

Nakba Eyewitnesses

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Narrations of the Palestinian 1948 Catastrophe

Prepared by
Ala Abu Dheer
Palestine Media Unit (Zajel)
Public Relations Department
An-Najah National University
Nablus - Palestine

Edited by
Liam Morgan & Alison Morris

Also by Ala Abu Dheer

* "Al-Aqsa Uprising in Cartoons", Palestinian Perspective, 2003

* "The Image of the Palestine Question in the American Cartoons", American Perspective, (Arabic)

* The Image of Iraq in the American Cartoons, American Perspective, (Arabic)

Dedicated to
my father and all refugees

Here We Shall Stay

As though we were twenty impossibilities
In Lod, Ramla, and Galilee

Here we shall stay
like a brick wall upon your chest and in your throat
Like a splinter of glass, like spiky cactus
And in your eyes
A chaos of fire.

Here we shall stay
Like a wall upon your chest
Washing dishes in idle, buzzing bars
Pouring drinks for our overlords
Scrubbing floors in blackened kitchens
To snatch a crumb for our children
From between your blue fangs.

Here we shall stay
A hard wall on your chest.
We hunger
Have no clothes
We defy
Sing our songs
Sweep the sick streets with our angry dances
Saturate the prisons with dignity and pride
Keep on making children
One revolutionary generation
After another
As though we were twenty impossibilities
In Lydda, Ramla, and Galilee!

Here we shall stay.
Do your worst.
We guard the shade
Of olive and fig.
We blend ideas
Like yeast in dough.
Our nerves are packed with ice
And hellfire warms our heart.

If we get thirsty
We'll squeeze the rocks.
If we get hungry
We'll eat dirt
And never leave.
Our blood is pure
But we shall not hoard it.
Our past lies before us
Our present inside us
Our future on our backs.
As though we were twenty impossibilities
In Lydda, Ramla and Galilee
O living roots hold fast
And--still--reach deep in the earth.

It is better for the oppressor
To correct his accounts
Before the pages ruffle back
"To every deed..."--listen
Tto what the Book says.

Tawfiq Zayyad

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United Nations Partition Plan UN Resolution 181



Preface

The situation of the Palestinian refugees is one of the largest and most enduring refugee problems in the world. Discussions on allowing them to return to their former homes within what is now the State of Israel, on granting the refugees compensation, and on resettling the refugees in new locations, have yet to reach any definite conclusions.

The number of Jews in Palestine was small in the early 20th century: most residents of Palestine at that time were Arabic-speaking Muslims and Christians. Beginning in 1914, with the outbreak of World War I, Britain promised independence for the Arab lands under Ottoman rule, including Palestine, in return for Arab support against the Ottoman Empire, which had entered the war on the side of Germany.

In 1916 Britain and France signed the Sykes-Picot Agreement, which divided the Arab region into zones of influence. Lebanon and Syria were assigned to France, Jordan and Iraq were assigned to Britain, and Palestine was to be internationalized.

In 1917, as stated in the Balfour Declaration, the British government decided to endorse the establishment of a Jewish homeland in Palestine. Jewish immigration into Palestine saw an immediate and dramatic increase.

In 1919 the Palestinians convened their first National Conference, expressing their opposition to the Balfour Declaration.

After WWII, at the 1920 San Remo Conference, Britain was granted a mandate over Palestine. The mandate was in favor of the establishment of a homeland in Palestine for the Jewish people. The terms of the Balfour Declaration were included in the mandate, which was approved by the Council of the League of Nations in 1922. By that year Palestine was effectively under British administration, and Herbert Samuel, a declared Zionist, was sent as Britain's first High Commissioner to Palestine.

In 1936 the Palestinians organized a six-month general strike, to protest the confiscation of their land, and Jewish immigration to Palestine.

In 1939 the British government published a new White Paper restricting Jewish immigration, and offering independence for Palestine within ten years. This proclamation was rejected by the Zionists, who then organized terrorist groups, and launched a bloody campaign against the British and Palestinians. Their aim was to drive out both the Palestinians and the British, and to pave the way for the establishment of a Zionist state.

In 1947 Britain decided to leave Palestine, and called on the United Nations to make recommendations. In response the UN convened its first special session in May of 1947, and on November 29, 1947 it adopted a plan calling for the partition of Palestine into Jewish and Arab states, with Jerusalem as an international zone under UN jurisdiction. The population balance in the new state of Israel was drastically altered during the 1948 war. The armistice agreements extended the territory under the Jewish state's control beyond the UN partition boundaries.

Historically, Palestinians consider a refugee to be a citizen from Palestine who was deported or fled from his or her own country during the Zionist movement's attacks launched against Palestinians after November 29, 1947. The Palestinians call this the Nakba, meaning "disaster" or "catastrophe".

The United Nations definition of a "Palestinian refugee" is a person whose "normal place of residence was Palestine between June 1946 and May 1948, and who lost both their homes and means of livelihood as a result of the 1948 Arab-Israeli conflict.

About two thirds of Palestinians fled or were expelled from Palestine as it came under Jewish control. This deportation continued until after the armistice that ended the war: these refugees were generally not permitted to return to their homes.

The Israeli government passed the Absentee Property Law, which cleared the way for the confiscation of the property of refugees. The government also demolished many of the refugees' villages, and resettled Jewish immigrants in many of the Arab's homes in urban communities.

Whereas most of the world's refugees are the concern of the UN High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), most Palestinian refugees come under the older body of the UNRWA, established in the aftermath of the Nakba. The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) is a relief and human development agency, providing education, healthcare, social services and emergency aid to over four million Palestinian refugees

living in the Gaza Strip, the West Bank, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria.

On December 11, 1948, UN Resolution 194 was passed in order to protect the rights of Palestinian refugees. The Palestinian refugees believe in the “right of return”, based on Article 13 of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights: “Everyone has the right to leave any country, including his own, and to return to his country”.

Introduction

While the Israeli assaults continue against the Palestinian communities, cities and homes, Palestinian heritage becomes nothing more than a memory. Many places have been destroyed during the last few years. To have a more comprehensive understanding of the present, we must look back to the past. We must learn from the experiences of our elders, who suffered through difficult circumstances that forced them to leave their homelands, farms, cities and villages. Their presence inspired the present generations, the children and grandchildren of those who suffered during that first expulsion, to be steadfast in the face of occupation.

The experience of the 1948 Nakba had a profound influence on the development of Palestinian political awareness, and has made Palestinians cling to their lands and learn from the mistakes made during the earlier war. With the 1967 Israeli occupation of the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, the Palestinians stood firm on their lands, refusing all attempts by the Israelis to drive them out, as had happened in 1948.

It is necessary to re-open the file on the Palestinian Nakba, to help the coming generations understand the importance of studying this crucial period in Palestinian history. The critical years began with the Balfour Declaration of 1917, continuing up to the decision by the United Nations to partition Palestine, on November 29, 1947. The consequence of this decision was the deportation of hundreds of thousands of Palestinian people, who fled to refugee camps across the region, including the West Bank, Gaza Strip, Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon, as

well as to Europe, and North and South America.

The documentation of oral narrations is not an easy task. Some narrations are missing important information due to either the advanced age of the narrators, or their fears about revealing their role in the resistance movement during the British Mandate. All of the narrators, however, agreed on the mandate's historical, political, and moral responsibility for the Nakba: the departure of the Palestinians and the occupation of their lands by the Zionists. The number of elderly narrators is small, and most of them suffer from health problems and failing memory. The process of verifying the information they have shared has been made more difficult by the deaths of a number of the narrators, as well as the difficulty of interviewing refugees living outside of Palestine.

We insisted on documenting the largest number of oral narrations as many of our narrators had passed away a short while after being interviewed. In the Arabic version of this book the documentation was made in the narrator's colloquial language. This was done both to maintain the accuracy of the information, and to preserve the old vocabularies used by the narrators. These colloquial dialects of the West Bank, Gaza, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan and other areas, are now infrequently used, even among the grandchildren of the refugees, who are most familiar with them.

In this book we have aimed to document the historical dimensions of the events of 58 years ago. In editing the narrations we strove to maintain the essence and coherence of the original ideas as much as was possible, while presenting the information in the narrators' own words. The interviews

which were the basis for the oral narrations followed a questionnaire in the style used by Dr. Shareef Kana'na, a Palestinian professor with the longest and best known history of collecting oral narrations. Dr. Saleh Abed Al-Jawad of Bir Zeit University, who trained us in administering it while we studied for our Masters degrees, developed the questionnaire. In conducting the interviews, we attempted to obtain answers to all of our questions, while taking into consideration the individuality of each single narrative.

I thank and do appreciate the efforts of the volunteers of the Public Relations Department, the volunteers of the Zajel Youth Exchange Program, Dr. Nabil Alawi, Kima Avila, Nour Kharraz, The Administration of An-Najah National University and the Social Development Centre at Askar Refugee Camp, who helped us coordinate the interviews and bring that project to success.

*Ala Abu Dheer
Palestinian Media Unit (Zajel)
Public Relations Department
An-Najah National University
Nablus-Palestine*

Abu Anees Al-Fakhouri

Born in 1938

Original home: Lydda

Current address: Ras Al-Ein, Nablus

It was a tragic situation and people lived in the mosques and schools.

Like the majority of people from Lydda, my father worked in Jaffa. My uncle was living in Jaffa until he was deported, then he came to Lydda to live with us. There was a group of fighters who formed a committee in Lydda which prohibited the people from leaving; they used to ask those who wanted to leave not to do so as this is what the Jews wanted.

We would hear many stories of how the Jews reached Tierah in Haifa and Deir Yassin near Jerusalem, and that they killed many people. This permitted the horror to spread throughout the rest of the country and consequently forced people from many cities to flee. However this was not the case of the people of Lydda who preferred to stay and resist the Jews. For this reason, Lydda was called "state No. 8." The people of Lydda tried to liberate Palestine but they did not find any supporters.

The Jews came to Lydda three days before Ramadan from all four sides. They came from the south through Ennabah, Abu Shusheh, Deir Tareef, and Al-Abbasyah; they came along the mountains through Jemzo, Al-hadethah and camped in Beit Nabala that was used by the Jordanian army which had withdrawn to Bodrus. They closed every road and started to shell the city using Mortar cannons. They delivered a leaflet

asking the people to surrender because there were no Arab states to protect them.

The Jews bombed the vegetables markets in Lydda, Jaffa and other places to scare the people. We were not deterred as Lydda was more fortified than any other town and we had many young men guarding it. They were united together and they worked in shifts so that somebody was always on guard.

Lydda had the biggest agricultural land in Palestine. People grew wheat, barley, corn and sesame. When they were driven out, they left their crops behind them.

When we heard about the atrocity in Deir Yassin, we stood fast and we were prepared to resist because we felt strong. If the Arab armies had not helped the Jews, Lydda would never have fallen under occupation. The committee held a meeting in their headquarters.

My uncle had become a leader working alongside Abdul Qader Al Husseini, the leader of the resistance in Jerusalem. Apparently his attendants had told him that the Arab countries had decided to send their armies to liberate Palestine. However Al Hussaini had responded by saying, "Palestinians do not want armies; we want people who provide us with financial support and weapons." At which point another one of those attendants said that it was too late as Palestine had already fallen in the hands of Jews.

We were living in the old city of Lydda in a place called al Moraba`a, where there was a market, Grand Mosque, Al-

Saraya (government house) and the mini Bazaar. There was a colony called Hazboon on the road between Jaffa and Lydda. There were Jewish gunmen there who targeted passersby with their guns. Those who passed this road had to move as fast as they could so that they would not be killed. Many young Palestinians attacked the colony of Hazboon in retaliation.

There were many British military Camps in the area. Some of these camps were given to the Jews by the British. The camps which were on the Arab side were evacuated of weapons, but the British camp that was not directly on either side was not given to any party. The British people said to us, "Whoever wants the camp can take it." Following this a battle took place between the Arabs and the Jews. The Arabs won this battle and therefore took control of the camp. During the night, the Arabs attacked the Jews in Wadi Al-Khyaar and many Jews were killed there.

When the Arab Rescue Army arrived they told the fighters, "We'll guard the camp at night and you will guard it during the day. Go home." They fighters were a little simple and so each one of the fighters returned home. The next day, the fighters returned to the camp to find the machine guns shooting at them. The Rescue Army had given it to the Jews and had been driven out of the Wadi. At this time the Egyptian army was not actually too far away from the camp and because of this the idea of a truce arose.

The Jews suggested a truce for 28 days, which would give them more time to buy heavy artillery from abroad. In contrast we as resistance fighters had to pay for our bullets with our own money which meant we were able to buy very little. When

the Jews were rearmed they were able to put their hands on the whole region and they forced the Egyptian army to retreat. This ultimately led to the fall of Lydda, Jaffa and the Negev.

The Arabic Rescue Army also helped in the fall of Lydda. I am completely sure of this. The citizens used to say, "Be patient, an Iraqi and Jordanian Army are coming to help you." The Jews did not have enough forces to occupy Palestine and that is why the British and Arab armies helped them.

The Arab armies were in charge of protecting Palestine. The Iraqi army was in what is now the north of the West Bank, camping in Huwwara and Nablus. The Jordanian army was in the village of Ain Az-zarqa and the Egyptian army was in the south. There was competition between all three to see who could get the most territory. The Jordanian army, which was camping in Yalu and Emwas villages, by mistake, attacked the Egyptian army which was based nearby. The English officers who were leading the Jordanian army ordered the Jordanians to shoot the Egyptians until they finished them.

The Jordanian army then arrived in Lydda but they did not stay long. Following their departure the Jews arrived to occupy the city. Everybody took what they could to fight with to resist the onslaught. The Jews were too strong though and the fighters had to withdraw to the Jordanian police station. Many people also managed to hide in the Dahmash mosque and the church opposite it. The Dahmash mosque was the scene of a massacre as the Jews shot many of the people who were hiding inside.

The next day, the Jews asked the children and those who were

more than seventy years old to leave. The Jews asked us to leave to Parphelia, a village near Lydda which they had come to occupy. Then the Jews entered houses and killed some of the inhabitants. They would stop the people in the streets and if they had a nice jacket, a watch, money or jewelry they confiscated it; they took almost everything.

When we left, people walked as if they were in a demonstration. If someone had a goat or a cow, the Jews would take it. If the Jews saw a cart driven by a horse they would try to take it. If the owner put up a fight, they would shoot the horse dead. The road to Lydda was strength sapping as it was very hot and we did not have enough water. Many people were dying from dehydration and dead bodies littered the path.

My cousin went down an old well, filled a jug with water and when he came back up he found a girl who was about to die out of thirst, "Do me a favor and let me have a sip of water" she said. He let her drink even before his mother. Another man swore that he would have jumped at a lizard in order to eat it out of thirst, hunger, and detestation.

We walked until we reached Bodurs village and at this point we began to split up. Some people went towards Na'ileen and the villages to the west of Ramallah such as: Deir Abu Masha'el, Kufur Ad-Deik, Deir Balloot, Jammalah and Beit Allo. Deporting the people of these villages took place on the third day of Ramadan. We reached Bodrus in the evening, and then we moved to Jammalah, Shoqba, and Jafnah near Beir Zeit where we found tents pitched under trees. We were not ready for such a situation; everybody had arrived without belongings and I remember trying to buy a straw mat to sleep

on.

After Jafnah, we moved to Huwwara on foot. We were very lucky since we had some farm animals with us including goats, sheep and cows. When we reached Huwwara, we found the Iraqi army there. It was a big army with many weapons and I am sure it could have defeated the Jews if it had had the will to do so. One of the Iraqi officials in the engineering forces told me that he wanted to sell some of his bullets so that he could buy what he needed. He also told me that they did not come to protect Palestine and save the Palestinians, but to help the Jews settle and create their state.

Following a short stay at Huwwara we moved on to Nablus. This meant we had walked the whole way from Lydda to Nablus. Many people had died; I saw an old woman dead with her baby sitting on her body trying to wake her. Some people died out of subjugation, others from thirst and hunger and some were simply killed by the Jews who chased them.

We went to our relatives in Nablus who were living in the Al-Yasmeenah neighborhood. There was a Samaritan Church there, where some people wanted us to stay. However we were stubborn and told them that we would rather stay in the refugee camp than live there.

When we arrived in Nablus, we had two Liras. We were naive enough to believe the promises of the Arab countries that Israel was only an illusion and that it would withdraw within the next few days. Unfortunately what happened was the opposite and therefore we remained in Nablus, I was very despondent.

The reason that we came to Nablus was because we had some relatives there who we were able to stay with. God bless those who were forced to live in refugee camps during the winter; it snowed heavily and they suffered a lot. Their tents were pitched in the old market during miserable conditions and sometimes the tent posts were blown away.

It was a tragic situation and people fought each other for water. They lived in the mosques and schools, people suffered from mange (itch), others suffered from lice, and some people suffered from lack of food and drinking water. Life improved gradually especially when UNRWA came and built small houses. During the Jordanian era, life was still very difficult and most people were struggling to get enough food.

After the people had left their cities and villages, some of them returned to collect some of their belongings such as the gold they had buried, their cows or their crops of oranges. The borders were closed, but some people still managed to reach their lands. The Arabs used to punish those whom they caught as they accused them of collaboration with the Jews.

Whenever someone left to bring back his cows, the Jews used to call the Arabs who started to look for them in Nablus. His descriptions were given to them by the Jews, and if the Arabs found him they used to imprison him.

After the Nakbah, I returned to Lydda and I found the experience very depressing. I traveled there with my brothers and some of my friends via Jerusalem. When we reached Lydda, we went to the airport in the south. It was a big airport built by the British and I knew it well. Beside it there were

Kufor Annah and Kufor Jinnis; the two villages that fell into the hands of the Jews. The southern part of Lydda was still the same and the church and one of the mosques remained untouched. However the Jews had damaged the old city and the stores. Dahmash Mosque, where the massacre had taken place had been turned into a workshop. The Jews had also pulled down all of the trees and changed many features of that area. Everything had gone, including the olive trees, the vineyards, and the almonds.

I thought I remembered the land well but those who were with me knew it better, they said, "This is our house and that is yours." We knocked at the door but we did not enter because the Jews inside did not answer the door. Some Jews allowed us see our houses while others did not. We used to have a piece of land called "Abdaat" in the south near the station but the Jews had built many buildings there now. Some squares were still the same, but about half the area was destroyed. I went past Lydda again a few years later and this time I closed my eyes. I did not want to see anything as I did not want to get upset.

During 1970s, the Red Cross negotiated with the Jews about the refugees right to return and the Jews agreed to a small amount of families returning to Lydda. The Red Cross chose the Hajjah Family that we knew well to return. The Hajjah family used to have an orange farm near the airport and their family was very fortunate to be selected. The Red Cross chose nearly 20 families in total. The Jews allowed these refugees to live in a place called Nawader in Al-Minqa'e Square neighborhood in Lydda.

The Arabs handed the Jews what was known as Al-Muthalath (The Triangle). When the people living in the Al-Muthalath went to bed, the Arab flag was there, but when they woke up, they found it had been replaced by the Israeli flag. The Arabs said that they had negotiated a border modification. "The Triangle" was handed to the Jews. King Abdullah was subsequently killed I believe by the British who, in turn, accused Mustafa Eshoo of killing him. It is my belief that Glubb Pasha who was one of the British officers commanding the Trans-Jordanian Arab Legion urged Eshoo to kill King Abdullah. Consequently, the outcome of this was that the Palestinians were blamed for the King's death.

Abu Khaled Al-Refaae

Born 1941

Original home city: Yaffa City

Current address: Askar Refugee Camp, Nablus

Many families forgot their children; some others died from thirst; people walked for tens of kilometers without anything to drink; many of them went without even shoes

We lived in a coastal area called Ras El Ein, very close to Kufor Qasim town. We had a shop where we used to sell products to the Palestinian, Jewish, and English people living in and around the British Ras El Ein train station. The train station was the main one for trains coming to the country. We had a grove about 49 dunum in size; when we were kids we used to go there to play. Our area was popular with people from Yaffa City – they would come here for a break, staying for 20 days in springtime to enjoy the vast green lands. It was an inspiration to see those green lands and pigeons when you woke up in the morning.

The Al-Oja River ran through Ras El Ein. The river water was treated before being sent on to Jerusalem. Every night Jewish militiamen would come to Ras El Ein. Between 10 and 15 armed people would station themselves in a fortification there, and every night around 100 Jewish militia man would come and shoot at them. We knew that the Jews attacked in great numbers and when we would go to the banana grove on the following day we would find some tactics written in the ground, and in the places where we used to store our oranges.

We used to have armed guards protecting us when we went to collect wheat from our land, to protect us from the Jewish settlers. One time, when I was young, I saw a snake and I started to scream. The Jewish people in the grove next to ours heard my screams and they started shooting at us. Luckily we were able to escape. We went back later and this time we were able to collect our wheat.

We left after the Arab Rescue Army, which had taken our weapons from us so we didn't have the ability to defend ourselves any more, left town. One afternoon, at 4pm, I saw the vehicles carrying the Arab army out of town. My father was disappointed as he had stocked his shop with goods, thinking that the Arab Rescue Army would use them while they were protecting us. We asked them where they were going and they answered that they had been ordered to leave. Abd Al Kareem Qasem, who became the Iraqi President, was in the Iraqi contingent and he wanted to blow up the water pump in Ras El Ein because the water was used by the Jewish colonies in Jerusalem, but an order was sent to him not to do that and to leave every thing as it was.

In 1948, three or four members of the Tette family that worked in our land were killed, and the whole family fled with us to Majdal Sadeq.

We stayed in Majdal town for two months but then the Jewish militia started shooting at us from a colony. We fled to the west of the town. We walked and it was a long way, especially as we had no water and food. Then we went to Lydda City, where we lived for six months. We didn't take anything with us. My father, who was always careful, closed the door of the

house and put a piece of wood against the door to make sure nobody could get in to attack us.

The people of Lydda fought hard to defend their city, but the Jewish assault was intense and prolonged. The Arabs weren't well equipped; they didn't have mortars, for example. All they had were simple guns and bullets and home-made Molotov cocktails. One gun cost the same as four or five cows. And weapons were hard to obtain, too – the British military controlled all the borders between Palestine, Syria, and Egypt and it was hard to get contraband weapons through these borders. Before the British military left, they gave everything they held in the country to the Jews. We'd see the British soldiers on the trains, going to Haifa and then to their ships.

While we were in Lydda we bought some new things. When we were leaving Lydda we wanted to take our new possessions with us, but the Israeli soldiers prevented us from doing so. We hitched a ride on a tractor. The driver told us he was going to Deir Ghassaneh village, near Ramallah. When we arrived there the mayor, Saleh Al-bargothi, told us we could stay in his house until the situation improved. The house had a small garden planted with pine trees. That very night, Lydda fell into the hands of the Jewish militia. And the following day, my mother, who had stayed on a farm near Majdal and so was not with us, gave birth to a baby boy.

The Jewish militia left one of their army cars on a road near Lydda, at Der Al Letron- Lydda, and turned it into a landmark. It's still there, between the pine trees, and they paint it every year. I'd say the arrival of the Arab Rescue Army was a disaster for us, as the soldiers took the guns and bullets from us and

left us empty handed.

