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OPGAN

Occupied Palestine and Syrian
Golan Heights Advocacy Initiatives

Al Ard

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LAND IN THE ARAB - ISRAELI CONFLICT

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Land in the Arab- Israeli Conflict
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Editors: Nassar Ibrahim, Bisan Mitri, Manar Makhoul

OPGAI welcomes comments, criticisms and suggestions for Al Ard. Please send all correspondence to the editors at: bisan@opgai.org

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Building 111 Main Street, P.O. Box 201

Beit Sahour - Palestine

Tel: +972 2 277 5444

WWW.OPGAI.ORG

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introduction

The Land of Palestine

When Zionism invoked Heaven to Face the Right to History and Belonging

Nassar Ibrahim
General Coordinator
OPGAI

“There are people (the Arabs, Editor’s Note) who control spacious territories teeming with manifest and hidden resources. They dominate the intersections of world routes. Their lands were the cradles of human civilizations and religions. These people have one faith, one language, one history and the same aspirations. No natural barriers can isolate these people from one another ... if, per chance, this nation were to be unified into one state, it would then take the fate of the world into its hands and would separate Europe from the rest of the world. Taking these considerations seriously, a foreign body should be planted in the heart of this nation to prevent the convergence of its wings in such a way that it could exhaust its powers in never-ending wars. It could also serve as a springboard for the West to gain its coveted objects.”
From the Campbell-Bannerman Report, 1907

“Imperialist Britain called for forming a higher committee of seven European countries. The report submitted in 1907 to British Prime Minister Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman emphasized that the Arab countries and the Muslim-Arab people living in the Ottoman Empire presented a very real threat to European countries, and it recommended the following actions:

- 1. To promote disintegration, division, and separation in the region.*
- 2. To establish artificial political entities that would be under the authority of the imperialist countries.*
- 3. To fight any kind of unity—whether intellectual, religious or historical—and taking practical measures to divide the region’s inhabitants.*
- 4. To achieve this, it was proposed that a “buffer state” be established in Palestine, populated by a strong, foreign presence that would be hostile to its neighbours and friendly to European countries and their interests.” (From the Campbell-Bannerman Report, 1907).*

Campbell's report that we have referred to is one of the most important and most dangerous documents that clearly indicate to the major role of the Zionist project as a pillar of the colonial project that aimed at dividing the Arab world, control its resources and the ruling political systems.

Having identified functions and roles of the Zionist project, the colonial powers began to search for justification to turn this project into a political reality. And the 1916 Sykes – Picot agreement and later on the Belfour Declaration of November 1917 followed by the British Mandate over Palestine in 1922 were all attempts towards bringing the Zionist project into reality.

Meanwhile, In Palestine, the struggle of Palestinians for their land forced The Zionist Movement and its colonial allies to make up and provide certain excuses in order to justify their agenda for the colonization and control of Palestine.

However, the Zionist project in Palestine had to face a major obstacle, which is the existence of the Palestinian people. The Palestinians, who have inhabited the land for thousands of years and connected to it in different ways including traditionally, socially, psychologically, culturally, politically and economically were viewed by the Zionist Movement as a major obstacle, so how can one justify the seizure of the land of the Palestinian people, and the denial of their natural and historical rights to it?

It was in response to that dilemma that the Biblical was evoked, and it became a corner stone in the justifications for the colonization of Palestine. Since it was not easy to eliminate the legitimacy of the existence of the Palestinian people in their own land, The Zionists had to form justifications that provide them with a divine legitimacy that go beyond the legitimate existence of the Palestinian people. In other words, if the legitimacy of the Palestinian people in the land comes from the history and geography, then the Zionist project derives its legitimacy directly from the god!

Thereafter, the struggle over the land of Palestine started to become racist, Zionist, religious and ideological. Which meant that the uprooting the Palestinian people and the theft of their land had become a “the fulfillment of a promise from God” this divine excuse has allowed the Zionists to justify their unethical and savage behaviour towards the Palestinians, also, it provided the Zionist with Christian allies in the West and helped maintaining the essence of the original colonial project that aimed to divide the Arab region.

The importance of the Land in the colonial Zionist ideology was never about its agricultural value or for being sacred, nor it is because of the emotional and

moral link the land has with the world's Jewry. But the importance is from serving the purpose of dividing the region and maintaining such division over the years.

In this context one can understand the Zionist policies in Palestine that include continued colonization and elimination of the Palestinian bond to the land and their existence on it, Also changing the history and memory of the place to make it serve the Zionist politics, because the Zionist movement views any retreat from such policies of elimination of Palestinians will threaten foundations biblical ideology that they adopted, and will end up exposing their fraud and will ultimately shake the credibility of their colonial project.

This Zionist narrative, which the Zionist movement has devoted all sorts of propaganda and resources in order to enforce, is focused on disengaging Palestinians from their land, and while doing so, the Zionist Movement through its militias, and later on military have used all kinds of brutal and savage methods.

Land for the Palestinians means life, it is the essence of belonging to a civilization that has been in existence for thousands of years. It is on that land that the Palestinian culture, and customs and traditions and myths were formed. Land for the Palestinians is not a narrative to use or a story to make up it is the very existence, being and continuity of the individual and the people of Palestine. And thus connection with land is found not only among the people of Palestine and their land but also is found in every society that agriculture was an element in the formation of its culture, life and its philosophy of survival.

On the other hand, even though land might be of a religious or emotional importance among ordinary Jews, but for the Zionist Movement land is a political tool first and for most. The Land of Palestine is not important for the Zionist colonial project and their colonial allies because it is called the "Promised Land", but it is importance; as mentioned before in the Campbell Project, comes for the control over the region and its resources and for the prevention of any future reunification of the region. And as long as the Zionist colonial project is in Palestine that reunification across West Asia and North Africa will never happen.

In the end, OPGAI through publishing this magazine aims to shed some light on several aspects of the conflict over land in Palestine, hoping that this will allow the readers to become more aware of the Palestinian history and identity, such awareness is important for the continuous struggle for and protection of the land of Palestine, as the struggle is still going and history is yet to make the final judgment.

Section One: Theorizing

The Concept of Land in the Zionist Ideology

Sergio Yahni

Alternative Information Center (AIC)

The Alternative Information Center (AIC)

is a joint Palestinian-Israeli organisation promoting justice, equality and peace for Palestinians and Israelis. The AIC believes that peace can be just and lasting only when based on ending Israel's colonial occupation, securing the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and the right of refugees to return. The AIC is grounded in internationalist values and actively participates in the global justice movement. AIC actions promote the anti-colonial struggle in the region and a Middle East free of wars and oppression.

The concept of land in the Zionist movement emerged from a colonial perception of non-European territories: an immensely empty space for the action of the white man.¹ While colonialism did not focus on a process of state building, aiming mainly to economically exploit the colonies by big corporations or by individual entrepreneurs, the objective of Zionism was the creation of a new nation. In other words, land for the Zionist movement was not a foundation for economic entrepreneurship, but a starting point for the transformation of European Jews into a modern nation. Land no longer was a void territory, but a landscape full of meaning: the domain of a heroic past, portrayed in romantic terms that becomes the territory of a new nation². Therefore, this also necessitated

1. On the colonial concept of space see: Basil Davidson, *Africa in History*, New York, Touchstone 1991. On the issue of Israel as a colonial state and its relation to the land see: Rodinson, Maxime. "Israel, fait colonial?" *Les Temps Modernes*, 1967. Republished in English as *Israel: A Colonial Settler-State?*, New York, Monad Press, 1973, see also Veracini, Lorenzo, "Israel and Settler Society", London: Pluto Press. 2006.

2. On the process of manufacturing the meaning of the Land in pre-state Zionist ideology see Zeev Sternhell *Nation Building or a New Society? The Zionist Labor Movement (1904-1940) and the Origins of Israel (Hebrew)*, Tel Aviv, Am Oved 1995. Meron Benvenisti in Meron Benvenisti, *Sacred Landscape The Buried History of the Holy Land Since 1948*, Berkeley, University of California Press 2002 describes how state cartographers translated such a meaning into an everyday reality expressed in the maps of Israel by renaming geographic sites to create biblical references in the landscape. Barbara Tuchman in *Barbara Tuchman, Bible and Sword, England and Palestine from the Bronze Age to Balfour*, London, Phoenix Press 1984, shows that such a process assuming later names and meanings were distortions dates back to the early 19th century and the first moves of British imperialism in the Levant. It is important to pay attention that Zionist manufacturing of meaning was not original, but entrenched in already existing in earlier European cultural and political attitudes and perceptions towards the region.

the displacement of the native population from this land, through using extreme colonial violence, common to all colonial enterprises. Violence, hence, becomes a primary political tool in Zionist colonialism, simply because the sought-after territory must be emptied to allow the metamorphosis of a European minority.³

Moreover, while Zionism is a Jewish movement, one among many, it is deeply rooted in the Christian messianic perceptions.⁴ The return of the Jews to the Holy Land, as well as the creation of Jewish statehood were perceived by puritans as a milestone in their normalization and transformation into followers of Christ.⁵ Within such messianic perception, the land itself becomes an 'empty' territory when it exists outside the Abraham's covenant with God.

For the colonization of Palestine, and similar to colonial projects in other territories, messianic perceptions were a vehicle of colonialism that enhances white supremacy, legitimizing the dispossession of heathens.⁶

3. When we talk about colonial violence we are talking about objective, subjective and symbolic violence as defined by Slavoj Zizek (Slavoj Zizek, *Violence*, New York, Picador 2008 pp. 9-15). Subjective violence is just the most visible of the three, it is the violence "enacted by social agents, evil individuals, disciplined repressive apparatuses, fanatical crowds" (p. 11). All Zionist actions to void Palestine from its original inhabitants (deportations, land confiscations, home demolitions etc) can be categorized as a subjective forms of violence. At the same time, the international community's permanent defense of the right of the Israelis to hold to a land voided of its original inhabitants under the political formula of "two states for two peoples" is an objective form of violence aimed at the permanence of the Palestinian refugee question and its later dissolution as part of a regional political agreement. Renaming the Palestinian landscape to construct a biblical landscape (see Benvenisti 2002) manufactures the language that justifies Zionist claims as part of a permanent return of the Jewish people to the promised land. This symbolic violence transforms Palestinian and non-Palestinian resistances to the Zionist project into anti-Semitic statements, delegitimizing them.

4. On the mystical and messianic roots of the Jewish return to the promised land and its later prohibition by orthodox Judaism see Gershom (Gerhard) Scholem, *Sabbatai Sevi: The Mystical Messiah*, Princeton, Bollingen Series, No. 93, Princeton University press 1976.

5. See Tuchman 1984. See also Zev Chafets. *A Match Made in Heaven: American Jews, Christian Zionists, and One Man's Exploration of the Weird and Wonderful Judeo-Evangelical Alliance*. HarperCollins, 2007 as well as Victoria Clark, *Allies for Armageddon: The Rise of Christian Zionism*. Yale University Press, 2007.

6. White settlers in North America as well as South Africa, who were persecuted in their homelands for religious reasons, perceived the new land as "the promised land". See for example, Cecelia Tichi, «The Puritan Historians and Their New Jerusalem», *Early American Literature* Vol. 6, No. 2 University of North Carolina Press, Fall, 1971, pp. 143-155 regarding South Africa see Bernard Lugan, *Ces Francais Qui Ont Fait L'Afrique Du Sud*, Paris, Bartillat 1999.

However, in Palestine, the messianic perceptions were secularized as the construction of the nation was reframed in new terms, which in many cases, derived from the language of the labor movement.⁷

Land as the objective foundation in nation building

The Zionist concept of land emerged among Christian Restorationists who believed in the return of the Jews to Judea, as prophesied in the Bible as a precondition for the Second Coming of Christ.⁸ In 1839 Rev. Alexander Keith, D.D., undertook a Mission of Inquiry to Palestine along with other ministers of the Church of Scotland. The group traveled through France, Greece, and Egypt then overland to Gaza. They sought Jewish communities along the route to inquire about their readiness to accept Christ and, separately, their preparedness to return to Israel as prophesied in the Bible. Keith recounts the journey in his 1844 book *The Land of Israel According to the Covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob*. It was also in that book that Keith used the slogan “A land without a people for a people without a land.”⁹

At the end of the 19th century, this concept was secularized by Theodore Herzl in a short pamphlet entitled “The Jewish State, a Proposal of a modern solution for the Jewish question.” In this pamphlet, Herzl argued that anti-Semitism is rooted in the landlessness of the Jews, a condition that prevents them from becoming a nation, a people who share a common territory and government:

The Jewish question persists wherever Jews live in appreciable numbers. Wherever it does not exist, it is brought in together with Jewish immigrants. We are naturally drawn into those places where we are not persecuted, and our appearance there gives rise to persecution. This is the case, and will inevitably be so, everywhere, even in highly civilized countries - see, for instance, France - so long as the Jewish question is not solved on the political level. The unfortunate Jews are now carrying the seeds of anti-Semitism into England; they have already introduced it into America.¹⁰

7. See Sternhall 1995.

8. See Tuchman 1984. See also Alexander Keith, *The Land of Israel According to the Covenant with Abraham, With Isaac, and With Jacob*, Edinburgh, William Whyte & Co. 1844

9. See Keith 1844.

10. See Theodor Herzl, *The Jewish State*, 1896. In *The Jewish Virtual Library* (<http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Zionism/herzl2.html>), Ch.: Introduction.

