

In his article "*Home as Region*" Theano S. Terkenli claims that "the strongest sense of home coincides spatially with the site of the domicile." (20) The father, although very selfish, wants that semblance of feeling at home, thus his only wish was to live in a concrete house. The mud hut doesn't resemble a home, but represents a destitute existence.

Marwan's father and Abu Qais resemble each other. Both in their own way deserted their families and their wives when they left to look for better living standards. Although

Abu Qais didn't flee from his wife and the responsibility of taking care of a family, he did leave his family, which then burdens the wife to tend for herself while raising the children. In their old age both were deprived the right to live securely in their home with their family, but instead they both had to start over again trying to make a substantial living in order to support their family. However, both in their own way fled their family and their responsibility of being the head of the family. Their sons and their wives bore that responsibility since the husbands left. Exile, the cause of their misery, had disrupted and broken family tradition.

Having a home is stability, whereas living in exile becomes instability. Marwan could find many excuses for his father and his older brother, but the fact of the matter is that the real reason for their behavior was caused by their expulsion and having to endure the hardships faced in exile.

Kanafani tries to show the meaning of home in contrast with exile by integrating all the problems that occurred out of the families' expulsions from their home and their grievousness in exile. By contrasting the two, he gives a clear conception of the hardship incurred because of exile. This supports Karl Marx's "It shows that circumstances make men just as much as men make circumstances."(21) Their difficult life in exile was the cause of their miseries and this circumstance had affected their life completely.

An Arab proverb "Leave your children either a [house of] stone or [an orchard of] trees," (22) points to the importance of owning a house for the Arabs, as a house

represents wealth, dignity, and honor. In exile, a refugee doesn't own a house but must depend on others to rent him a house, which is disgraceful and humiliating.

Abu Qais had to share his house with a neighbor, dividing it with patched sacks. In his village he had owned his house, and it was the field he shared with his neighbor "in the land he left ten years ago" for both to till. In exile, he feels cramped in his domicile whereas at home, he was privileged with open space. Marwan's father becomes a selfish beast in exile, as he only thinks about himself. His only care is to improve his own situation, which for him meant living in a house.

The novel describes the Palestinians in exile as downtrodden, impoverished, and vulnerable, since as strangers on foreign land, they are exposed to exploitation, and denied the protection citizens of countries normally have. Therefore, Kanafani is saying that exile is a deprivation of having that security one feels at home. He is also saying that in exile, one becomes unstable in his actions because exile deprives one of feeling worthy. Therefore, one acts as a means of survival, and at hoping to feel the normality that they are deprived of living on foreign land. For Kanafani, he is claiming that since the Palestinian is deprived of a place to call home, or a place to return to, he feels unsecured, unstable, and distraught at his present situation.

Kanafani has showed how the Palestinians were trying to cope with their exile living outside their homeland, and Darwish has showed how the Palestinians were coping with living inside their actual homeland in Israel. Both depict the Palestinian as being alienated from his present surroundings, whether living outside or inside their homeland.

It seems what both are claiming is that the exile is obsessed by the thought that only a return to the past could end the loss, and reintegrate the inner self.

## THE JOURNEY

All three men finally negotiate with a smuggler, Abul Khaizuran. Unlike the professional smuggler, he is a Palestinian and was also affected by the Nakba. During the fighting in 1948, he was hit by an explosion. His injury was inflicted between his legs and resulted in his castration, leaving him impotent, and bitter about his past. He not only lost his country but also his manhood. Since his employer is a well-known Kuwaiti business man, his truck doesn't get searched at the borders. The three men, feeling a common bond with him, agree to his price. But upon hearing his plans of having to smuggle them inside the empty tanker as it travels in the desert during the hottest time of day, they become weary. Out of desperation, they agree to go along with him although they know how risky it will be for them. Their aspiration in reaching Kuwait is more important for them than their comfort; however, they must suffer and risk their life in order to reach Kuwait, their "paradise".

## A VAST SPACE

All three men realized that to reach their destiny they must cross this vast space, the desert. They hadn't realized the harshness of the desert before they embarked on the journey, but once they have experienced how treacherous it can become, they fear it. Before having to stay inside the lorry, they felt they could bear the heat. But once inside the lorry while Abul Khaizuran was getting clearance on the first crossing, they almost suffocated from the desert's excruciating heat. They realized that the:

“desert was like a giant in hiding, flogging their heads with whips of fire and boiling pitch. But could the sun kill them and all the stench imprisoned in their breasts? The thoughts seemed to run from one head to another, laden with the same suspicions, for their eyes suddenly met.” (23)

Their lack of experience in this vast space stemmed from the fact that they didn't belong in the desert. The lands they came from contrast with this desert, as Palestine has a milder climate favorable for agriculture, and tolerable temperatures. They were naïve and ignorant of the desert's awful and dangerous atmosphere. Once they felt the desert's scorn, they became afraid of it and wanted to escape its wrath. Kanafani seems to be saying that exile, like the desert, becomes a dangerous place to live in once it is experienced. One embarks in exile naïve and gullible of its wrath, and once one experiences its perilous journey, one regrets ever leaving home in the first place.

Each is deep in thought while speeding through this vast empty space, hoping and longing to return to some semblance they once had in the past. Abu Qais dreams of

reaching Kuwait to make a little money to buy two shoots of olive trees, Assad hopes to make a future for himself there, and Marwan hopes to substitute his father's desertion with material gains to make his mother and siblings happy :

“The huge lorry was carrying them along the road, together with their dreams, their families, their hopes and ambitions, their misery and despair, their strength and weakness, their past and future, as if it were pushing against the immense door to a new, unknown destiny, and all eyes were fixed on the door's surface as though bound to it by invisible threads.” (24)

They cling to this blind hope of theirs at reaching their “paradise” as they forego their risk of reaching it alive. They are seeking a legendary promised land, a place where they hope their dreams would become a reality and in which they will at long last be free from the oppression and exploitation they were enduring all those long years.

The three never reach their destiny, as they roast inside the lorry truck while waiting for the smuggler to get clearance. The guards detain him longer at this second crossing as they have heard from his employer about his licentious affair with a prostitute.