When Lydda City collapsed, my father sent me off, early in the morning, to visit my mother in Majdal and collect some pots and plates. He said I should stay the night there. I went on foot. I arrived in the afternoon, exhausted from having climbed up mountains. I collected the pots and the other essential household items. I told my mother I would like to sleep two nights instead of one because I was very tired. I thought about getting a donkey to help me carry our belongings back.

I woke up at around three o'clock in the morning to the sound of missiles. My mother told me the Iraqi cannons were shooting from Kofor Qasim at the Jewish militias. We had to leave quickly. Two of my siblings were staying with us; I carried one, while my mother carried the other. This made escaping even more difficult.

We arrived at Deir Ballot village in the region of Salfit. The villagers of Deir Ballot used to visit us in Ras El Ein, so we had good relations with them. They welcomed us and looked after us, but the conditions were horrible. We had nowhere to stay except with the cows and sheep, and the mosquitoes attacked us in the evening. Then we arrived at the village of Deir Ghasaneh and after this we went on to Nablus.

I always remembered the good life we had in Yaffa. Such memories would come to mind when we were working as carriers or street sweepers. People couldn't really afford to buy trolleys to carry things so we carried goods for people on our backs. I remember Khadir Salem, who carried wheat sacks on his back from the Eastern part of Nablus city to the

West. We also worked in the ice factory, and we delivered ice to houses and shops and hospitals. I would see refugees in Nablus sheltering in mosques, caves and schools; the sanitation facilities were not good.

I visited Ras El-Ein in the 1970s. The train station buildings were still there, and when I visited Abu Sameer Nageb Nasser's house near the railway station, I found it pretty much as I remembered it, it had a distinctive fence around the garden, it made me remember how we used to play with his children there when I was young.

We may have had some support from the UNRWA, but it doesn't compensate for the land we lost in Jaffa and other cities and towns in Palestine. We left our green lands to the Jews and became refugees. I don't want the United Nations assistance; I want to go home to my land, and I am living here in the Refugee Camp of Askar only temporarily. George Bush is not our envoy and he has no right to speak about us or on behalf of us. He does not have the right to speak about our right to return, or to cancel our right to return! I hope people of the world will wake up one day and discover the truth.

Abu Bassam Al-Arda

Born in 1930s

Original home: Yazoor village/ Jaffa

Current address: Al-Ein Refugee Camp-Nablus

In the winter nights, we used to go out in the mud with or without boots to fix the pegs of the tent.

It was 1948 and I was barely 13 years old, I remember that I started to get an understanding of the conflict at this point. One of my first memories was of some activists who used to visit us at our school. They would encourage us to hold strikes against the British occupation who they claimed was depriving us of everything and executing our fighters. Our generation used to consider the British soldiers as deceptive. I was also involved in the conflict despite the fact of my young age and that I was unable to carry a gun.

I recall an incident that happened in my village of Yazoor which was 4 km from Jaffa. The British guards used to come in tanks that were called troop carriers, and we would run behind them in the main road. The British soldiers were targeting Yazoor with heavy shooting from the western side. Our village had four families and each family had its own Mukhtar or Head. Hajj Othman Jibril was one of the four heads and he went and talked to the British guards about them apparently firing at Yazoor. He told us he touched the submachine gun that had been used to fire at us and he discovered that it was hot. He raised his hand and said that this was clear proof that the British were the ones who were shooting at us. Hajj Jibril was wise and very alert.

Moreover this incident proved to us that the British were collaborating with the Jews and inciting conflicts. From this point I can remember the story and begin to analyze it. First of all they said, "Let's divide Palestine into areas." Of course, our people refused assuming that we were capable of fighting the Jews and insisting that we were able to carry weapons.

At this time I was with adults who were much more involved than me. They were almost 25 while I was only 13 years old. Even though I was young, I like many others in my age managed to stay in Yazoor with the fighters even when my family was deported.

When we were in Yazoor many battles took place elsewhere such as that of the Al-Qastal Mountain in Jerusalem. They announced on the radio while we were in the café that the famous Palestinian leader, Abd Al-Qader Al-Husseini was killed in Al Qastel. Apparently the Jews had occupied Al Qastal and slaughtered the women and the children there. The story had affected everybody in the town including senior citizens, women and children. Following this people from towns and villages near us started to be deported.

The Jews began to occupy the outskirts of our village. Many Jews used to come at midnight from the orange orchards and fire at Yazoor. People who lived in the western part of town and in the extended areas would come and live in the center as it was safer. We were living in the southern part of town that was one kilometer from the town center.

Few Jewish houses were close to us, the nearest being 2 km away. The Jews were the owners of a factory in Sawafi Al-

Raml that was part of Yazoor's lands but it was like a desert. To my knowledge, I think that somebody from Jaffa sold some of those lands to the Jews illegally. Somebody had faked the ownership of those lands claiming that he bought them from the families in Yazoor. After this he started to sell the land to the Jews.

The people prepared themselves to fight and families bought weapons. Men were selling their wife's jewelry so they could buy guns. They chose some people to be responsible for acquiring weapons while others had to build trenches. To dig a trench, one had to remove the sand with a shovel and put it in some sand bags. One of those men responsible for organizing the work was Abu Mahmood Barakat, who had a strong character. They made battlefields and appointed a person to be responsible for each site. The fighters were told to stay awake during the night and Abu Mahmood used to go to check whether they were sleeping or not. The fighters were responsible people but their lack of training let them down. Actually, we didn't have a regular army but freedom fighters. I recall that while the skirmishes were taking place between our fighters and the Jews, the owners of the orange orchards, were going with guards to the orchards in order to continue picking oranges.

During the skirmishes, one member of the Jadallah family was killed, as well as Abu Ra'íd's uncle and a man from Abu Safeyyah's family was killed near the railway, others lost their lives too. In addition the mukhtar's father, Abu Raid Barakat, was injured and another man from the Jabir family lost his hand.

If the Jews knew that there was a base in a certain house, they would shoot heavily at it. They would also sneak into that house and plant mines and bombs. There were some other houses that they destroyed since these houses caused trouble for them. They also destroyed another factory that they believed, was a place the fighters were using as a base.

We thanked God that we were in excellent condition before the interference of the Arab Rescue Army. I recall when the Syrian Rescue Army came to Yazoor; it was the reason behind our fall. I remember this well because I stayed in Yazoor to near the end. I first heard that they had brought a cannon or something similar and had started to fire at Tel Aviv and other areas. They said to the people of the town, "You can leave with your women and children in order to save them and we will stay here to protect your village. We can safeguard your village; Jews are nothing."

Actually, only a few of the Rescue Army members came. People were comfortable when they saw them because this regular army was an Arab army who had cannon. On the other hand, it wasn't a regular army, it consisted of just 12 inexperienced soldiers many who were originally policemen.

In the end the Rescue Army decided to leave while many of us were still in Yazoor. They pulled out, and we stayed with some of the young men carrying weapons in order to defend ourselves. I think as young men, who used to listen to the news and analyze it, we believed it was a conspiracy that the Arab Rescue Army had just arrived to try and remove the fighters peacefully.

A serious allegation at the time was that the Jews raped women and killed them but at the time we did not know if this was true. However, when the Arab radios kept repeating the crimes Jews were committing in other towns, one would feel ever more afraid.

The villages of Al-Khayriyah and Salama had fallen before Yazoor, but it seemed the Jews were afraid of occupying Yazoor. What actually affected us most was the situation in Jaffa. People were leaving carrying their furniture on cars and trucks whilst we could only watch on. This situation, of course, made people very fearful.

Following the deportation of many citizens from Jaffa there was hardly anybody left in the district, except us. The old generation considered honor the most important value in life. Despite the fact that we were positioned closer to the Jews than the people of Beit Dajan, they had left but we were still in Yazoor. Nevertheless we finally had no choice but to depart from Yazoor as we believed a Jewish attack was imminent.

There were still people leaving in cars from Jaffa. We were asking them to give us a ride, but they refused. Later, one of the young men I was with started shooting his gun in the air until the cars stopped. Finally, we got in a car that loaded with furniture and we headed for the city of Lydda.

I still recall that our neighbor, Muhammad Ashawafi, had returned to Yazoor with a horse and cart after we had all left. He discovered that the Jews hadn't occupied Yazoor, since they were not sure that it was safe.

We stayed in Lydda for 2 months and life was bearable but

my family decided it was time to move on. At this point we were divided into two groups. My mother left with her brother to a town near Salfit called Qir, for we had some relatives there, while some of my brothers and I left for Tulkarem, where we also had family. We stayed in Tulkarem for few months. Then in harvest time we met up with the rest of our family and moved to Nablus.

I was empty-handed when I was driven out while there were some people who managed to leave with their cattle along the railway. Some people would sneak back to Yazoor to collect their belongings. Altogether it took us one year to get from Yazzor to the Al-Ein refugee camp in Nablus.

People in the city welcomed us and helped us and the relationship between all was good. Some of us stayed in mosques, others at schools. In Nablus, we had met up with the Barakat's family and we fortunate to be able to live together in Abu Asu'ud house that was very kind to us.

We didn't go to school since the situation, after 1948, was very difficult; there was hunger and there was hardly any work. If a man could find work, he would work the whole day for a shilling or six pennies. God helped us to overcome those difficult times.

In the year when it snowed, we were in the house and the camp was being built. The Red Cross was erecting tents which the people started to come and sit in. In the winter nights, we used to go out in the mud with or without boots to fix the pegs of the tent. We would fix the pegs whenever the wind removed or broke them, it was real misery. How else can I describe it?

UNRWA gave us a refugee house and I myself developed this house to live in.

I returned to Yazoor on foot, for I worked near it after the war of 1967 which enabled us to visit the land we had been forced from. What I noticed first was the difference in the construction of the roads. The Jews were guarding these roads that were exclusively used by the Jews. The school where I received my education had not changed. They removed some houses from the quarter where we used to live because they built factories instead. The small hill that we still consider as our quarter remained as it was and there were sycamore trees which I recognized. On the other hand, the orange orchards were removed to build factories instead.

Yemani and Iraqi Jews had settled in our houses. Some people dared to knock on the doors of the houses where they used to live and talked to the Jews there saying, "This house was ours". The Iraqi Jews offered them water and coffee. The Iraqi Jews used to say, "We hope we can live in peace some day when we are able to return to Iraq and you may be able to return here." It was extremely difficult for me to see my house with other people living it, but what can I do? I have to bear this situation since we were in need of work there.

They want to compensate us, how I ask? In addition to the psychological compensation, I want them to compensate me for all the years where they used the land. They have been using the land and taking its crops for 50 years. I can prove with documents that this land is mine and that I never wanted to sell it.

Lately, we concluded; having been deported, after Lydda had fallen, after the West Bank had been taken completely, that this was a long of events in which Arab kings, Arab princes, Arab leaders and educated Palestinians interfered and ultimately achieved nothing. Actually, Arab countries as well as our leaders were the reason behind our Nakba and deportation. Moreover, our leaders were not as responsible as they should have been. They kept talking about the Mufti of Jerusalem, Amin Al-Husayni as the only one who was able to solve our problem. They really deceived us.

Our families of Yazoor were dispersed all over the world, and ultimately, we became refugees. Originally they told us that it would take only two weeks to return, then two months, but we are still here today hearing such promises. We now found ourselves under occupation and we have no land. One, who does not have a land, does not have dignity.

Huda Abu - Dheer

13 years old in 1948

Original home: Al- Manshiya neighborhood/ Jaffa

Current address: Old City/ Nablus

At this time the relationship between Jews and Palestinians was peaceful. We were friends and neighbors and there were no problems between us.

When we departed from Jaffa I was thirteen years old. We did not have a radio in our house, so my father would listen to the radio in the local cafe. When he returned home he would relay the stories to everyone.

At this time the relationship between Jews and Palestinians was peaceful. We were friends and neighbors and there were no problems between us. We lived in the neighborhood of Al-Manshiya between Tel Aviv and Jaffa, beside Hasan Beik Mosque and near Al-Carmel market. We would always have to go to the Al-Carmel market to buy vegetables for my mother. My father used to work in the market, and my sister and I used to visit him. He was normally sat down reading the newspaper.

Palestinians used to build tents and put flags on them on the occasion of Prophet Robin that lasted forty days. I went on this occasion many times. It was just as a feast. There were camel races and we used to ride on them and eat many sweet products.

Once my brother Mahammed came from Tel-Aviv and said, "The Jews are going to divide Palestine and they are having

celebrations where they sing and dance.” We did not know anything about this despite living so close together. We had a Jewish neighbor who came and sat with us, she told us, “You Arabs know nothing, we want to take Palestine and you will have nothing.” We told her that she was lying but she responded, “You will see tomorrow.” After two or three days, celebrations were held in the streets of Tel-Aviv and the partition plan was issued.

My brother, Mohammad, worked as a mechanic in a Garage owned by Jews in Tel-Aviv. In Tel Aviv the relationship between Arabs and Jews was a lot more volatile. On one occasion I had the misfortune of witnessing a Jew being murdered in Al-Manshiya. I immediately rang my brother and he left his job to come and investigate. When he arrived on the scene, British soldiers took my brother and incredibly accused him of the murder. At the time of the murder my brother had been working in the garage and after interrogation by the British soldiers they accepted his alibi and released him.

Following his release he returned to his place of work at the garage. By some bizarre twist of fate, a Jew that worked at the garage was killed when the car he was working on collapsed on top of him. The jack had slipped while he was repairing the underside of the car and he had been crushed to death. My brother was once again accused of killing him, and he was detained for forty days. During this time he was thoroughly interrogated before he was finally released without charge.

My brother Khalid worked in Tel-Aviv for a Jewish man. He was selling vegetables using a horse. When the war started, between Jaffa and Tel-Aviv, Khalid insisted on returning the

horse to his employer. We tried to tell him that there were great clashes but he was adamant and insisted to return the horse to his Jewish employer.

As the situation intensified we were forced out of Al-Manshiya to the neighborhood of Al-Ajami. Fighting was taking place a lot more frequently now. Arab fighters were opening fire on Jews and they were retaliating with equal force. The people from the neighborhood would support the fighters by sending them food. In these days of intensive fighting, we would usually sleep early. We would frequently wake up in the morning to find bombs in the streets.

When we had departed from Al-Manshiya we had left all our furniture behind. Therefore my father decided he would sneak back to the house to retrieve our belongings. He would bring with him one piece of furniture each time he went. On one occasion he took my sister, Nada, with him. My sister told me she was very nervous as a cat kept meowing while my father was playing with his prayer beads. My sister demanded that my father stopped doing this in case the cat meowing would alert the Jews to come to our house. My sister said she was very afraid and she was counting the minutes until my father had finished.

We remained living in Al-Ajami until the massacre of Deir Yassin occurred. We heard that the Jews had raped the girls and killed many pregnant women. My father and my uncle said that they had to move their daughters far away as he was very concerned for our safety. My father had four daughters including me and so did my uncle. They decided to send all of us with our mothers to Nablus where we had relatives while

the male members of the family remained in Jaffa.

My father and my uncle didn't want to leave Jaffa, neither did I. When my mother stayed in Jaffa, I asked her, "How could I leave Jaffa and you behind?" I asked her to give us some clothes but she said, "You want to stay for a long time in Nablus; it is just a short time and you will return." our neighbors were Jews. They left before things went bad and told us to leave because the situation would be very bad.

We traveled from Jaffa to Nablus in a truck. My mother was sat above the truck and there was a canister of gasoline behind her back. There was a leak in the canister which allowed oil to pour out onto the road and also down my mothers back causing her skin to burn. When we arrived in Nablus I was intrigued to see if it was as beautiful as many people had told me. My initial opinion was that Jaffa was more beautiful as it was by the sea. The first thing I did when I arrived in Nablus was to go to the Al-Khadra Mosque beside my grandfather's house.

My father, uncle and brother had remained in Al-Ajami where the situation was deteriorating and the electricity and water were now out of service. On one occasion my brother went out to buy some bread, but he could not find any. When he was returning he had been shot in the leg and this story was reported in the newspaper. My brother was concerned that my mother would find out from the newspaper, so he decided to come to Nablus to calm her fears. My uncle and my father remained in Jaffa until all hope was lost and they arrived in Nablus not long after we had arrived, without bringing anything with them.

We stayed in my grandfather's house in Al-Yasmina neighborhood in the old city. We lived there with the Alam Addin family as my uncle and his family slept elsewhere. There were eight of us in the same room and we had no bed, chairs or wardrobe. We went to borrow some bed sheets from the house my uncle was staying at but they only had one blanket and his family was already using it.

Bit by bit we bought furniture for our one room where we lived for our first few years in Nablus. We managed to eat there, clean our clothes and even turn part of it into a small bathroom. We used to bring water from the spring source in Al-Yasmina. There was no electricity so we used to have lamps with us. When radios became available, we used to listen to the plays that would be broadcast. There were many of us who would all sit around and listen to the radio. We had been offered a room in the refugee camp but my father declined it as despite the difficulties we were happy where we were.

Many more people now arrived in Nablus on foot especially from Lydda and Ramleh. Some of them were allowed to stay in the mosques, schools or the refugee camps. By coincidence, my brother Mohammad recognized the An-Nakib family who were our neighbors in Jaffa. A woman from this family, whose husband had been put in prison, had arrived in Nablus with three children and no blankets or clothes. My brother Mohammad went to many shops to collect some money to buy clothes for the children. He also asked our father for some extra thyme, cheese, a blanket or anything to give to this poor woman who had nothing. My mother provided some thyme, cheese and a blanket. My cousin was able to bring a blanket, two cushions beside and even some clothes. Life was very

difficult but we were surviving.

After An-Naksa in 1967, it came to my mind to go to Jaffa to see what had changed. I always said that I did not want to stay in Nablus. I went with my uncle and aunt. When we arrived we found nothing, there were some new buildings where our houses used to stand. We visited the Al-Carmel public market which was now being used by Russian and Iraqi Jews. I noticed that a part of Hasan Beik Mosque was demolished and we only stayed in Al-Manshiya long enough to pray.

I often reminisce about our trips to the beautiful orchards of Salama village which was near Al-Mansheya. It was a lovely environment where Jews and Palestinians relaxed in harmony together. The Jews of Salama were good people and we had a good relationship with them. We used to turn the lights on for them on the Sabbath when it was forbidden for them to do so.

In hindsight people left Jaffa relatively peacefully in comparison with people from Lydda. Some people had stayed in Jaffa, and in hindsight I wish we had done this and never came to Nablus. Life had been good in Jaffa as people were able to earn a good living. It is difficult to have a good quality of life when one is a refugee.

Muhammad Ahmad Saleh Abu Kishek

Born 1935

Original home: Abu Kishek, Yafa

Current address: Askar Refugee Camp, Nablus City

We are passing the story of our deportation from our generation to the next so that the "Question of Palestine" will never be forgotten.

Our village belonged to the Abu Kishek tribe, although we did have other tribes in the village with us, such as Quran, Araysheh, Khatatra, Labadeh and Mawalha. There were 5,000 citizens living in our village and our tribe consisted of more than 50 families. Our main form of work was farming: planting wheat, vegetables and raising animals.

People lived in peace; life was good enough and we wanted for nothing. But Jews were buying lands from rich Turkish officials who were appointed as leaders during the Ottoman rule. Those officials imposed taxes on poor farmers, and the farmers were too poor to pay these taxes so the Turkish officials took parts of the farmers' lands instead. They did not appreciate the importance and the value of the land as they were not the ones who worked on it, so it was easy for them to sell it to Jews after the collapse of the Turkish Empire.

When Palestinians started to be aware of the danger of Zionism on their lands they started to resist and stopped selling their lands to Jews. In the 1920s, Sheikh Shaker Abu Kishek, the head of our tribe, led a campaign against the newly-built Jewish colony on our land, Beitah Tikfa, which was called Emlabes by the Palestinians. However, the British

occupation troops supported the Jews and tried to put down our revolution.

When I was a child, people talked about the Alburaq Revolution of 1929, as well as the three revolutionists who were hanged by the British occupiers: Muhamad Jamjum, Ata Zeir and Fouad Hijazi. I had also heard about the Revolution of 1936 and the six months strike when all the shops were closed and nobody went to work. The strike was a Palestinian protest against the Jewish migration from Europe to Palestine. The Iraqi leader became involved, convincing Palestinians to suspend their strike after he got some promises from the British mandate, but nothing changed over the immigration issue. More and more immigrants were entering Palestine, and there were clashes between Palestinians, Jews and British troops. Palestinians tried to buy weapons, but it was very difficult as the Palestinians were not permitted to have arms by the British. Every Palestinian revolutionist had to buy his own gun secretly with his own money. Sheikh Abu Kishek, was the last one who left the village; he did not leave the village until he was sure that everybody had gone; he was doing his utmost for the cause.

The wheat spikes were tall when we fled, as we left in spring. I truly believe that Jews occupied our lands by force; we did not leave them voluntarily. I remember that the British troops were supporting the Jewish militia when they attacked Palestinian villages; they helped them get stronger and become entrenched in the newly-occupied villages. If Palestinians tried to support each other if one of their villages came under attack they were prevented from doing so by the British, who barred the way for the Palestinian support groups.

We didn't leave immediately though. We tried to continue with our normal life, but we were surrounded: Jewish colonies were built on three sites around the village and there was only one road to Yaffa city. We were scared when the citizens of Yaffa fled. We were isolated from the Palestinian villages that were on the western side of our village. The Jewish militia did not allow supplies to reach the village and there were negotiations between both sides.

There were some clashes between our resistance and the Jewish militia two nights before our deportation and both sides lost fighters. We had prepared ourselves to resist, but we could not continue the resistance without supplies. We were surrounded, it didn't matter how long we were prepared to continue fighting we just couldn't go on. The head of the Palestinian fighters in our village had brought three guns from Egypt but he was unable to enter the village as it was surrounded. We agreed to leave our village and our weapons and were given safe passage through an opening in the eastern entrance to the village.

After we left the village everyone was angry with the Arab leaders who had lied to us. We had been told the Arab armies were coming and we would be able to return to our villages after one week. We heard their propaganda from the British Near East Radio Station, and we believed it.

The Jewish militia destroyed our village after we left it. We could hear the explosions from our shelter in the village of Jaljolya. We saw the smoke with our own eyes. We went to Jaljolya region, which was not that far from our village, in order to be as close as possible to our lands. We stayed there for few months, until they signed the truce between the Arab states

and the Jewish militia that became the so-called “Israel”.

We lost our fertile lands and our homes, but we were lucky in comparison to our neighbors in nearby villages – we were allowed to take our clothes but they weren't. We had time to gather possessions during the negotiations before we were deported. Other villages, though, were cleared under fire so the residents had no time to gather their belongings. Our family ended up traveling to Nablus, while some other families went to Jordan and other countries.

Some families from Tulkarem and Qalqilya owned some farms in the Muthalath region, which was occupied by Israel; they would sneak back to their farms in order to gather oranges. Many of these farmers were killed by Jews when they sneaked back to their farms.

The clearance of Lydda City increased significantly the population of the refugee camp we were in. Everyone had to fend for themselves when it came to getting food for their children, but it was very difficult to get any sort of employment. Each family had one room to live in, although some families lived in caves.