Israel Zangwill, Herzl's colleague in the Zionist movement, clarified that the land and nation components of the equation. In an article published in the *New Liberal Review*, Zangwill claimed that, "Palestine is a country without a people; the Jews are a people without a country".¹¹ According to Zangwill, "Palestine has but a small population of Arabs and fellahin and wandering, lawless, blackmailing Bedouin tribes." He concluded that there is a need to:

[r]estore the country without a people to the people without a country. For we have something to give as well as to get. We can sweep away the blackmailer—be he Pasha or Bedouin—we can make the wilderness blossom as the rose, and build up in the heart of the world a civilization that may be a mediator and interpreter between the East and the West.¹²

Practically speaking, Herzl speculated that overcoming anti-Semitism through transforming the Jewish people into a modern nation was possible within the colonial realm: "We know and see for ourselves that States still continue to be created. Colonies secede from the mother country. Vassals fall away from their suzerain; newly opened territories are immediately formed into free States".¹³ Land, according to Herzl is, "the objective foundation of a State," while the people is its subjective one. Accordingly, Herzl perceived state making as a process that evolves in two momentums. First, securing the subjective foundation through the establishment of an incorporated "Society of Jews," a political entity that will collectively manage Jewish affairs through negotiations with the colonial powers in order to acquire the objective foundation of the state: the land.

Labor as the builders of the subjective foundation of the state Herzl's perception of the land, and the political institutions for acquiring the land, were just the skeleton of the nation-building process. However, Herzl and political Zionism were not capable to concretize the modes of conquest. The colonization of Palestine was made possible by a new factor, labor, or pioneering Zionism.

11. Israel Zangwill, «The Return to Palestine», *New Liberal Review*, Dec. 1901, p. 615

12. Israel Zangwill, *The Commercial Future of Palestine*, Debate at the Article Club, November 20, 1901. Published by Greenberg & Co. Also published in *English Illustrated Magazine*, Vol. 221 (Feb 1902) pp. 421–430.

13. Herzl 1896, Ch. V. Society of Jews & Jewish State

In 1862 German philosopher Moses Hess published a book titled “Rome and Jerusalem: The Last National Question”. In this book he argued for Jewish settlement in Palestine as a response to European anti-Semitism. Hess, who earlier collaborated with Marx and Engels, came to the conclusion that history is a cycle of racial and national struggles. He contemplated the rise of Italian and German nationalism and arrived at the idea of the need for Jewish national revival. Following the steps of the emerging nationalist movements, Hess proposed an agrarian Jewish socialist commonwealth in Palestine. Hess claimed that the agrarianization of Jews through a process of “redemption of the soil” will transform the Jewish community into the productive layers of society, rather than being an intermediary non-productive merchant class, which is how he perceived European Jews.

Forty years later, Russian Zionist thinker Dov Ber Borochoy, continuing the work of Hess, proposed that the colonization of Palestine would correct the “inverted pyramid” of Jewish society. He claimed that Jewish society is abnormal since most of the Jews were forced out from productive occupations by Gentile hostility and competition. He concluded that Jewish society would not be healthy unless the majority of Jews became workers and peasants again.¹⁴ This, he held, could only be accomplished in Palestine.

Giving birth to the Zionist pioneering movement, the ideas of Hess and Borochoy were made concrete in the 1907 conference of Poalei Zion Party, which was held in Ramla. Poalei Zion stated that, “history of all

14. Ber Dov Borochoy, “Poalei Tziyon - Our Platform” in The Jewish Virtual Library (http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Zionism/Borochoy_Poalei_Tziyon_Charter.html). Borochoy believed that Jewish migration don't change the basic economic contradiction of the Jewish existence and the competition between gentile and Jewish workers. According to Borochoy “[the] Jewish problem migrates with the Jews” (Ch.II). Therefore “[w]e will consider the Jewish question fully solved and its anomalies wholly removed...only when territorial autonomy for the Jewish people shall have been attained and the entire nation shall constitute a relatively unified national economic organism” (Ch.VII). He believed this development will be only possible in Palestine due the economically underdeveloped situation of the Palestinian population. Thus, not as in other destinations “[t]he welfare and functions of Jewish immigrants in Palestine will depend not on the native population but on the foreign market”, and similarly “Jewish labor will encounter national competition neither on the part of the native population nor on the part of the new immigrants.” As a consequence, according to Borochoy only in Palestine “the Jews will perform the functions which serve as a transition from the production of consumers' goods to the creation of the means of production.” Borochoy concludes “Political territorial autonomy in Palestine is the ultimate aim of Zionism. For proletarian Zionism, this is also a step toward socialism” (Ch.VIII).

hitherto existing society is the history of class and nations struggles.” At the core of Poalei Tzion ideology was the conquest of the “land along the conquest of work.” In other words, Poalei Tzion supported and promoted the dispossession of Palestinian natives from their land as well as their working places. The strategy proposed by Poalei Tzion was the creation of self governing colonies of land workers in a way that will allow the control of Jewish-only territories. Since 1920 until 1976, the Zionist movement was controlled by Poalei Tzion party and its derivate organizations (Mapai, Labor Party etc.). The way the Zionist movement clutches the land was designed by Poalei Tzion, and it continues until this day.¹⁵

Ethnic cleaning as a precondition to the Jewish State The colonial aggression promoted by the Jewish Agency under the leadership of MAPAI (a derivate party of Poalei Tzion) during the first 14 years of the British Mandate prompted periodical Palestinian uprisings that in 1936 provoked the six-month-long Arab general strike. Following the strike, on 11 November 1936, the Palestine Royal Commission, a British Royal Commission of Inquiry headed by William Peel arrived in Palestine to investigate the reasons behind the uprising. The commission returned to Britain on 18 January 1937 and on 7 July 1937, published a report recommending the partition of Palestine. The Peel report recommended that the British Mandate be eventually abolished — except in a “corridor” surrounding Jerusalem, stretching to the Mediterranean coast at Jaffa — and the land under its authority, and accordingly, the transfer of both Arab and Jewish populations, be apportioned between an Arab and Jewish state. According to the report, the Jewish side was to receive a territorially smaller portion in the mid-west and the north, from Mount Carmel to south of Be’er Tuvia, as well as the Jezreel Valley and the Galilee. The Arab state was to receive territory in the south and mid-east which included Judea, Samaria, and the Naqab. The report claimed that “sooner or later there should be a transfer of land and, as far as possible, an exchange of population” and that “in the last

15. Anita Shapira in Anita Shpira, *Land and Power*, Tel Aviv, Am Oved 1992 (Hebrew), describes the development of the Zionist ethos from working the land to waging war during the pre-1948 period as the colonization and land grab process deepens along clashes with the local Palestinian population. Hillel Cohen, in Hillel Cohen, *1929 Year Zero of the Jewish-Arab Conflict*, Jerusalem, Keter 2013 (Hebrew), claims that the clashes between Palestinians population and the Zionist movement during August 1929 set the moment when the Zionist movement consciously choose the path of violent confrontation.

resort the exchange would be compulsory". It cited as precedent the 1923 population exchange between Greece and Turkey. According to the report the population exchange, if carried out, would have involved the transfer of up to 225,000 Arabs and 1,250 Jews.

The Twentieth Zionist Congress in Zurich, held between 3 and 16 August 1937, announced that, "the partition plan proposed by the Peel Commission is not to be accepted," however, the congress expressed its wish "to carry on negotiations in order to clarify the exact substance of the British government's proposal for the foundation of a Jewish state in Palestine". Later at the same congress, David Ben-Gurion, MAPAI, then chairman of the executive committee of the Jewish Agency for Palestine, told those in attendance that although "there could be no question...of giving up any part of the Land of Israel ... it was arguable that the ultimate goal would be achieved most quickly by accepting the Peel proposals."

According to Charles D. Smith, "Weizmann and Ben-Gurion did not feel they had to be bound by the borders proposed. These could be considered temporary boundaries to be expanded in the future." Benny Morris, states that Ben Gurion saw the commission's recommendation on population exchange to be a positive achievement. Eventually, Ben Gurion convinced the Zionist Congress to accept the Peel recommendations as a basis for further negotiations. Ben-Gurion wrote:

The compulsory transfer of the Arabs from the valleys of the proposed Jewish state could give us something which we have never had, even when we stood on our own during the days of the First and Second Temples... We are being given an opportunity which we never dared to dream of in our wildest imagination. This is more than a state, government, and sovereignty—this is a national consolidation in a free homeland. ... if because of our weakness, neglect or negligence, the thing is not done, then we will have lost a chance which we never had before, and may never have again.¹⁶

Eventually, the British Government set up the Woodhead Commission to "examine the Peel Commission plan in detail and to recommend an actual partition plan." This Commission declared that the Peel

16. Benny Morris, *One state, two states: resolving the Israel/Palestine conflict*. Yale, Yale University Press 2009, p. 66.

Commission partition to be unworkable. The British Government accompanied the publication of the Woodhead Report by a statement of policy rejecting partition as impracticable. Nevertheless, the Peel commission made the possibility of achieving an ethnically-pure Jewish state starting the countdown to the Nakba. During the coming decade, the Zionist movement prepared its might to redraw the borders of any future partition of Palestine organizing its armed forces and its intelligence services towards this aim.

Those preparations materialized in the Plan Dalet (Hebrew Tokhnit Dalet; Plan D) that was worked out by the Haganah in March 1948. It was the fourth and final version of less substantial plans that had outlined Zionists objectives for Palestine and its native population. Palestinian historian Walid Khalidi claims Plan Dalet was the, “Master Plan for the Conquest of Palestine”. He points to the Zionist ideas of transfer and of a Jewish state in all of Palestine, and to the offensive character of the military operations of the Zionists as the main proof of his interpretation.

With the ceasefire agreement of July 1949, the Zionist movement could claim it had achieved its objectives: a Jewish state was established on a land that was virtually emptied of its native population; Jews became its sole peasants, its sole workers and its ruling class. Borochov’s social pyramid was reorganized. However, 65 years after the establishment of the State of Israel, there is room to ask whether the objectives of Zionism were achieved?

The State of Israel and the failure of the Zionist project

At first sight the answer appears positive: the objective foundations of the state are evident. However, even a simple analysis of the subjective foundations of the state as described by Herzl, and discussed earlier by Hess, reveals a totally different story.

The establishment of Israel did not resolve the animosity towards Jews. Yet the connection between Zionism and Judaism expanded animosity towards Jews to places where it never existed before: the Arab and Muslim world. Moreover, sustaining such a state in a hostile environment is fully depending on the good will of foreign powers. As a matter of

fact, the Jewish State depends on American good will for its survival as much as the French colonialists in Algeria depended on good will in Paris. However, this comparison is true with one difference: colonialists in Algeria were French citizens, Israelis are not American citizens. The problem is more profound, Zionism attempted not only to resolve the problematic relations between Jews and non-Jewish Europeans, but to resolve the not-less problematic relations between Jews as a religious-cultural community and nationhood. Herzl, Zangwill, Hess and other Zionist leaders expected that providing the objective foundations of a nation-state, a nation, in the secular meaning of the term, will emerge from political institutions. "Shall we end by having a theocracy?" Herzl asked in *The Jewish State*, and he answered, "We shall keep our priests within the confines of their temples in the same way as we shall keep our professional army within the confines of their barracks." But in the State of Israel, the reason of its existence remains solely in the hands of the Rabies, as the military became its most powerful institution. Finally, Zionism was never able to resolve the most basic contradiction: Palestine was never an empty country, as Palestinians were a nation ready to struggle for its rights. Asher Zvi Hirsch Ginsberg (Ehad Haam), a Hebrew essayist, and one of the foremost pre-state Zionist thinkers, wrote after a visit to Palestine in 1891:

We who live abroad are accustomed to believe that almost all Eretz Yisrael is now uninhabited desert and whoever wishes can buy land there as he pleases. But this is not true. It is very difficult to find in the land cultivated fields that are not used for planting. (Asher Zvi Hirsch Ginsberg (Ehad Haam), *A Truth from Eretz Yisrael*)

He added:

We who live abroad are accustomed to believing that the Arabs are all wild desert people who, like donkeys, who neither see nor understand what is happening around them... [However] the Arabs, especially the urban elite, see and understand what we are doing and what we wish to do on the land, but they keep quiet and pretend not to notice anything... But, if the time comes that our people's life in Eretz Yisrael will develop to a point where we are taking their place, either slightly or significantly, the natives are not going to just step aside so easily. (Asher Zvi Hirsch Ginsberg (Ehad Haam), *A Truth from Eretz Yisrael*)

Section One: Theorizing

Six years before the emergence of Herzl's political Zionism and sixteen years before the emergence of Ben Gurion's pioneering Zionism, Ehad Haam already rendered Zionist utopias on the redemption of the Jewish people through the conquest of the land, a tragedy.

Displacement and Dispossession of the Palestinian People

by Amjad Alqasis
Legal Advocacy Program Coordinator
Badil

BADIL Resource Center for Palestinian

Residency and Refugee Rights is an independent, community-based non-profit organization works to defend and promote the rights of Palestinian refugees and IDPs. Our vision, missions, programs and relationships are defined by our Palestinian identity and the principles of international law, in particular international human rights law. We seek to advance the individual and collective rights of the Palestinian people on this basis.

BADIL Resource Center was established in January 1998 based on recommendations issued by a series of popular refugee conferences in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. BADIL is registered with the Palestinian Authority and legally owned by the refugee community represented by a General Assembly composed of activists in Palestinian national institutions and refugee community organizations.

Land grab, leading to forced population transfer is one of the most serious and grave breaches of human rights and international humanitarian law in the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt). Forced Population Transfer of Palestinians has been ongoing since and even prior to the 1948 Nakba.

The ultimate objectives of the Zionist project – the nationalist ideology of Israel – are probably known to most of those interested in contemporary Middle Eastern and colonial politics. Simply put, the Israeli endeavor aims at emptying Palestine (also known as Historic Palestine', the geographical area which was ruled by the British Mandate, until its withdrawal in May 1948) from its indigenous inhabitants, including from areas that lie today within the borders of Israel proper. The intentionally designed displacement of Palestinians serves a parallel objective of relentlessly campaigning to settle Jewish-Israelis in settlements (colonies), illegal according to international law. In other words, Israel

aims to colonize Palestine with Jewish immigrants (settlers/ colonists) at the expense of the indigenous Palestinians, ultimately seeking to create a predominantly Jewish entity there.