Refusing to sign his papers until Abul Khaizuran reveals this affair to them, they keep him and the three men waiting helplessly while they idle pass the time away shamelessly laughing and joking about his sinful affair. Ironically, Abul Khaizuran is impotent.

While this nonsense is going on, the three men are slowly and silently dying inside the tank, helpless and defenseless. Abul Khaizuran finally gets his papers cleared but it is too late. The three men perish inside the water truck of suffocation. To save himself from

the police, he waits until dusk and then dumps their bodies in a garbage heap inside Kuwait hoping that in the morning their bodies would be seen by the authorities, who would give them a proper burial. The three men had entrusted their lives to this smuggler, but he was also powerless because he had to depend on the border crossing guards for their permission first to pass through, which led to the three men's death. The story ends with Abu Khaizuran shouting at the corpses as he is leaving the dumpsite, "Why didn't you knock on the sides of the tank? Why didn't you say anything? Why? Why?" (25).

Their desperation at reaching Kuwait, which they thought would finally end their misery, ended in their tragic death because they were clutching desperately to the one thing that would lead to their redemption, working and earning a living. Their life in exile was so pathetic that they were willing to sacrifice their safety in order to reach a place that would make them feel human and worthwhile again. Kuwait wasn't their home; therefore, they weren't able to reach it alive, but instead died in exile on their way there. A man without a home is a corpse without a grave, says the Greek Historian, Polybius (203 B.C.E-120 B.C.E), which is the culmination of the story.

*Men in the Sun* depicts the reality of exile when displaced persons have no home to return to. Their desperation at surviving in their harsh environments as strangers ends tragically as they become prey for others who take advantage of their vulnerability. They don't exist in the present, since the present for them is not their ideal life as the past once was, and in which the future becomes the idyll. These characters all wish to attain a lost

past which they hope to reclaim on foreign soil, thus avoiding a solution to their present problem as downtrodden, forgotten refugees. Instead of trying to reclaim their right on their homeland as is stated under International Law, and UN Resolution 194, they passively waited all those years after the Nakba, doing nothing, or attempted to run away from it by hoping to gain material security from employment in another country. However, they silently suffocated and died. Instead of seeking fortunes and happiness on foreign soil, their bodies were dumped in a garbage heap, denied even a proper burial. Therefore, Kanafani is saying that in exile, Palestinians are just surplus human beings, to be removed and dumped elsewhere. He has depicted the plight of the Palestinians in exile as distressed, disillusioned, and lacking any sense of hope. Home for him denotes security, happiness, and a sense of direction and control, it also represents dignity, honor and freedom, everything that is missing in exile. Ghassan Kanafani's novel *Men in the Sun* vividly depicts the humanitarian suffering of the Palestinians ensued after their expulsion from their homeland, and centers on the one thing in which would redeem them, returning to their homeland, since that is the only place where they could live in security, and in which they would redeem their dignity and honor.

Darwish's poetry exemplifies Kanafani's theme in the novel, which is that the Palestinians belong to their native lands. Darwish and Kanafani both long for a home devoid of humiliation and despair, a home which encompasses dignity, respect, and security. They both allude to a home to which one has ancient ties. Abu Qais's village and his land becomes the link that ties him to his ancient roots, and Darwish's poetry

echo with many references to an ancient past tied to the land. They both long to return to a past in which they lived among their friends and family in a home which identified them with wealth, security, and belonging. They have represented the Palestinians as distraught, impoverished, and downtrodden, losing their dignity and honor once they lost their homeland. Exile has disrupted their lives, and made them into wanderers and vagrants; thus, they felt a deep sense of alienation as a result of their dislocation, dispersion, and oppression. Both authors are asserting that a return to their homeland would relieve them of their misery and would end their suffering in exile, and this then would finally make them feel at home again.

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## CONCLUSION

### PALESTINIAN LITERATURE: A HOPE FOR RETURN

I have argued in my thesis how Palestinian literature depicts home in contrast to exile, and how that became its theme after the Nakba, or after the Palestinians' expulsion from their homeland in 1948.

The literature written before 1948 depicts a fear of loss of home but is devoid of the experience of loss of home and actually living in exile, as the Palestinians were still situated in place, and residing in their home. Therefore, the literature became the voice of the poets in warning the people about the ramifications of Zionism once the Zionists reach their goal of achieving Palestine as the national home of the Jews. This was their inspiration that had compelled them to compose literature that addressed their concerns and fears about Zionism and about losing their home. But the literature doesn't depict the contrast between exile and home, since the Palestinians hadn't experienced the banishment of exile yet, and hadn't felt the anguish and despair felt by their displacement, and dispossession.

After the Nakba, Palestinian literature begins to depict this loss of home and exile, and embarks on illustrating this theme in the literature, in order to explain the Palestinians' misery and alienation away from their home. Exile and home become the focal point in poetry, and short stories, as Palestinian literature begins to represent what had ensued

after their expulsion from their home once the state of Israel was declared, and Palestine was effaced from the map.

All the authors that I have chosen show how the Nakba had affected them personally as they portray the suffering and the longing for home in their genres. Their literature was a mixture of nostalgia and anticipation, focusing on the past and the future, with very little of the present to speak of. Mahmoud Darwish in his poetry depicts home in the past when Palestine was home to its native population. In the present historic Palestine has taken on a whole new existence, but it still remains in the memory of its native sons. Therefore, for Darwish the past is home and the present is exile as he is estranged from his Beloved, Palestine, since in the present she belongs to someone else.

In Kanafani's novel Men in the Sun, exile is depicted in the present as being deprived of a home and becoming estranged from that home. What follows is alienation, humiliation, despair, and anguish as a result of living in exile. Kanafani depicts this in his novel as he attempts to show his characters' miserable situation outside their home.

