



"Street Vendor with Newspaper 'Palestine' in Jaffa (1921-1923)" ©Frank Scholten

"FALASTIN" (PALESTINE) NEWSPAPER

The design of this publication was inspired by the Newspaper "Falastin" (Palestine) Newspaper, the main Palestinian national newspaper before the Nakba. It was founded in 1911 by Issa Al-Issa in Jaffa. After the Nakba, the newspaper continued its publishing from Jerusalem.



"And the days go by... then comes the Nakba and the mighty Jaffa falls. Then Falastin leaves its home, as the people of Palestine were forced to leave... and among them a pledge to return."

– Raja Al-Issa, editor of
"Falastin" Newspaper

71 TESTIMONIES

INTRODUCTION

The testimonies are written in silent letters, but each word is packed with living emotions and wrapped in precious tears. Each letter captures a ray of hope for a better time, a time when justice and righteousness reigned supreme.

"What does the Nakba mean to you?" is the question fathers, grandmothers, and youth answer in this record of their experience. Palestinians, young and old, from across

the world, have shed tears of pride and pain in composing their responses to this question.

These testimonies represent a very humble contribution, passing along to the reader only a small part of the history and the truth, reflecting only some of the pain and deprivation experienced, and continues to be experienced, by the people of Palestine.

A total of 71 Palestinians from the West Bank, including Jerusalem, the Gaza strip, and the rest of historic Palestine, as well from refugee camps in neighbouring countries and those in exile, have drawn the collective Palestinian memory and their thoughts about the Palestinian Nakba in modern history, and about Palestinians' firm determination to one day achieve their legitimate rights.



NORA KORT
Born in Jerusalem in 1950



AHMAD YOUSEF
Born in al-Yarmouk Refugee Camp in Syria in 1975



WADHA AL-BAYED
Born in al-Faluja Village in the early 1930's



ABDEL QADER AL-LAHAM
Born in Bayt 'Itab Village in 1920



TURKIYA WAHBEH
Born in Sa'sa' Village in 1946



OMAR AWADALLAH
Born in Damascus in 1972

ABDEL QADER AL-LAHAM

Born in Bayt 'Itab Village in 1920 (Lives in Dheisheh Refugee Camp)

"I was grazing sheep in Bayt Zakariyya (on that day). At around 4 in the afternoon we saw bombs dropping from the air and falling on Dayr Jamal and Dayr al-Hawa, where the Egyptian army was. Later, they (the army) pulled out. I started walking back to my village when night fell. As I arrived in Bayt Nitaf, I saw people loading their belongings. I kept on walking all night until I arrived in my village at dawn and found the people of my village loading their belongings too. I didn't know where my family was. I took my sheep and kept on walking to Wadi Fukin. I continued walking until I arrived to Hussan by dusk, where people were getting on vehicles heading to al-Khader and Bethlehem. I found people from my village there who also had sheep with them, and so we walked together towards al-Khader where we spent the night. By then, all the people in the villages around had left Hussan, Battir, al-Qabu, Ras Abu-Ammar. In the night we were woken up by the local villagers to warn us that the Zionist forces had entered Hussan. I told everyone with me to stay and wait – we couldn't leave again. I found my family three days later in Bethlehem. Life has been bitter. We lived through hard days without food, water, or clothes after we lived a dignified life in our homes and lands."



YOUSEF HAMZA

Born in Qaditta Village in 1947 (Lives in Shatila Refugee Camp in Lebanon)

"The Nakba is the unforgivable crime of the century against us, which prompted us to look for our identity. It is an open wound that it still bleeding, at great cost. The Nakba started with the infamous Balfour Declaration, of which I am one of the victims. It is to pay the price of expulsion from your own homeland because the colonial powers handed over your lands to others. They still want to finish off what is left of our people in Palestine, and to forcibly expel them just as they did to us. What the US Administration and Israel are doing today is proof of their intent to make a second Nakba against our people by cancelling the right of return for refugees and terminating the work of UNRWA. This means turning us into a dispossessed and dispersed people. But all these endeavors will fail. Even if the world signs off on Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, and the Jewish Nation State law, it will not be acceptable to our people. We are the owners of our cause, and of the land, and we have sacrificed for more than 100 years. We decide our fate on this land. This is what I teach my sons and grandsons. Our tragedy living in the Diaspora refugee camps is our current Nakba."



FUAD SHEHADEH

Born in Jerusalem in 1925 (Lives in Ramallah) / Interview Conducted in 2017

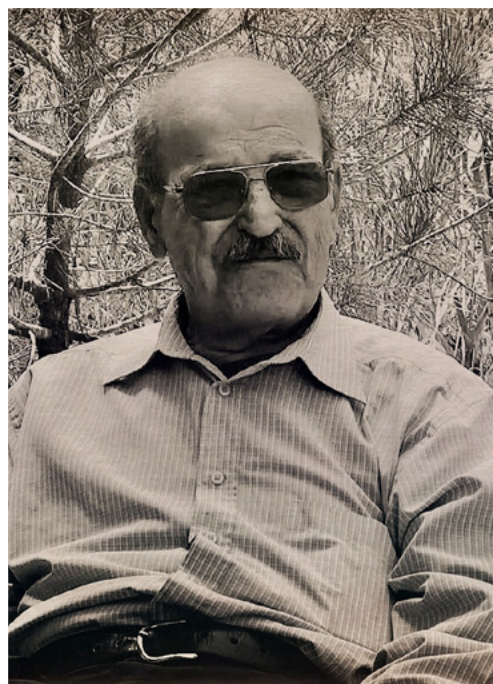
"During the Nakba, Zionist militias opened fire on our car. My mother and I were severely injured, while my friend died on the spot. We were transferred to the hospital of the investigation center (known as the Russian Compound), administered at the time by the British Government. After a month and a half, we were released from the hospital and went to Jordan with my family. We came back once a truce was announced to check on our home in Jerusalem, located near the National Hotel in what is now occupied East Jerusalem, but we found the glass had broken and the house completely looted. The only thing left behind was the newspaper my father used to publish called Mira't Al-Sharq (Mirror of the West) thrown on the floor. We were forced to go back to Jordan and returned to Palestine in mid-1949 and settled in Ramallah."

SHARIF KANANA

Born in Arraba al-Batouf Village in 1935 (Lives in Ramallah)

"The Nakba is what I remember of my village Arraba, and how my brothers fled and hid in the mountains when the Zionist gangs invaded our cities and villages. All the men were ordered out of their houses, and they rounded up all the weapons in the town center. At the time, my father was a notable community leader. As he was sat in front of the house, an Israeli officer hit him with the butt of his rifle. My father's keffiyeh and the black cord holding it in place fell to the ground. We had known this Israeli officer before, as a seller of beef who visited various Palestinian towns. It seems he was using this as a cover to acquaint himself with Palestinian towns before occupying them. The Nakba is a place that smells of fear, of terror and of the cries of women, especially after they would hear the news of massacres in nearby villages. Everyone feared for their lives. We thought we would all be killed, but instead they loaded the men onto buses and dropped them off at the Lebanese and Jordanian borders, opening fire on their heels as they fled. Having lived through the 1948 Nakba, what it means to me now, 71 years later, is that we must maintain hope, and find a way forward to a better future. The Nakba had a huge impact in terms of highlighting Palestinian national identity.

Now we must work to enhance this identity on all levels. The Nakba unified Palestinians and increased their awareness of the importance of preserving this identity. Today, there is a bleak picture, but history is a cycle of ebbs and flows, and we are waiting for a flow."

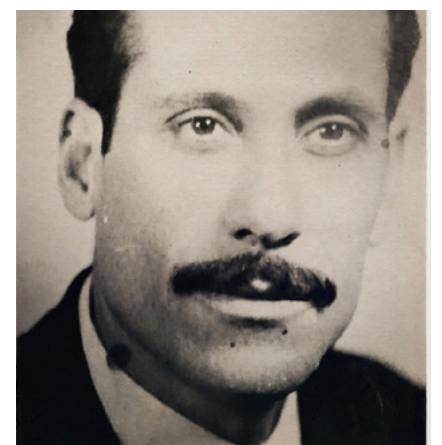


ABDEL RAHMAN AWDALLAH

Born in Isdud in 1931 (Lives in Ramallah)

"The Nakba is to remember my hometown, Isdud. After hearing about the massacres elsewhere, people started fleeing to nearby towns without carrying any of their belongings. Eventually only 50 elderly individuals remained in Isdud. My family and I left as well, except for my father. He thought the troubles would be over in a few days. It was a pathetic situation, everyone was afraid and troubled. I remember as we fled toward Hirbia hearing an announcement that the refugees would be returning to their homes as soon as the United Nations passed a resolution enabling refugees to return. Based on this, we turned back towards Isdud, but they started to fire at us from all directions, so we fled once more. The Nakba is to sneak into your original home in Isdud in order to bring leftover food to your dispossessed family in the Gaza Strip. It is to cross long distances barefoot.

It is to be received with tanks, cannons and fire. It is to be besieged and have your loved ones and relatives killed to prevent them from returning to their homes. The Nakba is a personal, historic, human, and political tragedy, the likes of which have not been seen except during the era of the Nazis. It is the mass destruction of our lives and the lives of our children and grandchildren and the conquest of their future, their land and their history. It is unforgettable and will be passed on to our children."



WADHA AL-BAYED

Born in al-Faluja Village in the early 1930's (Lives in the Old City of Hebron on Al-Shuhada Street)

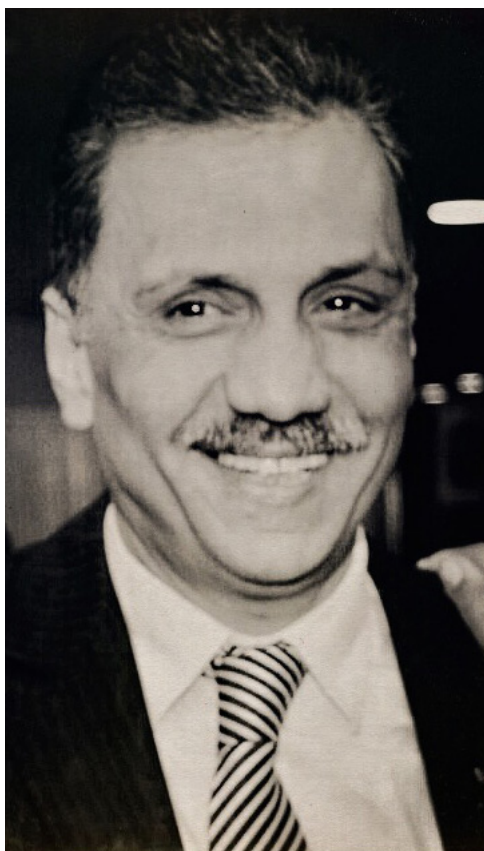
"I am from al-Faluja, which was under siege for eight months. My mother wanted my siblings and I to leave before they attack and kill us all. So, we left, but my parents stayed. We were away in al-Dawayima village for 15 days. We returned back to al-Faluja and were attacked from the air. There were planes dropping bombs on us. The Egyptian army was still in al-Faluja defending it when we rushed out of our homes. My mother mistakenly carried the broom instead of my brother. On our way out, at the edges of the village, someone asked my mother why would you carry a broom out of everything else? She screamed my brother's name. My father returned back to find my six-years-old brother hiding inside the house. We spent the night in one valley on our way to al-Dawayima village. The Zionists found us and started shooting people. Some were

killed and others survived. My father carried my siblings, we were eight, on his back, one at a time. We couldn't walk anymore, neither the old nor the young. Two or three days after we reached al-Dawayima, one of my brothers died. We then moved to Khirbet Loza, where 24 children died because of measles. We kept on walking to Hebron and stayed here in this same house since. Throughout my time, life has been as hard as it was then. One of my sons was killed in Al-Ibrahimi Mosque massacre in 1994 and the Israelis killed my other son in front of his store in 2002. I had 13 children, I have eight left. We, in Hebron's Old City, live in a prison. An ambulance can't reach here and we need permission to even go to the hospital. They want us to leave so that they can take over our homes."



