



A Narration Without an End: Palestine and The Continuing Nakba

رواية بلا نهاية: فلسطين والنكبة المستمرة

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11/9/2012

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This Thesis is submitted in partial fulfillments of the requirements for the Masters Degree in International Studies from the Graduate Faculty at Birzeit University, Palestine.

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To my parents for their moral and financial support.

To Palestinian refugees for allowing me to listen to their invaluable stories.

To my Supervisor Dr. Rana Barakat for helping me put this story together.

Contents

| | |
|--|------|
| Acknowledgments | iv |
| Abstract | vii |
| Abstract (In Arabic) | viii |
| Chapter One: Introduction | 1 |
| Chapter Two: The Official Palestinian Narrative of the Nakba, Between Commemoration and PLO Dominance | |
| 1. The Official Palestinian Narrative | 32 |
| 2. 63 rd Anniversary of the Nakba: “Refugees Revolution” | 39 |
| 3. 64 th Commemoration of the Nakba: from PLO Perspective and Voice | 45 |
| Chapter Three: The Narrative of First Generation Refugees | |
| 1. Life before the Nakba | 58 |
| 2. Their lives during and after the Nakba: The story of the exodus in 1948 | 62 |
| 3. Remembrance of the Nakba: Indicators of an on-going Narrative | 74 |
| Chapter Four: The discourse of the Second Generation Refugees | |
| 1. How do the second generation refugees narrate the stories of their parents? | 81 |
| 2. The Second Generation Refugees’ ‘Nakbat’: Their Individual Experience of recurring Tragedies | 90 |
| 3. Sharing their memories and stories with others | 93 |

Chapter Five: Third Generation Refugees' Stories: Their memory of the Nakba, and the Narrative of Continuity

| | |
|--|-----|
| 1. How Third Generation Narrate the story of their displacement | 100 |
| 2. Preserving the Memories of their Grandparents: Reconstructing their Grandparents' stories | 106 |
| 3. The Continuity of the Palestinian narrative and the Right of Return | 112 |
| Conclusion | 118 |
| Reference | 125 |

Abstract:

The Palestinian narrative of the Nakba is one of the longest stories of a society's dispossession, occupation and refuge. Since the Nakba, Palestinians have not been able to return to their lands, establish a sovereign state, and most importantly have not been able to put closure to their narrative. Because the weight of the Nakba is reflected in Palestinians daily lives whether from village demolitions, land grabbing, suppression, imprisonment and on-going Israeli onslaughts. The on-going nature of the Israeli occupation and encroachment of Palestine is leading to the on-going nature of the Nakba, which in turn leads to the continuation of the Palestinian narrative.

In my study I intend to analyze the oral testimonies of first, second and third generations of Palestinian refugees in order to examine why the Palestinian narrative of the Nakba does not have an end. In the process of storytelling I will explore the collective memory of the Nakba and the intergenerational transmission of the stories of the Nakba and subsequent traumas. This study is based on ethnographic fieldwork carried out from October 2011 to July 2012, in Al-Jalazoun refugee camp, Qalandia refugee camp, Ramallah and in areas near Ramallah.

The first chapter of this thesis discusses the official Palestinian narrative of the Nakba, with emphasis on the role of the PLO since the 1960s, in addition to the role of Palestinian intellectuals in the formation of this kind of narrative. I will also examine the commemorations of the Nakba and how within commemorative festivals PA tends to impose its semi-official narrative. Chapter two explores the narrative of first generation refugees, chapter three sheds light on the stories of their children, and finally chapter four discusses the narratives of their grandchildren-third generation refugees. The methodology of interviewing three generations refugees was to uncover the different phases of the Nakba and its impact on the Palestinian narrative itself which remains without an end. In my research I've concluded that there are many obstacles leading to the on-going of the Palestinian narrative such as the on-going Israeli invasions, not implementing the right of return, the division between Gaza and the West Bank, the on-going of the Palestinian refugee problem and other factors which will be revealed throughout this study.

ملخص:

الرواية الفلسطينية حول النكبة هي واحدة من أطول قصص اللجوء والتشريد والاحتلال لمجتمع ما. منذ نكبة 1948 لم يتمكن الفلسطينيون من العودة إلى أراضيهم وإقامة دولة فلسطينية ذات سيادة، والأهم من ذلك أنهم لم يتمكنوا من وضع نهاية لرواياتهم لأن أثر النكبة ما زال منعكساً في حياة الفلسطينيين اليومية سواء من تدمير قرى ونهب أراضي واضطهاد واعتقالات واعتداءات مستمرة. إن استمرارية الاحتلال الصهيوني واجتياح الأراضي الفلسطينية يؤدي إلى استمرارية النكبة والذي بدوره يؤدي إلى استمرارية الرواية الفلسطينية.

في هذه الدراسة سأقوم بتحليل الشهادات الشفوية للجيل الأول والثاني والثالث من اللاجئين الفلسطينيين وذلك لدراسة الأسباب التي تؤدي إلى استمرارية الرواية الفلسطينية. سأبحث مفهوم الذاكرة الجماعية للنكبة خلال رواية قصص النكبة وقصص نكبات لاحقة والتي تنتقل عبر أجيال مختلفة من اللاجئين الفلسطينيين. تعتمد هذه الدراسة على عمل ميداني قامت به الباحثة في الفترة ما بين أكتوبر 2011 حتى يوليو 2012 في مخيم الجلزون، مخيم قلنديا، وفي مدينة رام الله ومحيطها.

يتناول الفصل الأول الرواية الرسمية للنكبة مع التركيز على دور منظمة التحرير الفلسطينية منذ ستينيات القرن الماضي في تشكيل هذه الرواية، إضافةً إلى دور بعض المفكرين الفلسطينيين في تشكيل الرواية الرسمية. كما سأتطرق لاحتفالات إحياء ذكرى النكبة والتي تقوم من خلالها السلطة الفلسطينية بفرض روايتها الرسمية. أما الفصل الثاني من هذه الدراسة فيتمحور حول رواية الجيل الأول من اللاجئين الفلسطينيين والفصل الثالث يبحث رواية أبنائهم، وأخيراً يتناول الفصل الرابع رواية أحفادهم - الجيل الثالث من اللاجئين الفلسطينيين. تم الاستعانة بمنهجية المقابلات مع ثلاثة أجيال من اللاجئين الفلسطينيين وذلك للكشف عن المراحل المختلفة من النكبة وأثرها على الرواية الفلسطينية والتي ما تزال بلا نهاية.

بينت نتائج البحث بأنه يوجد هناك العديد من العوائق التي تحول دون وضع نهاية للرواية الفلسطينية مثل استمرارية الاقتحامات الإسرائيلية، عدم تطبيق وممارسة حق العودة، فصل غزة عن الضفة، استمرارية مشكلة اللاجئين الفلسطينيين، والعديد من العوائق التي سيتم التطرق إليها في هذه الدراسة.

Introduction

If the past cannot be changed the question is what to do with its legacy.¹

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

While narrating their stories, Palestinians render the memory of their homeland and life before and after the Nakba. Traditionally, most of the displaced Palestinians give the impression that in Palestine they lived in paradise, and as the Zionist forces occupied their lands, destroyed their homes and forcefully displaced them, they were turned into refugees whose problem is left without a solution until today. This has become the central theme of narration as Palestine “the lost paradise.” Moreover, the continuous Israeli invasion and encroachment of Palestinian territories, reveals that what took place in 1948 did not end in that year. The on-going nature of al-Nakba is manifested in the continuing colonial occupation with an unprecedented narrative of

¹ Ahmed Sa’di, “Reflections on Representations, History, and Moral Accountability”, *Nakba, Palestine, 1948, and the Claims of memory*, Ed Ahmad H Sa’di and Lila Abu-Lughod (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 303.

a society that continues to face the constant demolition of houses, deportation of its people, confiscation of land and the illegal imprisonment of thousands, among other travesties. All these elements create a condition that depicts a unique and traumatic reality of a prolonged and continuous Nakba.

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

Over the past decades Palestinian scholars, such as Edward Said, have emphasized the importance of writing down and recording the voices of Palestinian refugees, which serve as mnemonics in preserving Palestinian memory. In my study, and through interviewing different generations of Palestinian refugees, I studied the different voices, collective and individual memories which construct the Palestinian narrative of the Nakba. All these stories and collective memories fall under a broader narrative, in which all Palestinians underwent a radical change as they all lost a homeland.

Memory is a volatile concept, and is narrated by someone in the present. Nevertheless, we still use memory as authoritative sources of historical knowledge.² In the Palestinian case,

² Ihab Saloul, "The Afterlives of 1948: Photographic Remembrance in a Time of Catastrophe", *Zoom In* (Netherlands: Institute for Historical Justice and Reconciliation and Republic of Letters Publishing, 2011), 177.

oral history is a means in uncovering unexplored aspects of the Nakba. Memory is an essential concept in Palestinian history, because as Palestinians recollect what is taking place in the present, they begin to realize the significance of reconstructing their past. Since many chapters remain missing, or dislocated, from their story, memory plays a crucial role in filling in the pages of the Palestinian story. Following the emergence of oral history as a legitimate source of historiographic data, researchers, and writers; all engage and listen to those Palestinians who have a story to tell.³ For instance, a form of commemoration is reflected in the insistence of intergenerational transmission of memory through spontaneous telling and retelling of stories to children and grandchildren.⁴ This shows that within a Palestinian family the value of ‘story telling’ lies in protecting these stories from forgetfulness.

The main argument of this study is that the extension of the Palestinian Nakba is reflected in Palestinian narratives told from one generation to another without a narrative closure. Nevertheless, what is certain is that we cannot escape memory, or what Edward Casey calls ‘public memory’ which is attached to a past (normally an originating event) and acts to ensure a future remembering of that same event.⁵ In the process of narrating the Nakba and recurring tragedies, memory is the link tying us to the past and is everywhere evident in the stories of Palestinian refugees and this was apparent throughout my study.

Within the Palestinian narrative some narratives are more prevalent and dominant than others. For instance, the semi- official Palestinian narrative of the Nakba is dominated by the PLO and PA. Despite the fact that Palestinians do not have a sovereign state, an official narrative

³ Laleh Khalili, *Heroes and Martyrs of Palestine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 66.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ Edward Casey, “Public memory in Place and Time”, *Framing Public memory* (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 2004), 17.

which calls for the right of return, self-determination and Palestinian struggle for liberation is depicted in the narrative of the PLO. Thus, chapter two of this study examines the official Palestinian narrative in which Palestinian intellectuals and cultural embodiments, such as Edward Said and Mahmoud Darwish, played a fundamental role in the formation of this official narrative. I also argue that the official Palestinian narrative is reflected in commemorations of the Nakba, and particular attention was given to the 64th Nakba day. I found it important to explore the semi-official narrative of the Nakba before beginning with the narratives of multi-generations of refugees, due to the dominance of the PLO narrative in commemorative festivals of the Nakba which has hindered the emergence of other narratives; notably the narratives of subaltern groups such as Palestinian women. In chapter three, which explores the narrative of the first generation refugees, the majority of the interviewees were women. This was intentionally done in order to deconstruct the myth that women are incapable of telling history. Chapter three examines the narrative of first generation refugees, who narrated their lives before, and after the Nakba. After the exodus in 1948, “loss” dominated the recollections of first generation refugees. Moreover, indicators of an on-going Nakba was also investigated in their life stories.

The Palestinian narrative consists of collective memory, remembering and narrating of the conflict that constitutes a key site of the on-going struggle in Palestine.⁶ So the narrative of the Nakba is an accumulation of on-going catastrophes, as one narrative emerges marking the devastation of an entire nation, another narrative is formed complementing the previous one. Hence, the tales told by the second generation refugees complements the unfinished stories of their parents which they pass on to their children who later on add recurring events to their parents’ and grandparents’ continuous stories of displacement. Chapter four focuses on the

⁶ Nur Masalha, *The Palestine Nakba: Decolonizing History, Narrating the Subaltern, Reclaiming Memory* (London: Zed Books, 2012), 10.

stories of second generation refugees, who not only narrated the story of their parents' exodus in 1948, but also enumerated other catastrophic events they have experienced after 1948. Most importantly, the question of return was mentioned in the stories of second generation refugees who demanded the return of what is rightfully theirs. However, as Israel continues to deny Palestinians' right of return, Palestinian refugees continue living in a state of exile and injustice. On the other hand, chapter five addresses the narrative of third generation refugees who articulated that "we will return". Although implementing the right of return is a sine qua non for achieving a just solution to the Palestinian refugee problem, third generation refugees mention other obstacles which keeps the narrative of the Nakba without an end. Throughout my interviews with third generation refugees the burden of preserving their parents and grandparents memories was brought to light.

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

Some might argue that if a Palestinian state is established and the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations miraculously resulted in a peace treaty, Palestinian state of refuge will end. As refugees will return to their lands and their story of displacement, statelessness and

discrimination will end. However, the aim of my research is not to explore how and when the Palestinian narrative will end, but to examine how the construction of memory of the Nakba and other catastrophes affected the narrative of the Palestinians. The Nakba is not Palestine's past, it is not a historic event that ended sixty four years ago. It continues in the stories, memories of Palestinians and in the status quo of the OPT which continues to be subjugated to Israeli invasions, house demolitions and land confiscation.

Needless to say appeals to the past are one of the most common strategies in interpretations of the present. And as Edward Said articulates, "What animates such appeals is not only disagreement about what happened in the past and what the past was, but uncertainty about whether the past is really past over and concluded, or whether it continues, albeit in different forms, perhaps".⁷ Connecting this with the Palestinian case, present events confirm that what took place in the past is not over and concluded. The past continues to reinforce itself in the present, and this unending circle is reflected in the narrative of the Nakba which continues to be told in different forms. Here the role of recording the oral testimonies of Palestinian refugees who survived the Nakba and subsequent generations is an attempt to try and investigate how the continuity of the Nakba has affected the Palestinian narratives of the Nakba.

Significance of this study

The significance of this study is to analyze the oral testimonies of first, second and third generations of Palestinian refugees. Throughout this process, it is clear that some valuable sources as to what happened in 1948 are not covered in history books. Thus, there is a missing part of the Palestinian story and narrative that can be found in the oral testimonies of different

⁷ Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Vintage, 1993), 3.

generation refugees. Through interviewing multi-generations, it is apparent that the Palestinian narrative of the Nakba is passed on from one generation to another. Nonetheless, how each generation defines the past, reconstructs the memories of the Nakba, and grasps the present differs.

While examining the continuity of the Palestinian narrative, this study reveals the multi-narration paradigm in which many narrators endeavor to present their own point of view as to what happened in 1948 and what they experience today of the on-going Nakba.

Objective of this Study

Although some Palestinian scholars have studied the continuation of the Nakba, such as Elias Khoury, the objective of this study is to shed light on the continuation of the Palestinian narrative of Al-Nakba. This was done through examining the different phases of the Nakba whether in 1948, 1967, 1982, 1987, 2008-2009, which was revealed through interviewing the first, second, and third generation refugees. Through recollecting and reconstructing the memory Nakba, and of recurring catastrophes, different generations of Palestinian refugees can play a crucial role in exposing the continuity of the Nakba and thus of their narrative; and this was emphasized in my study.

Conceptual Framework

The intertwined relationship between memory, narrative and oral testimony forms an inextricable part of the Palestinian narrative of the Nakba. The process of narrating the past requires the act of remembering a specific event, and while doing so, recent events may occur in the process. In the Palestinian context I argue that the term memory, in part, entails the act of reminiscing the past, and perceiving it through present events. Through narrating what took

place in 1948, I found that recurring episodes are mentioned in the oral testimonies of Palestinian refugees, and this indicates the continuation of their past and of the Nakba.

Among the variety of works written about memory and history, I combined different approaches written about history, social construction of collective memory and oral history as the basis of my argument. I designed this conceptual framework which consists of the various works of Rosemary Sayigh which relies on oral testimony, Maurice Halbwachs's *On Collective Memory* and Pierre Nora's *lieux de memoire* 'places of memory', in order to provide a framework for my argument regarding a continuing Palestinian narrative. Through the constellation of the different mentioned studies, which complement as well as in part rely on one another, I analyzed the Palestinian narrative of the Nakba from different angles and put the pieces together so as to present the continuation of a Palestinian narrative. These studies examine the idea related to collective memory, and oral history, thus guiding me throughout my study in conducting interviews with Palestinian refugee women and men living in refugee camps and in other areas near Ramallah.

To begin with, Rosemary Sayigh's work on oral testimony of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon clearly applied to my thesis. Her work focuses on the notion of narrative exclusion in which women's voices are rarely heard. Through interviewing Palestinian women and men residing in refugee camps; Sayigh addresses Palestinians' memory of expulsion and continued displacement. For instance in, "Palestinian Women as Storytellers" she points to the value of personal narratives as a source of Palestinian history, and highlights the representations of "self" embedded in the life stories of Palestinian refugees which have much to tell about collective history⁸. Sayigh mostly focuses on presenting the voice and narrative of Palestinian refugee

⁸ Rosemary Sayigh, "Palestinian Camp Women as Tellers of History", *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol.27, No.2 (1998): 43-53.

women residing in Lebanese refugee camps, whose stories have been highly marginalized. She also explains their stories and their knowledge of the Nakba and later events should be included in the broader Palestinian narrative. Most of her research is based on recording the oral testimonies of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, and throughout her research she sought to give a voice to those who she describes as ordinary Palestinians who play the role of agents in the production of history⁹. Moreover, the importance of recording oral testimony lies in preserving the memory of al-Nakba from oblivion. Oral testimony presents new information about the events of al-Nakba which has been missing from the semi-‘official’ narrative. Incorporating Sayigh’s work on oral history to my study, it is clear how oral testimony constitutes a viable source of history and forms the primary source of my study.

While this thesis relies on the methodological importance of oral testimonies, I also used within the historical framework a concept of memory to read and analyze these testimonies. Maurice Halbwachs’s *On Collective memory* is considered one of the most important studies written on collective memory, and many contemporary historians, who further contributed to collective memory studies, have heavily relied on Halbwachs’s work in their works on memory, such as Pierre Nora.

Halbwachs’s study is based on the social construction of memory and how memory depends on the social environment. He believed that the present generation becomes conscious of itself, in counter posing its present to its own constructed past.¹⁰ Most importantly, he articulates that “our conceptions of the past are affected by the mental images we employ to solve present problems, so that collective memory is essentially a reconstruction of the past in

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Lewis Coser, trans, *Maurice Halbwachs On Collective Memory* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992), 24-80.

light of the present”.¹¹ Applying Halbwachs’s study on collective memory to my thesis, the collective memory of the Nakba is a reconstruction of the past in light of the present, wherein each Palestinian seeks to tell his/her story of the past in light of present catastrophes. Thus Palestinian refugees’ individual memory of the Nakba coalesces under a boarder kind of memory, notably the collective memory of the Nakba. As a result, various Palestinian groups from men and women, remember the Nakba differently. And the present Palestinian generation is endeavoring to reconstruct the past through trying to grasp their present situation. Halbwach’s study on collective memory is a starting point and a historical tool that allows me to read oral testimonies and understand “history” as, in part, a collective and popular narrative where memory forms a part of contemporary realties.

On the other hand, Pierre Nora’s *lieux de memoire (Places of memory)* is a seven volume collaborative project led by Pierre Nora. Nora, who is a French historian, complemented Halbwachs’s work on collective memory and wrote on notions of national identity. In one of his articles “Between History and Memory” he argues that history and memory are two different phenomena. He claims that memory is a bond tying us to the eternal present and is a perpetual phenomenon, whereas history is a representation of the past.¹² Moreover, Nora asserts that the quest for memory is the search of one’s own history, and those who have been marginalized in traditional history are not the only ones haunted by the need to recover their buried past.¹³ Most importantly, “memory crystallizes and secrets itself has occurred at a particular historical moment, a turning point where consciousness of a break with the past is bond up with the sense that memory has been torn- but torn in such a way as to pose the problem of the embodiment of

¹¹ Ibid, 34.

¹² Nora Pierre, “Between History and Memory”, *Les Lieux Des Memoire*, Representations 26, (1989): 7–25.

¹³ Ibid.

memory in certain sites where a sense of historical continuity persist”.¹⁴ Nora’s work further enriches my conceptual framework, because as Nora puts it, the task of remembering makes everyone his own historian.¹⁵ Therefore in my thesis the act of remembering fills the gaps in Palestinian history where not only Palestinian historians feel obliged to end the chapter of Palestinians story of exile, dispossession, and trauma but also each and every Palestinian plays a significant role in recollecting the past. Through combing the previously mentioned studies on oral testimony, history and collective memory to my thesis, the oral testimonies of different generations of refugees is full with collective memories and facilitates in recapturing the past and perceiving it through the lens of the present day.

Literature Review

Many works have been written about the Nakba and the memory of it. Some address the political and historical aspects, while others explore the memory and the continuation of the Nakba. Nonetheless, Palestinians differ in how they perceive, narrate and remember the Nakba; and this can be interpreted with taking in consideration the age, gender and status of the narrator whose story truly gives us a better understating of what happened in 1948. Some studies have addressed this matter and gave a voice to a particular group whose voice is seldom heard. For instance, Rosemary Sayigh’s work sheds light on the narrative of Palestinian refugee women in refugee camps whose stories reveals to what extent their narratives have been marginalized.

Before referring to works written about the memory and commemoration of the Nakba, it is essential to mention what has been considered the “official narrative”. For instance, the works of Constatine Zurayk, Sharif Kanaana, Walid Khalidi, and Edward Said have been taken as the

14 Ibid.

15 Ibid.

most cited sources written on the Palestinian question. The official narrative emphasized in my thesis is the narrative of the most prominent Palestinian and Arab scholars who have written on the Nakba and latter catastrophic events which had a role in the formation of the semi-official PLO narrative.

For instance, one of the first works written on the Nakba and which is used until today as one of the most reliable sources is Constatine Zurayk's *The Meaning of the Nakba in 1948 (Ma'na Al-Nakba)*. This book was written in 1948 and Zurayk is the first to use the term Nakba to describe the cataclysm that befell Palestinians in 1948. He also mentions the imperative need to understand the meaning of the Nakba and the reasons behind it. Zurayk uses the term Nakba to depict the Arab defeat in Palestine and the dispossession of, according to his estimation, 400,000 or more Palestinians. However, he argues that it wouldn't be entirely fair to hold Arab states full responsibility for the Nakba, because the enemy they fought was, or still is, formidably stronger. Zurayk pointed out that our defeat in Palestine doesn't mean that there is no hope for surviving and defeating Israel. On the contrary, we should be fully prepared and learn from our enemies the tactic of preplanning for future years and generations to come in order to reach our means and goals in liberating Palestine.¹⁶

Moreover, Zurayk stresses on the role of the intellectual, who is morally obliged and responsible to write and pass on this message of illuminating the wrongs and mistakes we have done, and to highlight the origin of this recent catastrophe. The reality is that hundreds of thousands of the inhabitants of the land have been dispossessed of not only their homes and lands, but also of their aspirations. Furthermore, fighting and overthrowing Zionism cannot be achieved in one war, but requires a series of protracted wars. Nevertheless, this war would not

¹⁶ Constatine Zurayk, *ma'na al-nakba* (beirut: dar al a'lam lilmalaeen, 1948), 8-15.

result in the triumph of Arabs as long as Arab countries remain in their current weak and dysfunctional position.¹⁷ Throughout this book, Zurayk sought to inform his readers the weight of the Nakba and the need to carry out strategic plans in order to liberate Palestine. What distinguishes this book from other studies written about the Nakba is that it was published in August 1948. Zurayk was aware of the need to document the impact of this disaster and to inform later generations of what the Nakba means. Furthermore, this book forms an important chapter in Palestinian history because Zurayk informs his audience to return to where it all began, the Nakba. This book shows how history was engaged and documented immediately after the events of 1948; therefore it is considered until today as one of the most prominent studies written about the Nakba. However, Zurayk was obviously an Arab nationalist and this was reflected in his study. Instead of giving details and evidence of the enormity of the Nakba and what precisely happened in Palestine, a great amount of the book dealt with critiquing the role of Arab countries and their armies for the loss of Palestine. Ever since this study was written in 1948, one would have expected it to present an in-depth analysis of the actual event of Al-Nakba.