Palestinian literature depicts home as belonging, security, happiness, affluence, and pride, whereas exile is depicted as misery, insecurity, impoverished, alienation, estrangement, and despair. This contrast is well defined as it shows to explain the Palestinians' plight after they were forcefully expelled from their home. It also shows how Palestinian literature echoes of the right of return to home as it is the only solution to their wretched situation in exile, and how that right is the only just solution to their cause as it becomes a matter of human dignity. To relinquish one's human dignity over another

is against human nature as can be seen in the poetry of Mahmoud Darwish and the novel of Ghassan Kanafani. Both authors, as well as the pre-1948 poets affirm their basic human right of home, in which they acknowledge their right of return to their home, Palestine, as they too belong on the land. A hope of return reverberates throughout their writing.

## APPENDIX ONE

### HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The first occupants to settle in Palestine were the Cana'anites. Originally from the Arabian Peninsula, they were Semites who had established a rich culture built around a large number of city-states. During the Bronze Age, 3200 B.C.E., their culture became predominant and lasted for hundreds of years. The Amorites, also Semites, and the Hittites came to settle there as well. During the years 1780 and 1550 B.C.E., the Hyksos dominated Palestine. Then the Egyptians took over that domination in the years 1550 to 1200 B.C.E. Yet the Cana'anites, throughout the other dominations, were still able to continue to develop their culture, which still flourished in Palestine. Toward the end of the 13<sup>th</sup> Century B.C.E., the Hebrews, also Semites and originally from Mesopotamia, invaded the land, and then the Philistines, originally from Crete, also invaded the land. They both were in a struggle to control the land, while the Cana'anites kept to themselves. The Hebrews won the battle and their rule lasted until 586 B.C.E. Afterwards, the Assyrians conquered the land, and exiled many Hebrews. In 516 B.C.E. the Hebrews were allowed to return to Palestine under King Cyrus of Persia. Later on Alexander the Great conquered the area in the 4<sup>th</sup> Century B.C.E., and then the Romans came. In 70 C.E. and 135 C.E. the Romans seized Jerusalem and destroyed the Jewish Temple and the dispersion of the Jewish people existed throughout the communities of the ancient world. (1)

The Roman occupation of Palestine came to an end with the conquest of Moslem Arabs in the year 638 C.E. At that time the inhabitants were mostly Christian, but as time went on many of the inhabitants became Moslem, (2) and the remaining Christians resided alongside the Moslems, along with the Jews.(3) With time, almost all the inhabitants conversed in Arabic as that became the dominant language throughout the area, and still is today. The Arabs were then followed by the Seljuk Turks, who had captured Jerusalem in the year 1075 C.E. For almost two hundred years the Arabs were fighting against the Crusaders from Europe for control of the Holy Land, as both referred to it, and especially for control of Jerusalem. This long fight with the Crusaders had weakened the military, which made it easier for the Egyptian Mamelukes to gain control of the area in the year 1250 C.E. Their control lasted up until the Ottoman Turks became supreme under Sultan Selim in 1517 C.E. The Ottoman Turks reigned until World War I, when the British became the Mandatory power of Palestine in 1917. (4)

## PALESTINE UNDER THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE

Palestine, under Ottoman rule, was part of Greater Syria encompassing what is referred to presently as Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, and Israel/Palestine. It wasn't dismembered until the Great Powers of Britain and France after World War 1 carved it up and shared it amongst each other, giving each area its modern borders. Palestine was

neglected by the Ottomans as it had no special value to the authorities, other than its religious importance held by all Moslems, Christians, and Jews. During the Ottoman era the area was constructed as individual units with a separate administrative authority for each. It was part of the large Vilayet of Sham (Syria) or Bilad al-Sham, west of the River Jordan, and was divided into three Sancaks: Jerusalem, Nablus, and Akka (Acre). Each Sancak was governed by a Mutasarrif and subordinate to him were Kaymakams (sub-governors) in the main towns of Jaffa, Gaza, Tiberias, and Safad. The Ottomans had reorganized the Vilayet of Sham in 1880, and in 1887 the Sancak of Jerusalem (al-Quds) was made an independent Mutasarriflik. The Mutasarrif was responsible directly to the various ministries and departments of state at Constantinople. In 1888, two Sancaks of Nablus and Akka, in the north of Palestine, were transferred to the new Vilayet of Beirut. Palestine, therefore, was governed in the south from Jerusalem, and in the north from Beirut. (5)

The geographic area of Palestine, about three thousand square miles, was referred by the Ottoman authority through correspondence as “arz-i Filistin” (the land of Palestine) meaning the whole area west of the River Jordan. This same area became Palestine under the British in 1920. (6) Also, the Zionist movement’s program adopted in 1897 spoke of a home “in Palestine”, and the first Zionist institution established in the country was the Anglo-Palestine Company. Therefore, the area Palestine, although part of Bilad al-Sham (Greater Syria), was distinctly identified separately from the other regions. Population statistics estimate that the beginning of World War 1, 720,000 people lived in Palestine,

the majority being Sunni Moslem, about 80,000 Christian Arabs, and about 60,000 Jews, who were mainly living in the four holy cities of Jerusalem, Hebron, Safad, and Tiberias.

(7) The people were mostly rural, about 65% of the population, while many were merchants, professionals, business owners, and clergy. (8)

The inhabitants throughout the entire Ottoman Empire were living in relative harmony. However, on November 3, 1839, the Empire decided to reform, which marked the beginning of the Tanzimat , initiated by the Ottoman Sultan “Abd al-Majid (1839-1861), as he “issued an important decree (the Khatti-I Sherif of Gulkhane), assuring equal rights and security to the life and property of all subjects of the Ottoman Empire.” (9)

The Tanzimat’s objective was to reform the Empire, and to reorganize it in an attempt at adopting European practices. A chief Rabbi, chosen by the Jewish community, was officially appointed by the Sultan. Jewish schools were founded, as well as government schools were opened to Jewish students. Also government posts were opened up to Jews. Jewish colonization began to develop afterwards. In 1855 Sir Moses Montefiore bought an estate near Jaffa. Later on in 1861, the “universal Israeli Alliance” was founded in 1870 for the protection and advancement of Jews, and in 1870, it founded an agricultural school, “Mikveh Israel”, near Jaffa. Its objective was the settlement of Jews in Palestine. The Love of Zion (Hibbat Zion), founded in Russia in 1882, aimed to encourage Jewish colonization of Palestine. Baron Rothschild took a particular interest in the settlements in Palestine, and by 1899, he was funding nine settlements, which covered two-thirds of land owned by Jews in Palestine. (10) This was the First Aliya in

which the Jews began immigrating to Palestine, and began their fulfillment of building a national home in Palestine.

