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Palestine, Our Homeland

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1 EDITOR PIECE

Fadi & Omar

We are grateful and thankful to God for this opportunity to share the story of Palestine as we see it, and our perspective of the world as we live it. Whether in our ancestral homeland of Filastin or in diaspora, our history, experiences, perspectives, lives, humanity and rights continue to be denied. In response, the world continues to witness the indomitable spirit, resilience, gracefulness and strength of Palestinians and their refusal to be simply erased.

For over 76 years, Palestinians have borne the brunt of Zionism's extremist and racist ideology, living in a perpetual state of Nakba (catastrophe) from one generation to the next. The human experience of being a Palestinian remains widely unknown, mainly because our humanity is negotiated by others and rules are set in which we are only allowed to be victims that hold no opinion about their oppressor.

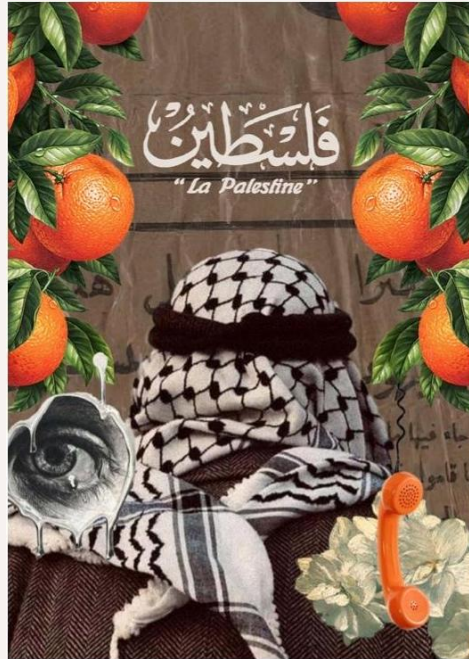
Today's reality is that we have generations of Palestinians that are born in diaspora, learning about their lands and history through stories from their families, land deeds proving where they are from, through keys to their homes, through Palestinian literature, arts and culture.

Other Palestinians are born as Israeli citizens, enjoying more rights than other Palestinians in the occupied Palestinian territories but treated as second class citizens in comparison to other Israeli citizens.

When Edward Said wrote his book the Question of Palestine that was originally published in 1979, he thought that no serious attention has been paid to the full human reality of the Palestinian as a citizen with human rights. One can see today that people do see the utter injustice happening against the Palestinian people. Yet, in the heart of the democratic world, this does not seem to make a difference.

The real question is, is any of this surprising? Is the denial of the plight of the Palestinian people, the denial of their right to self-determination and the denial of their basic human right to freedom surprising? Is it because people are unaware or is there something more at play?

We aim to tell the story of Palestine and Palestinians in different ways and in the best way we can. We don't promise to be objective because we speak from the roots of the land that God created us from, the same land we are deprived of. Our mission is to use the Olive Branch as our pen, and the Olive Oil as our ink that will serve to communicate to you our stories, thoughts, hopes, dreams and aspirations.



We now have generations of people born and raised into Nakba with the sole dream of seeing freedom and being able to reunite with their land and people. Unfortunately, we also now have generations of Palestinians living and dying without ever knowing freedom. A year like the one we just witnessed is a reminder of the pain our people share and the magnitude of the apparent, yet unacknowledged scars of the ongoing Nakba of the Palestinian people since 1948.

Yet, despite the pain of losing more and more of our children, despite having 2.2 million people live in a concentration camp in Gaza where they have been trying to survive a barbaric genocide, despite having people in West Bank and Jerusalem live under an unlawful Apartheid Regime and illegal military Occupation, despite having generations of Palestinians living in refugee camps outside their ancestral homeland, we remain defiant in the face of injustice.

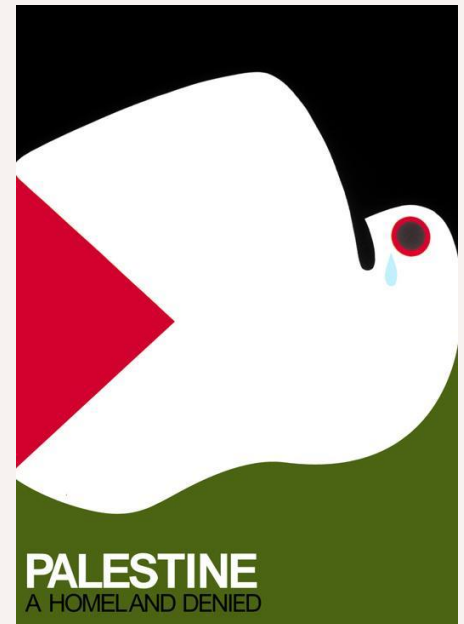
Palestine is our homeland and Palestinians are our people. The pain of the people of Gaza is the pain of Palestinians everywhere and the

loss of the men, women and children of Gaza is the loss of our own.

There is something we share as a people that is stronger than the failed attempt at erasure. We share a deep-rooted connection with our land, a connection that does not allow us to ever lose hope. For nearly eight decades, the occupation has made a continuous attempt to eliminate any connection we have with our lands by physically separating us from each other and by trying to convince us to give up our inalienable rights to our homeland, to our lives, to our freedom.

However, our hope is one that is deeply rooted and that is built on the basis of truth and justice. Our hope cannot be destroyed by tanks, walls, bombs and deception. Our hope is our shield that remains impenetrable even when faced with the worst of catastrophes.

Our hope is only matched by our efforts to keep learning, to keep moving and to keep working, in trying to build a stronger and brighter future for our people. Palestinians are not the ones calling for the dehumanization of the other, Palestinians believe in equal rights between people of all faiths and racial backgrounds and we do not call for death, erasure and exclusivity.



Mahmoud Darwish once said that Palestinians have a "disease of hope":

We have an incurable malady: hope. Hope in liberation and independence. Hope in a normal life where we are neither heroes nor victims. Hope that our children will go





safely to their schools. Hope that a pregnant woman will give birth to a living baby at the hospital, and not a dead child in front of a military checkpoint; hope that our poets will see the beauty of the colour red in roses rather than in blood; hope that this land will take up its original name: the land of love and peace

Where daily massacres against Palestinians have become norm and where the dream of freedom in Palestine is referred to as a myth, our disease of hope has become terminal.

