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Humanitarian Dilemmas for the Palestinian Refugees & the Question of Return

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HUMANITARIAN DILEMMAS FOR THE
PALESTINIAN REFUGEES & THE QUESTION OF
RETURN

by

Lina Smoum, BA, York University, 2004

A Major Research Paper
presented to Ryerson University

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts
in the Program of
Immigration and Settlement Studies

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the situation of Palestinian refugees who have been living in Arab host countries as a result of the 1948 and 1967 Arab-Israeli wars. Although their right of return was recognized by the UN Commission on Human Rights, 7 million refugees and 450,000 internally displaced Palestinians continue to live under unfavourable conditions, constituting about seventy percent of the entire Palestinian population worldwide (10.1 million) (BADIL, n.d, para1). During the refugee experience, Palestinians have suffered from all kinds of human rights violations in different countries. However, they considered the denial of their right of return as the most significant source of grievance. The right of return has become a major political goal and mobilizing influence of Palestinian nationalism.

In this paper, I will use Iraq as a case study to demonstrate the continued instability and discrimination that Palestinians face in host countries and difficulties for stable settlement in exile. The experience of Palestinian refugees in Iraq between 1948 and 2008 indicates that even in countries where Palestinian refugees had seemingly favourable conditions, changes in political climate and their lack of citizenship rights make life in exile a perilous experience. Recognizing the issue of return as a legal and political matter, I will argue in this paper that based on the Palestinian refugees' experience in various Arab host countries, securing the right of return should also be seen as a viable humanitarian solution. In the case of Palestinian refugees from and in Iraq, the right of return should be considered an emergency measure.

Key words: Palestinian Refugees, Nationalism, Right of Return, Palestinian identity, Humanitarian Emergency.

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Humanitarian Dilemmas for the Palestinian Refugees & the Question of Return

Chapter One : Introduction

Being a refugee means that you are seeking refuge outside your country of origin or nationality, leaving or escaping complexity due to natural disasters, wars, occupation, or due to discrimination or other threatening situations tied to ethnicity, religion, race, ideology, or political views. Refugees' problems do not end in exile; they also often face significant adjustment problems in their country of refuge. While these broad tendencies are true for all refugees, there are significant differences among the experiences of different groups. Palestinian refugees, who have been displaced from their homeland sixty years ago after the formation of the state of Israel, have been unsuccessfully searching for an alternative home that they could settle. Being in exile has been a repetitious experience for many Palestinians, moving from one refuge to another (Said, 1979). Most significantly, being treated as a special category, Palestinians do not benefit from international legal protections that apply to other refugees. For this reason, Palestinian refugees have been ineligible for most basic protection rights for refugees and stateless people (Akram, 2001). Palestinian refugees' humanitarian problems start with the UN definition of a Palestinian refugee. According to Akram (2001), the United Nations' (UN) definition of Palestinian refugees affects the type of protections that Palestinians are entitled to under international refugee law and the extent to which Palestinian refugees can be guaranteed international human rights.

Palestinian refugees are those who were expelled from Palestine to live in refugee camps in the diaspora as a result of the 1948 and 1967 Arab-Israeli wars. According to Canada Watch (2007), “Palestinian refugees and internally displaced persons (IDP) are the largest and longest-standing unresolved case of refugees and displaced persons in the world” (para 1). There are around “7 million Palestinian refugees and 450,000 internally displaced Palestinians, [which represent] 70 percent of the entire Palestinian population worldwide (10.1 million)” (BADIL, n.d, para1). Palestinian refugees live in different parts of the world, but most are living in nearby Arab countries. They are not limited to those living outside Palestine, but also include those who live in the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, and the territories that were occupied in 1948, and are thus refugees in their own country (Karama, 2008). Palestinian refugees initially thought that their first displacement in 1948 would be temporary but they have been living in camps for sixty years. Hammer (2005), citing Abu-Sitta (1996), W.Khalidi (1992), Kanaana (1992b), and Morris (1987, 1990), argues that during the 1948 and the 1967 wars, “Palestinians did not leave their villages and towns with the intention of leaving the country. They moved to the next village, into the nearby hills, or to any place considered safe at the time. Consequently, their flight involved several moves away from the place of origin.” (p.15) Palestinian humanitarian problems continue as Palestinian refugees have been on the move for the past sixty years often living in squalid conditions.

During the refugee experience, Palestinians have suffered from all kinds of human rights violations in different countries, but they considered the denial of their right of return as the most significant source of grievance. Their right of return is not only legal but also one of the basic human rights that Palestinian refugees should be granted. Based

on the UN Commission on Human Rights, Palestinian refugees should be entitled to the right of return. The UN Commission on Human Rights asserts that:

everyone is entitled, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth, marriage or other status, to return to his country; no one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his nationality or forced to renounce his nationality as a means of divesting him of the right to return to his country; no one shall be arbitrarily deprived of the right to enter his own country; and no one shall be denied the right to return to his own country on the ground that he has no passport or other document (cited in Said, 1979, p.48).

The situation of Palestinian refugees has varied depending on the treatment of the host countries. Thousands of Palestinian refugees were allowed entry into various Arab countries; however, despite the common language, religion, traditions and culture, establishing an alternative home in these countries has been very difficult. Palestinian refugees, living in Arab countries, face great human rights violations, poverty, and discrimination (Karama, 2008). Many do not have an alternative to the miserable conditions of camp life (Cleveland, 2004). They have been the most vulnerable to instability in political, social, and economic situations. The relationship between the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) and the host countries is tenuous at best, which strongly effect the rights of Palestinian refugees in these host countries. The tense relationship between Palestinians and their host countries and the lack of a viable alternative reinforces the need for a Palestinian homeland in Palestine and strengthens the Palestinian nationalism.

While the issue of return is a legal and political matter, in this paper, I will argue that based on Palestinian refugees' experience in various Arab host countries, the right of return should be seen as a humanitarian solution. I will argue for this solution based on

the experience of Palestinian refugees in Iraq, from 1948 to 2008. Thousands of Palestinian refugees, who fled due to the 1948 and 1967 wars, went to live in Iraq where they lived peacefully for more than 50 years until the American invasion in 2003. As a result of the American invasion of Iraq, the Palestinians found themselves in situations where they became refugees again. I will use Iraq as a case study to demonstrate the continued instability and discrimination that Palestinians face in host countries and prevent them from stable settlement in exile. Iraq has been chosen as the case study as Iraq is the most recent example of an Arab host country where Palestinian refugees were forced into exile and the others who still remain in Iraq constitute one of the most vulnerable and ignored group in this country.

This paper will be divided into four chapters. In the first chapter, I will begin with a historical review of the conditions that led to the Palestinian refugees' problem. In this chapter, I will look at the UN definition of the term 'Palestinian refugees' followed by a discussion of the issue of the right of return. In the second chapter, I will examine the experience of exile on Palestinian identity, nationalism, and Palestinians' perception of 'home'. In chapter three, I will review the situation of Palestinian refugees in the Arab host countries in general and in Iraq specifically to identify the dimensions of the humanitarian crisis for the refugees. Finally, in chapter four, I will conclude my argument that granting all Palestinian refugees the right of return is required in order to end the human rights violations they are experiencing, and that granting the Palestinian refugees in Iraq the right of return is needed as an emergency measure.

This study will be based on the review of available primary and secondary sources on Palestinian refugees. While there is considerable literature on the historical

and legal facts and the humanitarian problems dealing with Palestinian refugees in general (Cleveland, 2004; McDowell, 1998; Pappe, 2004; Zuriek, 1996), there is very little on the current situation of Palestinian refugees from Iraq (Mohammad, 2007). In addition, I will be critically surveying the available research on Palestinian nationalism and the meaning of home for Palestinian refugees (Peteet, 2005; Hammer, 2005). For the issue of the right of return, I will focus on Said's (1979, 1994) theoretical linking the right of return to human rights and Akram's (2001, 2002) analysis of legal violations using international law to legalize the right of return to Palestinian refugees. Due to the lack of media coverage, finding information about the current situation of Palestinian refugees in and from Iraq is a challenge. Therefore, my review of the Palestinian-Iraqi refugees will be based on reports provided by human rights organizations, including the UN, UNRWA, UNCHR, Al-Awda, Amnesty international, and Human Rights Watch.

1) A Brief History of the Palestinians Problem

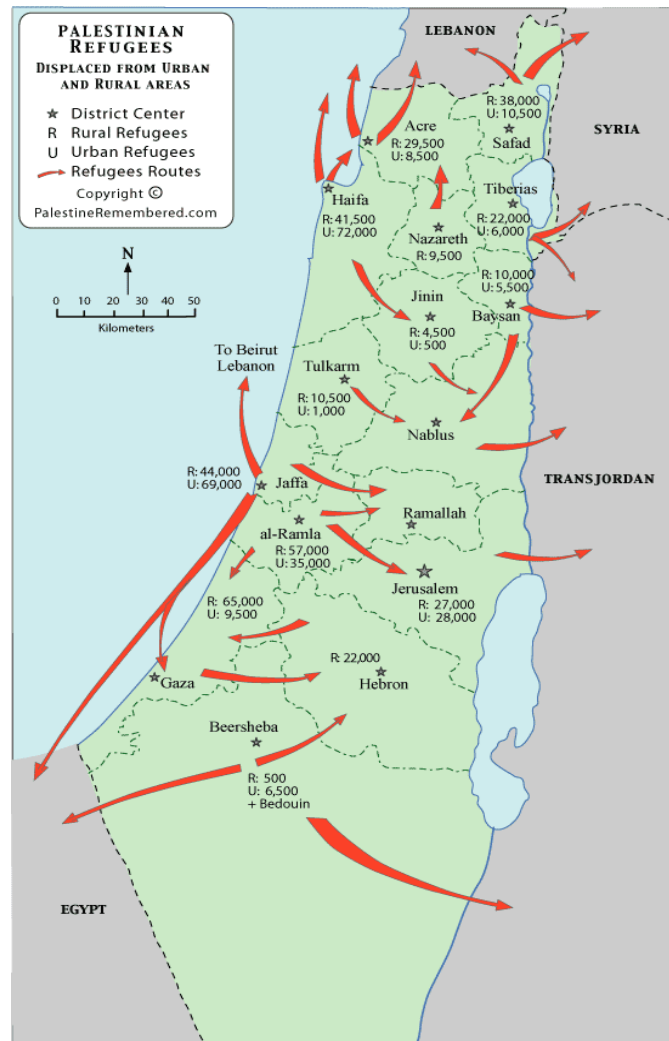
Prior to the 1940s, Palestine was a place where people of the three religions; Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, were able to live in relative peace together. There were Palestinian-Jews, Palestinian-Christians, and Palestinian-Muslims. However, the rise of Zionism changed this. Zionism is a political and social movement that believes Jews should have their own homeland to be free from persecution (Middleton, 2007). This has become a more pressing matter following the Holocaust. The Holocaust was the widest ethnic cleansing action committed by the Nazis toward various groups of people including communists, people with disabilities, homosexuals, Black, and Jewish. Jewish people paid the highest price of such criminal actions. Middleton (2007) points out that

in 1897, Zionists held their first conference to find land for the Jewish people to build a nation; the possibilities were Uganda, Argentina, or Palestine. The Zionists decided that Palestine would be the easier choice as it will ring for Jewish people as the “Promised Land” (Middleton, 2007). According to Boling (2003), in 1917 Britain’s Foreign Secretary, Arthur Balfour, wrote a letter, the Balfour Declaration, to a prominent leader of the Zionist movement, Lord Rothschild. This letter stated that Britain would “view with favor the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people” (p.73). However, Boling (2003) argues that the Balfour Declaration “was a letter written by a representative of the British government to a private person and therefore could not be considered binding upon any other states” (p.73). Even though Palestine was the Zionists’s aim long before the Holocaust, the Holocaust made it possible to persuade millions of Jews around the world to escape their countries of origin and immigrate to Palestine.