Israeli practices and policies are a combination of apartheid, military occupation, and colonization. Together, they aim to ethnically cleanse the territory of Palestine from its indigenous Palestinian presence.

This Israeli regime is not limited to the Palestinians living in the oPt, but it also targets Palestinians residing on the Israeli side of the 1949 Armistice Line as well as those living in forced exile. Reflections on whether a one or a two-state solution would be the appropriate means to end the injustice and suffering in Palestine overlook the fact that one legal entity has already been established within that specified territory. Indeed, Israel's treatment of non-Jewish Palestinians throughout Israel and the oPt constitutes a comprehensive discriminatory regime aimed at controlling the maximum amount of land with the least number of indigenous Palestinians.

The main components of that structure discriminate against Palestinians in areas including nationality, citizenship, residency rights, and land ownership. Israel initially applied this system in 1948 in order to dominate and dispossess all forcibly displaced Palestinians, including the 150,000 who remained and who later became Palestinian citizens of Israel. After Israeli forces occupied the remaining part of Palestine in 1967, this territory became subject to the same Israeli regime in addition to military occupation. Israel's settler-colonial regime was not necessitated by military expediency or broader national security concerns, to the contrary, its inception dates back to the beginnings of the Zionist Movement, decades before the creation of the State of Israel.

Zionist Movement

Zionist leaders established a movement in the late nineteenth century with the aim of creating a Jewish home through the formation of a,

“...national movement for the return of the Jewish people to their homeland and the resumption of Jewish sovereignty in the Land of Israel.”

As such, the Zionist enterprise combined Jewish nationalism, which it aimed to create and foster, with the colonial project of transplanting people, mostly from Europe, into Palestine drawing on the support of European imperial powers. The Zionist Movement constructed a specific Jewish national identity in order to justify the colonization of Palestine. The Zionist Movement had to define the global Jewry as a “people” in order to create a national identity. Moreover, this identity had to be linked to Jewish presence in Palestine during the first century BC. Significantly, like all other national identities which are a modern concept, Jewish nationality cannot be traced back to a natural origin. Instead, groups of persons constructed nationality based upon their own self-perceptions and desires.

The creation of a Jewish nation state in a land with a very small Jewish minority could only be possible through the forced displacement of the existing indigenous population alongside the implanting of the new Jewish settlers. For the indigenous Palestinians who managed to remain within the boundaries of what became Israel, their own national identity was revoked by decree and are forced to be citizens of a state in which they are ineligible for nationality.

The task of establishing and maintaining a Jewish state on a predominantly non-Jewish territory has been completed by continuously forcibly displacing the land’s non-Jewish majority population. Today, nearly seventy percent of the Palestinian people worldwide are themselves, or the descendants of, Palestinians who have been forcibly displaced by the Israeli regime. The idea of “transfer” in Zionist thought has been rigorously traced by Nur Masalha in his seminal text *Expulsion of the Palestinians: The Concept of “Transfer” in Zionist Political Thought, 1882-1948*. Israel Zangwill, one of the early Zionist thinkers captured the concept of “transfer” in 1905, when he explained:

“If we wish to give a country to a people without a country, it is utter foolishness to allow it to be the country of two peoples.”

Zionism is, therefore, aptly summarized as the creation of a specific Jewish national identity, the takeover of the maximum amount of Palestinian land, the diminishment of the number of non-Jewish persons on that land, and the implantation of the maximum number of Jewish nationals.

Colonizing Palestine

The Zionist Movement, when setting the scene to colonize Palestine in 1897 under the motto, “people without land will get a land without people”, faced three major obstacles:

- The indigenous Palestinian people who were living in that territory;
- Palestinian property and land rights within that territory; and
- Lack of a sufficient number of Jewish people in that territory.

Overcoming these three obstacles necessitated a legal system able to maintain the newly established status quo in the aftermath of the 1948 Arab-Israeli war. The Zionist Movement, and later Israel, had no interest in simply creating a system of domination of one “racial” group over another. Rather, the intention was to establish a homogeneous Zionist-Jewish state predominantly for Jewish people.

NurMasalhademonstrates that between 1930 and 1948 the Zionist Movement planned the forcible transfer of the indigenous Palestinian population in nine different strategies, starting with the 1930 Weizmann Transfer Scheme up to Plan Dalet carried out in 1948.

After the initiation of this ‘historic transfer’ the Zionist Movement initiated a series of pro-active and preventive measures in the form of laws, practices and policies to deal with the three challenges mentioned above.

Privileged Migration

To ensure a sufficient number of Jewish people in the colonized territory, Israel legislated the Law of Return (1950). It provides that every Jewish person in the world is entitled to Jewish nationality and can immigrate to Israel and acquire Israeli citizenship.

Thus Jewish nationals enjoy the right to enter Israel even if they were not born in Israel and have no connection whatsoever to that state. In contrast, Palestinians, the indigenous population of the territory, are excluded from the Law of Return and have no automatic right to enter

the country. The Law of Return has aimed to simplify and encourage the immigration of Jewish persons to Israel in order to achieve the exclusive Jewish state envisioned by Zionism.

Next to this, the Israeli nationality law embodies in law the separation of citizenship ('Israeli'), from nationality ('Jewish'). This separation was confirmed by the Israeli Supreme Court in *George Raphael Tamarin v State of Israel* 1972. Such a distinction allows Israel to discriminate against its Palestinian citizens and, even more severely, against Palestinian refugees by ensuring that certain rights and privileges are conditioned upon Jewish nationality. The Israeli regime has essentially divided the Palestinian people into several distinct political-legal statuses. Despite their differing categorizations under Israeli law, Palestinians across the board maintain an inferior status to that of Jewish nationals living within the same territory or beyond.

Category 1: privileged status:

- Jewish Nationals → Living abroad and in Israel → Full political, social and economic rights and full access to benefits

Category 2: Inferior status:

- Palestinian citizens of Israel → Living abroad and in Israel → Inferior rights and limited access to benefits.
- Palestinians in the OPT → Living under occupation → Denied/Restricted rights: no/severely limited right to enter Israel/move within the OPT, no/severely limited political, social and economic rights.
- Palestinian refugees living abroad → Forcibly displaced, made stateless and no right to return to their homes.

Property Rights

Israel legislated and deployed the Absentee Property Law (1950) to confiscate Palestinian property legally owned by forcibly displaced Palestinian refugees and internally displaced persons. The term "absentee" was defined so broadly as to include not only Palestinians who had fled the newly established State of Israel but also those who had fled their homes yet remained within its borders. Once confiscated, this land became State property.

Israel enacted the Land Acquisition Law (1953) to complete the transfer of confiscated Palestinian land, which had not been abandoned during the attacks of 1948, to the State. In the words of former Israeli Finance Minister Eliezer Kaplan, its purpose "...was to instill legality in some acts undertaken during and following the war." An almost identical process took place in the oPt in the aftermath of the 1967 occupation.

As a result of overall Israeli land strategy, Palestinians today own only a few percent of Palestine. The expansion of existing Palestinian localities in Israel and the oPt has been severely curtailed as a result of Israel's highly discriminatory planning policy. Since the occupation of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip in 1967, Israel has not permitted the establishment of any new Palestinian municipalities. Military Order 418 created a planning and building regime which gives full control of all areas related to planning and development in the oPt to the Israeli state. As a result, Palestinian communities often find themselves separated from their surrounding lands. In contrast, even the smallest Jewish localities have detailed building plans and regulations regarding land use. In sum,

"Israeli space has been highly dynamic, but the changes have been mainly in one direction: Jews expand their territorial control by a variety of means including on-going settlement, while Palestinians have been contained within an unchanged geography."

Forced Population Transfer

The central obstacle to the Zionist Movement, the Palestinian people themselves, has been addressed by various means throughout the last six decades. More than seven million Palestinians have been forcibly displaced – including their descendants- from their homes. Israeli laws such as the Prevention of Infiltration Law (1954) and Military Orders 1649 and 1650 have prohibited Palestinians from legally returning to Israel or the oPt.

Forced population transfer is illegal and has constituted an international crime since the Allied Resolution on German War Crimes, adopted in 1942. The strongest and most recent codification of the crime is found in the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, which clearly defines forcible transfer of population and implantation of settlers as

war crimes.

The greatest outflow of refugees took place in April and early May 1948 coinciding with the start of operations by Zionist paramilitary organizations. This period in recent Palestinian history is defined as the Nakba, the Palestinian catastrophe. The Nakba fundamentally altered Palestine. However the idea of forced displacement of the indigenous Palestinian people did not end with the establishment of Israel in 1948, rather it began that year. Since the Nakba, almost every passing year has witnessed a wave of forced displacement, albeit varying in degree. While 400,000 Palestinians became refugees in 1967, in 2008, Israel revoked the residency rights of nearly 5,000 Palestinian Jerusalemites.

This population transfer is carried out today by Israel in the form of the overall policy of silent transfer. This displacement is silent in the sense that Israel carries it out while trying to avoid international attention, displacing small numbers of people on a weekly basis. It is to be distinguished from the more overt transfer achieved under the veneer of warfare in 1948.

Israel's Silent Transfer Policy Today

The Israeli policy of silent transfer is evident in the State's laws, policies and practices. Israel uses its power to discriminate, expropriate and ultimately effect the forcible displacement of the indigenous non-Jewish population from the area of Palestine. For instance, the Israeli land-planning and zoning system has forced 93,000 Palestinians in East-Jerusalem to build without proper construction permits because eighty-seven percent of that area is off-limits to Palestinian use; most of the remaining thirteen percent is already built up. Since the Palestinian population of Jerusalem is growing steadily, it has had to expand into areas not zoned for Palestinian residence by the State of Israel. All those homes are now under the constant threat of being demolished by the Israeli army or police, which will leave their inhabitants homeless and displaced.

Another example is the government-approved Praver Plan, which calls for the forcible displacement of 70,000 Palestinian citizens of Israel due to an Israeli allocation policy, which has not recognized over thirty-five Palestinian villages located in the Naqab. Israel deems the inhabitants

of those villages as illegal trespassers and squatters, and as such, they face the imminent threat of displacement. This is despite the fact that, in many cases, these communities predate the State of Israel itself.

The Israeli Supreme Court bolstered the Zionist objective of clearing Palestine of its indigenous population in its 2012 decision prohibiting family unification between Palestinians with Israeli citizenship and their counterparts across and beyond the 1949 Armistice Line. The effect of this ruling has been that Palestinians with different residency statuses, such as Israeli citizen, Jerusalem ID, West Bank ID or Gaza ID (all of which are issued by Israel), cannot legally live together on either side of the 1949 Armistice Line. They are thus faced with a choice of living abroad, living apart from one another, or taking the risk of living together illegally. This system aims to further diminish the Palestinian population. This demographic intention is reflected in the High Court's explanation that "...human rights are not a prescription for national suicide."

The Way forward

Israel's commission of internationally-sanctioned crimes, namely apartheid, persecution, and colonization are intended to create an unbearable situation in order to drive the indigenous population out. Consequently, Israel does not simply seek domination over the indigenous Palestinians, but rather their forcible displacement. In this light, any discussion on the situation in Palestine has to consider that the essential issue circulates around the lives and rights of existing Palestinian refugees, as well as the prevention of future forcible displacement.

This continuous and calculated strangulation of the Palestinian people must be properly challenged by the international community by codifying that state's actions and policies into elements of an international crime against humanity. Israel's regime must be judged accordingly and its impunity must be brought to an end because the silence, if not complicity, of powerful members of the international community, in the face of practices and policies that violate fundamental rights and laws further entrenches politics, to the detriment of law.

This is why it is hugely important to seek solutions rooted in a strict rights-based approach. A rights-based approach could be best described as normatively based on international rights standards and operationally

directed to promoting and protecting those rights. “Under a rights-based approach, plans, policies and programs are anchored in a system of rights and corresponding obligations established by international law”. Therefore, a rights-based approach should integrate norms, standards and principles of the international rights system into the plans, policies and processes which seek solutions to the specific conflict at hand. In the case of Palestine this approach would seek solutions based on international law rather than relying on negotiations to bring about a long lasting and just solution. In this light, it should be unacceptable to refer to illegal Israeli settlements in the oPt as “undermin[ing] efforts towards peace” while in reality they constitute a violation of numerous international standards and principles and represent a manifestation of Israel’s ongoing impunity. Therefore, the implementation of international law and standard should be a demand and not be asked for through negotiations.

*Amjad Alqasis is a human rights lawyer, legal researcher and the legal advocacy program coordinator of BADIL Resource Center for Palestinian Residency and Refugee Rights.

Ethnic cleansing in the Golan Heights

By Taysir Mari'i
Director Golan for Development

The Golan for Development (GD) is a non-profit organization founded in 1991 in the occupied Golan Heights. GD activities target the Arab population that remained in the Golan after its occupation by the Israeli forces on June 1967 war. It seeks build self-reliant and democratic modern society in the Golan as a way of resisting the occupational policy, as well as promoting integrated and sustainable developmental institutions. Furthermore, GD encourages young leadership with improved management capabilities, enthusiasm and experience to take an active role in steering these institutions.

Article:

In light of its colonial, racial and anti-Semitic characteristics that serve its aims of occupation and geographical domination, the Zionist movement ideologically denies Arab nationalism in the Middle East. This denial has been practically implemented through fragmenting the Arab Middle East into countries and “nations”, executed by British and French colonialisms, and later carried out by the Zionist project. The Zionist enterprise depicts the Arab nation as a collection of distinct religious groups and ethnicities, seeking to break up this single nationality and form multiple independent nationalities in its place. Furthermore, in its attempt to normalize the formation of a Jewish state in the Middle East, the Zionist movement turned to transplant narrow and exclusive identities, an effort that was not limited to Palestine alone, but also stretched even to Iraq and Lebanon.