KHALED AL-ABADI

Born in Tal al-Zaatar Refugee Camp in Lebanon in 1964 (Originally from Balad al-Shaykh)



"The Nakba is our daily life in the refugee camps. It is manmade, not a force majeure catastrophe. What happened in Palestine was not caused by an earthquake. Today, we are dispossessed as a result of a forced displacement carried out by organized criminals. The Nakba is others believing I have lived in Haifa for a long time because I know its topography, alleyways, its historic traditions and the habits of its residents. The Nakba is to live Haifa without ever having seen it. The Nakba is my daughters memorizing the narratives passed onto them by my grandfather and my father. The Nakba is the eternal preservation of our national heritage despite all policies and plans to eliminate these from our memories. The Nakba is contributing to the freedom of Palestine through the education of my daughters abroad. They came to know more about Palestine than I do. They know how to confront the false Israeli narrative. They work to increase awareness about the rights of Palestinian refugees and about the Palestinian cause. The Nakba is vowing to one day return, despite the miserable conditions we live under here in the camp."

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"The essence of my existence is to continue sharing this story and to talk about the Palestinian people, who continue to live with pride, irrespective of the suffering, and to fight for existence. We are the witnesses of our own story. And this is our legacy."

– Nora Kort

RIDA NATEEL

Born in al-Majdal in 1946 (Lives in Ramallah)



"The Nakba is remembering a woman and her children who were slaughtered by barrel bombs dropped by Israeli planes as she was baking bread, under a large tree where she had fled with her children from the massacres of the 1948 war. The Nakba is these memories that don't fade away, of the view of corpses of children, women, and the elderly that I saw on the coastal road to refuge from al-Majdal to Gaza. It is the tragedy of every Palestinian from the day they became refugees until the present day. It is repeated forced displacement, from al-Majdal to Gaza, and then from Gaza to Jordan, Syria and Cyprus, and then again from Syria back to Gaza. The Nakba is to carry our children from one place to another like cats do, looking for a final destination. Despite the negative impact of the Nakba on our lives, it has served as an incentive for me and for the Palestinian people to pursue education, progress and persistence for the sake of our cause. Women standing beside men, joined in the struggle. To save and serve our cause, two things are required: education and struggle. This is what we have passed on to our children despite our dispossession. Out of tragedy we have created strong and resilient children. The Nakba is to say to my grandsons, 'You have a right which you must continue pursuing.' We will struggle for as long as it takes to restore this right. We are here forever, until the liberation of Palestine is achieved."

SAMAR ABDUL RAHMAN

Born in al-Yarmouk Refugee Camp in Syria in 1974, Lives in Ramallah (Originally from Isdud)

"The Nakba is an instinctive sense of injustice and endless oppression. It is my bag, which I was forced to carry to all the countries of refuge that I was displaced to because of the tragedy of 1948. It is the forced expulsion from the memory of place and time. It is the feeling that you are infiltrating into Isdud and Palestine through the books of history and geography in the strange curricula. It is the long and arduous journey of struggle and the prison cells which damaged my father's body and his dreams. It is that damned alienation my father and mother devoted their lives to, while teaching us the love of the homeland and the longing of nostalgia. The Nakba is not to repeat what happened to our parents and grandparents, it is to die in our homeland and never leave. It is to convey the dream and the narrative to my children and their children and never forget."

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"All of the people in Jerusalem live a Nakba. Some experience harder Nakba[s] than others."

– Hatem Abu Assab

MOHAMMAD AL-SHOLI

Born in Ein El Hilweh Refugee Camp in Lebanon in 1956 (Originally from Dayr al-Qasi Village)

"The Nakba is my father who was forced out of his home when he was only 12 years old. He took refuge in the Gargour garrison, which was a big hall partitioned by four blankets, with each blanket creating a space that was two meters by two meters. Each family was placed in such a space, with four blankets for their walls. In this painful reality, my father got married and, between those four blankets, had his sons and daughters. The Nakba is to grow up and become aware of my grandfather's small box, the one where he hid the deeds for his property in our village Dayr al-Qasi, and the keys to our house. The Nakba is this box, which was ignored, with the claim that it would be put to use as soon as it was time for the Return. The Nakba is this box, covered by piles of food and clothing rations provided by UNRWA, which told us "this is your temporary place of residence; you will return to your homes soon". It has been 71 years and we are still waiting. The Nakba is to inherit the status of refugee and to carry a blue ID reading "Palestinian refugee". It is the sense of being a sub-human without civil, social or political rights. It is being denied work, education and health services. It is to be a child growing up into a life of refugee-hood, dispossession and injustice. The Nakba is a child sensing he is an incomplete human in the eyes of others. It is when the child starts searching creatively for the means to prove his own existence, and to excel and be distinguished. We don't accept just being successful, but aspire for excellence and innovation. The Nakba is the despair that carries within it a permanent hope for our return to our lands."

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"I still cannot believe how after 71 years we are still suffering of its consequences."

– Nakhleh Abu Eid

MOHAMMAD AL-MISKAWI

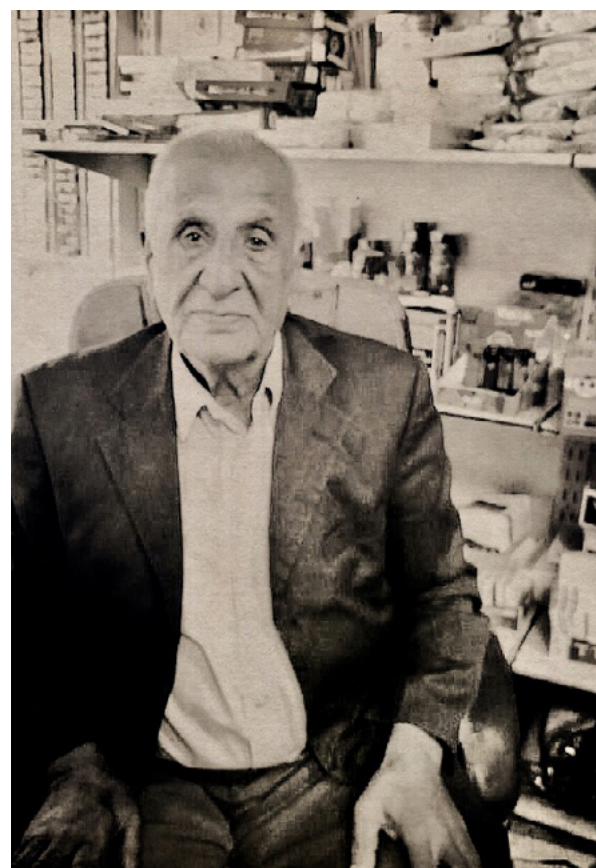
Born in Miska Village in 1936 (Lives in Balata Refugee Camp)

"I belong to the village of Miska, located 15 kilometers southwest of Tulkarem, from which we were forcibly and violently expelled in 1948. We were landowners of 100 dunums of land planted with fruits and vegetables, and would sell our crops to the nearby cities, particularly Jaffa. The memory of the Nakba is always in our hearts and minds. Since the catastrophe took place, we were forced to move at least 12 times until we settled in Balata refugee camp in Nablus. We were happy farmers, living very well in our paradise, but the Nakba has totally destroyed our lives and the occupation continues to destroy our lives. Three of my sons were shot and killed by occupation forces."

SA'ID AL-TIRAWI

Born in Tirt Dandan Village in 1933 (Lives in Nablus)

"I belong to the village of Tirt Dandan in al-Lydd district, and I was 15-years-old when we were forcibly expelled. Before the Nakba, our life was much better than today. We were very happy living in peace and tranquility on our land. My father was a farmer and a livestock breeder and our economic condition was great. The Nakba is the worst disaster that befell us. I would prefer to live in a tent in my hometown than being forced to live in a house here in Nablus."



AYSHEH HAJAJLEH

Born in al-Walaja Village in 1936 (Lives in Jericho)

"My family was expelled in 1948 from al-Walaja village where we owned thousands of dunums of lands, we were very happy family. I remember how when my family was forced to leave the village after heavy artillery shelling. We had to run in the fields barefoot and could not take any of our belongings. We slept in the fields of Bethlehem and attempted, in vain, to go back to our village. We were then forced to move to Ein el-Sultan refugee camp in Jericho where we lived for 8 months in dire conditions, enduring heat waves in the summer and the bitter cold in winter. I wish we had stayed in al-Walaja. I wish to go back. There is no nation in the world that suffered the bitterness of expulsion like the Palestinians. Palestine is not in need of financial aid from any country because we have very rich resources, just allow us to go back to our homes and we will re-build our country with our hands and live happily in peace."

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"71 years later I feel that we are still the guardians of the memory of a fantastic Palestine that is being denied to us and that dreams disappears a bit every morning."

– Fadi Kattan

IBRAHIM TAFESH

Born in Gaza in 1977 (Originally from Isdud)

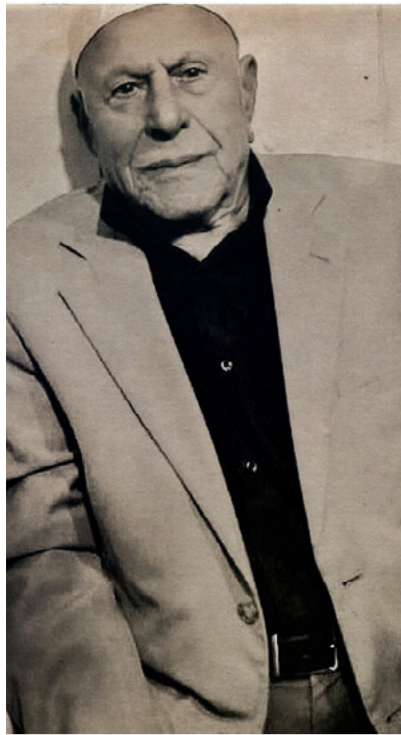
"I am originally from Isdud (Ashdod). My father is 82-years-old and my mother is 80-years-old; and they still tell us stories about their lives pre- Nakba, and how all their happiness was turned into a misery in a blink of an eye. The first house that was bombarded was my grandfather's brother house, killing his 8-year-old son. My uncle also disappeared without a trace. My entire family was determined not to leave their homes but were forced out when the shelling on the village was intensified. Although I was born in Gaza, the memories of the Nakba are still present in our minds and hearts. I see the sadness on my parents' faces as they never stop talking about it. I feel their great longing for their home, for their land, family and neighbors. I wish to return to the village where my parents and grandfathers lived. This is our dream. Our perpetual hope and we will never give up the right of return."



