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# Everyday resistance among Palestinians living in Israel 1948-1966

## **Abstract**

Contemporary research often either overlooks Palestinians who experienced life under Israeli military rule (1948–1966) or describes them as acquiescent. This interview-based study draws on wide-ranging sources and the testimony of Palestinians in the Galilee and Triangle to provide multiple examples of people's everyday resistance to the extension of Israeli military rule. The objects of this research are the acts of nonviolent resistance undertaken by Palestinians to preserve their own existence first and foremost rather than to endanger that of others. The testimony gathered signals the persistence of resistance, dignity, and identity, but it also speaks to how contingent and difficult acts of nonviolent resistance are.

## **Keywords**

Everyday resistance, Palestinians in Israel, Israeli military rule, military occupation, nonviolence

## 1. Introduction

The British Mandate in Palestine ended at midnight 14 May 1948 and war then broke out. By the following year, when armistice agreements demarcated the lines to which the armed forces of Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria, and the opposing Israeli forces, should withdraw, there were only between 80,000 to 160,000 Palestinians left within the borders of the newly established State of Israel (Ghanem and Mustafa 2009, p.107).<sup>1</sup> This article is based on interviews conducted with Palestinians who live in nine villages in the Galilee and Triangle in Israel,<sup>2</sup> and who experienced life following the end of the British Mandate under Israeli military rule from 1948 to 1966.

Scholarly research into this period has predominantly focused on the mechanisms of control established by the newly founded Israeli State, rather than on the variety of strategies that Palestinians adopted in response (Jiryis 1976, Zureik, 1979, Lustick 1980, Bauml 2007, Cohen 2010, Sa'di 2014). On the occasions when the persistent presence of Palestinians has been represented in the history of Israel, their agency has been largely ignored and they have been cast in the passive role of victims. Cut off from Palestinians who were now living in the West Bank and Gaza Strip under Jordanian and Egyptian control, as well as from those who had become refugees in neighbouring countries, Palestinians living in Israel have often been excluded from the history of the Palestinian national resistance movement and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) (Baransi 1981, Attyeh 1990, Darweish 2006, Rouhana and Sabbagh-Khoury 2011), and were even suspected of being collaborators with the enemy. Tawfiq Tubi, a former Knesset member and General Secretary of *Hadash* (The Democratic Front for Peace and Equality) recalled, 'The PLO perceived us as

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<sup>1</sup> This number excludes the Palestinian Jewish population.

<sup>2</sup> Palestinians living in Israel, Arabs in Israel, Israeli Arabs, Palestinian citizens of Israel, Palestinians from inside, Palestinians from the 1948 areas, and Palestinian Israelis are all terms that refer to the same population but their use reflects different political perspectives and contexts. Not all of these Palestinians were granted Israeli citizenship during the period 1948–1966; some were only granted citizenship after the end of military rule.

the fifth column and thought that we should not stay here, but should be outside taking part in the revolution.<sup>3</sup>

The researchers make no claim that the interviews conducted as part of this research are representative of what was a complex and diverse group. However, what the limited number of interviews with Palestinians living in nine villages in the Galilee and Triangle do show is that the interviewees remember adopting different kinds of actions at different times. This research examines the significance of this complex repertoire of actions, ranging from cooperation to resistance, through which these people on the losing side in a war interacted with the asymmetric power relations of military occupation. While the episodic instances of violent resistance to military occupation have consistently been documented by court records and media, (Landau 2016, p.69-99) less attention has been paid to nonviolent forms of resistance. This strand of nonviolent everyday resistance was 'motivated by Palestinians' drive to preserve their own existence first and foremost rather than to endanger that of others' (Dunsky, 2017, p.116). The testimony gathered signals the persistence of resistance, dignity, and identity, but it also speaks to how contingent and difficult acts of nonviolent resistance are. Before situating this research within broad debates around resistance and power and going on to focus on everyday resistance and the forms it takes under military rule, the next section will engage with the specific historical and contextual factors that shaped the lives of these Palestinian interviewees.

## **2. Contexts for resistance**

The establishment of the State of Israel had a devastating impact on the Palestinian people. It is estimated that about 700,000 were forced out of their homes or fled the war to become refugees either in the West Bank and Gaza Strip or in the neighbouring Arab countries of Lebanon, Syria, and Jordan. Those who remained within the newly established State of Israel

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<sup>3</sup> Interview with Tawfiq Tubi by Marwan Darweish, 14 July, 1991.

were reduced to a minority within their homeland, losing their connection with the rest of the Palestinian people. Estimates as to how many Palestinians remained in Israel in 1948, either in their own homes or as internally displaced people, range from 80,000 to 160,000: from these figures it is self-evident that, as a result of what they called *al-nakba* (the catastrophe), Palestinians experienced the decimation of their political, economic, and social structures (Zureik 1979, Lustick 1980, Morris 2004, Pappé 2011).

