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## LIFE IN OCCUPIED PALESTINE: THREE CAFÉS AND A SPECIAL ISSUE

CYNTHIA G. FRANKLIN, MORGAN COOPER & IBRAHIM G. AOUDÉ

### PART ONE, BY CYNTHIA G. FRANKLIN

*Coffee is a place. Coffee is pores that let the inside seep through to the outside. A separation that unites what can't be united except through its aroma. . . . Coffee is geography.*

– Mahmoud Darwish<sup>1</sup>

In May 2013, I traveled to the West Bank, part of what the United Nations and other international bodies refer to as the Occupied Palestinian Territories (oPt). During my eleven days there, I participated in a faculty development seminar designed to build connections among Palestinian academics and cultural workers and US academics without expertise in Israel/Palestine. I went with a specific project in mind: as a coeditor of *Biography*, I wanted to meet with people who might be interested in guest editing or contributing to a cluster of essays about life in occupied Palestine. One year later, together with my coeditors Morgan Cooper and Ibrahim (Brahim) Aoudé, I am writing the introduction not to a cluster issue, but rather to what has become a very full special issue. That I am coediting this volume is a privilege: through working on it I have established friendships and alliances with contributors, and learned from them about the ongoing history of, and the urgent need to end, Israel's colonization, ethnic cleansing, and occupation of Palestine. That I am coediting this special issue is also a symptom of just how difficult life is for Palestinians living in their ancestral lands.

Not much time in the West Bank was required to understand why, upon my arrival, I received cautionary words about finding guest editors for a *Biography* project. Over the course of visits to five Palestinian universities (Birzeit,

Bethlehem, Hebron, Al Quds, and An Najah), I learned that in addition to substantial department and university service responsibilities and publication pressures, faculty members there teach, on average, four classes of forty students each per semester, with no teaching assistants. We arrived at the semester's end, and the fatigue of grading 160 sets of final exams was perceptible. However, far more significant, and also evident, even as administrators, faculty members, and students extended their hospitality to us during this busiest of times, was the extraordinary and yet everyday strain of life under occupation. We heard over and over, even from those living only a few miles away, how the commute to campus can take hours; how students and faculty must travel absurd distances to navigate the Separation Wall, 85 percent of which in its planned route of approximately 430 miles (so far it runs over 270 miles) twists and turns *inside* the oPt (UNRWA); and how they routinely get stalled—or stopped—at the hundreds of fixed and “flying” (suddenly erected) checkpoints or roadblocks established by the Israeli military. We learned how the demolition of Palestinian homes often results in closed streets and a lack of access to campus. Since 1967, while building many thousands of new homes in illegal settlements throughout the West Bank, Israel has demolished over 28,000 Palestinian homes, businesses, livestock facilities, and other structures (“Stop demolition”). Al Quds University's main campus, located in Abu Dis, regularly becomes inaccessible due to home demolitions, especially because of Abu Dis's precarious position as a Palestinian territory in a district of Jerusalem under Israeli authority.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, a few days after our visit there, an Al Quds student facebooked us about how, owing to a home demolition, she and her classmates could not take their final exams.

In addition to these obstructions to movement that, among other problems, impede Palestinians' right to education, we also witnessed the emotional costs—stress, uncertainty, humiliation, anger, fear—and the price of resisting, or simply surviving (itself, under such conditions, a form of resistance), the violence of apartheid, colonialism, and occupation. Almost everyone we met with asked us to make their situation known, and expressed support for the international Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement.<sup>3</sup> Over coffee and cookies, students and faculty members told us of their experiences of being imprisoned, or having loved ones detained for participating in nonviolent protests, or for throwing rocks at invading Israeli tanks or at Israeli soldiers coming onto their campuses.<sup>4</sup> Of the universities we visited, Birzeit falls most fully under Palestinian control, and even that university experiences incursions by the Israeli military, the most recent one taking place as I write this introduction.<sup>5</sup> At Bethlehem University, our guide showed us memorials to students killed on campus by the Israeli army. In Hebron, after a visit to the university, we toured the Old City under the protection of vol-

unteers with the Temporary International Presence in Hebron (see “About TIPH”). There, we walked under steel netting that caught the garbage, excrement, and rocks—but not the bleach and acid—that Jewish settlers, living in houses that loom directly over Palestinian stores and homes, rain down on their Palestinian neighbors. We walked, too, under the watchful eyes and raised guns of the many Israeli soldiers perched above us in watch towers, and passed by walls upon which hate-filled messages including “Gas the Arabs!” appeared in red paint. As we made our way through the city, we were accompanied by a US scholar residing in Hebron on fellowship, who learned from one of her neighbors of another neighbor’s disappearance—an event that simultaneously distressed and failed to surprise her.

Faculty we met with also discussed difficulties accessing textbooks and shaping their curriculum, and described how Palestinians inside Israel’s borders also face restrictions on their right to education, along with denials of academic freedom, codified, among other ways, in some of the more than fifty laws that discriminate against Palestinian citizens of Israel.<sup>6</sup> At Birzeit University, as we ate a cafeteria lunch together, students involved in the “Right to Education” (R2E) campaign shifted from laughter-filled teasing about their texting practices to debating with urgent intensity whether or not hope was politically empowering in the struggle against colonialism, apartheid, and occupation.<sup>7</sup> I remember how one student’s ebullience in discussing Foucault (“I loved *Fifty Shades of Grey* but my true passion is Foucault!”) was suddenly overtaken by the onset of an asthmatic attack when another student brought up the arrest and disappearance of her fiancé the day before at a “Stop the Wall” protest. That same day Islah Jad, director of Birzeit’s Women’s Studies Institute, hosted us and some of her colleagues, including Magid Shihade and Sunaina Maira, whose advice in shaping this volume began that evening and continued the following week, after a hip-hop concert in East Jerusalem. After serving almost twenty of us a feast at her home in Ramallah, Islah gifted our group an enormous bag of za’atar, and promised me a file of letters written during the 2002 invasion of Ramallah that she said I could publish in *Biography* so long as she did not have to reopen the letters and re-visit the trauma they chronicled. Selections from that file, lovingly edited by her daughter Yasmine Saleh Hamayel, appear in this special issue as part of a mother-daughter piece, “From the West Bank: Letters and Acts of Resistance.” In short, during my brief stay in the West Bank, time and again I witnessed and heard about ways life in occupied Palestine is continuously punctuated by past and present instances of violence that make writing and editing both urgently important for those living under the occupation, and also activities that can be interrupted and impeded.

As Morgan, Brahim, and I work on this introduction, the violence has escalated once again. (And here I interject that because the conditions underlying this escalation persist, and also to capture a sense of the force as well as rapidity of the events that occurred during the writing of this introduction, we decided to date stamp each section of this introduction and do any updating through notes rather than attempt to bring sections up-to-date.) As part of Operation Brother's Keeper, thousands of Israeli soldiers have moved into the West Bank, invading its towns and cities, and ransacking its universities and other public as well as private spaces, ostensibly in search of three Israeli Yeshiva students who were reported missing in Hebron on June 12, 2014. The Israeli army is directing nightly air strikes and artillery fire into Gaza that they say is to retaliate for rockets fired towards Israel. In addition to accounts of the week's events in *The Electronic Intifada*, *Haaretz*, *+972 Magazine*, and *Mondoweiss*, and by the Ma'an News Agency and the Institute for Middle East Understanding (IMEU), I am following this latest assault on the West Bank on Facebook, as contributors to this volume along with students and faculty I met last year post photos and videos of their torn-apart kitchens (cabinet doors hanging off the hooks, food tossed out of refrigerators and splattered across the floor); of the broken furniture and ripped apart papers that litter their recently ravaged offices; of small children blindfolded or held in chokeholds by Israeli soldiers; of residents mourning loved ones killed by the military incursion; and of youth casting stones at Israeli tanks, drones, and soldiers bearing machine guns. My Skype sessions with my coeditors include auditory accompaniment to these images as Morgan describes, and Brahim and I can hear, the violence erupting in the streets of Ramallah. On high alert from reports, I mistake the sounds, coming from where Brahim sits in an Istanbul café, of dumpsters being emptied into trash trucks for the booms of explosives going off in Ramallah. Morgan laughs as Brahim corrects me, but by the next day, she and others report that the Israeli army has entered the city, setting off bombs and gunfire resulting in injuries, a fatal shooting, and widespread destruction and terror.

The firsthand accounts and photos that come across Facebook, and the sounds carried across the internet from Morgan's home, bring to life the statistics issued by the IMEU and human rights groups such as Addameer that summarize the collective forms of punishment visited upon Palestinians in the days following the three settlers' disappearance: thousands of home invasions; home demolitions; the closures of civil society organizations; hundreds of arrests without charges; administrative detentions; the whole of Hebron with its 680,000 residents under lockdown; road closures; new checkpoints; hundreds injured by rubber bullets, teargas, and concussion grenades; the beatings of wives and mothers of hunger strikers; and deaths. During the first

week alone, six Palestinians lost their lives, four of them shot dead: Mustafa Hosni Aslan (21 years old, shot in the head at Qalandia Refugee Camp), Mahmoud Jihad Muhammad Dudeen (14 years old, shot dead in Dura, just south of Hebron), Ahmed Saeed Saud Khalid (35, a mentally ill man who did not react when yelled at by soldiers, shot dead), Jamil Ali Abed Jabir (a man in his 60s who died of a heart attack when the Israeli army broke into his home), Sakher Dorgham Zaamel Abu al-Hasan (17, who stepped on a land mine while tending sheep in the northern Jordan Valley), and Muhammad Ismail Atallah Tarifi (aged 30, shot dead on a Ramallah rooftop by Israeli snipers) (see Kate). The data that details this wholesale assault on the people of Palestine, enabled by a complicit Palestinian Authority, is nowhere to be found in the accounts in the *New York Times* and other mainstream US and Israeli sources that report that Israeli teens have been kidnapped by the “Arab terrorist group” Hamas. Human rights groups have issued no condemnations of Israel’s actions, and a page calling for the death of a Palestinian for every hour the teens remain missing has been defended by Facebook as fitting within their community standards (Strickland). The accounts coming from mainstream US and Israeli media and politicians partake in but the latest chapter in a larger Zionist narrative. An index of their success is suggested by Israel’s election during this period to a leadership position on the United Nations’ committee on decolonization (Abunimah, “Israel elected”).

Along with acts of witnessing and alternative news reports coming across the internet, *Life in Occupied Palestine* challenges this narrative. Contributors to this volume represent history from Palestinian perspectives in what stands as a collective testimony that is created in concert with editors who ourselves work from different institutional and geographic locations, and from different national, racial, ethnic, and religious backgrounds (in my own case, white, Jewish, American).

The story of this special issue involves a return to Ramallah, and a tale of two cafés (there is also a third café, but that story will come later in this introduction, from Brahim).

Toward the end of our time in the West Bank, participants in the faculty seminar had a day off, and I took a bus from East Jerusalem to Ramallah. I had a meeting at Zamn café with Ghada AlMadbouh, a faculty member at Birzeit and research director at the Palestinian American Research Center (PARC), and her fiancé, Mohammed Attar, a Palestinian American filmmaker who had just been denied a permit to remain in the West Bank for their upcoming wedding and intended life together—a piece of news that upended their ability to make any future plans, let alone participate in a 2014 *Biography* issue. I had arranged for meetings at the same café with Raja Shehadeh and Sonia Nmir, both of whom I hoped would contribute to the volume.

