Each Day Another Disaster

Politics and Everyday Life in a Palestinian Refugee Camp in the West Bank

Gren, Nina

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Politics and Everyday Life in a Palestinian Refugee Camp in the West Bank

Nina Gren

UNIVERSITY OF GOTHENBURG
SCHOOL OF GLOBAL STUDIES

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University of Gothenburg
School of Global Studies
Social Anthropology

Abstract

Each Day Another Disaster: Politics and Everyday Life in a Palestinian Refugee Camp in the West Bank. By Nina Gren. Doctoral dissertation in Social Anthropology 2009, School of Global Studies, University of Gothenburg, Box 700, 405 30 Göteborg, Sweden.

This anthropological study examines the ways in which Palestinian camp refugees maintain everyday life in a situation that is characterized by chronic disruption, fear and mistrust. It explores how these refugees make sense of displacement and violence and how they uphold a sense of agency in constraining circumstances. One year of ethnographic fieldwork was carried out in a West Bank refugee camp during the intifada *al-aqsa* and this yielded unique data consisting of interviews and field-notes from participant observation.

The thesis shows how these people deal with repeated emergencies and it elucidates their struggle to recreate 'normal order' and continuity. The maintenance of daily routine, tactics of resilience, community, memory and morality are significant building blocks in this process. The data show the creative and often ambivalent means that people use to establish feelings of hope and trust in spite of difficult conditions. For the camp inhabitants, several dilemmas arise out of the tension between personal life goals and collective political aims. One such dilemma concerned return to the refugees' villages of origin. More than 60 years after their flight, return continues to be a political and existential theme. However, many refugees are now attempting to establish new homes outside the camp in their pursuit of a more permanent life. Another major dilemma concerns the proper way to resist Israel during a militarised uprising; 'ordinary' people try, by practicing 'steadfastness', to reconcile a desire to remain political subjects with a wish to avoid becoming militia or martyrs. The refugees' focal endeavour is to salvage integrity as they experience that both their physical and national existence are under threat.

Key words: anthropology, Palestinian camp refugees, West Bank, intifada *al-aqsa*, political violence, everyday life, constrained agency, normal order, resilience, return.

CONTENTS

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This thesis is dedicated to my host family in Dheishe with all my affection.

A Note on Transliteration

In this study Arabic sounds have been transcribed as follows:

Vowels

a like English a in hat

â like English a in bar

e like English e in send

ê like English ay in say

i like English i in sip

o like English o in not

ô like English o in note

u like English u in full

û like English oo in fool

y like in Englis yes

Consonants

ṭ like English t, but with a rounding of the lips and with slightly greater stress

ġ like a strongly aspirated guttural r

ḥ like h in horde, but slightly more aspirated

ḫ like German ch in ach, doch, or Scotch ch in loch

ḍ like English d uttered with a rounding of the lips and somewhat greater stress

ś like English in fish, shall

ṣ like English but with a rounding of the lips and somewhat greater stress

‘ an explosive articulation, made by compressing the air passages deep down the throat

q is in Cairo a catching of the breath

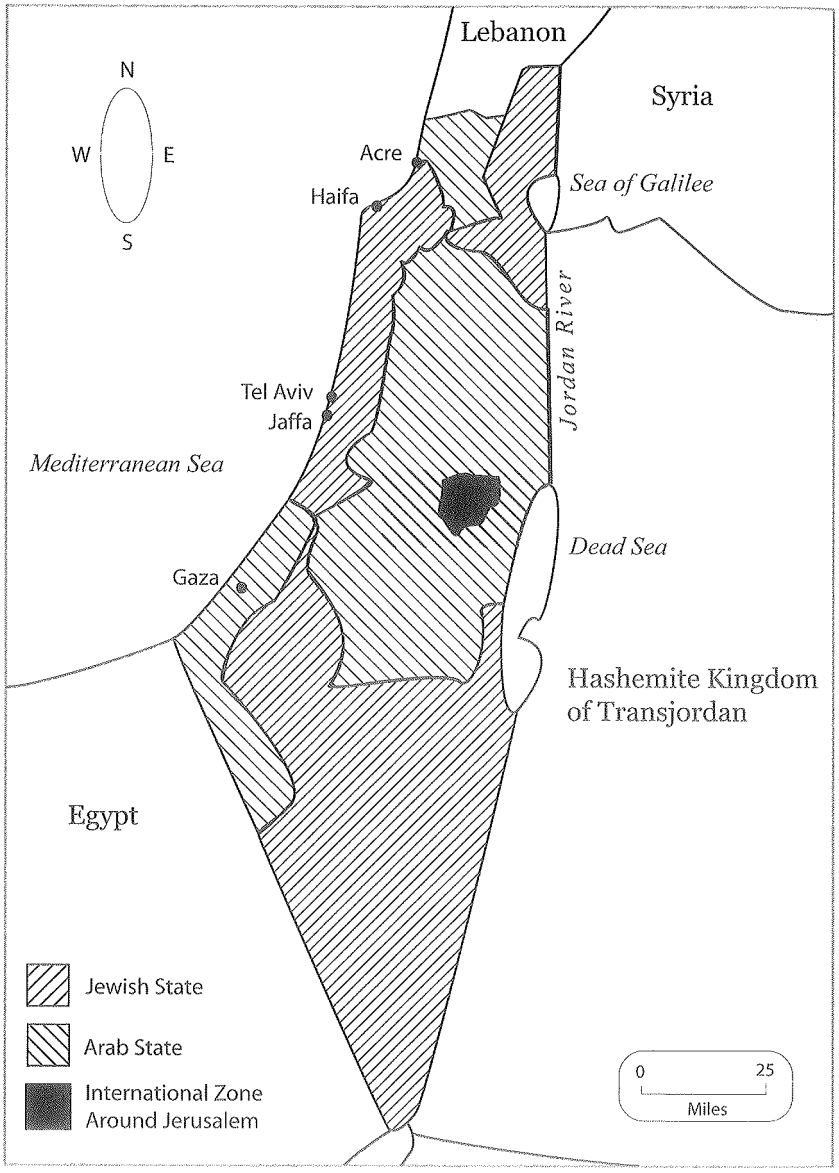
j like in English j in jam

The rest of the letters are pronounced as in English

NB. Names of persons and places have been transliterated in an anglicized way.

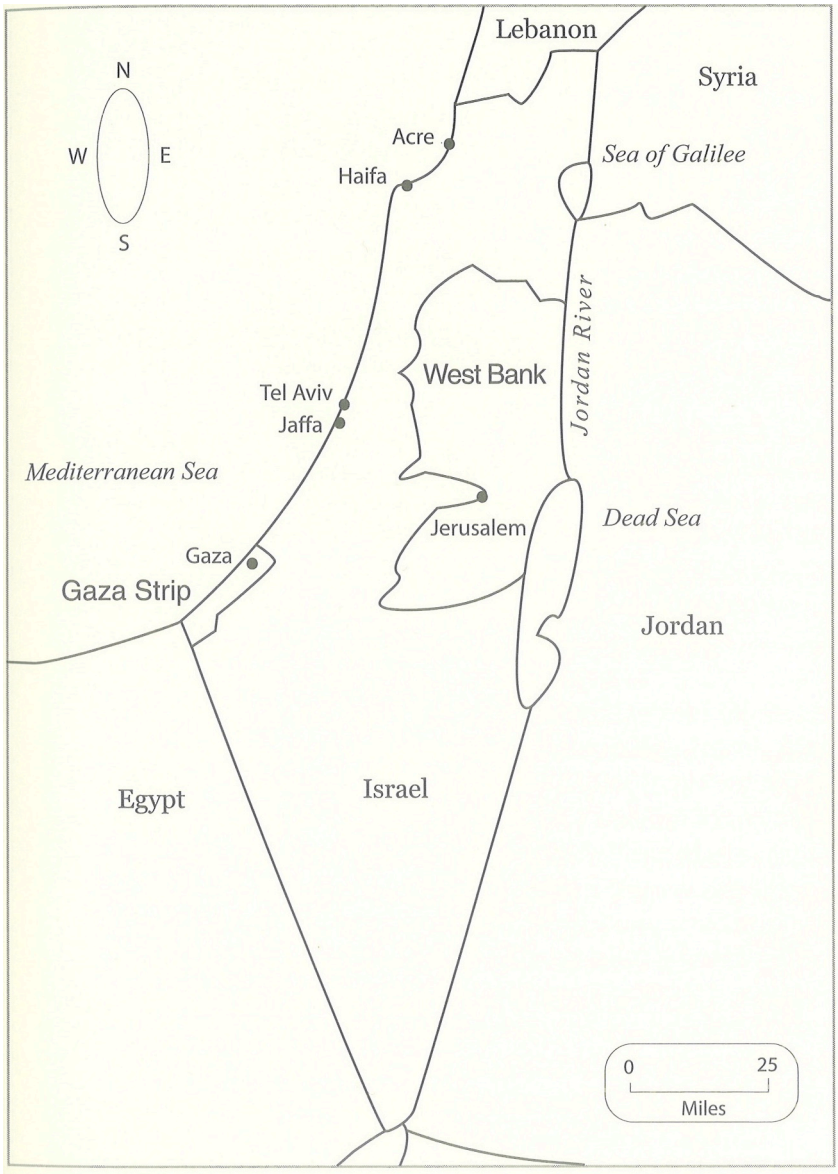
Maps

Map 1 Partition Plan 1947.



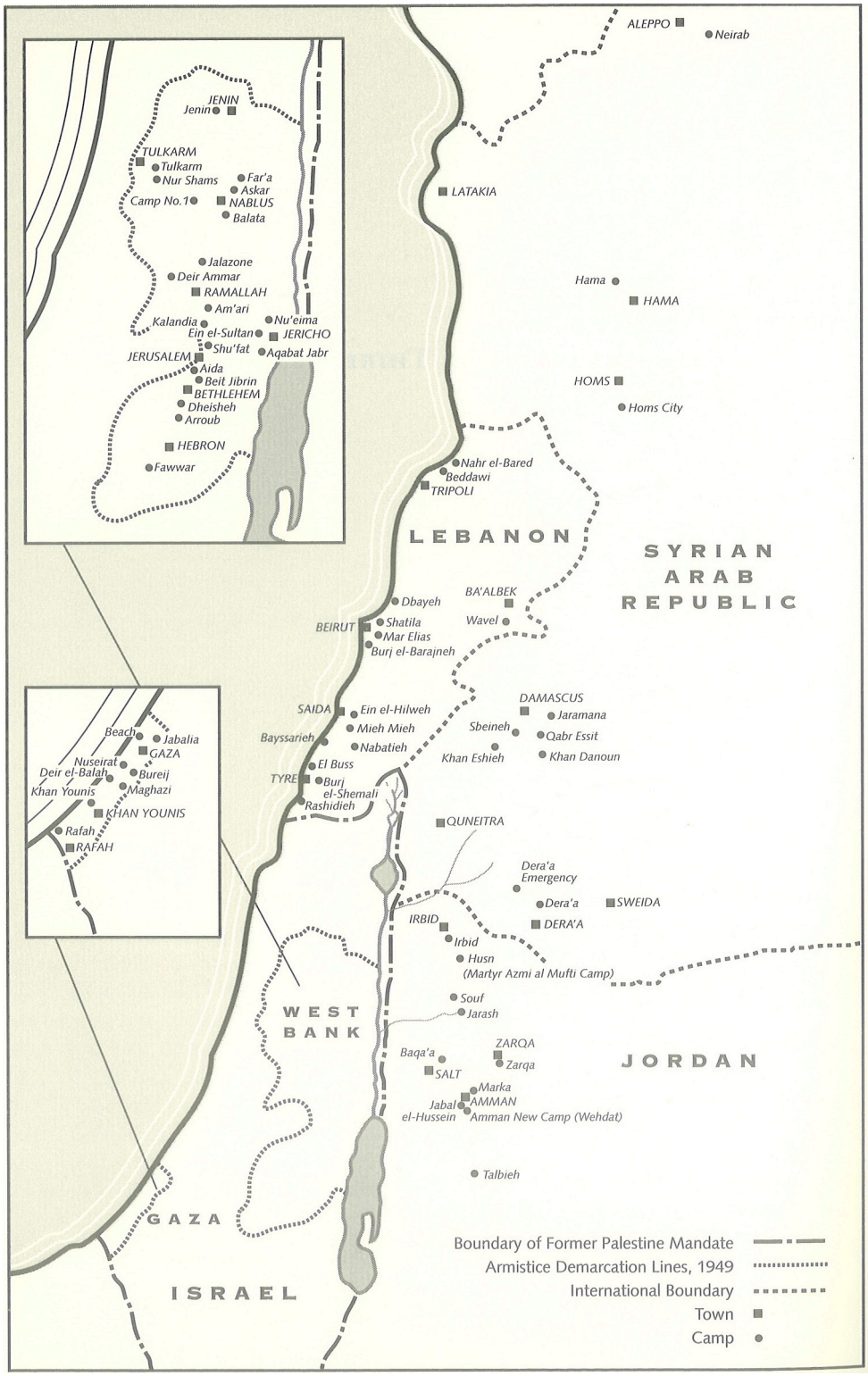
Source: Bornstein 2003a: 30

Map 2 Armistice Lines 1949.



Source: Bornstein 2003a: 31

Map 3 Palestinian Refugee Camps in the Middle East.



Source: Schiff 1995: 2

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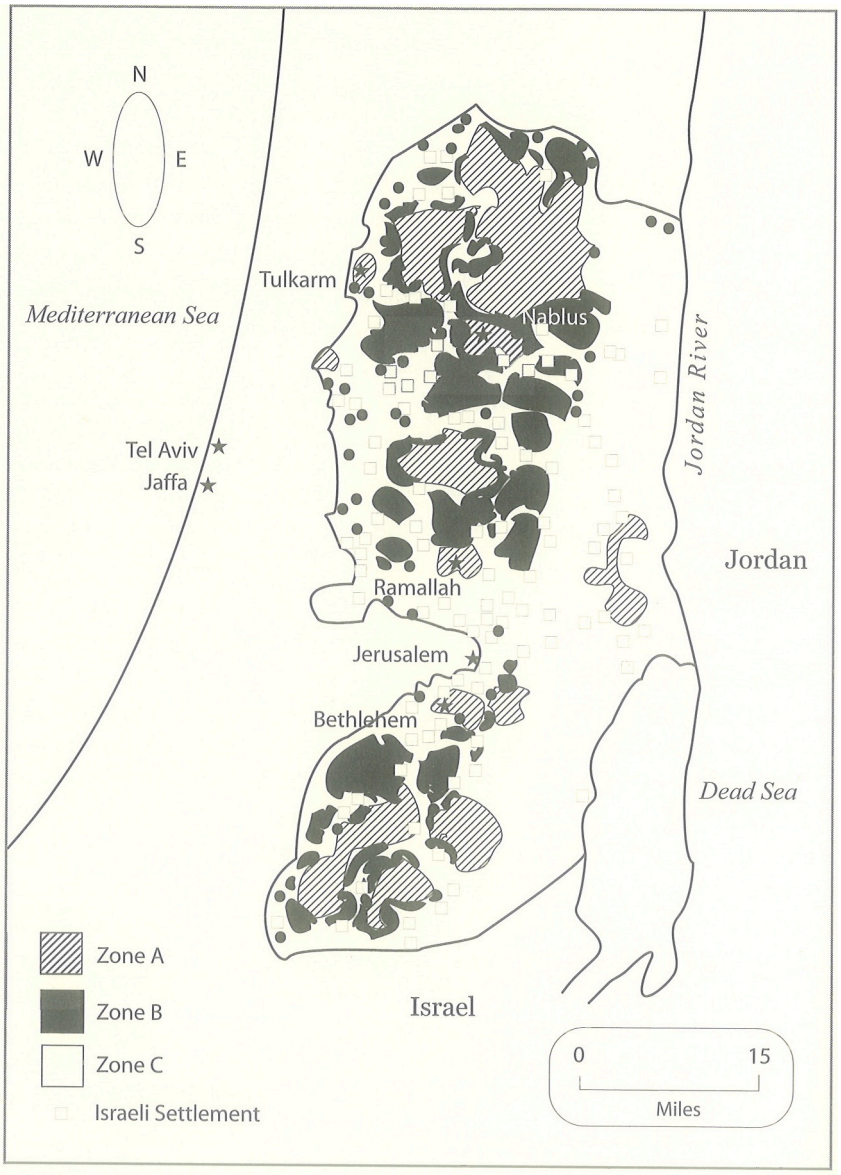
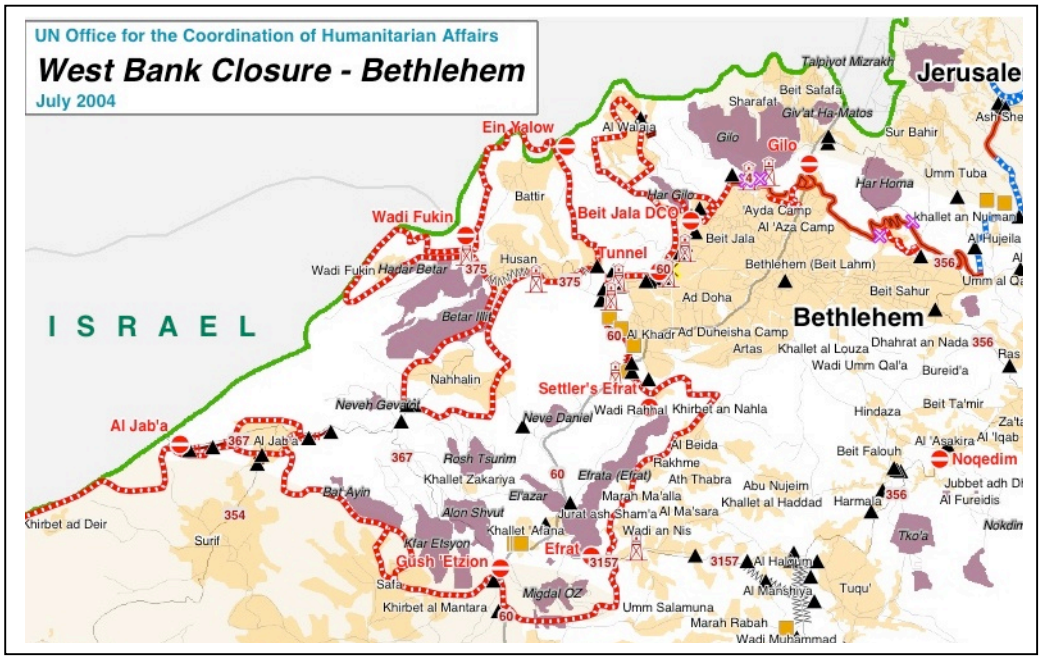
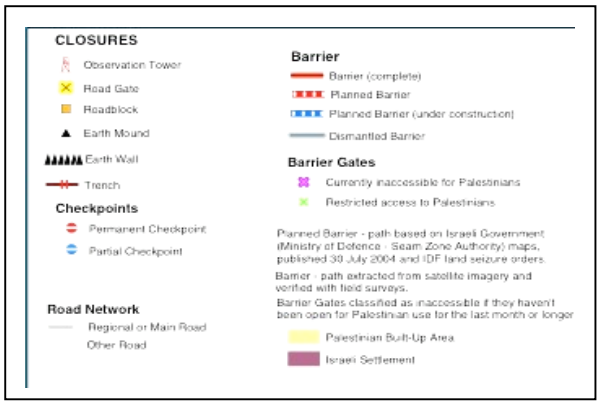


Source: Bornstein 2003a: 32

Map 5 Restrictions surrounding Bethlehem 2006.





Source: OCHA www.ocha.org

1. Introduction

A chilly wind is sweeping in from the arid hills east of Bethlehem, making Umm Ayman wrap her cardigan closer around her body. With one hand, she is holding her youngest son's hand and in the other she is carrying a plastic bag full of fresh eggs from the West Bank countryside. This evening she and her son are on their way home to the refugee camp Dheishe after a visit to Umm Ayman's oldest daughter, who lives with her husband and baby in a village not very far away. Umm Ayman is in her late forties, a housewife and mother of eight. She was born in a Palestinian refugee camp in Jordan, but since her father married her to her cousin more than 25 years ago she has lived in the West Bank. Nowadays her body is heavy and she moves with difficulty but her face looks surprisingly young. When you see her daughters, it is easy to imagine how Umm Ayman looked before giving birth to all her children and before sickness and worry caught up with her.

Umm Ayman and the young boy are hurrying up; they want to get home, to the warmth of their crowded house and to a nice cup of sweet mint tea. The taxi driver who brought them here has dropped them off at the wrong place. This is not where they usually get out after having passed the checkpoint. But Umm Ayman isn't worried even though it is almost too dark to see one's steps. She knows the road down to the bus that leaves for the camp and it is just a bit further down the hill.

'Who's there?' shouts someone in Hebrew in the darkness. A second later, the voice is heard again, 'You there, stop!' Umm Ayman is startled out of her thoughts. 'Who? Me?' she shouts back towards the sound. 'Yes, you! Stop!' And now, she can see the soldier ahead of her. He is about the same age as her teenage son and is pointing a heavy gun at them. They freeze and their world seems to have collapsed for a moment before the soldier's voice is heard again: 'Ok, you can go!'

*

Later that evening, Umm Ayman, shaken, recounted these events to her children and me over and over again. The stopping of a Palestinian civilian in the midst of his or her daily routine by a heavily armed Israeli soldier is a common enough experience in the West Bank but it begs a number of questions, central to this study, about living life in an extraordinary situation. How is 'everyday life' maintained in unpredictable and violent surroundings, where there is so much fear and mistrust? How do people make sense of and handle continuing violence and years of hardship and want?

Umm Ayman's family and others from their village were among the Palestinians who were displaced in 1948. That year marked the establishment of the state of Israel on part of the disputed British Mandate, and this led to hostilities between Jewish and Arab forces. During the war, between 700, 000 and 800, 000 Palestinians fled from their homes, events Palestinians remember as *al-nakba* or the disaster in English. In the early 1950s the United Nations established

numerous refugee camps all over the Middle East for the poorest Palestinian refugee population. Dheishe camp, the site of fieldwork for this study, gathered destitute Muslim peasants who had lost their homes and land; they originated from more than forty different villages south of Jerusalem. Some of the lost villages are only kilometres away from the camp, inside today's Israel.

Dheishe is the largest of three refugee camps in the Bethlehem area, both in terms of geography and population. It is situated on a hillside and is about half a square kilometre in size. It houses some 9,000 registered refugees[1]. As the Palestinian population in the occupied territories is one of the fastest growing in the world, the majority of Dheisheans consists of children and youngsters. While new generations of refugees reckon refugee-ness and 'original village' through the patriline, many female camp inhabitants who have married into the camp were either non-refugees or they came from other lost villages than the forty mentioned above.

Apart from a history of flight and deprivation, Dheishe also has a history of political activism and has frequently been depicted as a 'hard core camp' both by its inhabitants and by others. Clashes between Israeli soldiers and Palestinian activists and army harassments of families in the camp were frequent during the first intifada (1987-1994). Many camp residents have experienced political imprisonment in Israeli jails and most families have had their homes searched by the Israeli army.

Well after Israel had occupied the West Bank and the Gaza Strip in 1967, Umm Ayman moved to the camp through her marriage. In this environment of poverty, military occupation and Palestinian resistance, Umm Ayman and her husband Abu Ayman together managed to maintain their everyday life; children were born and grew up, some of them attended higher education, and their household slowly expanded their house in the camp. Two of the oldest children are now establishing their own families.

My fieldwork in 2003 and 2004 coincided with the second Palestinian uprising; this so called intifada *al-aqṣa* [2] reignited the conflict between Palestinians and Israelis after some years of tranquillity in the 1990s, and it created victims and perpetrators on both sides. At this time, the hardships of daily life in the camp seemed even more pronounced than before. The camp inhabitants experienced curfews, nightly arrests, house demolitions, shootings as well as threats and occasional beatings by soldiers. They were stopped and held at checkpoints and roadblocks.

[1] According to figures provided by the UN, Dheishe had a population of 12 045 registered refugees as of March 2005 (www.un.org/unrwa/refugees/westbank/dheisheh.html 19.11.2007 19.26). As will be discussed in chapter 2, there were probably fewer people actually living in the camp (personal communication Hussein Shahin the UNRWA head of the camp; PCBS 2008: tabell 26). Many had moved out from Dheishe without changing their official place of living.

[2] The intifada *al-aqṣa* is also frequently called the second intifada or the *Al Aqsa* intifada in English.

Meanwhile, Israel was starting to construct a barrier to separate the territories from Israel[3], or more correctly to separate Palestinians and Israelis from each others, thus further limiting Palestinian mobility. It was a time marked by fear and hopelessness. These two years were comparatively calm in the Bethlehem area but only months earlier there had been army intrusions, sieges and many people killed by snipers and military attack-helicopters as well as violent resistance in the camp through armed fighters and suicide bombers. Violence was never far off either in time or geographically; in the northern West Bank and the Gaza Strip there were new Palestinian casualties every day.

Furthermore, Abu Ayman, a painter by profession, could no longer work inside Israel and, like so many other Dheisheans who had depended on the Israeli labour market, he found himself unemployed and unable to provide for his family. The deteriorating economy in the Palestinian territories, which was also due to diminishing tourism in the Bethlehem area, was threatening livelihood and the underpinnings of social life. Due to restrictions on mobility and to outbursts of violence, Umm Ayman and others struggled to maintain social and kin relations. Perhaps even more troubling are the difficulties of upholding normal life, community, hope and morality under these circumstances.

Focus and Purpose

How then is everyday life dealt with and made sense of by people who face displacement and continuous violence? This dissertation focuses on Dheisheans' experiences of and responses to such violent transformation and ongoing disruption of their lives. The aim is to examine their attempts to re-establish a sense of normal order and to negotiate the moral dilemmas that they encounter. It is therefore concerned with the processes of maintaining as well as making sense of daily life. The thesis investigates how people with restricted possibilities to act try 'to strike a balance between being an actor and being acted upon' (Jackson 2005: x).

As will be elaborated below, this thesis deals with agency under constraining conditions. In the face of overwhelming power asymmetry and feelings of being trapped, people in Dheishe try to salvage a sense of integrity by combating assimilation or annihilation by Israel. They adopt practices and attitudes that may be considered 'tactics of resilience' (Scheper-Hughes 2008) when they face displacement, violence and insecurity. However, in societies torn by hostilities, the practices employed to salvage the 'ordinary' and predictable order are deeply ambivalent.

[3] The Barrier has partly been erected on the Green Line, which is the armistice line at the war of 1967, partly on what is considered occupied territory. What to call this construction is a controversial issue. Israel prefers to term it *Separation Fence*. Most international organizations call it *Separation Barrier*, while Palestinians and others name it *the Wall* (*i.e. al-jidâr* in Arabic).

Using three themes, this thesis investigates the complex issues that Dheisheans confront in their everyday lives in the intifada *al-aqṣa*. Firstly, it explores how people try to create a sense of 'normal life' through daily routines and how they try to maintain hope and endurance. Secondly, this study examines processes of social continuity in terms of kinship. Thirdly, it looks at the way in which Dheiseans nourish a local identity and sense of moral community as camp refugees. In contrast to the international media reports about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, my focus is on quotidian routine rather than on spectacular violence. However, when violence intrudes I have tried to understand its significance and intertwining in the daily life of the camp residents.

Although the first ethnographic field study in Palestinian society was carried out as early as the 1920s (Granqvist 1931, 1935), ethnographic studies about Palestinians are scarce, especially for refugees in the West Bank and even more in the Gaza Strip. Even fewer studies deal with life in the camps[4]; the political circumstances have often discouraged researchers from conducting extensive field studies. This means that there is very little basic ethnographic data regarding such issues as kinship, socialization and community formation in the context of camps in the occupied territories. Palestinian camp refugees in the occupied territories are of great anthropological interest because their liminal condition has particular political implications and cultural meanings. Compared to most other studies of Palestinian camp refugees in the West Bank and Gaza Strip to date, this dissertation builds on extended fieldwork conducted inside a refugee camp. It is an experience-near ethnographic account of the daily efforts of camp inhabitants to secure survival and meaning in a historical setting that is yet to be fully explored.

To my knowledge, this study is also the only one of its kind to have been carried out during this period[5]. The intifada *al-aqṣa* constitutes a new and more militarized phase of the Palestinian struggle for statehood and it has dramatically changed everyday life in the Palestinian territories. In such a situation, Dheishe as a politicized site was an interesting place to revisit, since I had carried out a briefer fieldwork there in 2000, before the new uprising. A more prosaic argument for focusing on Palestinian camp refugees is that their fate is often claimed to be crucial to the solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The refugees' envisioned return to their home villages inside present Israel and the question of compensation for loss of property remain disputed and highly politicized issues (*e.g.* Aruri ed. 2001).

[4] The few exceptions with a specific focus on camp refugees are Marx (1978), FAFO report (1997), Rosenfeld (2004), Jarrar (2003). Rosenfeld is the only one who has done a lengthy ethnographic field study more recently. Studies have been devoted to Palestinian refugees *outside* the occupied territories, for instance in Jordan (Farah 1999), in Lebanon (Sayigh 1979, 1994, 2005; Peteet 1991, 2005a), in Egypt (El Abed 2003), Kuwait (Ghabra 1987) and in Israel (Slyomovics 1998; Ben Ze'ev 2004, 2005).

[5] As far as I know, the ones who have yet published in English building on fieldwork in the occupied territories during intifada *al-aqṣa* are Allen (2008), Bishara (2008), Junka (2006) and Kelly (2004, 2008).

Conducting Research in a Debated Field

Once I had embarked on this project I realized that virtually everyone, everywhere seems to have an opinion on the situation in Israel/Palestine. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is in the headlines almost every day, all over the world. However, intense media coverage of conflicts does not automatically enhance knowledge about events or about the lives of people who are forced to live under war-like conditions. Indeed, the media reporting sometimes obscures more than it clarifies. As noted by Philo and Berry (2004), one of the difficulties faced by journalists who report on Israel/Palestine is that the causes of the conflict are subject to constant debate; there is no single account that is accepted by everyone. Almost everything is contested.

Many researchers have devoted time and effort to investigating the political situation in this region; it could even be argued that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has been over-researched in some academic fields, such as political science and history. It is, however, revealing that most of these works have focused on macro-level processes and that very few have tried to examine the everyday lives of the people concerned using participant observation as their main field method. This study is intended to address this gap.

In this thesis, special attention is paid to the links between macro and micro-levels of social life. As Greenhouse *et al.* (2002) note, 'political transformations provide more than the context […]. They also provide the contents as upheavals of change reveal that large-scale, so-called structures include the everyday lives of ordinary people – not merely the arenas in which their lives unfold' (*ibid.*: 7). For 'ordinary' people, the possibilities to control these processes or to choose how to act may be limited; their strategies of everyday life interplay with external forces.

The 'Conflict' as a Concealing Concept

The situation in the occupied territories often resembles something other than war or even armed conflict, despite the casualties on both sides[6]. The terms and concepts media agencies, the 'international community' and the concerned public use to describe the order of things in this part of the world are frequently misleading and hide a more complex reality (*cf.* Philo & Berry 2004; Dor 2005). On one level, the relations between Israelis and Palestinians can be understood as a traditional conflict between two national projects that I will return to later. The situation may also be understood as a regional conflict that involves not only Palestinians and Israelis, but also Arab neighbouring countries and Western countries that wish to exercise influence in the Middle East. On yet another level, the asymmetry of power between Israelis and Palestinians points at

[6] However, according to the definition of the Uppsala Conflict Data Program, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is for sure an active armed conflict, since there are more than 25 battle-related deaths a year (see http://www.pcr.uu.se/research/UCDP/data_and_publications/definitions_all.htm 13.05.2009 10.08)

other possible readings of the 'conflict'. Many Palestinians and others, including a growing number of researchers (*e.g.* Abdo & Yuval-Davis 1995; Kretzmer 2002), would not hesitate to call Israel a settler community that is involved in a colonial project that Palestinians resist. Comparisons with Apartheid South Africa are common (*e.g.* Carter 2006). To many Israelis and Jews in the diaspora, on the other hand, the establishment and national project of Israel constitutes a Jewish national and sometimes religious homecoming, which was originally a response to anti-Semitic aggression in Europe and elsewhere. Israel, moreover, portrays the conflict as a war for national survival fought between two equal parties (Heacook 2003; Philo & Berry 2004: 160). Palestinians also frequently understand the conflict in terms of survival in the face of a threat of extinction and they underline the power discrepancies between themselves and Israelis. Outside of Israel/Palestine the conflict is often depicted as being about religion. However, I would view it as being primarily about state-building and the control of territory, of land and borders (*cf.* Halper 2006; Segal & Weizman 2003), although attempts to dominate territory often carry religious connotations (*cf.* Khalidi 1997: 13f; Benevenisti 2000: 285f). The disagreement between those who compare Israel/Palestine with Apartheid South Africa and those who view it as a Jewish homecoming to an empty land could not be greater.

Most would agree that Israel has been occupying Gaza and the West Bank[7] since 1967. However, the nature of this occupation has changed, especially since the establishment of the Palestinian Authority (PA) in 1994 gave Palestinians some limited self-rule while Israel maintained control over borders and most of the West Bank.

The Battle over Legitimate Violence

Like the Colombian situation described by Martin (2000), there is in the Israeli-Palestinian situation a tradition of violence. Such tradition may, 'in terms of a particular historically shaped relation between order and violence […] take different expressions in the context of a specific political and institutional configuration' (*ibid.*: 164). Martin (*ibid.*) argues that a tradition of violence does not imply a culture of violence, which may make violence seem inevitable, but notes how the 'normal' situation with chronic, moderate violence is sometimes broken by more extensive periods of extremely violent acts. There is never 'peace' between Israel and the Palestinians, just more or less violence; in other words, 'the conflict' is constant but is more or less inflamed. As holds true for many other conflicts and wars, the Israeli-Palestinian situation is fuelled by memories of past losses and injustices; violence and power discrepancies have become a way of life.

[7] Some Israelis refer to the West Bank by using the Biblical names Samaria and Judea.

The anthropologist David Riches (1986) notes that violence is in general a political and ideological designation and it is therefore not always recognized as violence by everyone. In the Palestinian-Israeli context, there is a continuous political dispute over how to define or justify the acts carried out by both sides. Are Palestinians using terrorism or rightful resistance? Are Israeli soldiers acting within a framework of state terror or a defensive strategy to establish security for Israeli citizens? Is it a violation or simply legal procedure to demolish a house that has been built without permission? What violence, committed by whom, is legitimate and under what circumstances? In the Israeli-Palestinian context, these questions are hotly debated.

The Israeli state's use of aggression towards Palestinians is often justified by Israeli needs for security and as responses to what Israelis refer to as terrorism (Philo & Berry 2004: 160). The Israeli occupation is partly military since Israel uses its army to control the occupied territories, but some Israeli civilians, to be exact settlers, also exercise violence against Palestinians. The next two chapters discuss how the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip employs military, civilian and administrative means to control the territories and its population while the Palestinians use both violent and non-violent forms of protest. From the Palestinian perspective, the violence they use is seen as the self-defence of the underdog; the occupation has met with different forms of resistance, sometimes in the form of an armed struggle by paramilitary groups, 'freedom fighters' or 'suicide bombers' and sometimes in the form of non-violent civil disobedience.

Jackson (2005: 41f) argues that violence is generally associated with three obligations of reciprocity (Mauss 2002); giving, receiving and repaying. This logic governs relations with both those we love and those we hate, providing reasons to give as well as to take life. Using field material from Sierra Leone, Jackson (*ibid.*: 59) concludes that '[…] violence generally takes the form of retribution or payback, driven by the need to reclaim something one imagines to have been wrongfully taken, and that is now owed. One's very existence is felt to depend on making good this loss'. In Palestine/Israel such notions of retribution and payback inform nationalistic discourses and violent practices, such as Israeli military intrusions and Palestinian rocket attacks.

I propose that in their attempts to deal with violence and uncertainty, Dheisheans are neither merely victims of Israeli assaults nor simply perpetrators of violence but are social actors who find themselves in different situations marked by the power asymmetry between Palestinians and Israelis. Both victims and perpetrators are categories to be used with great care and it should be noted that groups and individuals may end up in relationships or situations where one of these terms characterizes their acts. Neither victimhood nor perpetratorhood should, however, be perceived as permanent qualities; they are context-dependent, situational and relational. In my

experience, very few Palestinians would wish to be described as only passive victims but would prefer outsiders to acknowledge them as people with goals and strategies, even though they are in an unfavourable position. Two conditions in particular, refugee-ness and occupation, limit the scope of action of people in the camp.

Being Camp Refugees under Violent Occupation

For Palestinian refugees in Dheishe, the profound uncertainty of their situation derives from multiple ambiguities. Essential here is the open-ended liminality of camp life as a 'temporary' status and although it has already lasted over four generations, no end point is yet in view. This basic uncertainty intersects with the chronic presence of violence and occupation.

'People Out of Place' in the National Order of Things

As we know from the anthropological literature on displacement, refugees and their experiences have been essentialized in numerous ways. In a groundbreaking article building on the theories of Victor Turner and Mary Douglas, Malkki (1995) discusses how refugees are understood to occupy a problematic, liminal position in the national order of things, since in the modern conception of world order, having a nation-state and a nationality is considered to be 'natural'. The nation-state thus appears to form the given basis of identity and culture (Bauman 1990). People who are forced to cross borders and who lack the protection of a state or, as in the Palestinian case, lack a nation-state altogether, disrupt the seemingly neat divisions of the world. In relation to this national order of things, liminality is then the interstitial position occupied by refugees as 'people out of place' (*cf.* Douglas 2002). The international solutions for refugees have thus advocated either voluntary return to the homeland or a permanent incorporation into another state[8].

The liminality of refugees is thus an ideological and political construct that often forms part of the political discourses and narratives of flight of refugee groups themselves. Returning home, to one's original place, is therefore often posited as the end point of exile (Eastmond 1989; Long & Oxfeld eds. 2004). Among Palestinian refugees, return to their towns and villages is portrayed as the healing of wounds created by displacement (see chapter 7)[9]. However, the imperative of return may not be so easily accomplished for Palestinians as for many other exile populations.

[8] UNHCR, the United Nation High Commissioner for Refugees, designated these preferred durable solutions at a time after World War II when 'the refugee' emerged as a legal category with a set of special requirements and covered by international agreements, notably the Geneva Convention 1951 (Malkki 1995).

[9] The other suggested solution of integration in the new society (both socially and as a citizen) has been less favoured among Palestinians and has also been discouraged by Arab host countries. For refugees in the occupied territories, this is an even more complicated issue since there is still no Palestinian state. Everyone in the 'host society' in the West Bank and Gaza Strip is thus without 'proper' Palestinian citizenship.

For Palestinian refugees, exile has become indefinitely extended, stretching over generations; returning to 'one's proper place' is not a viable option for the near future.

At the same time, the existential state of being 'betwixt and between' (Turner 1994), without a clear belonging and set of rights, is not only an ideological construct but has very real consequences. In addition to suffering economic and physical insecurity, Palestinian refugees as other refugees are often stigmatized by the surrounding population. They are, for instance, often despised as being poor and they are considered dangerous (see chapter 4). Palestinians, like other displaced populations, also face enforced immobility because of the difficulties in obtaining identity cards and passports[10]. This restricted movement is an aspect of the political and administrative control often exerted over people who fall outside of the order of nation-states.

Large-scale displacement gives rise to entire regimes of organizations, programmes of assistance and regulations. Refugees in general inhabit an extremely institutionalized world, made up of NGOs, governmental or local authorities and international organs, which provide them with assistance (Zetter 1991: 40f). As a category, refugees are entitled to certain privileges and it is therefore necessary to define who is a refugee. The 'Palestinian refugee' emerged when charity organizations and the UN started to assist those who registered as refugees (Peteet 2005a). According to Zetter (*ibid.*), the process of categorization implies the stereotyping of individuals as their lives become administrative cases[11]. An institutional or bureaucratic identity is created that is largely beyond the control of the displaced people themselves and it contributes to the development of an asymmetric relationship of power and influence. Although the refugee regime and the aid it delivers shapes the refugee label in a humanitarian and seemingly neutral guise, bureaucracy and resource distribution often carry political implications (Harrell-Bond 1986).

Bureaucratic categories are however not only political but also dynamic. They change in tandem with local policy and the integration and/or marginalization of the refugees. They also reflect refugees' own construction of identity through such efforts as political mobilization or the re-assertion of pre-existing identities (*e.g.* Zetter 1991; Ong 1995; Eastmond, forthcoming). Dheisheans and other Palestinian camp refugees have creatively contested and subverted the label 'Palestinian refugee' in many ways. By introducing competing images of 'refugee-ness', camps may thus 'become generative, productive sites for social and political invention and transformation' (Malkii 1995b: 238) and this may bring a sense of empowerment to displaced people. In Palestinian nationalism, 'the refugee' and 'the refugee camp' have become emblematic,

[10] Kelly (2004) discusses the complexities of such immobility among West Bank villagers as a situation where displacement and return, absence and presence, movement and confinement are intertwined.
[11] For an interesting and up-to-date discussion about refugee labelling in the present globalized world where new labels such as 'genuine refugee' and 'asylum seeker' are frequently used, see Zetter (2007).

signifying both struggle and suffering and refugee camps have been referred to as 'centres of resistance' by the Palestinian leadership (Sayigh 1997: 589ff; Lindholm 2003; Khalili 2007).

In sum, being refugees has both empowered and restricted Dheisheans. They have acted within frameworks set by the bureaucratic labelling that followed their flight but they have also sought to subvert or modify these.

The Meaning and Consequences of Violence

Anthropological literature on societies in the midst of violence has mostly been concerned with people as victims of violations[12] and with extraordinary brutality rather than with mundane life (*cf.* Kelly 2008). Despite the fact that armed conflict and violence have become favourite topics in ethnography in recent years and there are now many accounts of methodological and ethical concerns, explicit theorizing about violence and war has been scanty (*cf.* Abbink 2000: xiv). The anthropological approach has a great deal to offer here since it explores violence as a meaningful social act that expresses a relationship with another party. Violence is seldom devoid of meaning to those involved, even though it might seem senseless (Schmidt & Schröder 2001). Many anthropologists also emphasize violence as a form of symbolic communication (Abbink 2000; Malkki 1995a) and note its destructive, traumatic effects on those exposed (*e.g.* Green 1999).

Nordstrom & Martin (1992: 5) point out that repression and resistance generated at a national level are inserted into local realities in multiple ways. Political anxieties and political violence are thus expressed in cultural performances locally and in everyday life. As ethnographic examples from violent political events on the Indian sub-continent suggest (Das 2007; Chatterji & Mehta 2007), violence may become deeply interwoven into the fabric of the everyday; for instance experiences that cannot be talked about may be brought to mind by something quite ordinary. In a very concrete sense, ongoing hostilities and political unrest carry with them restricting effects on everyday life. Violence tends to disturb quotidian routine and often implies restricted mobility (*cf.* Bringa 1993).

While violence can be analytically separated into different types[13], most people in violent societies 'often perceive violence in the singular with one responsible perpetrator, one purpose, and one suffering and/or resisting body or people' (Jansen & Löfving 2007: 7). Furthermore,

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[12] Exceptions are for instance Robben (1995) who have focused on perpetrators in Argentine and Coulter's work (2006) on female guerrilla fighters in Sierra Leone.

[13] In addition to structurally imposed violence, which tends to be stable and often to some extent invisible, Galtung (1969) refers to direct violence as carried out in a subject-object relation. Direct violence is often, but not always, physical. However, those two types are frequently coupled; 'gross social injustice is maintained *by means of* highly manifest personal [*i.e.* direct] violence' writes Galtung (*ibid.*: 184). In the Israeli-Palestinian case, structurally generated violations sometimes take the form of direct physical violence, other times they constitute restrictions, humiliations and degrading treatment.

emic perceptions of violence are often relatively holistic, Dheisheans, for instance, felt it was impossible to 'have a life' because of violence in its variety of forms – structural as well as direct (Galtung 1969) – permeated their existence. Most importantly, they conflated the Israeli occupation with their experience of generalized, continuous violation (*cf.* Farmer 2004) including the scarcity of both material and existential resources (*cf.* Hage 1998: 20 in Jackson 2005: 41) that threatened their lives as well as their sense of integrity. This had implications for the ways in which they responded to their predicament.

Constrained Agency

Agency is about the human capacity to act. As human beings, we are all limited by structures imposed on us, but we also possess a variable degree of freedom to act within these constraints. Building on Hannah Arendt's book *The Human Condition* (1958), Jackson (2002: 12f) discusses this as follows:

> [E]very person is at once a 'who' and a 'what' – a subject who actively participates in the making or unmaking of his or her world, and a subject who suffers and is subjected to actions by others, as well as forces of circumstances that lie largely outside his or her control. This oscillation between being an actor and being acted upon is felt in every human encounter, and intersubjective life involves an ongoing struggle to negotiate, reconcile, balance, or meditate these antithetical potentialities of being, such that no one person or group ever arrogates agency so completely and permanently to itself that another is reduced to the status of a mere thing, a cipher, an object, an anonymous creature of blind fate.

The relation between structure and individual agency is, however, not straightforward (*e.g.* Giddens 1979); how much freedom to act does an individual have despite structural frames? Social science has turned to concepts such as creativity and imagination when discussing human agency (Rapport & Overing 2000); these concepts relate to or are even necessary bases for improvization. Feminist philosopher Lois McNay (2000: 5) argues against the understanding of agency as being predominantly *against* dominant norms in society and suggests a more generative aspect of subject formation and agency, noting that '[…] individuals may respond in unanticipated and innovative ways which may hinder, reinforce or catalyse social change' (*cf.* Mahmoud 2001). In addition, when action on the world around us is restricted, we can resort to acting upon ourselves, on our inner state, thereby transforming the way we experience the world, 'we create the illusion of acting to change the world by acting on ourselves' (Jackson 2005: 150).

Although the balancing between 'being an actor and being acted upon' is a more or less universal human issue, it is a more pressing concern for some people than for others. To those who live under very constraining circumstances, agency may seem blocked. The situation in the

West Bank is in some ways comparable to that of Post-Communist Russia, where Lindquist (2006) investigated how people turned to magic as a response to insecurity. Like magic in the Russian context, the practices studied in this dissertation thrive 'where power is brutal and overwhelming, where the rational channels of agency are insufficient or of limited value, and where the uncertainty of life calls for methods of existential reassurance and control that rational and technical means cannot offer' (*ibid.*: 2). The agency of people in Dheishe is severely limited because of the power asymmetry with Israel. However, even in the most totalitarian conditions people try to make space for themselves and leave a mark - like the little schoolboy in de Certeau's example (1984: 31 in Watters 2008) - who continues to scrawl and daub on his schoolbooks, even when he is punished.

Coming to Terms with Violence and Insecurity in Daily Life

This dissertation does not attempt to study violence or violent behaviour *per se*, but investigates how refugees in Dheishe handle long-term violence and insecurity. How did my informants as refugees, with first or second-hand experience of displacement, make sense of living in the continuous insecurity of military occupation? How did they attempt to salvage a sense of integrity in a condition of constrained agency?

My informants in Dheishe had developed communal and shared practices to cope with deprivation and the violence-ridden environment; people's unsettling experiences interacted with Palestinian communal ways of dealing with them (*cf.* Kleinman 1996). Experiences of violations (such as expulsion, war and arrest) had to be managed. For my informants, *al-nakba* represented a rupture and destruction of social life, just as the Partition between India and Pakistan in 1948 was for the Punjabis in Das' work (2007) (*cf.* Jassal & Ben Ari eds. 2007). It brought hitherto unimaginable breaches of taken-for-granted tenets of social life and subsequent experiences of violence also had to be handled. The remaking of a social world was achieved through the endless repetition of small events in domestic, quotidian routines. It was by descending into the ordinary (Das 2007) - by being present at many of these daily events – that I could begin to grasp the experiences of violence and to understand what it means 'to pick up the pieces' and live on. Below I present a number of concepts that may help us to understand the Dheisheans' predicament and how they grapple with it.

Tactics of Resilience

Scheper-Hughes (2008) underlines that conventional Western understandings of human resilience and vulnerability are often inadequate, especially in other cultural contexts. Referring to

Valliant (1977), she notes that strength becomes most apparent 'when the going gets tough', when one has to overcome difficulties. People who live in constant crisis, like Palestinians in the occupied territories, may therefore have ways of dealing with potentially unsettling events that differ from those employed in more affluent parts of the world.

Resilience is generally defined as the ability to withstand or recover quickly from difficult conditions. It implies the ability to recoil and spring back into shape after bending, stretching or being compressed (Oxford English Dictionary 1989). In the human context, it suggests an intention to become the person/the group one used to be or to return to an 'original' state that existed prior to a challenging experience. Scheper-Hughes (*ibid.*), who builds on research in South Africa and Brazil, identifies some 'tactics of resilience' that enable recovery. In the present study the tactics discussed are normalization, narrativity, reframing of events, black humour and enjoying oneself[14].

A useful concept for examining resilience is reframing[15]. By this I mean understanding a disadvantageous phenomenon in a way that makes it seem advantageous or even necessary. In this study, individual and collective efforts to reframe are evident in people's redefinition of losses as gains or weakness as strength. For instance, when the camp residents described themselves as being the main fighters in the Palestinian struggle this may be interpreted as a reframing of the bureaucratic refugee label with its connotations of poverty and helplessness. Furthermore, violent events, which many of my informants would once have understood as abnormal, were reframed as a sort of 'normality'.

Normalization is another means used by the refugees in this study for coping with the violence of everyday life (*cf. ibid.*). Such processes entail keeping up familiar routines and relations of everyday life to create a sense of order and predictability. For people living with great uncertainty and deprivation, life may seem to be a constant struggle to regulate the unpredictability of life. By extending the boundaries of the previous 'normal' order, people in war-torn environments may also bring anomalous and frightening experiences under control (Macek 2000). The need to normalize a state of emergency appears to be related to the high frequency of extraordinary experiences. This may be seen as an effort to re-establish ontological security (Giddens 1991). By ontological security Giddens means the sense of continuity and order in events that are characteristic of large segments of human activity in all cultures, and that 'carry the individual through transitions, crises and circumstances of high risk' (*ibid.*: 38). It seems that these events, such as everyday practice or life cycle rituals, become more urgent or pronounced in

[14] Scheper-Hughes (2008) identifies three more tactics which are out of the scope of this study: transcendental experiences in relation to traumas, socialization for toughness and manipulative and instrumental behaviour.
[15] Scheper-Hughes (2008) does not order those tactics of resilience.

conflict-ridden societies, where lives and livelihoods are understood to be constantly endangered (*cf.* Finnström 2003). Under normal circumstances, everyday life is governed by routine and predictability and this provides continuity.

Normalization of a violent and uncertain situation is a complex process that is fraught with ambiguity. Taussig (1992) describes a double state of social being in violent societies where one oscillates between understanding one's predicament as a state of emergency and understanding it as part of a normal order that has extended boundaries. In such contexts, trust cannot be taken for granted but has to be negotiated and re-established. Trust, with its connotations of honouring moral obligations, implies respect of each other's integrity. Having someone to trust may help a person to be resilient; trust acts as a protective mechanism (Rutter 1987; *cf.* Keenan 1992). Scheper-Hughes (2008) notes how the death of infants was normalized by the poor people she studied in Brazil. Similarly, in a recent article, Allen (2008) discusses a how martyr deaths have become normalized in parts of the West Bank. I will, however, argue that such routinization of death does not exclude the possibility that death may simultaneously be reframed as a heroic act of martyrdom.

Some ethnographic research among Palestinians in the occupied territories has touched on issues related to resilience. For instance, Rosenfeld (2004), who carried out fieldwork in Dheishe, shows the capacities of the camp residents to use family ties and kin obligations to advance whole families economically and educationally despite deprivation. When coping with imprisonment and martyrdom, solidarity among kin and Dheisheans was also crucial. Social relations were thus used to recover and to move forward (*cf.* Ghabra 1987). Bornstein's (2002a) work shows how West Bankers tried to deal with the inequalities created by borders and Israeli dominance during the years between the first intifada and the new uprising. By emphasizing their customs and traditions, Palestinians created community and boundaries against other people as a response to such control. Promizing new research has been provided by Kelly (2004, 2008). Directing attention to the mundane in the midst of violence, Kelly (2008) has focused on the importance for Palestinians who have not become politically involved in the intifada *al-aqṣa* of upholding ordinary life by continuing to study and honour kinship obligations.

Narrativity is also often used to make sense of violence. For people who have suffered war and displacement, stories are often important sites for negotiating what has happened and what it means and for finding ways to move forward.

> [Refugees'] stories are reconstitutive in the way they organize experience, give it unity and meaning, but they also, in a more pragmatic perspective, form part of purposive and meaningful action to influence the outcome. Story-telling in itself, as a way for individuals and communities to remember, bear witness, or seek to restore continuity

> and identity, can be a symbolic resource enlisted to alleviate suffering and change their situation. (Eastmond 2007: 251)

Oral histories of Palestinians in Lebanese camps about flights, war and resistance, exemplify such future-orientation in refugee narratives (Sayigh 1979; 1994). Bowman (2001) provides an interesting account from a West Bank town, where the re-negotiations of community due to political transformations depended on the establishment of shared local narratives of violence. Swedenburg (1991) interconnected the memories of the Palestinian peasant rebellion of the 1930s with the resistance of the first intifada, showing how memories were recoded to make sense of more recent events. Another anthropological field study from the so-called Oslo years is Rothenberg's (2004) book, which explores kinship and gender through stories about spirit possession. Such narratives are occasionally used to try and tackle experiences of torture in Israeli political prisons and to heal ex-prisoners by spirit exorcism.

People's sense of locality and identity are both discursively and historically constructed (Gupta & Ferguson 1997). Furthermore, processes to create sameness tend to be the 'flip side' of the establishment of otherness (Augé 1998). In Dheishe, many narratives that commented on phenomena as divergent as the political situation and local tradition, included processes of exclusion and 'othering'. Through narratives as well as practices, Dheisheans tended to constitute themselves in opposition to Israelis, Westerners and other Arabs. Ideas about sameness and otherness became especially visible when discussing moral issues in the camp. The threat of Israel was located not only in the repressive means of the state, but also in the risk of moral contamination.

In Mary Douglas' classic *Purity and Danger* (2002), she notes that society does not exist in a vacuum but is subject to external pressures. Palestinians have experienced literal attacks, military as well as civilian, on their society at least since 1948. In a society such as the Palestinian, where everyday life is characterized by uncertainty and difficulties in establishing continuity in the face of external powers, untidiness and disorder are pronounced and in urgent need of management. Douglas (*ibid.*: 5) argues that,

> […] ideas about separating, purifying, demarcating and punishing transgressions have as their main function to impose system on an inherently untidy experience. It is only by exaggerating the difference between within and without, about and below, male and female, with and against, that a semblance of order is created.

Creating clear boundaries between the community and others was thus a way of re-establishing order. In the chapters to follow, many concerns about maintaining integrity and resisting invasion or even exterminated by the enemy will be discussed.

One illuminating example is how Dheisheans' link morality to history; moral norms were justified by my informants by historical evidence. Like the refugee camp in Tanzania described by Malkki, Dheishe was 'a site that was enabling and nurturing an elaborate and self-conscious historicity among its refugee inhabitants' (Malkki 1995a: 52f). To borrow Malkki's term, people interpreted events and acted according to a mythico-history. This does not mean their narratives of the past were false or fictive but suggests that they were concerned with order in a fundamental and cosmological sense (*ibid.*: 55). They were centrally concerned with the re-establishment of a moral order and thus with boundary-making between 'us and them', other and self.

Resistance and Endurance

Political resistance is another response to violence and oppression. Implying action and opposition, resistance often comes to define the identity of people in violent or war-torn societies (*cf.* Löfving 2002). Among Palestinians, the suffering of abuse has frequently been defined as resisting acts (*cf.* Bowman 2001). Peteet (1994) analysed torture and beatings in the occupied territories in relation to male gender formation, and explained how male youths became men by being subjected to violence perpetrated by the Israelis[16]. Jean-Klein (1997, 2000, 2001, 2003), building on ethnographic data from the West Bank, writes about the politicization of everyday practices and about martyrs among Palestinians during the first uprising and concludes that a significant resistance strategy during the first uprising was the suspension of Palestinian everyday life by the masses and I shall return to this several times. Palestinian nationalism underlines the importance of resistance (*muqâwame*) and of struggle (*niḍâl*). Resistance is thus emically construed and part of the national discourse and it is closely connected to Palestinian subjectivity (*cf.* Lindholm 1999; Sayigh 1997).

Although it remains strong in other social sciences (Hollander & Einwohner 2004), resistance has become rather outdated as an analytical concept in social anthropology after Ortner's (1995) criticism of resistance studies[17]. Concepts such as coping or negotiation are now

[16] Peteet (1991), who has done most of her fieldwork in Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon, discusses the effect of resistance and political mobilization on female gender construction, showing very contradictory outcomes. Some women became 'emancipated' and more equal to men through their resistance, others resisted through reinforcing a more traditional female role.

[17] Especially during the 1980s, several influential new ethnographies were concerned with resistance to inequality and oppression (*e.g.* Comaroff 1985; Ong 1987; Scott 1985). Ortner (1995) later points out several problematic aspects of many of those studies and what she calls their 'ethnographic refusal', avoiding thick descriptions and holistic, fully contextualized accounts. Resistance studies have been 'thin' because they were often ethnographically thin: thin on the internal politics of dominated groups, thin on the cultural richness of those groups, thin on the subjectivity of actors involved. In sum, Ortner recommends immersed fieldworks and

more frequently used to analyse human agency in times of political crises, displacement and disasters. In this thesis, resistance is discussed in its emic sense, namely how people in Dheishe themselves related their everyday lives to what they defined as resistance. The practices that Dheisheans saw as conscious resistance to the Israeli occupation may also contain other dimensions of agency (*cf.* Allen 2008). By this I mean practices and positions that do not readily correspond with either resistance or compliance, but that are about remaining steadfast in the present and in one's hope for the future. In the Palestinian context, the notion of endurance is central and often seems to blur with the idea of resistance. Palestinians have long been opposing Israeli dominance and repression by *ṣumud* (steadfastness). The term carries several meanings both locally and in nationalistic rhetoric and its complexities are further discussed in chapter 8. It may involve staying on the land, which is both a strategy of survival and an expression of political opposition. Jean-Klein (2001) showed how daily activities were suspended during the first uprising, but in the second, these tended instead to be affirmed (Junka 2006; Kelly 2008). At the time of my fieldwork, people regarded amusing oneself, for instance by attending weddings or going on outings, as essential to endurance. Humour may offer a means of remaining steadfast. Scheper-Hughes (2008) argues that laughing at one's difficulties is not necessarily an act of resistance but may be more about bearing witness to hardships without giving in to them. Kana'na (1998, 2005) writes about legends of the first intifada and about political humour, showing how Palestinians have used storytelling and jokes as means of reflecting on their predicament. Jokes and funny stories are often told and they form part of a tactic of resilience.

Making New Homes While Imagining Return

The ability of displaced people to produce new homes has commonly been overlooked in refugee studies (Turton 2005). In this study, I will look at how practices of emplacement were enacted in Dheishe (Hammond 2004). The issue of house building in its symbolic as well as concrete sense will be given special attention. In the Israeli-Palestinian context, the building of houses is politically contested in several ways - a common strategy of the Israeli army is to raze a Palestinian house as a collective punishment - but it is also closely linked to the accomplishment of adulthood, a 'normal life course' and kin obligations, as will be outlined in chapter 6.

The making of new homes brings new kinds of belonging and is a response and an attempt to recover from displacement; it is a way to manage daily life, but also to normalize one's condition (*cf.* Jansen & Löfving 2007). However, refugee camps and houses within them tend to be considered special kinds of homes. They often become politicized 'technologies of power'

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an acknowledgment of agency. Taking that direction, resistance studies 'would, or should, reveal the ambivalences and ambiguities of resistance itself', she writes (*ibid*.: 190).

(Malkii 1995b) and 'centres of resistance' (see above), while simultaneously connoting temporariness, as long as the fate of the refugees remains undecided (*cf.* Peteet 1995). According to many Dheisheans, their 'authentic places', where they truly belong, are the villages they once fled from. The desire to return is also authorized by demands for the implementation of Palestinians' right of return according to UN resolution 194 (see chapter 3). Not really belonging and hoping to return to one's original village, yet rebuilding homes and managing everyday lives in a provisional place which is also the site of political empowerment, Palestinian refugees seem to be positioned between transition and permanency (Peteet 1995). Many camp residents have also bought land in the West Bank and others have moved out of the camp to build their homes in less transient places. Despite their ideological notions of rooted-ness, the refugees in Dheishe are constantly creating new belongings in a place in which the Palestinian presence is highly contested.

In the ambiguous, transitory and threatening everyday life of a refugee camp, the desire to return is hardly surprising. However, Jansen & Löfving (2007) argue that the strong nostalgia expressed by many people who are on the move is not necessarily best understood as a desire to return. Hanafi (2006) notes that a useful distinction can be made in the Palestinian case between the *material* (*i.e.* actual return and compensation) and the *symbolic* dimension (*i.e.* recognition and reconciliation) of return. To Palestinians, return is often depicted as a vital component in the healing of the social body, which has been sundered by violence and exile[18]. Return is also closely related to demands for justice and the recognition of suffering. The way that people in Dheishe continue to imagine return, I will argue, is both in the form of a moral discourse and in the form of hope in a desperate situation.

The Aftermath of Resignation: Illusio as in Hope for the Future

Resignation is generally understood as the act of surrender, giving up and handing over (Oxford English Dictionary 1989). It also carries a sense of acceptance of something undesirable but inevitable. Dheisheans often expressed such resignation when claiming that they could do nothing about their situation or that they had no life.

However, when the societal channels of agency are blocked, people turn to alternatives. Observation of the practices of everyday life may reveal that people who live under threat are not devoid of aspirations and projects for a different future. On the contrary, profound resignation may engender hope that, for an outsider, may seem unrealistic or even phantasmic. Such

[18] Recent studies show the complexity of return to the Palestinian territories and the many tensions between Palestinian returnees and residents (Hammer 2005; Isotalo 2005). This is however another kind of return than the one envisioned by my informants who longed to go back to their original villages inside present Israel.

practices may augment people's sense of existential being and agency and they may help transform hopelessness about the present into hopefulness about the future. In Jackson's words (2005: xxv), '[w]hen any society […] offers no hope, provides no care, and actively blocks certain people from participation in it, these people withdraw their investment and interest from it, and seek an *illusio* elsewhere.'

The concept of *illusio*, which is an interest or a stake in the game, was coined by Bourdieu (2000). It was later used by Lindquist (2006) in her study of magic in post-Communist Russia to refer to practices concerned with the future and with existential meaning among people with limited choices. To Bourdieu (2000: 207), *illusio* 'is what gives sense (both meaning and direction) to existence by leading one to invest in a game and its forthcoming'. People, however, are not rational actors but are more often 'passionate players' who are more concerned with augmenting their social being and agency than with maximizing social profit. *Illusio* is related to a limited or even regulated uncertainty; the agent needs to have a chance to win, which is neither nil nor total (*ibid.*: 213). Lindquist (2006: 6) states further that '*Illusio* is always oriented towards the future, to something that is to be brought into being, in projects and desires, and it is therefore connected with the foundational existential condition of being, that of hope'. To sum up, *illusio* contains several elements: it is about an imagined future, about hope and existential meaning and it implies risk-taking.

In this study, I use the term *illusio* to refer to a kind of virtual agency, which goes beyond the everyday and projects aspirations onto the future. I use it to understand certain activities on the camp that were concerned with investments in the days to come and with hope, such as by reading Koranic verses as predictions of a forthcoming Palestinian victory or imagining a homecoming to villages of origin. *Illusio* may also take the form of engagement in violent acts. One may speak of an *illusio* of violence, which implies a gambling with one's own life or the lives of others, to seek symbolic capital (Jackson 2005: xxv). Ghassan Hage (2003: 131f), for instance, discusses Palestinian suicide-bombers as people who, through their 'heroic' self-annihilation, accumulate personal status, recognition and honour they could not obtain in life. *Illusio* is thus a dimension of agency that may help us to understand the multiple ways in which Palestinians deal with a situation of despair.

Outline of the Thesis

Chapter 2 describes Dheishe as field site and outlines methodological and ethical concerns encountered during fieldwork. **Chapter 3** provides a brief historical background to the disputed events leading up to the time of fieldwork. It maintains a macro-perspective and gives some

explanation for the failure of the peace process during the 1990s that led to renewed violence. **Chapter 4** investigates both transformation and continuity in the camp, exploring narratives of flight, the establishment of the camp and the local process of refugee labelling. **Chapter 5** deals with processes of upholding daily life through everyday routines and normalization. Despite experiencing a 'state of emergency', the refugees extended the limits of normality but were occasionally overwhelmed by fear and distrust. **Chapter 6** focuses on the making of new homes in the camp. These practices of social reproduction and continuity give us important information about ongoing emplacement among Dheisheans but also about the obstacles they face in attaining ideal adulthood. **Chapter 7** discusses desires to return to the refugees' home-villages and ideas about rooted-ness in relation to emplacement outside the camp in the form of houses and patches of land. Since repatriation is not a realistic option for the near future, the right of return remains a moral issue that creates hope of change in a desperate situation. In **chapter 8**, practices of endurance and the emic concept *ṣumud* are discussed as they relate to resilience and resistance. Some interesting changes from the first intifada are also highlighted. **Chapter 9** describes the reconstruction of a moral order and how boundary making was often reinforced by a perceived sense of Palestinian moral superiority in terms of culture and traditions, political strategies and rooted-ness. The last ethnographic chapter, **chapter 10**, provides us with local views on Palestinian martyrdom. While violent death was accentuated, the camp inhabitants used practices and narratives to establish boundaries around 'true' martyrdom. This chapter also discusses different concerns about martyrs; suicide bombers in particular were considered morally ambivalent. Finally, in the concluding discussion of **chapter 11**, I sum up the findings of the thesis and provide some further insights.

2. Dheishe: Refugee Camp and Field-site

This chapter presents the site of this study, Dheishe refugee camp, and discusses the methodological and ethical concerns that arise when doing anthropological fieldwork in a situation of sustained violence and economic deprivation.

Dheishe – a Society of Its Own

Walking down the stairs that led from the flat of a young married couple, Ahmed and Hanan, I passed by the door of Ahmed's parents' flat, which was on the ground floor of the same building. The oldest part of the house was built in concrete in the early 1950s shortly after the establishment of the camp. Over the years the house had been extended with several rooms and a new floor to accommodate the growing family and later on Ahmed's household. After graduating from high school Hanan had taken a secretarial course. Now, she was 28 years old and a full time housewife and mother of three. When I left her flat, she was about to put her youngest daughter to sleep; as I carefully closed the gate to the family's small garden so as not to disturb them, I could spot the village of Doha on the hillside on the other side of the road that leads from Jerusalem to Hebron. Many former camp residents live in Doha, including several of Ahmed's older brothers, since the lack of space for housing in the camp has become intolerable. Ahmed, who was some years older than his wife, had not studied after graduation but had started his own business in town with one of his brothers. Their business went reasonably well and Ahmed had therefore been able to afford a rather a stylish flat.

Further away the lights from the houses and streets in Bayt Jala, a predominantly Christian town, were glimmering in the dark. Beyond that town, there is an Israeli settlement, Gilo, which, although erected on occupied territory, is increasingly considered part of greater Jerusalem by Israelis. I took the alley that passed by the house of Hanan's sister and her husband; the light was on in the kitchen but I couldn't see anyone. A wild cat sneaked away as I approached some plastic bags that had been put out to be picked up early the next morning by the young men, who are employed for a meagre salary by the UNRWA to collect garbage. I could hear drumming, clapping and singing from far away; there was a wedding going on somewhere.

By now, I had arrived at one of the roads that led down to the main entrance of the camp. On the wall of one of the houses was a painted picture of a young boy and it was surrounded by flowers. Underneath the picture, some words had been written in both English and Arabic: 'Martyr of Childhood and Suffering'. The camp is filled with graffiti and posters like this that serve as reminders and memorials of violent deaths, but they are also political statements and markers of resistance. I avoided the road and took another alley. Some young children were playing football between the houses. Behind the wall of a hidden garden, a huge tree reached out over the path and the birds in its branches were filling the air with their song. Further down in the camp, the alleys between the houses became

narrower and the gardens were smaller with the overcrowding. Despite the lack of space, there was always some family extending their house or putting in a new window and construction noise was constant.

At the end of the passage, one of the camp's three mosques came into sight. It would soon be time for evening prayers. As I turned into the small street where I had been living for almost a year, I greeted Abu Ibrahim, who was sitting on the doorstep to his tiny grocery shop as usual. Some minutes later I entered the home of my hosts. 'Amti (my 'aunt', my hostess) and her elderly mother were in front of the TV watching the news. 'There's a military operation in Gaza again', said 'amti. 'How many?' I asked. '14 martyrs, 14 this far.' My host sister came out of the kitchen carrying a tray with small coffee cups and a pot. 'Here you are!' she said, handing us each a cup. As I sat down on the sofa, 'amti shook her head, and whispered 'no, no, no'. The same bloodstained pictures were shown again and again while the reporter's voice described the order of things in Palestine.

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Dheishe is one of 59 Palestinian refugee camps that are administered by United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the near East (UNRWA)[19] and that still exist in the Gaza Strip, the West Bank, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria (Rosenfeld 2004: 2f). Urban Palestinian refugee camps like Dheishe often look like city slum districts in the so-called Third World.

Dheishe is virtually a society of its own. The camp contains butcher's shops, a bakery, gift shops, hairdressers, many small groceries and several internet cafés. You can buy clothes, shoes, mobile phones and TV sets in shops in the camp and they are cheaper here than in downtown Bethlehem. Down by the main road there are also larger supermarkets and a driving school. Furniture is sold on the opposite side of the main road next to a pool café and a restaurant. There are two gas stations and a garden centre nearby. Outside the camp, a market selling meat and vegetables is situated on the way to Bethlehem. The UNRWA provides basic services to the camp inhabitants for instance in the form of primary and preparatory schooling, a kindergarten, a women's centre and a medical centre free of charge. Several NGOs also have kindergartens, sport clubs and activities for older children; the most well-known Ibdaa, mentioned earlier, had at the time of fieldwork a huge building containing a guesthouse and a restaurant as well as space for cultural activities. In addition, a new private medical centre had been set up with foreign aid funding. Another establishment, *Il Feneiq,* had been opened on the hilltop of the camp and it had a small entrance fee. *Il Feneiq* had an assembly hall for gatherings and film screenings as well as an outdoor park with playgrounds and a cafeteria. This place quickly became popular in the hot summer months.

[19] UNRWA will be more discussed in the following chapters. Dheishe was however established by the Red Cross and other charitable organizations in 1949 (Rosenfeld 2004: 3).

As my description of Dheishe reveals, the infrastructure of the camp is inadequate for the swelling population. There are problems with sewage system and refuse collection, as well as with frequent power cuts in winter and water shortages in summer. The UN-run school is overcrowded with pupils and the lack of space to extend houses and communal buildings in the camp is alarming. Buildings have continuously eaten up the formerly spacious gardens that can be seen in older photographs of Dheishe (see Rosenfeld 2004), thus diminishing options to sustain families with some self-subsistence cultivation.

Palestinians invest a great deal of effort and money into building houses and this is linked to the establishment of new households, marriage and having children. People sell and buy houses in the camp but they do not own the land that houses are built on. In general, Palestinian refugee camps all over the Middle East are built on either state land or on land leased from local landowners (www.un.org/unrwa/refugees/wheredo.html 2007-11-19 19.39). Like other Palestinian camp refugees, Dheisheans are only permitted to use land for residence; the camp is built on leased land. It has, however, become a common strategy to invest savings in land outside the camp. This will be described in more detail in chapter 7.

Although the families in Dheishe were from pre-1948 farming backgrounds, nowadays people work in all sorts of professions; there are teachers, construction workers, nurses, doctors, social workers, clerks, mechanics, shop owners, seamstresses, carpenters, taxi drivers, academics, hotel employees and so on. Considering that older generations of camp inhabitants and particularly women over 60 years of age are illiterate or have only a few years of schooling, today's camp residents have witnessed remarkable educational success, largely thanks to the UNRWA schools as well as universities in the Middle East and the West Bank (Rosenfeld 2004). Rosenfeld (*ibid.* chapter 5) explains that the division of labour within Dheishean families has also helped some family members to study, thanks to their parents' and older siblings' wage labour. Many Dheisheans have high school diplomas or higher education. This means that although the majority of the camp residents, with the exception of some in-marrying women, have a refugee background, the camp contains considerable diversity in terms of social class and economic means.

As has been widely noted (*e.g.* Worldbank 2003; PCBS 2006b; UNRWA 2006), the intifada *al-aqṣa* has hit the Palestinian economy hard and poverty has increased in the occupied territories. At the time of my fieldwork, male manual workers seemed to be the most at risk of unemployment because they had been so dependent on the Israeli labour market as day wage

labourers (see also Rosenfeld 2004; Bornstein 2002a)[20]. As noted by Amnesty International (2005: 13), the increased unemployment and loss of income among Palestinian men have put pressure on other family members, both children and women, to find employment. At the checkpoints around Bethlehem and downtown, children, many of them from refugee camps, were selling candies or home-made snacks to provide their families with some income. Although the majority of Palestinian women were not engaged in paid employment outside their homes[21], women in Dheishe (who were not considered much of a threat by the Israeli Border Police) could enter Israel more easily than men and they could find work, for instance in Israeli factories. For people with some formal education, there were more work options in the West Bank, even if these were poorly remunerated. Even more vulnerable to economic recession were households in which the main breadwinner was sick, dead or imprisoned[22]. Like elsewhere in the occupied territories, female-headed households in particular found themselves in precarious economic situations (Hasiba 2004; PCBS 2007a: 16).

Politics in Dheishe

Dheishe camp is one of the better-known Palestinian refugee camps, particularly in Israel and the West, where it has a reputation for political activism; among Palestinians Dheishe is associated with resistance and struggle, but among Israelis it is associated with danger and terrorism. Rosenfeld (2004: 5), who conducted her fieldwork in Dheishe during the first intifada (1987-1994, see next chapter), described this period as a time when 'the camp residents, adults and youth, female and male, veteran activists and passive or inexperienced "irregulars", […] were drawn into the eye of the storm that swept through the West Bank and Gaza Strip'. Although Dheishe has a long history of organized resistance to the occupation, its reputation is probably also related to the importance the Israeli army gave to roads during the first intifada (Ron 2003); the heavy army presence that was supposed to keep the road between Jerusalem and Hebron open led to frequent clashes between soldiers and the camp residents. Close to the camp as well as in Hebron there were (and still are) also several Israeli settlements that Israel wanted to protect. An army camp was set up opposite the entrance of Dheishe, entrances were closed and

[20] In 2001-2002 men's unemployment rates in Gaza and the West Bank rose to unprecedented levels as ten of thousands lost their jobs in Israel. On average, refugees, both men and women, have endured unemployment rates 3-4 per cent higher than those of non-refugees the years 2000-2005 (UNRWA 2006: 14f).
[21] In 2007, only 16.6 per cent of the Palestinian women participated in the labour force (PCBS 2007b table 7), which however constitutes an increase the last decade. Many women are also engaged in some income-generating activity in their homes or unpaid in the family business.
[22] According to figures from March 2005, 1375 families in Dheishe received emergency food rations and 301 families were considered as special hardship cases (www.un.org/unrwa/refugees/westbank/dheisheh.html 19.11.2007 19.26).

the western side of the camp was encircled by a six-meter-high barbed wire fence during the first uprising (Rosenfeld 2004: 235). The camp inhabitants therefore experienced almost daily confrontations with the Israeli army.