The Israeli government drew upon the 1945 Emergency Regulation Laws inherited from the British Mandate to impose a legal system which gave military officers executive, legislative, and juridical powers (Asmar 1975, Jiryis 1976, Lustick 1980, Kretzmer 1990, Gordon 2008, Rouhana and Huneidi 2017, Nasasra 2017). Palestinian areas were divided into three main districts, each of which was directly administered by a military governor. Within and between these districts the movement of Palestinians was severely restricted: a person needed a permit from a military governor to leave their village, whether it was to work, visit family, obtain medical treatment, study, or to carry out any other task. A worker recalls:

We used to go to the military headquarters in Shafer A'mer to apply for a work permit. People from the neighbouring four or five villages would come and queue for the same reason, and hundreds of us would queue together. The permit would determine the route to and from work.<sup>4</sup>

Sa'di, in his forensic study of the genesis of Israeli policies during this period, adopts Foucault's concept of governmentality to analyse the Israeli technology of power over the Palestinian population (Sa'di 2014).<sup>5</sup> Gordon, in his book, *Israel's Occupation*, also draws on Foucault when he describes the modern form of governing in terms of any apparatus,

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<sup>4</sup> Interview, Shafa A'mer, 25 June, 2013.

<sup>5</sup> Developed by Foucault during a lecture course at the Collège de France between January and April 1978 (Foucault 2007). See also (Foucault 1991).

practice, or action that aims 'to shape the conduct of conduct' (Foucault 1991, Gordon 2008, p. 10); Gordon (2008, p. 10) acknowledges that 'the military learned from its experience of managing the Palestinian population within Israel' and used it as a prototype for its projects in the territory occupied in 1967. Both Sa'di and Gordon argue that, while circumstances and objectives have certainly altered over time, there has been significant ideological as well as practical continuity between the military rule imposed on Palestinian populated areas in Israel (1948–66), and the 1967 military occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Gordon concludes that the mechanisms of control used to manage, survey, and modify the conduct of the Palestinians in different geographical areas and historical periods have varied little; only the ways they operate have shifted. The work of these two authors indicates that to understand the specificities of the period from 1948 to 1966 we need to investigate, not only which Israeli apparatuses and practices were used during the period, but also the ways in which they operated and ways that the occupiers and occupied people interacted with them.<sup>6</sup>

This exercise requires an understanding both of power in its plural forms and of the dynamic relationship it has with the actions of a complex and diverse population who found themselves inside a political entity that, from their point of view, was not meant to be. How did the villagers interviewed cope? In order to survive, they had to comply with the military rulers and act in ways, which, in the absence of Israeli military power over them, they would not have done. In addition to compliance with the usually zero-sum first dimension of power, they also engaged with the two-dimensional power of the structures of Israeli society, because sometimes those structures favoured the compliant subject (Haugaard, 2012). Over time those structural constraints, which entail inclusion and exclusion, were made to appear reasonable because they were part of the perceived natural order of things.

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<sup>6</sup> Yagil Levy has taken a similar approach to expose the way in which the pattern embodied by the Israeli media is control of the military, not of militarism; that is control over the performance rather than over the political goals served by this performance (Levy 2010).

Palestinians living in Israel changed their behaviour and adopted new ideologies, which entailed both three-dimensional power and in a fourth dimension, incorporation as subjects. Against that, they also had part of themselves that wished the world were different, so they resisted. Consequently, they often resisted in ways that compromised their contrary attempts to obtain agency within existing structures. Without suggesting that the cooperation with the four dimensions of power did not exist, it is this strand of nonviolent resistance to preserve their own existence, defend their lands and livelihoods, which is the focus of this research.

### **3. Everyday resistance and asymmetric power relations**

The point of departure for this analysis is Foucault's (1982, p. 790) insight that 'freedom' is a condition for the exercise of power: 'power is exercised only over free subjects, and only insofar as they are free.' Gordon (1999) was particularly interested in Foucault's efforts to develop an account of the subject that avoids regarding it either as the passive product of power relations or as entirely self-creating. Foucault's subject is able to maintain agency within a restrictive structure, and this situated practice of freedom, or what Lilja and Vinthagen (2014) prefer to call self-reflexiveness, allows subjects the choice either to resist or to submit.

Power relations are multiple, and resistance therefore manifests itself in multiple fields of interactions. Abu Lughod's (1990) article on Bedouin women shows how their acts of resistance reveal the changing and multiple power relations in which they are enmeshed. The women's situated practice of freedom occurs within multiple fields of social interaction; Abu Lughod gives the example of the patriarchal relations of power but also the overlapping field of social interaction in which young women and men are attracted to new Islamist ideologies. Lilja and Vinthagen (2014, p. 107) develop the idea of multiplicity further when they suggest that, 'if resistance is a reaction to power, then the characteristics of the power

strategy/relation affect the kinds of resistance that subsequently prevail. Accordingly, it becomes interesting to discuss what kinds of resistance emanate from what kinds of power.'

Small, often covert, persistent, oppositional acts in asymmetric power relations have been described by the concept of 'everyday resistance.' Vinthagen and Johansson (2013, p. 2) state that 'everyday resistance is about how people act in their everyday lives in ways that might undermine power.' They concede that 'Everyday resistance acts are hard to capture since they rely on contextual tactics, opportunities, individual choices' and so on, and do not yet represent an articulation of 'long-term strategic planning by a collective that articulates a claim to a well-defined target' (Vinthagen and Johansson 2013, p. 23). Everyday resistance does not just involve creative ways of doing things differently; it also provides means for undermining power relations.

