

YA QUDS!

Academic Cultural Newsletter

Issue No. 4, July 2018



Centre for Jerusalem Studies
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سامر رداد

Greetings and a warm welcome to readers of the fourth issue of *Ya Quds!*,

Jerusalem has always been the central issue for the Palestinians in their struggle to achieve political independence and as such it has certainly been the scene of major political developments. However, last year was unprecedented in terms of events that might have far-reaching consequences for the future of the Holy City.

The month of July 2017 marked a significant Palestinian accomplishment in the face of Israeli authorities' attempts to alter the status quo of the religious sites in the city by enforcing new measures to control Palestinian Muslim worshippers' access to Al-Aqsa Mosque. In that month Israel installed electromagnetic equipment at some of the Haram al-Sharif gates. The Palestinians challenged and defied this arrangement and, after two weeks of non-violent standoff in Jerusalem, the Israeli authorities removed the security structures near the entrances to the holy site.

During February of this year, Israel added a new front in its persistent attempt to dominate Jerusalem – the churches. The Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, believed by Christians to be the site of the crucifixion and burial of Jesus Christ, was closed by the council of Jerusalem churches following the Israeli authorities' imposition of high taxes on the property. Demonstrations by Palestinians and behind-the-scenes negotiations compelled the Mayor of Jerusalem to back away and suspend plans to impose property taxes retroactively on church property.

On the international level, the UNESCO adopted resolutions in 2016 and 2017, which emphasized that the Haram al-Sharif is an exclusively Islamic Heritage implying, that Jews have no claim to the site. The resolutions asserted that Israel as an occupying power has no right to control the holy sites in Jerusalem. Furthermore, they criticized Israel for its violations against Muslims in terms of accessibility to the Haram al-Sharif and the restrictions it has imposed on maintaining the site while curtailing its structural integrity as a result of damage from underground excavations and police raids into the holy site.

In the context of these Palestinian achievements on the local and international

levels, the President of the United States, Donald Trump, declared on December 6, 2017, that Jerusalem is the Capital of Israel and that the US would be moving its Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. This marked a shift in a long-standing tradition of all previous US American presidents since 1995 to avoid implementing this move. In response to criticism from the Palestinian and the international communities regarding this flagrant condoning of Israeli violation of international law, the US Administration moved the embassy to Jerusalem at the time of when Palestinians commemorate 70 years since the Nakba (disaster), the same day that Israel celebrates 70 years since its establishment – otherwise known as Israeli Independence Day.

The recent developments suggest that the Palestinian-Israeli conflict may be spiralling towards increased tension overall and in Jerusalem in particular. The articles in this issue of *Ya Quds!* provide a multi-disciplinary look at the different aspects of events in the city of Jerusalem. While Walid's Salem's article is about political current events, other articles address different sectors, as well as narratives. For example, Raed Saadeh's article describes the struggle in the tourism sector, Samer Raddad writes about the health sector, and Zeina Abu Hamdan's article shares her childhood memories and the daily struggle at the checkpoint near her home. Altogether, the articles display the perspectives of a variety of Jerusalemites on the challenges of living in their city.

This issue of *Ya Quds!* comes at a time when the Centre for Jerusalem Studies has appointed a new director, Arnan Bashir. We would like to wish him all the best in his endeavours to promote the vision and goals of the Centre.

We would like to send out a call for the fifth issue of *Ya Quds!*, Articles may be in Arabic or English and should not exceed 1200 words. The deadline for submission is September 25, 2018. We look forward to your contributions.

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Personalities of Jerusalem

Khalil Qustandi Al-Sakakini (1878–1953)

Palestine is ours, and he who covets it will regret it.

We will sacrifice for her, whatever is dear to us, be it money or blood.¹

A nation that has people like al-Mutanabi, Abu Firas, Abu Tammam al-Bahtari, and Abu al-'Ala will never die.²

These two quotes from the literary works of Khalil al-Sakakini reflect the themes of his life: his love for his homeland Palestine and the legacy of the Arab nation, as well as the dedication of all his literary and intellectual energies to defending the dignity, freedom, and independence of his homeland.