The café had been chosen for me because as a landmark destination reachable in a fairly straight shot from the bus station it was relatively easy to find (particularly important because, if you Google specific locations in Ramallah, you will get a map of only a few streets, most of them with no names). Easy as Zamn was to find, I soon gathered that this café was not a uniformly popular choice. During my last meeting of the day, the complaint “I hate this pretentious café and its overpriced coffee imported from Italy” was accompanied by an endorsement of La Vie, a café I soon realized was the one run by Morgan Cooper, a former MA student at the University of Hawai‘i (UH), and her husband, Saleh Totah. I had contacted Morgan as soon as I knew I was coming to Palestine, and I was excited to see her. I well remembered her for her smart and passionate scholarship and organizing at UH on behalf of justice in Palestine. I had asked her to meet me at Zamn, but when she arrived, she refused to sit down—“I am not a fan of this café. Let’s go to my place.” Fifteen minutes later, we had wound our way through the city in Morgan’s car and arrived at La Vie, where we sat in the outdoor courtyard, encircled by a mix of cityscape and green shady trees, and Saleh brought us wine and a delicious vegetarian Maqluba made largely from ingredients grown in their garden.

I had looked forward to this meeting with Morgan as the purely pleasure part of the day, but as we talked, and as we were constantly interrupted by people dropping by the café or calling about the upcoming Palestine Festival of Literature that Morgan was helping to organize, I realized that her café was a cultural hub, and also, given both our conversation about the *Biography* project and the impressive array of skills she was employing on behalf of Pal-Fest and her café, that she would be a truly excellent coeditor for the *Biography* issue. I broached the idea—was she open to working with me if none of the Palestinian writers or scholars I had already approached or had planned to ask were able to take on the job? She was, and we agreed, should this come to pass, as it did several weeks later, to ask Brahim Aoudé, her advisor and my colleague at UH, to join us.

On the bus ride back to East Jerusalem that evening, I took out my phone and snapped a few photos as we approached the Qalandia checkpoint, one of the largest Israeli military checkpoints inside the occupied West Bank. The sun was slanting down and, with the glare from the windows and my awkward angle of approach, I could not quite capture the menace of its towering steel and concrete greyness, the armed soldiers, the line-up of vehicles ahead of us, or the Palestinians lined up, caged, waiting for permission to pass through the locked turnstiles. When we reached the checkpoint, a soldier stopped and boarded the bus, came up to me, and demanded I hand over my camera. As he stood there with his machine gun, only inches away from me, scrolling through my photos, he looked frighteningly young. Because I

had been drop-boxing any photos I took each day, the only others still on my phone were of Morgan and Saleh's café and garden. He took no interest in those, but ordered me to remove the shots of the checkpoint and of the massive Separation Wall leading up to it. This segment of wall features a mural with the words "FREE BARGHOUTI" painted in between a portrait of political prisoner Marwan Barghouti and a large heart.

Although at the time I was too scared to do so, I have since reflected on the irony of being ordered to erase images so readily available—and of a clearly superior quality—through the most cursory internet search.<sup>8</sup> Marwan Barghouti, the first member of the Palestinian parliament to be arrested by Israel, and a leader of the first and second intifadas, is often compared to Nelson Mandela, and the mural image of him, his raised hands in shackles, has achieved iconic status. So, too, no shortage exists of images of the Qalandia checkpoint: they often serve to illustrate the ugliness of Israeli apartheid and occupation. By contrast, the photos of La Vie and its garden, which borders Qadura refugee camp, provide a window into a Palestine that is seldom seen by those who have not themselves crossed into the West Bank, moving beyond the red Israeli sign at Qalandia that warns, in Hebrew, Arabic, and English, that "This Road leads To Area 'A.' Under the Palestinian Authority. The Entrance For Israeli Citizens Is Forbidden, Dangerous To Your Lives, And Is Against the Israeli Law." The lively café setting—the mix of people working on laptops, texting on their cell phones, or conversing over a cardamom-spiced coffee or a mint lemonade—and the garden, with its proliferation of fruit trees, herbs, vegetables, and chickens, capture a Palestine that persists in spite of Israel's attempts to take over the land and erase its people's existence, or render them inhumanly other and "dangerous to your lives."

In "Writing in a Time of Captivity," poet, activist, and political philosopher Haunani-Kay Trask, observing that "De-colonization is all around us," described her writing as "exposé and celebration at one and the same time; it is a furious but nurturing aloha for Hawai'i" (19–20). I have lived in Hawai'i now for twenty years as a settler, and as I have learned from Trask and many other Kanaka Maoli scholars, artists, writers, and organizers who struggle against the US colonization and occupation of Hawai'i, I have come to appreciate the beautiful, fierce, and complex layers that define aloha in the Islands. Working on *Life in Occupied Palestine* has taught me much about "sumoud." Sumoud characterizes not only the youth, pictured on the cover of this special issue, who—faces covered with keyfiyya and Palestinian masks for protective disguise as well as resistance—risk their lives to hold up the Palestinian flag as Israel drops its bombs on their land and people.<sup>9</sup> Sumoud also is demonstrated by this special issue's contributors, who write poems



and plant jasmine trees from prison, who dig through archives and build new ones, who theorize borders and home, who tell their children stories of a better tomorrow, who march in the streets and campaign for BDS, and who make final revisions to their essays during this terrible time.

This special issue tells stories about the everyday and extraordinary lives of Palestinians as well as the Zionist efforts to delegitimize, disempower, and eradicate those who live these lives. And it does so through a variety of life narratives that include and often intermix diaries, letters, Facebook updates, oral histories, memoir, interviews, poetry, photographs, analysis, and theory. So, too, resistance is encoded in this special issue's crossings and connections: as contributors write, in English, for an international journal coming out of a US university, and as those of us working together to make this special issue embody differences of national identity, race, ethnicity, and religion, *Life in Occupied Palestine* challenges the false and deadly divisions that structure apartheid, settler colonialism, ethnic cleansing, and occupation, while also offering visions of life together, and of a free Palestine.

—Honolulu. June 30, 2014

#### **PART TWO, BY MORGAN COOPER**

*Move the pot away from the low fire, that the hand may undertake its first creation of the day. Pay no heed to rockets, shells, or jets. This is what I want. To possess my dawn, I'll diffuse the aroma of coffee. Don't look at the mountain spitting masses of fire in the direction of your hand.*

—Mahmoud Darwish (qtd. in Deknatel).

Although I write this introduction from a place of great anger, I didn't begin there. Rather, when Cindy first visited me in Ramallah at my café, La Vie, I distinctly remember my joy at seeing her, at connecting to someone from my past, especially from the University of Hawai'i, where I spent two formative years. I remember excitement over her project, soon to become our project. I remember anticipation about shaping this issue. But today, a year and some months later, the place I write from is so full of anger that it threatens to overtake every memory, as it also infiltrates even the most mundane aspects of my days and nights. My mundane used to begin with a pot of coffee, shared with my husband, Saleh, in our home in the center of Ramallah. Before the city awakens, as we enjoy our coffee, the garden is full of birds' chirping and nothing else—no honking from the public transportation depot behind us, no voices on the streets, no cars speeding down our quiet street. But these days, I reach for my phone and scan Facebook before anything else. I search for news—has the intifada that we all anticipate

begun? how many more children of Palestine were murdered while I slept? more abductions? what of our prisoners, captive in Israeli prisons rotting in solitary confinement? It's no longer how many were massacred last night; instead I search the posts for whom, and then I stare at photos of the dead and destroyed, grieving for Palestine.

In the West Bank this June and July, our mundane begins with *ahwe sada*, the drink of death. After the funeral, the community shuffles into the home of the dead to offer condolences and sip a cup of bitter coffee, *ahwe sada*. I wish never to drink *ahwe sada* again. Then I think about how privileged we are to bury our dead and offer our condolences, when in Gaza medical workers and civilians are shot down by Israeli snipers if they dare search out their loved ones' bodies in the rubble ("Palestinian's killing"). Rotting corpses in the hot Gaza sun.

As Palestinians in Gaza sit in their Israeli-built prison and await death, we outside of Gaza's walls move from coffee to demonstration, from chants to the only weapon we have—rocks—met with indiscriminate fire and more death and more *ahwe sada*. I have spent so many years speaking to Americans who know nothing of Palestine, and declaring with great conviction that Palestinians engage in nonviolent resistance and that I support them. But this month, after attending my first protests and a funeral for a martyr (the word used here to identify and honor all those who are killed by Israel), everything has changed. I now believe that resistance, by any means the occupied Palestinian people have, is their absolute right. I no longer praise nonviolent resistance and emphasize to friends in America how laudable the nonviolent movement is here in Palestine. I see in the grief of the families of the dead, in the burning alive of a fifteen-year-old Palestinian boy at the hands of the occupiers, in demands for the most basic of human rights made by the thousands of Palestinian political prisoners in Israeli prisons, in the violent theft of lands and livelihoods for sixty-six years, in all of the great and enduring injustices Palestinians have suffered and continue to suffer hour after hour, a deep-rooted, legally enshrined right to resist by any means they possess. I have lived in Palestine for over ten years, and I feel with a new resolve how I will spend the rest of my days here, contributing toward a more just future and supporting the resistance. It is my greatest wish that Palestinians see a political reality in which justice replaces that which merits resistance.

On June 21, 2014 the Israeli military invaded Ramallah. It was a sleepless night. As morning arrived, I lay awake in my bed and my thoughts were only for the shebab (children and youth) who had taken to the streets. I reached for my phone and started my day not with coffee, but with words. To my Facebook friends in other parts of the world, I wrote:

Dawn is breaking over Palestine. Shots echo, explosions resound. Palestine is under siege. The Israeli soldiers play at war with our lives and our blood.

My thoughts on this sleepless night begin with the shebab who shared with all of us that moment when the first explosion rang out. Together we sat up in our beds groggy with sleep in our eyes. But while I lay back down, they hurry into clothes and into streets. The children of occupation who throw stones for our dignity and die for our freedom.

May the world hear the echoes of our screams for justice and smell our hot blood flowing in the streets.

A few hours later I learned one of those shots had killed Muhammad Tarifi, thirty years old. His body was found hours later, the blood dried. Photos of Muhammad's four-year-old son consumed in grief and held in his weeping mother's lap broke my heart. When Palestine has a martyr, an all too common occurrence these days, all businesses close as a sign of national mourning and respect—a general strike. This practice is left over from the days of the first and second intifadas, when the entire community engaged in such strikes as protest. Today, a group of kids go round and bully businesses to close—threatening with sticks and breaking merchandise. The Palestinian police respond by bullying stores to open in support of a better economy, a sold-out future absent of justice. We usually close for an hour or two



The wife and son of thirty-year-old Muhammad Tarifi mourn during his funeral in Ramallah, 22 June 2014 (photo by Issam Rimawi © copyright and used by courtesy of APA Images).

mimicking businesses in Qadura, the refugee camp next door, and then re-open with the door cracked, so customers can enter through the side door—a common practice in Ramallah. But on June 8, we closed fully for the entire day to participate in a general strike in support of Palestinian prisoners and hunger strikers. We were requested the night before to join the strike. We gladly stood in solidarity. We honored the prisoners' *sumoud*—their steadfastness. That day marked the beginning of our café being closed more often than open. And we were glad that strikes took on a more concerted meaning and allowed us to express our solidarity.

Then, on June 21, the morning Muhammad Tarifi was murdered, I did something I've never done before. My husband was driving around town to assess the situation. Just beyond us, on the edge of the refugee camp, is Mustashfa Ramallah, the hospital. From that direction, I heard chants that were growing louder. Martyrs are taken there and their bodies prepared for burial. That day, I saw crowds flowing from the hospital, moving down the street. I locked the house and flew to join them. I walked with our boys. And I lost my heart on that day. That day, I felt in a new way the grief that sweeps through our streets, the grief that has accompanied sixty-six years of Israeli military violence that began in 1948 with an ethnic cleansing of approximately 720,000 Palestinians (Pappe). *Sumoud*.