Another crucial study addressing the Nakba and which counter poses the Zionist myth and narrative of the 1948 war,¹⁸ is Sharif Kanaana's *Still on vacation! The eviction of the Palestinians in 1948*. In his study, Kanaana refers to the main reasons which led to the expulsion of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians who left their homes and lands because they were facing a life threatening situation. Such as the invasion of Palestinian cities, destruction of hundreds of villages, the various massacres perpetrated against Palestinians, or the horror

¹⁷ Ibid, 20-33.

¹⁸ The Zionist version of the story concerning the Palestinian exodus in 1948 is that Arab kings and head of states, and Palestinian leaders instructed or even ordered Palestinians to evacuate their towns and villages. They even claim that instructions to the Palestinians to leave their places of residence to safer places in Palestine or in neighboring Arab countries were broadcast to the Palestinians from radio stations in several Arab countries. To read how this myth was refuted see Sharif Kanaana's *Still on Vacation!* (Jerusalem: The Jerusalem International Center for Palestinian Studies, 1992), 2-3.

Palestinians felt albeit the spread of the news of these massacres¹⁹. This shows that Palestinians left due the creation of the state of Israel and the numerous tactics the Zionist forces carried out against the indigenous inhabitants of the land.

Kanaana emphasized that the Palestinian migration in 1948 is categorized as forced migration which began before the 1948 war. This study clearly denounces the Zionist- Israeli myth which argues that Palestinians left due to the encouragement and orders of Arab leaders. Through examining the main reasons which led to the creation of the Palestinian refugee problem, and through referring to the impact of the massacres (especially the Dier Yassin massacre) on the flight of Palestinian refugees; Kanaana concluded that the spread of the news of these massacres throughout Palestine was the main reason which led to the mass exodus of Palestinians.²⁰ Therefore, this study reflects Palestinian scholars' attempt to uncover the reasons which led to the displacement and dispossession of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians. While interviewing subsequent generations of Palestinian refugees for my study, they also mentioned the reasons as to how they became refugees which coincides with Kanaana's study.

Another important intellectual to this study and whose work is indispensable is Edward Said, whose career is often a framework for reading literature on, and about Palestine, that includes *Orientalism*, *Culture and Imperialism* and *The Question of Palestine*. Here I will refer to *The Question of Palestine* and "Permission to Narrate". *The Question of Palestine* is an exquisite representative of the Palestinian experience of dispossession, exile and exclusion. In this book, Said addresses many crucial issues such as, the Zionist and Western denial of the existence of Palestine and Palestinians, Zionism from the perspective of its victims, and

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid, 3-33.

Palestinian self determination after the Camp David accords. Said accentuates that for too long Palestinians have been outside history and outside discussion, therefore throughout this book he presents the reality of a collective national trauma embedded for every Palestinian in the Question of Palestine.²¹

Said remarked that although most of this book was written during 1977 and early 1978, his aim has been to write a book putting before the Western reader a grossly representative Palestinian position, something not really known or even appreciated. While formulating this position, Said claimed that he relied mainly on what he considers to be the Palestinian experience.²²

Although this book cannot be entirely considered as the written narrative of Al Nakba, Said's role in presenting the reader with a Palestinian narrative of displacement which has been missing from a Western audience for such a long period of time is imperative. Said wrote this book with the full awareness that the Western audience he addresses is deeply influenced by the dominant narrative of Al-Nakba, in other words the Zionist narrative. Thus throughout this book he sought to inform that particular audience with the missing Palestinian narrative of catastrophe. On the other hand, in "Permission to Narrate" Said addressed the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982 which resulted in the establishment of an international commission of six jurists who undertook a mission to investigate reported Israeli violations of international law during the invasion. Although this article isn't directly about the Nakba, and focuses on the Israeli invasion of Lebanon, Said sheds light on how the Palestinian narrative of the past and present is missing

²¹ Edward Said, *The Question of Palestine* (New York: Vintage, 1992).

²² Ibid

from the west and as a result the Israeli side of the story is taken as absolute truth.²³ This remark clearly shows how Palestinians' voice and side of the story regarding the Israeli invasion of Lebanon is rarely heard in the West and this position continues until today.

Said argued that during the Israeli invasion of Lebanon the existence of the Palestinian people was entirely undermined, and this exposes Israel's full intention of the war, which was to reduce Palestinian existence as much as possible. Moreover, he claimed that during the siege of Beirut, he told his friends and family there to record and write down their experience which he considered crucial so as to present the world with some evident narrative. Most importantly, Said accentuates that the lack of work written about Palestinians doesn't mean that they don't exist. On the contrary they exist, but the narrative of their present actuality, which stems from the story of their existence and displacement from Palestine, that narrative does not exist.²⁴ Said refers to the absence of a Palestinian narrative in the west, and this was apparent during the Israeli invasion of Lebanon where the lack of a narrative concerning the Israeli crimes resulted in not prosecuting Israel for the breach of international law, especially for genocide and mass destruction of buildings carried out against Palestinians residing in refugee camps in Lebanon. Said's effort in calling his family and friends in Beirut and telling them to write or record their experience, shows that the mistakes made in the past (during the Nakba) should not be repeated in present and in future Israeli invasions. Written material about the Israeli invasion of Lebanon and later invasions can facilitate in forming Palestinian narratives which describe not only the beginning of their expulsion and degradation, but also of the ongoing trauma of Palestinian displacement. Moreover, Said wrote this article in a particular historical moment, the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982, and during that period Palestinians' side of the story wasn't

²³ Edward Said, "Permission to Narrate", *Journal of Palestine Studies* 13, No.3, (1984): 27 -35.

²⁴ Ibid, 28-30.

recognized. Nonetheless, despite the fact that the Israeli narrative continues to dominate Western media and intelligentsia, Palestinian scholars are endeavoring to gain some influence in the West.

The act of remembering and commemorating the Nakba implies that Palestinians continue to evoke the memory of loss, despair and displacement which they continue to face until today. Hence, on May 15th of every year, Palestinians recollect the memory of their Nakba. It is important to note that commemoration and remembrance form an essential component of the Palestinian narrative. For instance many studies have focused on the memory of the Nakba, and how Palestinians' commemorate that memory such as Tom Hill's "Historicity and the Nakba commemoration of 1998" and Nur Masalha's "Remembering the Palestinian Nakba: Commemoration, Oral History and Narratives of Memory". The first focuses on the fiftieth anniversary of the Nakba, and the latter on the sixtieth anniversary, yet both articles shed light on how the Nakba was commemorated in its different modes. In his article, Tom Hill examines how debates over modes of narration and commemoration of the Nakba revolved around the nationalist narrative. He refers to Palestinian intellectual's critique, such as Edward Said and Rashid Khalidi, regarding how the Palestinian authority's narrative was dominant during the commemoration of the Nakba. He also examines how the oral testimony of the survivors of Al-Nakba has been either hindered, enhanced, or precluded in the commemorative discourse. The national discourse which dominated the Fiftieth anniversary of the Nakba portrayed Palestinians as victims and called for the liberation of the land. Furthermore, Hill shows the role of the intellectual in mediating the narrative of these testimonies. He also criticizes the national metanarrative of the fiftieth anniversary of the Nakba which was represented in the dominant

discourse of memory.²⁵ During the fiftieth anniversary of the Nakba, some narratives prevailed at the expense of others. Although this article examined the dominant Palestinian discourse during the fiftieth anniversary of the Nakba, the author doesn't really elaborate what this national discourse is. In addition, he relies more on Palestinian intellectuals' critique of the nationalist dominant discourse during the commemorative ceremony, rather than his personal assessment.

During the sixtieth anniversary of the Nakba and while Palestinians remembered the trauma that befell them in 1948, they realize that this particular memory continues to be produced. In the article previously mentioned, Masalha explores how Palestinians remember and commemorate the Nakba in the context of Palestinian oral history, narratives of memory and the construction of collective identity. He asserted that, "The year of the Nakba is a key date in the history of the Palestinian people—a year of dramatic rupture in the continuity of historical space and time in Palestinian history".²⁶

Masalha also referred to the Israeli methods of displacement which were employed in 1948, where 90 percent of the Palestinians who use to live in the land which became Israel, were driven out by psychological warfare and/or military pressure. Later on he asserted that the ethnic cleansing of the Nakba did not end in 1948, and although the concept of remembering is normally tied to the past; the Nakba did not end for it to be remembered as a past event. For Palestinians, mourning the sixtieth anniversary of the Nakba is not only about remembering the ethnic cleansing of Palestine; it is also about marking the ongoing displacement and

²⁵ Tom Hill, "Historicity and Nakba Commemoration", *European University Institute Working Papers*, (2005): 4-20.

²⁶ Nur Masalha, "Remembering the Palestinian Nakba: Commemoration, Oral History and Narratives of Memory", *Holy Land Studies* 7, No 2, (2008): 124.

dispossession of Palestinians. Today the Nakba continues through the continuous land confiscation, continued closure and invasion, and the ongoing siege of Gaza etc.²⁷

After reviewing some of the studies written on the commemoration of the Nakba, this section will cover the memory of it. The concept of memory is a connotation to many things, it could mean preserving an incident from oblivion, the inevitable act of reminiscing an incident or event, and it could imply passing on a focal point in a persons' life from one generation to another. In the Palestinian case, memory is a connotation to all of the above, because the radical change that hit Palestine in 1948 did not end in 1948. Therefore memory is connected to the past as it is to the present and to the future. One of the most significant works written on the memory of the Nakba is *Nakba: Palestine, 1948, and the Claims of Memory* edited by Ahmad H. Sa'di and Lila Abu-Lughod. In this comprehensive study which is comprised of a series of essays, the collective memory of the Nakba and thus the narrative of it is revealed. The essays included in this book rely on oral testimony and personal memory made public, and the authors of this book play an essential role in combining valuable sources so as to construct the history of the Nakba. Most importantly, the authors indicate that neither Arab nor Palestinian historiography has been able to construct a complete and solid narrative to confront the weight of the Nakba which led to the creation of the continuing refugee problem.²⁸ This point indicates that Palestinian historians were not able to write a complete and comprehensive narrative addressing the intensity of the events of 1948, which implies the continuation of the narrative and the difficulty of writing an end to catastrophic events which continues till this day.

²⁷ Ibid, 123-156.

²⁸ *Nakba: Palestine, 1948, and the Claims of Memory*, Edited by Ahmad H. Sa'di and Lila Abu- Lughod (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 7-28.

Relying on oral testimonies to reveal the Zionist crimes perpetrated against Palestinians and their lands, has been a priority of many Palestinian scholars and even ordinary Palestinians. The importance of documenting these valuable stories which contribute in preserving the collective memory of the Nakba is embodied in this book. For instance, in Susan Slyomovics chapter, “The Rape of Qula a Destroyed Palestinian Village”, she explores the importance of writing down the oral history of destroyed Palestinian villages. Writing is a political act that represents and molds the past, and words determine what is remembered and what is forgotten. Hence, Slyomovics recollects the memories of the destroyed Palestinian village Qula, through referring to research written about the power of oral testimonies of those who witnessed and continue to pass on the traumatic memory of the rape of Qula.²⁹ Another significant chapter by Lena Jayyusi entitled “Iterability, Cumulativity and Presence”, explores the concept of memory and its relationship to history. Jayyusi implies that the iterability of same or different tales and trajectories provides the glue of what can be constituted as a collective tragedy. She demonstrates how history shapes our understanding of the past and of the present, in addition to the unavoidable relationship between the event of the Nakba and the narrative; and between individual memory and what became known as collective memory. Furthermore, Jayyusi remarks that iterability is formulated across time, whether in narratives of the Nakba or in narratives of more contemporaneous events, and the unfolding trajectory of continuous dispossession and upheaval experienced at the hands of Israel was to reshape the collective

²⁹ Susan Slyomovics, “The Rape of Qula, a Destroyed Palestinian Village”, *Nakba, Palestine, 1948, and the Claims of memory*, Ed Ahmad H Sa’di and Lila Abu-Lughod (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 27-51.

narrative overtime.³⁰ This article discusses the continuous reemergence of a narrative from the time of the Nakba until today, as one narrative unfolds the depth of the Palestinian trauma another narrative emerges resonating the continuation of that tragedy. Relating Jayyusi's study to my thesis, the unavoidable and inevitable relationship between the past and the present and the continuity of the past has had a fundamental impact on the Palestinian narrative, which is constantly being shaped and reshaped by recurring episodes of dispossessions and invasions.

The importance of oral testimony is embedded in the need to preserve the memory of the unjust and inexplicable crimes Israel has, and continues to commit against Palestinians. For example, in Samera Esmeir's "Memories of Conquest: witnessing Death in Tantura", she examines Palestinian witnesses from Tantura, the act of witnessing, their memories and the challenges they face regarding the credibility of these memories. With taking Tantura as a case study, the author reveals the challenges of the Palestinian memory of Tantura, in which it was argued that their narratives were incoherent and contradictory. It was also argued that they lacked a narrative closure, and as a result, could not establish a historical truth.³¹ The incoherence of the narrative of Palestinians who witnessed the killings carried out in Palestinian villages, can be interpreted as to how each of them remembers and narrates his/her story. This should not be perceived as questioning the credibility of these narratives. Yet the author doesn't support her argument or even elaborate what she meant by not being able to put closure to their narratives.

³⁰ Lena Jayyusi, "Iterability, Cumulativity, and Presence: The Relational Figurers of Palestinian Memory", *Nakba, Palestine, 1948, and the Claims of memory*, Ed Ahmad H Sa'di and Lila Abu-Lughod (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 107-118.

³¹ Samera Esmeir, "Memories of Conquest: Witnessing Death in Tantura", *Nakba, Palestine, 1948, and the Claims of memory*, Ed Ahmad H Sa'di and Lila Abu-Lughod (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 229-230.

The editors of this book highlight the importance of oral testimonies which serve as evidence as to what happened in 1948. They also mention the fact that Palestinian writers were not able to narrate the Nakba in stories that have closure, nonetheless this point wasn't further explored. This book doesn't focus on the narrative of the Nakba but rather on the act of remembering. In my study of the narrative of the Nakba, I refer to the intertwined relationship between both the memory and the narrative of the Nakba which complement one other.

It is worth noting that the construction of the Palestinian narrative is multi-layered and consists of many narrators. However some narratives have been marginalized, and as a result their point of view and experience have not been heard or included in the 'official' Palestinian narrative, such as women and Peasants. One of the most significant authors whose writings explores the experience and perspective of marginalized women in refugee camps, especially in Lebanon, is Rosemary Sayigh. Her studies have focused on oral testimonies of Palestinian refugees residing in refugee camps in Lebanon, such as "Palestinian Women as storytellers", "Palestinians in Lebanon: Harsh Present, Uncertain Future", "Product and Producer of Palestinian History: Stereotypes of "Self". In addition to her book *Palestinians: From Peasants to Revolutionaries* which focuses on the life stories of Palestinian peasants.

In *Palestinians: From Peasants to Revolutionaries*, Sayigh presents the history of the Palestinian people that challenge the elitist narrative. For instance, she examines ordinary people's perception of the 1948 disaster, and discovers that the voices of the Palestinian people have been missing. Sayigh portrays the status of Palestinian peasants before the Nakba, and who recollected those days by remarking that they lived in 'paradise'. In Palestine, (before the Nakba) these Palestinians remember their lives as peasants who were able to provide their needs through harvesting crops off their lands. By conducting many interviews with Palestinian refugees and

through recording their testimonies of dispossession, most of the interviewees said that at a point after the exodus they had to return to their village in order to bring some supplies such as food, clothes and blankets and leave before the Zionist forces would catch them. They later on narrate the harsh condition of living in exile and degradation in refugee camps in Lebanon.³² This study was published in the 1970s, and was written in a different context from today. During that time little was known, or even written, about the Palestinian refugee problem, especially in the West. Today in 2012 the situation is far different, with the publication of many studies addressing the Question of Palestine and the Refugee problem and some of which rely on oral testimonies of Palestinian refugees. Nonetheless, Sayigh's work gives us today a better understating of the status of Palestinians before and after the 1948 Nakba, especially as she presents us with the narrative of peasants who also constitute a subaltern group; because their voices are also not included in the 'official' narrative.

Just as the lives of peasants were long ignored by the elitist narrative, women's voices have also been neglected, and this was the core focus of Sayigh's work, that is giving voice to the voiceless Palestinian women. For instance, in "Palestinian Camp Women as Tellers of History" Sayigh examines the value of personal narratives as a source of Palestinian history. She also highlights the importance of including Palestinian women's experience in refugee camps in Palestinian history. Sayigh reveals the oral testimonies of Palestinian camp women from Lebanon whose side of the story are seldom told and framed in a broader chronological form. Consequently, their narratives are not recognized or even categorized as history. Hence Sayigh emphasizes that oral life stories offer substantial material to historians regarding the Palestinian experience. The value of oral testimony is that it registers the experience of marginal social

³² Rosemary Sayigh, *Palestinians: from peasants to revolutionaries* (London: Zed Books, 1979).

sectors and it preserves the cultural and social characteristics of direct speech. For instance one of the interviewees, Umm Ghassan, a 60 year refugee woman living in a refugee camp in Lebanon, tells her story in chronological order. She began with the story of her exodus, moving on to the oppression of the Lebanese army in the 1950s and 1960s, then the Israeli invasion and massacre in 1982, and ending with the battle of the camps in 1995-1998. Although the younger speakers were more formally educated and politicized, they tended to structure personal narrations around national historical landmarks, and their life stories revolved around their political activities which were placed in the forefront of their narratives.³³ The message conveyed in this study is that Palestinian women tell the past differently from men, and the way they narrate their experience of living in exile and the hardships they face on a daily basis ever since 1948, presents the reader with rich and informative material. Most importantly, some of the women not only told the story of the past, but also continued to enumerate the Israeli invasions and internal conflicts with the Lebanese government which they continue to deal with until today.

In “Product and Producer of Palestinian History: Stereotypes of “Self” in camp Women’s Life Stories” Sayigh examines the representation of “self” embedded in the life stories of Palestinian women in Lebanese refugee camps. As in the previous study, this one relies on the life stories of women residing in the Shatila camp, recorded soon after its destruction during the “Battle of the Camps” (1995–98). From these stories it was apparent that the “self” stereotypes express historic continuity beginning with their exodus from Palestine and continues with living in exile in Lebanon. Through the analysis of the “self” stereotype, this points to a

³³ Rosemary Sayigh, “Palestinian Camp Women as Tellers of History”, *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol.27, No.2 (1998): 43-53.

“collectivization” of personal narratives, in addition to other factors such as age, social status, educational level which differentiates the speakers’ presentation of herself. However, the omission of women from national historiography is evident in the Palestinian case, where women are perceived as incapable of making history. Through recording the story of these women, Sayigh endeavored to deconstruct this stigma allocated to women. For example, in one of the women’s stories a refugee named Umm Norman gave a chronological description of her displacement and loss. She began with, “All our life has been lost,” and then went on to give the interviewer the full names of two sons who had been killed and a third imprisoned since 1976. She then listed all the homes she had been displaced from, in most cases through war, beginning with Kabri (Palestine), and continuing in south Lebanon.³⁴ From the recordings of these stories, it is clear how Palestinian women have a distinct style in narrating their life stories. Although the first generation Palestinian women began their stories with the exodus, later generations began with their political experience and affiliation in refugee camps. Despite the fact that both articles reveal the necessity of including Palestinian women’s perception of Palestinian history, the emphasis of both studies was on Palestinian women in Lebanese refugee camps. As a result, a generalization could not be made, where the experience of Palestinian women in Lebanon differs from the experience of other Palestinian women dispersed in other parts of our vast diaspora.

Women’s stories of the Nakba has been highly underestimated, their voices as to what happen in 1948 is not integrated in the semi-official narrative. Thus the exclusion of women from the Palestinian narrative can be enumerated as one of the reasons leading to the ongoing nature of the Palestinian narrative. In addition to Rosemary Sayigh’s research, other researchers

³⁴ Rosemary Sayigh, “Product and Producer of Palestinian History: Stereotypes of "Self" in Camp Women’s Life Stories, *Journal of Middle East Women’s Studies* 13, No 1, (2007): 86-100.

have shed light on the importance of listening to women's side of the story and documenting their experience. For instance, in Fatma Kassem's *Palestinian Women Narrative Histories and Gendered Memory*, she explores urban Palestinian women's experiences who witnessed the Nakba and now reside in Israel. She describes how these narratives serve as a window for examining the complex intersections of gender, history and memory, nationalism and citizenship in a situation of ongoing colonization and violent conflict. Her primary assumption is that women are active agents in the production and preservation of knowledge and history. And based on the interviews of twenty-five Palestinian women who witnessed the Nakba, Kassem emphasized that the competence of oral sources does not lie in preserving the past, but in giving significance to the past from a present-day position.³⁵ This shows how remembering the past from a present day perspective not only gives importance to the past, but also reveals how preserving and passing on the memory of it can give us a better understanding of present events.

Through recording and documenting the experience of elderly Palestinian women, this gave them a better sense of the importance of listening to their side of the story. However, some of these women were reluctant and hesitant in providing information about their experience of the 1948 Nakba, because in some situations it was too painful to reminisce the loss of a son or a daughter during the mass exodus in 1948.³⁶ In the process of interviewing these women, Kassem came across women who wondered why anyone would be interested in their life story. As these women recollected the events of 1948, recent events such as the attack on Gaza in winter 2008-2009 were vividly embedded in their stories. For instance, Salma indicated in her description of the spread of hunger and thirst during the exodus:

We had nothing, no clothes and no bread for the children....We were fasting.
My cousin died on the road my husband's aunts and his two cousins died on

³⁵ Kassem, Fatma, *Palestinian Women Narrative histories and gendered memory* (London: Zed Books, 2011), 3-10.

³⁶ *Ibid*, 64-85.

the road.....The days are repeating themselves now. Look in Gaza. Some of the people have nothing to eat. The days are repeating themselves, more or less.³⁷

As Palestinian women narrate their life story of the Nakba, they mention recent events which verifies the continuation of the Nakba. This also reveals the continuity of the past in present events. These women have not only witnessed the trauma of 1948, but also continue to watch the ongoing effects of it, and this clearly reveals that the notion of keeping women's side of the story in the margins needs to be deconstructed.

After reviewing some of the works written about the Nakba from different aspects such as memory, commemoration, the narrative of the Palestinian peasants and Palestinian women; it was clear that not one of these studies have comprehensively studied the question of an ongoing Palestinian narrative. Some addressed the Nakba as a political event, others examined the memory of the Nakba and others discussed the exclusion of women from the 'official' narrative. Due to the shortage of literature written on the continuity of the narrative of the Nakba, this shows the need to write and analyze the reasons behind this predicament. Notably this is what my study hopes to reveal, that the Palestinian narrative of the Nakba consist of many narratives and that the catastrophe that befell Palestine in 1948 continues until today. As long as Israel continues to invade, annex Palestinian territories and as long as the Palestinian refugee problem is left without a solution, Palestinian narrative will continue to be told without an end.

Research Question

To what extent has the ongoing of the Nakba affected the Palestinian narrative itself?

³⁷ Ibid, 135.

Sub- Questions

- How has the construction of the memory of the Nakba shaped the lives of subsequent generations?
- What are the reasons behind the continuation of the Palestinian narrative?
- Within the Palestinian narrative itself, are some narratives more prominent than others?
- How does the narrative of the third generation differ from the narrative of the first and second generation?
- Through interviewing different generations of Palestinian refugees, what are the indicators to the ongoing nature of the Palestinian narratives? What role does “memory” and “remembering” play in these narratives?

While interviewing different generations of Palestinian refugees the unavoidable relationship between the ongoing of the Nakba and the narrative of the Nakba is reflected in the Palestinian narrative, which consists of many narratives. In this study I argue that the Palestinian narrative of the Nakba has been influenced the on-going Palestinian state of exile, the refugee problem, the demolition of villages, the construction of the apartheid wall, the continuous Israeli attacks and occupation, among other continuing catastrophes which have been reflected in continuity of the Palestinian narrative. This will be proved through analyzing the interviews of various generations of Palestinian refugees who gave different answers to my research questions.

