PALESTINIAN RESISTANCE CINEMA

DOCUMENTARIES BY PALESTINIANS

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Declaration

I hereby declare that the material in this Dissertation entitled "**Palestinian Resistance Cinema: Documentaries by Palestinians**" submitted by me is in the partial fulfillment of the requirements of the award of the degree of the Master of Philosophy of this University. This is my original research work and this Dissertation has not been previously submitted for any other degree of this University or any other university/institution.

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(Research Scholar)

We recommend that this dissertation be placed before the examiners for evaluation.

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Dedication

..to whom
who struggle for
their rights,
for their existence
around the world..

Contents

Introduction

THE Palestinian people are virtually unique in the world today as a people regularly denied not only their land but their very existence. Fighting a profoundly uphill battle, the Palestinians have historically had to concentrate a great deal of effort, energy badly needed to achieve material gains, on simply reasserting before the eyes of the world this simple fact- that they are a people, with a history and a cultural identity. Speaking to Salman Rushdie in 1986, Edward Said put it this way: "the interesting thing is that there seems to be nothing in world which sustains story; unless you go on telling it, it will just drop and disappear".[1] Dispossessed, scattered, demonized, and faced with the opposition of two infinitely greater powers, Israel and the United States; it is as if they are caught in a kind of political quicksand, having to struggle mightily simply to maintain their position, to keep from being swallowed up into nothing.

It was this feeling of contributing to the uphill battle, of the playing a part in preventing this slide into oblivion, the feeling of contributing to the struggle of liberation and the struggle of resistance, that brought the Palestinian cinema into existence and hence provided it a remarkable atmosphere of purposefulness and importance.

The resistance in Palestine has appeared in many ways; in songs, theatre, writings, poems and most importantly movies. Palestinian cinema has been integral to the Palestinian resistance. So we find, since the very outset of Al-Nakba or the Catastrophe, the Palestinian film makers showcasing their efforts and representing their problems. Films such as *"A Woman of Palestine"* (1948) and *"The Land of Peace"* (1952) touched on aspects of the Palestinian Al-Nakba and the films that followed in the 1960s and '70s are mostly liberation or resistance films. Films such as *"Six O'clock Operation"* (1969) and *"Three Operations of Palestine"* (1969) demonstrated the resistance motif. These films pervaded the Palestinian cinematic landscape. Organizations such as the Palestinian Film Unit, established in 1968 by Al-Fatah, funded this film genre. Most of these films illustrated the Palestinian narrative and their pedagogical scope meant to instruct their

[1] Edward Said, *The Politics of Dispossession*, Vintage, London 1995. P-118.

audiences on the Palestinian revolutionary struggle and/or provide revolutionary political analysis.

The early movies are strong in content if not cinematically. In 1973, there were a total of twelve Palestinian films and it proved the most productive year for Palestinian filmmaking. Throughout the 1970s, Baghdad became the cinematic mother hub for hosting Palestinian film festivals. In 1980, however, the Iran-Iraq war put an end to it. In that year Arab directors contributed to the creation of five films. When the Israeli Army invaded Lebanon in 1982, they destroyed the PLO's Palestinian cultural heritage collections, which included the Palestinian film archives. Unfortunately, there were no second copies of the films. After their obliteration, the terrain of Palestinian cinematic landscape changed scope: short and long, feature films emerged that were less didactic. Films continued with the themes of resistance, occupation, racism, and love of homeland, but they did not incite politics.

Until the emergence of Palestinian feature filmmakers, a huge corpus of Arab films was produced on Palestinian issue. Two of these were magnificent works by non-Palestinian directors. *The Duped* (al-Makhdu'un 1972) by Tawfiq Salah, an Egyptian Marxist, who had temporarily sought asylum in Syria from Nasser's Egypt, and *Kafr Qassem* (the name of that village) by the Lebanese Borhan Alaweh. Made in Syria with financial backing from Syria and Egypt, *The Duped* is the first meaningful Arab feature film on the Palestinian cause, which strongly denounces the abandoning of the Palestinians by sloganeering Arab regimes. Weary of the dead end they have reached; three Palestinians from different generations try to reach Kuwait to find work. They are without any identity papers, but a sympathetic driver of an empty tanker-lorry bound for Gulf gives them a ride. On reaching the border, they hide inside the tank in the blazing heat, waiting for the completion of formalities. But between bureaucracy, the chatting and the tea drinking, so much time elapses that when the driver comes back, the three men have suffocated to death, a thousand miles from home but so close to their Eldorado.

The early 1990s and periods after that witnessed the rise in documentaries and fictions which portrayed the real suffering and injustice inflicted on Palestinians by Israel,

especially in the form of illegal, cancerous settlements and different unprovocative bloodsheds that took place seriatim. Films such as *'Ala Hudud Al-Watan* (1993) by Jamal Yasin, presents the sufferings of 400 Palestinians who were driven out of their homeland by Gen. Isac Robin which attracted world attention, and *Bayaan Min Ma'adin Al-Quds* (1993) by Jamal Yasin which documents the mass-killing of innocent Muslim devotees by Zionist forces in the Al-Aqsa mosque complex and their plan to burn the mosque or make it collapse by secrete underneath excavations and desecrating Muslims' sacred places. *Al-Muhandis* (1995) talks about the assassination of the resistance mastermind Yahya Iyash by Zionist forces. *Al-Mu'amra* (1998) deals with different incidents of occupied land. *Blood in the Ibrahimi Mosque* (1998) by Mohammad Ibrahim and Osama Abdal Razzaq documented one of the bloodiest pogroms of the Palestinian history in which Zionist terrorists opened fire in the Ibrahimi mosque of Madinatul Khalil on Muslims while they were praying in mid-Ramdhan 1994. The film consists of several interviews of those eyewitnesses who survived the massacre. *Al-Qamar Al-Sijeen* (1999) about the inhuman conditions of Palestinians in Israeli prisons. *Jerusalem And The Black Hatred* (2000) and *Al-Muhandis Al-Rabe'* (2003) etc.[1]

There are many good reasons why a dissertation or research on Palestine cinema needed to be done. At a time when Jawaharlal Nehru University boasts of its huge academic resources, it is pity to know that our library has not as such a resource on Arab Cinema, Middle East or North African films. The study of Arab Cinema is an effective tool for understanding and assessing issues of great impact on one of the world's most intense areas of political and ideological apprehensions. Today there is increased interest in films originating in the Arab world. In English speaking countries film from Algeria, Egypt, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine, Syria and Tunisia, for example, are making wider and more frequent rounds than ever before in local film festivals and repertoire theaters.

The idea of a work on Palestinian Cinema was born long ago. Some time back when I watched a Palestinian documentary *Jenin Jenin* by Mohamad Bakri, at Open Theater in JNU, I was impressed by the film a lot. The difficulties encountered along the way can

[1] Bashar Ibrahim, *Cinema al-Muqawama fi Filistin*, Al-Arabi, March 2005.

hardly be denied. I discovered how different are the ways in which people approach the act of critical appreciation. I wanted this dissertation (of my M Phil) to be an expression of how Palestinian people are being refused to their right to exist and being wiped off the map of their own territory. This dissertation gives an authentic view of Palestinian disaster in its first chapter; an overview of Palestinian and Arab Cinema in second chapter and a short review of some of the Palestinian resistance documentaries in third chapter.

It is my belief that this work will stimulate the interest of the reader in Palestinian Cinema and understanding Palestinian agony.

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—Nurul Islam Sadequey

The Balfour Declaration[1]

Dear Lord Rothschild,

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

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

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

Yours Sincerely

Arthur James Balfour

November 2, 1917

[1] Source: Documents on Palestine, Regional Surveys of The World-- Middle East and North Africa 2005, Europa Publications, London & New York.
(Balfour was British Foreign Secretary, Rothschild the British Zionist leader).

Palestinian Resistance

A View over al-Nakbah and Aftermaths

Palestinian Catastrophe

The land of Palestine has been described in the books of God as the 'Holy Land' and the 'Land of Peace'. Its people have inherited since ancient times a rich heritage and deep civilization reflecting the qualities of coexistence, tolerance and harmony between races, religions and cultures that flooded the land through people who came for protection, pilgrimage and blessings. The strategic geographic location of Palestine, in the heart of Arab world, and its religious significance have invited many invasions and aggressions by many empires and grand powers. The conquest of Palestine had been, in the eyes of those invaders, a pre-requisite for spreading power and influence. Whether it had been in Africa, Europe or Asia, the bridging over Palestine was an important step for triumph and glory; as an essential route for safe trade and protected transport lines as well. Such significance made the land a focal point in the attainment of fame and glory; and had invited invasions by ancient powers: the Assyrians, the Babylonians, the Romans, the Athenians, the Persians, the Byzantines, the Egyptians, the crusaders, the Mongolians, and in recent decades the French, the British and the Zionists. The land and its people have heavily suffered as a result of invasions spreading destruction and plunder throughout different sagas of history. The Holy City of Jerusalem for example, was gutted and destroyed nineteen times in history. Jericho had suffered similar fate on many different accounts, Acre and Jaffa had faced siege by the invading powers as every inch of the land had witnessed glorious battles of steadfastness, resistance and exemplary sacrifices offered by its people.[1]

It was this tolerant and peaceful approach that had welcomed Jews who were driven away, fleeing the European persecution at the end of the nineteenth century. The first wave of such Jewish immigration took place in 1881 as Russian Jews, being accused of attempting to assassinate the Czar of Russia, fled to Palestine for a safer heaven. The Palestinians and Arabs: Muslims and Christians have always recognized Jews as followers of a faith that is highly respected by them. It was this spirit of tranquility that made Caliph Omar request the citizens of Jerusalem to extend residence to the Jews in their city. They were well received, given equal opportunities and became part of the

[1] Khalid el-Sheikh, *Palestine: A Human Tragedy*, League of Arab States, New Delhi.

society to the extent that inter-marriages were allowed and organized. When Arabs held powers for centuries never thought in terms of settling their ancient scores with the Jews. The historian who contemplates the ugly treatment of Jews in Christendom for centuries, the pogroms, the Inquisition, the contempt in which they were held as evidenced in the portrayal of Shylock in *The Merchant of Venice* by Shakespeare and the Holocaust which happened in the heart of Europe, will attest with relief that the Jews were treated much better under Islam. Will Durant says, "The Jews of the Near East had welcomed the Arabs as 'liberators'. They suffered now diverse disabilities and occasional persecutions; but they stood on equal terms with the Christians, were once more free to live and worship in Jerusalem, and prosper under Islam in Asia, Egypt and Spain as never under Christian rule. ...Christian heretics persecuted by the Patriarchs of Constantinople, Jerusalem, Alexandria, or Antioch were now free under a Moslem rule that found their disputes quite unintelligible."[1]

When Zionism floated, in 1896, its ideology for the establishment of a "National Home for Jews in Palestine", it had two basic steps in mind towards the achievement of its goal: unequivocal support of the colonial powers and influx of Jewish immigrants after the expulsion of the indigenous citizens. The first step culminated in 1917 in the proclamation of the infamous Balfour Declaration,[2] through which the Great Britain promised to establish a national home for Jews in Palestine. This step was followed a few months later, after the British occupation of Palestine, by a systematic process of opening the doors of Palestine to bulks of Jews immigrating from European capitals initiating what was termed as "settler colonialism". The available figures show the magnitude of such a catastrophe. While in 1918 the number of Jews in Palestine did not exceed 56 thousand, it jumped to over eleven folds in 1945 (the time when British Administration finally decided to curtail immigration following protest by Palestinians). This went, at the same time, with a process of usurping the Palestinian land through introducing laws and ordinances that facilitated government's action in the confiscation of the *emiri* (state) lands to be allocated to the new immigrants. The Jewish land ownership jumped from

[1] Will Durant, *The Age of Faith*, Simon and Schuster, New York, 1950, p-218.
[2] See full text of the Declaration on page- 6

less than 2% in 1918 to about 6% in 1948. The Jewish Agency gave the following figures to the United Nations in 1947 for the Jewish population in Palestine.

Year	Jewish Population
1900	50,000
1930	1,65,000
1939	4,75,000
1947	6,30,000 [1]

While commenting on the legality of the Balfour Declaration of November 1917; and the allegations of Zionism over the "Historical" claim on palestine, the King-Crane Commission, appointed in 1919 at the suggestion of the US President, Wilson, declared in its report, "the initial claim submitted, often by Zionist representatives, that they have a 'right' to Palestine based on an occupation some two thousand years ago can hardly be seriously considered".[2]

At the time when Britain was negotiating with its Arab "friends" to initiate a military revolt against the Ottoman rule in return for independence, it entered in 1916 into a treaty *Sykes-Picot* with France and Czar Russia. This treaty provided for the division of the Arab world into sphere of influence and the establishment of a Jewish national home.[3] The Arab revolt was decisive in ensuring the defeat of the Ottoman regime. Russia, who withdrew from the treaty after October Revolution (1917), released to the world this unique behavior of 'rewarding' the Arabs. Much of the secret Arab-UK 'friendly negotiations' took place between the British High Commissioner, Sir Henry McMahon who arrived in Cairo January 1915 and Sharif Hussain of Mecca.