## ZIONISM; ITS MISSION IN PALESTINE

In 1865, Laurence Oliphant, an English Jew, approached the Ottoman government to “create an immigration center in Palestine for European and Turkish Jews.” According to his plan, as stated in Khalid A. Sulaiman’s book *Palestine and Modern Arab Poetry*, Oliphant wanted to establish a company to buy lands in Palestine to build Jewish colonies for the immigration of European and Turkish Jews. (11) The council set up to review Oliphant’s plans rejected it on account that this “would lay the foundation stone for the creation of a Jewish state” (12) and this would create problems in the future for the Ottoman Empire. However, this didn’t deter the Jews from continuing their plans of creating Palestine as home for Jews. The first Zionist Congress held in Basel in August 1897, with Theodore Herzl directing it, claimed that Jewish immigration to Palestine would relieve the problem of the Jews by transporting “the landless people into the unpeopled land.” (13)

Herzl was mistaken at the time about the population of Palestine, as it was heavily populated by Arabs who were already situated and established in their homes and properties, and cultivating the fertile land of Palestine. One year prior, he had tried to meet with Sultan Abdulhamid regarding Palestine. He wanted the Sultan to grant him

Palestine for Jewish immigration; in exchange he offered to “regulate the whole finances of Turkey” for “his Majesty the Sultan”.(14) The Sultan never met him, but did relay a message to Herzl’s aide, Philipp Michael de Newlinski, refusing to accept his offer “...I cannot sell even a foot of land, for it does not belong to me, but to my people...”(15)

The famed Jewish writer Ahad Ha-am observed this heavy Arab presence on the land when he claimed in an essay entitled “Truth from the Land of Palestine” written in 1891 after his 3-month visit to the country:

“We abroad are used to believing that Eretz Israel is now almost totally desolate, a desert that is not sowed, and that anyone who wishes to purchase land there may come and purchase as much as he desires. But in truth this is not the case. Throughout the country it is difficult to find fields that are not sowed. Only sand dunes and stony mountains that are not fit to grow anything but fruit trees- and this only after hard labor and great expense of clearing and reclamation-only these are not cultivated.” (16)

The Zionist Congress continued to proceed with its goal of claiming Palestine as the home for Jews. European Jewish immigration increased into Palestine with the Second Aliya from 1903 onwards. The Jewish National Fund was founded in 1901, and in 1907 an office was established in Jaffa, with Arthur Ruppin as its director. The aim of the Jewish National Fund (JNF) was to purchase land to settle new immigrants. (17) The first Zionist institution, a bank, was established in Palestine in 1903 called the Anglo-Palestine Company (APC) at Jaffa. This all aided Zionist aspirations to prepare Palestine as the home for Jews. However, this wasn’t overlooked by the Arabs (95 per cent of the population at the time) in Palestine as they began to consider that one day Palestine might

become the homeland for the Jews, and how that would mean that they would one day be a minority in their homeland.

As Jewish immigration increased, and as this became known throughout Palestine, Arabs took action. In 1891 a group of Arab notables from Jerusalem sent a telegram to the Porte, or the Ottoman government in Istanbul, asking it to restrict Jewish immigration into Palestine and to stop land sales to foreign Jews.(18) This marked the first effort by the Arabs to curtail Jewish immigration.



Figure 10. Yusuf Diya Pasa al- Khalidi courtesy of PASSIA ([passia.org](http://passia.org))

In 1899, out of “a sacred duty of conscience” (19) Yusuf Diya Pasa al-Khalidi, a leading member of an Arab family in Jerusalem, had also tried to prevent the Zionist’s from accomplishing their goals. Yusuf Diya had been an Ottoman Vice-Consul at the

Russian Black Sea Port of Poti, and was a deputy in the First Ottoman Parliament (1877-78), and a President of the Municipal Council in Jerusalem. He had traveled to Europe, teaching Arabic in Vienna. He wrote a letter to Theodore Herzl, via the Chief Rabbi in France, Zadok Kahn. In this letter, Yusuf Diya was specific in his intention to inform Herzl that “Palestine was an integral part of the Ottoman Empire and was inhabited by non-Jews. What material forces did the Jews possess to acquire the Holy Places which were also common to 390,000,000 Christians and 300,000,000 Muslims?”(20). He predicted in his letter to Herzl that Palestine could not be bought but could only be acquired by “cannons and battleships”.

Basically, the aspirations of Zionism may have been positive for the Jews since this would be their dream of returning to the land of their ancestors, which Yusuf Diya asserted in his letter. He continues to say that the Zionist idea was “completely natural, fine and just”, (21) but that they shouldn’t ignore the majority of the Arab population already situated and residing in Palestine, who also claim Palestine as their homeland, and as having a right to it by its long historical residency dating back more than 1,500 years, when they had conquered it from the Roman in the 7<sup>th</sup> century A.D. He concluded with: “For the sake of God, leave Palestine in Peace.” (22)

Throughout the area, Arabs eventually became aware of this Zionist threat which one day might lead to their expulsion if Jews were to acquire Palestine as their homeland. Thus, as the Zionists aspired to settle more Jews into Palestine, the Arabs, now that they

felt threatened with the “other”, began to cling more firmly to their rights and to their identity on the land.

Glen Bowman argues in his paper, “*The Exilic Imagination: The Construction of the Landscape of Palestine from its Outside*” that the “identity I claim is formulated after and in response to awareness of the threat of extermination. It’s that something comes along and threatens and the threatening makes me constitute myself defensively as an entity, or part of a collectivity organized to fight against that threat.” (23) The Arabs did foresee a threat to their existence with the onset of Zionism and, fearing their extermination on a place they considered their home, they began to actively organize in order to prevent this from happening. Both the Jew and the Arab now became aware of the other, since the other stood in the way of their aspirations to create a nation of their own.