Some of the political activism in the Palestinian territories has not been carried out deliberately but has simply been a response to military harassment in everyday life. For decades, camp residents have been experiencing repeated unpleasant encounters with Israeli soldiers, including being beaten in the street, having one's food stolen, having one's home ravaged or destroyed and seeing family members arrested (*cf.* Rosenfeld 2004). Any protest against these activities was interpreted as activism by both Palestinians and Israelis. After the Palestinian Authority (PA) took over responsibility for the Bethlehem area in 1995, the army presence diminished, which was a relief for the Dheisheans. As one woman said in an interview in 2000; 'the best thing the PA did was to get the Jews out from the camp'.

Oppression and resistance have often fuelled one another in the Israeli-Palestinian context. For the camp residents, it was a question of Israel provoking Palestinian resistance. For instance, Abu Amir, a middle aged father of four, explained how the Israeli army's house searches and beatings of other camp residents had influenced him as a teenager in the late 1960s. Abu Amir said that these experiences made him and some of his young friends decide to take up arms against the occupation.

As will be more fully discussed in the next chapter, the first intifada was a popular resistance movement that, despite the media images of youths throwing stones at Israeli tanks, also used non-violent methods of civil disobedience. Most of my adult informants had taken active part in the uprising; this meant that they had thrown stones, protected persons who were wanted by the Israeli army or security services, walked in demonstrations, distributed forbidden leaflets or joined solidarity activities for prisoners' families and so on. Some of my informants had been involved in Popular Committees, *i.e.* loosely organized grass-roots cells that coordinated self-help activities and resistance[23], and others had used more violent means against the Israeli authorities, such as Molotov cocktails, bombs and fires (*cf.* Rosenfeld 2004). I did not consciously seek out 'fighters' who belonged to an armed group during my fieldwork but it is possible that some of my informants were involved in political activities that they preferred not to tell me about.

[23] It has been estimated that there were several hundreds of Popular Committees (also known as Neighbourhood Committees) across the occupied territories during the first uprising. Their self-help activities concerned such issues as the production of food, educational programmes and healthcare. The Israeli army made efforts to disrupt the activities of the committees by arresting members and by declaring them illegal in 1988. (PASSIA 2004)

There was also a long history of political imprisonments in Dheishe; a significant number of politically active men, and some women, had been imprisoned as early as the 70s (*ibid.*: 211) and even during the period of Jordanian rule (1948-1967, see next chapter). According to a survey Rosenfeld (*ibid.*: 197) conducted, 85 per cent of the families[24] in the camp had experienced the political imprisonment of at least one family member, while 60 per cent had had two or more family members in Israeli prison. About half of a male sample population had spent time in an Israeli jail or detention centre for periods ranging from several weeks to fifteen years (*ibid.*: 232). Rosenfeld concludes that one may speak of imprisonments as a social fact affecting almost everyone and she contends that this led to the politicization of whole families when they made visits to political prisoners.

For most of my male informants who were between 25 and 50 years of age political activism had meant spending time in Israeli prisons. A few of the women I got to know had also experienced arrest. Many imprisoned Palestinians have been tortured and a considerable number of them were or are children under 18 years of age (Save the Children Sweden 2003; Cook *et al* 2004). Israel applies special military rules that make it possible to imprison children as young as twelve years (Save the Children Sweden *ibid.*: 7). Peteet (1994) refers to this as an Israeli denial of Palestinian childhood. At the time of my fieldwork, arrests continued to be carried out by the Israeli army; many mornings the camp residents woke up to the news that so-and-so had been taken into custody during the night. Most of those arrested were in their teens or early twenties[25].

Earlier on, Dheishe had been known as a Leftist camp. At the time of the intifada *al-aqṣa*, political activism as well as support in Dheishe, as in other parts of the occupied territories, had changed dramatically (Seitz 2006: 112). Umm Ayman explained the political sympathies as follows: 'Listen, the first intifada was dominated by the PFLP [Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine] and Fateh[26], PFLP was even bigger than Fateh. Now people are turning to support the Islamic parties'. After the arrival of the Fateh-dominated PA, smaller Leftist parties began to lose ground and Fateh used its leading position in the state-building process to consolidate its power base. Some claimed that membership in Fateh was advantageous if you were looking for a job in anything that was connected to the authorities. A possible explanation for the decline in popular support during the 1990s for the Leftist parties PFLP and the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP) in the West Bank and Gaza Strip is that they have proven unable to present a viable alternative to the Oslo process that they so vehemently opposed (Lindholm

[24] Families refer to nuclear families (personal communication Rosenfeld 2006). Most often the imprisoned family member was a son.
[25] Since the outbreak of the second uprising in September 2000 until 2003 over 2.000 Palestinian children had been arrested and imprisoned (Save the Children 2003: 31).
[26] The political parties will be more discussed in the next chapter.

2003b). One explanation for growing support for the Islamic parties, Islamic Jihad and, particularly, Hamas[27], may be dissatisfaction with the PA. The camp residents felt that the PA had shown itself to be incapable of democratic rule without corruption and breaches of human rights and they believed it was too weak to negotiate with Israel. Some people also supported Islamic parties' armed struggle, also in the form of suicide attacks. Umm Ayman, for instance, said that '[…] these Islamic groups are vengeful, they kill more [Israelis], they give more to the resistance'. This was strikingly different from the 1990's when the majority of Palestinians opposed attacks on Israeli civilians (Seitz 2006: 115). The rise of Islamism in the occupied territories was probably influenced by a more general tendency of growing movements of radical Islam in many Muslim countries (*e.g.* Gardell 2005).

At the time of fieldwork, fear of violence and fatigue with conflict and political struggle was common. The militarization of the conflict on both the Israeli and Palestinian sides was followed by a kind of de-politicization of many Dheisheans. Unlike the first uprising, the intifada *al-aqṣa* was not a mass-based movement[28] that everyone could participate in, but was primarily built on military resistance by militia groups and on suicide attacks. Israel had also forcefully struck against for instance Palestinian non-violent demonstrations. Most Palestinians felt it was too dangerous and difficult to be involved in political activities under these circumstances (*cf.* Kelly 2008). In addition to these obstacles to participation in the uprising there was distrust and a lack of legitimacy of the Palestinian leadership. As elsewhere in the occupied territories, many of my informants described their own political attachments as 'not being with anyone any longer' (see also Seitz 2006: 128). Taysir, the bachelor whose house construction we will follow in chapter 6, used to be a Fateh activist, but he felt it was better not to be involved politically any more since this would keep him 'out of trouble', such as prison and mortal danger.

Many of my informants in the camp largely agreed on the political 'grand narratives' For instance, people more or less agreed that Israel's ulterior motive was to bring about a 'slow transfer', *i.e.* to make life in the territories so miserable that the Palestinians would eventually give up and leave for exile. 'Transfer' is the term used by part of the Israeli society for expelling Palestinians[29]. There had indeed been a recent re-emergence of the discourse of transfer in Israeli

[27] For a Western audience, it might be important to outline that so-called fundamentalist groups such as Hamas and Islamic Jihad are not constituted by some kind of 'special people' but are very ordinary persons in the Palestinian society. At the time of fieldwork, even though someone was a supporter of Fateh, his best friend and neighbour might belong to Hamas.

[28] Initially in 2000 it seems that the masses were involved also in this intifada.

[29] Many researchers today agree that ideas of 'transfer' of Palestinians were pervasive among Zionist leaders well before 1948 (*e.g.* Nur Masalha 1992; Ron 2003). Now and then, Israeli politicians, often from the right-wing of the political spectra, publicly argue for a solution to the conflict between Palestinians and Israelis through continued 'transfer' of the former living in the occupied territories, but sometimes also of those holding

right-wing circles (Lindholm 2003a: 167). Camp residents argued that it was important to stay in the country, even though their strategies for coping with the situation were not always in line with this ideal. People also agreed that the international media were controlled by Israel. The Palestinians I met often stressed the power of Israel and its Jewish allies in international politics. Although opinions varied about things like suicide attacks and refugees' willingness to return, Dheisheans largely agreed on the reasons underlying the various viewpoints. Contrary to general understandings about Palestinian politics as being tightly interwoven with kinship (*cf.* Wood 1993; FAFO 1997), I noted that opinions and political affiliations varied even within the same family.

Experiences of Violence during the Intifada Al-aqsa

Following the outbreak of the intifada *al-aqṣa*[30] in 2000, Israeli reactions to the unrest have been marked by extensive violence (Lindholm 2003a: 161f; Seitz 2006: 117). The Israeli army shelled Palestinian towns, invaded the territories, carried out mass-arrests and helicopter attacks, placed snipers on rooftops in Palestinian neighbourhoods and ordered the extra-judicial killings of political leaders. The Palestinian police force and smaller security units[31] and the militia, that used primitive rockets along with suicide bombers, were met by the modern and well-equipped Israeli army. The power asymmetry between Israel and the Palestinians became more obvious than ever to the camp inhabitants. In a focus group discussion I held, Samar, a 33-year old housewife with four children, said '[The Israelis] say to all the people, the Arabs and the Western world, that "we are fighting a state that has weapons, [the Palestinians] have their president and weapons, if we don't defend ourselves then they will kill us"'. A sense of existential threat spread among the camp inhabitants.

As will be elaborated in chapter 10, in Palestinian society, both people killed randomly by the Israelis as well as people killed while attacking Israelis are considered to be martyrs *i.e. śuhadâ'* (*śahîd* in singular). According to Rosenfeld (2004: 236), 11 Dheisheans became martyrs as a result of the army's use of live ammunition and hundreds were injured either by live ammunition or rubber-coated bullets in the first uprising. By March 2005, 131 Palestinians from the Bethlehem governorate and nearly 3,800 from the West Bank and Gaza Strip had been killed since the beginning of the uprising (PCSB 2005: 53)[32]. The overwhelming majority of those killed were

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Israeli citizenship. Some speak of a 'voluntary transfer' through payments and legal pressures, others would not refrain from using violence (Ron 2003: 116f).

[30] The next chapter provides explanations and background to this uprising.

[31] According to the Oslo Peace Accords (see next chapter) the embryonic Palestinian state was not allowed to have an army but only police and security forces.

[32] Between September 2000 and December 2004, almost 950 Israelis (civilians and security forces personnel) had been killed due to Palestinian inflicted violence (B'Tselem www.btselem.org/english/statistics/Casualties 27.09.2008 15.10).

young men between 18 and 29 years of age (PCBS 2007b figure 52). Tens of thousands had been injured. During the first years of the intifada *al-aqṣa*, several persons who were involved in suicide attacks originated from Dheishe, but most of those killed and injured are said to have been civilians. Sawsaan, a female middle-aged teacher and single mother, commented on how the violence bred mistrust of the Israelis:

> [M]any more people have been killed than in the first intifada, maybe more than 2000. […] Maybe 15 to 20 here in the camp. And something else, […] the terrorism of the Jews in this intifada is much more, the force they use against us. And the humiliations became real, they act them out much more during this intifada, they act as inhuman beings. [...] They kill and negotiate at the same time. Like foxes.

Umm Ayman, and many like her, felt that the Israeli soldiers used violence irrationally, that they had 'become crazy and only wanted revenge'. According to the camp inhabitants, the Israelis' violence was not only extensive but also incomprehensible.

Violence and political unrest also affected the children of the camp[33]. Many had sleeping disorders, nightmares or wet themselves. An illuminating example of what was going on in many children's minds was that of a three-year-old boy who frequently told vivid stories in the present tense about soldiers killing someone or about what the soldiers were doing in the camp. This could happen when nobody was talking about these kinds of things and his stories were often met by an astonished and worried silence by the adults. I once asked two boys of about 11 years of age to pick out their favourite pictures from their collection of national Palestinian stickers (that they collected by buying packets of biscuits). Among all the stickers of Palestinian women in traditional dresses, Jerusalem neighbourhoods, pictures of *Al-aqṣa* Mosque, maps of Palestine and so on, they both chose the few photos that showed Palestinians crying for their dead or for a destroyed house.

Although young male Palestinians are most directly affected by the violence brought by the occupation, women have often been subject to increased economic pressures and violence within the family. Some of the women I met were having to deal with the frustration and anger of their male family members, who sometimes scolded or even hit them. There were also many concerns about honour and women's behaviour affecting their families' reputations negatively. It has been reported that domestic violence and so-called honour killings are relatively frequent in the occupied territories[34] (PCBS 2006a figure 1; Amnesty International 2005). Researchers and social

[33] See Save the Children (2003, 2004) for more elaborated reports about children's situation in the occupied territories during the intifada *al-aqṣa* (*cf.* Chatty & Lewando Hundt 2005).

[34] According to some statistics, 23 per cent of Palestinian ever-married women had been exposed to physical violence by husband during 2005. The same year, 61.7 per cent of these women had been exposed to psychological abuse and 10.95 per cent to sexual abuse (PCBS 2006a figure 1).

workers have interpreted domestic violence in the occupied territories as often related to and influenced by Israeli policies. Many men suffer from unsettling experiences of violence that impact upon their families' lives and unemployed males often feel humiliated because they cannot fulfil their male gender role as protectors and providers.

It is difficult to fully describe the kind of violence many of my informants had recently witnessed so I will let Samar, who was a housewife in her thirties, provide an example in her own words. When I asked her about martyrs, Samar exclaimed 'Oh, all these stories [about martyrs] bore me'. Then, remembering a demonstration at Rachel's tomb in Bethlehem, next to an Israeli army base, Samar turned to her brother and continued: 'All our life is tough. [That boy] and his brain came on your shirt. Then you didn't eat for two weeks. When you came home and looked scared, your face was yellow, mum thought it was one of our brothers [who had been killed]'. Her brother, who had told me earlier about the same event at the beginning of the intifada *al-aqṣa*, when he had carried a dying, gunshot-wounded child in his arms, looked away and did not say a word.

Dheishe in a Local Context: the Bethlehem District

> Once a bustling cultural and spiritual centre hosting tourists and pilgrims from around the world, Bethlehem has become an isolated town, with boarded up shops and abandoned development projects. The age-old link between Jerusalem and Bethlehem is nearly severed as a result of Israeli policies […] (OCHA & UNSCO 2004: 20)

At the time of fieldwork, Bethlehem was stagnating and it looked very different from when I visited it in 2000. Dheishe is located in the Bethlehem governorate with some 176,000 inhabitants consisting of the town of Bethlehem and two traditionally Christian towns, Bayt Sahour and Bayt Jala, some larger villages like Al Khader, Artas and Al Doha and a number of smaller ones. Besides Dheishe, there are two other refugee camps, Aida and Al Azza in the Bethlehem area (PCSB 2008: tabell 26).

Refugee camps such as Dheishe are today largely integrated into their local districts, although research on Palestinians in the occupied territories has conventionally divided the population into city, village and camp, assuming some homogeneity within each location (Taraki 2006: xxvi). Taraki (*ibid.*.) notes that because of the marginalization of agriculture in the occupied territories sharp differences between rural and urban areas are being blurred[35], while social instead of political divisions between camps, on the one hand, and towns or villages on the other are becoming increasingly untenable. 'Many of the urban refugee camps are part and parcel of the

[35] There are however increasing differences between the major Palestinian cities due to political and economic conditions but also due to different ethos characterizing each city (Taraki 2006: xxvi).

social fabric of the towns, even though they bear the markings of exclusion and separation as do so many other poor urban communities and neighbourhoods the world over', writes Taraki (*ibid.*.). However, class and religion, rather than locality, remain markers of differentiation between social groups within Palestinian society. The economic differences between refugees and other Palestinians persist; UNRWA (2006: 37) reports that the burden of poverty, however it is measured, has been borne disproportionately by refugees in the post-2000 period. Also when it comes to lack of physical security, refugees seem to carry a heavy burden; according to the Palestinian refugee organization BADIL (2004: xv), it has been estimated that more than half of the Palestinian fatalities related to the Israeli occupation in 2003 were refugees. Nor do refugees in Dheishe marry Muslim Bethlehem families and they rarely marry Christian Palestinians[36], but have their social networks mostly among other refugees and the lower classes of Palestinian society (*cf.* Jarrar 2003: 112ff).

Prior to the intifada, the inhabitants of the area, especially Christians in urban Bethlehem but also Dheisheans, had for centuries been benefiting from incomes generated by tourism and they had therefore been less dependent on the Israeli labour market than had inhabitants of other parts of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. With the decrease of tourism during the new intifada, the economy deteriorated quickly. The highest rate of unemployment in all the West Bank was found in the Bethlehem governorate in 2007 (PCSB 2008: 38). It is possible, however, that poverty was reduced thanks to the many international and local NGOs based in Bethlehem (*cf.* COWI 2007). The value of remittances is also far higher than in other areas since many migrant relatives to the Christian population live in Europe, the US and Latin America, where they have a higher standard of living than migrant or refugee relatives in countries like Jordan, where many Dheisheans have relatives.

As residents of the Bethlehem area, Dheisheans suffered restrictions to their mobility in 2003-2004 due to a series of security measures taken by the Israeli state to separate West Bankers from Israelis. The Bethlehem area was literally encircled by dirt mounds, road gates, checkpoints and roadblocks in addition to nine Israeli settlements, a stretch of the Separation Barrier and roads that were for Israeli use only (OCHA & UNSCO 2004, see map 5). Many of these obstacles had not been erected on the Green Line (*i.e.* the Armistice Line functioning as a sort of border) but well into the occupied territories. West Bankers were thus prevented not only from entering Israel but also from moving between Palestinian towns and areas. The Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) also extended their control of the area to include Rachel's tomb, in the northern

[36] According to Granqvist (1935), marriages across religious lines were not uncommon among Palestinians in the early 20th century. Other social factors such as class and political influence were more important (FAFO 1994: 57).

part of town. This is a holy site for Jews, Christians and Muslims but the Israeli move meant it was then only accessible to Jewish worshippers. Palestinians from Bethlehem who wished to visit Jerusalem also had to obtain permits from the Israeli Civil Administration[37] and even with these permits they could arbitrarily be denied access at the whim of the Israeli Border Police at the checkpoint on the road to Jerusalem. According to the Oslo accords, Bethlehem belonged to area A, where the accords had granted the Palestinian Authority (PA) full responsibility for internal security, public order and civil administration. In reality, however, Israel maintained and augmented its control of the area via other means. For instance, in 2002, the district had been placed under 24 hour curfew for 156 days (*ibid.*), which further restricted the mobility of its residents and increased their difficulties with keeping up normal routine. At times, Bethlehem was re-occupied by the army.

At the beginning of the new uprising, the Bethlehem governorate was frequently targeted by the Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) and was involved in Israeli-Palestinian clashes. For instance, in March and April 2002, during the second year of the intifada *al-aqṣa*, Bethlehem was one of the primary targets of the Israeli army's 'Operation Defensive Shield', which was launched after a number of Palestinian suicide bombings in Israel. In Dheishe, this period was frequently referred to as 'The 40 Days Invasion'. The operation involved military intrusions and extensive destruction in a number of West Bank cities as well as a siege of the Nativity Church in central Bethlehem, where some hundred Palestinians, including some armed activists, had sought refuge. After five days of siege, the IDF had killed ten people inside the church and an agreement had been made to exile the remaining Palestinian fighters. Meanwhile, the Bethlehem area was under curfew and the army was conducting house searches and mass arrests. People in the camp were both affected by and involved in this violence. According to my informants, some of the Palestinians who had exchanged fire with the Israelis in the Gilo settlement from the nearby town of Bayt Jala had come from Dheishe. 'Do you think those guys were from Bayt Jala?' a woman in the camp asked me, as a way of emphasizing the camp's status as a site of resistance.

The intifada *al-aqṣa* brought great demographic change to the Bethlehem district, reducing local Palestinian ethno-religious diversity. Before the outbreak of the second uprising, Muslims and Christians each constituted about 50 per cent of the population in urban Bethlehem, while Muslims counted for the overwhelming majority in the district as a whole, as they do in other

[37] Permits were obtained from the Etzion District Coordination Office (DCO) after security clearance from the Israeli intelligence services. Many camp inhabitants expressed that getting a permit was a time-consuming and difficult task, with an unsure outcome. Many had given up attempts to ask for permits for visits, while others struggled to renew work-permits.

parts of the occupied territories (OCHA & UNSCO 2004: 2)[38]. With the economic and political instability that resulted from the uprising, many Christians left for other countries; it has been estimated that one tenth of the Christians in Bethlehem had migrated by the end of 2004 (*ibid.*: 18)[39]. This exodus of Christians was a frequent topic of discussion in Dheishe because in Palestinian nationalistic discourse leaving has been portrayed as a form of betrayal and lack of steadfastness (*ṣumud*). However, the desperate situation caused by the intifada *al-aqṣa* also meant that Dheisheans wanted to leave, either temporarily or for good. Many were investigating ways to get out of the occupied territories and were applying for different kinds of visas to Western countries and trying to raise money for the trip. Some were successful, but most were not.

Doing Fieldwork in Dheishe

I remember lying awake, listening to the unfamiliar sounds from outside; the sounds of military jeeps approaching or the heavy steps of soldiers blended with the sound of my sleeping host-sisters' breathing. During those first weeks in Dheishe, each night as I prepared for bed I would arrange my clothes carefully so that it would be easy to get dressed if the house was searched. One of the young men in the household had asked me what I would do to help him if something happened during the night. As a foreigner, would I be prepared to act as a witness or 'mediator' if someone in the house was beaten or arrested by the Israeli army? I promised him that I would do my best to intervene, but I was not sure whether it would make things better. The oldest brother in the family hardly slept at all during these weeks of strange sounds at night and intense military activity. Usually, he would watch TV until late but on these nights he watched over us all instead. One morning he recounted that some soldiers had been standing on the veranda of the house during the night but for some reason they had changed their minds and left us alone[40].

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Abu Lughod (1986) contends that honest accounts of the circumstances of fieldwork are necessary if we are to evaluate ethnographic interpretations, but these can be embarrassing for the anthropologist. Conducting anthropological fieldwork in a violent context *and* with refugees also demands special considerations, both ethically and methodologically. My presence is evident

[38] This report builds on PCBS Population Census 1997.

[39] When identity politics become increasingly Islamized, as they have partly been in the Palestinian territories, a Christian minority may have problems to maintain a sense of belonging to the nation. In addition to a long tradition of Christian migration and well-established contacts with kin in other countries, the growth of the Islamic parties combined with the holding of Western citizenships and the deteriorating situation may serve as explanations to the accentuated Christian migration. Latent tensions exist and occasional conflicts between Palestinian Muslims and Christians sometimes erupt (Bowman 2001).

[40] This particular family has had their house searched by the Israeli army at numerous occasions both before and after my stay with them.

throughout this thesis, but I have tried to present it scrupulously and without lapsing into solipsism.

Violence often forces the 'neutral observer' to take sides (Schmidt & Schröder 2001: 13). This can be quite explicit as when I was prepared to help my hosts if there was a house search. It would have felt absurd and unethical to tell my hosts that I could not help them because of the demands of 'neutrality' or 'objectivity'. Although I have never been a peace activist or been involved in solidarity work for Palestinians, through my anthropological work I have become increasingly engaged in the 'Palestinian issue'. Like most other anthropologists working with Palestinians and other vulnerable populations, I am far from a 'neutral observer', if social scientists can ever justifiably claim such a position. However, without my concern and political awareness I doubt if I would ever have been able to establish enough trust among my informants to conduct ethnographic fieldwork at such a sensitive time as the intifada *al-aqṣa*. Now, as I sit writing, far away from Dheishe, I can adopt a more distanced and reflective stance. I therefore strive here to maintain a reasonably neutral but still engaged tone. As an anthropologist, I believe my task is to offer an emic perspective and try to give voice to my informants' experiences.

My fieldwork was broken into two main periods and a shorter visit, totalling 12 months in 2003 and 2004[41]. The interruptions were made largely for practical reasons, such as acquiring visa extensions but I was also concerned about my ability to handle living in such violent surroundings. I found that the breaks were advantageous in also giving me some distance from my experiences and a chance to reflect on data I had gathered as well as on my research aims. My repeated returns have also come to be understood as a sign of long-term commitment to the camp and to the Palestinian nation (*cf.* Åkesson 2004). During the fieldwork periods, I stayed with a family in the camp and this allowed me not only to interview the residents but also to observe and to some extent participate in daily interactions in Dheishe. I had carried out an earlier minor field study in this camp before the new intifada erupted and some contacts that had been established several years earlier also proved to be critical in the new situation, in which there was so much mistrust and fear.

So, who did I become to Dheisheans? I was introduced to my host-family by a friend, who is a close relative of the family. To some extent, I was considered to be the responsibility of this family and especially of its male members; this meant both protection and restrictions. My role in the family fluctuated between that of a pampered guest and that of a female family member, who was expected to do household chores and uphold codes of conduct (*cf.* Abu Lughod 1986: 15).

[41] Since my fieldwork was completed in October 2004 I have had the opportunity to pay several shorter visits to Dheishe in 2005 and 2006. Those visits have not included formal interviews, but have still been important means to follow up data as well as to catch up on the lives of friends and informants.

Although my host-family warmly accepted me, I inevitably remained an 'outsider' to the camp residents. It was also an advantage to remain an outsider to the conflicts and divergent status interests of different groups, families or individuals. However, with time, I did become more closely associated in the public eye with my host-family and my local field assistant. Dheishe is also a relatively large camp that houses about 9,000 inhabitants; even though people noticed me and recognised me, it was of course only a minority of the residents whom I got to know and who became directly involved in my research. As noted by Abu-Lughod (1986, 1989, 1993), there are both advantages and disadvantages with the positions of insiders, 'halfies' and outsiders respectively. El-Kholy and Al-Ali (1999) also discuss the ambiguity and context-dependence these concepts had during their fieldwork in Egypt. Being a Westerner in the Middle East often implies that one is automatically seen as connected to the politics of Western countries as well as to dubious morality (see chapter 9) and origin. Foreign researchers in the Middle East are also frequently suspected of being spies (*cf.* Dresch 2000; Salamandra 2004: 5; Shryock 1997: 164f). It would probably have been easier to conduct fieldwork if I had been at least 'slightly Arab' or 'slightly Muslim' (*cf.* Swedenburg 1991), since an imagined sameness among Arabs and Muslims is often emphasised in the camp. My Swedish citizenship was, however, often viewed positively since many Palestinians consider Sweden to be politically pro-Palestine.

Some of my informants did not think I behaved as they would have expected of someone with the amount of university education I had behind me. They told me that 'I was down-to-earth' despite the fact that I was 'almost an academic doctor'. I ate the food that they ate and had no problem sharing their living space. We shared 'bread and salt' as an Arabic saying for being related goes. The internal class divisions within Palestinian society made it unthinkable for most camp residents that a Palestinian researcher from outside the local community would stay with a refugee family in their home in the camp.

On the other hand, as a non-native, my stumbling Arabic remained an obstacle throughout my fieldwork despite my efforts and progress. I managed to acquire basic language proficiency for chatting about daily issues and to some extent about issues related to my research, but I remained dependent on my two field assistants, whom I will describe later.

In the gender segregated Palestinian context I would suspect it is easier for a female researcher to gain access to both male and female informants than for a male. In retrospect, however, it is clear that my data from male informants have been collected in more formal ways, while it was easier for me to talk informally with women.

Socially, I was also somewhat ambiguous because, in the Dheisheans' view, I was far too old to be unmarried and being an unmarried woman also meant that I could not move around in

the camp on my own after dark (*cf.* Rothenberg 2004). This was a problem since the evenings were excellent times for visiting people, both for interviews and informal chats. When I came home late on my own my hosts protested and I was scolded by the male family head; 'my roaming' around in the camp affected not only my reputation negatively but also theirs. My field assistant often escorted me home or other Dheisheans often volunteered to follow me back to my host-family or they would send their children with me to protect me from gossip about my loose morals. Although I tried my best, I sometimes failed to conform to the codes of conduct appropriate for an unmarried Palestinian woman but the Dheisheans, and my hosts in particular, were very accepting of my 'unfeminine' and strange behaviour. I remember once overhearing my hostess and her elderly mother talking; the older woman asked, 'Isn't Nina away from home a lot these days?' And my hostess replied matter-of-factly, 'Well you know, she is a foreigner after all'.

Religion is a sensitive issue in the Palestinian territories for several reasons. Asking a foreigner about his or her religion suggests suspicion that the person might be Jewish and likely to side with Israel or that they may even be a spy (*cf.* Shryock 1997: 178). I was born into the Swedish Lutheran Church and am not a religious practitioner. For many camp residents, the Lutheran faith is a light version of Christianity and they were concerned that I was not truly religious. Some of those who cared about me would probably have liked to see me convert to Islam, although few expressed this. Others, who were not very religious themselves, instead seemed to feel that our secular views gave us much in common. Religion is also an ethnic marker in Palestinian society and it is often associated with class. The camp residents are Muslims who come from a rural background, while many of the urbanites in the Bethlehem area are Christians. In general, Christian Palestinians tend to represent the educated middle class and to be more Western-oriented than the Muslim majority. As noted by Bowman (2001), conflicts sometimes erupt between Muslim and Christian Palestinians around Bethlehem as well as elsewhere in the occupied territories. Moving through this mine field of positions, I felt that my best option for establishing my religious identity during fieldwork was to stress my Christianity, even though this might suggest I was siding with the Christian Palestinians, whom many camp residents considered snooty. Nevertheless, I thought this was preferable to being viewed as an Atheist or a Jewish spy.

The most striking difference between Dheishe and other West Bank refugee camps was the frequent contact that Dheisheans had with foreign visitors: journalists, peace activists, volunteers, tourists or pilgrims. The camp is easily accessed from Jerusalem and it also hosts a number of non-governmental organizations, in particular the internationally renowned Ibdaa, which brings

foreigners to the camp. The town of Bethlehem has also been attracting tourists and pilgrims for centuries. Dheisheans's familiarity with foreigners worked to my advantage for my fieldwork.

Social anthropology and its methods were, however, almost unknown in Dheishe despite the fact that Rosenfeld (2004) had used some anthropological field methods when working on the camp. Camp residents were accustomed to university students and researchers who carried out shorter surveys and polls in the camp and to journalists who came to interview them once in a while. I realised that the fact that I did not distribute questionnaires to everyone made some people wonder if my field assistants would only let me talk to certain individuals. It was of course a conscious anthropological strategy on my part to slowly expand my networks.

'I was a message bearer and informant as well as a researcher', writes Abu Lughod (2005: 30) as a way of describing how she brought news about acquaintances and explained about life abroad to her informants in Upper Egypt. In such a politicized environment as Dheishe, many informants had political motives for speaking to me. My role easily became that of a witness and channel to the outside who could publicize Palestinian suffering. Others wanted me to explain Western foreign politics or how life in general was organized 'outside'. Some also hoped that I might be a resource for money and contacts. I will return to these issues later on when I discuss the practices to endure adopted by camp inhabitants.

As will become clear in this thesis, the ongoing negotiation of trust between researcher and informant is particularly difficult to handle in a conflict-ridden society (see chapter 5). Dresch (2000) has also noted that everyday life in the Middle East tends generally to be treated as a 'family secret'. He concludes that in many Arab communities 'one "covers" from view one's own affairs, but freely speaks about others' (*ibid.*: 112f). Despite this cultural norm and the mistrust nourished by occupation and memories of flight, the majority of the camp inhabitants I met were welcoming and helpful. Only a couple of people were openly hostile to me and only two Dheisheans refused to be interviewed when asked. None of those who agreed to participate refused to be tape-recorded when I promised that I would delete the recordings within a week. However, I believe most people at some point wondered about the intentions behind my presence and my research. I was also dependent on my male field assistant for establishing trust. His good reputation in the camp and his social relations became the building blocks of my networks. He belonged to Fateh and did not maintain contacts with people who supported Islamic Jihad. As far as I know, none of my informants belonged to or voted for this party. Supporters of Islamic Jihad were both numerically and politically weak in the camp and it is possible that they felt more threatened by Israel than did other Palestinian groups and therefore

did not want to jeopardize their political involvement or their everyday lives by talking to a foreign researcher.

In order to prevent feelings of mistrust among my informants I did not note down people's real names or where they lived. I never tape-recorded anyone or took photos without asking permission and I only did this when relations had been well-established. I was also careful in the beginning to avoid posing direct questions about people's political affiliations and personal experiences with the Israeli army and I was very cautious about bringing up potentially stressful topics. I also coded all the collected data; although most of the subjects covered in my study would have been of little interest to the Israeli security services, the data could potentially have been used in displays of power during interrogations of arrested Palestinians.

'Nina, you haven't seen a thing!' one of my informants correctly exclaimed during my last field trip, when we were discussing violence in the camp. Neither during my fieldwork, nor on other occasions, have I personally experienced the kind of violence many camp residents have lived through during the years. For instance, I have not seen someone getting killed or lost a close relative in political violence. I have never been arrested and tortured, I am not a refugee whose house has been searched 'a million times' and I have never had to run for my life when an attack helicopter is approaching or snipers are shooting. Thanks to the relative calm in the Bethlehem area in 2003-2004 and to my foreign status, all I experienced was curfews, soldiers sneaking around the house, shootings nearby, sound-bombs and explosions from house demolitions at night. I have also been held up at checkpoints, questioned at border crossings and frightened by army jeeps randomly accelerating or by aggressive soldiers. It is unquestionable that having a foreign passport and non-Arab appearance gave me a very privileged position in the occupied territories. It was, for instance, much easier for me to move in the West Bank and inside Israel[42] than it was for Palestinians and to some extent even for Israelis. Israeli soldiers were also unlikely to be rude and aggressive to me or to harm me physically. And, of course, I could easily get a 'vacation from my Palestinian experience' by going home or elsewhere; my informants and I were well aware that I could leave any time I wanted while they could not. As Jean Genet wrote about his stay with Palestinian guerrillas in Jordan, I was 'among – not with – the Palestinians' (Genet 1989 in Swedenburg 1995).

Listening to stories as well as silence about grief and experiences of violence was one of the most challenging parts of my fieldwork, both personally and methodologically. As Omidian (2000: 172), who worked with Afghani refugees in the US, writes, refugee research as well as research with other vulnerable populations sometimes deeply affects the anthropologist:

[42] The Gaza Strip was on the other hand at many occasions more or less sealed off by the Israeli army to foreigners in 2003/2004.

'[Working with refugees] puts the researcher at risk of emotional bombardment, feeling acutely the losses, deaths and seemingly endless struggle to cope with life […]'[43]. Despite all the differences between my informants and me, I tried my best to find a resonance between their experiences and my own life (Wikan 1992). Many times I noticed how my own emotional instability echoed that of my informants. Like my informants, I also developed strategies to handle the stressful situation. Some of these strategies I learned (more or less unconsciously) from the other camp inhabitants, others were related to my personal life experiences or to being an anthropologist. Heike Behrend, who carried out research in war-torn Uganda, points out that researchers can always rely on their methodology as 'a favoured means of reducing anxiety' (Behrend 1999: 8 in Finnström 2003). Apart from retreating from reality to focus on field notes and transcriptions of interviews, I comforted myself with having an intellectual reason for being in Dheishe. Omidian (2000) also notes the need researchers who work with vulnerable people sometimes feel to take action to overcome feelings of helplessness. I tried to ease my own discomfort by initially engaging in work with children at an organization and later on by giving English lessons to some women in the camp. This kind of activity also provided a way for me to get to know people and to become known.

Apart from the violence, the growing poverty in the camp was another concern for me. It was distressing to see that some families had more or less empty fridges; some people did not eat well because of economic problems, but lived from hand to mouth and depended on the good will of kin, neighbours and aid organizations. My feelings of helplessness and guilt had to be balanced against most peoples' discomfort about accepting money and my limited resources. I restricted gifts to small items I brought from abroad and once in a while I paid a taxi fee, bought a school uniform or made a contribution to a summer camp for children.

When I was interviewing people about painful topics, I tried not to push them but rather to let them speak freely and, if they preferred, in general terms. I occasionally interrupted interviews if I felt that either the informant, my field assistant or I could not take any more. In these interviews I tried to remain focused and to show clearly that I was listening. Omidian (*ibid.*) describes how she experimented with the spacing and number of interviews per week to help her 'survive' fieldwork. I followed this recommendation by sometimes postponing interviews or spending a few days only transcribing. I also became tougher with time, as Malkki (1995a) did when she was working with Hutu refugees. For example, when several informants described similar events, I found it became easier to keep a distance from the horrifying details. As Das

[43] Although my experiences with Palestinian refugees have many similarities with those of Omidian (2000), she generalises about fieldwork among refugees in a way I would not. Omidian seems to assume all refugees to be victims in all contexts, a view which I do not share.

found in her work with Punjabis who had experienced the Partition (2007: 6ff), Dheisheans were able to speak about *al-nakba* and more recent violent events and they told stories about their flight and subsequent violence, but usually they narrated without 'voice', not in the sense that they did not have words, but that these words became mechanical or numb and without life Interviews about violence may therefore be rather insufficient since it is in everyday life those experiences reappear (*cf.* Martin 2007: 744).

In societies where there is regular political violence, people have to constantly adapt their plans according to the changing situation. For example, I had hoped to take elderly refugees on visits to their home villages but was only able to do this once. As Kovats-Bernat (2002) reports, dangerous fields frequently demand improvised field strategies; in my case I had to smuggle an old lady into Israel. This also means that the researcher, despite enjoying a privileged position, has to deal with the same kind of uncertainty as his or her informants.

Kovats-Bernat (*ibid.*) also stresses the importance of listening to local expertise: locals can advise about which information would be too costly or dangerous to gather and so on. I soon decided with my field assistants not to go looking for 'activists' who were wanted by Israel as informants. This would have aroused unwanted attention from the Israeli security forces and suspicion among the Palestinians. If I had spent time with wanted persons it could also have increased the risk of injury for me if the Israeli army decided to attack or arrest the person while I was with them. Many politically sensitive issues had to be avoided or could only be raised towards the end of my fieldwork, after I had established good relations. Considering the shift in power balance between the anthropologist and the locals that takes place in dangerous fields, Kovats-Bernat also questions whether the anthropologist is able to deflect danger from informants. The ability to protect each other from harm is often a shared concern for actors in this kind of field.

Apart from the issues described above, my fieldwork was quite traditional. I stayed with the same family in the camp for the duration of my stay. Fieldwork included the usual anthropological methods of participant observation, informal conversations and more formal semi-structured interviews. Some of my informants, often those with university degrees, spoke fairly good English, while the majority's knowledge of English was scant. Due to my limited knowledge of Arabic, two field assistants were engaged in the study. One of my assistants was a male camp inhabitant in his early thirties, the other was a female Christian in her late twenties who was also from the area. Both of them were unmarried. Through these two companions I was able to come into contact with informants of both genders and with different political and social affiliations. Towards the end of my field stay I also conducted some focus group interviews

so as to capture the many ambivalences and negotiations between Dheisheans concerning political issues in the camp. In total I interviewed some 50 individuals between 15 and 85 years of age in. Some of these interviewees were only interviewed once, others on several occasions. I often tried to interview and get to know several individuals from the same household or family. I took notes on all encounters. More formal interviews and focus groups were also recorded and transcribed and the recordings of the interviews were normally deleted within a week. I also joined official or communal manifestations such as demonstrations, sit-ins and memorial days as well as weddings and funerals. My male assistant helped me to film some of these events. I also tried more improvised methods that allowed some of my younger informants to decide what to focus on while they showed me around their place of living, the camp.

3. A Disputed History and a Historical Failure

The struggle between Zionism[44] and Palestinian nationalism has long acted as a fundamental principle of both Israeli and Palestinian society. The conflict is also heavily contested. As in many war-torn societies and nationalistic disputes, the origins of conflict and turns of events are constantly debated. Opponents each tell their own version of history and often use it to legitimize their acts of aggression. The aim of this chapter is to give a brief historical background to the current situation and to outline a range of viewpoints. The focus is on how events have affected Palestinian refugees in the West Bank.

When fieldwork for this study began in early 2003, the intifada *al-aqṣa*, also called the second intifada, had been going on for two and a half years. Israelis and Palestinians had been involved since the early 1990s in trying to create peace and to establish a Palestinian state in the West Bank and in the Gaza Strip. The peace negotiations, often referred to as the Oslo Accords, which had established a Palestinian Authority (PA) and more or less maintained a ceasefire and hopes for a final status agreement, all seemed to have been in vain when the conflict was re-activated. The second aim of this chapter is therefore to offer some brief explanations for this failure.

Al-Nakba means Disaster

In 1947, the newly established United Nations presented a partition plan[45] (*taqsîm* in Arabic) for the disputed British Mandate in Palestine. This aimed to create two independent states, one Jewish and one Arab (*i.e.* General Assembly Resolution 181, see map 1). Many Palestinians refused to accept this proposal because it deprived them of their land[46]. However, in retrospect the partition plan would have given them far more land than they are likely to receive in any peace agreement today. At the time, Palestinians as well as Arab state leaders strongly opposed these plans and demanded full control of the British Mandate as well as national independence[47].

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[44] Although Zionism can be broadly described as an ideology that supports the foundation of a Jewish homeland in Israel/Palestine, it includes several currents (see *e.g.* Schulz 1996).

[45] There was an earlier Partition plan by the Peel commission in 1937 during the Palestinian peasant revolt (see Swedenburg 2003).

[46] According to the UN decision, a Jewish state was to be established on more than half of the total land area of Palestine, although Jewish land ownership did not exceed 9.38 per cent. Half of the population of the UN-planned Jewish state would have been Arabs. Moreover, the Arab state would have had an Arab majority population and a Jewish minority of 10,000 inhabitants. Jerusalem would be an international zone. (Hadawi 1988: 79f)

[47] Swedenburg (2003: 166) writes that it was only much later that the partition plan of 1947 was widely accepted among Palestinian Israelis because of the influence of the Israeli Communist Party, which won strong support from this group.

The establishment of the state of Israel in 1948 and the subsequent war between Israel and its Arab neighbours had enormous consequences for the Palestinian people. As mentioned, these events are called *al-nakba*, which means the disaster or catastrophe in Arabic. Arab neighbouring countries had sent their armies to attack the newly declared Israeli state[48]. Those troops were, however, poorly prepared compared to the well-trained Jewish/Israeli forces (Persson 1994). The war, which in Israel is known as the War of Independence, marked the beginning of the Palestinian exodus. Today this conflict would probably be considered a form of ethnic cleansing (Benvenisti 2000). Official Israeli discourses frequently argue that the refugees were not expelled but that they fled out of cowardice or that they were requested to leave by the Arab armies. In this way, Israel denies holding any responsibility for Palestinian losses. Research has shown, though, that the dispersal of Palestinians in 1948 included expulsion by Jewish forces, abandonment by order of Arab leaders, fear of Jewish attack or accidental involvement in hostilities, military campaigns against the communities by armed forces, psychological warfare, as well as fear of massacres and rapes, especially after the killing of men, women and children in Deir Yassin in April 1948 (Morris 1999: 252-258)[49]. As seems to be the case in most situations of war and flight, the reasons for flight were multiple and complex.

The result of the war between Israel and its Arab neighbours, which ended in January 1949, was partition, although this partition was not like that envisaged by the UN (see map 2). There was no independent Palestinian state and the Israeli state ended up being far larger than had been suggested by the international community[50]. The West Bank was annexed by Trans-Jordan[51] (against the will of other Arab states) and the Gaza Strip fell under Egyptian occupation. The name 'Palestine' had disappeared from the map and its territory had been absorbed into other states. The borders of the Israeli state remained disputed and there were no formal peace treaties, but merely armistice agreements (Shlaim 2000: 47).

It has been estimated that during and after the war, four out of five Palestinians fled from their homes in the area that is now Israel (Heiberg *et al.* 1994: 37). About 160,000 Palestinians were left within the new Israeli state (Pappe 2004: 142), some of them as internally displaced people. They were given Israeli citizenship and were often referred to as Israeli Arabs or Israeli

[48] In the predominant Israeli discourse, it has frequently been argued that these Arab armies were determined to destroy the Jewish state. This has, however, been disputed. Some claim that the Arab states were more driven by their own competing political and territorial ambitions. (Philo & Berry 2004: 21)

[49] Morris (1999: 248) writes that during this first Israeli-Arab war about 6,000 Israelis were killed and at least as many Palestinians (including civilians and armed irregulars). In addition more than 1,500 soldiers from other Arab countries lost their lives.

[50] The Jewish state was established on 78 per cent of mandatory Palestine rather than the 57 per cent suggested by the UN (Philo & Berry 2004: 22).

[51] Under British administration, the East Bank of the River Jordan became Trans-Jordan (Peretz 1986: 4). Geographically, this area roughly corresponds to today's Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan.

Palestinians. They were regarded by Israel as a dangerous fifth column and were therefore placed under strict military rule until 1966. Most Palestinian refugees were spread out in the Middle East; the bulk of them ended up in Gaza and the West Bank, in Lebanon, Syria and Jordan but also in Egypt. A few went even further afield to Iraq, Libya, Saudi Arabia and Great Britain; many who had worked with the Mandate government had been given British passports (Sayigh 1979: 100). Refugees who had financial means managed to buy new land or to rent houses and they became what is known in the international refugee discourse as 'self-settled' and some of them never registered as refugees. Many others spent the first years after flight on the move; they stayed in caves or with relatives and friends and eventually ended up in refugee camps established by the UN in different parts of the Middle East during the early 1950s (see map 3).

The international community also responded to the war by adopting several UN resolutions favourable to the Palestinians. The UN General Assembly Resolution 194 (III), 11 December 1948, is most frequently referred to when discussing the refugees' right of return (*ḥaqq al-'awda*) and roughly states that the refugees should be permitted to return to their homes as soon as possible and that compensation should be paid for lost property (see also chapter 7). Israel continues to argue that the implementation of the right of return is out of the question since large numbers of returning Palestinian refugees would threaten the Jewish character of the Israeli state; the non-Jewish citizens would basically become 'too many' in official Israeli views (Kanaaneh 2002: 50ff). This way of reasoning is part of a well-established Israeli discourse about 'the demographic threat' that will be discussed in chapter 6.

The refugees' attempts to return to their homes were later on prevented by the Israeli government, despite a temporary offer to let a minority of the refugees return (Schiff 1995: 16). Despite UN General Assembly Resolution 194 that confirmed the refugees' right to return to their homes and to be economically compensated, in August 1948 Israel initiated 'an anti-repatriation policy' (Pappe 2004: 146), which resulted in either destruction or full Jewish take-over of deserted Palestinian lands and houses in both villages and urban settings[52]. Over four hundred Palestinian villages had been depopulated and many of them were destroyed, while more than a dozen of the major urban centres that used to have an exclusively or predominantly Arab population were taken over by Israelis (Khalidi 1992). Referring to UN estimates and records from 1962, Fischbach (2003) has described the huge quantities and high value of land, buildings, industrial equipment, vehicles, agricultural livestock and household furniture that were lost by

[52] In the early 1950s, *Knesset*, the Israeli parliament, passed legalization that permitted continued land confiscations and depopulation of Palestinian villages, often in the name of security or the public good. Also, Bedouins in the South were forced to settle and they were robbed of waste tracts of land (Pappe 2004: 146).

Palestinian refugees in 1948[53]. Among Palestinian refugees, *al-nakba* therefore implies loss of land, livelihood and social relations.

Another outcome of *al-nakba* was the creation of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) in late 1949 to give acute relief to the Palestinian refugees since neither Israel nor the Arab states would take responsibility for the fate of the dispersed Palestinians. More than fifty years after UNRWA's founding, the agency embodies a unique international commitment dedicated to the welfare of Palestinian refugees. Other refugees fall under the protection of the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR). A major problem has been that of finding a durable solution to the refugee problem and of implementing UN resolutions concerning the Palestinian refugees' right of return. The Palestinian refugee organization BADIL (2000: 6) even argues that the UNRWA has in practice provided less for Palestinians than the UNHCR would have. UNRWA has developed into the Near East's largest public service employer, providing education, health, relief and social services to refugees registered by the Agency, but in recent years it has faced difficulties in providing services due to stagnating donor contributions.

Among Palestinians, there is a cultural concern with honour that seems to be connected to the loss of land (Warnock 1990). For instance, Katz (1996: 88) writes that no metaphorical phrase is more familiar to Palestinians than *arḍi 'irḍi*, which means: 'my land is my honour'. This should be read as: 'my land is my nobility… my being what I am'. Their inability to protect their land in 1948 and later brought a sense of humiliation to Palestinians, especially the men, and this has been exacerbated by subsequent military occupation and violent conflict.

Not only were people, villages and houses erased from the land but also Arabic names of villages, mountains, valleys, springs, were replaced by Hebrew names[54] (Abu El-Haj 2001; Benevenisti 2000; Peteet 2005b; Slyomovics 1998). Pappe (2004: 147) claims that this renaming was institutionalized and that the first Israeli Prime Minister Ben Guiron personally supervised the project, which was completed in the 1950s[55]. Palestinian mapmaking since *al-nakba* has often responded to Israeli maps, by making destroyed Palestinian villages visible and showing a Palestinian version of reality (see for instance www.arij.org). In the Israeli-Palestinian context,

[53] The lost land was estimated to be 4,246,032 dunums (one dunum equals one fourth acre or about 1,000 square metres) at a value of 204,660,190 Palestinian pounds (Fischbach 2003: 274ff).

[54] Also the new Israelis went through a process of hebraization – European Jewish newcomers to Israel were often renamed, many family names and even first names were changed to Hebrew names (Massad 2006: 38). Peteet (2005b: 160) notes that just as taking a Hebrew name was integral to becoming a new, Israeli person, so too did Palestinians who joined the resistance movement often adopt a *nom de guerre*, partly to disguise their true identity but also as a way of remaking their personhood.

[55] After the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza, this re-naming practice continued when giving names to settlements (Benvenisti 2000: 36).

naming, as well as mapmaking, are used to confirm and establish both dominance and resistance; the new Israeli state used this to inscribe itself on space and people and Palestinians responded in kind, although they did so without the institutional backup of a formal state.

Since *al-nakba* is such a key event for Palestinian society and in particular for its refugee population, we will return to these events in several chapters of this thesis.

In the Aftermath of Flight: The West Bank under Jordanian Rule

After 1948, the Palestinian population who remained in 'historical Palestine' fell under the control of mainly three states. Palestinians who remained inside the Jewish state were governed by Israel. Local Palestinians as well as stateless refugees in Gaza were governed by Egypt and the population in the West Bank and in East Jerusalem were governed by Jordan. With the annexation of the West Bank, the socio-demographic composition of the Hashemite kingdom of Jordan was profoundly changed. To the mainly Bedouin population of about 450,000 about 800,000 Palestinians were added, half of whom were refugees (Rosenfeld 2004: 34).

The West Bank Palestinians, both refugees and locals, were granted Jordanian citizenship. This meant that they could participate in parliamentary and municipal elections, they were granted equal political rights and allowed to obtain Jordanian passports (Jarrar 2003: 76). Many refugees' demands to influence politics, however, were met with hostility from local Palestinians in the West Bank. The refugees' reactions to the citizenship issue were also divided. Most of them seemed to have been concerned that Jordanian citizenship would deprive them of their right to return to their home villages (Plascov 1981: 48). In practice, Jordanian citizenship was more or less compulsory. 'Anyone who wished to travel, to work in the public sector, register the births of children, or enter them in state schools, had no other option but this' (Sayigh 1979: 99). The mistrust between the refugees and the Jordanian authorities remained. Also programmes that aimed to give them new land to cultivate were greeted with suspicion and were often seen as attempts to resettle them (Jarrar 2003: 78f). Sayigh (1979: 110f) concludes that 'Jordan pursued an energetic policy of integration [and] refused to recognize a separate Palestinian identity'. Palestinians were also recruited in vast numbers into the Jordanian army and government services and the camps were kept under close surveillance (*ibid.*).

The West Bank had by this time been cut off from its main trading routes, ports and commercial urban areas; the economy was thus redirected towards the East. Over the years that followed, Jordanian government investments were made on the East Bank of the River Jordan, and mainly in the area of the capital. This, along with unemployment and poverty in the West Bank, triggered migration to the Amman region, especially by the many destitute refugees

(Rosenfeld 2004). However, labour migration from Jordan to the Gulf countries also emerged; the majority of the work migrants were Palestinians and remittances became an important part of the Jordanian and West Bank economy (*ibid.*). Later on, during the 1960s, a part of this labour migration was constituted by skilled Palestinian professionals, often thanks to education in UNRWA schools and universities in other Arab countries, and later on in local institutions (*ibid.*).

During the first half of the 1950s Jordan faced political unrest and crises, army and police repression as well as strained relations with surrounding regimes (*ibid.*: 213). Partly, this political development was related to the tensions between Palestinians and the 'original' Jordanians. As in other neighbouring Arab countries, the presence of Palestinians represented an element of social and political destabilization (Morris 1999: 260). There were extensive arrests throughout the kingdom, also of Palestinians. War broke out between the Jordanian army and Palestinian guerrillas, who had established state-like structures and military training camps. The hostilities culminated in 1971 when the army threw the Palestinian militia out and killed thousands of Palestinian fighters[56]. Most of the Palestinians living in Jordan nevertheless remained there.

Following *al-nakba*, there were also constant clashes along the armistice line between Israel and the neighbouring Arab countries[57]. Displaced Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank began to engage in what was known as infiltration, crossing the ceasefire lines. Korn (2003) describes how so-called infiltrators, which often meant Palestinian refugees who were trying to retrieve property, see relatives or tend to their land inside what had by then become Israel[58], were expelled or killed during the 1950s. Morris (1999: 274) estimates that over 2,700 'infiltrators', possibly as many as 5,000, were killed by the Israeli army or police or by Israeli civilians between 1949 and 1956. The killings of returning fellow refugees were also a common theme in my elderly informants' accounts of the years after *al-nakba*[59]. Although the majority of the 'infiltrators' were unarmed and motivated by economic and social factors, others, who were involved in sabotage or violence, managed to kill 200 civilian Israeli and scores of soldiers between 1948 and 1956 (*ibid.*: 271).

[56] There were for instance massacres of several thousands of Palestinians in Jordan during 'Black September' in 1970 (Persson 1994: 123).
[57] The Arab countries also started an economic boycott of Israel and they closed their borders.
[58] Although Israeli police reports from this period described the majority of the infiltrators as 'hostile', other Israeli sources, such as military and intelligence documents, claimed that most of the infiltrators were poor refugees and that economic difficulties and general shortages across the borders made them try to return to their land and villages, looking for food and property (Korn 2003). Korn also notes that later 'Israel's policy to block the return of the refugees and the measures taken against infiltrators produced infiltration as a conscious form of opposition and resistance' (*ibid.*: 11).
[59] According to their memories and probably also due to the course of events in the specific villages they came from, the number of villagers killed seems to have been greater in the years after the flight than during it.

As a response to the 'infiltration' Israel adopted a policy of reprisals against villages in Gaza and Jordan. Shlaim (2000: 83) argues that 'all of these raids were aimed at civilian targets' and 'greatly inflamed Arab hatred against Israel and met with mounting criticism from the international community'.

The Palestinian National Project and National Imageries after 1948

1948 is a profoundly symbolic year for both Palestinians and Israelis. Their nation-state projects have since emerged side by side, often mirroring or responding to one another, although in very different terms as their means of power have been and still are so strikingly different (*cf.* Kanaaneh 2002: 58). While the Israeli national project intermingled with state-building, Palestinian nationalism developed in exile and often through military struggle, guided by a wish to return to the homeland and achieve national independence.

It has often been argued that Palestinian nationalism was paradoxically fully developed with the loss of homeland in 1948 and established as a mass movement by the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) by the end of the 1960s (see *e.g.* Lindholm 1999; Kimmerling & Migdal 1993). Since there have been many Israeli attempts to cast doubts on Palestinian identity as being recent and in some sense artificial, as opposed to 'real' national identities and nationalisms (Khalidi 1997: 178; Sayigh 1997: xiif) and to question the existence of Palestinians as a national group, it should be noted that demands for independence had been heard earlier[60]. Such a demand was for instance voiced in a peasant rebellion in the 1930s that was referred to in Arabic as *al-thawra* (Swedenburg 2003). Before *al-nakba*, political alliances and a sense of belonging were however often based more on locality and kinship ties than on the nation (Migdal 1980: 22ff). Farsoun and Zacharia (1997: 12) also note that Palestine had been viewed as an administrative and religious unity much earlier than the Ottoman era[61] that preceded British rule, a fact that influenced and helped the founding of a national 'imagined community', to quote Anderson (1983).

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[60] Pappe (2004: 45f) notes some sources claiming that Palestinian nationalism has its roots in the 1870s when city-based intellectuals started to oppose Ottoman rule, although these accounts have been questioned. According to Farsoun and Zacharia (1997: 59f) on the other hand, the Young Turks' revolution in 1908 that emphasized 'Turkification' of the Ottoman empire seems to have awaken an Arab consciousness (rather than a Palestinian) and open opposition to Ottoman rule.

[61] Farsoun and Zacharia (1997: 12f) write that the Greeks, Romans and Arabs all had a designation of the country as Philistia, Palaestina or Filistin. Both Muslim and Christian organizations also lent cohesion to Palestine as one province. See also Pappe (2004: 28) who argues that familial connections as well as geographical boundaries constituted by the River Litani, the River Jordan and the Mediterranean Sea held three sub-districts in the Ottoman Empire together in a social and cultural unit. Moreover, pan-Arabism seems to have reinforcing Palestinian national identity and by the beginning of World War I a consciousness of Palestinian national belonging was on the verge to emerge, but had not yet become politicized or organized (Farsoun & Zacharia 1997: 60).

Already by the late 1950s, frustrations and despair in the refugee camps in the Middle East were being channelled into guerrilla activity (Pappe 2004: 148). This was also the beginning of the glorification and romanticizing of violent resistance among Palestinians. The armed struggle evolved as a fundamental ingredient in the formation of Palestinian national identity (Sayigh 1997). However, only a few thousand took up arms or engaged politically through writing or diplomacy (Pappe *ibid.*: 152); most Palestinians were fully occupied with economic survival in the 1950-60s. Apart from military activities, a significant part of the Palestinian struggle from Mandate days until today has consisted of non-violent resistance, on the local level as well as the international.

Although the Palestinian military struggle was leaderless and divided into small guerrilla groups at first, it was from this cadre of young fighters that Fateh originated, the party that for decades maintained a leading position in the PLO[62]. With its revolutionary ideology and legendary leader Yasser Arafat (1929-2004), Fateh managed to influence Palestinian politics as well as the process of politicizing the people.

Early on, political Islam also affected Palestinian politics through the Muslim Brotherhood in the Gaza Strip. It was much later during the first intifada that radical Islam became a serious challenge to the PLO through two political parties, namely Hamas and Islamic Jihad. For the urban middle class, especially Christian Palestinians, Leftist and Marxist ideologies were in general much more attractive (Pappe 2004: 150). This support led to the establishment of a number of smaller parties that were left of Fateh on the political scale. Among them were the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP) and Palestine Democratic Union (FIDA). Pappe (*ibid.*: 151) summarizes:

> [At the end of the 1950s], Palestinian activists in their different locations had succeeded in formulating through their parties' platforms and discourse the two clear Palestinian goals that would guide them in the post-Nakbah era: the creation of a Palestinian state, and the return of Palestinian refugees. As the state they envisioned was to replace Israel, the second goal would have been achieved by the success of the first.

These pragmatic goals of Palestinian statehood and return were to be accomplished with the help of multi-vocal notions of suffering and struggle, which have been described as the building blocks of Palestinian national identity (Lindholm 1999; Sayigh 1997). These two concepts correspond to an idealized, almost mythical, image of the guerrilla fighter (*fidâ'i, fidâ'iyyîn*

[62] As a response to a rising Palestinian unrest and nationalist agitation, the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) was established by several Arab governments in 1964. It is an umbrella organization of various Palestinian factions. After the Israeli occupation of Gaza and the West Bank, a sort of coup d'état in 1969 replaced the head of PLO with Yasser Arafat (Massad 2006: 42).

in plural) and the refugee[63] (*lâji', lâji'în* in plural). The same individuals and groups often embody both images since Palestinian refugee camps soon became emblematic sites of resistance.

There were several attempts by the PLO to establish state-like structures and civil service institutions outside the homeland, notably in Jordan before the war in 1970 (see above) and especially in Lebanon until 1982 (when the PLO was forced out). The PLO structure of the time developed as a de facto government in exile. As a product of the times, the PLO in the late 1960s was influenced by Third World ideology of liberation and it developed as a radical and revolutionary movement. Apart from providing services and radicalizing the people, the PLO also managed, sometimes through spectacular and violent means such as hijackings and the taking hostages of the Israeli Olympic team in Munich 1972, to place the Palestinian question on the international agenda.

By reformulating its goal in 1974 to that of a Palestinian state only in the West Bank and Gaza, side by side with Israel, the PLO made its demands more acceptable internationally and it was then recognized as a representative of the Palestinian people. In Israeli views, though, the PLO remained a terrorist organization and it was therefore banned in the occupied territories. As late as the 1990s, Israel refused to negotiate directly with the PLO in peace negotiations.

Occupation 1967

The Six Day War in 1967 between Israel and Syria, Jordan, Egypt and Iraq was followed by Israeli victory, annexation of East Jerusalem and occupation of Gaza, the West Bank and the Golan Heights. This created new refugees and, for many, a second exile. Killings, evictions and demolitions of houses and villages followed. The UN estimated that some 300, 000 residents in the newly occupied territories fled during 1967 (Persson 1994: 113). Many were Dheisheans who fled once more, most of them to Jordan. For the Palestinians in the West Bank and in the Gaza Strip who stayed, the Israeli occupation brought additional and ambiguous changes. For some Israelis, by contrast, the new control of territory corresponded to a Greater Israel ideology (Pappe 2004: 197). Morris (1999) describes it as 'a strong expansionist current' in the Israeli state-building project.

The UN responded to the occupation with Security Council Resolution 242, which called for the 'withdrawal of all Israeli armed forces from territories occupied in the recent conflict' and a 'just and lasting peace in which every State in the area can live in security' as well as a 'just settlement of the refugee problem'. However, the Palestinians initially rejected the resolution

[63] As we will see further on, 'the refugee' is a much more ambiguous image than 'the fighter' in the Palestinian community. This has to do this class structures and conflicts between or different interests of the 'original' local population around refugee camps and the camp inhabitants.

since it did not mention their right to self-determination and national sovereignty. Israel accepted it in 1970, arguing that the resolution did not determine that *all* the occupied territories needed to be evacuated[64] (Philo & Berry 2004: 34f). Moreover, most Israeli Jews were convinced that the pre-1967 borders did not provide the state with security and that territories captured in a war for self-defence should not be surrendered without a political agreement (Kretzmer 2002: 7).

The occupation meant that Israel, defined as a Jewish state,[65] gained control over Jerusalemites, who were granted some social and legal benefits,[66] and over Palestinians in the occupied territories who were granted neither citizenship nor social and legal rights in Israel. Ron (2003) argues that this control over territory and people has obliged Israel, which he calls a semi-democratic country, to take some responsibility for the people under its rule. Israel, writes Ron (*ibid.*: 5), belongs to a group of states that define their communities more narrowly than their actual populations[67]. The dominant population in such a state controls the state apparatus and uses both legal and military means to privilege its own community. Like Israel, these states are partly democratic, but they are also deeply discriminatory in their way of distributing resources, both in the form of public services and symbolic dignity. Such 'semi-democracies' or 'ethnocracies' are, however, often sensitive to criticism and pressure from international audiences such as international human rights activists, United Nations bodies, non-governmental organizations and international agencies. Israel purports to have ambitions to respect human rights and often defends its policies by referring to international law (*ibid.*).

Ironically, the Israeli military occupation of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip implied an ambiguous 'opening up'; for instance, it became possible for Palestinians to resume social relations with relatives inside Israel and to work for Israeli employers. This was due to an Israeli decision at the time to integrate the newly occupied territories and to implement a policy of 'Open Bridges' (Gazit 1995: 176 in Bornstein 2002b; Roy 1995: 145f). This also meant that Israel linked roads, electricity, water-supplies and phone lines in the occupied territories to the Israeli networks.

[64] This ambiguity stems from different versions of the resolution in English and French.
[65] Though 20 per cent of the population consists of Israeli Arabs or Israeli Palestinians, who hold Israeli citizenship.
[66] Palestinians living in Jerusalem, annected by Israel, often hold ID cards proving their status as Jerusalemites, but not Israeli citizenship. These cards, which give them access to Israeli territory, provide them limited political rights at the local level and are entitled to the social welfare system in Israel. Even though the Palestinians in Jerusalem pay taxes to the Israeli state, their neighbourhoods in Jerusalem are often prevented from sufficient service compared to Israeli-Jewish areas.
[67] Ron (2003: 5f) also cites Serbia, Turkey, India, Russia and Mexico as examples of states that are wracked by struggles between the state and excluded groups that are seeking territorial autonomy or independence.

The economic integration meant that Palestinians became a growing source of cheap labour for Israeli employers[68]; they often worked as day wage labourers under exploitative and humiliating conditions (see *e.g.* Tamari 1981). For instance, since Palestinians were not allowed staying overnight in Israel many workers had to commute long distances on a daily basis. For people in Dheishe, working in agriculture in Israel or in Israeli factories occasionally meant that they were working on the same village land that their families had lost in 1948. However, although Palestinian workers were badly paid and treated and often had no social security, they nonetheless earned more than they would have in the occupied territories (Roy 1995: 143f). Small industries in the occupied territories also benefited from export to Israel, but unemployment remained a severe problem and the territories suffered greatly when there was an Israeli recession. The occupied territories also became a captive market for Israeli products, wherein 90 per cent of the commodities originated in Israel, while Palestinian products were only 2 per cent of Israeli imports, an adverse trade balance (Rosenfeld 2004: 9). Rosenfeld (*ibid.*) captures these complex processes as follows:

> This was a direct consequence of an Israeli policy that prevented competing Palestinian agricultural goods from entering the country's borders; imposed heavy restrictions on export from the Territories to other markets, as well as high tariffs and taxes on imports (other than Israeli) to the Territories; systematically denied permits and licenses to Palestinian entrepreneurs; and closed the local banking system. In an ongoing process, hundreds of thousands of *dunums* (four *dunums* equal approximately one acre) of Palestinian agricultural land were confiscated and turned into Israeli state property for settlement, parks, roads, and enclosures.

In Roy's research on the economy of the Gaza Strip (1995), she uses the concept de-development, as opposed to underdevelopment, to describe an ongoing retrogression linked to three structural components: Palestinian dispossession of land and water resources, externalization (*i.e.* reorientation towards Israel) of Palestinian labour (fed by drying up the local economic infrastructure) and deinstitutionalization *i.e.* destruction of Palestinian institutions.

In the aftermath of 1967, Israel started to construct settlements in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Settlement meant and continues to mean confiscations of Palestinian-owned land. Philo & Berry (2004: 36f) write that in Israeli society, the justifications for the settlements range from war gains and security needs to divine rights of the Jewish people to biblical land[69] (*cf.* Segal &

[68] According to Roy (1995: 144), the number of Palestinian workers crossing into Israel from Gaza and the West Bank rose from 800 in 1968 to 5,900 in 1970. Pappe (2004: 204) mentions that by 1974 about 45 per cent of the employed Palestinians in the West Bank and 50 per cent in Gaza worked in Israel. About half of them were in construction and the rest in agriculture and industry.

[69] These arguments are still heard in more contemporary comments. The former Israeli prime minister Ariel Sharon for instance was quoted as saying 'Israel is the promised land – promised to Jews and no-one else' in the

Weizman 2003). Especially after 1974, Israeli religious settler groups, such as Gush Emunim, have come to influence Israeli settlement policies; the settlements that used to be seen as a military frontier became increasingly conceptualized as both a messianic and a suburban frontier (Shafir 1999: 92 in Philo & Berry 2004: 38). However, settlement building is prohibited by the Fourth Geneva Convention, Article 49, which says that 'the occupying power shall not deport or transfer parts of its own population into the territory it occupies'[70]. As reported by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN OCHA 2007), the Israeli settlements have been a means not only of controlling the area but also of alienating Palestinians from the land.

As mentioned, attempts by Palestinian refugees to return in the early 1950s became a political crime according to Israeli law, which labelled such refugees as infiltrators (Korn 2003). Nevertheless, the occupation and the policy of 'Open Bridges' gave the refugees new opportunities to visit their lost homes. Slyomovics (1998: 14) describes such return visits as a twentieth century variant of pilgrimage and as a way for exiled Palestinians to go 'from the visionary to the concrete'. Refugees who visit their lost villages have been known to want to touch and feel the ground or the stones of their razed houses; to eat the herbs that grow on their lands etc. For many years, return visits to original villages inside Israel have been a way to re-establish links with the land and with the past. Younger generations of refugees have also been made aware of their history and the right of return; village visits have been an important pedagogic tool.[71] As mentioned, it also became possible to re-establish bonds with relatives left behind during *al-nakba*, even though the differences between Palestinians in the occupied territories and inside Israel have become increasingly visible over the years, both when it comes to life styles and legal rights (Bornstein 2002a).

For many Palestinians, the occupation meant not only economic dependence but also increased Israeli control, including political oppression, imprisonment and torture in Israeli prisons (see *e.g.* Rosenfeld 2004; Quigley 2005: 201). Israel imposed a military administration, which seriously restricted the social and political rights of the Palestinians under occupation and also extensively violated human rights and international humanitarian law **(**Falk 2006; Kretzmer 2002; Quigley 2005). Israel ruled the territories by military decree and military personnel exercised direct control (Quigley *ibid.*: 179). In addition, about fifteen hundred military orders

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Observer 13 July 2003 (Philo & Berry 2004: 37). For a critic of settlement policies from an Israeli perspective, see Yiftachel (2003).

[70] The Israeli government has argued that the territories are administered rather than occupied and therefore the article has no bearing (Philo & Berry 2004: 39).

[71] In Dheishe, not only families have brought their children on such educational visits to village sites inside Israel but the youth organization, Ibdaa had also arranged visits.

regulating all aspects of life were issued between 1967 and 1993 (JMCC April 1994 in Rosenfeld 2004: 35). Political freedoms such as the right to vote were severely restricted since all parties and organizations were treated as potential bases of resistance to the occupation and a strict political censorship was enforced (Morris 1999: 339). Israel also used Palestinian collaborators and created Village Leagues, associations equipped with municipal functions in the West Bank, that were viewed as collaborationist by local Palestinians (PASSIA 2004).

Ron (2003: 2) convincingly argues that the amount and type of violence used by Israel against the Palestinians has shifted according to the institutional setting:

> Prior to its 1967 occupation of the West Bank and Gaza, for example, Israeli forces mounted large-scale raids on West Bank and Gaza villages, killing many in what was then Jordanian- and Egyptian-held territory. […] Ever since Israeli troops took the West Bank and Gaza in the 1967 war, however, Israel ceased using intensely destructive violence, relying instead on harsh, police-style tactics. The more Israel consolidated its control over Palestinian lands and populations, in other words, the less dramatic its methods of coercion became.

The Israeli policy of 'Open Bridges' that in various ways connected the occupied territories with Israel proper after 1967 created what Ron analytically refers to as 'a ghetto'[72]. Gaza and the West Bank became in practice part of Israel, although they were not legally annexed but were under military occupation. Western powers neither openly supported this tacit annexation, nor encouraged Palestinian independence, but simply demanded that Israel respect human rights (Ron 2003: 18). In Ron's terminology, the 'ghetto' is constituted as part of a state and this inclusion makes it into a sort of ambivalent safe haven from expulsion and extermination although the population of a 'ghetto' often encounters very repressive policies and harsh 'policing'. 'Due to their halfway status, ghettos are segregated and repressed, but rarely liquidated outright' (*ibid.*: 17).[73]

Ethnic policing was the dominant method used by Israel in the occupied territories, but there were other more despotic alternatives such as semi-private Jewish militia from the settlements in the West Bank. Although no consensus exists in the settler movement, some of these paramilitaries have been known to support the 'transfer' of non-Jews, 'transfer' being the

[72] This analytical term 'ghetto' should not be confused with the ghetto (or prison) Palestinians sometimes use as a metaphor for their lives since the building of the Israeli wall.

[73] A valuable comparison with Native Americans in the US can be made. As long as the 'Wild West' was understood to be a 'frontier', not incorporated into the US, the indigenous population was the target of massacres and expulsion. However contradictory this may sound, once Indians were locked into reservations, where they were policed, oppressed and their society and culture almost crushed, they were probably also spared from utter liquidation. Although having to choose between expulsion/extermination and segregation/repression may sound like a choice between two evils, the institutional setting of a 'ghetto' may save people's physical lives (Ron 2003: 17f).

local term for expulsion (*ibid.*: 166). The Jewish settlers' regional councils and militias, established mainly during the 1980s and combining a religious-nationalistic ideology[74] with some military strength, have, however, been controlled by the Israeli state. Even though the settlers continue to generate fear and destruction in many parts of the occupied territories, they have not been allowed to carry out more ferocious policies such as ethnic cleansing (*ibid.*).

The United Nations produced a number of reports in the mid 1980s that criticized Israeli human rights abuses in the occupied territories and Israeli settlers' violence against Palestinians (Philo & Berry 2004: 62). It has been argued that increasing abuse by the Israeli army before the intifada was one of the main factors behind the first uprising (*ibid.*).

The First Intifada (1987-1994)

After 20 years of military occupation combined with the incapacity of the PLO to achieve national liberation from outside the homeland, Palestinians in the occupied territories rose up against Israel. In December 1987, Palestinians from the Jabbaliyya refugee camp in Gaza started throwing stones at an Israeli army compound and the uprising soon spread to other parts of the occupied territories. The PLO-leadership based in exile seemed to be taken by surprise by the mass protests and the abilities of 'ordinary' Palestinians to organize. Through out the intifada, violent clashes took place, mostly in refugee camps, villages and poorer neighbourhoods of towns (Strum 1998: 65), but much of the uprising consisted of civil disobedience[75].

Intifada literally means 'shaking off' in Arabic and it refers to an attempt to shake off the political and economic oppression caused by the occupation. In the words of the Israeli historian Morris (1999: 561):

> [i]t was not an armed rebellion[76] but a massive, persistent campaign of civil resistance, with strikes and commercial shutdowns, accompanied by violent (though unarmed) demonstrations against the occupying forces. The stone and, occasionally, the Molotov cocktail and knife were its symbols and weapons, not guns and bombs.

The first uprising generated a range of formal and informal political structures. Within some months the intifada was formalized by the establishment of the United National Leadership of

[74] Ron (2003: 168) writes: 'Broadly speaking, Gush [Emunim *i.e.* the main settler movement,] beliefs were that Jews were the chosen people, Palestinians had no national rights, the West Bank was promised to Jews by God, and that the Messiah would come only when Jews had settled Greater Israel and defeated Palestinian political challenges.'

[75] Schiff & Ya'ari (1989) write about the man behind these strategies of civil disobedience, Mubarak Awad, who called for a completely autonomous infrastructure as well as non-violent resistance.

[76] Rosenfeld (2004: 207) claims that the first uprising was a culmination of the modes of popular action that had developed since the Israeli occupation enabled any elaborated Palestinian military activity in the occupied territories.

the Uprising (Philo & Berry 2004). Much of the early leadership came from the younger generation who had recently accessed higher education and they imbued the uprising with values of democracy, self-help and empowerment.

Palestinian women initially took an active part in demonstrations and protest activities, extending their gender roles to include street fights with soldiers and other forms of direct political activism (Augustin 1993; Sabbagh 1998; Hasso 2005b). For many women, this activism was carried out in a realm of extended motherhood (Kanaana 1998; Gren 2001). All Palestinian young men involved in the struggle were for instance conceptualized as sons of any Palestinian mother and as such in need of motherly care and protection from Israeli soldiers. Strum (1998) described female activism as ranging from elite feminists with professional degrees to poorly educated housewives who saw themselves as emergency activists.