MOHAMMAD ABU HASSAN

Born in Sa'sa' Village in 1931 (Lives in Burj al- Barajneh Refugee Camp in Lebanon)

"The Nakba is turning 86 years old with Palestine still carved in my memory as vivid as the day I left it at the age of 12. It is the memory of big mountains and spacious landscapes stolen in my childhood by thieves. The Nakba is the feeling of powerlessness that overwhelmed me when witnessing a forced mass displacement that I had no way of confronting. It is the sense of defeat I feel knowing that the colonizers live in my homeland while my children and I live as strangers in places of refuge. The defeat fell not only on the Palestine people, but on the entire world, for their silence and failure to confront this crime. The Nakba is Palestinian dignity wasted in front of the world. It is the story that 'we are going to return to our homes as quickly as possible' when we have still not returned. The Nakba is the key that I still have and hold. The Nakba is my children and grandchildren continuing to hold this key. This key is the origin of the narrative."



GHAITHAH AMIRAH

Born in Aida Refugee Camp in 1995 (Originally from Dayr Aban Village)

"If there was no Nakba, we could have had a lot of land. Here in the refugee camp we live with a lot of difficulties, in addition to the Israeli occupation. But we will continue to work to achieve our rights until the last days of our lives. The right to self-determination, to return, and to have a dignified life. Even if we do not return, we want our destiny to be in our own hands. We understand the pain of our grandparents when they had to leave the village, but we still have the right to return. We have suffered from lack of justice and lack of equality. That's how our life has been for 71 years."

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"It is the 100 millionth attempt to save yourself and your children from bombing and destruction in al Yarmouk camp because you do not have the right to return to your home." It is to experience dispossession and vulnerability more than once in one life.

– Dima Odeh

NORA KORT

Born in East Jerusalem in 1950 (Originally from West Jerusalem)

"I didn't live the Nakba itself but my family lost a lot as a result of it. They owned a property in West Jerusalem, in which the second floor was the family house and the basement was an Orthodox church named after Saint George. It was made into a church by my ancestors in the 15th century. In 1948, the fighting in the immediate vicinity of our house was fierce between the Palestinian revolutionaries and the Zionist Haganah. And so, my parents left in fear for the safety of their first child at the time. My father, Samaan, was able to go back following the occupation of 1967 and kept on going there on a weekly basis. Soon after, he experienced his first heart attack when he was kicked out by a Jewish man from Yemen, who lived at the time in the basement of our house. My father left Palestine to Jordan, then Syria and Lebanon, in search of a new home and a job. Eventually he returned back. Nevertheless, till this very day, the Israeli law regards us as absentees with no right to our property. My father kept the house keys with him until his very last day and continued to ask me not to forget it. The property exists on 38 dunums of land (nearly 9 acres) in the area near the King David Hotel. The artists' neighborhood in West Jerusalem exists today on part of our land. Our home became the headquarters of the World Zionist Organization and the church was turned into a concert hall. The essence of my existence is to continue sharing this story and to talk about the Palestinian people, who continue to live with pride, irrespective of the suffering, and to fight for existence. We are the witnesses of our own story. And this is our legacy."



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"After 71 years, unfortunately, what hurts me the most is that many people still do not realize what the occupation is about and what the Israelis are doing to us."

– Henry Khoury

TURKIYA WAHBEH

Born in Sa'sa' Village in 1946 (Lives in Ramallah)

"The Nakba is to be an orphan without a homeland to cradle you. The Nakba is to drink the UNRWA-provided milk every morning, and with every sip of milk to recall your childhood memories of the destruction of your property and your entire life by thieves that want to steal your land. At the same time, the Nakba is the big school in which you get educated on resistance and social integration under the slogan of 'tragedy unifies us'. The Nakba is the humiliation of living in a tent, to see your once great and lofty father stand with a crooked and bowed back, and to see your mother searching for her relatives. It is to see yourself with no identity. The Nakba is to regain the dignity of my father and grandfather to make up for their suffering from

refuge and dispossession. Seventy-one years after the Nakba, my sons are even more determined than I was to regain freedom for Palestine, just as I was more dedicated to it than my own father. My grandchildren will be more determined than their parents. It is because they know that the Israeli parks and gardens were built over the graveyards of their fathers and grandfathers. It is because these flowers are feeding on the blood of their grandparents. I was forcibly displaced when I was three years old, I knew then by instinct that I was a Palestinian and a grave disaster happened, and this is well known to my children and grandchildren; they know that my home and their home is there, in Palestine."



JOHARA BAKER

Born in Jerusalem in 1971 (Still lives in Jerusalem)

"Al- Nakba to me, even though I am not a direct descendent of Palestinian refugees, is a collective wound for all Palestinians. For me, it's also a sore reminder that there's still an open wound for all Palestinians that Palestine is not free. That it is still under oppression, and that there are millions of Palestinians who have been denied their freedom to return to Palestine, which is their right. For me, it is a yearly reminder that the struggle still continues, and that we need to keep it going on until this right is restored."



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"Life has been bitter. We lived through hard days without food, water, or clothes after we lived a dignified life in our homes and lands."

– Abdel Qader Al-Laham

OMAR AWADALLAH

Born in Damascus in 1972, Lives in Ramallah (Originally from Isdud)

"The Nakba means that even though you are not part of the generation that lived the experience in 1948, you have lived it since the day your family had to leave Isdud until today. It is the memory of Isdud, the name I adore and that causes me to rejoice whenever I hear anything about it. The Nakba is depriving more than 6 million Palestinians of their names and calling them 'refugees'. The Nakba and its ongoing memory are the challenge of the Palestinian generations who have not stopped thinking about their right to return to their original homes and their homeland. It is the motivation to study and obtain higher education, the patience to work in any field that contributes to confronting Israeli occupation policies. The Nakba means that none of the descendants of the Palestinian refugees will forget their right to return, or to stop seeking a just resolution to the consequences of the Nakba. It is the long and painful journeys in the stories of our grandparents, and our determination to continue the same journey wherever we are. It is to face many policies that would cancel the rights of the refugees, thereby failing them. It means the refugees remain the permanent living witnesses to the Nakba while the conspirators disappear and the newspapers forget them. It means to teach my children to confront the Nakba by mentioning the name of our original village."



FUAD DAWABE

Born in Bethlehem in 1948 (Lives in Chile)

"I was born in June 1948, a month after the Nakba. My father used to be in what is known as "Ramat Rahel", close to Mar Elias Monastery. He was a farmer and sometimes worked on the bus line between Bethlehem and Jerusalem. We lost the farm and our home on it in 1948. My grandfather did not want my mother to be in a refugee camp, so he took us to his home in Bethlehem after we had been thrown to the street. We never thought of leaving Palestine, but as things developed, there were no job opportunities. We had relatives in Chile and it took about two years to prepare the papers to immigrate. This move killed my childhood. I could no longer see my friends and had to go to a country that I knew little about, including the language. Everything became temporary: Why would we settle elsewhere if we were going to go back to a free Palestine? Looking back, I feel a lot of despair for not having been able to achieve anything. I am very angry. Last year was the first time I could go back to Palestine on a tourist visa. I feel frustrated. My generation began the struggle to free Palestine, all of Palestine. Now people talk about a percentage of the 22% left of Palestine (the territory occupied in 1967). It is most frustrating that I could not have a normal childhood. I remember myself clearly, at 12-years-old, leaving Palestine, going into a car, without looking back. I was simply traumatized. I have never felt normal being in Chile. "



FATIMAH BARSEH

Born in Jerusalem in 1956 (Still lives in Jerusalem)

"Today is like yesterday. The Nakba is the same. Life in Jerusalem today is very tough and hard and on all levels. I am even stopped and interrogated with for wearing the Hatta (the Palestinian scarf/ Kuffieh). I was asked not to wear it because I am not in Palestine, but I am. I was even threatened with arrest for wearing it. Israel has crushed our lives and now Trump is doing the same. Albeit difficult, we continue to be hopeful and to pray to God that the situation will become better."

FADI KATTAN

Born in Bethlehem in 1978 (Still lives in Bethlehem)

"The Nakba for us was a different experience than what you usually hear. When it happened my family was in Bombay. Basically overnight everything that my grandfather had inherited and had bought as investments had disappeared. We are not refugees per se, I still live in my grandfather's home in Bethlehem, but we still feel we are forgotten, even more than other cases. Just like many Palestinian families that have never spoken in public, we have inherited the trauma of growing up with pictures, title deeds (...) a chunk of my family disappeared and nobody talks about it, mainly the international community. Coming from a business family, where the right of private ownership is the essence of investments, we also feel that the western capitalist world that is built on the right of private ownership is denying us this very same right. Why are we different than all other peoples in the world? The international community recognizes private ownership today of Israelis who have stolen the land. Some of them are using our property, our orange groves, as private businesses, which some European companies deal with. Like anywhere in the liberal world, whether it is the US, Europe, Latin America or Asia, where today private investment is guaranteed by international and local laws, we have the right to take back ownership of our property and receive compensation for Israelis' use of our land. 71 years later I feel that we are still the guardians of the memory of a fantastic Palestine that is being denied to us and that dreams disappears a bit every morning."

ZAKKIA AL JESHI

Born in al-Kabri Village in 1945 (Lives in Mar Elias Refugee Camp in Lebanon)

“The Nakba is being from Acre, Haifa, Jaffa, Galilee, Gaza, Nablus and Ramallah. The Nakba is to say I am from Palestine and all Palestine is mine. The Nakba is to go to the Lebanese border with Palestine and find an occupation soldier at the barbed wire fence. It is to extend my hand through the fence to touch the soil of Palestine. The Nakba is not to forget when the ugly soldier steps on my hand with his filthy boots to prevent me from touching the soil of Palestine. I wanted to take some of the soil to give to my children, and to other dispossessed relatives in the refugee camps in Lebanon. I just wanted to place this soil in my home to smell the homeland where my grandparents and ancestors were born. The Nakba means that Palestine lives in you regardless of geography and distance. It is to hold to Palestine wherever you go.”



KHALIL SHOKEH

Born in Bethlehem in 1955 (Still lives in Bethlehem)

“After the Nakba, my mother’s family left the country. They had their home in West Jerusalem, and they ended up going to Jordan. Their home was demolished. Many things changed. My father’s job was in Jerusalem, but after 1948 he could not continue working for many years. The families that left after 1948 could not return, especially after 1967. In Bethlehem, many people left the city after the Nakba, particularly because the economic situation became very difficult. Bethlehem had to receive thousands of refugees. Families, churches, mosques, and institutions were opening their doors to welcome the refugees. Refugee camps were established on agricultural land, and it became a bit chaotic. The suffering under the occupation and the separation of Bethlehem from Jerusalem has been the most difficult for the city. Historically, the people of Bethlehem, whether Christians or Muslims, depended on Jerusalem. Now Israeli settlements and the Wall have control over most of the land. This has had a huge psychological impact on people. People feel like they live in a prison.”

HENRY KHOURY

Born in al-Ramla in 1944 (Living in Ramallah)

“The Nakba changed me when I realized what had happened. Particularly in 1967, my father wanted to do what we did in 1948: walk from Ramallah to Amman (Jordan). I refused and said I would stay home. Why? Because I realized what happened in 1948. I knew the consequences of 1948 on my family and me. After 71 years, unfortunately, what hurts me the most is that many people still do not realize what the occupation is about and what the Israelis are doing to us.”