The Arabs, at the onset of Zionism in 1897, were part of the Ottoman Empire, but they wished for independence from the Turks as Arab nationalism was forming in the minds of intellectuals in the early nineteenth century. They formed a secret society with the objective of attaining Arab independence from Turkish control. The first Arab Congress was convened in Paris in 1913, far away from the Ottomans. (24)

The Arabs were patriotic and identified with their city or village within the area of Palestine, and cities and villages were held in high esteem among its residents. They had a powerful local attachment to place and it was customary for one to adopt his village name as his last name, such as al- Nabulsi (Nablus), al-Ghazzawi (Gaza), or al-Khalili (Hebron). (25) In the words of Reverend John Mills in 1864, “The inhabitants [of

Nablus] are most proud of it, and think there is no place in the world equal to it.”(26)

This statement can be applied to the many villages and towns in Palestine as the residents felt proud of their village or town.

During the era of the Ottoman Empire, all Ottoman subjects were free to travel throughout the Empire, and were free to live anywhere within the Empire. But with the growing number of Russian Jews applying for visas to enter Palestine, the Ottoman Government “feared the possibility of nurturing another national problem in the Empire.”(27) Outside the Ottoman Consulate-General Offices at Odessa, a notice was posted on November 1818 that announced:

[Jewish] immigrants will be able to settle as scattered groups throughout the Ottoman Empire, excluding Palestine. They must submit to all the laws of the Empire and become Ottoman subjects. (28)

However, the restrictions didn't deter the Jews since as Europeans, they were protected under the Capitulations, or privileges accorded to European subjects in which Europe protected the rights of its citizens within the boundaries of the Empire. This exempted European citizens residing in the Empire from paying taxes, and from military service. It also gave the European countries authority over the Empire when Europeans wanted to travel within the Empire's boundaries. Therefore, when the Jews from Russian wished to settle in Palestine, they were able to because they were protected as Europeans, and thus it was legal for them to settle anywhere in the Empire, including Palestine. Every time the Ottomans restricted the entry of Jews into Palestine, the European

countries, especially Great Britain, intervened and protected their rights.(29) The Arabs' fears escalated as more Jewish immigrants were settling in Palestine, setting up more colonies, and aspiring to turn Palestine into the Jewish homeland.

Najib Azoury, an Arab Nationalist of Jerusalem, launched a campaign from Paris, in which he predicted a disaster between the two peoples as he wrote in his prophetic book in 1905 , *Le Reveil de la Nation Arabe*, (in it he also called for complete detachment of the Arab provinces from the Ottoman Empire) :

Two important phenomena, of the same nature but opposed, which have still not drawn anyone's attention, are emerging at this moment in Asiatic Turkey. They are the awakening of the Arab nation and the latent effort of the Jews to reconstitute on a very large scale the ancient kingdom of Israel. Both these movements are destined to fight each other continually until one of them wins. The fate of the entire world will depend on the final result of this struggle between these two people representing two contrary principles. (30)

These early responses surfacing among literary circles reacting against Zionism encouraged the newspapers and the press to begin its own process of spreading awareness about Zionism in order for the Arab public to understand how Zionism would affect their country. What began to transpire on the land was a struggle between two peoples' claim for a home.

## THE ARAB PRESS

The main newspapers in Palestine were Al-Quds in Jerusalem, al-Karmil and al-Nafa'is al-'Asriyya (1908) in Haifa and Falastin and al-Asma'i (1908) in Jaffa. (31) After the Young Turk Revolution took place on July 24, 1908 the Constitution of 1876 was restored, which then gave the press more freedom. (32) The goal of the Arab Palestinian press was to write about the origins, aims, designs, and techniques of the Zionists as they were described, analyzed and condemned. The Arab Palestinian press realized that the Jews already residing in the Empire were loyal subjects, and they were not intent on what the Zionist's intent was regarding Palestine. Their objection regarding Zionism, as contrasted with the Jewish religion, was that the Zionists were intent on developing a nation in Palestine. Their fears arose because of the wave of new immigrants arriving from European countries, who were building colonies exclusively using Jewish labor, were excluding the Arabs. The Arabs foresaw this secularist Zionist attitude and realized that the Zionist intention of building a national home in Palestine was taking effect. Therefore, they began an intensive campaign of informing the Arab public about this threat to their homeland, but also wrote of a concern that once the Zionist objective was fulfilled, the Arabs would eventually lose their majority status on their homeland, lose most of the land, and Palestine would cease to be Arab. The editors were well aware of the futile attempts to bring this matter to the Ottoman authorities, therefore they believed that by bringing this to the reader's attention, it would arouse them to take an active role in preventing land sales to Jewish owners, which was the cause of the peasants' eviction, and loss of work for the Arabs. Owner and editor of al-

Karmil, Najib Nassar, gave his readers extensive background on the Zionist movement, and its significance, and even went on to say that what Palestine needed in order to oppose Zionism was:

“sincere leaders like Herzl who will forget their private interests in favor of the public good. We have many men like Herzl; all they lack is a realization of their own abilities, and the courage to take the first step. Let such men appear, and not hesitate, and circumstances will favor them, for men’s ideas have matured and we are ready.” (33)