Methodology

The methodology that was used in this thesis was face to face interviews with first, second and third generations of Palestinian refugees. This research is qualitative, and the sample of this study was purposefully chosen and consists of 22 interviews with three generations of Palestinian refugees. I did not refer to the full names of my interviewees; instead I used

pseudonyms in order to protect their identity. In the process of storytelling, there are different types of narrators such as first person narrator, omnipresent narrator and multi- narrators. And the Palestinian narrative consists of multi narrators. By multi narration I imply that we have more than one person narrating the stories of the Nakba, each of whom tells his/her stories differently.

Furthermore, the methodology of my study is based on ethnographic fieldwork conducted in various places in the Ramallah area. The interviews I've conducted range from Palestinian refugees living in refugee camps such as Al-Jalzoun refugee camp, Qalandia refugee camp, in addition to towns and cities near Ramallah, such as Dier Dibwan, Surda, Ramallah and Birzeit. So the geographic space of my study is areas in or near Ramallah. This was chosen because Ramallah consists of a diversity of Palestinian refugees who are originally from different parts of historic Palestine. The reason I choose to interview different generations is to show how each narrates and passes on the memory of 1948, and of whether in light of the deteriorating political status and instability of the region gives them a better understating of what took place in 1948 and since 1948. The primary data of my study is interviews, and the secondary sources are books, periodicals and articles that examine the various elements of the Nakba. The interviews I've conducted are combined with an in depth analysis of several studies written about al-Nakba, all in the purpose of unfolding how the continuity of the Nakba has influenced the Palestinian narrative.

Difficulties

The difficulties I faced while conducting interviews is that some of the interviewees would not allow me to record their stories, and didn't directly answer my questions. In other cases, they were too straight forward and didn't really elaborate or justify what they were saying. Also in some cases they seemed hesitant and reluctant in giving full details of their stories and insisted on keeping their names anonymous for political and security reasons. Although I conducted twenty seven interviews with different generation refugees, I used 22 of these interviews, because of the limitations of this study. In other words, the interviews I conducted with refugees were packed with valuable information where some of the interviews lasted for over an hour. Because this is an MA thesis I wasn't able to answer and address all of the issues raised in the life stories of first, second and third generations of Palestinian refugees. Also some of the interviews were not useful, as I will mention in chapter three, due to the health conditions of the interviewees.

Chapter Two: The Official Palestinian Narrative of the Nakba: Between Commemoration and PLO Dominance

64 years ago the name Palestine was erased from the world map, as the Zionist forces and leaders strove to occupy, depopulate and erase Palestine with the intent of replacing it with the newly established state of “Israel”. Ever since the 1948 Nakba, Palestinians commemorate the day, the year and the moment, they were forcefully displaced from their lands and were made into refugees dispersed in different parts of the globe. The aim of my research is not to portray Palestinians as victims who are incapable of fighting for their lands and cause, but to argue that in such a long and unequal struggle to speak and to remember is to resist.³⁸ Palestinians have for the past 64 years commemorated the memory of their Nakba in various ways, whether from the poems of Mahmoud Darwish, the novels of Ghassan Kanafani, the caricatures of Naji Ali, the stories of Samira Azzam, or in the annual festivals and Palestinian parades. All these commemorative forms, in part, construct the memory of the Nakba as something that can potentially mobilize Palestinians to resist and fight against the Zionist colonization of Palestine.

Although Palestinians have not yet established a sovereign state, within the narrative and commemoration of the Nakba, a semi-‘official’ Palestinian narrative is apparent. For instance, in the 50th anniversary of the Nakba the main speeches were delivered by Yassir Arafat, and Mahmoud Darwish, political and cultural embodiment of the nation and national experience, since 1964.³⁹ Thus a semi-official Palestinian narrative of the Nakba has been in the making since the foundation of the PLO in 1964. Since then this ‘official’ narrative dominates and

³⁸ Rosemary Sayigh, “Product and Producer of Palestinian History Stereotypes of Self in Camp Women’s Life Stories”, *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies* 13, No 1, (2007): 88.

³⁹ To read more on the 50th anniversary of the Nakba see Tom Hill’s “Historicity and the Nakba Commemorations of 1998”, *European University Institute, Working Papers*, (2005): 6.

overshadows other narratives and experiences through imposing the PLO discourse of the Nakba on Palestinians. This was, or still is, reflected in the commemorations of the Nakba. In this section I examine the official Palestinian narrative, the commemoration of the Nakba and PLO dominance in commemorative practices, with emphasis on the 63rd and 64th Nakba day.

1. The Official Palestinian Narrative:

When the PLO was founded in 1964, an official Palestinian narrative began to emerge. PLO began as small groups of political activists and self-styled “liberators” who sought the restoration of Arab Palestine, through war and the destruction of Israel. Taking armed struggle, both as practice and doctrine was their main means of mobilizing their constituency and affirming a distinct national identity.⁴⁰ As Palestinians became increasingly restless in the face of explicit Arab inaction, nevertheless, Egyptian president at the time Gamal Abdel Nasser took the lead in endorsing the initiative of a Palestinian lawyer and diplomat, Ahmad al-Shuqayri, to set up the PLO as a nationally-representative organization for the Palestinians in May 1964.⁴¹ Originally the PLO was founded by the Arab League in 1964 as a means in institutionalizing Palestinian energies.⁴² Here it is important to clarify that the PLO was not a government, and was without the authoritative means for the disposal of a national government for the propagation of an official version of history for the entirety of the Palestinian people.⁴³ Nevertheless, it was able to reach Palestinians through its newspapers, periodicals, its publishing houses, research institutions and particularly its radio station *Sawt Filastin* (The Voice of Palestine) which was listened to by many Palestinians.⁴⁴ Even though the basic elements needed for the establishment

⁴⁰ Yezid Sayigh, “The PLO and the Palestinian Armed Struggle”, *The Middle East Online*, p.1-2. www.gale.com

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Edward Said, *The Question of Palestine* (New York: Vintage Books, 1992), 134.

⁴³ Rashid Khalidi, *Palestinian Identity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 199-200.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

of a government or a quasi state were missing, the PLO was able to enforce its version of the story through its various centered institutions in the Diaspora, especially in Lebanon which was the center of the PLO through fundamental years of struggle after their exodus from Jordan until the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982. For instance, the PLO research center in Beirut underwent many Israeli bombardments, and in 1983 the research center was bombed by Israeli forces and closed down by Lebanese officials.⁴⁵

The largest Palestinian political grouping is Fatah, which was dominated by Yassir Arafat. So Fatah is grouped under the umbrella of the PLO,⁴⁶ and the PLO began as an armed struggle group with the aim of liberating Palestine. Yet the idea of state building wasn't missing from their agenda. One of the main consequences of armed struggle, involved a process similar to state building. State building in the Palestinian case involved the establishment of quasi-governmental services providing medical care and social welfare to the mass constituent.⁴⁷ It was also obvious in the obsessive insistence of the PLO on obtaining from both Arab and non-Arab governments recognition as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people.⁴⁸ However, the fact that the Palestinian leadership based its legitimacy on its role in armed struggle against Israel, encouraged the tendency toward "populist politics and authoritarian control".⁴⁹ Historically speaking, the PLO began as armed struggle groups and its role in armed struggle and resistance was prevalent throughout the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s. But with the passage of time, the "PLO has transformed itself from a national liberation movement into a kind of small town

⁴⁵ Samih Shibab, "al-thakira al tha'ia", *naho sia'gat riwaya tarikhira lil-nakba eshkaliat wa tahadiat*, tahrir Mustafa Kibha (Haifa: Mada Al-Karmal, 2006), 278.

⁴⁶ Edward Said, *The Question of Palestine*, 157-161.

⁴⁷ Yezid Sayigh, "Armed Struggle and State Formation", *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. 26, No. 4 (1997): 18-26.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

government, with the same handful of people still in command”.⁵⁰ Initially the semi-official Palestinian narrative consists of four essential components armed struggle, liberating Palestine, the right of return and self determination. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, the PLO’s official narrative was embodied in cultural and intellectual figures, who supported the PLO’s role in armed struggle and fighting for Palestinians freedom, such as Edward Said and Mahmoud Darwish.

Edward Said was one of the most prominent Palestinian intellectuals, whose writings, before the Madrid conference and Oslo Accords, marked the official Palestinian narrative. Edward Said became a member of the Palestine National Council in 1977. His role in informing a western audience of the Palestinian experience of exile and struggle for self-determination, has indeed facilitated in the construction of a semi-‘official’ narrative. For instance, in the *Question of Palestine* Said’s support for the PLO was clear as he said, “I myself am greatly impressed with the generous presence in the PLO of values, ideas, open debate, revolutionary initiative- human intangibles whose role, I think, has far exceeded, and has demanded more loyalty than the routine organization of a militant party might have”.⁵¹ Most importantly Said’s vision of peace and self determination is based on the fact that all Arab states have accepted United Nations Resolution 242 as a basis for peace in the region; and the PLO has indicated that in return for a U.S. declaration of support for Palestinian self-determination culminating in an independent state it will create very concrete proposals on peace.⁵² Yet one must note that Said spoke to a western audience and endeavored to change the western image of the PLO as a terrorist group. Instead he informed his audience that the PLO represents the political and national aspiration of the Palestinian people. Thus Said promoted the idea of a just solution for the Palestinians based on

⁵⁰ Edward Said, *Peace and Its Discontents* (New York: Vintage Books, 1995), 4.

⁵¹ Edward, Said, *The Question of Palestine* (New York: Vintage Books, 1992), 145.

⁵² *Ibid*, 196.

the establishment of a sovereign independent Palestinian state. However his support for the PLO and the Israeli-Palestinian peace process ended after the signing of the Oslo Accords- which will be noted in a moment.

On the other hand, Mahmoud Darwish's poems represent the cultural figure of the PLO's official narrative. Darwish represents the "state" of the Palestinian in the second half of the twentieth century—continuously in exile and under siege: exile from the Galilee to Lebanon in 1948, return to his destroyed village in the Galilee and life as a present absentee, life as a Palestinian citizen of Israel under the military government, departure for exile in the Palestinian diaspora, joining the PLO ,the siege on Beirut and the exit from it, life in Tunis, the life of the exile in Paris, residing in Ramallah after the establishment of the Palestinian Authority, and living in Amman.⁵³ His broad personal experience and its connection to so many of Palestinians experiences have established him as a national poet.⁵⁴ Edward Said even designated Mahmoud Darwish's work "*Bitaqit Hawia*" (Identity Card) as a national poem. The poem opens as follow:

Record!
I am an Arab
And my Identity Card
Is number fifty thousand
I have eight children
And the ninth
is coming in midsummer
Will you be angry?⁵⁵

The power of this small poem, which appeared in the late sixties, embodies the Palestinians whose political identity in the world has been reduced to a name on an identity card.⁵⁶ Hence Dawrsh's poems portray Palestinian national identity, resistance, Israeli siege, right of return,

⁵³ Almog Behar, "Mahmoud Darwish: Poetry State of Siege", *Journal of Levantine Studies*, Vol.1 (2011): 189-199.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Said, *The Question of Palestine*, 155-156.

⁵⁶ Ibid, 155.

and exile. All these elements have been integrated in the official narrative of the PLO. In his poems Darwish combines political activism, poetry, and history in an eloquent way which Palestinians from all over the world related to. And in 1973 Darwish was active with the PLO and established good ties with Fatah's leader, Yassir Arafat. He was active in the PLO until 1993, when he resigned in protest of the Oslo accords.⁵⁷ The agreement, he believed, "embraced a peace without justice for Palestine and was doomed to failure".⁵⁸ Just as his friend Said, Darwish was highly disappointed with PLO's concession in signing the Oslo Accords which did not serve justice for the Palestinians. In this study it is not my task to critically read Darwish; but to show how he has played a major role in the construction of this semi-official narrative.

After being an advocate for the peace process in the Middle East during the late 1970s and 1980s, Edward Said began to write about the end of the peace process and its failures in the early 1990s. For instance, in one of his articles, Said articulated that the larger problem is the PLO's recent vision of itself, its own history, and its own goals. He further adds that, "Many of us supported the PLO not only when it promised to liberate Palestine, but also when in 1988 it accepted partition and national independence for 22 percent of Palestine".⁵⁹ After the signing of the Oslo Accords Mahmoud Darwish, member of the PLO executive Committee, following the example previously set by Said, resigned in protest.⁶⁰ Therefore, both political and cultural embodiments of the Palestinian official narrative gave up their decades of support of the PLO, and didn't hesitate in showing their increasing critique of PLO leadership's decisions during the so-called peace Accords.

⁵⁷ Mohammed Omer, "Opening a Space for Jasmine: Mahmoud Darwish, Poet of Palestine and the World-Washington Report", *Mahmoud Darwish Foundation*, <http://www.mahmouddarwish.ps/etemplate.php?id=47>

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Edward Said, *Peace and Its Discontents* (New York: Vintage Books, 1995), 23.

⁶⁰ Ibid, 5-6.

The historical breakthrough announced by the PLO and Israeli government in 1993 is basically a joint decision to signal a new phase of reconciliation between two enemies; but it also leaves Palestinians the subordinates, with Israel still in charge of East Jerusalem, settlements, sovereignty, and the economy.⁶¹ In the Oslo Accords, the PLO was recognized by Israel as the representative of the Palestinian people, and on the other hand the PLO recognized the state of Israel. However the question of Palestinian autonomy remained limited. Oslo included that Israel will allow the vague notions of “limited autonomy” and “early empowerment” for Palestinians in the Gaza Strip and Jericho. Israel will control the land, water, overall security and foreign affairs in these “autonomous” areas.⁶² In Oslo, Palestinian leadership had given up on self determination, Jerusalem and the refugees, allowing them to become part of an undermined set of “final status negotiation”.⁶³ The signing of the Oslo Accords in 1993, overlooked many crucial issues which constitute the question of Palestine such as: the Palestinian refugee problem, retrieving Palestinian lands, dismantling Israeli settlements, free movement of Palestinians, and myriad of fundamental unresolved issues.

Many Palestinians were shocked with the outcome of the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations which was sponsored by the US. For instance Edward Said noted that “in the past I spoke out for peace and Palestinian rights and against Israeli practices. All of a sudden the major Palestinian leader, Yassir Arafat, signed an agreement with Israel (under United States sponsorship), and I found myself criticizing the so-called peace, as well as the PLO and its titular head”.⁶⁴ While reading *the Question of Palestine* and *The End of the Peace Process*, I

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid, 3.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid, xxiv-xxv.

realize that Said changed his mind regarding the PLO's role in liberating Palestine. In the first book he stood with the PLO and supported their struggle for liberation, in the latter he severely condemns the PLO and the peace process as he says: "I find myself puzzled as to why both the PLO and the Arab states allowed themselves to get into such an extraordinary stupid position, that is, to sign peace agreements with Israel before even the most limited versions of resolutions 242 and 338 had been compiled with".⁶⁵ Said had an influential role in mediating the negotiations process between the PLO and the US, yet when the so-called negotiations failed he changed his view, position, and support of the PLO and its leader Yassir Arafat.

Although the PLO representatives were negotiating the fate of Palestinians with Israeli officials, they disregarded Palestinian intellectuals, Palestinian refugees and Palestinian political parties' perspective before falling into a carefully planned Israeli trap. The peace process was totally oblivious to the interest of the Palestinian people, in addition to its enchantment of Israel's position by propaganda and political pressure.⁶⁶ Oslo gave Israelis and supporters of Israel a sense that the Palestinian problem has been solved once and for all.⁶⁷ Conversely, the outcome of the peace process was far from solving the Palestinian problem. As one of the third generation refugees I interviewed puts it, "When you look at the history of negotiations, it's been twenty years now and like I said before we are much worse off than we were".⁶⁸

Although Edward Said and Mahmoud Darwish showed their utmost disapproval of PLO's role throughout the so called peace process, up until 1993 they both had a huge impact

⁶⁵ Ibid, 5.

⁶⁶ Edward Said, *The End of the Peace Process* (New York: Vintage Books, 2000), 5.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Interview with Laila: Third Generation refugee. This interview was conducted on June 11, 2012 in Ramallah in English.

in the construction of this semi- official Palestinian narrative. As previously mentioned, in the *Question of Palestine* Said showed his inalienable support of the PLO and even advocated the establishment of a secular democratic Palestinian state and supported the idea of peace between Palestinians and Israelis. Said was also a member of the Palestine National Council, and resigned in 1991 because he lost confidence in Yassir Arafat's leadership.⁶⁹ On the other hand, Mahmoud Darwish was a part of the PLO Executive Committee, his activism in the PLO was embodied in his poems and speeches on Palestinian national identity and exile such as "Passport", "Without Exile, Who am I?" and "I Am There". Even though he showed his protest against the Oslo Accords through resigning from the committee, until today his poems symbolize the official Palestinian narrative. Thus both Said and Darwish's work which represents Palestinian experience in exile have contributed in the formation of the official Palestinian narrative through their various works and their personification of the question of Palestine. It is important to clarify that both Said and Darwish did not aim at constructing a semi—official narrative, but their work has been used and manipulated by the PLO to become a part of this narrative. For example, Darwish often spoke about not being a representative, but was one nonetheless; especially as he stood with PA officials during commemorations of the Nakba and delivered speeches. This is a contradiction where Darwish spoke about not a representative, but his appearance and association with PA and PLO officials have categorized him as one.

2. 63rd Anniversary of the Nakba: "Refugees Revolution"

On May 15, 2011, during the 63rd commemoration of the Nakba, a new form of commemoration took place. As Palestinians from all sides of the Syrian, Lebanese borders

⁶⁹ Mortimer Mildred, "Tribute to Edward Said", *Research in African Literatures*, Vol. 35, No 1 (Spring 2004):6-8.

courageously jumped off Israeli fences and strove to enter the occupied territories, with the aim of returning to their lands.

The camera followed the movements of a small group of people advancing from the mass of protesters. They were carefully making their way down a hill towards the high fence that closed off the mined field separating Syria from its own occupied territory of the Golan Heights that borders historic Palestine.⁷⁰ Most of the protestors were young Palestinians, drawn from the 470,000-plus refugee community in Syria: from Yarmouk refugee camp inside Damascus, from Khan el-Sheikh camp outside it, from Deraa and Homs refugee camps in the south, and from Palestinian populations all over the country.⁷¹ Despite the shouted warnings from the villagers from Majdal Shams about the lethal landmines installed by the Israeli military right up to the fence, these ordinary young “Palestinian refugees” began to both climb and push at the fence.⁷² It was a profoundly revolutionary moment, for these hundreds of young people entering Majdal Shams. Waiting, struggling, and organising for: liberation and return.⁷³ What differentiates the 2011 Nakba day from others is that it happened in a revolutionary atmosphere, the Arab Spring. It wasn’t a coincidence that Palestinian refugees were allowed to cross the borders from the Syrian and Lebanese side at a time when Arab societies were rebelling against their hegemonic regimes, such as in Syria.

Before May 15, 2011 Palestinians inside OPT, in the diaspora, and in refugee camps have been calling for an enormous ‘march of a million’ near the borders in order to liberate Palestine and break all imposed borders between them. Here the role of social media was prevalent,

⁷⁰ Karma Nabulsi, “Nakba day: we waited 63 years for this”, *The Guardian*, 19 May, 2011.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ibid.

particularly facebook. Palestinian activists have called on the Internet for a mass uprising against Israel to begin on May 15. A Facebook page calling for a third Palestinian intifada had gathered more than 300,000 members before it was taken down in March after complaints that comments posted to it advocated violence⁷⁴. However when May 15, 2011 approached thousands of Palestinian refugees, rather than a million, marched toward the borders.



(Figure Number 1 Photographed by Jalaa Marey/Reuters)

Palestinian refugees who marched toward the Israeli borders were from the 3rd and 4th generation refugees, who obviously have not forgotten the injustice done to them 63 years ago. And on May 15, 2011 Palestinians inside “Israel”, Palestine, Lebanon, Syria and even Egypt started their non-violent commemoration, however Israel caused another massacre and killed over 20 people, mainly Palestinian refugees on the four borders.⁷⁵ The Israeli forces attacked unarmed, non-violent protesters with great force all military means and equipment. The Israeli

⁷⁴ Ethan Bronner, “Israeli Troops Fire as Marchers Breach Borders”, *The New York Times*, 16 May, 2011.

⁷⁵ “Nakba Day 2011 Palestinian Refugee Revolutions”, May 16, 2011, <http://occupiedpalestine.wordpress.com>

military forces even infiltrated demonstrators disguised as Muslim women to arrest and attack civilians.⁷⁶ Despite the Israeli assaults and warnings, Palestinians inside Israel, in the West Bank, near the Syrian and Lebanese borders; commemorated the 63rd anniversary of their Nakba. Young protestors, notably third and fourth generation refugees, took matters into their own hands. They fought for their right of return and were fed up with waiting for Palestinian leaders to demand and implement their right

It is important to note that during the 2011 Nakba day, as 3rd and 4th generation refugees sought to enact their right of return, this act didn't catch many by surprise. The PLO has been historically concerned with return as the chief result of liberation.⁷⁷ The right of return has been historically reflected in the speeches and propaganda of the PLO, especially during the 1980s. For instance, during the 1980s, as the PLO developed its political programme, its leaders displayed four approaches towards the relevance of the right of return in the context of a political settlement with Israel: utter disregard of the concept; literal acceptance of Resolution 194; calling for full realization of return in a Palestinian state within territories occupied in 1967; and a method of differentiating between the collective realization and the individual one.⁷⁸ The right of return is a basic principle embedded in the semi official narrative of the PLO. PLO leaders refused the solution of resettling Palestinian refugees in host Arab countries, because it contradicts with their right of return. This theme has been resonating in the Palestinian diaspora and in refugee camps for decades, as Palestinian refugees insist on retuning and refuse resettlement as an alternative for their right. This doctrine was advocated and represented by young Palestinian refugees, as they literally strove to enact their right of return.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Edward Said, *The Question of Palestine* (New York: Vintage Books, 1992), 135.

⁷⁸ Menachem Klein, "Between Right and Realization: The PLO Dialectics of 'The Right of Return'", *Journal of Refugee Studies* (1998):1.

During the 2011 “march of return”, third generation refugees upheld the right of return and rejected resettlement. This march confirmed that for the majority of Palestinians, the thought of returning to their homes in Palestine has remained the force driving the contemporary Palestinian struggle and the dream that has become part of the collective memory of shared grief, suffering, and hope.⁷⁹ So this march was a consequence of the semi-official PLO narrative which has been calling, upholding and fighting for this inalienable right throughout the 1960s and 1980’s.

The amount of political mobility during the 63rd commemoration of al-Nakba was profound and unprecedented. For the first time in Nakba commemoration history Palestinians simultaneously enacted their right of return in Haifa and among Palestinians displaced inside Israel, on the borders of Lebanon, Egypt, Jordan, Gaza, and in the West Bank near the Qalandia refugee camp.⁸⁰ Despite the Israeli threats and attacks, Palestinians from all sides of the borders defied the IDF and marched towards the borders separating them from their villages and homes. On the one hand IDF received these protesting Palestinians with arms and landmines, on the other hand, the weapons the protestors carried were Palestinian flags, the deeds to their home and a young man was even carrying his grandmother who waited 63 years to see her homeland and witness this historic moment. Although Israeli soldiers carried lethal weapons, Palestinians carried a by far more powerful weapon; that is determination to return.

Despite the bravery of third generation refugees in marching towards an uncertain destiny, there was a hidden propaganda behind this march. Although plans for this march spread all over the social media, including Facebook, there were signs of official support in Lebanon

⁷⁹ Jaber Sulieman, “Trapped By Denial of Rights, Illusion of State: The Case of The Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon”, *Al-Shabaka*, (2012):2.