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“Nakba is the sense of defeat I feel knowing that the colonizers live in my homeland while my sons and I live as strangers in places of refuge. It is the key that I still have and hold. It is my sons and grandsons continuing to hold this key. This key is the origin of the narrative”.

– Mohammad Abu Hassan

AMIN ALI (KNOWN AS ABU ARAB)

Born in Saffuri Village in 1935 (Lives in Nazareth)

“We lost everything we had; our home, our land, our source of income, our life will never be the same. I can never forget that night when we were preparing to eat Ramadan Iftar, and the Zionists started bombarding Saffuri. People left the Iftar table and fled to the streets in terror. My family walked for two days until we arrived to Lebanon and lived in the Faroun refugee camp for 7 months. My sister died of Meningitis in the camp. I can never forget how I used to stand in long queues to receive food supplies. The entire world can neither compensate for the immense suffering we endured, nor wipe away the Nakba’s painful memory. I live in Nazareth today, but I am still dreaming of return.”



HEIJAR IRSHEID

Born in Abu Zurayq Village in 1941 (Lives in al- Baqa’a Refugee Camp in Jordan)

“I belong to Abu Zurayq village in Haifa district. The Jews attacked our village causing us to flee. We were displaced to Jenin and from Jenin we went to al-Karama refugee camp in Jordan, then to al-Baqa’a refugee camp. We will never forget our homeland. We left with our clothes and nothing else. I am the daughter of Palestine. Palestine is in my soul, mind and heart. I still remember my village well and will never forget until my last breath. If you ask me what happened yesterday I would say that I have forgotten, but if you ask me about my childhood in Abu Zurayq I would tell you everything.”



“

“I remember it as if it has just happened. The ugliest scene was when the Israeli army took the people out of the church and murdered 14 young men in cold blood. They kept bleeding until they drew their last breath”.

– Habib Zreik



MOHAMMAD JARADAT

Born in Sa'eer Village in 1964 (Lives in Bethlehem)

"The Nakba affected the Palestinian national identity. It changed part of the country placing it under occupation. Eventually it was the Palestinian national movement, the PLO that brought the national identity back from the ashes of the Nakba. But it could not reverse all of the effects of the Nakba. For me, it is most important that my humanity is restored. Currently, I see perhaps the worst possible political scenario, but I have the sense that the occupation is in its final stages and that the future is for the Palestinian people and their friends. I am not saying it is going to be easy; whoever wants their homeland has to be willing to pay a price. The fulfilment of our rights deserves our work even if the price is high."

AHMAD YOUSEF

Born in al-Yarmouk Refugee Camp in Syria in 1975, Lives in France (Originally from al-Sarafand Village)

"The Nakba is the cold smile of every foreign employee who gets bored of your carefully prepared response when he asks you casually, 'Where are you from?' It is the strange calm inside you when the teacher's fingers were pushing the fish oil pill down your throat, right before you start crying and vomiting. The Nakba is the difficult part of memory that did not believe the victory signs raised at each defeat. It is the nowhere your father left and the other nowhere you came out of. It is when you believe the innocence of the victim will defeat the evils of this world. The Nakba is the pain that has accompanied you ever since the thorn penetrated your father's foot. That child who walked barefoot from Haifa to Aleppo, and 70 years later, still feels the scar on his foot. Today, I tried to throw my keys into the river. I never liked my grandparents' story about those damned keys. The abandoned house in Yarmouk camp taught me that wasted houses have no value, but I still couldn't throw the keys, something prevented me. I am from Haifa."



KHADER ABDEL WAHED

Born in Jordan in 1992, Living in Ramallah (Originally from Tirt Dandan Village)

"The Nakba shaped the kind of life any Palestinian would have after it. It was the start of a new era for us all, not only my family. I was born 45 years after the Nakba, so when I was first introduced to the Nakba story, it didn't make sense at all. I mean I was living a different reality in a different country and it is very easy to continue your life if you are not reminded of the consequences of the Nakba daily. For me it wasn't until my family moved to the West Bank, it wasn't until then that I started realizing the effect the Nakba had on my family life and everybody else's life. You really realize the drastic change the Nakba brought to every single aspect of our life. Despite all the ugly circumstances we were living here

in the West Bank, what really affected me the most was how hard it was for us to be away from our extended family in Jordan. I remember asking my father once why we don't have a specific accent like people in Ramallah and his answer was, 'Because we are refugees, we have collected a little bit from here and there.' I feel great frustration looking back at what happened 71 years ago. It's the biggest fraud anyone could imagine. For me, most of the time it feels unreal. I can't believe that even happened, it's against any logic I've ever learned. For me, what is most unreal is the ethnic cleansing and the attempt to erase an identity and a culture as if it never existed. It's incredible."

“

"Education is key for us Palestinians. If it wasn't for education, the Palestinian people wouldn't have been able to once again stand on their feet. We are well and alive and they can never erase us."

– Mahira Al-Dajani

YUSEF AMR

Born in al-Sarafand Village in 1938. Lived in al-Yarmouk Refugee Camp until recently, then was again displaced (Lives today on the outskirts of Damascus)

"The Nakba is when a stranger asks, 'Where are you from?' and when you respond 'from Palestine' he replies 'and what has brought you to us here?' The Nakba made us different from other people, and made us feel that no matter what we do, we will not enjoy the same human rights as other human beings. The Palestinian will not be a natural and complete human being until he returns to his land. Until then he will continue to be tossed around life, calamities and civil wars, and he will continue to pay the price of a sin committed by criminals against him. Who knows Palestine better than I do? Who knows this feeling of nostalgia for the place where I was born? My children were born in the camp and they felt angry because they had to leave after the camp was destroyed. What anger and sense of injustice are we talking about? The Nakba is to live in a house that doesn't belong to you, and in which the entrance to its garden is not yours. The Nakba is the blunt truth that strikes the walls of my house in Haifa and our fields and citrus groves. It is the dream of having a grave that comforts me, under the soil of Palestine, from the torments of a long life as a refugee."

CHRISTINE*

Born in Ecuador in 1987 (Originally from Beit Jala)

"The Nakba affected my family by violating their inalienable rights, especially the right to movement, freedom, the right to their own land and the right to a nationality as specified in the 1948 UN Human Rights Charter. It still affects our family, given the fact that they do not have freedom. For me, I guess it has prevented me from having a place to call home, I need an (Israeli) permit to go back. While growing up, it meant not being able to meet my family. I never met my grandparents for example because of the Israeli imposed restrictions, and it was not until I was older that I could reconnect with my family and Palestinian heritage. Of course I am frustrated. I would say that after 71 years of trying to negotiate, all we see is more occupation, settlements and people losing their homes and lands. When I look back at 71 years, as a human being, as a Palestinian, 71 years of impunity and now Apartheid, it is outrageous that nobody is doing anything to stop Israel. I do not mean violence, but there is a responsibility that the world has not upheld."

* The surname is not shown upon the request of the individual



CHRISTIAN ABU GHATTAS

Born in Chile in 1971, Lives in Argentina (Originally from Beit Jala)

“As a family, as a people, we were all affected by the Nakba. It is about dispossession – a feeling that we were violated. That nobody did anything for us. I think that our problem began and ends at the same point: dispossession. Although I have only visited once, we all want to go back, to be on the land that you feel is your own. This feeling has affected my entire life – the feeling that I do not have the right to go back home freely. My grandfather was a happy person in general, but he was always sad because he could not stay with his family, be in his home. He may not have wanted to show it, but now all his descendants feel it. I feel a lot of anger, frustration, pain, after everything that has happened. Few really care about us.”

“

“The Nakba is to live Haifa without ever having seen it. It is my daughters memorizing the narratives passed onto them by my grandfather and my father. They came to know more about Palestine than I do.”

– Khaled Al Abadi

DIMA ODEH

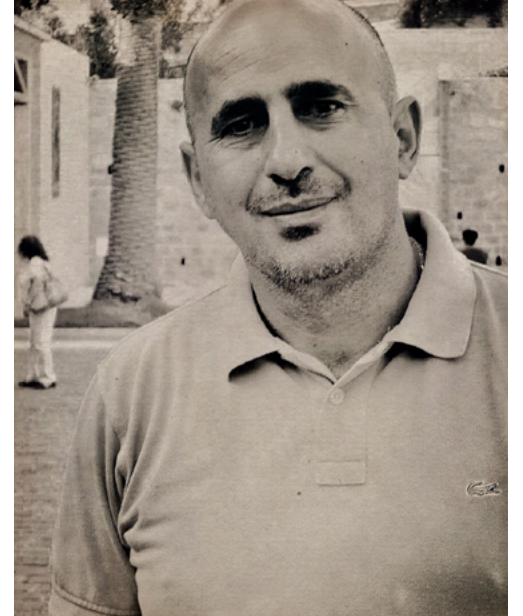
Born in al-Yarmouk Refugee Camp in Syria in 1976 (Originally from al-Tantura Village)

“The Nakba is that difficult feeling when you bid farewell to your grandmother as she utters with her last breath, ‘I want to die in Haifa’. It is to carry your grandmother’s dream in your mind and soul, to memorize it like your name and insist on achieving it no matter how long it takes. It is the chill that grips my body whenever I remember what my grandmother told me about the massacres committed by the Zionist gangs against the villagers, how their relatives were slaughtered, and the women’s jewelry was stolen. These thieves and bandits stole my children’s life and mine, and they turned it into hell and misery, and they made us homeless and vulnerable. It is to experience dispossession and vulnerability more than once in one life. The Nakba is to carry your children while fleeing from one area to another because of the bombing, killing and destruction in al-Yarmouk refugee camp. It is the 100 millionth attempt to save yourself and your children because you do not have the right to return to your home. The Nakba is not to feel the protection of the homeland after losing the protection of your father and mother who were killed by the bombing. But it is also the determination to go on despite the suffering and pain, and to consolidate Palestine in the minds of my children and grandchildren the same way my parents and grandparents did in mine.”

GEORGE RISHMAWI

Born in Beit Sahour in 1972 (Still lives in Beit Sahour)

“The Nakba has affected all the Palestinian people, whether refugees or not. The Nakba is about the theft of our national heritage, way of life and our very identity. It is about eliminating the name Palestine from the map, yet they could not eliminate it from my mind and heart. When I look back to before 1948, I always think about how things would have been without the Nakba. How our lives would have been much better. Palestinians are very hospitable and we could have all lived together in Palestine, but the Zionists wanted the land without us, without me and my family, without our culture and identity. They worked hard to eliminate everything about us. But they couldn’t succeed.”



TAMARA TAMIMI

Born in Jerusalem in 1989 (Originally from Jaffa)

“The Nakba affected us significantly because my grandfather was living in what is now West Jerusalem and the rest of the family was in Jaffa during the Nakba. At the time, his family moved to Jenin, and my grandfather was displaced to what is now considered to be East Jerusalem. After 71 years, only my father and I are from Jerusalem (with a Jerusalem ID) and remain connected to Jerusalem, but the rest of the family has Palestinian IDs and cannot access the city. The events of the Nakba, and Jerusalem that materialized was one of the results of the Nakba. It has separated us. It has affected every aspect of our daily lives. The Nakba also caused confusion: am I from Jaffa, am I from Jerusalem, am I from Ramallah? Where am I from? Then I decided I am from Palestine. 71 years on, I am disappointed with the international community that has not appreciated all the concessions we have made. I feel angry that I remain one of the few peoples who are under occupation in the XXI Century, and I feel that now more than ever someone should ensure justice prevails.”