The intifada was also imbued with an ethos of self-restraint and routines of abnormality as discussed by Jean-Klein (2001); for instance, weddings and other festive occasions were rarely celebrated. Except for commercial strikes and stone throwing, Palestinians also refused to pay taxes and forced Palestinians working with the Israeli administration to quit their jobs. Numerous collaborators were also punished and sometimes killed[77] (Morris 1999: 581 & 596; Rigby 1997; Sayigh 1997: 636f).

Bornstein (2002b: 207) describes how a partial border was re-established out of Israeli fear and altered Palestinian policies:

> Despite continued Israeli settlement in the Occupied Territories, a renewed border was made by (a) a fear that kept most Israelis out, (b) an economic boycott that refused Israeli goods, and (c) an effort to create an internal unity through patriotism and the preservation of Palestinian culture.

A campaign to produce food supplies, for instance vegetables and bread, so as to lessen dependence on Israeli goods was also initiated. Except for the Palestinian efforts to boycott Israeli products that failed in the long run (the occupied territories are today filled with Israeli goods), the border and boundaries between Israelis and Palestinians have remained manifestations of fear and of attempts to create national unity on both sides. However, one of the most important indicators of Palestinian dependence on Israel, Palestinians working for Israeli employers, turned out to be too difficult to end despite some efforts by the local political leadership (Morris 1999: 582). The need for employment and income seems to have been too great.

[77] According to Rigby (2001: 1f) an average of around 150 to 200 Palestinians were killed on suspicion of collaboration each year at the end of the first uprising in the early 1990s. It has been claimed that at this time more Palestinians were being assassinated by fellow Palestinians than by the occupying forces.

Initially, Israel failed to grasp the impact of the intifada, describing it as sporadic 'disturbances', which had not been uncommon in the occupied territories (Morris 1999: 586). The Israeli authorities then responded harshly; tear gas attacks against demonstrators, curfews, extra-judicial killings of political activists, public beatings, mass incarceration, torture, harassment, house searches, house demolitions and the outlawing of many political parties. They closed down print shops that printed political leaflets and forced merchants to keep their shops open during commercial strikes. Before the 1990s Israel also strictly censored the Palestinian press and forbade the Palestinian flag. At the time of the first uprising, having a Palestinian flag displayed at home therefore became an act of resistance for many Palestinians.

Criticism against the Israeli policies was common. Internationally, media images spread of the young Palestinian stone-thrower facing an Israeli tank, pointing out the power imbalances between the Israeli state and people in the occupied territories. Israel was also widely criticized by the UN, NGOs and human rights groups for the violence used. Israel's harsh treatment and targeting of children was particularly questioned (Finkelstein 1996 in Philo & Berry 2004). However, political capital that had been gained internationally was damaged by the Palestinian leadership's as well as the masses' support to Saddam Hussein during the Iraq War in 1991 (Philo & Berry 2004: 67). Among Israelis, discussions about the Palestinian intifada ranged from accusations of outside agitation by Syria and Iran to a questioning of the Israeli policies in the West Bank and Gaza (*ibid.*) and this deepened the polarization within Israeli society (Schiff & Ya'ari 1989: 324f).

As a semi-democratic country (Ron 2003), Israel was not immune to either internal or external criticism. The state therefore created multiple regulations, norms and orders to restrain the army's use of deadly force in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Ron (2003: 146) describes the methods during the first intifada as 'savage restraint', *i.e.* violence including both brutality and restraint. Typically, during the first uprising, the Israeli troops might beat and torture a teenage boy suspected of throwing stones, but in most cases they would refrain from killing the boy, even though unlawful killings were common even at this time (Middle East Watch 1993). Israeli 'policing'[78] was not only cruel, but also inconsistent, since units of soldiers rotated and often developed their own practices, partly hidden from their superiors (Ron 2003: 161).

[78] In other contexts that are not defined as 'ghettos' by Israel, notably in Lebanon, the Israeli state has not restricted itself to the use of 'harsh policing', but has used much more extensive force, such as shelling and massacres. Ron (2003: 172) writes that '[t]he sovereignty norm, coupled with Israel's disinterest in annexing Lebanon, constituted it as a counterinsurgency frontier vis-à-vis Israel, an arena that Israel sought to influence but not to incorporate.' Although Lebanon has been exposed to more intense and harsh Israeli military force, it has also enjoyed greater freedom from direct Israeli control than the occupied Gaza and West Bank areas.

As will be discussed in this thesis, particularly some parts of what Ron calls policing methods, such as political imprisonment, carry a very specific meaning in the Palestinian context. Political prisoners have in a similar way as 'the fighter' and 'the refugee' become heavily charged with symbolism in the Palestinian nationalistic discourse. The scars prison experiences and torture have left on individuals and society are however tremendous. As we will see in chapter 10 also martyrs imply a symbolic transformative force. Palestinians have thus partly been able to alter the meaning of violent 'policing methods' used against them (*cf.* Peteet 1994).

By 1990, trends of democracy and grass-root empowerment in the uprising had been radically reversed due to direct political repression by the Israeli army, enormous economic and physical costs of sustaining the mass rebellion, and internal fighting for power within the Palestinian society (Sayigh 1997 chapter 25). Notably, the rise of the Islamic movement[79], especially in Gaza, challenged women's participation in the uprising.

The economic, political and social effects of the intifada on Palestinian society have been huge. It resulted in many casualties, some Israeli, but mostly Palestinian[80]. Despite an economic crisis that developed in the occupied territories, economic dependency on Israel seems to have been slightly reduced (Morris 1999: 597). Socially, the intifada contested hierarchical structures among Palestinians, since young men, often from a poor background, took a leading part in political activities, challenging the status of their seniors as well as of the traditional noble families. Also women's status was raised at least temporarily. Politically and psychologically, Palestinians had become conscious and dignified by resistance. The intifada also nurtured a sense of Palestinian moral superiority (see chapter 9), empowerment and national unity.

Most importantly, the uprising also led to a series of negotiations (see Sayigh 1997 chapter 26). To sum up in the words of Morris (1999: 596):

> [T]he PLO agreed to recognize and make peace with Israel, and to establish a self-governing entity in a small part of Palestine. And Israel […] agreed to recognize the PLO and to evacuate much if not most of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. In addition, the United States was to recognize the PLO and reopen its dialogue with it […]. Ultimately, the result of the intifada was a basic restructuring of the geopolitical realities in the region, one of which was the start of the emergence of a Palestinian state.

[79] Hamas emerged out of the Muslim Brotherhood in the first year of the intifada. For years the organization had received funding from Israel in an attempt to weaken the PLO. The other Palestinian Islamic organization, Islamic Jihad, seems to have been less significant to the intifada (Morris 1999: 577f). See also Sayigh (1997).
[80] According to the Israeli NGO B'Tselem (in Morris 1999: 596), more than thousand Palestinians were killed by the Israeli security forces during the period December 1987-December 1993. At the same time, some one hundred Israeli civilians and soldiers were killed.

The Oslo Process and Palestinian State-building

After decades of attempts to build Palestinian state-like structures outside the homeland along with armed intrusions into Israeli controlled territory, the intifada and the subsequent Oslo agreements[81] gave Palestinians the chance to establish a limited self-governance on some parts of the occupied territories.

The 1993 Oslo Declaration of Principles was symbolically affirmed by the handshakes of PLO leader Arafat, US president Clinton and Israeli prime-minister Rabin on the lawn of the White House. The Declaration of Principles was an agenda for future negotiations and included agreement on Israeli withdrawal and Palestinian responsibility for internal security, while Israel maintained external security. Palestinians would take over control of education, health, social welfare, direct taxation and tourism. Elections were to be held and final status negotiations were to be completed within five years. However, after Oslo II, all the most contested issues, including Palestinian statehood, borders, refugees, settlements, water rights and the status of Jerusalem, were postponed to the final talks.

The PLO assumed control of the Jericho area in the West Bank and of the Gaza Strip in May 1994. More than a year later, the Israeli forces left six West Bank towns, including Bethlehem, the area of the fieldwork for this study. The Palestinians also gained civil administration in parts of Hebron. The Oslo accords (Oslo II) divided the West Bank into three zones: Areas A, B and C (see map 4). According to the accords, the newly established authority had sole jurisdiction and security control through a Palestinian police force in Area A, while Israeli security forces retained authority over movement in and out of the area. In Area B the PA had some limited authority, but Israel maintained security forces. As for Area C, which constituted the largest part of the West Bank, Israel held full control, but the PA would have responsibility for civil services (Morris 1999: 628). In sum, Israel maintained control over territory, while Palestinians gained some control over the population. The Israeli occupation was thus never completely ended and the PA only established self-rule in a minor part of what used to be the mandatory Palestine (Pappe 2004: 264).

At the leadership level, there was also a mutual recognition of the other party's existence and right to exist embedded in the Oslo accords (Philo & Berry 2004: 69). The PLO agreed to end the armed struggle and to change the parts of the Palestinian National Charter that called for the destruction of the Israeli state. Israel, for its part, recognized the PLO as a representative of the Palestinian people. Beinin (2006: 21) comments that the Declaration of Principles was

[81] The Oslo Accords are in fact a number of agreements that were negotiated and agreed upon over several years.

determined by Israel's overwhelming military superiority over its Arab neighbours and by its alliance with the US.

The treaty was, however, greeted with opposition from both Palestinians and Israelis. Some Israelis, often from the right wing, claimed that giving up land to the Palestinians was a betrayal of Israeli settlers, the end of the biblical Greater Israel as well as mortal threat to state security (Philo & Berry 2004: 69). The majority of the Israeli public was nevertheless in favour of the agreements. Pappe (2004: 255) comments that the Israeli population was attracted by the Oslo process because Israel 'was able to impose its own version of a settlement in Palestine: a strong Jewish state dominating a small Palestinian protectorate, without a solution to the refugee problem or a significant Palestinian presence or sovereignty in Jerusalem.' Among Palestinians, it has been argued that there were four main positions. Only a few Palestinians were enthusiastic supporters, but the majority were optimistic and desperate in equal terms (Rabbani 1993) and prepared to give the accords a chance despite serious doubts. The third position was often represented by Palestinian intellectuals, such as Edward Said, who supported a peaceful resolution but saw the accords as fatal to Palestinian national aspirations. They were critical of Arafat signing the agreement and giving up most of mandatory Palestine without any public debate and without any guarantee of statehood and agreement on the most debated issues. The fourth position was made up of those Palestinians, from the Islamic parties but also from the Left, who totally rejected the agreements. In their view, it would turn the occupied territories into a Bantustan consisting of disconnected patches of land that would make Palestinians joint administrators of the occupation[82].

The future of the Palestinian refugees seems to be one of the core issues to be resolved in Israeli-Palestinian negotiations. The refugee issue has, however, been repeatedly postponed in peace negotiations and it was more or less excluded from the Oslo agreements and this fostered resentment and bitterness among Palestinian refugees. With reference to UN resolutions, the Palestinian leadership has rhetorically maintained the indisputable right of return of the refugees but in practice demands were modified. As we will see in chapter 7, there was a re-emergence of the refugee issue during the 1990s and world-wide mobilization for the right of return. This right of return carries moral connotations in Palestinian society and is frequently discussed in a highly rhetorical way as a sacred right.

Some violent acts carried out by individuals supported by extremist groups in 1994 seem to have had a deep influence on political developments. That year a young settler and member of the Israeli Kach party opened fire at Muslim worshippers at the Ibrahim Mosque/Tomb of the

[82] Rabbani (1993) suggests that if the agreement had involved moves towards real statehood these rejectionists would probably have accepted it, at least for tactical reasons.

Patriarchs in Hebron. He managed to assassinate 29 Palestinians before he himself was killed[83]. Hamas vowed to avenge the massacre in Hebron and carried out a car bombing and the first ever suicide bombing in Israel some months later. It has even been argued that the killings in Hebron 'directly and immediately created the chain of suicide bombings and the appalling upward spiral composed of Israeli responses and Palestinian counter-responses' (Haaretz 28th September 1998). However, Palestinian Islamic parties had learnt how to carry out suicide bombs from Hizbollah in the Lebanon as early as 1993[84]. It is likely that suicide bombings would have emerged even without the attack in Hebron, although the attack served as legitimation of the bombings and revenge. Pappe (2004: 260) also notes that the bombings started at a time when the peace process seemed to be proving successful. The strategy to use suicide bombings clearly intensified Israeli concerns about security and control, while it divided Palestinians[85]. Internationally, though, the Palestinians were almost univocally criticized for using suicide bombings and they lost much political support.

Palestinians found themselves at a new stage in several ways and the PLO was in transition from being a revolutionary organization to becoming a government or an authority. Lindholm (1996) refers to this as a 'state-in-the-making'. In 1996, elections to the Palestinian Legislative Council as well as for an Executive President were held. Arafat's party Fateh won most of the seats on the council and gave way to what has been called a pragmatic leadership that was willing to compromise with Israel (Pappe 2004: 256). Participation in the elections was considerable, even though Hamas and Islamic Jihad did not run. Ministers were appointed and ministries opened, laws were elaborated, police and security forces created. In short, the Palestinian state-building process had begun. During this process some major internal problems emerged: Arafat's autocratic leadership, corruption within the PA and violation of human rights. The PA's dubious human rights record includes imprisonments on political grounds, torture and press censorship (see *e.g.* Amnesty International 2000). Although Israel repeatedly criticized the PA for not being able to curb the 'terrorism' used by Palestinians against Israel, observers claim that the PA actually did, which was the main reason that the authority had problems with its human rights record (Philo & Berry 2004: 79).

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[83] In response to the killings, the Israeli government put Hebron under curfew for five weeks but also outlawed the openly racist Kach party, which had not been allowed to run for elections since the 1980s. They refused however to start negotiations about the settlements and to remove the settlers from Hebron (Philo & Berry 2004: 71).

[84] In late 1992, Israel deported a number of supporters and activists of Hamas and Islamic Jihad to Southern Lebanon. There they were trained to carry out suicide bombings by Hizbollah. About a year later, they were allowed back to Gaza and the West Bank (Victor 2004).

[85] In the occupied territories, the population did not show any consensus on the issue of armed operations against Israelis (http://www.pcpsr.org/survey/cprspolls/94/poll13a.html 13.05.2009 10.28).

Alongside these problems with the PA, there were other reasons for the people's lack of confidence in their leaders. Most of the people who were offered employment in high positions within the PA had spent many years, often decades, in exile. To understand the deep distrust against the returning Palestinian leadership that emerged one also needs to grasp the divisions that have emerged within the nation. The divisions brought about by exile and the political setting have been conceptualized as cultural differences and different degrees of suffering among Palestinians with various backgrounds (Hammer 2005; Lindholm 2003). Palestinians who had stayed in the occupied territories and lived through the Israeli occupation felt that their lifestyles and suffering were more 'authentic' than those of the returning Palestinians. The West Bankers and the Gazans understood themselves to be true Palestinians who had suffered and struggled, while the Palestinians from outside were considered spoiled and often immoral. Political legitimacy derives not only from democratic practices but also from belief in the moral authority of a state or a leadership (*cf.* Barker 1990: 11 in Lindholm 2004). Many researchers have pointed out that the source of the PLO's moral legitimacy was the struggle[86]. In the Palestinian context, the leadership that returned from exile with the establishment of the PA had clear difficulties in re-establishing its legitimacy since this could no longer be based solely on the struggle. The people in the occupied territories also held high expectations of their leadership; their own political grass-root activism under occupation made them long for democratic practices that the returning leadership could not deliver. Moreover, groups of intifada activists, such as refugee youths and women, had difficulty gaining political influence.

In Ron's terms (2003), the Oslo period was distinguished by an altered institutional setting; the occupied territories were slowly transformed from ghetto to frontier, as they had been before 1967, vis-à-vis Israel. Being a frontier area of a semi-democratic state implies risk of extensive violence. Heacock (2003) also writes that in the agreements the Palestinians' right to self-defence was recognized for the first time in the form of 'a strong police force[87]. This 'self-defence' was intended, however, not to protect the Palestinian areas from possible army intrusions but to enable the PA to defend itself and to shield Israel from possible Palestinian hostile activities (Usher 1999 chapter 7).

The linking of infrastructure and economy to Israel during the first years of occupation implied a Palestinian dependency that still persists, even if the character of that dependence has been restructured and, some would even argue, deepened (interview with Abd al-Shafi in *ibid.*).

[86] Also the leaders of the intifada in the late 1980s were depicted as fighters and, as such, as morally pure and natural decision-makers (Lindholm 2004).
[87] See Usher (1999 chapter 7) for an account of the different Palestinian security forces.

According to the Oslo agreements[88], both Israeli and Palestinian leaderships embraced the idea of a free market economy. Israel and Palestine were to become one economic unit, with interconnected customs systems and a joint taxation policy. Although the Palestinians had demanded their own currency no agreement was reached on this. Israel had also been granted a veto on any Palestinian development scheme. Pappe (2004: 256) comments on this development:

> This meant that the monetary and developmental policies of Israel and its currency exchanges were to play a dominant role in the Palestinian economy. Other aspects of the economy, such as foreign trade and industry, were also totally dominated by the Israelis according to the interim agreement.

Israel also retained control of taxes collected for the emerging PA and this later on, during the intifada *al-aqṣa,* gave Israel a way of punishing or rewarding the authority. Moreover, Palestinian workers were still heavily dependent on the Israeli labour market, while Israeli employers were beginning to replace Palestinian workers with migrants from Thailand, the Philippines, Romania and other Eastern European countries, since Palestinian workers were increasingly understood to be security threats (Usher 1999: 44). All export of Palestinian goods now went to Israel or through Israeli-controlled borders (*ibid.*). As a result, the Palestinian economy became more dependent on international financial assistance than had been anticipated (Murphy 2006: 59).

Geographically, the peace process during the 1990s only partly disconnected Palestinians from the Israeli state since Israel continued to control borders and thus the mobility of both people and commodities. Since March 1993 (Bornstein 2002b: 207), the Israeli state has been erecting checkpoints at all major entrances between the occupied territories and Israel[89], thereby creating a de facto separation between Israelis and Palestinians, ending almost 25 years of 'Open Bridges'. While Israeli citizens were free to travel between Israel and the West Bank, Palestinians needed permits, which became difficult to obtain. In practice, the Israeli goodwill influenced how often Palestinians were checked and the 'Green Line' between the West Bank and Israel was impossible to fully control. Therefore, in 1998 the unofficial labour flow to Israel was estimated to be even larger than the number of workers holding Israeli permits (BADIL 2000: 14ff). Gaza and the West Bank were also isolated from each other. There was an ongoing process towards an ambivalent separation, informed by the two state solution envisioned in the Oslo agreements. At the same time, the Israeli settlements expanded in the West Bank and Gaza and a 'vast network of bypass roads was constructed to facilitate access to the settlements in preparation for the

[88] This economic part of the Oslo accords is called the Paris agreement, signed in 1994. For a discussion of Israeli economic liberalization and its relation to the Oslo process, see Peled (2006).
[89] Military checkpoints were not a completely new phenomenon in the occupied territories, but had existed earlier (*e.g.* Swedenburg 2003).

annexation of several large settlement blocs' (Beinin 2006: 29). The Israeli peace organization Gush Shalom published a report in 1998, accusing the Israeli administration of 19 separate violations of the Oslo accords and the breakdown of the peace process (Gush Shalom 1998). For instance, the building of Israeli settlements in the occupied territories continued and even intensified, despite Palestinian and international protests[90]. The violence with suicide bombings, army attacks and political imprisonments also continued during the 1990s.

To sum up in the words of the Israeli journalist Rabinowitz (Haaretz 19th March 2000 in Philo & Berry 2004: 82); for many Israelis, Oslo appeared to be a positive, symmetric process between leaderships that represented two people. But for many Palestinians, Oslo remained an asymmetric process; a weak Palestinian leadership[91] had been unable to negotiate in the interests of its people and it had sold out.

Intifada *Al-aqsa*

The event that triggered the new Palestinian uprising was the Israeli politician Ariel Sharon's[92] uninvited visit to Haram Al Sharif/the Temple Mount in the old city of Jerusalem in September 2000. Palestinians who threw stones to protest Sharon's visit, which was seen as provocative, were shot dead by Israeli security forces and the Palestinian protests soon led to a full-scale intifada (Beinin & Stein 2006: 8).

The reasons for the renewed hostilities were, however, more complex. Earlier in July that year, after two weeks of final negotiations, the so-called Camp David Final Status Talks, the disagreements had proven too great and the talks were interrupted. Israeli prime minister Barak argued that he had made a 'generous offer' to the Palestinians, returning more than 90 per cent of the occupied territories[93], while Arafat claimed that the offer was 'less than a Bantustan' (Philo & Berry 2004: 83). What really happened at Camp David and what kind of offers were actually made remains unclear. However, it is clear that the failure of negotiations at Camp David (as well as in Taba in January 2001) and Palestinian despair sparked the new uprising. Furthermore, Heacock (2003) claims that Palestinian popular disappointment with the corrupt and

[90] One of the most notorious settlement projects at this time was the building of Har Homa on the Palestinian owned Jabal Ghneim, on the outskirts of Jerusalem and within the Bethlehem district. Despite a Palestinian general strike and other protest actions in addition to several resolutions in the UN General Assembly calling to halt the project, Har Homa is today an established settlement, overlooking Bethlehem. (Philo & Berry 2004: 78)
[91] Sayigh (1997: 639f) mentions a series of setbacks for the PLO that led them to the negotiations towards the Declaration of Principles; the collapse and thus loss of backing of the Soviet Union, their own support to Saddam Hussein and a financial crisis that emptied the PLO treasury.
[92] To fully understand the gravity of the provocation, one should be aware that Ariel Sharon had a long career in the Israeli army as well as in politics. He had, for instance, participated in the destruction of Palestinian villages during *al-nakba*. As Israeli Defence Minister in the 1980s he was also held responsible by an Israeli investigation for the two massacres in the Palestinian refugee camps, Sabra and Shatila, in Lebanon.
[93] Exactly what percentage of the occupied territories was actually included in the offer is disputed.

incompetent authority, and anger at Israeli policies that were felt to be stifling the evolution of Palestinian statehood, fuelled the intifada *al-aqṣa*. Beinin and Stein (2006: 2) moreover write that the economic liberalization that resulted from the Oslo accords led to growing poverty in the occupied territories. The resort to hostilities was based on the right to self-defence and sovereignty from the Palestinian side, and Israel responded in a manner equivalent to a declaration of war between the two states[94].

Halper (2006: 63) has argued that whatever the offer may have been Israel would still possess a 'matrix of control' that would undermine Palestinian sovereignty:

> What is the matrix of control? It is an interlocking series of mechanisms, only a few of which require physical occupation of territory, that allow Israel to control every aspect of Palestinian life in the Occupied Territories. Instead of defeating your opponent […], you win by immobilizing your opponent, by gaining control of key points in the matrix so that every time s/he moves s/he encounters an obstacle of some kind. […] The matrix imposed by Israel […] has virtually paralyzed the Palestinian population without "defeating" it or even conquering much territory.

This matrix relies on interventions for the sake of security and 'the upholding of order', backed by the force of the army. Other sets of control mechanisms are 'facts on the ground' such as checkpoints, army bases, settlements and the system of bypass roads. A third set of mechanisms comprises administrative or bureaucratic restrictions such as the issuing of work, building and family reunification permits. As Halper (*ibid.*: 70) reasons, peace must thus revolve around questions such as control, viability and justice. A just peace felt remote for most Palestinians and this helps explain why the intifada *al-aqṣa* erupted.

Contrary to the first intifada, which included street confrontations *within* the urban centres, the second uprising initially took place at military checkpoints and at religious sites controlled by the Israeli army (*e.g.* Joseph's tomb in Nablus and Rachel's tomb in Bethlehem). Hammami & Tamari (2006: 266) reason that '[t]he Israeli army could better confine the insurgency within specific locations and protect itself at secure strategic positions. This narrowed "battlefront" allowed the Israeli army immediately to turn the clashes into a military confrontation'. The presence of Palestinian police and security forces provided justification of the Israeli use of extensive force also against civilians. A new development, moreover, was the Palestinian military actions against settlements. The weakened Palestinian civil society was another explanation for the absence of a more popular mobilization (*ibid.*).

After new Israeli elections in early 2001, Sharon became prime minister and he intensified the repression of the Palestinians. Following the September 11 attacks in the United States,

[94] Indeed, the second intifada has occasionally been described by top Israeli leaders as 'a war for national survival' (Heacock 2003).

Sharon began identifying Arafat and the PA with Usama Bin Laden and Al Q'aida, reframing Israeli military action in the occupied territories as a part of the American 'war on terror' (Beinin & Stein 2006: 8). He also claimed that there was nobody in the Palestinian leadership to negotiate with.

Apart from human casualties and reoccupation of the self-ruling areas, Israeli military operations targeted the infrastructure of the PA and its security forces. Other Palestinian institutions such as radio stations[95] and local universities were also attacked and often suffered major destruction. International NGOs have issued repeated warnings of humanitarian crises in the Palestinian territories since 2002. At times of crisis, many Palestinians united behind Arafat although he continued to be criticized. Despite the fact that the authority was weakened and often unable to act, Israel and the international community still demanded the PA to control Palestinian militia groups and to stop suicide bombings and other attacks against Israel. When urged by the PA, Hamas, although not Islamic Jihad, did however implement unilateral ceasefires, but when prominent Hamas leaders were assassinated by Israel, they retaliated (Beinin & Stein 2006: 9f).

Another political event that occurred while I was carrying out fieldwork was the presentation of the Roadmap in the summer of 2003. The Roadmap was an initiative by the so-called Quartet comprised of the US, the UN, the European Union and Russia, and it aimed to establish a Palestinian state in the near future. Sharon presented a unilateral plan to disengage from Gaza so as to avoid implementation of the Roadmap and, more importantly, to reduce criticism of the building of the wall. Nevertheless, an International Court of Justice judged the Israeli barrier illegal and demanded that its path should be redrawn and Palestinians should be compensated for related losses. (Beinin & Stein 2006: 11)

The fact that the disconnected Palestinian clusters that were surrounded by Israeli forces resembled 'a frontier' rather than 'a ghetto' influenced the hostilities during the new uprising (Ron 2003).

> Oslo, in other words, had begun to reverse Palestine's ghetto status. As Palestinians increasingly moved to the margins of Israel's zone of control, however, the threat to their physical security worsened. […] Today, Israeli commandos mount shoot-to-kill raids in regions controlled by the Palestinian authority, missiles strike Palestinian towns, and helicopters use machine guns against mixed civilian and military targets. None of these methods would have been used during the first Intifada, when Palestine was situated squarely within Israel's zone of control. (*ibid.*: 198f)

[95] Unlike the first uprising, which depended on leaflets and graffiti, the intifada *al-aqṣa* has been covered by Palestinian official media (Hammami & Tamari 2006).

Thus, the extensive use of force by Israel during the second uprising may be a sign of Israel losing control but also of a process of creating distance (or separation) between Israelis and Palestinians, an Israeli acknowledgment that Palestinians was no longer included in the Israeli entity and a questioning of the idea of Palestinian territories being 'a ghetto'[96]. It has been argued that in strict military terms it made no sense for Israel to use its advanced army against such a militarily weak enemy but, Heacock (2003) argues, the purpose was mainly symbolic, although its effects were also very real. In Ron's terms, the violence was a sort of acknowledgment of the new frontier status of the Palestinian areas.

For many Palestinians, but not all, the new frontier status of area and its subjection to brutal attacks justified the use of all sorts of weapons, including suicide bombers. They did not really anticipate a military victory. The Palestinians I met knew that their armed resistance would probably never be able to beat the modern Israeli army but they argued that it was a way to make Israelis fearful and for Palestinians to avenge their losses (see chapter 10).

As discussed in the previous chapter, the latest uprising has had severe economic and political consequences on the local level. The Dheisheans I worked with were facing increasing Israeli violence and restricted mobility and they were living in an altered and radicalized political landscape that was breeding internal Palestinian divisions as well as a deteriorating economy.

[96] One may note that the extensive force Israel has hitherto used against Gaza as compared to the West Bank may be explained in a similar manner since Gaza was evacuated in 2005 and is 'no longer part of Israel'.

4. Disintegration of Life: Becoming and Remaining Refugees

This chapter concerns the re-establishment of life after *al-nakba*, in which village life before flight has played an important role in individuals' memories, manifested in social organization and cultural practices in the camp. The focus here is on social continuity in the formation of community and its emplacement despite disruption and the externally imposed institutionalization of 'refugees'.

Elderly Dheisheans' narratives of *al-nakba* recounted Palestinian losses but they also attempted to order experiences and make demands for justice. Village life prior to flight was frequently compared with present day life. Although life had changed radically since *al-nakba*, village origins remained important building blocs in a multifaceted identity formation and in everyday practices.

UN registration and other interventions created a bureaucratic identity; 'the Palestinian refugee' (Peteet 2005a). As we will see, such refugee labelling is nevertheless not a one-way process, but a complex outcome of mutual social categorization and identity formation (Zetter 1991). In Dheishe, the dynamic process of institutionalization interacted with processes of place-making, politicization and affirmation of existing social identities.

Emplacement refers to the ongoing transformation of an empty space into a social place 'where meaningful action and shared understanding' become possible (Turton 2005: 258). For displaced people, resilience is often connected to such transformation of space; place-making and attempts to both re-establish and create new kinds of belonging become answers to crises evoked by flight and violence (*cf.* Jansen & Löfving 2007).

Dheishean Refugee-ness

People in Dheishe belong to generations of refugees, most of whom were displaced in 1948 but some also in 1967 when the military occupation of the West Bank and Gaza began. A peculiarity of Palestinian refugees is that they have their own UN organ - the United Nations Relief and Work Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). Today more than a third of the Palestinian population of the West Bank and a majority of the population of Gaza are estimated to be refugees registered by UNRWA[97]. In Gaza, half of these refugees are camp refugees, and in the West Bank one fifth, while others are self-settled (PLO 2000: 7).

[97] According to a census carried out by the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS 2008 www.pcbs.gov.ps/Portals/_pcbs/populati/demd4.aspx 2008-09-25 16.49), the West Bank population amount to nearly 2.4 million. 40 per cent of this population is under 15 years of age. In Gaza, the Palestinian population has

Dheisheans and other refugees in the occupied territories insist that they are 'refugees in their own land' (*cf.* Hamzeh 2001). They say this because the Palestinian pattern of dispersal partly follows what would nowadays be considered 'internal displacement'. Many of those displaced remained inside the country they fled from, in this case inside the British Mandate of Palestine. Some refugees in the occupied territories live very close to their former homes. Umm Khaled, who recounts her experiences of *al-nakba* below, was born in a village less than half an hour's drive away from the camp. The British Mandate was, however, not an independent state in 1948 and the Palestinians were also expelled *before* the Geneva Convention of 1951, which defines refugees within the international legal framework and originally referred to a European context. According to the convention, to qualify as a refugee a person must have crossed a recognized international border. Although Dheisheans were registered as refugees with the UN, strictly speaking they had not traversed any such border, only the armistice line between Israel and the West Bank.

Some of the inhabitants of Dheishe were not refugees from 1948 but had arrived during the war and Israeli occupation in 1967 (they were often referred to as 'displaced persons' in the UNRWA terminology) or for other reasons. There are in fact several groups of displaced Palestinians. One category is hence the refugees who were expelled during *al-nakba*, like most people in Dheishe, and another consists of those who fled in 1967. There are also two groups of 'internally displaced' people. The first includes Palestinians who remained in the area that became Israel in 1948. The second consists of Palestinians who were displaced in the occupied territories during and after the war of 1967. In addition, a third category includes those who are neither refugees from 1948 nor 1967 but who are outside historical Palestine and unable to return due to deportation, revocation of residency, denial of family reunification by Israel or because they are afraid of persecution. The dispersal of Palestinians continues because of house demolitions, shelling and the building of the Separation Barrier by Israel. Other Palestinians who have been exiled never registered with the UNRWA; they and their descendents are not officially counted as refugees (BADIL 2004: 33ff).

Chaos of Flight

> People were sleeping. Suddenly they heard an attack. After that my father carried me, I was asleep, me and my sister. 18 villages were emptied in one day. We left for the mountains. The Egyptian [soldiers] ran away as well. The people came from Bayt Ishmael and they went to the mountains. After that they took four people from our village to Wadi Bulos, four men and a woman and her child from the [X] family. And

been estimated to about 1.4 million in 2006. Although the Palestinian refugees are spread over the world, the majority of the refugees stayed in the former British Mandate or in the neighbouring countries.

> they killed them. Sharif, Muhammed's brother, ran away. They shot at him. They cut [the others] into four pieces. When [Sharif] saw that they had cut his uncle into pieces he started to run away and they shot at him. After that the people ran away; some to Halhul, some to Se'ir, some to Hebron or to other towns as well. When it started to get cold like now we fled to Jericho. We stayed there until May. It started to get too hot there, so we decided to come back here.
>
> Umm Khaled

At the time of the interview, Umm Khaled was in her mid-sixties. Although many years had passed, her childhood memories of flight were still fresh in her mind. Compared to others, Umm Khaled was quite talkative about the events called *al-nakba*, while her husband Abu Khaled preferred to talk about his life prior to that event (see below). My encounters with Umm Khaled usually took place in a small room built by the UNRWA in the 1950s and where she also slept. It doubled as a tiny shop; she sold sweets and cigarettes to her neighbours. The income was insignificant and several of her children provided for her, but she seemed to enjoy having people coming by. Umm Khaled had given birth to 12 children and she was in poor health with severe diabetes. Before she died in 2005, I had got to know her and her family well and in the thesis we will meet several of her family members.

In this part of Umm Khaled's story, the calm sleep implying peace and order was interrupted by chaos and death. Her account displays not only violence during displacement and war, but also how *al-nakba* signified more than flight from one place to another; it meant several years on the move, uncertainty and deep poverty, even starvation. Many of the elderly camp residents recounted having roved from place to place, sometimes living in caves, before ending up in Dheishe (see also Rosenfeld 2004: 3). Another elderly refugee woman remembered years of wandering, plagued by concerns about survival and whom to trust:

> When we first left [our village], we stayed in tents in the bush [*kherbe*]. Then we started moving; one night here, the other night there, until we reached Wadi al Nasara in Hebron. In each place we stayed one night. Carrying things on our heads, on the camels and on the donkeys. We took the animals with us, put things on the donkeys and on the camels. Everything else like the grain [we had grown] was left behind, everything was left behind. We took some of the cleaned grains with us, and carried them until Bayt Fajjar. We once kept them on the side of the road where we sat. Then some people said "you can go and sleep on the roof", but they had their eyes on our grain, so they stole the two bags of grain.
>
> Umm Rafiq, about 80 years old

Infants and young children were dying or suffering life-threatening illnesses due to bad conditions. Social networks of villagers and kin were disrupted. Rosenfeld describes the establishment of Dheishe as 'a result of a total disintegration of a way of life' (2004: 3). This

disintegration had social, political, economic and symbolic dimensions. In Lebanese camps, Palestinian refugees used metaphors of death, paralysis and non-existence when describing their first years as refugees (Sayigh 1979: 107). In Umm Rafiq's account death and confusion were not only metaphors but they described the course of events:

> During the attack on our village, those who were healthy and strong, they ran away. [But] elderly people and children who stayed, [the Jews] collected them and shot them. Children were taken by the Jews, [at least] their families could not find them. Some people say they killed them and some say they took them and raised them.

As argued by Scheper-Hughes (2008), narrativity is a means not only to reflect upon one's predicament but also to recover from hardships. Umm Rafiq's and other refugees' stories can thus be understood as both a way to order and make sense of the flight they lived through as well as 'a tactic of resilience' (*cf.* Peteet 2005a: 48f). A concrete example is Umm Rafiq who seemed to comfort herself by suggesting that maybe the Palestinian children left behind were not killed after all, but were adopted by Jewish families. For refugees, narratives of flight provide ways to deal with the past, although not in any simple manner, but also ways to move forward, for instance by making political demands.

As we will see, the analytical concept cultural trauma sheds further light on stories about *al-nakba* that recounted Palestinian suffering and victimhood.

A Cultural Trauma

Loss is a common theme in 'the refugee experience' both in narratives told by displaced people themselves and in much of the writing about refugees. Malkki (1995: 11) criticizes refugee research as well as policy for portraying all refugees as by definition vulnerable because of their assumed experiences of loss of culture, identity and 'roots'. She argues that losses cannot be taken for granted and may be of different kinds. Or maybe more to the point: 'While transformation and change are part of the refugee experience, not all change is perceived as loss or defined as problematic or unwelcome by all individuals involved. Nor are refugees necessarily helpless victims, but rather likely to be people with agency and voice' (Eastmond 2007: 253). A number of ethnographic studies show that loss is not automatically followed by powerlessness, but may, on the contrary, provide a sense of empowerment (*e.g.* Eastmond 1989; Malkki 1995; Sayigh 1994; Watters 2008). In many refugee groups and diasporas, personal narratives may draw on a common history and ideology to be made meaningful, but individual experiences may also challenge the collective story about loss and its essentializing tendency (Eastmond 2007).

To Palestinians, *al-nakba,* and its losses, is a foundational principle in Palestinian national identity formation. The analytical concept cultural trauma (Alexander *et al.* 2004) sheds light on the profound influence of the events in 1948 on the Palestinian community. Eyerman (2004: 61), who has done research on the African American community's experiences of slavery, defines cultural trauma as referring to 'a dramatic loss of identity and meaning, a tear in the social fabric, affecting a group of people'. The shared trauma may also be regarded as a fundamental threat to society's existence or as a violation to one or more of its fundamental cultural presuppositions (Smelser 2004: 44). In this sense, the traumatic event is not necessarily experienced by every single individual in a community but it becomes part of the collective memory of the group that is transmitted down the generations in testimonial narratives or ritualized commemoration activities. For individual Palestinians, *al-nakba* had probably been experienced in diverse ways, although today many of their narratives tend to merge into rather standardized forms. Narratives of trauma can also be used to make collective claims for redress. In the Palestinian case, the experiences of flight are seen as proof of injustices that demand acknowledgment by Israel and others (*cf.* Sayigh 1979).

Furthermore, there are limits to what can be told about experiences of flight. For displaced populations, the familiar social context in which stories are told is lost, but sometimes also the very units of time, space and character on which narrative coherence depends seem to be broken (Jackson 2002: 91). The elderly Dheisheans did *not* tell me all that happened during *al-nakba*; most of their narratives were fragmented and without much detail. For instance Abu Akram, a man of about 75 years of age and Ahmed's father, told a laconic story about these events:

> The people started to split up. They got scared from the Jews because they had killed people before. They had killed people in Deir Yassin and this massacre made people scared. So people who got their turn, split up and left. They started from Yafa, to Liid, Ramle until they reached here. So we left and we went to Jericho.

These lines seemed to be all he wanted to say about the flight. Many stories thus become condensed in time since events that took place over several months are summarized in a few words. Some unsettling events connected to the flight may remain 'unbearable sequences of sheer happening' (Arendt 1973: 106 in Jackson *ibid.*: 92) that cannot convey meaning; these same unspeakable experiences seem to be crucial for how refugees tell their stories. Palestinian cultural trauma becomes especially visible when discussing *al-nakba* from a gender perspective.

Gendering Al-Nakba: Threatened Children and Loss of Honour

Three things become visible when one examines from a gender perspective how *al-nakba* is remembered and narrated today in Dheishe. My interest is not primarily in what 'really happened' but instead in narrative truth, which is how people experienced and recalled the past.

First, elderly Palestinian men still felt humiliated and ashamed about their failure to protect women and children during flight. It was striking that many of them did not want to talk about *al-nakba*, while women wanted to. Men like Abu Akram above, who were in their seventies at the time of fieldwork, had been *śebâb*, or youth, in 1948. In traditional Palestinian society, the *śebâb* had a specific role as guards and fighters of the villages (Kanaana 1998). These men had thus failed to live up to not only expectations of their male gender role but also to expectations associated with their age group. Younger generations of refugees openly blamed their elders for not having been brave enough and for not having resisted the Jewish forces sufficiently. Sawsan, Umm Khaled's and Abu Khaled's daughter who was a teacher, for instance, claimed that: 'So many villages were occupied by the Jews without any fighting. [The villagers] haven't seen any [soldiers] or had any fights.' Also the story of this old refugee man, who lived in a village close to the camp, displays self-blame and a tendency to explain and excuse flight:

> Before we disappeared [from our village] we had fled from the Jews and returned 15 times. The Jordanian army didn't shoot a single bullet [to protect us]. [The British General] Glubb Pasha came to our village. He asked us: "What do you want?" We said: "We need an army to protect us". "You can fight the Jews by yourselves", he answered. We said: "We need helicopters and planes – we have nothing." […] The tanks were shooting at us, people in the village fled. It was [full of people] like a Saturday market, the Jews were even more. There was a British Commander, he was the leader of the second unit [of the British army]. He asked us how many had been killed in our village. We said: "Nobody, we fled". He damned our fathers and said: "You just left your village!"
>
> 85-year-old man in Doha.

According to this account, the refugees were not cowards but tried to stay in their village despite their lack of weapons and they did not just wait for the Jewish forces to arrive but asked in vain for protection. This is an example of how narratives are creatively employed by forced migrants to form a sense of continuity in whom they are, linking them in various ways to time and place (Eastmond 2007: 254). Thus, this elderly man ambiguously maintained that he and his fellow villagers were honourable and brave agents during *al-nakba,* and this corresponds with today's Palestinian self-image of struggle and heroism.

Second, the flight seemed often to be remembered as having been initiated by a concern about rape and honour. Umm Khaled recounted the rape of some girls in a neighbouring village: 'The girls' father had a heart attack and died because of that, [the Israelis] chose the beautiful

girls. When [the Israelis] took the girls, [the villagers] got worried about them and they decided to leave. Because of honour [*śaraf*], they ran away.' Male family heads had decided to flee because they feared that the advancing Jewish forces would sexually abuse their daughters and wives. In the Palestinian National Charter issued by the PLO in 1964, an analogy of rape of the land is also used when referring to the Israeli conquest of mandatory Palestine (Massad 2006: 43). As noted by Das (2007: 13) when writing about sexual violence during the Partition between India and Pakistan '[this] rhetoric strategy of focusing on abducted and raped women to the exclusion of the sexual violation of men allowed the nation to construct itself as a masculine nation'.

Third, Palestinian women related to me in their stories how they had managed to handle the flight by upholding their gender role as good mothers who did not abandon their children. There were, however, also frequent accounts and rumours about women who had forgotten their children because of shock. There was a widespread story about a woman who carried a pillow instead of her infant. 'In 1948 when we ran away, there was a woman who carried a pillow instead of her child. She left because everyone was so afraid and went out of the house quickly. The baby was sleeping next to her but when they left the house she took a pillow with her instead of her child. She had to turn back to collect him', Umm Rafiq recounted. Thus, although elderly women themselves claimed to have saved their children, people in the community sometimes doubted this. Women also blamed male relatives for having asked them to give up their sick children who were burdens to the fleeing community. An old lady in Dheishe said; 'We faced a lot. [During the flight] they asked me to throw away my daughter. [The village leader] asked me to do it. There was no milk, no nothing. I couldn't feed her. [But I kept her,] she is in Jordan now.'

Al-nakba thus connotes self-blame, dishonour and humiliation, but also attempts to save face. It also shows the deep crisis it initiated in Palestinian society. The foundation of society that built on a specific gendered moral order was destabilized. The threat to society came not only from outside, from the Jewish forces, but also from within. As in the words of Smelser (2004) cited above, *al-nakba* was remembered as a serious threat to society and as a violation of some of Palestinian society's fundamental cultural presuppositions, notably those concerning honour and gender structure. Claims that the refugees lacked courage or that village leaders asked women to give up their children as well as attempts to counter such statements also illustrate the 'struggle involved in creating a coherent narrative of self and the past when the future is highly uncertain or even threatened, as in the case of many asylum-seekers, refugees in camps or those with temporary protection' (Eastmond 2007: 254).

Out of these disrupted lives and difficult experiences emerged attempts to re-establish life in a new place, the refugee camp. This was not without its contradictions.

Labelling Camp Refugees

> When we came here [to Dheishe] the UN gave us tents. And the one who provided services to the people was the Red Cross, not the Crescent. It was the Red Cross, not yet the UN. The schools were also in tents, like military tents. They gave supplies to people and [distributed] used clothes. People started to collect wood to sell because they had no money. The women went to peoples' houses and asked them "Would you like to buy some wood?" They also went to the bakeries. There was no electricity. There were [oil] lamps like this [one], there was no electricity. We cooked on the fire. We even washed our clothes on the fire. There were no heaters, no gasoline, nothing. And after that, the UN and the Red Cross took away the tents and built [houses] of stones and cane.
>
> Umm Khaled

Palestinian refugees are a textbook case of refugee labelling, a specific kind of social categorization that emerges in the interaction between displaced people and the organizations that provide them assistance (Zetter 1991; Harell-Bond 1986). The distribution of aid, the policies of rehabilitation and the registration of the displaced Palestinians as refugees intermingled and included a certain amount of stereotyping.

One stereotype involved in the creation of 'the Palestinian refugee' is that refugee-ness is a male quality. Refugee-ness, like Palestinian-ness[98], is counted and inherited through the patriline, passed on from generation to generation[99]. In a gendered fashion, each male family head was issued a registration card for himself and his dependents. A refugee woman married to a non-refugee will hence have children who are not registered as Palestinian refugees or considered as such. The refugee classification has also persisted since the predicament of the refugees remains unresolved and since Palestinian refugees continue to rely on assistance from UNRWA.

The camp was initially viewed as a provisional place of residence before one could go back home. There seems therefore to have been little focus on making oneself at home in the new place and the first years after displacement were also filled with hopes and many attempts to return to the villages, now inside the newly created state of Israel. However, attempts to return or to visit former homes and lands often ended in disaster since many relatives of Dheisheans were killed by Israeli troops as 'infiltrators' (see also chapter 3).

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[98] In the Palestinian National Charter issued by the PLO, Palestinian identity is also seen as inherited through the paternal line; Palestinians are those Arabs who used to reside in Palestine until 1947, *i.e.* before *al-nakba* and those born to a Palestinian *father* inside or outside Palestine since then (Massad 2006: 43f).

[99] Many populations, such as Palestinian camp refugees, stay refugees although the flight took place decades, even generations, ago.

For refugees with a rural background such as Dheisheans, *al-nakba* brought a proletarianization of the landowning families. Many lost savings and investments in the form of land and property. Also families who did not own land in the villages suffered severely since they could no longer work as tenants or cultivate communal village plots. When the land was gone, so was their means of livelihood and their peasant lifestyle. In the quote above, Umm Khaled gives examples of some of the strategies the refugees employed to survive economically in the first years in Dheishe; mainly by accepting aid from charitable organizations and the UNRWA but also by starting up small income-generating activities.

By registering with the UNRWA, people obtained ration cards, which proved that they were Palestinian refugees (*cf.* Peteet 2005a; Schiff 1995). Relief distribution thus literally led to an establishment of refugee-ness. From the start, the village was used as a social unit for organizing and distributing relief and the village headmen (*i.e. muḫtâr* in singular, *maḫatîr* in plural) served as intermediaries with aid organizations (Peteet 2005a: 71). The UNRWA inherited refugee lists compiled by agencies already in the field and then carried out investigations to determine who was in need of relief (Schiff 1995: 22). In this process, there was also a restriction of access to rights; for instance each refugee was allowed a certain amount of aid. To circumvent such restriction, Umm Khaled told me that as a girl she had been clever enough to register twice with the UNRWA to get more food supplies. There seems to have been an ongoing negotiation of trust between relief workers and refugees about rations, which was informed by power imbalances in aid provisions. Refugees doubted that everyone would be treated equally and relief workers doubted that people were sincere about numbers of family members and villagers (Peteet 2005a: 60f).

Providing aid to refugee populations is often inspired by compassion but frequently also by ethnocentric and non-professional attitudes (Harell-Bond 1986: 26). It tends to shape refugees as helpless and aid 'which is imposed from outside not only usurps the roles of the host, suppresses the creative energy of the refugee who could have been helped to help himself, but provokes responses which are hostile and unproductive for all concerned' (*ibid.*: 3). Especially food rations that were intended to prevent the refugees from starving instead made them into dependent recipients, at least initially (Peteet 2005a)[100]. Women and children were sent out to collect rations since accepting relief was considered shameful for adult men. To accept aid is still highly ambiguous among Palestinian refugees since the shame of dependency is mixed with needs and rights as victims of expulsion and ongoing hostilities.

[100] For a more lengthy discussion about the transformative effects of rations, health care and education on Palestinian camp refugees, see Peteet (2005a).

However, among Palestinians, ration cards have been interpreted as 'tickets home' (*ibid.*: 74): the card implies that its holder is indeed a Palestinian refugee and as such has the right to return. Registration with the agency implied legal recognition of refugee-ness and connections to the lost land.

People also started to search for employment as unskilled workers. The UNRWA developed into a major employer of refugees. Today in Dheishe, many of the employees in local UNRWA institutions are refugees from the camp. In refugee administration one aim is in general to provide 'rehabilitation'; the UNRWA interpreted this as giving access to education and work. 'Works' as in the W in the UNRWA were central to the attempts to rehabilitate exiled Palestinians (Peteet 2005a: 48). Peteet (*ibid.*) comments that this was a project of modernization connected to a refashioning of identities: through interventions such as vocational training and resettlement, 'the refugee' would enter the modern world and acquire a new sense of self while coming to terms with displacement. Palestinian refugees both rejected and accommodated these interventions. The UNRWA has also been despised for being part of the organization that initially voted for a partition of the homeland in addition to its inability to implement political rights. Fraught with contradictions, the UN organization came to stand for survival and social continuity as well as new identities.

Dheisheans also remained stateless and thus liminal in 'the national order of things' (Malkki 1992). During Jordanian rule of the West Bank (1948-1967), most camp inhabitants obtained Jordanian passports. Since the beginning of Israeli occupation, they have held Israeli identity cards, which are still vital to be able to pass Israeli checkpoints and roadblocks as well as to obtain permits for work and travel. Today Dheisheans also have Palestinian passports distributed by the PA since 1995, which was never established as the authority of a state, but only of self-ruling areas[101]. These passports, however, are not recognized by all countries and since Israel controls all border crossings they are useless without an Israeli travel permit. In addition to refugee cards, Dheisheans thus hold multiple administrative tags, as semi-Jordanians, as occupied subjects of Israel and as semi-citizens of the PA.

Furnished with refugee cards, the former peasants were reduced to a bureaucratic category of refugees. This emerged alongside stigmatization of the refugees in the local community. In general, many locals in the Bethlehem governorate seem to have despised the displaced peasants as poor and dirty. The population in the West Bank was almost doubled by *al-nakba*, which may

[101] A few Dheisheans had foreign passports after having lived abroad. Others held Jerusalem ID cards distributed by the Israeli authorities (see chapter 1). For a more extensive account on Palestinian travel documents, see for instance BADIL (2004: 120).

explain why the local population did not always welcome the destitute refugees[102]. Peteet (2005a: 56) notes that there was a 'compassion fatigue' among the non-refugee population that set in within a year or two. The flight hence implied change also for those Palestinians who were not expelled.

The stigma was related to the striking poverty of Dheishean families during the first three decades after the flight. Families that were comparably well off at the time of fieldwork had, like most camp inhabitants, lived in deep deprivation in the past. My host family, for instance, recounted a story about what my hostess had said when her children complained about the poor food she served them: 'No, it's not the same food as this morning. Tonight we are eating bread with oil and *za'ta*r (*i.e.* a spicy mix of herbs, mainly thyme), this morning it was oil and *za'ta*r with bread'. Despite the wage labour many refugees eventually managed to get, they had remained dependent on UN food aid and remittances from relatives working abroad[103]. Children in the camp had started to work on school holidays from an early age. The scarcity was connected to the loss of livelihood in 1948; people had no land to cultivate or sell, neither did they have professions or education. Palestinian peasants had their resources in the land and lacked the broad networks that the educated urban elites and merchants had; they had basically nowhere else to go than to the camps (Fafo 1994: 47).

Emplacement in a Refugee Camp

Housing in refugee camps or resettlement areas for displaced populations often have distinct physical characteristics that distinguish them from homes in surrounding places (Zetter 1991: 52ff). By extension, particular physical attributes were ascribed by Dheisheans and others to 'the Palestinian refugee', who was associated with poverty and overcrowding. The physical character of Dheishe had initially been clearly visible. As Umm Khaled recounted at the beginning of this chapter, when the camp was newly established in the 1950s, the refugees spent several years living in tents. The older inhabitants of the camp recalled that the school had been in one tent, the medical centre in another and the UN distribution centre in a third. Abu Amir, who worked with the local authorities in Bethlehem, explained: 'My family lived more than eight years in the tent. I was born in a tent in 1953. And because of that I have problems in my chest, it's like asthma in my chest. And I have difficulty breathing.' As Umm Khaled mentioned, only later did the UNRWA provide a basic housing unit for each family. Until this day, refugee camps in the

[102] The West Bank population swelled from 460,000 to 740,000 with the massive arrival of refugees. The impact on the Gaza Stripe was even more dramatic (BADIL 2004: 37).
[103] Zetter (2007) notes that the root causes of migration are often complex and hence refugees and economic migrants are not always distinguishable. For an account of Palestinian migration, see Hilal (2006).

West Bank stand out from the surrounding villages and towns. Dheishe is now also both physically and symbolically marked off from its surroundings by a monument at the main entrance that commemorates martyrs and by a graveyard for martyrs at the opposite end of the camp (see chapter 10). Both of these constructions were undertaken by camp residents.

Although the refugees' lives and identities were institutionalized and reduced to bureaucratic cases, Dheisheans actively involved themselves in place-making as a way to form a community-based 'home' in the camp. This process was similar to the one that Hammond (2004) describes taking place among refugees who returned to Ethiopia[104]. Hammond posits that three sets of practices are involved in establishing residency and belonging. The first set consists of mundane everyday practices such as house building, cultivating, tea drinking, trading, attending mosque and celebrating public holidays. One example of this among my informants was provided by Umm Khaled, who mentioned collecting wood. The second set relates to representation, by which is meant conscious reflection upon or about the place. Representation results from individuals and groups engaging with their environment through daily practices and it complements direct experience. For instance, Dheisheans described the camp as 'a site of resistance' after conscious contemplation. Thirdly, community formation through the daily sharing of goods, favours and knowledge also helps transform a space into a social place. Community implies a sense of sameness among people who are flung together by circumstance and it makes them think of themselves as a unit that belongs to a particular place. In Dheishe, a community of fate developed through shared experiences of suffering and struggle and shared rural origins.

The Dynamics of Lingering Villages

As for many displaced groups, the past and lost places have taken on particular importance for Palestinian refugees. In the occupied territories, camp refugees generally have rural origins and these are evident in a variety of ways. The disintegration of peasant life and the imposition of a camp refugee tag also prompted responses such as the reassertion of pre-existing identities.

Turton (2005: 258) reminds us of 'the power places have to call forth an emotional response in us, a power which is especially potent when skilfully and artfully linked to the ideology of nationalism'. Lost Palestinian villages are infused with such power.

> The past - it was beautiful. We used to cook *ḫubbêze* [*i.e.* mallow]. We used to get bread and yoghurt, everything, from the land. This was how we used to eat. Today, if

[104] These returning refugees did not return to the homes that they had originally fled from, but to a new locality in another area in Ethiopia. In both cases, groups were allocated large empty fields where none of them had lived before

> we are relaxed and we have no troubles, it's good, but in the past nobody asked you about your identity card; "Where are you going, where do you come from?" It was much better; they never asked us about our identity cards. We used to work with the help of oxen; we had no tractors or machines when we worked on the land. In the past, it was much better. In the past everybody used to get his food harder, by sweating, not like in those days, by asking. […]
>
> I love my land. My sheep, my cows, my house. I dream about the village every night. […] Every day it becomes stronger and stronger. All my thoughts, all my thinking, fly to my village. About the well, about taking water from the well to pour for the cows and the sheep. I still think about it. I bring the water from the well to let them drink in the afternoon, we return home and I give them some food. I used to herd sheep and cows together.
>
> Abu Khaled

It is in its absence that home tends to move people most forcefully (Hobsbawm 1991). Abu Khaled, who was some years older than his wife Umm Khaled, loved to tell stories from his life in the village. For instance, when I met him during a shorter visit in 2006, Abu Khaled was sick in his bed but as soon as we had exchanged greetings he launched into a story about his animals and how he had brought them water from the well.

In people's memories, life was simpler and brighter before *al-nakba* and the food was tastier. The food one ate in the past was also considered cleaner and healthier. Foods became mnemonic devices (*cf.* Ben Ze'ev 2004; Peteet 2005a: 77). This was probably related to the fact that food rations distributed after *al-nakba* consisted of foods the refugees were not familiar with. 'Rations were [also] a constant and intimate reminder of the violent separation from the land and the fruits of one's own labour' (*ibid.*: 77). Elderly refugees spontaneously talked about their everyday life as farmers. They dwelled on details about how to harvest and preserve food, about the features of the landscape in their villages and they explained the names of tools that younger people did not know. Their stories described lives filled with hard work but also closeness to nature and other living beings. They remembered village life as free of political strife and as ordered and secure. 'Even if we got exhausted from work, our minds were at peace,' explained Umm Rafiq. Village life was remembered as an almost mythic past that was frequently compared with today's depressing situation (*cf.* Sayigh 1979).

Sayigh (*ibid.*: 11) notes that this kind of reconstruction of the past among Palestinians in Lebanon had several meanings. Firstly, the stories corrected the biases of more official historical accounts, either Israeli or Palestinian, but they also passed on knowledge to younger generations about their 'true homes' in Palestine and they thus gave a sense of belonging. There was also a political element in this remembering, which refused a Zionist takeover of former peasant land and urged for political action.

My elderly informants were in general more able and willing to describe their everyday life in the villages than they were to talk about *al-nakba*. They seemed relieved that I was not only interested in the more traumatic events they had experienced but that I also asked about their former daily routine. Younger family members did not always find this particularly interesting[105]. When I tried to interview younger people about their village background they often became embarrassed or even annoyed because they felt they knew so little about their villages. In all families, telling stories about village life in the past had probably not existed or only did so in the first decades after *al-nakba*. Older people's lived experiences of rural life often contrasted sharply with younger generations' vague images of lost village life.

> We were *fallaḥîn* [*i.e.* peasants]. The tomatoes we had – you should have seen them! They were not like the ones you see today. There were only tomatoes in the summer because they were cultivated without water [irrigation]. And we used to dry them to store them for the winter. And it was the same with zucchinis. And we made yoghurt. We had delicious meat and big zucchinis. Everything was delicious, not like today. We used to cut meat up and we put it in a jar. We cut the lamb into small pieces, cooked it and then we put it in a jar to store it there until it was finished. And we made stuffed bread in the *tabôn* [*i.e.* an outside oven]. We had chicken, like the chicken here on the roof […] and we had doves as well. […] In this season, we had *ṣaber* [*i.e.* prickly pear], but not like the one that is sold now. We used to cultivate it ourselves and would get 100 kilos. Today 2 fruits cost 1 shekel! And we cultivated figs - we used to get 90 kilos. When we shoed the horses, the man who did it he didn't get paid in money, but he waited until the harvest and then got his payment in kind. There was not money like today, we ate from our land.
>
> Umm Hassan, in her late 70s

The pictures of village life painted by my informants interacted with nationalistic discourses about an authentic traditional past[106]. Above Umm Hassan refers not only to her everyday duties in the village but also to a Palestinian national imagery within which the *fallâḥ*, or peasant, and rural life tend to embody authentic Palestinian-ness[107]. Swedenburg (1990) has for instance called the Palestinian peasant a national signifier that contests Israeli claims of Biblical rights to the land. 'By using the *fallah* as signifier of their intimate connection to a landscape, Palestinians stake

[105] The daughter-in-law of a woman I interviewed was working in the kitchen during the interview. At one point she interrupted her mother-in-law to say: '[Nina] doesn't want to know about this –tell her about the Jews!' But for the refugees who had lived and survived the flight, it made sense to juxtapose these experiences with a somewhat mythic past.

[106] The concern with tradition and authenticity in Palestinian society is shown in numerous ways; in Palestinian *salôns* as well as at official exhibitions, items originating from a rural past such as farming implements, are often displayed. There is also a revival of Palestinian embroidery especially of *thoubs*, the embroidered traditional female dress that was common in parts of Palestine. Restaurants are also often decorated in 'peasant style' with agricultural tools hanging on the walls, sometimes mixed with a 'Bedouin style', tent-like décor. Peteet (2005a: 149) notes that men's *keffyeh* (the traditional black or red and white checked headscarf) has become charged with meaning as Palestinian guerrillas have used it as an emblem of militancy.

[107] Ideas about authenticity and tradition also inform several other national projects in the Middle East (*cf*. Abu Lughod 2005; Salamandra 2004; Shrycock 1997).

out historical counter-claims as Israel makes the territory over' (*ibid.*: 22). Moreover, official nationalism has overlooked social distinctions and used this peasant imagery to unite a dispersed Palestinian nation. People in the camps embody not only struggle and suffering but also a lingering Palestinian genuine village life; camps and their inhabitants are seen as loci of resistance, suffering as well as authenticity, although wounded.

The authentic village past was remembered as coloured by more elaborate traditions than those of today - wedding celebrations lasted for days and guests would be received in communal guesthouses (see also Slyomovics 1998). Dheisheans said that many customs and traditions from the villages had disappeared or changed in the camp; for instance, marriage age was now higher both than it was in the past and than it is in neighbouring villages. Another example I could note were the lack of stories about spirits or *jinn* in Dheishe. Rothenberg (2004), who conducted fieldwork some ten years ago in the village of Artas, just behind the camp, recorded many stories about *jinns* but during my fieldwork in Dheishe, I hardly heard any. When I asked people about it, they simply said that they 'did not tell these stories any more'.

Some places are made in the absence of other places or as a direct response to the loss of a place. For refugees in particular, memories of a lost place might become significant building blocks of emplacement somewhere else. When they arrived at Dheishe or another Palestinian refugee camp, people not only registered as refugees but they also settled according to their village origin and they named their neighbourhoods after villages (so-called *idraś hayyarat*). This settlement pattern was an attempt to socially recreate the lost villages[108] (see also Fafo 1994; Farah 1999: 125f; Peteet 2005a; Slyomovics 1998; Sayigh 1979: 10). When people are in situations of displacement and crisis, they are usually unwilling to experiment with social innovation but tend instead to consciously seek to maintain social and symbolic structures (*e.g.* Colson 1973). Dheisheans, however, managed only partially to maintain familiar structures since people from the same village ended up in different camps and had to deal with the death and dispersal of relatives. For several decades, the divisions between villages were recognizable in the camp. Thus, emplacement is not only a practical arrangement but it may also commemorate or create continuity with lost places. When this is a collective undertaking, as it is in Dheishe, social memory interacts with powerful institutions such as states (*e.g.* Israel) or international organizations (*e.g.* the UNRWA).

[108] Another example is provided by Slyomovics (1998): some of the displaced Palestinians originating from the village Ein Houd, which is now an Israeli artist colony, replicated their village a few kilometres away from their lost homes. Ein Houd Al Jadida, meaning the new Ein Houd, was established by some of the original inhabitants, as a direct response to the loss of their village.

While the Red Cross and the UN provided the physical structure of the camp, the newly arrived refugees attempted to recreate their dispersed worlds morally, religiously and socially, for instance by calling to prayer. Abu Amir, a man in his fifties with a degree in Social Studies, said:

> I was thinking of what you said [Nina the other evening] about how a place is created. When my father [who was an *imâm*] came from Jericho, he found a high place to call the prayer from, "*allahu akbar*", and people started to pray. They [*i.e.* male family heads] also decided on the rules in the camp. "This is suitable, this is not suitable". They had the same traditions as in the villages. They solved their conflicts according to traditions in the village.
>
> Abu Amir

As Turton (2005: 258) notes, making a place for oneself is concerned with meaning-production. Community formation in Dheishe followed certain patterns that reflected both familiar social structures and the disruption that these structures underwent due to displacement (*cf.* Hammond 2004).

Another way of re-establishing the social structures of the lost communities was to intermarry according to village. This overlapped with the ideal of cousin marriage, since villagers were often related. As in Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon place and identity have been mutually constitutive: 'Identities and affiliations, belonging to a particular group whether family or village, nuanced the process by which camps became places of attachment and identification. In turn, these identities were profoundly transformed by life in these bounded spaces' (Peteet 2005a: 100).

On the other hand, in the early 21st century, both the village quarters and village endogamy were disappearing. Abu Amir, who had married a relative from the same village some 15 years ago, noted that the social boundaries between villages were losing importance:

> Well, the new generation considers themselves Dheishe camp inhabitants [first of all], you know people. Me for example, I was born here. I don't know the old village. So I grew up, as I said, with this neighbour from Falujja and that one from Bayt Etab, another nearby village, and that one from Khurda, and that one from Khalis. We were together in the same place, playing, going, coming [together]. […] Now the new generation, young people of 18 years or 30 years of age no longer listen so much to the elderly about differences between the villages. They are living together. This one is married to that one and everyone is mixed together.

New social networks that extended beyond village origins were necessary and an outcome of the accidental community of the camp. Dheisheans' social networks derived from multiple sources such as school, work, political party affiliation, NGO activity and location in the camp.

The importance of village origins did however linger on in other ways. Rural origins were, for instance, still evident in camp dwellers' accents, particularly those of older Dheisheans, and they were often clearly distinguishable from those of urbanites and villagers around them. People also tended to know which family and village other camp inhabitants came from. Abu Wisam, for instance, who was a Dheishean in his late thirties who owned a shop in Bethlehem, estimated that he knew from which village some 90 per cent of his fellow camp residents originated. He argued that the relationships between camp inhabitants had compensated for the relationships that were lost with *al-nakba* and that there was a 'camp matrix' of rules of conduct in the camp. Since most of a person's kin would stem from the same village, attendance at funerals and weddings allowed people to display support both as kin and as co-villager. In the traditional conflict resolution (*i.e. ṣulḥa*) that was often used in the camp, fellow villagers were an important resource for support and solidarity. Some former villages had also organized village committees or associations (*cf.* Slyomovics 1998; Fafo 1994; Ghabra 1987) that supported members economically and socially. People in Dheishe were normally also buried at the local graveyard but in a distribution that reflected their village of origin.

New naming practices also used the names of villages. Abu Amir explained that '[People] put the name of the village [on a shop or business]. For example in Amman as we have someone from here there, there is a pharmacy called Zakkariyya [after the village]'. Children, especially girls, were also occasionally named after the geography of Palestine. Karmel was a popular girl's name taken from the Mount Carmel inside present Israel as was Yafa, after the coastal town Jaffa. Slyomovics (1998: 201f) notes that these naming practices are spread throughout the Palestinian diaspora.

A rich cultural production had also evolved around village names and 'authentic' village life. At an exhibition during the days in May when Palestinians commemorate *al-nakba*, a political party displayed agricultural tools and traditional dresses that were used in the villages before the flight. Privately, some people collected old items such as coffee tins that were imagined to have been used in the villages and they arranged them as decoration in their *salôns*, which are rooms for receiving guests. The names of the more than 40 villages that Dheisheans had come from had been painted on the walls of the youth organization Ibdaa. There were also wall paintings that showed women dressed in the female traditional dress, *thoub*, carrying water in jars from a village well. At another NGO, Karama, children performed a play containing a scene about the past in which the children imitated the village dialects their grandparents still spoke.

Palestinian refugee camps are in themselves places in which remembered social structures have been replicated but they also serve as stages for other kinds of commemorative activity

(Connerton 1989; Gillis 1994). Activities such as the commemoration of martyrs establish social memory and mark some events out as symbolically important to the whole community. The political scientist Laleh Khalili (2007) has investigated national commemorations among Palestinians and shown that they contain narratives of heroism, suffering and steadfastness. She sees commemoration as fundamental in the constitution of Palestinian nationalism.

A Community of Fate

Palestinian national discourse has drawn much of its force from the suffering of displacement and encampment. Indeed, Dheisheans saw themselves as a community of fate and the camp was a place in which people shared suffering and struggle. Older generations of refugees in particular repeatedly confirmed their collective destiny by saying: 'We have suffered a lot'. Sometimes the community was extended to include all Palestinians, who had all suffered in various ways.

The construction of such a self-image provides one way to burst the constraints of labels and limiting conditions. Another process that tends to transform identities is political mobilization. The location of refugees in particular places may affect institutionalization. Malkki (1995a: 237f), building on Foucault's work on disciplinary institutions, argues that her field site, a refugee camp in Tanzania, '[…] as a technology of power, […] ended up being much more than a device of containment and enclosure; it grew into a locus of continual creative subversion and transformation'. Although refugee camps and other institutions such as prisons tend to fix and objectify people as 'refugees' or 'inmates', they may also become generative, productive sites for social and political invention (*ibid.*: 238). Objectification was thus not completely out of the control of Dheisheans.

The Palestinian national discourse interacted with the refugees' own elaborations of their bureaucratic identity so as to distinguish them as true fighters and sufferers. The empowerment of politicization contested both victimization and marginalization; it was an attempt to reframe 'the Palestinian refugee' and the powerlessness attendant upon this label. Dheisheans and other Palestinian refugees have also used their refugee status for concrete political aims, by claiming their right of return to their home villages, refusing to pay bills to the Palestinian Authority (PA), protesting about PA corruption and autocracy and so on. A Palestinian refugee card still also gives the holder access to a number of services, such as free healthcare, help for the handicapped and free compulsory schooling[109]. To be a Dheishean was meaningful and valued in a number of ways.

[109] Fafo (1994: 55) reports that in Lebanon, the Palestinian refugees' access to UNRWA services has created a competition between Palestinians and their lower class Lebanese hosts. This envy also had political implications.

When people in the camp consciously reflected upon the place in which they lived it was represented as full of significance but also of ambivalence. An example of representation connected to emplacement (Hammond 2004) was given by Abu Wisam:

> Camp people are the root of the case [*i.e.* the Palestinian issue]. [Being a refugee] makes you think about politics a lot, and it helps you understand the conflict and want to join the conflict as well, to fight. […] The Israeli side, they have tried to destroy [the refugees] psychologically, by putting pressure on us to give up our right of return. So they will resolve the most important problem in the conflict. This explains why the Israelis attack the camps. Let's think about the first intifada, it started in Jabbalyah camp [in Gaza]. It started in a camp because in the camp they suffer more, they have more pressure [from the situation]. […] [The Israelis] want to make you give away your right to go back, to make sure that they are strong, so strong that you can't even think about going back. To not be able to think about it even. They want you to think about the new problems they created for you, to make you forget the main problems that you started out [to struggle] for.

The camp inhabitants' extensive involvement in uprisings against Israel also exhibits their self-image as fearless fighters. The Israelis also tend to view refugee camps as more political and dangerous than Palestinian towns and villages. However, Abu Wisam also outlined how a troubling apolitical identity may be emerging due to overwhelming concerns with survival.

I heard another example of the political value of being a camp refugee when I was out walking one day with Rami. Rami was a high school student and, depending on his mood, he would sometimes talk about Dheishe and show me sites that he considered important for my understanding of the place and its residents. I filmed with my digital video camera while he talked at the places he wanted to show me. That is how I came to know about the alley that children and youngsters run and hide from Israeli soldiers in after they have thrown stones at the main entrance. Rami described this alley as the heart of the camp and he said that if a youngster did not know about it and the paths and passages connected to it they would not be able to get away. It was obvious that to Rami and his friends the camp was a home that carried political meaning.

Ibin al-muḥayyam, literally 'son of the camp', is an expression sometimes used by the camp residents that hints at a multifaceted local identity. While being a camp refugee held political value and was an asset for receiving aid and free services, it was still a social stigma locally. Mounsir, a young unemployed camp resident, jokingly said while pointing at himself: 'Here on my forehead, it's written that I'm a refugee'. Everyone present laughed. His friend Walid, a university student, continued by explaining to me that one became more serious by living in a camp because the conditions in the camps were harsher than at other places. A 'son of the camp' would own no land, like a villager, and no company or factory, like townspeople. 'Immediately, you can see from the way a person behaves or talks that he is from a camp. It's not a problem,

but it's your nature', said Walid. For these young Dheisheans, the sense of belonging to the camp parallels the strong village identity that the refugees remember as having infused village life before *al-nakba*.

Summing up this chapter, I have discussed Dheisheans' multifaceted identity formation as camp refugees. Becoming refugees involved both continuity and change with regard to social patterns as well as politics, education and livelihood. Narratives of flight as well as of village and camp life were used to order and manage experiences as well as to reflect upon one's predicament. Despite the tremendous changes Dheisheans had experienced since 1948, village origins lingered on in stories, in the memories of the elderly camp inhabitants, in social structures, in naming practices and in different cultural expressions. Deeply ambivalent identities emerged in the confusing interface between the latent and manifest meanings of the refugee label. These often simultaneously implied victimization, empowerment and stigmatization. But in spite of 'being people out of place', the camp inhabitants had actually become integrated in their new locality and they had created a new sense of belonging, although they lacked citizenship.

5. Living with Violence and Insecurity in Everyday Life

This chapter investigates some themes related to resilience and to keeping up 'normal life' under dire conditions. Events and behaviour that in 'peace-time', or in the Palestinian case 'non-occupied time', would be considered abnormal, such as outbursts of hostility and fear, sudden deaths and political imprisonment, need to be rendered manageable.

This chapter is divided into three parts; first, it investigates Dheisheans' understandings of and reactions to their situation as an emergency. The abnormality of their life was shown in comparison with other people's lives and in direct responses to fearful events. At the same time, as in many conflict-ridden societies, the camp inhabitants had to some degree got used to living under violent occupation. The second part therefore deals with processes of normalization. By maintaining daily routines and naturalizing different sorts of violations, Dheisheans extended the boundaries of 'normality'. However, it is important to underline that people in war-like conditions do not simply get used to their predicament in an uncomplicated way. Camp residents were frequently flung between a feeling of precarious normality, which defined some events as 'ordinary' because they were so common, and an alarming state of crisis. In response to the violence people had become suspicious of the intentions of others and this was based on fear of Israel. In the final section, this chapter therefore discusses the many negotiations in Dheishe about whom to trust and whom to be wary of. A total breakdown of trust was avoided by upholding cultural norms of hospitality and stoicism.

Between Emergency and Normality

> For those living in the affluent first world, crisis is understood as a temporary abnormality linked to a particular event […] But for those living in constant crisis and subject to repetitive traumas, and where 'emergency is not the exception but the rule' (Walter Benjamin 1969) the conventional wisdom and understanding of human vulnerability and resilience […] is inadequate.
>
> Scheper-Hughes (2008: 36f)

Scheper-Hughes notes that Western models of temporary calamity underestimate the human capacity not only to survive and live with terrible events but even to thrive despite extreme violence and deprivation[110]. However, this is not a question of either/or; people tend to be *both*

[110] Diagnosis such as Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is culturally constructed and unlikely to have universal resonance (*cf*. Kleinman *et al*. 1997; Summerfield 2004). Nonetheless, PTSD-like syndromes can be observed in many parts of the world (Scheper-Hughes 2008). Scheper-Hughes (*ibid*.) also writes that the trauma model is based on a specific view of humans as fundamentally vulnerable beings with few defence mechanisms.

resilient and frail. This duality holds true for Dheisheans' ways of coming to terms with prolonged crisis. In my experience, the situation in the Palestinian areas was distinguished by oscillating between acceptance of the order of things and panic. Building on his fieldwork in Colombia, Taussig (1992: 18) described this condition as:

> a state of doubleness of social being in which one moves in bursts between somehow accepting the situation as normal, only to be thrown into a panic or shocked into disorientation by an event, a rumor, a sight, something said, or not said –something that even while it requires the normal in order to make its impact, destroys it.