Professor John Carstang, in an article in the Observer, described the injustice done to the Palestinians by the Balfour Declaration and the mandate in the following terms. "For

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[1] K.P. Fabian, *The Israeli-Palestine Conflict*, India Quarterly, Vol 58, Jan-Mar 2002.
[2] See *'Recommendations of the King-Crane Commission'*, Documents on Palestine, Regional Surveys of The World- Middle East and North Africa 2005, Europa Publications, London & New York.
[3] See *'Sykes-Picot Treaty'*, Documents on Palestine, Regional Surveys of The World- Middle East and North Africa 2005, Europa Publications, London & New York.

more than a thousand years, almost as long as English folk have inhabited this country, an Arab people have dwelt in undisputed possession of the soil of Palestine. Gentle by nature, hospitable and courteous in bearing, they formed an orderly society, with their own doctors, lawyers, judges, government officials, landed gentry, small owners, agriculturists and peasants....The Arabs gave a cordial welcome to Lord Allenby's Proclamation November 1918, with its definite promise to the peoples of Syria and Palestine of 'National Government and Administrations deriving their authority from the initiative and free choice of the indigenous populations'.... What has clouded the horizon for Palestine - and for Palestine alone of all the mandated territories – has been, the imposition of a difficult and hazardous experiment. 'The Jews National Home', as a Jewish writer recognizes, is quite novel and finds no counterpart in international law... it is being created in a territory largely occupied by another race..."[1]

A word about the Balfour Declaration. When the project for a Jewish settlement in Uganda lapsed in the beginning of the 20th century, Dr Weizmann had predicted that the Britain would one day make the Zionists a better offer. Jewish units served with the British forces in the First World War, with a Zion Mule Corps taking part in Gallipoli landings and three Jewish Battalions of the Royal Fusiliers fighting in the Palestine campaign.[2] There was one more reason for the Balfour Declaration, "winning American-Jewish sympathy for the Allied cause was an important factor in bringing the United States into the war against Germany in April 1917".[3]

The Balfour Declaration was made without consultations with the Arabs; the absolute majority (93%) of the indigenous Palestinian population. When Sharif Husain asked for clarification, he was told that the Jewish settlement in Palestine would be allowed in so far as it was consistent with the political and economic freedom of the Arab populations.[4] The Arabs of Palestine had discovered, the non-recognition of their status in the mandate, which omitted every mention of their name. They also found that their request in 1922

[1] The Observer, September 20, 1936.
[2] K P Fabian, *The Israeli-Palestine Conflict*, India Quarterly, Vol 58, Jan-Mar 2002.
[3] Richard Allen, Sopra, p-241, quoted by Fabiab. Ibid.
[4] K P Fabian, *The Israeli-Palestine Conflict*, India Quarterly, Vol 58, Jan-Mar 2002.

for the creation of a national independent government was dismissed as inhospitable with the pledges made to the Jews. This meant that the solemn pledge given to Allenby, in 1918, to the 'indigenous population' is broken. This was the first blow to the British good faith, whereon the Arabs had relied.

Till the 67-word long Balfour Declaration was issued there was no Arab-Jewish tension in Palestine. When the immigration of Jews increased, and when it became clear that the Jews wanted the whole of Palestine for themselves, communal tension increased.[1]

Great Britain had endorsed yet another step in the direction of establishing a Jewish home, when it decided to shift the issue of the mandate to the aegis of UNO in 1947. Following prolonged deliberations, UN adopted the formation of a Special Committee on Palestine (UNSCOP). Two plans were proposed by the Committee: a Majority Plan, suggesting termination of the Mandate and the partition of Palestine into an Arab and a Jewish state with a *corpus separatum* for the city of Jerusalem, and a Minority Plan proposing a federal state (combining an Arab and a Jewish State) with Jerusalem as its capital. The Palestinians and Arabs rejected the partition as they saw in it a destruction of their territorial integrity. Intense lobbying and political pressure by US Administration and its allies, had forced several member states of the UNO to vote in favor of partition. Soviet Union was equally in favor of this project as they believed that the Jewish state would become their ally in the region since a great majority of the first influx of Jewish immigrants to Palestine came from the Soviet Union and other European Socialist States. Under such combined influence of the super powers, the General Assembly adopted on 29 November 1947, a resolution no. 181 (II), for the partition of Palestine by a vote of 33-13 with ten abstentions. India was among the states that voted against partition, opting for a federal solution since, as stated by its representative at UN, this resolution shall sow the seeds of conflicts and warfare. The role of this combined pressure in favor of partition was admitted by the US State Department Report on Foreign Relations.[2]

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[1] Ibid.

[2] State Department Report on Foreign Relations vol. p 548 dated 19 January, 1948. quoted by Khaild el-Sheikh, in *Palestine: A Human Tragedy*.

Even before the mandate over the Palestine could be ratified by the League of the Nations, Great Britain had established, since 1 July 1920, a civil administration with the appointment of leading officials from Zionist Jewish ranks holding key positions: Sir Herbert Samuel, a key figure in the framing of Balfour Declaration, as High Commissioner; Albert Hyamson, Director of Immigrations; Norman Bintwich, Attorney General and Chief Legislator of Laws and Max Nurock, Assistant Secretary to the Government in Palestine. This caucus was entrusted with the role of enacting Laws and Ordinances that facilitated Jewish immigration to Palestine and hastened Jewish acquisition of Palestinian lands including granting Jewish companies concessions over *emiri* (state) lands and the natural resources of the country.[1]

US Support for Israel

Says Walid Khalidi,[2] "US presidents since 1948 have been consistently sympathetic to Israel and for the most part just as consistently indifferent to the plight of the Palestinians. Dwight D Eisenhower, though firm with Israel, was uninterested in the Palestinians. Jimmy Carter was the first president to acknowledge Palestinians as human and political beings. George Bush Senior, as his country's envoy to the UN, was more critical of Israeli treatment of Palestinians than any other presidents. And Bill Clinton spent unprecedented presidential time and energy in talks with both Israelis and Palestinians. All this has been annulled by the gratuitous harshness of George W Bush and his near total espousal of the Israeli position despite his seemingly contradictory verbal endorsement of the creation of a viable Palestinian state."[3] The United States has been a champion and defender, a supplier and provider, an advocate and spokesman of Israel. From 1948 to this day, from Plan Dalet in 1948 to Operation Defensive Shield in 2002, all the major Israeli military operations (with the exception of the Tripartite invasion of Egypt in 1956) have been preceded by a bright or less bright green light from the White House. This is true of 1948, 1967, and 1982. It is also true today.[4]

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[1] Khalid el-Sheikh, *Palestine: A Human Tragedy*, League of Arab States, New Delhi.

[2] A founder of the Institute for Palestine Studies and its general secretary, is a former professor at Oxford University, the American University of Beirut, and Harvard University.

[3] For more, see *Journal of Palestine Studies*, no, 2 (Winter 2003), pages 50-62.

[4] Ibid.

There is a complex relationship between the United States and Israel, "which receives 10 million dollars in American aid a day".[1] President Bush, believing that one of the reasons for failure of his father to get elected for a second term as President was his quarrel with Ariel Sharon, was most reluctant to annoy him. The clout of the Jewish lobby in the United States is universally acknowledged. Allied to them is the powerful Christian Right, getting stronger and stronger, an important component of the electoral base of the incumbent President.[2]

When Ariel Sharon circumscribed the movements of Late Yasser Arafat, there was no adverse reaction from Washington. When Israel turned its mighty arsenal against the defenseless Palestinians, again the signal Ariel Sharon saw coming from Washington was green. After much deliberation and much hesitation, President Bush decided to send his Secretary of State Colin Powell on a mission to put an end to bloodshed, a mission which was destined to fail, primarily because the whole world, including Ariel Sharon, knew that Bush was not backing his secretary of State in toto. Even when Powel was shuttling between Ariel Sharon and his prisoner Late Yasser Arafat, the Deputy Secretary of Defence was taking part in public rally in support of Sharon's policies. Three weeks after President Bush asked Ariel Sharon to withdraw his armed forces from Palestinian territories, some withdrawal took place along with fresh incursions. Saudi Arabia pointed out that Israel was not "respecting" its partner, meaning US.

After the resounding victory of Hamas in the Palestinian Legislative Council elections in the last week of January this year (2006), it was US who took its western allies in favor to cut aid to Hamas-led Palestinian government, as a part of their effort to pressurise the new government toward a more accommodating stance with Israel. Hamas is known for its harsh Islamist stands towards Israel. The United States, the European Union and Israel list Hamas as a terrorist organization.[3]

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[1] K P Fabian, *The Israeli-Palestine Conflict*, India Quarterly, Vol 58, Jan-Mar 2002.
[2] Ibid.
[3] The Times of India, New Delhi, Thursday, May 11, 2006.

Jewish Terrorism and Expulsion of Palestinian Arabs

Immediately, after the partition resolution was adopted, the Zionist Jewish gangs put into effect their murderous plan, known as *Plan D,* to seize Palestine and establish a Jewish state. The aim of the plan, as discovered by Yigal Yadin, acting chief of staff of the army of Israel in 1948, was to "seize control of the area of Jewish state... the destruction of Arab villages, and evacuation of their inhabitants." In his book, "Soldier with Arabs", John Bajot Glubb, the British General in the Jordanian army, recalls a conversation between a high ranking British officer and an officer of the Hagana (the Jewish terrorist gang that had made foundation of Israel's army). As the British officer remarked that the population of Israel would, as soon as it was formed, divide almost equally into Jewish and Arabs, and that would most likely create a lot of difficulties. "The difficulties could be overcome", replied the Hagana officer adding that, "a few planned massacres would eventually help to get rid of the Palestinians".[1]

Soon after the Zionist gangs started engaging their military units to 'clear' Palestinians and seize their lands, explosions in marketplaces, blowing up of hotels and massacres were organized against innocent citizens in Jaffa, Jerusalem, Acre, Dier Yassin etc.. A wave of terror and panic spread over the Palestinian villages as the Jewish terrorist gangs placed pictures of these massacres on the walls with a caption saying, "This is what will happen to you if you do not leave". Nathan Chofshi, an original Jewish settler in Palestine, commenting on the cleansing campaign against the Palestinians, wrote the following to the Chief American Rabbi, "If Rabbi Kalpan really wanted to know what happened, we old Jewish settlers in Palestine who witnessed the fight could tell how and in what manner we Jews forced the Arabs to leave their cities and villages... some of them were driven out by force of arms, others were made to leave by deceit, lying and false promises. It is enough to cite the cities of Jaffa, Lydda, Ramleh, Beersheba, Acre among numberless others."[2] Today, there is not one single place built in Israel that did not have a former Arab population. Edgar O'Balance, the British military historian, in his book *The Arab-Israeli War -1948*, stated that "It was the Jewish policy to encourage the

[1] J B Glubb, Soldier with the Arabs, London 1957, p-99.
[2] The Spectator, May 12, 1961.

Arabs to quit their homes, and they used psychological warfare extensively in urging them to do so"[1]. Undoubtedly, he kept in mind, as he had made his testimony, the Zionist propaganda investing on massacres perpetrated against the Palestinians like the one at Deir Yasin, where radio broadcast in Arabic were full of threats: "If you do not leave your homes, you will share the lot of Deir Yasin.... "The road to Jericho is still open, quit Jerusalem while you are still alive".[2]

The massacre of Deir Yasin, on April 9, 1948 stands a glaring example of the extensive terror perpetrated by Zionist gangs against innocent Palestinian civilians and led by the veteran leader of Israel i.e. Menahem Begin and Yitzhak Shamir, two gang leaders who were made Prime Ministers of Israel. Deir Yasin was a massacre aimed at creating panic among the Palestinian civilians in a manner befitting the Nazi and Fascist regimes. In the Zionist calculations, this most peaceful village, that opted not to join in any militant activity or unlawful act, must receive maximum punishment. A straight forward message to others.[3]

The frightened Palestinians fled their homes leaving behind all their belongings: their households, jewellery, fields and groove yards. Nevertheless they did not forget to take with them their door keys, even as their homes were left unlocked. They trusted that the nightmare would soon be over and they would soon return home. For over fifty years, these keys still decorate their tents and walls of their new homes, standing as a staunch witness to the ownership of their property, a living evidence to their plight and sufferings; and a sign of their deep longing and yearning for return to the motherland.

