In our ministerial statement of the 74th Lebanese government after independence and the first in the era of President Michel Aoun, for which we chose the title of “Restoring Confidence,” we stressed the importance of strengthening the Lebanese-Palestinian dialogue. Just as “restoring confidence” is the right of the Lebanese that we owe to them by restoring their confidence in national accord, their State and their institutions. It is also the right of the Palestinians that we owe to them. We must reaffirm our commitment to the Palestinian cause, which was always present in our political discourse. Because confidence is our country’s most precious possession. Restoring it as soon as possible can only be achieved by consensus and interaction between the different Lebanese political forces, by going into various issues with a cool head and democratically, as we live in a democratic system based on dialogue and interaction.

The Lebanese chose dialogue among themselves in the interest of Lebanon and its stability, and because no one wants to go through a civil war again. The Palestinians also chose dialogue through the declaration of “Palestine in Lebanon” and in practice after the Civil War. Through the Lebanese Working Group on Palestinian Refugees, which included Lebanese political forces of all persuasions and affiliations, we have reached a deep Lebanese understanding of how to deal with the Palestinians in a manner that respects their basic right to a decent life until their return to their homeland, while upholding the provisions of the Constitution in terms of rejecting settlement clearly and consistently through: Paragraph (i) of the preamble to the Constitution, which states that “Lebanese territory is one for all Lebanese. […] There shall be no segregation of the people on the basis of any type of belonging, and no fragmentation, partition, or settlement of non-Lebanese in Lebanon.”

Today, in the face of the challenge of confronting Israel’s belligerent intentions, its clear plans to reject all efforts to achieve peace and its renewed threat to declare war on Lebanon, we must implement an inclusive policy whose main concern is the interests of Lebanon emanating from its Arab context while remaining committed to the Palestinian cause. This policy requires us to rise above conflicts and polarization. Our duties to the Palestinians living on our territory must not be a point of contention. We must work together so that the international community fully assumes its responsibilities and contributes continuously and uninterruptedly to the funding of UNRWA, which is suffering from a financial crisis that will inevitably and negatively affect the needs of refugees in Lebanon. We all know that the reality in the camps is tragic and the Lebanese state should not continue to simply watch this reality and it is exacerbated to become an unsolvable issue. The official Lebanon has reaffirmed that it will not relinquish the right of the Palestinian people to return to an independent state with Jerusalem as its capital. The Lebanese, of all persuasions, stressed that they are not an obstacle to any project that allows Lebanon to shoulder its responsibilities towards the Palestinian refugees. Lebanon will not shirk its duties, and it has stressed before international forums that there is no room for settlement or any action contrary to the right of return. Our position does not contradict at all with granting refugee brothers their human rights. In fact, giving them these rights provides us with the strength necessary to face the difficulties we face at various levels, political, economic or subsistence, and restore the strength of sound bilateral brotherly relations.
Stereotypes Overshadow the Suffering and the Heroes’ Stories

Lene Lind*

As Norway is one of the longstanding partners of the Lebanese Palestinian Dialogue Committee, I am pleased to be here in support of efforts to strengthen and grow comity and cooperation between Palestinian refugees in Lebanon and Lebanese host communities.

It is no easy task to change perceptions about a people which have been systematically developed, manipulated, and perpetuated throughout an extended period of civil war and displacement. Memories of a troubled past still haunt both the Lebanese and Palestinian refugees in Lebanon. With repeatedly interrupted reconciliation efforts and the creation of physical and imaginary boundaries between the two peoples, it is understandable how it has become so difficult for one to see himself or herself in the “other”; to see the human. Negative images and stories about Palestinians in Lebanon perpetrated by the media do not help either: lawlessness, violence, and stereotypes are overshadowing the human suffering that most Palestinians face on a daily basis. Such images and stereotypes also overshadow the many heroes within these communities who under harsh and precarious conditions still manage to secure a basic meal for the family or succeed on high school exams.

It is time to have the courage to open up to the “other” and to know them on the human level – I am sure that this will shatter all the false perceptions of fear that hinder the Palestinians in Lebanon. I am also honored to represent a country that has supported Lebanon’s remarkable ability to host its refugee population for more than 70 years. We hope that through our support to the LPDC vision, including the census that was conducted last year, Norway can continue to play a constructive role in re-shaping the narrative around the presence of the Palestinians in Lebanon – toward securing a dignified life until their right to return has been fulfilled.

*Slovenian Ambassador in Beirut

Sleiman: Conflicts of Interests is a Reason for Not Disarming Palestinian Factions

Former President General Michel Sleiman is apprehensive that the failure and collapse of the Lebanese state would lead to the extinguishment of the nationalist idea, given that there are people working for the benefit of their own “mini-states.” In a meeting with Jousour, Sleiman expressed that there was no solution to the Palestinian camps issue without a social contract, followed by formal legal regulation. This should first be preceded by an agreement among the Palestinian factions on the formation of a single authority to deal with the State and arrive together at a security solution.

President Michel Sleiman asserts that Lebanon has not lost its independence. “Riad al-Solh said in his Cabinet’s declaration in 1946 that we have created the state and we still have to create the homeland,” Sleiman said. “The state has been built with all its components, including drafting a Constitution, enacting laws, defining powers, privileges, rights and duties, and the national charter.” Unfortunately, the state remains to be beset by the rivalries of “mini-states,” Palestinian and Lebanese alike.

“And yet, I feel that the homeland is doing well and its independence exists, and the idea and concept of the homeland have become stronger,” Sleiman continued. “The preamble to the Constitution settles the problematic issue of Lebanon’s Arabism and the finality of its entity [as an independent state]. Lebanon has over the years asserted that it has a stronger Arab identity than that of all Arabs. Supposedly, Syria entered Lebanon to protect its Christians. It was said that its departure would spell their end and the destabilization of its regime would lead to Lebanon’s collapse.

“Where is Lebanon’s hand in the negotiation game for the international solution to the Syrian crisis?”

“...As for the initiative put forward by Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas during his visit to Lebanon during my tenure, which called for the surrender of Palestinian arms to the Lebanese state, the Palestinian Authority was unable to enforce it because of divisions and factional conflicts. What is happening in the camps is the same as the situation in Gaza. We are not the reason for the failure of this initiative. I am convinced that a social contract is necessary first, followed by formal legal regulation and a security solution.

“We, as Lebanese officials, agreed to cooperate and to regulate the security situation inside the camps, which is a reality and we are dealing with it, but the Palestinians did not have a single responsible united authority for us to deal with. We started to address the social and living conditions in the camps, but the events, including those in Syria, Lebanon’s economic problems, the economic slowdown and the contraction of the jobs market, have eroded everything in their wake. In such conditions that are veering towards catastrophic, how is it possible to work toward improving the situation...”

*Former President General Michel Sleiman
in the Palestinian camps in terms of jobs and other matters, while the Lebanese endure the collapse of their economy?”

The Army and lessons learned from the Nahr al-Bared battle

Sleiman believes that what is happening today is similar to what happened with regard to the Taif Accord and the Baabda Declaration. Nothing finds its way into implementation. “What happened with implementing the Baabda Declaration, the defense strategy, the formation of a body for abolishing political sectarianism and the adoption of a proportional representation election law, not like the one recently agreed upon and that is a sectarian law par excellence? What happened with implementing the establishment of a senate, the independence of the judiciary and Lebanon as a hub for interfaith dialogue? How do we become this hub when there are people fighting for a certain religious group and for a country other than Lebanon?

“What the president of the republic is calling for today, I have already called for before him and President Amine Gemayel before me. But we do not have the ability to achieve it. As for the Army and the security plan for the camps and the country, I believe that the obstacle is the ongoing political conflicts. I say this without forgetting the achievements of the Army. All the Lebanese and the Palestinians supported it in the fight against the terrorist group that was laying the groundwork for the establishment of an Islamic emirate in Nahr al-Bared.

“Therefore, I believe that a security structure must be created within the camps linked to the Lebanese state, with a designated and unified system, preceded by the unification of the Palestinian authority behind the PLO, given that it is the most representative. This would be a way toward a social contract with the Palestinians, which would lead to asserting their rights to employment and property ownership, among other things. So, all things are linked to a sense of cooperation and a good relationship.”

What happened in Mieh Mieh camp?

Sleiman is surprised that the trouble-maker Jamal Suleiman has left the country. He asks, “How can we make things easier in camps in such a situation? We are always afraid of a repeat of the Nahr al-Bared crisis as long as there are foreign hidden hands that incite these actions and push some Palestinians to commit bad acts against their people and against the Lebanese.

“There are many lessons to be learned from the Nahr al-Bared crisis, the first of which is the wiping out of the idea held by some terrorists that the Sunnis would stand by them. But the Lebanese, as a government and people, were united with their Army. It was later confirmed that establishing security and enforcing the law is beneficial for the State and the Lebanese and Palestinian societies in their security and their lives. And that the Palestinian cause should go back to being a purely Arab cause and the Arabs should unite around it. For those who love Palestine should help in this return, even go as far as reclaim it as an Arab cause.”

Sleiman denies the possibility of a pre-emptive Israeli war on Hezbollah. “Of course, any blow to Lebanon will be a heavy price to pay. Everyone is betting on Syria’s hand and the start of an Israeli war with the presence of big countries such as the US, Russia, Iran and Turkey, but it will not be in anyone’s interest. There are preparations for the cards on the table. Unfortunately, we as Lebanese are not ready and we do have not have any cards to play. Why hasn’t Lebanon been left non-aligned in the crisis? What happened with border demarcation? When will the Syrians return? What are our demands? Israel is putting forward its demands, so are Iran, Russia and the US. All parties have demands, but what about Lebanon’s demands? Where is our hand? Where does Lebanon fit in in this solution?”