2 JABALIA REFUGEE CAMP

Zeina

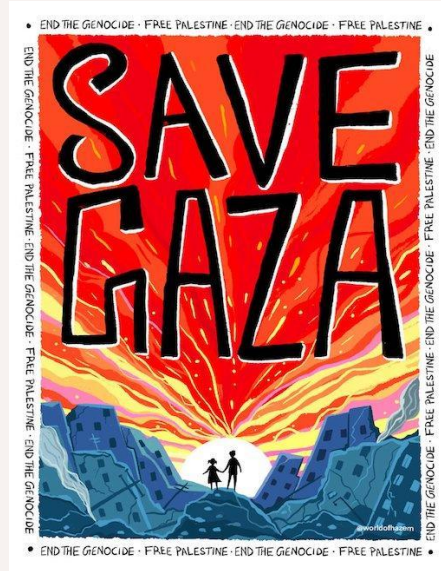


The horrific state of Jabalia today serves as a poignant echo of the camp's profound significance following the Nakba of 1948, when Israel colonized over 70% of the land and ethnically cleansed Palestine by killing thousands and displacing over 750,000 Palestinians.

Those expelled ended up in refugee camps outside of historic Palestine and in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, which have been under illegal occupation by Israel since 1967. Jabalia Refugee Camp, located in the Gaza Strip, has a history of pain and resilience, but more importantly, like all refugee camps, it has a history of people trying to return home.

During the Palestinian popular uprising of 1987, known as the First Intifada, Jabalia became a key center of resistance, fueling the grassroots uprising in response to years of injustice. The First Intifada erupted against a backdrop of 20 years of Israeli occupation, characterized by oppressive measures such

as curfews, raids, arrests, and house demolitions.



On December 8, 1987, an Israeli occupation forces truck killed four Palestinians in the Jabalia refugee camp. The following day, thousands left the camp to attend the funeral, marking the true onset of what would later be known as the First Intifada. They aimed to end the Israeli occupation and improve their economic conditions by resisting further civilian losses and rejecting the harsh realities of life under siege.

Jabalia became a fierce heartbeat of resistance, where residents—especially young people and women—bravely united non-violent actions like strikes and sit-ins with bold confrontations against Israeli forces. This indomitable spirit of resilience was fueled by local committees that brought the community together, creating a powerful model of leadership. Their mobilization embodied unwavering determination and ignited the spirit of the Intifada, which is often referred to as the "Intifada of Stones," reflecting the profound hope and unbreakable will of a people relentlessly fighting for justice and dignity.

Today, hundreds of thousands of residents are once again trapped amidst intensified Israeli occupation attacks in northern Gaza, facing constant displacement, intensified bombardment, illness, famine, and inevitable death.

The resilience of Palestinians in Jabalia Refugee Camp shines as a beacon of light, giving strength to all Palestinians inside and outside of Palestine as they confront the brutal

occupation, siege, and genocide. Just as they rose up against injustices in the past, today they are at the forefront of devastation, their voices ringing out in powerful testament to their unyielding spirit.

The echoes of history resound powerfully, reminding us that the fight for justice in Palestine, led by Palestinians in Jabalia, is far from over.

3 KHALIL BEIDAS

1874-1949

Danielle

Khalil Beidas was a Palestinian Christian scholar and novelist who was considered a prolific translator of Russian literary works into Arabic. Beidas was born in Nazareth and



educated in Jerusalem's Russian Colony School (i.e., Al-Masowbia), a Russian-funded bilingual Orthodox school. Interestingly, this building would later become an Israeli interrogation and detention centre for Palestinians who would come to know the commonly refer to the word "Masowbia" as meaning a detention center.

Beidas studied in Russia as a ward of the Russian Orthodox Church, returning to Palestine full of ideas on how to apply the Russian literary to his Palestinian nationalist efforts.





Beidas is considered to be the ‘pioneer of the Palestinian short story’. Alongside the printing and publication revolution, the first half of 20th century Palestine saw the introduction of modern technologies, growth in secular education and mass urbanization.

It is within this group of educated urban people that led to the rise of secular proto nationalism in Ottoman Palestine. Edward Said, a cousin to Beidas, once told the story of seeing Beidas when Said was a young boy, unaware of Beidas’ political and cultural impact on Palestine until reading his works decades later; he observed that Beidas’ essays, short stories, historical novels and works of translation played an important role in the construction of the Palestinian national identity, especially in relation to the Zionist settlers.

His only novel, written in 1920, *al-Warith* (meaning the Inheritor/the heir), prophesized the Partition Plan, the 1948 War, and the creation of the Jewish state. Beidas established a publication, *An-Nafais Al-Assriah*, the magazine covered news of its day and featured short stories, literary contributions, and translations. It was Beidas’ vehicle to criticize the growing Zionist settler movement, to address the plight of the Palestinians, his goal was to intellectually liberate his readers.

Beidas was expelled of his homeland by the Zionist militia in 1947 and at 73 years old and died a little over a year later. Beidas had amassed a large library of about books in his home in Jerusalem, which was looted and stolen by the Zionist militia. The loss of Palestinian books, manuscripts, entire libraries at the hands of Israel was not limited to Beidas. Thousands and thousands of books were stolen and to this day are held in Israeli government institutions like the Israeli National Library.

Beyond those materials that were looted, the Nakba saw the deliberate destruction and burning of Palestinian records, books, photographs, our history on fire with the aim of complete erasure. An Israeli policy that has continued for the 76 years since the beginning of the Nakba: A systemic attempt at the destruction of the Palestinian education system (i.e., Scholasticide) as a means of ethnic cleansing.

Most recently in the past year in Gaza, Israel’s destruction of Palestinian heritage,

knowledge, and education are at the heart of their genocidal aims. Every university and library in Gaza has been damaged or destroyed in the past year, countless archives and museums. This loss of heritage doesn’t compare to the pain of the loss of scholars and academics targeted and murdered by the occupation. It will be years before we fully understand the culture and academic loss experienced by Palestinians in Gaza this past year.

We are left to wonder how many books will never be written, how many future scholars and novelists, just like Khalil Beidas were killed before they ever had the chance to grow up. However, we continue to see that Palestinians refuse to be passive victims even though they have been killed and displaced. They are creating spaces of hope that help children survive, voluntarily employing the limited resources at their disposal to transform feelings of oppression and pain into acts of resilience.