In the beginning, Zionism was a European nationalist movement but it turned into a colonialist one “when its leaders decided to implement their vision of national revival in the land of Palestine” (Pappe, 2004, p.35). The Zionist leadership started preparing the conversion of Palestine into a Jewish state as early as May 1942 (Kimmens, 1989). On November 29th 1947, the United Nations General Assembly passed resolution 181, known as the “Partition Resolution,” which recommended the partitioning of Palestine into two states: a Jewish state and a Palestinian state, with a special international regime for Jerusalem (Boling, 2003). In April 1947, Britain announced its intention of withdrawing its mandatory authority in Palestine (Boling, 2003). On May 14th, 1948 David Ben-Gurion, the first prime minister of Israel, who himself was born in Poland (Gelber, 2001),

proclaimed the new State of Israel in Palestine, which sparked the first Arab-Israeli war (Cleveland, 2004). Said (1994) highlights two facts about Ben-Gurion declaration, first that it did not announce the actual borders of the new state, second it made the state of Israel the only state in the world that do not posited “as the state of its citizens but the state of the whole Jewish people” (p.139). There are different points of view about the cause of the 1948 (Al-Nakba) war. Sabel (2003) claims “the root cause of the fighting that caused such tragedy to the Palestinian Arabs and such loss of lives to Israeli was the rejection by the Arab States” (p.53) of the UN Partition Resolution. On the other hand, Kimmens (1989) asserts that the Palestinians have argued that the partition imposes unilateral and intolerable sacrifices. The Palestinians do not understand why they should have been the ones to pay for the Holocaust (Kimmens, 1989). The partition “could only be imposed forcibly and against the will of the majority of inhabitants” (Boiling, 2003, p.74). Pappe (2004) states that the Israeli army used to surround each village on three sides forcing villagers to flight through the fourth side. He adds that when people refused to leave, the Israeli army used to force them onto lorries that drove them to the West Bank (p.137).

The following map indicates the routes that Palestinian refugees were forced to take during the 1948 war:



<http://www.palestineremembered.com/Acre/Maps/Story583.html>

In order to defend and to justify their position, the Zionists argued that Palestine is a land with no people for people with no land. Thus, there should be no problem if Jews make Palestine their home. However, the Zionists were well aware that Palestine was occupied by thousands of hundreds of Palestinians. Said (1979) pinpoints an article that was published by Ha-Aretz on April 4 of 1969, which included remarks made by Moshe Dayan, who was the Israeli Defence Minister in 1967, where he admits the following:

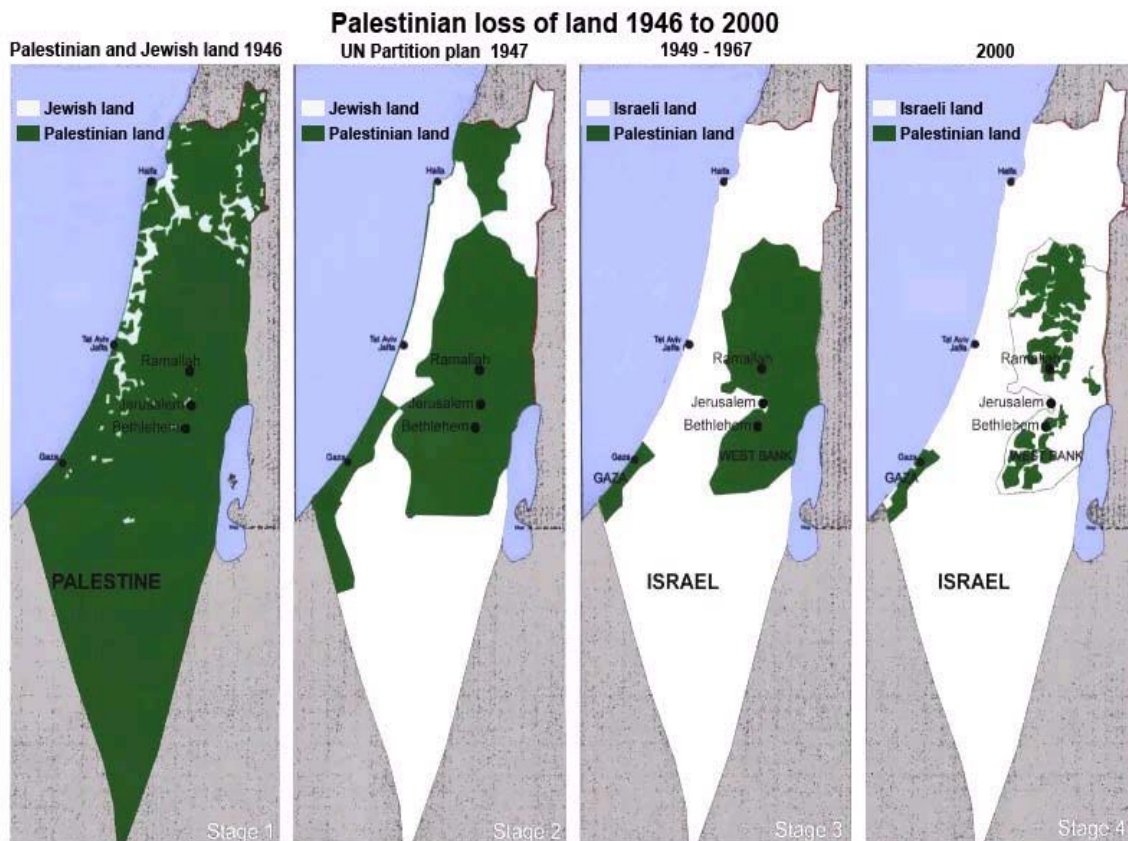
We came to this country which was already populated by Arabs, and we are establishing a Hebrew, that is a Jewish state here... you do not even know the names of these Arab villages, and I do not blame you, because these

geography books no longer exist; not only do the books not exist, the Arab villages are not there either... There is not one place built in this country that did not have a former Arab population (p.14).

As a result of the 1948 war, the Israelis did not only occupy the area that the UN partitions' plan allotted to the Jewish state, but even extended their control beyond this line in some regions (Gelber, 2001). More than 400 villages were destroyed and captured by the Israelis. According to Said (1979), professor Israel Shahak states that 400 villages were "destroyed completely, with their houses, garden-walls, and even cemeteries and tombstones, so that literally a stone does not remain standing, and visitors are passing and being told that 'it was all dessert'" (p.14). In consequence of the 1948 war, more than three-quarters of a million Palestinians became homeless (BADIL, n.d), with most of them moving to the West Bank and Gaza, and thousands moving to neighbouring Arab countries (Gelber, 2001). Hammer (2005) states that a limited number of Palestinian refugees or immigrants have been accepted by European countries, the United States, Canada and Australia. As soon as Israel proclaimed the law of return and the immigration of exiles, "Jewish people from all over the world, many with no ethnic relation to the holy land, came to make their home in historic Palestine, a land that they now called Israel" (Al-Araj, 1976, p.55). On the other hand, the Palestinians could not go back to their homeland, the law of return for Israelis became the law of no return for Palestinians (Al-Araj, 1976). As a result of the Nakba, "the land and return to it became significant national symbols" (Hammer, 2005, p.35). Despite the length of time that the Palestinians have been living in diaspora, they are still holding their home keys to their home a symbol of homeland, even though their homes have been destroyed.

The Palestinians' problems rapidly approached its catastrophic climax as many more Palestinians fled or were expelled from their original homes and villages and forced into refugee camps as a result of the 1967 War (Al-Naksa). McDowall (1998) highlights that in June 1967 Israel seized the rest of Palestine (Gaza Strip and the West Bank), Sinai from Egypt and the Golan Heights from Syria. According to (BADIL, n.d.), the 1967 war created more than 400,000 Palestinian refugees in addition to a smaller number of internally displaced person, who were forcibly evicted from their homes of origin in the territory that would become the state of Israel.

The following map indicates the continuous loss of land that Palestinians go through:



<http://www.palestineremembered.com/Maps>

3) The United Nations Definition of Palestinian Refugees

Refugees are people who leave their country of origin by force or out of fear to seek safety. Based on the 1951 United Nations Convention, the United Nations (UN) has a specific definition for refugees. According to the UN, a refugee is:

any person who, owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of particular social group, or political opinion, is outside the country of his or her nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail him- or herself of the protection of the country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it (McLean, 1996, p.423).

Castle (2002) argues that the international refugee regime does not recognize most of the reasons why the majority of forced migrants flee. This is especially the case of war, starvation, and environmental disasters which do not count for the purpose of the legal definition (Macklin, 1996). Kelley and Durieux (2004) pinpoint that both the UNHCR and the 1951 convention created after the World War II and they only reflect the major concern in Europe in that period. However, the United Nations have a specific definition for Palestinian refugees. According to the United Nations a Palestinian Refugee is “any person whose normal place of residence was Palestine during the period of June 1st 1946 to May 15th 1948 and who lost both his home and means of livelihood as a result of the 1948 conflict” (Zureik, 1996, p.9). Even though, the specific definition is more accurate as it explains why and who is to be considered as a refugee in the Palestinian case, the definition is argued to be inadequate as it does not cover all Palestinian refugees (Zureik, 1996). Instead, Zureik (1996) suggests a more detailed classification that groups Palestinian refugees into six categories: Palestinian refugees from the 1948 war who did not end up in UNRWA (United Nation Relief and Work

Agency for Palestinian Refugees in the Near East)¹ area of operations; those who remained in the area that became Israel (Internally displaced Palestinians); people from Gaza and the West Bank who were displaced as a result of the 1967 war; individuals who were deported by the Israeli from Gaza and the West Bank; people who left the occupied territories to study, work, or visit relatives and to whom Israel denied return (called late comers); and those who were outside Palestine when the, 1948 or the 1967 war broke out and were prevented from returning home by Israel. Evidently, all of these categories are also not covered by the UN general definition of a Palestinian refugee.