“In any case, the solution will be in the interest of Israel,” Sleiman says. “I have already written as president of the republic to the Secretary-General of the United Nations Ban Ki-moon the position of Lebanon in the event of any international solution to the crisis in Syria.”

“The camps are a microcosm of the Arab and regional situations”

“The solution to the problems of the camps is through an agreement among the factions on a single authority”

“Lebanon is doing well as a homeland, but its political mismanagement and the “mini-states” are undermining its nationalist idea”

Permanent settlement of refugees and the return of this fear

Sleiman describes the fear of the permanent settlement of refugees as existent because no one wants to allow the return of Palestinian refugees to their homeland. We fear permanent settlement, but only the international community is able to provide fair solutions, and this will be through a two-state solution. Lebanon never accepted permanent settlement and never will. The Palestinians are present, and we cannot deny them their human rights and prevent them from improving their social conditions, and this is something that the Lebanese are at ease with primarily. Lebanon cannot shoulder successive settlement processes because this will deal a blow to its formula and model (sectarian political power balance) that has been strengthened despite all the events and the calamities of recent years. The two-state solution and the return of Palestinians to the West Bank or Gaza should be secured.

Lebanon can no longer bear the demographic pressure and may explode one day. What resources can we provide for Palestinian refugees who are becoming more educated, and given that decent jobs must be provided for them? There is a high unemployment rate in Lebanon, which is difficult under its conditions and contraction of the jobs market for everyone without exception. Improving the conditions of Palestinians has nothing to do with permanent settlement, it is rather an obligation imposed by international and humanitarian laws.
The Duty to Remember and Speak Out

Ibrahim Najjar*

The Lebanese-Palestinian war has yet to be chronicled; we have not learned its secrets and we do not understand who was behind any of the decisions. For my part, I know that we were all victims of a bloody conflict. Those days in 1975-1976 were difficult, with many areas shelled.

Jules Boustany, the Lebanese army intelligence chief, would put a helicopter at the disposal of “Abu Zaim” and “Abu Hassan,” representatives of the Palestinian National Liberation Movement (Fatah), to carry them to the Holy Spirit University in Kaslik, where we met many times with Abbot Charbel Kassis, Abbot Boulos Naaman, and the late Shaker Abu Suleiman and Dr. Saeed Bustani. Every time we agreed on a cease-fire, there would be a special and congruous atmosphere, as if we held the same view on matters and employed the same reasoning. When I would return to Baabdat, passing through Bikfaya and bearing the good news of the ceasefire to Sheikh Pierre Gemayel and his wife Genevieve, the latter would ask me with a measure of sarcasm: “So, you’ve accomplished a Herculean task.”

Then the situation would take a turn for the worse again and the shelling would come back.

Many continue to believe to this kind of concord. The impression was that none of us wanted the war, that we were prepared to reach an agreement, and that the war and operations were subject to hidden orders, which many called the “fifth column.”

At the time, these attempts benefited from many errors and calls for the removal of Christian “privileges” from the Lebanese system. The world seemed convinced that the war in Lebanon was civil, a Christian-Muslim one, and that it was enough to amend some parts of the constitution to normalize the situation and stabilize Lebanon.

However, the subsequent events, and the upheaval, occupation and mandate that Lebanon experienced led to our country being placed under tutelage and maintaining a substitute army outside Lebanon’s legitimate structures, such that the regional powers no longer needed, in this emerging situation, to remain in Lebanon officially. Perhaps the pretexts that some had come up with to keep Lebanese territories occupied have been banished from memory, especially after Israel’s withdrawal from South Lebanon in 2000.

The factions who fought, clashed, offered thousands of martyrs, victims and disabled persons, and destroyed each other have become, over the years, united in the face of great upheavals, if not allies. The Middle East requires a rethinking because the revolution that almost saw the light of day after the Arab Spring and the subsequent blows did not produce democratic systems, and encouraged disregarding the Palestinian central cause, which is the other side of the requirements to establish a solid foundation for the future.

One day, which must be near, we would have to address honestly and frankly all these ambiguities and political images because Palestinian politics has changed after the emergence of Palestinian legitimacy on Palestinian land, albeit with different methods, and Palestine has deliberately adopted a policy of “dissociation” from the inter-Lebanese religious and sectarian tangle. I have witnessed this personally after going through three years at the Ministry of Justice, as frank and open cooperation had replaced the clashes and relations have become direct between two states that respect each another.

The time has come for drawing lessons from what happened. Its subjects are complex and thorny, especially after the other calamity has hit Syria and vast numbers of Syrian refugees have rushed to Lebanon without being aware of what happened in 1948 and beyond and without realizing that refugees in Lebanon alter its demographic equations.

No doubt that Lebanon must acknowledge its humanitarian, social, cultural and economic responsibilities, which raises the question: What is the Lebanese policy towards the displaced and refugees? How many times will we repeat that the only policy for Lebanon is to the “right of return” or returning the displaced to their country?

If there is to be a dialogue, it is better to define a framework, program and agenda for deliberations, which would ensure going back to searching for the truth about what happened, to bring to light what was concealed, to seek openness and to exchange views. After all, Lebanon’s interests are in the interest of a just peace in the region.

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Camps: Between Marginalization, Neglect and Exploitation

Marwan Abdelaal*

Incidents moving from one place to another and from a camp to its alleyways ... The scandal is that we are talking about that as if the "mother of all battles" is being waged with all kinds of weapons in a narrow alleyway, and a truce between two neighborhoods, or establishing a cease-fire in the heart of a camp ... What's worse is the reckless disregard for people's security, lives and blood, and the material and psychological damage, and high moral and political costs. It is superficial to summarize what is happening as a mere coincidence and Baltaja, or isolated incidents not interconnected or sharing a timing.

We are talking about a phenomenon that arose and formed in a special environment of its own with three interacting elements: a festering social reality, illegal arms, and abhorrent political exploitation. These elements cannot be dissociated from their relation to the juncture, accompanied by social banes with the aim of eroding the society, distorting the national identity and dispersing the camps to make them an element of rejection for their people and a scarecrow for their surroundings.

Thus, they gain new symbolism moving away from an image of a nationalist cause to a security-related one that no one can tolerate. The correct, simple and bold political sense starts from the introductions that produced this dramatic scene and stops at the personal responsibility that is surely of our own making. The policy of non-policy, the custodial policy, the policy of marginalization, closure or discrimination has led to the ejection of the Palestinian society from the circle of life, whether with high unemployment rates or living below the poverty line. It has also led to the emergence and development of pathological phenomena, for the camps to be labeled as outlawed, although they are a victim between the anvil of a policy of marginalization, reduction and oppression, on the one hand, and the hammer of neglect, illegality, and disgraceful and condemned violence, on the other.

The seriousness of the solution begins with a central question: Do we want the camps to be within the scope of the law or outside of it?

The process of social control, the organization of people's lives and interests, and the achievement of sovereignty and justice require the rule of law, and adherence to binding rules and provisions that safeguard individual and national interests. But without ignoring the political dimension of the law, that is, awareness of the political root cause of the existential phenomenon, that is, the Palestinian presence in Lebanon is temporary and coercive. Its peculiarity is not contrasted, but has been created by tripartite economic, political and security-related suffering. It is a victim that is not directly responsible for its protracted displacement and the result of political failure to achieve its nationalist rights and the right to return. It is also the victim of international dereliction, such as the decline of UNRWA's services and the threat to its future, and the victim of the Lebanese closure policy, because the security situation should not be invoked to shirk from humanitarian obligations. A clear policy is necessary to be outlined in a cabinet statement, or at least through the adoption of the recommendations of the Lebanese Palestinian Dialogue Committee in this regard, as a positive signal that paves the way for the implementation of the paths pursued.

Ending anomalous and outlawed phenomena requires the termination of the negative environment that has been produced. This begins with the law of rights and duties, because recognition of the concept of duty precedes the concept of rights. A duty is a duty, not a dialogue or an option; it is an appreciation of the self and the other. The obligation to respect the balance between rights and duties is fundamental and cannot be dissociated from each other.

This leads to a growing sense of persecution! The responsibility of the Palestinian political leadership and the Palestinian society depends on the ability to play multiple roles and functions, encompassing all aspects of life, strengthening social ties, and managing people's affairs in relation to all parties, while the political role is the most important in this regard, in that it exercises politics rather than the labels of politics in the creation of contention, discord and factional gains at the expense of the security and life of society.

The duties of sound policy are to control continuous change in the structure of the camps and their social and civic composition.

Thus, the society can play a role in protecting itself, expelling flaws, isolating anomalous cases and sabotage tools, immunizing individuals against the sway of destructive ideas, and putting an end to security offenders and those with precedents and foreign agendas in close cooperation with the Lebanese State. It can push the State to assume its responsibilities without slackening or negligence, to mitigate the risks of violent social unrest. Based on this, the expressive function of the political authority is achieved in actions rather than words, by representing the interests of its people and being in line with their goals, and allowing them to participate to fulfill themselves and defend their rights and issues.

Tripartite repression: The lack of social security, the chaos and arbitrariness of arms, and political anxiety, feed into the destruction of violence and a dangerous game for gains of asserting and dismantling the relation between means and goals and the tools without politics!