The Arab armies recruited the Palestinian militants into their units for four months after the 1948 war, and then they discharged them and confiscated their guns. The Iraqi Army left the West Bank, while the Egyptian Army was in the Southern part of the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

After the 1967 war, Israel occupied the rest of Palestine; both parts of Palestine were united under one occupation, so we

could travel with the so-called “Israel” in order to see our homes, which we had not been able to see since the war of 1948. We saw our village had been converted into an industrial zone where many factories had been built. I saw my village occupied by Jewish immigrants from Europe. It was so painful to see my village and land occupied by strangers. Many villagers returned to visit after 1967 and many were overcome with emotion. My sister did not stop crying when she saw her village and she remembered her childhood there.

Every Palestinian is eager to go home to their original village and leave the refugee camps. We are passing the story of our deportation from our generation to the next so that the “Question of Palestine” will never be forgotten. We will continue until the refugees get back their rights. The refugees will not give up; this conflict started in 1917 and has continued until now and nobody has been able to solve it. It will never be solved if they continue to ignore the right to return of the Palestinian refugees.

Even if I wanted to accept compensation in lieu of my land, my children wouldn't let me take it. Even if the whole world decides our right to return should be cancelled, I will never accept it. Even though it seems like an impossible dream, we will keep demanding our right to return, and we will not give up on this. If somebody accepts the cancellation of this right it will not be a decision that comes from heart.

Shaheir Dadosh

Born in 1933

Original home: Om Alfahim

Current address: Old City/ Nablus

Shame on the country that meets civilian resistance with tanks!

In 1947 I was working in an ice cream shop on Hadar Mountain on the outskirts of Haifa. I lived with my uncle, who also worked there. My father was a butcher and one of his brothers was a shepherd. Another brother of mine was working in Haifa, in a shop owned by a British man. Haifa was a vital city for the Palestinians, and we had a population of 100,000, compared to a Jewish population of only 20,000. Life was good and there were plenty of job opportunities. But then my life was disrupted by the clashes that erupted in the city.

The villagers of Om Alfahim lost their village after May 15 1948, when the state of Israel was declared. The Rhodes Agreement was a treaty signed between the newly-founded state of Israel and Arab that delivered villages and towns situated near the border of the West Bank. This agreement obliged Israel to give these lands back after five years. Israel did not respect the agreement and has kept possession of these lands even until now. The reason for this agreement was that Israel needed a larger piece of land between the coast and the West Bank. This is one of the reasons behind the presence of Palestinians living in towns and villages in Israel.

In 1948 I joined the Jordanian Army and after war broke out

we were promised that we could continue fighting with them. Unfortunately, they changed their minds and discharged around 400 of us because we had family inside Israel. I was staying in Baqa village when Jews took up a position very close to the village. We had heard that they had killed soldiers, so we escaped to the West Bank to avoid being slaughtered.

When we arrived in the West Bank we found that the Iraqi Army was stationed there. The Iraqis were glad to have our service and we were given Iraqi uniforms. There were still around 400 of us and we worked with them for a time. Then Iraq and Jordan agreed that Jordan would take control of the West Bank region. The Iraqis left in 1951 and this meant we were unable to continue our service.

Even though I was born in Om Alfahim village and my family still lived there I was unable to obtain residency because I was in the West Bank when citizenship was granted. In 1967, when Israel occupied the rest of Palestine, I was the first one to return to Om Alfahim, although I had revisited my village before then because I had been sneaking across the border once or twice a year to visit my family ever since the early 1950s.

I knew this country very well as I am a son of its land. I would travel secretly through the mountains alone and at night. It was a great feeling whenever I reached my village, as I was able to see all the members of my family that I had been separated from, and they gave me money, as there were no jobs in the West Bank at this time. My mother was raising goats and hens, which she would sell to raise money for me. I did not like relying on my family and so I came up with a

way of making money for myself. This involved smuggling goods across the border. There were no Palestinian clothes available in Israel, the only clothes you could buy there were of Western origin. Therefore, there was a substantial market for Arab clothes among the Arabs still living there. I would buy the clothes from Amman and smuggle them into Israel, where I would sell them to a friend who would distribute them. I usually made five Jordanian Dinars on each trip.

Once, my friends asked me to help them smuggle a cow across the border. I did not like the idea as I preferred smuggling clothes and I told them that I was not interested. I had already been arrested twice by the Jews; once I was detained for one-and-a-half years in Shata Prison and the other time I was detained for a month. Once I went secretly to Haifa after the war of 1948 in order to work in construction and earn some good money. I did this for two years and I saved a lot of money, which enabled me to return to Nablus and open up a shop.

Before the Diaspora of 1948, my mother told me that if I got stuck in the West Bank I should go and live with my aunt, who lived in the village of Yabad near Jenin in the north of the West Bank. This is exactly what happened and I ended up living with my aunt for 17 years. In fact, when I was 21 years old I married this aunt's daughter, my cousin.

More than 20,000 refugees found themselves in Nablus. I witnessed the poverty and the hunger; I saw the refugees' tents in the village of Janzoor on the way to Jenin – there was only one meter between each tent. People were enduring incredibly tough living conditions and it made for a tragic scene. Then they moved them to different refugee camps

and gave every family one room – while the Jews who were coming from Europe found Palestinian houses waiting for them in Haifa.

Today we are an unarmed people while Israel has nuclear weapons. Israel invades us every day while we offer resistance by throwing stones. Shame on the country that meets civilian resistance with tanks! They have taken our lands for free and want us to leave the region.

Sadiq Anabtawi
Born in 1942
Original home: Lydda
Current address: Nablus

All the money in the world will not compensate the Palestinian for his loss; the financial compensation is an easy thing, but the psychological compensation is something else.

We had a battery radio at home that my father used to sit and listen to at certain times of the day. I remember its shape and the fact that it did not produce a clear sound. It was the Near East Radio Station but I remember that the whole concept of the radio seemed something quite bizarre.

My father had high status in Lydda; he was married to the chief justice's daughter, and he had a good office job. My father worked in an office for Farid Al-Anabtawi. I was a little boy then and remember going to the office to run errands for him. My major concern at the time was to go to Saa'doo's shop and buy a bottle of sweet lemonade which I liked very much. I used to hear the word "committee", uttered by different people who came to see my father. It was called the national committee and it aimed at keeping the people on their lands and staying in Lydda. At this time some people had begun to make the pre-eminent move of leaving Lydda, as they feared deportation.

Many people though did want to stay fight for their land, and you could feel that a momentous event was taking place. I heard about the desire of people to have weapons. However, there was no money, so people were forced to sell everything

they had in order to buy them. The main problem was the lack of real leadership to unite the people despite the intentions of the Grand Mufti, Haj Ameen Al-Husseini.

My uncle, Bahjat Tibara, was an important official in the Jordanian army. I remember when he came to see us he arrived in an army car. He told my father that he should leave Lydda with the whole of his family. I still recall the conversation between them, with my father insisting on staying. However, in April 1948, much to the surprise of the National Committee, my family, including my father decided to leave Lydda.

There was one member of my family who did not want to go and that was my grandfather. My grandfather was very emotional and very stubborn and he was adamant that he would not leave. My mother was very worried about my grandfather especially as he was blind and she wanted to make sure that he was alright. The next morning, a car came for us, driven by a Jordanian officer who was a friend of my uncle. There was eight of my family in total who crammed into the car. This did not include my grandfather who could not be persuaded to leave and he stayed in his house.

We left Lydda without taking anything with us except the clothes we were wearing. My father's uncle, the late Haj Muhamad Anabtawi arranged for two trucks so that our furniture and belongings could be taken to Nablus. However as soon as my father found out, he refused this offer out of pride and because he really believed that we would be able return in the near future. His uncle told him that Lydda would be conquered but my father did not want to hear this.

I remember as we were leaving there was some disorder in the town. We were traveling in a big black car that slowly pushed its way through the commotion. Some people came and tried to stop the car, and so my father spoke with them. As we drove off my father told us that he had been talking to some of the committee members. My father had told them that we were leaving but we would be back soon if God wills, and they replied that God knows best. The Jordanian officer told us that the Jews were close to occupying Jaffa. This prompted me to realize that the commotion was caused by the Arabs fleeing from there as Jaffa was very close.

Once we had escaped the chaos circulating Lydda the rest of the journey to Nablus was quite smooth. Shortly after we had arrived a truce was declared meaning that we might be able to return. This caused some people to return to Lydda, but my family decided to wait in Nablus to see what would happen. This proved to be an excellent decision, as the infamous deportation events took place not long after.

We had been fortunate that we were able to take a car as many people had no choice but to walk. This is what my blind grandfather had to do once the city had been occupied. It took my grandfather a long time before he reached Nablus and my family was greatly relieved when he arrived. He was in good spirits although he had obviously suffered a lot on the way. We were informed that five Arab armies had entered Palestine and accomplished nothing. The Palestinian people guessed that the battle would be lost as there seemed to be a serious lack of real effort from the neighboring Arab countries. We were told that despite the massacre in Lydda some Arabs had actually managed to stay there.

In Nablus, we lived in many houses. First, we went to my aunt Um-Thabet's where life was difficult as we had no possessions of our own. Then a kind family let us use an apartment which is now where Adel Zu'aiteer School is built. There was nothing in the apartment, but people donated mattresses and beds. Nablus was poor because of the state of its economy which did not help the already dire situation.

In the winter, I remember the family that was allowing us to stay in their apartment brought a jacket for me. I remember my mother crying because I had neither boots nor even sandals during those desperately cold times. Since we arrived in Nablus, my mother had not stopped crying, and when we asked her why this was she replied, "Your uncles where are they? The family is scattered; where are my brothers and my friends whom I miss so much?"

She used to bring us to An-Najah University area, then an empty square piece of land and let us play. There was only one other family living in our street and two of the women from that family came and said to my mother, "Sister, we always see you crying, what is the matter." My mother gave them the same answer she had given to us. One of my uncles worked with the UN in Jericho, and he thought it was best for my grandfather to live with him. This scattered the family further making my mother more upset.

I thank God for having educated parents. My mother had graduated at The Arab College in Jerusalem before we were deported, and my father had earned a Diploma in Agriculture. My father started working with his cousin and they started a small business. At this time the Iraqis were in control and

the economy was stable. This situation changed when the Jordanians took control and the economy took a turn for the worse. This downturn in the economy led to my fathers business not succeeding. My father then became a teacher and after two or three years my mother worked in the same profession.

Before 1967, I traveled to Lebanon to study there. When I graduated, my father asked me to return to Nablus. At that time, it was under occupation and I wondered how I would cope with such a situation. Nevertheless in 1968, I returned to Nablus after finishing my studies as I desperately wanted to see my family.

After a week in Nablus, my brother asked me if I wanted to go with him to Jerusalem, which I agreed to. In Jerusalem I met up with some old friends who we stayed with. The following day, they suggested that we drive to Lydda. Just hearing its name rekindled some childhood memories and I got quite excited at the prospect of seeing the place we were forced to leave. When we reached there I was shocked to see the huge airport which now existed there. This provoked me to shout, "For God's sake, where is Lydda?"

The entrance to the city looked very different and I could not recall which street was which. My friends informed me we were on the main street and I then recalled the café, where I used to play outside with my friend. I told my friend to stop as I wanted to see it and he actually stopped under the balcony of my home, which was a little further down the street. Hardly anything had changed on this street one small exception was that Saa'doo's shop now had a door of iron instead of a glass

one. My friends wanted to leave soon after but I managed to get them to stay a little longer as I was really fascinated to see what had happened there. We looked at what was left of the old city after it had been destroyed. Then we came across our school which was still intact, which was heartening, and following this we decided it was time to leave.

My father refused resolutely to go to Lydda. The only time he went was when he went to Lydda airport. When he went he closed his eyes all the way from Nablus to the airport. I actually returned once more to Lydda and it was mainly by chance. I had got lost driving back from Tel Aviv after I had bought some goods. The first sign that I saw was that of Lydda and I decided to go there to take another look. I entered our old street and stopped in front of my front door. I felt a desire to knock but I was afraid of who I might encounter living there. So I walked around the quarter, and looked at the buildings and the people, and then I got back in my car and drove off. I never went to Lydda again.

All the money in the world will not compensate the Palestinian for his loss; the financial compensation is an easy thing, but the psychological compensation is something else. When I went to Lydda, the first thing I looked for is the place where I used to play. I searched for the place where Samir Zlatimo and I used to play in the dust, to rekindle my memories. What psychological compensation would I have? We do not own any property in Lydda anymore, but we do have real memories there.

Saleem Abu Dheer
10 years old in 1948
Original home: Al- Manshiya/ Jaffa
Current address: Nablus

...They also found a hairdresser with his hand over the head of his client on the chair and both of them were dead.

I was nine years old when we left Jaffa, but I still remember it very clearly. I used to go to the market with my father, and I still remember many events that took place at that time. My first memories were of happy times and but the atmosphere started to change. I recall that because of the rising hostilities my brother decided to stop working for his Jewish employer. My father supported his decision and gave him a cart full of almonds to sell, from which he made a lot of money.

Once my brother had done this his next job was to go in his lorry to the farms to collect oranges that he would then sell. On one occasion he was stopped when returning through the Jewish colony of Niter. The British soldiers who arrived on the scene allowed him to return to Jaffa but without his lorry. The following day he returned through a closed road in an attempt to retrieve it. However, much to his distress he found that his lorry had been burnt out.

As the situation deteriorated British soldiers would come to our neighborhood of Al-Manshiya and open fire at some of the Arabs. They did this to deceive us into thinking that it was the Jews who were firing at us. They wanted to stir up hostilities between us in order to quicken our departure. There was another occasion where the British soldiers invaded the

orphanage with snuffer dogs for an unknown reason.

When the Rescue Army arrived we were very excited. It was led by an Arab commander called Fawzi Al-Kowikji and we clapped very enthusiastically when he led his army into town. Our spirits were dampened when we heard the terrible news that Abed Al-Qader Al-Husseini, the leader of the Palestinian resistance had died. My sister brought the newspaper and she was crying and shouting, "Father, look at the paper and read what is in there." The paper was black to mourn the death of Al-Qader Al-Husseini.

Despite the appearance of the Rescue Army people had started to flee mainly because out of fear from many of the rumors that were flying around. Nevertheless, there were many people who would simply not leave. Some people had the attitude that they would rather die in their town than be forced to leave. I recall the family of Abu-Laban who had placed a canon on top of the mill they owned in order to defend it.

We did not leave Jaffa until the last moment. When we finally did leave we certainly did not anticipate that we would become refugees. My father brought the house key with him when we left. He also brought his nail clippers and a copy of the Holy Quran. All our remaining belongings we put into bags that we intended to come back for in the next few days. My father put two pieces of wood over our door in order to prevent the Jews from getting in. As we did not want to go too far from home we stayed in the Al-Ajami neighborhood for a while with my uncle.

After two weeks we returned in a lorry to Al-Manshiya to pick

up our belongings that we had left behind. I stayed in the lorry in order to keep watching for any Jews that were approaching who may wish to disturb us. When we had collected all our belongings and started driving away, we were shocked to see that some armed Jews had spotted us. They started firing at the electricity wires, some of which dropped down on the road. Fortunately we avoided them and we were able to escape unharmed back to Al-Ajami.

Once a lorry passed by Al-Azaz café' in Jaffa, as the lorry passed by some barrels rolled out of the back of it. We thought that those barrels had just accidentally fallen off and started to wave for them to stop and get their barrels back. However, when the barrels impacted with anything object they exploded. Every one in the café was injured. The same thing happened in the market and in the orphanage. In the orphanage people found a dead woman there with her baby alive beside her. They also found a hairdresser with his hand over the head of his client on the chair and both of them were dead.

After An-Naksa in 1967, two of my friends and I decided that we would visit to Jaffa. First we traveled down to Jerusalem and from there we caught a bus to Tel-Aviv. We decided to walk along the coastal path from Tel-Aviv to Jaffa which is not very far. In fact this coastal path actually goes directly past our front door, as Al-Manshiya was situated on the coast. The Municipality had constructed something that reduced the strength of the waves and this prevented them from reaching our doorstep.

Walking along the coast reminded us of how we used to swim in the sea at night. It was impolite for the girls to swim during

the day, therefore many of my female relatives would come to our house in the evening, and we would all swim together.

When we reached my house I was pleased to find it the same as I remembered it. We walked to the next street where my Aunts and cousins had lived and this street was also unchanged. When we reached the Hasan Beik Mosque I became very disillusioned. It had been neglected and had it was being used for acts of fornication as there were now nightclubs nearby. We entered Al-Derhali and al-Balabseh markets where we ate some fish and then we went to visit Al-Ajami. After that we went to Beit-Yam which we used to call Al-Jabaliya neighborhood where my uncle Abu Ali Ash-Sharqawi was living.

At a later date I returned with my father and my father-in-law. We went to visit our old house and then we visited the Al-Madfa Cafe. Here we sat and reminisced about how our life used to be here.

I took my brothers, Khalid and Abdulghani again to Jaffa. We found Al-Manshiya upside down. There was a place called Irsheid; we found it destroyed except for the mosque and the hill of Beidas Family. When we reached Al-Manshiya, we found no homes on the left or the right. Beidas house was a beautiful one with some tiles on its roof, the family of Beidas was very wealthy. They had a square and a Cornish. My deaf brother, Khalid, started to remember the days of his youth, while Abdulghani was only three years old when we were driven out, he did not remember anything but the porch and the stairs.

During the first Intifada, I took my son, Ali, and my daughter, Aida, with me to visit Jaffa so that they could see al-Manshiya neighborhood. Afterwards, I took them to the house of my uncle, Al-Hajj Asaad Abu Dheer, in the Al-Ajami neighborhood. We knocked at the door and entered the three storied house. We asked the workers who were painting there if we could see our house and they agreed. While we were entering, I told my children that here was the kitchen, there was the living room; the wooden doors were decorated in a beautiful way. The whole house was still the same. The Jews who now owned it wanted to rent it to other people. My son noticed the name of uncle that was still engraved in stone at the front of the house.

We then traveled through Al-Balabseh neighborhood, passed Al-Dajani Hospital, Al Hamra Cinema, the Monastery, Al-Darahalli Market, Abu Nabbout Public Fountain and Dar Al-siksek Mosque. We visited everywhere, and I used to tell my children how great it was to live there. My late mother used to say, "If I die, please take me to Jaffa, I do not want to die here in Nablus."

Muhamad Saleh Abu Leil

Born in 1936

Original home: Jamaseyen/Yaffa

Current address: Balata Refugee Camp, Nablus

It has been half-a-century now and still we are dreaming about going back to our homes

We lived within walking distance of Yaffa city. We grew watermelons, tomatoes and peas and would walk to Yaffa and sell our produce in the main groceries market there. We listened to the news on the radio, and read it in the newspaper. There was a British radio station that we listened to and the newspapers we read were Aldefa and Falastein – I remember they cost one-and-a-half pennies. People were desperate to hear about what was happening because they were so frightened: we had neither tanks nor guns and the Jews were shooting and shelling our village. We were peasants, but some people tried to buy guns; each one cost around 40 Palestinian Pounds, which was very expensive.

The British turned a blind eye as the Jews committed their crimes against Palestinians. The Jews massacred 12 members of the family of Aldabas, who had been living and working at the farm of Haj Hamid Abu Laban. We went to see the bodies in the early morning; they included children, who were killed while they were sleeping. A member of my own family was killed as he went to Yaffa to sell his vegetables; another villager, from the Ishtiwi family, was also killed by the Jewish gangs. I remember Abdul Latif Ayash, who was also murdered, as he was one of the resistances. Somebody else from Sheikh Emwanes Village was also killed in our village

and we buried him near Al-Oja River.

We were poorly prepared for war and we had no military training. We managed to dig some underground tunnels and we had some guns but they were of poor quality and only housed 11 bullets. But the Jews had automatic guns with never-ending magazines of bullets. We had heard that there was some smuggling of guns and weapons from Egypt and Syria, but British soldiers executed any Palestinian who owned a gun – while Jews were permitted to have whatever they wanted. They detained my brother, Saber, and sentenced him for four years' hard labor because they found he had an old gun in his house. We used to visit him in jail.

We had some militants in our village, and eight of the militants of Hasan Salameh`s group were killed there. We lost the villages of Salameh and Yazoor as well as the farms of Yaffa city. Abdul Latif Abu Ayash and another six fighters were defending our village, but in the end they gave up their guns to another group from Abu Kishek village.

We were told we should leave our village before the Jewish militia arrived, so we left – otherwise we might have been killed. Even though we had documents to prove we owned the land, we were scared. People left because they were frightened and had no weapons with which to defend themselves.

I remember members of my family crying and screaming and asking our father about where we were going. He said it would be for just one month and then we would come home. It has been half-a-century now and still we are dreaming about going back to our homes. The Arab Armies did nothing to

help us go back, while the Jews took Palestine from us.

We left at night and went first to Abu Kishik village, where we stayed for six days, until we went to Qalqilia. The citizens of Qalqilia town cried when they saw the terrible state we were in. We had lost everything and we were homeless, and we suffered a lot over the winter. We spent two years in Qalqilia town. The Iraqi Army was there at this time. The soldiers were fighting the Jewish militia, and they managed to arrest some militants – we clapped when we saw the Jewish gang members be arrested by the army. Then the Iraqi soldiers went off to defend Jenin, where many of them were killed. After two years in Qalqilia we had spent most of our money, and we decided to move to Nablus.

In Nablus we were given shelter in a zone called Rafidya; we lived in tents. Then more refugees arrived from Lydda City. They told us the Jews had slaughtered many people there in a mosque and many innocent children had been killed. The Red Cross was supplying us with basic necessities, but then UNRWA took over this responsibility. We built our homes in the refugee camps, although we used the term “units” instead of “houses”. My mother died here in the camp, as well as my wife; we have been dying in the refugee camps and in the Diaspora.

After the war of 1967 I went to work in Hartzilya city. Many Palestinians were there to work in industry and farming. I told my boss that this land was ours. He replied that I was just a worker here and that this was no longer Palestine but Israel.

We went on trips to Yaffa after the war of 1967 and I was able

to see my village and my house. My village had changed, but I could still easily recognize my house. The people living in my house “allowed” me to go inside. During our trips to Yaffa we would pray in the Sidi Ali shrine and we would offer sacrifices of goats. I remembered our past and the nice memories we had before our Diaspora.

The land we owned was relatively small and I wouldn't accept any compensation in return of it. At the time the Jews had offered a lot of money to buy our land but many of us had refused to sell it.

We escaped from the fear and terror, but if we had known that we would become refugees we never would have left. It would have been better if we had stayed there; it was a lovely place that was near to the beach and also near to a river. I always wonder how we ended up in this mountainous area of the West Bank. I wish I could return to my village right now and stay there for the rest of my life.

Abdul Ghani Ismail Doleh
Born in 1941
Original home: Yaffa City
Current address: Nablus City

Some villagers sneaked back to their farms to pick up some fruit, such as oranges, or property or animals, but the Jews killed all those they caught

Before the Diaspora, life was very good. We could move around the country freely, there was no fighting. We could go to the beach and go swimming, we could look after ourselves – and we even had a car.