Normalization[111] as a tactic of resilience requires keeping up familiar routines but also reframing anomalous events as 'sort of normal' (Macek 2000; Scheper-Hughes 2008). It was in this fluctuation between normality and emergency that Dheisheans developed concerns about other people's intentions. The difficulties in having faith in others may also make it more difficult to bounce back since trusting relationships may function as protection against disintegration of self and community (Rutter 1987).

Experiencing Ongoing Crisis

As we saw in chapter 2, there was no shortage of emergencies and violence in Dheisheans' everyday lives. These included army incursions, assassinations and the presence of snipers as well as regular nightly arrests, house-demolitions and curfews[112]. Such recurring crises made many feel that the lives they were living were not only abnormal but also threatened. For instance, one woman interrupted her mother's account of the flight in 1948 by sarcastically telling me 'Maybe there will be a *nakba* bigger than that one. Then you can write a new PhD, Nina!'

A common response to stressful events and violence was for people to immediately relate what had happened and repeat it many times to whomever was prepared to listen. One example of this was described in the introduction, when Umm Ayman and her child bumped into an Israeli soldier in the dark. She retold the story many times, to anyone who came her way. This worked like a kind of spontaneous and individual 'debriefing'. People in the camp were used to

[111] I use 'normalizaton' as an analytical concept related to resilience. My way of employing this term should not be confused with how some Dheisheans used the English word 'normalizaton' to denote normalized relations with Israelis, often in the form of cooperation between Palestinian and Israeli NGOs. In the context of a Palestinian uprising, such cooperation was understood as betrayal by many locals at the time.

[112] Some Dheisheans also seemed to have a distorted sense of time, probably reflecting a sense of constant threat. Time tended to blur for many people in the camp who experienced living in a constant state of emergency. When Rami recounted his talks at Palestinian solidarity organizations in Europe it also became evident that he portrayed Dheishe to European audiences was as a place constantly under curfew and surrounded by snipers. This was not actually the case. I imagine that his way of describing the situation he lived in was not only designed to gain political support for the Palestinian cause but was also an accurate reflection of how he experienced it.

listening to such stories and to acknowledging each other's pain or 'feeling with each other' as they put it. The shows of solidarity that were expected at funerals and prison releases (see below) could also occur spontaneously. One evening I went with Dalal, an unmarried factory worker, to visit her neighbour. We found the neighbour in tears, worried about her sick son who was in jail. Dalal sat down to comfort the woman for an hour or so and this was understood as a 'natural' manifestation of empathy and solidarity in the face of deprivation. It was often possible to find someone to turn to like this within the Dheishean community, and this may be a crucial factor in recovery (*cf.* Rutter 1987).

Many camp residents were moreover literally sleeping through their upsetting experiences. When they came home after having travelled through the West Bank or having been held at checkpoints or at gunpoint, they were often so exhausted that they would have to sleep for hours. One report describes how Palestinian school children see sleep as a way of relieving the tension of dangerous or long journeys home from school (Save the Children 2003: 14). This need to sleep, which I also felt after experiencing stressful events in the West Bank, did not seem to come just from physical exhaustion but from general fatigue. Sleeping can be seen as a response to the general exhaustion after four years of uprising (*cf.* Allen 2008).

Pain and depression were silently manifested in Dheisheans' bodies as the long-term responses to repeated emergencies. During fieldwork, I noted that many people, both men and women, felt that they were in bad health. They were constantly going to the clinic for medical check ups but the doctors were often unable to find anything somatically 'wrong' with them[113]. The painkillers and liniments that I had brought from abroad soon became popular with my hosts, who found them much more effective than local medicines. Camp residents were clearly seeking both medical and social support to deal with their fear and hardships.

People seemed to have different ways of making sense of their somatic responses to social suffering, with all their moral resonances (*cf.* Csordas; Good *et al.* 1992; Kleinman 1995, 1997). Sawsan for instance described her depression as related to the political situation. My ageing hostess, on the other hand, made no connection between her diffuse pain and her life experience. Huda, who was a housewife and about 30 years old, ached all over her body. She had also noted a general fatigue, which she related to fear and worry:

> I [have noticed] that people in general are tired. I know that psychological problems are reflected in their physical condition and capacity. I feel that everyone, young and old, has pain and they can't do physical activities. For example, someone like me, why do I always have pain in my legs and back? It's because I'm always thinking

[113] I also heard women report that they were absent-minded and forgetful and they viewed these as symptoms of the stress they were under.

> about the situation and the fear of living as we do. Also, you see it on the faces of people. For example, on happy occasions you don't see people interacting [socially] or being happy. When my brother got married, I was not in the mood to get dressed, fix my hair or my make up. If it hadn't been my brother's wedding I wouldn't have gone.

Since Huda's husband was in prison she did indeed have reasons to worry. The term *ta'bân* in Arabic expresses not only physical tiredness but also feelings of distress and unhappiness (*cf.* Dabbagh 2005: 206). It is my impression that although both men and women had somatic responses to their suffering, women tended to talk more openly about them. This was probably because Palestinian men were expected to be more stoical than women.

The Absence of a Proper Life

When asked directly, people in the camp would willingly list a number of things that were upsetting about the situation in the West Bank and Gaza taken as proofs of its' abnormality' and their own uniquely vulnerable position in the world[114]. My informants used phrases such as 'there is no life', 'we don't have a life', 'I'm tired of everything', 'I'm exhausted', 'we just want to live'. They talked of having no future, no life or happiness. Life (*ḥayâ*) or to live (*âś*) had become synonymous with normality. Ahmed, Hanan's husband, commented on the impossibility of planning even for the immediate future and how this made life uncertain and difficult:

> Two years ago I didn't like to speak about our history. Now I don't like to speak about this moment or our future because everything is bad. […] We don't know our future, we don't know the future of our children, how it will become. We don't know if we can continue to live. The future of our children is not clear, our future is not clear. I don't like to live in this situation. Most Palestinians don't like living in this situation, this is why we have been struggling for 100 years. And I think we will continue our struggle.

Ahmed here talks about the impossibility of life, both for himself and for the Palestinian nation. The national struggle has to go on although the future is unknown. All one could hope for was that an ideal order of normality would emerge at national, household and individual levels; these levels often interacted and were not always clearly distinguished but the ideal referred to how people would like to live.

[114] One way of coping with the Palestinians' predicament is for Palestinians to present their victimhood to an international audience and to tell detailed 'stories of misery' (see also chapter 8; Khalili 2007: 103ff, 204ff). It is my impression that most foreigners visiting the occupied territories are told such stories. It is, however, possible that Dheisheans tended to emphasize stoical ideals rather than dwell on their miseries, since in my experience 'tragic narratives' were more common in the neighbouring towns.

It seems to be common in violent societies or societies in crisis that the ideal state of a proper, moral life is frequently talked about in its absence, as a negation. One example is provided by Macek (2000: 24f), who writes about Sarajevans under siege. Among them '[normality] was charged with a sense of moral, of what was good, right or desirable: a 'normal life' was a description of how people wanted to live'. While normality is socially construed and constantly re-negotiated (*ibid.*) it often seems to become essentialized in societies where people lack the prerequisites for such a 'normal life'.

Most people in the camp understood the abnormality of their lives as directly caused by the Israeli state and to some extent also by individual Israelis. In an interview, Abu Amir recounted his discussion with an Israeli professor at a meeting some years earlier:

> I told him "in your whole life nobody insulted you or said a bad word to you or slapped you. It's happened to me in all my life. I have been slapped and humiliated hundreds of times. And kicked. Every day at the checkpoint, Israeli soldiers humiliate me. […] And you want me to be like you, to be quiet and peaceful and to be… I can't. There is great pressure on me, on my shoulders. So when I see you, ok I can sometimes deal with you as a human being, but after ten minutes or ten days or months I remember that you are someone from the society that took everything from my life." I am from a family that was considered very rich in the village [we came from]. And who stole my future, my life, my happiness? I have become the way I am as a result.

In Abu Amir's account, he had been robbed of the life he and his family would have had if it had not been for *al-nakba*. The quote also mentions Palestinians' frequent experiences of humiliation (of being beaten, offended or prevented from moving) and this makes a sense of normal order impossible.

Sawsaan expressed her longing for a better life in more poetic terms: 'The bird, when you put it in a golden cage, is [that] a free life? If you give it the best conditions, is [the bird] free and happy? No, it's no life. And I am like the bird. I want a free life and space.' In these accounts there is no doubt about how extreme the Palestinian situation is; compared to the ideal moral order, the conditions in the camp offered 'no life'.

The camp residents often compared their own situation with how they viewed or imagined life in other parts of the world to underline their own abnormal situation (*cf.* Åkesson 2004: 79; Gardener 1993, 1995; Appadurai 1991). Abu Amir pointed out that people in other countries were free to come and go as they wanted, they could love and live, dance and sing. 'You have all the freedoms and we have nothing here', he concluded. Proper life was seen as what other people had. Palestinians do not have their own nation-state or passports that are recognized by other countries; they are anomalies in the 'national order of things' (Malkki 1992). 'Life' could also be

envisaged as existing across the Green Line, inside Israel. For instance, Zaynab, whose morning we will follow below, indignantly compared the situation of the Palestinians with that of the Israelis: 'When a [Palestinian] father goes to work once or twice a year … Don't his children want to eat and drink? Don't they have the right to live and enjoy life? Don't they have the right to play like the Israelis? Is it right or not? Why are [the Israelis] living and we are not?' Thus, other 'normal' places were compared with the Palestinian territories so as to render the latter as sites of ongoing calamity.

In an interview, Hanan told me how her young daughter had cried because they could not go anywhere when the camp was under curfew: 'Before the intifada, there were no curfews, we used to take her to a swimming pool in Bayt Sahour [*i.e.* a neighbouring town]. She seemed to be happy. But these days we can't even go to Bayt Sahour. When we see some nice place on TV, she says she wants to go to that place.' This televized imagery of a complete and full life at distant places further added to a sense of abnormality in Palestinian society. Sometimes I had the impression that people in the camp found it hard to believe that anything sad happened in more affluent parts of the world.

Many people, especially from the younger generations, wanted to leave the country to establish proper lives elsewhere, permanently or temporarily. I soon lost count of all the Dheisheans who asked me to help them to study and work in Sweden. I also received several requests to marry men who wanted a chance to start a new life abroad. It was also apparent that most people had more than one strategy for improving their lives. A person might one day talk about leaving 'Palestine' to take an academic degree and the next day buy land in the hopes of being able to build a house there. One of my informants tried to get a work visa through an exiled relative who was living in another country but at the same time he was expanding his business close to the camp. Given the uncertainty of their situation, their strategy seems to be to keep as many options as possible open. The camp residents who attempted to leave were often younger people, unmarried or newly married. More men than women said they wanted to work in another country and some of the women I spoke to were encouraging their husbands to try to migrate to find work.

A proper life was also nostalgically situated in the past. While the younger generations dreamed of life abroad, elderly people in Dheishe longed for their villages and for the times before flight and occupation, but also before consumerism; 'now it's all about money' said Abu Akram, Ahmed's ageing father. Most camp inhabitants also saw the first intifada as the ideal form of resistance because people had been united. Some were even nostalgic for the often criticized Oslo period because at that time it had still been possible to work in Israel and things were better

economically in the Bethlehem area. There had also been hope then of a better future. Some of the younger people in Dheishe had direct experience of this imagined normality in the past but young children knew of nothing else than the uncertainty of the intifada *al-aqṣa* and they often acted out their fear and showed less ability to deal with hostilities. Judging by their behaviour, they were simply too afraid.

Extending the Limits of Normality

Like other people involved in freedom fights, Palestinians have rendered their suffering meaningful by understanding it in political terms. However, faith in the Palestinian leadership and their way of prompting the national project has diminished considerably in recent years. Understanding experiences of violence as politically valuable is no longer a self-evident way of handling them and the amount of violence during the intifada *al-aqṣa* has probably limited people's capacity to understand it in alternative ways. One means of coping that has grown in significance in Palestinian society is to carry on 'as usual' by concentrating on upholding mundane routine (*cf.* Kelly 2008).

Keeping Up Daily Routine: Zaynab's Morning

At dawn, Zaynab and her husband Sabri are woken up by the day's first call to prayer in the nearby mosque. While Sabri gets out of bed to spread out his prayer mat and pray, Zaynab falls asleep again, she can still sleep for another hour and a half before making breakfast for the family. At 6.30 Zaynab is out of bed and Sabri is in the bathroom shaving. Zaynab shakes her two oldest boys awake and while they get dressed in clean jeans and t-shirts with the UNRWA school emblem, their mother prepares them sweet mint tea in the kitchen. She brings back the tea on a large tray with some bread, olive oil and za'tar (i.e. a spicy mix of herbs, mainly thyme). While the boys eat breakfast their younger siblings remain asleep on the mattresses in the children's room. Sabri has prepared himself a cup of coffee that he drinks while smoking a cigarette and zapping between a local TV channel and the news from the Arab Satellite channel Al-Jazzira. Sabri soon heads off for his work as a caretaker at a local NGO in Bethlehem, promising his wife that he'll buy vegetables on his way home. Outside the camp he waves down a bus that departs for town.

The boys finish their meal, grab their school bags and leave for the short walk down to the UNRWA school. Meanwhile Zaynab has washed herself, put on a white skirt and headscarf that she uses to cover herself while praying. After the prayer, she sits down to have some tea. She then goes downstairs to check on her father-in-law. The old man already has a cup of hot tea in his hand that his daughter made him so Zaynab sits down to talk for a few minutes. Zaynab's father-in-law has heard some strange sounds during the night and wonders if the Israeli army has entered the camp to arrest someone but they have not heard of anyone being arrested and word

usually spreads quickly. Then, Zaynab crosses the street to go to her husband's brother's house. Im Muhammed has been up since the first prayer and has already baked bread. She hands some loaves to Zaynab who also borrows some eggs.

Back in her own house, Zaynab puts the eggs on to boil and starts washing the dishes from yesterday. She scrubs the plates and pans hard, working herself warm in the chilly morning. Afterwards, she wakes up her younger children and brings them the boiled eggs with some of Im Muhammed's bread and some tea. Then she begins dusting the salôn, with its sofas, side-tables and knick-knacks. Since this is the room for receiving guests it is especially important that it is clean and tidy. She carefully sweeps this room and then continues to sweep the rest of the three-roomed flat. The children are already out playing on the veranda. Zaynab casts a glance at her children outside, sees that her son is not properly dressed and then scolds her daughter for not having helped her younger brother. When the boy is dressed, Zaynab continues sweeping the floor and then throws the hot water onto the tiled floor. Scrubbing the floor with a broom, she works her way through the flat, pushing aside any furniture that's in her way. Using a large scraper, she then pushes the water into the bathroom and down the drain.

From the veranda, Zaynab's sister-in-law is calling her to come and have a coffee break with her and one of their neighbours. The three women sit down for their coffee and decide that they are going to make waraq dawâli together this afternoon. Waraq dawâli is a popular Palestinian dish consisting of delicious rolls of vine leaves stuffed with rice. It takes hours to make by hand and women often prepare it together to relieve the tedium. After coffee, Zaynab makes sure that her daughter does her homework and then she goes out to sweep the veranda. Her daughter will not be in school until after 12 o'clock. Since the UNRWA school is crowded the classes have to take turns, which means that the young girls start school late, something parents in the camp are unhappy about. When the veranda is presentable, Zaynab climbs up onto the roof to collect the dry laundry.

When she comes in with the clothes, Zaynab notices that her youngest son is stuck in front of the computer, playing a game. Sabri has used some of their meagre savings to buy the children a PC because he hopes it will stop them from playing in the street where Israeli army jeeps pass by. By the entrance of the camp, young children and teenagers sometimes throw stones at the army jeeps, though it has been some months since anyone got hurt in these outbursts of violence.

*

Zaynab's regular morning routine creates a sense of order and predictability. Everyday routines are linked to the need for ontological security - a concept that Giddens (1991) uses to denote the sense of continuity and order in events that is characteristic of large segments of human activity everywhere. Such routines are probably of particular relevance in places that are torn by hostilities. As Giddens (*ibid.*: 38) claims, such quotidian practices can 'carry individuals through transitions, crises and circumstances of high risk'. In situations in which there is a great deal of uncertainty, shifts and risks are probably more frequent than in many other contexts. As we saw

in the last chapter, daily routines among Dheisheans also contributed to emplacement and the creation of a meaningful social place in the aftermath of displacement (Hammond 2004).

Zaynab's day was nevertheless also affected by the political situation; for instance there were often Israeli soldiers in the camp both during the day and at night, there was frequently shooting nearby, her husband always checked the news in the morning to see if it was safe to leave for work and they had decided to buy the children a computer to keep them out of trouble. The sense of 'normality' she managed to establish was constantly threatened by emergencies such as sudden army attacks.

Naturalizing Violations

The following extract from my field diary shows that the boundaries of what was considered normal had expanded in Dheishe.

> Right when I was about to leave to my friend in Bethlehem there was some shooting here in the camp, two teenagers got slightly wounded. So I didn't dare to leave. People said there were soldiers everywhere. At the same time everyone was talking about attending a wedding at the neighbours. I couldn't believe what I was hearing, but still came with [my host sister] to the wedding. It felt completely surreal. Everyone acted as usual, as if nothing had happened – talk about normalizaton! After about half an hour I also relaxed and sort of forgot about the event. Very strange, all of it. After an hour or so I and [my host-sister] left and I decided to go to Bethlehem after all. I then spent some time with my friend and her aunt looking for a dress.

Things happen on the camp that would, in other circumstances, be judged as abnormal and would stop everyday practices. However, as in the case above, life does not come to a halt, plans are not changed but may only be delayed. These things are not always even worth talking about. One hears shooting, someone is wounded and there are armed soldiers around, but one still attends a party and goes shopping. Zaynab's morning practices were also a good example of how people were striving to get on with their lives, sending their children to school, looking for new employment, going to Ramallah for a medical check-up, inviting people to a birthday party or planning a trip to Amman. Some of the things that used to be abnormal had actually become *'âdi* or normal, ordinary, because of their frequency (*cf.* Allen 2008).

During a summer vacation 17-year-old Rami was invited to Europe to give some lectures at Palestinian solidarity organizations. When he returned, he vividly described his first car trip on European soil. He had been astonished at being able to travel for kilometre after kilometre without being stopped at any roadblocks or having to show his papers. Of course, he was fully aware that checkpoints were not 'normal' in other countries, but because interrupted journeys

were such a common everyday occurrence for him he was still surprised and shaken by the experience of being able to travel without being stopped. Because he was so young he hardly remembered the time when Palestinians could still move freely and this reminds us of how responses to long-term violence are a generational issue as well. Checkpoints had become so recurrent in the occupied territories that Dheisheans hardly reacted to them any more. It was essential to be able to pass checkpoints without having a 'nervous breakdown' each time and they had to be treated as something 'ordinary'[115].

People in Dheishe were also becoming accustomed to seeing gruesome scenes in the popular media, especially TV. Many camp inhabitants had themselves seen people being killed in real life and many no longer reacted to the images of mutilated corpses. A Dheishean friend once emailed me some horrific photographs of dead Palestinians bodies following the Israeli invasion of the Jenin refugee camp. My friend was apparently used to this kind of picture and was not as shocked or disgusted as I was[116]. However, he had a clear political message to transmit to me - he wanted to upset me in order to show me the 'truth'. Even children showed me these kinds of pictures. When Ahmed Yassin (the former spiritual leader of Hamas) was assassinated by Israeli forces, I went to visit a friend in the camp. My friend's 12-year-old son called me to his computer to show me some pictures of the late Ahmed Yassin with his head half blown off, his brain pouring out and his wheelchair stained with blood. I looked away in disgust, and in vain tried to protect the boy's younger brother from seeing the photos, but both of the boys seemed surprised by my reaction. It had become normal to look at and to show pictures of death and destruction. Similarly, on my first meeting with Taysir, an unemployed Dheishean construction worker, he showed me a photo of his recently killed friend at a lit-de-parade. A related phenomenon has been described by Allen (2008). Most Palestinians took no notice of the many posters and images of martyrs that invaded public space in West Bank towns and refugee camps.

Nonetheless, some had not become used to violence and death. The first time I met Huda, she told me that she was often haunted by the terrible sights she had witnessed. At night, when she was trying to get to sleep, she would often see the Israeli army killing a young man and the scene remained 'extraordinary' for her[117]. With this last example, I try to show how complex those processes of normalization are. While many people had to some extent become

[115] Some Palestinians panicked when passing checkpoints. This is a good example of the oscillation between acceptance and panic that Taussig (1992) writes about in the Colombian context.
[116] The fact that I reacted to them was probably also related to the way television images of corpses are 'censored' in Sweden.
[117] A trained psychologist might view Huda's repeated re-experiencing of this event as a sign of trauma or post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (McNally 2004).

accustomed to seeing killings and death, others had not and a person might react on some occasions but not on others.

Some violations had stopped being worth-mentioning and were acknowledged only by silence, not because they were frightening and difficult to talk about but because they were so common. People seemed 'numbed' to some of the extreme events. I always felt I was missing things when I left the camp because it was unlikely that people would tell me about recent events when I came back. Eruptions of hostilities did not even seem to be noteworthy for many adult Dheisheans; it was typically children or my field assistant who told me about them. Once, when I returned after having been away for two weeks, it took several days before Rami told me that there had been several martyrs (in this case Palestinians assassinated by the Israeli army) in Bethlehem during my absence. On another occasion I came back from a short visit to Jerusalem in the late afternoon and my host-family greeted me as usual and we had dinner as usual. Only later that evening did my field assistant tell me that an attack-helicopter, which is often used in extra-judicial killings, had been circling above the camp and two Palestinians had been arrested and another one wounded.

Another common response to constant pressure, (which may co-exist with numbing), was a state of vigilance: an enhanced state of awareness and a need to know what is going on. In Dheishe, it was not surprising if a 14-year-old boy could identify different kinds of arms by their sound or that we would all sometimes go up on the roof to get a better look at shooting between the Israeli army and Palestinian fighters in nearby villages and neighbourhoods. Standing on the roof was not without risks, but it was a way of gathering information so that one would not be caught unawares. This may be crucial in a violent situation.

Challenging Abnormality: Risk-taking

Within the extension of normality, risks were taken and priorities were made in ways that challenged the abnormal situation, sometimes defiantly. Being caught without an Israeli permit inside Israel could mean fines and imprisonment. Many camp residents took considerable risks by going illegally to Jerusalem to work and this says something of the severity of their economic situation. Illegal commuting was common among married women who had taken on much of the economic responsibility for their households since it was easier for them than for their husbands to move in the restricted landscape of the West Bank.

Individual needs and desires did not cease just because the political situation in the occupied territories was dangerous. The bachelor Taysir, whose house-building we will follow in

the next chapter, sometimes sneaked into Jerusalem just for the fun of it – he claimed that he needed the change and that it was worth the risk of ending up in jail[118].

Nor did people in the camp refrain from trying to fulfil their spiritual needs. Some therefore went regularly to pray in *Al-aqṣa* Mosque in the old city of Jerusalem even though this meant exposing oneself to danger. Sabri, who is married to Zaynab, once tried to walk around the main checkpoint between Bethlehem and Jerusalem but got caught by some Israeli soldiers. He told me that evening how the soldiers had taken his ID card and told him to follow them to the checkpoint to get it back. They were probably fully aware of how problematic and even dangerous it is for a Palestinian to lose his ID. This happened on a Friday morning and Sabri really wanted to go to the mosque to pray. He decided to continue and only hours later did he return to the checkpoint to get his card back. To punish him, the soldiers kept Sabri at the checkpoint for many hours before finally giving him back his papers and letting him go. The Israeli soldiers' show of dominance here met with Palestinian defiance. With sometimes almost childish wilfulness, some camp residents challenged restrictions of their movement imposed by the Israeli army. Israeli soldiers who were posted at checkpoints and were supposed to stop Palestinians from passing would also respond by teasing them[119].

Others, however, avoided risks as far as possible. People who could not stand the tension of passing checkpoints and roadblocks between West Bank towns had stayed in the Bethlehem area for several years. Huda, who was alone with her three children since her husband was being held in administrative detention[120], explained:

> Now if a man wants to go and work in Ramallah, he has to be sure that going to work there means that he has to be away from his home for at least one month. He can only come home once a month. Also, these days it is very risky to be so far away from home. […] Maybe the army will catch him and take him to prison and ask "why are you not in your area? What are you doing here?" And, if he is in an area that he doesn't know he might go to places that are dangerous. He might get into trouble and seek help from people, but he doesn't know them or whether he can trust them. That's also why it can be risky. In the first intifada, people moved a lot, even between the West Bank and Gaza, the roads were open. And the road to Jordan was open too. So the main thing [today] is the difficulties in moving around.

[118] Although Taysir probably wanted to show fearlessness, which is part of the ideal of Palestinian masculinity in front of me, he also claimed to need excitement in his life.
[119] In Ben Ari's study (1998) of the Israeli army he outlines how such puerile games form part of the construction of a soldier's identity.
[120] Administrative detention refers to imprisonment of Palestinians from the occupied territories by Israel without charge or trial for a period of up to six months. This period is also renewable. Administrative detention is based on the 'Law on Emergency Powers (Detention)' adopted by Knesset in 1979 (PASSIA 2004: 4).

Being in the wrong place during the intifada *al-aqṣa* was thus dangerous for various reasons. Compared to the first uprising, the restrictions on mobility were also much more severe.

Normalizing Violent Death and Prison Experiences

Some Dheisheans reflected upon the extended 'normality' they found themselves in. Umm Ayman was well aware of the kind of normalizaton that was happening around her.

> Death has become so natural here. When people hear of a martyr (*śahîd*) or people dying naturally they take it normally. The heart of the mother, the sister, the wife or the daughter is used to agony and sadness. Why would I be sad anymore, today [death] is in my neighbour's house, tomorrow it is in mine, today it is in my house, tomorrow it is in my neighbour's house or in my sister's house, so why should I be sad? People take death in a normal way now, also because we believe more in God now; people are aware now that for each person there is a specific time and kind of death waiting. This is what God wants and we are not wiser than God. So, we prepare ourselves to lose a son, a husband or a brother at any moment.

Scheper-Hughes (2008) describes such routinization of premature death as a feature of resilience: 'The experience of much loss, too much death where life should be led to a kind of patient resignation (clinical psychologists would label it 'accommodation syndrome') that obliterated outrage as well as sorrow.' The quote refers to the frequent death of infants among extremely poor people in Northeast Brazil. In Dheishe, such resignation was definitely *not* developed to the extent that people did not mourn their own children. I would say that resignation in the face of death was more of a collective way of handling it. It was not the closest family or best friends that showed such resignation, but rather the local community as well as Palestinian society in the occupied territories more generally. It is, however, also possible to understand such normalizaton of death as a way of repressing grief that may be necessary during ongoing conflict. Holding back emotions may, though, as Dickson-Gómez (2003: 340f) describes in a Latin American context, have long-term damaging effects on individuals as well as societies.

The acceptance of death in Dheishe was facilitated by religious beliefs; death was rendered intelligible and sometimes also meaningful through religion. As the Palestinian Doctor Ahmed Baker noted in 1991; 'From a psychological perspective, to reconcile the possibility of death in a situation such as ours is a release' (in Pitcher 1998: 18). It makes it possible to go on with life. In the narrative quoted above, Umm Ayman challenged the uncertainty and the randomness of the struggle and the military occupation with references to a divine order. There was a reason why some people died and others did not, although it was impossible to predict the turn of events. Umm Ayman interpreted the misery of Palestinians in an alternative, more meaningful way; the future was ultimately not up to the Israeli military forces but to God. Trusting in God and a

fatalistic order was a way of countering the ontological insecurity of the situation. It seemed to be a relief for Umm Ayman to submit herself to God's will. Violent deaths were not, however, as 'normal' as Umm Ayman made out because the Palestinians had a number of ways of symbolically marking the dead as martyrs, as we will see in chapter 10. Palestinian nationalism also requires martyrs as part of realizing a political project.

Other violent experiences, such as political imprisonment, were also routinized and ascribed meaning. In Palestinian society, the vast majority of political prisoners (singular *masjûn*, plural *masajîn*) are male and they have long been considered national heroes, who are emblematic of Palestinian resistance (Bornstein 2001)[121]. People in the camp were proud of their political prisoners and experiences of imprisonment had become somewhat normalized. Some brutal interrogation procedures were, however, harder to see as 'natural' (Rosenfeld 2004: 239f)[122].

In the early years of occupation, there were also fights for recognition as political prisoners within Palestinian society; they were not criminals as the Israeli authorities claimed but freedom fighters (al-Nashif 2004/2005: 54f). Such politicized reframing is related to the limited options of Palestinians in a context of constrained agency; basically, it was a response to the fact that Israel constrained Palestinians and was not a strategy to fill Israeli jails with Palestinians. Palestinian society has developed ways to deal with political persecution and assist those who have been most affected. Umm Ayman gave examples of how custody was socially framed as a heroic act:

> The family plays a major role, especially if the prisoner is honourable, by saying nice things to him such as: "you have brought honour on us", "we are proud of you", "you have emphasized the spirit of resistance", "what happened to you in prison is the reason why we are still struggling and the reason for us to exist" - sweet and encouraging words that make him regain confidence and feel proud.
> For example, two men from the camp were sentenced to several life sentences; [but] were released in an exchange of prisoners. […] They had very painful memories of their time in prison, as they had been badly tortured. They had been attacked by wild dogs and their bodies were really eaten up, their faces, their hands, everywhere, which was very ugly. Yet, people were always encouraging them by saying nice things to them […] They might be able to turn their bad memories of prison into good and heroic acts because of what people say to them.
> This alone will make the prisoner proud of himself and he can regain confidence in himself; he wasn't in prison for a crime, he was in prison for a just cause. He will even say "Yeah, I was in prison, I did this and that, I was tortured" and he will be proud of the things he has been through.

[121] Prisoners form part of a gallery of the national images, which includes fighters, refugees, peasants and martyrs (*cf*. Khalili 2007).
[122] Al-Nashif (2004/5: 77) writes that Palestinian experiences of captivity may be approached from different positions: arrest, interrogation, court, daily life in prison etcetera. Here I will however discuss prison experiences in a more generalized way and from the perspective of Dheisheans as a collectivity rather than from the perspective of the prisoners.

The glorification and politicization of prison experiences made suffering at least partially meaningful and might even transform them into a form of empowerment. Visiting detainees in prison and showing solidarity with their families also became political acts during the first intifada, particularly for the mothers and sisters of prisoners. Welcoming parties for those who have been released are still a way to support and show respect for the prisoners in the camp (*cf.* Rosenfeld 2004: 240). The gathering for a released prisoner that I attended in Dheishe was sex-segregated. The women who had gathered were given chocolates by his female relatives but we never actually met the young man, who stayed with his male visitors. When several prisoners are released at the same time camp residents also arrange a street party as a communal celebration.

Rosenfeld (*ibid.* chapter 10) writes extensively about the social and political significance of experiences of incarceration in Dheishe and how these are linked to education and political consciousness. By referring to prison as a 'university', ex-prisoners and their relatives were making a politicized inversion of the meaning of an institution that represents occupation and oppression and gained a sense of agency in adversity (*cf.* de Certeau 1984 in Watters 2008). Just as refugee camps had become 'technologies of power' (Malkii 1992) so had Israeli prisons. Improving one's knowledge about Palestinian history or different political ideologies and the role played by internal organizations among prisoners seemed to be significant[123]. However, although this might have been a coincidence, I only heard Dheisheans describe prison as a university in relation to past experiences but not in relation to intifada *al-aqṣa*. It is possible that this political way of making sense of imprisonment and its transformative dimensions was diminishing in importance (*cf.* Peteet 1994).

Palestinian ex-prisoners often tell detailed stories about the conditions in Israeli prisons. Their narratives seem to reconcile them to the hardships they experience in jail rather than normalize them. The sociologist Esmail al-Nashif (2004/5) writes that these conditions are also a contested issue; prisoners regularly organize mass protests about the poor conditions while the prison authorities try to maintain control and deny that improvements will be made in response to protests (*ibid.*: 55f). The clandestine communication networks developed by the captives may be seen as processes of community building and a bodily materialization of a colonial predicament as well as resistance, writes al-Nashif (*ibid.*). He argues that by hiding written messages on or in their bodies Palestinian prisoners resist the control of their bodies and their isolation from society.

[123] See Rosenfeld (2004 chapter 10) for a detailed description of the organization of political parties, study groups, hunger strikes and authority among prisoners. Also al-Nashif (2004/5) discusses how building relations and leadership in Israeli jails has been crucial for dealing with the deprivations – the crowded sleeping spaces, poor food and limited medical treatment.

Salo *et al.* (2005) writes that some Palestinian former prisoners grow morally and spiritually despite or even thanks to difficult experiences in Israeli political detention[124]. Umm Ayman related such 'success stories' to social support, while Abu Amir, who was still being praised by other refugees for how he had coped with interrogation and imprisonment, stressed that apart from gaining inner strength he had also been lucky to get an easy job in the prison kitchen. Huda suggested that the effect of prison had to do with the character of the individual detainee. Her husband was in prison again when she noted that:

> The prisoner himself is strong and can overcome his problems. The person who experiences bad torture and doesn't confess is able to overcome anything in the world. The main thing that affects the psychology of the prisoner and affects him all his life is whether he was able to resist or whether he confessed. If he gave in, he will feel weak … because the investigators beat him and won. It's very difficult to confess about yourself and about others and cause disasters for others. […] Of course, the family tries to help the prisoner to overcome the crisis. When he comes out of prison it means he has overcome half the crisis. I see that most young men re-integrate into society and don't show what's inside. It's like he says that "I was able to endure prison, so shouldn't I be able to deal with matters outside?" I was very strong [*i.e.* active] in the first intifada, but if I had been arrested I don't imagine that I could ever have endured torture. This is why many people would prefer to die than get arrested.

The heroism of imprisonment was not, however, automatic but was often questioned locally. The status of honourable prisoner was a form of social and political capital that had to be kept pure. A Palestinian prisoner is supposed to withstand torture and bad treatment without confessing or, most importantly, squeal on a fellow Palestinian. However, the Israeli military court system depends heavily on confessions and information gathered from detainees (Cook *et al* 2004: 30f). Although people rarely admitted to me that they had betrayed anyone (see also Bornstein 2001), Rosenfeld (2004: 241) claims that it is common to do so. People told me only in general terms that other people had squealed.

Although, as Huda pointed out, most ex-prisoners were re-engaging in society, the social recognition of their suffering as politically valuable was not enough for everyone; some ex-prisoners had unsettling experiences of prison (*cf.* Bornstein 2001; B'Tselem & MaMoked 2007; Khamis 2000; Punamäki 1988). I noticed that events that would be labelled traumatic and behaviour by ex-prisoners that would be considered evidence of psychological problems in

[124] *Cf*. Scheper-Hughes (2008: 50f), who notes that one method of resilience may be to enter a kind of transcendental state, similar to a mystical experience, in relation to assaults such as rape or torture. A man who survived a bombing in South Africa stated, for instance, that he had never felt closer to God than at that moment.

Sweden were often overlooked and sometimes even denied[125]. Although Palestinians often describe suffering as collective and as integral to Palestinian identity, the *individual* suffering of torture and so on were given little attention. Some camp residents reflected upon the experiences and behaviour of individuals but they seldom psychologized them. An ex-prisoner's outburst of rage might be explained as a physical rather than psychological effect of having been heavily beaten on the head while in prison. On one occasion I suggested that the domestic violence carried out by a male former detainee could be related to his prison experiences but his family denied this and said he was released too long ago for that to be the reason.

I suggest that much of the silence surrounding these problematic aspects of imprisonment was related to a complex set of factors that are not unique to the Palestinian struggle. Eastmond (1989) noted a similar pattern among former Chilean political prisoners: there was silence about personal ordeals and suffering was only given relevance as part of the collective struggle. These factors evoked a sense of shame both in families and in Palestinian society at large. Ex-prisoners, the overwhelming majority of whom are male, were expected not to express emotions but to show resilience. It was shameful for a family to admit that a member had psychological problems, acted inappropriately or was unable to lead the life of a responsible Palestinian adult man with all that this implies (see chapter 6). As in the Chilean case, this reflected a male discourse of heroism, which had political connotations. Acknowledgement of deep wounds in so many Palestinians would have been to grant victory to the Israeli enemy and would have revealed it is not always possible to reframe imprisonment and torture as heroic acts.

The Issue of Trust

Long-term conflict and violence tend to destabilize social relations and divide communities. As anthropological studies have noted, in some circumstances fear ceases to be an acute response to danger and becomes a more or less chronic condition (*e.g.* Green 1995). Individuals' basic trust - belief in the reliability of others - may also dissolve after the ordeals of war and violence (Dickson-Gómez 2003). Not all disruptions are manageable; there are limits to people's resilience. In Dheishe, some difficulties in showing resilience became obvious in relation to trust; although there was not a complete breakdown of confidence, trust had been severely jeopardized.

Below I focus on negotiations that took place concerning whom to trust in the camp. For my purposes, I view trust as the belief that another person's intentions are benign and that they do not threaten one's personal security or the integrity of the community. A lack of trust was

[125] In my experience, psychiatric diagnoses are considered embarrassing for Palestinians. However, they are not usually completely denied.

manifested in everyday life in the camp mostly in rumours and suspicions[126]. Outsiders were regularly suspected of having bad intentions. The main threat that underlay this distrust, of both outsiders and insiders, was Israel. Considering the situation, the constant negotiations about trust would seem to be appropriate accommodation strategies.

In order to earn the trust of the camp residents a person must be known. It should be clear which family and place a person belongs to; ideally, their family origin should be traceable to several generations back. A person to whom one had a connection, however distant, was also considered more trustworthy. In general, Palestinians who had been involved in the national struggle and who were considered to be suffering were also more trusted than others. For instance, one reason that my female field assistant - a Palestinian Christian and partly an outsider - was accepted when she worked with me in the camp was because a close relative of hers had been martyred in the first uprising.

Fear of Outsiders and of Conspiracy

Theories of conspiracy abounded in the camp. Since such theories sometimes prove to be true, I shall not dismiss them as imaginings but will discuss them as aspects of the negotiation of trust. The camp inhabitants' more sober accounts argued that Jewish ownership of international media spelled ruination for the Palestinian reputation and that Jewish influence in the US government was decisive for American policy in the Middle East. Some people claimed Islamophobia in Europe made the West discriminate against Arabs. Others speculated that the lack of support for the Palestinian cause from Europe was designed to stop Jews from returning to European countries. I also heard some doubt that so many Jews were actually killed in the Holocaust and some believed that the Holocaust was indeed partially orchestrated by Jewish Zionists as a way of enabling the establishment of a Jewish state[127].

The idea of the omnipotent Jew and denials of the Holocaust are not unique to Palestinians; both are common to anti-Semitic discourses in other Arab countries as well as in Europe and the US. Apart from this wider context, in Dheishe, theories of conspiracy seemed to be collective reactions to assaults. People like Abu Amir, who was politically moderate (for instance, he opposed suicide bombing), claimed that there was a hidden agenda:

[126] However, on one occasion, a man had professionals investigate his cell-phone because a 'suspicious' person had borrowed it and he wanted to make sure that the phone had not been tampered with.
[127] Initially, I personally became very upset when listening to statements that diminished the Holocaust. With time I managed to handle them better and sometimes questioned this reasoning in a more moderate way, which I felt was more constructive.

> I believe nowadays that Israelis and Jews control the media everywhere. The [international] news agencies are close to the Israelis and the Jews. [Israelis and Jews] are ready to give [news agencies] the money they want, as long as they keep in line. […] [That is] to show events as [the Israelis] choose, because money makes everything, money changes the truth everywhere. And we should do something about this.

Camp inhabitants often cited the overwhelming power of the Israelis, who are Jews living in a Jewish state, not to excuse Palestinians but to explain their situation. Anti-semitism has, however, been taboo in Palestinian nationalism in favour of anti-Zionism (Swedenburg 2003: 147). Some of my informants were therefore often careful to clarify that they did not have anything against Jews in general, but that they disagreed with the Zionist state-building project.

The anthropologist Ted Swedenburg (*ibid.*: 139ff) who investigated memories of the Palestinian peasant revolt (1936-1938) against the British, reported on how his former rebel informants reasoned. Although the older men had been deeply involved in planning and organizing the revolt, they still maintained that the British were behind the uprising and they identified the outcome as the cause. Some of his informants reasoned that '[s]ince the ultimate result of the uprising's failure was the establishment of the state of Israel, […] this must have been England's plan all along' (*ibid.*: 141). Many Dheisheans reasoned similarly about US policies in the Middle East, about Israel and about the PA. Since the Oslo process has simply led to further misery, this outcome was assumed to have been the hidden agenda of the peace negotiations from the start. The result was seen as proof of others' intentions to harm Palestinians. The destabilizing effects of violent conflict on social relations informed the refugees understanding of global power relations just as macro-politics conversely affected individuals' ability to trust one another.

It is early March 2003. I'm sitting in a servis, a shared taxi, and for the second time this day a taxi driver has asked me about my nationality. People around Bethlehem are quite used having foreigners around; for many years, even centuries, independent travellers, tourists in chartered buses, pilgrims, volunteers from abroad as well as foreign monks and nuns have been visible features of the town. A considerable number of foreigners, especially women from Eastern Europe who are married to Palestinian men, live permanently in this part of the Palestinian territories. Taxi drivers have not usually been bothered about where I come from, but now, with the beginning of the Iraq war, my nationality has become a common concern. Fortunately, the Swedish government has decided not to support the US-led invasion of Iraq and my answer that I'm Swedish is therefore greeted with pleased nodding. These days, Sweden is good, even if it is not as good as France, which stubbornly criticized the invasion. When necessary, I comment that I think Bush is 'ibin kalb' or a dog's son – which, with my faltering Arabic, always provokes a laugh. During the first weeks of the invasion, people in Dheishe are stuck in front of the TV following the news as

many hours as possible. Unsurprisingly, nobody will agree to be interviewed. The only one who tells me why is Ahmed. He admits that he gets furious every time he sees a foreigner these days, me included[128]*. Thanks to my field assistant's efforts, we can slowly begin work again after a couple of weeks.*

*

This is an example of how local distrust of foreigners echoed top-level politics and suspicion of Western policies. At the time of my fieldwork there was widespread solidarity between the Palestinians and other Arabs based on feelings of cultural and religious same-ness as well as Palestinian gratitude to Saddam Hussein for supporting their cause. Despite the solidarity among Arabs during the Iraq war, in Dheishe, as in other parts of Palestinian society, there was also distrust of the Arab governments. Palestinians have often felt betrayed by their neighbouring Arab states as well as by the international community (*cf.* Peteet 1995, 2005a). However, like Peteet's informants in Lebanese refugee camps (2005: 184f), Dheisheans had complex feelings about other Arabs. '[T]he refugees were wedged uncomfortably between a pan-Arab discourse of belonging, identity, and cultural affinity, or Arabness, and a keen awareness of Arab state interests and actions that undercut their struggle' (*ibid.*: 185).

Some months after my taxi journey, Rami's older sister Shireen dragged me into the kitchen and whispered in my ear that she did not like the French journalist who was sitting in the reception room; he happened to be a friend of mine and I had recently introduced him to Shireen's family. When I asked why she disliked him, she whispered: 'He speaks Arabic. He said he doesn't understand, but he does. I think he's a spy.'[129] For the first time, I realized that my imperfect Arabic had actually been an advantage in my introduction to the field. On a number of occasions, I came across camp inhabitants who claimed that any foreigner who came to the camp and spoke 'too good Arabic' might have been sent as a spy by the Israeli security forces (see also Rothenberg 2004). There were rumours about a Western girl who was working as a volunteer in the area. Some said that she pretended not to speak Arabic but that she actually spoke fluently and that she had volunteered to bring people's 'important papers' out of the country, through the Israeli border control and this was considered very suspicious. On top of this, it was rumoured that she would sneak away to make calls on her cell phone to someone with whom she spoke Hebrew. People wondered who the girl actually worked for. Was she an Israeli spy? Concerning an outsider, it might arouse suspicion whether one speaks Arabic or not, good Arabic or bad or if

[128] On the other hand, several locals expressed that they were happy that I was with them and that I did not plan to leave when war approached.
[129] Some days later Shireen admitted with some embarrassment that she had been too quick to judge the journalist.

one speaks Hebrew. Language is not only a marker of national identity[130] but also gives clues about where one's loyalties lie.

Language and also religion could be seen as warnings. It is likely that some people talked about me in a similar way to the way they talked about the girl described above. Some Dheisheans thought I looked Russian[131]. However innocent such a remark may seem, it suggested a questioning of my identity as Swedish (my family is, by the way, Swedish as far back as anyone now living remembers). Perhaps they wondered if I had some Russian Jewish roots? A question about a foreigner's nationality and religion often means that there is doubt about the person's motives and loyalties.

According to Salamandra (2004)[132], who carried out fieldwork in Syria, suspicion of foreign researchers and fear of political elites are also common in other parts of the Middle East. I had expected to be met with suspicion during my fieldwork, but I had not thought it would carry on for more than a year. By the end of my last field trip, Layla, who I knew well and who liked me, still could not resist from asking: 'Could you become an Israeli spy, Nina?' Some of the women in my host-family nevertheless showed trust in me by saying 'you understand us', *inti btifhamîna* in colloquial Arabic.

Although lack of confidence in other Arab countries was common, some people, like Huda, who trusted neither the Palestinian leadership nor Israel, pinned their few remaining hopes on other Arabs:

> The solutions [Arafat] believes in are not doing us any good because we are being killed every day, without any benefits. I also believe that if there is any solution [to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict] and there would be a Palestinian state, Sharon or any Israeli leader would come up with any excuse to attack this state, destroy it and kill its people in a more violent way. […] There's no motivation to find a real solution, it's just a game played against the people. The only Israeli ambition is to kill the Palestinians and transfer them away from here and turn Palestine into Israel without any Palestinians. For the time being, I don't see how we can go into any negotiations or solutions similar to the Oslo process. It wouldn't do us any good. Maybe we should wait, and maybe if we wait the Arab countries will wake up.

Fear from Within

As Huda said above, the threat against the community was not only understood as coming from outside, but perhaps more alarmingly, from within. Green (1995: 105) writes of Guatemala that:

[130] Since many Palestinians and Israelis speak 'others'' languages, language is a more ambiguous national marker than one might think.
[131] There are today many Israelis who have a Russian background, since Russian immigration became possible with the *perestrojka*. Some Russian women are also married to Palestinian men in the area.
[132] See Swedenburg (2003: xxxi), who writes that Palestinians are sometimes suspicious even of local researchers. See also Shryock (1997) about anthropological fieldwork in Jordan.

> Fear destabilizes social relations by driving a wedge of distrust between members of families, between neighbors, among friends. Fear divides communities through suspicion and apprehension, not only of strangers, but of each other. Fear thrives on ambiguities. Rumors of death lists and denunciations, gossip, and innuendos create a climate of suspicion. No one can be sure who is who. The spectacle of torture and death, of massacres and disappearances of the recent past have become deeply inscribed in individuals and in the collective imagination through a constant sense of threat. […] Fear is the arbiter of power – invisible, indeterminant, and silent.

Similarly, Palestinian society has experienced the destabilization of social relations as well as efforts to establish social contracts between the Palestinian Authority (PA) and its 'citizens'. Here I shall discuss fear and distrust of two sorts of insiders, people working with the PA and Palestinian collaborators, who were sometimes thought of as being more or less the same.

An illuminating rumour was spread in the Bethlehem area in 2004. It claimed that the Palestinian prime minister, Ahmed Quray (a.k.a Abu Ala), was selling the cement that the Israelis used to construct the Barrier and that he was thereby profiting from the misery and restricted mobility of his fellow Palestinians. The fact that someone so prominent in the authorities was viewed with such suspicion illustrates the current lack of confidence in the political leadership. This ethos was not only common in Dheishe but reflected a general trend in Palestinian society, as confirmed by several polls[133].

For Palestinians, Arafat began in the 1990's 'to sound more and more like a U.S. politician, condemning 'extremists' on both sides and making the violence of the occupier and the occupied appear somehow equivalent' (Swedenburg 2003: 201). Such ambivalence towards the authorities gave rise to uncertainty about the rules of the game. People in the camp were often uninterested in even talking about the authorities[134]. A typical way of expressing their mistrust and disinterest was when a group of friends who were invited to Ahmed and Hanan's home informally commented on the appointment of Mahmoud Abbas (a.k.a Abu Mazen) as prime minister in 2003. When I asked what they thought about him they shrugged their shoulders and said laconically that Abbas was from the PA so his appointment would not improve anything. One of them added that things had deteriorated since the establishment of the PA[135]. The PA had quite simply failed to deliver what people expected of it.

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[133] According to polls carried out from December 2002 till June 2004, about 30 per cent of the Palestinians in the occupied territories did not trust *any* Palestinian political figure or faction (www.jmcc.org/publicpoll/results/2004/no51.pdf 13.05.2009 10.30).

[134] My impression is that this was not out of fear, but out of fatigue.

[135] The people in the occupied territories also had high expectations of their leadership and their own political grass-root activism under occupation made them long for democratic practices.

Abu Akram, Ahmed's elderly father, saw the impotence of the authorities as a result of the power asymmetry between the Israeli state and the PA:

> They haven't done anything, the authorities. They can't do anything and they are blocked. They can't do anything against the Jews. Neither in this [intifada] nor the other one could they do anything. Did you see in Gaza yesterday, [the Israelis] tried to kill Abdul-Aziz Al Rantissi[136], but they couldn't and they killed someone else and a lot of people got injured. You saw it on TV, didn't you? This is the intifada, this is normal, [the Israelis] do what they feel like. There is no justice.

Even during my first minor fieldwork in Dheishe in 2000, the refugees were expressing disappointment with the corruption[137] and human rights violations of the PA. According to a poll carried out in June 2004, about 90 per cent of Palestinians believed there was corruption in the PA[138]. Hassan, a middle-aged man who supported Fateh and worked in the police force, commented as follows in a group interview: 'Everybody disagrees with this [Palestinian] leadership. From the nation [*i.e.* the people], who agrees with this leadership? Who agrees with this official leadership? We support change, to stop the corruption.' In the summer of 2004 there were several kidnappings of and threats to PA officials by Fateh-related resistance groups[139]. Several demonstrations were held in Gaza and Nablus against the Palestinian leadership. These events during my research period foreshadowed the election of Hamas and hostilities between different resistance groups that would erupt in the coming years.

Dheisheans have combated the marginalization and stigmatization implied by refugee-ness by engaging in political resistance and thus contesting the meaning of the label applied to them. But their political engagement has not paid off in terms of influence. Those I interviewed felt that they had been left out of the state-building process. Abu Wisam linked corruption to lack of representation of refugees and to connections between the Palestinian elite and the Israeli state:

> [T]he idea of the PA is like a business or an income for the people in the PA. I can't see anyone who lived through *al-nakba*, any refugee, who has a voice in the PA. He [*i.e.* someone with a high position in the PA] has no problems like I have or like my son has. One minister's son studies at a Jordanian university. Every day he goes with his own car to Jordan, he goes and comes back. There is no problem [with the Israeli border control]. If I had my father there and he was dying, [the Israelis] still wouldn't allow me to go and see him.

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[136] The Hamas-leader Rantissi was assassinated by Israel a year later.

[137] It has been argued that the corruption was a continuation of the patronage system the PLO established during its years in exile.

[138] See www.jmcc.org/publicpoll/results/2004/no51.pdf 13.05.2009 10.30.

[139] Most of these events occurred in Gaza in July 2004. The groups behind the kidnappings declared that they would act against corruption and promote political reform. See for instance *Revue d'études Palestiniennes* (2005).

In the restricted landscape of the West Bank, only a minister's son was thought to be able to pass through the Israeli border control on a regular basis and this underlines the powerlessness felt by 'ordinary' people.

The widespread lack of confidence in the PA and the political elite suggested uncertainty about their belonging. Were people working with the PA outsiders or insiders? Were they 'true Palestinians'? Many of them had in fact returned from exile upon the establishment of the authority and were met with criticism of their so-called foreign lifestyles (Lindholm 2003a; Hammer 2005). Umm Ayman argued that not only the poor people should have to sacrifice their sons, the powerful should also struggle and suffer. She disliked the fact that the leaders sent their children abroad when the new uprising started, to safer places than the Palestinian territories, and said 'only God knows what they do there'. Umm Ayman intimated that the families of the leaders may be morally corrupted by leading their Western lifestyles, for instance by drinking alcohol and having loose sexual morals. The Palestinian leadership's growing wealth was also viewed as morally disturbing. Concerns about morality in Dheishe were related to a general sense of threat to their community.

Political legitimacy does not only derive from democratic practices but from belief in the moral authority of a state or leadership (Lindholm 2003b). The source of moral legitimacy of the PLO had been the struggle and the leaders of the intifada in the late 1980s were also depicted as strugglers and therefore as morally pure and natural decision-makers (*ibid.*). The leaders who returned from exile, though, had difficulty re-establishing their legitimacy since it could no longer be based solely on the struggle. Aside from growing disagreement over who were the *real* fighters and the *really* suffering Palestinians, other discourses about morality also began influencing politics.

The Threat of Collaborators

In addition to more direct control mechanisms in the occupied areas, Israel also established a network of Palestinian collaborators, a system of domination that has aggravated mistrust and fear among Palestinians[140]. Collaboration is an extremely sensitive and shameful subject for Palestinians because it questions their moral integrity. However, it has been an issue for them since the peasant revolt against British rule in the 1930s (Swedenburg 2003). The killing of Palestinian quislings by nationalists began at this time and has continued until now. In colloquial

[140] Rigby (2001: 9), who has studied collaboration in many contexts, notes that '[i]t is impossible to live under occupation without some form of collaboration with the occupier, unless you want to be a hero or a martyr, and most of us are weak human beings with all the accompanying faults and failings'. This is also true for many West Bankers and Gazans.

Arabic, *al-'amîl* is a common word for collaborator, but there are also a number of other terms used for different kinds of traitors (Abdel Jawwad 2001: 19ff). Land dealers, informers and armed criminals are also considered collaborators. Those called collaborators by Palestinians are not necessarily seen as collaborators by Israelis but instead as 'cooperative Arabs'. During the first intifada, some Israelis even suggested calling collaborators 'Arabs who desire peace' (Swedenburg 2003: 195). After signing the Oslo agreements, Israel lost some of its ability to recruit informers and spies since less people were arrested and Palestinian dependency on the Israeli administration lessened (Abdel Jawwad 2001: 27).

Considering the clandestine nature of the matter, nobody actually seems to know how many collaborators there may be. Depending on how one defines collaboration, there may have been between 8,000 and 90,000 in the 1990s - the largest figure constitutes about 4 per cent of the Palestinian population (Rigby 1997: 4). With the outbreak of the intifada *al-aqṣa*, however, it is likely that the number of collaborators increased. After summary proceedings, the PA executed several traitors. Others were assassinated without trial by political factions or vigilante execution squads (Williams 2001)[141]. At the time of my research, many camp inhabitants were claiming that the number of collaborators was growing. However, Taysir told me that there had been many more during the first intifada. My field assistant also explained that some of those believed to be turncoats were actually Israeli citizens and soldiers operating in the territories:

> [T]hese two guys [who an informant concluded must be traitors] are Israeli guys, soldiers, but they wore Arabic clothes and they speak perfect Arabic. Sometimes they are from the Arabs of 48 [*i.e.* Palestinians with Israeli citizenship] or Druze. […] Or from the collaborators who are inside Israel because there are two camps for collaborators[142].

It is likely that accounts about a growing number of traitors reflect a perception of increased threat rather than actual numbers. Although it is well documented that Israel uses Palestinian collaborators in a systematic way, stories and rumours about betrayal tend to gather momentum. Israeli leaders may also try to fuel rumours since it is to their advantage if Palestinians believe that their community is full of spies.

Locally, there were several explanations for the existence of Palestinian collaboration. Dheisheans argued that most collaborators had been forced into it under torture or threat while in Israeli custody. Some informants suggested that certain individuals were less able to handle

[141] Concerning the first intifada, estimates of killed suspected collaborators vary between more than 700 and more than 900 (Rigby 1997: 54). During the second intifada about 120 Palestinians suspected of collaboration have been killed (www.btselem.org/english/Statistics/Casualties.asp 29.04.2008 15.15)

[142] Israel has established two sanctuaries for Palestinian collaborators inside Israel to protect them from Palestinian rage as well as to show them gratitude.

pressure; they were more likely to give in to Israeli coercion because they were so afraid. Huda presented her view thus:

> [It's n]ot only in the camp. [There have been lots of collaborators] for a long time. In the first intifada, [the Israelis] arrested guys at 13-14 years of age, they tortured them, scared them and attacked them sexually. People who are now collaborators, they were arrested in the first intifada. I was terrified of being arrested. [N: They say that young people who are arrested talk about their friends.] – Before they arrest anyone they have a list of names, but they need to get them to confess to give them life sentences. A house of a kid, 17 years old, is demolished. [There's a] court. They arrest someone, the next day they arrest another, then the next one. People guess which one. There have been lots of confessions. Most of them are by guys under 18. Before, I saw lots of children in the streets, now I see no one.

Despite the fact that 'the political prisoner' has been seen as the vanguard of the struggle and a metaphor for the Palestinians under occupation (Bornstein 2001), it is not an unambiguous concept. Bornstein (*ibid.*: 555) writes that the 'giving of names' to the Israeli authorities not only contributes to more arrests but it also creates distrust of neighbours and even self-doubt. In Bornstein's experience as well as mine, men who have been to prison rarely mention whether they themselves 'gave names' or confessed. 'By de-emphasizing the dynamic of confession, the narrative of torture became a story of initiation, a story whose focus was not on the will of the prisoner to resist but the suffering endured' (Bornstein *ibid.*: 555f).

Apart from using pressure on Palestinians in Israeli confinement to collaborate, the recruitment procedure has mostly relied on Palestinians' need for permits and licenses from the Israeli bureaucracy (Rigby 1997). Traditional Palestinian society was highly divided and permeated by patron-client relationships. This made people dependent on connections, 'brokers' or 'go-betweens', so-called *wâsṭa*, to address someone with status and influence, but favours were also supposed to be returned. The occupiers partly manoeuvred themselves into this system as a new influential category of patrons who could provide favours that demanded reciprocity. Israelis thus became 'patrons of the patrons' as Palestinian village leaders and civil servants became 'brokers' (*ibid.*: 44f).

Rami, like others, explained collaboration through reference to poverty and Palestinian dependence on the Israeli labour market. In Rigby's view (1997), such people may be seen as accommodationists who see no other alternative than to work for the enemy - hardly a surprising strategy in a situation that offers so few options to act. Rami said that Israeli employers were in a position to demand 'favours' of their Palestinian employees in the form of information about fellow Palestinians that might seem harmless. Later, Rami said, when a person had started to inform on others, the nature of the questions would change to more important matters such as

how many people had carried guns in a demonstration or who was planning attacks against Israel. Once they had given in to pressure, a worker became an easy target for blackmailing since the Israelis could threaten to disclose that this person was one of their informers.

Another category of Palestinians has been accused of collaboration because of their lifestyle and poor morality. 'Anti-social' activities such as infidelity or drug abuse are deemed to damage Palestinian society and undermine the national struggle. My informants also said that people with these habits were vulnerable to pressure; the Israeli agents could easily blackmail someone who had things to hide, such as extra-marital relations (*cf.* chapter 9). To remain a morally worthy Palestinian means, for both men and women, upholding sexual mores and maintaining boundaries against Israelis. During my fieldwork, I came across several stories from the first intifada of how young girls had been photographed naked with a man. This is called *isqâṭ* [143] in Arabic (see also Shalhoub Kevorkian 1993; Rigby 1997). According to the stories, the Israeli security services would threaten to distribute these pictures in the community, which would ruin the young girl's as well as her family's reputation. The girl was thus forced to work with the Israelis. Men could also be blackmailed by being photographed with naked women. Many Palestinians have also reported that they have been threatened with rape or the rape of family members when they have been arrested (Btselehem & HaMoked 2007)[144].

The character of Palestinian collaboration is often situational rather than essential, concludes Swedenburg (2003: 157) referring to both the 1930s and the first intifada. Charges of collaboration have also been levelled against people from rival political parties or against personal enemies for non-political reasons (Rigby 1997; Swedenburg 2003). During fieldwork, fellow Palestinians were occasionally called 'collaborators' even though it was clear that this meant that they were considered a bad person in general or that they were involved in a clan conflict or political competition.

Dheisheans also argued that the internal lack of confidence had consequences for the will to engage politically. Walid, for instance, worried that: 'Maybe the one who invites you to a demonstration, maybe he is a collaborator, nobody knows.' There were frequent claims that it was not Palestinians who started to throw stones at Israeli soldiers at demonstrations but unknown people, supposedly collaborators. Stone-throwing then gave the Israelis an excuse for responding with bullets. Samar also said that people were afraid since there was no trust (*i.e. thiqa*)

[143] *Isqâṭ* literally means to make fall down.
[144] The occupation and the relations between Israelis and Palestinians are highly sexualized. Intermarriages are rare but do exist and some Israeli women were reported to be living in Dheishe, having married men from the camp. Although rapes may be rare (or underreported) in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, 'sexual methods' of oppression are still used. Such sexualized procedures include threats in prison about rape of the prisoner or female relatives, fear of *isqâṭ* and rape by soldiers, being forced to undress in prison or at checkpoints.

between them: 'For example if I go to two people who want to organize me [in a resistance group] one of them will be a collaborator and will inform the Israelis about me, although he's the one who will send me to do something.'

Another example was given by Layla in a group interview with some married women in their 30s:

> [The Israelis] arrested more that 1,500 young people from the camp. Do you think that these 1,500 are all patriots? No, of course not, there must be some who are working with the Israeli *Mossad* [*i.e.* the national intelligence agency of Israel]. They are everywhere, in every neighbourhood and maybe in every house, so people are afraid of each other. You are not given a chance to do something.

According to Layla, one could not always trust everyone in one's own quarter or even in one's own family. This is remarkable given that for Palestinians trust is deeply associated with family (Peteet 1995). '[T]rust is, to a large extent, built into the meaning of kinship relationships. Family is a bulwark of sorts against precisely the mistrust that colors extrafamilial social relations. It is in the domain of extra-familial relations that trust must be nurtured' (*ibid.*: 169). However, Peteet argues that with *al-nakba*, Palestinian refugees lost trust in themselves, both as individuals and collectively since they had been unable to defend their communities and became dependent on relief (*cf.* Daniel & Knudsen 1995). This may mean that trust within the family has been questioned for a long time among Palestinian refugees. Nevertheless, everyone has to trust their family since kin are vital for economic and social support.

If a relative in prison cannot withstand the torture and reveals information about others or agrees to collaborate with the Israeli security services this may have dire consequences for his or her social relations. Umm Ayman explained how prisoners may dishonour their families:

> In prison they [*i.e.* Israeli guards and investigators] put so much pressure on the prisoner, for example [pressure to] report on activities in the [prisoners'] rooms […]. With time, a prisoner may give more sensitive information. Then he would be released but would leave [jail] in disgrace, dishonour and shame. If this happens in prison it can be a disgrace for the whole family for a long time even if the person repents and becomes clean after he comes out. Still people will say that he was this or he was that. For a long time it will remain like this. And some families, they will not accept it [but will kill him]. Even if he returns to the straight path it will be difficult to regain the trust of the people because they know this person was connected with the Israelis, which is a shame. He is not good.

Rumours about traitors were often connected to the Israeli army's extra-judicial killings of Palestinian activists. Rami, the young man who went to lecture in Europe, claimed that there were many collaborators living in the camp. An indication of this was an Israeli helicopter attack

in 2002 that targeted a car loaded with explosives in the middle of the densely populated camp. Three young Dheisheans were killed in a macabre scene of flying body parts and car pieces. The question for the camp inhabitants was *who* had told the Israelis about the explosives. Someone guessed it was a particular person, someone else argued that the Israelis rarely used collaborators in this intifada but could use their high technology to track a person through his or her cell phone. The camp thus became a deeply ambivalent place that signified both community and lack of trust. Rami said that he thought the Palestinians needed to change to be able to improve their situation because, in his view, half the camp was collaborating with Israel.

The stigma of being accused of collaboration leaves a lasting mark on a person and his/her family. At one point during my stay, I was warned by people from the camp not to have any further contact with a family in Bethlehem which had, according to the rumours, a 'dirty history' from the first uprising more than ten years earlier.

According to Rothenberg (2004: 120,127), Palestinian men are often understood to be exposed to multiple levels of menace because they have a greater and more intimate contact with Jewish Israelis than women do. This contact may be through work, prison or sexual relations with Israeli women. Men in Dheishe were generally better Hebrew-speakers than women and some kept in touch with Israeli friends they had met at work before the intifada *al-aqṣa*.

Palestinians seem to become collaborators or are asked to become collaborators when they are especially vulnerable, or 'on the border'. Mustafa, a bachelor working in an NGO, recounted that when he was actually crossing the border to Jordan, he was asked to become a collaborator; the Israeli security officer, who questioned him and could have stopped him from travelling, had suggested that Mustafa needed money to get married and said he could get this by collaborating. Insiders who were not trustworthy had transgressed the moral boundaries of Dheisheans' community and polluted an already disintegrating society (*cf.* Douglas 2002); 'they were people out of place' so to speak. Trust was thus related to concerns about morality and the establishment of clear boundaries between Palestinians and Israelis.

Cultural Norms that Counter Distrust

Judging from the widespread fear and lack of trust among Palestinians, it would be easy to conclude that it is extremely difficult for strangers to visit or work in the Palestinian territories[145]. However, distrust of outsiders may co-exist with norms of hospitality, although not without ambivalence, as Stefansson (2003) notes about post-war Bosnia. In the camp, there was a strong emphasis on hospitality; a good Palestinian was expected to welcome guests generously.

[145] More surprising perhaps was that the sense of 'paranoia' among the refugees and other Palestinians seemed to be contagious; I noted that many foreigners (including myself) frequently expressed similar feelings.

Preferably a guest should be offered coffee or tea, biscuits and fruits. A proper meal and a place to spend the night might be included if a visitor lingered. Foreigners were received with similar hospitality but were also subjected to efforts to influence their views in a pro-Palestinian direction. Even though a foreigner may have acted suspiciously, many Dheisheans seemed to be willing to take a calculated risk and nevertheless try to convey a political message to the 'West' (see also chapter 8). Some camp residents seemed beyond fear. One of these, Sabri, strongly suspected some European visitors of being spies but he added: '*ana ma baḫâf*', 'I'm not afraid'.

Not showing fear was the cultural and political ideal in Dheishe. In relation to resilience and vulnerability in different cultural contexts, Scheper-Hughes (2008: 43) notes that '[s]trength, emotional control, courage, and self-sufficiency, along with a certain display of 'invulnerability' to pain and suffering are moral virtues in the Stoical tradition'. In the field, I was often struck by how stoically people around me acted.

This principle of fearlessness is informed by notions of gender in Palestinian society. Peteet (1994) argues that masculinity in the Palestinian and broader Arab context is partly constructed around 'fearlessness'. The image of a fearless Palestinian fighter is often highlighted as a role model, and the fighter is normally male. Being fearless also refers to the tolerating of torture in Israeli prisons without squealing on fellow Palestinians. In general, female informants spoke more readily of their fear than did men since Palestinian womanhood does not demand fearlessness. Hanan, for instance, worried about helicopter attacks in her neighbourhood; she knew of a wanted man who was living near her house and she feared that the Israeli army would try to assassinate him without taking into account the safety of other people. But many women also put on a stoical face and were unwilling to show signs of alarm. The frequent violence sometimes prompted cynicism. For instance, when I worried about a possible Israeli army intrusion, my female informant Dalal simply said 'let them invade the camp, they've done it so many times before'.

However, the ideal of fearlessness was often difficult to live up to. A man in his 30s who told me stories about how he had, as an imprisoned teenager, refused orders and stood up against the guards, seemingly fearless, once admitted that he had been really scared in prison. On a number of occasions, I observed that many Palestinians were terrified when they approached Israeli checkpoints or roadblocks. One of my Christian girlfriends, who regularly passed the checkpoint between Bethlehem and Jerusalem, told me how a soldier once refused to let her pass despite the fact that she had a permit. He told her to go to another crossing but she lost her temper and shouted 'to hell with you'; she told me she realized at once that he could shoot her and she became overwhelmed with fright.

Fear is an effective way of keeping people subordinated (*cf.* Bourdieu 2000). On the other hand, not showing fear may be a way of confronting domination. Palestinians therefore frequently condemned the fact that some Palestinians acted fearfully. They could become frustrated and angry if someone hesitated to walk up to an armed Israeli soldier at a checkpoint. Children were reprimanded for showing signs of fear at the sight of Israeli army jeeps. *Not* feeling fear was a political necessity but a human impossibility in the West Bank. Moreover, people in Dheishe often claimed that it was the Israelis who were the frightened ones and this was the reason for the state-sponsored oppression of Palestinians. Suicide bombers were said to be a way of increasing Israeli fear.

Summing up this chapter, it may be said that in the refugees' attempts to uphold their everyday lives despite deprivation and danger, they oscillated between a sense of emergency and a sense of extended normality, which redefined anomalous events as 'sort of normal'. In responses to the violence and suggesting the limits of resilience there was great uncertainty about other people's intentions. This was based on a realistic fear of Israel and her supporters. This evoked concerns about boundaries and impurity, but it also activated cultural ideals of hospitality and strength that countered the breakdown of trust.

6. The Making of New Homes

Family life and the obligations of kinship are the bases of the kind of 'normal life' that camp inhabitants told me they desire. However, the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians manifests itself also in the area of domestic life. The constraining effects of exile, military occupation and economic dependence all affect the camp inhabitants' ability to provide for themselves and to live up to kinship obligations and build proper lives as adults and parents.

This chapter discusses younger Dheisheans' culturally and politically coloured attempts to establish new households by building houses, getting married and having children. Such social reproduction implicitly re-creates the bonds and lines of family that have been broken by *al-nakba* and recent violence. The homes of camp families have also literally become political stages on which the conflict with Israel has been played out, bringing both violations but also empowerment. This chapter also provides an account of how camp inhabitants rely on kin and other close social relations for economic survival and general support.

Through the chapter, we will follow Taysir's and other young camp residents' efforts to establish homes. The chapter also provides examples of the many practical obstacles and moral dilemmas that all Dheisheans face when honouring family life and kin relations in a situation of severe constraint in which the political situation demands solidarity with a wider Palestinian community than family. People find themselves trapped between their personal concerns as members of households and families and their duties as Palestinian patriots and camp refugees.

To Build a House is to Make a Life

Taysir was working on his house. The outside walls had been finished for some years while the interior was still a mess. As an unemployed construction worker he had the time and the skills to build it himself but he didn't have enough money to finish his work. Like many others who did not have enough money to build outside the camp, he was adding another floor to the family house. When he eventually ran out of money the work was stopped. Taysir was in his late twenties and his house had to be finished if he wanted to marry and establish a new household. Taysir's task is therefore important; a house or a flat for the new couple is one of the conditions a future bride and her family normally lay down in marriage negotiations nowadays. For both men and women, house-building is thus central to homemaking and becoming an adult member of Palestinian society.

Whenever my field assistant and I had some time during the weeks when Taysir was building most intensively we popped by to see how his work was progressing. He had it all figured out; 'here's the bathroom, here's the bedroom and the salôn (i.e. room for receiving guests). And I want some spotlights over here'. He had decided to build a large flat so he would not have to add new rooms when his family began to grow. He mentioned

his uncle's chaotic house as a bad example of house planning. The money Taysir was going to need to finish his house seemed unobtainable given the local situation.

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Taysir's wish to finish his house and get married was his attempt to establish 'a life' by becoming a husband and father. Attaining moral adulthood is connected to marriage and parenthood in Palestinian society as elsewhere. The link between marriage and house building is often clearly expressed; marriages are occasions for the building, renovation or extension of houses (2004: 43). Lévi-Strauss (1983, 1987 in *ibid.*) suggested in his work on 'sociétés à maison' that marriage is the central relation on which houses are based. Houses are also often ritual sites where parts of the wedding celebrations are carried out. As in Hammond's (2004) study about returning Ethiopian refugees, house building and wedding celebrations are among the practices that bring about emplacement.

House ownership is culturally significant in Palestinian society (Moors 1995a: 46). On the camp, owning a house is very meaningful for most people and this contrasts with the past in the villages where land ownership was more important[146]. The majority of the refugees in the occupied territories own their houses[147] although in camps they do not own the land on which their houses are built since camp land is leased by UNRWA. The camp refugees thus find themselves in a latently precarious situation because they buy and sell houses in the camps to which they have only occupancy rights. In addition to their social significance, houses have economic importance as one of few options for investment in an unstable political situation (Moors 1995a: 45f). Remittances from abroad have also largely been spent on housing (*ibid.*).

With the militarization of the intifada *al-aqṣa* and the lack of trust in political leaders, supporting a family took on more importance than engaging in political (frequently military) activism. It is my impression that the desire for a 'normal life' and reliance on family held true for many Palestinians in the occupied territories at the time of my fieldwork (*cf.* Allen 2008; Kelly 2008). However, the establishment of new families and homes in the camp carried symbolic connotations and implied economic challenges that many other West Bankers did not share.

[146] Elderly refugees' narratives of village life seldom included descriptions of lost houses (*cf.* Sayigh 2005). When asked, my elderly informants nonetheless told elaborated stories about house-building. This is probably related to the rather simple houses many peasants lived in at the time. In contrast, to prominent town families, houses have since long symbolized social position and 'deep-rooted-ness' (Moors 1995a: 46). Also in Palestinian memoires of the urban elite, there are more vivid descriptions of lost houses (*e.g.* Said 1999).
[147] According to a survey carried out in 2003, 47 per cent of the Palestinian refugees in the occupied territories own a house inside the camps, while 48 per cent own a house outside the camps (PCPSR 2003).

Economic Constraints on Establishing New Homes

For many Dheishean families, as for other poor people in Palestinian society, the project of homemaking may bring considerable financial problems. Apart from the costs of building the house or a flat there are costs for fitting out the bathroom and kitchen and for furnishing the bedroom. In addition to the costs of housing, the bridegroom's family also covers expenses for the wedding party, the bride's dresses and gold (often referred to as her *mahr*[148]). The bride's family normally pays for the party on the *ḥenna* night[149].

These costs have been a particular problem for camp refugees who lost most of their land and property in 1948. Khaled, for instance, compared his situation as a 30-year-old bachelor with that of his age mates in a nearby Palestinian village, where he used to go to school:

> When I was 17 years old some boys in school from the village [their families] already had houses for them, they got married and they had children at the age of 17. I am 30 years old and I have to do everything on my own, to study, and I have to be responsible for getting married, I have to pay for everything myself. But the young guy in the village he had everything, his father had built a house for him and he got him married.

Many camp refugee families have not caught up financially with families in neighbouring villages. In Palestinian villages, people usually own land that can be used to build on or sold to pay for the establishment of a new household. Khaled notes the impoverishment of the refugee population. Their loss of resources has profoundly affected their ability to establish homes (*i.e.* both to build houses *and* to pay for weddings) for themselves. His mother, Umm Khaled, who told us about her memories of flight, often worried about her son still being unmarried and repeatedly said that she wanted to see him as a groom before she died, but she did not have the money to help him. Ideally, a parent helps a son to pay for his wedding. Rosenfeld (2004: 184f) has argued that delaying marriage has become a strategy to ease the economic situation of entire families in Dheishe. My informants also said that they tended to get married later than other Palestinians[150].