In the Palestinian mind, the term “refugee” does not “refer only to those who are living in camps or are defined by the UNRWA as refugees” but includes “anyone who fled or was forced out of [her or his] home, regardless of [her or his] official “status” today” (Friedman, 2003, p.66). According to Peteet (2005), there are 4,055,758 registered refugees of the nearly eight million displaced Palestinians. Therefore, there are many more Palestinians who would identify themselves as refugees than are identified by the United Nations figures (Friedman, 2003). Accordingly, Palestinians living in diaspora are not limited to the official numbers provided by the United Nations, but also include the millions of others who are displaced from their homes in Palestine regardless of their legal status.

By not recognizing these categories of Palestinians as refugees, the UN is forbidding them from having a clear legal status and from enjoying the protection of a powerful institution: the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) (Castle, 2002). However, even registered Palestinian refugees cannot be covered by the UNHCR while they are covered by the UNWRA. According to Akram (2002), “the

¹ The UNRWA is the commonly used term for UNRWAPRNE (Schiff, 1995).

UNHCR has no protection mandate over Palestinian refugees in the area where UNRWA operates” (p.39) and its protection mandate over them is very limited outside the UNRWA areas. At the same time, Karama (2008) asserts that Palestinian refugees who do not possess permanent documents, do not benefit from UNRWA since they are not registered, while they should be covered by the 1951 Refugee Convention. The United Nations created the UNRWA in 1949 to ensure basic levels of care of the Palestinian refugees were maintained (UNRWA, 2008). UNRWA’s tasks include: prevention of “conditions of starvation and distress among the refugees and to further conditions of peace and stability” (Said, 2003, p.90). Said (2003) adds that to this day, UNRWA operates the majority of recognized Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, the West Bank, and the Gaza Strip where it provides them with essential education, health, relief, and social services.

Zureik (1996) highlights the fact that there is also a possibility of undercounting Palestinian refugees by the UNRWA. This possibility is based on many factors, includes: first, the 1948 border line split many Palestinian border villages in the West Bank and Gaza and denied Bedouin access to their lands, which affected more than 300,000 Palestinians who did not covered under the UNRWA’s operation. Second, registered refugees do not include stateless Palestinians in places where UNRWA does not operate, such as Iraq, Egypt, North Africa and the Gulf countries. Many Palestinians did not register themselves with UNRWA, especially middle-class Palestinians and those who acquired citizenship in the Arab or Western World. Forth, the offspring of Palestinian refugee women lose their refugee status with UNRWA when their father is non-refugee.

Palestinian refugees are unlike most refugees as they are “exempt from the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and from the authority of the UNHCR” (Karama, 2008, p.8). Palestinian refugees receive services from the UNRWA only, which include three major types of humanitarian aid: education, health and social services (Karama, 2008). However, the UNRWA has no authority to offer protection and its aid services are very limited. According to Pappe (2004), UNRWA spending, especially prior to the 1967 war, was very limited. The yearly amount spent per refugee did not exceed 13 dollars, which was only enough to provide them with flour, sugar, rice, pulses and oil with no vegetables, fruit or meat (Pappe, 2004). In addition, the UNRWA can not engage in any kind of defence of the human rights of refugees. As well, it is different from the UNHCR as it cannot intervene legally on behalf of refugees (UNRWA, 2008). Palestinian refugees have no protection as according to Karama (2008), they are considered to be under the protection of the host country’s government, while the host country’s government considers them to be under the care of UNRWA.

The UNRWA may have been created in order to limit the level of protection and the type of services that Palestinian refugees could receive while being under the protection of UNHCR. While, the UNHCR international refugee protection “directs protection of refugees’ human rights on a daily basis” as granted by 1951 Refugee Convention, the UNRWA provides Palestinian refugees with only the basic needs (Akram, 2002, p.37). Even though, Loescher (2001) (citing Rieff, 1995; Ignatieff, 1997) argues that the UNHCR is not very successful in “protecting civilians from human rights abuses and ethnic cleansing” (p.44), there is no doubt that it would be stronger and more

effective than the UNRWA. Schiff (1995) asserts that the UNRWA is not powerful as it depends on states' annual contributions and is not allowed to borrow money.

The UNRWA could have been created, as well, to save the UNHCR from being in a different position than its founders. According to Loescher (2001), the western governments created the UNHCR in a way that it would not pose a threat to their sovereignty or to impose financial obligations. Loescher (2001) adds that the UNHCR "is in no position to challenge the policies of its founder and host governments and merely acts as an instrument of states" (p. 34). Loescher (2001) argues that the UNHCR will receive a great deal of criticism if it tries to act as a powerful actor with independent effects on world politics. Akram (2002) also argues that there are some members of the UN who are preventing the Palestinian refugees from returning. Instead of being a humanitarian organization, the UNHCR found itself working in highly militarized and politicized situations (Loescher, 2001). Based on Loescher's (2001) and Akram's (2002) arguments, it may be logical to assume that there is a political reason behind the bad humanitarian conditions that Palestinian refugees are facing.

4) The Right of Return

The issue of Palestinian refugees and their right of return is the most difficult issue to resolve between Palestinians and Israelis. Friedman (2004) asserts that "the right of return is one of the most difficult and sensitive topics for Palestinians and Israelis to deal with because it hits at the very heart of the conflict" (p.63). For Palestinians, the right of return is the best solution that can end their misery. Palestinians never let go of their feelings of attachment to their homeland and of their right and hope for return.

“Every people in the world lives in a place, except the Palestinians. The place lives in them” (Rubinstein in Abu Sitta, 2001, p.195). For Israelis, accepting the return of Palestinian refugees would change the demographic of the Israeli state – the state for the Jewish people. Israel does not let any Palestinian refugees return back, with limited exceptions made for a few cases of family reunification (Said, 2003). However, the right of return is a legal right for the Palestinians, especially since the majority of Palestinians did not chose to leave. In fact, 89% left due to excessive military actions wielded against them, 10% due to psychological pressure, and only 1% chose to leave voluntarily (Right of Return Conference, 2004).

On December 11, 1948, UN resolution 194 was issued to call for the return of Palestinians refugees to their homes and for compensation for those who suffered damages (Right of Return Conference, 2004). The Right of Return Conference (2004) stressed that compensation was not a substitute for the right of return. Friedman (2004) explains the UN resolution 194, he states:

[T]he refugees wishing to return to their homes and live at peace with their neighbors should be permitted to do so at the earliest practical date, and... compensation should be paid for the property of those choosing not to return and for loss of damage to property which, under principles of international law or in equity, should be made good by the governments or authorities responsible (Friedman, 2004, p.63).

Abu Sitta (2001) pinpoints that resolution 194 is three in one: “it affirms the right of refugees to return home...to their place of origin, provides welfare to the refugees until they return and creates a mechanism to effect return” (p.198). The resolution was affirmed by the entire international community, with the exception of Israel and the United States (Abu Sitta, 2001). Resolution 194 is very important for Palestinian

refugees as it acknowledges that they were forced out of their country and that they have the right of return as a population and not as individuals (Right of Return Conference, 2004). However, according to the UNRWA (2008), Israel rejected resolution 194 even though the United Nations has affirmed the resolution 110 times by an overwhelming majority.

The right of return is a major step needed to provide Palestinians with basic human rights. According to Said (1979), Article 13 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which was issued on December 10, 1948, states that “everyone has a right to freedom of movement and residence within the borders of each state and everyone has the right to leave any country, including his own, and to return to his country” (p.47). Said (1979) states that “The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966) further affirms these fundamental rights of people” (p.47). Furthermore these rights have been accepted and documented by the UN in Article 12, in 1976, to include that “Everyone shall be free to leave any country, including his own, and no one shall be arbitrarily deprived of the right to enter his own country” (Said, 1979, p.47). All international organizations for human rights as well as the UN could seek and push to implement the right of return as a human right for Palestinian refugees.

Chapter Two : Palestinians' Attachment to their Homeland

1) Palestinian Identity and Nationalism

Prior to 1948, Palestinians used to identify themselves “as Arabs or as originating from a particular place, class, or sect” (Hammer, 2005, p.31). Being a province of the Ottoman Empire from 1516 to 1917, does not make Palestine less Arab or Islamic (Said, 1979). However, Palestinians’ experience of the 1948 war is what made them different from other Arabs (Hammer, 2005). Palestinians considered themselves part of the Arab world and bonded “by shared history, language, religion, and the contours of culture. In exile, Arabness becomes ambiguous and contradictory” (Peteet, 2005, p.5). Peteet (2005) argues that the “expectation that Arabs would solve the Palestinians’ problems [was] dashed” with the defeat of the Arab armies in the 1967 war (p.5). Palestinians realized that they are on their own.

Thus, Palestinian identity is stressed as a result of Palestinians’ harsh experience of exile. Despite the fact that “Palestinian identities have developed differently in different host countries” (Hammer, 2005, p.220), Palestinians who lived in Arab counties perceive themselves as strictly Palestinians; they did not become Lebanese, Syrian, Jordanian, or Tunisian, even if they adopted certain values and lifestyles (Hammer, 2005, p.209). Palestinian identity remains as many of the Palestinian parents were able to pass on a sense of identity to their children (Hammer, 2005). Being forced to leave their land, Palestinians want to make sure that their children do not forget Palestine or even the Palestinian dream of returning home. Said (1979) argues that Palestinian children, wherever they are born, in New York or Amman, usually identify themselves as being

from Nablus, Ramallah, Jerusalem, etc. By passing their homeland attachment to their children, Palestinian adults want to make sure that in the future there will be a Palestine.

Peteet (2005) argues that Palestinian identity is not separate from Palestinians' "places of origin, desired places, or the contemporary landscape in which they reside", and that their space, place, and landscape haunt the Palestinians' imagination (p.27). Peteet (2005) further explains that even though "the space of Palestine may no longer contain identity for Palestinians, it [remains] relevant and resonant, standing as a point of departure" (p.29). According to Peteet (2005), there are many factors that influence the formation of a Palestinian identity. First is that "the refugees are from Palestine and nowhere else" (p.99). The denial of a Palestinian national identity following the displacement launched the objectification of their identities (Peteet, 2005). "To be Palestinian was now freighted with insecurity, contingency, and the fear of invisibility" (p.99). The social and cultural crafting of place in the camps constitutes the second factor. Third [is] the militant anti-colonial political activities that unfolded in these places were productive of identities" (p.100). Being attached to their Palestinian identity is a form of resistance that Palestinians chose to use while being in diaspora.