⁸⁰ Karma Nabulsi, “Nakba day: we waited 63 years for this”, *The Guardian*, 16 May, 2011.

and Syria, where analysts said leaders were using the Palestinian cause to deflect attention from internal problems.⁸¹ Palestinian protestors would not have been able to reach the borders without the Syrian and Lebanese governments' approval. It seemed likely that President Assad of Syria was seeking to divert attention from his onslaught on the popular uprisings there by allowing confrontations in the Golan Heights for the first time in decades.⁸² It is important to note that the Golan Heights has been under Israeli control since the 1967 war, and since that time Syria has never allowed Palestinians to protest or even enter the borders. Hence Palestinian refugees have been used as a tool in order to deflect the worlds' attention from President Assad's aggressive response towards the Syrian revolution.

The fact that protesters made it to the border in Lebanon and Syria raises questions concerning whether those governments had endorsed the actions. Protesters in Lebanon claimed that they received permission from the army to enter the border area near Maroun al-Ras, 'classified as a militarily sensitive region'.⁸³ Also Hezbollah was believed to have helped coordinate the march.⁸⁴ The tension between Hezbollah and Israel, after the 2006 Israeli invasion of Lebanon, is hanging by a thread. But the internal and regional problems in Lebanon, since Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon was the center of PLO armed struggle until the 1980s, is much more complicated.⁸⁵ The instability of the regional and internal aspects in Lebanon whether from the tribal disputes or in the Israeli-Hezbollah struggle, have in a way motivated

⁸¹ Ethan Bronner, "Israeli Troops Fire as Marchers Breach Borders", *The New York Times*, 16 May, 2011.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ For instance Rosemary Sayigh argued that "One cannot understand the current situation of Palestinians in Lebanon without first setting it within the international and regional political frameworks that act on them both directly and indirectly, through official Lebanese policies and unofficial attitudes. International, regional, and Lebanese factors interact to produce a continually deteriorating situation for the Palestinian community, especially its poorest and most vulnerable segment. For more see Rosemary Sayigh's, "Palestinians in Lebanon: Harsh Present, Uncertain Future", *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. 25, No. 1 (Autumn, 1995): 37-38.

Hezbollah and Lebanese officials to support Palestinian refugees “march of return”. Although Palestinians were used again as a tool so as to deflect the world’s attention from the internal problems in Lebanon, it was a symbolic gesture in helping Palestinian refugees implement their right of return.

3. 64th Commemoration of the Nakba: from PLO Perspective and Voice

In 2012, the 64th Nakba day was organized by the PLO department of refugee affairs, as they hung “official” posters all over Ramallah inviting Palestinians to commemorate the memory of the Nakba. On May 15, 2012 thousands of Palestinians marched towards clock square in Ramallah to commemorate the 64th year of cataclysm, as they carried Palestinian flags, black flags inscribed with the right of return and some were even carrying keys to their homes. However unlike the previous Nakba day in 2011, which was marked as “refugee revolution”, this year Palestinians did not plan or organized a march towards the Israeli borders. As shown in the picture below, “the right of return is a red line that cannot be crossed”



(Figure Number 2)

During the beginning of May, the PLO department of refugee affairs hung posters in the West Bank which ensured ‘the right of return’. In the poster below, the PLO addresses Palestinians by saying that: “It is your duty, your religion, your belonging, your refusal of injustice, and occupation that requires you to participate and raise your voice aloud: No to occupation, No to imprisonment, and No alternative for a state and the right of return”.⁸⁶ Just from the tone of this poster, it is clear how PLO inflicts its narrative on Palestinians and makes participating in their commemorative festival a ‘national obligation’ upon all Palestinians. The fact that a PLO faction (Department of Refugee Affairs) planned and organized how and when Palestinians were to commemorate the 64th year of Nakba, reveals that the PLO enforces its authoritative role and voice in representing Palestinian refugees and their right of return.

⁸⁶ This statement was translated by the author.

العودة حق... وإرادة شعب

دعوة وطنية عامة



أهلنا وأحبنا:

تأكيدا على تمسك شعبنا بحقوقه الوطنية وفي مقدمتها عودة اللاجئين الفلسطينيين إلى الديار وردا على سياسة القتل والتهجير وهدم البيوت ومصادرة الاراضي والنكبات المتتالية التي يمعن الاحتلال باقترافها ضد أطفالنا ونساءنا وشيوخنا وشبابنا ومواجهة الاحتلال الذي يمعن في اجراءاته التعسفية ضد اخوتنا المعتقلين الابطال.....

تدعوكم دائرة شؤون اللاجئين في متف واللجنة الوطنية العليا لإحياء ذكرى النكبة الرابعة والستين في الوطن للمشاركة في مسيرة ومهرجان العودة المركزي يوم

الثلاثاء 2012/5/15 - رام الله

- التجمع : الساعة 11.30 أمام ضريح الرئيس الراحل الشهيد ياسر عرفات.
- ستنطلق مسيرة العودة السنوية باتجاه ميدان الشهيد ياسر عرفات تتقدمها الفرق الكشفية بمشاركة جماهير شعبنا بكل اطيافه وانتمائه السياسية والفكرية.
- يبدأ مهرجان العودة بعد المسيرة مباشرة، بمشاركة بعض الفنانين والفرق الفنية الوطنية الملتزمة.

جماهير شعبنا العظيم:

إن واجبكم.. دينكم.. انتماءكم.. رقصكم للظلم والاحتلال يدعوكم للمشاركة ورفع صوتكم عاليا
لا للاحتلال... لا لاعتقال... ولا بديل عن الدولة والعودة

- نوجه نداء خاص بالتقيد بالوقوف التام لمدة (64 ثانية) عند اطلاق الصافرة الساعة 12 ظهرا والمشاركة في الفعاليات المقامة في كافة محافظات الوطن.
- نرجو من المؤسسات الرسمية والخاصة السماح للموظفين بالمشاركة بهذا الواجب الوطني في هذه المناسبة العظيمة.

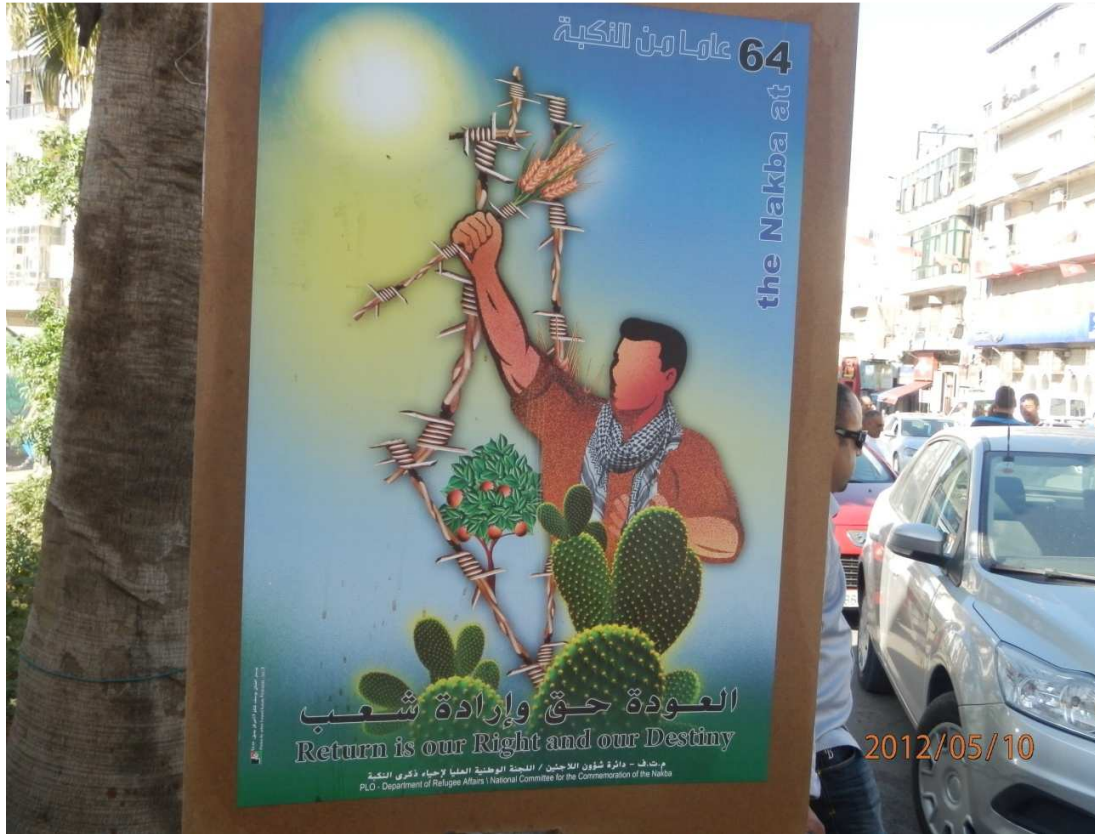
- يرجى المشاركة باللباس الأسود... يرفع العلم الفلسطيني والعلم الأسود والياقطات فقط



ملاحظة: على أي جهة ستقوم بفعالية خاصة بالذكرى إرسال برنامج الفعالية يتضمن الزمان والمكان على البريد التالي:
info@nakbah.com لإدراجها في البرنامج العام للفعاليات والإطلاع نرجو زيارة موقعنا www.nakbah.org

2012/05/12

(Figure Number 3)



(Figure Number 4)

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

yet the PA tends to use Palestinians right of return as a means in gaining Palestinians votes for the supposedly upcoming PA elections.



(Figure Number 5)

In the 2012 Nakba day, contrary to last years' Nakba day, a Palestinian uprising did not happen and the commemoration was just like any other commemorative practice, in which PA officials gave speeches and children sang to the national anthem. For instance, Palestinian prime Minister, Salam Fayyad, delivered a speech which ensured Palestinians right of return, human rights and Palestinians right in establishing a state in the 1967 lines. Dr. Fayyad stated that, “commemorating the Nakba despite the passing of six decades confirms Palestinians’ determination in continuing their national struggle to gain their rights, under the flag of the PLO;

its only and legitimate representative which has transformed the tragedy of refuge into an example of national struggle". The fact that PA officials spoke about Palestinian struggle for justice, proves that the PA was asserting an official Palestinian narrative. A narrative that defines the PLO as the 'only' legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, this orientation has been emerging since the 1970s. Therefore, remembering 64 years of injustice and statelessness was being unilaterally presented by the PA. Although the PLO and the PA are not the same, it terms of objectives and circumstances under which they were founded. For instance, the PLO began with the aim of armed struggle and liberating Palestine and consisted of many Palestinian factions including: Fatah, The popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), and The Popular Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (an off shot of the PFLP) among other groups.⁸⁷ Whereas the PA was established in 1995 with the aim of governing the OPT, and is dominated by Fatah (a faction of the PLO). Yet they have the same audience and they both claim to represent the Palestinian people. This is embodied in the official role they both play in organizing Nakba commemoration festivals. For instance, the PLO organizes Nakba commemoration in the diaspora, especially in refugee camps in Lebanon. On the other hand, the PA along with the PLO coordinates the 'official' commemoration festivals in the OPT.

It was clear that during the 2012 Nakba day the PA sought to represent Palestinians' side of the story in its own hegemonic point of view, and this version of the story overlooked women's narrative of the Nakba and even refugees. Therefore, in the 64th anniversary of the Nakba the act of remembering the past and subsequent tragedies were being represented from a faction of the Palestinian society rather than its entirety. My goal is to undermine the role the PLO played in armed struggle and liberation of Palestine in the past, but to emphasize how this

⁸⁷ Edward Said, *The Question of Palestine* (New York: Vintage Books), 159.

role has underwent a drastic change ever since the Oslo Accords, and the establishment of the Palestinian Authority, who became more concerned with the establishments of a Palestinian state rather than liberating Palestine.



(Figure Number 6)

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

in achieving most of their demands, which included three main calls: ending administrative detention, ending solitary confinement and the right to family visit.⁸⁸ This agreement was seen as a victory for Palestinian prisoners who underwent a mass hunger strike in order to make the Israeli Prisoners Authority listen to their demands. These prisoners were fighting for their basic human rights and needs, and in their peaceful non-violent strike, they were able to gain the support of the entire Palestinian community who stood with them in demonstrations demanding their immediate release.

The Palestinian prisoners' hunger strike began in September 2011, in which Palestinian detainees in Israeli jails started a hunger strike to protest their treatment by the Israeli prison services.⁸⁹ Under the previously mentioned agreement, which was signed following mediation by Egypt and Jordan, Israel was to end solitary confinement for all prisoners and allow around 400 prisoners from Gaza to receive family visits.⁹⁰ Around 2,500 prisoners joined the hunger strike after it began as a mass protest on 17 April. A handful of prisoners had been refusing food for a longer period. Two, who had been on hunger strike for 77 days, were believed to be close to death, and six others were in critical condition.⁹¹ In the afternoon of May 15, 2012 a number of protestors went near Ofer prison in Ramallah and clashes began with Israeli security forces near the prison. Hundreds made their way to Ofer prison, in the largest demonstration there yet.⁹² The Israeli army surrounded the protestors from three sides and fired large amounts of tear gas

⁸⁸ Lina Alsaafin "Nakba Day 2012: Revolution on Hold", *Alakhbar English*, 16 May, 2012. <http://english.al-akhbar.com/node/7392>

⁸⁹ "Palestinians detained in Israel Start Hunger Strike", Ma'an News Agency, Tuesday 27 September, 2011, <http://www.maannews.net/eng/ViewDetails.aspx?ID=424063>

⁹⁰ Harriet Sherwood, "Palestinian Prisoners End Hunger Strike", *The Guardian*, Monday 14 May, 2012, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2012/may/14/palestinian-prisoners-end-hunger-strike>

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Lina Alsaafin "Nakba Day 2012: Revolution on Hold", *Alakhbar English*, 16 May, 2012. <http://english.al-akhbar.com/node/7392>

canisters, which forced the majority of protesters to remain at a distance from the Ofer jail.⁹³

Accordingly, the 2012 Nakba Day was marked by Palestinian prisoners' hunger strike, as they resisted their unlawful imprisonment. During the 2012 Nakba day ceremony, Palestinian officials referred to the bravery and achievements of Palestinian prisoners, yet again they were being represented through the PA.

Despite the fact that on the national and international scene the PA speaks on behalf of Palestinians and negotiates their fate with Israel and the US, this does not mean that Palestinians approve of such negotiations. For instance, on Saturday, June 30th and Sunday, July 1 young protesters gathered at Manara Square in downtown Ramallah holding up posters denouncing the PA's act in receiving Shaul Mofaz, ex Israeli Defense Minister. The violent repression of demonstrations in Ramallah by Palestinian Authority police reveals the growing unpopularity of the PA's commitment to negotiations with Israel and normalization of the Israeli occupation.⁹⁴ Initially called by the civil society network Palestinians for Dignity, the 30 June demonstration was to protest the decision of the PA president to invite Shaul Mofaz to Ramallah. Given Mofaz's command of the Israeli occupation forces, and later the Israeli Ministry of "Defense" during the second intifada, he is responsible for numerous massacres and kidnappings, amongst the most infamous the use of bulldozers to destroy houses in the Jenin refugee camp in 2003.⁹⁵ As a result, the fact that PA president was even contemplating the idea of negotiating with this Israeli perpetrator created a mass mobilization among youths, especially amongst third and fourth generation refugees. Due to intense pressure from youth movements, political parties and even from within Fatah, the PA postponed the meeting. In spite of that the youth protests went

⁹³ Anna Day, "Nakba Day Protest: LIVE, *Policymic*, May 16, 2012. <http://www.policymic.com/articles/8358/nakba-day-protests-2012-live>

⁹⁴ Jamal Juma, "PA repression feeds flames of Palestinian discontent", *The Electronic Intifada*, 3 July, 2012.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

ahead as scheduled.⁹⁶ This mass protest was met by police officers' aggression who sought to 'contain' this protests, as they shoved, kicked, and beat protesters around them.⁹⁷ Not only that but the PA also infiltrated undercover *mukhabarat* (secret services) using metal chains and batons to beat unarmed protesters, attack journalists, beating women and young people, kidnapping protesters from the street and beating them in regime police stations "is a sign that any veneer of respectability and legitimacy that the PA has worked so hard to attain, is wearing thin".⁹⁸ For instance, one of the women I interviewed for the purpose of my research, Laila is a third generation refugee, was attacked by police officers as she testifies:

I saw a friend being dragged away by four thugs, and immediately went after them, trying to get my body between my friend and the thugs so that they wouldn't take him. I couldn't reach them though, and was pushed back more than once. I surged forward again and one thug began screaming at me, showering me with a plethora of insults. I yelled back for the thugs to let my friend go. The same thug drew back his arm and slapped me hard across the face, in broad daylight on one of Ramallah's busiest streets, shouting "WHORE! PROSTITUTE!"⁹⁹

The protests which roamed the streets of Ramallah during the end of June and beginning of July, was organized by a youth movement called 'Palestinians for Dignity'. These protestors constituted, in part, third and fourth generation refugees and the increasing amount of tension between these youths and the PA was profound. As third and fourth generation refugees refuse to co-opt with PA's dominance in negotiating their fate or even speaking on behalf of them in negotiations with Israeli leaders. Despite PA officers' assaults whether physical or verbal as

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Lina Alsaafin, "First-hand: Ramallah protests against Mofaz meeting attacked by PA police, thugs", *The Electronic Intifada*. Tuesday, July 3, 2012.

⁹⁸ Juma, "PA repression feeds flames of Palestinian discontent".

⁹⁹ Lina Alsaafin, "First-hand: Ramallah protests against Mofaz meeting attacked by PA police, thugs", *The Electronic Intifada*. Tuesday, July 3, 2012.

shown in the testimony above, Palestinians refuse to be silenced by the PA, as the youth protests proved the PA can no longer control the riots and youth mobilizations who chanted ‘NO NEGOTIATIONS WITH ISRAEL’ [emphasis added].

In summary, for the past sixty-four years Palestinians have commemorated a historical event that began in 1948 and remains till this day. Many of the Palestinian people are living the reality of the Nakba today, so the pain of the open wound has not yet healed.¹⁰⁰

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

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

¹⁰⁰ Aziz Abu Sara, “For the Palestinians the Nakba is not History”, Independent Reporting and Commentary from Israel/Palestine, 15, May, 2012. <http://972mag.com/for-palestinians-the-nakba-is-not-history/45771>.

Nakba day, as they organized the return march near the borders of Syria and Lebanon with the hope of returning to their lands.

Chapter Three:

The Narrative of First Generation Refugees

The issue of recording the oral history of those who witnessed a catastrophic event and its contribution to the historical record of a country is particularly important in the Palestinian case. According to Palestinians, a great deal of their written sources disappeared or were destroyed as a result of the 1948 war, which wasn't a war in a traditional sense, but was a larger project of ethnic cleansing.¹⁰¹ Palestinians have thoroughly sought to rewrite their history with referring to the oral testimonies of Palestinians who experienced life before, during and after the Nakba. Those who survived the Nakba can be described as *Jeel Falasteen*,¹⁰² whose stories of displacement presents Palestinians with a broader narrative of what happen to Palestine during the Nakba.

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

¹⁰¹ Saleh Abdel-Jawad, "limatha la nastati' kitabat tarikhina al moa'ser dona estikhdam al masader al shafawia", *naho sia'gat riwaya tarikhira lil-nakba eshkaliat wa tahadiat, Tahrir Mustafa Kibha* (Haifa: Mada Al-Karmal, 2006), 26.

¹⁰² Palestinians usually name generations by relating them to historic periods, hence Jeel Falasteen: the generation formed in Palestine. Rosemary Sayigh, *Palestinians: From Peasants to revolutionaries* (London: Zed Books, 1979), 58.

listening and analyzing the life stories of the first generation refugees, indicators of an on-going Nakba will be explored

1. Life before the Nakba:

The basis of this chapter is a set of life stories recorded from October 2011 until May 2012. The first generation refugees I interviewed for this chapter live in Al-Jalazoun refugee camp, Ramallah, Surda and Deir Dibwan, because, as noted earlier, the overall interviews conducted for my study are areas near or in Ramallah. The majority of the people I interviewed for this chapter are women. This was purposefully chosen, because women's side of the story remains in the margins of the broader Palestinian narrative of the Nakba. Nevertheless, I did not use all of the interviews conducted for the purpose of this chapter, because some of the interviewees suffered from an illness and spoke incomprehensibly. While interviewing six of the 'generation of the Nakba' I got a sense of what their lives were before the Nakba, which was predominated by a 'paradise' theme. Although this is not the focus of my study, I found it important to present a brief summary of their lives before the Nakba, so as to show how the Nakba has fragmented in reality and in a kind of collective imagination, and continues to fragment, the Palestinian society.

Many studies have focused on life during and after the Nakba, as a result, life before the Nakba has been marginalized in Palestinian historiography. Yet some scholars were aware of this lack and relied on oral history to depict life before the Nakba.¹⁰³ And from the interviews I've conducted with elder Palestinian refugees, here is how some of them described their lives before the Nakba:

¹⁰³ Such as Rosemary Sayigh's, *Palestinians: From Peasants to revolutionaries* (London: Zed Books, 1979).

Imm Najih: is a 74 year old woman originally from Haifa and currently resides in Deir Dibwan.¹⁰⁴ Before she began telling her story, Imm Najih lit up a cigarette and each puff of smoke was as if a memory was being recollected. She describes her life before the Nakba as follows:

We were living the best life, in the heart of Haifa right near the shore. Until today our house still stands..... We [as in Palestinians] were living in peace with the Jews as one family. Those who came from Tel-Aviv were my fathers' customers....we were neighbors, we use to play with them and everything. When my father died in 1947, Jews attended his funeral and were even crying. They were our neighbors, we were living like you people in Deir Dibwan, in solidarity.....In Haifa we were one of the happiest people. We owned many lands. My fathers' house had a brick surface, just like the ones rich people had. We weren't peasants. We had servants and workers who looked after the sheep and cows...We were civilized, Haifa was the center of civilization.¹⁰⁵

It is important to note that the interview above depicts an urban story, thus the socio, economic and cultural influence of the city of Haifa was illuminated. The composition of Haifa's population is highly diverse. In addition to the Christian, Muslim and Jewish communities in the city, consuls for European community were present in Haifa before World War I, such as French, English and Austrian consuls.¹⁰⁶ Accordingly, an emerging merchant class which included a large number of Christians, contributed new members of the notable stratum.¹⁰⁷ This new class was connected to the growing

¹⁰⁴ Imm Najih refused to be recorded and feared I would publish her interview online. I tried assuring her that her interview would remain confidential and would never be published online without her permission, yet she refused and insisted I take notes instead. This shows the extent of fear the colonial condition in Palestine has been inflicted on the first generation refugees, who in some cases such as Imm Najih's, held back while telling their stories and feared of experiencing the Nakba all over again.

¹⁰⁵ This interview was conducted on October 17, 2011 and was translated into English by the author.

¹⁰⁶ These resident foreigner community played a significant role in the politics of Haifa up to the outbreak of world war I, both overtly and covertly. The Haifa community had been subjected to the varying politics and cultural influences of competing European interest coming in by way of educational missions, the templar settlement and the trading opportunities provided by European consulates. To read more on the Economic and Social transformation of Haifa, see May Seikley's *Haifa: Transformation of a Palestinian Arab Society in 1918-1939* (London: I.B Tauris Publishers, 1995), 29.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

trade with Europe, and many of its members received socio and economic privileges.¹⁰⁸

From Imm Najih's life story, it was clear that her family belonged to the upper class of Haifa.¹⁰⁹ As she noted that her father was a wealthy merchant and they lived a comfortable life in Haifa, she recalled: "The wealth in Deir Dibwan and Nablus is nothing compared to the life I was living in Haifa".¹¹⁰ However, in 1948 her entire world changed and her life in Haifa was to remain nothing but a distant memory.

In essence, Imm Najih referred to the cohesion of the society in Haifa prior to 1948, in which Arabs and Jews were living in peace. However a division between the Arab and Jewish community in Haifa has been escalating since the 1930s,¹¹¹ when all Jews in Palestine and the immigrants that came before, and during 1948, united under the dream of establishing the so called state of Israel.¹¹² So Imm Najih sought to clarify that it was not all hatred and disputes between the Arab and Jewish community in Haifa, and at some point they were living in peace.