AWAD KHADER

Born in Zababdeh Village in 1939 (Lives in Ramallah)

“In 1948, during the war between the Palestinians and the Zionists, I was in an orphanage in Mamilla. We stayed there, and then they moved us from Mamilla to New Gate (Old City) to the Terra Sancta School. Once we left Mamilla, they made a border and no-man’s land, from Musrara to New Gate. I stayed there until 1952. It was forbidden for us to go to the other side, although sometimes we would get permits to go (through Mandelbaum Gate) to certain religious celebrations. One of my memories from the Nakba is that we were playing near the King David Hotel when it was attacked (by a Zionist gang). We would not continue playing. Since that time we have only been through wars. We never had a moment of peace. There has not been anything else in our lives. I can remember that the best years of my life were right before the occupation of 1967. We had some hopes with the Peace Process, but nothing happened.”

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“The Nakba is to become aware of my grandfather’s small box, the one where he hid the deeds for his property in our village Deir Al Qasi, and the keys to our house. It’s this box, covered by piles of food and clothing rations provided by UNRWA, which told us “this is your temporary place of residence; you will return to your homes soon.”

– Mohammad Al-Sholi

BASSEM HUSSEIN

Born in Jerusalem in 1963, Lives in France (Originally from Abu Shusha village)

“The Nakba is a true reflection of the weakness of the international community, the embodiment of imperial hegemony on our country. The Nakba is a true description of the current situation in Palestine and the Arab world. The Nakba is to remember what my mother told us about their forced displacement from their village in Abu Shusha. The Nakba is my Palestinian identity, which I have not yet fulfilled. I do not know if I will ever get it, but my connection to Palestine is what constitutes my personality, my existential components, my identity and my origin. It is difficult to live without roots. Despite my sojourn in France, I know that no one has the right, not even Trump or any other conspirator who has no connection to our cause, to make a decision at our expense or on our behalf. The Palestinian people are the final decision makers.”



Tiberias sea front. 1934-1939



Printing of Palestine's first stamps. 1920



Inauguration of the Palestine Broadcasting Service. Engineer controlling broadcasting in Ramallah. 1936



Jaffa. Al-Hamra Cinema (1937)



Jerusalem from Tower of Notre Dame de France. 1934-1939



Boys reading braille in blind school in Hebron. 1940



Harvesting at Beit Sahur and Bethlehem. 1898-1946



Palestine Broadcasting Service, Jerusalem. 1936-1946



Ramallah Quaker Mission School. 1937



Operating theater in Hebron hospital. 1944



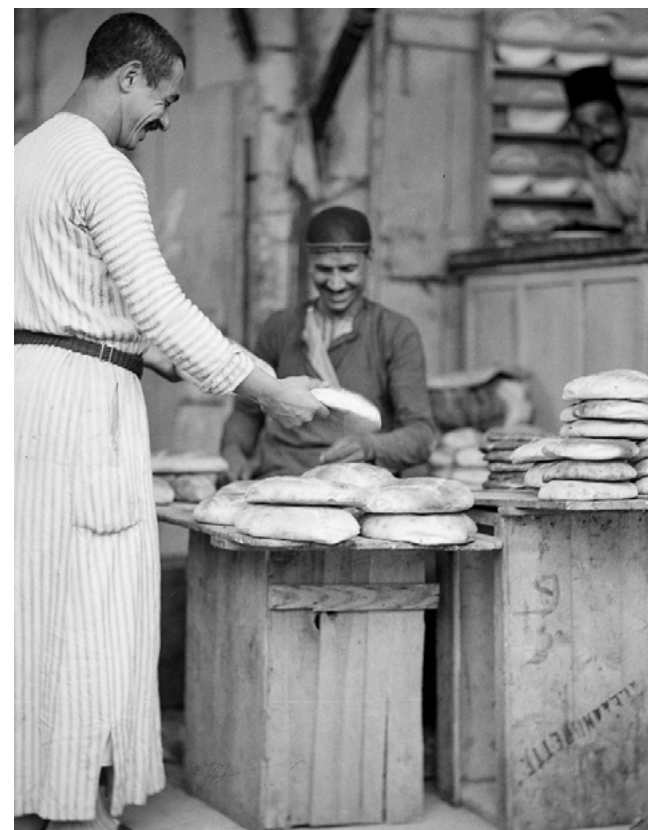
Imperial Airways facility in Gaza. 1935



Jaffa to Jerusalem. Train at Battir. Pulling up steep grade. 1920-1937



Arab Ladies' Union. Girls's school group in Musrara Quarter. 1940-1946



Old City bread seller. 1934-1939

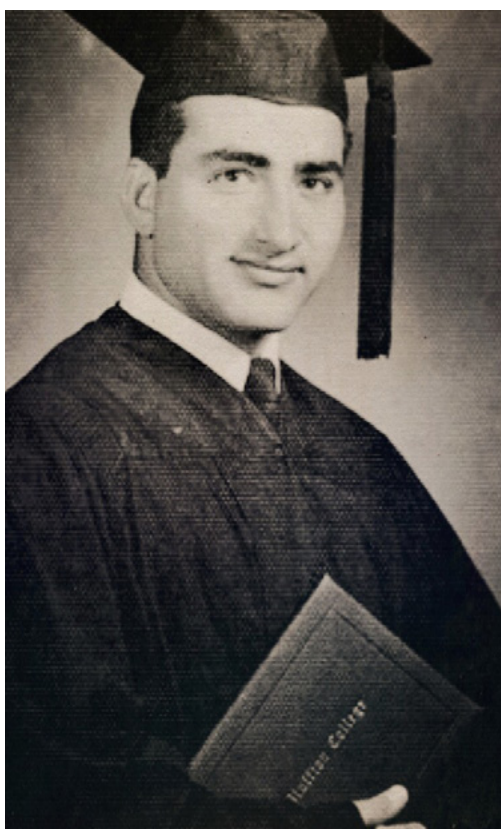


Soap factory in Nablus. 1940

ISHAQ AL-QUTUB

Born in Hebron in 1935 (Lives in the United States)

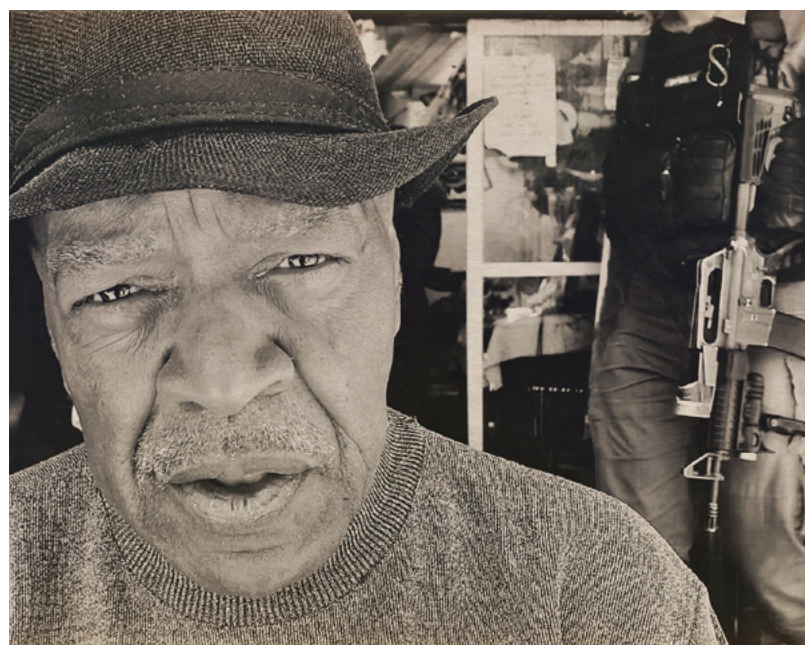
"The Nakba, in a global context, is a disaster inflicted upon people by force, creating damage that is psychological, social, economic, cultural, educational and political. In the case of Palestine and the Palestinians, inside and outside our homeland, the Nakba has increasingly created a wide range of effects. There are two aspects to the impact of the Nakba: (a) the inability of the United Nations to implement its resolutions to resolve the conflict and (b) the collective memory of close to 14 million Palestinians inside and outside Palestine that have never forgotten the tragedy. From one generation to the other, Palestinians continue using every possible means to be creative and effective contributors in every field towards the realization of our human rights and freedom, leading to the establishment of our own state living side by side our neighbors in peace and tranquility. The impact of the Nakba will continue until the restoration and achievement of Palestinian rights."



ALI JADDEH

Born in Jerusalem in 1950 (Still lives in Jerusalem)

"I am African-Palestinian. In 1968, I remember as a young Palestinian at the age of 18- years-old how I started to feel the impact of the occupation; how we used to be stopped on the road to be degraded and humiliated in front of those passing by. The Palestinian people live the Nakba every day. And we, as Abu Ammar (Yasser Arafat) said, are a forceful and tough people. Despite repression and oppression, we emphasize the meaning of steadfastness, sacrifice, patience, and commitment to identity and land. We are not a passing people or tourists; our roots are strong and deep in our land regardless of what Trump and Netanyahu say. Palestine will return to its true owners, the people of Palestine. We are sure of the future."



MOHAMMAD YASSIN

Born in al-Faluja Village in 1932 (Lives in al-Mahatta Refugee Camp in Jordan)

"I am originally from al-Faluja village. When the Nakba took place, all the families were dispersed and separated, some fled to Gaza with the help of the Egyptian army and some fled to Jordan with the help of the Jordanian army. There is no place like home. We used to be very happy in al-Faluja, living in tranquility and security. Yet since then we have been living in anxiety, feeling lost and insecure all the time. The Nakba has severely impacted all the aspects of our lives. We lost all our properties; we were landowners with a very good standard of living. Here we became employees with very limited salaries. The house we owned in al-Faluja was spacious, but our house here in the camp is small and we pay rent."

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"Throughout my time, life has been as hard as it was then. One of my sons was killed in Al-Ibrahimi Mosque massacre in 1994 and the Israelis killed my other son in front of his store in 2002."

– Wadha Al-Bayed

KHALED AL-SAHAB

Born in Jerusalem in 1962 (Still lives in Jerusalem)

"I did not witness the Nakba, but we continue to suffer from the reality it has created for Palestine, the land and the people, until this very day. We suffer from the occupation and the dispersal of the Palestinian people across various countries. When we tell our children about the Nakba, we say that before the Nakba we dreamt of a State of Palestine to set an example of excellence in democracy, education, and culture. The Nakba was the nail in the coffin of the Palestinian people. Instead of being a developed and prosperous nation in a state of our own, we have witnessed a devastating reality of dispersion and dispossession."