The pressing question, whether voiced loudly or softly, is now: what is the value of arms outside this "nationalism"? What is the point of defending a just cause without the weapon of awareness, knowing that the attrition of the nationalist situation turns us into things and forms that are closed, fragmented and isolated, which contributed to the emergence of closed terrorist cases that targeted the assassination of the nationalist idea? It may be argued that "brutal force can only persuade ideas if the ideas give in to it."

The radicality of the long-term solution is through politics. Arbitrary arms and the security turmoil are the evidence but not the only one to explain the phenomenon of violence, which has a social and political dimension that is inseparable from the psychological dimension. The key to ending violence is based on social development, eliminating the causes of lawlessness and the loss of justice.

*Palestinian writer and leader
Hoping for Reconciliation with the Palestinian Cause

Nasri Sayegh*

The story of Palestinian displacement to Lebanon is a peal. Palestinians did not choose to be refugees; Israel repeatedly forced them into this. Under the weight of occupation and massacres, Palestinians left their most cherished possessions: home, land, homeland, stories … They left everything behind in the hope of returning soon, very soon. Palestinians carried the keys to their homes and still carry them; the dream of return has not been taken away from them.

The first displacement happened 70 years ago – as if it were yesterday. Their stories are rooted in the tradition of displacement: uprooting, dispersion, torture and setbacks. Seventy years during which Palestinians continued to dream, work and fight for return. The first generation is almost gone. Today, the fourth generation is currently re-producing its dream with the bits and pieces of hope and prayer.

Palestinians became a political and military burden. The story of Palestinian displacement to Lebanon is a peal. Palestinians did not choose to be refugees; Israel repeatedly forced them into this. Under the weight of occupation and massacres, Palestinians left their most cherished possessions: home, land, homeland, stories … They left everything behind in the hope of returning soon, very soon. Palestinians carried the keys to their homes and still carry them; the dream of return has not been taken away from them.

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Refugees are taken in as refugees and not as tourists or businessmen. The suffering was devastating for their humanity: Tents in place of homes, estrangement from their homeland, allies instead of orange groves, houses and fields, leaden skies instead of a blue expanse all the way to the horizon, UNRWA their “paper” home that keeps them alive, basic minimum assistance for the bare minimum. Palestinians became a political and military burden.

Palestinians did not despair. They clung on to the keys to their homes, the fragrance of the soil, the smell of the orange groves, the mornings of days and their beautiful nights. They waited long. Then came Naksa Day, and along with it there was an influx of new refugees in successive waves. Palestine was occupied in its totality, and the armies of the regimes crumbled in face of the might of the Israeli military machine. … Palestinians were made to carry their cross and endure in its peal. They took up arms. With them, they might return to their homeland or to their lord.

Palestinian refugees counted on their Arab brothers. How long and deadly was the torment of the wait. Palestinians did not despair. They clung on to the keys to their homes, the fragrance of the soil, the smell of the orange groves, the mornings of days and their beautiful nights. They waited long. Then came Naksa Day, and along with it there was an influx of new refugees in successive waves. Palestine was occupied in its totality, and the armies of the regimes crumbled in face of the might of the Israeli military machine. … Palestinians were made to carry their cross and endure in its peal. They took up arms. With them, they might return to their homeland or to their lord.

Guests are burdensome, even more so when hospitality is protracted and without end: years, decades and more. It was natural for the Lebanese to feel this burden and responsibility. It was just as normal for the Palestinians to feel like a burden to themselves and others. The hosts’ grumbling about their overstaying guests is part and parcel of displacement, and it is natural for refugees to demand more than the basic minimum. … Silent and grueling conflicts arose: Palestinians were allowed low wages and unfair incomes. The camps are overcrowded shelters, with all the misery and lack of health, life and education services that come along with that. The camps are a repository of cheap labor for jobs and occupations that the Lebanese turn their noses at, unless they come from the peripheries where the misery of the Lebanese equals that of Palestinian camps.

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Palestinians took up arms before and after the Naksa. They no longer counted on Arab regimes. States tolerate no arms other than their legitimate arms as represented by their armies. The Palestinian resistance clashed with the Jordanian Army. It lost there, infiltrated into Lebanon, and quickly transformed the misery camps into a repository of fighters. Each camp became a front…

Palestinians were made to carry their cross and endure in face of the might of the Israeli military machine. … Palestinians were accused of replacing Palestine with Lebanon. ... Palestinians became more miserable and perhaps more desperate. Their light arms, their way to Palestine is blocked and forbidden. These arms turned into “wars of enemy brothers” inside some camps. A number of which lives with the plague of continuous violence. Palestinians kill their Palestinian brethren. The chapters of the clash have not yet ended. They may yet spread to other camps. In addition, they have become a burdensome guest for many Lebanese. The labor market is locked to them, their movements calculated. That is how they were taken off the Lebanese map and returned to isolation.

The Lebanese have yet not recovered from the remnants of the war. There was an attempted apology. It was accepted grudgingly. Seventy years of bad blood and misunderstanding, misfortune and bad outcomes, never ending with reconciliation from above. The Lebanese and Palestinians have yet to reconcile. Their concern of fighting settlement has to be shared. Palestinians are not satisfied. Their reality is a tragedy, their future is uncertain and their hope is lost. The Lebanese continue to fear that the refugee crisis will be resolved with the affliction of settlement. This is impossible because of the harm that would do to the sectarian balance of power. … If complaints about Palestinians today have receded into the background, it is because the Syrian displacement is at the center of attention and because the Lebanese have become prisoners of their daily problems relating to water, electricity, debts, etc. Seventy years of displacement. How many more years? How many years will Palestinians endure displacement? How many years will the Lebanese wait?

When will the Lebanese and Palestinians reconcile? Reconciliation from above is flawed. The hope is that there would be reconciliation with the cause: the Palestinian cause and the Lebanese-Palestinian brotherhood.

Is this a dream?

It is an urgent demand for the establishment of a lasting peace based on deep mutual understanding. Security-based remedies are flawed. Injustice generates conflicts. In-depth remedies are required. If only that would happen. It’s long overdue.
Giving Palestinian Passports to Refugees

Rachid Derbas*

There has been no injustice in history as complex, grave and blatant as the injustice suffered by the Palestinian people, whether on their land or in the diaspora. No state or international or regional organization can claim innocence in this people’s tragedy, for those which did not contribute to the promise of establishing the state of Israel contributed support, armament, international patronage and moral protection, and financial funds. Those which did not participate in the above, participated in collusion and turning a blind eye, disregard, or the provision of inadequate sponsorship for a people who went to the tents thinking that its stay would be numbered in days. But tents became its home and tomb. The elements of nature participated in the injustice, whether unilaterally or in partnership with Israeli raids, internal clashes, brotherly oppression, racial discrimination and lack of legal and national personality.

This chronic injustice has led, among many things, to the fact that the Palestinians have become demographically separated from their surroundings legally, though linked to them in other aspects. The initial embrace of early displacement morphed into wariness, then enmity, and finally belligerency.

The truth is that the Palestinian cause, which united the Arabs from east to west, has become a contentious issue even among the Palestinian people. Falling short of fighting back their enemy, Palestinian organizations have descended into infighting, going as far as shooting at sister organizations under the banner of liberation, which often receded to the level of pursuing a temporary truce that would allow besieged citizens a reprieve to buy food and drink.

The historical national organizing system that brought Palestinians together, regardless of religion, social status or class, was the inviolability of identity. But the emigration of many of the elites, the decline of religious diversity to a level of saving appearances only, their problems with UNRWA, land grabbing, the hardships of life, lost hope, lost solidarity, in addition to the ramifications practiced by the Arab regimes, or the processes of armed oppression and dislodgement from the camps have left this system seriously frayed.

From this introduction, I want to turn to the results of those injustices that are born randomly, without any controls to stop their proliferation or remedies to mitigate their humanitarian effects.

In Lebanon, Palestinian citizens cannot own property according to the law, which has led many to try to devise convoluted legal machinations to solve a dilemma that may have no solution in the future. The Palestinian owners use fake Lebanese names. These names will one day become heirs and heirs of heirs, thus dangerous consequences will ensue from this temporary illegal solution.

Palestinian citizens are not insured, as the services provided by UNRWA diminish almost to naught after the U.S., together with some other donors, decided to stop aid because the international community, having consolidated Israel’s foundations, washed its hands of the consequences of its actions and left the Palestinians strangers on their land and oppressed in the diaspora. Preventing the settlement of the Palestinians in Lebanon through paragraph (i) of the Preamble to the Constitution contains attachment to their original identity and to the return to their independent state. However, this makes their stay highly complicated and unfair because Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, while deprived of the features of citizenship and the rights of foreigners living on Lebanese territory, are creatures of diminished humanity, harboring great concern that cannot but spill over to their environment and make it susceptible to social, security and criminal crises ...

Moreover, this injustice is a violation of the principles of human rights.

After this exposition, I found that my involvement in Jousour required that I put forward a proposal that may be lacking in lucid studies but valid to be the start for a way out of the cycle of failure and rhetoric, to a platform where thinkers and opinion leaders can meet to return to the origin, i.e. that each Palestinian citizen has his original nationality, which is the nationality of Palestine, and has his own passport issued by the Palestinian Authority to whoever descends from that origin.