4 GROWING HOPE AGAINST THE ODDS

Dana

In the words of the revered Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish, “We grow hope.” Yet, an overwhelming sense of *قهر* (Qahr)—an emotion that intertwines frustration, anger, oppression, and the weight of subjugation—fills the air. It is a word that resonates deeply within the Palestinian experience, encapsulating both the personal and collective struggle endured over the past century. But amid this immense burden, the teachings of Rumi remind us that “The wound is the place where the Light enters you.” Even in the deepest despair, there is room for growth and renewal.

The Quran echoes this sentiment beautifully, as Allah says, “Allah is the Light of the heavens and the earth. The example of His light is like a niche within which is a lamp, the lamp is within glass, the glass as it were a pearly (white) star lit from (the oil of) a blessed olive tree, neither the east nor the west, whose oil would almost glow even if untouched by fire. Light upon light. Allah guides to His light whom He wills, And Allah presents examples for the people, and Allah is the Knowing of all things” (24:35). The imagery of the olive tree in this verse is

particularly poignant for Palestinians, symbolizing deep roots in the land, resilience, and an unyielding hope for freedom, even amidst ceaseless struggles.

Palestine’s story is one of resilience in the face of overwhelming odds. As Ghassan Kanafani, the Palestinian writer and intellectual, once said, “The Palestinian cause is not a cause for Palestinians only, but a cause for every revolutionary...for every exploited and oppressed mass.” Kanafani’s words remind the world that the struggle for Palestinian freedom is part of a larger human quest for justice and dignity.

Mahmoud Darwish’s poetry further illustrates this resilience. In his poem “On This Land,” he writes, “We have on this land what makes life worth living.” Despite the hardships, the connection to homeland and culture sustains Palestinians. Hope becomes an assertion of humanity, a way to insist on the right to exist and flourish.



In the *Journal of an Ordinary Grief*, Mahmoud Darwish opens with, “The voice radiates out to borders that do not end and realizes what lies outside is a vacuum.” This sentiment captures the journey of *قهر*, where one often feels trapped in a void—an echo chamber of indifference, misunderstanding, or outright opposition. It is isolating, draining, and in that vast emptiness, hope can seem like an impossible dream. Darwish continues, “Palestine, which flows out of itself and our blood, which urges us to recast it





with all the tools of the impossible, liberates us and holds us prisoner without giving us a way out. Do the boundaries of earth begin and end with our blood? The battles do not end, and the language remains on edge. The homeland is distant and near, and in this everyday grief and everyday death, the writing gets written, or tries to get written, so that this ordinary grief may stop accepting being acceptable.”

Grief, which the world has come to accept as the norm for Palestinians, plays out on screens daily, our blood a spectacle of apathy. The world watches as if it is expected—acceptable. Yet for them, for those who wage war in the name of defense, their blood is sacred. Ours, expendable.

And yet, in the face of this, Palestinians grow hope. They make makeshift knitting rods to prepare for the cold winters ahead, weaving warmth from resilience. They create soap from ashes, ovens from sand. They cook their cultural dishes, nurturing not just bodies but the soul of a people. Their hospitality, their shared provisions, and their unshaken spirit of community stand firm, even as the blood flows. They remain steadfast, unbroken, even when the vacuum seems deafening, even when it feels pointless to speak into the void.

Raising the white flag has never been, and will never be, an option. Instead, Palestinians find hope in the small miracles God grants them each day. His sun rises without fail, His light shines in the darkest corners, and His mercy flows as an endless stream. Whether it’s in the warmth of a freshly sewn sweater, the cleansing touch of new soap, the taste of food made with love, or the sound of music and poetry—Palestinians cling to hope.

And in God, the Most Merciful, the All-Knowing, the Most Patient, they trust.

5 DISHES OF PALESTINE – MAQLOUBEH

Dana

Food is a way to hold on to identity even from a distance. Though I’ve never physically been to Palestine, to connect to my roots, I use culture, music, art, and most of all, food.

I’ve chosen to write about Maqloubeh, a dish that is so synonymous with Palestinians as it represents resilience and survival, to honor the immense loss felt since the ongoing massacres in Gaza. In sharing this, we keep the spirit of Palestine alive.

Maqloubeh—which in Arabic translates to “upside-down” dish, which, in so many ways, mirrors the upside-down world Palestinians are forced to live in. Maqloubeh is more than just a meal; it’s a story of survival, resilience, and a connection to the land, even when that land seems unreachable.

In a time when the prices of food are skyrocketing, and war continues to strip away basic human needs, you’d think something like making a dish like Maqloubeh would seem impossible. And yet, despite the hardships, Palestinians still gather around their makeshift tables or the rubble, refusing to let go of their culture, their roots, and their identity.



In Gaza, getting the simplest ingredients—rice, vegetables, meat, chicken or lamb—is a challenge that speaks volumes. It’s hard to describe the heartbreak of not knowing when the next meal will come, or if the ingredients will be there at all. Yet, there’s this determination. Even when the world seems incredibly unfair, the sight of that pot being flipped onto the serving dish reminds us that, while our lives may be scattered, our traditions hold us together.



Chefs like the child chef Renad, who despite being visibly sick in her videos because of the ongoing genocide in Gaza, makes the most amazing dishes with the ingredients provided—mostly by aid, or Hamada Shaqoura—a former food blogger who works with

Watermelon Relief to make food in bulk for kids and families in the camps, they both exemplify and show this resilience on social media.



They remind the world that Palestinians make do with what they have, and no matter what they are grateful and steadfast. Even with few resources, they continue to share these traditions. Through their dishes, they tell the world that despite the struggles, Palestine will never die.

Many of us saw the resilience of Abu Elias making Maqloubeh in Gaza. Keeping in mind, 2.15 million or 96% of Gaza’s population is facing high levels of food insecurity and 1 in 5 Palestinians in Gaza is facing extreme starvation. Food prices have also skyrocketed, basic necessities like flour, onion, and sugar have gone up between 26 to 50 x their original cost.