At the Al-Ajami coffee shop, though, we would hear the stories of people who had fled their homes. They told us about leaving their property, even their clothes. When we asked them why they had left, they told us that the war would reach us, and that the Jews wanted to occupy the entire country. We were among the last to leave Yaffa city; it made us sad to see the city lose its people.

I had begun to expect that we would have to leave, as the only preparations had made for war were building some tunnels and buying some guns and food. There were some men who had military training – my brother was one of them – but the British Mandate had a policy of executing all those with any military association.

There were obstacles on the roads and people faced roadblocks on their way to their farms. The Jews were also digging tunnels of their own.

We moved to Lydda City, but it surrendered while we were there. People's spirits had been lifted when they saw some kind of military group coming towards Lydda, because they thought it was support for the Palestinians. But then we realized it was the Jewish militia of Hagana. The Hagana had no respect for the law and they butchered people without fear of punishment by the British authorities.

My two brothers were involved in the resistance; one of them was killed when the Hagana arrived in Lydda. We were scared when we saw the Jews because we knew they were killing Palestinians in the other villages. The support we had from the other towns was minimal, probably because they were under attack at the same time.

We were devastated when the Arab forces withdrew, and then we had the trauma of seeing our town destroyed. That's when we fled; we knew what would happen if we stayed: then Jewish militia had been scattering leaflets warning us that if we did not leave we would be killed.

After they had taken control of the town the Hagana militants came to our house and took my two brothers and five of our neighbors to help them carry some weapons to their cars. After doing this – coming under fire in the process – the commander told the militants to send the Palestinian men back to their homes. But on the way home, one of the Hagana militants pointed his rifle at them and ordered them to put their faces against a wall and raise their hands. It looked likely he was going to shoot them, but the commander saw what he was doing and stopped him. "I told you to take them to their homes and not to kill them," the commander said, and he

cursed the militant.

Then all the young men were told to go to Dahmash Mosque. We really thought they would be killed there. My brother told me we should all face the same destiny together – if it was our fate to be killed there, and then we would be killed there. We went together. I was very young. We passed men and elders with their hands on top of their heads. The mosque was full of people. One of the Hagana leaders came and told us that anyone who had a knife must throw it away. In this mosque there was a yard and a wall; the Hagana militants were on the roof of the mosque pointing their arms and rifles towards us. Then another commander came and said that all the young men should leave the mosque and only the elders remain there. We left the mosque. We had walked less than 100 meters when I heard the sound of automatic weapons coming from the mosque. And one hour later, the militants came and ordered us to leave Lydda.

We owned a truck. The Hagana tried to tow it away with a bulldozer. My brother was so angry he went into the house and picked up a knife, intending to threaten those trying to take the truck. But my mother wouldn't let him leave the house. She told him: "Money can be compensated for but your life cannot."

Our city surrendered when the resistance realized there was no point fighting any more. The Jews came to people's houses and shouted: "Go to Abdallah [the West Bank under Jordanian rule]!" That very day we walked to Nileen village. It was the first day of Ramadan, a hot day in July 1948. Some members of my family stayed behind – two of my aunts and

my sister – but my other brother is still missing today.

Some villagers sneaked back to their farms to pick up some fruit, such as oranges, or property or animals, but the Jews killed all those they caught. My aunt did not want to leave because she was sick, but on the departure day everybody was scared. Everyone was rushing. Some forgot their babies and children because they were panicking so much.

We thought we would stay here [Nablus] for a few days or weeks and then we would return home. We came through the mountains, where there was no Jewish militia, and we were welcomed by the citizens of Nablus city. The Nablusi citizens sheltered us and took care of us. We lived in Balata refugee camp, although some family members later left for Amman in Jordan. There were no job opportunities here; we did have some money, but others had no money at all.

I visited my home after the war of 1948. I found Jewish strangers living there. They invited me to visit my home. They told me they had rented the flat from the Government. Then they offered me some coffee – in my own home.

Abu Raed Barakat

Born in 1937

Original home: Yazoor/ Jaffa

Current address: Al-Ein Refugee Camp/ Nablus

My wife and children were with me picked the pomegranate and said, "This is ours." I told them, "This pomegranate was planted by your grandfather."

When I left Yazoor I was in the sixth grade. We used to listen to the news on the radio in the Café. In those days, radios were not widespread and the news concentrated on the Second World War. However there was an increasing amount of news regarding the situation in our own country.

The British soldiers were supporting the Jews; they constituted a corps for them in the British army. We saw the British training them at night, holding sticks like scout leaders. In contrast if the British army found any Arab in possession of a weapon or even a bullet they would demolish his house and execute him.

We did not imagine that things would progress as far as they did. In fact, I didn't imagine that one day I would become a refugee. Our people expected a lot from the Arab Armies. It started with sporadic skirmishes and then the Jews started to attack the towns to weaken its inhabitants and force them to leave. The Deir Yassin massacre had a great psychological influence on us. The Arab radio broadcasts from Egypt, Jordan and Syria were greatly hyped in order to frighten people and get them to leave the land open for the Jews. One was ready to sell his wheat to buy a gun and some bullets and stay to

defend his property.

Every house had its own provision of wheat, lentils and onions. All were grown on one piece of land. My father was an official of the Military Committee at Yazoor. He was responsible for arranging the guarding shifts. My father organized the young men to guard the town in shifts. They were armed with worn out guns to such an extent that you needed to use a skewer to adjust them. These poor quality guns were sent to our house and my father taught me how to clean them. There was about twenty or thirty guns and two or three machine guns and bombs. Our people were not trained to use the weapons properly and they used them haphazardly.

People used to fear going into the farms to pick fruit for fear of getting shot at. The Jews used to attack Yazoor at night, never in the morning, and the British army was supporting them.

Each one of us had the necessary amount of kerosene for boiling water and there was no serious food shortage. Most of the families were gathering inside the town; we were living near the orchards and we were close to the colony of Moledet. It was armed and it used to overlook the whole area.

The Jews did not dare to come in to the town at night. During the day they would travel in groups when they were driving on the main street. We used to shoot at them and this led to them getting tanks to escort them on the main road.

The country was divided into two parts; the left and the right. In the middle of the country there was a main road. On this main road there was a strategically positioned house between

Yazoor and Beit Dajan that acted as a base for the Jewish militia. It was called Hezbon and they dug tunnels under the ground from there that led them to E'yoon Kara. The young men of Yazoor had decided to bomb Hezbon which they managed to do successfully. The next day, the Jews were sitting on a pile of rubble.

My uncle, Haj Sa'dallah became a martyr the day he asked my father's permission to guard the town at night. He proceeded to a region which was near Moledet, carrying a short Italian gun. It was of poor quality and when it fired it produced enough light to give the location of the shooter. Consequently this enabled the Jews to determine my uncles position after he had fired, and they shot him dead. His family was living with us after they had been driven out from their house in the orchard. Uncle Sa'dallah was supposed to hand over his shift at mid night. Since he did not return my father and some friends went to search for him. They found my uncle sitting on his knee, with his hand still holding his gun. They thought that he might still be alive so one of the men carried him on his back. When I saw him, I told them that there was some blood on my uncle's hand. They examined his body and discovered that a bullet had entered his left shoulder and passed through his heart.

I also remember that Abdel Hameed 'Abu Zubaidah' and Haj Abu Safieh, who were from Yazoor, became martyrs. My father-in-law, Haj Abdel Hadi Jaber, was wounded. His hand was cut when a Suliban bomb, which was like a Mortar bombs, was blown up. It killed the person who was standing next to him, Abdel Hamid Abu Zubaidah. The Jews then bombed the Spinning Factory that was called Shanata and

the Ice Factory.

When things became worse, we, the children, were driven out to Lydda. Everybody who was able to carry weapons stayed in the town to defend it hoping that the Arab armies would come and help with the resistance. We only had English and Canadian guns in good enough condition to fight with. Those who had Canadian guns would get the best results since they had field glasses that helped with targeting.

When the Rescue Army finally arrived we thought that this would instigate the demise of the Jews. Fawzi Al-Kawukjy introduced himself as the leader of the Rescue Army; he said to my father, we are responsible for defending the town. Take the armed men out and we say goodbye.” My father agreed to leave the Rescue Army in charge which was a mistake as they did not stay very long. Yazoor had been steadfast and it only fell after we had handed over to the Rescue Army.

My father decided to gather the militants that had left Yazoor and lead them to Lydda where I was at the time to aid the resistance. Sadly, they only reached the village of Safreyeh, where the Jews were sitting ready in the trenches so they returned back.

One day shortly after we had arrived in Lydda a friend and I decided to return to Yazoor to pick up our bicycles which we had left behind. We went on foot and when we entered the town we were surprised to find it completely deserted; there was no rescue and no Jews. We had a dog in Yazoor that we were unable to take with us. Incredibly when I called his name, “Max”, he appeared, climbed on my shoulders, and

was trying to kiss me.

I looked at our house and I went inside and I took just a mattress and a blanket. The furniture had not been moved from its place. As I looked through the key hole of the shed I could see the bicycles and I felt happy. I brought a metal bar to open the lower lock so that I could open the door. Suddenly the latch came free and fell on Mohammed's hand causing him to shout loudly.

I then heard something else in the distance so I said to Mohammed, "They are coming, and I can hear them." We left everything and fled through the side streets in an area called Al-Bobareyeh, crossed the ancient ruins and arrived at the school. To be honest I just heard a sound but I didn't see anything. When we reached the school we met a man called Mohammed Al-Akel. We helped him push his car so it would start and he told us he was going to Jaffa. We asked him, "How can you go there? The Jews have invaded it. Take us with you instead to Lydda." He replied adamantly, "No, I want to go to Jaffa," and this was the direction he drove off in.

We reached our agricultural school and we looked at our quarter called the Nawabilseh neighborhood. We had a fifty square meter plot of land which was part of our store-cropping rights. The wheat that was growing there was ready to harvest as it was as tall as a man. In 1947 someone who lived near our village claimed this was his land and sold it to the Jews. He had no right to do this and my father told the police about this matter. The police official in charge Salah Nazer agreed and ruled that the land must be returned to my father.

Mohammed and I came from behind the sweet factory on foot and there we found that the Jews were stopping the cars. So we took a detour through the orange farms. As we were walking we met a man from Yazoor called Mohammed Abu Hamdeh, who was deaf and driving a carriage. I asked him loudly, "Where are you going Abu Al-Abed?" He replied, "To Yazoor, as I want to bring back some coal oil." He wanted to bring back some kerosene from a barrel in his orchard. The gallon of kerosene, which used to cost one shilling, had become too expensive and so this made Abu Al-Abed return to Yazoor to get a barrel of it.

We kept walking and we came to the village of Beit Dajan. We heard a shooting sound coming from the direction of the police station. We didn't know the reason and we did not want to find out. Next we came to the Safreya region where we met someone from our town from the Ass'oad family and he had a big Cyprus donkey with him.

We said to him, "How about picking us some good oranges from the top of the trees. The oranges have stopped growing in these orchards, but there are a few oranges at the top of the trees." He left the donkey with me while he climbed the tree for us. I quietly said to Muhammad, "We are tired! Sit behind me!" We harshly left the man who was picking us some oranges, and fled, riding on his donkey's back, all the way across the Safreya region. When we reached the Lydda railway, the man was still running behind us. We tied the donkey to the rail, jumped the fence and walked the rest of the way until we reached Lydda in the early evening. My family had been searching for me, and I apologized but I did not tell them I had been to Yazoor.

The Jews then came to take Lydda approaching from the eastern side. Coincidentally or more likely on purpose the Arab Rescue Army who had come to Lydda left the night before the Jews invaded. Some people hid in Lydda's mosques but the Jews entered one of them and killed the people hiding there. Following this a big fight broke out, but it was futile; the Jews were abundantly armed with weapons left by the British. The Jews shouted at the raging people, "Go to Abdallah, the prince of Jordan, Go to Abdallah." We fled with my brother, my uncle and his wife. It was like doomsday.

We were fleeing from Lydda during Ramadan and it was too hot. Women and children were struggling to continue; since there was hardly any water to drink. I was able to drink from a basin in which there was dirty water that contained some creatures and moss. We finally came to a place where we found a well and this caused me to dance with joy. We were extremely thirsty at this point. In order to get water from the well we tied our hettahs (head scarf) together and lowered them into the well. We would then bring them up, wring them out and drink the water.

When we reached Qibya village, there were some tractors coming towards us. People of Qibya mistook them for the Jews and started to run. We jumped over the roofs of the houses and apparently a woman forgot her baby and in the ensuing panic. Then somebody shouted, "Come back! Come back! They are not the Jews." They were Arabs who had come to help us.

After that, we went to Deir Ammar to be far away from the confrontations. We stayed there for two days, and then we

went to Nablus. We were in the lower Refugee Camp, which was close to a source of water. We were putting the sacks on to the trees in order to protect us from heat and we stayed a few weeks in these conditions. The people of Nablus sympathized with us and they would always offer their help. The schools and the mosques were opened for all the refugees. In the mosques, they used to bring food and blankets. The mosque was partitioned out with each family having its own area. When winter was close upon us, we left the camp and rented a house that belonged to Abu So'ud family.

After the winter we returned to the refugee now named, Camp Al-Ein where the Red Cross was distributing tents although some people decided to remain in the caves. When my father finally reached Nablus he and found out his family was living in the refugee camp he was dumbfounded. The people of the camp had heard a lot about my father and knew that he was one of Yazoor's notables, so they assigned him their Mukhtar, (Head), and the Jordanians at that time approved this. This helped my father come to terms with the fact that he was living in a refugee camp.

The following winter we spent the whole season in the camp. It was a very tough experience, as sometimes the tent would fall on us. People used to remove the snow on their tents to prevent this from happening. We also had communal toilets which was uncomfortable for us. We continued living in the camp until 1958.

The Iraqi army used to bring their cars to Camp Al-Ein for us to wash and they paid us some money for that service. In return people used to go to the Iraqi army camps and bring

food, rice and dates. While some other people went there to beg.

I was fortunate to be able to return to school. I studied at the new national college before the Jews demolished the center of the city. When they destroyed the college, I studied at An-Najah College and got my diploma in accounting. I worked as a clerk before I got a job with UNRWA.

My father and I visited Yazoor after the war in 1967. It is too difficult for one to describe his feelings the moment he sees his birthplace destroyed. I found my house damaged but there were still the pomegranate and sycamore trees. My wife and children were with me picked the pomegranate and said, "This is ours." I told them, "This pomegranate was planted by your grandfather."

We had a piece of land which was called Abu Al-Maiz. When my father saw our hometown, he got confused; he couldn't recognize the location of our land. He asked me, "Where is our land?" I said, "Isn't this Muhammad Abu Fudeh's water pump? Therefore this must be Abul Maiz." My father agreed with my conclusion.

We didn't stay long at Yazoor. My father lost his house, his land, and his money there. I did not want him to see and suffer anymore. In Yazoor, we found many Iraqis, and Yemenis who would say that it was not their fault what had happened. The people occupying our house refused to let us look around it and this prompted us to leave.

When we went back to Nablus, my father suffered a heart

attack. I looked at his face which was blue and said to him, "Our condition is much better than many others," Tragically this heart attack took his life and this was a terribly sad time for our family.

I was working at the time in the Green Market in Nablus, and I used to go to Tel-Aviv to buy some goods. Whenever I was traveling through Yazoor, I hid my head between my legs so as not to see it. I didn't want to glance at the land in which we used to grow corn, cucumber, tomatoes and eggplants.

I swear to God even if they gave me Nablus and the West Bank, I would not agree to this as compensation for my home land. I would prefer to live in a tent in Yazoor and I wish to be buried there.

Abu Saleem Jibril

74 years old

Original home: Yazoor village/ Jaffa

Current address: Al-Ein Refugee Camp / Nablus

It snowed over us and we used to go out from the tents in order to remove the snow by our hands in order to keep the tents from falling down.

We used to listen to the News Broadcasting Station which came from Cyprus. The broadcast was British and it spoke in particular about our area. However, we were so close to Jaffa that we did not need to hear the news about it from the radio. We were practically one of the suburbs of Jaffa and we could see any explosions that took place there.

We were building our hopes on the Rescue Army but they let us down. They said that they had come to liberate Palestine. When the news was announced that the Rescue Army was arriving, everybody's spirits was raised as we thought they would save us. In general, when you are in trouble and people come to help, you naturally feel better.

I expected the war would reach us because Yazoor was on the main road between Jaffa and Jerusalem. In addition, there were Jewish colonies such as Niter and Moleedit that were only 2km from us. The Palestinian village of Salama was on the southern side and Hazboon was on the western side.

Jaffa, Salama, and Yazoor were almost occupied at the same time. However, I did not expect to become a refugee. I did not think about that at all because we knew that the Zionists were

gangs while the Arab armies should exceed them in number. It is incredible! We had seven Arab armies and we relied on them, but they let us down. Before they arrived, the youth of the village guarded Yazoor in shifts. If any trouble happened, they defended and fought.

The intensity of the situation increased the level of good will and the facilities provided by the citizens. Every one paid everything they owned to buy a gun. Despite all the troubles, the people went to their lands to work. They devoutly believed that they would not have to leave their country. I saw the Jews several times while they were passing into the village. They did not fire at us as they were only passing by on the main road.

The story of the seven Hagana members who were killed by the old people showed that not only the young fought. They attacked a car of seven Hagana men and killed them at the entrance of Yazoor.

The prices of the fuel oil and kerosene rose. The price of a 50-piaster tin had become 10 pounds which was a significant amount of money. Most children sacrificed themselves and some even lost their lives. Some youth who owned tractors and cars tried to help and would attempt to bring back fuel which was very difficult.

Many battles took place, on one occasion I saw a Jewish gang get out of their car and run after a group of Arab youth. They caught them and killed them at the door of Al-Haj Khamis. My God, I was still a boy when I saw this. The Jewish gangs were wicked people and they did not want any truce. They wanted

to take control of the whole country.

I still recall Abu Ali who became a martyr and Al-Haj Abu Safiah who was killed at night by an act of deception. They tricked them by saying that they were Arabs and they killed him near the irrigating mill of his farm. Around this time they bombed the orchards of Al-Dracherma which caused many more deaths. There were many people from our village who were working in Jaffa. When the government house was bombed there, two or three people from our village lost their lives in that explosion.

I was scared of being shot by a careless bullet from the machine guns whilst I was waking my dad who was sleeping on the roof. Everybody was seized with fear. The fighting continued and Beit Dajan village was occupied before us while we were practically blockaded in the village. We wanted to escape but it was not easy.

My family left almost one week before me as the situation was getting worse and everything was confused. I heard that no one remained in Beit Dajan which was concerning. My mother did not take anything with her when she left except some money. My father carried some furniture and some friends helped take our sheep.

The fighting was getting more severe and the Jews bombed the ice factory in Yazoor. One night, another attack was launched against the village and we believed the British had been involved in this attack. My cousin Al-Haj Othman Jibril was Mukhtar, (Head of the village), and he went to speak to the British people. Al-Haj Othman had touched the British

machine guns and felt that they were hot. So he said to the British, "You are the ones who are attacking us with the Jews." They said to him, "Get out from here or we will kill you." We were convinced they were collaborating with the Jews.

The Jews used to come into the orchards at night where they would fire bombs and shoot at us. We found cartridges and bombs on the ground in the morning. What could a person say? One wished he was dead at that time. One day I found they had left a new type of bomb and I decided to defuse it. I pulled it apart from the back and removed the capsule, then I closed it and threw it away and it did not explode.

Every village was autonomous as we were unable to coordinate with other villages and towns. We were told about that the Rescue Army was arriving which we believed was excellent news. When they arrived they started shelling Tel Aviv with a manual canon that they had. However after they had fired a few rounds they packed up and left. Then it was like hell that night because of what they had done earlier in the day. We did not give up though and I think that Mohammad Alarddah and I were the last people who left Yazoor. We were so exhausted when that day came. Our village surrendered in the same way as many of the other villages in the area. It meant that we left Jaffa in a worst position once Yazoor had surrendered.

We departed to Lydda during the harvest time shortly before Ramadan. At this time of the year, if anyone walked among the plants, they would not be seen. We did not spend a long time in Lydda. We had relatives in Nablus including the second wife of my father, and so we decided to go there. When we were driven out, my mother was asked to go with her brothers and

sisters to Gaza, but she refused and said, “How can I leave my children in Nablus?” This meant that she was separated from the rest of her family who remained in Gaza.

When we reached Nablus, we entered from the side of the dark old city, Al-Yasminah Quarter. I could not believe we had left from the sea shore to this dark, depressing place. I used to ask my mother why there were no roofed streets like the ones in Jaffa. We lived in Algazaliah School at the beginning and we met some people from Jaffa there.

We stayed in the school for a while but it was very crowded. So my brothers and I agreed to leave the school. Originally we were a group of 8 and we were the first people who went into the refugee camp. We set up tents and we stayed in them for two or three years. It snowed over us and we used to go out from the tents in order to remove the snow by our hands in order to keep the tents from falling down. Later on the rest of the people started to follow us and others joined us from the north. Many people had buried their money back in Yazoor and some people returned some time later to retrieve it.

I returned to my village after the occupation of 1967. Our two-storey house had been demolished and they had turned it into a garden. There was an archeological site behind our house, called Al-bobareyah in which Moshe Dyane fell down and broke his hand while they were excavating the ruins. It was said that it was a street, 40 meters in length under the ground. It even had shops and it still exists until today.

I found the school as it was but they had demolished a large part of our graveyard. My family were buried their, and half

of their graves had broken tomb stones. There were some tombs had survived unscathed and I found the mosque in its place but it was in bad condition.

It broke my heart to see my village in such a situation. I felt as though I had been punched in the gut after I had seen that three quarters of my village had been demolished and that I was now a stranger amongst the foreign people living there.

My brother came from Europe and visited me for thirty days. He told me that he wanted to visit Yazoor, so we traveled there every day for the whole of his stay. On one such day we came into contact with one of the Iraqi Jews living there, and he asked us in Arabic, "Why do you come here every day? I have built two floors on this house and I am going to build another one. So what are you doing here?" I told him that Yazoor was our village and I pointed at the garden where our house used to stand and said, "This where I used to live". The Jew responded, "Two days ago, another man came and also said that". I told him he had been an older brother of ours who had come to visit the house earlier in the week.

On a different day a relative came with us so he could see his old house. When we were in Yazoor he thought he recognized his house but I told him that this was not his, I told him, "This is the house of Haj Abed Alaziz Tyim. If you want to see your house, come with me. I think I can remember where your house used to be." I walked with him and my memory started to return. We entered into a corridor and I said to him, "Come here, this is your house. Here is Beit Glood, which is the square that overlooks the Al-bobareyah." The man looked carefully at a palm tree of our neighbors. He said, "My God!

You have a good memory. It is true that this is the palm tree of our neighbors.”

While we were talking, the Iraqi Jew and his wife came out and welcomed us by saying “Hello my friend.” My relative told him that he was living in his house. The Jew responded by asking him what he was talking about. This led to my relative saying, “You are living in my house. Come! I can describe the house without entering it.” He told the Jew about every thing in the house and even the color of the marble. He described what was drawn on the ceiling, as they had decorated the ceiling in the past. The Jew said, “My God you are telling the truth.” He let us enter our house and said to us, “I agree that this is your house, I admit it. However, where is my house in Baghdad? Take me back to it.” He was a very hospitable man.