This is stipulated in the Oslo Accords. However, as regards the Palestinians of the diaspora, it restricted them to the procedures permitted by the Israeli occupation. However, as long as the Palestinian embassies accredited in the Arab countries can issue this passport, I propose that holders of the passport in Lebanon be treated like any other foreigner and that they be granted the same rights accorded to other foreign nationals. This does not contravene the constitutional principle of preventing settlement, given that the ownership of an apartment in Lebanon by an American, Kuwaiti or French person, for example, cannot be considered as an entryway to their settlement and turning them into Lebanese nationals. Why doesn’t the same rule apply to holders of Palestinian passports? Giving the Palestinian passport with its full effects is in fact one facet of preventing permanent settlement because it makes its holder attached to it, that is, to his identity and right to return to his usurped land, instead of pursuing other nationalities that would accept him as a respectable citizen with full rights.

The United Nations General Assembly, with the majority of its members, has recognized the state of Palestine, so the least that can be done now is translate this recognition into respect of the legal effects of the passport issued by the Authority, to protect the continuity of belonging and facilitate the lives of Palestinians who are entitled to live as respected foreigners in their countries of residence.

This is an idea for discussion, which I’m promoting in conditions of Arab regression and the decline of the conflict with Israel to the back burner, so that the future of the Palestinian people retains an identity recognized by brothers and friends and used as arms by future generations to restore rights.

Finally, it should be noted that the acquisition of Lebanese citizenship is subject to strict legal requirements that do not apply to any Lebanese resident, no matter how long they stay on Lebanese territory. In addition, the process of settling the Palestinians also clashes with the text of the Constitution. Another major obstacle that must be maintained is the rejection of this by both the Lebanese and the Palestinians, regardless of international pressure. The national, nationalist, coordinated stance is a guarantee and safeguard against the rebirth of new conflicts, for which the Lebanese and the Palestinians have paid dearly for.

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The Immigration of Lebanon’s Palestinians:
‘Individual Choice’ or ‘Organized Conspiracy?’

Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon are experiencing a growing migration outflow of their youth and families, and difficult economic and social conditions as a result of the crisis facing the Lebanese economy and the legal restrictions imposed on Palestinians. This situation is exacerbated by the bleak international political outlook preventing a just solution for their cause. For Palestinian factions, these “migrations” are a highly sensitive issue. Palestinian refugees in Lebanon suffer from harsh living conditions. The restrictions on them are many, UNRWA is contracting its services because of the financial crisis and aid from NGOs has decreased. Officials do not have any alternatives to offer.

Palestinians wonder if there is a political plan behind these “departure flights,” which seem too easy. Reports, studies and articles have warned that systematic migration poses a major threat to the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, leading to a drop in their numbers, amid fears that the rest of them will be permanently settled using various humanitarian and social pretexts, meaning the loss of the right of return.

The difficulties to make a decent living and attempts to end their cause with what has been referred to as the “deal of the century” as proposed by the U.S. administration amid a deafening Arab silence has pushed some Palestinian refugees to “desperate migration” to Europe, Australia, Canada and even Africa, in any way or route possible, in the face different risks. Some have arrived at their destinations while others have returned, and the fate of others remains unknown or they are missing.

Between 10,000 and 13,000 have left in three years?

Some figures provided by Palestinian leaders and officials show that 4,000 Palestinian families from Lebanon were registered in Europe in 2017-2018 and about 1,500 have emigrated over the past six months. According to these figures, more than 13,000 Palestinians have left the camps during the past three years, about 4,000 of them in the past few months alone. According to media reports, in three months, 500 people departed from the camps in North Lebanon and 300 from Ain al-Hilweh camp, in addition to those who migrated from camps in Beirut, South Lebanon and the Bekaa Valley. From Rashideh camp alone, families with 100 to 150 members have migrated. The amount obtained by a broker ranges between $6,000 and $8,000 per person.1

Between Europe and South America

According to Palestinian sources, the migration of refugees from Lebanon began individually and “legally” in 2014, mainly to Germany. It included educated young people looking for jobs that were not and would not be available to them in Lebanon, using the “family reunification” channel. But since the beginning of 2017, migration journeys are now undertaken by air part of a widespread phenomenon. It first began in Tyre camps and the surrounding gatherings, before spreading to the other neighboring camps and gatherings. Palestinians in these camps affirm that there are a number of “tour operators” arranging departures. But the name on everyone’s lips is “facilitator” J.Gh., whose phone number is shared between residents in camps. His office used to be a barber in Ain al-Hilweh camp. He heard from an acquaintance about a smuggler in Beirut. He didn’t respond to any of our questions,” Hadi said. “All he told us was the countries and airports we’d be going through: from Beirut airport via an airline to Africa, then to Brazil and Uruguay where we would stay with my family for several days, with the previous stops being ‘transit’ stops and from Uruguay back to Brazil then to Spain, where we would apply for asylum right at the airport. Asking about anything was not allowed, such as the date of the flight, name of airline or place of stay in Uruguay. The smuggler told me that I’d have these details before departure. “It seems that this smuggler does not require an entry visa. According to a Palestinian source, the Lebanese middleman provides to the refugee a “visa” to Brazil. Then the refugee travels to Bolivia or another South American country before going back to Spain as a transit passenger. There they tear up their official documents and apply for asylum.

‘There, it’s those who’ve made it, and here, it’s those who are waiting’

Ahmed responded to one of the invitations on WhatsApp groups and then through some Facebook pages during 2018 to the people of the camps in Lebanon, to the residents of Nahr al-Bared and Beddawi camps in North Lebanon, and Ain al-Hilweh camp in South Lebanon in particular, to demonstrate and demand migration. He took part in a demonstration in Nahr al-Bared, holding up a banner reading “Migration is a right.” This was followed by other demonstrations with lower numbers of participants. In other camps, adverts were put up on the walls of houses reading “For sale due to travel.” But Ahmad, who just wanted to “get out of Lebanon,” has come back to it burdened with debt and having lost his house and job.

Hadi, from Ain al-Hilweh, would only emigrate via a safe route. “I was told by friends about a smuggler in Beirut. He didn’t respond to any of our questions,” Hadi said. “All he told us was the countries and airports we’d be going through: from Beirut airport via an airline to Africa, then to Brazil and Uruguay where we would stay with my family for several days, with the previous stops being ‘transit’ stops and from Uruguay back to Brazil then to Spain, where we would apply for asylum right at the airport. Asking about anything was not allowed, such as the date of the flight, name of airline or place of stay in Uruguay. The smuggler told me that I’d have these details before departure. “It seems that this smuggler does not require an entry visa. According to a Palestinian source, the Lebanese middleman provides to the refugee a “visa” to Brazil. Then the refugee travels to Bolivia or another South American country before going back to Spain as a transit passenger. There they tear up their official documents and apply for asylum.

‘The matter is more complex than a mere business’

“What drives Palestinians to emigrate first is harsh living conditions, loss of civil rights and many occupations that are prohibited to them,” said Ziad al-Sayyid, who used to be a barber in Ain al-Hilweh camp. He heard from an acquaintance about an office that provides visas to Spain and other European countries at a cost of not less than $10,000. From the moment your luggage is weighed until you arrive in Spain, you are “covered in terms of security and they’re right there with you at every step.” “What matters is getting out of this country [Lebanon],” Ziad said. “But once you arrive in Spain, you get another type of treatment. We slept for eight hours on a wooden bench and waited until the International Red Cross came to pick us up. The trip took eight months, plus 20 days on the road.”

The experience revealed to Ziad and many more like him who have come back from a “migration of loss and separation” the fact that firstly, “those who run the operation of taking Palestinians out of the country are not just an office and a broker. There is someone behind it. The matter is more complex than a mere business. There may be parties that want to reduce the numbers of Palestinians in Lebanon.”

• Accurate data based on objective studies of the phenomenon of the immigration of Palestinian refugees from Lebanon, especially during the civil war and the preceding period, are not available. However, all indicators confirm that this immigration is similar to that of the Lebanese citizens’, affected by the lack of job opportunities, difficult living conditions, and the ongoing wars and conflicts.

• The findings of the Population and Housing Census in the Palestinian Camps and Gatherings in Lebanon-2017 revealed the cumulative irregularity over the years in counting the number of Palestinian refugees who are permanently residing in Lebanon, compared to the administrative records held by Lebanese Ministry of the Interior (175,000 Palestinians residing in Lebanon during the month of July 2017 out of the 466,000 UNRWA registered Palestinian refugees in Lebanon).

• The data collected by the Census on family members residing outside Lebanon does not, of course, include those that immigrated as entire families from Lebanon. Nor does it necessarily include individuals and their children who have acquired other nationalities and have for various reasons abandoned their refugee status. It is also important to note that families who responded to immigration questions during the enumeration process may be overlook some of their immigrant members as a result of forgetfulness or the long period of time that elapsed since their departure.

• 5763 families responded during the census that there was at least one member of the family residing outside of Lebanon, making up 12.2% of the number of Palestinian families in Lebanon.

Available Data from The General Directorate of General Security on arrivals and departures traffic of Palestinian refugees through Beirut Rafic Hariri International Airport provide indications of the large mobility of Palestinian refugees as well as the differential resulting from the incoming to and outgoing of Palestinian refugees numbers. It is important to note that the data published covers only Palestinian refugees who use travel documents issued by the Lebanese authorities during the entry and exit process and not those using the Palestinian passport or any other nationality that they may have in parallel.

In addition, the data explain the legal entry and exit process through Beirut Rafic Hariri International Airport exclusively without accounting for land crossings. Thus, the waves of illegal immigration by boat and others are not included in these figures.