In the widely circulated interview by Al-Jazeera, Abu Elias explains that he paid 25 Shekels (i.e., around \$10) for the tiniest amount of ingredients. He mentions that before October 7th, 25 Shekels used to be able to get groceries for him for a week. He stacks the tomatoes, the potatoes, and uses chicken bouillon to replace the meat in the dish (as of course there is no meat). He speaks to frying the eggplants in oil—but just barely enough so that the eggplants do not take too much of the oil since oil is very hard to find and extremely expensive. Even while cooking, he speaks to being shy about being able to make this dish while others around him cannot eat. Abu Elias is grateful for his blessing, but his heart remains with his people. He speaks to this Maqloubeh having a unique taste—not a better taste—but a taste of deprivation—despite this, he does this for his family. He then goes on to say how he has to remove wood and add wood to get the cooking temperature just right—as of course gas is not readily available and of course no kitchen appliances to cook with. In his tent, he flips over the dish, hence “upside down” and it is tradition to



knock on top of the pot with utensils to ensure nothing remains in the pot. Lastly, before

character; he sang of the land, attacking those who sold it, lauding heroes and martyrs, and criticizing the quarrels among leaders.

the home that once held the memories of generations of Palestinians, sheltering their life stories along with them in the midst of its walls.

Ibrahim Tuqan also mentored his sister, Fadwa Tuqan, who also became a great Palestinian poet known for her words of resistance against the Israeli occupation.

Time and time again, through destruction and bombardment, we have seen attempts to reduce Palestine to nothing but a piece of land in hopes of robbing Palestinians of their identity. However, these constant attempts have proven to be nothing but a failure, because for Palestinians, Palestine is not but a piece of land. It is a homeland. Or as Tuqan describes it "My homeland."

In 1934, Ibrahim composed one of his most famous odes, *Mawtini* which translates to "My Native Homeland" that is considered amongst many Palestinians as one of the best representations of the national struggle and love of the homeland. Ironically, it has also been used by many other Arab countries throughout the years and became the national anthem of Iraq.

A homeland, where he attributes glory, beauty, sublimity and splendour to its hills. Where he describes his people finding life, deliverance, pleasure and hope in its air. Where the exhaustion of defending it through any means necessary translates to a symbol of who Palestinians are.

One of the many dangers of war/genocide, is that countries get reduced to borders, people to statistics, land to square metres. Its infrastructures become targets, regardless of the purpose they once served, especially in the case of Palestinians in Gaza this past year.

Where the covenant of the Palestinians and their sense of duty towards their homeland is what keeps them resilient and perseverant in the face of occupation, genocide and apartheid. The path to self determination for Palestinians is one of honour and one that leads to nothing but honour. Honour that inspires a life and refuses one of humiliation and misery, as Mahmoud Darwish says: "We love life as long as we can find a way to it."

A school that was once a place where minds were nurtured, where generations were built and where growth was inevitable, became nothing more than pieces of the bricks that once made up its structure.

It becomes no different from the hospital next to it where sickness was once cured, and new life was welcomed into the world. It can no longer be physically distinguished from the bakery that once sated hunger or

It is of no surprise that the poem symbolizes the Palestinian rooted connection to their lands. Its words address the land itself. When Tuqan asks: "Will I see you safe, comforted and sound [and] honoured. Will I see



his family starts to eat, with the gnawing ache of hunger, he says "we have to put some for the neighbor's son, before we eat" a gesture of kindness that rises above all struggle, weaving generosity into the heart of their resilience.

This is Palestine. This is resilience. This is perseverance and steadfastness, despite every obstacle, we rise again in the hopes of a better tomorrow.

6 THE POET OF PALESTINE

Yasmine

Born in Palestine, Nablus, in 1905, Ibrahim Tuqan, known as the Poet of Palestine, was a pioneering Palestinian poet who used the power of the pen to compose poetry that was revolutionary and nationalist in

Source of image: Ibrahim Muhtadi [Al Quds], Gaza, Palestine

Design: Ibrahim Muhtadi [Al Quds], Gaza, Palestine

Embroidery: Jamela al-Bura'ai [Kawkaba], Gaza, Palestine¹





you in your eminence reaching the stars?" When he ensures it that "the youth will not tire until your independence or until they die," it is obvious that the people themselves are in service to their land.

It is a representation of the depth of their appreciation towards its soil. The very soil that raised and nurtured generations of Palestinians. The very soil upon which the Palestinian identity is built upon.

The strength and resilience of Palestinians are a living proof that the Palestinian identity is so much more than what their enemies are striving to reduce it to. After an entire year of bombardment, displacement and trauma, when 16 year-old Malik uses a fish tank pump to create a plumbing system for his make-shift bathroom, or when 18 year-old Doaa, an English major student sets up a make-shift school to "detach the kids from [their] horrible reality," despite her own horrible reality of losing 70 family members.

Their strength and resilience are seen when 21 year-old Shayma, a computer engineering student uses social media to fundraise for Taqat "an open space that provides freelancers in Gaza with a work suitable environment equipped with both internet and solar panel electricity" helping those who lost their jobs during the genocide in becoming financially independent by providing opportunities for independent freelancers, people working with companies from abroad, academics, bankers and even voice actors.

Their strength and resilience are seen when 27 year-old Bisan Owda, a Palestinian journalist and activist persists in providing the world with the reality of the injustices her people are facing through honest journalism, something world class journalists have failed to do.

Their strength and resilience are seen when the father of the 19 year old martyr Shaban, who was engulfed by flames while attached to an IV caused by an Israeli bomb describes his son as not only being his son, but also as being his companion and brother.

Their strength and resilience are seen when Palestinians are seen planting plants in the middle of a camp. When they hold on to their faith by congregating for prayer 5 times a day and reciting their Holy Qur'an. When they are seen baking bread for each other in

mud ovens and supporting each other in any way that they can.

Strength and resilience are seen in Palestine, where Palestinians in Gaza are an embodiment of the very words that Ibrahim Tuqan wrote almost a century ago.

[Israel] is protected as a member of the United Nations. Does this justify the erasure of another people? **HELL NO!** Not 75 years ago, not 57 years ago, surely not today!

Where is the protection of the Palestinian people? From erasure, from annexation, from illegal occupation, and apartheid. This is what we need to discuss!

– Francesca Albanese

@shadi_haddadin
@flyers_for_falastin



7 ROOTED IN HISTORY

Danielle and Fadi

INTRODUCTION

When speaking about the history of Palestine, many tend to mistakenly want to choose a starting point around the 1940's and more specifically as of 1948. This narrow view of history has several significant implications.