The ongoing political situation creates a special kind of relationship between Palestinians. Hammer (2005) argues that there is a sense of bonding among Palestinians wherever they meet. Their shared experience is what makes them bond together. Palestinians in the diaspora have a sense of shared identity and a sense of belonging to one another. Despite the fact that Palestinians were physically dispersed all over the Middle East and beyond, "the shared events of 1948 [and 1967] brought the Palestinians

closer to each other in terms of their collective consciousness” (Khalidi, 1997 cited in Hammer, 2005, p.35).

Palestinians in diaspora are able to maintain transnational networks which according to Dorai (2003) are characterized by efficiency and permanence and are based on a shared identity common to all Palestinian migrants. Dorai (2003) illustrates that

The overwhelming need to belong to the same group is related to three factors, namely: the shared and transmitted experience of the Nakba, an Arabic term that means catastrophe used by the Palestinians to designate the 1948 exodus; living in the camps that are considered a symbol of the exodus; and the gatherings based on the village of origin, making it possible to recreate the geography of Palestine in exile. All [of] these elements, with strong symbolic contents, structure the Palestinian solidarity networks at a local level as well as at a transnational one (p.26).

In terms of Palestinian transnational identity while living in host countries, many young Palestinians, especially the educated ones, develop more and more personal and professional mobility (Hammer, 2005, p.219). Hammer (2005) adds that they “consider it possible to live abroad and still be Palestinian” (p.219). Some of the Palestinians who are living in diaspora “already have a transnational identity and feel connected to more than one place in the world. They also possess the cross-cultural skills to navigate different societies and cultural settings” (Hammer, 2005, p.219). Hammer (2005) argues that some Palestinians see their transnational identity as a blessing because of the wider availability of choices and opportunities offered to them. However, others who prefer to settle down and establish their professional and personal lives in one country see it as a burden.

There is a difference between Palestinians who grew up in Arab countries and those who grew up in Western countries. For example, Palestinians who grew up in Arab

countries know more about Palestinian politics because they were raised in a Palestinian community (Hammer, 2005), which keeps them connected to their homeland. As well, sharing the same language makes it easier for Palestinians to integrate within Arab countries as “language can reflect the level of integration into a host country as well as the differentiation between native culture and host culture” (Hammer, 2005, p.172). Furthermore, there are many other little things, such as customs, music, and even food that can make the integration of Palestinians in Arab countries easier. As most other people living away from their country of origin, some Palestinians believe that eating ethnic food could “make you” a Palestinian and that the feeling of home is related to Palestinian or Middle Eastern food (Hammer, 2005). Hammer (2005) further explains:

The mother cooked traditional food; the celebrations and family gatherings provided a sense of community and separated home from the outside world. Even for the Palestinian families in Arab countries, preparing Palestinian dishes was considered part of preserving their cultural identity (p.183).

Though, there are always specific traditions and a cultural identity that distinguishes Palestinians from other Arabs. Hammer (2005) argues that for Palestinians, hospitality is “to put before a guest more than is needed, more than will be consumed, more than can be afforded. Wherever there are Palestinians, the same signs of hospitality and offering keep appearing, the same expectant intimacy” (p.183). Despite the similarities between Arab countries, each country has its own cultural identity and indeed Palestinians did not let their cultural identity disappear.

In Western countries, Palestinians have other ways to maintain transnational ties with their Palestinian identity and culture. For example, Hammer (2005) points out how in Canada, a Palestinian family opened a Palestinian restaurant not only to provide

traditional Palestinian food but also to provide a meeting place for community members, similar to the function of a coffee house in the Middle East. In addition, he explains how Palestinians, especially those who live in a Western culture, make sure that even the interior design of their homes is Palestinian by having Palestinian posters, pictures, flags, carpets, and even argileh (a water pipe). Hammer (2005) reinforces this idea of how much this is important for Palestinians by citing the words of a young Palestinian, living in the United States, about Palestinian decoration: “Every time we came here we would bring more things, and people would come into our house and say this is really nice. We would tell them it is from our land, from back home” (p.185). Palestinians would hang on to any tie that makes them feel that they exist and still have a home.

Hammer (2005) argues that the future of a Palestinians transnational identity between homeland and diaspora is inevitable since many are concerned with developments in the homeland as well as the diaspora country. Hammer (2005) adds, “being between two homes can be experienced as a comfortable space to inhabit” (p.218). In fact, transnationality is expressed by Palestinians’ interest in owning property in the host countries. Hanafi (2007) argues that many Palestinians show their desire to keep the property they have in the host country and maybe rent it when they return to their homeland. Hanafi (2007) argues that for the Palestinians, “the place of birth plays a major role in the degree of connection that is maintained with family members abroad” (P.52). For example, according to Hanafi (2007), “79 % of Palestinians born in Jordan retain ties with their close relatives in Jordan, even though they no longer live there...[however,] for those who return to Palestinian territories, their relations with Jordan diminished with time” (p.52). Hanafi (2007) clarifies that this is mainly due to the

impossibility of crossing the border to visit each other. For Palestinians, not only in Palestine but also in many Arab countries, it is almost impossible to travel freely due to a lack of legal documents pushing many Palestinians to choose to immigrate or to apply for refugee status to Western countries where they can, at least, get a passport or proof of identity. However, it is almost impossible for a Palestinian refugee to be accepted by Western countries. Akram (2002) states that, with the exception of Canada and Greece, most claims by Palestinians for refugees status get rejected or require difficult proceedings and lengthy immigration detention, where the claimants have no right to work or to travel. Legally, “Palestinians cannot claim the original persecution by Israel because they are not Israeli nationals and Israel is not their place of “last habitual residence”” (Akram, 2002, p.44). When Palestinians suffer and get expelled by host countries, they cannot be qualified as refugees as host countries are consider non-state actors. Basically, Palestinians are not matching the circumstances that the UN identifies as persecution situation, therefore, their refugee status usually get rejected.

Experiencing diaspora can either strengthen the identity and the attachment of specific groups to their country of origin or weaken it, and in the Palestinian case it certainly strengthens it. Palestinians have insisted on protecting their national identity, which has been reoriented as a transnational identity. Nationalism in diaspora is a strategy of resistance and Palestinian nationalism is one of the most obvious examples of nation-building in exile (Lindholm Schulz and Hammer, 2003). Smith (1972) argues that nationalist ideology is a natural response to foreign oppression (p.65). Nationalism is “a historic phenomenon that has emerged as a response to special political, economic, and social conditions” (Snyder, 1968, p.74). According to Muslih (1988), Zionism did not

create Palestinian nationalism but it directed Palestinians' focus toward their national struggle (p.217). Diasporic nationalism is a reflection of homeland nationalism that had emerged even before the 1948 war. For example, Muslih (1988) adds that in the period 1918-1920, the Palestinian nationalists' main concern was to prevent the implantation of Zionist entity in Palestine. Pappé (2004) lists a number of nationalist activities that existed long before the 1948 war such as the 1936 revolt.

Nationalism creates a solid ground that unites people based on human characteristic, geographical or historical base in order to use this unification to achieve a specific purpose. According to Snyder (1968), nationalism is:

a product of political, economic, social, and intellectual factors at a certain stage in history, is a condition of mind, feeling, or sentiment of a group of people living in a well-defined geographical area, speaking a common language, possessing a literature in which the aspirations of the nation have been expressed, attached to common traditions and common customs, venerating its own heroes, and, in some cases, having a common religion (p.196).

Muslih (1988) argues that after the demise of the Ottoman Empire, the Arabs have been attracted more to the idea of separate territorial nation-states than the idea of one single state. The destiny and the responsibility of each territorial nation-state lay with the native people of the land that needed to be liberated, defended and rebuilt (Muslih, 1988). However, Muslih (1988) states that after 1920, like the nationalist movements leaders of the neighboring Arab countries, "the Palestinian political leadership continued to adopt in principle the goals of Arab nationalism" despite the fact that "the ideology and organization of the Palestinian Arab national movement developed along Palestinian lines" (p.217).

Arab nationalism is associated with many factors such as anti-colonialism, regionalism, socialism, religion, and language. It began to emerge during the eighteenth century under the Ottoman rule. When the Ottoman rule was undermined, Arab nationalism rose (Alnasrawi, 1991, p.25). Arab Nationalism has used Arab identity for political purposes; it has used common characters such as language, religion, and culture to further its cause. Pan-Arabism is a secular and socialist movement that believes in the unity of the Arab people and nations and has strongly opposed Western countries involvement in the Arabs cultural, economical and political issues. Said (1994) argues that “during the [Jamal Abd El] Nasser period, Palestinians were caught up in a general wave of anti-imperialist, Arab nationalist sentiment... then, after 1967, Palestinian nationalism asserted itself in the breach made by the Arabs’ defeat” (p.35). The fall of Jerusalem in the 1967 war was the greatest symbolic humiliation for Arab nationalism. The 1967 war marked the end of the Pan-Arab dream. The Palestinian-Israeli conflict and the American invasion of Iraq have weakened Arab Nationalism, as Arabs feel that they are unable to help either the Palestinians or the Iraqis.

Palestinian nationalism became further threatened by being linked to terrorism. Said (1994) argues that “for their pains in having devised a theory of armed struggle against Israel, the Palestinian became associated in the world’s eyes with “terrorism” ” (p.35). The negative image of terrorists is being used to forbid Palestinians from having the right to resist. However, the more Palestinians feel that their nationalism is being threatened, the more they protect it. Facing such circumstances pushes Palestinians further to fight for their right of return. According to Smith (1972), being dominated by outsiders is ‘unnatural’, which directs nationalism aims toward fighting this domination

and building a nation. He adds that nationalism “regrets the lack of freedom, the lack of community, the loss of identity” (Smith, 1979, p.29). Having no freedom and being pressured to lose their identity, Palestinians became more attached to their homeland.

2) Palestinians’ Perception of Home

The typical dictionary definition refers to “home” as “a place, region or state to which one properly belongs, on which one’s affections center, or where one finds refuge, rest or satisfaction” (Morley, 2000, p.16). However, in host Arab countries, Palestinian refugees are not able to find an alternative home where they can rest and be satisfied. Their situation in host Arab countries did not always go smoothly. In fact, they were always vulnerable to the political situation of the host country and its relationship with the PLO. As a result, it was and is impossible for Palestinians to feel at “home” while living in host countries with such bad conditions.