DAOUD BADER

Born in al-Ghabisiyya Village in 1942 (Lives in al-Shaykh Dannun Village)

"I was born in al-Ghabisiyya village, and was only 6 years old when we were displaced. I currently live in al-Shaykh Dannun village, which is less than one kilometer from my home village. On the day of the Nakba, I recall that my mother woke me up suddenly, wrapped a Bukjeh (Palestinian word in the local dialect that means a cloth bag) placed it on her head, and rushed out of the house. I followed her and we walked. When I got tired, my uncle carried me on his shoulders and I fell asleep. My brother and sister who were both married fled with the crowds to Lebanon and have not returned since then. My mother refused to go to Lebanon as she was determined to die in her homeland. I remember my mother's grief, weeping for losing her children, as I was the only son who remained in her lap. Israel has confiscated all our properties under the pretext that its owners are absent, but we left our villages because we were frightened for our lives. There is no doubt that Israel is a racist state that grants exclusive privileges to Jews. We will never relinquish the demand of return, an inalienable right enshrined in international law, and we will continue to cling to it because no right will be lost as long as there is someone seeking it."



RAFIQ NASRA

Born in Kafr Yasif in 1951, Lives in Abu Snan (Originally from Kuwaykat Village)

"I belong to Kuwaykat village in the Galilee depopulated in 1948, and I currently live in Abu Snan village which is less than one kilometers from Kuwaykat. When our village was occupied by Zionists in July of 1948, my family left their homes terrified and unconsciously lost each other. My dad went back to the house and risked his life to take my nephew Ali, who was two months old at the time and was crying in his bed. Ali became an orphan, his father passed away before the Nakba and his mother fled with the crowds to Lebanon and lost touch. Israel and those who contributed to establishing it aimed at displacing the Palestinian people forever. They wanted us to disappear from the universe however we are bold and solid and have preserved our history, culture and existence. We are always keen to educate our grandchildren not to forget the right of return, and we will continue to fight until our last breath, and until the right of return is attained for all Palestinians."

MOHAMMAD SARHAN

Born in Baysan in 1930 (Lives in al-Fureidis)/ Interview Conducted in 2017

“I recall well how the British army were torturing the Palestinian people whether by beating them with their guns, slashing them with whips, or by forcing them to walk barefoot on cactus plants, all in a very humiliating way. No one expected that the torture would continue. We were not aware what this ominous promise would bring us. No one expected that the Zionists would invade and destroy our cities and villages in 1948. We thought that the British occupation would end one day or perhaps would last for a longer time, but we never imagined that it would be replaced with a Zionist occupation. The Nakba has continued since then.”



YOUSEF ABU GHAZALEH

Born in Jerusalem in 1939 (Still lives in Jerusalem)

“The Nakba of Palestine dispersed the Palestinian people. The country is no longer like it used to be, including Jerusalem’s Old City, from which many of its original inhabitants left. The reality in Jerusalem today is like someone who is living in darkness. Nothing is clear and we cannot even see which road we are on. The outlook is dark. And it will be worse with Trump’s actions. We feel like we have no backbone and no one to protect us. Hope barely exists, but I remain hopeful. Motivated by my children, I continue to preserve the existence of our shop after 95 years (since its opening).”



ABDULLAH ALI SAAD

From Baysan (Born in Saida in 1951, Lebanon, where he lives)

“The Nakba is the term that defines only Palestinians in the entire world. It is the symbol of the Palestinian refugee and the shame of the international community. Our people have experienced many calamities since 1948 and the transfer of the Palestinians from one place to another has had a negative impact no less important than the Nakba. But the root cause of all the calamities of the Palestinian people is the Nakba of 1948, which led to the establishment of the occupation state and expanded throughout all of Palestine by military force, including several massacres and the defeat of our defenseless people who stood alone to confront the Zionist gangs. The Nakba is the displacement of my family from Baysan to Syria, followed by successive migrations to a number of Arab countries until our arrival to Lebanon. We have lived in refugee camps, where the difficult economic conditions and the deprivation of rights is one of the greatest calamities experienced by our refugees over the years. Another impact of the Nakba was the movement of Palestinian families from Syria to Lebanon following the internal conflict in Syria. Some of them migrated for a third time in search of security and peace across the sea to Europe and elsewhere, including those who died drowning in the sea. The Nakba will continue if international and Arab weakness persists. However, our people will not fall for conspiracies as we did in the past. No one has the right to take decisions or actions affecting Palestinians but the Palestinian people themselves, who are the owners of the land and property, and we are the decision makers.”

“

“We lost everything we had; our home, our land, our source of income, our life will never be the same. I can never forget that night when we were preparing to eat Ramadan Iftar, and the Zionists started bombarding Saffuri.”

– Amin Ali

BISSAN ABDEL DAYEM

Born in Rashidieh Refugee Camp in Lebanon in 1989 (Originally from al-Ramla)

“The Nakba for me is the hometown of my grandparents in al-Ramla, which I have not yet been able to see, though I keep listening to the stories of my relatives about the land of Palestine. I imagine it green, full of trees, grasslands and beauty. The Nakba is the inability to have open lines of communication with my relatives in Palestine. It is the dream of completing my higher studies in law to defend the Palestinian cause. It is the unavoidable vision that I see in my dreams and reality signaling that return is imminent. It is the never-ending dream that will not stop me from seeing the land of my parents and grandparents.”

HUSSEIN MUBARKI

Born in al-Nahr Village in 1930 (Lives in Abu Snan Village)

“The Nakba forcibly expelled and displaced the Palestinian people. We were all replaced by Jewish settlers who came from all over the world and took over our lands. The Nakba was not accidental, but the result of a conspiracy between the Zionist movement... and the British Mandate. Our lives turned upside down; from landowners of at least 70 dunums of land in al-Nahr village to homeless people trying to take cover beneath the olive trees from the hail of the Haganah bullets. My brother who was one and a half years old was killed by the Zionist militias as my family was fleeing the village.”





NOUR ODEH

Born in Damascus, Syria, in 1978 (Originally from Khirbet Salameh in Dura, South of Hebron)

"To me, the Nakba is about uprooting, and about the negation of my identity as a Palestinian, my rich heritage, my deep roots. It is about a collective trauma of an entire people who almost overnight were uprooted and denied even their right to their memory, to talk about their past, or even celebrate their heritage. That is the Nakba for me. I did not live it but I think in many ways, the Nakba is an ongoing trauma, it has not stopped. The Palestinian people have not been defeated and they cannot be defeated so long as they retain their collective soul. So long as they hold on to who they are as a people, to their heritage, to their strength and nobility, and their certainty that their destiny is not one of pain and not one of dispassion but rather one of freedom and dignity, despite all the attempts to convince them to surrender. To me, that is the most important lesson. Not giving up, not surrendering to that overwhelming attempt to make us feel like it's not worth it because it is. Freedom and dignity are worthwhile. So, while this period is very concerning for me, I think that in the end when I remember who my people are, I am certain that we will overcome."

NAHLA*

Born in Jerusalem in 1963 (Still lives in Jerusalem)

"I know of the Nakba but did not experience it. It taught us perseverance and patience. The Nakba has greatly affected my children even more than me; I feel they want to know more about it than our generation. My daughter often goes with her grandfather, who is a refugee, to his family house and observes him closely as he tells her his story. I remember the war of 1967, many people left their houses to hide somewhere and others left to Jordan. I cannot forget how as children were passed from one person to the other as we crossed the wooden bridge to Jordan. The elderly cried thinking they will never return. We lived in Jordan with the fear that we would never return back to Palestine. Thank God, we returned."

* The surname is not shown upon the request of the individual

ALA' ZORBA

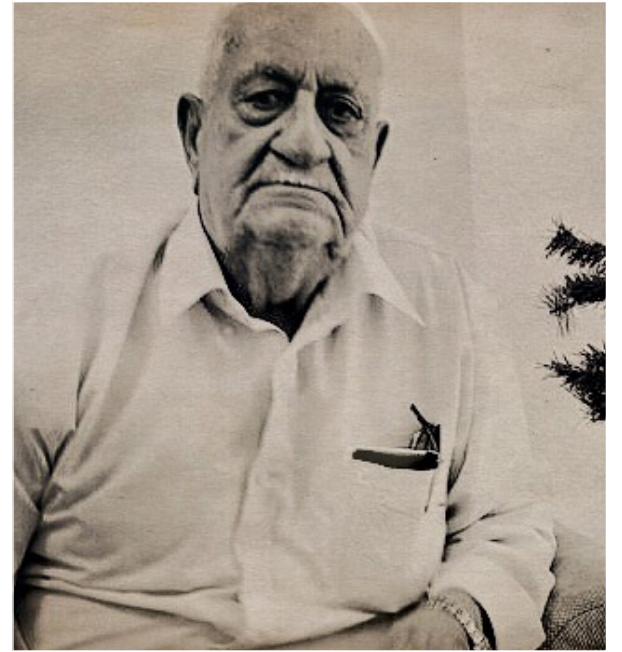
Born in Jerusalem in 1975 (Still lives in Jerusalem)

"I did not witness the Nakba itself, which signifies the loss of the historic land of Palestine, but we have been living a Nakba for the past 71 years. My generation was born under occupation and we have not yet seen freedom. Under occupation, we have no right to free movement in our own land, as if we are not the people of this land. That is also the case when we travel abroad. Jerusalem continues to be closed off to the rest of the West Bank even when the economy of our city depends on it."

HABIB ZREIK

Born in Eilabun in 1923 (Still lives in Eilabun)

"I lived during the British Mandate and the Nakba. I witnessed the atrocities and brutality of the British and Zionist occupations. The Israeli occupation is not different from the British occupation. The British taught the Zionists how to be oppressive and brutal and to crush Palestinian resistance. I cried so much, in pain, when the Zionist militias occupied my hometown Eilabun and committed a terrifying massacre on October 30th 1948. I remember it as if it has just happened. The ugliest scene was when the Israeli army took the people out of the church and murdered 14 young men in cold blood. They kept bleeding until they drew their last breath. Their blood was splattered everywhere. It was a black day, the saddest day for all of us."



JAMILA DEEB

Born in Dayr Aban Village in 1936 (Lives in al-Baq'a Refugee Camp in Jordan)

"I was 12-years-old when we were displaced from our village Dayr Aban in Jerusalem. We left Dayr Aban after we heard about the dreadful massacre in Dayr Yasin. We left everything behind us and came to al-Karama refugee camp in Jordan then moved to al-Baq'a refugee camp. There are very sad and emotional moments that we cannot forget. I recall that we wrapped my cousin with a carpet and laid it on the wall to hide him from the soldiers. I also cannot forget that my grandfather died because the British soldiers supported by the Zionists army slapped him on his face while he was attempting to protect his home. He later died due to sadness, he could not tolerate the bitterness of expulsion."

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"The Nakba taught us not to repeat what happened to our parents and grandparents, it is to die in our homeland and never leave."

– Samar Abdul Rahman



SA'ID BARAKEH

Born in Saffuri Village in 1931 (Lives in Shafa Amr)

"Saffuri is my hometown, from where we were expelled by Zionist militias. The Nakba is the crime committed against the Palestinian Arab people. It entailed the forced expulsion of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians from their lands, our villages were destroyed and many people were killed. It was not accidental but a conspiracy. We were forced to leave Saffuri and live in refugee camp in Lebanon in hunger and misery. Even though I live in Shafa Amr today, every moment I wish to go back. We must keep the memories thriving for generations to come, and the determination not to give up the right of return. Before Israel enacted 'Nakba Law,' we used to organize an annual march in the village to commemorate our expulsion. Now we are banned from accessing it."