This Jerusalemite writer lived during the Ottoman period, and later during the British Mandate period in Palestine. It was at this point in time that Palestinians first began to realize the danger represented by the Zionist movement for the future of Palestine. The peril became especially clear after November 2, 1917, when British Foreign Minister Balfour issued his declaration to establish a national homeland in Palestine for the Jews. Sakakini resolutely faced this danger, not only through his poetry and literary writings, but also through his activities in education and politics, and eventually through armed struggle.



Photo 1: Khalil Al-Sakakini

Khalil al-Sakakini was born in Jerusalem in 1878. He studied at the Orthodox School, later moving to the Evangelical Anglican College and eventually to the English College of Zion, where he studied Arts.³ In the summer of 1906, he travelled to Britain and attended lectures on education at the Universities of Ox-

ford and Cambridge.⁴ These lectures influenced him greatly and strengthened his determination to modernize educational curricula in Palestine as a starting point for national liberation. He believed that schools should prepare their students for patriotic civic endeavours.



Photo 2: Al-Sakakini and Al-Dusturiyya colleagues

In the fall of 1907, Sakakini traveled to America, where he remained for nearly a year, facing numerous difficulties in living and acclimatization before deciding to return to his homeland. He describes his short migration to these two countries and their impact on him as follows: “My travel to England and then to America and the influence of the German philoso-

pher Nietzsche and other philosophers on me, in addition to the difficulties I have encountered, all have revolutionized my personality in a way that I did not experience a year ago.”⁵

After returning to Palestine, Sakakini worked as a journalist and teacher of Arabic language for foreigners. In 1909, he established a school called the Constitutional School (al-madrasa al-dustūriyya). It is said that this name was chosen on the occasion of the adoption of the Ottoman Empire’s new constitution issued by the Ottoman Sultan in 1908. The new constitution impressed Sakakini and many of his contemporaries, who held hopes for a better future for the Arab nation.

This school became known for its new educational system based on eight principles aimed at transforming the traditional educational curriculum, which had relied on rote learning and recitation, into a curriculum that relied on analysis and understanding. The new approach also granted students the freedom to express themselves and to develop their personalities without humiliation and authoritative interventions by teachers. A documentary entitled Khalil Sakakini: Diary of a Man accurately summarizes what this great man hoped to accomplish: “Sakakini wished to produce a new Arab man, one able to use his mind to take in, store, and analyze information, thereby deriving new information and new knowledge. He wanted to create a generation capable of innovation, knowledge acquisition, knowledge creation, and knowledge production, not merely the consumption of knowledge as is the case today.”⁶

Arabic, rather than Turkish, was the official language of this school, reflecting Sakakini’s determination that ensuing generations be guided by a nationalistic orientation. In his article on Sakakini, Hasīb Sheḥādeh states that this school is

“the first Arab national school in the country that was not under the auspices of a particular religious sect or institution.”⁷ Regarding his main motivation in establishing this school, Sakakini wrote:

“The most important schools of this nation are foreign religious ones, and the government schools to this day are still not equipped with modern methods ... The major factor in awakening national sentiment is the language and its literature... nationalistic teachers must share with their students literature in the Arabic language that inspires enthusiasm and brings life to their souls...”⁸

Sakakini himself possessed a strong nationalistic spirit, and it is clear that Arabism and the future of the Arab nation in general, and Palestine in particular, are concerns that shaped his thought and enlightened his path and his literary and patriotic journey. This spirit was manifested in several areas, as outlined below.

1. In 1898, when only 20 years old, Sakakini founded the Association of Creative Arts in collaboration with others. This association sponsored cultural activities on the importance of modern nationalistic education and the revival of Arab nationalism.⁹

2. Sakakini defended the Arabic language, calling for its sanctification, saying: “First of all, language is the element by which we acknowledge the glories of the nation, and we must teach each student the dignity of his nation and its glory through Arabic words so that the student reads, feels, and sees the glory and national pride through letters and words.”¹⁰

3. Sakakini’s deep attachment to and belief in the importance of the Arabic language for the future of the Ummah [i.e., the Arab nation] led to a confrontation with the Greek Orthodox Church to which he belonged. He called for the Arabization of the language of the prayers in the church and demanded its use instead of the Greek language. In 1913, he published a proclamation entitled *The Orthodox Renaissance in Palestine*, which led to his excommunication from the Church. The excommunication prevented parishioners from interacting with him or listening to his views, and subsequently prevented his marriage and saw him ejected from the house he lived in, a house that belonged to the Roman monastery in Jerusalem.¹¹