For such a goal to be fulfilled in Palestine there needed to be a massive ethnic purification, which still takes place until this day: it was first materialized during the 1948 Nakba, which included the ethnic cleansing of Palestine from its indigenous population, ensued in importing Jews from Europe and the Arab countries in the 1950s and 1960s; this project continued through the displacement of the population of the Golan Heights, the Gaza strip and the West Bank in the aftermath of the 1967

war; later, Israel attempted to deport the population of south Lebanon during the occupation starting in 1982. Today, it is embodied in the forcible displacement of Palestinian Bedouins from the Naqab (Negev), building the Annexation Wall in the West Bank, the policy of home demolition in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, and the deportation efforts on the Palestinian citizens of Israel.

In the Golan Heights, the scattered basalt stones are definitely not ommissible, and when one observes them, one notices their semi-alliance that remained for their original function: to separate the unique properties that once belonged to the original population in this region. In addition to the basalt, one notices the scattered concrete structures that once formed churches, mosques and homes. Dotted with cacti or vine trees, these remains embrace the earth that witnessed an unspoken tragedy of massive displacement. Masking this tragedy is highly modern and securely fenced Israeli settlements, colonies, that divert the observer's attention from the history of the place. In his famous book, *Ethnic cleansing in Palestine*, Israeli historian Ilan Pappé writes:

After the holocaust, it has become almost impossible to hide horrifying crimes against humanity: currently, in our modern world that is witnessing a revolution in the field of communication specifically by the spread of electronic media, any aim to hide crimes against humanity from the public has become unattainable. Nevertheless, the crime against Palestine via which the population was deported was successfully erased from the world's memory: this crime was and is politically and morally denied, and remains unacknowledged despite of its significance in the history of Palestine.

This success facilitated the displacement of the population of the Golan Heights in 1967. On the one hand, the experience obtained from committing the first crime enhanced the perfection of the later. On the other hand, the later came to confirm the same aim of ethnic cleansing adopted by the same oppressor in a variety of times and locations. "Ethnic cleansing is a crime against humanity", Pappé proceeds, "and its executers are criminals that need to be faced with their crimes in special judicial bodies. Although determining the castigation against the 1948 oppression is judicially a hard task, at least a story delivering the true historical plot can be presented". However, was the ethnic

cleansing of Palestine in 1948 a single act of cleansing in the history of the Zionist movement?

The ethnic cleansing that took place in the Golan Heights and Lebanon, and is still ongoing against Palestinians in the Naqab (Negev), the Galilee and the West Bank, prove the persistence of the Zionist policy of cleansing and its gradual growth, development and professionalization. Ironically, we observe the executors of this ideology receive Nobel Prizes for peace.

Before it was occupied in 1967, the Golan Heights consisted of 130,000 Syrians distributed between the city of Qunitra and more than 200 villages and farms. Two months after the occupation, in August 1967, a survey conducted by the Israeli military stated that 6,396 Syrian citizens remained in the Golan Heights, out of whom 206 lived in Qunitra, while the rest were distributed between seven villages in the north.¹ Today, there are approximately 400,000 Syrian citizens who fled the Golan Heights and their descendants. They live in Damascus and other Syrian districts, while 21,000 remained in five villages.

For the past 41 years since the occupation, the Israeli narrative consistently omits the fact that what took place in the Golan Heights is forcible displacement, claiming that the region was an unpopulated area, except for a small number of Syrian soldiers who lived there due to their military service and a few Bedouin tribes. This narrative is identical to the story relating to the Palestinian Nakba, merely two decades prior to 1967. According to Nathan Shor, the population of the Golan Heights was ordered by the Syrian military to leave their villages and properties and move into Syria. Other Israeli claims state that this order was broadcasted on the Damascus radio, or that the population migrated voluntarily without any Israeli pressure.²

Studying and understanding the coercive deportation of the Palestinians in 1948 is essential to approaching the depopulation of the Golan Heights in 1967. This is so because displacements that followed the Nakba – in the Golan Heights and Lebanon – were improved and complementary policies of deportation, completing a single project. There is a lot of evidence that shows that what took place in the Golan Heights in 1967 is ethnic cleansing:

Although it is true that some of the population of the Golan Heights

moved to Syria, escaping the battles inside or beside their villages, most of the population lived in villages far from the front, a fact that challenges the claim that the population has moved completely voluntarily.

Rahaba'am Zie'vi said³ that David El-Azer has deported the population from the Golan after receiving permission from both Yitzhak Rabin, Military Chief Commander, and Moshe Dayan, Minister of Defense.

In a conversation with Israeli author David Grossman, Arnon Soffer (an Israeli historian) said that approximately 70,000 citizens were barbarically deported from the Golan Heights within two days only (Grossman 153).

In his book *Victims*, Israeli Historian Benny Morris mentioned the deportation of 80-90 thousand Syrian civilians as a result of the pressure generated by the Israeli military officers during the bombardments between 5 and 8 June 1967, and the military invasion between the 9th and the 10th of the same month. During a meeting of Israeli military commanders in the morning of 9 June, Rahba'am Zivi declared that when the Golan Heights is taken over, it should be unpopulated. Although the conclusion of the meeting was against the evacuation of the Golan Heights, the Israeli military commander in the north, David El-Azer, applied the evacuation policy nonetheless (Morris 309-310).

According to the pronouncements of ES-V 2252, 237-A/6797, and S/8158 (Gussing report):⁷, published in a report by the UN, the majority of the population in the Golan Heights fled to Syria before the occupation was fully accomplished. However, the report adds that those who remained in the occupied Golan Heights were indirectly forcibly displaced by the "war" atmosphere created by the Israeli army.

The number of Syrians who remained in the town of Qunitra decreased gradually. In July, 90 civilians crossed the Israeli-Syrian temporary borders after they were forced to sign a declaration stating that it is their own will to leave their homes (Ha'aretz (1) 16 August, 1967; (4) 12 September, 1967).

Despite the displacement resulting from the collective state of panic among the population in the Golan Heights, a great deal of the people remained in their villages after the war. However, they were triggered to leave their homes by both physical and psychological pressure generated by the Israeli military forces.

According to an argument introduced by Bashar Tarabeih during the 40th commemoration events of occupation, the Syrian radio never urged the population of the Golan Heights to move into Syria and leave their homes.⁴ He went on to say that Muhammad Harfoosh stated in a meeting with the Syrian media authorities that the Israeli army killed about 50 people from his village, Skoofia, after gathering them in the center of the village. Additionally, in an interview held with Suleiman Ashtiwi, from the village of Isha in the centre region of the Golan Heights, Ashtiwi said that was shot by the Israeli army and lost his consciousness, waking up in a Syrian hospital, as far as he remembers.

Patrick Seal, a British journalist, wrote that the Israeli forces deported Qunitra and evacuated all the surrounding villages. In addition to the 30,000 Syrians who were deported during the war, additional 90,000 Syrians were also forced to migrate in the six months after the war.

In Yahuda Rut's documentation of the southern villages in the Golan Heights – published by the Israeli National Museum in 1984 – post-destruction pictures of the southern villages in the Golan Heights are presented. Those pictures were taken a few months after the war, and they included a photo of an aged woman from Mitsar village preparing mud in order to make domestic tools (76), while the caption said that the woman still lived in that village.

In Military Order number 39, pronounced in 22 August 1967, the Israeli chief commander announced the existence of 101 villages in the Golan Heights:

By the power invested in me as a chief commander of the Israeli forces in the region, I declare that:

1 (a) - the area mapped in a scale of 1:50000 and containing the villages numbered from 1 to 101 is a closed area. The formulation of this order and borders of the closed area are attached to this declaration, which was exposed to civilians and is open for future exposure at the military unit in the Golan Heights to those of interest.

7 – This order shall be named “the deserted villages order” (the Golan Heights).

In the northern part of the Golan Heights, the mountaintop village of Majdal Shams formed a shelter for refugees from the neighboring

villages such as Z'oor, E'in Feet and Jibatha Elzeit. According to Salman Fakhr Eldin and Mahmoud Milli – residents of Majdal Shams who witnessed these events – the refugees from the neighboring villages used the dwellings of their friends as well as the school for residence. They stayed in Majdal Shams for two weeks under the constant threats from the Israeli forces until finally they were allowed to go back to their original villages. However, their journey back was not undisturbed. Rather, the refugees were under constant danger of Israeli shootings, which forced them to escape onto south Lebanon and later to Syria, i.e. outside the Golan Heights.

Relying on the little information available, Tom Saggy built a scenario describing the first war at the Golan Heights, which can be summarized as follows:

When the Israeli army entered the Golan Heights in the margining of on 9 June 1967, its forces were attempting to expand the Israeli borders eastward, which resulted in the evacuation of the villages either near the battlefield or those standing in the path of the Israeli forces – which suffered from bombardment, as previously happened in Palestine. Furthermore, the process of occupying the Golan Heights took place rapidly in two days, a fact that did not allow the planning of an ethnic cleansing operation: thus, this explains the fact that the great majority of the evacuation happened in the few months following the war. This explanation is supported by statistics conducted by the Israeli authorities in August of the same year, and by announcement of Area 101 as a closed area in 22 August 1967, which aimed to prevent the civilians from getting back to their homes.

Conclusion:

The above stated facts are drawn from a great volume of evidence on what happened in the Golan Heights in 1967. The history of the Golan Heights is integral to the implementation of the Zionist ideology, serving its aim of forming a Jewish country in Palestine, through implementing the concept of ethnic purification. Nonetheless, more extensive work needs to be done in two main aspects: first, we urgently need a deep study of historical documents on the displaced population of the Golan Heights. Second, we need to closely analyze the documents regarding

the conducts of the Israeli authorities, access to which is not guaranteed. To conclude, the 1967 events in the Golan Heights are definitely a crime against humanity for which Israel should be held responsible. This study is but an initiation for those of interest to study the 1967 events, and to uncover the Israeli record of crimes in the Golan Heights.

(Endnotes)

1. <http://nakba-online.tripod.com/Golan-6.htm>
2. Bashar Tarabeih, <http://www.jawlan.org>.
3. In a discussion between him and David Elie'zir, published in "Yedio't Ahronot", taken from <http://nakba-online.tripod.com/Golan-6.htm>
4. <http://www.jawlan.org>

Section Two: Practical Experience

Defence for Children International–Palestine Section Protection of Child Rights Reinforces Identity

DCI team

Defence for Children International- Palestine Section

Defence for Children International-Palestine Section (DCI-Palestine) is a national section of the international non-governmental child rights organisation and movement, Defence for Children International (DCI), established in 1979. As such, it is a member of the International General Assembly of DCI, which convenes every three years. Currently, DCI has 45 national sections and associated members throughout the world, an international secretariat in Geneva and consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council, UNICEF, UNESCO, and the Council of Europe.

Each national section and associated member is an autonomous entity affiliated to the movement by pledging to follow the broad mandate of promoting and protecting the rights of children according to international standards. DCI-Palestine is dedicated to promoting and protecting the rights of Palestinian children in accordance with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), as well as other international, regional and local standards.

Article: Introduction

Defence for Children International–Palestine Section (DCI-Palestine) strives to prepare work plans that focus on enhancing children's identity; raising their awareness and sense of belonging to their environment and homeland; and providing a protective environment for children's rights in Palestine. DCI-Palestine promotes activities and programs in accordance with international conventions relating to human rights in general and child rights in particular, as well as the Palestinian Child Law – which DCI-Palestine, through lobbying, advocacy activities and collaboration with various stakeholders, has guaranteed to be drafted

in line with international conventions. Further, DCI-Palestine seeks to comply with key criteria of the child’s best interest when handling children’s issues.

With regard to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), DCI-Palestine bases its work on the comprehensiveness and coherence of the rights contained in this convention, whether civil, political, cultural, social and economic; it directly stresses children’s basic rights, such as survival, development, growth, and protection from all forms of abuse and exploitation, as well as the right to full participation in family, cultural and social life.



credit to Husam Abu Allan

DCI-Palestine also concentrates its work on achieving the child’s best interest as one of the basic principles emphasized by the CRC; the particular political, economic and cultural circumstances of each Member State requires prioritizing the child’s best interests in all decisions pertaining to him/her.

International humanitarian law and the CRC

By revisiting the Fourth Geneva Convention and its Additional Protocol, with specific provisions on the obligations of the occupation authorities, we emphasize (as the provisions themselves stipulate) that any occupying power is bound to provide all life requirements for civilians who fall under its authority. It is also specifically responsible for protecting children under its authority and their fundamental rights.

The fact that the state of Israel is a signatory to the Fourth Geneva Convention – although it must also be said that any State’s reservation to this Convention or some of its articles does not revoke the mandatory implementation of the basic principles such as the protection of civilians, especially children – means that Israel as an occupying power is bound to guarantee that civilians under its occupation enjoy their full rights.

With respect to identity as recognized by international agreements, we can quote Article 8 of the CRC, which stipulates that:

1. States Parties undertake to respect the right of the child to preserve his or her identity, including nationality, name and family relations as recognized by law without unlawful interference.
2. Where a child is illegally deprived of some or all of the elements of his or her identity, States Parties shall provide appropriate assistance and protection, with a view to re-establishing speedily his or her identity.

Article 2 of the same convention provides that *States Parties shall respect and ensure the rights set forth in the present Convention to each child within their jurisdiction without discrimination of any kind, irrespective of the child's or his or her parent's or legal guardian's race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, property, disability, birth or other status.*

Further, Article 16 of the same convention stipulates that *No child shall be subjected to arbitrary or unlawful interference with his or her privacy, family, home or correspondence, nor to unlawful attacks on his or her honour and reputation.*

Occupation practices to distort and uproot identity

The Israeli occupation uses various methods and practices of repression against Palestinian children, ignoring all international conventions relating to the protection of child rights, as well as its role as the occupying power obliged under international conventions and humanitarian law (as previously mentioned) to provide protection for children and other individuals under its authority.