Furthermore, Hammer (2005), citing Rapport and Dawson (1998), stresses that “Home” is a “safe and still place to leave and return to, and a principal focus of one’s concern and control” (p. 206). However, Palestinians were forced to leave their homes and are still not allowed to return. Hammer (2005) argues that “home” provides human beings with a sense of stability and that the “concept of homeland and home, the feeling of belonging somewhere and being relatively comfortable and safe, are subjective and individual, though they can be shared and shaped by groups as well” (p.207). However, none of the countries that Palestinians are living in are able to provide them with stability, comfort, safety, or a sense of belonging, which is why Palestinians cannot call any place home. A Palestinian living in Jordan explains how he and other Palestinians of his

generation do not feel at home in any place and that they are only living in a transnational place.

I have never felt any loyalty to any place. It is as if being homeless has been my homeland, a kind of transnational place where I, along with other Palestinians of my generation, have felt the same sense of at-homeness that other folk, with a state of their own have had (Hammer, 2005, p. 200).

In addition, many Palestinians have remained in camps for the past sixty years and certainly camp life does not provide Palestinians with the stability or a sense of home. Furthermore, the attitude of the host countries strongly determines the transnational activities of Palestinian refugees (Dorai, 2003). Therefore, Palestinian refugees' social relations create a "transnational community not bonded by the geographical borders of either the countries of origin or the countries of settlement" (Dorai, 2003, p.25). Palestinians in camps feel that they are connected to each other because of the shared situation and exile experience they have been through. Even though millions of Palestinian refugees were able to pull themselves from the camp life, over a million still remain in the camps. Palestinian refugees were able to pull themselves from poverty mostly in host countries where they have the right to education and the right to work. For example, the following chart indicates that in Jordan, a very low percentage, around 17.6%, of Palestinian refugees remain in camps. That is due to the fact that Jordan is offering Palestinian refugees equal opportunities as its citizens (UNRWA, 2008). On the other hand, in Lebanon, the majority (around 53%) remain in the camps, as Lebanon does not guarantee Palestinian refugees the right to education nor to work and makes it difficult for the UNRWA to apply its rules and programs (UNRWA, 2008). According to Karama (2008), the difficult living conditions that Palestinian refugees are facing in Lebanon is

caused by the absence of jobs, which led to “social fragmentation, desperation, crime, a rising extremist religious discourse, and social problems previously unknown in the refugee camps” (p. 13).

According to the following table, which is provided by the UNRWA (2008) website, only 1,363,469 out of the 4,618,141 registered Palestinian refugees are living in camps:

Field of Operations	Official Camps	Registered families in camps	Registered Refugees in Camps	Registered Refugees
Jordan	10	66,587	335,307	1,930,703
Lebanon	12	53,746	220,809	416,608
Syria	9	28,194	123,646	456,983
West Bank	19	41,526	191,408	754,263
Gaza Strip	8	96,995	492,299	1,059,584
Agency total	58	287,048	1,363,469	4,618,141

Figures as of 30 June 2008

However, there is no reason for the Arab countries to believe that the Palestinians want to resettle forever in the host countries. The Palestinians themselves oppose resettlement in the Arab states. The way that Palestinians were driven away from their homes makes them obsessed with the idea of return: “The traumatic loss of the homeland strengthens the connection of refugees and exiles to the homeland, and it continues to

play an important role in their individual and collective imagination, constituting a central aspect of their self-definition” (Hammer, 2005, p.50). Said (1979) argues that “the Palestinian does not construct his life outside Palestine [as] he cannot free himself from the scandal of his total exile [and] all his institutions repeat the fact of his exile” (p.154). The expectations of Palestinians in the diasporic countries that were shaped by the image of a homeland were a defining factor for a possible return: “Palestine as a symbolic, imagined, and real homeland is central to Palestinians self-definitions” (Hammer, 2005, p.221). The fact that Palestinians were forced to leave Palestine creates a specific image for them of their homeland, which is symbolized by their image of “Palestine”. The strong attachment to Palestine, “especially in its symbolic terms, can be...considered political, even if it is not directly translated into active participation” (Hammer, 2005, p.170). All Palestinians, despite their religion, age, beliefs, experience, and the host countries where they have lived, share one thing: their love and attachment to their homeland. For Palestinians, home is Palestine and Palestine is home.

Chapter Three: The Current Wave of Palestinian Refugees: Palestinian Refugees in Iraq

1) Palestinians in Arab Host Countries

Palestinians in many Arab states such as Jordan, Lebanon, Egypt, Kuwait, and Iraq have been blamed, rightly or wrongly, for internal instability and political problems (Zuriek, 1996). Not only that, but also Palestinians have not been free to make their own political decisions and in many cases Palestinian refugees have had to pay the price for the PLO's political positions. Repeatedly, Palestinians find themselves in a situation where they are forced to leave the host country for no crime they have committed. Arab countries "have tended to respond to any political action by the PLO or by Palestinian factional groups by restricting the rights of all Palestinians or expelling them altogether" (Akram, 2002, p.44). Consequently, Palestinians become refugees again and again and have always wondered where their journey will take them to and for how long they will be allowed to stay there. The Arab world did not want to absorb the Palestinian refugees as by absorbing them Palestinians will lose their political rights to their land. As the following cartoon by Bukhari (graphic # 1) demonstrates, Palestinians find themselves in a never ending circuit of movement.



Graphic # 1 (Cartoon by Baha Bukhari, www.baha-cartoon.net)

Despite the fact that members of the Arab League signed the Casablanca Protocol in 1965 (El-Abed, n.d), Palestinians in most Arab countries do not enjoy most of the rights that the protocol entitled them to. According to El-Abed (n.d.),

The Casablanca Protocol called upon Arab governments to grant Palestinians residence permits, the right to work and the right to travel on par with national citizens, while at the same time emphasizing the importance of preserving Palestinian identity and maintaining the refugee status of Palestinians residing in host countries. On paper, at least, the members of the Arab League expressed their solidarity with and sympathy for Palestinians and their rights. On a practical level, however, the Casablanca Protocol was not upheld (p.5).

Even though individual refugees settled in and outside the region, the majority hardly mixed with their hosts both in Arab countries and in the West Bank and Gaza (Gelber, 2001). Gelber (2001) stresses that the Palestinian refugees remained separated socially and geographically in their camps, expecting their return. Hammer (2005), citing Sayigh (1977), states that:

Palestinians were confronted with the actual experience of living in Arab host countries such as Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, and Egypt. The tense relationship with the host society and developments within the Palestinian communities enforced the development of Palestinian national consciousness (p.31).

Despite the fact that Arabs are not able to allocate the right of return for Palestinians, Gillespie (2007) argues that Arab countries do not want Palestinians to get too comfortable so their desire for the right of return is not diminished. The treatment that the Palestinians experience in host countries is considered a pushing factor for Palestinians to hang on to their national identity and to not let go of their dream of going back to Palestine. According to Akram (2002), Arab states see the issue of return as a

legal matter, requiring Israel to allow people who expelled earlier a safe return. In addition, the Arab States believe that the UN holds a secondary responsibility by issuing Resolution 181, which legitimized Zionist claims to Palestinian land. As a result, for years, the Arab states refused to contribute to UNRWA or to solve the Palestinian refugee question (BADIL, 2005).

The Palestinian refugees' situation in host Arab countries has varied depending on the treatment of the host country. Even though Article 1 of the 1961 Convention of Human Rights requires countries to grant nationality to people born in their territories to those who will be considered stateless otherwise, and Article 9 prohibits denial of nationality based on race, religion or political opinion (Akram, 2001, p.171), the Palestinians have no agency to enforce their rights under the convention as they are not covered by the UNHCR, and the UNRWA only assists for their basic needs. The following is an overview of the treatment of Palestinians in various Arab host countries.

Jordan

Jordan was the only Arab country that automatically offered the Palestinians citizenship and a full place in the society. As a result, Palestinian refugees' situation is better in Jordan than in any other Arab country. However, "Jordan does not provide automatic citizenship to Palestinians who took up residency in Jordan after 1954" (BADIL, 2005, p.16). Based on BADIL (2005), in 1983, Jordan created a dual card system to differentiate between Palestinian citizens living in Jordan and Palestinian citizens living in the West Bank. Palestinians living in Jordan were provided with a yellow card that represents their full residency and citizenship status. Palestinians living

in the West Bank were provided with a green card to indicate that they are entitled to visit Jordan for short periods but have no right to live there.

By being expelled from their country, “the Palestinians were external to the land they hoped to liberate...therefore they required a base of operations in one of the Arab states bordering Israel” (Cleveland, 2004, p.362). The Jordanian government however, as other bordering countries, “could hardly be expected to welcome bands of armed guerrillas determined to operate independently and to conduct military action against Israel” (Cleveland, 2004, p.362). Cleveland (2004) points out that by 1970, the Palestinian commandos established their own administrative networks in the refugee camps and were operating independently of King Hussein’s authority. On September 15, 1970, the Jordanian troops directed their forces against all Palestinians in Jordan, “making no distinction between civilians and armed guerrillas ... bombarded the refugee camps in and around Amman and relentlessly pursued the commando groups throughout the country” (Cleveland, 2004, p.362). By the time the cease-fire was arranged, ten days later, more than 3,000 Palestinians were killed (Cleveland, 2004). Therefore, September 1970 is called Black September. The PLO was expelled from Jordan, but was able to recover from Black September and transferred its organizational base to Lebanon (Cleveland, 2004). However, Black September will always remain as a reminder for Palestinians that Jordan is not their “home”.

Lebanon

Lebanon has absorbed many Palestinian refugees coming from northern Palestine; from Haifa, Acre and Galilee (Gelber, 2001). After the arrival of guerrillas from Jordan,

many tracts of south Lebanon informally came under PLO control (McDowall, 1998, p.11). Camp life in Lebanon has been a war zone area for years. Some of the Palestinian refugee camps, such as Sabra and Shateela, were devastated and demolished during the 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon and were the scenes of a major massacre (UNRWA, 2008). According to the UNRWA, 12,540 people were registered as Palestinian refugees in the Shateela camp and around the same number were registered in the Sabra camp during the invasion (UNRWA, 2008). During the years of conflict, the camps were frequently targeted, which resulted in the destruction of property, and the displacement of refugees. Israel's invasion left 19,000 Palestinians dead and as a result, the PLO had to withdraw to Tunis (McDowall, 1998).

The situation of Palestinian refugees continues to be very grave in Lebanon. Said (2003) states that "fifty-six percent of a total of 387,000 Palestinian refugees in Lebanon live in the twelve refugee camps run and organized by UNRWA" (p.91). Palestinians in Lebanon suffer different kinds of discrimination. For example, Palestinian refugees in Lebanon are not allowed to get the same kind of jobs as the Lebanese. In Lebanon, Palestinian refugees can only work in the "UNRWA, the Palestinian Red Crescent Society, or unsteady, low-paying, dangerous, and unregulated work, primarily in construction and seasonal agriculture" (Said, 2003, p.91).