4. While working for Radio Jerusalem, Sakakini took exception to the phrase “Here is the Land of Israel,” as used by Jewish broadcaster on that radio station. It seems that his adherence to his position led the British Mandate government to prohibit Jewish broadcasters from “calling Palestine the land of Israel” in their broadcasts.¹² In addition, Sakakini’s nationalistic positions made

him one of the first to transform Arab radio in Jerusalem from a station that served colonial and Zionist interests into a platform for “raising awareness of the Palestinian Arab people about the dangers they were facing.”¹³

5. Sakakini was an active participant in the establishment of a Muslim-Christian association for inter-faith understanding.¹⁴

6. He joined the Committee for Union and Progress, which was aimed at “solving the problem of nationalities and minorities in the Ottoman Empire by concentrating and granting them self-determination in their regions.”¹⁵

7. He joined the camp of Prince Faisal bin Sharif Hussein, leader of the “Great Arab Revolution.”¹⁶

8. In 1925, Sakakini delivered a nationalistic speech from the Al-Aqsa Mosque platform, protesting the arrival of Lord Balfour in Jerusalem to lay the foundation stone for the Hebrew University. In a poem, he expressed his opposition to and rejection of Balfour’s promise to the Jews to establish a national Jewish homeland on the land of Palestine.

Balfour, we are a nation whose rights will never be violated.

There is no point in living without the tenderness of our nation.

Balfour, we are a nation that has high ambitions.

We will continue our struggle until we achieve our hopes.

Balfour, we are a nation that cannot tolerate oppression.

Balfour, you will be deterred because the ground where oppression thrives is disastrous.¹⁷

9. Sakakini composed the anthem for the Great Arab Revolution:

O our great Master, the pride of all Arabs,

March towards this king before it is too late,

Struggle against the adversary in order to save the homeland.¹⁸

Despite his fierce opposition to Zionism, Sakakini was not hostile to Jews per se. “Quite the contrary, he had several close Jewish friends.”¹⁹ His tolerance can also be seen from the fact that the Constitutional School he established in 1909 accepted students from all groups, including Jewish students. Most significantly, however, his attitude towards Jews may be seen from the following incident:

“An event that occurred during World War I can serve as evidence that Khalil al-Sakakini did not carry his enmity against Zionism over to Jews in general, not even to the Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe. At the end of November 1917, he offered shelter in his house to Alter Levine, a Russian Zionist Jew who held U.S. citizenship. Levine was wanted during the war by the Ottoman authorities on suspicion of espionage. Al-Sakakini did this despite the fact that in case of exposure he would face capital punishment for treason. His guest acted irresponsibly and attracted to himself and his host the attention of the police, which a few days before the fall of Jerusalem into British hands raided the house and arrested both Khalil al-Sakakini and Alter Levine. Before Jerusalem was occupied by the British, both were transported to Damascus, where Khalil al-Sakakini spent more than a month in prison and was forced to live in exile until the end of the war.”²⁰



Photo 3: Al-Sakakini's library

Sakakini spent the last five years of his life in Egypt after he fled with his family from his home in the Qatmoun neighbourhood of Jerusalem one day before the Haganah entered the neighbourhood on April 30, 1948, in the year of the Nakba, leaving a national and educational legacy worth of the respect and admiration of the Arab

nation in general and the Palestinian people in particular. He suffered a great deal from losing his home and his library, expressing his pain with these sad words:

O farewell, O our home, O safe haven, O gathering place of friends, the destination of the visitors at night and day, no one would pass by you, no passing by without coming in and drinking coffee, and if we were sitting to eat we would share it in whatever way possible. O farewell our home, the home of the nation, O meeting place for politicians, journalists, senior preachers and artists from Egypt, Lebanon, Syria and Iraq! O farewell our home, headquarters of the leadership, hospital for the wounded, and asylum for refugees.²¹

Then Sakakini bids farewell to his library, saying:

Farewell, my library, Dar al-Hikma, the gallery of philosophy, the Institute of Science, the symposium of literature, farewell, my books, I do not know what happened to you after our departure, burned, were you moved with respect and dignity to a public library or private, have you been given to shop

owners to be used as bags for onions? It is hard for me to be deprived of you as you have been my spiritual food and I still have a voracious appetite for this food. I was committed to you in my night and day, and no one visited me at night or day, but found me lying on my books.²²

Beyond his distinctive nationalistic activities, Sakakini exerted important literary, educational, and linguistic influences. For example, the establishment of the Constitutional School and the adoption of revolutionary educational principles. Sakakini considered education as the primary means for national awakening and vigilance, which caused him to place an unprecedented focus on education conducted according to the eight principles referred to earlier in this article. Sakakini believed the national cause and sound education together would create generations that would value and respect the heritage of their nation. In this context, we should not forget his focus on the importance of the Arabic language as a key factor in the educational process and national education.

The Sakakini wrote a number of works. Below is a selection from his bibliography:²³

- Palestine after the Great War (Jerusalem, 1920)
- Studies in Language and Literature (Jerusalem, 1925)
- Footnote to the Report of the Committee on the Facilitation of the Rules of the Arabic Language (Jerusalem, 1938)
- In Memoriam (in memory of his wife Sultana) (Jerusalem, 1940)
- Principles of Teaching the Arabic Language: The First and the Second Guide (Jerusalem, 1934, 1936)

Two years after his death, his autobiography was published, O world! This is My Case (Commercial Printing Press, Jerusalem, 1955).

Endnotes:

1. Aws Da'ūd Yacqūb, Khalil al-sakakini, in Al Quds Institution for culture and heritage, December 2012, p.12 (Henceforth, Yacqūb)
2. Yacqūb, p. 3
3. About this school and its name, see Yacqūb, p. 16, f.n. 9 .
4. حسيب شحادة: «شخصيات لا تنسى، خليل السكاكيني المرثي الفلسطيني وأحد رواد القومية العربية»، الموقع الإلكتروني لصحيفة «دنيا الوطن»، 6 تموز 2011م (Henceforth, Shehadeh).

5. Yacqūb, p. 3
6. From Khalil Sakakini: Diary of a Man, a documentary film. Al-Jazira Documentary (February 1, 2011).
7. Shehadeh, p. 1
8. Yacqūb, p. 3
9. Shehadeh, p. 1
10. Yacqūb, p. 9
11. Yacqūb, p. 4
12. Yacqūb, p. 10
13. Ibid.
14. Shehadeh, p. 2
15. Ibid.
16. Ibid.
17. Yacqūb, p. 12
18. Yacqūb, p. 5
19. Emanuel Beska, Khalil al-Sakakini and Zionism before WWI. Journal of Palestine Studies 62/64.
20. Ibid.
21. Yacqūb, pp. 10–11. (See a slightly different translation in: Danny Rubinstein, ‘Farewell to Our House!’ Haaretz Newspaper Apr 27, 2007 12:00 AM)
22. Ibid.
23. For a more comprehensive list of Sakakini’s works see Shehadeh, p. 2.

List of Photos

1. Photo 1: Wikipedia: Khalil Al-Sakakini, , April 6, 2018.
2. Photo2: Walid Khalidi. Before Their Diaspora: A Photographic History Of the Palestinians 1876-1948. Institute for Palestine studies, Washington. D.C., 1984, p. 163.
3. Photo3: Khalil Sakakini: Diary of a Man, a documentary film. Al-Jazira Documentary (February 1, 2011).

Orientalist Depictions of Jerusalem and Palestine versus Anthropological and Biological Diversity

Mazin B. Qumsiyeh and Reena Saeed

The first 120 pages of a four-volume book entitled *Picturesque Palestine* by Charles Wilson published in 1881 are on Jerusalem. These pages included spectacular descriptions of monuments, walls, and links to biblical names (most of them hypothetical/mythical) but barely a word on people and nature. Cox (1852) similarly wrote a lengthy monograph on Palestine including some 20 pages on Jerusalem barely mentioning the native Jerusalemites. The literature of Western travelers to Jerusalem is striking in this respect: the absence of people and little mention of nature. Travel writers like those mentioned above and many others (Mark Twain comes to mind as classical) came with preconceived notions; they wanted to see only what they wanted to see: links to the literature they knew which focused on the Bible and biblical-related writings of a land holy to a Judeo-Christian culture of the West (Rogers, 2011; Keighren and Withers, 2012; Yothers, 2016).