Sadly, this unpleasant and painful experience was, once again, repeated in 1967, in the aftermath of Jun war. Some have lived to become twice refugees. Israeli military forces occupied what remained of Palestine, in West Bank and Gaza Strip, forcing over three hundred thousand Palestinians to exile. However, the Israeli plan to transfer the whole of the Palestinian population outside the boundaries of Palestine for the realization of the

[1] O'Balance, Edger, The Arab-Israeli War 1948, Fober, London 1956.
[2] Khalid el-Sheikh, *Palestine: A Human Tragedy*, League of Arab States, New Delhi.
[3] Ibid.

Zionist dream in the establishment of a pure and exclusive Jewish state have failed. Those who remained in their indigenous homes opted to die over the land rather than expose themselves to another nightmare. Today there are around three million Palestinians living in West Bank and Gazza. Another one million live in those areas occupied since 1948; while four million live in Diaspora. The original figure of those who escaped the brutalities of the Zionist gangs' onslaught in 1948 were around 165 thousand. In five decades their number multiplied six times, challenging the projective of an exclusive Jewish state. The future of those Palestinians who stayed back was not any better than their brethren who were forced to leave. The conditions that they faced and the treatment they are receiving, as third class citizens in the 'democratic' society of Israel, expose the values of this democracy. By any account they were more fortunate since they remained over the land of their fore-fathers.

The fate of the Palestinians, in the aftermath of the exodus, became miserable and painful. Shift camps, with minimum facilities and most sub-human conditions, were hurriedly prepared to accommodate millions of those unfortunate Palestinians. It then turned to become permanent home for their Diaspora.

The vast majority of Palestinian casualties are civilian. Palestinian and Arab civilians have been at the receiving end of Zionist policies both before and since the establishment of Israel. Hundreds of Palestinian civilians died during the 1930s from bombings planted in crowded vegetable markets in Jerusalem, Jaffa, and Haifa by the Irgun, parent of the Likud Party. It was also the Irgun that blew up the King David Hotel in April 1946 in Jerusalem, killing ninety six British, Arab and Jewish civilians in what Dominique Lapierre, the co-author of *O Jerusalem*, calls "the first massive terrorist political action of modern history."[1] During the 1948 war, hundreds of Palestinian civilians were killed in scores of strategically planned massacres by Hagana, Irgun, and Stern Gang forces. Those same forces drove some 750,000 civilian Palestinians from their towns and villages in 1948. Some 250,000 more Palestinian refugees were driven by Israel across

[1] See the blurb by Dominique Lapierre on Thruston Clark in *By Blood and Fire: The Attack on the King David Hotel* (London: Hutchinson, 1981)

the Jordan River in 1967, while on Syrian front, Israeli forces expelled about 120,000 Syrian farmers and small townsmen from Gollan. During the War of Attrition on the Egyptian front in1968-70, Israel destroyed all the towns of the Suez Canal zone, causing the exodus of hundreds of thousands of civilians. On the Lebanese front, for two and a half decades, hundreds of thousands of Shiit farmers and villagers were again and again forced to flee the repeatedly devastated southern Lebanon in the direction of Beirut.[1]

The Zionists always resorted to the use of terror for attaining a major political goal for Israel, assassinated several British and French officers and UN mediators.[2] Winston Churchill, a staunch supporter of Zionism, was compelled to utter a grim warning in the House of Commons:

"If our dreams for Zionism are to end in the smoke of assassins' pistols and our labours for its future are to produce a new set of gangsters worthy of Nazi Germany, many like myself will have to reconsider the position we have maintained so consistently and so long in the past. If there is any hope of a peaceful and successful future for Zionism, these wicked activities must cease and those responsible for them must be destroyed, root and branch."[3]

Ariel Sharon

For the last fifty years one of the chief exponents and practitioners of the Israeli military doctrine of massive retaliation and of tactic of provocation, as a prelude to military escalation, has been one Ariel Scheinerman, also known as Arik Sharon. No other Israeli leader, military or civilian, has killed more Palestinian or Arab civilians or done greater damage to Palestinian and Arab civilian institutions and installations than this individual. Sharon joined the militant Zionist movement at 14, a military leader of high caliber, has fought in all Israel's wars. Sharon first came to prominence in October 1953, when he conceived and implemented with Unit 101, a special military unit he had created, a raid against the Palestinian village of Qibya- forty five houses were blown up, killing sixty

[1] Palestine: A Human Tragedy.
[2] See K P Fabian, *The Israeli-Palestine Conflict*, India Quarterly, Vol 58, Jan-Mar 2002.
[3] Quoted in the British Government's Survey of Palestine, Vol. 1, p-73.

nine civilians, three quarters of them women and children. According to the UN report issued in its wake, "Bullet-ridden bodies near the doorways and multiple hits on the doors of the demolished houses indicated that the inhabitants had been forced to remain inside while their homes were blown up over them."[1] This raid has become a prototypical one for the Israeli army.

Since that time Sharon has stayed the course. In 1964, on the Syrian front, he asked his staff "to gather data on the number of vehicles, buses and trucks that would be required to transport the entire Arab population of Northern Israel to the neighboring Arab countries."[2] In 1970 and until recently he advocated toppling the Jordanian monarchy so as to allow the Palestinian to take over Jordan as their alternative country. It is an old Israeli plan known as "Jordanian Option" and Sharon has in the past championed the plan and openly expressed his belief that "Jordan is Palestine".[3] The 1982 invasion of Lebanon, which he led, killed, according to the most authoritative Lebanese daily, al-Nahar, some 17,500 Arabs- the vast majority of them civilians. Of these, 12,500 were Palestinians.[4] And this total does not include the victims of Sabra and Shatila.

In the political field, Sharon was equally devastating to the prospect of peace. According to Geoffrey Aronson, the leading American expert on Israeli settlement, it was Sharon who transformed the idea of Greater Israel into reality. "For Sharon there was no green line... there was simply the Land of Israel. There was no entity called the West Bank...no Palestinians, only the Arabs of the Land of Israel. His was the vision and vocabulary of the militant Zionist."[5] In 1977, Sharon unveiled a new settlement plan called "A Vision of Israel at Century's End," which envisaged the settlement of 2 million Jews in the occupied territories.[6] Sharon was the architect of the Likud political bloc, champion of the religiously extremist settler movement Gush Emunim (Bloc of the Faithful), the driving force behind the colonization of Hebron and central Palestinian

[1] See Appendix B in Eh Hutchison, *Violent Truce* (New York 1956) p-157
[2] Uzi Denziman, *Sharon: An Israeli Caesar*, (New York, Adana Books, 1985) p-97
[3] Qamar Agha, *"Dubious Israeli Moves in Palestine"*, World Focus, May 2005.
[4] Al-Nahar, September 1, 1982.
[5] Geoffrey Aronson, *Israel, Palestinians and the Intifada: Creating Facts on The West Bank* (London, Kegan Paul International; Washington, DC: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1990), p-67.
[6] Ibid., p-70.

highlands, and the builder of the notorious bypass roads exclusively for Jewish use designed to make a contiguous Arab entity impossible.[1] In 1979 he said about the Golan, "We will never leave the Golan for any price, not even for peace with Syria."[2] His latest vision of a so-called Palestinian state was enunciated on 18 January 2001. It comprised 42 percent of the West Bank, with a unified Jerusalem, under perpetual Israeli sovereignty, no right of return for the Palestinian refugees,.[3]

In the so-called Operation Defensive Shield launched by Sharon against the Palestinians on 29 March 2002, the declared objective was to destroy the infrastructure of Palestinian terrorism. What Israel destroyed were the offices, equipment, furniture, computers, archives, and records of banks, corporations, businesses, research centers, town halls municipalities, jails, police stations, schools, radio stations, land registry offices, courts, and ministries across the administrative spectrum, including the Ministry of Higher Education and the Ministry of National Economy.[4]

This is the individual President George W Bush called 'a man of peace'.[5]

Palestine Rebellions and Revolts (1917-1948)

The people of Palestine, since the advent of 20th century, had exercised their sacred right in the struggle to defend their rights and land against aggression and occupation, reciprocating the right of all other peoples of the globe in their national battle for freedom and independence. The Palestinians, after realizing the plot to usurp their motherland turning it into a Jewish home waged a struggle, political and militant, to challenge and confront designs and conspiracies for colonization. As part of geographical Syria, while under Ottoman rule, the Palestinian joined the Arab mainstream in organizing resistance, since the beginning of 20th century, against the colonial designs to divide the Arab World and to insure full independence. Mass movements and popular revolts were organized to

[1] Ibid., p-71.
[2] Ibid., p-99.
[3] Walid Khalidi, "The Prospects of Peace in the Middle East," *Journal of Palestine Studies,* No. 2 (Winter 2003)
[4] Ibid.
[5] Ibid.

reject the Balfour Declaration and resist the influx of Jewish emigration to Palestine. On the first anniversary of the Balfour Declaration, 2 November 1918, the people of Palestine organized a massive protest demonstrating their strong rejection of such designs. By early 1919 (March) the First National Congress was convened expressing its rejection to the Declaration and the Jewish immigration to Palestine, urging the establishment of a national government.[1] Series of such revolts and uprisings were launched in 1920, 1923, 1929 and 1935.

The British Government pursued its conspiracy against Palestine despite the strong opposition of the people. On the contrary it continued its deliberate plans to build the Jewish home opening the doors for massive Jewish immigration. Winston Churchill, the British Colonial Secretary, while visiting Palestine in 1922, reiterated in a memorandum (White Paper) that the Balfour Declaration was not, "susceptible of change". Substantiating the Zionist project he further said, "It is necessary that the Jewish community in Palestine should be able to increase its numbers by immigration"[2]

The reiteration of British position, through Churchill's memorandum had envisaged a popular political movement against British designs and civil administration. Successive popular congresses while rejecting these designs had decided to boycott the civil administration and their plans for legislative elections endorsing instead, a plan to establish Palestinian self-governing institutions. A course of action was adopted to curtail Jewish immigration leading to a confrontation with the British army who were facilitating this immigration, arming the Jewish settlers and shielding their violent activities. During the visit of Lord Balfour to Palestine in 1925, massive demonstrations and strikes were organized demanding his immediate departure from the land.

The Palestinian resentment manifested itself again in an extremely violent revolt in the vicinity of the Wailing Wall in Jerusalem in 1929. Al-Buraq revolt (Palestinian name for the Wall) soon spread over to the other Palestinian towns and villages, sparking off

[1] See Khalid el-Sheikh's *Palestine: A Human Tragedy,* League of Arab States, New Delhi.
[2] See *'Churchill Memorandum 3, June 1922'* Documents on Palestine, Regional Surveys of The World-Middle East and North Africa 2005, Europa Publications, London & New York, p-58.

violent clashes with Jewish immigrants that lasted for 15 days leaving 220 dead and 520 injured on both sides. The British army managed to control the situation thereafter with reinforcement from aircrafts, naval vessels and armored cars.[1]

The Palestinian anger burst in the autumn of 1933 into a violent revolt forming a turning point in the Palestinian struggle. While targeting the Zionist gangs, some of whom were recruited in the British Police Force, the revolt aimed at the British Forces and Government institutions as promoters of imperialism in Palestine under the mask of 'human considerations for the Jews'.

In the following years, the Palestinian resistance gathered strength and was consolidated into an armed rebellion by 1935, attacking British military installations. The Arab Higher Committee of Palestine was formed with the objective of unifying and leading the popular resistance against British occupation, Jewish immigration and the liberation and independence of Palestine.