These repressive practices started with the expulsion of Palestinians more than 65 years ago, but this expulsion has not stopped: as the Palestinian territory lies under the authority of the occupation, the Palestinian refugee issue is the longest and largest expulsion process in modern history. Indeed, this situation is continually worsening in the present day because of Israel's ongoing actions on the ground. It is true that the historic Nakba ("catastrophe" in Arabic) of the Palestinian people began in 1948, but evictions and displacements continue in many areas of the occupied territory; the Israeli occupation continues to devise and implement a wide range of practices to justify the expulsion of greater numbers of Palestinians from their lands. Clearly, this state of continual expulsion has a huge impact on children, who are evicted along with their families or born in refugee camps.

Eviction and expulsion are not the only means pursued by the occupation authorities against Palestinian children. Other practices include, most notably, arrests: the Israeli state consistently and deliberately violates the most basic rights of children during the process, using torture, ill-treatment, solitary confinement and other practices that aim to render an entire generation of Palestinian children fearful, anxious, distorted and detached from their cause and identity. It is well known that the psychological effects left by repressive practices on children are difficult to overcome if such children have no access to adequate care and protection afterwards.

The role of DCI-Palestine against Israel's attempts to distort children's identity

Given all the abovementioned facts, DCI-Palestine seeks to provide protection for Palestinian children against any violation of their rights; defend these rights when violated; and engage indirectly in their rehabilitation process through cooperation and partnership with the stakeholders responsible for providing counseling and psycho-social support.

Protection: DCI-Palestine works both locally and internationally to protect Palestinian children. The organisation works to reduce violations of their rights by the Israeli occupation by, on the one hand, implementing outreach and community campaigns about child rights, and, on the other, how to address the occupation practices that aim to distort the Palestinian national identity. To this end, DCI-Palestine uses media outlets and training sessions targeting children, as well as theatre and other arts in order to educate children and the community about such violations and how take precautions.

The DCI-Palestine Accountability Programme, through its Documentation Unit and Advocacy Unit, gathers all testimonies and information documented by DCI-Palestine fieldworkers so that children whose rights are violated will be heard by the international community and decision-makers – and so that these decision-makers will proceed to pressure Israel to assume its role as the occupying power in protecting the rights of persons under its authority, especially children. DCI-Palestine has been able to achieve a number of results in this area by lobbying the European Parliament and influential figures within the European governments to improve the situation of Palestinian children's rights,

although continued and systematic abuses by the Israeli occupation mean that a truly protective environment for children is yet to be secured.

Legal representation: When the rights of Palestinian children are violated during arrest and detention in Israeli detention facilities and prisons, DCI-Palestine lawyers represent and defend a number of children in Israeli military courts; they also challenge the ongoing detention of children by the Israeli occupation authorities.

Rehabilitation and therapy: DCI-Palestine plays an indirect role in detained children's rehabilitation and therapy through partnerships and cooperation with civil society organisations involved in mental and community health. These organisations follow up on the cases of children whose rights have been violated in order to address and treat the horrendous psychological effects through which the occupation seeks to create a Palestinian generation distorted nationally, socially and culturally.

Involvement of child victims in advocacy work

Before discussing the advocacy and outreach activities carried out by DCI-Palestine on children's right to preserve his/her identity, we must note that human rights organisations involved in children's issues most commonly address community and decision-makers *on behalf of* children during their advocacy activities – that is to say, they work without directly involving this group, the children themselves, whose rights are violated. DCI-Palestine makes a concerted effort to pursue a very different policy: it directly engages children in lobbying and advocacy activities that respond to their needs and priorities. Indeed, DCI-Palestine believes that children's direct participation will have a positive and effective impact both on these issues and on their own sense of empowerment and ability to make change. This is a qualitative addition to advocacy: children are more qualified to talk about their concerns, their needs, and their feelings toward how community practices affecting their fundamental rights than anyone else could do on their behalf.

To demonstrate DCI-Palestine's efforts to link its policy on defending children's right to land and identity through advocacy and lobbying activities, DCI-Palestine is currently involved in defending child victims of deportations that Israel continuously carries out against Palestinians – whether these Palestinians are refugees, those residing in what is

currently known as Area C, or those affected by the Wall and settlements, etc. Together with BADIL Resource Centre for Palestinian Residency and Refugee Rights, DCI-Palestine is currently working on a *Rights of Children to Land and Identity* project, which is divided into two parts. Part One aims to educate children and introduce them to their rights as refugees of the longest expulsion in the world, which began 64 years ago and continues today in all areas through a wide range of tactics. Part Two engages these children to maintain and defend these rights by producing informational materials to launch advocacy and outreach campaigns. This project is to be carried out for a year, primarily in Jerusalem and Area C.

The project seeks to preserve the rights of refugees in their own land by educating children on these rights. The fact that the Israeli state has been violating their rights for 65 years does not mean that these rights are outdated. The project also involves children living in refugee camps and other marginalised areas, where they face daily struggles with the occupation and its repressive tools that impede them from enjoying their rights and maintaining their presence on their own land. Every single person in a society suffers from injustice brought against them, but children are the most vulnerable to violations of their rights. The key objective of this project, then, is to empower children and provide them with mechanisms and tools that will enable them to work effectively toward defending their rights. Furthermore, DCI-Palestine has a future vision for this kind of work: to leave a sustainable impact by empowering children and investing in their capacity to be effective actors in defending their rights.

Conclusion

Israel continues to implement its racist and repressive policies of displacement and colonialism against the Palestinians, specifically targeting the younger generation; the occupation is convinced that distorting Palestinian memory and identity will consequently distort and therefore weaken Palestinians' collective psychology, yielding a generation that is confused, frightened, and detached from their national identity. Through all of its programmes, DCI-Palestine works in response to these policies to protect and preserve the Palestinian identity and instil national spirit among the Palestinian – especially children – by emphasizing, protecting and defending their rights.

The asymmetrical equation - Land and Tourism in Palestine

By Rami Kassis
Director
Alternative Tourism Group

The Alternative Tourism Group (ATG) is a Palestinian NGO specializing in tours and pilgrimages that include critical examinations of the history, culture, and politics of the Holy Land. Established in 1995, ATG operates according to the tenets of “justice tourism”, that is, tourism that holds as its central goals the creation of economic opportunities for the local community, positive cultural exchange between guest and host through one-on-one interaction, the protection of the environment, and political/historical education. ATG works to encourage all tourism operators to abandon exploitive mass tourism and to adopt practices that positively affect the host population. Through these methods, ATG seeks to promote a positive image of Palestine and its people and to contribute to establishment of a just peace in the area.

Article:

Background

The case of Palestine is unique, as compared to any other situation worldwide. The Israeli occupation of Palestinian lands has affected both land and tourism alike. Palestinian land has always been the basis of the conflict, albeit the Israeli right-wing tries to paint the issue as a religious conflict. Israel seeks to obliterate the Palestinian national identity and the cultural history of Palestine through the strategy of acquiring and controlling land using illegitimate means. This is why the Occupation itself has been declared illegal under UN resolutions, human rights law and the Geneva Conventions. Israel has eyed the multiple tourism products existing in the form of history, culture and natural land, and promoted tourism to emphasize that it has occupied the land. It has tried to obliterate the previous history and culture, and on the other hand Israel has dealt equally aggressively with tourism by using it to



serve the Israeli policies of occupying Palestine, so that tourism has been promoted to stress the false notion that Israel and Palestine is one geographical entity which all belongs under the jurisdiction of Israel. Israel has altered entire maps to falsify history and, thus, created facts-on-the ground that deny

Palestinian claims that are true. These maps have obliterated important sites from the Palestinian territories and are dubiously claimed as being Israeli. Also, by the use of Israeli guides, Israel has deliberately worked to provide visitors a narrative that is untrue and makes believe that Palestinian tourism products are, in fact, Israeli. Within this narrative, the idea of Palestine is totally missing and, in their argument or story line, a historical error! To further validate these illegitimate claims, Palestinian land has been confiscated in order for Israel to build colonial settlements as a tactic to alter geopolitical and demographic realities on the ground.

The dilemma and impediments of land – a background

Palestinians argue that the growth of Israeli settlements compromises their ability to establish a viable state of their own in the territories, in accordance with the proposed two-state solution. http://www.poica.org/editor/case_studies/view.php?recordID=4141

Tourism has been hijacked by Israel, not only to create a rationale for perpetuating their occupation of Palestine but also used as a tool to discount the basic rights of the Palestinian people on their own land.

The disparity of tourism and the land

Tourism and land are synonymous in the Palestinian case. The Zionist project perpetuates the myth that Palestine is the promised homeland of the Jews. To validate this myth they have used the tactic of uprooting the identity of historic Palestine in order to match the Zionist account.

<http://www.councilforthenationalinterest.org/news/opinion-a-analysis/item/1659-expulsion-of-the-palestinians-the-concept-of-transfer-in-zionist-political-thought-1882-1948>Using this ploy, they have managed to nurture the support and sympathy of both the Jewish people and the international community. This is taking place by replacing the names of Palestinian cities with Jewish names and also by naming colonial settlements with biblical names. Almost every settlement is named after a Biblical city and this provides the impression that settlements are, indeed, part of Israeli territory. One can think of names such as Teqeo, Ephrata, Betar Elit, Maale Amos and Elizar as deliberate attempts to mislead the people who are deeply involved in understanding the conflict into believing that the settlements have a rationale for being where they are. Wilfully, they have destroyed hundreds of Palestinian villages, stolen the Palestinian cultural heritage and have fabricated interpretations that unlawfully convert what is a Palestinian heritage into an Israeli heritage.

Since the beginning of the 20th century Palestine has seen complicated changes in its political circumstances. These have included the creation of Israel in 1948 and the 1967 war. As a result of the latter, Israel occupied the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip. These events have created catastrophic political, economic and social facts which have deeply affected the life of the Palestinian people, most of whom became refugees. In many ways Palestine itself was simply wiped off the map, historic Palestine coming to be known as Israel. In this context tourism became a political tool in the supremacy and domination of the Israeli establishment over land and people, and an instrument to prevent the Palestinians from enjoying the benefits and fruits of the cultural and human interaction on which tourism thrives. <http://www.atg.ps/index.php?page=context>

Despite the fact that Israel signed the Oslo Agreements with the PLO in the 1990s and recognized the establishment of the Palestinian Authority to administer some of the Palestinian territories, namely parts of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, many areas of life in those areas are still under total Israeli control. For example, Israel controls all access to Palestine (land and sea borders as well as access from the airport, and connecting roads), most of the Palestinian water resources, and all movement of people and goods from, to and within Palestine. These

facts have significant impacts on the development of tourism in the Palestinian territories and the dissemination of information to tourists. Jerusalem – the heart of tourism in the region – has been illegally annexed to Israel, filled with illegal settlements, besieged, judaized, surrounded by checkpoints, and encircled by the Apartheid Wall, all of which has resulted in the city's isolation from its social and geographical surroundings. Tourism also in this context can play an important role not only as an economic activity in Palestine but as a sector irrevocably linked to the conflict and has a crucial role to advocate for the Palestinian people and their rights in this land. Through its activities, tourism can assist in the creation of a new consciousness by visitors of the justice of the Palestinian cause and thereby create a wider solidarity for the Palestinians. This solidarity enables Palestine and Palestinians to be liberated from the colonial structure of domination, subjugation, and control.

Land acquisition- a trend in the global tourism industry

In fact; there is a global trend of land acquisition for all forms of tourism projects around the world, and an increase of land being seen as a commodity, as real estate. Entire coastlines are being privatised when, in fact, these are lands that belong to the commons and cannot be appropriated without the total acceptance of the people via a social contract. Agricultural lands have been acquired after offering pitiful compensations and turned into helipads, golf courses, and other entertainment zones. So there is far less public space that is allowed to remain “for the common good” whether that land is in villages, countryside or inside cities. Much of the previously “common” land is accumulated through dispossession. Land conversions for large-scale tourism complexes are unreasonable and irresponsible. The lure of quick cash has led to appropriation of all kinds of lands for mega commercial ventures such as tourism, or real estate projects linked to tourism. This has resulted, for example, in significant diversion of the amount of land suitable for food production, particularly in Third World countries. Not only do “land grabs” by resort and real estate developers pose a rampant problem the world over, “sea grabs” for the development of commercial water-based tourism activities such as cruising, boating and diving, have also become commonplace, as has over-fishing by intensive methods such as factory ships. In India, for example, the Central government had sought to accord use of the seas

to large multinational corporation hotels to use as many as 26 nautical miles as part of the space they would use for the guests who arrive from the airports by seaplanes.

The rapid proliferation of mega-resorts that often include hotels, residential housing, golf courses, marinas, shopping centres, entertainment facilities and even landing strips for private jets, wreaks havoc on the natural environment, while impacting disastrously on the lives and sustainable livelihoods of millions of small-scale farmers and fisher-folk around the world.

In the particular case of Israel all the above factors exist, but they are fuelled and exacerbated by the Occupation. Israeli tourism is a double-edged sword. On the one hand, it fills the coffers of the tourism industry and enriches investors who put profits before ethics. Perhaps, the most serious thing about Israeli tourism is that it is a source of further deprivation and ideological control of minds about Palestine and Palestinians. The average tourist comes to Israel believing what the mainstream media has already told him or her about Palestine - either that it does not exist; or if it does, it is a dangerous place inhabited by dangerous people out to harm the good people of the world.

A different paradigm of tourism is possible!

As has been pointed out above, Israeli monopoly of the tourism industry is grounded in a narrative that justifies their occupation to the land. Palestinians obviously cannot sit and watch while their lands and heritage are stolen and appropriated for the Israeli project of control, domination, and subjugation. From that contention, tourism operators must set in motion another paradigm around which tourism can:

1. Offer a Palestinian narrative that introduces the reality with regard to Palestinian history and its age-old connection to the land – Palestine through the eyes of the Palestinians, or through the eyes of historians and others in the past who recorded Palestinian culture.
2. Reclaim all the historical, archaeological and biblical sites that Israel has stripped from Palestinian ownership. Since that is a matter of the 1967 occupation and 1948 “judaization”, Palestinian tourism activists should educate tourists about the illegitimacy of Israel’s claims that those sites are theirs. It may then mean that the tourist will enter

and protest certain areas and make known his or her resentment of illegal ownership of those sites by Israel and even refuse to invest money on food and souvenirs. Tourists may also lodge their dissent by returning as advocates to lobby for more such actions by other tourists. Definitely, what is needed is a campaign, with evidence that is compelling, that exposes Israel's hollow claims. Such exposure could be the example of confiscation of Palestinian land to build a national park and its embezzlement of Palestinian heritage. Worse, Israel's claim of such heritage as theirs is a lie that must be nailed in the international arena. A case in point is the way in which the village Lubia was razed to the ground and a National Park created in its place which was called "South Africa" – a rather blatant comparison at the apartheid years in that country now practiced by Israel!