McDonald (2013, p. 27) cautions that the concept of resistance has 'often been carelessly wielded as a blunt instrument, imposing itself on various modes of contestation regardless of context and local meaning.' He questions whether resistance offers a useful category of analysis because of its tendency to erase the significance of activities that have occurred as responses to oppression but have failed to disrupt hegemonic norms. In particular, whether or not resistance requires recognition by others is problematic (Hollander and Einwohner 2004). If acts of resistance are not assessed purely in terms of the effectiveness of the opposition they pose to oppressive forms of power, the significance of the full range of the research respondents' oppositional actions, successful and unsuccessful can be recognized. Attention can then be paid to the diagnostic role that oppositional acts play in serving to identify plural structures of power and shifts in mechanisms of control over time and in changing circumstances. Humans cannot exit power's web, but they can act differently within it (Gordon 2002). Their acts are embedded within fields of power but also within experiences of agency and the impulses and conventions that shape individuals' efforts to be and to belong (McDonald 2013). Analysis of the interviews with Palestinian



respondents in the Galilee and Triangle who experienced life under military rule, demonstrates that their hybrid acts of cooperation and everyday resistance are directional and goal-oriented: to echo Bayat (2010, p. 17), 'theirs is not a politics of protest, but of practice, of redress through direct and disparate actions.' The resistance identified in this case study is the quiet, unorganized kind that individuals employ against military rule and it tells 'the story of agency in times of constraints' (Bayat 2010, p. ix).

Bayat describes the connections and continuity that exist between disorganized and organized forms of resistance. What interested him about the 'largely silent and free-form mobilization' of the migrants he studied in Iran was the way in which it was excluded from the debates on 'civil society' which privileged associational life. He set out to show 'how these ordinary and often quiet practices by the ordinary and often silent people engender significant social changes' (Bayat 1997, p.56). Importantly, he affirms that seemingly ineffective or relatively passive actions are undertaken in meaningful ways by people who understand themselves to be making moral choices that enable them to survive with dignity as they move forward and improve their lives.

While quiet encroachment cannot be considered to be a 'social movement' as such, it is still distinct from survival strategies or everyday resistance. Firstly, the people involved in struggles seek to make gains at the cost of the state and rich and powerful groups rather than their peers or themselves, as happens when people are solely using survival strategies (Bayat 2010). Foucault understands the 'modern state' as 'a very sophisticated structure in which individuals can be integrated, under one condition: that this individuality would be shaped in a new form and submitted to a set of very specific patterns' (Foucault 1982, p. 214); on these terms, quiet encroachment becomes a form of refusal of the type of individualization linked to the state (Foucault 1982, p. 214). This is illustrated by Scott (2013) in his analysis of the micro-processes of state formation and resistance. Bayat's distinction between quiet encroachment and survival strategies or everyday resistance rests upon the

idea that an alternative logic exists which shapes the struggles and gains of the agents involved. Encroachment could be described as a propositional act with its own logic that informs the numerous practices undertaken by individuals, even though they are not coordinating with each other. The analysis of the research data brings to the fore the logic, of the kind identified by Bayat, that shaped the numerous and sustained acts of nonviolent everyday resistance enacted by Palestinians who lived in Israel from 1948 to 1966, a logic that was at once in tension with, and compromised, their numerous acts of cooperation with Israeli structures.

#### **4. Methodology**

Knowledge, or ‘what researchers “discover”,’ Reed (2007, p. viii) argues, ‘has less to do with any sense of matching observations with “factual evidence” and has more to do with what questions we ask, how we ask, them, and who is asked.’ As Gaventa and Cornwall have shown, empowerment through knowledge means expanding who participates in the knowledge production process and involves a concern with mobilization, or action, to overcome the prevailing mobilization of bias. The second dimension of power contributes to our understanding of the ways in which power operates to prevent grievances from entering the political arena (2008:174). In the case of this research, we deliberately sought out interviewees excluded by the prevailing bias in the structuring of both the history of Israel and the history of the Palestinian resistance. Interviewees were asked about their memories of living under Israeli military rule and their retrospective reconstructions of events were then scrutinized as an object of analysis in order to discover what constituted resistance within the particular circumstances generated at a certain time and in a certain place.

Twenty-two interviews were conducted in nine rural locations in the Galilee and Triangle

from 2013 to 2015.<sup>7</sup> This contrasts with the trend towards research referencing only the experiences of Palestinians who live in the territory occupied by Israel in 1967 (Hilal and Khan 2004, Hilal 2013). The sampling was purposive and aimed at maximum variation in order to capture different criteria in relation to locations and gender, as well as social, political, and religious backgrounds. The interviews were conducted with key social and political leaders from the generation of Palestinians who lived through military rule, most of whom are now aged in their 70s and 80s. Each interview lasted about an hour and a half, was conducted and recorded in Arabic, and was then transcribed and translated into English. Additional research was carried out in the Yad Yaari Research and Documentation Centre at Givat Haviva and at Haifa's Emil Touma Institute for Palestinian and Israeli Studies where Arabic and Hebrew newspapers from the period as well as monographs published by local researchers and journalists in Arabic were consulted. Zu'bi has gathered a set of data relating to Palestinian protest activities from news items published in *al-Ittihad* Arabic newspaper which has been analysed by Sa'di (2017, p.371). Sa'di recommends that Zub'i's data should be approached with caution and gives a number of methodological reservations including the fact the data is limited to the Galilee. This research complements Sa'di's quantitative analysis and extends the range of documented dissident activities to the Triangle.