Our taxi driver, who was with us, had previously been a taxi driver to Baghdad. His name was Haj Mohammad and he asked the Jew “Can you tell me where you are from in Baghdad?” Haj Mohammed began to name some streets and roads in Baghdad until the Jew suddenly told him, “Stop my friend this is the name of my neighborhood. How is Baghdad?” The Jew’s eyes were filled with tears while his wife started to cry. He repeated, “How is Baghdad my friend? I was living there, I miss it. By God, you can have your country; just let us return to Baghdad. God will punish both Arabs and Jews who caused this situation.”

After we had left his house we managed to lose our way, so we stopped a car to ask for directions. We asked a man about the road to Natania and Tulkarem. He was also an Iraqi Jew and he said, “Welcome my friends; it is not possible for you

to leave because you are my guests.” We replied, “Thank you very much but we must leave so can you show us the way.” He said, “No way, my father was a sheik in Iraq, I cannot leave you.” Finally, he agreed to show us the way.

Every time I returned, I felt as if my heart was bleeding. The deserted streets of Jaffa only highlighted the vibrant past that I still recall. Jaffa was busy and crowded just like a beehive, now the shops are closed and deserted. We used to go into Al-Shabab beach, where the youth would meet from all over Palestine. We found it empty and sad. My God, It was like a nightmare!

I do not regret that I saw it because it would have been a big mistake if I had not. One has to come back and visit his village in order to remind his children of it. I still have the registration papers for the land but the Jews have built houses on it now. Nevertheless, the shop of my father is still there and so is the shop of my cousin, Ahmad Jibril. There were some houses that the Jews decided to take for themselves, but the rest of the houses they had demolished. They had even uprooted many of the trees from the farms and I had the misfortune of witnessing some people urinating there now.

The graves of my father, family, cousins and ancestors were all at Yazoor. They were there, not here in Nablus. We are the branches that belong to these roots. When we went back to our town, we recited some verses of the Holy Qur’an on the remaining graves. It was enraging to know that even al Imam Ali’s shrine was closed and the Jewish rabbis were staying there.

The last time I visited Yazoor, I still remember the spinning factory which was owned by a Syrian man called Sulatah. It is still working but currently run by Jews. Not only did we have agriculture but we also had industry. It's impossible to forget the landmarks of the country. Now when I visit Yazoor, I let my memory reel back fifty years and I quickly remember all the paths which I'll never forget.

Abu Salem Katooni

10 years old in 1948

Original home: Al-Khayreyya village/ Jaffa

Current address: Al-Ein Refugee Camp/ Nablus

I remember my grandmother moaning, "They will take the fertile valley and give us the mountain."

There were hardly any radios in the village, so people went to the café to sit and listen to the news. I remember that the Jews would come from the north and shoot at the village. To counter this we were told that all the men should acquire guns in order to defend the village. Despite most people having had no military training everybody was willing to fight. My father was one of the fighters and one of the first decisions they made was to get all the women and children out of the village.

Rumors at that time were very dangerous; it was said that the Jews would open fire at us if given the opportunity. However the Jews sent letters to al-Mukhtar (Head) saying, "Do not leave, we want to live with you." Al-Mukhtar did not believe them as he knew our town was strategically positioned.

The Israeli soldiers had airplanes, tanks and weapons whereas in our village we had only old guns that were of poor quality. I had heard about the Rescue Army, but I had never seen them. I remember the day that Abd Al-Qader Al-Husseni was killed. It was reported by my uncle who used to read the paper out loud to many people in the village square. My uncle walked from Al-Khayria to Jaffa to bring us the newspaper as it was very important that we knew what was happening in the

region.

My uncle died during the war, his name was Said Al-Katoni. He fought until he was captured and killed. Hassan Salameh took the responsibility of defending our village and other neighboring communities like Salama village and Jaffa.

Unfortunately our village ended up being captured very easily. I did not see the Jews the moment they entered the village because I had already left the village with my family, although my father had stayed. My father said the Jews had distributed pamphlets by planes the moment they entered the village, which meant the village was surrounded. When the Jews entered our village, my father said he ran to the closet, took everything from it and left immediately. Few fighters stayed the moment the Jews entered the village; a number of them met martyrdom and the rest fled.

I remember a man called Abu-Omar, who lost one of his children in the confusion created by the departure. Fortunately the child was found by some kind people who took him with them to Amman. In Amman they managed to find out the name and place of his family and sent him to meet up with them.

We also left our grandfather in the village as he was old and very stubborn. When the Jews came they captured him and ordered him to leave. The Jews put him on the back of a donkey and told him to leave. They gave him his wooden slippers to take with him. My grandfather decided to bury them in a nearby field and he anticipated on retrieving them when he returned.

After Al-Khayria had been captured we went to the village named Bedia. On our way to this village we rented a van to carry our personnel belongings and household items. I remember my grandmother moaning, "They will take the fertile valley and give us the mountain." We chose Bedia because we had a relative there who helped us.

We then traveled to the village of Al-Zawia and stayed there for one month before heading to Nablus. In Nablus we bought a burlap cloth and prepared makeshift tents for us to live in. The weather was cold and it started snowing, so we were sent along with many other refugees to a place called Yakhor. This happened to be a large store that belonged to Sheikh Helme Al-Edresei and it served the purpose of protecting us from the harsh winter elements.

After a while we ended up in a neighborhood in Nablus called Ein Mera. We settled there and built a house out of stones. The door was made of tin which was closed using of a piece of wire. In 1954 we left this house and lived in Al-Ein Refugee Camp. I was the first one in our family to get a proper job in Nablus. I worked in the Soap Factory for a while and after this I sold yogurt.

We visited our village after 1967 with one of my uncles and his wife. When we arrived at our farm we found an animal farm in its place. I told the Jews there that this used to be our orchard but they were not interested.

Do you know how our village looks like now? They bring their garbage and throw it there. They only place of importance that remains is the cemetery. What do you expect me to say

when I see our village like this? My sons know that they are from Al-Khayria. Our village was captured on the 28th of April 1948 and I always remind them of this.

Mahmoud Barakat

20 years old in 1948

Original home: Yazoor / Jaffa

Current address: Al-Ein Refugee Camp-Nablus

I have not returned to Yazoor and I will never do that. How could I go back to my land and house to find that my enemy is still there?

I was only 20 years of age and still not married in 1948. We used to follow the news the traditional way and were not in need of radios. We were situated on the main road that ran from Jaffa through Jerusalem to Gaza and divided the town into two parts. The road went from Yazoor to the village of Beit Dajan, then to Lydda, Ramlah and Bab al Wad. Heading further south it passed through the colonies and reached Gaza.

Originally the Jews from the neighboring colony sent messages to the families of Yazoor to accept us as neighbors asking for a ceasefire. We too wanted to cast aside any problem between us. However we also knew that they were compelled to ask for a ceasefire with us in order to pass through Yazoor so that they could bring in supports and reinforcements. When they asked why we didn't accept we told them it was because of this reason.

From the moment the English people started to talk about partition and their intention to pull out, skirmishes started to take place. I still recall that skirmishes between us began as early as 1936. However I never expected that things would lead to Nakba. The Jews would pass through on the main

road near us. We were firing at each other throughout the night. Not a single day would pass without skirmishes. Almost fifteen or twenty persons from Yazoor lost their lives during the skirmishes, including my uncle.

The rebels said that they wanted 25 pounds from each family to buy weapons. People were buying the weapons from their own savings. The cartridge clip was about five pounds. Some people sold the jewelry of their women to buy weapons. They bought the remains of some German guns from the First World War. When one fired, the bullet would either kill its shooter or fail to explode. It was all staged. It was a British, Arab plot and all Arabs were colonized then.

From the beginning of the Arab revolt in 1936 until 1948, the British used to shoot any Arab if they had arrested him carrying any sort of gun cartridge. In contrast the Jews were trained on how to use the weapons with the attendance of the British. The first high commissioner who came to Palestine was a Zionist.

Working on the land was still continuing until the last moment. Everybody went to their land with a gun on their shoulder. Every town was self-sufficient in defending itself. The situation was just fine, as long as working on the land continued.

The Jews had no opportunity to enter; they would get engaged in skirmishes and shooting at us from Tel- Aviv and Niter colony. The Jews did scare people, particularly, when the massacre of Deir Yassen happened. We were not frightened In Yazoor, even when we heard the news of Deir Yaseen. On the contrary, we remained for two or three weeks in our village

after the massacre.

A group of people came from the neighboring villages in order to help us; but they were merely individuals. We kept fighting until the Arab Rescue Army arrived. Apparently the Rescue Army had come to rule the area and fight for us. The whole Rescue Army, which came to our village, consisted of just four people in a jeep. They said, "Show us the high areas of the town." Later on, the rest of them came and this made us feel safer. I remember a woman from our village started to sing and utter thrilling cries of joy. Unfortunately, the Rescue Army was useless.

My father was a leader and when the Rescue Army came to the town, they inquired about his name. He told them that his name was Abu Saleh. They demanded that my father show them the high places, which he did since they would take ambush positions there. They told him that he needed to take all the inhabitants outside the town. My father suggested that they would let the children and the women leave while the armed men would stay. They said, "We don't want any armed person to stay here. We order you to leave and we will manage." My uncle, Jaber used to say during the exit, "If any one decides to go out, I will shoot him dead. All of you should stay here. You have to protect your land and honor." Nevertheless we had no choice and we left as the Rescue Army instructed.

The Rescue Army did not come to liberate a country; the local people were the only ones who carried out the resistance. After we had left a senior person who stayed behind said that the Rescue Army stayed only two more days, shelled three bombs on Tel Aviv and then left.

Someone from Lydda rented a piece of land in Yazoor for cultivation purposes. He irrigated his plants by using our own irrigating mill. When the Rescue Army came and told us to leave, half of my family went with that man. Some people went up to Lydda, and others to Ramleh.

First, we went from Yazoor to Lydda by foot and stayed there for a short time. It was the summer when a friend of my father came and told him "Abu Saleh, we have a farm of cactus in Qibbia. You can take your family and stay there for two months. Afterwards, you can come back to Lydda if you wish." There were no skirmishes in Lydda and Qibbia at this time and the situation was good.

We were then told that the Jews had come at night and had occupied Yazoor and they had cut off the supplies to the village of Salama as they both were on the main road. Later, the Jews occupied Lydda and so we remained in Qibbia as guests. We had left all our furniture, clothes, and other belongings in Lydda. We did not take anything because we were told that we would return. Therefore we lost all our possessions when Lydda was occupied.

All the people of Yazoor were scattered and every one managed the situation according to their own circumstances. We spent two months in Qibbia, before leaving to the village of Deir Ammar and then we moved on to Nablus.

When we came to Nablus, my father refused to live with any of his friends there or even with his uncles in the village of Alzawiah, such was his pride. Therefore, we made a housing unit and stayed in it for a period. Later on, when the tents

were made, people started to go to Balata refugee camp and others to Jericho. Some people lived for ten years in the tents of the refugee camp. The first year in the tents there was heavy snow. The people of Nablus were incredibly hospitable and they helped to accommodate many of us. People lived in schools and mosques for almost five or six months. The more wealthy people could afford to rent houses in Nablus.

Many stories were narrated in the camp about the panic that took place when the people were deported from Lydda. We were told that every one tried to escape in any way they could from Lydda. It was said that a woman carried a pillow with her instead of carrying her baby from utter panic and confusion. Some people were killed while they were escaping and others died because of thirst. Parents had to leave their children. In other words, the battle of Lydda sounded just like doomsday.

When the Jews invaded again in 1967, which meant we could now work in Israel, the Head of our family gathered all the people of the camp to speak to them. He told them if any woman wanted to work in Israel, they must leave the camp immediately and they would not be allowed to live here. The males were the only ones who were allowed to work in Israel. One woman ran away and she did not dare come back.

I have not returned to Yazoor and I will never do that. How could I go back to my land and house to find that my enemy is still there? I would stand at the door of my house like a stranger. My father went there and saw it and when he returned he died from a heart attack.

Mohammad Ahmad Abu Eisha

18 years old in 1948

Original home: Al-Sufsaf village/ Safad

Current address: Al-Ein Refugee Camp/ Nablus

My children and I were waiting eagerly at the taxi rank. When she arrived, I found myself embracing her in the street and crying.

In the last few days before our departure, it was difficult to get a newspaper and there were no radios in our village. I anticipated that the war would turn into a catastrophe. This view was reinforced after the city of Safad, which was just 6 kilometers away, was captured. We lived in the village of Al-Sufsaf and were told that every family should buy a gun and cartridges. We organized shifts so somebody was always guarding at night and we dug many tunnels. The fighters once detained a Jewish woman who spoke Arabic.

Most people had no idea how to use a gun and because of this one man accidentally shot his own brother. There was no training in place on how to use them which was a major problem. The Jews did not approach us at this time because they were preoccupied in Safad.

After Safad was captured, the Rescue Army came to our village and they brought a canon with them. Some of the fighters in the village were allowed to fight alongside the Rescue Army. In all there were more than one hundred fighters attempting to defend our village. The presence of the Rescue Army gave us a real sense of safety and security. The relationship between the fighters and the Rescue Army was strong.

The main reason the Rescue Army had come to our village was because it was strategically important for the Jews. During this time we continued to live as normally as possible; we continued planting tobacco, grapes, figs, olive trees and wheat. One day the shepherds found some empty bottles of beer and weapons; it was evidence that the Jews had been on our territory. The Rescue Army placed markers every few meters in the west to highlight the places where the Jews had been walking.

We fought bravely to defend our village and we were determined to stop any forces from entering. We felt well prepared as we constructed many trenches and barriers. On one occasion the Jews kidnapped two girls from the village but thankfully they returned them unharmed. The fighting had now begun to take place daily and the Jews managed to kill one or two of our fighters hoping that this would force us to evacuate. Unfortunately this prompted the Rescue Army to leave our village and when they left our hope went with them. The Jews had now started firing mortars at us from Safad. In the final battle the Jews used modern planes which fired missiles at us, and we had no anti aircraft missiles to defend ourselves with. The village was finally captured after a strong defense.

We gathered and hid in two houses in the north of the village with about three hundred citizens gathered in each house. It was said that to die with people is much more merciful. We stayed there till sunrise; a person came to us and said that the village was captured and that the Jews had took it. We raised white clothes and covers above our heads as a sign of surrender; three Jewish militia soldiers came close to us and

said, "Go back inside." We managed to escape through the windows and ran across the fields until we reached the village of Yaroon.

When we were fleeing from the village, I had my niece with me who was just a little girl. During the total bedlam that developed she tragically slipped from my grasp and she became lost among the people running out of fear. We spent a long time looking for her but without any success. I felt terrible about this and it was one of my biggest regrets in life.

We stayed in Yaroon for one day where we told the shocking news that fifteen people had been killed in our village. We were told that the Jews had ordered fifteen people to stand in a row and then opened fire on them. After the execution the Jews dragged the corpses to a hole called Al-Ain that was a huge whole, 70 meters in length that was to be used as reservoir for irrigation purposes. The old people in our village then had to bury the bodies. The following day we were told the Jews had gathered another fifteen men and killed them and also did this on the third day as well. Once the Jews had finished they had turned 49 people into Martyrs. They had killed every one who they believed was able to carry a gun.

After leaving Yaroon our next destination was the village of Bent Jebail. After an extremely long walk with a few more stops along the way we finally ended up in the Al-Borj refugee camp in the southern suburbs of Beirut.

Life was difficult there as the salary of a Palestinian worker was one fifth that of his Lebanese counterpart. Due to this discrepancy I decided to return to the West Bank. That is

how I turned up in Nablus and now live in the Al-Ein refugee camp. To reach Nablus I had to travel through Jordan and this journey took me a long time.

Many years had passed when one day the Palestinian Authority called me and said that there was a woman who had contacted them and wanted to speak with me. I told them to put her on the line to me and I was immediately greeted by the woman who said, "How are you uncle?" and she started to cry, immediately afterwards. I could not believe it, I was so happy. She continued, "I married someone who works for the Palestinian Authority and I returned to Palestine with him. Now I am living in Gaza and I desperately want to see you. We decided to meet each other in Qalqilya city because this is the town where the taxis stop when bringing people from Gaza. My children and I were waiting eagerly at the taxi rank. When she arrived, I found myself embracing her in the street and crying. It was a fantastic feeling as she told about everything that had happened to her since we split.

In 1983, I returned to the village to find it demolished. My house, my property, and every thing were gone. I stumbled around without being able to speak a single word. I wanted to find out what had happened in my village. Some strange people were living there now and I felt uncomfortable taking photos. I could not believe that they had even chopped down the trees. Everything in my village was destroyed. My village had suffered the same fate as every other village that had resisted and been destroyed.

Om Issa Abu Sereyyeh

Born in 1916

Original home: Shekh Emwanes, Yafa District

Current address: Askar Refugee Camp, Nablus City

I do have hope that I will be able to go home to my village and this thought does not leave my mind

We owned a 100-dunum farm, which we planted with wheat and other cereals and vegetables, but we were forced to leave it without harvesting our crops.

For a time the Palestinians and Jews were like one people, There was a sizeable Jewish minority but we lived together in peace, as these were not the same as the Jews who came from the West. Those who came from abroad were militants and racists. They formed the Hagana and Stern militia gangs in Palestine, which started killing us and forced us to leave our homes.

We did not bring the title deeds to our land with us, as we were afraid that we would lose them on the way and we were certain that we would be returning soon. So we hid the contracts in the ground and covered them with sand and soil. We did not take anything with us – I didn't even take my slippers.

Some people collaborated with the British occupation. They came with the British soldiers. They would sit in the soldiers' armored vehicles with their faces covered and they would identify activists for the soldiers. The people they singled out would be detained by the British.

All the members of our family left our village. Jews were killing people indiscriminately. We left with our children, in the rain and with the Jews shooting at us. We headed for Qalqilya town; everybody had to look after themselves as there was nobody to organize us. After Qalqilya we went to Salfit town and after that to Nablus city. In Nablus we lived in caves surrounded by snakes and hyenas; we didn't sleep properly because we were afraid of them.

While we were living in the caves, UNRWA built a camp for the refugees. We moved there after living in the caves for three years. We were given one room to shelter six people. Once my sons were able to earn money we were able to improve our room by adding more rooms and installing electricity and a water supply.

Many people were slaughtered as they fled from their villages, and many became lost and separated from their families. Many went to Jordan or Kuwait, even though they had nowhere to live there. All anyone could think about was escaping from the Jewish militias, because of what we had heard about them. But if I had known I would become a refugee and unable to return home, I would have stayed in my village, regardless of what might have happened to me. I would like to go back to my home village and to die there.

My son took me to visit our village after the war of 1967. I remember I had been building a new house before the deportation of 1948; I had been fixing the windows and applying the finishing touches. I went to see my house; I found new Jewish immigrants living there, who had moved from Iraq. I told the lady there that this was my house and she

let us enter and offered us some Coca Cola and cold water. Since then I have not wanted to see my house again.

When I went to my village I also went to the sea at Yaffa. I smelled the sea and remembered what I had been missing all these years so I spoke out loud "I have missed the smell of the sea." A Jewish man was fishing nearby. He heard my words; he had good command of Arabic and he said to me: "This is not your land, go to Jordan, there is your country," he stared at me and he looked very serious. I got upset and did not want to continue the tour of our country. I told my sons that I would like to return home to Nablus; I did not enjoy any part of the trip.

I do have hope that I will be able to go home to my village and this thought does not leave my mind. If the whole world was given to me as compensation I would not agree to forget my land. Even though I am a very old woman I still have hope, especially for the younger generation of refugees: they are determined to keep their rights; I keep telling them about our land. Our land was not empty as the Jews claim. It was not an empty land for a homeless Jewish nation.

I'm not prepared to accept compensation in lieu of my land. I have lost more than one hundred dunums and I demand my right to return to my land so that I can live with Jews in peace.

Abdul Qader Yousef Al-Ha

Born in 1938

Original home: Qaqon village, Tulkarem

Current address: Askar Refugee Camp, Nablus

Some of the villagers had built new homes but they didn't get chance to enjoy them, as they had been living in them for only one or two years when they left

I fled with all my family members, my parents and the rest of the villagers. Our village had fertile land and we had a field next to it; the Mediterranean Sea was just eight kilometres away. We had troubles with Jews for over five years before the deportation. We tried not to flee, but in the end they brought armed militia with tanks and a large number of armed people and launched a sustained attack on our village; they wanted to clear all the people from our village.

They wanted our village in particular because it was in an important location strategically. We thought about what we should do and we decided we had to evacuate the women and children; only the young men stayed behind. We had some military support from neighbouring villages, but we couldn't really do much against the Jewish militia, as they were so well-armed. So in the afternoon we left our village and went to stand in the fields around the neighbouring village, waiting to see what would happen.

We already knew that the Jewish militia was coming to attack us with a view to occupying our land. So during the night, around Midnight in fact, the men of the armed resistance left the village too. By the way, we had lost around 50 members of

the Iraqi army and Palestinian resistance by this stage. These men had been defending the village while the Jewish militias shelled it. We had had more than 100 Iraqi soldiers in our village, and we had built tunnels around the village as well.

The resistance had been buying weapons in Syria and smuggling them into the country. One single rifle cost 100 pounds – and that was without ammunition. The Palestinian pound was worth quite a lot of money then: one pound was worth around four or five US dollars. So we would share the cost of the rifle with another family; we had to defend our village within our limited budget.

We expected that the situation we lived in the five years before 1948 would lead to the deportation, because we had had conflict, clashes, and many other troubles with the Jewish militia. They would build a colony with a checkpoint, they would kill some people and we would avenge the deaths by doing the same.

The British mandate allowed Jews to strengthen their positions; through the Balfour Declaration, the British made it possible for the Jews to settle in Palestine. The Jews did their best and used all manner of tricks to displace us from our country. The British gave the Jews their national home in our homeland. The Jews are still using the same strategy and trying to deport us from the West Bank – they settled here through force and murder.

The first missile to hit our village did no damage – it landed outside the town. But when people went there to see the damage, the Jewish militia shelled them, killing and wounding

almost 50 people. This forced people to flee. We did not see the Jews when they entered the village, but the men in the resistance did.

We had been living in peace in our village; the land was fertile and we had been able to live well off it. Some of the villagers had built new homes but they didn't get chance to enjoy them, as they had been living in them for only one or two years when they left.

I did not go back to my village, but some people did – they would sneak back in at night to collect some of their possessions. We did not carry anything with us of our clothes—we left everything. We left our money and land.

Many refugees lived in caves and tents. The tents were hot in summer and miserable in winter. There was no water, electricity, or toilets; the sewers were open. People got rained on in winter and sometimes it snowed. Then the UNRWA built some units for refugees... each family had one unit but we didn't get an electricity supply until 1963. Some donations came to the camps from westerners but we didn't have a piped water supply – we had to struggle carrying water until one was installed. Even when we got an electricity supply, people were too poor to pay for it, or for medical treatment.

After the war of 1967, I went to work in Israel, which was Palestine, but I did not go to visit my village. My parents also did not visit it after the deportation. I did not like to see it occupied and until this day I dream of going there and seeing it liberated from occupation. I would be prepared to walk it there – it wouldn't take more than a day. I know the road; it

would take only a few hours to get there.