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[148] Moors (1995a: 77) writes that in legal literature the most common English translation of *mahr* is dower. It can both refer to the gifts the bride obtains at marriage (prompt dower) and to what she receives when becoming a widow or in case of divorce (deferred dower). Other terms such as brideprice/bridewealth or dowry is misleading, according to Moors, since the former concerns payments for the bride rather than to her and the latter gifts from parents to their daughter. Moors (*ibid.*) has documented a sharp decline of the prompt dower in favour of the deferred dower since 1967. For a lengthy discussion on all the complexities of the *mahr*, see Moors (*ibid.*).

[149] *Laylet al-ḥenna* is a celebration before the wedding, normally starting by a party at the bride's home with her female friends. Her future husband's female relatives come to pick her up, dancing for her with *ḥenna*, flowers and coffee on a tray. The bride gets *ḥenna* on her finger or hand and is brought to the bridegroom's family house for another party.

[150] In the Bethlehem district, the age of marriage was 17 years for females and 22 years for males in 1995 (PCBS 1997 table 24).

However, at the time of my fieldwork many Palestinians who were not refugees had similar problems getting married and marriage was becoming increasingly unaffordable in the occupied territories (ESCWA 2007). The economic and political situation was so severe that young men were unable to secure an independent house or to provide for a family. Palestinian couples were marrying at later ages than before; this change was particularly noticeable among rural families that had a tradition of early marriage (*ibid.*).

To overcome the troubles involved when establishing new households, men in particular had to mobilize their networks of relatives and friends to obtain manpower as well as money. Most of the time Taysir, who we met above, worked on his house by himself, although his brother-in-law who was an unemployed electrician came by for some days to help install the electricity. Later on, a friend of Taysir gave him a hand with the walls. Taysir's mother served the workers brunch or coffee among the rubbish and the sacks of cement in the unfinished flat. Both Taysir's mother and older brother reported that they had spent their own savings on his house project. His paternal uncle also contributed with some building material. This is an example of how close relatives from different generations may become involved in the homemaking of younger men.

While the men were building houses for their future families, the women who were soon to be married would decide on furniture and decoration for their future homes using money belonging mostly to the groom. Ideally, everything in a new household should be arranged before the wedding day. The furniture of the bedroom, which normally includes a double bed, side tables, cupboards and a dressing table, is more or less obligatory in the new home and an expensive bedroom is a source of status among the camp inhabitants. Taysir claimed that the custom of buying a complete bedroom for the couple was introduced 15-20 years ago. When Taysir's sister Maryam got married during my fieldwork, her extended family gave her sheets and a number of small items that her mother had saved for her, such as coffee cups. The wedding gifts from her family and friends also included electric household appliances such as a blender and a washing machine.

Another example of someone who struggled to make a new home was Jamila. After her husband divorced her, Jamila had a miserable time trying to secure the custody of or at least access to all her children, facing occasional unemployment and housing problems. She had moved back to her fathers' house, but in her depressed state, she was unable to get along with her parents and siblings. To get some peace, she and the child who was living with her established their own household in an older part of the house that had been used for storage; there was a room and a small kitchen that originated from the first constructions the UNRWA

built in the 1950s. Jamila tried different strategies to 'change her situation'. Among other things, she tried to investigate a housing project the Palestinian Authority (PA) was planning for employees and she checked some rental apartments outside the camp. The housing project turned out to be in the early stages of planning and she found the rents far too high for her salary in a kindergarten. Like many Dheisheans, she felt that renting accommodation was an unsatisfactory solution and preferred to have her own home. Jamila therefore tried to buy a house in the camp together with a relative, but despite some hard bargaining the price remained too high for their budget. Her efforts brought her into conflict with her brother, who thought it would be better for her to opt for a cheaper alternative and build a new house on top of the old construction. Such constructions were common in the camp; some houses were more or less hanging in the air since they were only partly built on top of old buildings.

Compared to Taysir, who was supported by his family in his effort to finish his house, it was rather striking that a divorced woman like Jamila was trying alone to improve her accommodation for herself and her child. Sa'ar (2006: 410) notes that Palestinian divorced or unmarried women in general have difficulties earning respect in their communities and this respect is often needed to gain support for various undertakings.

Notions and Patterns of Marriages

When Taysir's house is eventually finished he will most likely look for a bride through his acquaintances in the camp and in the Bethlehem area. Dheisheans often marry other Dheisheans or refugees from a nearby camp or elsewhere in the area. In Dheishe, marriage preferences follow an ideal of 'sameness' (or endogamy, to use a more traditional kinship term)[151]. People from the nearby villages and from the Bedouin tribe Ta'amre[152] also married people from the camp. With the dispersal of kin groups, new social networks and restricted mobility, the choice of marriage partner seems to be based more on locality than kinship. In general, Dheisheans do not tend to marry Christians or Israelis[153] and they do not find spouses in old Muslim Bethlehem families. Practice is, however, more fluid than ideals and despite the ideal of sameness, a number of foreign women and at least one foreign man had married into camp families by the time of my

[151] Tuastad (1997: 107) has described the cluster of marriage preferences in a Palestinian refugee camp in Gaza: ideally, a Palestinian should marry a Palestinian, a Muslim should marry a Muslim, a refugee another refugee, a refugee with peasant origin his or her alike, a camp resident another camp resident, and if possible a marriage should remain within the *ḥamûla*.

[152] Granqvist (1932: 14) mentions that the tribe Ta'amre were considered former powerful enemies to her informants in the village Artas, but the beduins and the villagers also intermarried.

[153] There were actually some rare exceptions; notably some Israeli women had married camp residents. When Muslims and Christians get married today the couple generally run off and carry out the wedding without their families' approval. Some serious conflicts have erupted because of such marriages (Bowman 2001).

work. Since Muslim and Palestinian as well as refugee identities are transferred to new generations from the father, it was more acceptable for a Dheishean man to marry an outsider than for a woman to do so. As early as the 1920s, Granqvist (1932) noted a considerable number of exogamous marriages in the Palestinian village Artas. It would therefore seem that marriage patterns have been quite flexible for a long time. As Johnson (2006: 65) writes, the logic of 'marrying close' is not necessarily the same as it used to be; it is embedded in historical processes and it may reflect responses to threat and insecurity as well as being a source of symbolic and material capital. The ideal of sameness in relation to marriage is thus relatively dynamic.

Marriages between close relatives, ideally between patrilineal parallel cousins (*i.e.* between two brothers' children: a father's brother's daughter or son), seemed to be becoming increasingly uncommon in the camp[154]. Statistics also show that camp refugees tend to find a non-related spouse slightly more often than do other Palestinians (*ibid.*: 68f). Hammami (1993: 286 in *ibid.*) has suggested that marriages based on kinship persist as a way of preserving identification with dispersed communities and, I would add, interrupted lineages of kin.

The issue of marriages between relatives is complex. Rosenfeld (2004), who completed her fieldwork in Dheishe in the early 1990s, noted that cousin marriages develop for a number of reasons, such as personal preferences, political activism and romance. For instance, a girl in the neighbourhood where I stayed married her maternal aunt's son from a village outside Bethlehem, a marriage that the girl herself labelled 'a love marriage'. Sholkamy (2001: 75), who works in Egypt, also writes that related couples often have the time and space to nourish love and compassion both before and during engagement. On the other hand, there is a normative discourse of modernity in Palestinian society that expresses concerns that close relatives will give birth to children with genetically transmitted disabilities and diseases (Johnson 2006: 85f).

According to Sawsan, marrying according to one's own choice has been common for the last 20 years in the camp. The authority of the older generation over marriage has diminished considerably, especially since the first uprising, which is often considered to be the point at which traditional power structures in Palestinian society were inverted. Although few camp residents are forced to marry these days, marriages continue to some extent to be arranged by the couple's families. For instance, people occasionally have secret affairs that lead to marriage but officially these marriages are 'arranged' and must be negotiated by the couple's families.

[154] This builds on my informants' accounts in addition to my own observations and not on any statistical survey. According to Johnson (2006: 67) about 44 per cent of the marriages of ever-married women in the occupied territories were between relatives in 1999. There are however also statistics that show that between 1995 and 2000 the marriages between relatives (including first cousins and distant cousins) were diminishing (*ibid*.: 68f).

Taysir may approach a woman indirectly and unofficially by asking someone who knows her if they think she will accept him or he may try to talk to her discretely himself. He may then officially propose to her with the help of his relatives. Alternatively, he may simply go in the company of a male relative and ask for a woman's hand. His female family members, in particular his mother, may also be sent to negotiate a marriage deal (*cf.* Tuastad 1997). Unmarried women play a more passive role in marriage arrangements since they do not build houses and cannot propose to someone or 'date' openly. However, a woman may mobilize her network; her female friends may for instance tell their brothers or other relatives who are looking for a spouse about her. She may also try to enhance her options by getting an education and a good job (though some suitors prefer women not to work), keeping herself beautiful, well-dressed and well-mannered and grooming her reputation as a chaste woman. As we will see below, for women, the experience of having been in prison may jeopardize their reputations and thereby marriageability.

Marriage in a Politicized Context

In the politicized context of Dheishe, the kinds of choices people make in terms of marriage are affected by political considerations. Mustafa, Taysir's brother, told me that he and his extended family always tried to 'check' on any man who asked for the hand of one of their female relatives. Besides checking his personality and social status, they would want to make sure that he did not have any 'political problems'. In this family, this meant that the man must not be suspected of collaborating with Israel. In other families it might mean that the suitor should not be wanted by the Israelis. A suitor's political reputation may accordingly influence his marriageability (see also Moors 1995a: 89). Khaled had a story to tell about this. Using one of his sisters as a go-between, he had asked for a girl's hand. When the girl, who supported Hamas, learnt that Khaled was working in the Fateh-dominated PA, she immediately turned the proposal down. This girl's political opinions as well as her mistrust of the PA was seen by her family as a valid reason for turning down the proposal, even if we do not know if she also had other reasons. By contrast, a few camp marriages had been entered into on the basis of shared political commitment. Rosenfeld (2004: 310) notes that in the 1980s and early 1990s a number of marriages took place in Dheishe that were based on the couple's common political affiliation and activism**.** My informants Ahmed and Hanan had for instance met and fell in love while engaging themselves in political activities during the first intifada.

Marriage strategies also express the constraints of immobility. Some West Bank men have tried to marry Palestinian women who have Israeli citizenship because this would give them

access to the Israeli labour market (Bornstein 2002a)[155]. However, in 2003-2004, it was becoming more difficult to acquire permission for family re-unification with a spouse living in Israel[156] and marriages across the border were seen as disadvantageous in Dheishe, at least for women. It was becoming increasingly difficult to maintain contact with and to socially support a married daughter or sister in another area. An unmarried woman named Dalal, who worked in a factory in Bethlehem, had several suitors who had Israeli citizenship but since these men were unwilling to settle in the occupied territories Dalal's family turned down their proposals. Her relatives told her that if she had problems in her marriage, they would be unable to help her because of the difficulties in entering Israel. As is the case in many societies, marriage in the territories is the concern of the couple's extended families; if a couple has problems in their marriage, their families will usually intervene. Hence, Israeli politics of separation and restricted mobility clearly limit people's marriage options.

Formerly, however, social bonds were often re-established across the Green Line, notably through inter-marriages between Israeli Palestinians and Palestinians in the occupied territories. These marriages brought new social and economic opportunities that have taken on particular relevance in the current situation. Among my informants were, for instance, several women who held Jerusalem ID cards. Zaynab, whose morning routines we followed in the last chapter, came from a village outside Jerusalem[157] and her Jerusalemite status meant she could bring her young children through the checkpoints on cherished visits to Jerusalem, to her parents' village and to her siblings who also lived in Israel. Unlike other young children in Dheishe, her children went on a trip to Tel Aviv and the Mediterranean in the summer 2004. Because of their access to the Israeli labour market, her natal family's economic situation was also better than her husband's and she would return from visiting her parents with new clothes for herself and her children.

Cultural and Political Connotations of Weddings

Although house-building and weddings are costly, getting married is a reason to celebrate but how to celebrate has changed during the years. Moreover, Palestinians often view weddings as emblematic of their culture and as expressions of nationalism. In everyday life both men and

[155] During my fieldwork, Palestinians often talked about Palestinian men who wanted to marry foreign women only because these men wanted to settle in Europe or the US or get other advantages.
[156] In May 2002, Israel temporarily suspended the processing of family reunification claims between Palestinian citizens and Palestinians from the occupied territories (PASSIA 2004: 38). See Kretzmer (2002) for a more extensive discussion about family unification in the Israeli-Palestinian context.
[157] Zaynab comes from a village that lost about half of its land to an Israeli settlement, built in the 1970's and whose inhabitants had been given refugee cards, but also Jerusalem IDs in 1967.

women chat regularly about weddings and marriage strategies[158] (see also Kelly 2008). Seng and Wass (1995: 233), who write about Palestinian exiles in the US and the revival of traditional Palestinian wedding dresses as a sign of national pride, note that:

> Weddings themselves serve as a symbolic microcosm of the sociocultural order. They are a celebration of the future as well as the past, a celebration in which identity is reaffirmed, values re-instilled, and relationships cemented. They bring focus to bear on the family, the social and economic unit of Middle Eastern society, and subsequently upon women and their role within the family. […] The critical focus of the ritual is […] upon women, for the wedding signifies not only the reaffirmation of the identity of the community but also the redefinition of the woman who leaves the house of her family.

Many Palestinian folktales also focus on family life, courtship and weddings (*cf.* Muhawi & Kanaana 1989), as do contemporary cultural expressions, such as Palestinian films[159], Arab soap operas and Arab pop music. For instance, a number of popular music videos that are broadcast daily on Palestinian TV end with the singer and his or her beloved dressed up for a wedding[160]. As we will see in chapter 8, weddings are also occasions for enjoying oneself and relaxing. In addition to everyday assistance between kin, life cycle rituals such as weddings also carry individuals through crises and disorder, reinforcing kinship ties and contributing to a sense of ontological security (Giddens 1991).

During the first uprising, the suspension of proper wedding celebrations was a significant form of resistance at the grass-root level. It was an attempt to politicize daily routine (Jean-Klein 2001) as well as to reduce the economic burden on families that were living under strain (Moors 1995a: 122f). By putting 'normality on hold', ordinary people could restore a sense of personal and collective self-control; strategies like this complemented the more formally organized national liberation movement. At the request of the national leadership, civil servants resigned from their positions, commercial strikes were introduced and enforced, Palestinians refused to pay taxes to the Israeli civil administration, but people also sacrificed activities such as daytrips, picnics, leisurely evening strolls, social visiting and especially ostentatious wedding celebrations (Jean-Klein 2001).

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[158] Also researchers have shown interest in Palestinian weddings; the Finnish ethnographer Granqvist wrote extensively about weddings and marriage conditions in two volumes published as early as in the 1930's (Granqvist 1932, 1935). See also Rothenberg (2004).

[159] *E.g.* the movies *Wedding in Galille* by Michel Khleifi (1987) and *Pomegranates and Myrrh* by Najwa Najjar (2008).

[160] This can be related to the fact that romantic relationships outside wedlock are socially and legally condemned in many Arab societies.

> The suspension of wedding celebrations (*zaffat*[161]) seemed iconic of the entire range of cultural activities held in abeyance. 'There are no more weddings now!' people commonly concluded their reports, of whatever form of personal and communal self-restraint. (*ibid.*: 96)

Jean-Klein (*ibid.*) furthermore describes these personal sacrifices as an ongoing reflexive examination of practice that created politico-symbolic capital. It has been reported that martyrs' funerals (see chapter 10) have rhetorically been called patriotic weddings (*i.e. 'a'râs waṭaniyye*) and they are attended with street processions and ululation similar to those at traditional Palestinian weddings (*ibid.*: 100). This suggests a further political connotation of weddings, though none of my informants referred to funerals in this way.

As noted, the intifada *al-aqṣa* differed from the first uprising in a number of ways. One of the differences was that ordinary Palestinians no longer felt involved in the political struggle; the 'ethos of self-restraint and routines of abnormality' (*ibid.*) no longer infused the everyday life of Palestinians. Nor did the Palestinian leadership urge Palestinians to refrain from celebrating weddings or enjoying other activities during the new uprising. In 2003 and 2004 in Dheishe there were many weddings with street processions. Some people told me that this kind of 'real' wedding was a revival that they had not seen since the present intifada had begun a few years earlier (*cf.* Kelly 2008). Although the Palestinian leaders had not officially promoted restraint, it seemed that the killing of Palestinians at the start of the intifada *al-aqṣa*, the curfews and the sieges had discouraged people from holding elaborate weddings. It seemed that this was not so much a political strategy but simply that people were concerned to show respect for mourning families nearby and were worried about the risks given the political situation.

In May 2004, the situation had changed and wedding celebrations had become boisterous events. One evening the streets were filled with the loud noise of a wedding party that an extended family in the camp was holding for one of the sons on his '*ḥenna* night'. However, not everyone felt comfortable about this. My host-brother, who was not particularly fond of these neighbours, commented on the improper behaviour of the young men at the party who had opened a bottle of wine to celebrate. This clearly disturbed my host-brother's Muslim sensibilities. When I asked whether the celebrating family had any members in prison, my host-brother muttered that they had at least four members incarcerated. He was no doubt aware of how improper this ostentatious wedding would have seemed during the first intifada, though he and many others were resigned to the fact that the current situation was different. Sawsan commented that it was too hard for people not to celebrate weddings, that not celebrating made

[161] As Jean-Klein (2001) notes, *zaffat* means wedding processions, not weddings, but in the context during the first intifada her informants used this word to denote a range of ceremonies associated with weddings.

them tired; people needed to party to cope with the situation. As Scheper-Hughes (2008) has noted, enjoying oneself is a common way for people to recover from hardship. The kind of political weddings described by Jean-Klein no longer existed in the camp[162]. To sum up, in the context of a Palestinian uprising, *not* postponing weddings had become part of a process of normalization that was associated with the masses' political disengagement. Some camp inhabitants, however, remained highly ambivalent about these celebrations.

Furthermore, in the camp, weddings fitted into a narrative of social change and loss. At refugees' weddings food was not served, at least not to all guests. Economic restraints meant that normally only soft drinks and cookies or sweets would be provided. Those who could afford it would hire a hall in Bethlehem or any of the nearby villages for the occasion, but most people held their weddings at home in the camp. The weddings of middle and upper class Palestinians usually involve both a dinner and the hiring of a hall. According to the camp residents the lack of food at weddings was problematic and unsatisfactory; the omission of food was said to make wedding celebrations very different from those prior to 1948. Umm Khaled told me that: 'At a wedding [before *al-nakba*] they would take the bride all around the village on a camel, and the mattresses with her and they went all around the village. They used to celebrate for 15 days, dancing and singing. They used to kill sheep and feed all the villagers at weddings.' According to this elderly woman and several other camp residents, weddings also used to be celebrated for more days than today, though the exact number of days that informants claimed used to be celebrated differed, possibly reflecting differences between villages. Jean-Klein (2001: 99) reported that her informants made many nostalgic comments about the food (in this case *mansaf i.e.* a dish with meat and rice) that used to be served at weddings before the first intifada.

Since so much money was spent on for instance the preparation of bedrooms, it is possible that not serving food at weddings was a political statement after all. Alternatively, it may nowadays simply be felt to make more economic sense to invest in a house than in the prestige that may derive from serving dinner to one's wedding guests.

Imprisonment Delaying Life

In Dheishe, detention and political imprisonment make it difficult for people to fulfil their dreams of a proper adult life. Taysir was imprisoned for a month by the Israeli authorities for having crossed the Israeli border illegally. He later explained to me that he had gone to Israel to gain an income; he had been selling Islamic religious literature to Israeli Palestinians. He

[162] According to my field notes, there was a case of 'political engagement' in Ramalla in 2004. The future groom was imprisoned by the Israelis. The engagement was carried out through a mobile phone and shown live on the Arabic news channel *Al Jazzira*. The engagement was moreover held on 'Prisoner's Day'.

desperately needed money both to provide for himself and to finish his house. Since so many Dheisheans had spent time in prison and people were constantly being arrested in the camp, Taysir's problem was shared by many (see also chapter 4). Many of those arrested are, like him, young men who are trying to make a life for themselves.

Shireen was a young woman with several close relatives who had experienced imprisonment (her father, uncles, male cousins and an aunt). She told me that former prisoners often had their lives interrupted at a crucial point in life, namely between youth and adulthood:

> [I]t is very difficult for [the ex-prisoners], because when they are released from the prison they have to start from zero. […] I pity them because their lives have been wasted and someone who is now thinking of getting married, now when he is 30, he could have been married at the age of 20, for example. And my uncle was a *tawjîhi* [*i.e.* high school] student and each time he wanted to take the exam [the Israelis] would come and arrest him. Three times this happened to him. Each year when he was supposed to sit for the exam, they arrested him.

During the first intifada, many youngsters had also been unable to finish school because the schools were frequently closed due to strikes or unrest. Politics had accordingly prevented or delayed Palestinians from continuing their education. Mustafa, when he was talking to his friend Abu Wisam about all the arrests going on, said that yet another generation was being destroyed by imprisonment; he was alluding to the problems the young prisoners face when they are released. Palestinians often stress the importance of education and they take pride in high levels of education. As Rosenfeld (2004) has shown, educating some family members has also provided a way to escape poverty and ease the economic situation for a whole extended family. In my fieldwork I noted that having education was helpful for getting married and providing for a family since better educated camp inhabitants often had much better chances than manual workers of getting a job in the West Bank.

However, the political merit earned from imprisonment may sometimes make a man a more desirable suitor, as Umm Ayman explained:

> [In Palestinian society] everyone welcomes [an honourable prisoner] especially if he proposes to someone's sister or daughter, they will be very proud and happy that he himself comes to propose and they will be so eager for him to propose to one of their daughters or cousins. And that will be a very good support for [the ex-prisoners], they will feel accepted in society and feel that they are valuable to the community.

In Umm Ayman's words, one may detect a wish to resist the idea that imprisonment breaks the path to adulthood and an attempt to reframe it as an experience that makes a man more

marriageable. This kind of politicization of marriages may make it easier for former prisoners to build a family.

Interrupting the Path to Manhood

The current political circumstances, in particular prison experiences, indirectly prevent Palestinian men from attaining ideal adulthood or 'a normal life' by getting married, having children and providing for a family[163]. The graveness of this should not be underestimated; Dabbagh's (2005) study of suicide in the West Bank[164] shows that failure to achieve the requisites for adulthood may lead some individuals to try to kill themselves. This is especially true of men who fail to live up to their role as provider and protector. Dabbagh convincingly connects the suicide attempts made by men with changes in Palestinian society related to the political situation at the time of her study in the late nineties. With diminishing access to the Israeli labour market, the men in her study found themselves unable to provide for their families or get married and start new families. The shame of unemployment was also evident among some of my male informants in Dheishe, who sometimes exaggerated the number of days that they had worked in recent months because they did not want to admit that they could not provide for their families. One of these men was supported by his wife, who had become the household breadwinner by commuting to a job in Israel. Dabbagh also argues that men who had established a good reputation for their political activism in the first intifada often failed to find ways to maintain their reputation and honour after the uprising ended. Johnson has described the situation in the occupied territories during the intifada *al-aqṣa* as aggravating this 'masculinity in crisis' (2003: 16) as men feel disempowered both politically and economically due to overwhelming Israeli control (see chapter 9).

Suicide attempts may also be related to the political activism of Dabbagh's informants in other ways than those she mentions. Experience of imprisonment not only delays the progress of a life trajectory but torture and maltreatment may also cause emotional disturbance in Palestinian ex-prisoners (*cf.* B'Tselem & HaMoked 2007; Khamis 2000; Punamäki 1988; Bornstein 2001). In Dheishe, former prisoners were sometimes unable to provide for their families because their unsettled experiences prevented them from being able to study or work; they had problems remembering, concentrating, sleeping or dealing with the authorities[165]. Bornstein (*ibid.*: 560)

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[163] As has been discussed by Swedenburg (2007), an extension of the period of youth with delayed marriages is widespread in the Middle East due to socio-economic realities in an era of late modernity and capitalist expansion. Apart from being related to the Israeli occupation, Palestinian delayed marriages are thus also linked to such more general patterns.

[164] Compared to other countries, suicide rates are estimated to be very low in Palestinian society, but suicide is not a new or 'foreign' phenomenon as has sometimes been argued (Dabbagh 2005: 132f).

[165] It should be noted that I am not trained in psychology or psychiatry; my own observations must thus be viewed in the light of other researchers' work. Except from the shame that mental health problems bring,

describes the conditions for ex-prisoners that visited a rehabilitation centre in Gaza during the Oslo period in the following way: 'Most of the time, it was only a job they wanted, but their palpable anxiety and the descriptions of their distress including sleeplessness, emotional unpredictability, fear, and anger, revealed that the problems had become more than economic.'[166] Some former prisoners had moreover become sterile due to torture and this meant they could not perpetuate their patrilineage. Adding to their problems is the fact that mental illness remains a sensitive issue in Palestinian society (Dabbagh 2005).

Peteet (1994) writes that in the first intifada beatings and detention were reformulated as means of attaining and enacting manhood among young Palestinian men (*śebâb*), who claimed that they had become 'real men' by experiencing political violence, and their interpretation was confirmed by their social environment. In this way, the *śebâb* inverted their subordination. The violence used by the Israeli state to subordinate them was understood by Palestinians to be part of a rite of passage into manhood. This 'trick' reversed the social order and gave Palestinians political agency despite the limitations of their circumstances. However, this strategy was undermined by the fact that interrogation procedures often included sexual abuse[167]. As Peteet (*ibid.*: 45) notes '[o]ne cannot return from prison and describe forms of torture that violate the most intimate realm of gendered selfhood'.

Questioned Virginity

Young women may also find it difficult to get married after being arrested. Imprisonment puts a woman's reputation at risk in other ways than it does a man's. Palestinian female prisoners face many problems related to their gender, both while they are in prison and after their release (Women's Organization for Political Prisoners 1993). Many of these problems concern sexual harassment and sometimes rape or fear of rape while in Israeli custody (Kevorkian 1993). In cases of rape and harassment more generally, Palestinian women are often held responsible for inciting such assaults (Dabbagh *ibid.*: 73). When it comes to imprisonment, women and girls tend to be blamed for getting involved in politics, which is supposed to be a male arena. Shireen, cited above, told me of the experiences of one of her girlfriends:

Palestinian society is lacking the kind of psychologizing discourses that tend to prevail in Western societies (*cf.* Summerfield 2004).

[166] Bornstein (2001: 567) also notes: 'The rehabilitation program revealed how traumatized many were but also made me suspicious of the victimology that disempowered their vanguardism by framing social service providers and doctors as bestowers of gifts. And then, tens of thousands of former prisoners became victimizers when they enlisted as 'security' forces for a repressive military regime.'

[167] According to Punamäki (1988: 86), different forms of sexual abuse are commonly experienced by Palestinian prisoners, especially during interrogation. For an updated account, see B'Tselem & HaMoked (2007: 58f).

> People talk so much, especially if [the female prisoner] is a girl [*i.e.* a virgin as opposed to a married woman]. I'm certain that there is not one single female prisoner who has been released whom nobody has talked about. Everybody talks about her. My friend that I talked about [who] carried the knife [and] went to the checkpoint[168], she threw [the knife] away and was arrested. And after she was released, everybody was talking about her - even her best friends were talking about her. The families of her closest friends were talking about her. There were friends who left her. And now she is forbidden [by her family] to leave the house. […] Why? Because this is an Arab society.

Shireen was obviously worried about her friend and was afraid the girl's family would force her to marry the first man who proposed to her. The assumption is that a female ex-prisoner may no longer be a virgin and it will therefore be difficult to find her a husband.

During the first intifada, many young girls married earlier than they would have otherwise[169]. Umm Mustafa, a former cleaning lady, explained to me that the family considered her daughter too young to get married and would have preferred her to continue her high school education, but because of *śaraf al 'eile*, *i.e.* the honour of the family, the girl married another camp inhabitant when she was 17 in the late 1980s. At that time, the girl had already been arrested for throwing stones at Israeli soldiers. Umm Mustafa said that the situation had been very bad and there had been soldiers in the camp all the time and this had made it still harder for the camp inhabitants to provide for their children and it made them fearful of rape and imprisonment of their daughters. For these girls, entry into adulthood was not delayed but, on the contrary, brought forward.

The Importance of Having Children

A Palestinian married couple's homemaking project means 'filling the house with life' by having children. As has been noted by Hazboun (1999), both motherhood and fatherhood are strongly emphasized as essential to full adulthood in Palestinian society. Moreover, as is the case elsewhere in the Arab world, a woman becomes 'Im Muhammed' and a man 'Abu Muhammed' according to the name of their first son (a so-called teknonym or *kunya* in Arabic, see Schimmel 1997). This changed form of address implies reproductive and sexual normalcy, socio-economic security and fulfilled personhood. In a society that lacks a social security system, ageing individuals without children, especially women, also face severe problems in providing for themselves. Having no children therefore implies vulnerability. In the Palestinian context,

[168] Those kinds of attacks are often referred to as *jihâd fardi* (Victor 2004).
[169] For Palestinian women, the transition from unmarried girl (*bint i.e.* a girl, daughter, intimating virginity) to wife (*mara i.e.* an adult woman, a wife) is precarious. As Dabbagh (2005) shows, female suicide attempts were often connected to this specific transition or to more general protests against harsh treatment by male relatives.

children are said 'to tie a husband to his wife' and they are thought to create love in a marriage (Hazboun *ibid.*). Furthermore, in the face of regular, lethal violence and the loss of family members, having children is a response to the losses and to the patriotic quest to reproduce the nation.

Preference for Sons

There is a traditional preference for sons in Palestinian society. Hanan and Ahmed, who had three children, were therefore delighted that after two daughters they had a son. This meant that they could stop having children without feeling the persistent concern of their families and society in general. Ahmed's mother, who had given birth to 13 children, nevertheless still occasionally said that her grandson needed a brother.

The cultural concern with having sons and children in general must be understood in the light of the Palestinian kinship system (see below); having many family members is a source of security for the patrilineage in times of conflict, especially among the lower classes. As Aburish (1991: 22) writes of his own family history: 'A man's tribal status is often judged by the number of men behind him, his *azzwa*'. Kanaaneh (2002: 72) argues that this clan concept, which means strength, has been transferred to the nation[170]; Palestinian boys are hence needed in the national struggle.

Practices tend to show much more fluidity than ideals when it comes to family and relatedness. Although my informants felt that it was important to have sons, failure to produce a daughter was also a motivation to continue having children. In everyday life, daughters and sons had complementary roles and this made women and girls more important to the family than the ideal may suggest. However, women have an ambiguous status after marriage, since they are neither completely absorbed into their husband's family nor do they cease to be members of their natal families.

A Dual Nationalistic Discourse on Reproduction

Apart from the cultural and economic emphasis on the importance of having children, the political discourse also pressurizes Palestinians to reproduce. In recent years, nationalistic calls to reproduce have been heard in a context of growing Israeli fear of being demographically outnumbered by the Palestinians[171]. According to Kanaaneh (2002: 50ff), several Israeli leaders have expressed concern about the high Palestinian birth rate both inside Israel and in the

[170] As Kanaaneh notes clanishness has been judged unacceptable within nationalism. In the local context of Dheishe, it was however not an insignificant issue, but something that informants pointed out as important.
[171] See also Fischbach 2004, about Israeli concerns about demography since early Zionism.

occupied territories. Israeli concern with the 'Arab time bomb' that is threatening the Jewish-ness of the Israeli state is to some extent mirrored, although asymmetrically when it comes to means of implementation, by Palestinian political organizations[172]. The benefits of increasing the size of the Palestinian population are reflected in political speeches as well as in the Palestinian press. Kanaaneh (2002: 63) refers to the front page of a Palestinian newspaper that shows a picture of Palestinian boys making victory signs and with a headline reading 'Every Month, Four Thousand Newborns in Gaza'. Many Palestinian women would also claim that their most important duty as Palestinians is that of motherhood and the raising of their children to become 'good Palestinians' (Gren 2001). As in many other nationalistic struggles and movements, women have become the markers of national boundaries and their bodies and reproductive capacity have been the focus of intense contest (*cf.* Yuval-Davis 1997). As Carsten (2004: 162) notes the kinship metaphors of nationalism easily become a living reality under extreme conditions. The politicization of reproduction by Israelis and Palestinians is definitely not unique and was sometimes reflected in individual women's presentation of themselves. For instance, Umm Ayman was evidently proud when she told me that she was the mother of eight.

Although there has been a decline in birth rates in the last 30 years[173], the total birth rate for the occupied territories is still high in comparison to rates in neighbouring countries and countries with a similar level of economic development (Giacaman 1997: 15). I did not have the occasion to talk with men about this issue, however, younger women in Dheishe expressed in informal conversations that they wanted maybe four or five children, which was considerably fewer than in the past[174]. For instance, Layla, a married housewife, said that both she and her husband were content with their two girls and that it was quite enough to have a small family since her husband already had sons with his first wife. Nevertheless, she was hesitant about using the contraceptive pill[175] and shortly after I had completed my fieldwork, Layla was pregnant again, this time with a son.

There is a dual nationalist discourse among Palestinians; the cultural and political preference for a large family coexists with the preference for a small family; '[i]ndeed, most Palestinians agree with both perspectives to some extent: that it is a national and even human

[172] As Kanaaneh (2002: 58) rightly points out 'Palestine' is not able to mirror Israel, since without a state Palestinians do not have the same power and means to implement their national imaginings.
[173] For instance in 1995 the total fertility rate was 6.24 children, *i.e.* 5.61 in the West Bank and 7.44 in Gaza (Giacaman 1997: 15) as compared to 2006 when it was 4.6 children for all the Palestinian territories, 4.2 in the West Bank and 5.4 in Gaza (PCBS 2007b figure 29).
[174] Giacaman's (1997: 21) report indicates that 63 per cent of the Palestinian women in the occupied territories preferred to have between 4 and 6 children. It should be noted that contraceptive methods are rather well-known and easily accessible.
[175] Palestinian women in Israel often worry about side-effects of hormones according to Kanaaneh (2002). It is possible that Layla also had such concerns.

duty to reproduce, *and* that it is important to ensure a good life for one's children' (Kanaaneh 2002: 68). The patriotic argument for the second position claims that a few highly educated, professional Palestinians would be a greater threat to Israeli domination than large numbers of poor and uneducated Palestinians. This position is, however, best understood as part of a modernization discourse; Palestinians are modern, not backward, therefore they have few children. It can also be related to consumerism. Children today need things, be it university fees or computers; they do not only provide their parents with socio-economic security, they also cost money. The policies of the PA also reflect these competing views, signalling what Giacaman (1997: 23) called 'the absence of an integrated national level population policy'.

As Robben and Suarez (2000: 25) note about Holocaust survivors, having children may in some contexts and among social groups that have suffered much violence, become a symbolic victory over perpetrators. A child may become a response to refugee-ness and violence as well as a link both to the future and the past, recreating broken extended families and vanished communities. This finds expression in the fact that Palestinians like to name their children after a martyr in their family. During the intifada *al-aqṣa,* which resulted in numerous Palestinian casualties, organizations promoting birth control also delayed visits to areas where many had recently been killed. According to Kanaaneh (2002: 74), the staff reasoned as follows; 'How can we tell them not to have children when their children are being killed? It's not appropriate.' This way of thinking also fits into Palestinians' sense of existential threat. The violence and disruptions of everyday life during the second uprising were understood as putting the very existence of both Palestinian individuals and their community at risk (*cf.* Fastén 2003).

There are accordingly cultural, economic, political as well as acute existential reasons for having children in 'Palestine'. These partly conflicting reasons often create dilemmas and ambiguities for couples and families. As patriotic Palestinians and emblematic camp refugees, people in Dheishe had been urged to resist the occupation by having children. But should one have many children in response to nationalistic desires to outnumber Israelis and produce men who may fight for the family and the nation or should one have few so that one is able to support and educate them and thereby present another kind of threat to Israel[176]? Having children also means risking losing them.

Contested Childbirth

Reproduction was contested in yet another way during the intifada *al-aqṣa*. Israeli soldiers had many times refused to let Palestinian women in labour pass checkpoints on their way to hospital.

[176] In the case of childbearing, personal aspirations, kin obligations and national goals are actually interwoven although presenting two different alternatives.

Women had been forced to give birth outside or in a waiting car or ambulance. On several occasions this had led to the death of their babies or other tragedy (Amnesty International 2005; Save the Children 2003: 21). Since Dheishe is situated close to the hospitals in Bethlehem there had been no such cases in the camp, but anxiety about not being able to reach a hospital had nevertheless become a major part of the experience of giving birth in the occupied territories. Umm Ayman's adult daughter, who lived with her husband in a remote area, therefore temporarily moved back to the camp towards the end of her second pregnancy. Another woman in Dheishe told me she had been afraid of having to give birth to her youngest child under curfew. Although she had managed to get to the hospital in Bethlehem, her sister and mother could not be with her to provide the normal support. She said the child had also become 'scared of the soldiers' and did not want to be born so the delivery had been complicated.

As the camp residents understood it, history was coming full circle; once again Palestinian children were under threat and Palestinian society was in a deep existential crisis. The stories of children dying during birth at checkpoints recalled some of the events of *al-nakba*. Elderly refugee women told me stories about children dying at the time of flight (see also chapter 4). Old Umm Hassan for instance recounted: '[After the flight from our village] we found two caves; one for us and one for a family from Tel Assafi. I gave birth to a boy in the cave and he died after seven days because of the bad conditions. My little girl died when she was 1 year and 2 months old [due to a children's disease].' During the flight, children's lives had been threatened by hunger and illnesses and some of the elderly women also told me that male relatives had asked mothers to abandon their children. In those stories, children had also been lost or forgotten during the chaos of flight. As will be further discussed in chapter 9, the recent intifada was understood, like *al-nakba,* to be a fundamental disruption of social order.

Home as a Political Stage

Homes in the camp were also stages for explicit political conflict where Dheisheans' attempts to focus on running their ordinary lives were at risk.

Demolitions and Invasions of Homes

A clear obstacle to camp residents' homemaking was the Israeli army's policy of demolishing houses (*al kassafor jeeś*). According to a report by Amnesty International (2004), more than 3,000 homes have been destroyed by the Israeli army and security forces since the beginning of the second uprising. Most of those homes are in the occupied territories, while some belong to Israeli Palestinians living inside Israel. In the summer of 2004, about one house per week was blown up

by the army in the Dheishe camp. Palestinian efforts to establish normality and continuity by building new homes were thus literally destroyed for some. The house demolitions were also a display of the absolute Israeli power to destroy.

The fact that houses are contested in the Israeli-Palestinian context is nothing new; village houses were razed after the refugees fled in 1948 and houses have regularly been destroyed since the beginning of the occupation in 1968 as a way to punish Palestinians for their political activities. The British authorities also blew up houses as a form of reprimand during the peasant revolt in the 1930s (Benvenisti 2000: 90; Swedenburg 2003). Palestinian houses have therefore been politicized for more than half a century. In addition, the Israeli prime minister at the time of my fieldwork, Ariel Sharon, who has a long career in both the Israeli military and in politics[177], is quoted to have said: 'I know the Arabs … For them, there is nothing more important than their house. So, under me you will not see a child shot next to his father. It is better to level an entire village with bulldozers, row after row' (Curtiss 2003[178]). Not only do Israeli policies politicize Palestinian houses, but so too does Palestinian resistance. For instance, the houses lost in the villages are often evoked in Palestinian nationalistic poetry and the village house continues to exemplify Palestinian identity, steadfastness and struggle (Slyomovics 1998: 176).

There seemed to be a pattern of how the houses in Dheishe were destroyed. The house demolitions were carried out at night, the army would normally arrive at midnight or one o'clock in the morning without warning and the family of the house would be given ten to fifteen minutes to leave their home. Some hours later, when the army had evacuated the neighbouring houses and filled the house with explosives, it was 'neatly' blown up. The Israeli army claims to have two main reasons for destroying Palestinian houses; the first is if the house has been built without permission (which is the usual reason for demolishing houses built inside Israel) and the second is the wide category 'military/security needs', including destroying the homes of Palestinians who are suspected of carrying out attacks against Israelis (Amnesty International 2004). In Dheishe in 2004, my impression was that the majority of the houses that were destroyed belonged to a family that had an arrested or wanted member; the demolitions were collective punishments for the acts of individuals. According to the camp residents, it was evident that the Israeli forces used threats to blow up an arrested Palestinian's home to try to make him confess or when the person was wanted to make him turn himself in. For everyone staying in the camp, it was very stressful to be woken up in the middle of the night at the sound of explosions.

[177] Ariel Sharon was elected prime minister in 2003 and had a long history in the Israeli army, being involved both in the war in 1948 and held responsible for the massacre in the Palestinian refugee camps Sabra and Shatila in Lebanon 1982. Until the press of this study, he remains in coma.
[178] http://www.arabnews.com/?page=7&section=0&article=33893&d=20&m=10&y=2003 13.05.2009 10.38.

As Zaynab explained to her worried parents during a visit to Jerusalem that I joined, it was not so difficult to handle the presence of soldiers; it was the nightly explosions that really shook us. The house demolitions terrified not just the affected family but the entire local population.

In one of the families that had their house razed because of the political activities of the sons, the younger brother was about to get married and had prepared a flat for himself and his future wife, but this was also destroyed. When my field assistant and I visited the family, the young man took us on a tour through the rubble and the few remaining walls. He regretted having spent so much money and time finishing his flat. He added stoically that if the Israelis had problems with bricks then they could destroy his house but he and his fiancée would carry on with their plans to get married within the week regardless. The young man's interrupted homemaking was of course a deeply felt dilemma even though he used a kind of 'stoic rhetorical resistance', which is common among the camp inhabitants. His father, however, was very worried that this son, who was the only son not imprisoned, would now be provoked into engaging in the military struggle. The father told me how upset his sons had been by the violence used by the Israelis. Like many other camp residents, he associated the willingness to struggle for one's country and engage in violence with a deeply felt sense of loss and grief. He continued: 'I didn't send my son to study so that he could go and blow himself up.' This comment reflects the dilemmas the refugees found themselves in, trying to meet both personal and familial needs as well as national goals.

With limited possibilities to act, Dheisheans were not always able to choose between alternatives (for instance imprisonment or getting married). The young man whose house was blown up because of the political activism of his brothers is illuminating. Despite the fact that he had chosen not to get involved in politics like his brothers, his homemaking was still interrupted by the Israeli authorities when they collectively punished his family. What alternatives did this young man have other than refusing to postpone the wedding in spite? Since he was the only son not in jail he had obligations to his parents and siblings that none of his brothers could fulfil.

When someone's house was demolished neighbours, relatives and friends came to grieve with the family as they would at a funeral in the camp. Silent men would sit outside on plastic stools and chairs under a white sun shelter, while the women expressed their support indoors. When fellow camp residents came to offer their condolences, this was a way of showing solidarity and sharing in each others' misfortunes.

More common than house demolitions were other kinds of intrusions into refugees' homes, such as house searches and arrests of family members. During the intifada *al-aqṣa*, there was an increasing number of arrests carried out in the camp, often at night. Virtually every house

had been searched by the Israeli army. Such trespassing of boundaries and encounters with representatives of the occupation in people's homes mean that home offers no real security for people in Dheishe, at least not in any unambiguous way. A 15-year-old schoolboy, Ziad, recalled a house search in 2002 with the following words:

> [The soldiers] didn't leave any house in the camp during the 40 days invasion [*i.e.* Operation Defensive Shield]. I woke up from the noise. First, they put us in another room. They took my father and tied him up - he showed them all the rooms and told them what we used each of them for. They got to the cupboard; he said that this is where we put the trousers. They found trousers in there with camouflage patterns. I had been at a summer camp and the trousers were from the summer camp. They took me to one room and started to question me. I didn't answer. They took the trousers and left. They only took the trousers and the jacket that went with it. They started at 6 o'clock in the morning and left at 10 in the morning. […] We were all woken up. My youngest brother, they woke him up with a machine gun.

Sometimes house searches had been experienced mainly as humiliation. Hanan and Ahmed had a newly decorated living room; their *salôn* was not a separate room but open to the kitchen and dining room. Ahmed proudly showed it too me. The unusual stylishness of the flat had apparently also been noted by some Israeli soldiers who had searched the couple's home during one of the army invasions in 2002. According to Ahmed, the young Israeli soldiers had taken a picture of themselves in their living room while Ahmed and Hanan with their children had been forced to stand outside in the rain, waiting to be allowed back into their home. 'This was the first time the soldiers came to my house without arresting me' said Ahmed. Like many other Palestinian men in their late twenties or early thirties, Ahmed belongs to what is sometimes called 'the lost generation'. Men of this age were in their teens during the first intifada and many of them had been arrested, imprisoned and even tortured.

Having one's house searched is an experience that residents have been sharing for years and that forms part of the social memory of the camp, but violations of homes sometimes had consequences that the Israeli army could hardly have intended. Abu Amir, for instance, explained how the brutality Israeli soldiers used during house searches in 1967 was what made him decide to become politically active and to engage in armed resistance.

A Stage for Empowerment

Home may not only provide a stage for fear and humiliation but may also be a place for the development of feelings of empowerment, especially during the previous uprising (*cf.* Gren 2001). Umm Mustafa regularly came back to events that she had experienced during the first uprising. Her husband had then been working abroad and she had been living alone with her children. On

a number of occasions she had fought soldiers in or nearby her home to save one of her children from being arrested or harmed. Just before I was due to leave the camp after my first six months there, she came to talk to me about the first uprising. It was a story for my study, she insisted. She then told me about a day on which the soldiers had been chasing her oldest son, who was only 14 years old at the time. The boy had run into his house, to the bedroom, to hide. The women of the extended family, including the boy's sisters who were also in their teens, had protected the boy from the soldiers with their own bodies. Her son had already told me this story, so I knew its sad ending; the soldiers had managed to arrest the boy and they had beaten him badly while he was in custody. Umm Mustafa also recounted how she at another occasion had managed to rescue her teenage daughter from suffocation by dragging her out from under a group of soldiers who had thrown themselves on top of her. The girl, who is now a married mother of five, had remained blue for a week after this event. One of Umm Mustafa's sons joked with me about these stories, 'Do you understand now that being in prison was sometimes a rest for me! This is how it was at home!' Despite the suffering that Umm Mustafa referred to in these stories, she also told them in a tone that suggested nostalgia for 'the good old days'. She laughed with her son as she talked and it reminded of how other people in other contexts tell less violent family stories.

Her resistance of the soldiers, however futile, gave Umm Mustafa a sense of empowerment in the face of their invasion of her home. In her narrative, she reframed her limited ability to stop the invasion of her home as well as her family's suffering into acts of resistance and means of coping. As Bowman (2001) notes, loss and victimization have often been interpreted and rendered meaningful as elements of a prestige economy. 'In this potlatch-like counter-economy, status accrued to those who 'gave freely' (and aggressively) to the enemy' (*ibid.*: 51). House searches in Dheishe engendered fear and humiliation but they could also become occasions to resist the occupation and to gain resistance capital.

Getting By Through Sociality and Reciprocity

While Taysir was building, the family's chickens and quails wandered freely through the kitchen-to-be. This room also contained a hatcher that made sure there were always new birds hatching. His mother Umm Mustafa fed the birds every day: vegetables, leftovers or some of the unappetizing rice the UNRWA was distributing for free. Once in a while the family would eat some of the birds for dinner. Taysir took care of the slaughtering and then brought the birds to the kitchen where his mother and sisters waited with boiling water to pluck them. The chickens were

then distributed among the households of the extended family. Taysir's household-to-be was thus already contributing a little to the livelihood of his extended family[179].

*

Like other Dheisheans, Taysir was connected to a wide web of social relations, especially kin, and these relations implied mutual obligations. The urgent need of support in difficult times interact with cultural imperatives of sociality, reciprocity and community. For decades of hardship, Palestinian kin relations have constituted a crucial ingredient in counteracting social disintegration and economic deprivation in exile (Rosenfeld 2004; Ghabra 1987). Kinship has been given special prominence because relatives are considered to be those one can rely on (*cf.* Peteet 1995: 169). However, with the difficulties of maintaining contact with relatives outside of the local area, family ties and obligations are often put in jeopardy and the norms of kin solidarity are not always upheld.

The House as a Kinship Unit

Observation of the everyday lives lived in a household offers a window onto the local significance of kinship. In processual understandings of kin relations, the 'house' has often been taken as point of departure when investigating everyday understandings and practices of kinship (Carsten 2004: 36). In Dheishe, 'the house' or *dâr* in Arabic[180], had multiple meanings and the word for house was also used to denote a family, a correspondence that is common in many other contexts (*ibid.*: 46).

Taysir lived with his parents and unmarried siblings in his father Muhammed's household, *dâr Muhammed.* The polite way to address his father was as Abu Mustafa; thus people outside the closest circle of kin and friends referred to the household as *dâr Abu Mustafa.* A household typically consists of a married couple and their children, but an elderly parent may also live with them. Households may also commonly be composed of a widow or widower with unmarried or divorced children. In everyday interactions I observed in Dheishe, the word *dâr* could also be

[179] Many people in the camp had similar strategies; they had birds, most often chickens, or maybe a goat. Depending on the size of land a family could use in the camp, some inhabitants had a small garden for subsistence cultivation or for flowers. Some families, especially in the more spacious part of the camp uphill, had quite big gardens, while others did not have any garden at all. Subsistence cultivation used to be more important in the camp in the past when the population growth had not forced people to build on all the land they held. As we will discuss further ahead cultivating also carried symbolic meaning for these former peasants.

[180] There is another word for house and family, *bayt,* which was less common in everyday language in Dheishe. According to one of my informants, camp refugees in general preferred the word *dâr* instead of *bayt*. Sayigh (2005: 2) who works among Palestinians in Lebanon claims there is little difference between *dâr* and *bayt*, although *dâr* implies social importance and is a more polite way to refer to others. A Fafo report (1994: 51) describes the historical difference between the two Arabic words for home as follows: 'The peasant house, the *bet* [*bayt*], had one room. When the sons married more rooms were added, each with separate doors. The house turned into a compound household, a *dar*.' There is another less frequent word for house, *manzil*, which literally means 'where I stepped down'.

used more inclusively to refer to an extended family. *Dâr Muhammed* belonged to an extended family, which was frequently referred to as *dâr Abdl Rahmin* (*i.e.* their family name)[181]. Such patrilineal extended family ideally consists of a parental household and their sons' households, although there is great flexibility in living arrangements in reality.

The boundaries between households in the extended family are not always clear-cut. Generally speaking, a household will have its own entrance and kitchen, but close relatives from different households often cook together or share meals. In times of economic hardship in particular, the budgets of the households of an extended family may no longer be kept separate. In my experience, members of an extended family, especially children, will sometimes sleep in another member's household and people, especially men, will happily help themselves to food in the fridge of a relative's kitchen. This kind of sharing of accommodation and food establishes relatedness and organizes the relationships between different households of an extended family.

Today in Dheishe, as elsewhere in the Palestinian territories, an extended family often shares one building in 'a kin-based living arrangement' (Johnson 2006), although each household unit will have its own flat, kitchen and entrance[182]. Extended families with many members tend to occupy several buildings in the same neighbourhood and this makes them both kin and neighbours. Normally, a woman moves into her husband's family home but other solutions are common for practical reasons and because of the political situation, such as restricted mobility[183]. As elsewhere, the establishment of new households in the West Bank requires flexibility.

There is a trend in the occupied territories towards increasing independence of each nuclear household; about three-quarters of Palestinian households have been estimated to be nuclear (Johnson 2006: 92). However, the vulnerability of many households may be arresting this trend. A newly married couple may not be able to establish their own household due to unemployment and imprisonment. In Palestinian society, there is both a concern to keep close relations with kin by living nearby and a trend towards greater household autonomy, strengthening of the nuclear family (Moors 1995a).

Palestinian extended families also belong to patrilineal descent groups, *ḥamâyel* (plural) or *ḥamûla* (singular), which are descended from mythical ancestors from several hundred years ago

[181] An extended family is also often called '*eile*.

[182] The patrilocal household structure has slightly changed in Palestinian society which is probably due to political developments as well as a more general process of modernization; back in the villages before 1948, and for many years after, married sons with their wives used to stay in a separate room in the house of the husband's parents. The different nuclear units used to share kitchen and other facilities (Fafo 1994).

[183] The living arrangement of one of the families I interviewed was for instance an exception from the virilocal norm. They had bought their house from the wife's father when he moved out from the camp to the village Doha. In this house, they also had a small business. However, the husband's extended family was living nearby in the same neighbourhood. Another informant from the camp was planning to establish a new household in Ramalla where he was employed, since commuting through checkpoints and roadblocks was such a hazzle.

(Tuastad 1997). These have sometimes been referred to as clans in English. The members of the *ḥamûla* that Taysir belonged to were spread out in the occupied territories and some of them lived in Jordan and others inside Israel. Tuastad (1997: 113) suggests that among Palestinian refugees the *ḥamûla* has been fragmented and is no longer the operative category that it used to be in the villages prior to 1948. As a consequence of flight and dispersal, Taysir's family had lost contact with many relatives who had remained inside Israel. At the same time, various factors work to counteract fragmentation. The dispersed members of Taysir's *ḥamûla,* who had ended up in the West Bank, still constituted a functioning kin group; for instance if a relative living in another nearby refugee camp passed away, the West Bank part of the *ḥamûla* collected money to support his family[184]. Other relatives, in Jordan or in European countries for instance, would sometimes visit Dheishe and might also contribute something to the mutual support systems.

Ideals and Reality of Kin Unity

The official ideology of the Palestinian extended family envisions the relationships within the patrilineal group as those of cohesion, solidarity and mutual commitment (Sa'ar 2001: 723)[185]. Individuals and households form part of networks of relatives and neighbours and within these networks they are dependent on reciprocal exchanges that give economic and social advantages. Without close relatives, Palestinians become extremely vulnerable. This is also related to the lack of a developed state-funded social security system. As was discussed earlier, Taysir's unemployment implied a heavy dependence on his relatives to finish his house, but also for daily subsistence. To his siblings' annoyance, Taysir kept asking them for money to buy cigarettes and for other small daily expenses. Usually, though, his family nevertheless obliged.

Palestinian families are in general highly structured according to age and gender. A person's moral obligations as well as what kind of support one can expect depend on how old a person is and on being a male or a female. Baxter (2007), who carried out fieldwork among Palestinians in Jerusalem and villages in the West Bank, notes that brothers in particular had many obligations towards their sisters that became observable in everyday life. 'Collectively, the brothers were expected to be actively engaged with their sisters' lives. They were to guide, care for, support, and materially provide for them' (*ibid.*: 762). Such understandings of male obligations and care were

[184] This kind of patrilineal descent group has a tendency to fission with time; it is possible that this division would have occurred even without *al-nakba*. As Carsten (2004) notes kinship is also more often a processual matter than a static.

[185] This Palestinian understanding of beneficial outcomes of strong family ties contrasts with blanket characterizations such as 'patriarchy' prevail when describing social life in the Middle East (*cf*. Baxter 2007). As Singerman (1997: 16), who carried out ethnographic fieldwork among the popular classes in Cairo, has noted local everyday life among Arabs in general contains much more negotiations, bargaining and flexibility concerning family ideals and values than prejudices indicate.

also present in Dheishe. As will become clear later in this study, Palestinian men met increasing difficulties in living up to the social expectations as providers and protectors associated with their male gender role.

Female-headed households might also find themselves dependent positions, lacking social as well as material resources (*cf.* Hasiba 2004; PCBS 2007a: 16; Sa'ar 2001). One case was a woman with several young children who was widowed during my fieldwork. Ideally, a widow is supported by her husband's brothers, but this woman's late husband did not have any brothers living in the West Bank. The widow herself had health problems, which made it difficult for her to work. Neither could her youngest children have managed alone at home if she had been employed. Luckily her natal family, her brothers and sisters who were refugees living in Bethlehem, could help her and her children with daily expenses though she remained poor.

This culturally ascribed ideal is, however, not always practised. Although Dheisheans have strong kinship bonds, relationships in camp families are not always as harmonious as the case described above of the widow whose siblings helped her. Problems between close relatives are common and the reciprocal benefits these relations are supposed to give are sometimes absent. One may punish or ignore some family members by refusing to help them with household tasks, food, loans, support or visits. Some relatives refuse to speak to one another altogether. A woman who was married to a man with serious health problems was, for instance, refused financial help by reasonably well-off brothers. During my fieldwork, I was aware that male family members occasionally fought violently. Secret romances also caused tension; young women and men could find themselves in serious trouble with their families if it was discovered that they had a boyfriend or girlfriend. Ruptured relations within the family may, though, be repaired if a conflict erupts between two families[186].

The Need of Proximity to Uphold Obligations

It is important to acknowledge the socially constructed nature of kinship ties even in a society such as the Palestinian, where blood relations are often discursively underlined. As Rothenberg (2004: 86) writes, proximity is central to the practices of affirming kinship and for enforcing familial ties and obligations. With continuous dispersal of Palestinian families and restricted mobility, which hinder the maintenance of relations with kin outside the local area, these ties and obligations are often weakened. When Umm Hassan's brother died in Jordan her grief was mixed

[186] To fully grasp the dynamics of support and conflicts in Palestinian families a much more lengthy discussion is needed than I can provide here. For more detailed studies about Palestinian family dynamics, see Moors (1995a), Sa'ar (2001, 2006) and Baxter (2007). Joseph (1999) has also written extensively about such issues in the context of Lebanon.

with frustration at not being able to travel to Amman for the funeral because the Israelis would demand a travel permit and it would take weeks to try and obtain one. The economic situation also made it difficult for people to support one another the way they would have liked to.

In the camp, neighbours tend to become almost as important as relatives. Neighbours who are on good terms help each other in various ways, show solidarity at funerals, celebrate weddings and the release of prisoners, lend money to one another, share food and information and help resolve conflicts. The social cohesion of the camp is accordingly created by proximity, choice and sentiments (*cf.* Rothenberg 2004). Choosing who to interact with is not always an individual matter though; women and younger men may be instructed by their male relatives to avoid contact with particular families if the men have been in conflict over influence and authority in the camp. Sometimes people obey and sometimes they do not.

One is seldom alone in a house in the camp. This is partly a question of crowding but partly also of sociability. Many families I met had numerous members and there were often visitors. Most of these guests would be members of the extended family. For instance, two of Hanan's sisters were living with their children and husbands near her house and the sisters visited each other almost daily. This geographical proximity made everyday visits easy. Sisters in particular also helped each other with household duties (see also Rothenberg 2004). For instance, some months into Hanan's third pregnancy, the doctor ordered her to rest and her youngest unmarried sister, who lived in their father's house at the other end of the camp, came by every day after work to help Hanan with the housework. At other times, Hanan and her married sisters would look after each other's children. In the camp, relatives may be both neighbours and friends. An individual's parents and siblings or in-laws may live in the same building and uncles or other close family members may live across the street. As many people also tend to marry someone from the camp, other relatives often live nearby.

Sayigh (2005: 10) also notes that the boundaries of homes in Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon, as is also the case in the West Bank, are strikingly different from those of homes in northern Europe. Palestinian homes are not characterized, in Sayigh's words, by the 'unbreachable boundaries of individual privacy and exclusion' of the members of a household but, on the contrary, are open to members of the extended family and to close friends and neighbours. For instance, on a number of occasions I was woken up in the morning by some visitor sitting on my bed, wanting to talk with either my host-sister or me, or by some children from the extended family playing in the room[187].

[187] There are although limits to this openness. It is not anyone who can walk into the bedroom in another household, but it is a question of kinship and gender as well as relatedness.

In Dheishe, kin relations and other social relations were relatively dynamic and it was evident that closeness and sameness needed to be recreated and maintained on a regular everyday basis. Also, at the time of my fieldwork, mutual support had become more restricted to relatives who lived close to one another because of limited mobility.

Feeding Relationships and Morality

Social networks do not only have economic advantages that are important in times of crisis but they are also infused with cultural values. Demonstrating one's sociality by being a good host is also a way of displaying Palestinian-ness as it is understood in the camp and in other lower class areas. Hospitality is closely related to morality and being a 'good' Palestinian. It is also used as a social marker in contradistinction to middle and upper-class Palestinians as well as Christians in the area. Mustafa, for instance, jokingly described a 'Bayt Jala dinner', referring to the predominantly Christian town nearby, as a meal at which you were *not* served food.

An adult Palestinian needs a home in which to receive guests and show hospitality. People's memories of village life before *al-nakba* also stress how hospitality infused daily life. In the lost villages there were for instance public spaces or houses where guests used to be received[188]. Today, in the camp no such communal guesthouses exist any more but camp residents find other ways to receive guests. Depending on its economic situation, each household or extended family has a reception room with some sofas and armchairs and coffee tables where guests are entertained. Some families cannot afford any furniture but just put mattresses or simple plastic chairs in this room.

The following ethnographic description shows how kin relations are re-established and maintained by visiting, showing hospitality and eating together.

When I came back to the camp after a visit to Bethlehem early one afternoon in late July 2003, I found the kitchen full of women from the extended family of my host's household. They were busy preparing lunch. The sofas in the TV room were occupied by women and children I did not know. The fact that they were sitting in the TV room and not in the reception room indicated that they were close to their hosts. I later learned that these women were relatives of my host family and that they came from the same village but were now living in another refugee camp in the West Bank. They had come to visit unannounced. There was an elderly lady, her three daughters in their thirties, a teenage granddaughter and a number of young children. As they waited for lunch, the adults and the teenage girl were served sweet tea with mint leaves. Some of the men from my host family entertained the guests,

[188] Those guesthouses were called *diwan*, *madafah*, *diwaniyye* or *saahah*. They were meeting places for related kin groups that existed and still exist in many Arab societies (Slyomovics 1998: 137).

sharing news about relatives. Both the women and the children were dressed up in smart new clothes and none of them made any effort to help the women in the kitchen. Their visit Dheishe was clearly a special occasion.

Although they lived not too far from each other, these relatives had not seen each other for a long time because of the 'situation'. 'Not since Ramadan in November', explained my host-brother, which made it eight months. The curfews and checkpoints on the road and general disorder made the short trip risky and bothersome[189].

When the food was ready all the women and children went to eat in the room inside. There, lunch was served on a big plate that was placed on an oilcloth spread out on the floor between some mattresses where they guests could sit. This is where the members of this household eat on special occasions, for example at Ramadan. The guests ate sparingly of the maklooba (a dish of chicken, rice and fried vegetables), while their hosts urged them to take more and placed the choices pieces of chicken in front of them. When we had all finished, the women of the house began to collect the plates and spoons, but this time the adult women from the other camp, with the exception of the elderly lady, decided to help. One of them took care of all the dishes.

*

Eating together affirms relationships and community; the Palestinian anthropologist Kanaana (personal communication) explained that 'otherwise something is missing' at a Palestinian family reunion. Even though relatedness is normally expressed through blood ties in Palestinian society, these ties must be reaffirmed through practices such as commensality. Several Arabic proverbs also allude to the links between food and relatedness. 'Sharing bread and salt' is used to communicate closeness. In the case above, Palestinian norms of hospitality, which include the serving of food, served to maintain the relatedness of kin who came from the same village but lived apart. The fact that the guests also helped in the kitchen after finishing their meal also expresses closeness and women who were not related would probably not have been allowed to help.

The women of my host-family here confirmed their ability to show hospitality and they acted out their femaleness. Cooking and serving food are ways to display female virtues (*cf.* Malmström 2009). These women thus proved themselves to be morally good women (see also chapter 9). Domestic practices such as food production have also played a role in politicized resistance strategies in Palestinian society. During the first uprising homemade or locally produced foods replaced blacklisted Israeli products (Jean-Klein 2001). For instance, women

[189] By the end of July 2003 the political situation had temporarily become a little calmer in the south of the West Bank, the arrests and unpredictable killings were less frequent and the Israeli soldiers were not so rough and strict in the checkpoints as they had been some months earlier. On the news we could follow the negotiations about the road map. Even if no one in the camp seemed to like or accept the road map which was said to dismiss the refugees' right of return, the mere appearance of some sort of peace plan opened up possibilities for ordinary people to move more easily between the towns of the West Bank and gave them all some much needed time to breath and feel a relative calm.

started to bake all the bread their families consumed. The fact that many women I met repeatedly pointed out that their bread was homemade may be understood in the light of this political and moral discourse. Food therefore carries multiple connotations to both politics and family life. The women's efforts in the kitchen also 'spilled over' to the male members of the family, displaying the hospitality of the whole extended family. This was clear when my host-family cooked for the house of a mourning family – the men of my host-family negotiated the right to cook for visitors to the mourning household on a specific day following the death while the women did the cooking.

Many people in Dheishe found it difficult to live up to ideals of hospitality with their strained economies. It was also difficult to meet one's relatives in other local areas since movement in the West Bank was restricted. Visiting family in Gaza was unthinkable. There was consequently a strong desire for community, solidarity and reciprocity that would give people a sense of security and trust in one another. This desire was thwarted by displacement, immobility, economic deprivation and the violence associated with the political situation.

To sum up this chapter, it may be said that everyday life in Dheishe informs us about the profound effects of the Israeli occupation. Many of the refugees' efforts to establish homes are hindered by or delayed because of Israeli policies. The resilience that camp inhabitants can cultivate by drawing upon social networks of kin and establishing a 'normal life' by becoming a married parent is limited, though people continue to try. Many camp residents are also frustrated by the fact that they cannot be as generous as cultural ideals prescribe. In addition, their attempts to make homes also create dilemmas; the needs of the nation are not necessarily the same as the needs of a family or an individual. As they try to make their homes, people try to find a balance between pragmatism and nationalistic demands made of them as Palestinians and as emblematic camp refugees.

Perhaps most significantly, Dheisheans showed steadfastness, a concept that will be discussed in the coming chapters, by (re-)building houses in spite of threats of house demolitions and by having children in spite of their fear of losing them. The next chapter discusses the dilemma people face when they establish new homes outside the camp while still imagining a return to their villages inside Israel.

7. Return and the Desire for Roots

Sitting on the stairs one evening outside Taysir's unfinished apartment, he, my field assistant and I happened to overhear a young woman's private phone call to her husband in prison. Taysir commented that if possible he would leave the camp. I asked where he wanted to go. He said 'Anywhere. It's always like this; that the neighbours hear what you say among yourselves.' I said 'But there are people in the camp who claim that you must stay in the camp to get back your villages, to get back Ajour [i.e. his village]? He answered: 'Ajour is a dream, shut your eyes. I want something in my hand.'

*

This chapter will focus on the tensions brought about by the interminable temporariness of camp life and the increasingly distant hope of return to original villages. It develops a theme from the previous chapter concerning the conflicting demands on Dheisheans as members of families and kin groups, on the one hand, and as politically charged members of the Palestinian nation on the other. The dilemma, especially for the younger generation, is about whether (and how) to remain true to ideals of return and rooted-ness or to seek out other options by making new lives outside the camp and thus relinquishing one's identity as 'camp refugee'. The notion of steadfastness (*ṣumud*), demonstrated by staying on the land, is central to this dilemma.

This chapter examines 'return' as part of a multifaceted discourse among Palestinian refugees. It will examine this discourse and delineate the different and sometimes ambivalent positions that Dheisheans take on return in its complex political, material, moral and existential dimensions. Narratives that promote return are interpreted in three ways. Some narratives uphold return as a means of political resistance and protest against Israeli policies of expulsion; return makes a claim to moral redress and justice. Others argue for return as an existential remedy to Dheisheans' temporary condition as camp refugees. For these, returning home would be an end to the refugee cycle and a 'normal' order would finally be re-established. Yet other narratives seek to command or renegotiate the future. This stance may be understood by reference to Bourdieu's (2000) concept *illusio,* the infusion of hope for people in desperate circumstances and with limited scope for action. These narratives are all coloured with the tension that permeates the lives of all the Dheisheans in this study – the tension between life in transition and life as a struggle to achieve normality and permanence.

The Refugee Issue and the Right of Return

One day in Jerusalem, the English edition of an Israeli weekend supplement caught my attention. The front page of the Jerusalem Post carried a photo of a young Palestinian boy with a sign in his hand that was shaped like a huge

key. The text underneath the image said 'Key to Destruction' (Jerusalem Post, Upfront, June 18 2004). The key has become a symbol of the Palestinian right of return and many refugees claim to have saved the key to their abandoned houses. Metaphorically, the right of return may be interpreted as the key to both the refugee issue and the Israel-Palestinian conflict. The word destruction under the photo in the Israeli newspaper referred to Israeli fears about returning Palestinian refugees.

*

The future of the Palestinian refugees is one of the most difficult issues to be resolved in Israeli-Palestinian negotiations[190]. Various efforts to address this issue have been made since the onset of the peace process in the early 1990s, but years of violence and the breakdown of the process have probably hardened attitudes and damaged confidence and trust (see *e.g.* Brynen 2008). A solution to the refugee predicament therefore seems remote.

The UN General Assembly Resolution 194 (III), 11 December 1948, which is most frequently referred to when discussing the refugees' right of return (***haqq al-'awda*** in Arabic), states as follows:

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

Apart from repatriation and compensation, peace and responsibility are key words in this resolution.

The quest of Palestinian refugees to return to their homes prior to *al-nakba* is not only a demand for the implementation of a legal and moral right but it has also become a significant part of Palestinian national identity and it symbolizes Palestinian history. Return, *'awda* in Arabic, plays an important role in collective and individual imaginings of the homeland and of Palestinian-ness. Much Palestinian poetry and fiction link political aspirations to individual concerns in the longing to return to the homeland (see *e.g.* Slyomovics 1998). Among Palestinians, the name *'awda* has been adopted for a range of phenomena in daily life such as a newspaper, a football team, a dance group as well as several mosques (Isotalo 2005: 51).

Although it forms the basis of patriotic mobilization, the refugee issue has been repeatedly postponed in peace negotiations and was excluded from the Oslo agreements, and this created resentment and bitterness among Palestinian refugees (Lindholm 2003a). In 1991for instance the refugee issue was treated separately from other issues and was referred to a 'Refugee Working

[190] Other core issues in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict that are beyond the scope of this study are settlements, control over borders and water resources as well as the status of Jerusalem.

Group', which argued for an improvement of living conditions for those displaced, in particular for those outside the occupied territories, and for increased access to family reunification[191] (Shiblak 2009: 6f; Massad 2006: 116; Hammer 2005: 88-93).

The Palestinian leadership has rhetorically maintained the undisputable right of return of the refugees, with reference to UN resolutions, but, in practice, demands have been modified over the years. For instance, Massad (2006: 115) argues that when a two-state solution (*i.e.* with a Palestinian state solely in the West Bank and Gaza along side Israel) became more acceptable to part of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) in the 1970s, it also became difficult to see this as compatible with the implementation of the right of return (see also Pappe 2004: 151). It is, however, unlikely that a Palestinian leader would sign any document that officially surrendered this right (Shiblak 2009: 8). More recently, the Palestinian negotiators as well as individual politicians and intellectuals have proposed a collective homecoming to a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza Strip instead of an individual right of return to a person's particular place of origin (Lindholm 2003a: 144ff). This proposition excludes repatriation to villages and towns inside Israel and it has provoked the Palestinian public (Hanafi 2006; Isotalo 2005: 58f). On the other hand, a solution built on a single, bi-national state that is shared by Israelis and Palestinians and would manage refugees returning to its territory has been discussed mainly in Israeli and Palestinian Leftist circles in the past and seems to have re-emerged recently[192].

Despite claims that a collective political identity and shared experiences of occupation had become more significant building blocks in Palestinian national identity than the right of return (Bisharat 1997), Palestinian refugees began to mobilize for return in 1995 and 1996[193]. This self-mobilization occurred after the establishment of the Palestinian Authority (PA) in parts of the occupied areas and as a reaction to the neglect of the refugee issue by the leaders. The refugee issue has, moreover, resurfaced at the heart of the debate since the failure of the Oslo process (Sayigh 2006). Today, there is a worldwide network promoting the right of return of Palestinian refugees through research centres, NGOs, conferences, campaigns as well as e-mail lists and internet sites (*ibid.*).

[191] Family reunification in most cases implies that Israeli authorities allow a Palestinian to reside legally in Israel after marriage to an Israeli-Palestinian citizen.
[192] A well-known person who argues for a joint Israeli-Palestinian state today is Ghada Karmi, a Palestinian academic and writer who is based in Great Britain.
[193] Several popular refugee conferences were organized by the refugee camps' Union of Youth Center. One of these was held in Dheishe. Massad (2006: 126) writes that 'due to the diversity of opinions among refugees regarding relations to the PA [*i.e.* the Palestinian Authority] and the PLO, the conference program and recommendations were not implemented; as a result refugees have not been able to elect their own leadership.'

It is impossible to predict how many Palestinian refugees would actually return to their families' former homes and under what conditions (see *e.g.* Sayigh 2006)[194]. Some scholars, notably Abu Sitta (2001), claim that it is practically fully possible to return Palestinian refugees to areas inside Israel[195] and that this would, indeed, be necessary for achieving long-term peace. Successful repatriation however depends on many factors, such as employment, housing, family connections, social networks, security and standing before the law (Hanafi 2008 in Shiblak 2009: 9). It is also clear that Palestinian refugees themselves have been left out of discussions of how to compensate and repatriate them. As in other unresolved political disputes, the refugees have become pawns rather than actors in the peace negotiations, reconstruction and power struggles that follow conflict (*cf.* Eastmond & Öjendal 1997).

Hanafi (2006) suggests that it may be useful to distinguish between the material and the symbolic dimensions of the Palestinian right of return. While the first is about actual return to physical places and compensation for lost property, the latter is more concerned with a process of recognition as victims and with forgiveness and reconciliation. The right to choose between options may be crucial for the initiation of such a process (*ibid.*). In addition to repatriation, these options, Shiblak (2009) proposes, might include return to a Palestinian state, the right to enjoy equality and full citizenship in host countries as well as compensation for loss of property. The right of return also carries moral connotations in Palestinian society and it is often discussed in a highly rhetorical manner as a holy right. Return is usually related to what is discussed below as 'an ideology of rooted-ness'.

Israeli Concerns

Israeli political leaders argue that implementation of an actual repatriation of Palestinian refugees is out of the question since it would threaten the Jewish character of the Israeli state; the non-Jewish citizens would then be 'too many'[196]. Some Israelis question the legality of Palestinian refugees' claims for return (*e.g.* Benvenisti 2008) and it has been argued in public debate in Israel that because Palestinians were the ones who started the war in 1948, Israel cannot be expected to take responsibility for its costs (Gal 2008). It has also been claimed that since Jews have been

[194] Since return is an extremely sensitive issue in the Israeli-Palestinian context, I would like to underline that I personally think that it was a serious mistake to not find a solution to the right of return within the Oslo agreements. I am also convinced that the ones concerned, namely the refugees themselves, have to be involved in these discussions.

[195] Abu Sitta (2001) argues that the areas in and around former Palestinian villages are largely uninhabited and unused and could therefore absorb returning refugees.

[196] The UNRWA claims to have registered some 4.6 million Palestinian refugees (UNRWA 2008 in Shiblak 2009: 3). Many other displaced Palestinians are not registered with the Agency. These refugees, many of whom are living under harsh conditions in camps in the Middle East, are considered a threat to Israel. Apart from Israeli Palestinians, there are also many non-Jewish labour migrants already living in Israel.

expelled from Arab countries[197], there has been a just 'population exchange' between Arabs and Jews and that Israel therefore has no moral obligation to accept the return of refugees (Pappe 2004: 146).