The twenty-two interviews were then analyzed using Nvivo software according to a spectrum of everyday resistance developed for this article. The spectrum used here is influenced by the work of Werner Rings. In his study of collaboration and resistance in Europe, Rings (1982) demonstrated that collaboration and resistance were closely related: collaboration was often a necessary, practical response to an overwhelming situation, and

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<sup>7</sup> Umm Al Fahim, Mua'awiya, A'ara, A'ra'ra, Kufr Kara', Nazareth, Kfur Kana, Ibillin, Shafa A'mar.

resistance was selective and tactical. The types of resistance exercised by Palestinians living in Israel, have been captured using characterizations derived from Rings' work combined with others derived from research into nonviolent resistance (Sharp 1990):

- **Active resistance:** The protagonists are prepared to do all that they can to frustrate and overcome the oppressor by nonviolent means, including individual actions, strikes, demonstrations, and other forms of direct action.
- **Symbolic resistance:** In this case, the protagonists refuse to cooperate with the occupier, and communicate their continued allegiance to their cause and its values by means of gestures, culture, individual actions, or dress. In most cases, these actions will be characterized by their symbolic nature and self-assertiveness.
- **Defensive/constructive resistance:** The protagonists aid and protect and support their community members and thereby preserve human beings and values which are endangered by the occupying power. They seek to create alternatives to the order imposed by the occupier, and these alternatives embody the values that they hope to see flourish.

## **5. Forms of everyday resistance**

### **5.1. Active resistance**

Research respondents reported early examples of active resistance by individuals; and that, as the period of military rule became more prolonged, active resistance was undertaken by informal groups. These were acts of redress through direct and disparate actions, of the kind described by Bayat. The way in which they are remembered suggests that they stemmed from a personal sense of injustice and a frustration of individual aspirations. By the late 1950s resistance was also channelled through political parties and the challenge to the Israeli zero-sum power over the Palestinians living under military rule was raised in public meetings.

The example that follows from Umm Al Fahim tells the story of an individual woman who took the initiative to frustrate the military governor's plans to occupy her family's home.<sup>8</sup>

A military governor who was appointed in the small village of Umm Al Fahim in Wadi A'ara occupied the main two-storey house in the village, made it his headquarters, and expelled the owners from their home. The mother explained:

[T]he soldiers kicked all the family out, removing and throwing away whatever their hands picked from our new house which we moved to recently after our wedding. Our family was forced to move to another house in the village and we lived there for several years in very poor conditions. The house that the family moved to was crowded, damp and cold in the winter. The walls were crumbling and it was dangerous to live there.

The women in the family reached a point reminiscent of Foucault's situated practice of freedom, where they had the choice either to resist or to submit, and they decided to take direct action and move back to their own home. Ghassan Fawzi, then one of the children, described the way they returned as follows:

My mom and her older sister and their eight kids reached the 'headquarters', as our home had come to be referred to by the local people. The rain was heavy and lightning and thunder threatened. But we moved toward our own real home where my parents got married and enjoyed their first days of love together. We sat there refusing to move or obey the soldier's request to move. We were happy and scared, orderly and chaotic. My mom was silent and worried in anticipation of something happening. The heavy storm continued

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<sup>8</sup> Interview, Umm Al Fahim, 25 June, 2013.

outside and the Military Governor, the ruler of the town and area, didn't make it that day to his office and we stayed there.<sup>9</sup>

The military governor agreed that the family could return a few years after their eviction.

The governor negotiated with another family in the village to rent a house and moved to this new location. This testimony reflects an act of resistance offered by one family with a shared personal goal, rather than the type of resistance offered by an organized group against the prevailing military power.

In a second example, the families of Mua'awiya, a small hamlet in Wadi A'ara, reclaimed their property through quiet but persistent and courageous acts of active resistance. In 1948, the Israeli military forced the 370 residents of the hamlet to leave the village before proceeding to destroy their homes. The displaced residents found shelter in a nearby village. They were nearly destitute because they had left all of their possessions behind; however, the families refused to accept their expulsion and dispossession as a fait accompli and went about developing a strategy to return to their homes and land gradually. Bayat (2013, p. 20) has characterized this kind of action as 'encroachment': 'not a politics of protest, but of practice.' One of the residents explained how they proceeded (Jabareen 2007):

We used the livestock as a method of returning to the land. We started immediately to take animals to graze on the land of the village. Step by step we got closer to our homes and then recovered food and possessions; gradually we began to stay there. Another strategy we employed was to work on the land and harvest it. Eventually the military issued temporary permits to work the land. Finally, this culminated in the military agreeing to allow us to return to our homes and rebuild them with one condition – that we would not ask for any compensation.

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<sup>9</sup> Extracts from a story written by Ghassan Fawzi and an interview with his mother, Ifat Sharef.

Refugees who were forced out of their homes were deprived of income and goods from their land and were then unable to support their families. A type of resistance employed to address this issue, according to one shop owner, involved the formation of foraging teams. Team members went back to their land, which was now under the control of the Israeli army and new Jewish settlements, in order to reclaim (or steal) grain and other produce that was often grown on land expropriated from the families of the raiders. These actions can be compared to the quiet encroachment described by Bayat in that the foragers were making gains at the cost the state and richer and more powerful groups, rather than other Palestinians (Bayat 2010).

The first open political protest against the military authorities took place in Nazareth on 1 May, 1958. Thousands of demonstrators came from the surrounding villages to Nazareth. The police attempted to block entrances to the town to deter people from participating, and, by the end of the day, more than 350 people had been arrested and scores injured. These May Day demonstrations became the occasion for Palestinians' active resistance to military rule in Israel, and they provided a focal point for the demand for equal civil rights. The demonstrations also offered an opportunity for the expression of a Pan-Arab identity, as protestors proclaimed their support for anti-colonial movements throughout the Arab world. One research participant from Nazareth, who worked in the military government office, recalled that 'The communists and nationalists would use the celebration of May Day as an occasion to confront the military. Activists would spend hours preparing themselves to confront the army and the police.'<sup>10</sup>

One interviewee explained that the military governor 'threatened my father that they would expel my brother to the Galilee if he took part in a national meeting opposing

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<sup>10</sup> Interview, Nazareth, 11 June, 2013.

military rule.<sup>11</sup> As a consequence, his father did not participate in the meeting and his brother avoided expulsion.