These most recent events are not new ones for my neighbors, who were dispossessed of their homes and lands, their jewelry and inheritance, their trees and livelihoods, and their futures in 1967. They ended up in a refugee camp in the center of Ramallah that touches my home property. *Sumoud*.

And when the Israeli soldiers enter Ramallah in their armored vehicles, clad in bulletproof vests and helmets, armed with automatic weapons, my neighbors take to the streets and face all this deadly force with stones. *Sumoud*.

The shebab I talk with every day, the twenty-two-year-old who organized the kids' summer camp, all of them, flew from the safety of their homes and defended our homes and our right to life and peace and justice with stones. They faced death at the hands of a bloodthirsty oppressor. Every stone they threw made each one a hero to me. And for the first time in my life I applauded violence—stone-throwing became heroic. It is *sumoud*.

Now I join them at night, chanting for justice and including my body with theirs to register our absolute rejection of life without dignity, without freedom. On June 22, I marched with the shebab who held up the body of Muhammad Tarifi in his funeral procession. And every day since, I have felt angry. Every time I check my Facebook newsfeed, there is another photo of another boy who has been broken or murdered or burned alive. And I feel angrier. The mundane should not include body counts. In Palestine it does. And we should all, wherever or whoever we are, be angry about that. *Sumoud*.

I didn't start out angry. My awakening to the situation in Palestine happened step by step. On January 7, 2003 I entered Ben Gurion airport. I was an ignorant fool. On my second day I crossed from Jerusalem to Ramallah through the notorious Calandia Checkpoint. At that time, the checkpoint was a mixture of mud and rubbish and broken concrete blocks and razor wire. It looked threatening yet temporary. I focused equal parts attention on navigating the muddy path and pretending not to see the soldiers' guns. I walked out of Calandia a changed person. Though I didn't yet understand what was happening in Palestine, I knew something was terribly wrong. It took me a lot longer than it should have to put the pieces together and identify what exactly was so wrong (for that, I credit growing up in a society where Zionism seemed common sense). Broken down, the issue is pretty simple: Israeli military occupation and colonization of Palestine is illegal and immoral. American tax dollars front most of the bill for that violence. America has responsibility for what Israel is doing to Palestinians, and like Israel, should be held accountable.

I spent my first few months in Palestine asking thousands of questions. The answers were less telling than the experience of living there. I was adopted by a wonderful family and lived with them for several months out of every year, whenever in Palestine, for the next five years. The experiences of taking the kids through checkpoints to the swimming pool, or on weekend trips to the sea still weigh heavily on me a decade later. Once, while waiting at a checkpoint, I saw a child slapped across the face by an Israeli soldier. I stood silent and felt helpless. I just wrapped my arms around the child with me, and looked forward. I have regretted my silence every day since, and made sure that it was the last time I ever stood by, only watching. But I did not realize the extent of my self-censorship until a week ago at a protest, where I was nearly hysterical at the front of the line screaming in the faces of the riot police who were preparing to attack protestors. Someone laughed at me and said, "Don't expect your visa to get renewed again. Let's hope they don't know who you are." I realized I don't care about such consequences anymore. I cannot stand by to see a child slapped by the military or a man humiliated at a checkpoint.

But many others do continue to self-censor. Last night, July 24, there was a march from Al Amari Refugee Camp in Ramallah to Calandia Checkpoint and then on to Jerusalem. Of course, the marchers didn't make it past the checkpoint. The ten thousand strong march was met with great force; the Israeli military shot tear gas, live ammunition, and rubber-covered steel bullets. Palestinians in turn threw rocks and let off fireworks into the night sky. As we walked around our café, announcing to customers that we would be closing shortly and inviting them to join us at the march, many people were undecided. They wanted to go but weren't sure they should put their bodies on the line; what if there were only fifty people? I realized that we are in the

midst of a historical moment, which may have taken the form of an uprising by the time this journal goes to press, though the distance between now and an uprising still seems great. We are deciding if we are prepared to risk what we have, or in some cases what we have left, in the name of justice. And people weigh that decision with the historical realities of two uprisings, dozens of massacres, and sixty-six years of colonization. A revolution, it seems to me, is made possible by great desperation, and if a society chooses that path, I think there must be either nothing left to lose or the conviction that the result, no matter what, cannot be worse than the current reality. And so—and this is especially true for those of us living in Ramallah—we consider the “good life” we have now.

Many claim Ramallah is a bubble where people can ignore the political realities of Palestine. One article in the Israeli newspaper *Haaretz* featured a new hostel that sought Israeli clientele and bragged that Ramallah offers the good life. At the bottom of that article, our café was featured as a place to visit. I did not pursue publication of the response I wrote, but I’ve also never shut up about how much the *Haaretz* article angered me. Ramallah *is* a bubble. And many people do imagine they are living a good life here. But *nothing* in Ramallah is free from the political realities of occupation, and certainly our café does not offer such a depoliticized space. Everything from the staff scheduling to our tea offering is mediated by occupation, and we never lose sight of that. On a day off, one staff member goes home to Hebron to visit family. When Hebron is closed by Israeli military order, she cannot return to work for the five following days. Glassware in the café is imported through an Israeli company; the Israeli driver refuses to deliver to our usual pick-up place next to the Israeli military checkpoint, Hizme. I am not allowed to cross Hizme checkpoint; it is open only to Israeli settlers, foreign nationals, or Israeli ID holders who wish to access the occupied West Bank. The driver argued he was not safe to meet me there, even though he would be surrounded by Israeli soldiers and settlers! The company asks me for a creative solution to the problem. How absurd, I think, that I should have to figure out a way to address his irrational fear, when I am the one who is under the restrictions of occupation—when I am the one who is denied the right to cross the street. Meanwhile, staff members even suspected of throwing stones are picked up by the Palestinian police on behalf of the Israeli military. And my visa to live in my home and work in my restaurant does not come from the Palestinian Authority but rather from the Israeli military via the Palestinian Authority. Our menu is printed on Israeli paper. Occupation permeates our entire work place. So when our clientele plot protests, we are very happy to offer them coffees and ashtrays while they plan. We welcome them when they come out from prisons or return from throwing stones.

Growing up in the United States, I equated ex-prisoners with ex-convicts or criminals. In Palestine, I was confused by the way that everyone seemed to have a brother in prison, a father who had been arrested and imprisoned fifteen years earlier, and a sister who just had been released. I had no index for political prisoners much less for their presence in the mundane. Nearly every member of my staff at Café La Vie has been in prison. When I work with them, I see survivors. I see heroes. I wish you could see the same. Perhaps those of you who only know Palestinians through the mainstream media can begin to see and hear them with this *Biography* issue.

I was brought up in America by a typical default-Zionist family, as so many Americans are. You support Israel, because it says you should somewhere in the Bible. We failed to understand what is happening here in the context of a twentieth-century colonial project. Occupation and its violence is neither a response nor part of a historical “cycle” of violence. Israel neither acts out of retaliation, nor self-defense, and certainly not out of concerns to maintain security. Furthermore, Israeli occupation is not only about permits and checkpoints, ID cards and midnight raids, targeted killings and arrests. I taste the violence of occupation in my morning coffee. I am aware of it as I sit next to my husband and think how his presence as a Palestinian is granted by a military occupier that can easily deport and kill the occupied, and my presence is allowed by a visa often denied to foreigners who are then deported. Our very ability to be with one another is granted by the Israeli military. The violence of occupation lies in the arbitrary limitations, the constantly shifting rules, imposed on every aspect of every life in Palestine.

A simple example. I am married to a US citizen who also holds a Palestinian ID, called hawiyya. It is required by law that he keep his hawiyya card (with his personal information recorded in both Arabic and Hebrew) in a standard bright green case that identifies him as a West Bank Palestinian, as opposed to a Palestinian from Jerusalem, whose ID must be kept in a standard dark blue casing. His hawiyya means he is allowed to stay in Palestine but it also means his US passport is not “valid” in Palestine—he has no privileges or even basic human rights guaranteed to US citizens. We married in January 2012, and I applied for a visa as the spouse of a West Bank hawiyya-holding Palestinian. We submitted my application to the PA Ministry of Interior, who shuffled it over to the Israeli Military. My visa came back with an additional gift: a stamp that reads “Judea & Samaria Only.” This language intentionally evokes the Biblical lands in an effort to legitimize modern Israel’s historical claim to the lands it occupies; ironically, the Israeli state uses this language to refer to the West Bank, even though the historical borders of Samaria reached to the sea, while Judea included Jerusalem, a holy place from which Palestinians are emphatically and intricately barred. A few months after receiving the

stamp, the US Consulate in Jerusalem sent an email to all US citizens (meaning not my husband, but those of us who do not hold hawiyyas and who are thus still considered US citizens in Palestine). We were informed that after talks with the Israelis, the United States had negotiated our visa situation and the Israelis agreed to remove the stamp limiting us to Judea and Samaria only. I was thrilled. Let me explain why. Non-hawiyya holding US citizens living in Palestine are not allowed to buy a car with green license plates, registered as Palestinian cars. We are required to purchase and register yellow-plated cars, registered to the Israeli Ministry of Transportation. I am ultimately under Israeli law as a foreigner in an occupied land. I, thus, own a yellow-plated Israeli car, and the previous year I was not able to renew my registration because I was no longer allowed to enter Jerusalem, where the Ministry resides. When I found myself with no other option, I snuck into Jerusalem anyway and tried to renew the car. I was threatened with arrest for “crossing the border.” I then tried to sell the car. However, once the car’s registration is expired, it cannot be sold. Yet I could not renew it. In the end, I was forced to travel to Jordan and immediately return over the land border in order to receive a new tourist visa and renew the car, paying late fines. At least I registered it for the next year and sorted out my insurance. Without the “Judea & Samaria Only” stamp, which an Israeli human rights lawyer argued is an illegal limitation with no legal weight (though its ink still bleeds from my passport into my life), I could renew my car and drive to the Ben Gurion airport in Tel Aviv and pick up my father, who was visiting in a few weeks’ time.

I was happy to be the first US citizen in the Beit El Civil Administration building that morning, imagining the crowds to come. I sat across from the responsible officer, an Israeli who lives near Tel Aviv and commutes to the occupied territories daily. He laughed at me and said, “Your Ambassador is a very bad listener. Only US citizens working for international organizations can have the stamp removed.” I argued that I did work for an international organization registered in the UK, called Engaged Events, so I qualified. “No,” he stated matter-of-factly. “You’re married to an Arab. It doesn’t matter who you work for. You’ll never have the stamp removed.”

I was at a loss. “What do I do then?”

“Divorce.” He laughed. “But if you want to travel from Ben Gurion, I can give you a permit for a day. You can still use the airport.”

I left very frustrated. A young Australian who was doing voluntary service in the Israeli military for the summer walked me out. With a smile, he said, “I don’t understand why it matters? Your life is in Ramallah, who cares if you can go to Jerusalem.”

I tried to explain, “But I’m forbidden by law to buy a Palestinian car. And forbidden to renew my registration in Jerusalem. I’m stuck in between.”



“Don’t have a car,” was his simple response.

Yes, so simple. Don’t have a car.