The Israeli approach in negotiations has this far been to treat the right of return as 'a symbolic political issue rather than an operational one'; claimed rights are thus assumed to carry no real geo-political meaning or constitute any threat to the Jewish-ness of the Israeli state (Gal 2008: 5). Currently, Israel seems unlikely to accept the repatriation of more than a small number of Palestinians to its territory (*ibid.*). However, despite being excluded from the Oslo process, the refugee issue has regained its position at centre stage, although the Israeli leadership seems overwhelmed by its complexity, by the number of actors involved and by uncertainty about the consequences of an agreement (*ibid.*). The Palestinian right of return also contrasts sharply with the Israeli Law of Return, according to which only those of Jewish ancestry, born anywhere in the world, hold the right to settle in the Jewish state and to claim Israeli citizenship (Shafir & Peled 2002: 145f). Continuous Jewish immigration is hence encouraged by Israel while Palestinian immigration and return is resisted.

Dheishean Voices on Return

Palestinians commemorate al-nakba on the 15th of May; this is also a day when they mobilize for the right of return. After my field assistant and I had been to the annual demonstration in the camp in 2004, I went to visit Umm Mounsir and her adult but unmarried daughter Dalal. The two women were sitting on the floor in front of the TV, preparing rolls of vine leaves. I asked them why they had not joined the demonstration and Dalal said half-jokingly: 'It's over! Give us the money and we will forget about it [i.e. our villages/right of return]!' Her mother also laughed. Dalal continued by saying that she did not want to live in the village anyway. She had earlier told me that she would prefer to live in Bethlehem because the camp was too crowded. Umm Mounsir became serious and said 'But I am from my village [baladi] and there, there are my father's fields ['ard]. His land is bigger than the entire camp.' As if to make sure that I had fully understood, Umm Mounsir repeated this last sentence twice.

*

This example shows how individuals of different ages may hold different views on the right of return. The elderly often wish to return, while the young are often ambivalent. Many younger camp residents, however, did not agree with Dalal but claimed to share older people's desire to return; their statements were part of a well-established rhetorical discourse in the Palestinian community. A person might hold an animated speech about the importance of the right of

[197] Just as the expulsion of Palestinians has been questioned, it has been debated whether Jews who left Arab countries were expelled or left freely (*e.g.* Pappe 2004: 176ff; Beinin 2005).

return, but later admit to me in privacy that he could not imagine going back to live in a village although nobody should deny him his right to do so[198]. This kind of ambivalence did not stop children from becoming sentimental about 'their village'; Samar's 12-year-old daughter Yara, for instance, dreamily described how beautiful her village was after she had visited it with her paternal grandmother.

In my experience, Dheishean families handled the transmission of memories of flight and village life in very different manners; some families consciously talked about their villages and brought younger relatives on visits when the political situation allowed, others avoided reminding themselves of such sad issues (*cf.* Sayigh 1979). Village visits were used as pedagogic tools for learning about one's origins and they were carried out also by the youth organization Ibdaa[199]. These temporary returns were ways of re-establishing links to village land.

Imagining Return

During my fieldwork, a Palestinian research institute published a poll about Palestinian refugees' opinions on return[200] The sample was taken from Jordan, Lebanon, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. The poll sparked violent reactions in the Palestinian community, especially as the Israeli news media announced the results as the 'death of the right of return'. A US-based Palestinian website commented as follows:

> The Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research (PCPSR) dismissed Monday, July 14, reports claiming that just one in 10 of the Palestinians expelled from their homes when Israel was created in 1948 want to return there, and attributing the findings to the Center, sparking angry and even bloody reactions among Palestinians.
> According to the alleged findings of the survey, only 10 percent of Palestinian refugees in the West Bank, Gaza Strip, Lebanon and Jordan would consider setting up home in Israel and obtaining Israeli citizenship.
> Just 5.6 percent of those living in Jordan allegedly said they wanted to return to their pre-1948 homes, apparently because of favorable living conditions in the Hashemite kingdom. By contrast 23.2 percent of those living in Lebanon said they would favor that option and 12.6 percent in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.
> Upon publishing the claimed results, angry protests from Palestinians were sparked Sunday. The furious protestors attacked the center at its base in the West Bank town of Ramallah.
>
> (www.palestinechronicle.com/story.php?sid=20030714195549889)

A year later, when I was conducting group interviews, I decided to use this event as a starting point for discussions about the right of return. Mention of the poll sparked heated disagreement,

[198] I never heard anyone argue *against* the right of return more generally. Some said that they personally did not want to live in a rural village, others that they did not think return would be possible.
[199] One such trip was captured on film by Mai Masri in *Frontiers of Dreams and Fears* (2001).
[200] See www.pcpsr.org/survey/polls/2003/refugeesjune03.html 13.05.2009 10.33.

particularly among some men between 30 and 45 years of age. Sharif, who had been living abroad for many years but had come back to Dheishe some years earlier, upset his friends, including my field assistant, by suggesting that even less than 10 per cent of the refugees would return.

> ***Khaled*:** [T]his report is lying, it's just lies.
>
> ***Abdalla*:** I want to tell you one sentence, just to add to this. When we were kids my father brought us to [our village] Bayt Natif and he showed us the land, this is for this person, this land for this person, and I don't know what. This is our land even if we lived in the camp. You see man, me or you, we never forget; it's our homeland. To go back, we will go back. Most of the Palestinians will go back.
>
> ***Sharif*:** If all of you go back, where will the Jews go, where will the Israelis go? This one will go to Bayt Natif, this one to Zakkariyya. Where will the Israelis go?
>
> ***Khaled*:** They have to arrange it themselves.
>
> ***Abdalla*:** They will go back also to France, to Holland, to Poland, to Germany. They should go back [to the countries they came from].
>
> ***Sharif*:** If according to Shikaki, 10 per cent want to go back, my feeling, and I've been living with the Palestinians for four years, tells me that there is only 2 per cent who will go back to the villages. Maybe 2 per cent will go back. My father and your father. The old people. Anyone else? No, they won't go back.
>
> ***Hassan*:** It's not like this, the report. Listen! It's not like this, Sharif. The one who has built a huge stone building, he won't go back [He probably means A.] It's not like this, the report!
>
> ***Abdalla*:** I've built a stone building.
>
> ***Sharif*:** The one who owns land here, he will not go back [H and K own land]. Because when you [*i.e.* the villagers] left Bayt Natif you were 30 families and now you are 70, so you won't get two square centimetres there.
>
> ***Abdalla*:** I want to go back! I'll live on these two square centimetres.
>
> ***Sharif*:** Nobody wants to go back. And if they offer you 70 000 dollars for each UN [refugee] card, the first ones who will give up their cards are me and you and him. […] This is my opinion and what I have realized here is that people talk about the right of return only in the media. The right of return has failed since you left there.
>
> ***Khaled* and *Field assistant*** [both angrily]**:** It's not true.
> […]
>
> ***Sharif*:** Abdalla, we are holding a straw, like someone who is drowning in the sea and catches a straw – will it save him?
>
> ***Abdalla*:** You're [still] holding! Why do you think that Israel is a powerful state? Go away, man! Israel won't be for long! [The Israelis] are living in an ocean [of Arab states] and this ocean will revolt.

This animated quarrel highlighted a number of issues related to the right of return, to steadfastness and ideas about roots: pragmatic considerations (such as where the Israelis would

go; that housing and investment strategies had weakened interest in returning; and the generational differences concerning return) were opposed to a rhetorical insistence on return to the villages. Sharif, however, felt that this insistence was a 'false' promotion of Palestinian determination to media representatives[201]. The discussion also contained undercurrents of blame and questioning of each other's ideas about where to settle. Abdalla was in fact living outside the camp, in a multi-storey building in Doha, and Hassan argued that a person who had built such house in the West Bank would never return. As far as I know, Khaled and Hassan also owned land outside the camp and Sharif argued that people with land would not go back. Khaled had also bought an apartment in town and had told me that he was thinking of moving to this place permanently. The discussion thus fluctuated between blaming, rhetoric, pragmatism and hope of future change.

Layla, who was moving out of Dheishe, questioned whether leaving the camps was really an issue when it came to the implementation of the right of return. In her opinion, refugee-ness was verified by UN registration, not by *where* one resided: 'Even if you don't live in the camp, you will still have the [UN] card. […] This proves that we are refugees whether we live in camps, in Bayt Jala or Doha - the card proves we are refugees'. Samar added that even 'if you live in Sweden but you have a UN card, this means that you are still a refugee and you will return'.

My informants had not actually read the report referred to above, they had just heard about it on TV or read about it in newspapers. In the report it is clear that the 10 per cent who would go back refer to a return to an Israeli state in which they would either become Israeli citizens or not. This was probably considered to be a choice between two evils: to forego return or to return to an Israeli state and jump into 'the belly of the beast'. 25 year-old University student Walid doubted the statistics and suspected that the survey had been carried out incorrectly, though he added that the results could also reflect the political situation. He suggested that another political development would have yielded different results:

> I want to return to my country or my village, but I don't want Sharon to rule me or the Israeli government to rule me. […] If we go back we have to get all of our rights, not only to go back to live there. […] [The Palestinians] think it's so difficult to go back to our villages since Israel is still present. If there was one government, [a joint] Israeli-Palestinian, just one government, maybe. But [with] a Palestinian government and an Israeli government, there is no peace and there is no return.

Maryam, Taysir's sister, also said that she preferred living in the West Bank to returning to a village that was under Israeli control.

[201] Foreign researchers have probably fallen into the category of media representatives in people's minds. It is possible that my informants' insistence on return was encouraged by my presence.

Playing 'devil's advocate', my field assistant and I gave a group of women, all married housewives between 30 and 40 years of age, examples of how the circumstances in the village might be if they could go back; no services, no work, Israeli authority, relinquishing Palestinian passports and possibly having a military camp outside the village. This scenario was taken from the reality of some Palestinian villages inside Israel that remain unrecognized and denied services today[202]. Israeli Palestinians fall under Israeli authority, they do not have Palestinian passports and until the late 1960s they were under military rule inside Israel. When Layla insisted that refugees would return even under these conditions, Samar exclaimed: 'You say that but when you think about it, if you have children, would you stay in a village that you were forbidden to leave, forbidden to work, forbidden to eat or drink? How could we live? Would I go back to die? If this is the case, some people will refuse to go back'.

Their discussion also turned to the issue of hopelessness:

> ***Zaynab***: Is it true that there is a right of return?
>
> ***Layla***: Of course there is.
>
> ***Zaynab***: Yes, there is, but do we hope for this? This is the problem.
>
> ***Layla***: We are dreaming of return.
>
> ***Zaynab***: There's a dream, and there are wishes, but is it really going to happen? That is the question.
>
> ***Layla***: I just want to say, the statistics say that only 10 per cent want to return, but there's no one who doesn't dream of return, not even children; only those who are not patriots think of not returning. I think 90 per cent or 95 per cent of the people are patriots and want to return, and only 10 per cent are not patriots and don't want to return and think that money [*i.e.* compensation] will be better. Even a child wants to return.
>
> ***Samar***: But I think even collaborators want to return.
>
> ***Layla***: No.
>
> ***Samar***: Even those who are not patriots want to return, there's no one who doesn't want to return. The person who doesn't want to return it is not because he wants money [as compensation]; he doesn't want to return because there is no hope with return.

The dream of returning to places of origin often constitutes an important element in diasporic identity formation, but it seldom leads to actual repatriation (*e.g.* Brubaker 2005; Safran 1991; Hammer 2005). Dreaming therefore does not necessarily mean acting out one's wishes but may be an unrealistic or self-deluding fantasy. Of the three women, it was only Layla who kept on

[202] Since these villages are considered to have been illegally established, the Israeli authorities do not provide services to the Israeli Palestinians who live there, despite the fact that they hold Israeli citizenship.

expressing hopes of return. The others agreed that Palestinians wanted to return or to claim their rights to the land but said that people doubted whether there would be a chance to do so. In the report mentioned above, the majority of the respondents did not believe that Israel would accept the suggested solution, which was based on the stranded negotiations in Taba 2000. Moreover, the refugees had more acute concerns about sustaining everyday life. Dheisheans were also worried that they would be expelled from their homes by force once again or that they would have to migrate in order to be able to provide for their families.

I asked some informants to describe what they thought life would be like and what they would do if they went back to their villages. Their descriptions mainly concerned whether or not it would be possible to live off farming. Khaled said that there was something inside him that drove him to farm the land. 'If I returned to my village, I would start farming the land and I would live off this.' Another young refugee man said that he dreamed of getting married to his girlfriend and of building a small house in his village where they could have chickens and some cultivated plots. Abu Wisam cited the example of a village close to the camp that had, against all odds, managed to reclaim some of the land that the Israeli authorities had taken in 1967. A limited number of villagers had returned there and this made it possible to envisage repatriation for others. Many Dheisheans had also visited their home villages; they knew that most village houses had been destroyed and they knew whether there were Israelis living in their village or not. As West Bankers, they had also experienced Israeli society (its administration, military force and individual members) and they knew how Palestinians with Israeli citizenship lived. My informants therefore probably held more realistic views of repatriation than did most diaspora Palestinians. Palestinians who returned to the Palestinian territories during the 1990s from the US and the Gulf States had often been disappointed because they had fostered unrealistic hopes about their homeland (Hammer 2005). Repatriation is often complex and it may create new conflicts and disruptions (*e.g.* Long & Oxfeld eds. 2004; Stefansson 2003). Hammer (2005) notes, for instance, the many tensions between Palestinian returnees and local residents that emerged in the West Bank after the Oslo accords. Conflicts erupted over issues as diverse as modesty, dress codes, language skills and benefits offered by the PA to returning Palestinians. The returning Palestinians were also a heterogeneous group; their different places of exile had influenced them and women and men had different ways of explaining their reasons for returning and of relating to the national project (Isotalo 2005). Many Palestinians who came back to the PA-controlled areas also maintained a transnational lifestyle, held several citizenships and kept a number of homes.

Summing up, the issue of return condenses politico-ideological, material, moral and existential concerns for Dheisheans. It draws particular force from and in turn reinforces a Palestinian ideology of rooted-ness.

Understanding Return within an Ideology of Rootedness

Rootedness is a recurrent cultural theme in Palestinian narratives. Although scholars question the notion that humans actually have 'roots' and that refugees are therefore uprooted (Malkki 1992), 'roots' remain important for displaced groups and for nationalist ideologies. Sedentary agricultural peoples often have a sense of being rooted in the soil (*ibid.*: 31) – this is the case for Palestinian camp refugees with their peasant backgrounds. It is often possible to trace a Palestinian's origin centuries back through family legend and naming systems that consist of long strings of names (see *e.g.* Ashrawi 1995: 132ff; Schimmel 1997). Although the refugees in Dheishe have established new homes there, most would argue that the camp is neither their true home nor their 'natural' or 'authentic' place. Despite the pragmatics of emplacement and new belonging, a sense of 'being out of place' persists as one dimension of a multi-layered refugee identity. This perception of refugees as anomalies and strangers is also one reason for Palestinian stigmatization of refugees, particularly of those living in camps.

According to Slyomovics (1998: 174ff), Palestinian poets often depict rural life and features of the landscape to emphasize the connection between Palestinians and the land. This poetic imagery feeds into the political argument that denies any affinity between the Jews and the land. Comparing themselves to Israelis, Palestinians claim to have a more personal and material relationship to the land.

A metaphor commonly used in Palestinian poetry is that Palestine is a beloved woman or a mother. This feminization of the land was evident even in early Palestinian and Zionist nationalism (Katz 1996). The portrayal of the land as the object of men's love and sacrifice transformed Palestinians into 'real men' (*ibid.*: 89f). Descriptions of Palestine as a conquered and colonized space may also be given gender connotations; Palestine has been described as penetrated, raped, conquered and controlled by foreign invaders (Slyomovics 1998: 208). A more empowering metaphor is that of the land as a pregnant woman who gives birth to revolutionaries who will free the land (Kanaaneh 2002).

Many camp inhabitants expressed their love of the land in poetic, metaphorical terms. A 14-year-old girl who had visited her family's village and whom I interviewed in 2000 said:

> I visited my land twice. The first time I cried, I couldn't stop myself. I thought: why don't we come back, the land needs us. Why are we living in the camp? I saw old

> trees from 1948 in the village. I wanted to bring them, to put them in the camp. But I don't think they could survive in the camp, you've seen the situation in the camp.

Return as Political Resistance

As in Palestinian nationalism, Abu Wisam argued that the right of return is connected to the issue of statehood, to acknowledgement of refugees as victims and thereby to reconciliation:

> When they allow me to go back to my village they admit in front of the whole world that they have expelled me and that this village is my home, my land. [He sounds upset for the first time during the interview.] […] If the Israelis agree to my right as a refugee, in what they say is their state, these territories they already say are Palestinian, so they must agree... If they agree that I am from Deiraban, they call it Bayt Shemish now, they will agree that it is not Bayt Shemish, this is Deiraban and you can go back to Deiraban. They have to say it is Palestine, not Israel. […] We don't want to talk about their right to be here; the Israelis have a right to be here, but not to rule this country. If they will agree that we have a right to go back they will [by extension] agree that they have no right to rule this country.

For many Dheisheans, return was connected to a successful peace process and an independent Palestinian state, whether this was established in the occupied territories or on Israeli territory. Abu Wisam's way of linking his own repatriation to macro-politics would appear to be a conscious attempt to resist Israeli control and historical narratives (*cf.* Sayigh 1979).

Walid was aware of the debate in the international community about reconstruction in war-torn societies and he used it to argue for Palestinian return: 'There are many countries that have refugees. They don't ask them if they want to return or not. There is a political decision after [the conflict is] over – for them to go back. [This is m]y right that is given by international law'. The land and its people would ideally be restored with the refugees' homecoming and they would be treated like 'any other refugee population'.

Moreover, Walid claimed that the right of return, which is often described as a holy right in Palestinian discourse, is not an individual right, but a collective obligation: 'The right of return is not just a personal right. The right of return is everybody's right, not according to my mood. […] I should and I must return to my land.' Such collective obligation was not easily evaded for individual refugees and also points at the right of return's significance within Palestinian national identity; you will not be considered a proper Palestinian refugee if you do not argue for the right of return.

Countering Dishonour: A Symbolic Healing

There is a tendency to see displaced people as problematic in moral terms (Malkki 1992). These views were also expressed by some Dheisheans; something was fundamentally wrong with them

because they were not in the place where they had roots. They were, in Mary Douglas' terminology (2002) 'matter out of place', which implies impurity (*cf.* Malkii 1995a). In their own words, Dheisheans had lost something more than just land, livelihood, villages and social relations – they had lost the moral qualities of dignity and honour. One of my informants, Khaled, cited the Palestinian proverb, 'the honour of the one who leaves his home will never be the same again'. Khaled explained that for him this meant that a person who leaves his home, his relatives and his friends will lose some of the respect he would have enjoyed back home - in his 'proper' place. The dishonour of displacement and the importance of protecting one's land figure in several Palestinian proverbs (*cf.* Warnock 1990: 22). As Benevenisti (2000: 247) explains, today *al-nakba* is seen as having forced people to choose between protecting their land and protecting their family honour (*cf.* chapter 4). 'Reclaiming one's land' may therefore be understood partly as a means of recovering one's honour.

'I can't believe I'm a refugee in my own land' said Abu Wisam. In the current situation in the West Bank, the humiliations the camp residents experienced, for instance at Israeli checkpoints, was felt to be a continuation of the disgrace that began with *al-nakba*. The restrictions upon their movements were related to ideas about roots (*juzúr*) and origins; not only did people risk encountering violence at checkpoints but Palestinians were in humiliating ways stopped in their own land, the land they belong to and which they argued to belong to more than the Israelis. Dheisheans saw themselves as the true owners of the country, while Israelis were seen as invaders or outsiders.

According to this 'ideology of rootedness', the wounds of uprooting may only be healed by returning to one's rightful place. By returning 'home', the wheel of displacement would turn full circle; a normal order would be re-established. Elderly refugees would often say: 'I want to be buried on my land'. Since it was impossible to bury refugees in their home village, the norm was to bury them among their own people, in an area of the local graveyard designated for the members of their village[203]. A young man in a neighbouring refugee camp told me how his uncle had brought earth back from his village because he wanted at least to have some soil from Bayt Jibrin with him in his grave.

A sense of security would also supposedly be re-established in the home-village after return (*cf.* Peteet 1995: 171). Umm Khaled, who told us about *al-nakba* in chapter 4, stated that she would return under any conditions. To her, return to the village meant security and peace and this contrasted sharply with the situation in the West Bank:

[203] This is more complicated for married women because they may be buried at the gravesite of their husband, who may not be from the same village.

> I will eat the sand and the leaves in my village (*baladi*). Eating the sand from our land is better than eating mutton here. First of all, the Jews kill the children here. They kill us again. Shut up! Return me to my village. I will live in a cave, I don't want anything else, I don't even want a house, in the summer I will build a small hut and in the winter I will live in a cave. The most important thing for me is to sleep all my nights in peace, to not have to worry about my children or anything else. […] I don't want anything [else].

According to the ideology of rootedness, the refugees must return to their original places. In the meantime, patriotism for the refugees means staying in the camps, waiting for repatriation.

The Illusio of Return

The strong nostalgia expressed by many people who are on the move is not necessarily best understood as a concrete desire to return (Jansen & Löfving 2007). Home is made and remade on a daily basis to preserve continuity and community. Above, I have discussed two ways of understanding Dheisheans desire for return – as a resistance strategy to counter Israeli superiority and as a way to end the liminality of refugee-ness.

For some Dheisheans, return may be imagined as being brought about by divine intervention. This resembles what Bourdieu (2000) refers to as *illusio*. As Bourdieu (*ibid*.: 207) notes the stakes of the game, *illusio*, are what give meaning and direction to existence, especially in situations where agency is severely restricted. *Illusio* is people's way of acting strategically and consciously according to a calculation of their chances of success. This gambling is set in a social field, which Bourdieu calls the 'field of a game', which is structured by power positions within a certain space. A *field* is established through the practical strategies adopted by agents with different *habitus,* different amounts of capital and, consequently, unequal control over the forces of production (*ibid*.: 151). The relationships between Israelis and Palestinians may be seen as such a social field. When Palestinian refugees insist on the right of return this is an investment in the game with Israel. To risk making such a move, there must be at least a chance of success (*cf.* Lindquist 2006: 9f). Thus, the unconscious mode of '*habitus* may be accompanied by a strategic calculation tending to perform in a conscious mode' (Bourdieu 1990: 53). As long as the right of return has not been finally rejected in negotiations between the Israelis and the Palestinians, there remains hope that it will be enforced.

Many of my informants admitted that actual return was a remote possibility. Trust in the political project was diminishing as both resistance and negotiations had essentially failed and people were increasingly turning to religion for hope. Those Dheisheans who held onto a belief in a homecoming to their villages also managed to keep a kind of virtual agency by projecting

their hopes onto the distant future. Layla, for instance, stated that the refugees would return through divine intervention (*cf.* Farah 1999):

> The Koran says we will return, there is proof of that. […] Even if you lose hope, Palestine shall return. This is what the Koran says, and it also says "Israel will grow and reach great heights, but [its] fate will be to crumble". There is proof in the Koran that Palestine will return. Besides, what was taken by force will be reclaimed by force.[204]

Abu Akram, Ahmed's father, said that he did not mind living with the Israelis as long as he could go back to live in the place where he was born. When I asked him if he thought this would happen, he answered 'There is nothing strange in this life. God can turn the mountains upside down. He made kings fall, so it may be.' These two people provide examples of how people with limited choices may move beyond resignation, by rhetorically and with reference to heavenly forces invest in a game of uncertainty that, for others, seems to offer little chance of success (*cf.* Lindquist 2006). Claiming the right of return was perhaps as much emotional as it was political risk-taking, even though it seemed existentially reassuring.

When Dheisheans invested in activities such as reading Koranic verses that predicted their homecoming to their villages they were concerned with investing in hopes about the future, in *illusio*. When nothing is possible, everything becomes possible, writes Lindquist 'as if all types of phantasmic discourses about the future – prophesies, divinations, predictions, millenarian annunciations – have a purpose in filling up the void in what is to come, creating the non-existent future – offering the illusory hope where the realistic one does not exist' (2006:10). Threats of social disintegration and misery tend to generate obsession with chance and with violence, for instance through millenarian movements or dreams of winning the lottery. As will be discussed in chapter 10, investment in extreme politico-religious acts, such as suicide-bombings, may also be seen as strategic investment on behalf of the Palestinian collectivity.

Staying in Camps and Remaining on the Land

Palestinian refugees have argued that leaving the miserable conditions in the camps could be interpreted as an acceptance of their permanent expulsion and as giving up the right of return (Warnock 1990: 140). The camp is the ultimate symbol of being different, of not belonging in the new place and it also symbolizes the rights of the Palestinians and their connections to Palestine (Lindholm 2003a: 114f). It is possible to voice political claims because one lives in a camp (*cf.* al-Mawad 1999 in Lindholm 2003a: 115).

[204] My informants could not tell me exactly where in the Koran you could read this.

Refugees' attitudes to camp life and occupation were frequently coloured by the notion of *ṣumud,* steadfastness, which I discuss further in the next chapter. Palestinians have long opposed Israeli dominance and repression through this strategy of endurance. In an environment in which the Palestinian presence is highly contested, staying rather than leaving represented one expression of *ṣumud*. The *fallâḥ* or Palestinian peasant has been fashioned as a symbol for this attachment to the land (Swedenburg 1990: 21f). The houses in the camps have also been referred to rhetorically as shelters (*malja'*) instead of houses, to accentuate their temporariness (Bisharat 1997). Over time, however, the connection between improvement of living conditions (either in camps or outside of them) and political rights has weakened, although permanent resettlement remains a sensitive issue (Lindholm 2003a: 116f).

The insistence on refugees remaining in camps should also be viewed in the light of UNRWA's work and Israel's suggestions to resettle and rehabilitate Palestinian refugees[205] rather than repatriating and compensating them in accordance with UN resolutions (see *e.g.* Schiff 1995:214ff; Hazboun 1996). For instance, Moshe Dayan (then Israeli Defence Minister) stated in 1973: 'As long as the refugees remain in their camps… their children saying that they are from Jaffa or Haifa; if they move out of the camps, [our] hope is they will feel attached to their new land' (The Jerusalem Post June 13 1973 in Hazboun 1996). Attempts to resettle Palestinian refugees more systematically have nevertheless failed. Abdalla, a middle-aged businessman living in Doha, recalled an earlier Israeli attempt to resettle refugees in the Jordan valley (*cf.* Schiff 1995: 217; Hazboun 1996) that had been turned down by Palestinian leaders. '[T]he project was called Ben Porat [*i.e.* an Israeli politician], if you've heard of it. They offered to give us land [in the Jordan valley] and to build villages that look like the [Israeli] settlements and we would go to live there, but they kicked the Israelis out and they refused.' On the other hand, Israeli assumptions that resettlement projects for camp refugees on the Gaza Strip would automatically dampen their will to return are highly questionable (Hazboun 1994).

Palestinian refugee camps were established as temporary solutions to feed and shelter the displaced. They were not intended to function as permanent settlements (see *e.g.* Peteet 2005a). Linking this assumed temporariness to violence, Peteet (1995: 177) describes an oscillation between a sense of permanence and impermanence in Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon and the occupied territories:

> For a [Palestinian] child who grows up in a [Lebanese] camp, there is an air of permanency because it is the only home and way of life known, until it is rocketed by an assault by hostile forces that precipitates another uprooting. For the parent or the

[205] Some political parties in Israel have also argued for a transfer of refugees in the occupied territories as a 'solution' to their predicament (Hazboun 1996).

> young adult displaced two or three times, refugeehood is reaffirmed. Any semblance of permanency is quickly and violently revealed to be illusionary. Impermanence is also a daily reality for the refugees […] in camps in the occupied territories […] [who] fear they will be the first ones to be "transferred" to Jordan if the Israeli Right is able to execute its plan to transfer Palestinians out of Palestine.

During the intifada *al-aqṣa* rockets fell on camps in the occupied territories and many of my informants expressed fears of another exile. As explained in chapter 3 and building on Ron (2003), I would say that the status of the West Bank and Gaza became more frontier-like, as is the case in Lebanon. The more Israel distanced itself from the territories the more extensive the violence that was used. Impermanence became more pronounced. Peteet (1995) reasoned that in such a continuing process of becoming a refugee, 'not-belonging yet rebuilding shattered lives and homes, attempting trust and permanency on a day-to-day basis yet always assuming the eventuality of a Palestinian entity where one is no longer marginal, insecure', positions the person between transition and permanency. In the ambiguous and insecure life of the refugee camp dreams of return are hardly surprising.

It is nonetheless common for Palestinian refugees to move out of camps in search of better lives (*cf.* Fafo 1994; Farah 1999: 308f; Hazboun 1994). This has met with disapproval; the PLO leadership opposed not only resettlement of camp refugees but also the improvement of living conditions in camps, at least until the Oslo period (Klein 1998: 11). Also the League of Arab States advised its member states to give Palestinians social and economic rights (*e.g.* secure residency), although without giving them citizenship because they should maintain their refugee identity (Shiblak 2009: 5).

People in the occupied territories have also been urged to stay in the homeland by the Palestinian leadership. For instance, PLO leader Yasser Arafat was quoted as having said: 'If you only fight – that is a tragedy. If you fight and emigrate – that is a tragedy. The basis is that you hold on [to the land] and fight' (Mishal & Aharoni 1994:13 in Lindholm 1999: 55). This kind of *ṣumud* or steadfastness was also reflected in my informants' accounts; Mounsir said: 'To be on the land – that's *ṣumud*!' Staying, as opposed to leave, was an important especially under political and economical difficulties as during the intifada *al-aqṣa* when many West Bankers, including Dheisheans, migrated or dreamt of new lives in other countries. Migration also has a long history in the camp, as it does elsewhere in the Palestinian areas (see also Hilal 2006; Rothenberg 2004). The search for livelihood and education had often led to relocations abroad; migration may be temporary or permanent.

Staying has practical relevance in people's lives. Samar, whose brother was studying abroad, reasoned:

> If I run away because I'm bored here, bored with the fight, the soldiers, or even if I can't find food to eat or water to drink, and all I think of is having another nationality than Palestinian that is one thing. But when I go to study and bring back something that helps me and helps develop my country that is something else. It's nice when I know that Palestine is missing something and I can bring it here through education and that's harmless. There's a difference between those who emigrate and never come back and those who go for education.

Some camp inhabitants also claimed that many Israelis were migrating to other countries, despite the fact that the violence was not affecting them as much as it was Palestinians, and they said this was because Israelis lack *ṣumud*.

Urgent Material Conditions

However, there were pressing material conditions in the camp. Dheisheans' main reasons for moving out were lack of space and this sometimes created outright conflicts.

One summer evening, we all rushed out at the growing sound of a murmur in the neighbourhood where I was staying. In a few minutes, crowds of people, mostly men, had gathered in the street to see what was going on. A family that was extending their house had got into a fight with the neighbours, who had opposed the builders' plans to put in a particular window. Members of one of the families were dropping cement blocks from their roof, aiming at their adversaries down on the street. My host brother screamed at me to get inside since this was not 'women's business'. I disobeyed and lingered on with another woman from the family, but when one of the people in the street started firing a gun in the air I was scared enough to go inside. Within an hour the Palestinian police had arrived and the fight was calmed down. Some days later the conflict was settled through so-called traditional law[206].

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Population growth, overcrowding and better economic conditions for some had coincided in Dheishe with the Oslo accords of the 1990s. Since the negotiations left the refugee issue unresolved, it is no coincidence that many camp residents moved out at this time. Conflicts concerning housing created problems not only between neighbours but also within households and extended families. For instance, Hisham's move to the village Doha, which we will soon come back to, was accelerated by an argument in his extended family. When they were building their new house, Hisham and his wife and children temporarily occupied a flat that had been prepared for his oldest nephew and his future bride. The nephew's mother wanted to see her son

[206] Many conflicts between Palestinians are settled by so-called traditional or tribal law and not by the official legal system (see also Lang 2005). In the West Bank, a heritage of several legal systems co-exists (Ottoman law, British law, Jordanian law, Israeli military orders, traditional law and Palestinian laws). This legal pluralism together with the paralysis of the Palestinian Legislative Council by occupation and violence create legal confusion (Wagner 2000).

married soon so she asked Hisham to move out but the rest of the family thought she was being unreasonable. The lack of space also meant people got on each other's nerves, particularly with the stress of the intifada *al-aqṣa,* and children had difficulty finding a quiet place to study.

To Dheisheans, being short of space also meant lack of privacy. Zaynab recounted that since there was no space between her house and the neighbour's it was even difficult to get changed: 'I don't open my bedroom window all summer, I don't dare. Why? Because there are people right in front of us! [I]f I want to change my clothes, before I take [them] off I have to look 50 or 60 times and close the window and the curtains well so I can change.' Camp inhabitants were concerned about their living conditions. As Hanan, who longed to leave the camp, put it:

> In the summer, there is water once a month. In the winter, the electricity is cut off all the time. Some houses are not built well. The water pours in during the winter, […] [poor people] don't have money to fix it. They don't like their houses in the winter, because they have bad houses. […] [One man] told us that when it is snowing he has to remove the snow from the roof quickly so it won't cave in [on his family] inside.

There were indeed many problems with electricity and water as well as with the sewage system in Dheishe. And there was little beauty or greenery in the camp. As Sawsaan said: 'There is nothing nice in the camp, nothing that brings happiness to the heart. I don't talk in general but about myself. I like nature; I like the mountains, the trees and the forest. I miss them. I really like them. But where can I get this?'

Dheisheans tried different strategies to meet housing problems in the camp. People were always building or extending their houses; Abu Wisam added a room for his children and this left only a tiny space between his extension and neighbours' wall. Even families who had a low income would buy paint to freshen up the interior of their homes. Money and effort were spent on making oneself at home in the camp. Many houses looked shabby on the outside while the interior was normally in a much better shape.

It is understandable that people wanted to improve their housing but in the Palestinian context this is a controversial issue for camp refugees.

Moving Out of the Camp

It was a hot afternoon in August 2004. My field assistant and I got into Hisham's old car. Hisham slowly drove us out of the camp through its narrow alleys, carefully zigzagging between the pedestrians and children who were on their way home from school. We turned left on the main road leading to Hebron. Some minutes later we turned right into the village of Doha, which is on the opposite side of the road from the camp. After a short drive uphill on

a gravel road the car stopped and we got out to have a look at the construction site of Hisham's new home. As some men from Dheishe worked on the house, Hisham showed us around and pointed to the boundary of his land. He and his wife had both been working hard to save money for their new home: 'We didn't eat well' Hisham joked. Two years earlier they had finally managed to buy this piece of land. They had not taken any loans. All the money was from their savings. Half of the land and the house belonged to Hisham's sister Layla and her husband. Hisham and his wife still lacked some of the money they needed to finish the house. The two couples had previously been renting apartments in Doha, but when they got into a fight with their landlord they had decided to move back to the camp while finishing the house. Apart from the two apartments for the siblings' families, the building would include two more apartments for rent. Hisham said that he did not mind leaving the camp; he felt it would be great to live in Doha, without having people around him all the time like he did in the camp and that he would enjoy not having to deal with his neighbours. My field assistant laughed and said that other people figured that the loss of social relations was a reason for not moving out from the camp. Hisham had in fact already established contact with his new neighbours, a schoolteacher and his family, who were refugees from one of the other camps in Bethlehem.

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Doha lies between the Christian town of Bayt Jala and the village of Al Khader. It has its own municipality, its own mosque, a newly built school as well as a number of shops and other facilities. The construction of Doha was begun in the 1970s, when people started buying land from families in Bayt Jala. House building seems to have escalated in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

It is mostly refugees from nearby camps who live there. Sometimes a group of people, often relatives or neighbours, move out together, sometimes just a household. The camp residents I knew of who moved out from the camp were often younger people, unmarried or just embarking on married life. Older people seldom discussed moving out, although I know of one exception, a man who wanted to leave the camp once he had retired. Everyone in Dheishe seemed to have relatives and friends in Doha and camp inhabitants sometimes took me on visits there. In general, the houses in the village were spacious, well built and nicely decorated. The people living there usually had gardens and big verandas.

Physically, Doha did not resemble any of the neighbouring refugee camps, but it was clear that it did socially, although its residents had economic resources that many camp residents lacked[207]. Among some people in Bethlehem, Doha had been branded refugee and lower class,

[207] The economic differentials between camp residents and those who had moved out was reflected in the student enrolment at Bethlehem University. When I was looking for a female field assistant a friend at the University volunteered to help me and asked the students with a refugee background for help. It turned out that most of them lived in Doha, even though they were 'originally' from Dheishe. Many camp residents were studying at the Open University, which demanded much lower fees.

even though the houses there did not suggest poverty and did not differ in appearance from newly built houses in other areas. Families who moved out of the camp clearly did not automatically shake off their refugee label.

Hanan and Ahmed opted for something else than a better house in Doha. Their flat in the camp was comparatively well built and was spacious enough for their family, but their concern was also with upward social mobility and distancing themselves from the camp and its lifestyle, which they considered too traditional. Ahmed was the only one of his brothers who still lived in Dheishe and he had bought land together with some friends in an area of Bethlehem that Hanan described as 'nice'. They and their friends planned to construct a building with several apartments; the owners would live in some and the rest would be rented out. She and Ahmed opted for the penthouse and Hanan spoke dreamily of the huge windows she wanted for the sake of the view. Unfortunately, the project was soon halted since they could not find the money to continue the construction.

Unlike this couple and Hisham, some people who had moved out longed to move back to Dheishe because they missed the atmosphere and the strong social ties the camp connoted to them. This was the case for Maryam, Taysir's newly married sister, who complained about the residents in the neighbourhood in Bethlehem that she had moved to. She missed the sociability of her relatives and friends. Although this home-sickness might have been related to the fact that she was trying to adapt to married life and to her husband's family, it was also easy for an outsider like myself to see that the social bonds in Dheishe in general seemed stronger than in other areas in Bethlehem. Hospitality also distinguished the camp residents. Dheishe was thought of as a 'community of fate', a place where people shared experiences of exile and of oppression and resistance, which offered social support in times of hardships. It is possible, though, that some Dheisheans wanted to escape living in such an exposed place that was so frequently intruded upon by the Israeli military.

However, moving out remained a matter of contention for many camp residents. Samar argued that:

> When I live in a camp and feel a bit stressed that makes me want to leave the camp. This makes me more determined to go back [to my original village]. Maybe my village is big and I would live there in better conditions. After all, it's my village. At least there I have land that I can cultivate and live off, but here we can't do this.

The words of Samar echo the Palestinian national discourse and Israeli assumptions that refugees who stay in camps are more determined to repatriate[208]. The quotation also reframes poverty and the hardships of camp life as politically valuable.

Many former camp residents did not change their place of residence on their UN registration cards (personal communication with Hussein Shahin, UNRWA director in Dheishe), but preferred to remain Dheisheans officially. According to the director of UNRWA in the camp, 'they are afraid the future will change' and they might then lose rights to food rations and other assistance they may need if things deteriorate. The refugees always seem to expect new disasters.

Losing Land, Recovering Land

In a context of cultural and political ideals of rooted-ness and the persistent threat of Israeli land confiscations, many Dheisheans bought plots of land in the West Bank without necessarily living there. This may be seen as another response to their 'uprooted' condition as refugees. Furthermore, although they may not be an explicit resistance strategy, practices concerning land were, I suggest, also attempts to counter Israeli land control[209]. At the time of my fieldwork, the Israeli state was confiscating *dunums*[210] of land in the Bethlehem area.

The Craze for Land

Since the early 1920s, land has been a 'key interest, almost an obsession' for the Zionists and later on for the Israeli state, writes Pappe (2004: 94). As with demolitions of Palestinian homes, Israeli land confiscations have been carried out since the war of 1948 when Israel rapidly extended its control over the Palestinian refugees' land and destroyed or took over their agricultural production. From the onset of the occupation, there was continuous Israeli land-grabbing which was intended to extend Israeli settlement and infrastructure[211]. Later, this took the form of building settler roads and the Separation Barrier or the Wall (*al-jidâr,* as Palestinians call it) (UN OCHA 2007). A 'complex legal-bureaucratic mechanism' (B'Tselem 2002), of which a central element is the declaration of state land[212], is used by Israel to take control over territory. Israel

[208] Samar partly contradicted herself in another interview (quoted above) by claiming that UN registration rather than place of residence will determine the right of return.
[209] As far as I know, the Palestinian national leadership has never urged Palestinians to buy land in the occupied territories as a way of resisting Israel.
[210] *Dunum* is a local unit of land area, equalling one quarter of an acre (Othman & Neu 2002) or about 1,000 square metres.
[211] Israeli settlement construction has taken place under every government since the beginning of the occupation, despite the fact that settling occupied territories is illegal according to international law.
[212] In the early 1980s, Israel reinterpreted the Ottoman Land Code to allow the military commander of the West Bank to declare uncultivated *miri* land that had not been registered during British or Jordanian rule as 'State Land'. Approximately 80,000 hectares were then declared state land (UN OCHA 2007: 56).

also uses other methods to seize land: declaring it as a military area[213] or making nature reserves/green areas[214]. The state also helps its Jewish citizens to purchase land on the open market. The UN has estimated that by 2007 these administrative and military measures had effectively placed 38.3 per cent of the West Bank beyond the reach of Palestinians (UN OCHA 2007: 52). Although Palestinian protests have been internationally acknowledged[215], there is a continuous increase in Israeli settlement, which alters the demographic pattern: almost half a million Jewish Israelis live in the West Bank today (UN OCHA 2007: 12).

Segal & Weizman (2003: 80) concludes that the West Bank settlement project 'attempted to resolve the paradox embedded in early twentieth-century Zionist spatiality; one that, while seeking the return to the "promised land", mainly inhabited the plains instead of the historical Judean hills, thus reversing the settlement geography of Biblical times.' In addition to the remaking and hebrecizing of the landscape as part of the Israeli state-building project (see chapter 3), taking control of the territories was also a military and demographic issue.

According to a report by a Palestinian NGO (www.arij.org 2004), the maps of the planned wall provided by the Israeli authorities in August 2004 showed that Israel was planning to confiscate more than 3,000 *dunums* of Bethlehem's agricultural lands. Most of these confiscations were related to the building of the Separation Barrier. Israeli settlements are located in 'settlement blocs', and those south of Jerusalem and close to Bethlehem belong to the Gush 'Etzion bloc. The encirclement of this bloc by the Barrier ensures that settlements remain connected to Israel but it also cuts off six Palestinian villages from urban Bethlehem. In 'Aida camp, another refugee camp nearby, this 'walling process' was more apparent than it was in Dheishe since part of the Wall was built next to that camp. However, enclosure by the Barrier, checkpoints and road blocs influenced the lives of almost everyone in the area. Dheisheans were also affected by the on-going land confiscations. One of my neighbours, for instance, had been banned by the Israeli state from visiting his fields; he recounted how some soldiers had threatened him and made him sign a paper that he was no longer allowed to visit his plots. With the help of another Palestinian NGO this man tried to claim his right to his land.

[213] The IDF operates 48 military bases in the West Bank. In addition more than one-fifth of the West Bank is designated as closed military areas, including an area fenced along the border to Jordan (UN OCHA 2007: 42).
[214] When land is declared a nature reserve to enhance ecological diversity, this severely restricts use and development. Palestinian shepherds and farmers caught crossing through Israeli-controlled reserves risk being fined for trespassing (UN OCHA 2007: 44).
[215] The Barrier has been declared illegal by the International Court of Justice and in 2006 the UN established a special organ UNROD, the UN Register of Damage, to compile damage claims for Palestinians affected by the Barrier (UN OCHA 2007: 46).

Land and Betrayal

While buying land is not understood locally as an explicitly political act, selling land definitely is. Land sales to Israelis are seen as a form of betrayal in terms of Palestinian nationalistic discourse. By comparison with the treachery of land-dealers and those who have sold their land, land purchasers are seen to be exercising a degree of political agency. Well before the creation of the state of Israel and *al-nakba*, land sales to the Zionist movement in the 1930s were already controversial in nationalist circles of Palestinian society (see Swedenburg 2003: 24). Gossip about which families sold their land to Jews during the British Mandate still prevail among Palestinians and they are assumed to have been the large landowners who were based abroad in countries like Lebanon and Syria. As Swedenburg (*ibid.*: 98f) observes, popular memory and more official versions of Palestinian history tend to edit out the role of Palestinian landowners and smaller farmers, at least in front of foreign researchers. 'Such mnemonic condensations, usually presented as encapsulating the story of land sales, allowed the involvement of Palestinian landowners and small farmers in such transactions to be ignored', writes Swedenburg (*ibid.*: 98). During the Palestinian peasant revolt (1936-1939) those involved in land sales were treated as traitors, they were punished and sometimes executed. A related event during fieldwork sheds further light on how this issue continues to provoke strong reactions. A man was murdered in a village close to Dheishe. Rumours soon flourished about the man being a land-dealer or *simsâr al-'arḍ,* which is often understood as the worst form of collaboration. According to the rumours, guests who mourned with the dead man's family stopped coming to their house, which is a clear sign of social condemnation and nothing short of a social catastrophe in the Palestinian community. Another example occurred during an interview with a man who did not usually lose his temper. He described his uneasiness about collaborators and especially about land-dealers, whom he encountered in his work as a policeman. He said he knew it was not right to hit them but there was some kind of rage in him that made him want to beat them up.

As far as I understood, some of the Palestinian landowners, faced with land confiscations by the Israeli state, 'chose' to sell their land, while others had refused and their land was taken without any financial compensation. Palestinians can go to the Israeli court system (either to appeal committees or the High Court) to oppose *specific* land confiscations, although the court system does not interfere in government action and policy in the occupied territories more generally (Kretzmer 2002; B'Tselem 2002). To appeal one needs knowledge, money and proof of land use or ownership. It was usually futile to start legal proceedings against the Israeli state since the chances of a ruling being made against the Israeli authorities were extremely low (B'Tselem 2002: 55) – even if a Palestinian won it was unlikely that the ruling would be implemented. Selling

land claimed by Israel may, in this context, seem to be the only economically viable alternative but this is politically and morally risky. People did not discuss this with me very much, possibly because it is considered shameful for Palestinians to sell land to the Israeli state. This dilemma was evident in a discussion I witnessed between a Christian woman in her sixties, who I only met briefly, and her friend's brother. The woman was very upset when she told us that she owned some plots of land that had been confiscated by the Israeli authorities since they were on the other side of the newly constructed Wall. When she had tried to reach her land, the Israeli soldiers had threatened her at gunpoint. When she told me her story, she kept repeating that she wanted her land back. Her lawyer had strongly advised her not to try and go to her fields again because of the risk of being shot. Her friend's brother calmly said to her that it would have been better for her to accept compensation from the Israeli state, but she replied, 'No, it's my land!' When she woman had left us, the man told me that in her situation he would have sold the land so as to at least get some money for it. The question of selling to the Israelis or not captured the conflict between individual economic concerns and the collective agenda of the Palestinian national project. However, judging from this woman's emotional outburst, not selling her land was far from a strictly economic issue.

The continuing land confiscations were emotionally charged even though many camp inhabitants did not seem to have the energy to become upset anymore. While some friends and I were watching the horrifying uprooting of old olive trees in Bayt Jala to make space for the Separation Barrier, one of the landowners, an old man, seemed to become enraged and ran off into the remaining part of his olive grove.

To Compensate for Lost Land

A poll carried out in 2004 claim that 17 per cent of the refugees in the West Bank and Gaza Strip own land outside the camps (PCPSR 2003), and I would estimate that more than 17 per cent of Dheisheans owned land. They used land to move out to, to cultivate usually with olive trees or they might leave it untended. Land was regarded as an investment. As Moors argues '[l]and is still seen as a form of security, a provision for old age, and a source of supplementary income for wage labourers'(1995a: 47) in the occupied territories. Purchasing land was thus an economic strategy for individuals and households.

It was, however, not only important for the camp refugees to recover land for economic reasons. The olive trees some landowners in Dheishe had planted do not require much attention (which is practical if one lives far from the plot) and they are considered symbols of the Palestinian nation. Buying land could be read as a way of contesting Israeli land quests, even

though purchasing land offers no guarantee that it will not be confiscated since Israel seizes both privately owned as well as municipal Palestinian land. Investment in land seemed to have a symbolic and historical dimension; namely, to compensate for lost village land, in the sense of fields (*i.e. 'ard*). Elderly refugees in particular were often concerned with literally compensating for agricultural land by cultivating their gardens or on their rooftops. Referring to the tiny but well-tended garden behind his family's house and to the huge pots and boxes of plants on the rooftop, Khaled said that cultivation was a way of expressing a yearning for the lost land:

> Everything we cultivate, everything; all kinds of trees and all kinds of flowers. It's for a reason; my family, especially my father and mother, is still connected to cultivating and farming. I have said before about my mother and father that since they don't have land they try to find an alternative. […] They plant many different things, sage, pepper, mint and spinach. Everything.

In a rather symbolic way, camp residents like Umm Mounsir, who was quoted earlier, often spoke of the huge land areas that basically everyone's father or grandfather was said to own in their original villages. Other refugees described their lost land as collectively owned. According to Benvenisti (2000: 92f) such statements hide a more multifaceted reality; the system of land tenure and of landownership in Palestinian villages was full of legal complexities (*cf.* B'Tselem 2002: 51f). Village land was divided into different categories. Some land was permanently under private possession, while other land was classified as *muś'a* [216], which was transferred temporarily to villagers or worked communally. The agreement of an entire village was needed to sell such property. Some of the rural population was also landless.

Buying plots of land may be understood as a way of making up for immoral land sales and lost village fields.

Temporary Return and Symbolic Links to the Land

Another way of compensating for lost land was to create symbolic connections to the land and the past by consuming herbs and fruits grown on village land. During our visit to her former village, Umm Hassan, an elderly woman, frantically picked *maramiyya* (*i.e.* sage, often used dried in tea during winter) despite the blazing sun. She explained that she had promised her children and grandchildren to bring them herbs from their village that the others could not reach at the time of fieldwork. Her grandson later smelled the *maramiyya* the old lady had collected and claimed that he could recognize the herb as having been grown in their village because it was 'strong' thanks to the hot climate in that area. The experiences of the anthropologist Sharif Kanaana

[216] According to Benevenisti (2000), the British tried to abolish the *muś'a* system and they managed to dramatically reduce the land that was considered *muś'a* (*cf*. Kanaaneh 2002: 30; Pappe 2004: 24).

(personal communication) from his research project at Birzeit University echo mine. Kanaana went on numerous visits to villages with former inhabitants, who gathered and ate wild plants. Many brought a picnic along just as Umm Hassan did. By consuming herbs grown on one's land, one seemed to become part of that land. Palestinian refugees often claimed that their village had a speciality, that the apricots or almonds grown in their village were the best in all Palestine. Even the gathering of herbs were contested since it was forbidden by Israeli law (*cf.* Swedenburg 2003: 59). Swedenburg (*ibid.*: 56ff) has noted that Israeli care for the land is frequently expressed through ecological activism. Ecological arguments and claims that Palestinians are ignorant of environmental issues have provided a pretext for proscribing Palestinian practices such as collecting herbs.

It is difficult to see eating herbs as a conscious form of resistance to land confiscations or as economic investment in land but it may be seen as a way of reinforcing a sense of belonging to the land and providing existential reassurance of who one is and of fostering hopes of return.

A related example is from the week in May when Palestinians commemorate *al-nakba*. Fateh was serving free food at a youth centre with the help of a women's organization in the camp. For several days, people were coming and going, greeting acquaintances and friends, eating meals together (although in sex-segregated groups) that the women had prepared. The strained economies of many Dheisheans made a free meal attractive but there was more to it. The food that was served, for instance *jirîśa*, *maqlouba* and *maftôl*[217], was understood to be homely fare and part of the traditional Palestinian kitchen. It made sense to eat this kind of food when commemorating lost villages and flight. Food is one of several key symbols of traditional Palestinian rural life. In contrast to the other activities, such as demonstrations and lectures, during the '*nakba*-week' the sharing of food seemed to be a meaningful way to re-establish and reaffirm community in the camp. It was also a way to remember the villages and maintain bonds with the way of life before 1948 (*cf.* Ben Ze'ev 2004).

The constant struggle over land in Israel/Palestine hence touched upon economic security, a sense of belonging and the political struggle between Palestinians and Israelis. Buying land carried multiple meanings and was emotionally charged since it was also connected to honour and the deeply felt humiliation Palestinians experienced during *al-nakba*. Land purchases may also be understood as part of an ongoing emplacement in the West Bank.

[217] *Maqloba* is frequently eaten in the camp; it is a dish of fried vegetables, meat (or often chicken) and rice boiled together and then turned onto a huge plate. It is not really a dish for parties or holidays, but is still understood as a traditional dish. However, *jirîśa* as well as *maftôl* are served on special occasions, such as weddings and funerals, if the family can afford it. According to one informant, *maftôl,* a kind of couscous with chick-peas, is often provided to guests three days after a funeral. *Jirîśa* is grain that is harvested in late autumn and commonly eaten as a kind of porridge during the winter.

In sum, this chapter illustrates the ongoing dilemma posed by commitment to the Palestinian national project on the one hand and the need for a decent life for oneself and one's family on the other. Emplacement outside the camp coexisted with concerns about roots and symbolic healing as well as hopes of return. Holding on to return and staying in the camps or moving out, buying land and trying to make new lives elsewhere may be seen as different ways to resolve the same predicament that individual Dheisheans face: that between the temporary and highly uncertain existence of camp life and a desire for a more settled situation, a desire for rooted-ness.

8. Beyond Resistance

This chapter is about the ways in which Dheisheans' try to remain political subjects even when direct resistance against Israel is not possible. It focuses on local notions of what constitutes proper responses to oppression and on people's attempts to come to terms with the uncertain situation by enduring in rather mundane ways. Compared to the processes of normalization described earlier as acute responses to violence and insecurity, the practices dealt with here are more concerned with an experienced political vacuum and with the future. As will become clear, *ṣumud* or steadfastness implies a certain political agency as well as tactics of resilience, notably black humour and enjoying oneself. In particular, affirmation of life has become increasingly important in the camp as a means to recover from hardships.

Sumud – Being Steadfast

In Palestinian national discourse many everyday practices are referred to as *ṣumud* or steadfastness. *Ṣumud* is a complex emic concept that holds several interlaced meanings, both locally and in nationalist rhetoric. Linguistically, it derives from the verb *ṣamada* and carries connotations of defying and withstanding, standing up to, resisting and opposing as well as holding out (A Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic 1980). Showing steadfastness has long been a political strategy for Palestinians and it is closely related to the land and agriculture as well as to indigenousness. It complements the armed struggle (Lindholm 1999: 54)[218]. In the last chapter, *ṣumud* was referred to in relation to refusing to relinquish one's land, for instance by staying in refugee camps and inside the Palestinian homeland. Construed in this manner, steadfastness is connected to the Palestinian ideology of rooted-ness and implies that a person and a group of people belong to a specific place. By staying in the West Bank, Dheisheans were *ṣâmdin* (*i.e.* steadfast, committed) in remaining close to their original villages inside Israel.

The focus in this chapter is on another sense of *ṣumud*, as endurance and patience in difficult and dangerous circumstances, when other kinds of opposition are impossible. When I was conducting fieldwork I noted that such an interpretation of *ṣumud* had become stressed in Dheishe. This resembles the shift noted by Peteet (2005a: 148f), building on decades of anthropological research on Palestinian refugees foremost in Lebanon:

[218] In the occupied territories, *ṣumud* was employed as a concrete political policy since 1967 that also related to specific educational and welfare programs as well as funds from neighbouring Arab countries (Sayigh 1997: 465f; Lindholm 1999: 54f). It seems to have carried a pejorative connotation associated with nepotism and elitism because of an uneven distribution of benefits as well as with a fatalistic passive resistance to military occupation especially during the 1980s (Tamari 1991 in Khalili 2007). My informants, however, understood *ṣumud* to be something positive that made people carry on despite bad conditions.

> Steadfastness as a category for interpreting one's own actions and those of others underwrote a cultural and political recoding of seemingly ordinary action as resistance. […] [During the Lebanese civil war, s]teadfastness took on connotations of survival and registered a refusal to acquiesce, a refusal to be dislocated. As an act of resistance, *sumud* is only meaningful in the context of an exceedingly powerful, well-equipped other, willing to unleash horrific violence.

In this sense, *ṣumud* implies a survival tactic and a passive, defensive stance that is often understood by Palestinians as complementary to military resistance and to activities that are more obviously political such as participation in political gatherings. It is a kind of 'emergency measure'; in Khalili's words, it is the only strategy left 'when all other avenues are closed, when organizational infrastructures are destroyed, and when complete annihilation –not only of political institutions, but of every person –is a real possibility' (2007: 99).

As in Lebanon, where Palestinian refugees have experienced multiple waves of hostilities and civil war in addition to several dispersals and massacres (*ibid.*: 99f; Sayigh 1994: 231-319), many practices in the occupied territories to sustain daily routine during crisis were thus considered part of *ṣumud*[219]. It is possible, even likely, that West Bankers and Gazans had been inspired by the *ṣumud* of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, since there was awareness of the terrible conditions in Lebanese camps (Khalili *ibid.*: 102). The contemporary interpretation of *ṣumud* in the occupied territories was, in Layla's view, something that Palestinians had learnt over the years:

> [Palestinians who fled in 1948 and 1967] didn't suffer as much as we are suffering. These days, soldiers come into houses and shoot children in front of their mothers, while they are sitting in their homes. [Earlier generations of Palestinians] didn't witness what we have witnessed. There is torture that only God knows about, there is rape in prison, [the prisoners'] are deprived of their rights, there is hunger and torture - all this is called *ṣumud*. Nevertheless, we are still enduring and resisting and we refuse to surrender. And we are not happy with any of the peace agreements, the PA or anything they say that might come through peace, because what was taken by force will only be regained by force, not with peace or anything else. All we have to do is to be patient and endure this.

In this quote, taken from an interview with Layla, not only does the endurance of misery figure, but there is also a more directly oppositional sense of *ṣumud*; namely, its relation to the Palestinian cause and being steadfast to one's political principles. Walid, for instance, explained that; 'There is a mental *ṣumud* as well, maybe, to have principles, to have an idea [of returning to our villages] and to keep it. […] In 56 years, we haven't changed our opinions, not me and nor anyone else. This is *ṣumud*!' Firmness of principles, for refugees often to hold on to the right of

[219] Women's efforts to hold the family together and to provide protection and sustenance are acknowledged as endurance (Peteet 1991: 153).

return, is intimately connected to an ability to carry on. In this sense, *ṣumud* is obviously connected to the Palestinian political project.

Khalili (2007), investigating Palestinian nationalistic narratives, notes that *ṣumud* includes an explicit hopefulness, which recalls Lindquist's (2006) application of the term *illusio* (Bourdieu 2000) as a means of sustaining hope of a different future. Later in this chapter, we will see how Dheisheans frequently pinned their hopes on that which was yet to come, either in life or in heaven. Furthermore, '[a] narrative of *sumud* recognizes and valorizes the teller's (and by extension the nation's) agency, ability and capacity in dire circumstances' (Khalili *ibid.*: 101), thus drawing our attention to practices that positioned my informants as social agents rather than as victims. ***Ṣumud*** was boosting their self-esteem as Palestinians and allowing Dheisheans to stay politically engaged even when outright opposition was more or less impossible.

An Ambivalent Affirmation of Life

Maryam, who worked as a journalist in Bethlehem, was still unmarried even though she was over 30 years old. Since she had no children of her own, she enjoyed spending time with the children of her extended family. After months with lingering winter weather as well as curfews and nightly arrests in the camp, she decided to bring these children on a picnic one sunny Friday in early April. Some of the neighbours' children also came along, as well as Maryam's brother, two of her aunts and me. Two service taxis came to pick us all up and drive us away from the camp, through Bethlehem and Bayt Jala, to the Cremesan monastery. On the monastery's terraced land, which was planted with olive trees and vine, there was space for children to play and for the adults to prepare for a barbeque. We had brought vegetables, bread, meat and soft drinks to make a picnic. The children ran around, playing, laughing and picking spring flowers. Some of the adults prepared a fire while Maryam and I collected herbs and almonds. As we ate our barbeque we could spot the outskirts of Gilo, an Israeli settlement that has become part of Jerusalem, on the other side of the valley. It turned out to be a beautiful and peaceful day. In the late afternoon, we all returned happy and relieved to Dheishe. Later, I told Maryam how much I had appreciated the outing, how much I had needed it and she nodded in agreement.

*

To enjoy oneself, or 'making merry despite the wolf at the door' in Scheper-Hughes' words (2008), is in many contexts where living conditions are extremely difficult something that allows individuals and communities to survive or come to terms with painful events. Providing examples from her fieldwork in Brazil, Scheper-Hughes (*ibid.*: 50) quotes a female informant as saying: 'No, Nancí, I *won't* cry. […] What good would it do me to lie awake at night crying about my fate? […] But if I don't enjoy myself, if I can't amuse myself a little bit, well then I would rather be dead.'

Many people in Dheishe tried to enjoy themselves by getting away on picnics or other outings whenever possible, despite the political situation and the difficulties of making ends meet. This was a shift in meaning of political agency towards an affirmation of life. Just as Zaynab managed to maintain her daily routines in a kind of extended normality (see chapter 6), many people in Dheishe found ways to have fun and do things that were considered part of a proper life. They thus tried to counteract their experiences of not 'having a life'. During the summer vacations, camp inhabitants organized many summer camps for children, something that was considered necessary and part of a 'normal childhood'. Excursions were, of course, not always possible but depended on the political situation on the particular day and they were sometimes interrupted by sudden army activities[220]. Sawsan nevertheless often brought me to her friends, who were within walking distance in Bethlehem and Doha 'to give us some change'. Those camp residents who could afford entrance fees would go to swimming pools in the area with their children or to a park in the camp called *Il Feneiq* that opened in 2004[221]. Another popular place for picnics that could be accessed for free was an area some kilometres away called Solomon's pools that had ancient remains.

Weddings were popular events at which Dheisheans felt that they could enjoy themselves and get a break from their everyday routine. Many women saw weddings, which were often sex-segregated, as occasions to relax and socialize by dancing and chatting with female friends and neighbours. They were also opportunities for people to dress up and show off their new clothes. These attempts to show resilience were, however, not uncontested and they revealed differences between the first and the second uprising.

A Reorientation Since the First Intifada

These examples from Dheishe attest to a change from the first intifada in the ways ordinary people respond to violence and which activities they consider to be proper Palestinian resistance or political behaviour during an uprising. For many, it has become acceptable or even imperative to enjoy oneself. As Junka (2006: 355) writes about picnics and camping at Gaza Beach during the intifada *al-aqṣa*;

> […]the cheerful atmosphere that currently prevails on the Palestinian parts of the beach, in the heart of the Gaza Strip, is surprising and hard to locate within dominant representations of the conflict. Produced as a site far removed from the

[220] I will never forget an outing I joined with a youth organization from the camp when the sudden appearance of an Israeli army jeep terrified the children.
[221] In the summer of 2004, *Il Feneiq*, which soon became a popular alternative for Dheishean families, closed at eleven o'clock in the evening since the Israeli army regularly showed up before midnight.

> conflict yet conditioned by it, the beach displays forms of Palestinian subjectivity and agency that are as far removed from representations of militancy and suicide as they are from those of passive victimhood.

As with Palestinian weddings (see chapter 6), this 'affirmation of life and joy' in Gaza as well as through picnics and outings in the Bethlehem area seems to differ strikingly from the suspension of everyday life that marked the first uprising (Jean-Klein 2001). In the ethos of self-restraint that was requested by the local national leadership, Palestinians sacrificed leisure activities and thus claimed political agency. Junka (*ibid.*: 357) suggests that the concept of hope and its relation to political agency may shed light on why there was a *suspension* of certain elements of daily life in the first intifada but an *affirmation* of everyday life during the second. She argues that this reorientation of proper Palestinian agency is connected to what Palestinians expect of the future.

> Disenchanted with past narratives of national liberation, countless Palestinians have abandoned the strict discipline of the first intifada and have returned to the beach, choosing to focus on the affirmation of life and joy in the immanent present rather than a future that, for many Palestinians, appears indefinitely delayed. (Junka 2006: 357f)

Although these remarks are valuable, my own data (collected over a longer period and in the West Bank) suggest that my informants experienced a greater ambivalence concerning this reorientation than Junka proposes. I often heard camp inhabitants blaming themselves or other Palestinians; they would for instance say 'if only we could clean up our society', 'if only we could be united, like in the first intifada' or 'if only we had better leadership'. These comments pointed at a nostalgic longing for the time when the cancellation of daily life was a meaningful element of the struggle. Moreover, to some people, like Huda, it was difficult to feel joy at weddings even if they were celebrated:

> When you go to a wedding party, they play very nice songs that are intended to make people dance - even a silly person who has never danced would dance to such songs. But you feel that people are exhausted and they don't want to dance. Psychologically, they don't want to dance or sing.

Huda's negation of the possibility of dancing and being happy captures a sense of meaningless felt by some Dheisheans and a deep existential crisis in Palestinian society. Having fun as a way of being resilient does not work for everyone.

Even though practices of putting 'normality on hold' (that included commercial strikes, refusal to pay taxes to Israel, sacrifice of leisure activities and weddings, *cf.* chapter 6) were never

recognised as resistance by Israelis, they had been a way of strengthening the unity and morals of Palestinians. I interpret the abandonment of the discipline of the first uprising as also related to disappointment with the Palestinian leadership. Why maintain discipline when the elite in the Palestinian Authority (PA) is said to have enriched themselves from foreign aid money and to be living in luxury? During the first uprising, the national leadership also ordered people to refrain from activities far more than the leaders have during the intifada *al-aqṣa* [222]. Moreover, since the proper way to struggle had increasingly become envisaged as being through military operations, the non-violent methods of the first uprising had come to seem insignificant.

Realizing the gravity of the situation, camp inhabitants also seemed to acknowledge their need to be resilient. They displayed *ṣumud* as a daily strategy of survival. To enjoy oneself was no longer a failure to resist but, on the contrary, was a way to be resilient and this could be crucial for Palestinian society, especially if the alternative is seen to be social and personal collapse.

With a Sense of Humour

Another way of handling and sharing difficulties was to laugh at them. Stories that seem sad and ugly to me now, as I sit writing far from Dheishe, made me laugh at the time. Below is an example of such a story, which Huda told. Everyone present laughed, both because of the absurdity of the events Huda described but also because of her storytelling skills - acting out fear and imitating how her brother had backed away and tried to calm down the Israeli soldier:

> I will tell you another story. It's funny, but it's not funny. […] It's a story about my brother. He works on a cement truck. He went to Bayt Fajjar to a house that is under construction. And he wanted to [go back] to Bethlehem. If he had gone at the "turn about roads" [that are allowed for Palestinians], it would have taken him a very long time. He would need the whole night to come back. And it's also very risky. He thought of going through the checkpoint. [But] the soldiers stopped him. The soldier told him "No, go back, to the other roads that people use." My brother didn't want to go all this way, so he said, "You can search me, I have nothing and then you can let me through." The soldier said "No". And the soldier didn't bother, he sat down like this. He drank and ate. My brother stayed at the checkpoint. He stayed for about half an hour. He said to himself, "Maybe, they will feel sympathy for me and let me through." […] [M]y brother got down from the truck and he said "It's enough. Why don't you let me through?" The soldier said: "Turn around and go back or do you want to become headline news on Al Jazzira?" And he pointed his gun at my brother. "Go or you will be breaking news on Al Jazzira!" My brother said: "No, no, I'm leaving, I'm leaving!"

[222] When Hamas took power in Gaza after the fieldwork for this study was completed they also ordered fellow Palestinians to refrain from celebrating weddings (personal communication with social anthropologist Gudrun Kroner).

How we laughed! 'Breaking news on Al Jazzira…' In societies under severe stress, laughter and macabre humour are often part of resilience. Bowen (a.k.a. ethnographer Laura Bohannan) described in a novel one of the responses to a fatal smallpox epidemic among the Tiv in Nigeria as 'the laugh under the mask of tragedy' (1964: 297). Similarly, Macek (2000: 60f) notes that one of the major ways in which Sarajevans under siege expressed and shared their war experiences was through jokes that were extremely context-dependent. The humour in Sarajevo, as in Dheishe, was difficult to grasp for those who did not share the experiences.

In the Palestinian context, Kanaana (2005) has described the humour of several crises. Palestinian humour is quick to respond to political events. Jokes from the first intifada dealt with issues directly related to the uprising, such as demonstrations, rock throwing, arrests, strikes and forbidden flag raising. They normally included an element of competition; unlike jokes from earlier and later periods, jokes at this time portrayed Palestinians as superior to or at least equal to Israelis because of their cleverness, wit or simplicity (*ibid.*: 21). Palestinian jokes contain alternative realities, political criticism, incongruities, play and aggression.

I heard several jokes about Arafat that portrayed him as a pitiful creature - powerless, old and sick. One memorable sketch shown on local TV showed a man in the occupied territories pretending to call President Bush on a shoe that doubled as a cell-phone. He was trying to explain at length the difficult situation of the Palestinian people but eventually the call was interrupted. The man shook 'the shoe/phone' he had been talking in to make it work again but then he gave up, muttering the word 'the battery'. Here, humour was being used to reflect on one's predicament. Palestinians feel it is impossible for them to communicate their distress to the mighty men who are believed to be able to ease their situation. The sketch also portrayed Palestinian misery – Palestinians have fake phones with useless batteries. Except from the absurdity of using a shoe as a phone, Kanaana (2005: 34) has also noted that as the lowest part of the body any association with the foot or foot wear is insulting and degrading for Palestinians. The man who called President Bush could thus be seen to be lowering himself in desperation or he could be seen to be using an insulting act to call a 'dog' like Bush.

The story about Huda's brother above is also a good example of the limits of an extended normality. To her brother, it had become normal to stop at checkpoints and wait for the approval of Israeli soldiers; it was 'normal' because it was common. But when the soldier threatened him at gunpoint, he panicked, the event became 'abnormal' and was transformed into a story to tell and laugh at; the event was 'worth mentioning'.

Drawing on Goldstein (2003), Scheper-Hughes (2008) argues that instead of seeing the black humour of Brazilian favelas (and I would add war-torn societies) as a site of resistance it is

rather 'a site where existence itself is made possible. Humour not only allows one to live but it contains within itself a refusal of the demand to suffer. Humour, then, is a way of bearing witness to tragic realities without succumbing to them' (*ibid.*: 48f). In the Palestinian context, ironic and absurd humour is also related to *ṣumud* in its sense of daily survival.

With a Distant or Divine Hope

A number of authors have identified hope as a building block of Palestinian identity (*e.g.* Peteet 1995; Habibi 1991; Lindholm 2003). As noted earlier in this chapter, *ṣumud* also includes an element of hope (Khalili 2007). When discussing the right of return, Lindholm (2003: 207) writes that hope 'is another strategy to counter processes of victimization and "feelings of powerlessness"'. Hope or *amal* is also a common Palestinian girl's name. Even though most of my informants would often express their lack of hope, there were some exceptions. Mahmoud, Khaled's younger brother, for instance, said:

> [The Israelis] control everything, except hope, they can't control that. They can't break us down. Our parents lived on less than this [economically] but they continued. [People] get hope from God. If you want to look at it from another [angle], there is nothing, everything is destroyed, everything is broken down. Nobody is working, you know that. For 10 years I have not worked with concrete [*i.e.* with construction work] and now I have for two days, and I'm broken, I'm really tired from it. You have to get used to the situation. What can we do?

'What can we do', *śo biddna nsawwi* in colloquial Arabic, was a phrase I often heard. This may be interpreted as a sign of resignation and powerlessness but also of resilience and acceptance of a situation that the refugees had very limited influence over. To 'get used to the situation' also shows the capacities of the camp inhabitants. Hope has also often been a long-term strategy in the Palestinian case, a patient waiting for the situation to change for the better.

In Dheishe, this enduring while waiting for change was for many connected to a divine and predicted intervention by God. A change would come, *it had to come*, and it seemed that the more pessimistic the present appeared the more remotely into the future a better life was projected. Hope may even be projected beyond death, in paradise. Along with the affirmation of life and the worries about expulsion and disasters, there was a focus on a distant future when Israel would vanish. This view is exemplified by an extract from an interview with Samar, whose three year-old son was playing in the room during the interview:

> I didn't talk about *al-nakba* with anyone, not with my mum, not with my grandma. Only with my mother-in-law. She told me how they fled. [But] I want to know their feelings, how they experienced it. To know what to do it if we had to flee once more.

> [Nina: You think you might flee again?] – For sure. There are *nakbaat* [*i.e.* disasters] every day. In Rafah for example, Jenin, Nablus. It's from God. He wants to see if people have patience. I think he tests people who are believers [*i.e.* Muslims]. […] Everyone who reads the Koran can see that Israel will disappear. It's not clear [when], but it is there [in the Koran], maybe in my time, maybe in [my son's] time or in his children's time.

In this quote Samar positioned her hope of a different future in the generations to come and she had found justification in the Koranic verses. In this hopeless situation, with the felt threat of another expulsion and with daily catastrophes, many people in Dheishe read the Koran to seek prophecies. Layla explained;

> Even in the Koran they talk about the Lake of Tiberias, that it will dry up, and this is one of the signs of Israel's breakdown, and if you have noticed the level of water is decreasing each year. This means that the breakdown of Israel is near. It also says: "they will fight you from behind the walls" [implying the Wall built by Israel].'

More examples could be added[223]. Mustafa and several others for instance claimed that 9/11 attacks as well as a destruction of Gaza could be read about in religious texts. Israel's war on Gaza and its devastating effects in late 2008 and early 2009 was thus more or less predicted by the camp residents. In fact, I only heard one person who rejected this kind of interpretation; this was a middle-aged, religious man who said that a specific Koranic verse should not be read so literally but instead as spiritual guidance.

Such predictions, I suggest, were attempts to show endurance and buoyancy that reinforced the meagre hope that people still held. As 'passionate players' in Bourdieu's (2000: 213) terms, Dheisheans 'invested in the game' by interpreting religious texts in a specific and largely optimistic way. These interpretations were, like the magical practices in post-Communist Russia (Lindquist 2006), 'methods of existential reassurance and control that rational and technical means cannot offer' (*ibid.*: 2).

In addition to this hope of heavenly intervention, I noted a growing number of people who regularly prayed at the mosques in the camp. This reflected both the global Islamic revival and increasing support for Hamas. However, the routine of praying five times a day (either at home or in mosque) also helped structure quotidian life; through prayer people maintained normality and tranquillity (see also Save the Children 2003: 13). In a focus group discussion with men in their early twenties the participants claimed that the growing number of pious Dheisheans, many of whom are unemployed men, is also related to hope and hopelessness.

[223] Khalili (2007: 105) also quotes an interview with a Palestinian refugee woman in Lebanon 2002 who said that one could read about what was happening between Israelis and Palestinians in the Koran. She did not interpret her reading optimistically as a prediction of Palestinian victory.

Nina: But as Mounsir said there are also people who trust in God. Do you think that people become more religious when the situation is more difficult?

Mounsir: Yes, of course.

Nina: How? How do you see it? How does it show?

Mounsir: Well… Someone who is at home, he doesn't have any work or anything. He asks to what? He goes to pray; "maybe God will help me" - this is how people think.

Ali: People think about it in this way.

Walid: And there is another thing, in our condition life is bad so we don't want to have a bad time even in the end [*i.e.* in after-life]. Existence is bad so we want to make one of them good.
[…]

Mounsir: There is no future. The future is that they will step on your neck and keep you down all the time. Anyone who raises his head up he will get it cut off.

Field assistant: Walid?

Walid: We are religious believers - don't think I'm a believer [*i.e.* very religious], I'm not a *śeiḫ* [*i.e.* a religious leader] - but we believe that we will win. This is written in the Koran and in the Hadith. Even the people who don't pray believe in that. The next year and the year after it will happen [*i.e.* something will change]. We also believe in something else, the solution will not come from us[224].