First, starting Palestinian history around 1948 effectively attempts to erase the presence and connection of the indigenous people of historic Palestine to their land and attempts to delegitimize Palestinian national identity by framing it as a modern invention. It overlooks that Palestinians of a very diverse ethnic and religious background had been living in historic Palestine long before the establishment of the state of Israel.

Moreover, without looking at the context in which the settler colonial movement started making its way to Palestine in the late 1800's, we simply cannot fully understand how the 1948 Nakba, in which over 750,000 Palestinians were exiled out of their homeland, took place. Understanding recent Palestinian history requires understanding the Nakba; and understanding the Nakba requires knowing the context of the Zionist movement, British colonial practices in Palestine and Palestinian society prior to 1948. When history starts in 1948, the collective trauma of exile, the connection to the homeland, resistance and the Palestinian identity as a whole are all concepts that are ignored and Palestinians are reduced to being a mere reaction to the state of Israel where conversations about their history are often limited to whether or not they are a safety threat and whether or not their violent killing is acceptable.

Focusing on history as of 1948 also makes it easier to paint the Palestinians as being responsible for their own suffering in some sorts. It shows Palestinians as rejecting the other and trying to take away the land from the state of Israel. Palestinians are not seen as people who were dispossessed of their inalienable rights but people who are against peaceful coexistence, which is the furthest thing from the truth.

Rooted in History



Finally, without understanding the real history of Palestinians, concepts like ethnic cleansing, right of return, resistance to illegal occupation, apartheid would seem more abstract and unjustified for many western educated minds. The right of Palestinians to defend themselves and their right to self-determination are seen as security threats of extremists that hate freedom and democracy.

The reality is that the story of the Palestinians before Zionism was a rich, diverse and vibrant history of people living.... well, a very normal life. Which is something that we have been yearning for, for a century now.

You know the type of life where you wake up in the morning and get angry because there is traffic and not because the soldier at the checkpoint held you up two hours because they felt like it or spoke to you in a degrading way.

The type of life where your kids can play in the streets without fear of getting shot or bombed at.

The type of life where the refugee camps are not normalized. Where people live life to the fullest with the normal ups and downs instead of a life of bitter injustice. A life where you are not seen as evil for not accepting the

theft of your home and the murder of your family.

IDENTITY AND NATIONALISM IN LATE OTTOMAN PALESTINE

Why does identity matter so much in reference to late Ottoman Palestine? It is important to explore three points as we unravel Palestinian identity and nationalism. The first is the need to look at the vast western European literature that has written out Palestinians from their own history, orientalist materials that projected a picture of the "Holy Land" that largely dismissed the indigenous population. "The major lacuna in the historiography of Palestine during the Ottoman period is the absence of a live portrait of the Palestinian people, especially the historically 'silent' majority of peasants, workers, artisans, women, merchants and Bedouin." ¹ Secondly, we must approach the (re)writing of the history by both Zionist and Palestinian nationalists fueled by political drama with the same critical lens as they are "projecting current nationalist feelings and aspirations backwards, both sought to create a nation through an historical "nationalist charter"². Lastly, the call to construct an alternative history that truly looks at the indigenous peoples,

1 Doumani, B. (1999). Rediscovering Ottoman Palestine; Writing Palestinians into History in The Israel/Palestine Question; Rewriting Histories. p. 13.

2 Doumani, B. (1999). Rediscovering Ottoman Palestine; Writing Palestinians into History in The Israel/Palestine Question; Rewriting Histories. p. 13.

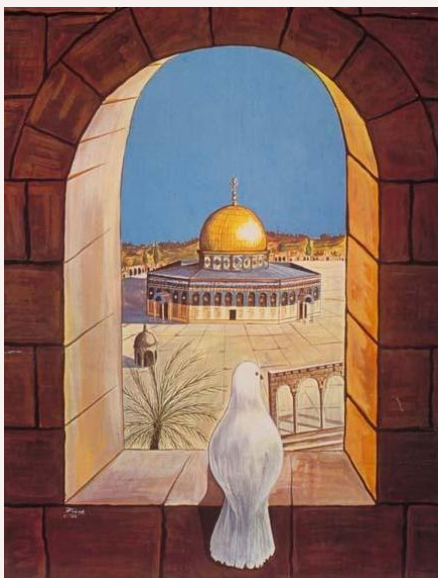




societies, legal and administrative constructs that will only then be able to rewrite Palestinians into Palestinian history.

For Europeans, the nineteenth century was one that saw the extension of British and French economic, political and cultural superiority over the non-industrialized world. However, the subject of the indigenous “other” in the work of European historians was never the central focal point, their narratives rather focused on the conquests, stories and rule of the white Christian males. This also applied largely to the case of Palestine, but further complicated by the regions unique religious/symbolic significance, that of the “Holy Land”. This resulted in a vast output of highly skewed historical literature. One example is the focus of European historians on the biblical and crusader periods of history as they most relate to European history but “the intervening and following centuries, mostly characterized by Arab/Muslim rule, were largely ignored despite the fact that it was precisely during these centuries that the basic structures of contemporary Palestinian society, economy, and culture were forged.”³

The historical literature put out by nineteenth century Europeans leads us into our second point of looking at both Zionist and Palestinian nationalists view of the era. Their “amazing ability to discover the land without



discovering the people dovetailed neatly with early Zionist visions.”⁴

The painting of Palestine as “empty” before the first wave of Jewish settlers in 1881 was central to their nationalist charter. The emptiness of Palestine for Europeans (Zionist and Christian alike) had little to do with the absence of a physical native population but rather it meant the absence of “civilized” people.

The Zionist study of Ottoman Palestine was focused on the “underlying assumption and a key ideological argument: Palestine was a neglected land rescued by Jewish colonization.” When reading the historiographies of this period it is important to take a moment and look beyond “what” is being said and rather reveal the orientalist frameworks and assumptions that the historians have. The framework of Ottoman decline versus Western progress is the overarching theme that these histories are written within. That these studies of Palestine were “not aimed so much at investigating Palestinian society as it actually was, but rather at documenting an unchanging traditional society before its anticipated extinction due to contact with the West”.⁵

To be understood, Palestinian identity and more specifically Palestinian nationality needs to embrace the many levels of identity amongst the locals, “whether Islamic or Christian, Ottoman or Arab, local or universal, or family and tribal.”⁶ These varying levels of identity are not unique to Palestine but mirrored in much of the Ottoman Arab provinces, but the level of scrutiny applied to Palestinian nationality to cater to competing external narratives, whether European or Zionist is the unique barrier to understanding and accepting a cohesive Palestinian perspective.