Table 1: Distribution of members of households abroad by period of immigration and sex

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date of Immigration</th>
<th>Total</th>
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</thead>
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<tr>
<td>before 1982</td>
<td>5.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>from 1982 to 1989</td>
<td>8.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>from 1990 to 2005</td>
<td>32.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>from 2005 to 2012</td>
<td>24.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>from 2013 and after</td>
<td>29.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
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</table>

Table 2: Distribution of members of Household Living abroad by age and Sex

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-14</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-24</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>25-64</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>65+</td>
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Figure 1: Distribution of members of Palestinian refugees Households residing abroad by region of their current residence
‘Deal of the century’ A Preliminary of an Open Conflict

Hisham Dibsi*

The unprecedented clash between the current U.S. administration and the Palestinian leadership over the so-called “deal of the century” announced by U.S. has added further complications to the complexity of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, with a spillover of disarray in the Arab political landscape.

The Palestinians see in the U.S. actions a denial of their national aspirations and a serious blow to the question of negotiations, especially after Washington has begun to implement this policy and impose it unilaterally. This comes in the wake of the withdrawal of the U.S. administration in recent years from being a partner – or even mediator – in the negotiations, leaving the Palestinians and Israelis one-on-one as the region continues to be engulfed in internecine conflicts.

So we are back to the pre-Oslo Agreement square one after a quarter of a century of pursuing a settlement that would meet the bare minimum of Palestinian national interest. Thus, this challenge poses fateful questions for the elites as well as average citizens about Palestinian prospects: Where do we go? Can we stand our ground? And how can we stand our ground while we fail, time after time, to achieve internal reconciliation and witness the erosion of people’s basic needs and the impuissance of the Palestinian political system to address its major issues, with the decline of the democracy that had formerly existed?

The Palestinian leadership was well-aware of these facts when it declared its outright opposition to the “deal of the century.” This opposition has reached the point of political rupture with the Trump administration. The view of some observers is that Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas “climbed to the top of the tree and could not find anyone to help him come down.”

“It is true that President Abbas climbed to the top of the tree as a countermove to the U.S. and Israeli parties crossing all the red lines,” the PLO leadership says, “but he also pushed to the limit the political and diplomatic spheres in response to the challenge. Moreover, he no longer had to come down the tree, as long as there is nothing for him to do on the negotiation ground – as there is no negotiation ground – and while popular clashes on the ground with the occupation army are escalating everywhere!”

Where does the Palestinian position derive its ability to hold firm in defiance, despite the fact that many – perhaps even most – have a hopeless view of the Palestinian-Israeli and regional-international scenes? In fact, the answer to this question may be simple, but it is not simplified, nor does it belong to a particular political group or individuals. It requires a variety of approaches that consider the subjective and objective conditions of the conflict, and the nature of contradictions that can be solved and those that are insoluble. It also considers, in particular, the nature of the Palestinian-Israeli balance of power at all levels. It is the task of the collective Palestinian mind and the collective Palestinian effort, given that the conflict has gone on for over a century and become a priority on the international agenda, as recognized by its most senior spokespersons, most prominently the United Nations.

Firstly, reaffirming our great appreciation for the courage of the Palestinian leadership in accepting the challenge, it must be said that the primary and most important source of strength of the current Palestinian stance is the vitality of the Palestinian society at home and in the diaspora and its historical and qualitative responses to the challenges, at the most intractable junctures, in a way that has made all the difference:

• Despite the dispersion of the Palestinian people and the different laws, systems and means of development that govern them, there has been a positive empirical outcome since the year of the Nakba, as reflected in the Palestinian people’s attachment to their human and political rights, their ability to unite under the harshest of circumstances and their ability to develop their forms of political resistance, including peaceful popular uprisings, not to mention armed conflict.

• In this context, it is possible to reflect on some of the historical features revealing the willingness of the people to bear high costs in defense of their material and moral existence. At the start of the 20th century, the Palestinian people numbered no more than 500,000 individuals. Then more than 615,000 people were lost as casualties in the struggle with the Zionist project, with hundreds of thousands of others injured and millions detained over the course of a century, according to estimates of the relevant institutions this year. Another instance is the Gafni Committee set up by Prime Minister Golda Meir in 1973. Its task was to plan the prevention of the Palestinian population in Occupied Jerusalem rising above 22 percent. Today, Netanyah is trying everything to reduce the number of Palestinian Jerusalemites, who make up 41 percent of the city’s residents.

• Netanyah declared Occupied Jerusalem “a united city and the eternal capital of the state of Israel,” heading in the direction of a “Jewish state” and liquidated the Palestinian presence in the territories of 1948. This time the response came from within the territories and from Jerusalem in particular, in the form of an overwhelming popular rising, with Muslim and Christian participation, in defense of the Al-Aqsa Mosque and condemnation of the crime of “selling Orthodox land endowments.” This rising reverberated powerfully in the occupied West Bank, Gaza and Jordan, as well as the cities and towns of 1948! This year’s peaceful “Al-Aqsa Intifada” came as a surprise to the expectations of the Israeli mind, and perhaps to the expectations of many Arabs.

In short, the vitality of Palestinian society, despite its geographical dispersal, is a force that cannot be arrested or destroyed, nor can it be stopped or controlled. This is the source of strength of the recent Palestinian stance expressed by Abbas, reinforced by the sum total of a historic struggle to impose the presence of the Palestinian identity on Israel first, and on all international and regional forums, and reinforced by a more intransigent reality, which is the impossibility of consigning the Palestinian cause to oblivion. The “deal of the century” seems to be a pipe dream in a sick imagination.

Despite the dominance of the U.S. administration in our world, the Palestinian stance played the role of political lever for the Arab Summit held in Dhahran last March, and it is no coincidence that it was called the Jerusalem Summit. The Palestinian peace project is at the core of the Arab Peace Initiative, which expresses common Arab views. It is also a consensus between regional and international working systems, including the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and the Group of 77, which appointed the state of Palestine to represent it at the last United Nations General Assembly. The strong position of the king of Jordan on the issue of permanent settlement and the confederation should be noted, as should the official Lebanese position in this regard.

In addition to the above points in answering the question of where the Palestinian political position derives its strength from, another fact is that the regional conflicts that have been going on for seven years ago do not seem to be moving toward inevitable finalities, as some may like to think or promote. They are rather in a constant state of flux, as can be seen through a close inspection of the existing alignments and their contradictions at the regional and international levels. Hence the importance of the Palestinian steadfastness with regard to achievements or outcomes that are no longer reversible. In our opinion, the current Israeli mind needs help coming down from the top of the tree!

A Palestinian woman who took part in recent peaceful demonstrations against the Israeli army said: “We have become immune and numb in the face of guns that are constantly pointed at us!”

And we join the Palestinians in saying: Our bloodshed makes the weight of our bodies dispel their victory, so we are not defeated and they are not victorious! But those at the top of the Israeli pyramid seem to have forgotten what came in Leviticus: “Proclaim liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants.”

*Former central information officer of Fatah ovement in Lebanon
The Israeli Internal Dispute on the ‘Basic Law of Nation-State’

Antoine Shalhat*

Early on the morning of July 19, 2018, the Israeli Knesset conclusively enacted the nation-state law, which defines Israel as the ‘nation-state of the Jewish people.’ It grants preference to the Hebrew language over the Arabic language, as well as to Jewish settlement. In addition, it limits self-determination in Israel to Jews only and names “Jerusalem, complete and united” the capital of Israel.

Basic laws have constitutional status in Israel, since it still does not have a constitution.

I think that the danger of this law to the Palestinians in their various places of residence is clear, but from my specific position in the 1948 areas, I will try to focus on the internal Israeli dispute over the law to get to the bottom of it and understand the extent to which it is compatible with our reasoning as Palestinians in opposition to this law.

The first thing to say in this regard is that when the “nation-state law” was still a “bill” open for discussion, there was agreement regarding everything that had to do with determining Israel’s identity and functions among the main Israeli political parties: Likud, Labor, Yesh Atid, The Jewish Home, Yisrael Beiteinu and Hatnua (The Movement). Their political platforms define Israel as a Jewish state and thus its higher functions are derived from this definition.

This is what applies to opposition parties. For example, the opposition secular centrist party Yesh Atid (There Is a Future) defines its vision of Israel’s identity in the introduction to its platform thus: “We believe that Israel was created as a nation-state for the Jewish people. It should remain a state with a Jewish majority, with secure and defensible borders.”

The Labor Party (opposition) also defines Israel in its recent election platform as “the state of the Jewish people, and accordingly, the party opposes the return of Palestinian refugees to areas within Israel’s borders. The problem of these refugees will be resolved in an agreed manner with the participation of the countries of the region and the international community, but not by granting the right of return (to refugees).”

As for Hatnua (opposition), its election platform includes the following principles:

1. “The Israeli people have an inalienable right to a sovereign State within the borders of Eretz-Israel (Palestine), its national, historical, religious and cultural homeland;
2. The central political goal of Hatnua is to ensure the consecration of the State of Israel as a national home for the Jewish people, as a democratic state in the spirit of the ‘Declaration of Independence,’ living in peace and security with all its neighbors;
3. Ensuring Israel’s survival as a Jewish and democratic state requires maintaining a Jewish majority among its citizens.”

Such consensus is not confined to the main Israeli parties in the coalition and the opposition. It also applies to elites who style themselves liberal. They believe that Israel is indeed a nation-state of the Jewish people and that there is no need for a basic law to define its identity because it would undermine the principles of Zionism itself, as if what is contained in it contradicts the essence of the Zionist doctrine.