The movement was led by Sheikh Izziddin al-Qassam, a Syrian born Arab, who came to Palestine at the end of the Syrian revolt against France. A teacher by profession, Al-Qassam while realizing the magnitude of the conspiracy in Palestine as a part of a colonial project to colonise Bilad al-Sham and the Arab world, formed in 1926 an underground movement with the objective of confronting British occupation. As the Palestinian resistance gathered strength, al-Qassam organized an armed revolution against British army inflicting heavy casualties in their ranks. Known in history as the "Arab Struggle for Palestine", the movement was well-organised and spread over the land with Jericho as its headquarters. Following a number of military confrontations with the British Soldiers, al-Qassam was pushed to the hills of Yabad (a town near Jenin) where he was martyred in November 1935 alongwith some of his followers. The movement gained momentum after his martyrdom and was transformed into a great Palestinian Revolution during 1936. The military action was incorporated with a political movement organized by the Higher Committee to generate into a comprehensive massive

[1] See Khalid el-Sheikh's *Palestine: A Human Tragedy,* League of Arab States, New Delhi.

military and political struggle, culminating into a popular uprising, a general strike that continued for almost six months without interruption (April-October1936), and a campaign of civil disobedience. This led to the enforcement of acts of collective punishment, curfews, imprisonment, mass arrests and torture. In the course of this wave of resistance over 50,000 Palestinians were killed, hundreds were sentenced to death and over 100,000 were imprisoned.[1]

As the oppressive measures failed to suppress the revolution, Britain resorted, once again, to political maneuvers to quell the uprising, appointing a Royal Commission of Inquiry, it turned to Arab regimes for a solution. These regimes issued a call to their 'Palestinian Brethrens' to cease their military action, halt the uprising and count on the "good intentions of the friendly British Government and its desire to achieve justice".[2] The general strike was called off in October 1936. Meanwhile the report of the Royal Commission headed by Lord Robert Peel, a former Secretary of State for India, while reiterating the British policy over Palestine concerning Balfour Declaration, recognized the just demands of the Palestinians for independence. The Commission admitted that the Palestinian reaction was "quite logical, as they can not accept creation of a national home for the Jewish people in Palestine", and suggested a partition plan.[3]

The Royal Commission's recommendations on partition was accepted by the British Government, but was rejected by the Palestinians as a conspiracy hatched to physically install the Jewish home. Britain called thereafter, a round table conference in London to discuss alternatives for a settlement. The British Government invited representatives from the Palestinians, the Jews and representatives from the Arab States.[4]

At the Conference in February 1939, the Palestinian delegation, supported by Arab States, reiterated its position in condemning British policies towards Palestine, calling for

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[1] See Khalid el-Sheikh's *Palestine: A Human Tragedy,*
[2] Ibid.
[3] See *'Report of Palestine Royal Commission /Peel Commission'*, Documents on Palestine, Regional Surveys of The World- Middle East and North Africa 2005, Europa Publications, London & New York, p-59.
[4] See Khalid el-Sheikh's *Palestine: A Human Tragedy,*

full independence. It demanded scraping off the Balfour Declaration, termination of the mandate and a halt to Jewish immigration. As the Conference failed to take off due to strong objections from Zionism, Britain introduced in a paper known as "Macdonald White Paper"' a unilateral policy towards Palestine disclaiming its intention to establish a Jewish State, rejecting the independence of Palestine as an Arab state, proposing a termination of the mandate by 1949, and granting thereafter independence to a unified Palestine whereby both Jews and Arabs would share its governance. The paper also agreed to allow admission for 75000 Jewish immigrants in the coming five years.[1]

Under the combined pressure of Zionism and the Government of USA, Britain turned its back on the faith that the Palestinian Arabs had once more, placed in Britain. While it had officially declared its intention to curtail Jewish immigration and the transfer of land, it closed its eyes over the illegal immigration, the transfer of land to build Jewish settlements and the arming of the Jewish Brigades with armour and tanks. At this stage the US involvement became more visible and effective, projecting Israel as an advanced colonial base in the Middle East to safeguard the US interests and check the dangers coming from the East.

The unequivocal support extended by the US Government to the project of Zionism has encouraged the Zionist terrorist organizations like Hagana, Irgun, Tz'vai L'umi and Stern to increase their terrorism against Palestinians. To this effect a strong will armed force of over sixty thousand terrorists was deployed with the full moral and material support of the United States of America. With the increase in terrorist activities, the British Government organized in 1946 another round table conference to discuss the new developments. The conference had failed to produce any result as the Jews have downplayed the role of Britain; and the Palestinians have expressed no confidence in any British measure to that effect. For the Palestinians the conspiracy looked clear as the two super powers (Britain and US) have joined together to visualize the Zionist dream. An international legal cover was necessitated to legitimize this illegitimate child. The newly

[1] See *'White Paper* 1939' Documents on Palestine, Regional Surveys of The World- Middle East and North Africa 2005, Europa Publications, London & New York, p-59.

established United Nations took this task in hand. In April 1947 Britain shifted the question to the UN where a partition plan was adopted. A year later the state of Israel was proclaimed as the Palestinians found themselves in Diaspora facing the most tragic catastrophe in the history of mankind, which is continuing till this moment.

Palestinian National Movement & Emergence of Al-Fatah (1959)

Despite the volume of the catastrophe that had ravaged the Palestinian life following their expulsion and the usurpation of their land, the people of Palestine continued to have faith in Pan-Arabism. The Arab failure to protect the Holy Land and halt the colonial Zionist aggression did not weaken their resolve to revive the Arab nationalist movement and unify the Arab potentials towards this goal. Soon, at the height of their tragedy, the Palestinian played an active role in generating Arab mass movement across the Arab world through the existing Arab political parties i.e. Al-ba'th party, the Nationalist Socialist Syrian Party, the Communist Party, the Muslim Brotherhood and the establishment of new political parties i.e. the Arab Nationalist Party and Al-Tahrir Islamic party, preaching the same goals of Arab unity and the liberation of Palestine. Palestinian youth and intelligentsia played a pivotal role in the political struggle of most of these parties during the fifties. The sharp ideological divisions among their ranks, their split over the tactical strategies in confronting Israel's aggression, the conspiracies to further divide and rule the Arab world, the vertical division in the Arab regimes and their classification into progressive and reactionary camps, had drifted the direction from liberation to little petty disputes once in a while, prolonging the agony of the Palestinians who began losing faith in this concept of struggle. Such political developments in the Arab arena had strengthened the determination among the ranks of Palestinian youth and intelligentsia to lead the battle of liberation of their motherland.

In the middle of fifties such belief generated momentum after the heroic battle of steadfastness at Suez. A process of reorganization and recruitment began among the Palestinian students and working class inside Palestine and in the refugee camps, and yielded in 1959 into the establishment of a Palestine National Liberation Movement (al-Fatah) with sole objective of liberation of Palestine. The movement sought to gather the

potential of the Palestinian and Arab masses into this sacred battle of armed struggle. It also sought to rise above the Arab political and ideological divisions opening its doors for all nationalist forces and individuals, irrespective of their political doctrines and ideologies, with only one objective: the liberation of Palestine as the means towards Arab unity.

The movement had, successfully strengthened this conviction among Palestinians and Arab ranks, during the first year of the sixties, as the means to liberate Palestine and reinstate the Palestinian national rights. Thousands had joined the ranks of al-Fatah, relinquishing their ties with various Arab political parties and enlarging its base among the masses. The victory of the Algerian Revolution (1962) and their liberation of Algeria from the French colonial yoke has strengthened the people's conviction in the armed struggle. On January 1st, 1965, al-Assifa, the military wing of al-Fatah, waged its first military operation against Israel's military installations. In the following years al-Assifa waged a series of qualitative operations inflicting heavy casualties on the occupation army. The success of its military action had consolidated the faith of the Palestinian and Arab masses in the inevitability of this line of strategy. It had also encouraged different political parties to change their approach and hostile attitudes; as tens of militant organizations were established by these same parties to join stream of armed struggle including PFLP (Popular Front for Liberation of Palestine), DFLP (Democratic Front for Liberation of Palestine), Al-Saiqa, PLF, Arab Liberation Front and many others.

The setback of June 1967 war had spread a deep wave of humiliation and frustration over the Arabs. The smashing victory of Israel in that war had wiped every hope in a classical warfare generating a massive popular support for al-Fatah and its militant action. The victory at the battle of al-Karamah in March 1968 had strengthened the firm resolve in people's war as it had sent alarming signals to the Israelis and other forces over the growing imminent dangers that were engulfing the state. The battle of al-Karamah was not an operation in isolation. It was followed in the period after that by a series of large scale military operations i.e. green line, al-Hima etc striking at the military structure of Israel. While such successful operations had generated hopes and aspirations among the people embodying their dreams into reality, their hopes and aspirations in a free

Palestine, it had at the same time opened an unfinished chapter of military aggression, war of distortion, isolation and continuous attempts to dismantle al-Fatah and the Palestinian National Movement due to the serious threat it poses on Israel's existence. A severe war of attrition began involving many partners and fronts, and evolving into a series of massacres through daily attacks and air raids against the Palestinian military bases, refugee camps and other civilian concentrations in the neighboring Arab states. It was carried as well through the assassination of Palestinian leaders and cadres. The target was to dislodge the people's armed resistance against Israel. This war of attrition and its serious consequences on the masses had forced the Palestinian Revolution to evacuate its bases from the longest borders with Israel, in 1970 to Syria, then to Lebanon and later on to the distant frontiers in the midst of Tunisia as well as other Arab states i.e. Sudan, Yemen, Algeria, Libya and Iraq.

Meanwhile al-Fatah was totally involved in the military battle for the freedom of Palestine. It waged a political battle to revoke the world public opinion on the Palestinian tragedy and need for its early settlement. It evolved a strategy to insure and preserve national unity among the Palestinian life. To this effect al-Fatah organized in Cairo, the first Palestinian conference (1968) to discuss modalities for the unification of the Palestinian National Forces. During the 4th session of PNC in Cairo in 1968; al-Fatah effected important major changes in the charter, shape and institutions of PLO. The session while inviting the representatives of the militant groups to its membership, took many democratic decisions effecting the functioning of PLO including separating the legislative and executive institutions and the direct election of its executive committee. The participation of the national militant groups and the election of Late Yasir Arafat, as Chairman during the works of the fifth Session in February 1969, had sanctioned new developments in several spheres of the Palestinian life, reaffirming the status of PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people and consolidating the independence of the Palestinian decision taking. It should be mentioned here that such developments were not direct against any regime or power center, but were necessitated to illustrate the Palestinian responsibilities and reinstate the Palestinian national identity; destroyed after the usurpation of Palestine in 1948. The side battles that had evolved due

to this misconception were most unfortunate and regrettable; as it had weakened the Palestinian abilities and created a rift in some Palestinian-Arab relations.[1]

Undoubtfully, actions carried by some groups in the shape of hijacking of aeroplanes and seizure of hostages have thrown dark shadows over the genuine goals of the Palestinian struggle as it had been exploited to humiliate and discredit this noble struggle and sacrifices. Whether it was a result of increasing frustration, or a sincere resolve to propagate the Palestinian cause and sufferings of the people without underlining the damage and loss in life that such actions may create; the issue was never at any stage, intended to wage a terrorist war or to mutilate the true nationalist and human face of the Palestinian Revolution. The Palestinian goal had always been the freedom of Palestine and the reattainment and exercise of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people through self-determination, the repatriation of refugees and the establishment of the independent state of Palestine over the Palestinian national soil.

PLO And Arafat

In May 1964, Egypt created the Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO) under Arab League auspices, but only as a front for the Arab nations. Fatah played no part in the June 1967 Six-Day War, which resulted in Israel's capture of the Sinai peninsula and Gaza Strip from Egypt, the old city of Jerusalem and the West Bank from Jordan and the Golan Heights from Syria. Arab humiliation in the Six-Day War strengthened Arafat's argument that the Palestinians had to take their fate into their own hands. He emerged as a major force in the Arab world in March 1968 when an Israeli armoured column attacked a Fatah base at Karamah in the Jordan valley, and in the ensuing engagement 28 Israelis were killed and several tanks destroyed. The following year (1969) Fatah gained virtual control of the PLO and Arafat was elected chairman of the executive committee.

In 'Black September' 1970, Arafat and the PLO's armed units came into conflict with King Hussein of Jordan and were expelled from the kingdom, despite Iraqi and Syrian military support for the Palestinians. Arafat and his forces took refuge in Lebanon,

[1] See, Palestine: A Human Tragedy.

carving out a semi-autonomous "Fatahland" in the south and taking an active part in the Lebanese civil war. Fatah's armed struggle gave way to diplomacy in 1972, when Arafat agreed to scale down military operations in exchange for Arab economic and diplomatic support. The first manifestation of this agreement was the recognition of the PLO as sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people by the Arab League summit in the Moroccan capital, Rabat, in 1973. The following year (1974), Arafat delivered an historic address to the UN General Assembly, telling delegates: "I have come bearing an olive branch and a freedom fighter's gun. Do not let the olive branch fall from my hand."[1]

Arafat's diplomatic triumph at the UN in 1974 was followed by a period of diplomatic stagnation and a series of military-strategic reverses, culminating in a full-scale Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982.

After the secret negotiation in Norway, in September 1993 representatives of Israel and the PLO signed the historic Oslo peace accords in Washington DC, providing for mutual recognition and the creation of Palestinian self-rule areas in Gaza and Jericho, with that autonomy envisioned as the beginning of a larger transfer of authority to the Palestinians in the occupied territories. The agreement was sealed by a hand shaking between Arafat and Israeli Prime Minister Itzhak Rabin, both of whom received the Noble Peace Prize the following year. That same year (1994), Arafat arrived in the Gaza Strip for his first visit to the Palestinian self-rule area, and stepped onto Palestinian soil for the first time in 25 years.