We keep in touch with our neighbors who became refugees. They went to different places – some went to Kuwait, others to other places in the Gulf and Jordan.

As for us, well, when we first left we went to Shweikeh village near Tulkarem. Then we went to Burqa village and we stayed there for two years. People there supported us, but there were no jobs. We stayed with friends of my father's for seven months. They took care of us, but we had to continue looking for work. We moved to Tulkarem for three years. Life was hard: there was no farming there. We existed but we didn't live; we had to rely on the UNRWA for food, and we only survived because of what we got from them.

Then we moved to Nablus and we stayed there until 1960. We stayed in the Old City where there was no electricity and we couldn't really afford the rent of the flat. We had to wait till 1955 for jobs in the city, after people started to move to the Arab Gulf to work. Many died in the desert, but those who managed to get to Kuwait were able to provide their families with a monthly allowance. This enabled people to build houses and improve their living conditions in the West Bank. The situation continued in this way while we were under the rule of Jordan, even until 1967; when we saw the Jewish militia that became the Israeli army occupies the rest of Palestine.

In 1967, the Israeli occupation authority opened its civil administration and imposed taxes on us. They attacked the commercial businesses, companies, shops, and stores and this affected life under occupation. Many people were

detained, then people started to work in Israel as employees. They went to work in their lands, but not as owners, as employees.

Abu Khader Hamdan

Born in 1928

Original home: Salameh, Yaffa District

Current address: Askar Refugee Camp/ Nablus

We fled immediately, taking to the mountains. It was very hot on the mountains and many Palestinians died there

I lived and worked in my home village, Salameh, which was less than six kilometers from Tel Aviv. There was just a field separating us from the outskirts of Tel Aviv, but the relationship between us and the Jews was fine. The Jews were expanding Tel Aviv. Tel Aviv is a relatively new city, it was built on Palestinian land called Tel Al-Rabe, and it was part of Yaffa city.

Things started to change after November 1947, when the UN decided to divide Palestine between Palestinians and Jews. This caused conflict between the residents and the British Mandate's policy, which was biased in favor of the Jews, did nothing to make things better.

For five months we resisted the Jewish militia, from November until the spring of 1948. But the Jews were getting more and more weapons from Czechoslovakia. It meant that we were fighting with just guns while they had mortars and missiles.

The Jewish militia shelled Salameh. As they were committing massacres in the villages, we decided to flee – on foot. The Jewish militia did not close the exit from our village and we left on 17th April 1948. It was during the orange season and we had managed to harvest our oranges for a month before we were deported. Our village was far from the truce line so it was

so hard for us to sneak back in order to continue collecting our oranges.

We went first to the town of Sarafand, which was on the border. But then the Jews occupied Sarafand too, even though it was supposed to lie outside the border of their state. So we went to Lydda city, where the Jews committed an atrocity in July 1948. [Gathering older men at the mosque and opening fire on them]. On our third day in Lydda we heard Jews announcing on the speakers: “Get out of the city immediately”. We fled immediately, taking to the mountains. It was extremely hot on the mountains and many Palestinians died there. But the Jews would not allow us to use the main street; they drove us into the mountains to die there. We went from village to another, a long, long journey.

I visited Yaffa city after the occupation of the West Bank in 1967. Some refugees were afraid of visiting their villages or seeing them. Many refugees died after they saw their villages – they got sick or had heart attacks. My village became one of the neighborhoods of Tel Aviv. I could visit Yaffa but I did not visit Salameh village. My friends who did visit it told me Salameh is not there any more – it has been removed from the map.

Fatmeh Daoud Abdul Rahman
Original home: Mzera`, Lydda City
Current address: Askar Refugee Camp, Nablus

The Jewish militia invaded our village in armored vehicles and destroyed homes causing people to flee

I used to get news each day from my husband, Who would go to the coffee shop where there was a radio then come back to update us on the latest developments. We knew that some sort of evacuation was planned under the British mandate. We thought we would end up with our independence but we were wrong – our land was given to Jews instead. We cried and prayed to God for that not to happen. We were looking for independence from the British and we were frustrated when they were replaced by the new colonizers.

Before the Jews arrived in our village an English soldier arrived and told us that we should leave for another place and that they would stay long enough for this to happen safely. An old man stopped some of the people who were leaving and told them not to leave as it was a trick that the British wanted to empty the village to allow the Jews to occupy it. He managed to convince some of them not to leave. My husband was one of these and because of this he decided to stay longer.

The Jews put bombs inside barrels and exploded them in the Palestinian streets and neighborhoods to scare us and force us to leave; people stayed in their homes, and many of them did not had enough food for days.

Somebody called Muhammad Salah was wounded in the field

and he was stranded alone there. He managed to reach the farm and was taken to the hospital in Ramleh town. Another person called Abed was killed when he was climbing over a tank and a Jewish female soldier shot him in the chest. I saw the Jewish troops invading our village; they did not leave the tanks as they were afraid to leave them. Some fighters came from Deir Ghassaneh village and Majdal and Quliah towns to help us. They were fighting on the mountain but people were afraid because they were listening to the rumors spread about the Deir Yassin massacre.

Somebody called Abu Kayed was warning those planning to emigrate against leaving, but I gathered my children and took with me some pieces of bread and a gallon of water and went to my father's house, which was downtown. The Jewish militia invaded our village in armored vehicles and destroyed homes causing people to flee. We escaped while they were shelling and surrounding the village. The scene of the shelling was horrible; people were scared, especially after what they have heard about the massacre of Deir Yassin. People were trying to carry some of their belongings and fled to the neighboring villages of Marj Ubaid and Ras Tananeh. We stayed without shelters for hours and hours, at a time when we were fasting because it was the holy month of Ramadan. It was too hot and we were extremely thirsty so the Sheikh told us to break our fast in order to survive. We would shelter under the trees, because of the heat but also because of the shelling. The Jews would follow us and shoot at us. We stayed in these conditions of horror and fear for three days.

We went to Deir Ghassaneh, where we lived for nine years in a wooden hut. People from other villages gave us bread

and sheltered us for a while, but many of our neighbors fled to different parts of the country; I moved three times before I arrived in the refugee camp of Askar.

Khalid Rashid Mansor

Born in 1932

Original home: Ejzim, Haifa

Current address: Jenin Refugee Camp, Jenin

A woman was crying and screaming because she realized she was carrying a cushion instead of her baby when she had to flee

I was born in the village of Ejzim and I was 16 at the time of the Nakba. I studied at the Arab School of Haifa, which suffered a lot of damage and has now been converted to a bar. It was located in a street called Albasha.

My family left the village to work in Haifa in 1938 and stayed there until April 21 1948. My family went to work in Haifa because the job opportunities were good there: there were factories and economic associations, and companies such as the cement factory and the oil filtration factory. We fled to Akka city during the war, but we left there when we had no more guns with which to fight.

I kept up with the news through the Head of the village who got the news from the radio. I'll never forget hearing about the massacre at Deir Yassin. We were very sad about what had happened, but we were very scared, too. I expected the war would turn out as it did because we were informed by our teacher that Jews would like to occupy our land and establish their Jewish state here.

The peasants of Ejzim village had a big role in resisting the Jewish militia in Haifa city, as well as in the village. They bought

guns and rifles from Egypt and Syria. The British Mandate authorities facilitated the emigration of the Palestinians; around 50 families from our village left from the port of Haifa. We went to Akka and then to Sor and Saida in Southern Lebanon, before reaching Syria. Then we went back to Tantorah village, near Haifa, and back to Ejzim Village to continue the resistance for four more months. The Iraqi Army provided us with guns but they stopped that once the Rhodes Ceasefire was signed, so we were forced to leave. 15 days later the Jewish militia entered the village.

The colonies neighboring our village tried to make agreements with us, but we refused. The Jewish militia occupied Tantorah village and killed around 250 of its people in one of the well known massacres; they also stole their money and gold.

Abdul Rahman Qasim, our relative, was killed during the clashes; his house was very close to the Jews' homes, they killed him at night while he was in his house.

We did not see the Jewish militia in our village before we withdrew; they attacked us every night but we were ready to defend our village and kick them out. They would hit us, we would hit them; it went on for some time like this. The neighboring villages helped us too.

A Syrian man came to help us too; he had a Haown cannon, but the Jews killed him and destroyed his cannon. Many volunteers came from Lebanon and Syria, but they left when the village fell. We left because we were afraid because of the massacres the Jews were committing in every village and city. We had no option but to flee in order to protect our families.

We all left the village, except a man called Mahmud Almadi; he did not like to leave the village because he had much land and refused to leave it. Most of the village was damaged. I visited it a few years ago; I found the school still there but a synagogue was built next to it.

We left and went to Arah village. We arrived there the following day. Local people gave us food, and then the Iraq Army took us, in their trucks, to the town of Jenin. From there people scattered in the Diaspora.

I will never forget one incident that happened to us while we were escaping from Haifa, a story that seems like fiction but is true; I saw it with my own eyes. A woman was crying and screaming because she realized she was carrying a cushion instead of her baby when she had to flee. This shows how scared we were of the Jews' massacres.

Many people took their gold and money when they fled, but the Jews stopped some people and took their gold from them. My mother hid our money and gold in the baby's clothes. We were hoping that we would be back after a few days or weeks, but our itinerant life lasted a long time and even now we still live in hope of returning to our farms.

I worked in farming when we stayed in Jenin; there were some farms around. I had to do any work I could get in order to get food my family needed. I worked for five pennies a day. The UNRWA supported us and provided us with food. I then went to Amman in Jordan to work in the sweets industry. After that I worked in Germany for four years and then I came back to the West Bank.

After the war of 1967, I and my seven sons were arrested by the Israeli occupation authorities. I was sentenced to six months in jail, and then I went to look for a job in Haifa. I like Haifa. I spent my childhood there, I have good memories of there, so I went to work there and luckily I found a job there.

Hafiza Abdullah

Original village: Kanon/Tulkarem district

Current address: Shweikeh/Tulkarem

*For one summer we lived under the trees, waiting for tomorrow.
Then we discovered it was all just lies*

We lived off what we grew on our farm – watermelons, cucumbers, corn and wheat for example. Our lives were enjoyable. We got our news from listening to the radio. I remember hearing the news about the Germans and Hitler and people were talking a lot about the Second World War. We did not think for a moment that war would reach us; we talked about it but it never occurred to us that it would lead to deportation.

The people of my village were only simple farmers and did not have any weapons when we were driven out during the wheat and watermelon picking season of 1948. Around 27 people from our village were killed before we fled, including men, women and children. My brother Samer was one of those that were killed and my father would not leave the village until he had buried him in the house. Two bombs fell on separate places in the village killing two families. I still remember some of those who died: there was wife of Alhayet, as well as the Shumali family, the daughters of Abu Sabah and the son of Abdul Rahem was killed and buried in the village too.

Our village lands were taken and I can still remember the sizes: Alkhuwar, 30 dunum; Nareyeh, 27 dunum, and Aljereh, 15 dunum. Our trees were uprooted, we lost our home; we had no more wheat, no more corn and no more farm. Even today,

the image of what the wheat fields looked like is as fresh in my mind as if I had seen it yesterday. They damaged them and left nothing for us. We did not leave of our own accord: we were forced to flee from the terror and the murders; we were afraid because of what we had heard about the massacres.

We went to Shweikeh village, next to Tulkarem city. We lived there because we were told that Shweikeh was close to our village, so we would not have to walk far when we were able to return. Days passed, and then years and we are still waiting to return. It is now more than fifty years since we left and still we wait for and dream of the day of our return.

We did not carry anything with us when we left our village. When we arrived to Shweikeh village we could not find work to help us to survive. We spent the money we had saved in the past up until we had no more money. We lived for one summer season living under the trees, waiting for tomorrow. Then we discovered that it was all just lies.

I went to my village after the war of 1967 to visit. I saw strange people living there; I saw those who had deported us in 1948 living on our lands and planting in our farms. They had made us a homeless and sad nation.

Muhamad Radwan
Born in 1931
Original home: Wadi Hawartheh
Current address: Tulkarem Town

It still depresses me today that Jews can come from all over the world to live in my village while I am not allowed to live there.

We followed the progress of the war through the radio; we didn't read newspapers at that time. We had been living in peace with the people living in the Jewish colonies nearby; we'd go to the same coffee shops and everything. But then the Jews started to establish their own militia; they were having military training and drilling and acquiring equipment. Then they attacked us. We didn't have any weapons, but they still attacked us.

Life was difficult, but it was bearable; we could still go to our farms, for example. But then the Jewish militia started to attack people as they made their way to their farms, so we were too afraid to go. Naturally, people were worried about their farms, their crops and their cattle; this situation lasted for around three months. Food and other goods became very expensive.

The village was attacked several times; some houses were shelled. One day, a militia group of Jews called Hagana came to the neighboring zone of Tulkarem. They captured six Arab militants there. They executed four of them and released the other two. This caused chaos and a feeling of terror within the Palestinian community; we were scared and many people

started to flee. Somebody was shouting: "Go back". Some of us did go back, but the Jewish militia attacked us again, so we headed for Tulkarem, which was nearby. We were very upset; English troops evacuated us, using their military vehicles to accompany our caravan. We left our village in the wheat season; we left early in the morning, everybody taking his own property by car. We left for Tulkarem town.

The Arab Rescue Army came after we fled. The English troops facilitated the deportation of our people in order to transfer the lands to the Jews. We dreamt about returning to our villages; we never thought we would be away from them all this time. We were homeless and poor when we arrived in Tulkarem; there wasn't much employment in the refugee camps. We just sat listening to the news and waiting for Palestine to go back to how it was.

We heard that the Jewish militia attacked Deir Yassin village and committed a massacre there; we later heard worse news about Lud City and Ramleh Town. We thought that the deportation would not last for a long time; we thought it might only take a few days until the war ended and that we would be back. We did not expect the war to reach us.

We were afraid when we heard about the Jews committing crimes in Haifa, where many people were killed. The Jews entered the Palestinian villages and began killing women and children in order to scare the rest of the village into fleeing. The English mandate had not allowed us to build up our military infrastructure; any Palestinian who had a rifle or a weapon was executed, although Haj Amin, the Head of the Palestinian Committee, managed to provide some guns.

At first we lived in tents, then later we moved to houses, or what I will call “home units”. It still depresses me today that Jews can come from all over the world to live in my village while I am not allowed to live there.

Nasoh Wafi

Born in 1936

Home city: Yafa

Current address: Askar Refugee Camp, Nablus

It is hard to speak of those beautiful days as they bring back memories of the childhood that was taken from us.

We followed the news on the Near East and Al-Quds radio stations and in the newspapers. I still remember the names of many of the journalists who gave us the news: Mohammad Abu Dia'aene, Hazem Al-Shanty, Sami Al-Shanty, George Dahboor, Raje Sohyoony and Hosam Hamad. Moosa Al-Dajne and Kosay Hashem, who worked at the Near East Station, and Essa Al-Esaa, the Editor of the Falasteen newspaper, and his cousin Dawood Tamer Al-Eleh.

In the last months of 1947 the news was about the League of Nation's Partition Plan, 181, and the British Withdrawal, which was to take place on 15 May 1948.

Our reaction was the same as anyone who had heard such news: great fear and anxiety. We expected war to break out anywhere in Palestine. Six months before the League of Nation's Partition Plan 181, Bessan Town and Taybarah city were invaded. After this, many more cities were invaded – Haifa, Safad, Acre, Nazareth, Ramleh, Lud, Yaffa and Beer-Sabe. On 9 April 1948, the Jewish militias carried out a massacre at Deir Yassin.

Al-Muthalath, a very fertile area of Palestine covering between 10 and 15 towns, was given to the other Jewish State and was

lost because Israel did not respect the Rhodes Agreement. The international imperialists, led by the United States of America, needed a base from which to protect their interests within the region. If America didn't have Israel as a base in the Middle East the Arab countries could become a united power, one capable of challenging America, so posing a threat to the wellbeing of America.

The news scared us a lot because seven Arab countries and their armies couldn't stop the Stern and Irgun Jewish militia gangs. We were hoping that the Palestinian leader, the Grand Mufti Haj Amin Al-Huseini would work with our Arab neighbors to help with the liberation of Palestine. But they let us down. And we are still suffering the consequences today: despite hundreds of projects and initiatives, the Arab leaders have still not been able to convince subsequent Israeli administrations to acknowledge the rights of the Palestinians. They have been unable to establish a Palestinian state, with Jerusalem as its capital, and give the refugees the right to return even to the land they lost 20 years later, on 4 June 1967.

In 1948, we started to stockpile food and ammunition because there were rumors that the Arab armies were advancing towards us. Weapons had to be smuggled in and people were smuggling them in from Syria and Egypt. At the same time, the British were arresting and torturing people, and all areas of life came to a standstill because of fear and the difficulties encountered in trying to get to work.

Many people were killed and injured. I may not be able to give their individual names, or those of people who distinguished themselves defending the town, but everyone did more than

was expected of them.

I saw the Jewish militia orders people out of their houses. As I remember it, some people went to help their brothers in nearby towns, while many volunteers came from the east of Jordan. They brought weapons with them, but their weapons were not enough to face down the army.

The volunteers got on well with the local residents, and when the moment came for the volunteers to withdraw, we felt scared. Nobody told us what to do, so we did what we thought well. The city wasn't totally destroyed, but a few buildings collapsed.

The Arab leaders didn't advise us to leave, but as the radio stations spread stories about towns being destroyed and we heard about the killings and what the Zionists used to do with the children and women and we became really scared about what they might do to us and we left. Haifa city fell into the hands of the Jews after a struggle. Lud city, Ramleh, Latroun and Deir Yassin fell after ferocious battles and severe resistance. The Jews gathered all the residents of these cities in one place and made them leave along just one route.

Deir Yassin was completely destroyed, but the city where we are now was partially demolished. I remember that many were arrested and many others were injured.

This wasn't the first time I had left the city. I left with my parents, my mother, brothers and sisters; we didn't leave any of our children behind, although some people left their relatives behind thinking that they would come back soon. I

don't remember who left the city after we did.

We went to Lebanon for six months, then Syria – we stayed there for eight months – then Jordan and, finally, Nablus, where we have been ever since. I can't put into words what we went through and had to bear during our wanderings, what things we lacked. The Syrians and Lebanese welcomed us warmly and sympathized with us but we couldn't work there.

After 1967 war, I visited my old house; it was half-ruined. I was really emotional and I wished I hadn't been to see it. I remembered the happy days I had spent there in my childhood. It is hard to speak of those beautiful days as they bring back memories of the childhood that was taken from us.

Jawdat Ali Issa Abu Serreyeh

Born in 1942

Original home: Sheikh Emwanes, Yafa District

Current address: Askar Refugee Camp, Nablus

We have the right to have our land given back. We will keep demanding to get it back: a right will never be forgotten as long as somebody speaks of it to his children.

When we left our village we did not take any pots, plates or even a glass. We were sure we would be back after the war between the Arab armies and Jewish militia. We lived in caves for three years, until UNRWA built the refugee camps. I remember in 1950 when it was snowing in Nablus city and we were living in a cave. The snow was very heavy at that time and it was so cold. The snow actually covered the entrance of our cave and we were stuck inside until some citizens of Nablus came and rescued us by shoveling out the snow blocking the entrance.

There were no jobs in the West Bank after the Nakba in 1948. Life was hard. The conditions were unbearable and people were even struggling to get bread. The UNRWA gave us sugar and wheat and they had opened some schools for Palestinian children. I attended one such school in 1949, as they were accepting students from the age of seven. They gave us pencils and books but I did not feel like a proper student as I did not even have a pair of shoes to wear to school. We were very deprived and I was suffering terribly from the cold in the winter.

I am afraid that the UNRWA will count each piece of medicine

it gives to us in order to discount it from the compensation that people speak about. They might also count the sugar, wheat and education they offered to the Palestinian refugees over the past decades. I would like to mention that our land has been producing great vegetables since 1948 for the benefit of Jews who are working it, even though it is our land that was stolen in front of the United Nations. However, who do you complain to if the judge is your enemy?

We have the right to have our land given back. We will keep demanding to get it back: a right will never be forgotten as long as somebody speaks of it to his children. I will tell the story to my children, and they will pass the story of their lands in Yafa to their children. I won't accept millions of dollars in return for my family's lands. The struggle is going to be very long but we are patient enough to keep waiting.

Om Hasan Al-Abed

Born in 1942

Original home: Yazoor village, Yafa District

Current address: Al-Ein Refugee Camp, Nablus city

Where is the democracy and justice in this situation? I am living under occupation; why do I have to accept this?

Even though I was only six years old in 1948, I remember my village of Yazoor well. We left it to go to Beddo village, where we stayed for three months until the Jewish militia followed us there and occupied it. We were then deported to Naleen village, where we stayed for a while, and then we moved for Deir Ammar village. While we were homeless and traveling from place to another looking for a better life we heard about somebody from the League of Nations called Count Bernadotte, who was the League of Nations` mediator. He was sent to Palestine to check whether Israel was respecting the Partition Plan, Resolution No 181. He wrote in his report that Jews were enlarging their state and had occupied more land than they should have, forcing Palestinian citizens to flee. He was assassinated in Jerusalem by members of the Lehi group.

When we first left our village, an Iraqi commander told us that we would be able to return home soon. More than 57 years have passed since then, and we are still waiting... If anything the opposite has happened, as the Jews occupied the rest of Palestine in 1967 – the West Bank, Gaza, the Golan Heights and even East Jerusalem – and they still continue with their aggression today.

We lived in the village of Deir Ammar for a while. The League of Nations gave each family a tent and we ended up living in ours for 10 years. The UNRWA gave us wheat, sugar, sardines and oil every month to exist on. Then the UNRWA built a room for every family; we added to our room to make it more comfortable to live in.

In 1967, after the Six Days War, I went to visit the village of Yazoor; in fact, I have visited it seven times now. It was nearly empty and most of the cemetery had been removed; we found only one tomb still standing. There were some Israeli factories, and some homes that were now ruins. Most of the villages that were around Yazoor were removed totally from the map. We did not find our house at all; we found what was left of the police station, while the rest of the village had disappeared or was in ruins. I felt I needed to cry in order to release the sadness in my heart. I sat on the ground and cried with my cousin who had come with us from Jordan. He took some sandy soil of Yazoor village home with him.

A few days ago, a group of international volunteers visited me to hear my testimony about what happened in 1948, I asked them: "What are you doing for justice? Your countries claim they are democratic, the countries of fairness and freedom. You can make the needed change in your countries, but I would like to ask you why international law has allowed Israel to deport Palestinian people from their villages? You saw how we are treated by the Israeli occupation at the roadblocks."

They told me that Israel has power and influences most of the western media in order to distort the truth. They continued that they themselves could see that the truth they had witnessed

was different to that which they had been subjected to through the media. They promised me that they will protest in front of the European Union to condemn the Israeli occupation. Then I told them that I wondered how the western media could fabricate links between the Palestinian resistance and the terror attacks organized by Osama Bin Laden. I don't understand how they can fool the people so much. Where is the democracy and justice in this situation? I am living under occupation; why do I have to accept this? Why do the Israelis have the right to hit us with F16s? Where are our human rights? My home is occupied by the Israeli troops and I am astonished by those who are fabricating stories about ties between our struggle for freedom and international terror. This comparison is ridiculous.