To illustrate the position of these elites, extracts from a “memorandum” presented by two senior researchers from the Israel Democracy Institute in Jerusalem to the Israeli Ministerial Committee for Legislation can be found at the start of the discussion of the bill building up momentum (memorandum dated May 2, 2014).

The memorandum opens with the following: Although we agree, naturally, that Israel is the nation-state of the Jewish people, we oppose the recent bill proposed in this regard, since we see a dangerous bill that could upset the fragile and sensitive balance between the two main components of the definition and character of the State: Judaism and democracy. This is not about an ordinary law, but rather about an untouchable basic law that defines the identity of the state.

The proposed draft law lacks the necessary balance between the state being a nation-state of the Jewish people and a democratic state, because it pushes the democratic component from its central position to the fringe, i.e. this is a complete turnabout that radically changes the constitutional system in Israel in place since its establishment. The draft law deals with the identity of the state, focusing on its Jewish character and dwarfing its democratic character. It even goes as far as to completely disregard any content in this democratic character. We see this as undermining the “very foundations of Zionism” … Thus, the bill damages irrevocably relations between Jews and Arabs in Israel and the image of Israel in the world, while making the state an intolerant place for anyone who adopts a liberal Jewish view.

The memorandum believes that the enactment of this law will be a lever in the hands of anti-Israel forces used to make claims against its legitimacy as a Jewish state.

These extracts indicate that the opposition of the law, by the forces that profess to be liberal, does not stem basically from a principled or moral viewpoint, but rather from concern about the reactions the law might provoke around the world. They also indicate that this approach is in essence a “right-wing” position, since it is supposed to serve the purely Jewish interest in “granting conditional concessions” to the rights of Palestinian citizens at home. It is not founded on universal and equal values based on the recognition of the collective nationalist rights of these Palestinians.

Perhaps what is even more unsavory is reading between the lines of the said memorandum. It can be inferred that Israel does not need a constitutional text to better discriminate in favor the Jews, to establish Jewish settlements and towns for Jews only, etc. This is exactly what the state has been doing through the public policy of apartheid adopted by its successive governments, but more as “low-intensity” discrimination without public proclamation lest it be caught red-handed. It goes without saying that most of the above was reflected boldly in most of the internal Israeli debate that followed the conclusive enactment of the law, with few exceptions that do not blot out the toxicity and character of this consensus.

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The information leaked regarding the proposals made by Jared Kushner, adviser to the U.S. president, and Middle East envoy Jason Greenblatt, and their discussion with the king of Jordan about the possibility of permanently settling 2.2 million refugees in Jordan appear to be just the tip of the iceberg in the so-called “deal of the century,” especially when this trend is combined with cutting $365 million in U.S. aid to UNRWA following a previous decision to freeze $300 million of the total amount paid in 2017.

Of course, things did not stop at placing financial pressure on the U.N. agency. It was accompanied by a targeted political and media campaign that vented its anger at the role played by the international agency in preserving the Palestinian refugee cause and passing down the status of refugee from one generation to another, thereby perpetuating the Palestinian cause and ensuring the survival of the demand for the right of return. This was accompanied by two bills under consideration by Congress to limit the status of Palestinian refugee to the generation that witnessed the Nakba in 1948, which then brings the number of refugees to a figure set by some American authorities at only 40,000 Palestinians. As for the remaining millions of refugees registered with UNRWA in its five areas of operation, the occupied West Bank, the Gaza Strip, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria, they should hold the nationalities of the countries in which they reside. The United States would then redirect the money allocated to UNRWA to the countries concerned. This would be accompanied by the de facto abolition of UNRWA as a U.N. organization, even if not legally abolished at the United Nations, and the transfer of refugees registered with it to the UNHCR, which must manage their settlement.

Of course, Jordan announced its rejection of the U.S. proposal, especially as it entails more than the liquidation of the Palestinian refugee cause. It conceals from view that this approach aims to turn Jordan into the alternative Palestinian homeland for the Palestinian territories occupied by Israel in 1967 in both the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, by considering that the place of the Palestinian state should be outside “Judea and Samaria.” If this is not achieved, in the Gaza Strip and part of the Sinai area there is enough space to accommodate the establishment of an airport and industrial zone, which alleviates the overcrowding in the Gaza Strip. The U.S. administration does not recognize the existence of refugees in Gaza, although there are more than a million refugees there, nor the principle of the return of refugees from Jordan, Lebanon and Syria to their homes. Therefore, it is working to get rid of the refugee cause altogether as part of its efforts to end the thorny and unresolved issues between the Palestinians and Israel. Thus, there are moves forward on the path to resolving the “Middle East issue” and the Arab-Zionist conflict by reducing the number of refugees through a comprehensive system of measures, including economic and financial pressures to encourage them to emigrate and leave the region.

The fact is that there is a permanent settlement project owned by President Donald Trump’s administration that envisions settling large numbers of Palestinian refugees in their temporary places of residence in the host countries, with the UNHCR managing the migration of those who cannot be absorbed in those countries. It seeks to turn the page on the issue of Palestinian refugees, making responsibility for refugees limited to the UNHCR and consecrating the Jewishness of Palestine by making the nation-state law a reality. Thus, the measures will be complete: from recognizing Jerusalem as the capital of the occupying state to moving the embassy there, along with all the punitive U.S. political and financial measures taken against the Palestinian people and their leadership.

Of course, this is not the first time that a settlement project has been produced for Palestinian refugees by the U.S., Israeli or others. In fact, settlement projects have accompanied the refugee cause since 1948. They have been developed by envoys sent by the U.S., Israeli or others. In fact, settlement projects have accompanied the refugee cause since 1948. They have been developed by envoys sent by successive U.S. administrations, or by initiatives from companies, institutions and even individuals. The first of these projects was developed by McGee, followed by Clapp, Blandford, Eric Johnston, among others. What they had in common was considering it the gateway to settlement, thus getting rid of the refugee cause economically and developmentally.

They included agricultural, industrial and vocational projects, and providing infrastructure (roads, sewers, water dams, reclamation of land, industrial and service establishments and housing plans) in Syria and Jordan, leading to the settlement of refugees in these two countries in particular, with the reduction of the number of refugees in Lebanon. Some projects added Iraq, as it can take in 1 million refugees over a period of 20 years (a British Foreign Office project in 1955 discussed this with the U.S. government as it appeared in report No. 115625/37/F), with the U.S. and other countries providing the funding for these projects.

First, the U.S. policy began with the principle of maintaining Israel’s special status and role, and confronting the Soviet threat and the communist tide. Now, the Arab fragmentation is being used to get rid of the essence of the conflict and to place its responsibilities on Arab governments. The projects have constantly faced a unified Arab-Palestinian stance that insists on the right of return, prompting Israel to prepare a file on the Jews who left Arab countries and the value of their property and having it ready, turning the cause of the return of Palestinian refugees or compensating them into the return or compensation of Jewish refugees.

It should be said that the previous projects and attempts were all aimed at getting rid of Resolution 194 (adopted on Dec. 11, 1948, at meeting No. 186, with a majority of 35 countries, with 15 voting against and eight abstaining), which consecrated the right of return or compensation. It includes many details addressing not only the protection and management of holy places, and establishing an international regime for the Jerusalem area under the supervision of the United Nations, but also stipulated linking the recognition of this decision with the recognition of the state of Israel. Yet 70 years after the resolution’s adoption, Israel does not contemplate returning refugees, but rather bringing in Jews from other countries and settling them in their nation-state.