Months later the US Consulate emailed. Again, all US citizens could have the “Judea & Samaria Only” stamp removed, not only those working for foreign organizations. I read the brief email and was elated. Our car had all but died and we needed to find something new. At the bottom, the last line read, “This does not apply to spouses of Palestinians.” I huffed out an angry puff of breath.

But I was granted one exception. A permit to travel using Ben Gurion airport. Let me share how that went. I wrote in an email about the experience to a woman who wanted to perform in Tel Aviv and was seeking information about BDS: “I want to share the extremity of this apartheid state and this brutal occupation as I experience it: as a white American woman with a US passport, meaning I have the US embassy to stand behind me if I need, and if they choose.” I went on to outline for her my situation with the Judea & Samaria stamp, the racist suggestion to divorce, and my car problem.

My ninety-two-year-old grandma is losing her mind. My mother called and told me she doesn’t recognize anyone lately. Come fast. I bought a ticket through Ben Gurion (Palestinian are forbidden to use their own airports). I was told by the military that I cannot apply for a permit to enter Israel (though my husband can apply as a Palestinian but then can only use the one awful checkpoint with cages to enter on foot, and is then forbidden from driving or being outside Jerusalem). However, the military told me, I can use Ben Gurion and they will issue a permit for two hours to go there. I called the commander yesterday. I have a flight, I told him. He said, “Yes you may use Ben Gurion but I don’t know how you will go there. It is forbidden that you enter Israel.” But the permit you told me about . . . ? “No, I don’t give that anymore. Go to Jordan. Use their airport.” So, a new ticket, go get a visa to enter Jordan, and spend an extra twenty-four hours to do overland travel. Why not? That’s what my husband is forced to do.

I tell you the truth: I fear to have children that they should know Israeli apartheid and occupation in Palestine.

And this is the occupation. We married on January 1, 2012 for a visa. I imagine we would have married the next summer, surrounded by family and friends, even if only a small gathering. Instead, we rushed it for a visa. My very right to live with my husband is mediated by the military. My car. My access to the Consulate. My water and electricity. The Israeli military occupation of Palestine is present in every single cup of coffee we serve in our café and drink in our home. It is a poisonous dye that bleeds through the very fabric of our lives.

In this volume, contributors speak to and work under these conditions. Ruanne and Basel travel from two separate border crossings into Jordan because Ruanne holds a blue Israeli ID and Basel holds a green hawiyya like my husband. Sa'ed dreams of the sea, his birthright, and those dreams are obstructed by his occupiers. Rima's visa, like mine, is Israeli military-issued, though it is also her birthright to live in Palestine. Instead of living in her family's home, she is denied access even to the graveyard of her relatives. Raja's great pleasure of walking is routed and rerouted by illegal settler and military encroachment. Refaat is today in Gaza, which is being bombarded and massacred by the Israeli military. They grant him his sleep and hope, and they steal it away even faster. And Brahim coedits this special issue from Hawai'i, having been dispossessed of his homeland.

It has been my great honor to work with Cindy and Brahim on this issue. Though they have traveled for family reasons or for conferences and occasionally skyped from outside Hawai'i, there is always one of us in Palestine and one in Hawai'i. It is sometimes a challenge to see beyond the great consuming grief of life in occupied Palestine, especially now as Shufat burns, Hebron is in lockdown, and Gaza smolders under another wave of bombs, as Palestinian children are being kidnapped and murdered. Skyping to Hawai'i reminds me that while sumoud is a Palestinian tradition, it is strengthened by global solidarity. Solidarity is pouring forth right now with protests across the world—in San Francisco, Montreal, Washington, DC, Boston, London, Dublin, Istanbul, Beirut, Buenos Aires, Mumbai, Paris, Berlin, Delhi, Amman, Tel Aviv, Cape Town, and Honolulu. Last year we read Noenoe Silva's *Aloha Betrayed: Hawaiian Resistance to American Colonialism* in a book club at my café. Hawai'i's colonial history is still largely unknown, but as more Palestinians understand Hawai'i's history and struggles, they are angry for the native people, and those of us living in occupied Palestine stand in solidarity with Native Hawaiians. I am thankful to be reminded every time I work on this special issue that *Biography* is housed in Hawai'i and that I work alongside two academics who struggle for justice there as well as for Palestine.

While Cindy, a Jewish American, came to Palestine and could have sought aliya had she wished, receiving Israeli citizenship within a week, Brahim, a Palestinian refugee with a US passport, is only allowed to visit as a US tourist. And so he will not come until he may return as a Palestinian, alongside all Palestinians who hold the right of return these sixty-six years later. I honor Brahim's choice. And so, when I met Cindy in my café, I gave her coffee to take back to Brahim in Hawai'i. I can only connect him to his homeland with a taste of home—ahwe sada—the taste of hospitality and welcome that is now so often the taste of death. Sumoud.

—Ramallah. July 25, 2014

**PART THREE, BY IBRAHIM G. AOUÉ**

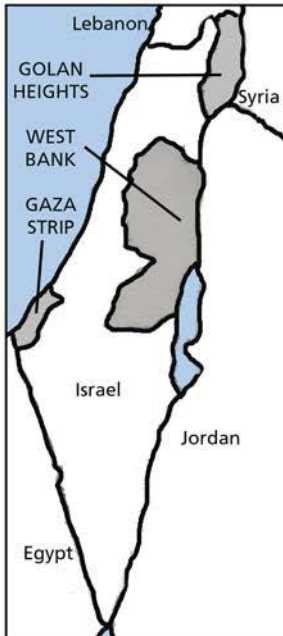
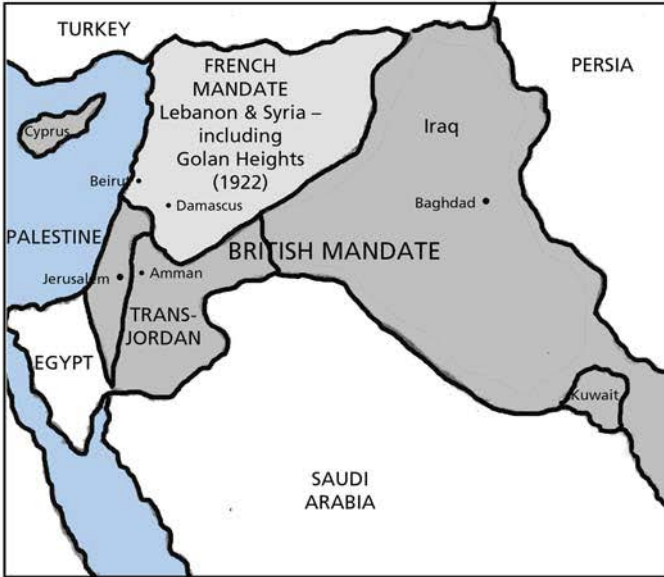
*They can aim sea, sky, and earth at me, but they cannot root the aroma of coffee out of me. I shall make my coffee now. I will drink the coffee now. Right now, I will be sated with the aroma of coffee, that I may at least distinguish myself from a sheep and live one more day, or die, with the aroma of coffee all around me.*

—Mahmoud Darwish

Watching the news about Israeli crimes against my people in Palestine in June and July 2014 triggered in me a collage of memories. Images of the first two Intifadas—the first that began on December 8, 1987 in Gaza, and the second on September 28, 2000—the 2008 and 2012 Israeli attacks on Gaza, and the July 12, 2006 Israeli invasion and destruction of Lebanon all raced in my mind. Those events had been defining ones in the popular struggle against Israel in Palestine and Lebanon. But they also are the product of a long history of the Palestinian struggle against colonialism and Zionism that has impacted me in multiple ways as an individual. And so, in introducing *Life in Occupied Palestine*, I wanted to paint that history in broad strokes and bring into the open my relationship to it. I do this realizing full well the gravity of and the responsibility attached to embarking on this endeavor.

The role of the individual in history is probably one of the most significant topics to reflect on in the study of revolutions and political movements. National liberation movements are no exception. The Palestinian struggle continues to produce heroes: ordinary individuals, young and old, mothers and daughters, brothers and sisters, fathers and sons, who in their attachment to the land and the olive tree, refuse to kneel down before the barbarians. Those individuals make history, but as Karl Marx wrote, not as they please. It is the context of the time that determines the trajectory in which they make their own history.

I was born in Jaffa, decades after the November 2, 1917 Balfour Declaration in which the British promised the Zionist movement a “national home” in Palestine, and several years after the end of the 1936–1939 Arab Revolt. In *The Arab Awakening* (1938), George Antonius warned early on of a Zionist plan to take over Palestine. The savage British repression of the Palestinian people to defeat the Arab Revolt resulted in the decimation of the Palestinian leadership. The 1922 League of Nations Mandate granted to the British had legalized their 1917 occupation of Palestine. The British collaborated with the Zionist movement to create not a “national home,” but a Zionist state in Palestine. It is interesting to note that the Mandate legally committed the British to protect the Palestinian people and prepare them for independence



at some future point. Instead, the British looked the other way when the ethnic cleansing of the Palestinian people started on March 10, 1948 with the adoption of Plan D (Pappe). The Zionists, under the leadership of David Ben-Gurion, wanted to capture as much territory of Mandate Palestine and expel as much of the Palestinian population as possible. The Zionists were not satisfied with the United Nations General Assembly's November 29, 1947 Partition Plan (under UN Resolution 181) of Palestine, which granted the Zionists 55 percent of Mandate Palestine even though the number of Jews at that point comprised one-third of the population. It is significant to note that at the start of the Mandate in 1922, Palestinian Arabs made up 90 percent of the population. As the indigenous majority, the Palestinian population rejected the plan because they were not consulted about it and because the plan robbed them of their sovereignty and self-determination.

My family was among the 720,000 Palestinians who had been forced to leave after the creation of the state of Israel. We left in the midst of the Arab-Israeli war that began when Arab troops entered to prevent the Zionist takeover of parts of Palestine allocated to the Arab state in accordance with UN Resolution 181. My father asked his cousin to drive us from Nazareth to the Southern Lebanese town of Marji'yoan. He decided to stay behind for a few more weeks. We became refugees overnight. I have reflected often on our 1948 trek from Nazareth, reflections usually triggered by my mother and aunty narrating the way in which we had become refugees. Each time surreal images accompany those reflections. Reality mixed with an ephemeral illusory existence between Nazareth and Marji'yoan. At three years of age I felt the horror of that existence. Those memories, reinforced by the family's narration of the trek, have been foundational in the constructing and reconstructing of my identity.

The family moved to Beirut eight months after becoming refugees. I attended a coed elementary school primarily for Palestinian refugees in a working class suburb of Beirut. Attended by both Palestinian and Lebanese Christians and Muslims, the school had been one of seven in Beirut and the South established by Christian denominations from the United States. My mother had been appointed the school principal and I was fortunate to attend that school, where she proved much stricter with me than she was with other students. She wanted me to study and perform well. My elementary school years were instrumental in forming my Palestinian identity.

Those experiences cultivated in me tolerance and respect for the "Other" and a sense of justice that has served me well throughout my life. I remember my mother telling me about Gamal Abdul-Nasser shortly after he successfully led the July 23, 1952 military coup to oust King Farouk of Egypt and declare a republic. To her he was an Arab hero. She asked me one day to

read an Arabic translation of Alfred Lilienthal's *What Price Israel?*. I quickly jumped into it, fascinated by all the information it held. At the age of nine the book presented me with a chance to make sense of those narrations about our refugee status in Lebanon, where I lived and belonged but did not really. Parenthetically I should say that as fate would have it, I met Alfred Lilienthal at the University of Hawai'i in the mid 1980s and I recounted the story of a nine-year old reading his book.