By the late 1950s, the number of attempts to give public expression to the emerging aspirations of Palestinians in Israel was increasing. In 1958, one of the first public meetings organized against military rule was held in the village of Umm Al Fahim. The organizers had invited Tawfiq Tubi,<sup>12</sup> a Knesset member from Maki – a descendant of the Palestinian Communist Party with Israeli Jewish and Arab members (Greenstein 2014, p. 101) – to address them. In response, the military governor attempted to block all of the entrances to the village to prevent his arrival. One of the organizers recalled their decision to overcome these measures:

We went and met him at Lajoun junction (Megido about 10km from the village) and disguised him as a woman on a donkey and sneaked him through one of the back entrances. The number of the police and army present was equal to the number of demonstrators. The meeting was held and a confrontation broke out with the military and more than 40 people were arrested and many were injured. They attacked us with batons but we responded with stone throwing. We physically attacked the governor and he hid underneath the military jeep.<sup>13</sup>

The Arab population also focused on social and economic justice issues, alongside the struggle for civil and political rights. Mahmoud Younis, then a member of Mapam, the Zionist Socialist Party, which opposed the military rule, recalled that some people overcame their fear and confronted the military outright: ‘The first demonstration organized in A’ara was in 1952 and we raised slogans like “We refuse to die hungry” and demanded “Our right for work and bread.” The army shot at us but there were no injuries.’<sup>14</sup> This organised resistance within the Israeli political party system could be interpreted both as resistance

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<sup>11</sup> Interview, A’ara, 20 June, 2013.

<sup>12</sup> Tawfiq Tubi was elected to the first Knesset in 1949.

<sup>13</sup> Interview, Umm Al Fahim, 18 June, 2013.

<sup>14</sup> Interview, A’ara’ra, 20 June, 2013.



and cooperation. Through participation in Israeli political parties Palestinians challenged the two dimensional power structures of the Israeli state and the way in which it was organised to the systematic disadvantage of the Palestinian population. Paradoxically the struggle for equal rights presupposed the possibility of positive-sum structural constraints which would be protective of the minority population. If A prevails over B in an election, it is different (both empirically and normatively) from A prevailing over B by using a gun – ‘your money or I shoot’. The former presupposes mutual structural reproduction while the latter does not (Haugaard 2012).

## **5.2. Symbolic resistance**

Symbolic gestures communicated a steadfast commitment to reject military rule and helped people to identify with other defiant Palestinians and Arabs. Israel placed particular emphasis on restricting the planting olive and almond trees because they represented a long-term claim on the land. Instead, local farmers were encouraged to cultivate vegetables and seasonal produce. The planting of trees came, in this context, to be seen as a form of resistance and a sign of non-compliance with the military authorities.

Rings (1982) and Sharp (2005) identify symbolic resistance to occupation as the ‘quietest’ form of resistance because it carries the smallest risk of sanctions; however, a number of the farmers who persisted in cultivating their orchards were killed or injured by the army, mines, or unexploded ordinance.<sup>15</sup>

Non-cooperation with the military was also expressed through poetry, songs, and other forms of cultural expression. In 1949, the village of Umm Al Fahim, with the rest of the Triangle, was handed over to Israel by Jordanian forces. The Israeli military commander ordered all of the residents to gather in the centre of the village and demanded that they

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<sup>15</sup> Interview, Umm Al Fahim, 18 June, 2013.

hand in all their weapons to mark the end of the fighting. The residents were then instructed to celebrate the arrival of the Israeli army through singing and dancing, but the women sang songs that expressed their sorrow and anger rather than joy. They covered their faces with charcoal and turned the event into a form of protest that signified that this was a dark day in the history of the Palestinians.<sup>16</sup> This was an early instance of the manner in which Palestinians in Israel would express their opposition to Israeli military rule through literature, song, and other cultural forms of resistance. Arab and Palestinian culture became a means to highlight their national identity. The poetry festivals and public meetings which were held in Nazareth, Haifa, and other villages provided people with non-confrontational opportunities to express their opposition to military rule and the discrimination they experienced.

Saoud al-Asadi, a poet and traditional singer from the Galilee, recalled celebrating the birthday of the 10<sup>th</sup>-century Arab poet Al Mutanabbi at the YMCA in Nazareth in 1965. He recalled: 'It was a large gathering. In this way culture brought people together and was a very powerful means of struggle. Al Mutanabbi was proud of his Arab identity and he was used as an outlet to express our own Arab identity in Israel.'<sup>17</sup>

Weddings, as well as national and religious celebrations, became a medium for political expression because they created opportunities for the singing of national songs and this offered people a quiet way of challenging military rule. Sometimes traditional songs would be sung in the local dialect to denounce the military governor and describe him in a scathing and disrespectful manner whilst he was actually present, sitting unawares as one of the important guests at the wedding. This was something that the military regime could not easily prevent. Al Asadi described one occasion when his father used a wedding to sing the praises of the Egyptian general Abed Al Muna'im Riyad who was respected for his stand

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<sup>16</sup> Interview, Umm Al Fahim, 25 June, 2013.