* Lebanese researcher and academic.
We note our appreciation for the achievements of the committee, particularly not coordinated and unified in a single plan – until the Lebanese-Palestinian Lebanon have been involved in the service of this cause – albeit their work was Over the course of seven decades, “government institutions” and NGOs in of providing the required services based on the objectives of the international although UNRWA in its programs has not achieved the appropriate level of due to its political, humanitarian and ideological importance, this cause has marked the history of contemporary Arabs and Muslims, and cost them human and material sacrifices at all levels, producing negative effects on various Arab political, social and even economic issues. Over the past 70 years, the issue of Palestinian refugees has created many problems and complications that have weighed on the reality, capabilities and capacities of the host countries, particularly Lebanon, the Arab country which, since the 1948 Nakba (Palestinian exodus), has proved its national and nationalist integrity in its support and advocacy for the cause of Palestine and the rights of its brotherly people. All of this despite its small geographical area and its modest economic capacities and potential, and despite its particular and sensitive sectarian model and sectarian and religious diversity. Lebanon has borne on its territory the burden of Palestinian refugees, relying officially and popularly on itself and the best it could do. As time passed, Lebanon found itself facing an individual responsibility toward the Palestinian refugee brethren because its values, nobility and traditions would not allow it to shirk this responsibility. The League of Arab States was no longer present with its supportive influence and effective programs. In addition, a great distance emerged between the founding principles of this Arab institution and what should have been done for the rights of the Palestinian people. This happened as a result of a decline in the positions of most Arab regime members of this institution and a decline in its embrace and support for the Palestinian cause, especially since Arab agreements – tacit and explicit – with the Israeli entity have contributed more and more to a siege of Palestinian rights in all aspects and the nonfulfillment of the return of diaspora refugees to their land and homeland. This has left Lebanon as one of few Arab countries bearing the weight of human concerns (such as economic and financial), in addition to the suffering of the Palestinian brethren on its land. Although UNRWA in its programs has not achieved the appropriate level of support for the dignity, life and needs of these refugees and did not respond to the bare minimum owed to them, the question that arises here is: Is it capable of providing the required services based on the objectives of the international resolution establishing it, as long as it is part of the agenda of the international community, which has not yet endeavored to implement Resolution 194? Over the course of seven decades, “government institutions” and NGOs in Lebanon have been involved in the service of this cause – albeit their work was not coordinated and unified in a single plan – until the Lebanese-Palestinian Dialogue Committee was conceived in its official form and began to examine the needs of refugees in their camps and residential gatherings. We note our appreciation for the achievements of the committee, particularly the Lebanese Working Group on Palestinian Refugees during the last three years. The working group has taken upon itself, with seriousness and using scientific and technical methods, the issues before it. The group benefited from qualified specialists who made it possible for it to crystallize ideas and rectify data at times. This contributed to facilitating dialogue among its members and to moving toward better drafting positions for discussion themes and their complexities, so that the joint conclusions reached by the participants became the motivation and drive to achieve and announce the common vision contained in its 2017 document. Thus, the two teams of experts and facilitators and the working group have made meaningful contributions, objective in their process and style, flexible and useful. The working group is owed a debt of gratitude. The representatives of the parliamentary blocs and their parties in the working group used as a basis, given their great national responsibility, the historical background of the course, junctures and the results of past incidents between the Palestinians and the Lebanese, on the one hand, and between the Palestinians themselves on Lebanese soil, on the other. They examined the current reality of the issue of continued displacement and discussed the legal, political and national repercussions and consequences of the Palestinians being exiled from their homeland and denied the right of a decent return to Palestine. They also discussed the duty of the Lebanese state and its capabilities to continue to support and address the basic and urgent need to improve safety in camps and gatherings. The members of the committee proposed important recommendations and effective ideas in correcting the responsible handling of this issue/cause. They presented texts that contribute to and are complemented by cooperation and role, with the previous laws issued by the Parliament and the initiatives of Lebanese governments and their service institutions. This is what was submitted in the name of the Working Group to then-Prime Minister Tammam Salam.

What set apart the tireless effort of the working group members and chair are several important points, namely:

Their commitments were not separate from the guidance of their leaders and their authorities, as there was clear determination to reach Lebanese collective and Lebanese-Palestinian agreements that would achieve the desired goal of healing this group and agreeing on the titles and themes of the relevant topics. The discussions were not just limited to security problems; the dialogue also included various aspects surrounding and relating to the cause. The humanitarian dimension had its place, and the national and nationalist link was the priority in the search for solutions to this suffering and its existing challenges. The recommendations of fellow members were indeed the best possible to be reached as suggestions tackled in-depth the most fundamental dilemmas, which are a priority in the desired solutions. The working group did not hesitate to propose effective follow-up mechanisms with a view to applying and implementing these recommendations with the competent official authorities in the Lebanese state. Given that only one recommendation has been achieved, i.e. the statistical census of Palestinian refugees living in refugee camps and gatherings, we hope that the other recommendations will be adopted with the formation of the next government so they too take the course of implementation, in order to complete this unique effort in national devotion and to agree together to alleviating the social and humanitarian suffering of the refugee brethren.

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Palestinian Youth in Lebanon: Desire for Change is Stronger Than Marginalization

Imane Chamas*

Palestinian youth in Lebanon suffer from two-fold marginalization: Firstly, being refugees who are victims of an international, regional, internal and local political conflict, and, secondly, because they belong to a generation of Arab young people who are overwhelmed by a general feeling of frustration, anxiety and fear of the future due to the overall deteriorating economic, social and security-related conditions that affect their independence and professional life.

Young people make up the biggest part of Palestinian society in Lebanon. The 19-35 age group constitutes 63 percent of total Palestinian refugees, according to the results of the general census of population and housing in Palestinian camps and Palestinians conducted by the Lebanese-Palestinian Dialogue Committee in partnership with the Lebanese Central Administration of Statistics and the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics. About 45 percent of them live in camps in overcrowded areas where infrastructure and housing structures are often hazardous. In addition, they are often victims, hostages or participants in internal armed conflicts.

They face many challenges in Lebanon that are passed down over generations:

They complain of a politicized and militarized Lebanese attitude toward them because of their identity. This is exacerbated by the circulation of stereotypes inherited through the memory of the Lebanese Civil War and the controversial role the Palestinians played in it, and the focus of some media on portraying the camps as lawless pockets of insecurity and extremism. Any positive stories about the ability of the Palestinians to adapt and endure despite all the challenges, or even about their normal daily life and peaceful coexistence with their neighbors, are completely disregarded.

Access to basic rights is a major factor, affecting their lives significantly. The ambiguous legal representation of Palestinian identity and restrictions preventing their access to the “legal” job market leads them to look for unsafe work. This compounds their suffering due to a lack of funding for income-generating projects and UNRWA’s contracting education and health services, as well as due to the difficulty of reconciliation with Lebanese communities and the discrimination by Lebanese in employment and social behaviors such as marriage, or personal judgments.

Some 47 percent of males and 80 percent of females suffer from unemployment. Enrollment in higher education institutions is also low. Only 31 percent are able to complete secondary education and 22 percent are able to pursue university studies. Some 57 percent of Palestinians view Palestinian camps as worrying places. The Palestinian political divide has spread to their ranks too. There is pressure from the older Palestinian generation critical of their talents and ambitions. Conspiracy theories promoted by this generation regarding challenging Palestinian traditions, gaining political influence or spreading financial corruption have infiltrated their views. These are additional factors that lead to a feeling of insecurity among young people and to the spread of social problems, such as drug addiction, dependency and reliance on others, or resorting to migration, both legally and illegally, as the sole solution (see Immigration). More than 40 percent of all Palestinian families emigrating from Lebanon are young people, and young men are more likely than young women to emigrate.

This is some of what young Palestinians have to go through daily without having their hopes for change destroyed. Young activists are motivated by a genuine desire to alleviate the harsh conditions in their communities, and the legal and circumstantial restrictions in many professional areas.

They are encouraged by projects aimed at community development and capacity-building carried out by some official institutions, associations and NGOs in the camps and gatherings. They devote their time to social work or volunteer in their free time in various types and levels of community support activities.

They undertake many activities and projects, drawing inspiration from their success stories and the concrete impact they have on their communities. They are able to “create something out of nothing,” taking a gamble on their skills, their knowledge of ways to advocate their causes, and their ability to adapt their energies to change through effective communication with each other in Lebanon and abroad. They work to find permanent spaces to meet and discuss problems in a free, informal and safe environment; they want to freely express their views and find out everything that they have in common. Many have chosen to open youth cultural cafés inside and outside the camps. These spaces are a hub of social activity for young people, combining the arts, dialogue, social awareness, political activism and profit generation. This also seems to attract Lebanese youth, who sometimes enrich cultural exchanges.

The future for them, as for all young people, is not entirely bleak. They are working enthusiastically to alleviate the harsh conditions experienced by their society and to free themselves from the legal and circumstantial constraints in many aspects of their lives. This suffering brings them closer to Lebanese youth, whose sympathy for the Palestinian cause is politically unifying. But the prevailing Lebanese sympathy for the Palestinian cause does not necessarily mean sympathy for the improvement of refugee conditions in Lebanon, although there are some changes in Lebanese society that have the potential to increase the space available to Palestinians to lead decent lives. In recent years, the fate of a generation of young Palestinian refugees has converged with Lebanese youth despite the prejudices shaped during the Civil War. The “Lebanese Unified Vision for Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon,” a document ratified by all major Lebanese parties in 2016, represented a legal way toward appropriate policies to address the situation of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon in general.

In addition, the Lebanese Palestinian Dialogue Committee managed to develop a special strategy for Palestinian youth in Lebanon (2019-2025) aiming to show Lebanese and international donors the potential and existing fears of Palestinian youth and the need for and possibility of investing in them and the impact of this investment.

This strategy was formulated by the Dialogue Committee based on a survey of concerns around Palestinian youth issues. It also included interviews, open group talks and various workshops with about 750 young Palestinians between May 2016 and December 2018. It aspires to motivate Palestinian youth to think about their potential and how to incentivize them in the face of obstacles to their ambitions.

The Palestinian youth scene is active through the various types and levels of training offered by the majority of Palestinian, Lebanese and international NGOs working with the Palestinian youth theater, which will enhance many of the tangible skills of young people and provide room for collective learning and meetings. Currently, there is growing interest in investing in Palestinian youth, as reflected in strategies from various international donors and United Nations agencies that have earmarked at least $15 million for youth participation and empowerment projects. They are putting their trust in them to develop and lead initiatives that have a direct impact on their lives and interests.