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

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ The Population of Haifa was distributed into three social classes: The class of notables, Christian landowners and commercial strata, and a middle class was also emerging. To see more on the Soci-economic stratification of Haifa see Mya Seikaly's, *Haifa: Transformation of a Palestinian Arab Society in 1918-1939*, p.33.

¹¹⁰ Interview with Imm Najih.

¹¹¹ During 1936, and the following years of the revolt(1937-1939), Haifa remained a source of active fighters and saboteurs for blowing up bridges, fund raising, smuggling of ammunition and similar activities. The majority were peasants from the villages and workers who knew Haifa well, who lived in the slums. The targets of this revolt were British policy, police and Jewish settlements. Jewish organizations at that phase were concerned with intensifying their armed protection, which the British authorities were helpful with. Mya Seikaly's, *Haifa: Transformation of a Palestinian Arab Society in 1918-1939*, 248-250.

¹¹² The Jews wanted the port city of Haifa but without the 750,000 Palestinians who lived there, and in April 1948, they achieved their goal through executing operation 'Scissors'. This operation indicated both the idea of a pincer movement and of cutting the city off from its Palestinian hinterland. For more see Ilan Pappé's *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine* (United Kingdom: One World Publication), 92.

Every day we use to collect sixty five boxes of potatoes. As Omar, Khamis, my sister in-law and myself use to plant three tons of potatoes...besides the lattice, onions, garlic and Salamander we planted. There were many sources of income...My father in-law never hired works, he had us; me, my sister in-law and her kids.... My father in-law owned many lands, he was always preoccupied with his money and land...I use to tell him you want money and work I want to go wherever I want, meaning to weddings. He told me go wherever you want. God bless his soul.¹¹³

In contrast with the previous interview, Zania's story represents the rural side of the Palestinian narrative, notably peasant's narrative which revolved around agriculture. One of the most common phrases I heard of life before the Nakba is that 'we lived in Paradise'. It is true that these dispossessed peasants have recalled their homes in Palestine from a present so bleak that their poverty and class oppression there tend to be blurred.¹¹⁴ But there is truth in their perception of peasant life as good, for, despite of poverty their lands provided them with all their needs.¹¹⁵ Clearly in the Palestinian society agriculture was the main source of income, in which they were able to harvest all their crops which provided them with their basic needs.

Moreover, as shown in Zaina's story of life before the Nakba, the family household was both production and consumption unit-a family collective. Its size, and the practice of pooling its labor and income, enabled it to survive in bad times, expand in good ones.¹¹⁶ Nevertheless in the following section all the generation of the Nakba recalled after the Nakba was 'loss'; loss of income, loss of lands and loss of lives.

¹¹³ This interview was conducted on January 8th, 2012 in Al-Tira and was translated into English by the author.

¹¹⁴ Rosemary Sayigh, *Palestinians: From Peasants to Revolutionaries* (London: Zed Books, 1979), 10.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 22.

2. Their lives during and after the Nakba: The story of the exodus in 1948:

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

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

To begin with, Imm Hamed is my friends' grandmother. While her granddaughter and I entered her house, she was surprised to hear that I was interested in documenting her story as she said, "you cannot imagine how glad I am that you came here to listen to my story, if you offered me a Kilo of gold or you coming here and listening to me I'd choose the latter".¹¹⁷ And this shows the extent to which first generation refugees are striving to be heard and acknowledged. She narrates her story of the Nakba as follows:

I'm originally from Al-Lydda.... First of all there was a six month strike, people closed their shops. And then the people of Jaffa left in their cars and took all of their furniture along with them. As for the people of Al-Ramle, they took all their Shabab [youths] as captives. In Lydda, the Jewish forces invaded our village and

¹¹⁷ This interview was conducted on February 1, 2012 in Ramallah, in Arabic and was translated into English by the author.

began to shoot everywhere. Those who survived were told to dig and bury those who were killed...Have you ever heard such stories.¹¹⁸

When asked about the massacre that took place in Lydda,¹¹⁹ Imm Hamed described how “it was a very powerful massacre”. And when I asked her whether she had witnessed this massacre, she replied “*Wila*” of course (while crying). She describes her journey of exodus as follows:

We fled because they attacked us in our homes.....They told us to go to the field where we use to collect the wheat. They kicked us out of our homes and kept us outside until noon.....The Jordanian army was present in the Lydda, and when they saw the Jewish soldiers they changed their uniforms so that the Jews wouldn't shoot them.....The Nakba which the people of the Lydda experienced, no one in the world had experiencedWhy did we leave our country? Because of the horror they did in Deir Yassin...When people told us to leave, we simply left because we didn't want what happened in Deir Yassin to happen to us. I was married and had a boy and a girl. We walked until we reached Ramallah...While we were walking, a Jewish soldier approached my uncle, who was carrying 2000JDs, and asked him: Where did you get this money from? They took the money and shot him. I then called for my mother to be careful! They killed my uncle. I thought she fainted, it didn't occur to me she was dead.Yumma Yumma [mother she cried], she didn't wake up she was gone.... We were all dispersed and anyone who fell was left to die; there was no one to treat them. Were there any Arab countries that helped us? Not one Arab country In Lydda my father owned a soap factory...He told us to go and check on the soap factory...As my cousins and I headed to the factory, we found olive oil spilled all over the floor like a river, isn't that just running people's livelihood.¹²⁰

From Imm Hamed's story the stratagem the Israeli forces followed in order to depopulate the city of Al-Lydda was based on massacres and creating panic among Palestinians residing in these cities and villages. For instance, Sharif Kanaana argued that when one of the suburbs or neighboring villages was attacked by shelling, this caused the inhabitants to head

¹¹⁸ Interview with Imm Hamed.

¹¹⁹ During the Israeli attack on the Lydda in July 1948, dozens of unarmed detainees in the Dahmash mosque were shot and killed. “Apparently, some of them tried to break out and escape, perhaps fearing that they would be massacred. IDF troops threw grenades apparently fired PIAT(bazooka) rockets into the compound. For more information see Benny Morris *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem Revisited* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 428.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*

towards the city.¹²¹ This was then followed by shelling the city and occasional aerial bombardment of the city itself.¹²² Afterwards the Zionist/ Israeli forces executed a large scale massacre in a neighborhood or nearby village, which sent a wave of panic, confusion and mass flight from the cities. This pattern was used for all the major cities: including Lydda.¹²³

Witnessing the massacre of Lydda and the murder of her mother devastates Imm Hamed today just as it did sixty four years ago. Her story was full with anger as she articulated “No one in the world, in Palestine, in the Arab countries and the Americas have been ruined more than the people of Al-Lydda”.¹²⁴ The issue of portraying the people of the Lydda as the most victimized people in Palestine and in the world is an exaggeration. This is not to undermine the experience Imm Hamed and other first generation refugees went through during the Nakba, but to highlight how Palestinian refugees tend to boast on whose more victimized than the other.

During her interview, Imm Hamed recalls the taking of Lydda as one of the most devastating experience, because to her the Lydda is “one of the most beautiful places in Palestine”.¹²⁵ The notion of loss structured the story of Imm Hamed as she referred to the loss of fortune, family, and a homeland. Although she mentioned the comfortable situation she is currently living in, and was proud of her children who are doctors and architects, she still yearns for her life in Lydda.

¹²¹ Sharif Kanaana, *Still on Vacation!* (Jerusalem: The Jerusalem International Center For Palestinian Studies, 1992), 21-108

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Kanaana further examines how the Palestinians who stayed in Lydda, about one thousand of them, received inhuman treating including rape and starvation. These people were kept within a barbed wire fence where they were kept for several days without food, water or covers. The number of Palestinians killed during the Lydda massacre, including women, children and elders was over 250. To read more on the Lydda massacre see Sharif Kanaana, *Still on Vacation!*, 21-108.

¹²⁴ Interview with Imm Hamed.



(Figure Number 7 Imm Hamed)

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

We were returning from our field, we had just filled two carriages with watermelons, and someone told us are you crazy! Go home our village has fallen. When the Jews attacked Lydda I was 18 years old, married and my eldest son Al-Abed was one year old.... It was Ramadan, and we were fasting for three days. ...They started shooting towards us, and my brother-in-law's son was killed in front of our house, he was seven years old. My youngest brother-in-law was 16 years old..... He ran towards a hill; however they were able to capture him and shoot him near Al-Nabi Moqdan..... When the Jews arrived I was just about to bake some bread, but when the Jews attacked us they said yallah [come on] get out of here. Where am I supposed to go? If we leave what are we supposed to eat! People were poor.... When we left to Na'leen we became beggars for bread. We had nothing with us.....I shouldn't have left, if I stayed on my land it would have been better for me.¹²⁶

As mentioned previously, Zaina began her story with life before the Nakba and described the prosperity they lived in. As she enumerated the dozens of olive oil tanks, wheat bags, or the “150 dunums of land” they owned. But after the Nakba she lamented for the loss of

¹²⁶ Interview with Zaina.

everything. Most importantly, Zaina mentioned that “many people were killed in the Lydda” as a result of the massacre. So the Zionist propaganda in emptying the land was based on massacres and implanting fear in Palestinians so as to leave.¹²⁷ However, despite the massacre and fear that roamed the city of Al-Lydda, Zaina asserted “I wasn’t afraid, and I didn’t want to leave”.¹²⁸

In Nur Masalha’s *The Politics of Denial*, he claimed that in the case of the Lydda and other towns, the order was given by Ben Gurion himself to expel the inhabitants. And between July 11-12 tens of unarmed civilians were stopped at the mosque and church of the village, all of them were killed. It is estimated between 250-400 Palestinian were killed in the Lydda massacre carried out by the Israeli Defense Forces, and around 350 died after being expelled from the village.¹²⁹

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

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

¹²⁷ Saleh Abdel Jawad noted that “Massacres should be viewed as a common phenomenon in nearly every Palestinian village and Bedouin settlement from which people involuntarily fled. Jaffa and Haifa, the major cities and centers of Palestinian intellectual and cultural life, and Lydda were the sites of the most destructive forms of ethnic cleansing. For more see Saleh Abdel Jawad’s, “Zionist Massacres: the Creation of the Palestinian Refugee Problem” *Israel and the Palestinian Refugees*, Ed. Eyal Benvenisti and others (Berlin: Springer, 2007), 69.

¹²⁸ Interview with Z.S

¹²⁹ Nur Masalha, *The Politics of Denial: Israel and the Palestinian Refugee Problem* (London: Pluto press, 2003), 31-51.

My father was dead, my brother left to Jordan. I was 10 years old. They took one of the most beautiful lands..... People left and were dispersed due to heavy bombardment and explosives by the Zionist forces. Men were killed, houses destroyed...Nothing is left... Yet those who remained profited, they were not stigmatized as refugees. When we migrated to Nablus, they treated us passively. My sisters hated Nablus, they referred to refugees as *Jana Al Haywanat* [zoo].¹³⁰

From the interview above, the notion of dehumanization was clear, where refugees were stereotyped and discriminated against within the Palestinian society.¹³¹ However, despite the degrading status allocated to the word 'refugee', Imm Najih asserted, "I am proud to be a refugee, the bride of Palestine". In the beginning of this chapter I presented a brief summary of her life before the Nakba, as she described the luxurious life she had in Haifa. Yet after the Nakba everything was gone, and they've been treated as "beggars". In just a few hours their lives have been completely transformed from dignity to humiliation.¹³²

What distinguishes Imm Najih's story and recollection of the Nakba from others is that she sheds light on how refugees are living in a racist world, where a refugee is labeled as 'inferior'. She gave an example of how they were treated in Nablus, and how even in Deir Dibwan people "stigmatize me". Palestinian refugees are often treated as passive recipients of aid and are only in need of assistance, rather than as individuals with unique histories and the right to redress.¹³³

¹³⁰ Interview with Imm Najih.

¹³¹ When Palestinians were dispossessed of their lands, the lives of hundreds of thousands of refugees have been changed. Where they loss a land, prosperity, and status. They also suffered from social isolation in the years that followed the exodus which included lack of respect by host Palestinian communities . Accordingly the social spaces and boundaries that emerged between refugees and the Arab host societies were based on cultural differences such as dialects and traditions. For more see:

Mahmoud A'qil, *ain bayat al ma': mokhaim al laja'in al falastinian: derasa fi a'lim ijtima' al mokhiyamat* (Alquds: al jame'a al falastania al akadimia lilshou'n al dawlia, 1992), 57.

¹³² Rosemary Sayigh, *From Peasants to Revolutionaries* (London: Zed Books, 1979), 85.

¹³³ Lisa Malki, "Speechless Emissaries: Refugees, Humanitarisim, and Dehistorization" , *Culture Anthropology* , , Vol.11.3, (1996): 378.

To top it all, international media usually portrays refugees as victims instead of specific persons, a “miserable sea of humanity” where no one has a name or face.¹³⁴

It is important to note that each Palestinian refugee has a unique and different story to tell. For instance, Imm Najih focused on the stereotypical depiction of refugees in the Palestinian society, which is something Palestinians try to overlook when speaking of the 1948 Nakba. I wasn’t even aware of this image until I interviewed Imm Najih who was deeply frustrated with this stigma that has been attached to her ever since she left Haifa, until today. She even told me “Here in Deir Dibwan, people look at me in a degrading way. A stigma exists”.¹³⁵

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



(Figure Number 8 “The Bearer of Burdens” painting by Suleiman Mansour)

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Interview with Imm Najih.

Suleiman Mansour drew this painting in 1969, and this painting depicts the journey of the Palestinian people after the Nakba. The Palestinian in the painting is carrying the city Jerusalem upon his back along with the Dome of the Rock.¹³⁶ This painting symbolizes the Palestinian refugee problem, where a refugee carries the burden of Jerusalem upon his shoulder. Hence Sulieman's painting is full with symbols and metaphors, as Mansour epitomizes Palestinian steadfastness, patience and determination to carry the burden of the Palestinian question upon his back and shoulders.¹³⁷ By hanging this painting on her wall, Fatima conceives this painting as symbolic to her and other Palestinian refugees' stories.

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

Before the Jews attacked our village, they went to Deir Yassin; subsequently the Dier Yassin massacre took place near the break of dawn...After the massacre happened, my village people went to Deir Yassin and found women and children killed. Shortly after that the Jewish forces attacked our village, Ayn Karim....When they attacked our village, my uncle and father said we should head towards the mountains. We headed west, and stayed there with my aunt for over a month. Yet the Jewish attacks reached us, and we were forced to leave.¹³⁸ So we headed to Bethlehem at 1:00 am and stayed there for a year. I moved with my in-laws to Surda where we purchased a piece of land and built a home here. I've been living here ever since. When my children got older, I took them to Ayn Karim. We went walking, and when we reached Ayn-Karim I showed them my parents' house and the water spring.....My son was infuriated when he saw our village.¹³⁹

Although Fatima and her family strove to escape the Israeli assault on their village, and found temporary refuge until the situation would calm down, the Zionists attacks reached them and they were forced to leave. This reveals the Israeli/ Zionist policy during the Nakba which

33 Mohammed Salem al-agma, "qissat al atal al falastini jabal al-mahamel", dina al-ra'i, 2012

<http://pulpit.alwatanvoice.com/articles/2010/05/03/196999.html>

¹³⁷ Abdallah Abu-Rashid, "alquds fi a'youn al fananin al tashkilian al falastinian", www.thaqafa.org.

¹³⁸ In *All That Remains*, Edited by Walid Khalidi he asserts that the attack on Ayn Karim started at 2:00 am on July 18, when the Israelis stormed the height of Jabal Rab overlooking Ayn Karim. At 9:00 am, the village fell without a struggle. *All That Remains*, Ed. Walid Khalidi (Washington: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1992), 237.

¹³⁹ This interview was conducted on January 26, 2012 in Surda, and was translated into English by the author.

aimed at preventing Palestinian refugee return.¹⁴⁰ However, as Fatima puts it, “it never occurred to us at the time that we will never return”.¹⁴¹ When they left to Bethlehem for a year, they sought temporary refuge until they would be able to return to their village. Once it was clear that returning to their village was diminishing by the day, they built a new home in Surda, and sought to build a new life along with it.

The stories above represent the narrative of Palestinian refugee women, as four out of six interviewees were women. Due to the exclusion of women’s voice in the context of the Palestinian discourse of the Nakba, as Palestinian women, their stories are both similar to and different from the Palestinian national narrative.¹⁴² The significance of these stories is not what they say about the past, but what they potentially offer to the present and future.¹⁴³ Women’s stories of the 1948 exodus revolved around the fall of their village/ city, the journey of the exodus and nostalgia for the past. Thus, women’s recollection of the Nakba forms a rich source of national history.¹⁴⁴ Their omission would leave us “with an impoverished history unable to explain how, in spite of everything, the Palestinians people struggle has persisted”.¹⁴⁵ By listening to these women’s stories it not only gave them a sense that their stories are an indispensable source of Palestinian history, but also gave me a better understanding of the crucial information embedded in their life stories.

¹⁴⁰ Nur Masalha, *The politics of denial: Israel and the Palestinian refugee problem* (London: Pluto press, 2003), 67.

¹⁴¹ Interview with Fatima.

¹⁴² The Palestinian national narrative and its dominance over other ‘subaltern’ narratives was discussed in chapter two, for more see chapter three.

¹⁴³ Fatma Kassem, , *Palestinian Women Narrative Histories and gendered Memory* (London: Zed Books, 2011), 240.

¹⁴⁴ Rosemary Sayigh, “Palestinian Camp Women as Tellers of History”, *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol.27, No.2 (1998): 57

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

On the other hand, the interviews below were conducted with first generation refugee men living in Al-Jalazoun refugee camp. The idea is not to marginalize men's life stories at the expense of women's, but to give Palestinian refugee women a bigger space to speak up and deconstruct the stereotype that women are "not recognized as making, knowing history, or capable of telling it".¹⁴⁶

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

I'm from Beit Nabala which is located near Lydda, next to the airport. I remember 1948 as I see you now. When the Nakba happened I was in school, I was in the seventh grade, and it was the last semester. Before the semester ended, Jewish planes invaded the country, as a result people left. In the afternoon we were on our way home from school....And people were leaving. We first left to Shokba. After that we went to Al-Mazra'a al-gharbia and stayed there for a while. From Al-Mazra'a al-Gharbia we left to Kobar and lived there for five years.¹⁴⁷

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

There was nothing. Our village in particular, people just left....After 20 days of our departure, the Jews entered our village and occupied it. People left out of fear, and because of the Deir Yassin massacre, they were afraid. After 20 days, my brother, whose older than me, and I returned to bring a bag of wheat....But nothing at all happened....At the beginning people left with nothing, later on they returned to bring some of their belongingsAfter Kobar we left to Al- Jalazoun..... We were properly received in Kobar, they treated us well. We lived in a house for three years without paying rent....There is no racism in this country.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁶Rosemary Sayigh, "Product and Producer of Palestinian History: Stereotypes of "Self" in Camp Women's Life Stories, *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies* 13, No 1, (2007): 88.

¹⁴⁷ This interview was conducted on April 13, 2012 in Al-Jalazoun refugee camp in Arabic, and was translated into English by the author.

¹⁴⁸Interview with Mahmoud.

According to Mahmoud's testimony, the people of Bayt Nabala left out of fear and the Jewish forces occupied the village twenty days after its emptying.¹⁴⁹ The fall of Bayt Nabala shows how in order to understand the Palestinian exodus, it is important to consider not only a refugees' last day in a village, but also the long cumulative process of harassment and terror.¹⁵⁰ The harassment and terror that is meant in this situation is not only Israeli attacks and massacres but also, as Saleh Abdel Jawad puts it, "The residents were also attacked with psychological warfare and propaganda".¹⁵¹ The impact of the psychological warfare, as previously mentioned in the work of Sharif Kananna, was devastating. As many Palestinians fled due to the Zionist whispering campaign and the spread of the news of massacres which created a panic wave among Palestinians.¹⁵²

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

¹⁴⁹ Bayt Nabala was mentioned in the operational orders for operation Dani. Israeli forces were ordered to attack Bayt Nabala, in which the Arab legion had stationed a second line company of nearly 120-150 soldiers. When the people of the Lydda were expelled from their city on July 13, 1948, many were forced by Israeli soldiers to go to Bayt Nabala. The village fell a few days later, before the end of operation Dani on 18 July. For more see *All That Remains*, edited by Walid Khalidi, Ed. (Washington: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1992), 366.

¹⁵⁰ Saleh Abdel Jawad, "Zionists Massacres: The Creation of the Palestinian Refugee Problem", *Israel and the Palestinian Refugees*, Ed. Eyal Benvenisti and others (Berlin: Springer, 2007), 69.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵² Sharif Kanaana, *Still on Vacation!* (Jerusalem: The Jerusalem International Center for Palestinian Studies, 1992), 81.

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

I was ten years old when I left. I remember what happened in our area, but what happened in Haifa, Jaffa I wasn't really aware of..... I wore my backpack and was on my way to school. Right next to our town there was a camp for the British. The Arabs got into a dispute with the British, regarding who will control the camp after the British leave....People were defeated, they fought with primitive weapons. Some had guns, while others fought with swords. We were in the middle of the street, people told us go home, a war is happening. We left and after four-five days they told us that we should send our women and children to Al-Lyddah, while the men remained in the village.....People resisted for two months. Then people left to Al-Lyddah, and after a while the Arab armies entered the Lydda, and I was there when that happened. Day and night there was shooting in the Lydda from both sides. The Arab armies assured us that they will provide us with cars, and the Jordanian army transferred people.¹⁵³

Adham suffered from a disability, his arm was amputated. When I asked him "how did you lose your arm?" he replied: "When we left to Al-Lyddah I got injured. I don't know if the shooting was from the Jews or from the Arabs' side.....I was injured along with other people. One of them died, the other suffered from minor injuries, and I lost my arm".¹⁵⁴

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

From the stories above, it is clear how the Nakba has led to the dispersion of the Palestinian society in an unprecedented and an unrecognizable way. Palestinians have collectively loss a

¹⁵³ This is interview was conducted on November 17, 2012 in Al-Jalazoun refugee camp, and was translated into English by the author.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

homeland, and on an individual level they each lost something valuable that cannot be replaced. Therefore, documenting their life stories and incorporating it within the broader Palestinian narrative, is an effort in reconstructing and preserving the past.¹⁵⁵

3. Remembrance of the Nakba: Indicators of an on-going Narrative

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

Moreover, the attempt of appealing to the past and understanding it from a present day perspective reveals how during the Nakba Palestinians who left their homes thought it was only for a short period of time. Today they articulate how ignorant they were for leaving their homes. For instance, Zaina stressed that when they left “We thought it was a matter of days, a month at the latest and we would return. Yet the matter has prolonged”.¹⁵⁶

All of the first generation refugees I interviewed said that the moment they left their homes, they thought it was temporary. It never occurred to them that they wouldn’t return. As Fatima noted, “When we left we didn’t even take our house keys with us. We were hoping to return, but hope of return was, and remains, little”.¹⁵⁷ On the other hand, Imm Najih dreams of returning to Haifa, as she expressed how Deir Dibwan “isn’t my home, I will not abandon my country. If I had the opportunity to return I would”.¹⁵⁸ The notion of a continuing narrative based on the life

¹⁵⁵ Ahmad Sa’ di, “al-thakira wa al hawia”, *naho sia’ghatrRiwayatTarikhira lil-nakba eshkaliat wa tahadiat*, tahrir Mustafa Kibha (Haifa: Mada Al-Karmal, 2006), 60.

¹⁵⁶ Interview with Zaina.

¹⁵⁷ Interview with Fatima.

¹⁵⁸ Interview with Imm Najih.

stories of first generation refugees is represented in their status quo today; as a refugee striving to return to their homeland. So as long as they, and all refugees, are living in exile, their stories will continue to be told without closure.

A fundamental element leading to the continuation of the narrative is not implementing the right of return. Refugees' right of return to the part of mandatory Palestine has been the most obstinate block preventing the resolution of the conflict between Palestinians and Israel. Because the right of return affects the essences of its respective history ever since the conflict began, with the prospects of its future.¹⁵⁹ However no just solution can take place without prioritizing refugees' right of return, and its actual implementation.