<sup>17</sup> Interview, Nazareth, 9 June, 2013.

against Israeli, British, and French forces during the war of 1956. As it happened, the groom had the same name as the general:

My father used this occasion to highlight the groom's steadfastness, courage, and resilience but in fact he was referring to the Egyptian general. Everyone in the celebration understood this play on names and metaphor. He was accused of incitement and praising the enemy but he totally denied that and insisted that he was singing about the groom<sup>18</sup>

In 1952, an association for Arab poets was established in different villages in the Galilee and Triangle area. Its branches became a focal point for political, cultural, and social activities which worked against military rule and contested discrimination against the Arab population. This was despite the fact that for more than a 'full decade almost no Arabic books were available in Israel ... neither imported nor printed' (Hoffman 2009, p. 204). However, poets like Samih Al-Qasim, Mahmoud Darwish, Tawfiq Zayyad, and others played a critical role in the struggle of Palestinians in Israel against military rule and for civil and national rights; their work later become known as the 'poetry of resistance'. Rashid Hussein (Boullata *et al.* 1979) in his poem 'Opposition' declared

I am against boys becoming heroes at ten  
Against the tree flowering explosives  
Against branches becoming scaffolds  
Against it all, and yet  
When fire creates my friends, my youth and country  
How can I stop a poem from becoming a gun?

In his discussion of disciplinary power, Foucault gives particular emphasis to its relationship with the education system, which has the capacity to shape how individuals think about themselves. The State of Israel was no exception in introducing a singular educational

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<sup>18</sup> Interview, Nazareth, 11 June, 2013.

narrative. While the Israeli Jewish school population was encouraged to accept the hegemonic idea that the state was Jewish, democratic, and the valiant victor against the odds, the Palestinians were encouraged to see themselves as the recipients of much-needed progress (Pappé 2014). Each population was disciplined to identify its happiness with an increase in the powers of the state (Foucault 2007). To refuse this discourse was an act of resistance. Those interviewees who talked about their school days often remembered subversive acts which were public and could be described as counter-socialization, or reminders to other Palestinians of their Palestinian identity. For example, schools would organize celebrations of Israel's Independence Day to show loyalty to the military administration (Lustick 1980). However, some Palestinian parents and students, for whom this was the anniversary of the *al-nakba* (catastrophe), refused to take part in such events in symbolic acts of resistance to military rule. A pupil explained, 'I remember that I was asked by a teacher to bring money to cover the cost of the celebration of the Israeli Independence Day held in the school, and my Dad refused to give me the money as a sign of rejection to the Israeli authorities.' Mahmoud Darwish, then a child in school and later a Palestinian national poet, was summoned to the military governor after reading poetry critical of the military authority during a school commemoration of the event (White 2012).

Appointment of Palestinian teachers in the education system required the approval of the Israeli security services (Lustick 1980, Bauml, Cohen 2010). It is understandable that teachers were afraid to express their views openly given the sanctions they might face; however, some found creative ways to express opposition. One teacher explained how he quietly managed to express his rejection and refusal of cooperation with the military government:

Once I wrote one of Al Mutanabbi's poems on the wall of my classroom. Its theme was that those who are used to accept humiliation will continue to be humiliated and controlled. I was then called up to the military governor's office

and was reprimanded and humiliated because I wrote such a piece of poetry. My argument was that this poetry was written a thousand years ago.<sup>19</sup>

Resistance to military power could also involve a refusal to recognize the symbols and leadership of the state. Omer Ibin Al Khattab was one of the most powerful caliphs in Islam, renowned for his commitment to justice and for speaking truth to power. His image was hung on the wall of a school in Umm Al Fahim, but the headmaster was asked to replace it with a photo of Chaim Weizmann, a Zionist leader and the first president of Israel. One of our interviewees, then a student aged 12, told us that 'secretly I went and smashed the photo of Weizmann, nobody knew who did it, but the message was clear.' This was a symbolic individual act of everyday resistance.

The 1950s witnessed growing support for the Pan-Arab movement led by the president of Egypt, Gamal Abdel Nasser. He challenged Israel and the colonial powers, and this earned him such broad support that he became an iconic figure across the Middle East and the world. Among the Palestinians interviewed many saw their support for Nasser as a symbol of their rejection of military rule. One interviewee explained that 'I had the radio on the balcony and turned it on high so that others could listen to nationalist songs praising Abdel Nasser as an Arab leader and listen to his speeches. The military governor remanded and threatened me for doing that.'<sup>20</sup>

Pappé (2011, p. 76) has summarized the power of poetry, literature, and culture in the everyday resistance of Palestinians in Israel, as follows:

Poetry was the one area in which national identity survived the Nakba unscathed. What political activists did not dare express, poets sang out with force. Poetry was one medium through which the daily events of love and hate, birth and death, marriage and family could be intertwined with the political

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<sup>19</sup> Interview, Nazareth, 9 June, 2013.

<sup>20</sup> Interview, Umm al Fahim, 22 April, 2012.

issues of land confiscation and state oppression and aired in public at special poetry festivals [...] The Israeli secret service was powerless to decide whether this phenomenon was a subversive act or a cultural event.

Through symbolic resistance Palestinians not only refused to accept the imposition of Israeli military rule, but created a culture that was at once in tension with, and compromised, their numerous acts of cooperation with Israeli structures.