This is the age of power, Jews have power, but that land remains mine. I don't forgive and I don't grant my right to Jews. They occupied my village by force and terror. We did not leave so that they could leave it empty, and we only left it because of the massacres they had committed.

We should not remain refugees for ever, there should be a solution. The USA and Europe should solve this tragedy that affects the Palestinians. Who gave Europe and USA the right to give our land to the Jews? We did not discriminate against the Jews; it was Europe that discriminated against them. Why then can Israel still be allowed to occupy our lands while the international community does nothing against it? There must be an end to these double standards; the international community should force Israel to withdraw from the occupied lands exactly as they forced Iraq to withdraw from Kuwait. This is the only way to approach peace in the Middle East.

Radeyeh Husein Meri`

Born in 1942

Original home: Almansye village/ Haifa

Current address: Jenin Refugee Camp/ Jenin

We took some sand from our village and returned to our refugee camp in Jenin. I often smell the sand. It reminds me of the soul of my village and farm

I was afraid when I heard the sound of bullets and the shelling of Haifa city. We were thinking of leaving our village before the arrival of the Jews; we had heard what had happened to the other neighboring villages. The people in my village did not resist or be involved in any way with the resistance; they were just ordinary working people. We kept up with what was happening every day through the updates on the radio. Everyone fled when we heard the Jewish militia was heading to the village. Nobody stayed there, everybody left. They left secretly at night, taking none of their property with them, neither clothes nor furniture.

We went to Lajon village because we had some friends there, then we left for the village of Zulfa. Our people asked the head of our village to form a good relationship with the Jews so we could remain in our village but he refused. So we left our village, intending to come back later.

One of the women fleeing with us was pregnant. She gave birth while we were on the move. She suffered a lot. She had no clothes for the child and no food either. She put the baby under her dress and cuddled him until we arrived at Lajon, where the women helped her and looked after the baby. Our

village was occupied by the Jewish militia the day after we left; we heard that it was mostly destroyed and that they had uprooted its orchards.

After staying in Lajon for a while we went to Zulfa village, where we lived in makeshift homes. We stayed there almost a month. Some people from my village tried to go home to collect fruit and other food, to gather some of their crops, But the Jews had laid mines to prevent us from reaching our farms. My cousin was one of those who tried to reach the village, but he was caught and murdered.

Then we went to Rumaneh village, and then Taybeh village. We moved from village to another until we arrived in the town of Jenin, where we settled in the refugee camp. We lived in tents. My father worked on a nearby farm to get money for food and other necessities. Everyone else who left my village ended up in different villages, where they had relatives and siblings. I visited my village a few years ago, in the 1990s, when I went with some other women and men from my village to see what had happened to it. We saw the village had been comprehensively destroyed. We saw some rubble and many newly-built settlements and convoys of new Jewish immigrants, who had come from Russia to live on our land. I cried along with the others. We took some sand from our village and returned to our refugee camp in Jenin. I often smell the sand. It reminds me of the soul of my village and farm. This was the first and the last time I visited my village.

Rushdeyeh Awad Jabaji

Born in 1929

Original home: Lydda

Current address: Askar Refugee Camp, Nablus

We were sure that we would return. We had a lamb at the time of our deportation and I remember leaving him some food then closing the door on him.

I was 19 years old in 1948 and I can remember what happened very well. There were clashes between Palestinians and Jews and there were some Arab troops in our region. We didn't have many weapons and some men even sold their wives' gold to buy weapons so they could defend themselves.

We weren't able to harvest our crops before we left; we left them in the fields. After the Jews declared independence in May there was meant to be a two-month ceasefire, but the Jews didn't respect this and continued to occupy our city, commit crimes against us and deport us during this period.

A Jewish militia group entered Lydda from Beit Shemel Colony and started to shoot randomly in the city. My family, along with many others, hid in the mosques while other families hid in the churches. The Palestinian resistance struggled to defend the city. We spent three days in the mosque, and then, when the resistance was subdued, they kicked us out of the city. It was at this time that the Jews gathered many people in the main mosque and opened fire on them. My husband was in a different mosque to us and we were unable to find out how he was, but, thankfully, we were reunited in the village of Naleen after the deportation.

We were deported while we were fasting during the holy month of Ramadan. I had a one-year-old child at the time, and this made things even more difficult. It was too hot and we were thirsty, and we found nothing on the way that we could eat or drink. We remained hungry for two days as we had absolutely no food. We were walking and dreaming of water when trucks arrived to transport us to different destinations. We were taken to Naleen. We stayed there for 12 days, and then somebody suggested we go to Jericho. We decided this was a good idea, but when we got there it was too hot.

We stayed out in the sun for a few days then some people brought us something similar to tents. There was one cover for every three families and it was uncomfortable, so people started to move elsewhere. Some of them went to Jordan, but we stayed where we were for 16 years, although we did spend two years away from Jericho, in Gaza. My husband had no work in Aqabet Jabr Refugee Camp in Jericho, so he went to work in Jericho town as a carter, but he was sick and this prompted us to come to Nablus after 16 years.

I went with my husband to Lydda after the war of 1967, I went to see my city and we still had relatives living there. We cried when we saw it; many streets were still as they were when we left them in 1948. I was so sad when I saw the shop of anyone I had known; the tears would not stop rolling down my face. One of my relatives was with us and I said to her: "This is the shop of Ahmad Alhafi, and this is the shop of Abu Hasan Jabber". The shops of Alqudsi and Abdul Halim Huso were also still there as I remembered them.

My parents died during the Diaspora in Jordan and that is

where my brothers live now. We took the keys of our house in Lydda with us when we left, as we were sure that we would return. We had a lamb at the time of our deportation and I remember leaving him some food then closing the door on him. I still wish I could return to live in Lydda, but it does not look as though this will be possible anytime soon.

Shaker Mahmud Darwish Abed

Born in 1936

Original home: Al-Faloja Town

Current address: Askar Refugee Camp, Nablus

We had to collect water on foot from a spring in another village, and we would go there once a week to wash ourselves.

Al-Faloja was on a main road and people would come from all over to use the weekly market. We did not have a radio so we were unable to listen to the news at home; we would go to the coffee shops to get a daily news update. I was a school pupil in the 4th grade at that time and I still recall the names of the coffee shops – Abu Alabed Altayeb and the Tammam Coffee Shop. The Radio Station of the Near East was transmitting for the benefit of the British Mandate and encouraging Palestinians to leave.

My father decided we should leave, although he told us that it would only be for a short time. I had heard my father speaking about the amount of time we would spend out of the village, which he said would be less than a week. For this reason we did not take our belongings. My father had a library and he read a lot, but we took none of his books when we left.

Nobody in our village had really been trained to use guns; people didn't choose to become fighters, they did it out of necessity. They got their weapons from Bir Sabi. At the time people not involved in the fighting would not leave their homes. After we left, my uncles remained in Al-Faloja as resistance fighters; it was under siege for six months. The Egyptian Army entered the town while the Jewish Israeli troops were

surrounding it. My uncle and seven comrades were hit by a Jewish shell. Luckily, he was not killed and he fled to Hebron. One of the Egyptian commanders during the siege went on to become the President of Egypt. He was Jamal Abdel Nasser, who took control after the revolution of 1952.

Israeli fighters continued to shell the Al-Faloja resistance until October 1948. We were told that the Egyptian commander Taha had ordered his soldiers to open a tunnel so they could surprise the Israelis. However, the Israelis used six fighter aircraft against the resistance and so the resistance surrendered. Many people were killed that day, many were injured; people tried to shelter in the mosque but they were not safe there as the Israelis bombed them.

Then the fake weapons scandal erupted in Egypt, contributing to the revolution of 1952. The guns would fire backwards, killing the person shooting the gun rather than the person they were aiming at. After that, the citizens left in Al-Faloja for the Gaza Strip. The Jewish militia, which became the Israeli Army after the British withdrew, destroyed the wheat mill and the water mill then they destroyed the rest of Al-Faloja.

We had left Al-Faloja at the beginning of the conflict, to stay in the village of Yazoor, where my father had been working. When the time came for the British Army to withdraw, they told the Arab forces to come and take the military camp of Tel Hshomer. But the Jews had already taken it over, and when the Arab forces arrived, they were easy targets for the Jewish militiamen. The British betrayed the Palestinians all the time, but protected and supported the Jews. For example, there was always a British armored vehicle to assist the Jewish

caravans on the main road from Jerusalem to Tel Aviv. Once, the Palestinian resistance of Yazoor put a mine on this road, the mine exploded and killed three Jewish people. The day after, Jews came and bombed the ice factory that was at the entrance of Yazoor. The leader of our village complained to the Jews but they told him that they might bomb the whole village too.

Soon the Jews were attacking us every night and then they invaded the village, which caused chaos. Take the mother of Saleh Abdul Nabi, for example. She was terrified by the shelling and she was running, trying to escape, She gave birth to twins. She managed to carry one but she forgot the other, who was Saleh. It was a terrible situation, with the Jews killing people randomly. Fortunately, her sister remembered Saleh and ran to get him, even though she came under fire as she did this. This heroic act saved Saleh and enabled him to have a good life, to get married and have children. But there was a tragic end to this story, as Saleh was shot and killed by the Israelis during the first Intifada.

Once the war started we headed for Lydda city, where we stayed for three months. The troubles followed us to Lydda and we had more traumatic experiences there. The Jewish militia gathered people in Dahmash Mosque, where they slaughtered them. The Jewish militia was well-armed and they yelled that we should go to Jordan. They stole gold from Palestinian women and detained anybody they wanted to. My uncle, Abed, was detained by them. He told us after he was released how he was tortured in the detention camp. Once we had been deported we went to the village of Deir Abu Mishal, near Ramallah.

We lived for four months in Deir Abu Mishal; our suffering continued. We had to collect water on foot from a spring in another village, and we would go there once a week to wash ourselves. We decided this life was too difficult so we came to Nablus, where we stayed in the municipal park. Just when it seemed things could not get any worse we became infected with smallpox and we had to be kept in quarantine until we were cured. Finally, after all this, we ended up settling in Balata Refugee Camp in Nablus.

While living in Balata I worked in Nablus. During this time, I taught myself Hebrew, and this meant I was able to work in Haifa in the 1990s.

I returned to Al-Faloja after the 1967 war. It was a shocking sight – there was nothing left of the village apart from a mosque. But the Israelis had built a new colony there, Quryat Qat. I also visited Yazoor village, as well as many other Palestinian villages and towns in what is now called “Israel”.

My mother came with me when I went to see our house in Yazoor. As we were fleeing from Yazoor my mother had hidden some gold next to the fence of the place where we had been staying. We found the house was now occupied by Jewish people, and we asked them if we could see inside our house. They told us that it was not our house and that they had bought it from the government. We told them that my mother had buried something next to the fence and asked if we would be able to look for it. They said yes, but, unfortunately, my mother could not identify exactly where she had buried the gold because all the trees had been uprooted and the fence removed.

I wish I could die in Al-Faloja. If I was given the choice, I would be prepared to leave my house here in the refugee camp and live in a tent at Al-Faloja. At one point I worked in Saudi Arabia but I could not carry on doing this as I could not bear my life outside Palestine. There is no place like home – as I keep repeating this to my sons and daughters.

Abdul Rahman Awad

Born in 1936

Original home: Lydda city

Current address: Askar Refugee Camp, Nablus

They took my home and my land, drove out my family, made us refugees

We owned some land in the Lydda region, around 10 dunums (around 10,000m²). We planted it with olives, okra and cactus. There was no fighting in our area; we were driven out of our home after the ceasefire. The Jews turned up with armored vehicles and other craft; we had nothing. It took us completely by surprise – we didn't even have time to think, let alone organize any resistance. All we had was 12 ordinary guns and four automatic ones. Anyway, guns weren't that much use against the Jewish troops who became the Israeli army. There was an imbalance of power between us; we had some Palestinian fighters, but what could we do against well-armored Jews, and, anyway, what is the point of having well-trained men if there are no guns for them? And the Jews were able to operate with even more impunity after the British withdrew from Palestine.

All the cities and villages around Lydda were cleared. We walked from Lydda to the village of Naleen, where we lived for two years before moving to Nablus. We fled with the citizens of Lydda, which was cleared at the same time. I was in my father's house when the Jews invaded our city. They drove us out like cattle and treated us very badly; women, children and elderly people were forced to leave Lydda immediately. I was the one who locked the front door of our house. I still have the

key today.

We did have some money with us when we were forced out, so we were able to rent flats wherever we went, but when the money ran out we had to go to the refugee camp. None of us had any work during the first four years we were there.

I have a cousin in Lydda; she is married and has children. My other family members, though, are scattered around this region - Jordan, Jerusalem, Egypt, the West Bank, all over the place. I've been back to Lydda twice since the 1967 war. I was afraid the whole time I was there, and the memories of that day in 1948 were uppermost in my mind the whole time. I couldn't spend more than an hour there because of these feelings.

The worst thing of all is that there is nothing we can do. It made me really sad to see Israelis living in my city. They took my home and my land, drove out my family, made us refugees. What do the Jews expect from me? I would love to go home, but I feel there's nothing I can do to help me go back: if I did, I am afraid they would either kick me out again or kill me.

Abu Omar Lidawi

Born in 1930

Original home: Lydda

Current address: Askar Refugee Camp, Nablus city

The Jews rounded up many people into the Dahmash Mosque then killed around 80 of them

I remember the British occupation of Palestine very well. I believe the British are responsible for the current plight of the Palestinian people as they were ones who brought the Jews from Europe and gave them power in our lands.

Before 1948 we had good living conditions, although even then we were concerned about the presence of the Jewish immigrants from Europe. Yet even though they were settling here, we didn't fight them – in fact, there was a Jewish colony called Beit Shemel next to our village.

By 1948, though, the Jews were well-armed and well-prepared for war, while we had no guns, because of the restrictions imposed under the British mandate. I was living in the city of Lydda when the Jewish militia attacked the city on an afternoon in July. I was on my way back from work and heading for the coffee shop, when I heard shooting. There was supposed to be a truce at that time but the Jews broke it.

The Jews rounded up many people into the Dahmash Mosque then killed around 80 of them. They squeezed many citizens into that mosque, but thankfully we were not among them as we managed to escape through a field. The Jews announced on loudspeakers that the Lydda citizens should leave the

city immediately. People were panic stricken as they tried to escape.

Some people forgot to carry their babies as everybody was rushing in order to be safe. There was no time to look for your wife or your children. The Jewish militias were shooting randomly at people and many fell to the ground as they tried to escape. As I was near the coffee shop I could not reach our house. The Jewish militia did not allow me to reach it to see my father and my family. A man pointed a gun in my face and told me to leave or I would be killed. Fortunately, I managed to meet my family in a village as we were fleeing.

In order to escape, people had to negotiate the treacherous thorn bushes that surrounded the village. There were many thorn bushes that were too high to climb and people had to find an uncomfortable way through. The Jews were still shooting at us as families attempted to climb the mountain; it was a terrible scene. To make matters worse, people were fasting as it was the month of Ramadan. It was too hot, our throats were dry and there was no water.

Lydda city was the last city to fall into the hands of the Jews. The Jewish militia had announced on the loudspeakers that we should go to the village of Parfilya. However, I knew this village was low on water so we decided to head for the village of Naleen instead. We were instructed not to walk down the main road that we must leave through the mountains. At Naleen we found some cars that were taking people to Jordan, the Gaza Strip or Ramallah. We went to Ramallah and settled there.

We were able to occupy an empty house in Ramallah that was owned by a Palestinian family working in the USA. Another person allowed us to use their farm in order to get our food, while other refugees stayed in the camps. After one year we went to Nablus city, where we rented a flat. Nablus was a poor city when we came to it, and there were no jobs. I went to Jordan and worked there as goods distributor, I was selling products in the Arab Gulf and Lebanon.

I went to Lydda City after the war of 1967. I was very sad when I saw it. The first time I went there I saw a Jewish man living in my house; I could easily recognize my house even after 20 years. I told the owner that this was my house and he told me to go away otherwise he would shoot me. He would not even allow me to see my house from the inside to allow me to recall my memories.

Two years later, I went back to visit my city again. I found that my house was gone and a new building stood in its place, a larger building, to house the increasing number of Jewish immigrants. I could recognize all of the neighborhoods of Lydda city, I remembered it very well. I couldn't stop crying when I saw what had happened to my house and other parts of the city.

I went to the cemetery of Lydda and read some verses of the Holy Quran. The Jews had displaced the people and the buildings, so I was concerned that they would remove the two cemeteries as well. The mosque was still standing, as was the church, but the Jews were not allowing the Palestinian citizens still living in the city to renovate either. I suspect this is so they will collapse by themselves.

Some Palestinians have been able to return through the Red Cross, and I met some of them. There are only around 50 families now, compared with 70,000 or so people before the Diaspora.

The Jews have occupied my land and my father's land, and they want to cheat us out of adequate compensation. I have a "Right of Return", recognized by the United Nations. The Jews have taken our lands by force and power, and taken them for free as well. They came from Europe and Russia in order to occupy our lands, and now they want us to shut our mouths. I don't expect to get a home in paradise in return for my house in Lydda City. My country is so dear to me, and we would like to live in our land in peace.

Muhamad Ahmad Huwaidi

Born in 1930

Original village: Abu Kishek Village, Yafa

Current address: Askar Refugee Camp, Nablus

I don't want compensation for the loss of my land – I want to go home to my village, and to visit the Shrine of Sidi Ali; I know how to go there but the Israelis won't let me go to it.

I got married in 1948 in Hableh village near Qalqilya town, where we owned a farm. I heard about the Jewish project in Palestine; the Balfour Declaration and then the partition Plan. The Jews didn't have so much power in the beginning, but they did get more powerful later, when they formed the militias of Stern and Hagana. They were arming themselves while cursing at us when they saw us going to our work. We had no weapons – only one gun for every ten men – because it had not been easy to smuggle weapons in. somebody called Sheikh Shaker went to Egypt to buy guns but they were not very good. The English mandate troops had been detaining the armed Palestinian citizens and sentencing them to around 15 years for having a gun and five years for having a bullet. We used to plant everything we needed for our daily life. As we had no mosque nearby we had to travel for one hour to Sheikh Emwanes Mosque.

Jews were living next to our village. One of our Jewish friends came to us and said, "Don't leave your village because if you do that and flee to the mountains (West Bank) you will not be able to come back again. You will not defeat the Jews because they are very strong and they have obtained many weapons from the British." We asked him what we have to do then. He

said, "You can raise the white flags of surrender." However, we did not trust them and we left when other villagers started to flee.

The people of Yaffa left first, then those from Salameh village, and then the residents of Sheikh Emwane's village left too. Jews were shooting on Palestinians randomly; some Palestinians fought back, with the poor-quality weapons that were available. We were not trained for war; we had done no military training or exercises compared to the Jews. Many people were killed there in Salameh and Yazoor villages because they resisted. Five people were killed in the Shawabkeh area, which was very close to us.

Once, some Palestinians from the Al-Shobaki family went to the British Administration and informed them about the Jewish militia growing in Hertselia Colony and their increasing military power there. However, the British told the Jews about this family. The Jewish militia attacked the family and slaughtered five of its members; we buried them in the village. This incident caused us to become scared, and we decided it was time to leave.

We had been producing milk and butter, which we would store in jars, but my father, did not let us bring them with us when we left. He hid them under the ground, covering them with sacks in order to protect them, believing that we would soon return. We also left our wheat and hay, but we did take the house key with us.

Jews laughed at us and sang while we were leaving. They didn't shoot at those who left voluntarily, because they wanted

to encourage us to leave our homes. And we all left – nobody remained in the village. My father brought some sacks and we sewed them together in order to make a tent, or something that looked like one.

We had had 75 dunum of fertile lands; we had cows and sheep. My father was married to three women; all three of them, and their sons and daughters, became refugees in Jordan, Kuwait and the USA. I myself left for Qalqilya, and then went to Nablus City. We owned a camel so we put some of our essential belongings on it; we left our goats and sheep. We sold our cows before the deportation.

My father bought a gun from Egypt; he sold it when we went to Qalqilya so he could feed his children. People were using donkeys and camels to carry their furniture or mattresses; the people of Yaffa used their cars, while the poorest people had to carry their belongings as they went by foot.

We lived in tents in Qalqilya and we had no jobs. We rented a piece of land in order to plant it with vegetables and fruits, and then we left for Nablus and rented land and farmed there. Some people went through occupied Palestine after 1948 in order to pick oranges they didn't have chance to pick before the deportation. Some of them were detained and others were killed by the Israeli soldiers on the border.

I worked in a farm in Nablus City for 15 years. We got some supplies from UNRWA. I managed to do well enough to send my sons to university. I went to work in Israel after the Occupation of 1967. I worked in construction, and I worked in Tel Aviv until the late-1990s.

Some of my relatives, who had been in Lydda in 1948 and didn't leave there, have Israeli residency now. Some of my brothers went to see our village next to Yaffa and they told me that it was completely destroyed. On one occasion I went to visit them and told them that I would like to visit Sidi Ali shrine in Yaffa. We went there and prayed; it was one of the holy sites that we used to pray in. Then we went to visit my village. I was shocked when I was not allowed to get in to the village because it had been converted into a military camp.

I don't want compensation for the loss of my land – I want to go home to my village, and to visit the shrine of Sidi Ali; I know how to go there but the Israelis won't let me go to it.

Abu Abdallah EI-Halaq

Born in 1938

Original home: Sha'ib Village / Acre

Current address: Al-Ein Refugee Camp / Nablus

The fighting meant that life stopped in the land; wheat was not harvested, and olives and corns were not cultivated. There was genuine fear, the prices rose.

The first outbreaks of fighting started at the end of 1947, and the news about deportation and emigration was quickly spread by the Jerusalem and Cairo radio stations. We heard news about how the Haganah had forced their way into Jaffa and were confronted by Arab revolutionists. Despite the Arab resistance Jaffa had fallen, and was quickly followed by Yazoor and Salama.

Shortly afterwards both the cities of Haifa and Acre fell, with the volunteers unable to do anything in response. They were waiting for the Haganah to come and face them, instead of going to confront them. There was no real military confrontation, just guerilla wars. When the city of Acre fell, my village of Sha'ib, along with the village of Majd El-Krum became the next line of defense.

Arab resistance fighters and their leadership had gathered in Sha'ib village after the state of Israel had been declared. This prompted the young people from all the surrounding villages of the Galilee to assemble in Sha'ib to protect the leadership. I remember one of them called Abu Es'aaf, who went to Syria to bring weapons back for them.

We were afraid that due to so many Arab towns being captured we would be unable to have a state of our own. We desperately wanted a state, and this was the reason behind the people of Sha'ib not wanting to leave. Although we did not actually think that the war would reach as far as Sha'ib. We were optimistic about independence especially if the Rescue Army was to come to our aid. We did not expect that things would turn out the way they did and we assumed people would be able to return home in a couple of months.

Regarding preparations, people were collecting money from each family in order to buy weapons. There were nearly 400 volunteers present in Sha'ib but they were not trained in using weapons during the British Mandate. The local volunteers and the volunteers from outside were fighting without any direction whatsoever.