From the collapse of Camp David summit in July 2000, grew the second Intifada, a Palestinian revolt against Israeli occupation, led by younger generation of Palestinians which was often critical of Arafat and the alleged corruption of his regime. The Intifada's other activists were the fundamentalist of Hamas and Islamic Jehad, who embarked on a campaign of suicide bombings against Israeli targets. Whilst they did not oppose Arafat,

[1] See World Focus, May 2005, New Delhi.

the fundamentalists did not owe any allegiance to him and he had little control over them.[1]

Battles of Steadfastness

As al-Fatah and the PLO were bringing nearer the dream of Palestinian people for freedom and independence, the Palestinian Revolution became increasingly targeted with attacks and conspiracies. The primary objective of the Israel was to dismantle the Revolution and break its coherence with the masses. The USA orchestrated a smearing campaign to damage the Palestinian relations with the Arab states and its national human face worldwide.

After evacuating its military base in Jordan, al-Fatah and the Palestinian Revolution established anew its bases in South Lebanon and Biqaa' valley to the East. The Fidayeen were well received by the Lebanese masses and the Palestinians living in the refugee camps there, who embraced the Revolution and offered precious contributions to this growth. The developments had spread panic over Israel which moved its forces to wage a continuous war of attrition against the Fidayeen and civilians in theses areas, causing heavy damage to civilian property and Lebanese infrastructure.

In March 1978, Israel carried a large-scale military operation crossing international borders, invading South Lebanon and occupying all the areas North to River Litani. A ceasefire was later organized through a UN peacekeeping force in Lebanon. But the aggression was not ended as Israeli forces continued to engage the forces of Revolution with military activities sometimes directly and at other time indirectly through the newly created puppet army, "the South Lebanese Army", in areas that remained under its occupation in the South.

Meanwhile as the military aggression failed in achieving Israel's goals in dismantling the forces of the Revolution, a conspiracy law hatched to drag the Palestinian Revolution in the moving sands of Lebanon. In 1974, the Phalangists, a maronite armed Brigade, attacked at Ein Rummaneh, a bus carrying Palestinian children on their way to school.

[1] See World Focus, May 2005, New Delhi.

Twenty four were killed as many others were injured. This deliberate attack sparked off an extensive fight that developed into a 'war' and continued for several years, largely dividing Lebanon on the basis of religion. Though the proclaimed causes had targeted the Palestinian presence in Lebanon, as a ring in an overall conspiracy to destroy the Palestinian Revolution, certain other complex issues had surfaced relating to deep constitutional and socio-economic grievances, creating similar environment to that of Lebanon's civil war in 1958, inviting a US military intervention. The job was this time entrusted with Israel who sabotaged every opportunity for reconciliation and a peaceful settlement in this domestic conflict. Though the complex developments had exhausted the potentials of the Palestinian Revolution and the Lebanese National Forces, it did not weaken their resolve to continue the battle of freedom and independence.

Battle of Beirut

In June 1982, Israel carried out another aggression against Lebanon occupying the whole of South Lebanon reaching to the outskirt of Beirut, the capital of Lebanon. This barbaric and flagrant aggression which was perpetrated under the fake label of "peace for Galilee" operation turned to become a large scale war spreading huge destruction and terror as Beirut went under total siege by the Israeli forces for 88 days.

As the siege had failed to achieve its goal in forcing a surrender on the capital; and as the forces defending Beirut repulsed all attempts by the army of Israel to enter the city, a massive indiscriminate bombardment of the city was carried out. Several million bombs were showered on the capital and its civilian population, using the latest deadly weapons including cluster bombs, suction bombs, phosphorous bombs and others. According to estimates, Israel bombarded Beirut with over 200,000 bombs in one day. Such most barbaric acts had spread death and destruction in every corner of the capital.[1]

The crisis took another human aspect, the siege of Beirut has caused serious humanitarian sufferings as foodstuffs as well as all essential services including water, electricity and petrol supplies were cut. Supply of medicaments and medical assistance was halted. This

[1] See Khalid el-Sheikh's *Palestine: A Human Tragedy*, League of Arab States, New Delhi.

blockage caused huge unbearable sufferings to the civilians and led to mass-death, as a result of starvation and lack of medicines.

This huge civilian loss and the large-scale destruction in Beirut had enforced a proposal for the withdrawal of PLO from Beirut. The proposal was acceded to subject to assurances for safe withdrawals and guarantees for the safety and protection of the Palestinian civilians remaining on Lebanon's soil. After prolonged negotiations involving USA, through Ambassador Philip Habib an agreement on withdrawal was reached endorsing the above mentioned two conditions and allowing the deployment of a peacekeeping forces comprising USA, France and Italy. The USA has affirmed the guarantees extended to PLO. As a result, a ceasefire came into force on 12 August allowing the departure of the forces of the Palestinian Revolution to various Arab countries.[1]

Massacre of Sabra and Shatila

Two weeks after the departure of PLO forces from Lebanon, the multinational forces decided, suddenly to withdraw from Beirut. A day after (14 September 1982), the president-elect, Bashir Gemayel, the phalangist military commander, was assassinated. Israel decided on the same day to occupy West Beirut. Its forces entered the city on 16th September. On that very night, the militia men of the phalangists entered the refugee camps of Sabra and Shatila, Southern Beirut, and perpetrated under the cover and protection of the Israeli army, who were stationed only a few hundred meters away near the camps, the most dreadful and horrible massacre in the history of mankind. In a clear act of genocide over 4000 unarmed Palestinian civilians were brutally massacred in a span of 40 hours at the hands of phalangists sparing no life including infants and children. Loren Jenkins, a correspondent of 'the Washington Post' described the situation at the camps on the morning of September 18, as follows:

"The scene at the Chatila camp when foreign observers entered on Saturday morning was like a nightmare. Women wailed over the deaths of loved ones, bodies began to smell

[1] Ibid.

under the hot sun, and the streets were littered with thousands of spent cartridges.... Houses had been dynamited and bulldozed into rubble, many with inhabitants still inside. Groups of bodies lay before bullet-packed walls where they appeared to have been executed. Others were strewn in alleys and streets, apparently shot as they tried to escape. Each little dirt alley through the deserted buildings, where Palestinians have lived since fleeing Palestine when Israel was created in 1948, told its own horror story." [1]

Ralph Schoenman and Meya Shore, two American journalists, testified the following before the International Commission of Inquiry on the massacre:
"We entered Sabra and Shatila on Saturday (18 September) the final day of the killing, shortly after 12 noon ...when we entered we saw bodies everywhere...we photographed victims that had been mutilated with axes and knives. Only a few of the people we photographed had been machine-gunned. Others had their heads smashed, their eyes removed, their throats cut, skin was stripped from their bodies, limbs were severed, some people were eviscerated."[2]

The massacre had been perpetuated even while the US Government had in letters of guarantees to the Lebanese Government and PLO assured of the safety of Palestinians after the departure of PLO from Beirut. Such guarantees were extended as a condition to the evacuation agreement.[3]
Before it had withdrawn its forces from Lebanon (September 26) Israel, during its ten days of occupation of Beirut, carried out barbaric acts on Palestinians; including destruction of camps and plundering of the Palestinian property, arresting thousands of Palestinian civilians into concentration camps in Israel and the 'security zone' they had established in South Lebanon. Even books, documents and cultural materials were not spared as Israel plundered and robbed the Palestinian Research Center taking over 45 tons of books and rare documents.

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[1] International Herald Tribune, 20 September 1982.
[2] Report of the International Commission- page 270. quoted by Khalid el-Sheikh.
[3] Error and Betrayal in Lebanon- Foundation for Middle East Peace. Washington DC., 1984, p-57, quoted by Khalid el-Sheikh in *Palestine: A Human Tragedy*.

The Palestinian Intifada (Uprising)

It had become clear that Israel's objectives in its invasion of Lebanon aimed at driving the Palestinian Revolution and the Palestinian civilian presence out of Lebanon, ensuring therefore, what they believed to achieve 'a secure and stable' state. Indeed the evacuation of the Palestinian forces had contributed to a temporary halting of the struggle, but this had never ceased as it shall never as long as occupation persists on the Palestinian and Arab soil.

Meanwhile, the Palestinian leadership in its effort to promote the struggle, initiated a massive uprising in the Palestinian territories under Israel's occupation. The uprising or Intifada as the name became famous, was sparked off on 9 December 1987 at Jabalia Camp in Gazza, when an Israeli military truck, in a deliberate action ran over civilian vehicle killing four Palestinian workers and wounding nine others. For over the years, the Intifada had gained momentum reaffirming the Palestinian rejection of Israel's occupation and its act of oppression, atrocities, endless sufferings and economic stagnation of the Palestinian people.

The Intifada was unprecedented in concept, volume, life and impact and consolidated the Palestinian struggle to end Israel's occupation and protect and preserve the national and political identity of the people. It reinforced the role of PLO in leading the Palestinian struggle following the invasion of Lebanon in 1982.

In confronting Israel's occupation and atrocities, the people of Palestine have displayed heroic steadfastness and exemplary resistance and sacrifices defying Israel's brutalities, excessive and indiscriminate measures inflicted on people at all ages and walks of life: children, women and old men. The people countered with open chests and bare hands the most sophisticated military power of Israel disproving its conviction on security, and the ability to maintain it as long as their military ware can reach out.

The impact of Intifada has been immense and great on the people of Palestine, Israel, the region and the world. While it underlined the gross injustices against the people, it exposed Israel's real face to the western world and uncovered the myths behind its

democracy and social justice. The Intifada consolidated the Palestinian national unity under occupation and in Diaspora; foiling all heinous designs aiming at the Palestinian fragmentation and division under various claims and nomenclatures. The Intifada encouraged the Palestinians to become self-reliant, undermining Israel's economic stagnation and plots to destroy the socio-economic structure of the people. Its political impact has been great and significant. On one hand, it has reaffirmed beyond any doubt that occupation and oppression cannot impose capitulation on people, on the other, it generates heroism and enhances the spirit of resistance and steadfastness. Israel's acts of collective punishment, genocide and state-organized terrorism have consolidated the Palestinian firm determination in their resolve to achieve their goals of freedom and independence. The international community became deeply involved in the Palestine Question expressing the urgent need for a just settlement. The impact on Israel has been wide and deep-routed. It opened a wide and intense debate in the streets and among the political and military ranks, expressing a demoralizing aspect on their morale and questioning the real identity of the state in the midst of confusion and the need for a direction. The peace camps were strengthened and became more actively involved in pursuit for a peaceful settlement. Most importantly, Intifada had opened wide the doors of Madrid and the track of Oslo evolving a firm conviction in negotiations and political settlement.

Towards A Just And Lasting Settlement

At the end of the Oslo Peace Process (1993), it was commonly believed that the Palestinians under the leadership of Yasser Arafat would declare the establishment of an independent Palestinian state in 1998 over Gaza Strip and West Bank with East Jerusalem as the capital. But as early as on July 8, 1996 Richard Perle, a close ally of Paul Wolfowitz alongwith David Wurmser and Doug Feith, delivered the "Clean Break" Report to the Israeli leader Benjamin Netanyahu. "A Clean Break: A New Strategy for Securing the Realm", called on Israel to abrogate the Oslo Peace Accords, annexing the West Bank and Gaza Strip, launch pre-emptive attack on the Palestinian Authority, drive the US into an armed attack on Iraq, to divide the Arab world and create a permanent rift between the US and the Arabs, to establish a new Washington- Tel Aviv axis of military

domination over the West Asian region and specially the Gulf region. On July 10,1996 the Israeli leader Netanyahu presented the "Clean Break" strategy as his policy, in a speech to a joint session of the US Congress.[1]

The Palestinian desire to explore a just and lasting political settlement to the Question of Palestine has been constant and firm since the beginning of the tragedy. As stressed earlier, the Palestinian decision to wage armed struggle has become inevitable as their faith was diminished in a political settlement. It has formulated a firm conviction that military and political struggle go parallel in the course of struggle of a nation as one supplements the other. The decision of the Palestinian leadership to halt Intifada came in the context of this conviction and the need to create conducive atmosphere to ensure the success of a political settlement. Sadly this sincere Palestinian approach is confronting a defiant, arrogant and insincere behavior from the leadership in Israel, who still preach violence and espouse the Zionist dreams in occupation and expansion.