### **5.3. Constructive resistance**

Constructive resistance sought to aid and support community members who had been forced from their homes and land: it involved people holding on to the culture, identity, and values of their community and sharing the burden of problems by creating alternatives to the order imposed by the occupier. These constructive actions placed value both on the right of Palestinians to remain in their homeland and on an insistent refusal to give up or surrender. In later years, this kind of activity became known in the Palestinian struggle as *sumūd* (Van Teeffelen 2006, Johansson and Vinthagen 2015).

The destruction of hundreds of entire villages and major infrastructure created a severe humanitarian crisis and hard living conditions. Some villages became staging post or camps for thousands of dispossessed Palestinians who had been forced out of their homes (Masalha 2012, Pappé 2011). Displaced people lived in schools, deserted homes, mosques, churches, and any possible shelter they could find. Refugees had to report to the police about their movements and ensure that they would not return to their villages. One resident vividly described a situation in which 'olive trees were covered with plastic sheets and became homes for the refugees, the little water springs became a magnet for refugees to stay in the area, and the whole village became [a] big tent.'<sup>21</sup> Many of the refugees lived for years in caves, even in harsh winter conditions, as a symbol of their steadfastness and their willingness to suffer to stay in their homeland.

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<sup>21</sup> Interview, Umm Al Fahim, 13 July, 2013.

Refugees who had been displaced from their homes and remained within the borders of the new State of Israel received little or no support from the United Nations or from any other international agency (one interviewee reported help from Red Cross in Eilabun in the Galilee). Local residents carried most of the burden and provided food and shelter. For up to two years, they organized collections of flour, oil, rice, eggs, and vegetables to provide needy families with means of survival.<sup>22</sup> Their actions created a sense that Palestinians in Israel were 'all in it together' and could rely on each other's support; Interpreting this period retrospectively, we would argue that already at this time in history the social practices of resistance embodied the tacit knowledge that later became discursive with the concept of *sumūd*.

The people who offered help felt that they had a kind of national and religious obligation to help displaced Palestinians to stay on their land and refuse the new political reality. One informant recalled the generosity he had encountered:

After we were expelled from our village, we lived with distant relatives for two weeks. They welcomed us and agreed for us to stay; they fed us and watered us. We had nothing with us; no food and no money.<sup>23</sup>

During the first few years of military rule, families were driven by scarce resources to become as self-sufficient and self-reliant as possible. Residents started to grow their own vegetables, and they often reared chickens, pigs, and rabbits secretly in their gardens and on rooftops in defiance of the military authority's regulations, though these transgressions, if discovered, would lead to fines and possible imprisonment by the military. Refugees and local residents in villages foraged edible wild plants and vegetation such as spinach, wild asparagus and mallow; they would go into wild areas to collect figs, grapes, wheat, pulses,

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<sup>22</sup> Interview, Umm Al Fahim, 13 July 2013.

<sup>23</sup> Interview, Ibileen, 20 June, 2013.

and berries so that they could make jam. One refugee told stories about how his family managed to survive after they were expelled from their village to Sakhneen in the Galilee:

We used to buy eggs, barley and flour and then sell it to the Jewish communities; this was a way of supporting our family and our extended family. This was done against the laws and regulations of the military authorities. Sometimes we were arrested and imprisoned and we paid a fine.<sup>24</sup>

Palestinians also drew strength from symbolic acts of solidarity and leadership. Fawaz Al Sa'ad, who was the head of one of the major land-owning families in Umm Al Fahim, was out of the country during April 1948, but his family decided to return, in contrast to others who left, to follow developments on the ground. The return of the landowner, who represented social, political, and economic authority in the village, encouraged many people to stay in their homes and retain their land. The Al Sa'ad family's symbolic act bolstered villagers' morale and it encouraged them to be resilient and determined in their efforts to remain in their homeland.<sup>25</sup>

Recognizing the symbolic power of local social and political leaders, Israeli authorities exerted strong pressure on them to leave the country. Al Afandi, a national leader and intellectual, was one of the targets of the military authorities. His son explained that his father was offered compensation for his property if he were to leave Palestine: 'My father was aware of the political implication of the act and rejected all the pressure put on him through the government. For that he paid a high price: arrest, harassment, and obstacles put in his way by the Israeli authority.'<sup>26</sup>

Israel imposed travel restrictions and curfews as a way of controlling the movement of Palestinian residents. In response, Palestinians explored creative ways of bypassing the

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<sup>24</sup> Interview, Ibileen, 20 June, 2013.

<sup>25</sup> Interview, Umm Al Fahim, 2 April, 2014.

<sup>26</sup> Interview, A'ara, 20 June, 2013.



controls. One obvious way for people to increase their freedom of movement was to bribe the *mukhtars* who acted as go-betweens in transactions between local people and the military governor who controlled travel permits. As one interviewee explained, 'It was possible to bribe both the military officers and the *mukhtar*; I gave them two kilograms of almonds so that they might give me a permit to work.'<sup>27</sup> Others who were refused permits simply travelled to work without them, bypassing checkpoints and travelling in secret. Workers would stay away from their families for months at a time and avoid public places to reduce their risk of arrest. The harsh conditions these workers endured fostered solidarity and mutual support. One interviewee who worked in Tel Aviv recalled that 'Life in Tel Aviv was harsh, we learned how to cook and to make bread and to live with basic supplies. We used to help each other and support each other to the point that strong friendships were forged and remained for years.'<sup>28</sup>

Occasionally, the Israeli police would raid workplaces, arrest workers, and imprison them for a few days, imposing fines and sending them back to their villages; but when they were released, these workers would go back to Tel Aviv-Jaffa, again without a permit. Someone who used to travel to Tel Aviv-Jaffa for work remembered how the workers concealed their presence in orange groves at night: 'We would make hammocks up in the trees as our beds in order to hide from the police. As we were up in the trees the police would see no bedding on the ground and assume there were no workers there.'<sup>29</sup>

Workers who went to Jewish population centres were under pressure to change their names to Jewish ones: a Mahmoud would become a Yossi and so employers could pretend that they were employing Jewish rather than Arab workers. A man interviewed for this study remembered leaving his village as a teenager to study in a high school in Haifa:

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<sup>27</sup> Traditionally *mukhtars* enjoyed significant social status, but under the military regime they came to be seen by many as collaborators.