Not only the Muslim majority but even the other natives in Palestine (including the 15% native Christians and 3% native Jews) were almost entirely missing from these orientalist narratives. These and dozens of other Western monographs on Jerusalem rarely mention the rich native diversity of Palestine (human, fauna, flora) and consider it merely as a sterile land thus fulfilling the notion of “a land without a people for a people without a land.” Palestine thus seems desolate and devoid of life.

Palestine is the western part of the Fertile Crescent. Its diverse habitats inspired poets and nurtured prophets. It is an area whose beauty is best explained by its diversity: diversity of people and biodiversity in nature. The geology and geography that produced the rich lands also produced a strategic location connecting Eurasia to Africa. Over the centuries, the old Canaan land thus became a magnet for nearby empires, invaders, pilgrims, and traders. It became a Holy Land to followers of three world religions (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam). More than half of the global population now follows these religions. These people and religions are living and not dead. Jerusalem and the rest of Palestine are not mere monuments for tourists and casual travellers to view through orientalist



Palestinian Landscape.

depictions as an exotic east connected only to religious and racist mythologies (Said, 1979).

Palestine's beauty is rooted in its biodiversity and human diversity. It follows naturally from variation in habitats and bio-geographical zones (Ethiopian, Mediterranean, Saharo-Arabian, and Irano-Turanian). Even though the Palestinian environment was subjected to significant damage over the decades including demographic changes and colonial activities (e.g., see Qumsiyeh et al., 2014, 2017), we still have significant biodiversity. Over 2,500 species of plants, over 500 species of birds, and over 120 species of mammals and many others inhabit this land. There is also significant human diversity despite the attempt to bury it. It goes back to our ancestors who had branched evolutionarily into many Aramaic-speaking Canaanitic people: Phillistines, Jebusites, Nebateans, Judeans, Phoneicians, Samaritans, etc. But they all mixed and traded with each other and with people who invaded and controlled the area (e.g., Romans, Persians, Ottoman Turks). At the time of Jesus, for example, Jerusalem was a bustling town of some 20,000–40,000, with people who spoke many languages: Aramaic, Latin, Arabic, Hebrew, Greek, Amharic, among others. But languages and cultures had no definite borders as they were all mixed.

The Palestinian “Arabic” spoken in Jerusalem for more than 2,000 years and until today is a mix of predominantly Arabic, many Aramaic words, and some Turkish and other words. From Aramaic, for example, we find words like *shub-bak* (window), *juwwa* (inside), *barra* (outside), *baʿl* (for agriculture that uses



Palestinian Landscape.

no water), and hundreds more. From Turkish we find *afandi* (a term of respect) and *baghshish* (tip or bribe). We say *franji* (Frank for “foreigner” relating to the Franks going back to Crusader times). The linguistic and archeological history was thus also buried, together with other native history of Palestine (see Ra’ad 2010). But there is still resistance and, despite attempts at creation of a homogenous Jewish state on top of Palestine, we find among the 6.2 million remaining native Palestinians: Ethiopian, Armenian, Moroccan, Aramaic, Turkish, Samaritan, Circasian, Druze, Bahai, and many others.

The rich and beautiful diversity existed a mere 80 years ago. Even agricultural diversity and living off the land is threatened and is being replaced by industrial (mono) culture. Seven million Palestinians are currently refugees or displaced persons, originating from some 500 villages and towns destroyed or depopulated between 1948 and 1950. As the old die, fewer people remember village life and traditional culture, let alone the rich tapestry of agricultural, natural, and human diversity that was destroyed in much of historic Palestine over the past 100 years (Qumsiyeh, 2004). How many remember the rich mosaic of people and nature (including diverse agricultural products) in Western Jerusalem areas like Lifta, Al-Walaja, Al-Malha, and Deir Yassin? What kind of animals were raised or hunted, what crops were cultivated, what wild plants were gathered, what stories were told of this intimate relationship to nature? Answers to questions like these will be lost unless we act quickly. Some six million Palestinians still live in historic Palestine (now Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Terri-

tories). Preserving our agricultural, anthropological, and biological heritage is essential to maintaining Palestinian identity and for a more sustainable future for nature and people.