Just as disregarding the right of return is a determining factor leading to the continuation of the Nakba, subsequent Israeli invasion also have a formidable impact. For instance, as she narrated the story of the Nakba, Imm Hamed articulated that "Look at what happened in Gaza how many Palestinians were killed. Look at the situation of the crazy Arabs, how many died in Egypt while they were playing football".¹⁶⁰ While telling her story, Imm Hamed gave chronological description of the Nakba, the six days war, the on-going Israeli invasion of Gaza and ended with the Egyptian soccer riot. This interview was recorded on February 2, 2012, only one day after the riot in Egypt. Although the Egyptian soccer ordeal isn't related to the Palestinian catastrophe, the instability of the region is an important factor leading to the continuation of the Nakba. Thus as the Nakba persists, every new incident is accumulated and is reflected in the Palestinian narrative. Here it is important to note that the Nakba is neither the

¹⁵⁹ Yoav Peled and Nadim N. Rouhana, "Transnational Justice and the Right of Return of the Palestinian Refugees, *Israel and the Palestinian Refugees*, Ed. Eyal Benvenisti and others (Berlin: Springer, 2007), 142.

¹⁶⁰ On February 1st, 2012, 74 people have been killed in clashes between rival fans following a football match in the Egyptian city of Port Said. Scores were injured as fans - reportedly armed with knives - invaded the pitch after a match between top-tier clubs al-Masry and al-Ahly. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-16845841>

first nor the only historical event in Palestinian history, as many recurring episodes have emerged since 1948. All these on-going events should be documented and integrated within the Palestinian narrative which is far from having an end.

According to Maurice Halbwachs “We preserve memories of each epoch in our lives, and these are continually reproduced, through them, as by a continual relationship, a sense of our identity is perpetuated”.¹⁶¹ The memories of the Nakba are imprinted in the minds of the survivors of Al-Nakba. In the process of recollecting the expulsion, stories are continually reproduced from one generation to the next. For instance, some of the first generation refugees narrated their experience of the Nakba in the form of *qissas* (stories), as Fatima asserts, “because our stories have been passed on to various generations, they have turned into stories which I tell to youngsters”.¹⁶² Nonetheless, according to Fatima the term *qissa* (story) is an implication to fictional events, therefore a distinction between fiction and history needs to be made. Fatima claimed that “You can go and investigate of the information I provided you with and conclude that it is true. However with the passage of time it has evolved into a story”.¹⁶³ Stories can be based on real events, and this should not undermine the value of oral history as authoritative and credible sources. Because collecting peoples' stories and preserving them through oral tradition can help us understand the past and leave a treasure for future generations.¹⁶⁴ Most importantly, history was made and written based on documenting the oral testimonies of those who witnessed a historic event, and until today history is being told in the form of stories which grabs children’s attention regarding their past.

¹⁶¹ Coser, Lewis, Trans. *Maurice Halbwach On Collective Memor*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992), 47.

¹⁶² Interview with Fatima.

¹⁶³ *Ibid*.

¹⁶⁴ “Preserving the Past Through Oral Tradition”, SSortment, <http://www.essortment.com/preserving-past-through-oral-tradition-42028.html>

In Fatima's story, the notion of passing on her experience and perception of Al-Nakba to children was reflected in her testimony, as she said "I tell this story to children, who sit and listen to my tale....The story passes on from one generation to another, and this story doesn't have an end".¹⁶⁵ This confirms that there are different forms of a continuing narrative, while some enumerated on-going tragic episodes; others recalled the essence of storytelling. As the story of Palestinian exodus is being transmitted to young children who will in the future passed it on to their children. As a result this unending cycle of narration is another indicator to the on-going of the Palestinian narrative. So the narrative of the Nakba is, as Lena Jayyusi puts it, "A narrative of continuity that marks not only the past within the present, as legacy, scar, outcome, wound, etc., but also the past still at work within the present, still actively re-engendering in its own shape".¹⁶⁶

While recollecting the memory of the past, Fatima commented on the present and future, as she said "today is probably better than tomorrow, who knows what other catastrophe is hidden for us in the future....the Nakba has devastated us and continues until today and tomorrow".¹⁶⁷ On the other hand Imm Hamed asserted, "The Nakba continues until today, it has no limit. Palestine will never be ours again. We lost our country".¹⁶⁸ Here the relationship between history and memory is brought to light. The Nakba is a historic event, and a place for collective memory. It binds all Palestinians in a certain point in time which they perceive as "An eternal present".¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁵ Interview with Fatima.

¹⁶⁶ Lena Jayyusi, "Iterability, Cumulativity, and Presence: The Relational Figurers of Palestinian Memory", *Nakba: Palestine, 1948, and the Claims of Memory*, Edited by Ahmad H. Sa'di and Lila Abu- Lughod (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 114- 115.

¹⁶⁷ Interview with Fatima.

¹⁶⁸ Interview with Imm Hamed.

¹⁶⁹ Ahmad Sa'di, "Al-thakira wa al hawia", *naho sia'gat riwaya tarikhira lil-nakba eshkaliat wa tahadiat*, tahrir Mustafa Kibha (Haifa: Mada Al-Karmal, 2006), 60.

The continuous Israeli invasions and onslaughts first generation Palestinians are forced to witness and experience until today is an extension of the Nakba. For instance, during his interview, Mahmoud recollected the loss of a son, “Who was killed by Israeli forces, all of my sons were imprisoned”.¹⁷⁰ Hence, Mahmoud is reminded of the Nakba when he remembers his son “who was only a freshman at Birzeit University when he was killed”.¹⁷¹ From the stories above, it is clear that first generation refugees experienced the Nakba and the continuing affects of in different modes. They contribute in illuminating the characteristic of the Palestinian narrative of the Nakba which is truly a story without an end.

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

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

¹⁷⁰ Interview with Mahmoud.

¹⁷¹ Interview with Mahmoud.

refugees. True their stories revolved around the Nakba more than recent events, yet the Palestinian narrative of the Nakba is being iterated endlessly in one narrative after another.¹⁷²

¹⁷² Lena Jayyusi, "Iterability, Cumulativity, and Presence: The Relational Figurers of Palestinian Memory", *Nakba: Palestine, 1948, and the Claims of Memory*, Edited by Ahmad H. Sa'di and Lila Abu- Lughod (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 115.

Chapter Four:

The Stories of the Second Generation Refugees

The children of the first generation Palestinian refugees have been raised in different parts of Palestine and of the globe. Their parents' history and story of the Nakba has had a huge impact in shaping their past, present and determining their future. What distinguishes the second generations' stories from their parents' is that their memory of the Nakba consists of 'stories of stories' they've heard from their parents and elders who experienced and witnessed the Nakba in 1947-1948. Nevertheless, in the narratives of the second generation refugees more catastrophes and causes of flight, they experienced and continue to experience, was apparent. As they mentioned the 1967 Naksa, the 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon and other catastrophes they experienced on a personal level also play a significant role in the construction of their memory. So the Nakba "is not a historic event that ended in 1948, it is a continuous route. Understanding it only as a past event blocks its essences. The path of the Nakba is continuous and takes different forms depending on historical stages. Thus the Nakba is a part of Palestine's present, not its past".¹⁷³ This was revealed in the narrative of the second generation refugees as they narrated the continuity of 1948 in different stages.

Despite the fact that second generation refugees did not experience the 1947-1949 Nakba, the right of return was poignantly embedded in their narratives. Today as Palestinians continue to be denied the right of return to their homeland, the relevance of narratives of Al-Nakba continues to increase.¹⁷⁴ How they, and subsequent generations, ultimately remember and narrate

¹⁷³ Elias Khoury, "al-nakba al-mostamira", *al Nakba mojadadan*, majalat al-dirasat al-falastinia, al-adadd 89, Sheet'a (2012):37.

¹⁷⁴ Ihab Saloul, "The Afterlives of 1948: Photographic Remembrance in a Time of Catastrophe", *Zoom In* (Netherlands: Institute for Historical Justice and Reconciliation and Republic of Letters Publishing, 2011), 176.

the story of their continuing trauma consists of their personal understanding, analysis and even critique of what happened to their parents in 1948. This chapter discusses the stories of the second generation refugees who tell the stories of their past and other phases of the continuing Nakba which fits within the hypothesis of my study of an ongoing narrative.

1. How do second generation refugees narrate the stories of their parents?

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

No human being should be threatened with transfer out of his or her home or land; no human being should be discriminated against because he or she is not of an X or Y religion; no human being should be stripped of his or her land, national identity, or culture, no matter the cause.¹⁷⁵

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

Each of the second generation refugees I interviewed told his/her individual memory of their parent's exodus, and in these stories the lasting results of the Nakba was engraved in their memory. It is important to stress that the oral testimony of second generation refugees consists of

¹⁷⁵ Edward Said, *The Question of Palestine*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), xlii.

invaluable information, yet with the limitation of my research, I sought to include the climax of their life stories and incorporate it within the continuity of the Palestinian narrative.

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

I'm originally from Deir Yassin. When my father left he was 18 years old....First of all my history is deep rooted. Second of all this Nakba has affected us more than anyone else. Deir Yassin is located near Jerusalem, and the location of Deir Yassin has a huge impact on everyone, not only on me. The Deir Yassin massacre was the first massacre that took place in Palestine and resulted in the death of 92, or to be more exact, the martyrdom of 92 people. This massacre had an enormous impact on Palestinians, because as a result of this massacre Palestinians left their homes and were displaced. True a massacre did happen in Deir Yassin, yet the media and radio stations exaggerated the actual event of this massacre, and consequently most Palestinians left their cities and villages because of the war of Deir Yassin. Many children, elders, and women were killed. The number of casualties was 92, 78 of them were from our village and 12 happened to be at Deir Yassin at the time of the massacre. Their names and numbers are available and everything. However, the media had amplified the news of this massacre and terrified the rest of Palestinians. This issue is very provocative, because it wasn't in the interest of Palestinian society at all.¹⁷⁶

As he spoke of the death toll of Palestinians killed in the Deir Yassin massacre, Hamza claimed that the number he provided me with is accurate. So I asked what led him to this number? He replied "My father witnessed the massacre, and the people who were killed their names are registered and everything. An accurate number exists, and I can give you their names".¹⁷⁷ Hamza's father was his main source as to what happened during the Deir Yassin massacre. Although until today the exact number of Palestinians killed in this massacre remains disputable. For instance in a study conducted by Sharif Kanaana, he concluded that the exact

¹⁷⁶ This interview was conducted on October 23, 2011 in Ramallah in Arabic, and was translated into English by the author

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

number of Palestinians killed in Deir Yassin was 100.¹⁷⁸ Also in Walid Khalidi's *Deir Yassin* he argued that the number of villagers killed in Deir Yassin was 100.¹⁷⁹

On the other hand, in Nur Masalha's *The Politics of Denial* he noted that on April 9th between 120-254 villagers were killed in Deir Yassin.¹⁸⁰ Although the Deir Yassin massacre is not the emphasis of my study, it was mentioned in all of the interviews I've conducted with second generation refugees; and was considered as the main cause of Palestinian flight. Apparently there is a disagreement regarding the death toll of Palestinian martyrs, however Hamza was certain and unquestioned the number his father gave him. Even though there is no doubt that the news of the Deir Yassin massacre was exaggerated whether from the death toll of Palestinians or from the crimes the Zionist forces committed against Palestinians, spreading the news of this massacre and amplifying it in Arab radio stations complies with the Zionist version of the story.¹⁸¹ This is not to undermine the credibility of oral history in retrieving uncovered or hidden truths, but to emphasize that misconceptions of the past ought to be perceived in the present with an eye of criticism rather than compliance.

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

When the 1948 war happened everyone from our village (Anaba) was displaced and left to Ras Karkar. After 1950 they went to Al-Jalazoun refugee camp, and I lived there until 1987.....My parents said they left due

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

¹⁷⁹ Walid Al-Khalidi, *deir yassin* (alquds: mo'assasat aldirasat alfalastinia, 1999), 150.

¹⁸⁰ Nur Masalha, *The Politics of Denial* (London: Pluto Press, 2004), 39.

¹⁸¹ Both Childers and Khalidi spent a great deal of time and effort in order to denounce the Israeli/ Zionist version of the story as to why Palestinians left in 48. The Zionist claim that Arab leaders and kings encouraged Palestinians to leave via Arab radio stations. Both Childers and Khalidi found evidence leading to the opposite direction. To read more see Sharif Kanaana, *Still On Vacation!*, p.10.

to fear, especially after what happened at Deir Yassin. I was born in Al-Jalazoun refugee camp and then I moved to Al-Bireh. However it's not my hometown, it's not the same as living on my land amongst my family. Our family is now dispersed; some are living in Al-Jalazoun, others in Jordan, and America. If we stayed on our land people would have stayed together..... We kept on visiting Anaba¹⁸² up until the year 2000. We use to go there with my father and it's not easy to express what I felt when I visited my hometown. Every time we visited Anaba my father would get extremely sad. His entire life was in Anaba, and whenever he got a chance, he would go and visit his homeland.¹⁸³

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

During this interview Wifqi's three daughters were present, and I wanted them to join the conversation. So I asked all three if you all had the opportunity to return to your village would you? They all replied yes. And the youngest, who is twelve years old, said "very much, I've only visited Anaba once and I was very young at the time". Although the narrative of the third generation refugees is the premise of the next chapter, the intergenerational sense of a suppressed national identity was common in all three narratives (first, second and third generation). In the Palestinian case, deprived by powerful states of a national identity based on

¹⁸² To see how Anaba was occupied and depopulated see *All That Remains*, ed. Walid Khalidi (Washington: Institute for Palestine Studies), 289.

¹⁸³ This interview was conducted on February 20, 2012 in Al-Bireh and was translated into English by the author.

land, they feel an intense subjective affiliation with the disappeared national identification.¹⁸⁴

The fact that Wifqi and other refugees identify themselves with the image of a lost village or city, reveals the power of intergenerational transmission in constructing a national Palestinian identity.

Furthermore, Wifqi mentioned that his father “was interviewed several times; he was even in a documentary film on Palestinian refugees, this was shortly before he passed away”.¹⁸⁵

Wifqi’s fathers’ story is symbolic to every Palestinian who was forced to leave his/her land and live in exile. His last visit can be seen as a farewell visit to his homeland, which profoundly symbolizes the right of return. Therefore Wifqi’s father’s last interview exemplifies his last and urgent testimony. He sought to pass on his story and memory of the Nakba, before he leaves this life. His last journey to Anaba was even photographed and framed in Wifqi’s living room.

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

Includes interviews with three generations of refugees, it was taped in 2000Filming this documentary was an opportunity for me to take my children to Anaba. I even made a condition that I will continue with the film only if I take my children to Anaba. The film was completed, and after two months my father in law passed away. He was the protagonist of this documentary. There’s another tape, besides the one I just mentioned, this one is an older film. This documentary is aired on TV and on foreign channels. There’s also interviews that were conducted thirty five years ago, which compares between the lives of Israelis when they occupied Palestine, and the lives of Palestinians living in refugee camps and in the Diasopra. The comparison was between their livelihoods, their homes and even the tools they use inside their houses....In this interview, A. was a child probably in the second grade, W. was in first grade.....Palestinian children spoke about their lands, and

¹⁸⁴ Rosemary Sayigh, Palestinian Refugee Identity/ies; Generation, Class, Region. Conference Palestinian Refugees Different Generations but One Identity. Ibrahim Abu-Lughod Institute of International Studies: Birzeit University, 2011, 1.

¹⁸⁵ Interview with Wifqi.

of returning. Where on the other hand, Jewish children spoke about the Arabs and how they wanted to deport us all from our lands.¹⁸⁶

Throughout her story, Khadeeja mentioned documentaries they owned which consist of interviews with three generations of Palestinian refugees. This film which was taped in 2000, portrays how stories of the Nakba are being taped and preserved for future generations. During her interview, Khadeeja also showed me a coin dated back from the British Mandate period which she keeps in her wallet. The coin was dated from 1935 and was a gift from her father. Preserving Palestinian heritage and memory was at the core of this interview. Whether from filming documentaries, taking pictures, the lease to their home in Anaba, the key to their home and other personal and valuable possessions, Wifqi and his family pertain many forms of commemorating the Nakba and passing on the memory of it. Through preserving all these valuable assets, these Palestinian refugees are fighting against the erasure of their history. Interviewing different generations of refugees, and making a documentary film based on these interviews, reflects how the memory of the catastrophe is preserved and implanted in subsequent generations; who insist on keeping the memory of it alive. Here the importance of narratives is brought to light, not only as a vehicle for transmission of memories but also as the main content of all commemorative practices.¹⁸⁷ The different ways of commemorating the Nakba or Palestine, which was vivid in the interviews above, reflects the significance of clinging on to whatever possession reminding them of their homeland, such as a mural, a key or even a coin.

Allan: English/Palestinian who was born in England to an English father and a Palestinian mother. His mother is a first generation refugee originally from Jerusalem, and he

¹⁸⁶ This interview was unplanned and was conducted after interviewing Wafqi, which was on February 20th, 2012. This interview was conducted in Ramallah in Arabic, and was translated into English by the author.

¹⁸⁷ Laleh Khalili, *Heroes and Martyrs of Palestine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 5.

carries his mothers' maiden name which is "Khatib". Based on his mother and grandfathers' stories, here is what he had to say regarding the story of his exodus:

My family is from Katamon in West Jerusalem. They have a long history of settlement in Katamon, in fact my grandfather's house that he built is still there...We were forcefully displaced in 1948.. Particularly in Katamon areas, there were a series of incidents, attacks by the Hagana..Basically in all this chaos, you then have Deir Yassin and you had a whispering campaign...The Hagana and Stern gang....were basically saying that this has happened in Deir Yassin. Everyone knew about Deir Yassin, if you don't leave the same thing will happen to you. And they were shooting at windows and things like that. Now my family, the British told them get out, you'll only be away for two weeks. The Jews were saying get out we're going to kill you, and the British were saying we'll mediate this in just two weeks you'll be back in your house. I don't know the details but I know we fled out of fear. We left thinking we were going to come back. A very important part of my family's story is how when my family were leaving, they didn't even have time to pack anything, this all happened very quickly. And as they were leaving an aunty of my mother decided to go back to the house and collect a blanket...And so she went back in with my mothers' brother, my uncle. When she came back out she was shot by the Hagana and she was killed in front of the house. It took my family two days to negotiate getting her body, and the British intervened or something.¹⁸⁸

On November 1947 the UN put forward resolution 181 which aims at partitioning Palestine into a Jewish state and an Arab state. This resolution designated the city of Jerusalem as a corpus separatum under an international regime administrated by the UN.¹⁸⁹ According to resolution 181, the city of Jerusalem was to remain under international protection. However, the Zionist forces such the Hagana violated this resolution, and occupied areas in Jerusalem by force. And as described in Allan's story, those who tried to return and gather some of their essential and necessary belongings were killed.¹⁹⁰ As noted

¹⁸⁸ This interview was conducted in Birzeit, in English on May 14th, 2012.

¹⁸⁹ To read more on the UN General Assembly resolution 181 and its impact see Ilan Pappé's *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine* (Oxford: One World, 2006), 31-33.

¹⁹⁰ According to a study conducted by Badil from the end of 1948 until the end of the Suez Crisis, Israeli forces killed some 5,000 Palestinian refugees who were trying to return to their homes. "From the 1948 Nakba to the 1967 Naksa", BADIL Occasional Bulletin, No. 18, (June 2004): p.1. www.BADIL.org.

in the previous chapter, Allan demonstrated that when his family left they thought it was only for a couple of weeks. So they left as quickly as they could, and didn't carry anything with them. As a result Allan's mothers' aunt returned to bring some essential belongings, but on her way out she was shot by the Hagana forces. The Zionist strategy was carried out in order to terrify other Palestinians who were even contemplated on returning to their homes.

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

They emptied one village at a time, and they implanted fear, horror and terror in other villages. As a result people were defeated. People were ignorant not like today. Now the terror is a hundred times stronger than it was in 1948, yet people remain. Look at what happened in Gaza, they annihilated them, did they leave? Did they move! No. let us die they declare. Today it's impossible for a person to leave his/her homeland.....People are learning from mistakes made in the past, they wouldn't leave even if their lives depended on it. A country is very valuable to a person....Nowadays people are more aware, and wouldn't leave....In 1948 my relatives, our family dar Saqir, were annihilated. The Jewish forces shot them all. Not one of them was left, except for an old lady and a little girl whose mother was killed right in front of her eyes.¹⁹¹

It is important to clarify that Bahiya is a refugee from both her parents' and her in-laws' side, and throughout her story she criticized her parents and in-laws' act in leaving their lands.¹⁹²

¹⁹¹ This interview was conducted on January 22, 2012, while interviewing Zaina, first generation of refugees. This interview was also unplanned and was translated into English by the author

¹⁹² This was covered in Adel Yahya's *sal-lajioun al-falastinoun*, which is comprised of the oral testimonies of first, second and third generation refugees. Based on the analysis of the second generation refugees, their parents' left their lands in 1948 out of ignorance, in addition to lack of judgment in foreseeing the outcome behind leaving. To read more see: Adel Yihya, *al-lajioun al-falastinioun* (alquds: mo'assat aldirasat alfalastinia liltabadel althaqafi, 1998), 33.

She expressed that “People were ignorant back then not like today”,¹⁹³ this clearly shows how Palestinians are leaning for their past and wouldn’t repeat the mistakes of their parents. So Bahiya was retelling her family’s story and history from her own perspective. Nonetheless, she pointed that today Palestinians insist on staying on their lands in spite of the on-going Israeli invasions and attacks.

It is impossible for any Palestinian to pretend that the trauma of 1948, or of subsequent dispossessions and forced exiles that have afflicted Palestinians and continues to do so, are no longer essential.¹⁹⁴ Without those memories and history nothing makes more sense.¹⁹⁵ Regardless of the Israeli/Zionist effort in erasing Palestinian traces and history, memory comes to aid and restore traces of lost homes, lost lives and most importantly lost stories. The idea of recoding the oral testimonies of second generation refugees is not to investigate what exactly happened to their parents in 1948, but to document how they remember and retell these stories. Moreover, my aim of interviewing second generation refugees is to stress that the events of 1948 is not, and should not be the center of Palestinian history. More recent and subsequent events which second generation have witnessed should also be documented and integrated in the narrative of al-Nakba. And this will be discussed in the following sections.

It is the next generation of refugees who have been making films, organizing the collection of testimonials, trying to grasp the meaning of the Nakba, while at the same time

¹⁹³ Interview with Bahiya.

¹⁹⁴ Omar Al- Qattan, “The Secret Visitations of Memory”, Palestine, 1948, and the Claims of memory Ed. Lila Abu-Lughod and Ahmad Sa’di (New York: Columbia University Press), 204.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

fighting forgetfulness and making public claims on behalf of their parents' suffering.¹⁹⁶ Although some of the people I interviewed mentioned that their parents were interviewed and their testimony of 1948 was included in a documentary such as *Wifqi*, on the other hand the majority of the interviewees' parents were not. So it is their memory of these untold stories which shed light on their parents' experience of dispossession, as Tariq noted, "The Nakba for me meant many things. For instance I went to my fathers' house, and at one stage I went to go look for the house, I took pictures of it and sent it to my family. This year I took a video of it and I sent it to all of my aunts, uncles and cousins so they could know about the history of where their grandparents are from".¹⁹⁷ Through taking a video of his grandfathers' house, Tariq sought to retrieve the memory of his fathers' house and share that particular memory with his family members in order to protect it from oblivion; especially in light of the Zionist judiaization of the city of Jerusalem.

2. The Second Generation Refugees' 'Nakbat': Their Individual Experience of recurring Tragedies:

The narrative of the second generation refugees' is constructed of accumulating tragedies and "Nakbat". This generation has been categorized as *Jeel Ma ba'ed Al-Nakba*¹⁹⁸ 'generation after the Nakba'. Accordingly, the Nakba is the violent moment that has created a rupture that cannot be gaped between the past and the present.¹⁹⁹ It is worth mentioning that all memory work involves a critical relationship between past and present, and between those

¹⁹⁶ Lila Abu-Lughod and Ahmad Sa'di, Introduction, *Nakba, 1948, and the Claims of Memory* (New York: Columbia University Press), 20.