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"The ultimate defeat is when we, the oppressed, adopt the role of the oppressor. Our cause is just, and we should never accept the doctrine of the aggressor."

– Albert Aghazarian

AHMAD HAMMASH

Born in Dheisheh Refugee Camp in 1990 (Originally from Bayt 'Itab Village)

“The Nakba is the continued denial of my rights and my sense of injustice. It is the denial of my human dignity, and this feeling still lives inside me because the Nakba of 1948 still exists today. The Nakba still exists and it has deprived me of my right of return, the right to movement, the right to self-determination, and many other rights. Israel continues to forcibly displace Palestinians both inside the Green Line, such as in al-Araqib in the West Bank, Jerusalem, Khan al-Ahmar, and the Gaza Strip during the wars that expelled Palestinians and forced them to leave to other countries. It exists in the practices of killing and collective punishment against my family and those close to me. The Nakba is the daily incursions of the occupation army into the cities, villages and refugee camps. The Nakba deprives me of communicating with my people at home, in Jerusalem, or in the Diaspora. It is the hope that we see in the young generation and their interests in activities carried out by refugee organizations. It is their adherence to the right of return, which is not susceptible to any pressures. Neither Trump’s decisions nor those of any other can cancel our right to return. The absence of policies or operational mechanisms to implement international resolutions relating to the refugee issue doesn’t mean the absence of this right. I, as a Palestinian refugee, know that I have a right that I will continue to insist upon; this also applies to my children and grandchildren.”

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“It means the refugees remain the permanent living witnesses to the Nakba while the conspirators disappear and the newspapers forget them.”

– Omar Awadallah

SUMAYA SWEILEM

Born in Kafr Saba in 1945 (Lives in al-Mahatta Refugee Camp in Jordan)

“I belong to Kafr Saba town and my family was displaced in 1948. I do not remember what happened during the Nakba as I was only three-years-old, but the Nakba was followed with the Naksa in 1967, which I remember well. I was raised in Qalqiliya, and was married with children when they occupied Qalqiliya. We fled our homes and slept in the fields of olive trees. I was panicked trying to protect my children. There is no place like home; to be happy is to live in your homeland. I wish to go back to Palestine and be able to visit my married daughter in Qalqiliya. My visa is always rejected although I am a very old woman.”

IMAD ABU KHADIJEH

Born in Jerusalem in 1961 (Still lives in Jerusalem)

“My family are refugees from al-Lydd (Lod). I was born in Jerusalem 58 years ago but I still live the Nakba, which continues to this very day. My grandfather experienced the Nakba, and so did my father, and it’s the case for me as well. The Nakba is ongoing, and will not end without the restoration of all our rights. For that, we have to keep going and work hard towards achieving this end. My father, who is 90 years-old today, witnessed the Nakba and has kept on telling me his story since I was a child. My father still cries when I take him to visit al-Lydd. History cannot be forgotten. Thus, we continue to pass on our stories from one generation to the other.”

ISHAQ ABU KHADIJEH

Born in al-Lydd in 1930 (Lives in Jerusalem)

“They (the Zionists) entered al-Lydd from the east, near the airport. They were wearing Hatta and Egal (the headdress Arab men wear) and so people confused them with the Jordanian army. We thought help had arrived, but (Palestinian) fighters with guns, who appeared in front of them were killed. Afterwards, they started shooting at everyone, forcing people to leave. By 1948, I was married with a baby girl. I left with my family, walking with so many people from different villages, until we reached Ramallah. In 1949, I moved with my family to Jerusalem. We had a house and a building there, but they tore it down. I continue to miss al-Lydd and I still go back to visit every three months. We have no family left there. All of what has been happening to us for the past 71 years is unjust. Life has been bitter.”



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“The Nakba is to be an orphan without a homeland to cradle you. It is the humiliation of living in a tent. Nakba is the big school in which you get educated on resistance and social integration under the slogan of ‘tragedy unifies us’.”

– Turkiya Wahbeh

NAKHLEH ABU EID

Born in Beit Jala in 1941 (Still lives in Beit Jala)

“I was a child, people were scared. Neighborhoods were trying to get organized for the defense of the towns. The terror attacks conducted by the Zionists were pushing people to leave their homes. I remember that my cousin bought a rifle and we thought this would make us safer. It was a good rifle, but it was also comical: To patrol our area we had one rifle and dozens of unarmed people. We (the children) used to look for stones that would be good enough for use in defending the town. The Nakba definitely changed our lives. It forced many of our people to live abroad. I still cannot believe how after 71 years we are still suffering of its consequences.”

RAWAN ZGHARI

Born in Dheisheh Refugee Camp in 1985 (Originally from Jarash Village)

“My family was in a village and from there they were displaced to a refugee camp. In fact people from 48 villages came to the same refugee camp, how can you live like this? In the village they had enough land to plant and to have a life. My grandmother used to be very happy. In the camp things are different. The old generation could no longer cultivate land, so instead they invested what they had in the education of their children. But there is still something missing. We never felt at home anywhere else other than our village. I cannot see justice here. We are from here, but then we see people from all over the world, from Italy, from Russia, coming to our land calling this place home while we are deprived of our own village.”

NAJIYEH AL-GHREIFI

Born in Ijzim Village in 1943 (Lives in al- Baqa'a Refugee Camp in Jordan)

"I belong to Ijzim village in Haifa district from which we were displaced in 1948. I was only 5-years-old when we were forced out of our homes and had to walk for long hours on thorns until our legs swelled. I wish that I stayed in Palestine. I had my home, my land planted with wheat and olive trees, my neighbors around. If we have stayed our situation would have been much better. I still follow closely what is happening in Palestine in the news. I still have family in Palestine. My father and brother died in Palestine and I could not see them because I have no permit to visit."



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"They worked hard to eliminate everything about us. But they couldn't succeed."

– George Rishmawi

SAMIR AMR

Born in Jerusalem in 1958 (Still lives in Jerusalem)

"The people of Palestine use the word 'Nakba' to describe a major event with a catastrophic impact, causing us to suffer a severe loss. In 1948, the Palestinians were well aware of the loss they suffered and so they called it the Nakba. We were uprooted from our homeland by killings, demolitions, displacement, and the use of brutal force. At the time of the Nakba, people carried their home keys thinking that they would be away for a few days, but that journey has lasted 71 years. Therefore, we still insist on the right of return and I have a firm belief, with our persistence and resilience that Palestinian refugees will return to our homeland, Palestine. The Palestinians will continue to exist inside or outside Palestine, and our nation will not be obliterated."

HATEM ABU ASSAB

Born in the Old City of Jerusalem in 1973 (Originally from West Jerusalem)

"All of the people in Jerusalem live a Nakba. Some experience harder Nakba[s] than others. For five exhausting years, I held my (home) file in a bag from one lawyer to the other and from one (Israeli) court to the other. I eventually lost the case for the most trivial reasons and was (forcibly) evicted from my home (in Jerusalem's Old City). This is the second time this happened to my family. My grandmother's family, who converted from Judaism to Islam some 250 years ago, were forced out (of West Jerusalem) in 1948. My grandfather's family lived in al-Baqa'a (in West Jerusalem) and in 1948 they escaped to Jerusalem's Old City. First, they took refuge in a room atop a nearby mosque for four years, then they moved to this house (the one I recently lost) in 1952. We lived in our Jerusalem home for nearly 70 years. Inside the Israeli courts, I felt the decision against me (to force me out of my home) had already been decided. Defending my right to my house in the court sessions felt like a play. I was the last (Palestinian) to leave. There were already (Israeli) settlers in the houses near mine. The setbacks and shocks we have experienced so far have only strengthened us, and with everything that has happened I continue to be hopeful."



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MAHMOUD KANAAN

Born in al-'Abbasiyya Village in 1938 (Lives in al-Mahatta Refugee Camp in Jordan)

"I belong to al-'Abbasiyya village between Jaffa and al-Lydd. The Israeli airport 'Ben-Gurion' is partially built on our village lands. We never forget that black day when our village was attacked several times and we were forced to leave. First we went Bayt Nabala village close to al-Lydd, then we moved to Ni'lin village, then to Bayt Rima, then to Hosh An-Nabi Saleh, then to Jalazon refugee camp, then to Aqbat Jaber refugee camp in Jericho, and finally to Jordan. The Nakba has fragmented the whole family. We were six brothers and two sisters. Now each of us lives in different countries - some settled in Iraq, some fled to Beirut, some remained in Palestine. This is the result of the Nakba; the dispersal and fragmentation of the Palestinian people. Our grandchildren do not know each other at all. We cannot meet as one family. If the dream of return will not be realized as long as I am alive, I hope that our grandchildren will go back to Palestine in the future."

VARSEN AGHABEKIAN

Born in Amman in 1958 (Lives in Jerusalem)

"I know what Nakba means from my Armenian parents. They think about what happened to them, especially my mother's side all the time as her parents lost almost all their family members. For us as Armenians, we constantly carry this burden with us. It's a trauma that has lingered for a really long time and has transcended from one generation to another, specifically for those who fled to Palestine and once again have been subjected to another Nakba. Both catastrophes have resulted in a lot of pain and have in fact stolen from us dreams we could have achieved. My mom's family started a new life here, where they were welcomed and embraced. I consider myself a Palestinian of Armenian roots. For me now, this is home, and I know very well that the pain of Palestine's Nakba will never go away. Every Palestinian family was directly or indirectly affected by the Nakba; it lives within all of us. And so, we will continue to remember it; it's not possible to forget it."

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"The Nakba is the pain that has accompanied you ever since the thorn penetrated your father's foot. That child who walked barefoot from Haifa to Aleppo, and 70 years later, still feels the scar on his foot."

– Ahmad Yousef

MOHAMMAD DARWISH

Born in Bayt Nabala Village in 1936 (Lives in al-Mahatta Refugee Camp in Jordan)

"I belong to Bayt Nabala village. I remember that we left our village terrified. The Israeli army came and informed us that the village is a no man's land and we were not allowed to access it. Until today I cannot forget my land. I cannot forget the vegetables and fruits we were planting. I was 12-years-old. I still remember our land inch by inch. I remember my school and the poems we used to recite. If we were still living in Bayt Nabala our lives would be great. We would have land to plant and eat from the harvest. Here we feel insecure -- we have no money like we did before. I hope that the situation will change and that we will be united with our family in Palestine. We hope that Palestine will be liberated."



ALBERT AGHAZARIAN

Born in Jerusalem in 1949 (Lives in Jerusalem)

"The Palestinian people have endured a lot as a result of the Nakba. Any Nakba, catastrophe, doesn't accidentally just happen. It has specific components and requirements. Most importantly, it's based on the consideration of other people as less human than you are; that conscientious laws don't apply to them. Unavoidably, this requires you to constantly be reminded that you're facing danger. To me, the core problem is emphasized in a six-word sentence 'we alone are God's chosen people'; while underlining the word 'alone'. More words to accentuate the problem we face here are: ignorance, greed, and blind hatred. Despite the painful turbulence the Palestinian people have been experiencing, we're still here. Be it defeat or victory; this comes from within – it's a state of mind. What matters is that I have not lost hope, and I will continue to be hopeful for as long as we do not accept to switch roles with the Zionists. The ultimate defeat is when we, the oppressed, adopt the role of the oppressor. Our cause is just, and we should never accept the doctrine of the aggressor."