“The Palestinians had not only to fashion and impose their identity and independent political existence in opposition to a European colonial power, but also to match themselves against the growing and powerful Zionist movement, which was motivated by a strong, highly developed, and focused sense of national identification, and which challenged the national rights of the Palestinians in their

own homeland, and indeed the very existence of the Palestinians as an entity.”

So further exasperated by Palestinians being denied their own independent nation state and the absence of sovereignty and self-determination. “The absence of sovereignty throughout their history has denied the Palestinians full control over the state mechanisms...which myriad recent examples show is essential for disseminating and imposing uniform ‘national’ criteria of identity.”⁷ While these differing levels of identity contribute to outside misunderstanding of Palestinian nationalism, early Palestinian intellectuals, and writers “who were instrumental in the evolution of the first forms of Palestinian identity...identified with the Ottoman Empire, their religion, Arabism, their homeland Palestine, their city or region, and their family, without feeling any contradiction, or sense of conflicting loyalties.”⁸ The establishment of the newspaper *Filastin* by two of these Palestinian writers, ‘Isa al-‘Isa and Yusuf al-‘Isa is a notable example of Palestinian identity entering the WWI period. “While previously no private Arabic newspapers had existed in the sanjaks of Jerusalem, Nablus, and Akka (Acre), more than thirty Arabic periodicals were established in the years following the revolution until the outbreak of World War I. This was a development of crucial importance, which led to an accelerated flow of information and had a momentous impact on the identity of Palestine’s inhabitants.”⁹ Much of the focus of *Filastin* centered around the issue of Zionism and its threat to Palestinians and it’s publications played a major role in shaping how Palestinians and other Arabs came to understand the Zionist agenda. “The combative anti-Zionist newspaper...contributed significantly to the forging of a new (distinct and separate) Palestinian identity.”¹⁰ The ‘Isa cousins, both Orthodox, also used *Filastin* as a battle ground to highlight the struggle for the Arabization of the Palestinian Orthodox Church under the Greek-dominated Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem.

“In any case, the newspaper *Filastin* became the most widely circulated and, consequently, most influential Arabic daily in Palestine during the British Mandate, powerfully

3 Doumani, B. (1999). Rediscovering Ottoman Palestine; Writing Palestinians into History in The Israel/Palestine Question; Rewriting Histories. p. 14.
4 Doumani, B. (1999). Rediscovering Ottoman Palestine; Writing Palestinians into History in The Israel/Palestine Question; Rewriting Histories. p. 15.

5 Doumani, B. (1999). Rediscovering Ottoman Palestine; Writing Palestinians into History in The Israel/Palestine Question; Rewriting Histories. p. 15.
6 Khalidi, R. (1997). Palestinian Identity. p. 6
7 Khalidi, R. (1997). Palestinian Identity. p. 10
8 Khalidi, R. (1997). Palestinian Identity. p. 19

9 Beska, E. Yusuf al-‘Isa: A Founder of Modern Journalism in Palestine. p. 74.
10 Tamari, S. (2014). Issa al Issa's Unorthodox Orthodoxy: Banned in Jerusalem, Permitted in Jaffa



shaping the discourse of the Palestine nationalist political movement as it struggled to resist two foreign forces: British imperialism and Zionist settler-colonization.”¹¹

PALESTINE AT THE DECLINE OF THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE (1872-1917)

What are we talking about when we talk about historical Palestine? In short, when talking about Historical Palestine, we commonly refer to the land before 1917, i.e., before the British Mandate of Palestine and before the large-scale Jewish migration to Palestine began. Historical Palestine includes what is known today as the State of Israel, West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

In 1853, as the start of the Crimean War, the population of Palestine was around 500,000 people who were mainly Muslim, with 60,000 Christians and 20,000 Jews, all Arabic-speaking.¹² As noted by American demographer Justin McCarthy, the overwhelming majority were Muslim Palestinians, with important “minorities” – in particular Christian, and Druze – present.

The land was part of the Ottoman empire and was administratively governed under the “province” (i.e., vilayet) of Beirut with the three “divisions” (i.e., sanjaks) of Akka (Acre), Nablus and Jerusalem. The rise in the use of the Arabic term *Filastin* in the latter half of the 19th century was only one indicator of the growing perception of Palestine as distinct and separate from the area known as *bilad el shaam* (i.e., term used to describe the areas of Palestine, Syria, Lebanon, and Jordan).

Unlike Europe which saw its first printing presses arise in the 15th century, the first printing press in Palestine was established in Jaffa in the 19th century – Palestine Press, so in comparison the literary or scholarly output of Palestine in Arabic was limited in contrast to the vast sources in European languages.¹³ Life was mainly agricultural and rural but

entering a time of rapid urban economical change in the town centers. While the era of the late 19th century brought on much change with European intervention, modernity was not a true innovation of European influence. For example, similar to the “modern” economic models presented by Europe in the 19th century, cities like Nablus already possessed an independent economical model that dated back to the 1700’s by treating commodities and land as private property.¹⁴



Even Ottoman organization in the region was not purely imported. “It has been suggested that the European presence in Ottoman cities and the subsequent pressure on the Ottoman administration led to the creation of Ottoman municipalities. This theory implies that local Muslim societies were stagnant and lacked the required resources for social and urban change. Based upon findings from three Palestinian Ottoman cities: Nablus, Haifa, and Nazareth, urban services had been established long before the foundation of the municipalities or the presence of Europeans in Palestine. In this respect, the law regarding municipalities and their establishment was not a true innovation when they were created, Ottoman municipalities took on public

services that had been present many years before.”¹⁵

It is important to clarify here that whether Palestinians under Ottoman rule saw the Ottomans as an important part of their national identity or not, does not in itself mean that Palestinians belong less to their native land. In fact, there were probably many that did see that Palestine was part of the bigger Muslim world. During the subsequent birth of Arab nationalism, people imagined an Arab world that would be somewhat unified in principle at least. That being said, it is clear that for Palestinians, they addressed the Ottomans (and later the Arab world) as a whole, in most part, working for what they believed was in the best interest of Palestine.