There have been several peace plans starting form the UNSCR 242. Rogers Plan, Jarring Plan, Allon Plan, Camp David Accords, Reagan Plan, Fahd Plan, Fez Plan, 1988 Algiers Plan, Madrid Plan, Oslo Plan, Mitchell and Tenet Plan and so on. Israel has always refused to implement the agreements' provisions, as it desires to retain all the occupied territories.[2] The openly declared objective of the mainstream Palestinian national movement since the Palestinian National Congress of Algiers in 1988 has been the liberation of the Palestinian territory occupied in 1967 and the establishment of an independent sovereign Palestinian state on this territory alongside and in peaceful and mutual recognition with Israel.[3]

On 15 May Israel turned 58. Israelis have celebrated it with barbecues and parties. Nearly 60 years after most Palestinians were first forced from their homes, the killings and blockades carry on with impunity. But some of those not celebrating were Arab citizens

[1] A K Pasha, "Post-Arafat Palestine," World Focus, May 2005, New Delhi.
[2] Ibid
[3] Walid Khalidi, "The Prospects of Peace in the Middle East", *Journal of Palestine Studies*, No. 2 (Winter 2003)

of Israel, they demonstrated to remind the world that Israel displaced millions to take their land without compensation. Million more Palestinians demonstrated in the refugee camps of Gaza, the West Bank and neighboring Arab states against their expulsion by Israel.[1]

HAMAS

HAMAS is the acronym in Arabic of *Harakat al-Muqawama al-Islamiyya (Islamic Resistance Movement)*, meaning *enthusiasm* or *zeal*. The Palestinian Islamist organization was founded, according to its own official history, on December 14, 1987 during the first Intifada 1987-1993. Its charter was published in August 1988. The ultimate goal of this movement is to establish an Islamic state in lands with Muslim populations, including Israel. This movement is an offshoot of the Muslim Brotherhood, the oldest Islamist party in West Asia founded in Egypt, whose presence in the Gaza Strip can be traced to 1928.[2] As a component of the Muslim Brotherhood, Hamas considers itself the most recent link in the long chain of the jihad against Zionist occupation. Hamas was formed by a group of Gazans led by the quadriplegic cleric Sheikh Ahmad Ismail Yassin and Dr. Abdel Aziz al-Rantissi, both assassinated in March and April 2004 in Israeli helicopter raids.

Hamas, unlike other groups, tries to gain support through social work and it is the only cohesive group in Gaza. It is the only group trusted by the poor people. Even some senior officials of UNRWA in Gaza trust Hamas to redistribute food donations to the people.[3] The dynamics behind Hamas are constituted by two groups. These are the youth and the merchant classes. This means that Hamas will remain a major factor in determining the future of Palestine.[4]

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[1] The Hindu, Wednesday, May 17 2006.
[2] Bernard Reich, ed, *Arab-Israeli Conflict and Conciliation: A Documentary History,* Westport, Praeger, 1995, pp 203-12.
[3] Sara M. Roy, "Gaza: New Dynamics of civic integration," *Journal of Palestine Studies,* No. 4, Summer 1993.
[4] Bulent Aras, "Peace Process since Oslo," *Strategic Analysis,* November 1996.

Initially, the majority of Palestinians treated Hamas with suspicion. After all, it owed its existence to the Muslim Brotherhood, which supported King Hussein of Jordan's bloody "Black September" crackdown on the PLO in that country in the late 1970s. The Muslim Brotherhood was at that time virulently against nationalistic and secular regimes, which held sway in many parts of the Arab world. This animosity, to a large extent could be attributed to the banning of the party in countries such as Egypt, Iraq and Syria.[1] The Muslim Brotherhood's rivalry with progressive forces in the 1950s and 60s and its link with the Jordanian monarchy may have lulled the Israelis into initially giving Hamas a free hand to organize in the occupied territories. However the Hamas leaderships refused to oblige the Israeli government by indulging in fratricidal blood-lettings. Its leaderships asserted that it was 'obligatory' for the Palestinians to wage *jihad* against the occupying power. By plunging headlong into the first *intifada*, Hamas emerged overnight as a strong competitor to the Fatah for the hearts and minds of ordinary Palestinians. Hamas got a boost when PLO leader late Yasser Arafat accepted UN Resolution 181 in 1988, in the process tacitly recognizing Israel. This move brought international recognition, especially from Western countries, for Arafat and his Fatah.[2]

Hamas, on the other hand, stood by its steadfast rejection of the state of Israel. With Israel later on reneging on its commitments under the Oslo Accord and with hopes of a viable Palestinian state diminishing by the day, Hamas' credibility among Palestinians grew domestically while the Fatah functionaries got transformed into ministers and bureaucrats. Hamas also created a social infrastructure for the Palestinians in the occupied territories by constructing hospitals, schools, libraries, orphanages and seminaries. On the other hand, a lot of international aid that the P.A. received went into private bank accounts. In 1988, Hamas published its manifesto calling for the creation of a Palestinian state from the Mediterranean Sea to the Jordan River. The manifesto challenged the PLO's claim to be the sole representative of the Palestinian people.

[1] John Cherian, *A history of resistance*, Frontline, February 24, 2006.
[2] Ibid.

Ties between Hamas and the P.A. improved to a great extent after the second *intifada* began in 2000 following Ariel Sharon's provocative visit to al-Aqsa mosque in Jerusalem. President Yasser Arafat released a large number of Hamas activists that the PA's security forces had arrested on orders from Tel Aviv and Washington. Meanwhile, sections of the Fatah moved closer to Hamas. Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade, a militant wing of the Fatah, supported and joined Hamas in military action against Israel. Hamas also built bridges with radical Palestinian groupings such as the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) led by veteran revolutionary George Habbash to build an alternative to the leadership of the PLO, known as the "Rejection Front". Other members of the Front were the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP) and the Palestine Islamic Jihad (PIJ). In September 1989, Israel declared Hamas as 'illegal' organization.

As the election results show, Hamas ' pragmatic blend of nationalism coupled with asceticism obviously appealed to a broad cross-section of the Palestinian people. As an opposition party, Hamas aggressively focused on issues that the PA put on the back burner- right of return for the Palestinians languishing in refugee camps in neighbouring countries, Jerusalem as the undivided capital of Palestine and the undivided unity of the Palestinian people.

Hamas' armed wing, the Izzeddin al-Qassam Brigades, was created in 1992. it is named after Sheikh Izzeddin al-Qassam, the first important leader of contemporary Arab resistance against imperialism. By 1994, the organization started its military operations with the first suicide bombing in an Israeli city. Israel retaliated with targeted killing of Hamas leaders and activists. One of the most prominent Hamas leaders to be assassinated was Yehiyeh Ayyash, a top leader of Izzeddin al-Qassam Brigades. Israel dropped a one-tonne bomb on the house of Hamas leader Salah Shehada, killing him and 14 others, in July 2002. The other prominent leaders assassinated by Israeli security forces include Ismail Shanab on August 21, 2003, and Sheikh Ahmad Yassin on March 22, 2004. An earlier missile attack on Sheikh Yassin, the wheel chair-bound spiritual leader of Hamas in September 2003, only managed to kill innocent civilians. Abdel Aziz al-Rantissi, who

succeeded Yassin, was assassinated in April 2004. On 23 May, 2006, Israeli troops captured the West Bank supremo of Hamas, Ibrahim Hamed, wanted in Israel for the past eight years for masterminding a series of suicide bombings.[1] The Damuscus-based Khaled Meshaal is the current supreme leader of the organization. The important leaders in the occupied territories include Mahmoud Zahar and Ismail Haniyeh. The latter led Hamas in the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) elections and now is Prime Minister of Palestine. Hamas won 76 seats in the 132-member PLC. The ruling Fatah came second with 43 seats. About 77 percent of the 1.34 Palestinian voters exercised their franchise in the January 25 elections.[2]

Recently, the Hamas-led Palestinian government is going through acute financial crises, the US and EU have cut off all aid to Palestinian government as a part of their effort to pressure the new government toward a more accommodating stance with Israel, while pledging to help meet the crushing humanitarian needs of the Palestinian people through charities and other means. Israel also refused to transfer $55 million in monthly tax revenue it collects for Palestinian Authority. A recently issued statement by Mideast Peacemakers underscored a concern that months of withholding most aids from the Palestine, was harming its people.[3] A few clashes and violence have been reported between Hamas and Fatah activists, which is tarnishing image of the Palestinian freedom struggle and internationally reducing support and sympathy for this noble cause. An already fragile security situation has degenerated into a deadly power struggle between the newly-elected Hamas government and the vanquished Fatah factions that many feel could kill statehood dream and end up in civil war.[4]

[1] The Times of India, New Delhi, Wednesday, May 24, 2006.
[2] John Cherian, *The Rise of Hamas*, Frontline, February 24, 2006.
[3] The Times of India, New Delhi, Thursday, May 11, 2006.
[4] The Times of India, New Delhi, Wednesday, June 14, 2006.

Cinema in Palestine

A General View

First Local Productions in the Arab World

The films of the Lumiere brothers and Edison appeared in the Arab world soon after their debut in Europe in 1896. They were presented to primarily distinguished, affluent audiences - in Morocco, for example, they were shown at the royal palace in Fez, while in Egypt, films were viewed at Alexandria's prestigious Cafe Schneider. The first true big native Arab productions wouldn't start until the 1920s; the groundwork, though, was set with these films.[1]

Fast on the heels of the first presentations, Edison and the Lumiere brothers dispatched camera men to the Arab world, which provided an exotic milieu. North Africa was alluring to French audiences. Palestine was popular as it was the Holy Land and Egypt because of its antiquity. The market for films, meanwhile, soon opened in Arab countries. Cinemas appeared in some cities before World War I, and audiences had the same opportunities to watch the films their counterparts viewed in Europe and America.

Europeans residing in Arab countries launched the first local productions - in Alexandria, the Italians; in North Africa, the French. Around 1906, a resident of Algeria, Felix Meskich shot his first film in Morocco. Such efforts attracted Arabs who wanted to try their hand at this exciting new medium, and they joined with native Europeans to produce films as World War I raged in Europe. These collaborations occurred mainly in Egypt which had an active cultural scene and flourishing theater, but aspiring Palestinian, Syrian and Lebanese filmmakers also joined up with Europeans to produce films.

From this period sprung what we consider the first real native Arab big productions in the 1920s. These first works may have been somewhat feeble compared to Western productions; still they represent the birth of Arab cinema.[2]

The Tunisian, Shamama Chiklin, shot his first film in 1922; his first long film in 1924; and in 1929, Elias Mabruk's *Adventure* became the first Lebanese film. Somewhat earlier, Italian companies had tried to set up a professional film industry production in Egypt

[1] Viola Shafik, *Arab Cinema: History and Cultural Identity*, (The American University Press, Cairo 1998)
[2] Ibid.

during World War I. They were unsuccessful because they didn't focus on the local market. However, during the 1920s local production proved quite successful.

In 1925, the Italian-produced *In Tutankhamun's City* appeared, but the first authentic Egyptian films also appeared in the mid-1920s: one based on the first authentic Egyptian novel "Zaynab;" the other, "Layla" produced and co-directed by the Egyptian actress Aziza Amir.

The advent of sound changed the whole picture, especially in Egypt, which then started industry production of films. With sound, one could present one's own culture via music. This coincided with the, Egyptian music boom in which singers such as Umm Kulthum and Abdel Wahab were already known throughout the Arab world.

Arab cinema boomed and Egypt became a film leader. But it was not just because of the musical. Nationally oriented Egyptian businessmen put money into cinema production. This didn't occur elsewhere because of colonial constraints and economic reasons.

Largely as a result of colonialism, there was no native film industry in other Arab countries, despite attempts. In North Africa, a colonial film industry was started, based mainly in Casablanca. It produced nearly 200 films, but only a few, perhaps six, starred Arabs. Some were meant to compete with Egyptian films; they didn't succeed.[1]

It was with national independence (Syria and Lebanon in the '40s, and North Africa in the '50s and early '60s) that most other Arab countries, except the Gulf States, truly entered the film scene. According to Prof. Viola Shafik, this era could be called the Third Period of Arab Film production.

During this period, nationalist- and socialist-oriented governments tried to establish film productions in order to confirm national identity on screen. This was most notable in Syria, Algeria and Tunisia.

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[1] Ibid.

Arab cinema's fourth period began in the '80s when states started to withdraw from production. The Algerian film industry went bankrupt, while the Egyptian had major financial problems, owing millions of dollars. Films in North Africa, Syria and especially Lebanon began to be mainly co-produced with the west. France, as part of French hegemonial aspirations, is again trying to spread "francophonie" in North Africa by financing films there; it has even financed films in Egypt.[1]

In 1990s in Egypt, where there has been an economic crisis and strong competition from the TV boom, production has fallen from 76 films a year to six, with an average of eight to 15 films a year.