MAHIRA AL-DAJANI

Born in Jerusalem in 1933 (Lives in Jerusalem)

"We lost every single thing we owned as a result of the Nakba, and we lost my brother, who was 22 years old at the time. Ala' Al-Din was martyred as he fought a battle to defend Jerusalem at Bab al-Nabi Daoud (David's Gate). I had my Metric Exams during the war when the massacre of Deir Yassin happened and Abd al-Qader al-Husseini was martyred. So I stayed, like other girls, in a house near the school as I couldn't go home, which was located in al-Nabi Daoud. Only my father was home when I returned, my mother and sisters were already gone; they left to Hebron. My father asked me to pack my stuff and leave with our relatives to join them. I only took a small bag and left all

my gifts, awards, and valuables. I left the house and never returned. My plan was to go to the United Kingdom to study law, but I couldn't go. We lost everything. I am 86 years old today, and I often think that I didn't become the lawyer I wanted to be because I was meant to take care of Dar Al-Tifel school. This school embraced the children of this nation. Education is key for us Palestinians. If it wasn't for education, the Palestinian people wouldn't have been able to once again stand on their feet. We are well and alive and they can never erase us. We remain hopeful and strong believers that one day our rights and lands will be restored, and I continue to pray to witness this day."

HIDAYAH AL-HUSSEINI

Born in Jenin in 1956 (Lives in Jerusalem)

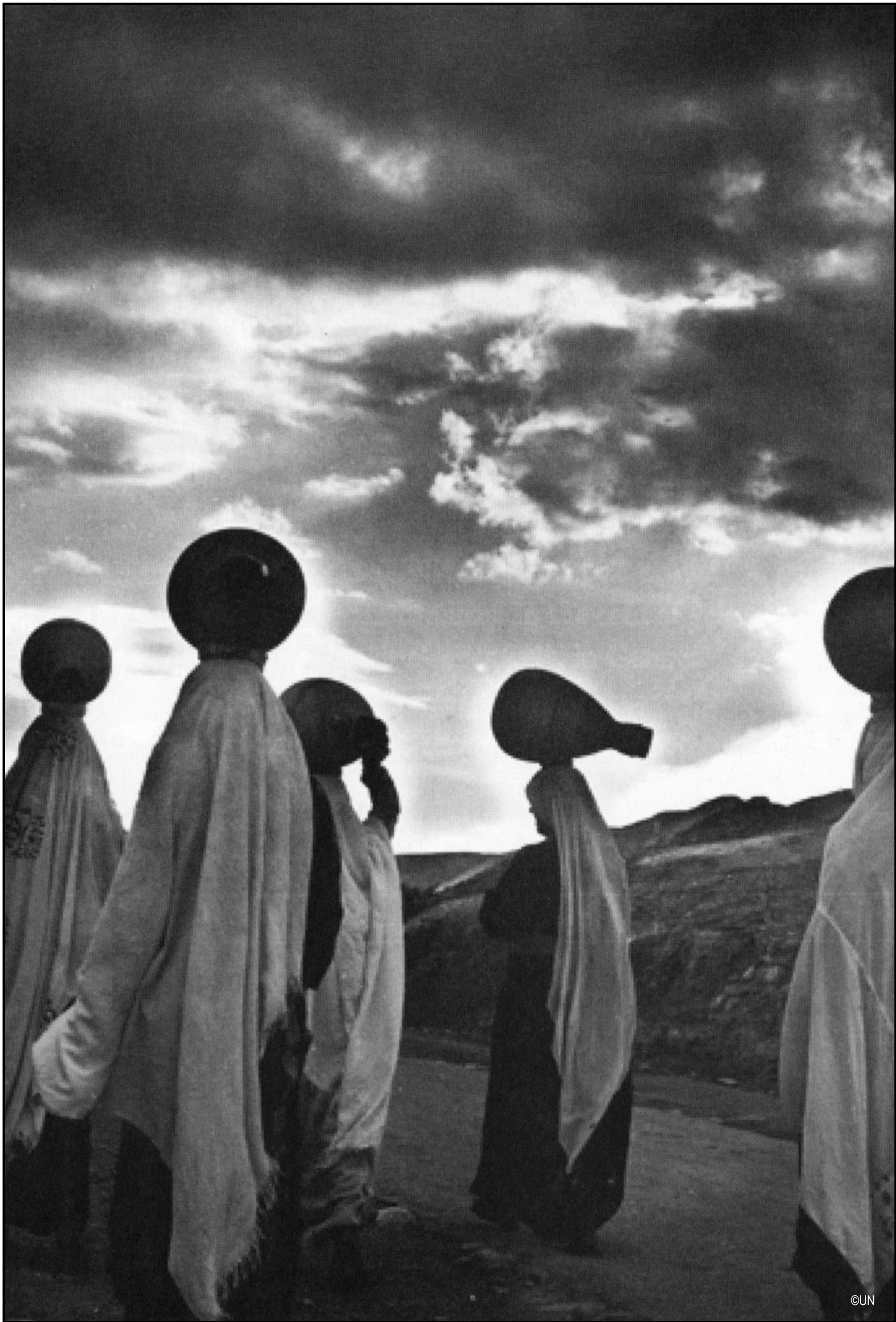
"I am the only adopted child of the late Hind Al-Husseini, who after the massacre of Dayr Yasin established Dar Al-Tifel school in Jerusalem. There were 55 children, the eldest was 12 years old and the youngest was 1 year old, who were put in a truck and dropped off in front of Damascus gate. My mother at the time was a teacher at the Islamic college, she was just passing by when she saw them. She couldn't leave them. And so, she first rented two rooms to host them, then later convinced her family to turn a mansion they owned, which part of the family was already living in, into an orphanage. Gradually, Dar Al-Tifel has become the school we see today. Thousands of girls from across Palestine were raised in this school and many of them are successful and distinguished. On the commemoration day of Dayr Yasin, and for as long as my mother lived, she used to repeat this same speech in front of the entire school:



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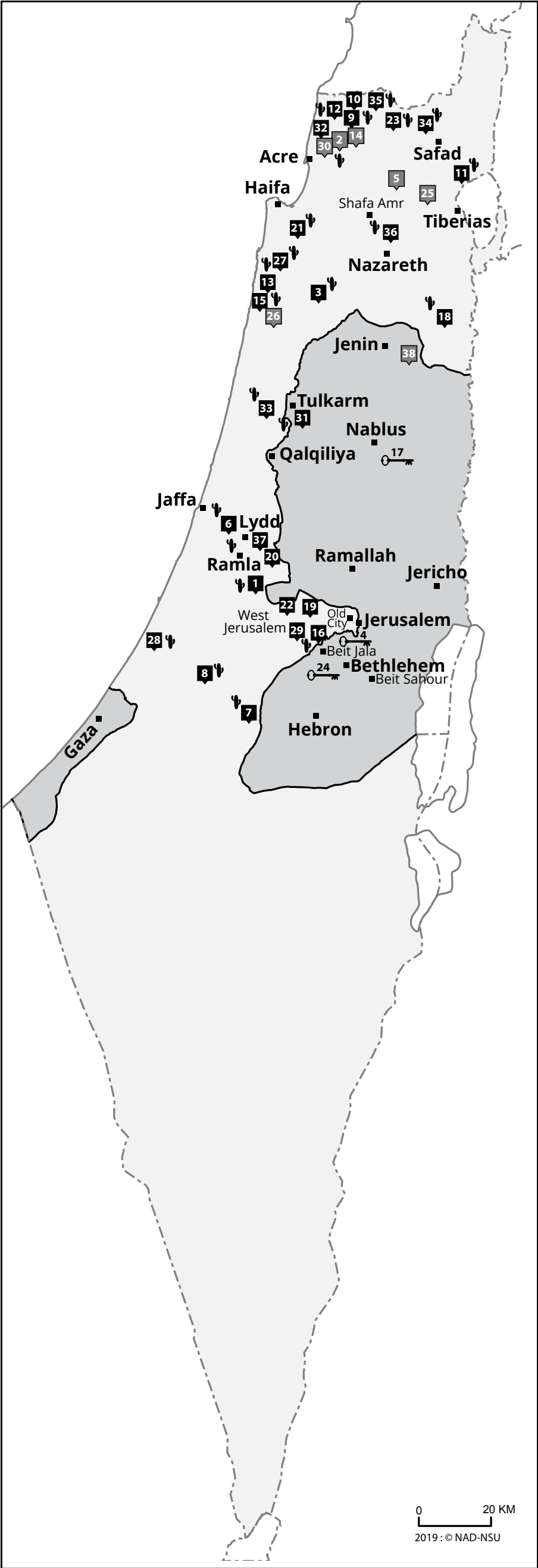
I again repeat, on this day in April, we remember the heroic martyrs of Dayr Yasin, not to fear and not to run away, but to remember the year 1948 when the village of Dayr Yasin was overrun by a gang headed by Menachem Begin. They killed and drove away the villagers to terrorize and scare off the rest to flee... We will no longer flee our country, we will remain in Palestine. It is our country and the land of our fathers and forefathers before, it is our legitimate right and we will not fear death...."

– Hind Al-Husseini



MAP OF HISTORIC
PALESTINE

- 1. Abu Shusha
- 2. Abu Snan
- 3. Abu Zurayq
- 4. Aida Refugee Camp
- 5. Arraba al-Batouf
- 6. al-‘Abbasiyya
- 7. al-Dawayima
- 8. al-Faluja
- 9. al-Ghabisiyya
- 10. al-Kabri
- 11. al-Majdal
- 12. al-Nahr
- 13. al-Sarafand
- 14. al-Shaykh Dannun
- 15. al-Tantura
- 16. al-Walaja
- 17. Balata Refugee Camp
- 18. Baysan
- 19. Bayt ‘Itab
- 20. Bayt Nabala
- 21. Balad al-Shaykh
- 22. Dayr Aban
- 23. Dayr al-Qasi
- 24. Dheisheh Refugee Camp
- 25. Eilabun
- 26. Fureidis
- 27. Ijzim
- 28. Isdud
- 29. Jarash
- 30. Kafr Yasif
- 31. Kafr Saba
- 32. Kuwaykat
- 33. Miska
- 34. Qaditta
- 35. Sa’sa’
- 36. Saffuri



CONCLUSION

These testimonies serve as a reminder of the political and humanitarian tragedy that befell the people of Palestine. These testimonies also serve as a resounding message to the international community, Israel, the UK and the US, reminding them of the Nakba and its consequences, including the ongoing plight of the refugees, which continues through the present day, and of their political and legal responsibilities regarding the achievement of our people's rights.

Our people are still waiting for justice to be achieved, and for the rectification of the historic injustices that resulted from the occupation of their land in violation of international law, injustices which call for intervention and accountability in accordance with the principles and provisions of international law and United Nations resolutions, specifically 194. The just cause of Palestine's refugees, the cornerstone of any future solution, should be solved from its roots. Until our salvation, our people will firmly remain on our land as our ancestors did for thousands of years. We will continue to defend our existence and the right to self-determination.

The people of Palestine deserve justice.

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