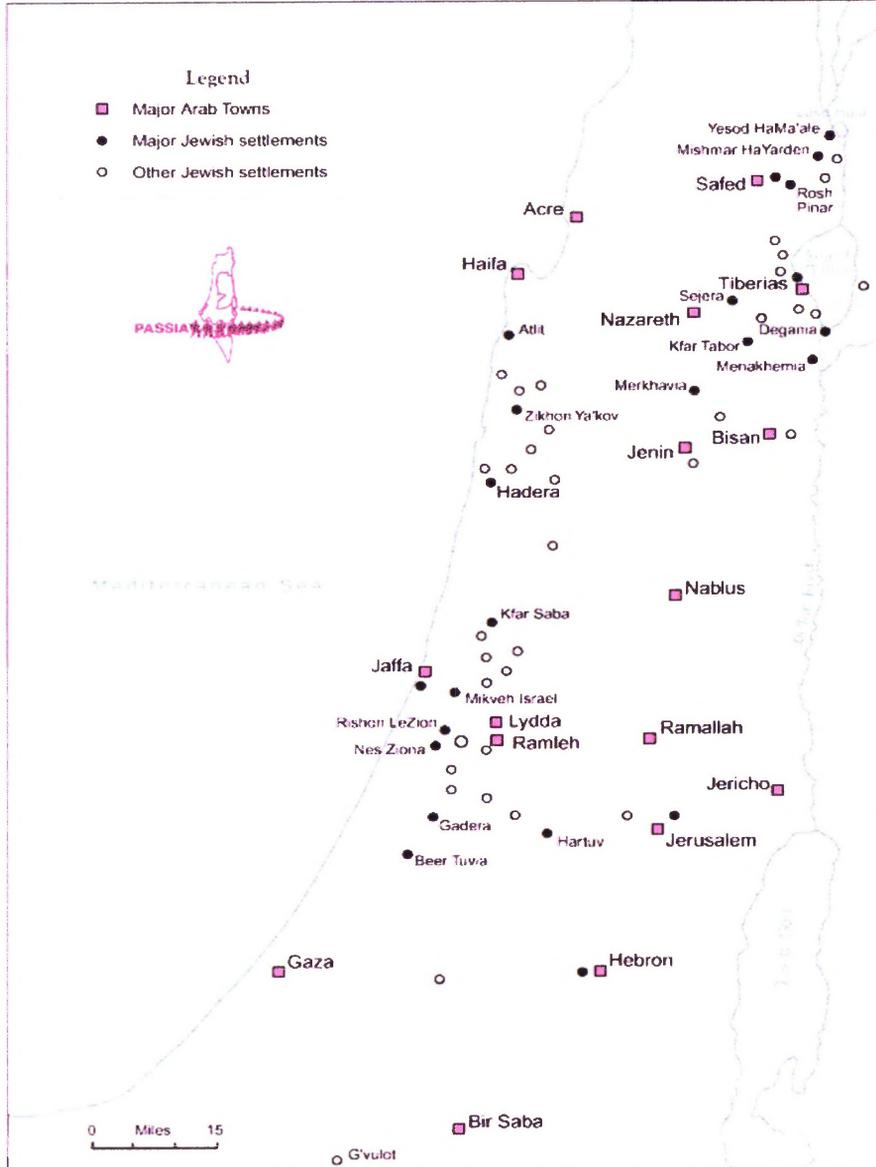
This attempt by the editors of newspapers to spread awareness to the people had awakened Arab poets’ attention. They reacted by composing poetry that would strike at the emotions of the public.

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2. Hourani, Albert, *A History of the Arab Peoples* . Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1991. p. 47.
3. *ibid.*,p. 47.
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6. Zaslhoff, p. xxii.
7. Khalidi, Rashid, *Palestinian Identity: The Construction of Modern National Consciousness*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1997. p. 96.
8. Said Edward W. and Mohr, Jean, *After the Last Sky Palestinian Lives*. New York: Colombia University Press, 1999. p. 88.
9. Sulaiman, Khalid A., *Palestine and Modern Arab Poetry*. London: Zed Books Ltd., 1984. p. 1.
10. *ibid.*, p. 1.
11. *ibid.*, p. 2.
12. *ibid.*, p. 2.
13. *ibid.*, p. 2.
14. Mandell, Neville J., *The Arabs and Zionism before WW1*. p. 10.
15. *ibid.*, p. 12.

16. Khalidi, Rashid, Palestinian Identity: The Construction of Modern National Consciousness. P. 101.
17. *ibid.*, p. 241 and Mandell, Neville J., p. 65.
18. Sulaiman, Khalid A., Palestine and Modern Arab Poetry. p. 3.
19. Mandell, Neville J., p.47.
20. *ibid.*, p. 48.
21. *ibid.*, p. 18.
22. Khalidi, Rashid, p.75.
23. Bowman, Glen, "The Exilic Imagination: The Construction of the Landscape of Palestine from its Outside." p. 57.
24. Hourani, Albert, Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age, 1798-1939. London and New York: Oxford University Press, 1962. p. 283.
25. Khalidi, Rashid, p. 153.
26. Doumani, Beshara, Rediscovering Palestine: Merchants and Peasants in Jabal Nablus, 1700-1900. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1995. p. 21.
27. Mandell, Neville J., p. 3.
28. *ibid.*, p. 2.
29. *ibid.*, p. 4.
30. *ibid.*, p. 50 and Khalidi, Rashid, p. 152.
31. Sulaiman, Khalid, p. 193.
32. Mandell, Neville J., p. 58.
33. Khalidi, Rashid, p. 125.

## Major Arab Towns and Jewish Settlements in Palestine, 1881-1914

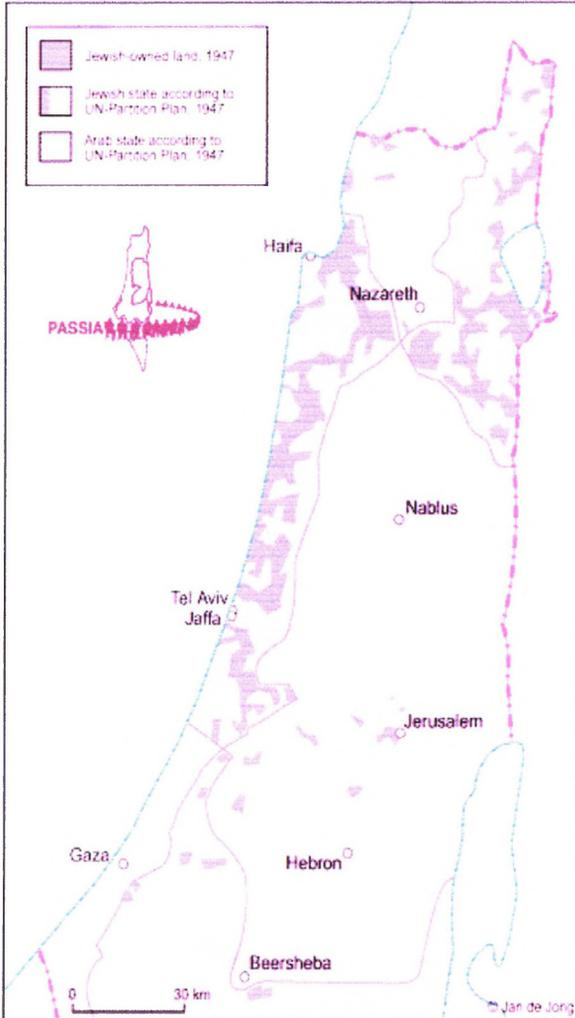


Adapted from Sachar HW. *A History of the Jews in Palestine*. New York: Knopf, 1981.