Moving to an all-male private school in 1955 for a year, then to another for three years, gave me a broader perspective on the political situation in Lebanon and the Arab world. The 1956 Tripartite (British, French, and Israeli) invasion of Egypt was a defining moment in my political education, as it was to millions across the Arab world. The invasion and its outcome (the withdrawal of the invaders) catapulted Nasser to the status of undisputed Arab hero. Two years later, the February 1958 union between Egypt and Syria and the civil war in Lebanon had become major watersheds in my political education. Throughout the quick march of events, Palestine was the focus of the Arabs. I remember my father discussing the events of the day during the May 1958 civil war, which lasted for three months, with friends and neighbors. I remember, too, the multiple Arab radio stations that boomed in our neighborhood, all opposing Arab nationalism and Nasser. The most notorious of those was Radio Baghdad, spewing its propaganda in support of Western interests in the Arab world. All those fumes dissipated, however, on July 14, 1958. No, it was not Bastille Day. It was a military coup that brought the end of the Hashemite monarchy in Iraq. Those events constituted significations for the construction of my identity as a Palestinian Arab. At thirteen I felt no contradiction in being at once Palestinian and Arab. Together with my friends at school, both Lebanese and Palestinian, I sought out political movements dedicated to liberating the Arab world from colonialism and imperialism. We all felt this to be our duty. But direct political participation had to wait a few years longer.

In London, England, where I was a student in a technical college, politics were my main interest. Studies came second. I remember taking a stroll with a friend in a park in High Street, Kensington, discussing the latest developments in the Arab world: Algerian liberation and the two 1963 Baathist coups in Iraq and Syria. We passed an elderly Iraqi woman sitting on a bench, who upon hearing our discussion uttered something like, "Arabs! They all talk politics all the time, everywhere!" It was her way of saying, "enough politics, smell the roses!" But foremost in our sights was the fate of the Arab world. We did not care for much else. I was eighteen then and a member of the Executive Committee of the Arab Students Union in the UK and Ireland.

A year later I was hitchhiking in independent Algeria. My trip there, two years after liberation, was the highlight of my adventures up until then. While I was back in London for the last stint before graduation, the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) was formed at the 1964 Arab Summit. Ahmad al-Shoqairy, a Palestinian lawyer who had served as the Saudi representative at the United Nations, was appointed its chairman. My friends and I welcomed the creation of the PLO, but were cognizant that it was created to contain the groundswell of popular Palestinian political activity in the Arab world. A group of Arab students across the UK, of whom I was one, had been studying Marxism and publishing a primitive-looking journal editorializing about events in the Arab world. The Editor asked me to write an article about the significance and role of the PLO at that political conjuncture. The request gave me the opportunity to formulate my thoughts about the topic in a forum read by Arab students in the UK.

Back in Lebanon, I reunited with several of my Arab friends from the UK. We formed a study group and began connecting with workers and students. The intent was to create a significant Lebanese political organization. Concurrently, I joined with those seeking to politically educate Palestinian youth.

The defeat of the Arab regimes in the 1967 war ended with the Israeli aggressors swallowing the rest of Palestine (Gaza and the West Bank), the Sinai, and the Golan Heights. That war brought about the abrupt collapse of Arab nationalism as represented by Nasser, and the rise of the Palestinian guerilla movement. In 1969 the Palestinian Resistance Movement (PRM), primarily constituted of the main guerilla organizations, took over the PLO and Yasser Arafat became its chairman. Consequently a new chapter in the Palestinian struggle began.

After roughly fifteen months of existence lacking a political compass, I decided to leave the Arab world for North America in 1968. Here I witnessed the tail end of the Civil Rights Movement (CRM), which revolutionaries (leftists and Arab nationalists) had been following in the Arab world. I remember being in Saudi Arabia when the news about the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr. was broadcast on radio. It was another blow to the cause of justice and liberation. The CRM had been near and dear to our hearts, and we considered it the link in the chain that completed the circle of anticolonial struggles around the world. Patrice Lumumba, Martin Luther King, Jr., Malcolm X, Nelson Mandela, Ho Chi Minh, Nasser, and Arafat were the pillars of that struggle.

The American war in Southeast Asia was in full swing. So was the US antiwar movement. I read lots of articles and books about Marxism and the Frankfurt School, and attended many concerts and lectures and watched documentaries about the antiwar movement. That education was significant to

my intellectual development in Hawai'i in the early 1970s and in Los Angeles in 1975 and 1976.

Nasser died in September 1970, practically at the same time that Hafez al-Assad mounted a successful coup in Syria and a year after the Qaddafi coup of September 1, 1969 in Libya. The 1973 war succeeded initially in defeating the Israelis, but Egyptian president Anwar al-Sadat decided to stop the advance of his troops, resulting in serious reversals on both the Egyptian and Syrian fronts. Not only did Sadat leave Hafez al-Assad holding the short end of the stick, but went even further when he visited Israeli-occupied Jerusalem. The visit eventually led to the Camp David negotiations of 1978 and the peace treaty of 1979 between Egypt and Israel.

In the Fall of 1976 I enrolled in the PhD Program in Political Science at the University of Hawai'i, and worked as a lab leader at the Ethnic Studies Program, which became a department in 1995. My previous stay in the Islands allowed me to appreciate Hawai'i's history and society. In 1976, however, I began seriously studying Hawai'i's rich history. Quickly, the relationship between Hawai'i and Palestine became clear to me. What united them was the land question. In fact, Hawai'i and Palestine are two case studies about indigenous struggles against colonialism and empire. I note here with pride that the Department of Ethnic Studies to which I belong was the first and only academic department in the United States to unanimously endorse the American Studies Association's Resolution of 2013 calling for the boycott of Israel's academic institutions.

My publications about the Arab world have been informed both methodologically and theoretically by my knowledge of and experiences in the Islands. Conversely, my publications about Hawai'i have been informed by my knowledge and experiences in the Arab world. Those transnational experiences continue to enrich my exilic worldview.

The Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty secured the Egyptian front for Israel, which began to prepare for the invasion of Lebanon, a country in the midst of a civil war that started in 1975. The peace treaty therefore may be regarded as a watershed in the decline of the Palestinian struggle for liberation. The 1982 land invasion of Lebanon from areas in its South, which Israel seized in 1978, resulted in the expulsion of the PLO from Lebanon. Israel's strategic goal went further than that. It wanted Lebanon as a satellite in its orbit and to eradicate Syria's influence in Lebanon. Ultimately, Israel failed in its quest when in 1985 the Lebanese resistance forced it to withdraw from Beirut and the mountains to the South. Israel remained there until 2000, when the Lebanese resistance forced it again to withdraw from almost all of the areas it occupied in 1978.

The 1970s witnessed the rise of Islamist movements, including the Muslim Brothers (established in 1928), and Salafis, to fill the vacuum left by the



decline of Arab nationalism. Islamist movements picked up speed right after the United States, Pakistan, and Saudi Arabia created the “Mujahedeen,” who later transformed into al-Qa’ida, to fight the Soviets in Afghanistan. US president Ronald Reagan likened them to “our founding fathers.” Matters deteriorated even further as a consequence of the Iraq-Iran war that began in September 1980 and lasted till 1988. In his action against Iran, the dictator Saddam Hussein had depleted much of Iraq’s military and economic power. By degrading Iraqi power, Saddam had provided a great service to the United States, Israel and regional Arab states allied with the United States. Two years later he followed that war with the invasion of Kuwait, which proved disastrous to the Arab world, and especially to the first Palestinian Intifada, as Arafat had rushed to support Saddam in his invasion of Kuwait, bringing the wrath of the Gulf Arab states against the Palestinians.

Desert Storm devastated what had been left of Iraqi military and economic power after the Iraq-Iran war. The adverse political consequences of the US triumph were even more devastating for the Arab world, including the Palestinian popular struggle against the Israeli occupation of Palestine. In 1991 US President Bush declared a New World Order (NWO), and in October of that year the Madrid Peace Conference was held, presumably to find a solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict. Negotiations had been set up between the Israeli state and each of the Arab states separately. While a Palestinian team, part of the larger Jordanian team, had been negotiating with the Israeli state in Madrid, parallel secret negotiations had been going on between the Israeli state and a Palestinian team led by Mahmoud Abbas. The two parties finally reached an agreement in September 1993. Dubbed the Oslo Accords, the agreement led to the end of the first Intifada. August 1, 1994 witnessed the implementation of the first phase of the Accords, when Arafat, as the head of a Palestinian National Authority (PNA), entered Gaza-Jericho.

On that day in August I was visiting an Egyptian political personality close to Arafat who asked me jokingly why was I not in Gaza celebrating that significant achievement. He of course knew very well that I had been against the Oslo Accords from the beginning. I quickly answered, “Well, I am waiting for Gaza-Jericho to expand. . . .” Oslo did not stop the building of colonies, euphemistically called settlements. Oslo has been a disaster for the Palestinian people and the Arab masses, and Israeli practices during the Oslo years led to the Second Intifada of September 2000.

This continuing journey revealed to me a critical matter: Palestine is the focal point of the struggle in the Arab world. Current events in Palestine, Syria, Iraq, Libya, Tunisia, and Egypt, for instance, are all interrelated. One cannot fully understand the Palestinian struggle for liberation without understanding the environment in which this struggle is occurring and the economic and

geopolitical interests of regional and Western states in the future of the region. This conclusion has been underscored by the Arab uprisings, beginning in 2010 as it had after the 2003 US invasion and occupation of Iraq. The chaotic state of the Arab world has weakened advocacy and the struggle for the Palestinian cause, and strengthened Israel's hand in the Arab region.

We come full circle back to June and July 2014 to witness Israeli barbarism against the Palestinian people. As I write this introduction, news on Arabic TV channels about Israel's war crimes in Gaza, the West Bank, and ad-Dakhil (the 1948 areas of Palestine where the state of Israel was established) clearly shows what life under occupation really looks like.

When my colleague Cynthia Franklin (Cindy) invited me to be part of the *Biography* project, I quickly realized the importance of this endeavor, but was not sure what value I could bring to it. Nor was I certain that I would have enough time to dedicate to this issue of the journal. Be that as it may, Cindy and I met one morning in July 2013 at a café in Mānoa Valley near the University of Hawai'i, where she explained the project in some detail and informed me that Morgan Cooper, my dear friend, would also serve as a co-editor. We had a very productive session. I was in. What helped in convincing me to participate was an inducement that Morgan had prepared for me in Ramallah. Cindy delivered Arabic coffee to me, which she had transferred into a plain plastic bag at Morgan's recommendation to obscure its Palestinian origin so as to make it through Israeli airport security.

Throughout the 2013 Fall semester, which I spent mostly in the Arab world, Turkey, and Australia, we held conference calls on Skype to plan the journal issue. Back in Hawai'i for the Spring 2014 semester, Skype remained the way in which we three communicated across continents. I continued communicating with Cindy and Morgan through Skype while visiting Turkey and Lebanon this past May and June and after I returned to Hawai'i on July 1. On my 2014 visit to Turkey I sipped Turkish coffee at Kameriye café while conducting *Biography* business on Skype. During one of our meetings, at the onset of Operation Brother's Keeper, we heard a loud noise that sounded like an explosion. Cindy automatically asked Morgan about it. Her worries soon dissipated when Morgan nonchalantly said that the sound did not originate from Palestine. I quickly added that municipality workers close to the café had thrown a heavy object onto a truck bed.