¹⁹⁷ Palestinian/American who's originally from West Jerusalem. This interview was conducted in Ramallah in English on May 17, 2012.

¹⁹⁸ Rosemary Sayigh, "Product and Producer of Palestinian History: Stereotypes of "Self" in Camp Women's Life Stories, *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies* 13, No 1, (2007): 91.

¹⁹⁹ Ahmad Sa'di, "Al-thakira wa al hawia", *naho sia'gat riwaya tarikhira lil-nakba eshkaliat wa tahadiat*, tahrir Mustafa Kibha (Haifa: Mada Al-Karmal, 2006), 69.

and the future: what will be, what is to come, what is expected and/or willed.²⁰⁰ In the stories of the generation after the Nakba recurring Nakbat they experienced coalesces with their parent's experience of the Nakba. As a result, new narratives are formed which resonate the past and this is told in a different, yet similar, context; that is under the extended Zionist colonization over historic Palestine.

For example, Dr. Hamza articulated that:

Although I did not experience the Deir Yassin Massacre, the first Nakba that I had witnessed was in 1967, and I still witness Nakabat until today. Today's Nakba is worse and more powerful than the previous one. We are all refugees, living under occupation. Do not distinguish between this person is a refugee, that person is a citizen, we are all living under occupation in one cage. All Palestinian society is imprisoned in one big cage along with our president Abu-Mazen. My situation is just like any other citizen who left after 1948 or even after the 1967 Naksa. Massacres are still being perpetrated until today.. We are all in one Ditch.²⁰¹

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

Most importantly, Hamza expressed that his Nakba began in 1967 not in 1948. Despite the fact that Hamza did not experience the Nakba, how he conceives the memory of the Nakba is based on his own experience and account of subsequent 'nakbat', starting from 1967 onwards.

²⁰⁰ Lena Jayyusi, "Iterability, Cumulativity, and Presence: The Relational Figurers of Palestinian Memory", *Nakba: Palestine, 1948, and the Claims of Memory*, Edited by Ahmad H. Sa'di and Lila Abu- Lughod (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 118.

²⁰¹ Interview with Hamza.

He also referred to the continuing phases of the Nakba, in which the one that occurs is more devastating than the previous one. Therefore, the importance of storytelling lies in the ability to narrate and bear witness to current tragic events which mirrors the trauma ones' parents experienced in the past.

While documenting the life stories of the second generation refugees, one must note that not all Palestinians experienced the impact of the Nakba in the same way. It differed for men and women, old and young, rich and poor, those who stayed and those who left.²⁰² For instance second generation refugees who were born in refugee camps have different stories to tell than those who grew up outside of these camps. In Eman's²⁰³ story she spoke about her experience of living in Al-Jalazoun refugee camp and the services provided by UNRWA. She emphasized on what she has experienced on a personal level, rather than her parents' story of the Nakba. She noted that: "we were used to seeing Jewish soldiers invade houses in the camp, and gather all the men together.....During the second Intifada, my brother was killed while throwing rocks at an Israeli tank".²⁰⁴ According to her, the continuing affects of the Nakba is embedded in the loss of a brother and living under poor conditions in Al-Jalazoun refugee camp.

Each Palestinian has a starting point, an individual experience that puts him/her within the broader framework of the Nakba. For example, Sameer²⁰⁵ was born and raised in Ohio; his political consciousness began in 1982, during the Israeli invasion of Lebanon, as he claims:

²⁰² Rosemary Sayigh, "Women's Nakba Stories: Between Being and Knowing", *Nakba Palestine, 1948, and the claims of memory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 136.

²⁰³ Second Generation refugee who is originally from Lydda. She was raised in Al-Jalazoun refugee camp, and currently lives in Deir Dibwan. This interview was conducted on March 18, 2012 and was translated into English by the author.

²⁰⁴ Ibid.

²⁰⁵ Sameer is from Al-Bireh, and his father witnessed the Nakba in 1948. Although he is not a refugee, his father migrated to the States and in 1967 and wasn't able to return to his home. This interview was conducted on March 22, 2012 in Ramallah in English.

“When I started full scale university in 1982, the war happened. And when the war happened in Lebanon, it over changed my feeling, my emotions, and my motivations to the point where people today tell me you’ve been working on diesel ever since that time and you didn’t turn off your engine”.²⁰⁶ So Sameer became politically active for the Palestinians cause in 1982. Despite the fact that he was born and raised in the diaspora, his “mental presence was in Palestine”,²⁰⁷ and in 1994 he settled in Palestine and has written many articles on the Palestinian question and the refugee problem, with taking into consideration that he addresses a western audience.

Nevertheless, all these individual memories coalesce under what Maurice Halbwachs terms “collective memory”, in which there are many collective memories as groups and institutions in a society.²⁰⁸ However, it is of course individuals who remember, not groups or institutions, but these individuals, being located in a specific group context, drawn on that context to remember or recreate the past.²⁰⁹ The individual memories of the second generation refugees are used as an apparatus in reconstructing the past, as more recent events and individual tragedies are accumulated and are being included under a broader Palestinian narrative. However these memories are being collectively represented via groups and institutions. In the Palestinian case, the PLO and PA are representing the Palestinian people, refugee problem and the Palestinian narrative and memories of the Nakba.

3. Sharing their memories and stories with others:

The stories told by the second generation refugees are essential as they portray a complex narrative that is of a continuing nature. Thus to remember “is essentially to be on your own,

²⁰⁶ Interview with Sameer.

²⁰⁷ Ibid.

²⁰⁸ To read more on Collective memory see Maurice Halwachs, *On Collective Memory* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992), 48.

²⁰⁹ Ibid.

even if sometimes you have the illusion of sharing your memories with others. Ultimately, only a description of a crossroads will do-how it happened that your own journey crossed that of so many others”.²¹⁰ The events that took place in Palestine in 1948 have transformed the lives of Palestinians in general, and those who became refugees in particular. How they share and tell their stories of on-going dispossessions is worthy of being heard.

Although the second generation refugees were born in exile, nostalgia for the past united the stories of these refugees. The thought of ‘what their life could have been like if their parents stayed on their lands’ was apparent in Wifqi’s story who articulated: “Although I’m living here (Ramallah), it’s not my hometown, it’s not the same as living on my land with my family. Our family is now dispersed in different parts of the globe”.²¹¹ What was also emphasized in the narrative of the second generation is that each new tale is an echo within the echo, focusing and conjuring the collective predicament through the individual, and ramifying the significance and symbolic meanings of the individual experience through the collective.²¹² Through sharing their stories and memories with an audience (that is me) the notion of expressing their own individual experience and assimilating it within the border collective Palestinian tragedy was clear. In the process of gathering threads of Palestinian stories, it is the individuals who remember and who contribute in shedding light on the on-going stories of loss and injustice. For instance, Sameer noted that:

The continuation of the Nakba whether it’s called 67, 82, or whether it’s called 87, I do view it as one continuum, and its one continuum that serves my analytical mind as well as I’m writing. I just mentioned I finished Last night my land day article for 2012, and I’m pulling out documents from 1976 reading them and actually saying nothing has changed....So I do see it as a

²¹⁰ Omar Al-Qattan, “The Secret Visitations of Memory”, *Nakba, Palestine, 1948, and the Claims of memory*, Ed Ahmad H Sa’di and Lila Abu-Lughod (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007),191.

²¹¹ Interview with Wifqi.

²¹² Lena Jayyusi, “Iterability, Culmativity and Presence”, *Nakba, Palestine, 1948, and the Claims of memory*, Ed Ahmad H Sa’di and Lila Abu-Lughod (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 110.

continuum.....our consciousness is from 1948 onward, whereas we've lost a lot of understanding of what was Palestine prior to 1948. I think that's the negative of the Nakba, because we were overwhelmed we were shocked. This was our 9/11 times 10.²¹³

Sameer not only refers to the Nakba as a historic event that ended, but also refers to recurring catastrophes such as Land day in 1976, the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982, and the first Intifada in 1987. He describes the Nakba as a "continuum" that endures till this day. Connecting this with my research question, this continuum of Nakbat is leading to the continuation of the narrative itself. The reality is that the tragedy is continuous and knows no limits whether in place or time.²¹⁴ Regardless of the place or time, in OPT there's always a memory, a catastrophe, a loss reaffirming the 'presentness of the past'.

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

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

²¹³ Interview with Sameer.

²¹⁴ Elias Khoury, "Al-Nakba al-mostamira", *al nakba mojadadan*, majalat al-dirasat al-falastinia, al-adadd 89, Shit'a (2012):38.

visibility to by banning it.... Memory isn't just about remembering a past, it's about re-negotiating the present..It's not just about remembering a past that's sort of finished, but it's about narrating how that past affects your present.²¹⁵

As Allan shared his and his grandfather's story, the act of retuning to Palestine confirms that Palestinian memory is substantial in places and in stories recounted and recorded which shows that far from being a completely ideal construct, narratives that commemorate the past are reproduced and reproduced through the practices of persons.²¹⁶ So by returning to Palestine, Allan sought to commemorate his mother and grandfathers' memory of 1948 through reclaiming what is rightfully his, his grandfathers' house.²¹⁷ As a result lost houses can be portrayed as mnemonics which verifies the right of return in addition to mobilizing the Palestinian community to find a just and reasonable solution towards their plight. However, individuals' memory and story of 1948 varies for each Palestinian. And in the narratives of the second generation refugees how the past reinforces itself in present actualities is also another form reflecting the continuation of the past.

Three out of the eight second generation refugees I interviewed for this chapter were brought up in the diaspora. So when they returned to Palestine they began relating their stories with other Palestinian refugees' stories. For instance Tariq claims that: "it was only when I came here that I can see myself in the context of other people who have been dispossessed and other stories of dispossession".²¹⁸ On the other hand Allan adds that "You can't divorce me being here from my family's experience in 1948...The memory is not a normal memory, especially when you're remembering it through family stories and narratives".²¹⁹ Through combining different stories

²¹⁵ Interview with Allan.

²¹⁶ Laleh Khalili, *Heroes and Martyrs of Palestine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 88.

²¹⁷ Although Allan's father is English, and he has spent his life in England and then Australia, he considers himself a Palestinian refugee.

²¹⁸ Interview with Tariq.

²¹⁹ Interview with Allan.

and experiences of recurring dispossessions, the relationship between the past and present, between memory and reality is imprinted in the narratives of second generation refugees who reaffirm the existence of a continuous story of historic injustice.

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

While listening and documenting the stories of the second generation refugees, their memory of the Nakba is what infuses their determination to return, as they all stressed on their right of return. Because Palestinians as individuals insist on their right of return, and that right must be respected.²²⁰ Moreover, the continuity of the Nakba was mentioned in their life stories in different stages and forms. From those who experienced the 1967 Naksa to the Intifada, it is apparent that the Palestinian narrative of the Nakba will continue to be written without a full stop. Therefore, Al-Nakba is not merely a historical date to be commemorated. It is the collective memory of Palestinians, which shapes their identity as a people.²²¹ Al-Nakba is not a distant memory but a painful reality that continues to fester, as the rights of refugees continue to

²²⁰ John Quigley, "The Right of Displaced Palestinians to Return", *The Palestinian Exodus*, Ed. Ghada Karmi and Eugene Cotran (UK:Ithaca Press, 1999), 151.

²²¹ Hanan Ashrwi, Recognizing Nakba Reaching Peace, *HAARETZ*, 15 May, 2012.

be denied.²²² Thus the memory of the Nakba reinforces second generation refugees right of return, as they insist on reclaiming what is 'rightful' theirs.

²²²Ibid.

Chapter Five: Third Generation Refugees' Stories: Their memory of the Nakba, and the Narrative of Continuity

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

Throughout the stories of third generation refugees, all of whom I interviewed carry a college degree, the amount of political mobility and giving voice to their predecessors' stories is brought to light. As they all insisted on implementing their right of return, and as one of the women I interviewed, Laila claimed "Refugees will return and it will be a one binational state".²²³ The majority of the people I interviewed for this chapter asserted that the "right of return is inevitable, and unquestionable". According to this kind of narrative, it is only a matter of time that Palestinian refugees will return to their lands.

The issues raised in the life stories of third generation refugees are numerous, and are only partially embedded in this study. Nonetheless, "when the individual narratives of pain accumulate, they become not only inescapable, but also impossible to dispel, at least for a few generations. Nowhere is this truer than in the memories of the Palestinians".²²⁴ In this chapter I will combine the memories and stories of the third generation refugees in order to investigate

²²³ Interview with Laila.

²²⁴ Omar Al-Qattan, "The Secret Visitations of Memory", *Nakba, Palestine, 1948, and the Claims of memory*, Ed Ahmad H Sa'di and Lila Abu-Lughod (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), p.193.

how the memories of the Nakba, along with the accumulation of subsequent events, affects the narrative of the Nakba.

1. How Third Generation Narrate the stories of their displacement:

The refugees I interviewed for this chapter live in Al-Jalazoun refugee camp, Qalandia refugee camp, and various parts of Ramallah. In some cases, third generation refugees heard the story of their displacement directly from their grandparents. In other cases, which will be explained below, their grandparents did not talk much about the past because “recollecting the past was too painful”.²²⁵ Nonetheless, the eight third generation refugees I interviewed, narrated the stories of their grandparents’ displacement in their own understating of how they were turned into refugees.

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

I’m originally from a village near Jerusalem called Sar’a, which is currently enclosed as a museum. Based on what they say, I consider that the question of Palestine was built on rumors.....Foreign regimes persecuted Jews, and it was automatically supposed that all the Jews in the world should find a place where they can gather themselves....From the beginning Palestinians have been under occupation under the Ottoman rule, and British. When the British left, they handed the country over to the Jews... The weapon they literally used was rumors. Such as the Deir Yassin massacre, where they killed a couple of Palestinians; yet those who survived such massacres told others what happened..And from one person to another the story evolved. My grandfather did not see the Jews, he heard what happened and thus became displaced. In 1948 my grandmother gave birth to a baby girl, and when people

²²⁵ Nireen: Palestinian/ Canadian third generation refugee originally from Lydda, she has a BA degree in English Language and Literature. This interview was conducted on January 17, 2012 in Ramallah in English.

fled she fled along with them and left her daughter. However she returned and brought her daughter back, because my grandfather swore he would divorce her if she didn't bring her back. Look as I told you, my problem isn't with the Jews, my problem is with the Israelis... People confuse between an Israeli and a Jew..Judaism is a religion just as Christianity, and I respect it. My problem is with the Israeli who took my land, took my home and kicked me out. I became a refugee in my own country.²²⁶

Instead of beginning with the story of her grandparents' journey of exile, Wa'ed began her story with the Jewish question. The founder of Zionism, Theodor Herzal saw the establishment of a Jewish state a solution to the Jewish question. A solution, that is, to the long years of European persecution of Jews.²²⁷ On the other hand, Edward Said argued that "in the most direct way possible, the Palestinian question is the metamorphosis of the Jewish question, the difference that of repetition makers...The resolution of the Jewish question under the constrains of European imperial hegemony, created the question of Palestine".²²⁸ The ongoing struggle between the Israeli and the counter Palestinian narrative regarding who is the victim and who is the victimizer plays a central role in the construction of both narratives. As the power to tell the story and to eliminate the counter-narrative is an essential part of the actual military and political struggle over non-symbolic resources such as land and political power, the war over the land, the struggle over the legitimization of sovereign national existence and that over who is the victim and who is the victimizer became inseparable parts of the symbolic and military confrontation between the two collectives.²²⁹ This struggle has affected the Palestinian narrative, in which Palestinians tend to view themselves as victims. Based on Wa'ed's life story, the question of Palestine was created based on the Jewish question and Zionism's attempt to solve it

²²⁶ This interview was conducted on March 25, 2012 in Qalandia Refugee camp and was translated from Arabic by the author.

²²⁷ William D. Hart, *Edward Said and the Religious effects of Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 143.

²²⁸ Ibid, 143-146.

²²⁹ Ilan Gur-Ze'ev and Ilan Pappé, "Beyond the Destruction of the Other's Collective Memory: Blueprints for a Palestinian/Israeli Dialogue", *SAGE* (2003):95.

through occupying Palestine.²³⁰ She also pointed to a very crucial point. She articulated that her problem is not with the Jews; but with the Israelis who occupied her land. In the Palestinian context and from the interviews I've conducted with Palestinian refugees, the word Jew is a synonym to Israeli. So Wa'ed sought to clarify and differentiate between both terms, which Palestinians combine into one word, notably Jew.

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

It's a long story, but to summarize it based on what my grandfather, God bless his soul, use to tell me: before the Jews attacked them, people would hear about the massacres that were taking place around them and were afraid. Consequently they left and took what they were able to carry with them....Thinking they would return soon. Some took their house keys, other didn't.....on the basis that they would return. But the story has prolonged and until today we did not return. I was born in Al-Jalazoun refugee camp, and I have been living there all my life. As you know, the situation inside the refugee camp is devastating....For instance, the services provided by UNRWA are receding.....My grandfather left before the Israeli invasion. No one from my village was killed, they left because they were afraid.²³¹

Following the previous interview, Ahmed also explained how his grandfather left out of terror. So the Israeli/Zionist method made systematic use of violence and killing, without taking the "classic form of genocide". As a result terror was spread all over Palestine, as massacres and terror became a well planned practice that created a cloud of terror.²³² The impact of the massacres and Israeli killing in spreading terror in Palestine was mentioned in both of the interviews above. Comparing Ahmed's story with Mahmoud's, first generation refugee who is also from Bayat Nabala, they both confirmed

²³⁰ Edward Said claims that according to Herzl, Zionism was a movement to free Jews and solve the problem of anti-Semitism in the West, later elaborations of this idea took Palestine as a place where the conception was materially fulfilled (after locations in South America and East Africa had been considered and dropped). To read more see Edward Said's *The Question of Palestine*, 1992 p. 23.

²³¹ This interview was conducted on February 13, in Birzeit and was translated into English by the author.

²³² Saleh Abdel Jawad, "Zionist Massacres: the Creation of the Palestinian Refugee Problem", *Israel and the Palestinian Refugees*, Ed. Eyal Benvenisti and others (Berlin: Springer, 2007), 81.

that Bayat Nabala was emptied before the Jewish forces occupied it.²³³ And this uncovers how the collective experience and memory of the fall of Bayat Nabala is accurately being transmitted to third generation refugees.

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

I remember my grandparents always telling me that they were forced out of their houses and they couldn't take anything with them. They took what was on their back and they had to move out as quickly as they could. Because all the Jews were taking over and controlling their lives....They ended up in Ramallah...They didn't want the Jews to kill them, they had to save their families.....Every now and then they always wished that they were back in the Lydda. Lydda is where we were from, it's our origin. It's not every day that we get to go to the Lydda, I personally have only been there twice. I don't know anything about the history of the Lydda... There was a lot of things I didn't know about the Lydda, I was able to go see the church my grandparents went to. And my Grandpa also showed me the house that he lived in, it's still there. He also showed me the school that he went to.....I was happy that I got to see where I'm originally from...I know there's something missing, cause I don't know part of the history of the Lydda. My grandma doesn't talk about the Nakba, unless we ask her about it. I can imagine her now if I asked her about it she would probably be screaming...Its something in the past that they don't want to reopen, because if they reopen it, it's too painful.²³⁴

When Nireen went to Al-Lydda for a visit, a part of her identity and history was retrieved. In the Palestinian context, having a part of one's history missing is associated with the loss of place. And not knowing much about the past confines one's understanding of the present. Because the Nakba is "Happening at the moment in Palestine. It is not a historic event to be

²³³ For more see chapter three which covers Mahmoud's story regarding the fall of Bayat Nabala.

²³⁴ Interview with Nireen.

commemorated; it is as Edward Said articulated, a present continuously threatened with interpretations".²³⁵ Although when I interviewed Nireen's grandmother,²³⁶ she did not hold back while telling me her story. This can be analyzed as to how first generation refugees feel more comfortable telling their stories to strangers or journalist, than they do with their own grandchildren who in some cases, which will be mentioned in a moment, blamed their grandparents for leaving.

Arij: Third generation refugee who is also from Al-Lyddā. Arij is currently an MA student in the International Studies programme at Birzeit University. Just as in the previous interview, Arij explained how her grandmother didn't talk about her story of dispossession, as she says:

It's rare that my grandparents would talk about what happened to our country in 1948. When I ask my grandmother of the old days she wouldn't talk much. To be honest, I don't know much of what happened to my grandparents in 1948, I don't have the details as to how they became refugees. My grandfather never spoke of it, sometimes my grandmother would speak about the Nakba....As my grandmother recollected the past, she was glad someone was listening to her.²³⁷

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

²³⁵ Elias Khoury, "al-Nakba al-mostamira", *al nakba mojadadan*, majalat al-dirasat al-falastinia, al-adadd 89, Shit'a (2012):37.

²³⁶ Imm Hamed whose testimony was covered in Chapter three, the narrative of first generation refugees.

²³⁷ This interview was conducted in Ramallah on February 3, 2012 and was translated into English by the Author.

In the process of interviewing third generation refugees I noticed a difference between those living in camps, and those who are originally from Lydda. For instance, leaving their homes in 1948, was an act some of the third generation refugees condemn today, as Wa'ed asserted, "I blame the naïveté of my grandfather..I mean it's your land at least fight for it".²³⁸ Also Ahmed use to always tell his grandfather, "Why did you leave? Why didn't you fight back?"²³⁹ Blaming their grandparents for leaving their lands in 1948 was expressed in the stories of third generation refugees living in refugee camps. However Wa'ed and Ahmed are the only refugees' I interviewed for this chapter who live in refugee camps, thus a generalization cannot be made and this issue requires further exploration and research.

The question of who should be held accountable for the creation of the Palestinian refugee problem is highly controversial. As some blame Zionism as the genesis of the Palestinian question, others blame Britain, Arab countries for not protecting Palestinians, and some even blame Palestinians for fleeing. Although the issue of accountability is disputable among many scholars and common Palestinians, it was always present in my interviews of third generation. It is important to note that many sides are responsible for the creation of the Palestinian refugee problem as well as for the loss of Palestine, and this responsibility is hierarchal. The apogee of the problem is Israel, hence the existential harm that was committed against Palestinians should be acknowledged by those who did that harm, or their successors in power.²⁴⁰ Because recognizing the narrative told by the victims of injustice is a sine qua non for reconciliation.²⁴¹ Without Israeli acknowledgment for its responsibility in the creation of the Palestinian refugee

²³⁸ Interview with Wa'ed.

²³⁹ Interview with Ahmed.

²⁴⁰ Lex Takkenberg, "The Search for Durable Solutions for Palestinian Refugees", In *Israel and the Palestinian Refugees*, Ed. Eyal Benvenisti, Chaim Gans and Sari Hanafi (Berlin: Springer, 2007), 376.

²⁴¹ Yoav Peled and Nadim N. Rouhana, "Transnational Justice and the Right of Return of the Palestinian Refugees", *The Palestinian Exodus*, Ed. Ghada Karmi and Eugene Cotran (Ithaca Press), 145.

problem, their predicament will continue along with the Palestinian narrative of continued historic injustice.

Based on the interviews above, Palestinians play a minor role in taking responsibility for their plight. However, by saying so, this narrative fits with the Zionist narrative, that the Arab countries and Palestinians themselves are responsible for the creation of the Palestinian refugee problem.²⁴² This dominant narrative tends to overlook the Israeli massacres, attacks, psychological warfare and destruction of cities and villages which were the determining factors that led to the fragmentation of Palestinian society. By saying that one should blame Palestinians, who were forced to leave their lands, for the creation of the refugee question reveals to what extent Palestinians have been unconsciously affected by the mainstream Zionist narrative.

2. Preserving the Memories of their Grandparents: Reconstructing their Grandparents' stories

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

²⁴² The Zionist mainstream narrative is that Palestinians voluntarily "fled" their villages in accordance with orders given by the Arab armies, ignoring the Jewish call to them to stay put. To read more see Mori Marikos "Zionism and the Nakba: The Mainstream Narrative, the Oppressed Narratives, and the Israeli Collective Memory", *Kyoto Bulletin of Islamic Area Studies* (2009): 89.