The Lebanese experience added to the "collective loss and trauma of exile", and fuelled nationalism and militancy among Palestinians (Peteet, 2005, p.99). In Peteet's (2005) words, "[t]he contours of their interaction with the host Lebanese also endowed Palestinian identity with the specificities of place, otherness, and power, as did the collective experience of UNRWA institutions" (p.99). Peteet (2005) points out that even

though Palestinians reside in Lebanon, they do not feel that they belong to it: “In Lebanon, Palestinians’ lives have been punctuated by persistent violence, uncertainty, and continuing displacement” (p.102). The violence and uncertainty that the Palestinians experience in Lebanon make it very difficult for them to feel that Lebanon could be “home”. At the same time the situation stresses their Palestinian identity.

Egypt

In Egypt, around 13,000 Palestinians fled to safety as a result of the 1948 war and another 33,000 fled as a result of the 1967 war (El-Abed, 2005). In 1950, Egypt signed an agreement with the UNRWA that allowed it to operate in Gaza but not in Egypt in order to avoid creating suitable conditions for Palestinians to remain in Egypt (El-Abed, n.d.). The situation of Palestinian refugees improved during the Nasser regime. Nasser (1918-1970) was “assertive, independent, and engaged in the construction of a new society freed of the imperial past and oriented toward a bright Arab future” (Cleveland, 2004, p.301). He ruled Egypt between 1954 and 1970. Nasser fought in Palestine in the 1948 war and suffered the humiliation of being defeated by Israel (Cleveland, 2004). For Palestinians in Egypt, the years between 1962 and 1978 were the ‘Golden Era’ where they had the same rights as Egyptian citizens, except for being able to hold a passport; instead Palestinians held Egyptian travel documents (El-Abed, n.d). Nasser was one of the few Arab leaders who deeply cared about Palestine which made him to be considered a hero among the Palestinians.

According to El-Abed (2005), after Jamal Abdel-Nasser became president of Egypt in 1954, Palestinians were allowed to work in trade, industry, and transport

between Gaza and Egypt. As a result, when the 1967 war occurred, they settled in Egypt due to the professional networks they had established. Nasser's implemented policies "welcomed Palestinians and treated them as if they were Egyptian nationals" (p.17). However, after the era of Nasser and specifically in 1978, laws and regulations were amended to treat Palestinians as foreigners. The regulations created as a result of both the Camp David Peace Accords, which Egypt signed with Israel, and the killing of the Egyptian Minister of Culture by a Palestinian group (El-Abed, 2005). Palestinians' rights to free education, employment and even residency were taken away from them. In addition, they lost their rights to public services (El-Abed, 2005). When a Palestinian commits a crime, Palestinians as a group find themselves in a situation where they have to pay the price of the crime. El-Abed (2005) argues that Palestinians in the Arab countries were victimized as there are no clear guidelines or legislation to govern the treatment of the Palestinian refugees in host countries.

Kuwait

Palestinians settled in Kuwait from the 1948 war until the 1991 Gulf War. A new wave of Palestinian refugees was created during the first Gulf War. Even though the PLO called the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait illegal, it "voted against the Arab League resolution condemning the Iraqi invasion" (Cleveland, 2004, p.481). The Palestinian authority was against launching military actions toward Iraq, and against Arab countries participation (Cleveland, 2004). After the Gulf War, Kuwaiti authorities expelled Palestinians for their support of the Iraqi government. According to El-Najjar (2001), in 1990, there were around 450,000 Palestinians in Kuwait. Only 26,000 Palestinians

remained in Kuwait by 1995 (El-Najjar, 2001). Some argue that the real reason behind the expulsion of Palestinians in Kuwait was the demographic challenge that Palestinians created in Kuwait (El-Najjar, 2001). While there were only 564,262 Kuwaitis, Palestinians numbered 450,000 (El-Najjar, 2001). El-Najjar (2001) argues that instead of solving the problem by providing eligible Palestinians with Kuwaiti citizenship, the Kuwaiti government wanted to get rid of the entire Palestinian population. El-Najjar (2001) suggests that the Palestinian authority's support of Iraq was the perfect excuse that Kuwait needed to evict all Palestinians together. As a result of the 1991 Gulf War, Palestinians were evacuated from Kuwait and around 5,000 Palestinian refugees escaped the situation in Kuwait to Iraq (Mohammad, 2007). Mohammad (2007) adds that many of the Palestinians, who were living in Kuwait, left to the Palestinian territories after the OSLO Accord in 1996.

Despite the fact that there is no indication that the Palestinian authority's support for Saddam Hussein exceeded being verbal, Palestinians paid a high price. The treatment of the Palestinians in many of the Arab countries worsened as a result of Palestinians' support for the Iraqi President during the 1991 Gulf-War (El-Abed, 2005). Palestinians supported Saddam Hussein during the first Gulf War because of the aggressive propaganda he launched against Israel and the US in early 1990, which improved his prestige and pictured him as the only national leader who would liberate the Palestinians (Cleveland, 2004, p.478). Such propaganda made Saddam Hussein popular for many Arabs but mainly for Palestinians (Cleveland, 2004). Arabs were not satisfied due to the fact that the US was quick in enforcing the UN resolution against Iraq but never enforced the UN resolution on Israel (Cleveland, 2004). For Palestinians, Saddam Hussein was a

nationalist leader, who identified the Palestinian problem as the responsibility of all Arabs. Saddam Hussein fashioned himself as a champion of the Palestinian cause (Shadid, 2007).

In addition, there were many other small incidents that Palestinians had while living in Arab Host countries. For example, Akram (2002) states that in 1995, “Libya expelled several hundred Palestinians in retaliation for the establishment of the Palestinian Authority under the Oslo Accord” (p.44). Libya did not approve the OSLO Accord and Palestinians in Libya were the ones who paid the price. Therefore, the rights of Palestinians, living in Arab countries, are always under the threat of being taken away. Palestinians can not suspect when and why their rights will be denied.

In summary, Palestinians could not settle permanently and effectively in neighboring Arab countries. While their attachment to their homeland played role in this process, their attempts to develop a distinct identity and organizing a national liberation movement also put them in a collusion course with some of the host countries. Hammer (2005) argues that Palestinians “subsequent experience as refugee exiles in neighboring Arab countries hindered the initial stages of development of a Palestinian national movement” (p.219). Examples, such as, the Black September and the 1982 war in Lebanon added to their isolation and despair while leading to longing for homeland (Hammer, 2005). Despite the high price that the Palestinians paid, they could not let go of their national identity.

Palestinian refugees have suffered in all the Arab host countries. Even where they had periods of relative comfort, their situation remained perilous and unstable. Their experiences demonstrate that resettling in other Arab countries has not been an effective

solution, it also indicate the humanitarian problems that Palestinians face in host countries. In the following section, I will offer a review of the experience of Palestinian refugees in Iraq.

2) Palestinian Refugees in Iraq

Palestinian refugees settled in Iraq from 1948 to 2003. Human Rights Watch (2006) divided the Palestinian Refugee population in Iraq into four groups: Palestinian refugees as a result of the 1948 war; refugees as a result of the 1967 war; a number of Palestinian refugees who were living in other countries, who went to Iraq to study or to work and resettled there; and finally, those who were forced to leave Kuwait and other Gulf States as a result of the 1991 Gulf War. There were more than 34,000 registered Palestinian refugees living in Iraq since the 1948 Arab-Israeli war (Human Rights Watch, 2006). In addition, there were around 80,000 – 90,000 Palestinian refugees that were living in Iraq but were registered as refugees in other Arab countries, such as Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, and Egypt (Karkar, 2007). Plus 5,000 Palestinian refugees from Kuwait (Mohammad, 2007).

The first wave of Palestinian refugees settled in Iraq after the 1948 Arab-Israeli War. According to Human Rights Watch (2006), “during the 1948 war, the Iraqi army fought in the area from Haifa to Jenin, and when it withdrew, took some Palestinian refugees with it and that is why many Iraqi Palestinian families are originally from Haifa” (para 4). At the beginning, Palestinians resisted the Israeli attacks on their villages but then they were forced to flee to Jenin where the Iraqi army was present. Palestinian men were incorporated into special units in the Iraqi army, while Palestinian women and

children were evacuated to Iraq. When the Iraqi army withdrew from Haifa, Yaffa, and Jenin, it took Palestinian men with it (Ziadah, 2007). Karkar (2007) states that Palestinians in Iraq lived quiet and respectable lives, mostly in the urban areas of Baghdad, waiting for the day when they could return to their country.

Integration of the Palestinians to Iraq was very effective and successful. According to Mohammad (2007), Palestinians in Iraq spoke with an Iraqi dialect, got their education in Iraqi schools and universities, and married to Iraqis, especially the second and third generation. Palestinians in Iraq are a largely well-educated population (Karkar, 2007). This was due to the fact that Palestinians, not only those living in Iraq but from all over the world, were granted the right to free education in Iraq (Mohammad, 2007). After 1994, when the Palestinian authority signed the Oslo Accord with Israel, Iraq limited this right to Palestinians living in Iraq (Mohammad, 2007). Palestinians again paid the price for a political decision made by the Palestinian authority which the host country did not approve of.

In Iraq, Palestinians were not assisted by the UNRWA as Iraq preferred to assist their needs itself rather than sign the agreement (Human Rights Watch, 2006). Palestinians in Iraq enjoyed many rights, such as the right to work and full access to healthcare, education, and government services. In addition, they were issued special travel documents (Ziadah, 2007). Basically, Palestinians enjoyed the same rights as Iraqi citizens without being granted citizenship (BADIL, 2005). They enjoyed a high standard of treatment that was “mainly guided by the Casablanca Protocol ratified by the League of Arab States in 1965” (Wengert and Alfaro, 2006, p.19). All Palestinians in Iraq, including Iraqi-born Palestinians who were registered as refugees and not as citizens,

were granted travel documents but not Iraqi passports (Human Rights Watch, 2006). Travel documents restricted the Palestinians and made traveling outside Iraq very hard (Human Rights Watch, 2006). However, this was standard practice for the Palestinian refugees throughout the Middle East. As mentioned before, Jordan was the only country in the region that granted Palestinian refugees citizenship (Human Rights Watch, 2006). Even though granting Palestinian refugees citizenship will provide them with many rights, including the right of mobility, Palestinians were not granted Iraqi citizenship in order to avoid reducing the pressure on the Israeli government regarding the issue of Palestinians right of return. Citizenship was not provided to Palestinians in most of the Arab countries for political reasons. Being citizens of other countries may cause Palestinians to lose their right of return. The PLO, the Arab States, and Palestinians themselves have opposed getting another citizenship for the same reason.