By the next day, Israeli soldiers had invaded Ramallah. Since then, unfolding and escalating Israeli war crimes have spread from the West Bank to Gaza, giving more relevance to this *Biography* issue and its small window into Palestinian lives under occupation. My people are subjected daily to Israeli crimes against humanity. But the struggle of my people continues, and as suggested in the contributions gathered in this special issue, narratives about life

under occupation will increasingly become narratives about liberation and not merely resistance and steadfastness. One hopes that a time will come in which narrations captured by Mahmoud Darwish's poem, "Record! I am an Arab . . ." will be transformed to "Record! I have entered Jerusalem and Tel Aviv. . . . Peace be upon all regardless of race, ethnicity or religious belief."

—Honolulu. July 19, 2014

**PART FOUR, BY CYNTHIA G. FRANKLIN**



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On July 16, 2014, four cousins, playing soccer on a beach in Gaza, were shot dead by Israeli soldiers engaged in Operation Protective Edge. At the time of this writing over 1,600 Palestinians have been killed in this latest military assault on Gaza, one-third of them children. Of these, the deaths of Ismail Mahmoud Bakir, 9, Ahed Atef Bakir, 10, Zakariya Ahed Bakir, 10, and Mohammad Ramiz Bakir, 11, are those that an international audience is most likely to know of and to mourn. These children, living through their third Israeli invasion, happened to be at play in front of a beachside hotel popular with journalists. In videos, photos, stories, and tweets, reporters at the scene captured these

boys in motion—and then their sudden, arbitrary, but deliberate deaths, and the ensuing grief of their family members. In the days that followed, artists, writers, and organizers took up their story, conveying in hard-hitting, haunting, and often beautiful ways the incalculable value and unforgivable expendability of the Bakirs' lives. As these accounts interrupt the Zionist narrative in which Israelis are engaged in acts of self-defense against terrorists with no regard for their own or even for their children's lives, these boys have become small figures through whom a larger story is finally being heard (see Kumar). In this way, they and the stories about them suggest the power of life writing, and also the impetus behind this special issue in which contributors make known what life in occupied Palestine is like for Palestinians.

To expose the violence that underpins occupation, knowing the facts and figures is necessary, although not easy or enough. As the massacres in Gaza continue at the time of this writing and surpass those of the 2008 Operation Cast Lead, and as Israeli troops open live fire on over tens of thousands of Palestinians protesting in Jerusalem and the West Bank, it is difficult keeping up with these numbers, and also challenging to find them.<sup>10</sup> One must turn to specialized sources such as the Institute for Middle East Understanding (IMEU) or the *Middle East Monitor*, to attempt to keep track of how many Palestinians the Israeli army has killed, or to learn of the other numbers: the number of Palestinian homes destroyed; the number of hospitals, schools, shelters, cemeteries, churches, and mosques bombed; the number of Palestinian people arrested and detained; the number of Palestinian people without water, food, medical supplies, or power; the number of Palestinian people living in makeshift shelters; the number of Palestinian people without shelter; the number of Palestinian people severely injured; the number of Palestinian children who lost parents; the number of Palestinian parents who lost children; the number of entire families wiped out.

When these numbers are reported in the mainstream US and Israeli press, they are regularly distorted or masked. The *Baltimore Sun's* July 21, 2014 headline, "13 Israeli soldiers, 70 others killed," provides one clear but not unusual example of this (Kishawi). These "others" almost always go unnamed, and not only because there are so many. Israel recently banned a radio clip from the Israeli Human Rights organization B'Tselem that named the children killed in Gaza because it was "politically controversial"; members of Jews Say No! and Jewish Voice for Peace were arrested when, in an act of civil disobedience, they entered a Friends of the IDF office in New York City and read out names of those killed in Gaza (Hovel; Kane and Weiss, "US Jews"). With few exceptions, when acknowledged at all by politicians and mainstream pundits, these deaths are invariably laid at the door of Hamas, which is said to be using civilians as human shields and to

garner support for terrorism. As David Brooks of the *New York Times* put this, drawing on statements made by Bill Clinton and other US politicians, “ Hamas has basically decided they want to see their own people killed as a propaganda coup. . . . [W]hat we’re seeing is sort of a desperate Hamas trying to gin up some sort of publicity coup through the death of their own people” (Kane and Weiss, “ Hamas”). On CBS’s *Face the Nation*, anchor Bob Schieffer stated, “ The Palestinian people find themselves in the grip of a terrorist group that has embarked on a strategy to get its own children killed in order to build sympathy for its cause” (Hart). Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who charges Hamas with the “ double war crime” of killing their own people and forcing Israelis to kill them (Geller), formulated this mind-bending yet pervasive position even more memorably: “ All civilian casualties are unintended by us but actually intended by Hamas. They want to pile up as many civilian dead as they can because somebody said, and I mean, it’s gruesome, but they use telegenically-dead Palestinians for their cause” (Kane and Weiss, “ Hamas”).

By contrast, each Israeli death is reported in life-giving detail, so that anyone reading of it can feel the loss, and in a way that distracts from the larger political and historical contexts. This public relations strategy can be seen in the ways Israeli political leaders, together with the mainstream media, made use of, while misrepresenting, the murders of Gilad Shaar, Naftali Frenkel, and Eyal Yifrach. As a staged search was conducted for these three yeshiva students, kidnapped from the illegal settlement area Gush Etzion, their photos and stories circulated everywhere. When finally announced, the media broadcast them as the starting point for what has come to be called “ a cycle of violence,” with accounts of their individual lives and deaths providing an alibi for Operation Brother’s Keeper and then Operation Protective Edge, invasions that arguably were not responses to the murders, which Israeli police already knew not to be the work of Hamas (Zavadski; Horowitz and Weiss), but an offensive against the Palestinian unity government that had just tentatively been agreed upon after a reconciliation between Hamas and Fatah (Elhousseini). In explanations for the killings of these youth, politicians and mainstream media not only persist in blaming Hamas, they also fail to mention as antecedents the unprovoked killing, caught on video camera, of two Palestinian teens: on May 15, 2014, Nadim Sian Nuwara and Muhammad Mahmoud Odeh Abu al-Thahir were fatally shot by Israeli soldiers following a demonstration for prisoners in the occupied West Bank city of Beitunia (Abunimah, “ Video”). Most significantly—and in contrast to the coverage Netanyahu would ban of “ telegenically dead” Palestinians—stories about the three Israeli teens and “ cycles of violence” continue to cover over

the unidirectional processes of colonization, occupation, and ethnic cleaning. These processes have been ongoing since 1948 with varying levels of intensity, though perhaps nowhere so palpably on the West Bank as in Hebron.

Palestinian-American poet Remi Kanazi incisively critiqued this phenomenon of lingering over the life of each Israeli citizen's death to build support for Israel when he posted on Facebook on July 17, after the first reporting of an Israeli fatality, "An Israeli soldier was killed in Gaza. I'm sure I'll know their favorite color & shoe size by 6 a.m. via the US media." The exception to this pattern, occurring when the Jerusalem resident who was killed was a Bedouin and not a Jew, proves the rule. Even after Israel began its ground invasion of Gaza—an action resulting in the deaths (some from "friendly fire") of tens of Israeli soldiers—the Israeli civilian fatalities number two, at the time of this writing, in addition to a Thai worker. The lack of detail in the mainstream US or Israeli media about one of these Israelis' deaths can be explained by the account given in *Mondoweiss* that identifies Auda al-Wadj as a Bedouin killed by rocket fire from a Palestinian resistance group. Bedouins inside Israel are Israeli citizens, and live on land that the Israeli government nevertheless categorizes as agricultural, not residential—and here, there are connections to be made between how the state designates Bedouin villages as agricultural land and how the Israeli military describes their intermittent bombings of Palestinians entrapped in Gaza as "mowing the lawn" (Rabbani).<sup>11</sup> Because they are not in residential zones, Israel has deemed Bedouins ineligible for protection under Israel's Iron Dome, and prohibited them from building bomb shelters. Bedouins petitioning for these rights were told instead to "lie on the ground" (Khalek, "Israel's Iron Dome"). In other words, Bedouins count as Israeli citizens—and, indeed, as human—only after they have become useful statistics, casualties that can be blamed on Hamas.

What this radically asymmetrical approach to representing Jewish Israeli versus Arab or Palestinian lives and deaths begins to suggest is the high stakes that attend the narration of individual lives. It is through the Zionist narrative that Palestinians are dehumanized or rendered non-existent. Through a massively-financed campaign of *hasbara*,<sup>12</sup> when they are not cast as terrorists, Palestinians become so much grass to be mowed; or "human shields" (a description that itself reduces Palestinians into instruments of war); or a mass of bloody bodies that, when inconveniently captured on camera, comprise Netanyahu's "telegenically-dead Palestinians." That Netanyahu and his supporters cannot recognize the grievability of these lives, or even grant human status to Palestinians, surely is linked to recognition of the threat posed to a Zionist state by representing Palestinians in ways that should, but do not, go without saying: that Palestinians are human, that their lives and deaths matter.<sup>13</sup>

However, owing not only to the scope and scale of the violence Israel is unleashing against Palestinians, but also to the powerful ways Palestinians and their allies are making use of social media, cell phones, and sumoud, stories that testify to the humanity of Palestinians cannot be repressed, and their impact is enormous. If, as with the three Israeli teens, stories of individual lives can serve to obscure history and structures of colonialism, they also can bring this history to life.<sup>14</sup> This was the case with the Bakir cousins playing on the Gaza beach. So too, there is Mohammed Abu Khdeir, a Palestinian teen and also an Israeli citizen burned alive by Israelis out for revenge in the hours after the announcement that the bodies of Shaar, Frenkel, and Yifrach had been found. Mohammed Abu Khdeir's family has not been granted a proper investigation into his murder—instead, his father was accused of orchestrating his son's death, the family's home was destroyed, his cousins and uncle were arrested and held without charge or trial by the military in administrative detention, and the only one of his murderers taken to trial was acquitted on grounds of temporary insanity. Nonetheless, Mohammed's story is circulating, and unsettling the Zionist version of justice. This counter-narrative owes not only to irrefutable documentation proving he had been immolated, but also to the fact that one of his cousins, Tariq, a fifteen-year-old visiting from Florida, was severely beaten and arrested and then deported. Aided by Tariq's status as a US citizen, the Khdeir family has been able to access mainstream media sources, and photos of Tariq and Mohammed have circulated widely along with accounts given by Tariq and his family members. Through their statements, the Khdeir family has situated the violence done to Mohammed and Tariq in relation to that experienced by Palestinians from Israel on a daily basis. "The Palestinians live like this every day," Tariq's mother, Suha Abu Khdeir, announced on the ABC news (Marquardt). Accounts of Tariq's and Mohammed Abu Khdeir's lives and Mohammed's death have received enough attention internationally as well as in Israel and Palestine to be called a "tipping point" (Turgemon; Wallace-Well). As these stories enter into the mainstream, they destabilize the Zionist narrative upon which the monetary and ideological support for Israel so crucially depends.

In the dominant Zionist narrative, Palestinian perspectives—abundant outside of mainstream channels—have been occluded and distorted. On the one hand, this narrative renders Palestinians as non-existent. On the other, it represents them as nameless, faceless, agents of violence—as Arab or Muslim terrorists intent on destroying the Jewish people, with little or no regard for their own survival. These representations are not competing but complementary. The first, as it sutures over the Nakba, makes possible the claim to Israel as a Jewish homeland and rightful place of refuge from anti-Semitic persecution. The second is crucial to positing the state of Israel as the only

democracy in the Middle East. The erasures and Islamophobia that underpin these depictions are also necessary to casting the decades-long Israeli occupation and colonization of Palestine as an ancient, intractable religious feud that is without a political solution. In relation to our present moment, the Zionist narrative would have it that this is but the latest chapter in an age-old religious conflict, wherein the Muslim terrorist group Hamas, exhibiting Arab disregard for life, ignited a cycle of violence when they killed three Jewish teens. As the only democracy in the Middle East and as the Jewish homeland, it is Israel's duty and right, runs this narrative, to defend against this latest instance of anti-Semitic persecution.