There was a radical change in the importance of Palestine to the Ottomans in the late 19th century, mainly due to the increased political consciousness in people’s minds about what the Land of Palestine should look like and due to the increased European and Zionist aspirations to penetrate the land.¹⁶ The importance of Palestine (also referred to as the Holy Land) to Europeans and the power struggle for control of the area, pushed the Ottomans to make *significant* administrative restructuring which affected the area. By 1870, the *Mutasarrifate of Noble Jerusalem* was created, which is the equivalent of a province or state in a decentralized form of federal body. The intense power struggle coming out of the Crimean War¹⁷ was veiled by European powers as being around protecting the “rights” of Christian minority of Palestine. That power struggle contributed to the “profound shift in the way Palestine was perceived, reconfigured and experienced in the late Ottoman period”.¹⁸ This reorganization in the Ottoman administration was fully supported by local Palestinian elites that often advocated for areas in northern Palestine and for Jerusalem to be distinct of *Bilad al-Sham*. This may be due the fact that the area was generally experiencing an increase in nationalist identities where they identified more with their own nationalist movements such as in Egypt, Lebanon and Syria. The *Mutasarrifate* of Noble

11 Masalha N. (2018). Palestine : A four thousand year history. Zed. p. 282.

12 Pappe, I. (2004). A History of Modern Palestine. p. 14.

13 Masalha N. (2018). Palestine : A four thousand year history. Zed. p. 260.

14 Pappe, I. (2004). A History of Modern Palestine. p.18.

15 Yazbak, M. (2018). Comparing Ottoman Municipalities in Palestine: The Cases of Nablus, Haifa, and Nazareth, 1864–1914. In A. Dalachanis & V. Lemire (Eds.), Ordinary Jerusalem, 1840-1940: Opening New Archives, Revisiting a Global City. P. 240

16 Palestine, a four thousand year history, note 2, p.260.

17 1853-1858.

18 Palestine, a four thousand year history, note 2, p.261.



Jerusalem consisted of the districts of Yafa (Jaffa), Gaza, al-Khalil (Hebron) and Beer-sheba in addition to the district of Jerusalem proper as its capital. This *Mutasarrifate* alongside the areas of Akka (Acre) and Nablus were commonly referred to locally and internationally as 'Palestine'.¹⁹

Historically, we have already seen these three areas that cover the land of Palestine being represented by the Byzantines as *Provincia Palestina*. Much of the modern Middle Eastern states of that time were created along this same historical trajectory, where local towns and cities are connected to create a larger entity. The national identity of Palestinians was built on the fact that there were common historical, ethnic, social, economic, linguistic, and cultural ties as well as a sense of a shared identity.

In the case of Palestine, there is a clear indication of a distinct local identity emerging that supports the idea that the Land of Palestine, with frontiers similar to the country under the British mandate, were clearly present in the Palestinian's minds. This national identity has been circumvented by a constant struggle against erasure with the creation of the state of Israel and the prior settlement/Zionist policies of the British Mandate period. Again, it is important to note that even in the absence of this national identity (which was clearly present), if Palestinians identified with the inhabitants of another planet, that is no reason for them to be subjugated to the settler colonialism and ethnic cleansing that followed. Therefore, an argument that attempts to justify the creation of the state of Israel by the fallacy that Palestinians lacked a national identity suffers from two problems. First, it does not matter what kind of national identity Palestinians had, no one has the right to ethnically cleanse them from their lands. Second, Palestinians did have a national identity and continuously advocated for its promotion.

One of the most important developments that came out of the late 19th century to promote settler colonialism in Palestine was the rise of external European Christian interest and influence. Large scale Christian missionaries and pilgrimages took hold in Palestine and played a large role in the political economic changes in urban Palestine. External

investments in photography, cartography and archeology were also important for the purposes of producing an image of Palestine to Europe that can corroborate how the Europeans saw Palestine and could relate to it. These Christian missionaries and tourists came with an eagerness to change Palestine, to bring it to their view of "modernization", painting a picture of a supposedly "primitive" Palestine that needed to be "saved", an era come to be known as the quiet crusade.²⁰



"The early Zionists arrived at roughly the same time as the missionaries, Zionism was a European phenomenon and so shared other Westerners' disregard for the local population."²¹

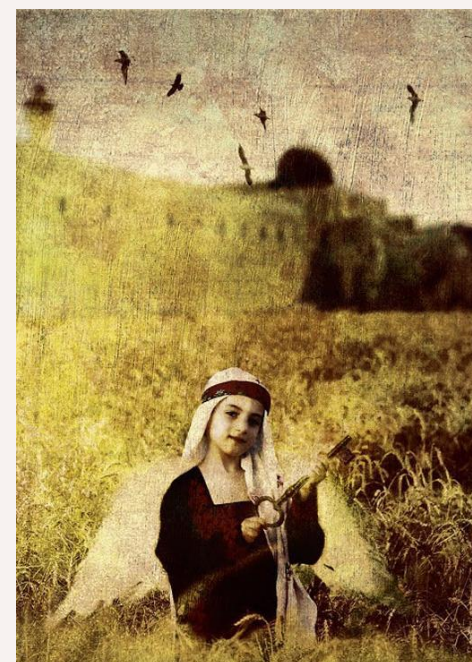
RISE OF ZIONISM

Zionism (which will be discussed in further detail in a separate piece) is a colonial ideology and political movement created by some European Jews that called for establishing a Jewish nation state in Palestine. Considering that Palestine was already inhabited, this necessitated the ethnic cleansing, oppression, and expulsion of the indigenous Palestinian

communities to create the necessary conditions for this settler colonial state.

In Europe, Zionism emerged in two ways, in central Europe where it was more a conceptualized solution to the Jewish "problem" and then in Eastern Europe where it was taken on as a practical solution to this "problem".²² Theodore Herzl, a Viennese Jew who would lead the Zionist national movement which would surmount with the colonization of Palestine at the end of the nineteenth century.²³ Zionism emerged in Europe as a solution to the rising white-supremacist ideologies and gained popularity. The indigenous population of Palestine were seen by Zionists as a commodity or an asset to be exploited for the benefit of the newcomers or an obstacle to be removed. Settlers did not see themselves as causing the destruction of a people but as building a "villa in the jungle" or as we have commonly heard in the past year, making the "desert bloom".