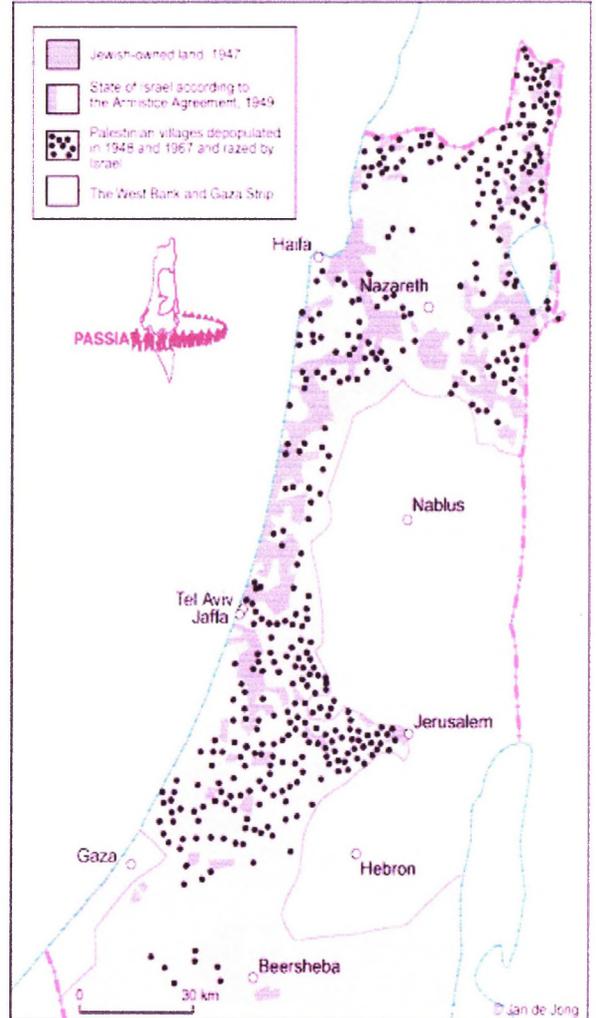
**Palestinian Academic Society for the Study of International Affairs (PASSIA)**

Appendix 2 (courtesy of passia.org)

### Landownership in Palestine and the UN Partition Plan, 1947



### Palestinian Villages Depopulated in 1948 and 1967, and Razed by Israel

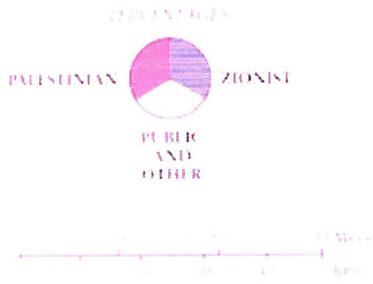


**Palestinian Academic Society for the Study of International Affairs (PASSIA)**

Appendix 3 (courtesy of passia.org)