Without reducing religion to a mere response to violence and despair, it has been noted that religious practice is often used to handle the existential dilemma posed by violence (*cf.* Warren 1993). Kent's writings (2006, 2007) about Cambodia also provide examples of religious revival being an attempt to achieve resilience and the re-construction of society. In the Palestinian case, that dilemma seems to be about survival, both at an individual and a collective level. How can I survive, how can I go on living? And if I do not survive, how can I work on my relation to God? How can we survive as a nation and as a moral community when we are threatened with exterminated? In Dheishe, the practice of Islam offered an answer for many.

This sense of threat is not a new phenomenon in Palestinian society. For instance, Bowman (2001: 50) writes about a killing carried out by the Israeli army during the first uprising; '[…] Beit Sahouris could see the event as yet more evidence of the presence of a systematic programme of extermination mobilized against them […]'. However, it is likely that the amount of violence used during the intifada *al-aqṣa* and the political situation more generally had made those fears of extinction even more pronounced. In these circumstances, when hope and change

[224] Several camp residents claimed that the solution to their plights would come from the East. This belief was also referred to the Koran.

for the better are frequently connected to the after-life, it may not be strange that death has become normalized or that suicide bombing has become an option.

Continuing to Resist

Palestinians seem to have tried 'everything' to change their predicament. They have been engaged in guerrilla warfare, in hijackings and popular uprisings. Over the years, they have protested and continue to protest against Israeli policies to international organizations such as the UN. The Palestinian leadership has constructed state-like institutions in exile as well as in the West Bank and Gaza. Thus, they have used multiple strategies, both violent and non-violent, but so far with little success since their two main political goals, to establish a Palestinian state and to find a solution to the refugee issue, have not been fulfilled.

In the local context of Dheishe, these political failures were deeply felt. As described in chapter 2, Dheisheans had also been involved in many kinds of political activities. After the first uprising, in which many camp residents had been actively involved, they had waited for the implementations of the Oslo accords and for the benefits of a Palestinian authority. They waited fruitlessly for final status agreements that many had hoped would finally end the conflict and give Palestinians an independent state. When I was in Dheishe, many people were living from hand to mouth. The intifada *al-aqṣa* had furthered neither their political project nor their general situation, but rather the opposite. Fellow Palestinians had been sacrificing their lives as martyrs for decades and the death toll had accelerated in recent years. People in the camp indeed experienced that Palestinians were struggling and suffering in accordance with national discourse, but despite this, nothing seemed to have changed for the better. Zaynab for instance said to her friends: 'I agree with you, we accept hunger and endure all this, but until when?' Still, many of them sought ways to look forward and to at least partly hold onto the national project, in spite of a political void in which they found it difficult to participate as political subjects.

Alternatives to Military Resistance

> ***Mounsir***: Listen, instead of throwing stones, which I know won't help, I stay at the entrance of the camp and I have a big sign like this [showing with his hands]. I can stand in front of TV cameras and say; "We are against the Separation Wall!" I won't get hurt and I won't hurt the people who are with me.
>
> ***Walid***: Is it enough?
>
> ***Mounsir***: It's not enough, but they are at least doing something. […] If there was a state and they had weapons, I would be the first one to join you [in the armed struggle].

On occasion, when 'extended normality' broke down and the abnormality of the situation became evident, many camp residents felt an urge 'to do something', to engage themselves in politics, as yet another response to violence and deprivation. During the militarized intifada *al-aqṣa* the possibilities of participating in political activities were less than they were during the first uprising, because of the danger. Although Dheisheans had a flexible understanding of resistance, many were dissatisfied that they were unable to oppose the occupation as they would have wanted. Walid and Mounsir were both unmarried young men who thereby belonged to the social category in Palestinian society that is most often expected to take action against the occupation. Had the interview above taken place during the first intifada, they would probably have been among those who threw stones or engaged in more militarized attacks. But how could they participate politically or resist in a highly dangerous situation without risking their own or other people's lives? If there were no weapons[225] to fight back with, what other means remained? Moreover, in this phase of the conflict, Palestinians trusted neither the political process nor the Palestinian leadership. What kind of political agency was left?

As Mounsir explained, non-violent demonstrations that attracted media attention were part of one solution to this dilemma. In 2003/2004, a few demonstrations were held inside the camp or on the main road just outside, but they were usually interrupted well before they reached Bethlehem. This was a strategy used in order to avoid provoking violent responses by the Israeli army, which was constantly present at a military base at Rachel's tomb near a checkpoint to Jerusalem. This adaptation made it feel safer to demonstrate and to still feel engaged in politics, and that 'you were at least doing something'. For some individuals, however, there were other 'low-profile ways' to act that made sense politically.

'Wakening the Outside World'

Many Dheisheans invested time and energy in trying to protest against the Israeli occupation in a non-violent, 'low-profile' manner by communicating with foreigners. This political technique is often overlooked and it is somewhat outside more organized forms of political activism (see also Jean-Klein 2001: 94f). As a foreign researcher, I was often the object of such efforts. Mahmoud expressed hope that my research would 'change people outside, to change their opinion about us, to move them. I somehow don't think so but I hope that'. Like many other camp residents, he

[225] This frequently expressed worry about lack of weapons in Dheishe corresponds with a romanticizing discourse about heroic fighters and militarism that has been nurtured by the Palestinian revolutionary political culture. Nonetheless, people like Layla, realized that: 'The world has more compassion for the Jews than for us because we have used weapons'. Because Palestinians had used weapons (and suicide bombings) Palestinian victimhood had become more difficult to promote to an international public (*cf*. Khalili 2007: 204ff).

had a message for me to transmit to the outside world[226]. Dheisheans also frequently engaged in discussions with me to try and find out why nobody helped them, why the international community did not intervene on their behalf.

Other refugees, primarily men, privately or through NGOs, participated in documentary films[227] or welcomed foreigners to the camp, taking them on 'political tours' or inviting them to dinner at home. Some managed to get invitations by foreign solidarity groups and thus travel permits and visas to travel abroad to inform about the Palestinian issue. Before the new uprising, the children and teenagers who participated in the cultural centre Ibdaa's *dabke* group also travelled round the world telling the story of flight, violence and camp life to outsiders in their dance performances. Half of the folkdance troupe consisted of girls, partly balancing the gender bias in this otherwise mainly male storytelling.

The felt need to communicate with the outside world was also manifest at a solidarity event for prisoners in Bethlehem that I attended. The relatives of the prisoners carried huge photos of their imprisoned loved ones and desperately held them out towards me and other foreigners, hoping that we would photograph or film them and in this way make the prisoners' suffering visible and render them more human and less anonymous to people in the 'West'. There were also banners with lists of names of prisoners attached to a wall. It was victimhood and suffering rather than heroism and struggle that were most important when communicating with an international audience. This has been discussed by Khalili (2007: 204ff) as being related to NGOs' need for foreign funding; it is easier to persuade countries to donate if you portray Palestinians as victims of Israeli assaults. This contrasts with the heroism usually associated with prisoners within Palestinian society.

Other strategies for promoting the Palestinian cause were to publish lists of names of injured, killed or imprisoned Palestinians on national TV or in news magazines[228] and to document house demolitions, destroyed villages prior to 1948 and other acts carried out by the Israeli state. These strategies also acknowledged the importance of archives of losses and hardship when establishing a social memory (*cf.* Nora 1989). Listing and documenting may be interpreted as future-oriented acts; Palestinians wanted acknowledgment of their hardships and hoped that one day Israel might be held accountable for its acts. If Palestinians remained

[226] I had the impression that some Dheisheans felt it was easier to interact with pro-Palestinian journalists than with a researcher who lived in the camp. It seemed easier to convey a rather one-sided message to someone who only came by occasionally.
[227] To a Western audience, two award winning documentary films have partly been shot in Dheishe: Mai Masri's *Frontiers of Dreams and Fears* (2001) and Justine Shapiro's and B.Z. Goldberg's *Promises* (2001).
[228] See, for instance, *Al Majdal*, a quarterly newsletter of BADIL Resource Center for Palestinian Residency and Refugee Rights based in Bethlehem. This paper is published both in Arabic and English and thus directed towards several groups of readers.

steadfast long enough, justice would eventually come. Similarly, some refugee families kept papers that proved their land ownership in their original villages inside present Israel or referred to Ottoman archives that held records of landowners before 1948. Listing and documentation had accordingly been used for a long time in the effort to oppose Israel.

Peteet's accounts of foreign visitors to Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon also resonates with my observations in Dheishe; 'Telling stories about expulsion, uprooting, and life as a refugee was an attempt to lessen the distance between the Palestinian and the other, to create knowledge and thus empathy. It was in such an atmosphere that trust could be established with others' (1995: 178). By showing foreigners their camp and their homes, Dheisheans could tell their stories[229] and try to gain a voice in world politics so as to affect the so-called international community. Khalili (2007: 206) calls such visits, which are organized by camp-based NGOs, 'witnessing tours' because they underline Palestinian suffering and need of support and aid money. Some of the people who guided foreigners around the camp however consciously avoided focusing on misery because they did not want people to feel sorry for them. 'I don't want them to think that we are *maskîn* (*i.e.* to be pitied, poor)', said a man who organized such tours for an NGO in the camp.

The Internet was also used to disseminate stories about the plight of people in the occupied territories. For instance, Abu Amir, planned to make a difference by establishing a website:

> The media everywhere knows the Palestinians as terrorists and the Palestinian struggle as terrorism and the Israelis as victims. It changes everything. And I want to do something to show the truth […]. I hope to have an internet page, a website, with the history of Palestine.

The fact that Abu Amir wanted to write about the history of Palestine was no coincidence given the constant battle between Israelis and Palestinians over historical truth (*e.g.* Abu El-Haj 2001; Benvenisti 2000; Swedenburg 1991; Slyomovics 1998). Rami, on the other hand, wrote poems in English about the suffering of Palestinian children and he sent them out on his e-mail lists to foreigners. In a more organized way, some Dheishean youth had been involved since 1999 in the Across Border Project, which was launched by Bir Zeit University in the West Bank to established contact between different refugee camps in the occupied territories and in Lebanon (Khalili 2005: 141f; Lindholm 2003: 181f). Websites carrying alternative news to that broadcasted

[229] It became clear to me during my time in the camp that 'everything' was not told on these tours or in these meetings with outsiders. Parts of the Palestinian struggle that were considered shameful were often played down, or even excluded. On the other hand, Palestinian suffering and morality were underlined (see also Swedenburg 1991; Bowman 2001: 52).

by the mistrusted international media are another example of this low-profile opposition[230]. Many former stone-throwers in Dheishe and elsewhere in the West Bank and Gaza were now designing websites to get their message out to the outside world.

There has been a great increase in Palestinian-related websites that are not only managed from the occupied territories but also by the Palestinian diaspora. Stamatopoulou-Robbins (2005) claims that these websites have different aims depending on who hosts them and who the audience is and she notes that they also reconnect with the past and with other Palestinians in other places. This is mainly noticeable among the younger, diasporic, English-speaking professional elite (*ibid.*: 34). Khalili (2005) investigates how Palestinian refugees in Lebanon use the Internet and internet cafés to display and enact Palestinian identity. 'The Electronic Intifada'[231] is in fact the name of a US-based pro-Palestinian website but it could also be more broadly applied to Palestinian attempts to both make their voices heard and to attack the media representation of one's enemy. Lindholm (2003: 182) reports about the events at the beginning of the intifada *al-aqṣa*: 'A few days after the first Israeli attack against the public Palestinian broadcasting company, Israel was exposed to a flooding on the Internet which wiped the Israeli Foreign Department and Knesset off the web'.

At the time of the first intifada, camp residents lacked Internet and satellite channels and even required permission from the Israeli civil administration to get a phone line (Mustafa recalled that when he was young there had only been three phones in the whole camp). Now, however, this cyberization of the new intifada offers new potential. Landzelius (2006) provide interesting parallels about the diverse ways that marginalized or isolated groups such as indigenous peoples and diasporas all over the globe are using the Internet. They do so in a highly politicized manner to create community within the group but also to earn sympathy and support from a wider society. This results in a kind of cyber-activism. As the Israeli-Palestinian conflict became militarized, it also became 'cyberized'. During my fieldwork, new Internet cafés were popping up here and there in Dheishe and a considerable number of camp inhabitants had computers and Internet connections at home.

Trying to communicate with outsiders to gather political support was nothing new, but it is likely that, as part of the political project, it had been reinforced during the intifada *al-aqṣa* along with a reorientation of everyday life. This endeavour to create trust between the refugees and the outside world, as Peteet (1995) writes, also implied reciprocity. When the refugees shared their

[230] See, for instance, Philo & Berry (2004) and Dor (2003, 2005) for examinations of the media coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Khalili's (2005) Palestinian informants in Lebanon also underlined that the Internet gave them access to more accurate news from the occupied territories.
[231] See http://electronicintifada.net/new.shtml 13.05.2009 10.34.

food, their place and their narratives of suffering with outsiders, they expected to receive something in return, mostly empathy but also political and economic support. Camp residents were also vigilant about checking that outsiders had the right political opinions so that they could be trusted to share at least the basics of 'Palestinian truth'.

This chapter has shown how, within a politicized context characterized by constrained agency, mundane practices of *ṣumud* provided comfort in the present and a way to look forward. By being steadfast, Dheisheans maintained a sense of political engagement. However, just as researchers should avoid romanticizing resistance (*cf.* Ortner 1995), we should not look for political agency and resilience where there is only despair and frustration. This chapter also points out the complexities of endurance and hope among people who are living in extremely difficult conditions; in Dheishe, there were many instances of shifts between hope and despair, between resignation and great, often fantastical, plans for the future. While conducting my fieldwork, I was struck as much by the despair of my informants as by their ambitions to start a new business, build a house or apply for higher education in spite of it all. 'They are at least doing something' as Mounsir said when referring to demonstrations that were held in front of TV cameras. Maybe he was also referring to something more general. I suggest that there is a deep existential urge in such a statement that reflects a universal human need to maintain the power to act and to influence the course of events. This felt need was a motivation to continue to struggle either politically or just by carrying on with everyday life and refusing to succumb to tragic reality. As Scheper-Hughes (2008: 52) notes, in some contexts, existence itself is more than enough to celebrate.

9. Reconstituting a Moral Order

This chapter investigates the reconstitution of moral order in the camp. It describes a Dheishean moral community as well as the practices and narratives employed by camp inhabitants to earn and exhibit moral capital and to demarcate themselves from outsiders. As is often the case in wars and conflicts, one tends to position one's own group as morally superior to one's opponent or enemy. The main 'others' for Dheisheans were the Israelis, although a process of othering also affected perceptions and relations to fellow Palestinians, other Arabs and Westerners. My informants painted a somewhat essentialized portrait of Palestinian-ness in contrast to the Israeli and Western ways of life and they described the politically, economically and militarily inferior Palestinians as *morally* superior. In this way, the camp inhabitants reframed their predicament and aggrandized their sense of self.

In this chapter, we will first see how this sense of moral superiority had its base in historical experiences of injustice, in *al-nakba*. Current events were fitted into a chain of disasters that demanded moral redress. Coupled to the claim of moral superiority was the maintenance of a moral community that was based in gender ideals.

However, upholding moral superiority was not unproblematic; individuals, either Israelis or Dheisheans, did not always conform to moral ideals or prejudices. In Dheishe, people were also concerned about the erosion of morality due to contact and intimacy with outsiders. A gendered political morality existed that concerned whether and how men and women were to be politically involved. Gender and age determined what political action against Israel was possible for different individuals. At the time of fieldwork, these elaborated practices were often impossible to implement and this created a further sense of moral failure and emergency.

A Chain of Catastrophic Events

To many Dheisheans, history seemed to repeat itself. Difficulties and disasters were frequently explained and understood as a chain of interconnected events that fitted into a pattern of oppression and deprivation. This process is captured by Malkki's (1995a) analytical term mythico-history. As was the case among the Hutu refugees in Tanzania described by Malkki, in Dheishe, '[e]veryday events, processes, and relations in the camp were spontaneously and consistently interpreted and acted upon by evoking this collective past as a charter and a blueprint' (*ibid.*: 53). In Malkii's terminology, 'mythic' does not denote something false or made up, but refers to a moral and cosmological order or collective narrative that structures events and experiences and makes them understandable (see also Gren 2001). The Palestinians' mythico-history was designed

to establish a moral order in which historical and current injustices were acknowledged and Palestinians were portrayed as victims of Israeli aggression.

> [The mythico-history] was concerned with the ordering and reordering of social and political categories, with the defining of self in distinction to other, with good and evil. It was most centrally concerned with the reconstitution of a *moral order* of the world. It seized historical events, processes, and relationships, and reinterpreted them within a deeply moral scheme of good and evil.
>
> Malkki (1995a: 55f)

The starting point of Palestinian suffering was *al-nakba*. The events of violence and flight in the late 1940s were thus an important theme in the Palestinian mythico-history that was narrated in the camp. Many people also connected the current state of emergency to *al-nakba*. For instance, when I tried to ask about the flight in 1948 many people would say *'fî nakbaat kull yôm' i.e.* 'there are disasters everyday'. My informants aimed to redirect my interest in the calamities of the past to those of the present. They were of course right that in the occupied territories there is always some Palestinian being killed or arrested, some Palestinian town is under curfew or siege, and the general economic situation is deteriorating.

Since *al-nakba*, certain events had repeatedly struck the Palestinians. Displacement and flight continued; for instance, TV images of the destroyed refugee camp in Jenin in 2003, where refugees were again living in tents provided by the UN, evoked memories of the refugee camps when they were set up in the 1950s. Martyrdom was another such theme, introduced in the 1930s and still an issue, as was political imprisonment. The many stories I heard during fieldwork about women who had lost or almost lost their infants during *al-nakba* foreshadowed the Palestinian women of today who miscarry when they are denied passage through checkpoints on their way to maternity hospitals.

Mythico-history was not only evident in narratives but also in practices. During the days in May when Palestinians commemorate *al-nakba*, the local branch of Fatah, the leading party in the PA, arranged lectures about the refugees' right of return. After one of these lectures by an invited politician, there was a sudden burst of noise and activity in the drowsy lecture hall. An old woman was brought out to address the audience about her suffering. Many of the male spectators left their seats and ran up to the stage to surround the old lady. I had been filming during the lecture and at this moment my male field assistant grabbed the camera and rushed off to take some close-ups. In the company of some other female visitors and some of the men, I watched the spectacle from a distance. The woman told the story of losing her loved ones: two of her brothers and her son had been killed by the British, the Jordanians and the Israelis

respectively. The old woman also told us that she was sad for the ones she had lost, but proud and not ashamed.

The following day, there was another lecture. I started filming but soon got bored. The invited lecturer was speaking in an Arabic I did not understand, but no one else in the audience of about 60 people seemed to be very interested either. My field assistant assured me that I was not missing much and that the man was talking about 'the same things you always hear concerning the right of return, there is nothing new.' But all of a sudden something happened. I had noticed a man among the listeners whose son I knew had been martyred the previous year. It turned out that many people in the audience were actually from martyrs' families. A man was starting to call out the names of the martyrs and, one by one, someone from the each martyr's family, a father or a mother it seemed, came up in front of the audience to collect a souvenir plate with a relief of *Al-aqṣa* Mosque and Al Quds (*i.e.* Jerusalem) written on it. These plates can be bought in any souvenir shop in Bethlehem. The audience applauded them and they silently went back to their seats. Only one of the martyrs had no relative to collect a plate.

Remembering *al-nakba*, the beginning of suffering, was thus connected to multiple losses. The Dheishean version of mythico-history was quite literally staged in front of the audience during the '*Nakba*-days', underlining the connectedness of misery and disaster in a process of continuous deprivation and oppression. The ongoing uprising was seen as just another stage in the mythico-history, within which Palestinians appeared as victims of Israeli assaults. Most importantly, the chain of disasters evoked claims of injury and moral redress.

The Camp as a Moral Community

One dark evening in Dheishe, Shireen and I were walking home together through the dusky alleys of the camp, leaving behind a loud and lit up ḥenna[232] *party where we had just had sweet biscuits and coffee. We did not talk much but hurried along so as to get back to Shireen's family house without having our chastity questioned. Women, and especially unmarried women like us, were not supposed to roam around on their own in the dark.*

Inside their home, we sat down to have some tea with Shireen's mother who had been too ill to join us at the party. Shireen took off her headscarf and coat-like Islamic dress (gilbab) and vividly started telling her mother about the party. Such a scandal! How they dressed! Shireen was angry and upset and almost shouted as she gave her mother a detailed summary of the bad manners of the hosts. She described how the bride's sisters and sisters-in-laws were dressed in sexy outfits and how the bride's brother and his young wife were dancing intimately. Although wedding celebrations are occasions for the close female relatives of the bridal couple to show off in more revealing clothes than usual in sex-segregated groups, or at least in privacy, this party was apparently too much for Shireen.

[232] The *ḥenna* night is part of Palestinian wedding celebrations and is normally held the evening before the wedding.

*

This brief account provides an example of concerns about morality and of different moral standards in the camp. Shireen and her family were part of a group (often Fateh-related) that treasured Palestinian traditions, while the bride's family was related to one of the Leftist parties and they considered themselves more 'modern'. The value of hospitality, which Palestinians tend to regard as a sign of true 'Palestinian-ness', was also evident.

The camp was constituted as a moral community by proper moral conduct according to gender. Camp residents argued that moral conduct was guided by both interpretations of religious laws and religiously influenced recommendations as well as by traditions that were constantly negotiated. As mentioned in chapter 4, the refugees related how the different village leaders had agreed on rules of conduct in the newly established camp in the 1950s. In interview, Khaled, like many other Dheisheans, noted the importance of guidance and norms in society. Significantly, many of the moral precepts were expressed in terms of gender:

> [T]here are things that rule us in our society, first the religion (*al-dîn*), second our traditions (*'adâtna*). But I take the positive things from our traditions. I'm with the positive and against the negative. The religious things are very clear for the one who has an understanding of the religion; to him they are clear.
>
> The mixing of women and men, there is no allowance for that, there are rules for that. If the woman is dressed in a good way and if she takes care of herself, it doesn't matter to me [if they mix], everything goes back to how you raise the girls. Your boy or your girl will grow up accordingly. For these things the traditions rule.

Rules about proper behaviour were often discussed and negotiated in the camp. One example of this kind of negotiation was when my host-sister and I wanted to go for walks in the evenings to get some exercise. My host-brother was not really happy about us 'roaming around' on our own outside the camp, but when his senior, a paternal uncle, said he had no problem with this, he gave in and let us have our way[233]. Cases of Palestinian conflict resolution also involved much discussion about what was considered acceptable behaviour and what was not.

Abu Wisam explained that what was considered *'eib*[234], *i.e.* shame or shameful, was in flux:

> Many things we think are *'eib* are not against the religion. For men [to wear] shorts, if they come down to the knees, is not forbidden. The traditional issues are not stable and they are changing all the time. A long time ago if we saw a woman smoking, we thought it was strange, but now we offer her a cigarette. The *adat* [the traditions]

[233] As noted, restricted mobility is a gendered issue in the camp and in other parts of the Palestinian territories. The movements of Palestinian women are often restricted. However, it was often an advantage when I was doing fieldwork to be a woman when trying to pass checkpoints and roadblocks or stay illegally inside Israel.

[234] '*Eib* (*i.e.* shame, shameful) is a common word in Dheishe. It is used to correct or scold children who are doing something inappropriate, but is also used jokingly between close friends or more seriously while gossiping about someone's bad or strange behaviour.

> develop by using these kinds of things, it becomes normal to us. Maybe everything we consider *'eib* today will change with time. Only if it touches our religion or won't fit with it will it be forbidden.

Moral norms also depended on views of modernity and tradition. Of course, individuals' standpoints also varied and different political affiliations could influence what kind of view a person held on specific types of conduct. Shireen's family, above, was more 'traditional' and connected to Fateh than the bride's 'modern' Leftist family (*cf.* Bornstein 2002a: 103ff). Some men in the camp boasting about their liberal views on drinking alcohol while other people would not dream of even drinking fruit juice that had been produced at a vineyard[235].

How social norms were understood to apply also varied between the generations in Dheishe; for instance, the elderly Abu Khaled sometimes complained about his ten-year-old granddaughter wearing shorts and a top because he felt that girls of all ages should conform to the rules for modest dress. His children and grandchildren as well as other camp residents of their age found his point of view difficult to accept.

Moral concepts were also often understood to be inter-connected in Dheishe. For instance, someone who was patriotic would also be generous. Samar and her unemployed husband had four children to support and they were helped out economically by her husband's family. When asked if her husband's family was annoyed because they had to provide for them, Samar connected different virtues by saying: 'On the contrary, every day they give us money. They are employees and get salaries. In this [difficult] situation there are not many who have problems [getting help from others]. It is nationalistic to help others. […] It was even more so in the first intifada.' Not everyone agreed with Samar that people in the camp still helped each other - on the contrary, many felt that morality was eroding.

Moral sanctions in the camp consisted mostly of gossip and social isolation. More serious breaches of norms were sometimes punished with violence. For instance, an unmarried girl could be beaten if her parents and uncles learned that she had held the hand of a boy in public.

Morality in Everyday Practice

Numerous everyday practices not only served to accomplish necessary tasks, such as cleaning, cooking, going to school or earning an income, but also confirmed a morality built on a specific gender order. For instance, when Zaynab, whose morning routine was described in chapter 5, repeatedly swept the veranda outside her apartment this was a way for her to confirm her own status as a morally upright woman (*cf.* Rothenberg 2004).

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[235] Note that drinking alcohol is *ḥarâm, i.e.* forbidden religiously, it is not only shameful (*'eib*).

Such gendered moral boundary making (either between men and women within the group or between women of one's own group and others' women) often forms part of national projects or the process of distinguishing between different ethnic groups (*cf.* Melhuus & Stölen 1996; Yuval-Davis 1997).

A Gendered Labour Division and Complementary Roles

Men and women were often understood as having complementary roles in the camp (this ideal is locally referred to the writings of the Koran). Men were said to work outside and women inside their homes. Abu Wisam elaborated the different roles of men and women:

> My mission is to cover the expenses and to watch the children and to advise them when I am at home. A wife needs to work in the house. And I give [my wife] all rights to raise the children, because I don't have the time to be with them all the time. And I ask her about how the children react, who has a problem or whatever. So I can fix it. […] The girls help their mother with the housework. And of course they study so when they have some time they help her. About my son, sometimes he comes to help me in the shop. We are Arabs and Muslims.

In an interview Khaled, who at the time of fieldwork was still unmarried, explained part of this gendered labour division:

> In the morning, I don't ask my sister to make coffee for me, but she makes it for me. In society they think about it in this way. The woman has to know about it. The man, it doesn't matter if he works or not, the woman, it doesn't matter if she is his sister or his mother or wife, she has to serve him. But in our family we don't do these kinds of things. Maybe my sister doesn't like to make coffee. If my sister is not available, if she is at work, I do the work. […] I clean the floor, wash the clothes and put them up on the roof [to dry].

The way in which different families managed housework was quite varied in Dheishe. Some younger men like Khaled did many tasks that had previously been considered women's work, other men did nothing that they considered to be women's duties.

Doing things for others is a way of showing them that you care for them and love them. This is not only something that women do for men but men also do so for women and same-sex friends do so for each other. Men who were served and fed by the female members of the family were also supposed to return these gestures of love with gifts as well as in their role as providers (*cf.* Joseph 1999). Baxter (2007) and Sa'ar (2001, 2006) have discussed the dynamics of obligations, responsibilities and power of men and women towards each other within Palestinian families, thus complicating prevailing assumptions about female subordination in Palestinian families.

Most women in the camp, like Zaynab, spent hour after hour cleaning, cooking, washing every day. For women, keeping their house clean was not simply a matter of hygiene but it was closely related to their own reputation as moral women. In the quarter where I stayed the women gossiped about other women who did not manage to keep their homes neat and tidy. In my host-family, as well as in friends' homes, I was often corrected for not using enough elbow grease when washing dishes or sweeping the floor and for not hanging the laundry in straight lines up on the roof. Straight laundry lines were visible signs to the neighbours that the females in my host-family were morally clean. Rothenberg (2004: 73), who did her fieldwork in a village close to Dheishe, drew similar conclusions:

> Women young and old speak constantly of their *shughl*, or daily work. This is a constant source of conversation and complaints. […] *Shughl* is often used as evidence by women that their lives are hard. […] The importance of doing her *shughl* properly is key to a woman's sense of self-esteem and accomplishment, and is taken as a proof of symbolic cleanliness and a good way of life.

Rothenberg also notes that repeatedly sweeping outside their houses was a public demonstration for women that their homes were clean and that they themselves were morally clean[236] or upright. Many women complained about the amount of household duties, especially those who were wage earners. Maryam, when still unmarried, often complained about the heavy workload she had even though she was the only one in the family who had full-time employment.

Sharing tasks with women from the extended family or the neighbours and possibly also complaining about one's own hard work helped establish this gendered moral order in Dheishe. Women kept clean houses, cooked good food and made coffee with *wijh* or *wiś* (*i.e.* face, the froth on the coffee)[237]; they educated children and maintained modesty by carefully watching their sexual reputation. Most women and girls in Dheishe also dressed 'properly' and took care not to move about on their own[238].

For men, it was essential to have a wage and thus be able to provide for their families in order to demonstrate their moral uprightness. Men in the camp often also competed for social status and recognition. Social status could be earned among other men by such acts as displaying generosity at funerals *i.e.* by getting the right/honour to pay and cook a meal for the mourning

[236] Keeping the body clean included practices such as removing hair from female bodies, keeping hair on male bodies and ritual washing for both sexes before praying (*cf.* Malmström 2009).
[237] Traditionally, a girl's ability to make froth on coffee and the way she served a suitor was a way for the girl to present herself as a decent and modest woman. The practice is said to display her marriageability.
[238] Female dress codes in Dheishe had changed rather dramatically; my informants often showed me photos from the 1980s showing local women in short skirts and without headscarves. Wearing the headscarf was often described as an individual decision although the rise of the Islamic movement as well as a more general Islamization probably also had had an impact on this (*cf.* Swedenburg 2003: 201; Bornstein 2002a: 95f). There were also women in Dheishe who made a point of not wearing modest dress.

family and their guests. This status competition was, however, a question of teamwork in the family since men and women depended on each other's skills and the whole family earned status; men had negotiating skills and women cooking skills[239]. For men to be good hosts in their own homes also implied dependence on females since a guest was not only supposed to be entertained, but also to be served drinks, snacks and meals that were usually prepared by women[240].

Another means for men to gain status was to mediate in conflicts or to acquire support from others in a dispute. The Palestinian so-called traditional law (*ṣulḥa*), which, in the absence of a clear legal system, is often used in the occupied territories to solve conflicts, also demands that the mediator has moral authority. Traditionally, mediators were well-respected older men. But as several researchers have noted (*e.g.* Peteet 1994), the first intifada often altered power relations and authority between father and son in Palestinian families. According to Peteet (*ibid.*: 38), the kind of moral authority that mediators embody may be acquired not only with age but also by experiencing prison or political engagement, at least since the first uprising. During my fieldwork in Dheishe, there were a number of disagreements that were solved using this informal arbitration system (*cf.* Lang 2005). To be chosen as a mediator or to involve oneself as a mediator even in smaller disputes provided males with social status. The many conflicts and fights among Palestinian men may also have provided compensation for their inability to show bravery and display manhood in front of Israeli soldiers and settlers.

Multiple Moral Spaces

In Palestine, as elsewhere, what was considered appropriate when it came to social norms and moral conduct differed according to the circumstances. The locality in which something took place - the 'moral space' one related to - was significant. What was appropriate conduct in private, 'at home' differed from that which was appropriate in public, 'in the street'. In the occupied territories, it is for instance extremely rare to see women smoke in public. Even though it is today more acceptable that women smoke, it is considered respectful not to smoke in front of one's seniors, sometimes also for men (see also Bornstein 2002a: 95). Within a locality where one is known, one's social geography as Rothenberg (2004) has called it, less strict behaviour is demanded than in other places. As Abu Wisam pointed out, it is acceptable for a man to wear shorts at home and often in his neighbourhood, but not when he is farther away, for instance

[239] In practice, it is possible that women also contributed financially from their savings and incomes.
[240] If no woman was around, most men were fully capable of serving their guests themselves.

downtown Bethlehem. Accordingly, it was not only women who were affected by ideas about private and public but everyone, although to different degrees.

The interior of houses in Dheishe was considered to be a private female or family domain, a domain that 'outsiders', especially men, should not enter anyhow. The many army intrusions into houses in the camp over the years and are therefore grave violations across the thresholds of this 'interior domesticity'. In Dheishe, women were 'undressed' for instance without their *mandîl* (*i.e.* local word for headscarf) inside their houses but they also used this in a number of creative ways[241]. My host-sister, for instance, could tell her brothers and uncles that she was not dressed when she was in her bedroom and in this way she could sometimes get out of cooking for them.

Slyomovics (1998: 205) has questioned Palestinian women's seclusion historically. She argues that Palestinian folklore and oral history both confirm and contest it. While village women are often symbolically associated with the house, they have not been secluded there but on the contrary used to work in the fields. Also Granqvist's study (1935) shows that Palestinian village women used to be mobile and would travel alone to places like the East Bank of the river Jordan.

Places at which Dheisheans met Israeli soldiers, policemen and guards, such as checkpoints, border crossings and jails were considered places of great danger, both physically and morally[242]. According to my observations and to my informants' accounts, moral behaviour in such places demanded caution. Palestinian ideals of stoicism, politeness and fearlessness (in the sense of not showing that one is afraid) were stressed. A Palestinian should show restraint and distance at these encounters, thus upholding boundaries between 'us and them' as much as possible. Failing to do so would bring one under suspicion of collaboration.

Palestinian Moral Superiority and the Immoral Other

In general, Palestinians consider themselves to be generous, hospitable, empathetic and caring towards other people. They claim to be polite and reserved in public (Peteet 1994) and to have sexual morals that restrict sex and courtship to wedlock[243]. A model Palestinian is also educated, politically conscious and often religious to some extent. Suffering, struggle and steadfastness are also terms that connote Palestinian identity (Lindholm 1999). As Sa'ar (2001: 723) notes, the

[241] Although it is beyond the scope of this study, one may note that keeping the boundaries of this inner female and family space inside houses was a way of performing femininity (Butler 1990); one becomes a woman by staying inside, not moving around by oneself after dark, covering one's hair or at least many parts of one's body when in public.

[242] Rothenberg (2004: 119) writing about spirit possession in a Palestinian village says; 'Prison is an obvious and extreme problematic social space, symbolically and indeed physically aligned with places of dirt, immorality, and the presence of the jinn'.

[243] Norms for sexual behaviour and 'dating' do however vary within the Palestinian community according to locality, class, religion and gender. An upper-class male Christian living in an urban setting normally has more sexual freedom than a Muslim unmarried woman from a refugee camp.

official ideology of the Palestinian extended family envisions the relationships within the patrilineal group as those of cohesion, solidarity and mutual commitment.

A Depraved Western Society

A morally corrupt Western society was set against this idealized view of Palestinian-ness. The camp residents frequently emphasized the strong bonds in Palestinian families and seemed horrified by the bad family relations they insisted exist in the 'West'. The high divorce rates in Western countries and the fact that elderly family members stay in old people's homes were taken as proof of the depravity of Western society. Even though many people in Dheishe were comparatively used to meeting and interacting with foreigners and seldom condemned Westerners outright (at least not in front of me), many were astonished by this otherness and tended to pity people in the 'West' rather than condemn them. They did, however, emphasise the differences between Palestinian traditions and Westerners' traditions, or even the latter's lack of traditions. These views of the 'West' conform with Bornstein's (2002a: 112) reports from the more isolated northern West Bank. Traditions worked as an expression of dignity:

> One of the most powerful images generating communal identity for West Bankers was that of an immoral, promiscuous, and alienated society in the 'West'. Uncontrolled desire, immodesty of dress, pictures of naked women in films and magazines, all ubiquitous in the streets of cities in Israel, as in Europe or America, celebrated the consumption of the thin, vulnerable female body. The absence of proper custom indicated moral depravity and the breakdown of community.

Palestinians dignified their identity by projecting the 'wrong' sexual practices or gender behaviours beyond their community (*ibid.*). The sexual liberalism of the 'West' was also frequently condemned or understood as strange and incomprehensible.

The loathing of Western society, often exemplified by America, is part of a global trend that extends well beyond the Palestinian context. When this dislike goes beyond a criticism of colonialism and US policies and it transforms into a dehumanizing image of the West, it has been referred to as 'Occidentalism' (Buruma & Margalit 2004)[244]. Dabbagh (2005: 42f) puts this view of the 'West' into context; Arabs often feel defeated by and inferior to Western countries because of colonialism, the creation of Israel and the technological and democratic advances of the 'West'. In narratives that are promoted to contest the self-image of a backward, conquered

[244] Palestinian Occidentalism to some extent mirrors the Orientalism that Edward Said (1978: 2) described as 'a style of thought based on an ontological and epistemological distinction between 'the Orient' and (most of the time) 'the Occident''. In this light, the complexities of the human condition disappear and, in contrast to Western societies, 'the Orient' is portrayed as unable to change and limited by tradition and backwardness. Orientalism is unfortunately not a relic from the past, but seems to take on new meanings and is used to explain new dilemmas, such as terrorism and despotic rule in Arab countries (*cf.* Abu-Lughod 1989: 287).

people, Arabs point out that their societies at least have low crime rates, fewer social problems and flourishing customs and traditions (*i.e. âdât wa taqalîd*)[245].

When camp inhabitants talked about their place of residence they emphasized that people in the camp felt with each other or that they were like 'one hand'. Hanan, who would prefer to move out of the camp, still maintained that there were good sides to Dheishe; 'if someone dies or someone gets married [people in the camp] will be around you and come to share your sadness or your happiness'. To the camp inhabitants, community was intertwined with *empathy,* while there seemed to be a shared understanding in Palestinian society that Westerners lacked community were unable to react emotionally to others' suffering.

The Immorality of the Israelis

In the process of othering, Israelis were often portrayed as the worst kind of Westerners, although some Israelis were considered better because they expressed support for the Palestinians or came from the 'East'. Israelis from the 'East' were Arab Jews[246], which implied cultural similarity and that they were not spoiled 'Americans' (*i.e.* Israelis who had immigrated from the USA)[247]. Among others, Ahmed said that most Israelis would leave the country immediately if only they were paid, implying that the Israelis were not attached to the soil and were not properly rooted[248] but mainly cared about money. The Israeli way of life was not widely sought after by camp residents, although some of them liked aspects of it, such as the Israeli welfare system.

Also with regard to customs and behaviour Israelis were deemed immoral. Immorality was also a question of language and politeness as Abu Amir explained: '[The Israelis] are very rude. It means that [their language] is not like that among the Palestinians or in your country or…[…] I can show you respect in many ways [in Arabic]. We have this in our society. [But Israel] is a new society.' In general, Israeli behaviour was considered rude and impolite (*cf.* Peteet 1994: 42). The boundaries between Israelis and Palestinians were also confirmed by Samar who described with amazement a visit to her husband's Israeli workmate some years earlier. Even though they had

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[245] The flexibly used notions of traditional versus modern are ambiguous concepts in the Palestinian territories (Bornstein 2002a). Modernity is something that Palestinians both want and refuse. This ambivalence should be understood in relation to Israeli discourses about barbaric 'traditional' Palestinians and civilized 'modern' Israelis (*cf.* Rabinowitz 1997).

[246] Kanaaneh (2002: 157f) argues that the strict separation between Arabs and Jews as two different groups is a recent phenomenon, initiated by Zionism and continued by Palestinian nationalism. European Zionism was also concerned with essentializing Jewish identity as Western. Israel was to become a modern Western state. Jews, who originated from Arab countries, were perceived as backward, primitive, despotic *etc*.

[247] Because of US foreign policies in the region many people strongly disliked America, even though individual Americans did not seem to be met with more suspicion than other foreigners.

[248] For Israeli place-making strategies see for instance Abu El-Haj (2001) and Ben Ari & Bilu (1997).

been welcomed and invited to have coffee and sweets, Samar noted that they had not been served as is the polite way to receive guests among Palestinians, but were expected to serve themselves from the items that had been put on the table in front of them. The conclusion seemed to be that Israelis were clearly not as hospitable and generous as Palestinians.

The immorality of the Israelis was however most evident in relation to more political issues. As Lindholm (1999: 145) writes, experiences of Israeli arrogance and suspicions of an Israeli master plan to keep the occupation despite peace negotiations have also affected the outcome of macro-political processes between Israel and the Palestinians. In daily life, the beatings of Palestinian children carried out by Israeli soldiers during the first intifada evoked a sense of Palestinian community through the display of empathy by fellow Palestinians (Peteet 1994: 37f). The beatings, public or hidden, were also acts that affirmed the Israelis' lack of morality and, thereby, Palestinian moral superiority. In my work I found that the violence and deprivation the Israeli occupation implied, experienced as ongoing since *al-nakba,* were understood as immoral by definition. Events such as house demolitions that were carried out by the Israeli army while there were still people inside deeply upset people. The women in one group interview mentioned another event in the local area that indicated the immorality of Israeli soldiers:

> ***Layla*:** On TV they talked about someone who was caught at the checkpoint. [The Israeli soldiers] took him and they peed in his mouth. They forced him to drink their urine! Is there more injustice than this?
>
> ***Zaynab***: He was from Bethlehem. Did you see him? They had an interview with him on the local TV station. They [also] threw him out from the third floor. He said that he went to a family and they took him to hospital.

People in the camp sometimes related that they had tried to talk some sense into Israeli soldiers and other Israelis, trying to make them reconsider how they treated Palestinians, specifically pointing at the lack of morality the Israeli occupation created[249]. The mere questioning of Israeli behaviour along with an experienced refusal among Israeli individuals to take personal responsibility for the policies of the Israeli authorities confirmed Palestinian moral superiority. Layla recounted a visit to the home of an Israeli couple that her husband knew from his business. It brought back bad memories and made her question the Israeli man's work as a border policeman:

[249] In general, Israeli society uses notions such as 'the purity of arms' and 'an enlightened occupation' to indicate the high moral standards of Israeli soldiers (Moors 1995b).

> The woman told my husband to ask me to go inside, but I didn't want to go in. I hated them and I couldn't stand being around them, but she insisted or she wouldn't give my husband his money. So, I went in. She used to work in Al Bassa [*i.e.* an Israeli military prison], I used to see her when we were arrested after a demonstration during the first intifada. She was a secretary there. I recognized her from the minute I saw her, but I didn't say to her that she had arrested me or that she used to insult us, but no, she was good, she was [just] a secretary [*i.e.* said ironically]. So, I sat down and she brought us coffee and cola. Then her husband came, he's from the border police... Before he came the woman [warned] me so I wouldn't get scared. Then I started laughing, and she said why are you laughing? I told her that "if you bring Sharon himself I wouldn't be afraid". So he came and we started talking, but my husband didn't like it, because he doesn't like to talk politics in front of Jews. So I asked the man where he was coming from [that day] and he said Gaza. I asked him if he shoots at demonstrations, he said yes. So I asked him "how many children did you kill?" First, he stayed silent, he didn't respond. I asked him why he didn't reply. At this point my husband asked me to keep quiet, but the man said that it's ok, he's not upset and that I could talk. So I asked him again how many he had killed. He answered, "we also have to defend ourselves when they shoot at me, when there are weapons used". But I told him, "don't you know that when a child holds a stone it is still a child who wants to play".

In Layla's view this Israeli couple was morally corrupt because of their direct involvement in the occupation and they (or at least the man) did not acknowledge any personal responsibility of their acts. Camp residents would also argue that all Israelis were to blame for the occupation since most of them did their military service[250]. The monuments and pictures of Dheishean martyrs on walls in the camp were other means of displaying the Israeli lack of morality. These commemorative sites and images could be read as signs of Israeli immorality and lack of compassion as well as of Palestinian suffering.

A frequently raised issue with a Westerner like me was the undemocratic nature of the Israeli state. The question was how the 'West' could consider Israel a democracy. A woman I visited who had recently had her family's home blown up by the Israeli army held an animated lecture about the Americans, who supposedly thought Israel was the only democracy in the region. 'Is this a democracy?' she indignantly said pointing at the site that used to be her house; democracies should not carry out such violations. Earlier there has been a reported admiration for democracy *within* Israeli society among Palestinians in the occupied territories (Lindholm 1999: 150) but I did not hear any Dheishean voice such admiration, although I did not follow up on this question.

[250] The argument that Israelis as a group also benefited economically from the occupation was rarely raised.

Palestinians themselves often expressed, on the other hand, that they had a sense of how to be democratic[251]. Ahmed underlined that the neighbouring countries in the Middle East were by no means democracies and that being under occupation had made Palestinians politically aware:

> I think you agree with me, the [Arab] governments want to rule their people [in an undemocratic manner]. And they work [together] with Imperialism. They are very bad. [T]he Israelis gave something good, something in it is good. Sometimes we take the good things and sometimes we take the bad things. Our situation and our life with the Israelis made us develop. [W]e struggle because we are under occupation.

Ahmed's view captures the ambiguity of closeness to Israel and engagement in the struggle against Israel since these have been vehicles of political consciousness. Other camp residents, however, rejected the idea of any positive outcome of the occupation. Close interaction with Israelis is often considered contaminating. As the quote shows, Palestinians also positioned themselves against other Arab countries[252] that were perceived to be traitors that were governed by self-interest, which prevented them from supporting the Palestinians. As noted by Kanaaneh (2002: 160), this kind of suspicion disrupts any simple Jewish-Arab division.

Democracy also implies modernity and westernization to Palestinians. Bornstein (2002a: 101) writes that '[t]he word [democracy] was used as if it meant freedom from moral constraint, the opposite of [Palestinians'] own customs, which they described as emphasizing generosity, honor, respect, and religion.' Dalal, for instance, convinced her father to let her accept employment by saying that he was 'democratic', by which she meant that he would not mind that women were wage earners.

Despite the feminization of Palestinian men through occupation and colonialism (Katz 1996) a response among Palestinians is to view Israeli men as lacking proper manhood.

> When Israelis pursue and engage Palestinian youths, the cultural interpretation available to Palestinians is to consider the Israelis as lacking in the emotional and moral qualities of manhood. Only men of little honor and thus dubious masculinity would beat unarmed youths while they themselves are armed with and trained in the use of modern implements of warfare. […] Palestinians construe these aggressions as cowardly and immoral, rather than a challenge.
>
> (Peteet 1994: 41)

As 'men of little honour' Israelis were not as brave as Palestinians, but were cowards. In Peteet's words (*ibid.*: 42), these contrasts serve as rhetorical devices that lend meaning to the occupier's

[251] It is possible that the reasonably fair elections carried out in the occupied territories the last decade have given Palestinians certain self-confidence in relation to Israel.
[252] Palestinians in Lebanon also saw themselves as morally superior to the Lebanese (Peteet 1995: 182).

behaviour. Umm Ayman developed the theme of Israeli cowardice in relation to restricted mobility in the occupied territories:

> The first [reason for putting up checkpoints] is that [the Israelis] are well known for their cowardice and fear. And the second reason is to increase the suffering and exhaustion of the Palestinians. The third reason is to eliminate the connections between the Palestinian local party-groups and this is wrong. But it doesn't limit their connections, it increases them. They can't limit this kind of connection because the Palestinians are known for their courage. They are not afraid of things like checkpoints, so they aren't a big obstacle for these political parties. [The Israelis] believe the checkpoints provide boundaries that give them security.

Rhetorically, Umm Ayman also refused to accept that even Israeli dominance through means such as restricted mobility was an obstacle for Palestinians.

Defending Israelis

As the violence of everyday life had been partly normalized (see chapter 5), there had also been a kind of normalization of immorality. Even though the lack of morality and compassion among Israelis were frequent topics of conversation in the camp, the boundaries of normal Israeli behaviour had been extended just as those of normal life had.

Despite the frequent hostile attitudes towards the Israelis, Dheisheans sometimes defended or played down Israeli oppression and the role and responsibility of individual Israelis in the occupation. As Peteet noted (2005a: 184) when writing about similar processes between Palestinians and Lebanese, '[o]thering was neither consistent nor totalizing' and these relations were also rapidly shifting. Even Umm Ayman, who scathed Israeli cowardice and immorality above, claimed that there were some nice soldiers and the way they treated Palestinians depended on their mood. Another typical example is from an article in the Israeli newspaper Haaretz (www.haaretz.com 9th May 2006). The article recounts the shooting of a Palestinian worker who tried to get into Israel illegally. Notwithstanding that the man was seriously wounded, a Palestinian eyewitness described the Israeli soldier as 'not negligent, he was really alright in his behaviour towards Nasser [*i.e.* the wounded man]' since he gave him first aid after he and his colleagues had shot him. Despite the fact that the soldiers remained largely passive and the ambulance took two hours to arrive, the Palestinian cited in the article described the event as 'sort of ok'. Although we cannot tell whether this Palestinian eyewitness was hesitant about revealing in the press what he really thought about the Israeli soldiers, many Palestinians apparently expected nothing of the Israelis apart from oppressive behaviour or they were simply

relieved if the soldiers' behaviour was not even worse. This was a kind of acceptance of the Palestinians' own subordination.

One might argue that these examples may be understood as a way of acknowledging that Israelis are also 'ordinary people' who are not so different from Palestinians. Some people in the camp, such as Samar's husband Suleiman, who had been working for Israeli employers for many years and had therefore met many Israelis far from checkpoints and house searches, recognized more complex relations between Israelis and Palestinians. He differentiated between the Israelis he himself had worked with, who were good people, and many other Israeli employers who refused to pay Palestinian workers as they had agreed or did not ask for them if they did not need them. Others argued that Israelis were less concerned with status hierarchies than Palestinians and that they were usually quite easy-going.

Eroding Morality Due to Contamination

A 12-year-old boy entered the shady kitchen of one of my informants. He was wearing a light blue t-shirt with a text in Hebrew on it. I could not help asking if he knew that the writing was in Hebrew and if so what it said. His uncle who was present whispered something in the boy's ear. The boy looked bewildered and tore his t-shirt off. He left to find something else to wear.

*

For many Palestinians, the threat of Israel is located not only in the repressive apparatus of the state but also in risks of contamination. Douglas (2002: 5) writes that:

> […] ideas about separating, purifying, demarcating and punishing transgressions have as their main function to impose system on an inherently untidy experience. It is only by exaggerating the difference between within and without, about and below, male and female, with and against, that a semblance of order is created.

In a society such as the Palestinian, where everyday life is distinguished by uncertainty and difficulties in maintaining continuity, disorder is pronounced and in urgent need of management. Rothenberg (2004: 126f) notes that there was widespread fear among Palestinians of becoming morally contaminated through *contact and intimacy* with Israelis (*cf.* Tamari 1981: 62). The intimacy, and one could add dependence, established between Israelis and Palestinian males in prison, at work or in romantic relations with Israeli women jeopardized Palestinian morality, politically and sexually. This 'lure of foreign ways' (Rothenberg 2004) was also seen as dangerous in Dheishe. My field assistant for instance claimed that a male acquaintance was more or less morally destroyed, since he used to live with an Israeli woman on the other side of the Green Line, working and staying illegally in Israel for several years. It was also frequently voiced that drug

abuse in the occupied territories was the result of drugs being planted by the Israeli state with the help of Palestinian criminals.

As mentioned earlier, 'normalization' often implied cooperation or even collaboration with Israeli NGOs or individuals and for several of my informants this was seen as a form of contamination. It was argued that working with Israeli groups or individuals during the intifada *al-aqṣa* threatened to destroy the moral reputation of individual Palestinians, to soil their profession but also to harm the political struggle more generally. Projects such as the *West Eastern Divan Orchestra,* established by Edward Said and Daniel Barenboim and consisting of young musicians of Israeli, Palestinian and other Arab origin, has been controversial in Palestinian society and has met with much suspicion and resistance (Dagens Nyheter 8th May 2008).

Moral contamination was perceived to emanate from foreign influences on customs and everyday practices. Below, Khaled explains changes in Palestinian society as a general trend towards Westernization. These changes were not limited to the present impact of Israel and the 'West', but Khaled connected them to the profound societal changes after the flight in 1948:

> The problem is that the people get used to these kinds of things [like Western dress codes], they start to look at these issues that are far away from religion. And it becomes normal. […] Our traditions in general, the woman must wear religious clothes, this is in our religion and in our traditions. If you go to the villages south of Hebron, there are no girls who go out without a headscarf. When we were in Zakkariyya [*i.e.* his 'original' village] it was the same.
>
> By being here [in the camp], we became mixed with other societies and traditions even from the south [of Palestine] or from abroad, because some people [from the camp] went abroad and they have been influenced by Western society. […] What we like, that we got from outside, from the Westerners, is science or what they are discovering. [But] what we have received from Western society, clothes, fashion, haircuts, you know… I think what we are doing is in blindness, we don't know what we are doing.

Khaled here expressed a sense of impurity or pollution that is presumed to come from refugee-ness itself as well as from modernity and outside influences.

Some of the outside influences were thought of as coming from Palestinians who were returning from exile[253]. Khaled was not alone in his worry about returning fellow Palestinians; Hammer (2005) also notes that many locals perceived returnees in the occupied territories negatively and as foreigners or outsiders. One reason for this was differences in habits and traditions concerning anything from language skills and dress codes to eating hamburgers and not respecting elderly relatives. During my minor field study in 2000, I noted that returning

[253] Another boundary was between Palestinians in the occupied territories and those inside Israel. Although my informants did not dwell on this issue, Bornstein (2002a) argues that his West Bank informers often judged Israeli Palestinians to be morally corrupted through their more frequent and intimate relations with Israelis.

Palestinians were often described as lacking morality in relation to alcohol and sexuality. Returnees were seen as not having suffered enough because they had been spared the Israeli occupation and they were also considered to have been contaminated by living outside the homeland. Moreover, there seems to have been an interplay between the perceived immorality of returnees and the mismanagement of the Palestinian Authority; individual returnees who worked with the PA damaged its reputation with their lifestyles while the corruption and autocracy of the Authority conversely damaged the reputation of the returnees who were associated with it[254].

Questioned Work in Israel

Contact with Israelis has, however, been unavoidable at worksites. Palestinian male labour in Israel has not been uncontested during the decades of occupation but it has been legitimized with arguments about men's responsibilities as family providers and the way in which the occupation has damaged the economy of the territories (Moors 1995b). In a group interview several women argued that it was necessary.

> ***Layla*:** The [Palestinian] who doesn't work in Israel or with the PA is lost.
>
> ***Samar*:** Like my husband, we don't have any income; my husband hasn't worked for a year.
>
> ***Zaynab*:** And you think the one who works for the PA is living? He's not living [because the salary is so low].
>
> ***Samar*:** How much are the wages in the PA? They're nothing. […]
>
> ***Zaynab*:** My husband brings home 1300 NIS a month. What does that do for 6 members in a family?
>
> ***Layla*:** We don't have projects here so people can work. There are no possibilities for people to work here [in the occupied territories], this is why they must go out to work in Israel.
>
> ***Samar*:** If we don't work in Israel, this may also make people think of migrating. If people don't find work here or in Israel - how will they live?

Men have never been requested to stop working in Israel apart from a few days of strike during the first uprising. Tamari (1981) discussed the implications of Palestinian work migration to Israel for local rural communities and noted some of the advantages of working for Israeli bosses: higher wages, diversity of jobs and a more relaxed working atmosphere. Palestinians also work in settlements in the occupied territories. During the intifada *al-aqṣa*, some Palestinian men from the local area even took employment as workers on the Wall constructed by Israel. The women

[254] These perceptions probably also hide conflicts of political interests and struggles over power in local society.

quoted below claimed this was necessary because of the high unemployment rates in the West Bank.

> ***Samar***: We want the settlements to be removed, but when we go and build these settlements, we encourage them.
>
> ***Zaynab***: But for all their lives, the [Palestinians] have worked [for Israelis] in workshops in settlements and outside settlements.
>
> ***Layla***: To me, it's the same[255].
>
> ***Zaynab***: Ever since we were born we have heard that our parents, brothers, and grandparents have worked on the construction of buildings and all the projects [the Israelis] have… Who built it all? Our grandparents, fathers and brothers did.
>
> ***Samar***: Do you know that the *mufti* (*i.e.* Śeiḫ Ekrima Sa'id Sabri) said that it's *haram* [*i.e.* religiously forbidden] for the workers to construct the wall.
> […]
>
> ***Nina***: But even with that, there are people working on the wall!
>
> ***Layla***: Yes, it didn't stop them.
>
> ***Samar***: They are not Palestinians, the ones who are working, [the Israelis] brought them from outside.
>
> ***Layla***: No, they are not from outside, there are people who work from here [*i.e.* Dheishe]. Fatina's husband works with his bulldozer… They are not from outside, they are all from here.
>
> ***Zaynab***: No one can stop the wall even if they didn't work.
> […]
>
> ***Layla***: So even if we stop the workers, there is a problem with Israeli weapons. The workers are not all in one neighbourhood that you can gather and talk with and convince them not to work. If we want to stop them we have to go to where they work, and there you find so many soldiers with their weapons, so it will be difficult to stop them.
> […]
>
> ***Zaynab***: Hold on, the worker would say I'm ready to stop working on constructing the wall - give me an alternative opportunity to work…
>
> ***Samar***: True.
>
> ***Zaynab***: …so that I can stop working on the wall.
>
> ***Samar***: But also, if I don't stop by myself, when I know that what I'm doing is wrong… If all [the Prophet] Mohammad's people come and tell me that this is wrong and I'm convinced it's not wrong, it's impossible to stop.
>
> ***Zaynab***: But if you work for Arab employers you will be very humiliated.

[255] Many Palestinians do not distinguish between work inside Israel and in the territories, since it is all originally Palestinian land (*cf.* Gren 2007). Layla probably referred to this line of thought.

> ***Layla***: You have two solutions to stop the workers. Firstly, to convince them to stop and give them alternatives and secondly, to show resistance, to go there [at the site of construction] and start throwing stones, and to throw stones means soldiers will shoot back.
>
> ***Samar***: And who told you that those working on the wall were not shot at? They have been shot at with live ammunition, the Palestinian resistance shot at them and they [still] didn't stop. If I myself don't stop, nothing will stop me.

Not even religious prohibitions or shootings could apparently stop some from working on the Wall. Samar also seemed ashamed to acknowledge that some of those workers actually lived in the camp. Work at these problematic sites (*i.e.* in settlements and on the Wall) remained an insoluble problem, despite the fact that it worked against the Palestinian wish to establish an independent state.

In Palestinian national discourse, women's work in Israel has been much more controversial than male labour. At the beginning of the first intifada, local political activists strongly discouraged women from working across the Green Line, advising them to work in the occupied territories instead. Many women were warned personally and some were also attacked physically (Moors 1995b). This was still an issue for some in the camp. Huda felt alarmed about the many women working in Israel and the accompanying risks of contamination and moral corruption:

> Women are working more than before. Many women go to work in Israeli factories[256]. And I don't know if I like it but they have to do that to provide for their families. I wouldn't like to do this job. It's about the dignity of women (*karâmat al-mara*). […] I know that there are no other possibilities for these people than to go to work there, but especially for women it's exhausting. I don't know, maybe people who are working there would get upset but I don't like it, this is my personal opinion.

As Moors writes, it has in general been considered shameful for women to work in Israel, although many women have done so since the occupation in 1967 opened the borders and made the Israeli labour market accessible to Palestinians: '[W]omen were perceived as to have less of an excuse than men to go and work there (as only men are, after all, obliged to provide for their families), and because they were seen as putting themselves into greater moral danger' (Moors 1995b: 31). Moors (*ibid.*) also refers to the shame one of her female informants felt when going to work in Israel. For women, work in Israel jeopardized their reputations as honourable women since they were beyond the control of their families and neighbourhoods. As if to hide these moral flaws, I heard several people say of particular Dheishean women who commuted to

[256] According to Huda, and this is also my own impression, most of these female workers did not have permits to work in Israel, but worked there illegally.

Jerusalem were not working for the Israelis, but for Christian churches. Although I had no possibility of checking where they worked, I nevertheless found these local claims that they were working for someone less morally contaminating than an Israeli telling. One of my female informants was employed in East Jerusalem at a hospital for Palestinian patients with Palestinian staff. She also had a work permit and I never heard anyone question her employment there. Her job was not seen to be risky since she was working among Palestinians.

Unlike men, Palestinian women are viewed as carriers of tradition and continuity (*cf.* Tamari 1981: 62) and they occupy a special place in the Palestinian national endeavour. The Palestinian Declaration of Independence[257] from 1988 for instance says; 'We render special tribute to that brave Palestinian Woman, guardian of sustenance and Life, keeper of our people's perennial flame.' As 'mothers of the nation' (Kanaaneh 2002: 65f), women transmit Palestinian values and tradition to their children. Women are made to stand for lost villages, the land and the nation (Slyomovics 1998: 208; Katz 1996). Female labour in Israel therefore also threatens to contaminate their symbolic force in the nationalist imagery.

In sum, working in Israel continued to smack of moral ambiguity and implies dependence and necessity. Being able to provide for one's family was also a highly valued norm especially for men and this was often seen as more important than keeping one's distance from the Israelis. One of my younger informants, Rami, noted, however, that it was pointless to refuse to deal with the Israelis or to boycott Israelis products since the very tap water he drank and the electricity he used came through Israeli networks. Dependence on Israelis made it impossible to uphold strict boundaries against them.

Moral Flaws of Dheishe

However, although camp residents often positioned themselves as morally superior to others, they were also deeply concerned about the lack of morality in their own community. Elderly refugees, however, complained about the present in slightly different ways from the younger generation. For the elderly, life had also been contaminated by consumerism and greed and they said that village ideal of generosity had been weakened. Abu Akram, who was in his seventies said:

> There are people who if they have things, they won't give to anyone. It depends on what you have inside. Life is money. In all nations, life is money. There is no dignity. There is only money. If you have money, you're always welcome. If not… Money is

[257] The Palestinian Declaration of Independence was adopted in Algiers 15th of November 1988 by the Palestinian National Council.

> the main thing in life. Money is necessary, [but] it is about not becoming a slave to money. To live in a good position and to feel with others. To feel with others.
>
> [Later in the interview:] People have changed here in the camp. […] How they treat each other, their mentalities have changed. The things they used to like in the past, they don't like anymore.

There was a sense that community in the camp was eroding; life had been better before - before this intifada, during the first uprising, before the flight.

Apart from accounts such as these and the frequent fear of collaborators (who were by definition immoral), the doubts about the morality of fellow camp inhabitants and other actors in the local community were expressed through moral narratives. These stories seemed to prosper as a way of handling contamination or the fear of it. There were narratives about infidelity, prostitution or a girl losing her chastity, about greed or unwillingness to help relatives out economically, about drug abuse or crime[258]. These were stories about the moral failures of people who belonged to the same circle. The stories of collaborators that were discussed earlier often contained several kinds of breakdown; collaborators were not only said to inform about the political activities of fellow Palestinians but they were also described as drug dealers or car thieves or as being sexually loose (*cf.* Moors 1995b: 31). Contrary to the Lebanese camp described by Peteet (2005a: 186), such moral flaws were not talked about in hushed tones but were elaborated upon. The camp was not as morally proper as it should be; it was garbage, trash, *i.e. 'zbâle al-muḥayyam',* as Taysir said. Also, the political situation or the 'world' in general was described as completely broken, *i.e. 'al-dinya ḫarbâne'*. Some said Palestinian society needed to be cleaned and by this they were referring to the corruption and bad management of the Palestinian Authority as well as to collaborators.

This immorality was often blamed on outsiders or on those Palestinians who had been in too much contact with the outside world. It was thus when the boundaries between the community and others were trespassed that immorality flourished. It is likely that the fear of contact with and contamination from others hide a deeper concern with dependence and humiliation in Palestinian society.

Gendering Political Morality

There was a gendered political morality in Dheishe that concerned whether and how men and women were to be politically involved. Gender and age determined which political action against Israel was possible for a given individual. However, it was often impossible to take appropriate

[258] Like in most places of the world, Dheishe had its share of social problems such as theft, drug abuse, rapes and domestic violence. Here these problems were not overlooked, but on the contrary focused on and often discussed.

action anyhow and this created a further sense of moral failure and emergency. I am grateful here to Penny Johnson's (2003) observations of the crisis of motherhood and fatherhood that has been prompted by the second intifada.

The Crisis of Political Motherhood

In the Dheishean context, a moral woman was ideally also supposed to have engaged in political activities during the first intifada. The early phase of the first intifada had offered a special opportunity for women to expand their gender roles by participating in the uprising (*e.g.* Augustin 1993; Sabbagh 1998). Women's participation seems to have been largely informal and often quite spontaneous; many female activists constituted 'emergency activists', whose political involvement would no longer be required when independence had been won (Strum 1998: 63). Their activism was often built on Palestinian motherhood; being a good mother who educates and cares for one's children is to be a good Palestinian female nationalist. The ideal Palestinian woman sacrifices for her children as well as for her country and this may mean sacrificing her children for her country (Gren 2001). In Palestinian collective memory of the first intifada, for instance as told in the legends that Kanaana has analysed (1998: 123), heroic deeds were most often carried out by courageous women who saved male youngsters from the Israeli army. Peteet (1994) also describes how women witnessed and engaged in street battles with Israeli soldiers in ways that revealed the soldiers' immorality. Peteet sees these street fights as a moral reconstruction; witnessing violence and interfering in arrests was a way of reconstituting the female self by caring for and protecting children in a sort of extended motherhood (just as men reconstitute their moral self by enduring violence in prison, see below).

The militarization of the Palestinian struggle during the intifada *al-aqṣa* has meant that popular participation for instance by women in struggles with soldiers has become too dangerous. Rami told me a story about events from the year before my fieldwork. His aunt, who was in her 60s, and some of her female neighbours had tried to save a mortally wounded young man during an army incursion. This woman had been involved in numerous similar actions in the first intifada. This time, however, as the middle-aged and elderly women rushed towards the soldiers, who were standing beside the dying man, they were met by live bullets and were forced to retreat. The extended motherhood that had been so culturally celebrated was no longer possible.

Instead, women in Dheishe concentrated on keeping their children at home, out of danger (*cf.* Johnson 2003)[259]. When there were Israeli soldiers by the entrance of the camp, Huda rushed out to look for her 11-year-old son who was trying to throw stones at Israeli army jeeps. Umm Ayman recounted how she tried to keep her teenage children, especially her sons, at home when the situation was aggravated. The partially offensive street action that camp women had previously engaged in had been replaced by a completely defensive position. Women like Layla and Samar had also participated in the first intifada when they were unmarried teenage girls. Now, though, as adult, married women, they did not want to risk arrest or injury.

> ***Layla*:** I used to go to all the demonstrations. It's only recently I stopped going as I said [earlier in the interview] because I'm afraid of others and people don't trust one another. There were many things that I took part in, like *dabke* [*i.e.* folk dance], demonstrations and I brought food for people during the invasions, for the people who were isolated with bullets raining down on us. We used to go to the mountains [during the first uprising]… […]
>
> ***Samar*:** I received a container with my name on to deliver to the camp [in the first intifada] and the camp knows [about it].
>
> ***Layla*:** Wanted men - [both of us] used to help them in the early morning to escape from the camp during the rain. We used to take them to Bayt Jala. […] Life changes. Now we are married. I have a husband and children. My life is not my own.

If they had been married during the first uprising they would most likely have engaged in street fights with Israeli soldiers to protect their own and others' children. At this stage of the Palestinian struggle, this kind of political participation was no longer an option.

Crisis of Fatherhood

Maybe even more alarming to Dheisheans was the crisis of fatherhood (*cf.* Johnson 2003). Peteet (1994: 34) sums up Palestinian masculinity[260] as part of Arab cultural patterns but also as constructed in a certain political situation:

> Arab masculinity (*rujulah*) is acquired, verified, and played out in the brave deed, in risk-taking, and in expressions of fearlessness and assertiveness. It is attained by constant vigiliance and willingness to defend honor (*sharaf*), face (*wajh*), kin, and community from external aggression and to uphold and protect cultural definitions of gender-specific propriety.
>
> The [Israeli] occupation has seriously diminished those realms of practice that allow one to engage in, display, and affirm masculinity in autonomous actions.

[259] These attempts to keep children at home are not new (*cf.* Peteet 1994: 37). The difference seems to be that it became more or less the only way for mothers to react.

[260] Compared to the amount of research that has been carried out on Palestinian women and female gender, Palestinian masculinity is under-investigated.

> Frequent witnesses to their fathers' beatings by soldiers or settlers, children are acutely aware of their fathers' inability to protect themselves and their children.
>
> Manliness is also closely intertwined with virility and paternity, and with paternity's attendant sacrifices. Denying one's own needs while providing for others is such a signifier.

At the time of my fieldwork it seemed virtually impossible for grown up men to display fearlessness *vis-à-vis* the Israelis so married fathers in particular stressed their moral identity primarily as providers for their families. For instance, Baxter (2007) describes the many obligations and responsibilities Palestinian men have towards their family members, especially their female ones.

This may explain the somewhat half-hearted reactions to Palestinian men's work in Israel or in the Israeli settlements. Although the Palestinian religious leadership has protested against this kind of activity, a Palestinian man is nevertheless expected to provide for his family, so even participating in building the wall may be seen as necessary. By helping to build the wall, a man could remain a moral father and husband, although he was a poor nationalist. Many of those I spoke to argued that they risked their lives to meet the everyday needs of their families. If they were forced to choose, many prioritized the role of family provider. Some of those who did not choose this remained unmarried, like Taysir, whose struggle to finish his apartment was described in chapter 6.

One man I interviewed in Dheishe had managed neither to protect his son from imprisonment nor to provide for his family, which his wife did instead by commuting to a job inside Israel. According to others, he had been a successful building contractor in Israel before the outbreak of the new uprising. Now he just stayed at home or went to the coffee shop that presumably also sold illicit liquor, judging from the smell of alcohol that surrounded him. In interview he told me: 'Before we used to fight [the Israelis]. They used to beat us, we beat them and still we had a good [economic] situation. We used to throw stones at night and go to work [in Israel] in the morning. I'm one of those who gave up [the struggle].'

It has been reported that domestic violence has increased in Palestinian families during the intifada *al-aqṣa*. Although it is difficult to judge the accuracy of these claims, increases in domestic violence have been related to three factors concerning Palestinian masculinity; men's loss of their breadwinning role due to unemployment; humiliations experienced by men at encounters with the Israeli army and the increased temptation to take out frustrations on family members since unemployed men are stranded at home for extended periods of time (Human Rights Watch 2006: 36).

Palestinian manhood is also related to political violence and oppression, especially for younger men. Male youth (*śebâb*) are ideally fearless fighters and they may achieve manhood by enduring public beatings by Israeli soldiers or imprisonment. Masculinity is also related to suffering. Mustafa remembered when his father had visited him in jail years earlier to encourage his son 'to be a man!' With tears in his eyes, Abu Mustafa had raised his shirt to show his son the scars on his own body that came from torture in Israeli prison years earlier. Mustafa's story shows how masculinity through endurance of suffering may literally be transmitted down the generations.

As objects of violence both through public beatings and in prison during the first uprising, young Palestinian males acquired masculine and revolutionary credentials that transformed age hierarchies and to an extent also class hierarchies since the politically active urban elite had been less exposed to Israeli violence (Peteet 1994). Although they have no traditional authority, young men who have been released from prison may be chosen as mediators on the basis of the politically acquired authority.

Suffering and struggle did not, however, offer straight paths to masculinity. A person who had been in prison might, for instance, be suspected of collaboration or of having been 'emasculated'. Rapes or threats of rape and other sexual harassments in Israeli detention form part of this 'de-masculinization'. Writing in the mid-1990s, Peteet noted that her argument that Palestinians could reclaim agency and meaning by interpreting Israeli violence as rites of passages to manhood was already eroding. 'Sexual forms of interrogation deprive young men of claims to manhood and masculinity. One cannot return from prison and describe forms of torture that violate the most intimate realm of gendered selfhood' (*ibid.*: 45). People in the camp did of course understand that prison experiences were difficult and sad. I was told that older, more experienced men informed their younger relatives or friends about how to behave during investigation so I asked a teenage boy whether he had heard stories that would help him if he was arrested. The boy looked excited, possibly thinking that 'yeah, that would be cool, I would be able to handle an arrest'. His uncle, who was also present, slowly shook his head in doubt and said to the boy '*yah ḥabîbi!*' (*i.e.* 'oh my dear').

This chapter has shown how moral boundary-making tends to become accentuated at times of experienced threat. In this case, the camp inhabitants were positioning themselves as the opposite of both Westerners and Israelis, by stressing their proper conduct and through the telling of different kinds of moral narratives. Sometimes they also distinguished themselves from other Arabs in ways that recalled the pattern of whom to trust, which was discussed in chapter 5. They tried to establish clear boundaries between themselves and others by talking about the

moral faults of those who were not considered part of 'us' in their process of othering. Dheisheans strove for 'democracy' and 'modernity' but simultaneously associated these with 'the depraved West', Israeli state building and identity formation and, ironically, with their own subordination. However, my informants not only claimed that Palestinians were morally superior, but they also expressed alarm about their own decaying morality and the difficulties of upholding a moral order under pressure.

10. The Making of Martyrs

So far, I have focused on everyday life rather than 'spectacular' violence. This chapter, however, concerns Palestinian martyrs. As we saw in chapter 5, Palestinian deaths had to some extent become normalized. But such naturalization had limits and Palestinians have historically made sense of fatalities by interpreting them as politically meaningful. They have a number of ways of symbolically marking those killed as martyrs.

In the occupied territories, whether they are political activists or not, people who die in the notorious suicide bombings as well as those who are killed by the Israelis are considered martyrs. The majority of Palestinian martyrs are thus not suicide bombers, most of them are unarmed and many are not even involved in political activities. Suicide bombing, with its dramatic effects, nevertheless dominates in reports in the global media and this makes a large part of the international audience believe that Palestinian martyrdom is equal to suicide bombings and attempts to kill Israelis. In reality, though, suicide bombers represent a very small proportion of the martyrs[261] and they are also a recent phenomenon, starting in 1994. Initially, the Palestinian public was unanimously opposed to the idea of attacking Israeli civilians (Seitz 2006: 115). Nevertheless, suicide bombings have sometimes gained considerable support during the intifada *al-aqṣa*, though my field material shows that they continue to be questioned. Martyrdom is thus primarily about dying, not about killing others.

This chapter discusses collective understandings of martyrs in Dheishe[262]. Firstly, it focuses on the accentuation of violent death, by glorifying martyrdom, resistance, sacrifice and through an *illusio* of violence. Secondly, it outlines the complexities of the social making of martyrs. Dheisheans succeeded to some extent in turning losses into gains but this transformation process was complicated by a number of obstacles. There was, for instance, a need to constantly reaffirm the authenticity and intent of martyrs and to distinguish between different degrees of martyrdom. Thirdly, this chapter discusses the dilemmas associated with martyrdom. Suicide bombers were particularly morally troubling because they undermined the Palestinian moral superiority that was discussed in the previous chapter.

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[261] During the four first years of the intifada *al-aqṣa* 112 suicide bombings were committed, compared to the 3,275 Palestinians killed by Israel (including 173 women and 139 children under 12) (Palestinian Red Crescent in Fassin 2008: 541).

[262] Some recent research on martyrs in the Israeli-Palestinian context has focused on the various motives of individual suicide bombers (Allen 2002; Hasso 2005a; Hage 2003). In this chapter, I build on my ethnographic field material, which does not include any individuals who tried to carry out attacks. My concern here is not to try to examine the motives of individual Palestinians for carrying out attacks (they were probably several), but to elucidate the significance of martyrs in the local moral discourse and in the daily life of Dheisheans.