<sup>28</sup> Interview, Umm Al Fahim, 18 June, 2013.

<sup>29</sup> Interview, Nazareth, 11 June, 2013.

I used to take the risk [of] travelling every two weeks without a permit to Haifa at the age of 14. I used to travel on the bus and, to disguise being an Arab, I would buy a Hebrew newspaper and I would sit and read it, so when the soldier or police would ask everyone to come off the bus to show their permits I would stay on the bus and pretend not to be an Arab. So my permit was the Hebrew daily newspaper *Yediot Ahronot*. The driver was Jewish and he knew I was an Arab, and he kept it quiet, because I brought him presents such as olives and olive oil. In 1965, I was arrested and taken to Afula police station. I was fined and then released late at night.<sup>30</sup>

Israel's restrictions on the movement of Palestinians sought to prevent displaced people from returning to reclaim their land and homes. The existence of this strategy is made clear in Lustick's (1980) citation of the adviser to the Israeli prime minister on Arab affairs. The adviser explained the situation from his standpoint, close to the Israeli administration: 'The Arabs who used to live in the empty villages, egged on and organized by the Communists, would go back and squat on their ruins, demanding their land back ... And then, when they have made as much trouble as possible about their own lands; they will start clamoring for the return of refugees' (Lustick 1980, p. 187). The emergence of *Sumud* has deep roots in people's everyday need to survive and persist in the face of ongoing Israeli efforts to displace Palestinians. We would argue that even before the term became current, after 1967, the social practices that underpin the concept were fundamental to the protection of Palestinian values and the preservation of Palestinian land. These social practices brought together strategies through which an alternative to the order imposed by the occupier might be created (Van Teeffelen 2006, Johansson and Vinthagen 2015).

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<sup>30</sup> Interview, A'ara, 20 June, 2013.

## 6. Conclusion

The quiet encroachment of Palestinians has been so hidden that it could be described as a non-movement, but as Bayat has so vividly argued, 'the story of non-movements is the story of agency in the times of constraints. ... [B]y bypassing the rigid dichotomies of 'active'/'passive,' 'individual'/'collective,' or 'civil'/'political' resistance which have limited our conceptual horizons, [... we open up] wholly new possibilities to explore unnoticed social practices that may in fact be harbinger of significant social changes' (Bayat 2010, p. 19). These testimonies also name names, and demonstrate that individuals living under military occupation, and individuals who serve the military occupation, have agency and the possibility of a choice either to resist or submit. Neither the occupier nor the occupied are solely the passive product of power relations. We do not conclude that no one can be held responsible for those power relations, nor do we assume that, as Steinbeck said, 'Maybe there's nobody to shoot' (Hayward and Lukes 2008). Instead, we produce evidence of the persistence of nonviolent resistance which has been largely overlooked by scholars.

The double marginalization of the Palestinians living in Israel is a function of the logic of separation between Arab and Jew, which dominated political discourse in the period between 1948 and 1966, and this logic has dominated the political scene again since the Oslo Accords were ratified in 1993 and 1995. The experience of those Palestinians who lived in Israel after 1948 fits awkwardly with Israeli history and with the history of Palestinian resistance to Israel. Foucault emphasizes the importance of 'making visible a *singularity* at places where there is a temptation to invoke a historical constant' (Foucault 1991, p. 76). It is important to note, then, that it was not self-evident that Jews and Arabs should live separately ( Robinson 2013, p.12, Klein 2014). A breach of those self-evidences on which our knowledges, acquiescences, and practices rest in relation to Israel and Palestine, and a new focus on narratives that disrupt these artificially separate histories, together with an

examination of their contradictions and rough edges, may reveal insights that help to shift unhelpfully binarized perspectives in productive ways.

The retrospective histories recounted in the interviews and the Arabic and Hebrew press and monographs consulted from the period 1948-66 demonstrate that Palestinians living as a minority in Israel have persisted in identifying themselves as part of the Palestinian people. Yet, at the same time, because of structural constraints they have also cooperated with, and participated in, Israeli political and economic structures. Maybe, this position means they are uniquely positioned to cross over, and even rise above, the binarized oppositions between Palestinian and Israeli, Arab and Jew (McDonald 2013, pp.231-261). The acts of everyday resistance and cooperation carried out by these Palestinians, who were subjected to conquest by the Israeli forces in 1948, and have since that period been turned into what can be termed (given systematic discrimination) 'semi-citizens', invite notice and solidarity from the other. More research is needed to identify ways in which this kind of resistance combined with cooperation has an impact on power relations. Maybe, a new logic could emerge which would enable a greater number of Palestinians and Israelis to identify with each other and show solidarity, if not community, on the basis of shared values?

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