Towards the end of the nineteenth century more practical leaders took lead of the Zionist movement and they were focused on settlements. Jews fleeing Russia were the first to enter and settle in Palestine starting in 1882. "The 'territorial Zionists' who reached Palestine were few, and many did not stay long. But they laid the foundations for a future Jewish community in the land."²⁴ By the end of



19 Palestine, a four thousand year history, v
20 Pappe, I. (2004). A History of Modern Palestine. note 1, p.33-35.

21 Pappe, I. (2004). A History of Modern Palestine. note 1, p.33-35.

23 Pappe, I. (2004). A History of Modern Palestine. note 1, p.36.

22 Pappe, I. (2004). A History of Modern Palestine. note 1, p.36.

24 Pappe, I. (2004). A History of Modern Palestine. p. 39



the nineteenth century there were these two colonizing efforts raging Palestine.

CONCLUSION

Under the Ottoman rule, Palestinians understood that decisions regarding their national interests were taken in Istanbul. Considering the long-lasting rule of the Ottomans in the region, Palestinians had representatives advocate for their social and economic interests with the Ottomans.

The arrival of Zionism (from Europe) as a settler colonial ideology in Palestine effectively put the native population on guard against a new kind of rule that was intending to creep into society. The reason for that is quite simple, Zionists came with an idea that Palestine should become a state for Jews anywhere in the world because of their religion. This is hardly a novelty in the region as the Crusaders had a similar mindset.

It is an ideology that proposes erasure of the native population, many of which, had Jewish ancestors. Palestinians were able to see that early on and there is no doubt that their political and national identity as a people has been influenced by this constant threat.

Palestinians have always dealt with some sort of external factor whether as a threat, occupier, or an “acceptable” ruler (i.e., Ottomans). Interestingly, Palestinian culture, heritage, history, social consciousness finds a way to withstand these influences.

As we take a deeper dive into external forces that eventually shaped the past century in Palestine such as the British mandate and the state of Israel, it is important to remember that there is one thing has always proved to be true; Palestinians are Rooted in History and the attempts of settler colonialism, ethnic cleansing, illegal occupation, apartheid and genocide will not be enough to change that.

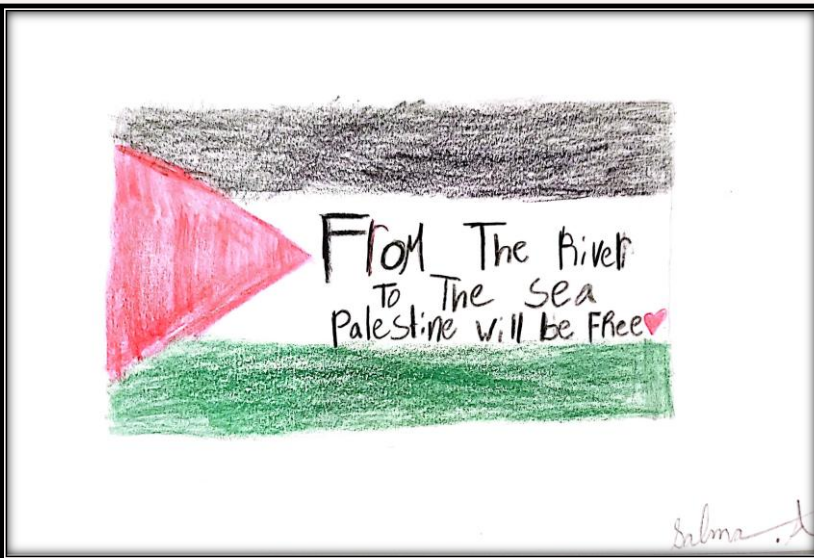
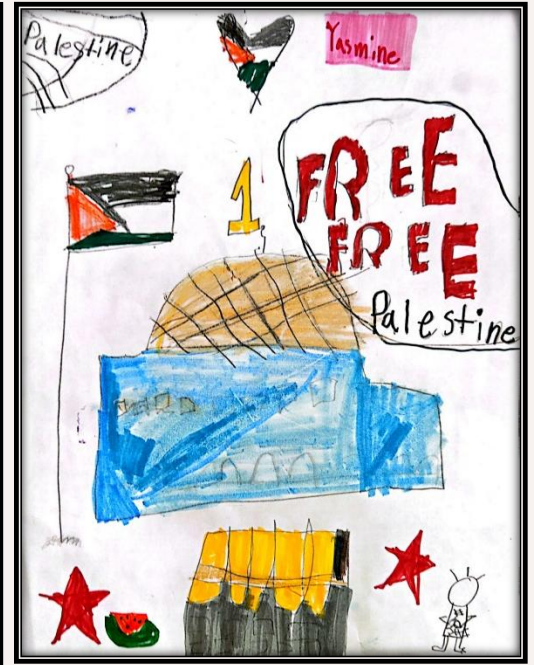
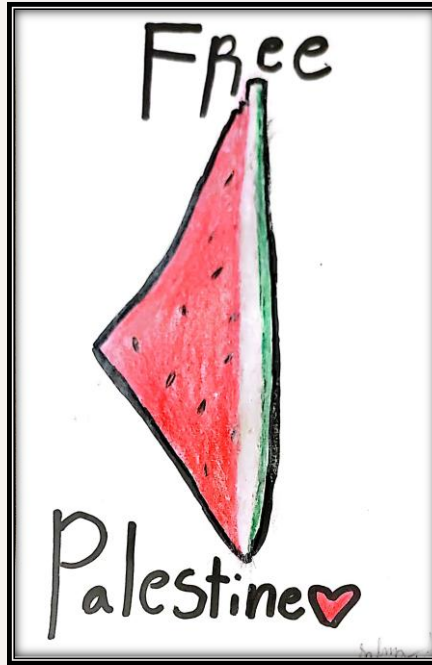


8 SANABEL OF PALESTINE

Salma A., Yasmine R., Maryam A., Maryam R., Aya A.

This section highlights the love and affinity our young Palestinian Canadians have for their homeland. These expressions of belonging are engrained in the DNA of every Palestinian worldwide. If you wish to submit your kid's Palestinian artwork in future publications, please send them to our attention:

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