Palestine has been subjected to foreign rule for centuries – Ottoman, British, Jordanian, and Israeli control and/or occupation. Military conflict and political struggle have superseded environmental issues, threatening our natural and cultural heritage (Qumsiyeh, 2004).

Environmental awareness and education remain under-valued and underfunded, and preserving our cultural heritage faces many challenges. UNESCO states that “the protection and promotion of cultural and natural diversity are major challenges of the 21st century.”

To preserve our cultural heritage we need interdisciplinary research on Palestinian natural history, the sociology of village life, and the traditional cultural expression in stories, fables, proverbs, and other artistic manifestation, such as museums,¹ thus reconnecting to our anthropological and natural heritage (our diversity).

Professor Mazin Qumsiyeh teaches and conducts research at Bethlehem University. He is director of the Palestine Museum of Natural History and the Palestine Institute for Biodiversity and Sustainability. He previously served on the faculties of the University of Tennessee, Duke, and Yale Universities. He has published hundreds of refereed articles and several books including *Mammals of the Holy Land*, *Sharing the Land of Canaan*, and *Popular Resistance in Palestine: A History of Hope and Empowerment*.

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Yothers, B. 2016. *The Romance of the Holy Land in American Travel Writing, 1790–1876*. New York: Routledge.

Endnotes:

1. “Museums and collections constitute primary means by which tangible and intangible testimonies of nature and human cultures are safeguarded.” (<http://www.unesco.org/new/en/culture/themes/museums/recommendation-on-the-protection-and-promotion-of-museums-and-collections/>). The International Committee of Museum (ICOM) emphasized: “Museums preserve, interpret and promote the natural and cultural inheritance of humanity.” (<http://icom.museum/the-vision/code-of-ethics/>, Tunbridge and Ashworth, 1996).

Memoricide

Alya Brejiyeh

For the past hundred years, Zionists have been using many systematic strategies against the people of Palestine. The main motivation for these actions is ethnic and ideological cleansing aimed at completing the Zionist occupation of Palestine.

One of these strategies is *memoricide*, a term coined by the Croatian doctor and historian Mirko D. Grmek after the attack on the National Library during the Sarajevo siege in April 1992. *Memoricide* is the willful destruction of a vanquished people's memory and cultural treasures. As Carmen Verlichak wrote "*Damage to memory is worse than physical destruction, because human beings, through cultural monuments, try to turn their mortality into a piece of immortality.*"¹



Memories of the Palestinian Nakba.

The social, cultural, and historical life of our ancestors and their sacrifices should be remembered. Defending their rights is our historical responsibility, rights such as their right of return to their homeland after the Zionist Occupation in 1948, the year of Al-Nakba (or "the catastrophe"). Since then, the occupation power denies the right to return of more than 750,000 people who were forced to leave their homes during the 1948 war and their more than 6 million descendants. But more than that, the occupation power attempts to deny that they ever existed. Countless methods are used to erase visible signs of their existence, such as planting flora that is not specific to the terrain just to cover destroyed villages. For example, in the new town of Migdal Ha-Emek, the Jewish National Fund (JNF) strove to hide the ruins of the

Palestinian village named Mujaydil by planting alleys of pine trees in order to silence stories about places previously inhabited by Palestinians.²

Destroying both physical places and conceptual spaces to accomplish *memoricide* can take different forms, such as building on top of other peoples' dwellings and sacred places (e.g., building a highway over graves of indigenous people) or making it impossible to imagine what used to be (e.g., replacing one way of thinking with another that disparages the concepts of the former; as in the case of language).³



Symbols of Jewdization of Jerusalem.

The Zionist power obliterated more than four hundred villages in the occupied territories in 1948, and then replaced them with colonies, gardens, forests, parks, and agricultural areas. In this same way, the occupation power is currently pursuing a systematic plan to obliterate Islamic monuments, especially in Jerusalem, such as the Muslim cemetery and the Ottoman court that lies beside it.⁴ A good example of this type of historical *memoricide* may be seen in Jerusalem's Mamilla neighborhood, where an ancient Muslim cemetery has been covered over completely by a new building and called "Independence" Park. Furthermore, the Zionist municipality plans to build a museum on another part of the cemetery.