However, as Morgan discusses earlier in this introduction and in ways contributors delineate throughout this special issue, the Israel-Palestine conflict is not Biblical in origin: it is political, and dates back prior to 1948 and the foundation of Israel as a Jewish state, to the late nineteenth-century Zionist hijacking of Judaism. Nor is this conflict two-sided. Rather, Israel, a powerful state founded on the ethnic cleansing of Palestinians, continues to expand through an illegal occupation and settlements—populated by roughly 500,000 Israelis—established in violation of international law and maintained through the separation wall and a system of checkpoints, road blockades, and separate roads for settlers. Also, contrary to the Geneva Conventions, Israel exercises the full force of its military might and intelligence against a largely unarmed civilian population whose front-line fighters are youth with stones (see, for example, accounts in this volume from Islah Jad and Yasmine Hamayel, and Rima Najjar). The US, Israel's primary sponsor, ignores the facts that under international law Israel is an occupying power; that occupiers are responsible for the well being of the population under occupation; and that as an occupied people, Palestinians have a right to self-defense that is instead repeatedly denied to them. Moreover, Palestinians' efforts to resist and defend themselves against their occupiers are systematically criminalized (today in mantras about Hamas), while Israel's indiscriminate killing of civilians is naturalized as a necessary defensive measure (Erakat).

These structures of apartheid, settler colonialism, and occupation would not be possible without the Zionist narrative that obscures and justifies the expulsion and dispossession of Palestinians from their homeland. This narrative is also required to sustain the apartheid practices within Israel that render Palestinians second-class citizens, with over fifty laws discriminating against them that range from bans on family reunification to prohibitions against owning homes and land or teaching about Palestinians' history in their schools. This narrative also enables the Israeli apartheid practices throughout Palestine that increasingly fragment and separate Palestinians from one another, and subject them to forms of ethnic cleansing that range



from the bureaucratic to the architectural to the military. Whether internally displaced by Israel as “present absentees” whose property is then confiscated, or entrapped within the 140-square-mile, open-air prison that is Gaza, where 1.8 million residents, most of them already refugees and half under the age of eighteen, are repeatedly subjected to bombings, gassing, artillery fire, homelessness, and a devastated infrastructure, Palestinians find their very existence under violent erasure and assault.

Changing this narrative matters. In *The Battle for Justice in Palestine*, Ali Abunimah contends that the struggle “is and has always been, first and foremost, a battle of ideas.” After reviewing the central tenets of Zionist ideology, Abunimah states, “Our notion of the possible and impossible, the just and the unjust, the desirable and the undesirable are bounded by such ideas and how legitimate and ‘realistic’ they are seen to be. It is precisely to prevent us from breaking out of the strictly enforced limits of current thinking that Israel and its lobbies are investing so much in efforts to stop mere discussion—especially in the United States, Israel’s indispensable sponsor” (xiv). In this battle of ideas, there are material consequences to how individual lives and deaths are represented, or not represented.

## ORGANIZATION AND CONTENTS

This special issue features contributors who contest—not only in these pages, but also in their writing and teaching and organizing on so many fronts—the dominant narrative that would render Palestinians nameless and voiceless, as either agents of violence and terror or as nonexistent. That contributors are unified in their opposition to this narrative, in which Palestinian lives are disposable and in which their deaths go uncounted, does not mean that this volume is one-sided. Rather, as contributors provide multifaceted accounts of Palestinians’ lives under occupation, they disrupt the human-inhuman, Jewish-Arab, citizen-terrorist binaries that characterize Zionism in its most overtly violent forms. From diverse vantage points, they also challenge the “both sides are human,” “both sides are to blame” liberal rhetoric that puts a softer spin on these us-them binaries that sustain Israel’s status quo. Contributors differ in terms of generation, vocation, education, religious orientation, sexuality, gender, region, nationality, race, and ethnicity. The volume includes poets, political prisoners, professors, students, activists, artists, lawyers, writers, theologians, mothers, brothers, fathers, sons, and daughters. Some are internationally known; others are part of the newest generation of activists and intellectuals.

In constituting this special issue, we have worked to identify central themes that connect contributors across their diversity: borders and barriers to mobility and home (section one); how imagination and art are ways to

survive and resist state-sponsored violence, including invasion and incarceration (section two); the possibilities and importance of reciprocal solidarities and communal forms of action (section three); and the significance of the BDS movement and how individual lives figure into this collective campaign (section four). Connections exist within and across the four sections. Virtually every piece explores ways occupation is enforced through restrictions to mobility, and throughout each section, contributors advance visions of hope, resistance, and solidarity. Taken together, the pieces in *Life in Occupied Palestine* evidence the significance of life writing, while making a much-needed intervention in the ways Palestine and Palestinian lives are narrated.

In the first section, “Borders, Journeys, Home,” contributors analyze and counter the many ways that Israel has divided Palestinians from each other and from their land. Even as we deliberately sought contributions to this special issue from Palestinians situated in various locations, including the regions of Gaza and the Galilee and the cities and towns of Nablus, Ramallah, Jerusalem, Abu Dis, Galilee, Jenin, Hebron, and al-Marja, along with our contributors we oppose, rather than reinscribe, Israel’s attempts to divide the two occupied chunks of land and to separate Palestinians living on the West Bank from those in Gaza and from those inside the 1967 borders that demarcate the state of Israel.

In “Borders, Journeys, Home,” as contributors historicize and reflect on personal experiences of the borders that Israel establishes to impose on Palestinians conditions of apartheid, occupation, and dispossession, they also tell stories that show the everyday and extraordinary ways that Palestinians over the past decades have crossed these borders and reclaimed their homes and land. The section begins with “Exiled at Home: Writing Return and the Palestinian Home,” where Nadera Shalhoub-Kevorkian and Sarah Ihmoud draw on their personal histories navigating the violence of Israeli settler colonialism and militarization to theorize the Palestinian home as not only a physical, but also a psychological and epistemological space. As they delineate Israel’s ongoing efforts to fragment and dislocate Palestinians from their homeland, they posit a decolonial analytics of returning to their home/land, and envision a way to reconstruct Palestinian belonging and identities through a radical praxis of love that engenders new forms of resistance. This essay provides a historical sweep and a theoretical framework through which it is possible to situate the essays that follow.

The next two essays, as they focus on earlier time periods, continue to explore the power of borders and ways Palestinians have defied them. Engaging in archival work, their authors show how even the most seemingly mundane life narratives contribute to understanding a larger history of Palestinian colonization and resistance. In “After the Nakba in Nuba: A Palestinian Villager’s

Diary, 1949,” Alex Winder translates from Arabic into English excerpts from the diaries of Muhammad ‘Abd al-Hadi al-Shrouf, a Palestinian police officer from Hebron. Through his reading of the diaries, Winder examines Palestinian experiences in the direct wake of the 1948 war, questions diaries’ association with privacy and interiority, and posits an alternative tradition of life writing that privileges community. Winder also challenges the presumed dichotomy between Palestinians in exile and those rooted in village life. Magid Shihade similarly intervenes in understandings of village life through archival research and interviews with residents of Kafr Yasif village. In “Not Just a Picnic: Settler Colonialism, Mobility, and Identity among Palestinians in Israel,” as Shihade narrates the social, economic, and political history of this village in Galilee through the lens of two picnics, he demonstrates how villagers continued to be involved in complex exchanges throughout the Mandate period and after 1948, and how the larger Palestinian history has been impacted by the rupture caused by the formation of the Israeli settler colonial state.

In “Locked Out,” Lina Hesham AlSharif provides a brief and moving meditation on yet another way borders work to separate Palestinians from one another, as she describes how she cannot enter Gaza, and how her family cannot exit Gaza to visit her in Qatar. “Borders, Journeys, Home” concludes with “Once Upon A Border: The Daily Life of Resistance.” In this essay, Honaida Ghanim explores how the Palestinian residents of al-Marja, a village adjacent to the Green Line, experienced the first appearance of the “borders” in their lives in 1949. Based on villagers’ stories, Ghanim provides insights into the arrangements, techniques, and tools that residents developed to infiltrate borders and recapture “ordinary” ways of living that, under Israel’s newly imposed borders, became extraordinary.

Whereas section one explores forms of resistance and creativity that allow Palestinians to move through the daunting obstacles that define everyday life, the second section, “Invasions, Incarcerations, and Insurgent Imagination,” focuses on how Palestinians resist the violence of occupation and colonization through art and other acts of creative expression. In “Incidental Insurgents,” visual artist Ruanne Abou Rahme talks with Morgan Cooper about her and Basel Abbas’s *Incidental Insurgents*. This arrestingly beautiful project, structured as an audio-visual novel, involved an investigative approach to archival research and oral history as Rahme and Abbas delved into the life story of Abu Jildeh. Reflecting on this project, Rahme addresses the stakes of how revolutionary movements are narrated, and illuminates how the radical figure Abu Jildeh has been criminalized in a way that obscures his engagement in class struggle—something she sees lacking in present-day Palestinian political life. Reclaiming Abu Jildeh becomes a way to reclaim history that can then serve as a resource for shaping a revolutionary future.

The other pieces in this section also evidence imagination as a pathway towards freedom. The next two essays focus on ways writing life stories can do this work. In “Towards a New Language of Liberation,” renowned international human rights lawyer and author Raja Shehadeh discusses the poetics of life writing and the role the writer can play as witness and seeker of justice. In “*Gaza Writes Back*: Narrating Palestine,” Refaat Alareer writes of how living through Israel’s efforts during Operation Cast Lead to permanently silence the people of Gaza inspired him to work with young writers to create *Gaza Writes Back* as a means to resist, through creativity and imagination, the brutality of an occupation that refuses to end. A poem by Lina AlSharif follows Alareer’s essay. One of the contributors to *Gaza Writes Back*, in “Write What You Know?” AlSharif exercises the liberatory possibilities of poetics as she writes of wanting “to see the sea for what it is / and marvel the sunset / without a permit.” In her memoir “Dreaming of Never Land,” Sonia Nimr also evidences the decolonial power of imagination—to make the stars sing and to create and to dream, as she survives three years of incarceration in Maskoubiya prison and life under Israeli occupation. This section concludes with “‘Food is Not Our Issue’: Reflections on Hunger Striking.” In this autobiographical meditation, Sa’ed Omar discusses his reasons for going on hunger strike when incarcerated as a political prisoner; attempts by Israel and the Palestinian Authority to break his spirit; and his determination to go to the sea of Haifa, Akka, and Yaffa, where he will take photos to send to the officer who imprisons him. His message is one of hope for a Palestinian life of freedom and dignity.