As an emergency measure to the 1948 and 1967 wars, the Iraqi government housed thousands of Palestinian refugees in government shelters, such as former schools or former orphanages (Human Rights Watch, 2008). Mohammad (2007) states the condition of these underground shelters was quite uncomfortable. After visiting these shelters in 1967, Habobi, the Iraqi Social Services Minister back then, stated that these shelters were not suitable for human-beings; they were very crowded (7-12 people live in 3.25 m²), where there was no access to the sun or to clean air (p.29), which makes these underground shelters even more humiliating than living in camps (Qudsayi cited in Mohammad, 2007). These shelters had no water, electricity, or other facilities². To solve this humanitarian problem, the Iraqi government built low-rise buildings and

² Three of these shelters still exist, where around 800 Palestinian refugees live (Mohammad, 2007)

provided inhabitants with basic services such as water, sewage disposal and electricity to accommodate Palestinian refugees (Human Rights Watch, 2008). Later the government rented private homes free of charge to Palestinian refugees. Around 63% of Palestinian refugees benefited from government-provided housing (Human Rights Watch, 2006).

A draw back to the Palestinian refugees' situation in Iraq happened in 1994, when the Iraqi government issued a law where it forbade non-Iraqis from owning property in Iraq without excluding or taking into consideration the Palestinian refugees' situation (Mohammad, 2007). As a result of this law, Palestinians lost many of their rights. For example, they were not allowed to invest their money, to own a car, to work on government projects, to get a work permit, or even to operate their own businesses. This dramatically increased the poverty among Palestinians in Iraq (Mohammed, 2007). Mohammad (2007) argues that Iraq claimed that the law was issued to protect Iraq's economy during the sanction years. He clarifies that the law lasted until 2001, when the Iraqi government issued a law to treat and grant Palestinians with all of the rights of Iraqi citizens, except the right of citizenship.

Palestinians' situation worsened and they quickly became targets after the US invasion of Iraq in 2003. Palestinians suffer as they were stereotyped as Saddam Hussein supporters (Wengert and Alfaro, 2006). Ever since the occupation, Palestinian neighbourhoods in Baghdad have been bombarded and attacked (Al-Awda, 2008). Amnesty International (2007) claimed that "Palestinians are one of the most vulnerable groups in Iraq" (para3); "they are the hidden victims of the Iraq conflict" (para1). Many Palestinians in Baghdad received death threats that were hand-delivered to them by armed men. This led to widespread panic among the Palestinian population (Ziadah,

2007). Karkar (2007) states that Palestinians became the target of random acts of torture, violence, arbitrary detention, kidnappings, and killings. Words of a Palestinian man living in the Al-Ruweished camp were highlighted by Shadid (2007), the Palestinian man argues that even though Palestinians were not a party of the war, yet they bore the consequences.

In the post 2003 period, Palestinians lost the benefits that were provided to them during Saddam's regime (Wengert and Alfaro, 2006), and with no ethnic or tribal backing, they become a weak population (Rubinstein, 2007). They were attacked by Shias and others who had suffered under Saddam Hussein's regime and who believe that the Palestinians were always loyal to him. Many Iraqis, mostly Shias, felt that Palestinians enjoyed preferential treatment over Iraqis and wanted to take revenge (Ziadah, 2007). According to the UNHCR (2003) report, government's propaganda during the Baath regime exaggerated the status of Palestinians in Iraq, which made Iraqi citizens assume that Palestinians were being privileged and that they enjoyed more rights and assistance than Iraqis themselves. However, Mohammad (2007) argues that Palestinians in Iraq have never been policy makers, never been privileged in any way, and that the only privilege they had was being in a safe country where they received good treatment.

The situation further worsened when Palestinian tenants were evicted from their subsidized houses as landlords were no longer paid subsidies by the Iraqi government (Karkar, 2007). Palestinians were expelled from their homes and workplaces and thousands of them fled. In 2003, the UNHCR (2003) states that more than 60-90,000 Palestinian refugees in Iraq will lose their homes. Since Saddam Hussein's government,

who used to assist the Palestinian refugees instead of the UNRWA, fell, it is expected that the UNRWA to assist them to ensure that they get, at least, the basic services.

Palestinian refugees in Iraq are in desperate need of help. It is well understood that the current Iraqi government is not able to ensure the security of any of its residents (Wengert and Alfaro, 2006), however, the Iraqi government can help by avoid issuing racist rules toward Palestinian refugees in Iraq. Karkar (2007) states that the current Iraqi Ministry of the Interior is treating Palestinians who remain in Iraq as foreigners, non-residents. He adds that Palestinians can get short-term residency permits and yet the whole family has to attend to renew the permit. According to Mohammad (2007), after the 2003 war, the new government in Iraq cancelled the permanent residence of Palestinians, instead asking Palestinians to renew residency on a monthly basis. The government also stopped issuing travel documents and did not extend or renew old ones. They also stopped issuing identity cards. As a result, new born Palestinians in Iraq have no registered identity or residency status. Mohammad (2007) adds that the responsibility of Palestinian refugees was taken away from the ministry of social services and given to the immigration ministry as Palestinians began being considered foreigners (non citizens).

In addition, after the fall of Saddam Hussein's government, "the Ministry of Displacement and Migration, which is the government body that is responsible for refugee issues in Iraq, called for the expulsion of Palestinians from Iraq to Gaza" (Wengert and Alfaro, 2006, p.19). However, Israel denied their return to the West Bank and Gaza. The director of Human Rights Watch for the Middle East and North Africa division, Sarah Leah Whitson, states that: "These Palestinians are refugees twice over. Israel denies them their right to return to their homeland but Iraq has become a country

where they are targeted for violence” (Wengert and Alfaro, 2006, p.20). Yet, they are not allowed to seek refugee status in nearby countries such as Jordan and Syria (Amnesty, 2007).

Systemic propaganda has been used against the Palestinians in Iraq blaming them for violent activities (Mohammed, 2007). However, Mohammad (2007) argues that all of the accusations and claims that the Iraqi media is spreading about Palestinians are not real as it never provides proof. Mohammed (2007) accuses both the US and the British governments for the lack of security and instability in Iraq, as he believes that presently the Iraqi government is under their influence.

All refugees who left Iraq during the 2003 war were quickly resettled in third countries with the exception of the Palestinians (Al-Awda, 2008). Palestinian refugees were not allowed to go back to their country of origin and yet they could not safely stay in Iraq. Due to the 2003 war, Palestinians from Iraq had to live in tents on the Iraqi-Jordanian and Iraqi-Syrian borders for years waiting for any country to accept their entry. No Arab country has been assisting the Palestinian refugees from Iraq. Only the Palestinian authority offered to absorb them. However, since the borders are controlled by Israel, refugees’ entry into Palestine/Israel remains impossible (Rubinstein, 2007). Rubinstein (2007) argues that Israel could accept these refugees and they could not cause a demographic implication, especially, that since the outbreak of the second Intifada, more than 50,000 Palestinians have left the West Bank back to their host countries.

Palestinians from Iraq are being denied entry not only by neighbouring countries but by almost all countries around the world. According to Amnesty International (2008), currently there are more than 3,000 Palestinian refugees from Iraq “cut off from the rest

of the world in dire conditions without access to adequate humanitarian assistance” (para 1). Upon arrival at the Syrian and Jordanian borders, hundreds were put up in tent encampments: the Al-Hul camp near Syria and the Al-Ruweished camp near Jordan (Rubinstein, 2007). Ziadah (2007) points out that the Al Hul refugee camp was originally set up by UNHCR in 1991 for Iraqi refugees fleeing Iraq. Two additional camps were built for the Palestinian refugees from Iraq near Syria; the Al-Tanaf camp and the Al-Walid camp (Ziadah, 2007). There are 305 Palestinians in the Al-Hul camp, 148 Palestinians in the Al-Ruweished camp, 720 Palestinians in the Al-Tanaf camp, and more than 2,000 Palestinians in the Al-Walid camp (Al-Awda, 2008). Bill Frelick, the refugee policy director at the Human Rights Watch, argues that:

Jordan is slamming the door in the face of a small but desperate group of people, who have seen their relatives murdered in Baghdad. Jordan should not treat Iraqi Palestinians fleeing persecution more harshly than other Iraqis fleeing violence, who have generally been allowed to enter Jordan (Wengert and Alfaro, 2006, p.20).



“Palestinian refugees arrive in Syria from Iraq at the al-Tanf border crossing on May 9, 2006” (Eshelman, 2007).

Palestinian refugees who are living on the border between Iraq, Syria, and Jordan experience many problems, including, health, educational, economical and social difficulties. Even though the camps have “received some help from the Red Cross, there are no organized health or educational services” (Rubinstein, 2007, para 11). Eshelman (2007) lists some of the health problems that the Palestinian refugees who are living at the Iraqi borders are suffering from. He points out that some people have hypertension because of kidney problems. Others are having digestive problems as a result of the pre-cooked meals. In addition, there are many other problems that are caused by heat and dust, such as eye problems, which are caused by dust storms (Eshelman, 2007). A spokesperson for the UNHCR states that “the conditions there are totally unacceptable for extended human habitation” (Eshelman, 2007, para 10). There are, as well, mental effects on Palestinian refugees living in these camps. There were two cases of women who committed suicide, one of which was pregnant (Eshelman, 2007). The trauma of the war and of camp life continues for a long time. For example, Ziadah (2007) points out how a family, who was accepted for entry in Canada, is still strongly traumatized even after being in Canada for two months. The father sleeps by the door of his house to allow his children, who are afraid of attackers in the night, to sleep securely.

Ziadah (2007) argues that Palestinian refugees in these camps are basically prisoners; they have no legal status, no freedom of movement or freedom of work. Ziadah (2007) further explains that Jordan transformed the Al-Ruweished camp into a prison where refugees are not allowed to leave and visitors require permits. She adds, some Palestinians have been living in these camps for years, where children have no access to educational services, and they are forced to eat rotten food. Furthermore,

Ziadah (2007) states that the tents are highly flammable; a three year old child died when the family's tent caught fire. According to Mohammad (2007), Palestinian refugees, living in the Iraqi borders, have no water, no electricity, no food, no medicine, no security, no right of returned, no Arabic or international acceptance that represent political or ethical responsibilities toward Palestinian refugees.