These acts show that Israel is a state established on the ruins of Palestinian homes and bodies. Israel deliberately ignored the status of the Honored Memorial of the Companions and their religious and social values for the indigenous people. According to Meron Benvenisti, a former deputy mayor of Jerusalem, "Islamic sites in Jerusalem have been turned into garbage dumps, parking lots, roads and construction sites. The Muslim cemeteries' condition is so outrageous that if it existed in another civilized state it would raise a public storm."⁵

The countless examples of memoricidal destruction committed by the occupation include rebuilding, renovating, or denying Palestinians access to their religious and historic sites. Some of the most impressive works of architecture in Palestine have vanished forever, such as Al-Khayriyya Masjid, which now lies beneath the city of Givatayim, or the church in Birwa, which lies beneath the cultivated ground in a Jewish village named Ahihud. Similarly, the occupation government gave the approval for the destruction of a true gem of architecture, the mosque in Sarafand near Haifa, which dates back a hundred years.

The destructive tools of *memoricide* also include changing original Palestinian names. The occupation power used this strategy to rebrand places and historical sites throughout Palestine with Hebrew names, thereby erasing the Arabic names. This strategy is systematically wiping the Arab identity from the map of Palestine. The occupation power has excavated every part of Palestine as a means to fake the identity and names of Palestinian places, thus denying the history and identity of the land.⁶

Today, one can no longer see the destroyed villages in the land occupied in 1948 since they have been replaced by Zionist colonies. Indeed, the memory is mental and cultural as well as physical. The most serious eradication is the eradication of mental and cultural memory. Therefore, the occupation power seeks to Judaize the educational curricula in schools and street names, hiding the remains that prove that the land is Palestinian. Today, the remains of the Palestinian villages are well-hidden behind trees, cacti, and the forests of JNF. And some of them, through the process of transformation, the residential houses were turned into stores and parks for children are situated above the graves of the village. Also, mosques have been turned into a market with kiosks.⁷

Palestine has been suffering from all forms of *memoricide*, especially the cultural destruction, wiping out the historical heritage found from the Canaanite civilization until today. The Zionist power has worked to hide and or appropriate all historical remains that date back to the ancient civilizations of the Canaanites in Palestine.⁸

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The Qalandia Checkpoint: My Childhood Foe!

Zeina Abu Hamdan

Growing up in Palestine means you are destined for a more than “average” childhood. Yes, as a Palestinian there are your two loving grandmothers, who always insist on feeding you slightly too much. You get to grow up with a lot of siblings and cousins, and you enjoy a rich heritage that you end up embracing one way or another. But due to occupation, this childhood becomes shaped by Israeli authorities. Children grow up witnessing hundreds of human rights violations, whether cases of physical violence, death and destruction, or cases of emotional abuse and/or children’s rights’ violations.



Separation Wall at Qalandia checkpoint

Palestinian children carry around the history of their ancestors everywhere they go. They grow up adding words to their childhood vocabulary like ‘suffering’, ‘humiliation’, ‘fear’, ‘settlements’, ‘checkpoints’, ‘demolitions’, ‘arrests’, ‘martyrs’; not necessarily by choice, but because these things become part of the routine life of Palestinian residents, however old

they may be – hardly making Palestinian childhood “average”. This article does not catalogue these violations, nor does it aim to discuss numbers and facts. It is about just one of these violations: my personal experience with my very own childhood foe: the infamous Qalandia Checkpoint!

I have had the unfortunate pleasure of witnessing the birth of this checkpoint and watching it grow as the years pass. In 2000, this appalling checkpoint was no more than a few soldiers, based along the main Jerusalem-Ramallah road, checking passing cars and asking people randomly for their identification papers. At the time, I was an 11-year-old school girl who didn’t quite grasp the concept of checkpoints. I had to cross this checkpoint daily to get to school and, like many other Palestinian children, I didn’t understand why I had to go to so



Separation Wall at Qalandya checkpoint

much trouble just to get to school (as if children need additional reasons to dislike school at that age!).