Dheishean Martyr Terminology

In daily conversation in the camp, the word for martyr *śahîd* (*shuhada* in plural) was used in a broad sense to include civilians, unarmed activists who were killed by Israelis and those who killed themselves when attacking Israelis. When I asked people to tell me a story about a martyr using the word *śahîd*, I never knew what kind of martyr my informant would choose to talk about. It might be a story about a child who was killed by Israeli shelling, or a stone-thrower who had been shot or a suicide bomber who had blown himself up.

Although suicide bombers are often included in a wide range of lost ones, there was also a frequently used local term for them, *istaśahidîn* (*istaśahid,* singular). This word literally translates as 'those who kill themselves in a martyr's death'. Many also talked about a suicide bombing as a martyrdom operation or *amaliyye istiśâdiyye*.

To avoid disrupting the text with too many local terms, I will use the English word *martyrs* when referring to the general category *shuhada*, but *martyrdom operation* and sometimes *suicide bomber* or *istaśahidîn* to describe the act and persons who intended to hurt Israelis by carrying bombs attached to their bodies. I am, however, aware that some would claim that the English term 'suicide bomber' has been misinterpreted in international media and that this is not a suicidal act[263]. This is nonetheless a term that adequately describes a person who carries out the act of blowing himself up without calling it 'terrorism' or for that matter 'resistance'.

Accentuating Violent Death

It was late March and the weather was chilly and grey. We stood by the women's entrance to a mosque in Dheishe, Umm Mustafa and I, waiting for a funeral procession to start. Umm Mustafa had found a female friend of hers and they were chatting quietly. The day before, four people had been shot to death by Israeli soldiers in central Bethlehem and one of them was going to be buried this day. The killings had taken place close to the house where I stayed during my first visit to Palestine in 2000. As soon as the news about the shooting had been shown, as was usual, in a subtitle on the local news station, I had called my former landlady. Not surprisingly, the line was busy, but when I finally got through my landlady could confirm that she was unharmed although a bit shaken since 'we haven't had any shooting right outside the house for a couple of months now', she explained.

Among the four dead Palestinians, there was a young Christian girl of 12 years. Her father had also been seriously injured but later recovered. It remained unclear why the girl and her family had been shot at. Two of the three other martyrs, who were all Muslim men, were understood to be political activists by local Palestinians and

[263] For instance, Strenski (2003) has suggested 'human bombers' as a more neutral designation, but this term has not become popular.

they seemed to have been the target of the Israeli operation[264]*. The third dead man was considered a non-fighter locally and he had probably just been unlucky to be in the company of the wanted men when the Israeli soldiers showed up to assassinate them. According to my former landlady, who had run out onto the balcony at the sound of guns, after the shooting the Israeli soldiers had prevented the Palestinian ambulances from reaching the wounded. This was a common story I was told. While I was still talking to my landlady we both noticed that the firing was still going on. 'I don't understand why they are still shooting', she said quietly.*

This day in Dheishe, one of the Muslim men was going to be followed to the graveyard in a masîrat iś-śahîd *i.e. funeral procession of a martyr. Both some local and international journalists and cameramen were waiting for the martyr along with the rest of us, the media representatives had placed themselves on a wall to a courtyard to get a better overview. Suddenly, the mass of people started to move slowly, some men were coming out from the mosque carrying the martyr on their shoulders. The dead body was wrapped in a Palestinian flag. To my relief his face was covered unlike the pictures I had seen on TV from martyrs' funerals. Contrary to how corpses are usually treated according to Palestinian custom, a martyr is not washed before the funeral since his or her blood is said to wash the body*[265]*. Women do not normally join in funeral processions for others than martyrs. Among the mass of people who moved up the hill of the camp there were, however, also women although we waited until most people had passed and then joined the end of the procession. The unwashed body that is wrapped in a Palestinian flag (or sometimes an Islamic flag), the presence of women and the flower decorations distinguish a martyr's funeral procession from other funerals. Martyrs' funerals are also frequently turned into political manifestations (Jean-Klein 1997). This political aspect of the funerals is probably the reason why the Israeli army often refrains from (or sets special conditions for) returning a dead person's body to his or her family (Bowman 2001).*

When the women started to move I tried to keep pace with Umm Mustafa, who, despite her age, walked surprisingly fast. Later on some young girls whom I knew from a youth organization in the camp joined me. There were hundreds of people in the procession and as we walked up the camp I felt rage and grief mixed with a sense of empowerment. When I later asked Umm Mustafa if she had felt the same mixture of emotions, she cast a surprised glance at me and said 'of course'.

*We walked all the way through the camp and continued down towards the village of Artas. The procession ended at a place outside the camp called the martyrs' graveyard (*al maqbarat al śuhadâ'*). The martyrs' graveyard had been constructed at the beginning of the intifada* al-aqṣa*, when it had been judged too dangerous to carry out funeral processions to the usual graveyard in Bethlehem, which is close to an Israeli army post at Rachel's*

[264] This Israeli strategy of so-called targeted assassinations (or, more accurately, extra-judicial executions) has been widely employed during the intifada *al-aqṣa*, but is not a new phenomenon.
[265] Not washing the corpses of a martyr alludes to a Hadith, which says that someone killed in *jihâd* will be washed from his sins by the first drop of blood (Fastén 2003).

tomb. When we women finally reached the martyrs' graveyard the ceremony was already over and people began hurrying back to get inside in the chilly weather. Umm Mustafa and I then returned to the alleys of the camp.

*

Martyrs are ever present in daily life in Dheishe through such public funerals and in many other ways. If anyone was to forget them, there is a huge sandstone monument by the camp's main entrance in the form of a map of Palestine prior to 1948. It is called *ṣarḥ al-śahîd*, literally the martyr's release, and was erected to commemorate those who died in the 1990s. At the other end of the camp, as described above, there is the martyrs' graveyard. These two places related to martyrs close in and mark off the camp from its surroundings, underlining the refugees' understanding of the camp as a place of suffering, struggle and loss.

Martyrs were also a part of life because so many Dheisheans had been killed in political violence over the years (see chapter 2). Even without looking for informants who were relatives of martyrs, I still often met people who had a martyred family member. During the intifada *al-aqṣa* alone some 25 persons from the camp had reportedly been killed, including 7 people who had carried out suicide bombings. In Dheishe, one's daily routine would not necessarily be shaken by hearing of yet another death; at least not if it was an unknown person in another local area. In relation to martyrs, Allen (2008: 465) has noted that martyr posters with their 'predictable repetitiveness […] visually subsume[d] each individual death into the common stream of intifada martyrdom, only add[ing] to their normalcy'. As people in Dheishe would say death was *'âdi* (normal).

At the same time as death was normalized, it was also accentuated. Stories and practices concerning martyrdom were ways of handling violent death by giving it multiple meanings. Reinterpreting events in order to give them a higher purpose may promote resilience among people who live under harsh conditions. 'Even the most unbearable events can be described as "not so bad after all" or as something that will lead to positive change in the end' (Scheper-Hughes 2008: 44). Scheper-Hughes relates how a Brazilian father of a three-year-old girl, who died from malnutrition and pneumonia alone at home while her parents had gone dancing, concluded that 'perhaps Mercea died to bring us to our senses, to make us a united family again' (*ibid.*). In Dheishe, violent deaths of loved ones were not completely in vain because they were symbolically marked and interpreted as patriotic gains, either when the martyr was a civilian or when he or she had taken part of more organized resistance. Fatalities were moreover rendered intelligible and meaningful through a politico-religious discourse on martyrdom and calls for armed resistance.

> [These Palestinians] were not killed; they were martyred. […] One who gets killed, his life is ended without him having done anything in his life, while a martyr dies defending his country. He goes to the highest level in Paradise. […] God finds a martyr with strong will, so when he dies he will not be scared. God gives the honour of martyrdom to someone who prays to be a martyr. […] First, the martyr is better than all of us. A martyr who sacrifices his life is better than someone who prays and fasts and stays in his home; he doesn't sacrifice. No one will be sad for someone who died for his country.

When asked to tell a story about some Palestinian who had been *killed*, Ziad, a 15-year-old boy, corrected my field assistant as shown above[266]. Ziad's words display common notions of glorified martyrdom, which include connotations of nationalism, religion and sacrifice. Such notions helped make sense of Palestinian deaths.

In Palestinian nationalism, there is a strong rhetorical discourse about martyrdom (*cf.* Jean-Klein 1997; Khalili 2007). Martyrs are seen as political heroes who sacrifice their lives for the nation. As underlined by Benedict Anderson (1983), dying for one's country is commonly treasured within nationalism and is definitely not unique to the Palestinian case. All Palestinian political parties have used martyr rhetoric to fuel resistance. It was, however, not until the 1990s that the *śahîd* concept became flavoured by political Islamist discourses (Lindholm 2003a: 129). One example of this rhetoric that calls for revenge for lost ones is from the following Hamas communiqé during the first uprising: '[T]he blood of our martyrs shall not be forgotten. Every drop of blood shall become a Molotov Cocktail, a time bomb, and a roadside charge that will rip out the intestines of the Jews' (quoted in Mishal & Aharoni 1994: 202 in Khalili 2007: 197).

There is also a long tradition in Palestinian society of celebrating martyrs that goes back to the Palestinian peasant revolt during the 1930s (Swedenburg 2003: 107f). Also during the first intifada, the locally based nationalist leadership emphasized the significance of martyrs by proclaiming strike days as a gesture of mourning of the most recent martyrs (Khalili 2007; Jean-Klein 1997: 87). At the time, popular rhetoric compared a martyr's funeral to a 'nationalist or patriotic wedding' (*a'râs waṭaniyye*), the martyr being equivalent to the bride who married the land, *i.e.* the groom[267] (*ibid.*). To Jean-Klein's informants, the march that accompanies the martyr to the grave was associated with a wedding procession ideally involving hundreds of people, although the Israeli authorities often disrupted or put obstacles in the way of the correct

[266] Later on in the interview, Ziad also acknowledged that there were other ways to sacrifice for the Palestinian cause, for instance by helping one's people as a medical doctor.
[267] The homeland is normally described as a female in Palestinian nationalism, in the 'nationalist wedding' described above there was an inversion of gender symbolism.

performance of this practice. The image of the 'nationalist wedding' provided an example of how different key symbols (Ortner 1973) can 'feed each other with meaning'; the cultural and political significance of the wedding reinforces the importance of martyrdom (*cf.* chapter 6). However, none of my informants compared the funerals of martyrs to weddings. It seemed as if this kind of metaphor had lost its importance.

Apart from its nationalistic dimension, martyrdom also carries religious connotations. An overwhelming majority of the Palestinians in the occupied territories are Sunni Muslims and most are to some extent actively religious (Dabbagh 2005: 19). As Dabbagh writes about contemporary views on martyrdom in Arab countries more generally '[d]ying for the sake of others, particularly other Muslims, is greatly respected and admired'(*ibid.*: 44), a statement that fits neatly into the Palestinian discourse[268]. Although Christian Palestinians have been martyred over the years[269], the discourse about martyrdom is highly influenced by Sunni Muslim beliefs.

A Palestinian martyr is thought to be rewarded after death, as Dabbagh (2005: 30f) explains:

> Martyrdom is considered to be the sacrifice of life in the service of Allah, usually as part of the struggle for God's cause, jihad. The rewards for the martyr are many. […] Having given up his life for God, a martyr is not judged as an ordinary human, but all his sins are forgiven by the very act of martyrdom. […] Several times the Quran says that martyrs should not be thought of as dead, but living.

In this Muslim context, it is not without significance that the earliest known use of the term *śahîd* was by the Prophet Muhammed at the battle known as *Badr* (Kanaana 2005: 190). In the preparation of this battle the Prophet promised those who joined him that they would be martyrs and therefore guaranteed an entrance to heaven. Both the Koran and Hadith collections (*i.e.* the Prophet's sayings and stories about his life) promise the martyr a place in paradise.

As noted by the Palestinian anthropologist Kanaana (*ibid.*), martyrs are understood to only emerge in *jihâd*, which is often inadequately translated as holy war, although it also carries a more spiritual meaning[270]. As interpreted by Kanaana, such war must be both defensive and serve God's will to qualify as a true *jihâd*. It has been argued that a 'true' martyr is a Muslim who dies in a true *jihâd* and whose only motive is to serve the will of God (*ibid.*: 187). The struggle against Israeli occupation needs to be defined as *jihâd* for defensive purposes and as according to God's will; this went without saying in the camp. As long as someone who was killed by violence related

[268] This ideal of doing things for others to the extent of sometimes neglecting oneself is also present in daily life; a decent Palestinian is expected to act towards others in this way.
[269] To my knowledge, there have been no Christian suicide bombers in Palestine.
[270] In its primary meaning *jihâd* means 'exertion' or 'struggle'. It is sometimes also translated as 'to strive'. Although *jihâd* is a collective obligation for Muslims, it may be undertaken in many ways; 'by his heart; by his tongue; by his hands; and by the sword' (Ruthven 1997: 116).

to the struggle against Israel had the right *intention* he or she was generally considered an authentic martyr; as we will see, Dheisheans often discussed and questioned whether specific martyrs had the right intentions or not.

The Armed Struggle and the Emergence of Suicide Bombings

Violent resistance in different forms can be a means of dealing with oppression. Historically, and maybe most notably in Lebanon, the Palestinian armed struggle was supposedly carried out by *fidâ'iyyîn*, *i.e.* guerrilla fighters, attacking Israeli targets. During the first intifada, the leaders and participants from the occupied territories broke with PLO's strategy of an armed struggle and promoted mass mobilization as their primary method. The more violent resistance was handed over to the young stone-throwers. '[T]he iconic figure of a young guerrilla fighter, armed and ready to do battle, was replaced with the equally iconic stonethrower, his face covered in the *keffiyeh* [*i.e.* the famous white and black checked scarf], sometimes carrying a 'sling and a stone, like David", Khalili (2007: 196) notes. The typical martyr during the first uprising was thus often a youngster who had thrown stones - at least this is how it is remembered today. As was described in chapter 3, the first Palestinian suicide bomber was sent by Hamas as a response to an Israeli settler's attack on praying Palestinians in Hebron during the Oslo years. When the intifada *al-aqṣa* erupted in 2000, there was also a re-emergence of the armed struggle; the use of suicide bombers intensified along with other military operations such as attacks on Israeli checkpoints, exchange of fire between Palestinian militia and Israeli settlers and the launching of homemade rockets. In this heavily militarized uprising, suicide bombers became part of the much wider category of celebrated martyrs.

Among Palestinians in the occupied territories during the intifada *al-aqṣa*, there was general agreement that violence in the form of an armed struggle was justified and necessary to overcome Israeli domination and to gain independence[271]. However, many people in Dheishe reasoned somewhat ambivalently way about militarized resistance. Layla, who was against the martyrdom operations, explained as follows:

> To me, the martyrdom operations or any [military] resistance are our only hope to scare the Jewish people and force them to leave our country, because this is the only choice we have. But at the same time for us as Muslims even if we resist and throw stones we can't go back [to our villages] until we stand together. Islam will return to what it once was, people will become like one hand, there will be no collaborators and no traitors, when we all love our country and when we all resist. So it's not only

[271] A public opinion poll released in January 2001 by the Jerusalem Media and Communications Center (JMCC) reveals that 70 per cent of women and 74 per cent of men approve of Palestinian military operations as a suitable response to Israeli aggression (Johnson 2003).

> the martyrdom operations, but also our love for our country and our love for each other that will lead us to return and force the Jews to leave our land.

An armed struggle can be carried out in a number of ways and was for most people thought necessary to overcome the enemy but insufficient to achieve political goals. Layla added that there was a need for Palestinian unity and a religious and patriotic awakening.

The local view of martyrdom operations in the camp was also influenced by competing discourses among the Palestinian political leadership and elite. Arafat and his party Fateh seemed to spread a message of double moral standards. Walid and his friend Ali thought of it as an act close to betrayal: '[…] Arafat said that we are going to Jerusalem as millions of martyrs. [But w]henever there is a martyrdom operation in Jerusalem [Arafat] is the first one to condemn it. And he says that we are against these things', Walid said. His friend Ali continued to explain that the PA encouraged resistance but when they knew of Palestinians who planned to attack Israeli targets they arrested them. 'It's orders from the Israelis', Ali said. Officially, the discourse in favour of martyrdom operations was mostly maintained by the Islamic parties at the national level. For instance, cited at a main Israeli newspaper's website, the Islamic Jihad's spokesman Abu Ahmed legitimated a suicide attack in Tel Aviv a day earlier by saying: 'This is a legitimate attack by all the international laws and conventions, as well as religious rules, and no one can condemn this act of resistance' (Haaretz 2006-04-18). The divide between Islamists and PLO-connected parties was not always as clear as it might seem here. It is, however, beyond doubt that suicide bombers were much debated in Palestinian society during my fieldwork and a letter of protest against the use of them was published and signed by leading Palestinian intellectuals and political actors in late 2002 (Khalili 2007; Allen 2002). Religious authorities also took different stands on this issue (*e.g.* Larzillière 2001: 938).

Death as a Release from Life

As we have seen in earlier chapters, hope in a Palestinian context was sometimes even extended beyond death, to paradise. During the intifada *al-aqṣa,* when channels of agency were considerably restricted, the only chance for some to obtain a better life seemed to be in afterlife (*cf.* Hage 2003).

> ***Field assistant***: Isn't it sad that young people go to blow themselves up? Maybe he has a chance to get an education, to get a life.
>
> ***Mounsir***: That's possible but you have to ask yourself why this young person goes to do this. You will find out that most of his family has been killed. With all respect, what do you want from this guy?

> ***Walid*:** There is also something else; to believe in God. There is a heaven. Since [the suicide bomber] believes that he will die one day, he will not live forever, death is not his decision. If God doesn't want that, the soldiers will capture him [before the explosion]. If I want to kill myself, I will anyway. God knows when this person will die. Most of the people who get killed [are] from the Palestinians, [for example] a little child who goes in a car and [the Israelis] attack them by plane.

Also Umm Ayman, who like many camp inhabitants had a fatalistic view of events, said that 'their souls are telling them that they will be martyrs'; death was already decided. Death thus happened according to a divine plan also when related to martyrdom operations. The religiously influenced discourse on martyrdom also points out that a martyr will indeed be compensated for his sacrifice, in heaven.

Martyrdom was imagined as a better option than a continuous battle in life. Allen's (2002) findings from her fieldwork in the West Bank in 2001/2002 suggested that Palestinians did not take despair as a valid explanation of the *istaśahidîn*. In Dheishe in 2004, however, most people did. Martyrdom operations were explained as an outcome of frustration and desperation, as suggested in the following interview with two women:

> ***Zaynab***: Did you see the man who was caught [by the Israelis] yesterday, trying to go for an operation [*i.e.* suicide bombing]? He left ten children behind.
>
> ***Samar*:** He tried to go through the checkpoint twice.
>
> ***Zaynab*:** Poor guy! He was on TV yesterday. […]
>
> ***Samar*** [explaining]**:** A man from Gaza, he's 42. For 22 years he comes and goes to Israel. He passed through the checkpoint twice carrying explosives. The first time, the metal detecting machine rang, and he claimed it was his watch, so they took his watch away and he passed. He pulled his shirt up, there was nothing. He was doing tests on coming in and out from the checkpoint. He made the explosives as shorts; he was trying to check and see if he could get through with this type of belt instead of the one around his waist. Two times it worked out, but the third time they suspected him, so they caught him and undressed him. He was going to do a martyrdom operation.
>
> ***Zaynab*:** It's all from despair from life - this is what he said.

In the women's interpretation of the news, even a family man, who apparently was lucky enough to have a work permit in Israel so he could support his many children, was so frustrated with the political situation that he wanted to become a suicide bomber. In Abu Amir's view, the situation was so desperate that the Palestinians were approaching a collective suicide:

> The Israelis pushed us into a corner - we have nothing more to talk about. It looks like their *Masada* story [*i.e.* a historical Jewish struggle ended with a collective suicide]. What happened last week [when there was a martyrdom operation] is no surprise; more and more bloody events. The Palestinians have nothing to fear, we have

> already lost everything. [The Israeli army] kill and kill and destroy houses even if we don't do anything.

Also, as Allen (2002: 37) notes, many Palestinians felt that any Palestinian could be killed anywhere, at any time; suicide bombers did at least put up a fight. When faced with overwhelming power discrepancies, a martyrdom operation or risking one's life in a demonstration was also an attempt to take control of one's own death, although God would always have the final say. In desperate circumstances, death could be interpreted as liberation. The fact that the monument commemorating martyrs by the main entrance to Dheishe had been named 'the martyr's release' was hardly a coincidence.

Sacrifice and the Illusio of Violence

Śahîd literally translates witness from Arabic, as in 'a witness to the truth' (Dabbagh 2005: 30). The Palestinian martyr is a 'sacrificed person, the one who has chosen to give up his life to affirm his religious - and by extension - political truth. [T]he martyr bears witness without speaking: he testifies through the sacrifice of his life, and after his death through his image, reproduced in icons' (Fassin 2008: 541). For Palestinians the term martyr is linked to a militant rhetoric, according to which there is a single condition for becoming a heroic victim and that is to die either voluntarily or involuntarily in the struggle against Israeli occupation (*ibid.*: 541).

As a form of sacrifice, Palestinian martyrdom is not a strictly individual act but is related to empowerment of the Palestinian people as a whole (*cf.* Gren 2001); Ivan Strenski (2003), professor of Religious Studies, notes that sacrifice is a profoundly social action that involves networks of relationships and of social exchange. It is a special mode of giving in which that which is given is typically destroyed and thus becomes sacred. 'By extension, much that comes into contact with that which has been made sacred by the sacrifice, itself becomes sacred by contagion' (*ibid.*: 25). According to Strenski (*ibid.*: 21), Palestinian suicide bombers give up their lives for Palestine and other Palestinians who are also obliged to reciprocate for these deaths by continuing to resist. The families of martyrs gain status from their sacrificing relative (see below). The sacrifice also makes the territory of Palestine sacred, since it is the site of an event of making something holy as well as an intended recipient of sacrifice: '[T]hese suicides or homicides are sacrificial gifts of an extreme sort, offered to attain something in exchange – Palestine – to keep it alive, to realize it, to create it, in return for the sacrifice of young lives' (*ibid.*: 27).

At the time of my fieldwork, power was experienced in the occupied territories as overwhelming and brutal; despair and hopelessness prevailed and rational action seemed to be of limited value. In situations distinguished by 'a widening gap between expectations [in this case of

national independence, return and a proper life] and chances' (Jackson 2005: xxiii), marginalized populations may turn to alternative channels of agency; they withdraw their investment in society and seek an *illusio* elsewhere. This 'elsewhere' may be sought in the afterlife. When people gamble with their own or others' lives, they rely on an *illusio* of violence, thus hoping that change will come through violent acts (*cf.* Hage 2003). Such gambling is engaged in not only by suicide bombers but also by others who risk their lives by joining public marches, throwing stones, refusing to follow curfews or provoking Israeli soldiers. However, in Hage's view (*ibid.*), Palestinian suicide bombers in particular, who are deprived both of a proper life and of a means of armed resistance, consciously try by dying to gain a status and honour that they could not obtain in life.

On an inter-subjective and collective level, I will argue that by transforming suicide bombers into martyrs, Dheisheans and other Palestinians have taken a more or less calculated moral risk in the hope that sacrifice may pay off. For many Palestinians, suicide, which is forbidden in Islam, is no longer a shameful act but is a weapon against one's enemies. But what if all those who have died were not martyrs after all? In the face of such uncertainty it is important to clarify the boundaries between different kinds of martyrs.

The Social Making of a Martyr - An Extraordinary Death

Every Palestinian who is killed by Israel is ideally a martyr. However, for my informants it was important to confirm that someone really was a 'true/authentic martyr'. A death could be socially transformed into an act of martyrdom in a number of ways. Jean-Klein (1997: 91) meant that Palestinian martyrs during the first uprising 'demanded the continuous and appropriate practical attention of a living community of "reciters" so as to bring their status, or rather, their quality to lasting closure'. The status of martyrdom required continuous maintenance. Since people were also killed because they were collaborators or because they were involved in clan feuds or criminal controversies, the status of martyrdom had to be kept clean and clear. As Jean-Klein (*ibid.*) has noted, the secret nature of many political activities among Palestinians often demanded a clarification of a dead person's intentions in order to establish whether they were in fact a secret activist and martyr.

One of the clearest ways in which Palestinians maintain boundaries around martyrdom is in stories about martyrs to give them a kind of posthumous reputation. These stories recount the events immediately before and after their death, the way someone died and often hints about the kind of person the martyr was. Kanaana (1998, 2005) has collected thousands of such narratives

over the years[272]. He comments that Palestinian narratives have been inspired by and resemble stories that were told about Afghani martyrs during the war against the Soviet Union in the 1970s and 1980s as well as stories from the times of the Crusaders and from the Koran (Kanaana 2005). Stories of martyrs frequently include mysterious events.

Martyr Legends as Moral Narratives

I heard one story about a martyr when my field assistant and I had sat down for a coffee with Huda before continuing an interview with her. We started to talk about reading coffee grounds[273], which is a common art of divination in the Palestinian territories. Huda related that more than ten years ago, towards the end of the first uprising, when she was pregnant with her first child, she had asked a woman from Gaza to 'read her coffee'. The woman took a look at Huda's cup and then refused to tell what she had seen because it was too sad. Two days later, an Israeli settler shot Huda's favourite maternal uncle to death. Before the killing, Huda had several nightmares about a brush that her uncle had given her and in the dreams the brush was broken. Huda said that ever since the killing of her uncle she has had dreams that come true.

There were numerous similar stories told in the camp. Often something supernatural happened in connection to a martyr's death to signal that it had been foretold. Umm Ayman told one such story of a Palestinian martyr who died without being involved in any armed operation, that contained many typical signs of martyrdom (*cf.* Kanaana 2005: 191f).

> I had a paternal uncle who became a martyr; half an hour before he was killed he washed (*i.e.* the Muslim ritual washing before prayer), prayed and said goodbye only to his mother, who was sitting with other people and he said to her "pray for me, because I don't know if I am going to see you again" and half an hour later he was martyred.
>
> Then, one week after, they wanted to get his ID to give to the Israelis [Field assistant: Because when it comes to martyrs the Israelis usually collect their ID cards.] He had his ID in his pocket when he was buried so one week later [his brother and a friend] went to the grave and opened it to take the body out and bring the ID. They said that one week after his death he still smelled really nice as if he was sleeping. Even his grave smelled nice unlike the other graves, and it wasn't frightening.

As in Umm Ayman's narrative, martyrs might reveal to someone, normally their mother, that they have a feeling that they will become martyred. Male martyrs are also often remembered as

[272] In his initial analysis of this material Kanaana (2005) distinguishes between a true *karamât aś-śuhadâ i.e.* legends of martyrs and other stories about martyrs. Here I do not distinguish between true legends and mere stories but treat them all as moral narratives.

[273] To tell fortunes by 'reading' the grinds left in the bottom of a coffee cup, a *finjân*. See Rothenberg (2004: 46f).

having a special relation to their mothers (Kanaana 1998). Some martyrs had also beforehand expressed that they wanted to become martyrs. 'There are so many people who ask for martyrdom. Because they love martyrdom so much they would expect it any minute. I heard about some people who, for example, refused to get an education because they want to be martyrs', explained Umm Ayman. Before their deaths, martyrs were often said to have put on new clothes, corrected things, asked for forgiveness, paid their debts and prayed a lot[274]. These ways of settling accounts before martyrdom also implied that the martyr knew or at least had a presentiment about their coming death.

In the narratives, something extraordinary often happens after the death of a martyr, like the scent of jasmine coming from the corpse or it failing to decompose (*cf.* Kanaana 1998). In this example from an interview with Samar, even the forces of nature reacted to the killing of a young boy from the camp:

> There is another sad story. When Mutaz got martyred, there was no rain anywhere except in Dheishe camp. When they announced that [there] was a martyr, it started to rain. He had no father. His mother was the only one in the family who was working and he was the oldest son. […] Seriously, it started to rain.

In these martyr legends, most martyrs were described as being good people who were beautiful, righteous and, if they were young, with excellent school records. Kanaana (2005) notes that legends about young martyrs predominate. Narratives about martyrs contain many similarities across the occupied territories. Underlining how serious the subject of martyrs was and in response to my guarded questioning of the stories, Ziad said '[These are] not just stories, nobody can tell a lie about a martyr'.

There were also different levels of martyrdom depending on the martyr's intention with the act. A person may be more or less accidentally shot to death, they may pray for martyrdom or may be a suicide bomber who had planned and prepared their death. Samar elaborated on these different intentions, but also acknowledged that God was the only one who could possibly know for sure what a person's deepest thoughts were:

> There are different levels of martyrs; some people fight, fast and pray to die. The second level is good Palestinians who fight but they don't pray or fast. And there are others, like a person who was killed from behind when he was drunk at the checkpoint. God decides. [People discuss these types] like the guys who killed the moneychanger [and then became suicide bombers to repair their reputation]; they are not real martyrs. But people can't know the inner thoughts of others. Sometimes you discover that the teacher is a collaborator [for example]; there was a teacher of

[274] These practices are also claimed to be part of the preparations for suicide bombers.

> religion in Gaza and for ten years he had been collaborating with the soldiers [and nobody knew about it, everyone thought he was a good religious man].

Religiosity combined with nationalistic engagement and a will to die therefore constituted the ingredients of the most valued kind of martyrdom. To be killed because one was drunk or to seek death as a way of compensating for an irreversible mistake, such as having killed a fellow Palestinian, were not considered adequate criteria for martyrdom. Some people in the camp, such as Huda, refused to make distinctions between kinds of martyrs, claiming that anyone who had been killed by Israel was as much a martyr as anyone else. Young children who were killed were also considered martyrs, without any judgement of intent.

These stories all point at extraordinariness as the qualification for a martyr's death. The narratives establish boundaries around martyrdom, distinguishing between martyrdom and other deaths, such as assassinations of collaborators.

Special Traits in Stories about Suicide Bombers

Although stories about ***istaśahidîn*** normally contain the same elements as other martyr stories, informants tended to add some ingredients. The storyteller usually underlined that the suicide bomber had experienced bereavement and emotional upset that created an urge for revenge or justice; grief was frequently used as an explanation for the decision to carry out a martyrdom operation (*cf.* Rosaldo 1989). More importantly than in other stories it seems, the suicide bombers were described as 'ordinary people' and it was also emphasized that they were moral persons. These elements were not coincidental; on the contrary, they highlight the moral uneasiness and ambivalence in the camp about martyrdom operations.

Rami told me about one of his friends who became a suicide bomber, and about the circumstances and experiences that made this young boy take this irrevocable decision[275]. Muhammed was 17 years old when he carried out a martyrdom operation. In 2003, his picture was on a poster that was put up all over the camp to commemorate earlier years' martyrs. Rami described Muhammed as someone who was initially 'normal', which locally means 'not politically active'; Muhammed used to tell people that he did not know anything about politics. He had many friends and was good in school.

Muhammed, however, was 'a boy who became a man' when something overwhelming and shocking happened to him, as Rami put it. Muhammed had tried in vain to save one of his friends from dying after he had been wounded in the head by an Israeli bullet. He was later interviewed by a local TV-station. With tears in his eyes, Muhammed had sworn to avenge the

[275] What interests me here is not the accuracy of the turn of events but Rami's way to narrate them.

killing of his friend, according to Rami. He then went to a man in the camp who was known to organize attacks on Israelis. After a period of carrying out administrative work in the local branch of Fateh, Muhammed was sent on a martyrdom operation to Jerusalem, disguised as an Orthodox Jew. Here, he blew himself up and took some 30 Israelis with him to their deaths.

The need to 'pass' as an Israeli by being disguised or wearing 'Israeli-looking' clothes or haircuts, captures the extreme separation between Israel and the occupied territories. Hasso (2005a: 25f) notes that: 'Palestinians who undertake these attacks can only commit them by violating such geographic organization through ideological, sartorial, and racialized forms of 'passing', so that they are deemed unsuspicious enough to enter Jewish-majority places'[276].

Like others of Rami's stories about martyrs, this narrative acknowledges the main character as a martyr, but also tries to explain and make sense of how young people like Muhammed came to choose martyrdom. In Rami's story, the martyr was described as a morally good person, even as apolitical, but who experienced something terrible that he could not make sense of. Muhammed's experience was far from unique in the camp. Considering how randomly violence seemed to affect Palestinians, this experience could have been almost anyone's. Being a 'true Palestinian', Muhammed had suffered and mourned. As has been argued by Rosaldo (1989: 6ff), modes of coping with bereavement often involve rage in cultural contexts as diverse as Ilingot head-hunters and the Anglo-American upper middle-class, although the ways in which they deal with their rage differ (*cf.* Jean-Klein 2003: 569). Through political engagement Muhammed then managed to transform his experience of suffering, his rage and grief into strength and a sense of empowerment in the terms of the local moral discourse. Ironically, the only way he felt he could 'rebound' from his experience was by bringing about the deaths of others as well as himself.

Since Rami also added a mysterious dimension to his story by speaking of the unknown road Muhammed took to Jerusalem during curfew, he confirmed that 'his' Muhammed was in fact a 'true' martyr. It should be noted that Rami was personally opposed to suicide bombings. He was convinced that there would be no peace if one was unable to feel compassion with one's enemies. But Rami also recognized how grief and rage are intimately connected. The expression 'to explode' in a frustrating situation takes on new dimensions in the Palestinian context. By experiencing a friend's death, Muhammed also ended up reproducing death. A common saying in the camp was that the *istaśahidîn* were mostly people who had lost a close relative or friend. In Rami's story, Muhammed did not really seem to have a choice but was forced by the circumstances. Others would explain it as events being out of his control, as destiny or as a divine intervention.

[276] For an outsider, it takes time to learn to distinguish between the looks of Israelis and Palestinians. The differences are mainly evident in dress codes, fashion and hair cuts than in physical features.

Often 'ordinary' martyrs seemed, by definition, to be morally righteous. When it came to *istaśahidîn*, however, their morality was not self-evident to all. Several of my informants felt a need to stress the compassion, humanity and morality of people who carried out martyrdom operations[277]. In Rami's story, this becomes clear in the part of the story where Muhammed is disguised as an Orthodox Jew, with appropriate clothes and haircut. His only mistake was that he had smoked nervously and since Orthodox Jews do not smoke on the Sabbath, people around him became suspicious. This nervousness implied a sense of humanity. In Rami's story, Muhammed was, despite his successful mission of killing a number of Israelis, not a cold-blooded terrorist but an ordinary empathetic person, not unlike you and me.

These elements are even more obvious in the story of a young female suicide bomber from Dheishe, Ayat Al-Akhras (see also Victor 2004; Hasso 2005a). The eighteen-year-old was described as beautiful and she had been engaged to be married; according to one of my informants 'she had everything a girl could ask for'. Many explained her act as a way of saving her family's reputation, since her father, who was a foreman with an Israeli building firm in a settlement nearby, was thought to care more about his financial situation than about the national cause. According to the story I was told by several people from the camp, Ayat was an excellent student and had managed successfully in an exam the same day that she blew herself up. This extraordinariness was combined with her moral righteousness. She even remained an empathetic moral person while carrying out the attack, the story goes, by warning two Palestinian women before blowing herself up at the entrance to an Israeli supermarket in West Jerusalem. The fact that Ayat 'only' killed two people in addition to herself did not diminish her glory. In media reports about Ayat, her family and fiancé mourned her death and were also against her act (Hasso 2005a).

'True' *istaśahidîn* thus seemed to be distinguished by grief and revenge but also by compassion and humanity despite their violent acts. These narratives were also told in a context in which Palestinians and their claimed moral superiority were questioned by outsiders because of the suicide bombings. Since many Palestinians were conscious of how they were represented in global media the stories became speeches in Palestinians' defence to Israeli and international claims that they were mere terrorists. However, the narratives also imply the uneasiness in the Palestinian community about martyrdom operations that I will return to below.

[277] The concern to display suicide bombers as righteous people was probably influenced by what the camp inhabitants assumed that I, as a Westerner, thought about them.

Practices Associated with Martyrdom

Apart from the telling of stories, there were a number of other practices connected to martyrs in the camp (*cf.* Jean-Klein 1997; Allen 2008). It is for instance common in the Palestinian territories to erect monuments commemorating martyrs, such as the one by the entrance to Dheishe. The naming of a street or an open space after a martyr has also been a way to remember and honour lost ones (*cf.* Bowman 2001; Allen 2008). As discussed in the last chapter in relation to the commemoration of *al-nakba* in Dheishe, gifts in the form of small souvenirs were distributed in public to martyrs' families, connecting the 'original' disaster with more recent suffering and sacrifices.

In connection to the immediate death of a specific martyr there were a number of public practices that the camp residents communally employed. As described earlier, the funeral procession of a martyr was distinguishable from that of an ordinary death in a number of ways. The procession led to a special graveyard, *al maqbarat al śuhadâ'*, behind the camp. To be buried there was a sign of martyrdom in itself. For someone who had carried out a martyrdom operation, the practice of reading funeral prayers also confirmed that this person had not committed suicide, but was indeed a martyr. As in the first uprising, activist youth would still occasionally compete with the Israeli authorities or intelligence services to claim the body of a martyr (*cf.* Jean-Klein 1997). If the Israeli authorities succeeded they would hinder local Muslim burial procedures according to which the dead are supposed to be buried before sunset on the day of death, and they also put obstacles in the way of politicized funeral processions.

If it was not clear to which political group a martyr belonged, political parties also tended to compete for the right to print posters with the picture and name of the martyr[278]. An apolitical person, who had been killed 'accidently' or as a bystander, thus often became politicized after death. It seems that a political affiliation was desirable in order for Dheisheans to make sense of a Palestinian martyr. The posters of martyrs, displaying the faces of men, women and children superimposed on a collage of nationalistic symbols such as *Al-aqṣa* Mosque, Koranic verses and the logo of a political party, were then pasted up on walls of the camp as well as downtown Bethlehem. As Allen (2008) notes, these posters were everywhere, in the homes of people, in shops and restaurants as well as on lamp posts and house walls, displaying 'a nation united through death' (*ibid.*: 463). Also graffiti-like wall paintings and outdoor templates of the martyr's face were part of the practices that communally acknowledged the authenticity of a particular martyr. Public recognition continued by adding a martyr's name to lists of killed Palestinians that are printed in newspapers and magazines and showing them on local broadcastings. Sometimes

[278] This competition seemed similar to the way families in the camp competed over the right to cook for a mourning family during the days after a death.

people printed t-shirts with the image of a martyr and distributed small prints with Koranic verses in commemoration of martyrs. Anniversaries were also held, usually in the martyr's family home.

Extended social support to the close kin denoted a martyr's death. Shireen explained: 'In a funeral for someone who died naturally, only close relatives attend. But for the martyrs, everyone joins, whether they knew him or not. Everyone joins the funeral. Even schools participate at the funeral of a martyr […].' In connection to any death in Palestine, neighbours, friends and relatives visit and stay with the grieving family for the first week to express condolences, frequently in sex-segregated groups. Martyrs, however, are clearly everyone's concern and they are an ambiguous political gain that may symbolically strengthen the nation. Also during the first intifada people paid condolence visits or solidarity visits to the family and especially to the mother of a martyr (Jean-Klein 1997: 92). Thus, extended social support was for instance manifested by the many unfamiliar camp inhabitants and people from other parts of the Bethlehem area who showed up at the house of a martyr – as my informants said - not to lament the death, but (at least rhetorically) to congratulate the mourning family. I will although argue that this has more to do with support to the mourning family and relatives' attempts to 'com[e] to terms with grief and irresolvable contradictions' (Johnson 2003: 19) than to celebrate.

More privately and individually, people commemorated their lost ones in multiple ways. To show to her visitors, the mother of a martyr I visited had arranged an album with photos of her son who had carried out a martyrdom operation. In the album, photos from his visit to Europe with a youth organization and his participation in a *dabke* dance troupe were mixed with family photos and pictures of him as a militant fighter with a gun taken just before he embarked on his suicide bombing mission. In the Palestinian context, the mothers of martyrs have also been vital in the acknowledgement of young males as both victims and resisters, as true martyrs in the local community (Jean-Klein 1997). Families often put up a photo of a martyred relative on the wall of a reception room in an almost shrine-like manner, denoting both pride and sorrow. At a youth organization where I occasionally helped, one girl carried a photo of a young man in her key ring. The girl shyly explained that the photo showed her martyred brother and this was her own private way of remembering her brother. It was also common for a newborn to be named after a martyr in the family.

The suicide bombers also had their own practices for influencing their transformation into martyrs. Their filmed testaments that have usually been released after martyrdom operations are filled with messages about their reasons for self-sacrifice and the righteousness of their acts. In the recordings, they ask their audience to pray at their funerals and also exhort them to rejoice

and mobilize (Khalili 2007: 201f). It is particularly important to read the funeral prayers for suicide bombers in order to show that the person is a martyr and did not simply commit suicide. When *istaśahidîn* ask for funeral prayers in their testaments it implies that it is not beyond doubt that they are fighters and not 'simple self-killers' for who one does not read a prayer (Fastén 2003: 14). They normally also try to clarify the intention of their acts and the righteousness of the martyrdom operations is established by references to *jihâd*, holy war (*ibid.*). Using the Palestinian nationalist symbols, the suicide bombers in these video testimonies constitute themselves as soldiers in God's army. Khalili (*ibid.*: 202) notes that the videos use the language of other Muslim contexts with martyrs (*cf.* Larzillière 2001):

> Although the symbolic elements present in the videos are Palestinian nationalist symbols (the flag, *the keffiyeh* [*i.e.* the Palestinian white and black checked scarf], the familiar poses of young men with their Kalashnikovs), the format itself and other elements therein remind the viewer of other martyrdom videos elsewhere. The headbands worn by the soon-to-be martyr recall the headbands of Iranian martyrdom-seekers during the Iran-Iraq war or the militants of Hizbullah; they contain slogans or Qur'anic verses. The language of masculine bravery is also familiar from the same context. Martyrs' videos, as macabre as they may seem, are also a forum for the martyr-in-waiting to articulate his or her own reasons for seeking martyrdom, and in a sense to commemorate his or her own impending self-sacrifice.

Despite these video recordings, not all *istaśahidîn* were successful in convincing people of their intentions.

Moral Capital and Social Support to Families of Martyrs

The families of any kind of martyr were normally understood as being marked by suffering, struggle and sacrifices; they therefore enjoyed respect, prestige and empathy in Palestinian society (*cf.* Peteet 1991; Jean-Klein 1997). *Umm Śahîd* (or in the case of a female martyr *Umm Śahîda)*, a martyr's mother, and *Abu Śahîd* (or *Abu Śahîda*), a martyr's father, are respectful forms of address for the parents of a killed son[279]. This prestige often stays with a family for a long time. Huda's in-laws, for instance, had a famous martyr in the family who was killed in the first intifada, something that still marked them as a sacrificing family and added to their reputation of being politically active. If a family had not been politically engaged before the loss of a close relative in political violence, they soon became so; a martyr in the family seemed for many to be a catalyst for further political consciousness and activism (*cf.* Rosenfeld 2004)[280].

[279] More than 90 per cent of the Palestinians killed during the intifada *al-aqṣa* are male (PCBS 2007b figure 51).
[280] This kind of family accommodation has also been noted in other conflicts with political violence; Scheper-Hughes (2008: 44) tells a story of a South African mother who managed to accept the killing of her son and then went on to become an important community activist.

Apart from this social and symbolic marking of martyrs' families, there was a popular story that recounted how a family had been literally marked by their martyr. In a refugee camp nearby, a martyr's nephew had been born with a birthmark in the form of his late uncle's name on his cheek. Photos of the baby, showing a clearly distinguishable name, were distributed and discussed in Dheishe during my stay. In this case, the story and photo of the newborn proved to the local community the special mark on the martyr's family.

Depending on their social relations and political connections, families with a martyred relative were able to cultivate their moral capital in different ways. The hierarchy among these families was also due to the status attached to their martyr, which was often conveyed in stories as well as in rituals and practices. All martyrs and acts of martyrdom did not therefore imply the same degree of status and moral capital, but depending on circumstances and intentions for dying, martyrs were judged as more or less authentic and their families as more or less sacrificing and moral. The story about a man who was found killed in a nearby village is illuminating (also chapter 8). I was told that people came in their masses to mourn with his family since they thought he had been martyred. When the rumour spread that he had been killed by other Palestinians for being a land dealer and collaborator, people stopped attending his wake. His family, of course, lost all claims to any moral status. As far as I could observe, the difference in social status was also striking between a widow, who had lost her civilian son during a curfew and the father of a suicide bomber who was visited by representatives of the Palestinian political elite.

To a 'true' martyr and his family, death was not futile. Acknowledging that someone had died as a martyr was a way to console the family of the deceased (*cf.* Fastén 2003: 15). This view of martyrdom was quite explicit in the camp; Shireen, for instance, claimed that 'a woman whose husband dies [as a martyr] will not weep in the same way as if her husband had died naturally because she believes that he is martyred and he is going to heaven and God will give her patience.'

The martyrs' families were in theory not supposed to mourn their lost family member. Jean-Klein (1997: 98f) notes after her fieldwork in the West Bank 1989/1990 that:

> Mothers were expected to fear for their sons and try to protect their health and lives; and they were expected to suffer and display loss when a son suffered illness, injury, or death. But in the end, it was in their own personal interests, their sons' spiritual interests, and their community's nationalist interests that as mothers of heroes they demonstrated graceful acceptance of their son's dedication to the struggle to the point of death; in fact, completing this move by 'letting go'. The mother's exultation in her son's death by thrilling at his funeral, as if it were his wedding, was the ultimate form of publicly demonstrating her readiness to let go.

My impression is that these stoical ideals of endurance for the concerned families were even more difficult to live up to during the intifada *al-aqṣa* when many camp residents found it hard to 'believe' in the struggle and the political leadership. It seemed as if failures to 'let go' were also met by understanding from other camp residents. Despite the honour and pride of having a martyr in the family, the killing of a relative of course brought tremendous grief that often persisted and was remembered by families for decades. Some middle aged and older women, for instance, took the opportunity to speak with me about their brothers who had been martyred in the 1960s. For individuals and families, martyred loved ones continued to be missed and grieved, although they also prompted pride and were evidence of the torment suffered by Palestinians.

Dilemmas with Martyrs

It is important to note that although martyrs provided the Palestinian community with symbolic force through patriotic sacrifice and gave martyrs' families moral capital, they were more of a necessity than anything else. If there had not been a crushing Israeli opponent, Palestinians would not have needed to be martyred. Martyrdom was *'âdi*, normal, because it had to be normal (*cf.* Allen 2008).

Emotionally, all kinds of martyrs posed a dilemma to the community. The killing of Palestinian infants and young children were especially difficult to come to terms with and these deaths also seemed to remain futile. But older martyrs were of course also missed and mourned. Repressed emotions were palpable at the anniversary of a martyred young man in the neighbourhood where I stayed. Although she looked as though she would fall apart at any moment, the *Umm Śahîd* uncomplainingly chatted with her guests and served coffee and tea. Contrary to the media images that tend to focus on Palestinian mothers ululating and celebrating at the martyrdom of their children, reality was far more ambiguous and complex.

The large number of martyrs during the second uprising was of course also problematic, not only for the concerned families but for the whole Palestinian community. Socio-economically, it was especially problematic if someone had many dependents. It was often pointed out to me how many children a martyr had left behind or if the person killed was the oldest son with no father, which implied a specific socio-economic responsibility for his mother and siblings. Following the Palestinian tradition of levirate marriages, it could be arranged for a brother of a martyr to take his place as husband and stepfather. For instance, a teenage girl I came to know during fieldwork never knew her father because he had been martyred during the first intifada when the girl was still an infant. After the death of her father, her paternal uncle

proposed to her mother and took care of the girl. Her mother explained that since the girl was his dead brother's daughter, her husband was especially attached to this girl.

Another concern with the many martyrs was increasing difficulties with replacing the current political leadership since so many politically active Palestinians had been killed. To many informants, the high number of martyrs was seen as an ongoing political 'brain drain'. The experienced lack of educated or politically engaged individuals was also related to the migration of many Palestinians because of the economic and political situation.

Moreover, one case of martyrdom may give rise to more martyrs. Firstly, if a martyr was a suicide bomber or was involved in other military operations against Israel, the Israeli army was likely to retaliate by killing more Palestinians as some of my informants noted. The army also often destroyed the houses of suicide bombers and other activists. Secondly, even if hardly talked about or seen as problematic locally, the killing of a fellow Palestinian made people more willing to seek revenge and to sacrifice themselves. A vicious circle may ensure, fuelling further violence.

The Efficiency of Martyrdom Operations

The ***istaśahidîn*** and their martyrdom operations were often discussed with even greater ambivalence in the camp. As I wrote earlier, in Palestinian society, there is not and never has been any consensus about the use of martyrdom operations as a means of struggle.

I often tried in vain to discuss with Dheisheans the political efficacy of the martyrdom operations and how they affected the view of Palestinians in Israeli society as well as internationally. Some, like Hanan, noted the unwanted outcomes of the suicide bombings and argued that one should refrain from them because they were used as an excuse by the Sharon-led government to implement even harsher methods against Palestinians. Walid on the other hand claimed that it did not really matter what kind of resistance the Palestinians employed since Israel always managed to influence the media reports to the outside world; '[i]n general, the Israelis are smart and so strong. […] When you want to fight them, they will tell you "Look such terrorists [the Palestinians] are!" When we want to live with them in peace, they don't say how much we like peace, they say that *they* like peace.'

A common view in the camp was that since the Palestinians neither had an army nor the military technology of an army, they were forced to use martyrdom operations to defend themselves. Several camp residents argued that the Israelis should feel fear in their everyday lives just as the Palestinians felt fear. Samar also reasoned that suicide bombings were effective since they made Israelis scared:

> When the martyrdom operations were continuous, the soldiers and the Jews in general were afraid. My husband's [Israeli] boss was so frightened to leave his home for work, he said to my husband that he'd rather stay home without any job than go out and die. As you see busses leave empty, you hear of demonstrations by the peace movement in Israel, and so on… All this has an effect.

The politics of insecurity and arbitrary power display employed by the Israeli state were to some extent imitated by the Palestinians with the martyrdom operations, creating fear and adding to a sense of distrust among Israelis. In Samar's opinion, it would in the end bring a solution to their plight.

Most people, either against or in defence of the operations, also tried to contextualize them. Abu Amir for instance said that '[f]oolishness is met by foolishness, but only the [Palestinian] reaction is seen, not the [Israeli] action. I'm not happy when twenty people die in a suicide attack. I don't accept this. And I am not afraid to say this'. At one of my visits to Sawsan's place, the news on TV reported about a suicide bombing in Israel. Sawsan, who tended to favour the martyrdom operations, turned to me and commented that since I knew how the Palestinians suffered I needed to understand by now that the attack was a result of the occupation.

Suicide or Resistance?

There are strict religious and social taboos about suicide in Palestinian society[281]. A number of people were therefore worried that the intentions of some suicide bombers were indeed suicidal and not political and religious. These were martyrdom operations that Dheisheans doubted had been carried out due to love of the country and the people. Locally, one knew of circumstances in specific individuals' lives, such as having disgraced oneself publicly in one way or the other, that may have led to a suicidal act that had been given political connotations rather than the other way round. 'The guys who killed the moneychanger' that Samar mentioned was one such case. Authentic martyrdom operations needed to be interpreted as non-suicidal, with the right intention to serve God and the nation.

The intentions of female suicide bombers, which have emerged during the initfada *al-aqṣa,* were particularly strongly questioned. In January 2002, the first Palestinian woman completed a

[281] Contemporary views on suicide in Palestine can, according to Dabbagh (2005: 40f), be summed up as follows: First, suicide is a sin or *ḥarâm i.e*. the strongest level of prohibition in Islam. Second, someone who commits suicide is an infidel or an unbeliever. Only an unbeliever despairs while a true Muslim patiently puts his or her faith in God's hands. Third, suicide is taboo and is considered shameful and is not much talked about. Fourth, suicide is a Western phenomenon. Fifth, no prayers are read at the funeral of someone who committed suicide, even though the corpse is buried at the same cemetery as everyone else in the usual way. Fifth, an attempted suicide may be forgiven, although it is remains shameful. In two contexts, Arab Muslims still tend to tolerate suicide: in legendary love stories and in the case of actual military defeats (Dabbagh 2005: 32). These two conditions relate to how my informants understood the situation at the time of fieldwork; many people were filled with rage and grief after losing loved ones *and* experienced defeat and subordination.

martyrdom operation and was later followed by seven other females until May 2006 (Schweitzer 2006: 25)[282]. In Dheishe, several women's reasons for carrying out a martyrdom operation were claimed to be social rather than strictly political (*cf.* Victor 2004). For instance, when a married woman with several children carried out a martyrdom operation in Gaza people in the camp wondered if this woman had had problems in her marriage that made her choose to become a suicide bomber (*cf.* Hasso 2005a). In relation to this, Samar exclaimed: 'If I have a fight with my husband or his family, and I go to carry out a martyrdom operation, I am not a martyr - this is a suicide'.

Female suicide bombers were also debated in Dheishe because some felt it was not a woman's duty to sacrifice her life for the nation like a man. The national struggle is normally and traditionally supposed to be carried out by Palestinian men, although the list of national heroes also includes some women[283]. Regional responses by male Muslim leaders and Islamists to the women's attacks and their martyrdom status varied (*ibid.*: 31)[284]. According to Dabbagh (2005: 32), martyrdom is reserved in Sunni Muslim beliefs for men who die in *jihâd*; women can become martyrs but primarily when they die during childbirth. Women should ideally bear children for the nation, not kill the enemy. Some of these young women, for instance Ayat Al Akhras from Dheishe, were however also glorified. Shireen for instance said that 'Girls who go for martyrdom operations, they are fighters'. There were practical reasons behind the strategy of females carrying out martyrdom operations, since the restricted mobility in the occupied territories made it easier for women than for men to move; women were more effective weapons than men. Thus, although the struggle is usually strongly connected to masculinity and manliness, women have emerged as a kind of emergency activist (*cf.* Strum 1998). The severity of the situation during the uprising gave rise to locally considered desperate responses, including female resistance.

The Concern with Killing Civilians

The contested suicide bombers were however mostly discussed as a moral issue concerning the victims and the moral costs of the struggle. Most significantly, many camp inhabitants argued that to kill was actually ***ḥarâm*** (*i.e.* strongly prohibited) according to the Koran; the killing of

[282] Israeli sources count 67 Palestinian women as planning to carry out suicide bombings between January 2002 and May 2006, but only eight succeeded (Schweitzer 2006: 25).
[283] There have been female Palestinian fighters especially in Lebanon (*e.g.* Peteet 1991; Lindholm 2003a: 136ff). Two of the most famous Palestinian women militants, killed in battle, are Fatima Ghazzal and Shadiya Abu Ghazaleh. Another woman, Layla Khaled, became renowned worldwide when she hijacked two airplanes in 1969 and 1970 (Hasso 2005a).
[284] Although a Muslim authority in Cairo stated that women were henceforth authorized to sacrifice themselves and that they would be rewarded after death, local Hamas leaders were initially against this. Most of the female suicide bombers have also been sent by the secular *Al-Aqṣa* Martyrs Brigade (Hasso 2005).

civilians and especially of children was judged as immoral for religious reasons. Others, who were not very religious, felt that it was simply morally alarming. This is how some young men, all unmarried and in their early twenties (except for my field assistant, who was older), discussed the issue in a group interview in which many of the arguments against and pro the martyrdom operations were raised:

> ***Field assistant***: What about the one who goes to blow himself up - is this a good [resistance] strategy?
>
> ***Mounsir***: He is not going to blow himself up, he is going to get martyred (*istiśady*). He defends his country, he protects his people and his honour. He wants to show the Israelis and Sharon that any time you kill, we will kill as well.
>
> ***Walid*** [jokingly]: You will get us arrested tonight!
>
> ***Ali***: Maybe you will not like my opinion but… […] Killing babies and children, I don't agree with that. If someone goes to blow himself up in the middle of some soldiers [ok], but if they go to a school for children to blow themselves up, I don't agree with it.
>
> ***Field assistant***: I want to add a comment. We are all against killing children, all of us. […]
>
> ***Mounsir***: The innocent should not be involved.
>
> ***Field assistant***: […] We have no order to kill their children. To make it clear, there has never been a [martyrdom] operation in a school, in a hospital or in a kindergarten. The children get in the way. But the Israelis, when they make an [army] operation they kill Palestinian children on purpose.
>
> ***Walid***: One shouldn't have the wrong opinion about a person who goes to blow himself up, maybe he goes to blow himself up and there is a little child that will die. But if it was earlier and the person saw a little child about to be run over by a car he would certainly help the little child. Even if he is a little Israeli, he will not have any problem with that. If we had an organized plan to kill their children, anyone could go to any playground or school and kidnap the children there. Most of the *istaśahidîn* they go to blow themselves up among soldiers. To prove it, look at yesterday's operation. And the idea of that girl [*i.e.* a female suicide bomber] was to get on a Jerusalem bus [with soldiers].
>
> ***Mounsir***: I want to add something. The prophet said: "Don't cut the tree, don't kill a child nor even an old man or a woman".
>
> ***Nina***: What? What do you mean by that?
>
> ***Mounsir***: There is a war [*ḥarb*] between us and the Israelis, but it's forbidden to kill a child, to cut a tree or to kill a *śeiḫ* or a woman. It's forbidden. It was written in Islam that if you want to kill, kill the man with a weapon who came to kill you.

Alongside the arguments put forward *against* martyrdom operations, namely that it is both morally questionable and religiously prohibited to kill, especially children, the quotations from the focus group include arguments pro martyrdom operations. Mounsir initially talks in a rhetorical manner to justify and clarify martyrdom operations; his way of speaking also implies a sense of

justified revenge against the Israelis. Since the Palestinians are in an underdog position, several of the participants also claim that martyrdom operations are a justified way to resist. They also make a distinction between killing children intentionally and doing so accidentally. Another distinction is made between the killing of civilians and the killing of soldiers in the Israeli army, the latter being much less debated. Military attacks against soldiers and Israeli army camps are not generally considered ambiguous but are mostly understood as righteous. A distinction between the occupied territories and Israel proper is also sometimes made; international law is in general interpreted as allowing violent resistance in territories defined as occupied, such as the West Bank and Gaza. Avoiding attacks against civilians inside Israel therefore earns more legitimacy in the international community. Other camp inhabitants, however, argue that the whole of Israel in fact belonged to the area of the British Mandate that most Palestinians still consider their true homeland; all of Israel is thus occupied territory (Gren 2007).

Below follows a discussion from a group interview with three women in which Layla saw the moral superiority of the Palestinians as threatened by the *istaśahidîn*:

> ***Field assistant***: Do you think martyrdom operations are something good?
>
> ***Zaynab***: Honestly, I personally don't support them.
>
> ***Nina***: Why?
>
> ***Layla***: I'll tell you why! Martyrdom operations happen when the Israelis assassinate a Palestinian, then the Palestinians want to retaliate in a harsh way. It's more of a release of pain and anger. Nothing more, especially when [the Israelis] are forcing siege and make the people suffer. But I don't agree with martyrdom operations. Why? Because our Islam is against killing children. But you might say that they kill our children, but God didn't grace them as he graces Islam. What is the guilt of a baby to be killed in such a way? If the martyrdom operations were [only] in military places - then yes, but among civilians I don't agree.
>
> ***Samar***: But at the same time, the Jewish baby when he grows up he'll be a soldier [since the military service is compulsory for Israeli Jews], so why do we forbid ourselves to kill Jews?
>
> ***Layla***: Because our Islam tells us so.
>
> ***Samar***: Our Islam fine, but …
>
> ***Layla***: [The Israelis] are criminals, we are not.

People also questioned the morality of the Palestinian individuals who arranged suicide bombings and thus sent others to their deaths. Layla said, 'If someone wants to do something [against the occupation], why does he send other people's children? Why doesn't he send his son

or his father? […] He sends others' son, [exactly] because it's not his son. He didn't suffer to raise him.' Or, as one of my field assistants commented; 'Why doesn't he go himself?'

During the course of my fieldwork, camp residents also frequently changed their minds about the contested martyrdom operations; someone who initially argued against them could some months later defend them as necessary. This was the case with Dalal who once told me that one must feel for the Israeli mothers who had lost their children in the conflict and that one should not kill civilian Israelis. Later on during my stay in the camp, she had had enough of Israeli violence and claimed she wanted to see as many Israelis as possible dead. One should not underestimate how violent acts by the Israeli army evoked responses on the ground. During periods when many Palestinians were killed and there was much military activity in the camp it was clear that people were less willing to feel compassion for individual Israelis. Others argued that even if they generally agreed to use martyrdom operations, there were situations when that kind of resistance strategy was not advisable, for instance when there was no direct violence and negotiations were in the offing.

In sum, this chapter has shown that even though violence may seem senseless, it is never completely meaningless to those involved (Schmidt & Schröder 2001: 3). It expresses some kind of relationship with another party, even if the relationship may be based on power imbalances. By marking the dead as martyrs, losses were inscribed with meaning and purpose in Dheishe. Violent death was a way of suffering and sacrificing together and it enhanced a sense of community. Practices, legends and negotiations about martyrs constituted moral statements, demarcating martyrs from other dead and underlining the intentions and righteousness not only of individual martyrs but, by extension, of the local community as well as the Palestinian nation. According to this moral scheme, Palestinians were victims acting from an underdog position and they had the right to stand up to occupation.

The *istaśahidîn* were however more difficult to fit into a moral discourse; the community needed to clarify this kind of martyrs' intentions more than others' and even if their intentions were clear and interpreted as righteous, many Dheisheans would still not accept this way of struggling since they were concerned about killing Israeli civilians, especially children. At the same time, these operations were part of an *illusio* of violence that aimed to create another imagined future through risking one's own and other people's lives. Some camp inhabitants supported such an interpretation of the martyrdom operations, while others did not.

Martyrs provided a crucial way of highlighting Israeli brutality and the Palestinian victimhood that were the locus of Palestinian moral superiority. Some martyrs were deemed to

embody the righteous struggle of a moral community. Others, such as suicide bombers, threatened to destroy this same community.

11. Concluding Discussion

> [The Israelis] believe that if they pressure people from all sides, Palestinians will surrender and accept the reality of such a life. Or that they will do whatever the Israelis want them to do. […] They have forced us to accept this situation but there are still honour and principles.

In the quote above, Shireen is referring to the processes of normalization described in this study but also to Palestinian attempts to stand up against Israel. When Shireen made this statement, she was a student at the Open University in Bethlehem and was having problems paying her term fees. Her family was living from hand to mouth since her father, who used to work in Israel, was unemployed and her oldest brother was the only one in their large family who was bringing home a small income. With feelings of humiliation, her mother had visited the director of the University to beg him for a grant or a reduction of the fees but had only been promised that they did not need to pay the total sum immediately. Shireen regularly visited her maternal grandparents in Hebron and had to deal with the many checkpoints and roadblocks on the road. 'They make us wait and suffer', she commented about the Israeli soldiers who stopped Palestinian vehicles. She had not been in Jerusalem for several years because that would require going through all the hassle of getting a permit. Like everyone else in Dheishe she hurried home in the evenings so as to be safely indoors in case there were arrests by the Israeli army that night. Although she was used to gunfire, curfews and house searches, she occasionally worried that one of her brothers would be arrested. At the beginning of the intifada *al-aqṣa*, her brother Rami had been taken into custody. There were indeed things to be anxious about in Dheishe. One of Shireen's neighbours had been shot to death two years earlier by an Israeli sniper and although she never knew the young man personally she pointed out to me the spot where he had been martyred. Like most camp residents, Shireen did not see much of a future and she was worried about whether she would manage to get through her education and, if so, whether there would there be any jobs for her? Maybe she should wait for a suitable suitor and end up being a housewife instead but these days she was unsure as to whether any man would be able to support her. Meanwhile, she tried to concentrate on her studies and she helped her mother with the housework. Shireen felt that there were constant economic, political and psychological pressures on her and other Palestinians. In these circumstances, Dheisheans' overriding concern had become to remain 'whole' despite intrusions.

Shireen's account epitomizes what this dissertation is all about. The thesis shows how people in Dheishe deal with repeated emergencies and struggle to recreate 'normal order' and continuity in which daily routine, tactics of resilience, community, memory and morality are

significant building blocks. The data reveal the creative and often ambiguous ways which people establish feelings of hope and trust despite the difficult conditions. Shireen and other Dheisheans experienced that their society was under constant attack. Israel was invading the Palestinian territories both literally and symbolically; Israeli military forces had re-occupied Palestinian towns, Israeli consumer goods were flooding shops in the West Bank, the state continued to confiscate land and 'invade the minds' of Palestinians by disquieting them. The camp inhabitants were living in a situation of ongoing calamity - a 'state of emergency' in which emergency is not the exception but rather the rule (*cf.* Walter Benjamin 1969 in Scheper-Hughes 2008).

Maintaining Integrity in the Face of Violation

The concept of integrity seems crucial for understanding the refugees in Dheishe and their attempts to resist violations. The word integrity has two main meanings (The Oxford English Dictionary 1989). The first is related to moral qualities such as rectitude, honour, righteousness, virtue, decency, sincerity and trustworthiness. Its second meaning is related to unity, as in an unbroken state, unification, cohesion, togetherness and solidarity. Resilience, which has been frequently discussed in this study, is also about resuming shape or the ability to recoil. In this context, integrity is less of a personal quality and more of an aspect of the collective. Dheisheans felt that they risked disintegration both in the sense of losing honour and in the sense of losing community and they faced a number of dilemmas and contradictions in their quest for integrity.

Reframing is key to understanding the camp residents' predicament because it is used in attempts to salvage integrity and/or to become inviolable in the face of violations. For example, imprisonment was reinterpreted by claiming that it did not jeopardize the integrity of the Palestinian cause; on the contrary, the cause had been strengthened. As representatives of the people, prisoners had withstood pressure to collaborate while in jail and had often become more politicized. Although the Israeli army's house searches were literal penetrations of homes, such events were redefined as acts of resistance by their inhabitants and as occasions to display one's moral rectitude. Camp residents also claimed that they and other Palestinians had not resigned themselves to an overwhelming power but that they maintained their integrity by being steadfast instead of resisting in more directly political ways. These interpretations asserted that there were after all 'honour and principles', just as Shireen claimed.

As mentioned earlier in this study, Douglas' (2002) work on boundaries and pollution may also provide inspiration for understanding quotidian life in Dheishe. Douglas (*ibid.*: 5) notes that society is constantly subject to external pressures on its boundaries and margins. This is particularly true for groups that live with insecurity and long-term threat from the outside; such

groups also tend to be distinguished by a greater collective concern with boundary making (*cf.* Kurkiala 2005: 220ff). Dheisheans were involved in several processes to counteract the disintegration or even annihilation of their local community as well as of the Palestinian nation. Boundaries to 'the outside' were established by emphasizing differences in culture and politics. These differences were defined according to a moral scheme that positioned Palestinians as morally superior to Israelis and other outsiders.

However, social realities partly elude attempts to categorize them; concepts cannot fully capture the complexities of life. Therefore, there are always things that cannot be fitted into a systematic order. Dheisheans not only claimed that Palestinians are morally superior to Israelis and others, but they also expressed alarm about a crisis of morality in their society and the difficulty of upholding order under pressure. With increasing menace by and separation from Israel, any boundary transgression by the Israelis or by fellow Palestinians was felt to soil Palestinian unity. Contact and cooperation between Palestinian and Israeli NGOs and negotiations between political leaders from both sides were despised. The killings of Palestinian collaborators are extreme ways of abolishing a dangerously unclear margin of the community and establishing instead a strict boundary between 'us and them' (*cf.* Douglas 2002: 150).

Struggling Against Temporariness

There is a tension that seems to permeate the lives of all Dheisheans throughout this study, namely that between life in transition and life as normality and permanency. As camp refugees, Dheisheans acted on the basis of an experienced liminal condition that had been brought about by *al-nakba*. The ambition of establishing an independent Palestinian state was also necessary in order for them to become 'like everyone else' in the world of nation-states. Life in a refugee camp was also unsatisfactory. Holding on to the idea of return and staying in the camps or, conversely, moving out, buying land and trying to make new lives elsewhere were somewhat contradictory ways of resolving the same predicament. As we have seen, some of these practices were controversial. The discourse of return is deeply embedded in Palestinian thinking. Calls to return are not only rhetorical but resonate with a deeply felt existential dilemma. According to Dheisheans, solutions to this dilemma resonate with desires to restore community, honour and roots (*juzûr*).

The development of a sense of belonging to the camp and of a camp refugee identity also contributed to a process of emplacement that involved everyday practices, formation of community and conscious reflection on place. Solidarity and shared suffering were the bases of social cohesion in the camp. At the same time as Dheisheans made a social place out of the camp

they also established a sense of place. By 'sense of place' I mean a place in the world 'where meaningful action and shared understanding is possible' (Turton 2005: 258; *cf.* Appadurai 1996).

In the confusing interface between latent and manifest meanings of the refugee label, deeply ambivalent identities emerged, often simultaneously implying victimization, empowerment and stigmatization. During the decades since their displacement, Dheisheans had engaged in a reformulation of refugee-ness; in their own view, they were not to be pitied and they refused to be marginalized but saw themselves as moral political subjects who opposed Israeli domination and rejected prejudices about them held by locals. Many had acted in accordance with their iconic status as true fighters for Palestinian nationalism, for instance by enduring imprisonment.

Having a Life or Being a True Patriot?

The dilemma between transition and permanency can also be seen as emerging from a conflict between personal life goals and collective political aims. In some highly politicised contexts, it is difficult to distinguish between the quest for personal well-being and that for political autonomy (*cf.* Jackson 2005: 187). However, at this time in the Palestinian struggle, people often find themselves trapped between their concerns as individuals who belong to specific households and families and their desire to live up to the image of Palestinian patriots and camp refugees.

As members of kin groups, many Dheisheans were anxious to establish new households and uphold kin obligations in everyday life. To become proper adults, refugees were expected to establish, protect and support a family of their own. Kin relations and camp community also demanded solidarity both socially and economically. The needs of the nation were not necessarily the same as those of a family. For instance, involving oneself in the national struggle may lead to martyrdom. This is a heroic act in terms of Palestinian nationalism but a partly problematic and tragic one for families and the local community. Another dilemma was that of child bearing: should one have many children in response to nationalistic calls to outnumber Israelis and to a kin ideology demanding many men, or should one have few so as to be sure of being able to support them? The Dheisheans I met struggled daily to reconcile social and nationalistic demands.

Given the restrictions upon their agency, however, Dheisheans are not always in a position to choose; individuals may be inexorably drawn into politics. The example of the young man whose newly-built flat was blown up because of the political activism of his brothers is a case in point. He had chosen not to get become politically engaged but his attempts to establish a home and a stable adult life were nevertheless interrupted when the Israeli authorities collectively punished his family. In predicaments like this, many Dheisheans showed steadfastness for

instance by (re-)building houses despite the threat of demolitions and by having children despite their fear of losing them.

How May One Remain a Political Subject?

To Dheisheans, having integrity meant being politically engaged. In the context of militarization and lack of confidence in the political elite, Palestinian political subjectivity was expressed in new ways. To Dheisheans, *ṣumud* or steadfastness constituted a form of political agency and tactic of resilience. Maintaining *ṣumud* was Dheisheans' main way of remaining political subjects even when direct opposition against Israel was not feasible. Leisure activities that had previously been condemned were redefined as necessary ways of showing resilience and continuing the political project in the long run. Other forms of resistance, such as public demonstrations close to the camp, were sometimes impossible or considered pointless. However, many felt a need to continue their struggle but by other means as a way of refusing to succumb to tragic realities.

Political action was also manifested symbolically such as by commemorating *al-nakba* and eating herbs grown on village land. This kind of practice may be seen as augmenting a sense of belonging to the land and as an existential reassurance of identity, along with hopes for the future. Funeral processions held for martyrs also remained emotionally and politically meaningful. Notions of glorified martyrdom, resistance, sacrifice and an *illusio* of violence gave violent death strong symbolic connotations. However, this kind of symbolic transformation of losses into gains involved a number of obstacles. It was necessary to continually reaffirm the authenticity and intent of martyrs and to distinguish between different kinds of martyrdom. Martyrs were crucial in demonstrating Israeli brutality and Palestinian victimhood that together justified Palestinian moral superiority. Some martyrs were the embodiments of righteous struggle. But the suicide bombers were more problematic and their actions were a potential threat to the Palestinian moral community if the bombers could not be clearly defined as empathetic, suffering people who were acting out of altruism. This symbolic rendition of death and its transformative power contrasted with the routinization of violence, though both seemed to be necessary in dealing with the complexities of life in the occupied territories.

This dissertation is the result of my anthropological interest in writing against common views of Palestinian refugees as either 'terrorists' or mere 'victims' and in instead presenting them as social agents who have choices and aspirations although within limiting conditions. I have thus taken into account the profound power imbalance between Israelis and Palestinians but without assuming that this asymmetry renders the dominated party passive or disabled. The way in which camp residents carried on with life in all its ordinariness despite the extreme conditions around

them may seem provocative for some; these lives do not fit easily into the simplifying discourses and media representations that highlight Palestinian militancy, heroism or suffering. Dheisheans' lives are marked by ambivalence and constraints but also by creativity in finding ways to deal with their predicament.

The ways in which future generations of Palestinians will confront the dilemmas mentioned above remains to be seen. The intifada *al-aqṣa* has been a time of crisis but also of change. At the time of my fieldwork, morality was being renegotiated and a renewed Palestinian-ness appeared to be emerging.

Existence and Politics

This study was also motivated by my interest in exploring how high politics pervade 'ordinary life'. We have seen how Dheisheans' daily lives are affected in a number of ways by the Israeli occupation and the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians. It is also at the level of daily life that Palestinians defend their integrity politically and existentially. Circumstances are, however, conspiring to reduce the camp inhabitants' opportunities to demonstrate resilience.

All aspects of life in Dheishe seem to carry both political and existential dimensions. The notion of Palestinian martyrdom, for instance, is a political weapon but it is also a way of making sense of violent premature death. The right of return is both a political issue and an expression of an existential need for belonging. When we try to understand the Palestinian predicament we need to take into account both of these dimensions. In this context, politics is not 'just' about peace negotiations between political leaders, death tolls and destroyed infrastructure, the repatriation of refugees or human rights abuses; it is about existence itself.

The Dheisheans have shown here that it is still possible to remain actors even under the most constraining circumstances. Despite the limitations on their agency, the camp residents *did* make a space for themselves to salvage integrity through steadfastness, moral subjectivity and their pursuit of roots and permanency. They also nourished hope in the days to come through diverse forms of *illusio*. There is something universal in the dilemma Dheisheans face. All humans need to handle the tension between 'being an actor and being acted upon' (Jackson 2002: 12). Do we not all try to maintain our integrity although our particular definitions of integrity and our ability to take control of our existence may differ? We redefine our lives so as to present them in more favourable ways to ourselves and to others.

The ethnography presented suggests that human survival under dire conditions depends on the maintenance of integrity, honour, morality, justice and national pride, which may be seemingly elusive properties for the onlooker. It also depends on resilience through the

upholding of daily routines, sharing a meal with one's family and confining in a friend. The fact that life is a struggle in Palestinian refugee camps in the West Bank may not come as a surprise. More surprising, however, are the many innovative ways of acting and handling everyday life that Dheisheans have developed. They persist in spite of it all. To me personally, their efforts offer a sense of reassurance.

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Photos by the author.

Front-page: On the way to and from a checkpoint close to Ramallah (2004).

On top above: A view of Dheishe (2004).

Above: A demonstration on the road outside the camp (2004).