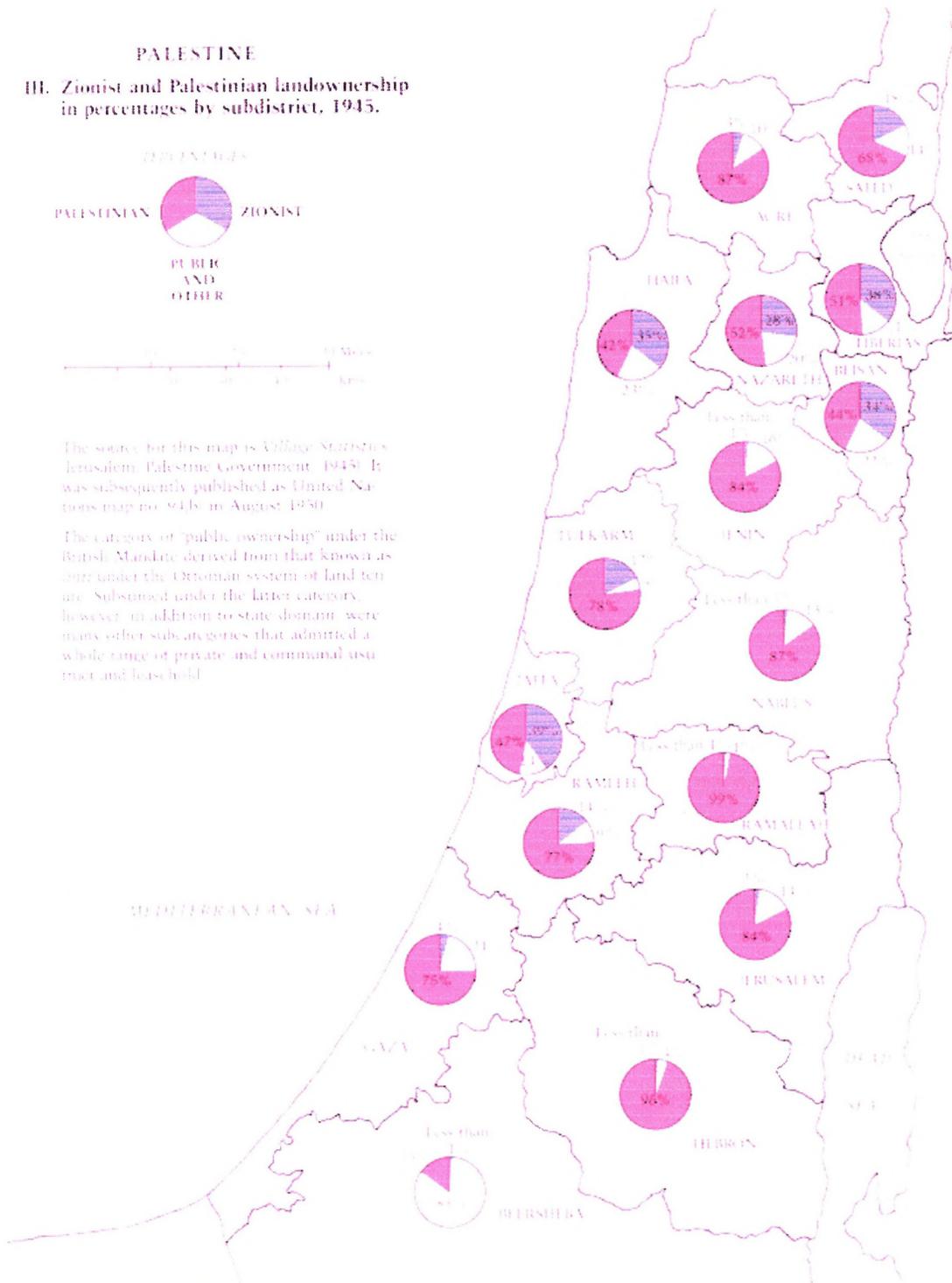
PALESTINE

III. Zionist and Palestinian landownership in percentages by subdistrict, 1945.

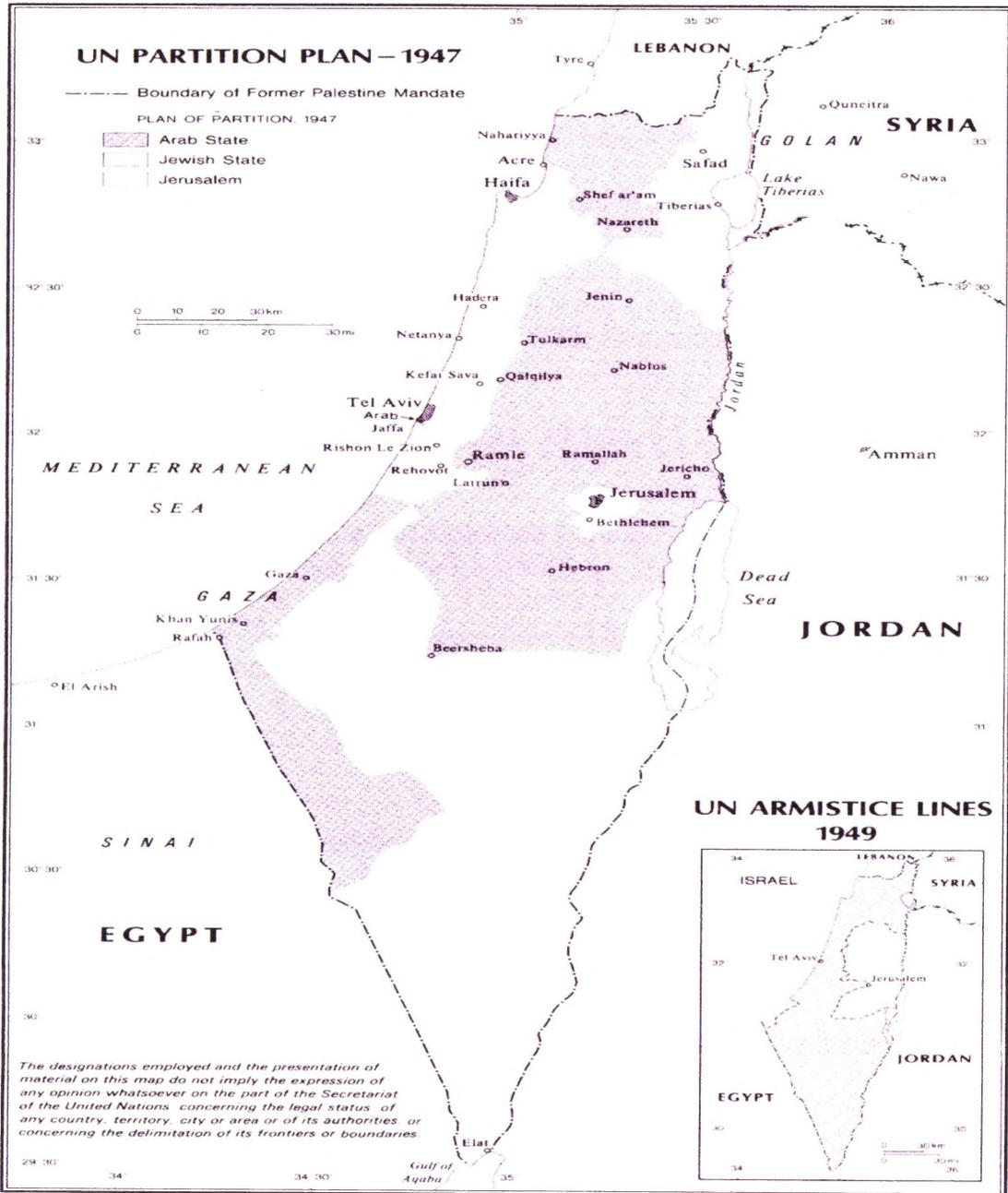


The source for this map is *Village Statistics* Jerusalem: Palestine Government, 1945. It was subsequently published as United Nations map no. 94(b) in August 1950.

The category of "public ownership" under the British Mandate derived from that known as *mir* under the Ottoman system of land tenure. Subsumed under the latter category, however, in addition to state domain, were many other sub-categories that admitted a whole range of private and communal usufruct and leasehold.



Appendix 4 (courtesy of passia.org)



MAP NO. 3067 Rev. 1 UNITED NATIONS  
APRIL 1983

Appendix 5 (courtesy of United Nations.org)

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