In the third section, “Reciprocal Solidarities, and Other Revolutionary Relations,” contributors demonstrate the possibilities of life narratives that do not allow for empathy to be enough. Instead, contributors advance and enact forms of solidarity and witnessing through genres that include letters, social media postings, autobiography, and travel narrative. “From the West Bank: Letters and Acts of Resistance” includes excerpts of letters written by Islah Jad at the height of the 2002 Israeli invasion of the West Bank. Her daughter, Yasmine Saleh Hamayel, edits these letters, and reflects on them as someone who lived through that time with her mother, and who then went on to participate in the youth activism of 2011–2013. As they claim and bear witness to a history they have lived through, Jad and Hamayel counter Israel’s attempt to rob them not only of their narratives but also of their very existence. In “Life in Abu Dis Continues Quietly,” activism shifts to a different medium. Through Facebook postings, Rima Najjar engages in an unfolding form of life writing, one that follows the daily rhythms of her Abu Dis neighbors. Najjar discusses how she uses social media to communicate the human costs of the Israeli occupation and to foster resistance to the dehumanizing representations and the erasures of Palestinians upon which the Israeli government’s continued human

rights abuses depend. Whereas Najjar creates political community with her Facebook friends, in “Traveling as a Palestinian,” a personal narrative of his experiences as a Palestinian traveler, Yousef M. Aljamal documents some of the many obstacles Gazans, and more generally, Palestinians, face when trying to cross borders, as he tells of the solidarity he forges with those he meets on his travels through Aotearoa and Malaysia. In “Reciprocal Solidarity: Where the Black and Palestinian Queer Struggles Meet,” Sa’ed Atshan and Darnell L. Moore embrace a model of solidarity that thrives on reciprocity, love, friendship, storytelling, shared experiences and struggles, and queer kinship. As they end their piece reflecting on the lack of justice on both sides of the Atlantic, they nonetheless take sustenance from the queer utopian memory that they have created together. Whereas section three ends on a somber note, it also reflects the hope that shines through all these pieces for the transformations that can be brought into being through cross-generational and sometimes international relationships.

The special issue concludes with attention to a concrete and forward-looking form of action—the nonviolent BDS movement—that so many contributors have highlighted as a way the international community can act in solidarity with Palestinians. In the final section, “Forging a Just Future,” the editors interview Omar Barghouti and Falastine Dwikat, both of whom have played important roles in the grassroots BDS campaign. In “The ‘I’ in BDS: Individual Creativity and Responsibility in the Context of Collective Praxis,” Barghouti and Dwikat reflect on the personal experiences and contributions of activists, artists, and academics to the BDS campaign, and analyze how this Palestinian-led movement brings to life the dialectical relationship between the individual and the collective in the struggle for a free Palestine.

#### POSTSCRIPT AND DEDICATION

In these last days of July 2014, as Israel’s assault on Gaza intensifies, and Morgan provides me with feedback on this final section of our introduction, she connects the volume’s concluding essay on BDS to the actions unfolding on streets in Palestine and across the globe.

*Today in Palestine we marched against sixty-six years of injustices under Israeli colonial rule. On 24 July 2014, a few nights ago, more than 10,000 took to the streets in Ramallah—the greatest number of protestors since the last Intifada ten years ago. Some say they have never seen those numbers on the street here. We chanted alongside elderly couples, children, communists, Islamists, students. We burned tires and threw stones. The Israelis shot tear gas and their snipers fired live ammunition into the*

*bodies of the occupied. We shot fireworks into the sky and celebrated our resistance. Two of us died, hundreds of us were wounded, thousands of us screamed, and all of us hoped.*

*I wonder, as the world begins to wake up to the great and long-running violations of Palestine, if we dare to believe that justice is on the horizon. Two years ago when Israel massacred in Gaza over 1,400 people, also mostly civilians, we foolishly dared to think the world could not allow the colonization of Palestine to continue; Israel would be held accountable for war crimes. But as we know, the result was the UN Goldstone Report, which was quickly shelved amidst vehement slurs against the “self hating Jew” and renowned South African judge who penned it. And justice shelved alongside it.*

*The main shift we note from our vantage point in Palestine is that as people take to the streets in the hundreds of thousands in cities around the world, there is no translation from this act of popular protest into the halls of parliament and policies of our governments. Indeed, the US just rearmed the Israeli military to continue the slaughter while in the same breath condemning the Israeli shelling of UN schools serving as makeshift shelters for civilians (“US Supplying”). As inspirational as the streets of London are, so too are the streets of Nazareth, where people stand up against Palestinians’ historic oppression.*

*Our greatest conviction today after sixty-six years of gross human rights violations at the hands of a globally backed colonizer is that it will not be our government nor yours that enables justice in Palestine; it will instead be you, the reader of this journal, who will join the movement called for by the besieged people of Palestine. BDS will bring both the colonizer and its supporters to the table to finally forge a just and sustainable future for all the peoples in all of Palestine. It cannot come soon enough. We can neither keep up with the names of the dead, nor the space to bury, nor the cataloguing of war crimes. As the world governments and UN together forsake Palestine, we have only our sumoud and hope that solidarity translates into justice. The only path we see, BDS.*

As Morgan, Brahim, and I join together in grief and anger as Israel’s US-fuelled rampage in Gaza rolls on in these last days of July, we also take inspiration from the contributors to this volume who, alongside so many others, write and organize and march for justice in Palestine, as they also insist on the power of stories that will endure and help build a better tomorrow.

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As July 2014 comes to its bloody close, those killed include Mohammed Alareer, brother to Refaat Alareer, along with four other members of Refaat's family, all of them found dead in the wreckage of their own home during a "humanitarian ceasefire." Only hours after hearing this, Refaat writes, "A house of four floors but thousands of stories is no more. The stories, however, will live to bear witness to the most brutally wild occupation the world has ever known" ("The Story of My Brother"). We dedicate this volume, in which Refaat and the other contributors bear witness and tell their stories, to the memory of Mohammed Alareer and to all the others who died while trying to live life in occupied Palestine. We offer it as a small yet insistent intervention in the greater struggle for justice in Palestine.

—Ramallah and Honolulu. August 1, 2014

## NOTES

AUTHOR'S NOTE—Cynthia Franklin: For feedback on the first and the fourth section of this introduction, my thanks go to Candace Fujikane, J. Kēhaulani Kauanui, Laura Lyons, S. Shankar, Magid Shihade, Patrick Wolfe, and John David Zuern. I also thank them for support for this special issue, along with Penelope Mitchell, Ghada AlMadbouh, and Amani Zghayer from the Palestinian American Research Center (PARC). Thanks as well to Penny Johnson; Sunaina Maira and the whole of the USACBI Organizing Collective; and my fellow FDS (Faculty Development Seminar) travelers to the West Bank. Also, it has been a particular pleasure to work with my coeditors, Ibrahim Aoudé and Morgan Cooper. The three of us thank the *Biography* staff—Craig Howes, Stan Schab, and John David Zuern—for their extraordinary support; and the contributors for their hard work, their commitment, and their brilliance.

1. Darwish's name appears in this issue with different spellings, as do other Arabic names and words. We have chosen to preserve different spellings of the same words to foreground the acts of translation and transliteration from Arabic to English that are involved in this issue's discussions of people, places, and historical events, and also to honor differences that are often political. We also have left in place different naming practices when it comes to contested terms. For example, in some contexts contributors call the military by its Israeli name, the IDF or Israeli Defense Forces, and in others, the IOA or Israeli Occupying Army, and in others still, the Israeli Army or military. To take a second example, what is usually called the Security Fence or Wall in Israel is usually called the Separation or Apartheid Wall by contributors, even as Israel is at times referred to as "inside '48" or "inside the Green Line."
2. Under an administrative divide made as part of the 1995 Interim Agreement of the Oslo Accords, the oPt of the West Bank, which include parts of Jerusalem, remain divided into areas A, B, and C, with over 60 percent falling within area C, which is under full and exclusive Israeli control; and approximately 23 percent in Area B, under the civil jurisdiction of the Palestinian National Authority but subject to Israeli "security" control; with the remaining 17 percent, Area A, under Palestinian civilian and policing authority. Abu Dis is within Area B. For an account of how Al Quds is particularly impacted, see Ben H.

3. See Barghouti and Dwikat's explanation of the BDS campaign in the concluding piece to this volume. The BDS campaign's three primary objectives entail recognition of the Palestinian people's right to self-determination and compliance with international law: (1) that Israel end the occupation and colonization of all Arab lands and dismantle the Wall; (2) that the fundamental rights of Arab-Palestinian citizens of Israel to full equality be recognized; and (3) that Israel respect, protect, and promote the rights of Palestinian refugees to return to their homes and properties in accordance with UN resolution 194 (see BDS). Those we met, located as they were in universities and addressing us as US academics, particularly urged support for the boycotting of Israeli universities, and for the USACBI campaign (see Palestinian Campaign and US Campaign).
4. As reported by Addameer, a Prisoner Support and Human Rights Association, in their "Fact Sheet: Prisoners Detained by Israel," "Since the beginning of the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories in 1967, over 650,000 Palestinians have been detained by Israel. This forms approximately 20% of the total Palestinian population in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT). Considering the fact that the majority of those detained are male, the number of Palestinians detained forms approximately 40% of the total male Palestinian population in the OPT."
5. For a student account of this invasion, see Shalash and Dwaib. While putting final revisions on this section, reports and photos have come in of Israel's bombing of the Islamic University of Gaza ("Israel strikes"). For context on these attacks, see the Committee on Academic Freedom; see also the beautiful commentary by Refaat Alareer (contributor to this volume) on Israel's bombing of IUG, "There are no poems of mass destruction."
6. For a database of these laws, see Adalah Legal Center.
7. For information about the R2E campaign, see US Campaign, "Right to Education."
8. I have written a short account of this experience in "Sightseeing in the Apartheid State."
9. And here we thank Eloïse Bollak (aka Elo B) for her photograph.
10. To cite just a few of the numbers that have been reported, in the week following the ceasefire, over 58,000 people are living in UN schools; over 500,000 people have been displaced; over 15,000 housing units were destroyed, leaving over 100,000 in need of new homes that will take over twenty years to build if restrictions on importing building supplies remain in place. The only power plant was bombed, severely restricting electricity (Catron). The Israeli military used 21,000 tons of explosives—the equivalent of two nuclear bombs. These included prohibited weapons. The infrastructure for water was destroyed; 90 percent of water sources are no longer fit for human use. Four-hundred-fifty factories and farms were destroyed, and the killing of sheep means there is no meat in Gaza ("Moving and Powerful"). In the name of creating a "buffer zone," Israel explicitly set out to obliterate 44 percent of Gaza (Rosenfeld). Seven UN refugee sites and over 25 medical facilities were bombed; 244 schools were damaged, 25 of them beyond repair, and no schools have yet opened for the new term (IMEU).
11. In his July 24, 2014, *Jerusalem Post* column, "Into the Fray: Why Gaza Must Go," Martin Sherman extended this metaphor: "No, periodically mowing the lawn is not a policy that can endure for long—it simply will not cut it. The grass needs to be uprooted—once and for all."
12. For one reflection on hasbara, or Israel's "explaining" of its actions to an international (largely US) audience, see Pfeffer. For background on how Israel enlists (and pays)



students to engage in hasbara, see Abunimah, "Israel Student Union." Within the United States, the David Project expends approximately four million dollars each year on Zionist advocacy (Abunimah, *Battle for Justice* 3). For a discussion of how hasbara about Hamas serves to justify Israel's slaughter of the people of Gaza, see Khalek, "Israel Is Deliberately Targeting."

13. For a project that powerfully contests this dehumanization in the context of Operation Protective Edge, see Jewish Voice for Peace and IMEU's #GazaNames project and its "Freedom 4 Palestine" video, which insists of every person killed in Gaza, "each one has a name, an age, a story." See also *Humanize Palestine*, which "attempts to honor the deceased as martyrs by bringing them back to life through their pictures, stories, art, and poetry. Humanize Palestine reminds us, that contrary to Western bias, a Palestinian life is no less valuable than the life of another. . . ."
14. I explore this topic at some length in "Eichmann and His Ghosts."

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