And this is where Arab cinema now stands. Looking at Arab cinema, there are many, many excellent works, but only one film, Muhammad Lakhdar-Hamina's Algerian epic "Chronicle of the Years of Embers" has received true international recognition.

Authorships in Arab Cinema

The notion of authorship is critical in Arab cinema, and in its history, Arab cinema has been enriched by many significant and vital filmmakers. In Egypt during the '30s and '40s, the names that stand out are Muhammad Karim and Ahmed Bedrakhan for musicals and Togo Mizrahi for comedy. After this period, Egypt's main names in film are: Henri Barakat for commercial productions; Sharia Abu Salaam for art films; and Youssef Chahine, Salah Abou Seif and Tewfiq Saleh for realism.

Realism was the phenomenon of the '50s, but in Egypt only one or two films a year were produced that could be called realist. However they were very strong as Egyptian realism was very much connected to Egypt's great writer Naguib Mahfouz, who influenced both Abou Seif and Saleh. Looking at his prodigious amount of screenplays and screen-adapted books, Naguib Mahfouz could also be considered an Arab film author.

In other Arab nations, there are also a number of distinguished film authors. From Syria: Nabil al-Maleh, Muhammad Malas, Usama Muhammad, Dughri Laham and Samia

[1] Viola Shafik, *Arab Cinema: History and Cultural Identity*, The American University Press, Cairo 1998.

Muzikhor. From Tunisia: Najia Binmabruk (who produced one of the most beautiful Arab films on women, *Samah*), Omar Khlefi and Ferid Boughedir (his films *A Summer in La Goulette* and *Halfaoiune, Boy of the Terraces* were very well received). From Algeria: Muhammad Lakhdar-Hamna, Ahmed Rachidi, Merzak Allouache and Farouk Beloufa, who produced just one film, the classic *Nah' la*. From Palestine: Michel Khleifi and Elia Suleiman are most prolific filmmakers and known for characteristically capturing their surroundings.[1]

Along with Chahine, the filmmakers in Egypt most associated with the socially-conscious filmmaking trend are Chadi Abdessalam, for only one feature, *The Mummy* (1969), and Tewfiq Salah, whose early formation also included Victoria College. Salah's work is somewhat limited by the effects of censorship whims but includes, *The Cheated* (1971), *The Rebels* (1969), set in a hospital and dealing with inegalitarian healthcare and authority without responsibility. The film was withheld for some time and only released with cuts.

Syria is one of the few Arab countries to have had indigenous production since the beginning (1928) and to host a regular film festival; however, production is sporadic. Samir Zikra and Oussama Mohommad are two young filmmakers who trained in Moscow and are just beginning their careers. The best known films remain *The Leopard* (1972) and *Mr. Progressive* (1973) by Nabil Maleh; Omar Amiralay's documentary *Daily Life In A Syrian Village* (1974) and Mohamed Malass's *City Dreams* (1984), about a child's entry into the adult world of the 40s.

In several countries production is largely state-controlled: Iraq, for example, produced *Mutawa And Bahia* about an Egyptian peasant trying to persuade Sadat not to sign the Camp David Accord, several films have been set against the war and a few aimed at entertaining a tired population. In other countries production could be greater, but is not: the Kuwaiti Khaled el Seddiq, for example, studied in India and made his first feature in

[1] Malek Khoury, *Origins and patterns in the discourse of new Arab Cinema*, Arab Studies Quarterly, Wntr-Spring, 2005.

1972 (*The Cruel Sea*), about the pre-oil life of pearl divers; his second was *The Wedding Of Zein* (1976), based on the novel by Sudanese writer, Tayeb Saleh.

The Lebanon, on the other hand, has had commercial studio facilities for years and several producers and cinema-owners of Lebanese origin operate throughout Africa and the Arab world. But the work of younger filmmakers has featured the war situation. Documentary-maker Jocelyn Saab has recently completed her first fiction: *Sweet Adolescent Love*. Mai Masri (Palestinian) and Jean Chamoun, on the other hand, have only made documentaries, of which *Fleurs D'ajonc* (Gorse flowers, 1986) is very famous. It shows women in the country, resisting, protecting, nurturing against all odds. Maroun Baghdadi has made both documentaries and the fiction *The Little Wars* in 1985; Borhane Alaouie has also made *Beirut, The Encounter* (1982) and a documentary on the Lebanese Shi'a. In 1980, the Algerian filmmaker, Farouk Belloufa, made *Nah'la*, in which a journalist goes to report on the situation and becomes involved in Beirut life.

Egypt has not been without other 'new generation' filmmakers: for example, Ali Abdekhalek (*Song On The Track* 1983); Daoud Abdelsayed, Atef Tayeb, Achraf Fahmi; and Mohamed Khan, whose work includes an adaptation of H E Bates' *The Darling Buds of May* (*Reported Missing*).

But a real departure for the new socially-aware cinema had taken place in North Africa, when after several decades of French colonialism, Tunisia and Morocco became independent in 1956 and Algeria in 1962. Filmmakers emerged "armed with the philosophy of Frantz Fanon" and the idea that "the political liberation of the third world was going to change the face of humanity" and bring about the "birth of a new man".[1]

The Algerian struggle had been portrayed by Chahine in *Djamila The Algerian* (1958), based on the book by Maitrel Jacques Verges about the trial of resistance fighter Djamila Bouhired. Otherwise there had effectively been nothing and for several years producing the history of colonialism and of the war and celebrating the heroes and martyrs was a major project of the State-run cinema: *Dawn Of The Damned* (1965) and *The Opium And*

[1] Ferid Boughedir, quoted by Viola Shafik, *Arab Cinema: History and Cultural Identity*.

The Baton (1969) by Ahmed Rachedi; *Wind From The Aures* (1966) and *Chronicle Of The Years Of The Brazier* (1974) by Mohamed Lakhdar-Hamina and prize-winners at the Cannes Film Festival.

Recent Algerian films of interest have included *Leila And The Others* (Sid Ali Mazif, 1978) - 'a new feminist image'; *A Wife For My Son* (Ali Ghanem, 1982); *Autopsy Of A Conspiracy* (Slim Riad, 1978); *La Nouba Of The Women Of Mount Chenoua* (1978) and *Songs Of Forgetting* (1980), both by Algeria's only woman filmmaker, Assia Djebar. *The First Step* (1980) and *The Refusal* (1985) by Mohamed Bouamari.

There is also no shortage of comedy - but a complete knockout for the audience (and those in power) was *Omar Gatlato* by Merzak Allouache (1975) about a poor and crowded Algiers neighborhood and Omar, doing an unsatisfying clerical job and so macho that when he is interested in a girl he can't follow through and approach her. Here was not the "new man" but the *actual* man in the street and the film blew fresh air through the cinema and established thinking. Later there was Allouache's *Adventures Of A Hero* (1978); *Ali In Wonderland* (Ahmed Rachedi, 1980) and *The Crazy Years Of The Twist* (Mahmoud Zemmouri, 1982).

In Tunisia Brahim Babai produced the first socially-aware film, *And Tomorrow?* (1971). Hitherto Tunisia's assets were (and remain) the Carthage Film festival (inaugurated by one of the 'founding fathers' of Arab cinema, Tahar Cheriaa) and a thriving amateur film movement (whose founder, Omar Khlifl, made *The Dawn*, 1966 and *The Challenge*, 1985) and through which many filmmakers have passed. An international breakthrough came when *Soleil Des Hyenes* (Ridha Behi, 1977) was presented at the Cannes Film Festival. Abdellatif Ben Amar followed in 1979 with *Aziza* after the equally praiseworthy *Sejnane* (1974), both focussing on the situation of women; in 1982 Taieb Louhichi made *Shadow Of Earth*, and in 1984 Nacer Khemir made *Les Baliseurs Du Desert* in the vein of *1001 Nights*. Ferid Boughedir produced the excellent documentary *Camera Arabe* in 1987, which ended with an appreciation of Nouri Bouzid's first feature. *Man Of Ashes* (1987) has been warmly received for its honest study of masculinity, child abuse and its portrayal of a time in Tunisia when Jews and Arabs lived peaceably together.

In many ways Moroccan filmmakers have the hardest job, trying to produce without real state support or interest. Virtually everyone is on his own and some have only made one film. The first important Moroccan film did not appear until 1970: Hamid Benani's *Traces*, about an orphan boy with a strict Muslim adoptive father. Two years later Souhel Ben Barka made *A Thousand And One Hands* about the situation of dyeworkers, following it in 1975 with *The Petrol War Won't Happen* and in 1982 with *Amok*, a story set against apartheid and liberally based on Paton's 'Cry my Beloved Country'. Ben Barka has now constructed a private but much-needed cinema complex in the country.

The 1970s also saw two Moroccan films of poetic realism - Moumen Smihi's *El Chergui OrThe Violent Silence* (1975) about the problems of a young wife; and Ahmed el Maanouni's *Oh The Days* (1978), a dramatised documentary about peasant life and the imagined promise of France. But in the 80s Moroccan filmmakers have been the most prolific: Mohamed Reggab's *The Hairdresser From A Poor District* (1982); Taieb Sakkiki's Zeft (1984); as well as *The Great Voyage* by Abderrahmane Tazi (1981), Mustapha Derkaoui's *The Beautiful Days Of Scheherazade* (1982) and Jilali Ferhati's *Reed Dolls* (1981), which tells the tragic story of a young girl married against her wishes, widowed while pregnant and deprived of her children by the courts.

Seeing the works of such authors, we must expect more brilliant Arab films and a continuation. A major problem though, for Arab films has been distribution and the lack of strong markets. If this changes, more Arab films should get the recognition they deserve.

Domination of Egyptian Cinema

Within the Arab world, the Egyptian cinema has always dominated the screen with its prolific production of mass audience films on the same lines as those of Hollywood. By 1917 there were 80 cinemas in Egypt and by 1925 an impulse of 'national capitalism' led to the Misr Bank's involvement. The first Egyptian film is considered to be *Leila* by Stephan Rosti (1927). It is a story of love, misuse, betrayal and downfall and was the first

in a long line of melodramas. Its stars, Aziza Amir, became one of the Arab world's successful women producers of whom Assia Dagher is probably the best known.

But Egyptian cinema really took off with the introduction of sound during the 1930s. The radio had already made Egyptian singing stars famous throughout the Arab world and powerful record companies like Odeon and Baidaphone encouraged the singers they had under contract to appear in films which they co-produced.[1] Unused to Egyptian Arabic, the public in other countries (where often slightly different dialects are spoken) went to the cinema to see their favorite stars singing; Umm Kalthoum, Mohammed Abd el Wahab, Leila Mourad reigned supreme to the end of the 1940s.

Abd el Wahab was also a great composer of Arab music and successfully brought to the cinema the rhythms and tempos of jazz and Latin American dance, to lighten the traditional recitative form, this music (with its overture, slow rhythm and duration of up to 20 minutes) was successful and very popular in live performance, but made the films somewhat static- particularly those of Umm Kalthoum, one of its greatest exponents. Other popular singing stars include Chadia (who made 72 films), Abdelhalim Hafez, Farid el Atrache and sister, Asmahan, whose promisingly great career was curtailed by her death in a car crash.

During the 1930s, the Misr Bank further financed production by sending technicians abroad for training and setting up the Misr Studio in 1935. Production increased from six films in 1933 to 17 in 1936. Other studios were installed; artists' salaries rose as in Hollywood and to the musical/comedy genres were added farces and the melodrama, consisting of seduction, implied rape, adultery, murder and suicide. The 'first lady of the screen' was Faten Hamama, who played roles of the orphan/Cinderella type (*A Happy Day* by Mohammad Karim, 1940; *The Immortal Song* by Henry Baraket, 1959), later incarnating the difficult conditions of women (*The Sin,* 1964; *No Condolences For Women,* 1979; *The Night Of Fatma's Arrest,* 1984). In 1953 Hamama starred with an unknown Syrian-Lebanese Christian, Michel Chalroub, in Youssef Chahine's *Raging Sky*. Becoming a Muslim, he changed his name to Omar Sharif and they married, starring

[1] Abbas Fadhil Ibrahim, quoted by Viola Shafik, *Arab Cinema: History and Cultural Identity,*

together in Chahine's *The Black Waters* (1956), then in *Night Without Sleep* (1958) and *River of Love* (1960). With him there appeared for the first time in the Egyptian cinema the erotic hero, with magnetic eyes and tantalizing voice.[1]

Amongst the directors of the early Egyptian period were Niazi Mustapha, whose career began with a huge successful comedy (*Salma's Doing OK,* 1937) and who became noted for action films, (many of which starred Farid Chawqi) and Fatine Abdel Wahab, notably for comedies. But Salah Abou Seif has probably been the most prolific and worked with all the stars and in all the geners. Youssef Chahine calls him 'the most Egyptian filmmaker of all'. Both he and Mustapha made films in the late 40s based on tales about the famed pre-Islamic poet and hero, Antar, son of a chief and a black slave, and his love for Alba. In 1952 Abou Seif made a film which for the first time showed a poor urban neighborhood. *Hassan The Foreman* was based on an idea by its star, Chawqi. He was also one of the directors to work with Naguib Mahfouz- one of Egypt's most important writers. They adapted Mahfouz's 'A Beginning And An End' (*Dead Amongst The Living*, 1960, with Chawqi, Sanaa Gamil and Omar Sharif). In 1970 he made *The Dawn Of Islam*, successful throughout the Arab world, but later a film made in Iraq (*El-Qadisiyya*, 1981) was a major disappointment.