The Rescue Army brought us hope but they turned out to be total fakes. When they first came they coordinated with the leaders of the resistance and took up strategic military positions. A war took place between the Rescue Army, with the support of the fighters and the Haganah. I attended one of the battles with some friends and was amazed to see the women supporting the volunteers by joyously shouting encouragement and carrying water on their heads to give them. They managed to take back the village of Al-Barwah on the outskirts of Haifa. It was a happy day, apart from the fact that three volunteers became martyrs.

At this stage the Rescue Army had given us a certain amount of confidence. Their next move though was to ask the fighters to pull out from Al-Barwah, so they could replace them, and

the fighters agreed to this. Shortly afterwards the Rescue Army gave it up to the Jews, causing a great deal of pain to the resistance fighters.

In Sha'ib I have one of my most clear memories as I was attacked. I was with a group of about 12 youth who were walking on the outskirts of the village. Suddenly we heard gunfire and one of my friends shouted, "Lie down". It was true that the bullets were fired in our direction and some of them passed between us, we were very lucky.

Although the Rescue Army remained in Sha'ib there was a significant lack of trust between them and the resistance fighters. This led to a severe lack of coordination with the resistance groups operating autonomously. One of the local resistance groups reminded me of a scout group and they were called Najjadah. I can still recall the words to a special song that they would sing,

*We the Najjadah, glory seekers... all of us, all of us
Every one of us represents hope for the country... all of us,
all of us
And for the fluttering of the flag... all of us, all of us
And for the sword and the pen...all of us, all of us
My homeland, by the proud youth,
If a foreigner does harm to you,
We, the Najjadah, the glory seekers will fight for you.*

We actually had our own song that my friends and I would use to sing. We had been taught it before at school as The Department of Education was keen on disseminating the national spirit. This is what we used to sing,

*Anybody else may love beautiful women
But for me, I love my homeland only.
How beautiful, my country, you are!
How dear you are!
I sacrifice my life for you
Your soil is more sublime than the stars
I protect your glory as long as I live
If any hardship afflicts you, without being protected by us,
Then we would not be worthy of being your sons.*

The fighting meant that life stopped in the land; wheat was not harvested, and olives and corns were not cultivated. There was genuine fear, the prices rose, and the people had to live on low supplies. We stayed in Sha'ib for a month before my family decided to move on to the village of Majd Al-Krum.

After we had left, Sha'ib fell because once again the Rescue Army had surrendered. The old people of the village stayed for two months, before cars came to collect them and take them to the region of Marj Ibn-Amer. The Jews even brought some Bedouins from Al-Huleh, and made them settle down in Sha'ib; in fact two thirds of Sha'ib's people were now not originally from Sha'ib.

We walked to Majd Al-Krum during Ramadan with many other people and we were all still fasting. I remember the sun setting as we walked over the hills. For large parts of the journey I was carrying my brother who was very troublesome. We had taken nothing with us, not even food or blankets. Fortunately there were many friendly people in Majd Al-Krum who helped us. We were able to sleep relatively comfortably for twenty days under the olive trees.

Despite the Rescue Army surrendering Sha'ib they were still in the area and in Majd Al-Kruom we felt relatively safe. However this all changed when one night when we heard shooting on Al-Layat Mountain that continued until midnight, which we assumed was between the Rescue Army and the Jews. Al-Layat was clearly visible from Sha'ib and so the following morning we could see that the Rescue Army had disappeared. The belief at the time was that the Rescue Army had faked the shooting incident in order to escape without protest.

This meant the defense lines were now vacant as some believed the Rescue Army planned, and the village had no form of protection. Therefore, the people of the village decided to climb to the top of Al-Layat Mountain and raised the white flags. The Jews took over Majd Al-Krum captured the remaining resistance fighters and sent them to Lebanon. We knew that the Rescue Army had apparently left for Syria.

Once the Jews entered Majd Al-Krum, they participated in acts of terrorism against its inhabitants. They entered Majd Al-Kroom at ten o'clock in the morning, and they went on shooting sporadically for two days. The village was besieged, and they used this same plan on many villages to terrorize people in order to leave. The people, who now resided in Majd Al-Krum, included many people who had fled from neighboring villages.

All the males in the village were forced to go to the Hanana café on the main street, where they were all forced inside. At which point the Jews selected seven or eight young people to go and stand outside. They were lined up on the pavement

and blindfolded and then they decided to shoot one of them from Al-Ghrabi's family. Following this they chose a new group, of seven to eight young people to line up outside. Then an Arab came and talked to the Jews in English and they were released. This incident looked very suspicious and I suspect that this Arab was acting for the Jews.

During that night, people were deported to Lebanon without their belongings. Half of the people did manage to remain in Majd Al-Krum but the Jews continued to occupy the village day and night. Most of us were still gathered in the Hanana Cafe which they allowed us to leave for two hours a day so we could get water. It was uncomfortable and the Jews were harassing the women near the well.

After a week, the Jews departed but they returned two weeks later, besieged the village and demanded all the remaining males gather in the yard. They sorted the people into groups according to their villages: Al-Barwah, Sha'ib, Adamoon and Majd Al-Kroom. The men from Sha'ib lied about where they were from because they were afraid to tell the truth. They knew this may antagonize the Jews as there had been a Palestinian militant base there.

I sat on the floor with my family. They asked my father for his identification papers which the Jews had given to some of the Arabs after they had declared their state, but he did not have it with him. This meant that my father was arrested. As he was being taken away he told us to remain in Majd Al-Krum and he would come back for us. Many families were being led away by Jewish soldiers to be transferred from the village in large trucks. They were being deported to places like Jenin and

even as far as Amman.

We were very fortunate that we were able to avoid being expelled as we were able to stay with a friend of my mother in the village. After two months my father was released and returned to Majd Al-Krum for us. He was very tired and said we would go to Acre with our ID papers to prove we had been allowed to stay. However when we reached Acre and explained the situation we were told, "Go to King Abdallah". They put us on the military trucks and we were transported to the village of Romanah near Jenin. My father was old, and he died three months after the shock of the deportation.

Conclusion and recommendations:

After our reading of the oral narrations published in the pages of this book, we realized the nature of the Palestinian issue and Palestinian-Israeli conflict that lie in removing the Palestinian people and settling Jews in their homeland instead. Palestine was not a barren land, or a land without a nation, as the Jews still claim today; on the contrary, it was a fertile land that was exporting almonds and fruit daily to Europe, through the Yafa and Haifa harbors. If Palestinian land had not been rich, the invading forces would not have made such efforts to occupy it, and drive its people away.

Palestinian farmers did not leave their lands willingly and quickly. When they were driven out, they thought that their leaving would be only for a few days. It did not enter their minds that their departure would be forever.

Media propaganda, no doubt, played a negative role in the departure of residents by not reporting on the massacres and crimes committed against the land and the Palestinian people. This does not negate the fact, however, that there were massacres committed. The illiteracy of many of the people contributed to the immigration. If the Palestinian people had been better informed about the goals of the occupation and the 1948 war, they would have refused all attempts to drive them away from their lands and homes. Perhaps the deciding factor was the lack of political and military proficiency of the Arab and Palestinian leaders during the 1948 war.

The Palestinian people had suffered a lot, having been occupied many times over the years. After the Ottoman age,

Palestine was ruled by the British mandate, leaving no era of independence in which to foster a scientific and cultural rebirth of the Palestinian people.

After our reading of the oral narrations in this book, I offer the following recommendations, hoping to encourage other researchers to study the Palestinian oral history of the 1948 war, and other important events in the history of the Palestinians. In addition, I encourage other researchers to document the daily sufferings of the Palestinian community, and the daily military siege on the Palestinian cities and villages, including the attacks and humiliation. My recommendations could be summarized as follows:

- * Teaching oral Palestinian history in the Palestinian universities as a general course for students, not only for the students of history and political science.
- * Translating oral narrations from Arabic into English, to make it possible for the Palestinian issue to reach the external and non- Arab world.
- * Conducting additional interviews with narrators as soon as possible, to benefit from those who are still alive. Many of the narrators passed away soon after being interviewed, due to their advanced age.
- * Broadcasting oral narrations as they were written, in colloquial language, through television and radio.
- * Focusing on the period of the Palestinian Nakba in any negotiating process, stressing the importance and continued

relevance of this event. The refugees' issue shouldn't be forgotten. We have a moral duty to raise these issues in political, diplomatic and media conferences.

* Producing translated televised and documentary programs about the Palestinian Nakba, to ensure that the international community knows the facts of this issue, and the nature of Middle East conflict.

7. Demanding that the British government formally apologize to the Palestinian nation for its abrupt departure from the region, the crimes that they committed against the Palestinian people during the British mandate, the resulting occupation, and deportation of the Palestinian people from their lands in 1948. Moreover, we have to pressure the British civil community to do their best to compensate the Palestinian people for the historical injustice they were exposed to as a result of the tendentious policies of the British government.

Overall, the international community and the British government are responsible for the atrocities committed, and that continue to be committed daily in Palestine, since the British mandate in 1917. Successive generations of British citizens, and the international community, should know that the crimes committed against the Palestinian people, both in the past and today, are the result of taking the largest portion of the Palestinian's lands, and giving it to the Jews fleeing from the discrimination, anti-Semitism, and crimes committed against them in Europe. The Palestinian nation did not commit these crimes against the Jews. They did not deserve to be driven from their lands, forced to pay the price for the crimes committed by Europeans. The problems created for the Jewish people should have been solved at the expense of

the Europeans who created them, through their hate for the Jews in their countries. The Palestinian nation did not have a hand in these European crimes, and should not have had to pay for them with their lives and their lands.

Ala Abu Dheer

Media Unit (Zajel)
Public Relations Department
An-Najah National University
Nablus-Palestine
info@zajel.org
www.zajel.org

Appendix 1

A questionnaire about oral narrations of the 1948 war

- * The name of the narrator:
- * The age of the narrator:
- * Name of the village or the city:
- * The date of the interview:
- * The place of the interview:
- * How did you follow the news of the war? Was it through the radio, newspapers, or conversations with people in cafés?
- * What did you hear in the news? What was your reaction?
- * Did you expect that the war would reach your village and lead to the Nakba?
- * Were there any preparations for war in your city or village, such as buying ammunitions and weapons, digging trenches, stockpiling food, or making contact with leaders?
- * Had there been any military professionals in your village who knew how to fight? Was there weapons' trafficking from Egypt or Syria? What was the reaction of British against that?
- * What had the British done to armed people?
- * Did your village experience disruption to daily life before the residents were forced to leave, such as difficulty in getting to fields?
- * Was there anarchy or a sharp rise in the cost of foodstuffs?
- * Were you ever subjected to bombing, occupation, military attacks, starvation, or to car bombs?
- * Do you still remember the date of departure? (You

can help the witness to remember the date by using agricultural seasons or plants that were in season during immigration.)

* Did you flee at dawn, or after prayer?

* Had there been any attempts to contract an oral agreement between the head of the village and with the head of the Israelis settlement?

* Did you ever hear about such agreements?

* Were you offered such agreements and you refused? Why?

* In case of approval between the two sides, did the Israeli side abide by the agreement?

* Do you know any one that was killed or injured during the war from your relatives or village? Do you remember the circumstances of the incident?

* Did any citizen from the city or village distinguish themselves while defending the village?

* Did you see Israeli forces in your village? If the answer is no, what did you hear about them? If the answer is yes, where and when did you see them and what was the situation like?

* Did the Head of the village help you during the Israeli attacks?

* Did the rescuing army give you a hand?

* Did any foreign or Arab volunteers from East Jordan or Yugoslavia help you? Did they come in time or too late? Were there many of them? Were their weapons enough to fight the Israeli gangs? Did their presence give you security and hope?

* How was their relationship with citizens generally and with city and village leaders in particular?

* Did you have to provide them with food and

accommodation?

* Were they fighting for your village and the neighboring areas?

* In case of their withdrawal from the village before its occupation by Israeli gangs, did that lead to decrease of citizens' morale before immigration?

* Did any one give you instructions in case you were attacked?

* Was there any destruction to your village during Israeli attacks?

* Were you advised to leave by any Arab or Palestinian leaders or in radio broadcasts and if so why?

* When did you leave your village?

* Can you tell us about killing and horror stories?

* have you heard about women being abused?

* Were you subjected to psychological warfare such as air attacks and rumors?

* When and how was your village occupied?

* Was it occupied after a prolonged battle or after simple armed clashes?

* Was it occupied after being besieged or after the Israeli gangs reached the village when the resistance had decided that it was useless to continue fighting?

* Did the Israelis enter the village while the residents were still present? If the answer is yes, how did they deal with people?

* Did any elderly people remain in the village or city after other residents had fled?

* Was the village damaged immediately after occupation or after a short or a long period of time?

* Did the Israelis use the village as a military camp?

* Have you returned to your village since you left? When

and why?

- * Did any of your neighbors or relatives return, and why?
 - * Did villagers try to return in groups?
 - * Was any one arrested or injured when he tried to come back in 1948?
 - * Do you know any stories about villagers secretly attempting to harvest oranges or fetch sheep and other livestock?
 - * Was this the first time you had left your home?
 - * Did you flee alone? If the answer is no, who left with you?
 - * Did you and the other refugees leave any of your relatives or family members, such as one parent or both, behind?
 - * Do you know anyone who forgot their infant or child because of the sudden departure?
 - * Did any one leave the village before you?
 - * Do you know any one who is still in the village now?
 - * When did the head of the village leave? Was he the first or the last to leave the village?
 - * Had any one encouraged you to leave?
 - * Did you take with you money, food, clothes, furniture, bed sheets, animals or sheep when you left the village or not?
- Why?
- * What did other take, and why?
 - * Where did you go at first?
 - * How many times did you have to move before you reached stability? (You have to narrate the story of departure).
 - * Why did you choose that place?
 - * Was it far away from your house?
 - * How long did it take you to reach that place?
 - * How long did you spend in that place?
 - * How were you received as a refugee in the places you went to?

- * Did the people of your village move to the same places?
- * Were you able to find a job quickly after your departure?
Tell us about employment/unemployment in general and finding shelter.
- * Did you visit your house after the West Bank was occupied in 1967? If the answer is yes: Did you talk to the Israelis living in your house? What did you talk about? Did they allow you to enter your house?

Appendix 2

The Balfour Declaration

2nd November, 1917

The British government decided to endorse the establishment of a Jewish home in Palestine. After discussions within the cabinet and consultations with Jewish leaders, the decision was made public in a letter from British Foreign Secretary Lord Arthur James Balfour to Lord Rothschild. The contents of this letter became known as the Balfour Declaration.

**Foreign Office
November 2nd, 1917**

Dear Lord Rothschild,

I have much pleasure in conveying to you. On behalf of His Majesty's Government, the following declaration of sympathy with Jewish Zionist aspirations which has been submitted to, and approved by, the Cabinet

His Majesty's Government views with favor the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavors to facilitate the achievement of this object, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine or the rights and political

status enjoyed by Jews in any other country.

I should be grateful if you would bring this declaration to the knowledge of the Zionist Federation.

**Yours,
Arthur James Balfour**

Appendix 3

UN Resolution 194, Right to Return

General Assembly, A/RES/194 (III), 11 December 1948

194 (III). Palestine -- Progress Report of the United Nations Mediator

The General Assembly, Having considered further the situation in Palestine,

1. *Expresses* its deep appreciation of the progress achieved through the good offices of the late United Nations Mediator in promoting a peaceful adjustment of the future situation of Palestine, for which cause he sacrificed his life; and Extends its thanks to the Acting Mediator and his staff for their continued efforts and devotion to duty in Palestine;
2. *Establishes* a Conciliation Commission consisting of three States members of the United Nations which shall have the following functions:
 - (a) To assume, in so far as it considers necessary in existing circumstances, the functions given to the United Nations Mediator on Palestine by resolution 186 (S-2) of the General Assembly of 14 May 1948;
 - (b) To carry out the specific functions and directives given to it by the present resolution and such additional functions and directives as may be given to it by the General Assembly or by the Security Council;

(c) To undertake, upon the request of the Security Council, any of the functions now assigned to the United Nations Mediator on Palestine or to the United Nations Truce Commission by resolutions of the Security Council; upon such request to the Conciliation Commission by the Security Council with respect to all the remaining functions of the United Nations Mediator on Palestine under Security Council resolutions, the office of the Mediator shall be terminated;

3. *Decides* that a Committee of the Assembly, consisting of China, France, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, the United Kingdom and the United States of America, shall present, before the end of the first part of the present session of the General Assembly, for the approval of the Assembly, a proposal concerning the names of the three States which will constitute the Conciliation Commission;

4. *Requests* the Commission to begin its functions at once, with a view to the establishment of contact between the parties themselves and the Commission at the earliest possible date;

5. *Calls upon* the Governments and authorities concerned to extend the scope of the negotiations provided for in the Security Council's resolution of 16 November 1948 ^{1/} and to seek agreement by negotiations conducted either with the Conciliation Commission or directly, with a view to the final settlement of all questions outstanding between them;

6. *Instructs* the Conciliation Commission to take steps to assist the Governments and authorities concerned to achieve a final settlement of all questions outstanding between them;

7. *Resolves* that the Holy Places - including Nazareth - religious buildings and sites in Palestine should be protected and free access to them assured, in accordance with existing rights and historical practice; that arrangements to this end should be under effective United Nations supervision; that the United Nations Conciliation Commission, in presenting to the fourth regular session of the General Assembly its detailed proposals for a permanent international regime for the territory of Jerusalem, should include recommendations concerning the Holy Places in that territory; that with regard to the Holy Places in the rest of Palestine the Commission should call upon the political authorities of the areas concerned to give appropriate formal guarantees as to the protection of the Holy Places and access to them; and that these undertakings should be presented to the General Assembly for approval;

8. *Resolves* that, in view of its association with three world religions, the Jerusalem area, including the present municipality of Jerusalem plus the surrounding villages and towns, the most eastern of which shall be Abu Dis; the most southern, Bethlehem; the most western, Ein Karim (including also the built-up area of Motsa); and the most northern, Shu'fat, should be accorded special and separate treatment from the rest of Palestine and should be placed under effective United Nations control;

Requests the Security Council to take further steps to ensure the demilitarization of Jerusalem at the earliest possible date;

Instructs the Conciliation Commission to present to the fourth regular session of the General Assembly detailed proposals

for a permanent international regime for the Jerusalem area which will provide for the maximum local autonomy for distinctive groups consistent with the special international status of the Jerusalem area;

The Conciliation Commission is authorized to appoint a United Nations representative, who shall co-operate with the local authorities with respect to the interim administration of the Jerusalem area;

9. *Resolves* that, pending agreement on more detailed arrangements among the Governments and authorities concerned, the freest possible access to Jerusalem by road, rail or air should be accorded to all inhabitants of Palestine;

Instructs the Conciliation Commission to report immediately to the Security Council, for appropriate action by that organ, any attempt by any party to impede such access;

10. *Instructs* the Conciliation Commission to seek arrangements among the Governments and authorities concerned which will facilitate the economic development of the area, including arrangements for access to ports and airfields and the use of transportation and communication facilities;

11. Resolves that the refugees wishing to return to their homes and live at peace with their neighbors should be permitted to do so at the earliest practicable date, and that compensation should be paid for the property of those choosing not to return and for loss of or damage to property which, under principles of international law or in equity, should be made good by the Governments or

authorities responsible;

Instructs the Conciliation Commission to facilitate the repatriation, resettlement and economic and social rehabilitation of the refugees and the payment of compensation, and to maintain close relations with the Director of the United Nations Relief for Palestine Refugees and, through him, with the appropriate organs and agencies of the United Nations;

12. *Authorizes* the Conciliation Commission to appoint such subsidiary bodies and to employ such technical experts, acting under its authority, as it may find necessary for the effective discharge of its functions and responsibilities under the present resolution;

The Conciliation Commission will have its official headquarters at Jerusalem. The authorities responsible for maintaining order in Jerusalem will be responsible for taking all measures necessary to ensure the security of the Commission. The Secretary-General will provide a limited number of guards to the protection of the staff and premises of the Commission;

13. *Instructs* the Conciliation Commission to render progress reports periodically to the Secretary-General for transmission to the Security Council and to the Members of the United Nations;

14. *Calls upon* all Governments and authorities concerned to co-operate with the Conciliation Commission and to take all possible steps to assist in the implementation of the present resolution;

15. *Requests* the Secretary-General to provide the necessary staff and facilities and to make appropriate arrangements to provide the necessary funds required in carrying out the terms of the present resolution.

* * *

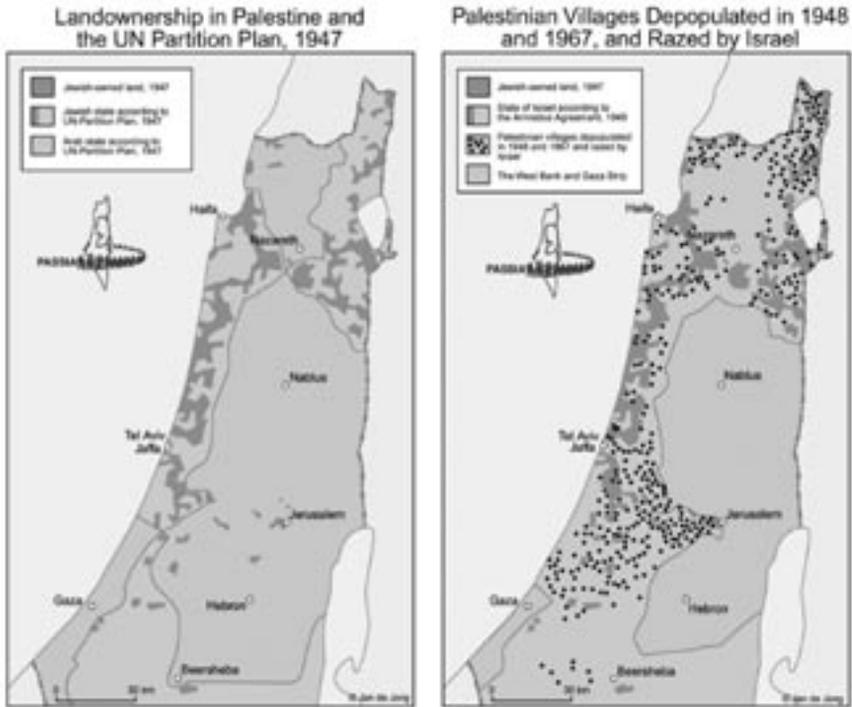
Maps

United Nations Partition Plan, Rhodes Armistice Line, 1949



Palestinian Academic Society for the Study of International Affairs (PASSIA)

Land Ownership and UN Partition Plan, Palestinian villages depopulated in 1948.



Palestinian Academic Society for the Study of International Affairs (PASSIA)

Population Movements 1948-1951



The Palestinian Academic Society for the Study of International Affairs
PASSIA

Palestinian Refugees: UNRWA Refugee Camps, 2001



Palestinian Academic Society for the Study of International Affairs (PASSIA)

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Ala Abu Dheer
Palestine Media Unit (Zajel)
Public Relations Department
An-Najah National University
Nablus-Palestine
youthexchange@najah.edu