3rd generation Palestinian refugees continue living with the stories and memories of their grandparents. They dream of going back one day, to return to their homes and lands, to reclaim what is rightfully theirs.²⁴³ For instance, Ahmed claims that:

Living in a refugee camp is tough, it's not easy. I'm one of those people, I don't want to leave the camp unless I return to my homeland.....I will not abandon my land, and my right, no matter what.... What more can I say, it's a Nakba... It was literally a Nakba, I don't know what else you can call it....I will tell my children, and the next generation that this is our land...True at some point we didn't fight enough, but this isn't the land of the Jews, it's our land.²⁴⁴

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

I think our generation has the most prominent role which is not forgetting, and making sure the generations after us hear what happened and not forget the stories of our grandparents. Some of the stories they say are adventurous and I swear to God are worthy of the best movies ever, but at the same time there is sadness behind them and real truth behind them. History covers all of that, cause I was raised over there and took history my entire life, and I've never once heard about the Nakba till I got here. So with history what happens is that it's one sided, whoever wins gets to write in it whatever they want. So I think it's our role, the third generation Nakba, to make sure that generations after us hear what happened. I'm definitely, when I have kids, I'm gonna tell them I'm really from the Abasyia. This and that happened to my grandparents.²⁴⁵

A dangerous factor which threatens the loss of the Palestinian narrative, as Malak said, is that history is being written by the victors. And as Rashid Khalidi argued "It is a commonplace that history is written by the victors. And it follows that it is more likely to be written about the stronger than the weaker...All these historical biases have complicated the modern

²⁴³ Sami Adwan, "Al-Nakba: The Palestinian Catastrophe Continues", *In Zoom In Palestinian Refugees of 1948, Remembrance*, Ed. Sami Adwan, Efrat Ben- Ze've, Menachem Klein, Ihab Saloul, Tamir Sorek and Mahmoud Yazbak(Netherlands: Institute for Historical Justice and Reconciliation and Republic of Letters Publishing, 2011), p 197.

²⁴⁴ Interview with Ahmed.

²⁴⁵ This interview was conducted in Deir Dibwan on July, 16, 2012 in English.

historiography of Palestine”.²⁴⁶ As a result history is acknowledged and is written from the victors’ perspective, and this undermines and marginalizes the victims’ point of view. Here the role of the grandchildren of first generation refugees lies in telling their children the truth behind these stories and preserving it from the victors attempt to weaken, disregard and erase the defeaters’ history.

From the stories of third generation refugees, al- Nakba meant many things to them. Some remember 1948 as “loss of land, despair...It’s like people are trying to force you out of your homeland. They’re trying to erase all of your memories, your origin”.²⁴⁷ Whereas others remember 1948 as, “The genesis of the Palestinian problem”.²⁴⁸ It is the de facto of the OPT that stimulates these memories and feeling of the Nakba, as well as the memories of their grandparents’ suffering. All the interviewees expressed their deep attachment to their homeland and emphasized how proud they are to be a Palestinian refugee, for instance Khaled emphasized that:

I’m proud to be a refugee..The problem with the Palestinian society in the West Bank is that they continue to say this person is a refugee, that person is not. Recently this image has slightly diminished, but it still exists and I still hear it.²⁴⁹

Just as some of the first generation refugees mentioned the stereotypical depiction attached to refugees,²⁵⁰ third generation also referred to this issue. So with the continuation of the Nakba, Palestinian refugees are yet being stigmatized as ‘refugees’ which is a reference to ‘inferior’ or other degrading status. Thus Khaled remembers the story his grandmother told

²⁴⁶ Rashid Khalidi, *Palestinian Identity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), 89.

²⁴⁷ Interview with Nireen.

²⁴⁸ Interview with Wa’ed.

²⁴⁹ Khaled Third generation refugee, originally from Al-Lyddda. This interview was conducted on March 3, 2012 at Birzeit and was translated into English by the author.

²⁵⁰Such as Imm Najih, whose story was covered in chapter three.

him of how refugees were stereotyped during the journey of their exodus, where “near Hebron, they refused to allow refugees through their lands, thinking they would control their lands”.²⁵¹ He connects this story with the status of a refugee today in the West Bank who is yet dealing with the consequences of the Nakba, and is stigmatized with the term “refugee”.

Moreover, as I described earlier, the efficiency of the oral source does not lie in the preservation of the past, but in an effort of the teller to give significance to the past from a present day perspective. Hence, memory is not a passive depository, but an active process of creation of meanings.²⁵² The storytellers of this chapter are the grandchildren of the ‘generation of the Nakba’, some of whom are retelling stories told by their grandparents and are reconstructing these stories in light of the many changes that took place whether after 1948 or in 1967. For example Khaled noted:

When the 1967 war happened, my grandfather had a truck and loaded everyone in it during the war. My grandmother had 12 children, and in 1967 my grandfather wanted to take them all to Jordan. Many of our relatives were in Jordan and settled there after the 1948 exodus. However, my grandmother refused to go. She said I’m not leaving. She forced my family to come back, if my grandmother hadn’t force them to get off that truck I would have been living in Jordan now.²⁵³

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

²⁵¹ Interview with Khaled.

²⁵² Fatma Kassem, *Palestinian Women: Narrative Histories and gendered memory* (New York: Zed Books, 2011), 3.

²⁵³ Interview with Khaled.

Intergenerational transmission of memories was also reflected in their stories, where despite the omission of the Nakba in Palestinian curriculum taught in schools,²⁵⁴ one of the third generation Palestinians feared that her story would be forgotten. So she implanted the memory of her village in her daughter who is in second grade, as s she narrates:

My husband is from Anaba, and I always tell my children about our village...If you sit with my daughter she will tell you all about the Nakba and about the idea of return, and how we must return. She narrates this in a way you would think she's an old lady...We have to explain to our children where they're originally from because the narrative will be lost along with our existence on earth.²⁵⁵

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

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

²⁵⁴ In the Palestinian curriculum, the Palestinian refugee problem is not mentioned until the fifth grade and the eight. In the Ninth grade, however, the 1948 war and the refugee question were conveyed in only four lines. And in eleventh grade an entire class was devoted to the refugee problem. Nevertheless it did not refer to the crucial aspects of the problem such as the massacres that happened in that 1948. For more see :

Ahmed Al-Adarba, "al-lajioun alfalastinoun fi almanahij alfalastinia: dirasat halat fi manhajai al-tarbia al-watania wa al-tariekh, *alminhaj al-falastini*, almoharir Abdel Karim Al-Shiekh (Filastin: Mouatin, 2006), 439.

²⁵⁵ Interview with Wa'ed.

It means the continued absences of justice, it means a collective dispossession of an entire people that has been forgotten by their world, ignored, neglected. In some way the world has been complicit to this continued dispossession through its silence.....This goes with the code that Ben-Gurion has said: The old will die and the young will forget. The old have died but the young didn't forget! And that's evident in third generation of Palestinian refugees who grew up hearing these stories, who grew up learning the names of the villages they're originally from.²⁵⁶

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

When I went to Al-Lyddā, I saw where my grandparents use to live. Their house has been replaced by a building which carries an Israeli flag. This provoked me, because in Ramallah we're living in rent. When we were living in Lydda, we owned a piece of land...After my visit to Al-Lyddā I was depressed for three consecutive days. Al-Lyddā is deserted, neglected and no one is taking care of it. This proves that the Jews despise Al-Lyddā...Because of the vicious struggle the Jews met in Al-Lyddā, they detest the city. Al-Lyddādwa played a huge role in Palestinian resistance.²⁵⁷

While visiting their places of origin, third generation refugees couldn't stand the sight and reality of their houses which have been replaced and are inhabited by Israeli settlers. It is the stories of their grandparents which evokes these memories and feelings of the ugly reality which they experienced sixty four years ago, and which their grandchildren experience today. Khaled also referred to the prominent role the Lyddādwa played in the struggle for Palestine in July of 1948, in which the war between IDF and Palestinians in Lydda lasted for days before the fall of the city.²⁵⁸ According to Khaled's own understating of the war of Lydda, he argues that because the Lyddādwa resisted the Zionist/ Israeli attack on the city until today Israelis hate Lydda.

²⁵⁶ Interview with Laila.

²⁵⁷ Interview with Khaled.

²⁵⁸ For more on the fall of Lydda see:

From all of the above, the cumulative effect of memory relocated in the stories of third generation proves that they did not, and will never; forget the beginning of their displacement. They realize the importance of their grandparents' stories, particularly in light of the Israeli/colonial agenda in erasing Palestinian memory. Because the Palestinian memory of the Nakba, "is an essentially privileged and especially powerful way of getting back inside our own past more intimately, of reliving it from within".²⁵⁹

3. The Continuity of the Palestinian narrative and the Right of Return:

In the process of telling their stories to their grandchildren, older generations relay the harsh and oppressive memory of their collective experience to younger Palestinians, many of whom live their own Nakba today.²⁶⁰ As third generation refugees retold their stories of dispossession, each narrated his/her own continuous Nakba, which verifies that third generation cannot put closure to their grandparents' story of displacement and their on-going story of loss. For instance, Wa'ed asserted that:

As long as we are still living in refugee camps, and as long as refugee camps exist; the Nakba continues. It will not end unless I return to my land. And returning to my land is not enough. I want the Israelis to compensate me for all the years they used my land, my grandparents' land, and my ancestors' land. I know I'm dreaming.²⁶¹

Esbeer Munir, *al-lydda fi a'hdai al-intidab wa al ihtilal* (beruit: mo'assasat al dirasat alfastinia, 2003), 87-95.

²⁵⁹ Edward S. Casey, "Public memory in Place and Time", *Framing Public memory*, (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 2004), 17-18.

²⁶⁰ Ramzy Baroud, "The Palestinian Nakba: The resolve of memory", *The Palestine Chronicle*, 15 May, 2012. http://palestinechronicle.com/view_article_details.php?id=19298

²⁶¹ Interview with Wa'ed.

64 years ago when the UN General Assembly set forth Resolution 194, which reaffirmed Palestinian refugees right of return,²⁶² Israel continues to refuse to recognize, restitute or implement this resolution. Resolution 194 embodies customary law relative to the right of return,²⁶³ thus is binding on all states. And the right of return is one of the most basic principles enshrined in international law convention and treaties such as The Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948.²⁶⁴ Furthermore, return is also one of the most feasible solutions to end the status of refuge and solving the predicament of refugees.

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

The problem is that people do not believe that they will return. I always tell them when you believe in something it will happen. I believe that I will return...Al-Lydd is my right, and my land. When you go to Al-lydda you will be surprised and shocked with the de facto there. I don't know, because I was born in Ramallah my emotions are mixed up...Because I live in Ramallah, it's hard to imagine living in the Lydda... But the question of return is inevitable...The Jews are digging their graves with their bare hands, there are domestic problems within the Israeli society....I believe we will return to Al-Lydd.²⁶⁵

The Palestinian refugee problem is the premises of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict from which all else has flowed over the past half century.²⁶⁶ Hence, the inextricable link between the right of return and the end of the Nakba was described in the oral testimonies of third generation refugees. Needless to say, putting an end to the Palestinian narrative is not only connected with

²⁶² Lex Takkenberg and Susan Akram, "Palestinian Refugees and their Legal Status: Rights, Politics and Implications for a Just Solution", *Journal of Palestine Studies*, (Spring 2002): 20-75.

²⁶³ Ibid.

²⁶⁴ Article 13 in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that:

(1) Everyone has the right to freedom of movement and residence within the borders of each state.

(2) Everyone has the right to leave any country, including his own, and to return to his country.

²⁶⁵ Interview with Khaled.

²⁶⁶ Rashid Khalidi, "Truth, Justice, and Reconciliation: Elements of a Solution to the Palestinian Refugee Issue", *The Palestinian Exodus*, Ed. Ghada Karmi and Eugene Cotran (UK: Ithaca Press, 1999), 221.

refugees returning to their lands, it also depends on many unresolved issues such as freeing all Palestinian prisoners, demolishing the Apartheid wall, removing all Israeli settlements, checkpoints, etc.

Moreover, the narrative of the Nakba is “A story of occupation, a story of injustice...In the meantime the Palestinian society is divided and this forms a new Nakba. If the Palestinian society is not united, we won’t be able to retrieve one inch of our land”.²⁶⁷ So the continuation of the Nakba, as mentioned above, is also because of the internal disputes between Palestinian political parties. Separating Gaza from the West Bank, and the ongoing rivalry between the leaders of Hamas and Fatah is perpetuating the Israeli occupation. And this is reflected in the Palestinian narrative itself which is continuous. For instance Ahmed adds that:

Palestinian leaders, or Palestinian parties, should look into the past. If we go back to the past each Arab county was fighting for its own interest, as a result we lost our county... Today is a repetition of the past...We should learn from mistakes made in the past....The Palestinian story has an end, the solution is simple....No negotiation, no peace, and no PA. How long have we been negotiating with the Jews! Since 1994, and we call it more than one negotiations... At the end the solution is simple, to bring back all of Palestine, from Ras Al-Nafoura to Gaza. What was taken by force can only be restored by force.²⁶⁸

As shown in chapter two, the Palestinian- Israeli negotiation process is also leading to the continuation of the Palestinian story. Until today neither side has agreed on a practical solution for the Palestinian refugee problem. Its treatment in Arab-Israeli negotiations so far reflects the unremitting pressure from the Israeli side for more than sixty four years to ignore, diminish and bury the entire refugee problem it created in 1948.²⁶⁹ Yet some of the third generation believe that the refugee problem will be solved once the entire land of Palestine is brought back; from Ras Al-Nafour till Gaza as Ahmed implied.

²⁶⁷ Interview with Ahmed.

²⁶⁸ Ibid.

²⁶⁹ Rahid Khalidi, “Truth, Justice, and Reconciliation: Elements of a Solution to the Palestinian Refugee Issue”, *The Palestinian Exodus*, Ed. Ghada Karmi and Eugene Cotran (Ithaca Press), 221

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

The Nakba continues as long as its consequences continue. Because People did not return to their lands, lands have not been restored to its people, and no one was able to return to their village. People are yet living in refugee camps, and some are living outside of the country. It's a continuous Nakba, the Nakba did not only happen when they left their lands, it is all the catastrophes that hit them as a result of the Nakba. As long as new generation refugees are being born and are living a life of refuge, of course it's a continuous Nakba. The status of refuge can end if we follow International law and implement the right of return.....And through armed struggle of course. What was taken by force can only be restored by force.²⁷⁰

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

Furthermore, Nireen pointed that "The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is gonna go on, and the narrative is always gonna go on. Even if there was a two state deal, it continues. Because everyone knows there's more to history than what we read, what we see on television and what we learn in school".²⁷¹ The intertwined relationship between the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the continuity of the Palestinian narrative of exile was depicted in the stories above. Meaning third generation refugees enumerated different reasons which they consider is leading to the continuation of their catastrophe. For instance Laila adds that:

The ongoing Nakba refers to the on-going occupation polices that is still practiced against Palestinians till this day. Today I just read in the news that Susiya in Southern Hebron received a demolition order for an entire village. All 50

²⁷⁰ This interview was conducted on July 30, 2012 in Ramallah and was translated into English by the author.

²⁷¹ Interview with Nireen.

buildings in the village will be demolished. This is still going on till this day and age is completely absurd. This is what is meant by an on-going Nakba.²⁷²

According to Laila, the policies the Zionists forces executed in order to expel Palestinians haven't changed since 1947. To think that the Israeli tactic in demolishing houses was only practiced in 1948 is a mere misconception. As emphasized in Laila's life story, demolishing Palestinian villages is yet being practiced until today, such as the new Israeli order to demolish the village of Susiya.²⁷³ In spite of the on-going Zionists plan in erasing Palestinian villages and landscapes, third generation refugees are fighting against this attempt in making them forget.

For example Malak articulated that:

The Nakba continues in different stages, because Nakba gets redefined. Back then it meant surviving and going back, now it's become not forgetting....for instance, when someone says I'm from Jalazoun, not Al-Jalazoun refugee camp. Jalazoun became a name of a village not a name of a refugee camp anymore. So people are slowly forgetting what these places really represent...There is thriving in it which is great, but people are forgetting what it symbolizes which is dangerous....Israel is committing crimes to cover up the crimes they committed in 1948. So at first it was getting everyone out....then it was rebuilding and making sure everyone stayed out. Now it's like making sure everyone forgets, and there slowly doing that which is scary to say and scary to see.²⁷⁴

The original Palestinian Nakba fragmented Palestine 64 years ago. Its effects continue to be felt everyday in Palestine not as a historic event, but as the outbreak of a process that continues to shape the lives of Palestinians in every corner of today's world.²⁷⁵ Thus the Nakba continues today is different stages where, as Malak claimed, it started with expelling Palestinians, then ensuring that they do not return, and now its reflected in making Palestinians

²⁷² Interview with Laila.

²⁷³ Israeli forces on Tuesday June 12, 2012 handed a southern West Bank village demolition orders for each of its 50 buildings, a week after Israeli authorities agreed to halt all construction in the area in response to a petition filed by a settler group. To read more follow this link: <http://www.maannews.net/eng/ViewDetails.aspx?ID=494781>

²⁷⁴ Interview with Malak

²⁷⁵ Rich Wiles and Nidal Azzaz, "The Fluidity of Resistance", *Almadjdal* (2012): 4.

forget. On the other hand, Nireen asserted that “we will never forgot how the Israelis tortured us and forced us to leave our houses, and no matter what anyone says or thinks the Nakba is never going to end and the narrative is never gonna end”.²⁷⁶

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

On the one hand, “The Palestinians abide by the rights of their case in international law and basic justice and demand a return to their homeland and full compensation for their loses; and on the other hand, Israel is adamant in rejecting outright both these proposals”.²⁷⁷ Implementing the right of return is difficult, yet as shown in the narrative of the 3rd generation many obstacles occur beside the question of return such as, the building of Israeli settlements, houses demolition, the on-going of the Israeli- Palestinian negotiations, the Israeli attempt in erasing Palestinian memory which keeps the narrative of the Nakba far from having an end.

²⁷⁶ Interview with Nireen.

²⁷⁷ Ghada Karmi, “Concluding Vision: A Return to Israel/Palestine?” *The Palestinian Exodus*, Ed. Ghada Karmi and Eugene Cotran (UK: Ithaca Press, 1999), 243

Conclusion

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

Reading and analyzing many studies written about the Palestinian narrative of the Nakba, and directly listening to the stories of different generations of Palestinian refugees; are two completely different experiences. One becomes more involved and indulged in a story which is directly being narrating to him/her, and senses the amount of pain, guilt and loss these refugees have experienced. What motivated me to conduct this study is the intergenerational transmission of stories of the Nakba, and the idea of comparing their stories of the past with the present. In the process of doing so, the construction of memories of the catastrophes that took place in Palestine in 1948, 1967, 1987, 1992, 1993, 2006, 2008 have contributed in the continuation of their narrative. However, while comparing the event of the 1948 Nakba with the status quo of the OPT, I concluded that not much has changed since 1948. As Palestinians are still being deported, killed, stigmatized, houses and villages are yet being demolished, prisoners remain in Israeli cells, land is constantly being confiscated, Palestinians remain without a state, and most importantly refugees' right of return continues to be denied. All these unremitting factors have a formidable effect on the Palestinian narrative of the Nakba, as Palestinians continue to end their story with a comma instead of a full stop.

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

Although it’s been sixty four years since the Nakba, Palestinians continue to remember, commemorate and revive the violent memory of the Nakba. For instance, during the 63rd Nakba day, Palestinian refugees; notably third and fourth generations, in Lebanon and Syria marched towards Israeli borders with the determination of implementing their right of return. This march was known as the ‘return march’ which led to the martyrdom of nearly 20 Palestinians. However, this march of return was, in part, a result of the PLO’s discourse for the past decades which has been historically concerned with the right of return. This was described in chapter two, which explored the official Palestinian narrative of the Nakba which has been emerging since the foundation of the PLO in the 1960s. Although Palestinians have not established a sovereign state, a semi official Palestinian narrative represented by the PLO was evident. Also prominent Palestinian cultural and intellectual embodiments, such as Edward Said and Mahmoud

Darwish, have contributed to the construction of this semi-official narrative; as they both were politically active on the international and national stage for the Palestinian cause.

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

Memory is an inseparable part of the Palestinian narrative which informs recent and future generations of the names of their villages destroyed in 1947-1949; in addition to preserving their family legacy and stories of the Nakba. Thus memory plays a prominent role in filling in the missing pages in our history, and answers whatever questions one might have regarding life before, during or after the Nakba. The intertwined relation between memory and history was covered in the narrative of first generation refugees, whose stories are constructed of their story of the exodus, their lives before the Nakba and the ongoing phases of the Nakba. As I listened to their stories, I realized that they raised unexplored aspects of the Nakba which has been sort of marginalized in the narratives of the Nakba. Such as the issue of stigmatizing refugees, where two out of the six first generation refugees I interviewed expressed how they were passively received in Palestinian society. As first generation refugees dwelled on the past, a

common feature I found in their stories is regret, as they said, “I shouldn’t have left”. Furthermore, first generation refugees narrated their stories in chronological order beginning with the Nakba, 1967 Naksa, Operation Cast Lead and the Egyptian soccer riot in 2012. What I gathered from the life stories of first generation is that they referred to different forms a continuing narrative. In some stories it was reflected in their status quo as a refugee still waiting to return, in other cases it was envisaged in the arts of storytelling; where one of the interviewees articulated how she narrates her story to young children and explicitly explained that this story has no end.

After documenting the stories of first generation refugees, chapter four highlighted the stories of their children, who were raised in refugee camps, Ramallah and in the diaspora. As I listened to their stories, I realized that their narratives and memories of the Nakba are just as important as their parents’ stories. Some expressed how “we are all refugees”, others assimilated their stories of dispossession with other Palestinian stories of dispossession. Despite the fact that they did not witness the 1948 Nakba, their account of the 1967 Naksa and other “Nakbat” is crucial in the construction of the Palestinian narrative. Although the ‘generation after the Nakba’ experienced the effects of the Nakba differently, where some were raised in the diaspora and others in refugee camps, their continuing stories of exile combines with the stories of their predecessors and successors. So the stories of the second generation refugees forms a middle ground between their past (stories of their parents) and their future (stories of their children). Some defined the Nakba as a “continuum” and articulated how they still witness Nakbat until today.

I concluded that another determining factor that leads to the continuity of the Palestinian narrative is utter disregard of the right of return. For instance, in the narratives of third generation

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

While reading many studies written on Palestinian exile, displacements and the diaspora, it does not come close to completely portray what all Palestinian refugees experienced. Through listening to their stories of exile, and terminal loss, I realized that each and every Palestinian refugee has a story to tell and is worthy of being documented. Some of the interviewees mentioned new and intriguing questions which I was not able to fully answer throughout this research. I consider this study a beginning, or a chapter, of a far larger study on the narrative of the Nakba. Because many questions were raised in their life stories, yet due to the fact that this

study is a thesis dissertation for an MA degree, I could not cover one third of the interviews I recorded. Another difficulty I faced in this study is that there is no clear cut categorization of refugees as first, second, or third generation refugees. For example, some of the third generation refugees were second and third generation at the same time, where their father was one year old when he left his homeland and their mother was born after 1948. It is also crucial to emphasize the geographic space of my research. I conducted this study in areas near Ramallah, so the intergenerational differences among Palestinian refugees and the indicators of an on-going Palestinian narrative depends on the areas they reside in. In other words, Palestinian refugees distance or closeness to historic Palestine determines their answers regarding a continuing narrative. So Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, Jordan and other areas would most certainly give different reasons they believe are leading to the continuity of the Palestinian narrative. Thus the issue of space also requires further research.

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

Perhaps it is normal for a story is to have a beginning and an end. Nevertheless, as Emile Habibi questions, “It’s the logical thing for a story to have a beginning and an end. But is that really the rule? And even if it is the logical thing, is it logical in this country of ours?”²⁷⁸

²⁷⁸ Emile Habibi, “The Odds and Ends Women”, *Anthology of Modern Palestinian Literature*, Ed Salma Jarryusi (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), 459.

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