3. It is widely estimated that sixty per cent of Palestinian West Bank land is considered as Area C and therefore it is controlled and used by the Israeli side, although the Oslo Accords only granted Israel temporary custodianship of that land, until 1999. In this regard, relevant UN bodies – for example, the UN-World Tourism Organization (UN-WTO), must be lobbied to demand de-control of the many natural resources of Palestinian land and water, including touristic sites. Instead, Palestinians must be empowered to invest in and use these sites as the tourism products they offer.

ATG's stratagem

It must be stated with a sense of fairness that the touristic, historic, and holy places found in Israel and the Palestinian territories are unified by geography and, perhaps, history. As such, they cannot be separated from each other. In this regard ATG encourages tourists to visit both Israel and Palestine, rather than choose to visit one over the other.


This route is the way towards more fairness and justice. Tourism in Palestine provides visitors with a particularly rewarding and enriching experience. Not only does the tourist discover the beauty, spirituality and hospitality of the country and its people, but also begins to encounter some of the political, economic, and social facts on the ground that shape the daily life of Palestinians. This is as it should be, for much

can be gained – both by tourists and by their Palestinian hosts – from a healthy relationship between the two.

Too often the contact is only very slight, consisting of rapid, coach-driven visits to the Nativity Church in Bethlehem (with a preferred souvenir shop on the way) – a style of tourism that derives from the fact that much of the itinerary is controlled both by Israel and the processes of the Israeli tourism industry. ATG promotes a Code of Conduct which seeks to contribute to a more general effort to re-engage the tourist with Palestinian land and people so that local communities benefit, over exploitation of a small number of iconic sites is reduced, and the pollution from coach-driven mass tourism in Palestinian towns and cities is also minimised.

The entire focus is therefore to bring the tourist to Palestinian cities, towns, villages, desert or other country landscapes and allow time for encounters with the population living in or near those places. Palestinians need to be mindful that visits by pilgrims and travellers to the country are an opportunity for cultural, social and human exchange. Hence tourism must transcend its mere economic characteristics, which adopt a supermarket-style relationship: 'We sell - you buy'! It is important to transcend this exclusively money-based equation by an emphasis on 'human encounters' that enable people to develop strong and lasting ties that are mutual, non-exploitative, justice-oriented and that develop a true sense of global community, and, thus allow for travellers to become messengers of justice and peace and spirituality in Palestine and Israel.

Section Three : Environment



The Question of Land in Palestine

By Muhanad Al Qaisy
Campaigns Officer

The Joint Advocacy Initiative of the East Jerusalem YMCA and YWCA of Palestine

The Joint Advocacy Initiative of the East Jerusalem YMCA and YWCA of Palestine (JAI) seeks to mobilize the movements of YMCA and YWCA worldwide as well as Churches, Church-based organizations, individual and group activists, to influence decision-makers and prompt actions that will contribute to the end of the Israeli occupation and all its violations of international law.

On an international level, the JAI shares information and news through various media outlets, youth exchange/internship programs and other group activities in Palestine. Through its worldwide networking the JAI involves people in lobbying and in practical actions and activities such as the Olive Tree Campaign and various other initiatives. Locally, the JAI trains and engages youth in advocacy, and is part of coalitions / networks to consolidate the Palestinian message.

Article:

Land has been the primary reason for Zionist-Jewish presence in Palestine. As the Israeli narrative goes, the land of Palestine has been 'promised' to the Jewish people in the Old Testament. Moreover, Jewish-Israeli Zionists believe that they are God's chosen people, and that He has entitled them to claim Palestine for themselves. This is so even if this meant expelling hundreds of thousands of Palestinian families from their homeland. Under this pretext, they came and slowly began to take over the country of the Palestinians.

In the 1948 War, the Zionist forces killed thousands of Palestinians, and expelled more than 750,000 from their land and homes to become refugees in surrounding countries, mainly Jordan, Syria and Lebanon. Moreover, there are more than two million refugees living in the West



Bank and Gaza strip. Over the course of the 1948 *Nakba*, the Israeli army seized more than 56% of the lands of Palestinians.

Even though the Palestinians fought against the Israelis during the 1967 War, supported by the Jordanian, Egyptian and Syrian armies, the Israelis emerged from this war victorious, expelling

large numbers of Palestinians from their homes and claiming more Palestinian land - the West Bank and the Gaza strip.

On 30 March 1976 Palestinian Citizens of Israel protested against the Israeli occupation and in defense of their rights on their lands. The spark that lit this protest was the confiscation of thousands of dunams of land, mainly in the Galilee (Jaleel) area in the north of Palestine. The Palestinians challenged the Israeli military and police, which responded by violently invading the villages. Six Palestinians were killed on this day, which has ever since been commemorated by Palestinians and is known as 'Land day'.

The United States of America brought Palestinian and Israeli leaders together to negotiate a peace agreement in 1993. This agreement, known as the Oslo Accords, aspired to allow both sides to live in peace. It also stipulated that the West Bank must remain free of Israeli settlements and under the full control of the Palestinians. However, the Oslo 'peace process' allowed the Israeli authorities to introduce laws to bring about an end to any possible Palestinian connection to areas that were taken by Israel in the 1948 and 1967 wars.

Through finely structured processes and policies, the Israelis began to put a Jewish stamp on Palestinian land. They took control of historical sites and holy places. After 1948, the Zionist Israeli government issued many laws to facilitate the confiscation of lands, and make it seem legitimate. These laws include the Closed Areas Law, the Law of Absence and the Law of Wastelands. Through these invented laws the Zionist government was able to seize more than million dunums of the

best lands in Palestine.

The second Intifada broke out in 2000. The Intifada erupted as a result of the visit made by Ariel Sharon to Al Aqsa mosque in Jerusalem. Outraged Palestinians took to the streets in protest of this offending visit, and many were killed as a result of Israeli army violence. The Israeli government used the second Intifada as an excuse to control and confiscate more lands in the West Bank, and in 2002 they began to build the 'Apartheid Wall' to separate Israel from the West Bank. The Wall also enables Israel to annex thousands of dunums of Palestinian land to the Israeli side.

In response to the Israeli actions and the aggressive attacks on the Palestinian civilians and their lands in the West Bank, continuing land confiscation, uprooting of trees, control of the water resources, arbitrary arrests, expanding settlements and assaults on farmers, the Joint Advocacy Initiative (JAI) launched the Olive Tree Campaign (OTC) in 2002.

The olive tree is of huge significance to the Palestinian people, due to its deeply rooted history in the Holy Land. It is also a major commercial crop in Palestine, for many families it represents their primary source of livelihood. For these reasons the JAI chose the olive tree as a peaceful means of struggle to defend the land and our right to live in peace and justice. Since the beginning of its occupation of the West Bank and the Gaza strip in 1967, the Israeli Military uprooted and destroyed nearly 600,000 olive trees. Nearly half of these trees were uprooted during the past 11-years. The mission of the Olive Tree Campaign is to educate the international community about these violations, and mobilize the community to intervene in defense of the rights of Palestinian landowners, as well as the Palestinians' rights to freedom, peace and justice. We also aim to keep hope alive among Palestinians, through assisting them to replant olive trees and help them protect their lands.

The Olive Tree Campaign aims to protect Palestinian lands, strengthen the agricultural sector and offer an opportunity for internationals to visit Palestine to support farmers and give them an opportunity to experience the local culture and the hardships of life under occupation. We ultimately advocate for peace with justice for Palestinians through policy changes.

The Olive Tree Campaign empowers Palestinians farmers and supports their right to maintain their own lands. It is a creative and persistent way of dealing with the Israeli systematic destruction of lands and uprooting of olive trees. The Campaign also engaged numerous individuals and organizations from around the world to support farmers by sponsoring the purchase of olive trees, participating in planting and harvesting of olive crops, as well as acting to influence policies in their own countries to make changes on the ground in Palestine.

Eco-justice for Palestine

By Simon Awad
Executive Director
The Environmental Education Center

The Environmental Education Center (EEC) is an educational ministry of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land (ELCJHL). The EEC tackles all environmental issues and their effects on the aspects of social, cultural and economic life, and contributes to the sustainable development of society. Additionally, the EEC works to teach the Palestinian community about the value of nature, conservation, and biodiversity in order to find justice and wellbeing for the entire community through several programs including the Botanical Garden, Natural History Museum and Environmental Exhibition. Our program also includes the first bird ringing station in the Arab world in addition to educating the next generation of Palestinian citizens and leaders.

Article:

Land is considered central to the conflict between Palestinians and the Zionist movement. Actions taken by the Israeli occupiers have damaged the unique environment of Palestine in addition to harming the people. In light of the conflict on the ground, many Palestinians have forgotten the beauty of their homeland and the importance of preserving it. Palestinians have had to resort to several means of resistance such as political, economic, social, cultural, peaceful and popular. But the success of preservation of the land and its people is intertwined through the use of ecology. Coming from the Greek word *Oἶκος* or *Oἶkia*, meaning home or homeland, ecology is the study of how an environmental system works, including both the land and the organisms that live on it.¹ Without the consideration of the ecology of Palestine, the people of Palestine may never find true and lasting justice.

1. Dr. Guillermo Kerber. *Eco-Justice in Palestine-Theological and Ethical Insights*. The Environmental Education Center's Third Palestinian Environmental Awareness and Education Conference entitled "Eco-Justice of Palestine". December, 2012.

Palestine: A Land of Biodiversity

Palestine holds a privileged geographical location as it mediates three continents: Asia, Europe and Africa. The variety of climates and differing regions may have contributed to the high diversity of plants and animals found in Palestine. Despite its small land size, Palestine is one of the richest areas of biodiversity in the world. Due to the large variation in climate, geographical terrain and soil types, Palestine has a large number of plant species. There are approximately 2,700 flowering species, about 261 endemic species, 53 species special to Palestine, 12 very rare species and 543 endangered plant species, mainly from the Alzenbakah and Iris families. According to the Palestinian Ministry of Environmental Affairs, Palestine is characterized by a great diversity of fauna including mammals, reptiles, amphibians, birds.²

In addition, its location within the “Fertile Crescent” may have contributed to human evolution and stable civilizations. The indigenous people of Palestine, namely the Canaanites, provided a great gift to humanity through the development of agricultural practices and domestication of animals. Palestinians have also been credited with the first cultivation of basic and native agricultural crops such as wheat and barley.³ In contrast, the Zionist movement needed to seek the assistance of Europeans to introduce the cultivation of grapes for wine production, much like the French colonizers in Algeria.

Distortion of History

In addition to the destruction of the environment, the Zionist movement has distorted the history of the land and its people before the creation of Israel. However, falsifying the narrative of land is not unique to Zionist historians. Benjamin Netanyahu (the current Israeli Prime Minister) claims in his book, *A Place Under the Sun* that writers, politicians, poets and non-Jews have contributed to the formation of the Zionist interests.⁴

2. Palestinian Environmental Quality Authority. World Environmental Day. 4, June, 2010.

3. Dr. Mazin Qumsiyeh. *The Coming Environmental Nakba: Review of “Gaza in 2020” Report*. The Environmental Education Center’s Third Palestinian Environmental Awareness and Education Conference entitled “Eco-Justice of Palestine”. December, 2012.

4. Abd Al-basset Khalaf. Review of the book, *A Place Under the Sun*. Published in Al-Hayat Jadida News. 30, January, 2013. No. 6193

Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Palmerston and even Herzl considered the Zionist movement a European desire, not a Jewish dream. He writes that the Romans put an end to the Jewish presence in Palestine (the Roman army stormed Palestine in 64 BC, ending the Maccabee rule). He claims “Jews did not take the Arab land, but it was Arabs who robbed the land of the Jews,” and “the controversy between Arabs and Jews... is like the debate over ownership of human rights at home.”

He also quotes the French poet de Lamartine, that in the year 1835 “outside the gates of Jerusalem, we have not seen a creature alive and did not hear the voice of any creatures, we came across a total emptiness and silence.” The wasteland myth created by Zionism, describes Palestine as empty and the ruins of “the cursed Jericho is today desolate and dilapidated.” Jews had found a barren land, not with paved roads or ways of transportation, so they built roads and founded cities, factories, hospitals and turned swamps into farmland. They saw the Arabs in Palestine had built only one new city, Ramla, during the past 1200 years and that “the name of Palestine itself is no longer in use between the Arabs”. Netanyahu quotes Churchill’s statement, “Left to themselves, the Arabs of Palestine would not in a thousand years have taken effective steps toward the irrigation and electrification of Palestine.” Netanyahu claims that the Jews “have regained their land” through settlement and self-defense, not with blood and fire as the Spaniards did when they regained Cordoba and Granada from “Islamic occupation”. Although these claims are not true and woefully misrepresent the history of Palestine and its people, they have been used by the Zionist movement to create the state of Israel.

Israeli Land Acquisition

Historically, Zionists acquired Palestinian land through purchases from absentee landlords and forged land sales. Many organizations assisted in the purchasing of Palestinian land for Jewish immigrants, such as the Jewish National Fund (JNF).