* Lebanese journalist

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* The figures in this article are based on: Quantitative data from the 2017 general census of population and housing in Palestinian camps and gatherings in Lebanon, conducted by the Lebanese-Palestinian Dialogue Committee in partnership with the Lebanese Central Administration of Statistics and the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics; the 2012 ILO study.
When There Were No Boundaries or Barriers

Saqr Abu Fakhr*

Up to 1926, there were no borders or barriers between Lebanon and Palestine. The north of Palestine and southern Lebanon had one human, economic and social environment. The Hula Valley, for example, was a natural geographical extension of the Marjayoun Plain. The mountains of Galilee were part of the mountain range from Jabal Lukam (Amanus) in northern Syria today to the heights of Jabal Amel in southern Lebanon, and then to the mountains of Jerusalem. The lands of some villages of the south such as Meiss al-Jabal and Adaisseh penetrated into the Palestinian territories despite the borders traced for the first time in 1922 by Newcombe and Paulet. The people of southern Lebanon headed toward Palestinian cities before 1948, such as Haifa, Jaffa and Nazareth, due to geographic proximity and relative prosperity. Following the Nakba in 1948, however, the inhabitants of the south headed toward Saida, and then gradually toward Beirut. Many Lebanese lived in Palestine and in Lebanon at the same time. Many eminent Lebanese figures, such as Raif Khoury, Zaki al-Naksh, George Hanna, Ali Nasereddine, Ajaj Nouwayhed, Nabih Amin Fares (born in Palestine like May Ziade), Wadeeh Al Bustani, Najib Nassar (founder of Al-Karmil newspaper), Naguib Azoury, George Antonius, Monah Khoury, Farid Zeineddine, Labib Ghulmiyye, Salwa Nassar and Maarouf Saad.

Music and Song

Before the Nakba, the Lebanese Youssef al-Batrouni enjoyed fame in Palestine, teaching music at Terra Sancta (Holy Land) College in Bethlehem and then became the conductor of the Jerusalem Radio Orchestra. The Lebanese musician Yahya al-Lababidi, born in Akka, also enjoyed fame. He is the author of the famous tune Ya raynti tayr (Wish I Were a Bird), which launched Farid al-Atrash’s singing career. In addition to these two eminent figures, Ajaj Nouwayhed (from the town of Ras al-Metn and the father of the historian Bayan Nuwayhed al-Hout) was director of the Arab department of Al-Quds Radio in the 1940s. Many musicians and singers in the Arab world worked at the Near East Broadcasting Station. Among them were Lebanese Philemon Wehbe, Elia Baida (performer of Baghdadi mawwal), Saber el-Safh (known as the “songbird of the cedars”), Amer Khadaj and his wife, singer Sanaa (her real name Adla Jadoun) and Toufic El Bacha.

The Palestinian poet Sabri al-Sharif discovered that folklore is the fountain from which modern Arabic song should derive its creativity. To this end, he summoned the Palestinian director Mohammad Krayyem, who previously worked for Near East Broadcasting Station, and directed in Beirut the famous program Shamel w Meri. They were joined by Nahida Fadli Dajani and Shakib Khoury.

Three Palestinians can claim great credit for the career of the singer Fairuz. They are Halim el-Roumi (Hanna Awad Baradei), Sabri al-Sharif, who directed most of the Rahabani Brothers’ plays, and singer Mohammad Ghazi, who trained her to sing muwashshah and sang with her Al-layl anasheed wal omr mawaceed. He also performed the muwashshah Ya waheed al-ghaydi and the song Khamrat al-aliha (music by Toufic El Bacha).

Culture and Journalism

The Palestinian presence in Lebanon did not consist of armed factions, as portrayed by many. It was a place where a Palestinian community that was uprooted from its original land lived. This place later turned into the headquarters of a national liberation movement, with all its merits and its failings. Between 1952 and 1982 in Lebanon, the Palestinians issued some 120 newspapers, magazines and publications, with Tha’r (Revenge) in 1952 being the first in this series. Worth mentioning are the magazines Al-hurriyah (Freedom), Al-hadaf (Goal) and Ila al-amam (Going forward), which were magazines with Lebanese legal privilege, in addition to specialized periodicals such as Palestinian Affairs, Arab Issues, Al-Karmil, the Journal of Palestine Studies, The Palestinian Revolution, The Voice of Palestine, Nidal al-shab (The Struggle of the People), Sumud (Resistance), The Arab Revolutionary, Balsam, The Palestinian Writer, Samed al-iqtisadi, Al-Jil (The Generation), and Olive Mountain. There were the Palestine Film Institute, the Research Center, the Planning Center, The Institute for Palestine Studies, the Wafa News Agency, the Palestinian Broadcasting Corporation and other institutions appeared in the neighborhoods of Beirut, such as libraries, archives and printing presses.

Many worked and excelled at these institutions in journalism, creative writing and the arts, such as Ismail Shamhout, Tamam al-Akhal, Naji al-Ali, Ghassan Kanafani, Nabil Khoury, Jihad al-Khazen, Afif al-Tibi, Wafic el-Tibi, Aboud Abdel Al in music, Ihsan Abbas and Mohammed Youssef Najm in academia, Ahmed Shafiq al-Khatib and Constantin Theodore in dictionary work, and Dimitri Baramki in archaeology. In addition, Marwan Jarrar and Wadia Haddad were the first to establish a folk-dance group in Lebanon. The first to found choirs were the Palestinians Alvarez Boulos and Salvador Arnita (the uncle of Lebanese singer Madonna). The first founders of scientific research centers were Walid Khalidi, Burhan Dajani (Institute for Palestine Studies), Fafy Sayegh and later Anis Sayegh (Research Center) and Youssef Sayegh (Planning Center). There was a fourth brother, the poet Toufic Sayegh. They all lived and worked in Lebanon. They were like all the other people mentioned above, Palestinians and Lebanese, Arabs, with all what Arabism signifies in terms of comprehensive cultural meanings. Let us also recall that Juliana Seraphim, Moussa Tayba and Paul Guiragossian were at once Palestinian and Lebanese. So, can anyone break this bond?

*Palestinian writer and researcher
I Will Never Sell My Father’s Shop

Yafa el-Masri*

After a long career in education of over 40 years, my father did not wish to stay at home and stare at the TV. Neither did he want to spend his day memorizing the faces of news anchors and following weather forecasts. So, he decided to open up a small shop selling toys and household items near Burj al-Barajneh camp in Dahieh, a suburb south of Beirut.

The shop was on the corner of Al-Burj Street separating (or joining) the Palestinian refugee camp and the Lebanese Al-Burj area. My brother and I would hear all day long constant shifts between accents and we would try as kids to imitate them when we had customers. But often we would mix up Palestinian and Lebanese expressions in wishing good fortune and use them in the wrong context, such as the Lebanese to’borni and the Palestinian allah yisiidak. And many times, when trying to say something sweet to handsome little boys, I had mixed up Lebanese and Palestinian expressions.

My father’s shop was the first of its kind in the area and was almost a shrine for all the women of Al-Burj and the camp. My father called it the Dollar Store, as was the new market trend at the time. My father would bring the goods from the Basta al-Taha area in Beirut. The owners of Burj al-Barajneh camp shops would buy merchandise in bulk from him. The small shop was busy with merchants, women and children, and us.

Even though my brothers and I tried to help, we were “blinding her instead of applying kohl to her eyes,” as my father used to say, meaning that our intentions to do good would backfire. My mother was a conservative Palestinian village girl. Her words were always more impactful. She would say Palestinian village proverbs to us, such as “there are those who build castles and those who dig graves.” I never understood my mother’s words. We were only children, trying new toys in the shop and enjoying them before they were bought. And we tried to spend the take of the day on ice cream and candy from the shop across the street. But the best time at my father’s shop was when children our age came to buy toys and share new songs or moves.

Reem was the one who taught me the nursery rhyme Fatati ya warde, dummi ya warde (Open flower, close flower). I remember Reem well. Her father would bring her by when she would do well at school to reward her with a gift of her choice. I used to envy her because her father bought her toys that she liked, and she envied me because my father owned a toy shop ...

Reem would sit next to me on the steps in front of the shop to try her new toy while our parents chatted. She would sing songs from her school to me. Once, she asked me to clap her hand as she sang: “I am Sindbad, I am from Baghdad, my uncle is Aladdin, he got me a religion textbook, from Palestine, Palestine is our country and the Jews are our dogs, they come to our country like beggars … Gars, gars, gars…”

I was transfixed as she sang with absolute energy. I do not know why I was surprised by her singing that day. I was hearing for the first time a declaration of true love for Palestine from a girl who said to’borni and not allah yisiidak. Could it be that accents got mixed up in my head again? I rushed to my father to tell him about Reem’s song, and he smiled and said: “What did you think? All human beings are born to love.”

My father that day was the first person to define love for me.

My mysterious father, whom I never knew anything about except what I heard from his PFLP comrades about his heroism and his training in Gamal Abdel Nasser camps in Egypt when I found his old passport full of United Arab Republic stamps. My father was a man of few words. One December/January morning, I saw him remove the dollar store sign and put up one in Arabic reading. “Everything for a Lebanese pound.” He did not tell me why he suddenly changed the name, just as he never told me why he did not respond to the invitations of parties and honoring ceremonies.

Twenty years have passed and the market has changed. I started seeing “Beijing” in all Al-Burj markets and no longer saw a single customer in my father’s shop.

Consumption patterns changed and my father’s hair color changed, but the shop name did not change. The moment my father said that we’re selling the shop, I realized that day had come and it was inevitable. I knew at the time that our postponed secret could no longer be postponed.

I know … I know, my father, that the shop has not been making money for a long time, and that you hide every day a fat book with the bag of fruit and only need two days to finish it, and that customers no longer come into the shop and that it is your escape from life to the fictional world of novels, and from old people meetings and doctor appointments. I know you sit there all day to avoid someone asking you about the reason for our losses in the war and the fate of the missing who fought alongside you. So that your grandchildren would not ask you about the meaning of justice or homeland.

Where will you play out your imagination now? Did you give it up my father? Where are you going to hide from medicine packs now? Where will you hide from your daughter’s hope for love?

P.S.: My father will not read this article, and I will not sell the shop, so life’s justice is intact.

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