Breen, the representative of the UNHCR for Refugees in Jordan, states that “I can't recall ever having seen this kind of situation in such a bleak environment...they can't go backward, and they aren't moving forward. They're literally stuck in the desert—no way back, and nowhere to go” (Shadid, 2007, para 16). In the Al-Tanaf camp, Palestinian refugees live in the desert where the temperature reaches 50 degrees Celsius in the summer and falls below zero in the winter, in addition to the existence of snakes and scorpions which sting the camp residents (Colville, 2007).



<http://electronicintifada.net/bytopic/431.shtml>

Today, Palestinians from Iraq are scattered around the world. They head to any country that accepts their entry. A few countries, such as Syria, Jordan, Brazil, Canada and Sudan have accepted a small number of Palestinian refugees from Iraq, leaving

thousands of others suffering. Jordan keeps threatening to shut down the Al-Ruweished camp and to transfer the residents to the border, claiming that it is already hosting 1.2 million Palestinian refugees as a result of the 1948 and 1967 wars, and around 700,000 Iraqi refugees. However, officials from the UNHCR were able to persuade the Jordanian government to keep the camps open until a permanent solution establishes (Global Exchange, 2007). Syria closed its borders to Palestinian refugees, arguing that it is already hosting around 450,000 Palestinian refugees and their descendents as a result of the 1948 and 1967 wars (Karkar, 2007). Loescher (2001) argues that for developing countries, accepting huge numbers of refugees does not only present an economical burden but material burdens as well that can threaten governmental authority. However, Jordan and Syria host millions of Iraqi without huge economic repercussions. The issue seems to be more of political rather than an economic. According to Karkar (2007), Syria accepted almost one million Iraqi refugees and only about 200 Palestinian refugees from Iraq. Wengert and Alfaro (2006) point out that Jordan only admitted 386 Palestinians from Iraq who are from mixed marriages.

In 2006, Canada accepted 63 Palestinian refugees from Iraq, who had been living in a camp near the Jordanian town of the Al-Ruweished since 2003 (CBC News, 2006). According to CBC News (2006), a spokesperson for the Department of Citizenship and Immigration said that Canada's decision for admitting people is based on specific guidelines. The spokesperson adds: rejected refugees could possibly have been found medically inadmissible where they could be a burden to our medical system, or they might pose a security threat. Stereotyping Palestinians as suspected terrorists could be another reason for rejecting their refugee claim in western countries such as Canada,

which add to the Palestinian refugees' problems. Palestinians are not only suspected because they are Arabs but also because their resistance has been classified as terrorism, especially after the US declared the war on terrorism.

A Palestinian living in the Al-Ruweished camp pointed out that he received a rejection letter from the Canadian embassy which concluded the following:

You have not provided sufficient evidence that you have a well-founded fear of persecution nor that you have been and continue to be seriously and personally affected by civil war, armed conflict or massive violation of human rights... I am therefore refusing your application (Shadid, 2007, para 37).

A relative of the rejected man argues that: "I would have to die, my husband would have to be killed, or my children would have to be slaughtered in front of my eyes, so that I'd have the right to leave this place" (Shadid, 2007, para 39). The rejection letter from the Canadian embassy highlights the problematic nature of the current UN definition of what constitutes a refugee

For relief agencies such as the UNHCR, resettlement of the Palestinians from Iraq to other countries is considered as the only possible solution to the current humanitarian crises (Amnesty International, 2008). Brazil offered to accept about 100 Palestinian refugees from Iraq and promised to provide them with accommodations, furniture and material assistance for up to 24 months (Brazil Mag, 2007). Sudan announced that it will host hundreds of Palestinian refugees (Christian Today, 2007). However, giving the experience of Palestinians in other host countries such as Jordan, Lebanon, Kuwait and Iraq, offering Palestinian refugees' entry to Syria, Jordan, Sudan, Brazil and Canada might be a temporary solution; a permanent solution should be considered.

Chapter Four: Conclusion

During the past sixty years, Palestinians have faced numerous traumatic experiences, including wars, occupation, imprisonment, forced migration, and exile that left them scattered around the world in different host countries. Such an experience has had a huge effect on Palestinians' lives, psycho and politics. For Palestinian refugees, statelessness and the denial of their right of return created a strong sense of desperation. Mahmoud Darwish (n.d.), the late Palestinian Poet, reflected Palestinian refugees' feelings toward having no stable homeland in the following words:

My homeland is not a traveling bag,
Nor am I a passing traveler.
It is I who am the lover and the land is my beloved

Palestinian refugees have been uprooted from their homeland and have not been allowed to return to it. The right of return will be the permanent solution to end their misery and humanitarian problems. It can bring an end to the human rights violations and terminate the difficult living conditions that Palestinian refugees are experiencing while living in host countries. Temporary solutions need to be considered to improve the Palestinian refugees' situation, while in exile, until the right of return achieved.

In exile, Palestinians have found themselves in situations where they have had to reorganize themselves and to search for a "home"; but the question remains *Where exactly is home?* Palestinians have few or no resettlement options available. Instead, they have been contained in camps, in bad living conditions, and with no human rights.

The idea of resettling is not workable for a number of reasons. First, Palestinian settlement in other Arab countries has not been a stable, permanent, or satisfactory solution. There is always the possibility, despite the level of achievement that Palestinians reach while living in an Arab country, that all of their achievements will be wiped out at any moment. As “outsiders”, their experience in exile has been vulnerable to changing political context in the host countries. Said (1979) asserts that “every Palestinian achievement is flawed by this paradoxical truth, that any survival outside Palestine is ruined in a sense by its impermanence, its groundlessness, its lack of a specifically Palestinian sovereign” (p.155). Palestinian achievements in the host countries are underestimated as they are wiped out under the umbrella of a generic “Arab” identity (Said, 1979, p.155). Loss of achievements and achievement’s identity, insecurity, and instability highlight the complexity of resettling in Arab host countries. Palestinians in Arab host countries usually pay the price for any kind of conflict that the PLO has with the host countries. They, therefore see the return as the only solution. Social and political instability and insecurity make permanent settlement in Arab host countries difficult (Hammer, 2005). Palestinians suffer from social divisions, structural inequality, and systemic racism where the host countries create a separate set of laws for them and have inequalities in the distribution of power and opportunities. The unfavorable treatment they face in host countries push Palestinians to continue dreaming of the day they will go back to their homeland.

A second factor that makes settlement elsewhere difficult has been the attachment to the notion of Palestine as “homeland”. For this reason, Palestinian refugees have strongly opposed any resettlement in other Arab countries and have never let go of their

attachment to their homeland and of their aim of going back. Pappe (2004) argues that “resettlement was an unsatisfactory solution for the refugee problem, as most refugees clung to the hope of being unconditionally repatriated, as the UN had promised them in Resolution 194” (p.189). Palestinians’ strong feelings of nationalism, which strengthened after the decline of Pan-Arabism, are what make them oppose re-settlement in other Arab countries. This was not unique to Palestinians. With the decline of Pan-Arabism, new forms of Arab nationalisms, such as, Lebanese, Egyptian, Palestinian, Syrian, emerged in the region.

Acknowledging the fact that the right of return is the only reasonable solution for the Palestinian refugees’ problem, the right of return of the Palestinian refugees from Iraq needs emergency measures. Palestinians from Iraq should not be left to face life threatening situations. International law and Human Rights Organizations might want to draw more attention to the case of Palestinian refugees from and in Iraq. Since the situation of Palestinian refugees from Iraq is the most oppressive, the first negotiation that needs to occur between Palestinians and Israelis is for Palestinian-Iraqis to be allowed re-entry to their homeland and not to be blocked by the Israelis at the borders.

The situation and the experience that the Palestinian refugees are having in Iraq is only one of the examples of the suffering that Palestinians face in a host country. In many Arab host countries, Palestinians, at some point, have had to go through similar experiences of harassment, discrimination, violence and evacuation at some point. Palestinians keep experiencing evacuations and exile over and over again, starting in 1948, and continuing through 1967, and it happening again in Lebanon, Jordan, Egypt,

Tunis, Libya, Kuwait and Iraq. Unfortunately, Iraq will not be the last exile experience for Palestinians.

As refugees, Palestinians should be entitled to international protection. Human rights laws should be applied to end Palestinian refugees' misery. The right of return is a fundamental human right (as highlighted in Human Rights Convention) that Palestinians are entitled to, which should be implemented, as "Human rights and humanitarian law confirm that the denationalization of Palestinians was illegal and that they retain the right to return to their places of origin" (Akram, 2002, p.41). The UN should have the ability to implement resolution 194, especially since the UN itself is partly responsible for the Palestinian refugees' problem. The UN introduced the partition plan without taking into consideration the fate of the Palestinian people who were living in the area that was given to the Israeli people. The UN could continue to raise the humanitarian situation of Palestinian refugees and try to convince its members to implement the right of return to Palestinian refugees.

Despite the fact that the right of return in this paper was discussed as a humanitarian solution, we need to recognize that the right of return is, in the final analysis, a legal and political matter. The human rights violations that Palestinian refugees are suffering from are mostly for political reasons. Arab host countries do not offer easy settlement or citizenship for Palestinian refugees as they do not want them to let go of the right of return. Re-settlement, for both Arab countries and Palestinians, is considered to be a political defeat. Palestinians reject having another nationality in order to not lose their political rights to the land. The refugee issue is a key for solving the conflicts between Israelis and Palestinians. The longer the issue of Palestinian refugees

remains unsolved, the more refugees there will be. The problem will not fade away over time, especially since the population of the Palestinian refugees is increasing, Al Awda (2007) states that the annual growth rate is 4 per cent.

The right of return of Palestinian refugees might be the first step in recognizing Palestinian identity and statehood. Palestinian human rights, connections to their homeland, and this may form the bases of the creation of a legitimate Palestinian state. Even though there are Palestinians who are enjoying successful and stable lives in the host countries, and may not chose to return to their homeland, they should have the right to make a choice whether they want to return or not. Just as Jews, from all over the world, have the right to go to Israel or to stay where they are. A sovereign Palestine would ultimately have political legitimacy that would enable Palestinians to cherish their identity and history, and would solve the problem of Palestinian refugees.

I would like to conclude with Said's call for the historical reality that needs to be addressed: "*there is a Palestinian people, there is an Israeli occupation of Palestinian lands ... there is a large Palestinian population in exile*" (Said, 1979, p.51). This has been the source of the refugee crisis. I will argue that the only long term solution to this crisis is implementing the right of Palestinian refugees to return to Palestine. Finally, I would like to leave the readers with Said's (1994) words, hoping a day will come when Said's message will inspire change. Said (1994) states: "*we are not an inconsiderable people, and our achievements in education, business, science, and engineering testify to intelligence, will, and foresight. We say to the Israeli ... live with us, but not on top of us.*" (p.143)

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