The JNF was founded at the Fifth Zionist Congress in 1901. The objective of the non-profit organization was to raise money to purchase and develop land in the then Ottoman Palestine for Jewish settlement. The JNF continued to acquire land throughout the British Mandate and is still active today. Since its inception in 1901, the JNF has contributed to the purchase of hundreds of thousands of dunums (a dunum is equal

to about 0.25 acres) for the development of Jewish movement and settlement. Other JNF projects have included the draining of wetlands, land reclamation and Israeli infrastructure development. When the State of Israel was established in 1948, all the land acquired by the JNF was given to the state to use and manage.

Donations collected by the JNF were not just from Jews, but from people of all nations around the world, particularly Europeans. The JNF used many pretexts for international fundraising campaigns such as environmental conservation and forestry. Currently, the JNF is working on projects labeled as tree planting, environmental conservation and the extensive cultivation of exotic trees (started earlier during the British occupation in an effort to create the green Palestine imagined by the West). Many of these projects are on sites of Palestinian villages destroyed in 1948 during the Nakba, often blurring the effects of the occupation and destroying the remaining fig and olive trees and grape vines which once surrounded Palestinian homes.⁵

Being a tool of colonial and expansionist movement, the JNF used environmental reservation as a pretext for controlling more land, which enabled the state of Israel to confiscate Palestinians' property. Because of these actions, most Palestinians regard Israeli environmental policies as anti-Palestinian policies. Palestinians have struggled with the idea of environmental preservation since its beginnings in the region due to the ties with Zionist expansion based on "a land without a people for a people without a land."⁶

Changes to the Environment

Palestine is rich in its diversity, but is threatened by time itself due to occupation. Since 1948, the Israeli occupation has systematically destroyed the environment of Palestine through water plundering, land confiscation, destruction of agricultural and wetland areas, settlement establishment, uprooting of trees, closure of many natural reserves, and construction of the 757 kilometers long apartheid Wall, water

5. Dr. Eurig Scandrett. *Colonizing the Environment: An International Perspective in Environmental Injustice in Palestine*. The Environmental Education Center's Third Palestinian Environmental Awareness and Education Conference entitled "Eco-Justice of Palestine". December, 2012.

6. Dr. Abdel Wahab Al-Mussire. *Encyclopedia of Concepts of Zionists: Critical review* (from the Study Center for Politics and Strategy. Al-Aharam, Cairo. 1975.)

contamination from settlement sewage, air pollution and dangerous chemical plants such as those found in Tulkarem and Salfit. Many of these actions remove the Palestinian architectural heritage through demolition, confiscation, forgery, and obliteration, resulting in the aggressive destruction of the natural environmental balance and devastation of everything in its path.

The occupation has also affected the water in Palestine. When Israel drained Lake Hula, the resulting diversion of natural water flow led to an environmental disaster in northern Palestine. Typically, springs and seasonal streams flow to join the Jordan River, which eventually feeds into the Dead Sea from the east, or descend from the central and western mountains into the Mediterranean Ocean. The diversion or blockage of these natural water systems has caused the conversion of peri-wetlands into dryland areas and an increase in desertification. Exacerbating this problem is the replacement of the freshwater springs and streams with sewage water from Israeli settlements, causing pollution and killing many fish, animals and plants. Additional pollution is a result of overused agricultural land and modern technological methods using chemical pesticides compared to the traditional farming methods utilizing raw materials and cultivating native species. Now due to the competition created by aggressive Israeli agricultural practices, the use of genetically modified organisms has led to the elimination of traditional seasonal yields.⁷

As part of the Israeli effort to confiscate Palestinian Land, several green or protected areas were announced under the guise of environment protection. However, the true reason behind these areas was to prevent Palestinian expansion or use of the land. One example is Abu Ghunaim (Har Homa), a forested area declared a nature reserve for many years in order to stem Palestinian expansion from the Sur Baher and Umm Tuba neighborhoods and the city of Beit Sahour. However, the Israeli government later removed the environmental designation in order to begin development of a new Jewish settlement known as Har Homa. When the mayor of Jerusalem, Teddy Kollek, announced the start of construction, he stated, "We kept this land with trees and today we will uproot trees and plant Jews in this region!"

7. Ussama Abu Ali et al. Field Guide in Food Security. Ma'an Development Center. 2006.

The defense of the environment and the protection of Palestinian land are linked together, creating new issues surrounding the occupation, the conflict and defense of the land. All of these problems require international efforts from both the United Nations at large as well as its specialized environmental organizations in order to put pressure on the occupation.

Eco-justice Efforts in Palestine

In an effort to continue defending the Palestinian environment, the Environmental Education Center organized and held an international conference at the end of 2012 entitled “Eco-justice of Palestine”. Local and international experts addressed the procedural violations, destruction of the Palestinian environment and many other issues surrounding the occupation. The conference emphasized ending the occupation as the best way to achieve justice for Palestine in all aspects, including environmental justice.

The conference discussed the importance of repeated invitations to international, human rights and environmental organizations in order to compel Israel to fulfill its legal and political obligations. Currently, Israel ignores all agreements, international charters and conventions in regards to Palestine, including those focused on the environment.

During the conference, it was also concluded that invitations to international communities, data and reports about the difficult environment caused by Israeli violations would contribute to the clarification of the occupation in international public opinion. This understanding would increase the international solidarity found for the just cause of Palestine.

The conference demanded the establishment of an organization dedicated to documenting the environmental violations due to the occupation and providing legal cooperation with official institutions both locally and internationally.

During the conference, it was also reiterated that one of the most urgent actions needed to protect all components of the Palestinian environment is the activation of the International Court of Justice-the judicial statute of the United Nations based in Hague in the Netherlands. In the summer of 2004, the International Court of Justice issued an advisory opinion which condemned and criminalized the apartheid wall built by Israel

in the West Bank starting in June of 2002 and considered all Israeli settlements illegal. The use of fences and walls to take uninhabited Palestinian land has destroyed farmland, nature reserves and water sources, as well as creating profound negative effects on various aspects of life, including the environment and biodiversity.

Members of the conference invited friends of international participants to join together for the prosecution of the occupation based on the crimes against the environment and life in Palestine. Official institutions and civil society organizations participating in the conference adopted a decisive stance against working with any parties associated with the Israeli occupation and Israeli settlers through the lens of environmentalism.

The future of the Palestinian people is closely related to the state of their environment. Recognizing and correcting the environmental violations caused by the Israeli occupation and teaching the people of Palestine the value of environmental efforts will benefit the ecological system of Palestine. Dispelling the myths of the history of Palestine and acknowledging its environmental importance will be critical in the establishment of eco-justice for Palestine.⁸

8. The Environmental Education Center's Third Palestinian Environmental Awareness and Education Conference entitled "Eco-Justice of Palestine". December, 2012.

Land and Health

Waleed Abu Rass
Financial and Administrative Director
Health Work Committees

As a Leading Palestinian Non-Governmental Health and Developmental Organization, the Health Work Committees functions in a Rights-Based Approach providing Health Services to all segments of the Palestinian Population, particularly the poor and the marginalized; building development models, and; lobbying and advocating in support of favorable policies and legislations.

Its vision is a free Palestinian society enjoying health rights that are equitable, well-developed and comprehensive.

Article:

The World Health Organization defines health as being not merely just the absence of disease, but also an ideal state of well-being. Thus it is a concept that reflects state beyond the recovery from illness to include the access to and achievement of good health, followed by living a life free from diseases. Access to health requires sound balance between the personal, physical, mental, and spiritual aspects of one's life. In order to achieve the status of a complete healthy well-being, those aspects must be integrated together.



In reference to the above stated comprehensive definition of health, it can be concluded that the health status of the individual is affected by social, economic, and political factors. And the health status cannot be dealt with in isolation from those factors and the effects they may impose. Poverty, social exclusion, scarcity of housing and poor health systems are the most significant social causes of ill-health.

One might propose the following questions: what is the relationship between land and health, and what is the connection between them? From the above, we can conclude that there is a controversial relationship between land and health; land is the source of food, wealth and the place for residency. Thus any violation against the land will reflect itself upon the health and well-being of those who reside in it.

The most significant threats to the health sector in the occupied Palestinian territories result from the Zionist occupation and its subsequent barbaric aggression against the Palestinians' rights and land. What we are witnessing from violations against the Palestinian territories by the occupying forces, including the confiscation of land, building of settlements, taking control over the groundwater, constructing of the wall, transforming the Palestinian territories into dumpsites for the Israeli waste products, and the establishing of several military checkpoints, are all factors that directly affect the health of the Palestinians¹.

Health and Environment

When talking about the land and health in Palestine, the environmental conditions cannot be overlooked and the topic is usually addressed from a rights-based approach; according to the Palestinian Constitution "a well-balanced and clean environment is one of the human rights, and the preservation and protection of the Palestinian environment for the use of the present and future generations, is a national responsibility²." Similarly, the environmental conditions in Palestine cannot be tackled without addressing the role of the occupation and its practices that aim at the destruction of the Palestinian environment and the overall health of the Palestinian individual.

Here it is worth to mention the most significant violations of the Israeli occupation against the Palestinian environment:

- The State of Israel has been taking over the Palestinian territories through policies of building settlements, confiscating agricultural

1. The Palestinian Independent Commission for Citizens' Rights, the environment in the territory of the Palestinian National Authority.2005

2. The Palestinian Independent Commission for Citizens' Rights, the environment in the territory of the Palestinian National Authority.2005

lands, which are considered the source of living for many of the Palestinian families, and constructing bypass roads leading to settlements.

- Bulldozing the Palestinian lands and uprooting of trees under the pretext of imposing security measures; More than 600,000 trees were uprooted since the start of Al-Aqsa Intifada in 2000.

These serious violations, which have been carried out by the Israeli occupation in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, have caused the deterioration of the Palestinian economic and social situation in a way that have never been witnessed before; the people who have been affected by such changes the most are the residents of the Gaza Strip, the Palestinian farmers and those whose homes have been demolished. Thousands of Palestinian farmers are prohibited from reaching their lands, and therefore they have become unemployed and with no source of income for a decent living.

Moreover, the occupation policies of house demolition and bulldozing of lands have had destructive effects on the environment; thousands of dunums of the natural and agricultural lands have become bare and cannot be used for agriculture at its current status and its rehabilitation requires large sums of money, which the owners can not afford. Also the livestock have been obliterated, different kinds of birds have died and thousands of bee hives have been destructed; all of which is considered as vital source of livelihood for the residents of the area.³

The systematically repetitive political violations, which are carried out by the Israeli occupation against the agricultural Palestinian land and homes of the civilians, are considered, under the International Humanitarian Law's principles, serious and dangerous violations. Furthermore, it is a form of a collective punishment, which is banned by the principles of international law.

The Palestinian agricultural sector has been a focal point; targeting it has been an obvious practice and a main goal for the Israeli occupying forces, primarily aiming at the destruction of this sector, which is considered the main base for the Palestinian economy.

3. The Palestinian Independent Commission for Citizens' Rights, the environment in the territory of the Palestinian National Authority.2005

Polluting the Palestinian water and increasing its salt concentration; the settlements contributes significantly to this pollution through the discharge of wastewater into the Palestinian lands including the agricultural lands as it is the case in Qalqiliya, Salfit and the southern area of the West Bank. This has been causing the contamination of the surface and the ground water with toxic substances such as lead and aluminum. Thus the water has become unsuitable for drinking or human use. In addition to that, the occupying authorities and settlers have vandalized the water and sewage networks.⁴

The 2006 Human Development report indicated that the per capita of water for the Palestinian individual especially in Gaza Strip, is considered one of the scarcest in the world at the international level. The scarcity of water is due to both the scarcity of the sources of water and the poor management of the shared water resources. The average per capita of the use of water by the Israeli settlers in the West Bank is 9 times higher than that of the Palestinians. ⁵

The Palestinians have access to only one quarter of the water resources, which the Israelis have access to. There are similar problems related to water in the coastal aquifer, which barely reaches the Gaza Strip because of the increase on the extraction rate at the Israeli's side.

Only 5% to 10% of the groundwater is considered a good quality drinkable water;⁶ the decrease on the percentage of the groundwater, the increase of the salinity of the sea water and the pollution resulting from the leakage of the sewage water, are factors which impose a threat to the quality and quantity of water resources available.

The Palestinian Hydrology Group indicated that the current rate of pollution is four times higher than that of 2005. It is estimated that there is 25 million cubic meter of sewage water annually, which cannot be discharged in the environment in more than 350 locations in the West Bank.⁷

There are several indicators that the Israeli authorities have been imposing destructive practices upon the Palestinian environment. This is

4. Amnesty International, disturb the water: to deprive the Palestinians of the right to access to water.2009

5. The Palestinian Independent Commission for Citizens' Rights, the environment in the territory of the Palestinian National Authority.2005

6. Amnesty International, disturb the water: to deprive the Palestinians of the right to access to water.2009

7. <http://www.phg.org/>

manifested by disposing some of the hazardous wastes of the Israeli manufacturing industries, which are located in the settlements, in areas, which are theoretically under the control of the Palestinian National Authority. The Environment Quality Authority revealed several cases such as the presence of 29 barrels of hazardous wastes in Khan Younis, which the settlers have thrown on the lands adjacent to the settlements. Also it has discovered around 250 barrels of hazardous chemical wastes buried in the land of Umm Toot in Jenin Governorate; this is the waste of one of the paintings and coatings industries of "Ganim" settlement and most of it is flammable and explosive. After the compound has been analyzed, it was identified as nitrocellulose, which is flammable, easily explosive and its remnants could be dangerous. Also waste was discovered buried in Qalqiliya areas, Azzun, Jayyous and Tulkarem dumpsites; the source of these waste products is from Israel.⁸

The Israeli occupation has transformed Palestinian land into dumpsite for solid and hazardous waste, through the establishment of its own dumpsites on the West Bank such as Tovlan dumpsite in Jericho governorate, in addition to the current attempt to establish another dumpsite near Nablus in an area called Kasaret Abu Shusha. The plan is transfer a monthly amount of 10 thousand tons of waste from Israel and the Israeli settlements located in the West Bank. As a result of the current policies imposed by the Israeli occupying authorities, the management of disposing the solid waste was destructed, as the number of random and open dumpsites in the West Bank has increased from 89 to 189.⁹

Despite all of that, the occupying state refuses to adhere to the Charter of the Basel Convention, which rule out the transfer of any hazardous materials of one territory into another , arguing that the Palestinian territories has not been recognized as a state yet.