I remember a particular incident, when I became very impatient waiting in the crowds for the soldiers to allow us to pass, and I decided to move forward, despite soldiers screaming at me not to. One soldier ended up taking my school bag away, and an older Palestinian man had to quarrel with him for me to get it back. Looking back at that incident, it seems very insignificant in comparison to the daily struggles Palestinians go through but, at the time, I was puzzled by what I had done as a child to be treated that way. The truth is, I never did anything, I was just Palestinian. I had to learn at that age that Palestinian children are different. Soldiers do not see them as children, so they learn not to see themselves that way. I began to understand what being under occupation meant: You don't really have control over your life, your childhood does not belong to you, and everything you go through has to be influenced by the authority of the occupation. I came to understand what freedom meant because of the lack of it. And I realized, despite the "somewhat" normal life I was living, that the checkpoint had come to show me that, as a Palestinian, I would never be entitled to "normal" or "average".

In 2001, Qalandia checkpoint was transformed into a 'border crossing'. There came into existence a lane for cars and a section for pedestrians, all marked by concrete blocks, and the cities of Ramallah and Jerusalem became officially separated from each other 24 hours a day. Year after year, the checkpoint grew to include a watch tower, corrugated tin roofs, cages and turnstiles, metal detec-



Israeli watchtower at Qalandia checkpoint

tors, security cameras, biometric identification devices, and other machines allowing soldiers to remotely control the crossings! ‘Checkpoint’ became an understatement for what the monstrous entity had become: a humiliating, horrific, and sickening terminal!

Today, Qalandia checkpoint is one of the largest Israeli military terminals, through which soldiers hold the ‘right of passage’ to the Holy City of Jerusalem. Of course, to many readers, Qalandia checkpoint needs no introduction, particularly following the recent dilemmas associated with it: traffic jams, brutal attacks, closures, and many more. Over the years, this checkpoint has embodied all the meanings of humiliation: Palestinians are ‘herded’ through cages and turnstiles like cattle, with barely enough space for one person to pass at a time. They

rush through the metal gates and are constantly at the mercy of the soldiers’ moods and their arbitrary decisions about whether or not to click that button and open the gates.

For years I gazed at the lights on top of these metal gates and that particular light turning from red to green was one that brought me a lot of joy. Walking through Qalandia checkpoint meant and still means we always need to be prepared to take our coats off on a cold winter day because the soldiers feel like having us do it. It means we have to wait for soldiers to finish their coffee and get through their chit-chat before they decide to look at our identification cards. It means we have to run from one gate to the other, back and forth, until soldiers decide they are bored with this game and are ready to let us pass.

Now, it takes us from 15 minutes (on a very lucky day) up to 2–3 hours to cross this checkpoint, whether by cars or as pedestrians. It is our own living nightmare – a ‘battle of survival’ in which people become willing to push and shove to get out – we hate it, not only because of how the soldiers treat us, but also because of how we treat each other. Of course as a Palestinian, you can expect to witness everything there at the checkpoint: we have witnessed both the birth and the death of our fellow Palestinians; we have experienced frustration, fear, sympathy, and helplessness; we have seen hope and life, in the form of individuals who have chosen this location to be the headquarters of ‘their business’, but most importantly (and sadly) we have seen ourselves growing accustomed to it.



Israeli watchtower at Qalania checkpoint

In many ways, Qalandia may be a terminal, but in so many others, it is the worst embodiment of the satisfaction these soldiers get from behind their glass windows, playing their own version of ‘the sims’ virtual reality computer game, controlling Palestinians with one button. It is a brutal example of being stripped of your basic human rights, yet overjoyed when they are given back to you as if you were never entitled to them.

Qalandia checkpoint may have been my childhood foe, but today it is just one other aspect of a reality I find myself forced to grow accustomed to. As Palestinians, part of our daily struggle is not tangible, but rather an invisible battle to fight the feelings of numbness that the occupation has made sure grows in us over the years. Our resentment of this checkpoint has definitely increased over the years, as has our resentment of the occupation itself. Yet, we find ourselves becoming more accepting of and used to such gruesome measures by the occupation, in our hopeful attempts to enjoy a somewhat normal life.

This checkpoint remains yet another symbol of the many hardships we experience as Palestinians, but it is also a living reminder that no other nation has more strongly embraced the desire to live amidst death and a living monument to our longing for a land that will forever be ours.

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