The above mentioned atrocities and violations against the Palestinian land and environment leave a direct impact on the lives of the Palestinian citizen at the social, economic and political level and subsequently affect the Palestinian health and health issues.

8. The Palestinian Independent Commission for Citizens' Rights, the environment in the territory of the Palestinian National Authority.2005

9. The above reference

The Apartheid Wall and Health:

The apartheid wall, which is more than 700 km in length, has surrounded and isolated the West Bank. One result thereof is the isolation of several Palestinian water wells and springs sources and thus prohibiting the Palestinian citizens from using them. This is considered a severe and direct violation of the right to enjoy adequate standard of living including the human right for accessing water, adequate food and appropriate shelter.

When the construction of the wall is finished, the accessibility to healthcare services will be hindered in 32.7% of the Palestinian villages in the West Bank governorates. The number of the isolated clinics will be 71, granted that 41 clinics have already been completely isolated.¹⁰

In case the construction of the apartheid wall was completed as planned, it will lead to the following:

- 33,000 of the Palestinians who are holders of West Bank IDs and are living in 36 locations will be entrapped between the wall and the green line.
- 126,000 Palestinians will be surrounded by the wall from three sides; this will be in the city of Qalqilya, the Badeya and the Bedouin.
- 28,000 Palestinians in 9 locations in Azzun, Jeeb, Bir Nabala, will be surrounded by the wall from four sides and they will be connected with the West Bank only via a street or a tunnel¹¹.

The construction of the wall is part of the Israeli comprehensive policies of violation which is dividing the West Bank and Gaza Strip into smaller areas and separated ghettos. The main purpose of building the wall in Salfit and Qalqilya, isolating the occupied city of Jerusalem from the rest of the West Bank, and expanding the settlements that are built on various locations such as Bethlehem and Hebron, is to create and increase the number of ghettos.

This is in addition to the permanent and mobile military checkpoints, which are established within these ghettos in order to create more

10. United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the occupied Palestinian territories. The impact of the wall on Health - Special Report, 2010

11. The above reference

divisions and impose a sense of power that has tangible reflection at the lives of the citizens, primarily on health and development.¹²

The most dangerous effects on the health of the Palestinians are the ones resulting from separating the West Bank from Jerusalem. The wall, the settlements and the military checkpoints cause dangerous health problems as it isolates the Jerusalemite communities in Anata village, Shuafat, Zaeem, Sheikh Saad, Eastern Sawahrah, Ram, Abu Dis, Al-Ezarea, Bet Eksa and the old Beit Hanina and the rest of the cities and villages of the south west of Jerusalem, from the rest of the important health centers such as the ophthalmology hospital, Al-Makassed, and the Red Crescent, which are operating in the city of Jerusalem. This is in addition to revoking the identity cards of the Palestinians, who are holders of Jerusalem IDs (the number is estimated to be 70 thousand Palestinians), thus preventing them from reaching Jerusalem city. Also their health insurances have also been revoked under the pretext that they are not anymore residing in the city.¹³

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12. World Health Organization, the World Health Assembly Sixty two, the health conditions in the occupied Palestinian territories, including East Jerusalem, and the occupied Syrian Golan, 2008

13. United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the occupied Palestinian territories. The impact of the wall on Health - Special Report, 2010

The Concept of Land for Palestinians

By Jamal Talab AlAmleh

Director

Land Research Centre Jerusalem

A Palestinian non-governmental, non-profit organization established in Jerusalem in 1986 as a part of Arab Studies Society. LRC activities cover all West Bank including East Jerusalem and Gaza strip. LRC activities, applied research and studies focus on land and Palestinians right to land and housing and natural resources management.

Article:

Religious Introduction:

(And by the earth and He who spread it) surah 91 verse 15 in the Holy Quran means that Allah (God) has spread the earth in all directions in order for it to be a living place for human beings.

The earth in religious concept means homeland, the cradle of a person's aspirations, creativities along with his wrongdoings and wars. This concept is found in all religions where it is believed that human beings have inherited the earth from God to prosper and grow it. Some have succeeded in doing so while others have only wreaked havoc.

The earth is often linked with phrases like "unfair distribution of resources" or "prolific production". It is geography diversified for there are springs, rivers, mountains, valleys, seas etc. There are deserts that even animals can't live in while there are paradises in other places. There are places with heavy rain while there are others with scant rain. With all the paradoxes taken into account, every place on earth- every country- has people who love it. It is but instinctive in us to want to live in a place we can call home; where we feel we belong.

There is somewhere south west of Yatta, in a desert-like place people can only reach by a SUV and then walk on foot for half a day, where simple people live. The land is often barren and the water supply is so scarce it can hardly be enough for them and their livestock. They live on breeding cattle and live in clay huts. No roads, electricity, schools,

or markets. And yet, when a woman was asked, “What makes you stay in this barren land?” she simply answered, “It is **home!**”

Land is an important natural source:

- **Land is home:** where people live and build. In the old times, people took shelter in caves to survive. Palestine has lots of caves and even nowadays people in Palestine, especially Bedouins and shepherds use them as alternative shelter instead of their houses that get demolished by the Israeli occupation for various reasons.
- **Land is a national capital:** Land is considered the foundation of building a home- There is no homeland in diaspora or in the outer space. Building a home and a state needs land and people. The Palestinian people cling to their homeland despite the displacement that is often forced upon them. Palestinians consider historic Palestine their home and they dream of having their independent state someday. The land of Palestine is a Palestinian capital that will flourish one day.
- **Land is food:** All food needed by humans or animals is from land. It's noteworthy that Palestine was the first to be called “The land of honey and yoghurt” in reference to its abundant sources of food. Palestine is the land of grapes, orange, figs, olive, dates, and spinach among many others. One of the wonders of Palestine is that its people have never experienced hunger. Its diversified nature and geography enable numerous plants to grow.
- **Land is medicine:** Palestine's trees, flowers, seeds, and leaves are known for being medicines to many diseases. The Palestinian, by experience, knows the importance and benefits of using plants in healing or protection. Even Palestine's soil and mud are of healing powers especially for the skin. The mud from the Dead Sea is probably evident evidence.
- **Land is an inheritance from ancestors and martyrs:** Palestine's soil is soaked with the blood of martyrs in indication of how many wars and attacks Palestine has gone through throughout history. Palestine is a gravesite of grandfathers and martyrs as well as attackers.

A poet known as Abu Al- Ala' Al-Ma'ri wrote a verse that the case of Palestine perfectly applies to:

“Do not stride arrogantly on graves of people who died here; rather, be like a breeze in its lightness

For the soil of this land is made of nothing but the bodies of the dead”

So, Palestinians' pride in this land stems from their pride of their ancestors and the martyrs. The soil of this land is the store of time, history, glory, and bittersweet memories.

- **Land is sanctities:** Palestine land is the heaven's gate, the place of gathering in the doomsday, the land of prophets and the cradle of monotheist religions. You could almost hear the rustle of swords and the scent of the past in it. There is almost no town or city in Palestine that doesn't have a place of worship or a shrine.
- **Land is memories and love:** Land keeps secrets of its residents and farmers. It is the well of women's tears through decades of pain and struggle. Palestine keeps secrets of childhood, laughs, memories and merry times.

Palestine also keeps secrets of love stories of teenagers from long time ago till now with all the sorrow, longing, and happiness these stories may embrace.

Abu Salma, a poet, was true when he once said,

“Men came to love their countries..... from the dreams of youth they had there”

- **Belonging:** No land has ever witnessed so many struggles over it as Palestine did. Occupiers and conquerors were never satisfied in capturing it but they also wanted to possess it and have it in their legacy. The Israeli occupation is certainly the most heinous enemy of all history for it claims that Palestine has always been theirs and Israelis have been trying to steal the heritage, cultural identity, folklore, and traditions of the Palestinians. Yet, Palestine with its wheat, bread, olive oil, embroidery, markets, mint and chamomile, tailoring and handicrafts, valley and mountains, springs and deserts have shaped the Palestinian cultural identity. To the Palestinian, Palestine is homeland, mother, sister, friend and lover.
- **Land means hope and wishes:** While Palestine is the collective memory of past ages, it is also a promise of tomorrow for generations to come. On the Palestinian land, the will of people will prevail. On this land, the local and international peace will find a way. Palestinians, though they have endured lots of pain, still see Palestine as the symbol of beauty and glory. It is the dreamland.

Palestinian Land and the Struggle over Every square Meter of it:

The Palestinian struggle is getting more heated as the Israeli occupation is trying to “Judize” and make Palestine “Jewish” by replacing Palestinians with Israeli colonists.

Land Research Centre (LRC)- a Palestinian NGO- attempts relentlessly to document all the Israeli violations on the Palestinian land. It protects the rights of the land's real owners and tries to show the world the Israelis' maneuvers and ways in denying the Palestinians their rights.

LRC tries to support the steadfastness of people and spread awareness among them in how to protect their rights, use their land in the best way in agriculture or construction, reclaim their land and improve its productivity and encourage people to go into farming and agriculture. This is so because the land is for the one who protects it and uses it. As the lands takes the side of its real owners and those who respect it as when a person gets detached from his land, his roots and sense of belonging get fragile.

LRC looks at the land of Palestine as a foundation for keeping the Palestinian cause present in the international community agenda. It makes Palestine alive in the conscience of people who believe in freedom, justice and truth. All Arabs' and Muslims' claims of glorifying the Palestinian land and admitting its sanctity are wasted unless they enter the struggle with all its forms until they free this land from the humiliation it goes under by its occupiers.

The land of Palestine is pride and honor to Palestinians. The land should be the mosque and church to Muslims and Christians respectively. The land is the religion and faith; it is the prayer and fasting; the message of the nation and its goal...

As long as the Palestinians and Arabs keep their pride and honor, they're ready to preserve their land until Palestine retains its freedom that its people truly deserve.

Jamal Talab AlAmleh
General Director
Land Research Centre

Section Four : Opinion



Never Ending Ties

By Naba' Assi,

Laylac

The Palestinian Center of Youth Action for Community Development was established on May 25th, 2005 and registered with the Palestinian Ministry of Youth and Sport on April 11th, 2006. It was a dream of a youth group from Bethlehem area who initiated the action towards that end. The mission of the Palestinian Center of Youth Action for Locality Development "LAYLAC" is to contribute to the empowerment of the Palestinian youth sector in particular and the development of the Palestinian Society at large.

Article:

One cannot write about the land of Palestine without speaking about its owners, the Palestinian people. It is the historic and organic connection of Palestinians to their land that creates the identity of the place. The physical and human dimensions of the land of Palestine and the Palestinians that lived in it for centuries, are core to the meaning of national affiliation, and the legacy which have been preserved by Palestinians. This relationship continues to be true even among Palestinians that have been displaced from their lands since 1948. A rhetorical question then rises: would being forcibly displaced from one's own home and land equal surrendering their rights to these properties?

In order to achieve a perception according to which Palestinians have no connection, therefore rights, to their lands, the Israeli occupation aims to prevent their return to their stolen homes. This, of course, is in stark violation of international law. Moreover, the Israeli media plays a decisive role in promoting the Zionist narrative that Palestine used to be an empty land.

After 65 years in the diaspora, the Palestinian refugees continue to keep the old keys to their homes, adamant to return. This persistence stems from the organic relationship, forged over hundreds of years, between the Palestinians and their land, in an ever-evolving mutuality between space, time, and the Palestinian social fabric. It is this identity that continues to drive Palestinian resistance for emancipation and freedom.

The collective history of Palestinians is passed on through the stories of the individuals. The history of Palestine is the memory of all Palestinians. My grandma always tells us stories, they always relate to the land. Grandma is a proud woman, but her stories are filled with sadness of loss. She nostalgically tells us about the harvest seasons, of olives and other fruits and vegetables. Not a metaphor, for Palestinians the land is an actual source of sustenance and livelihood.

An interview with a Palestinian Refugee

What does land mean to you? What does homeland mean to you?

A land can be a certain geographic area that is devoid from human feeling and memory. This what differentiates between any land and our homeland. It is belonging, sacrifice, and the social fabric that make a land a homeland. These things give the place a soul, without which it will be a barren piece of land.

How do you define yourself?

Refugee is a person who is searching to answer two important questions: who is it, and why here? Although there seems to be no difference between a refugee camp and the city, in terms of architecture of the houses, the camp is an idea not a place. It is connected to a political right, which is both individual and collective. It is wrong to associate refugees with poverty or suffering, because the Palestinian refugee who resides in Sweden has the same rights exactly like me.

What is the idea of return for you?

I want to return, but I do not know where to. The most important thing is not only to go back to my land and my village, but also to go back to collective Palestinian life, to have the freedom and choice. We need not forget that the right of return is an individual and a collective right at the same time. Return means retrieving Palestinian life in its completeness and complexity the way it used to be.

What does Doha mean to you?

Doha is a suburb of Bethlehem that is mostly made of Palestinian refugees who left the nearby refugee camps (mainly Dheisheh). Although they left the camp for better living conditions in Doha, the residents of Doha still associate themselves to the refugee camps, calling Doha 'the garden of Dheisheh refugee camp'.



Occupied Palestine and Syrian Golan Heights Advocacy Initiative (OPGAI) is a coalition of 11 civil society democratic and progressive organizations in occupied Palestine and the Syrian Golan Heights, working as active contributors to the solidification and furtherance of advocacy and pressure towards ending the Israeli occupation. OPGAI was established during the preparation for the 2005 World Social Forum in Porto Alegre and it stresses the ways and means necessary to improve advocacy strategy towards ending the occupation and the building of new, democratic social movements in the Palestinian society that is capable of playing an active role in the building of a society in which freedom, equality, democracy and social justice prevail.