The possibility of a truly cinema, indicated in Kamal Selim's landmark film, *Determination* (1940), did not emerge until the Free Officers' Revolt of 1952 led by Colonel Gamal Abdul Nasser, on whose leadership the Arab world's frustrations and hopes focused for several years.

Palestine Cause in Arab Cinema

The loss of Palestine was felt throughout the Arab world, many countries still experiencing European colonialism. Nasser represented the possibility of a nationalist Arab unity. In 1956 he nationalized the Suez Canal, which provoked an attack by Britain, France and Israel and led to the second Arab-Israeli war. (Among other films about this was Ahmad Badrakhan's *God is With Us*, Egypt, 1956). Some Arab countries became

[1] Abbas Fadhil Ibrahim, ibid.

independent (of France or Britain) during the late 1950s, but Algeria's war of independence, won in 1962, was the most significant. Algiers tended to play a role similar to that of Cairo. But the 'Six Day War', the third Arab-Israeli war, was an enormous military and psychological defeat for Arabs, leaving Israel from 1967 in possession of Jerusalem, the West Bank and the Golan Heights and the Sinai Desert.

In that year the Organisation of Palestinian Cinema was set up, principally to document the struggle. In this period there was a wealth of cultural expression: in particular the poems of Mahmoud Darwish, Samih el Qasim, the Syrian, Adonis, or the songs of Cheikh Imam (Egypt) and Fairuz. Tewfik Salah's *The Dupes* (1967) and Borhane Alaouie's *Kafr Kassem* (1974), both essentially Syrian productions, came out of this experience. *The Dupes* (and later *The Cheated* in 1971 also), was based on a novel by Palestinian writer Ghassan Kanafani, "Men Under The Sun" written in 1965. Through the allegorical story of the attempt of three impoverished Palestinians to get into Kuwait, the false eldorado, it virulently denounces the betrayal of Arab governments and the inability of the leadership of the resistance to give the struggle a correct strategy. Kanafani, a spokesman of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), was killed in 1972 when his boobytrapped car exploded in Beirut.[1] *Kafr Kassem* was based on an actual event in 1956, when 49 villagers returning home from the fields were shot dead because a curfew of which they were unaware had suddenly been imposed by Israeli officers. Slim Riad's *Sana'oud* (Algeria, 1972) also treated the Palestinian issue. Lebanese Christian Ghazi, director of a full length but little known film *A Hundred Faces for One Day* also devoted to Palestine.

The theme of Palestinian resistance has obsessed Arab cinema since 1948. The Palestine dilemma is one of the more frequently visited themes in New Arab Cinema also. Over the last fifteen years, however, more emphasis is put on approaching the question of Palestine through the eyes of its real victims, i.e., peasants, fishermen, working class and

[1] Guy Hennebelle, *Arab Cinema*, Middle East Research and Information Project (MERIP) Reports, No. 52. (November 1976), p-7.

unemployed Palestinians. Equal accent is also laid on exploring internal elements that augment the state of stagnation, which prevents the resolution of the Palestine issue.[1]

Films depicting the realities of exile and living under occupation are increasingly moving away from the abstractions associated with earlier films and towards more vivid depiction of the harsh veracity of isolated towns, villages and refugee camps both inside Palestine and in the surrounding Arab diaspora.

Another important film, which is among the very few in a long time to deal with the actual history of the Palestinian problem and is among the first large-scale productions to deal with the issue is Egyptian filmmaker Yousri Nasrallah's 2004 *Door to the Sun* (Bab Al-Shams). Adapted from a novel by Elias Khoury, one of the Arab world's most acclaimed writers, the film is a four and half hour epical portrayal of the story of the Palestinian exodus. It covers half a century of Palestinian dispossession and resistance through the eyes of two protagonists Younis and his adopted son Khalil. The film is a tale of love, loss, and struggle to reaffirm national identity. It is almost entirely shot on location in Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon and Syria. Once again, the emphasis here is on reintroducing the history of the Palestinian dilemma as a tangible personal story of dispossession and struggle.

All these films appear more concerned with providing a new outlook on one of the most important Arab national predicaments. For the most part, the tendency in New Arab Cinema is to vibrantly explore internal social dynamics that enhance national stagnation.[2]

The first inter-Arab meeting to concern itself, peripherally, with palestine in the cinema was held early in 1970 in Amman, a spin-off from the official conference on radio and TV. Two years later at the international festival of the 'other cinema' in Damascus, a special section "Palestine on Screen" ran concurrently for the five days of the festival, and the critics' prize was awarded to a feature film on the Palestinian resistance. And a year after that, in Baghdad, the International Festival of Films on Palestine ran for five

[1] Ibid.
[2] Malek Khoury, *Origins and patterns in the discourse of new Arab Cinema*, Arab Studies Quarterly, Wntr-Spring, 2005.

days of continuous showings, eight hours a day, of documentaries, shorts and TV films from the Arab world, Europe and the US, while several commercial cinemas in the city showed features with Palestine as their subject.[1]

A Decade of Negligence and Defficulties of Filming

And yet, from 1956 until 1967 no film produced in Egypt, by far the most important centre of arab film industry, had referred to any aspect of the Palestinian question. (And before 1956 the few feature films concerned with the subject, were melodramas in which brave young Egyptian soldiers married weeping Palestinian heroines who promptly settled into Egyptian domesticity and forgot their country.)

At first sight the reason for this extraordinary neglect lasting over a decade would seem to be a lack of popular interest, pessimism and shame on the part of producers and directors. Before this period more than twenty Egyptian or Lebanese full-length films devoted to the subject were nearly all wretched as they were meant to be commercial success.[2] The productions of Egypt's Misr Studios have always been resolutely aimed at making money, rather than art or thought, and it would seem that mass audiences in the Arab world were simply indifferent to the Palestine problem until the rise of the resistance and the romanticisation of the Battle of Karameh (1968). But even if there is some truth in this, it does not appear to be the only reason. During this same period no feature film was produced that seriously treated any of the Egypt's political or social problems. No film for mass audiences dealt with the monarchy, or the British in the Canal Zone, or the agrarian land reform, or even the tripartite attack of 1956 in anything but the most superficial way. The two exceptions are revealing in their subject matter: *Djamila* being about the Algerian war of independence, and *Salaheddin*, although clearly referring to twentieth –century imperialism and Gamal Abdul Nasser's struggle against the new crusaders, was protectively cloaked in the past.

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[1] Soraya Antonius, Journal of Palestine Studies, Vol. 7, No. 2. (Winter, 1978)
[2] Guy Hennebelle, *Arab Cinema*, Middle East Research and Information Project (MERIP) Reports, No. 52. (November 1976)

Censorship, rather than the public's indifference, has been the stumbling block. Of three outstanding feature films on Palestine, not one has been shown in all the Arab countries; one has been commercially shown nowhere at all; and the other two, after being released in Algeria, Syria and Iraq, have had to depend on European film festivals and politically committed cinemas in the various European capitals. Even Yusuf Shahin, the well-known and admired Egyptian director, faced this problem when he made *Al-Usfour* (The Bird) on the 1967 war.

He could not get financial backing for it in Egypt, although his previous films had enjoyed commercial as well as critical success and the film, co-produced by Algeria, was only released in Egypt after the 1973 war and the *Infitah*. Burhan's *Kafr Kassem* dealt a subject which can hardly be construed as implicit criticism of any Arab regime, but the film has been shown only in Algeria, Syria and Iraq, and its director has worked on documentaries ever since. Christian Ghazi's *Mi'at Wijh la Yom Wahed* (A Hundred Faces for a Single Day) was finished in 1971; it has not yet been released in any Arab country. Tewfiq's *Al-Makhdu'un* (The Dupe) also went through the same vein. All the three films have won international awards, while their directors have been reduced to silence. Even a straightforward action film like Algerian Selim Riad's *Sana'oud* (We Shall Return) has sunk like a stone.

Al-Makhdu'un is critical of all Arab countries fifty years ago and specifically of Jordan, Iraq (which nevertheless released the film) and Kuwait. But above all it condemns the attitudes then widespread among Palestinians and its most savage contempt is reserved for the Palestinian leadership, or lack of it, in 1948 and immediately after.

Another reason for this long absence may have been a deep sense of despair about the resistance. Also, until 1968, when a Palestinian film unit was established by Fateh, all available images of Palestine struggle—the Mandate and occupation, the rebellion of 1936 and 1939, the 1948 war and subsequent dismembering of the country, the exile, the 1967 war and the fall of Jerusalem—all were recorded from a foreign point of view, most commonly by the colonizers and attackers themselves. These were primarily concerned with self-justification, so the pictures they give of events in Palestine are seriously

distorted, when they are not downright lies. In collecting these old films, these fragments of a national memory, Palestinian cineastes are faced with a major problem: the Zionists had to deny the existence of the indigenous population, so they absented them from the images of the new colony. Nor were the British mandatory authorities much better: while actively discouraging potentially neutral observers (a role American news reporters might have played in the 1930s) the documentary film stock produced under their control is not only heavily biased in their own favor but blind to aspects and events that were of prime importance to the Palestinians. Nor were independent photographers or newsreel film makers allowed to record the opposition and popular resistance to the mandatory policies.

Even after 1948 there is little archive material. The Egyptians made some documentaries, and UNRWA (UN Relief and Work Agency) complied a great deal on the refugee camps, much of it of outstanding technical quality, but pruned of anything that any UN member state—and the Israel is a member of the UN—might consider 'political'.

Unfortunately no Palestinian or Jordanian recorded the nineteen years on the West Bank, the appalling Israeli attacks on Qibya and Qalqilya, for example, or the official founding of the PLO and the Palestine National Council in Jerusalem, or the pioneering efforts that turned the Ghor into a richly productive oasis. After the Israelis invaded the West Bank and Jerusalem in 1967, and a new wave of young filmmakers began to grapple with the subject, this was to prove a major difficulty.

History and Development of Palestinian Cinema

During the British occupation, Palestine boasted of many cinema halls. This ex-Ottoman province was urbanised and well-provided with schools, and the city of Jaffa, now a suburb of Tel-Aviv, was its centre. The al-Hamra showed Western and Egyptian films, and is still remembered by the older generation. In the mid-1950s, some 150 Egyptian films were exported to Palestine-Israel. There were several attempts to make features in Jaffa. Sequences were shot at the entrance of the old city of Jerusalem (East), *The Dream of a Night* (Ahlam Laylatin, 1948), made by Salah Badrakhan, is supposed to be the first Palestinian film; apparently no copy of it remains. The official 'suspension' of the

Palestinian nation in 1948, date of the first Arab-Israeli war, may lead one to conclude that Palestinian cinema could no longer exist since it is an industry, which demands a basic infrastructure.

Palestinian cinema is only partly a cinema made by Palestinians, but is to a large extent a cinema which was first and foremost preoccupied by the question of the invaded Palestine, the subsequent resistance and the issue of Palestinian self-representation. It is hardly surprising that Arab Palestinians, due to the political circumstances, did not make any use of the audio-visual media before late 1960s. Until then, the representation (and/or misrepresentation) of Palestine and its people was left to others. At the end of the nineteenth century Palestine was one of the first places in the so-called 'Orient' to arouse the interest of Lumière's and Edison's cameramen, who were eager to bring home exotic footage from the 'Holy Land'. As a whole, the early silent period in Palestine was dominated (just as in other Arab countries) by newsreels, travelogues and documentaries exclusively shot by foreigners.[1]

The first 'native' film was not produced by Arabs, however, but by Jewish-Ashkenazi immigrants. It was entitled *Haseret Harishon Shel Palestina/The First Film of Palestine* (1911) and was (most likely) directed by Moshe Rosenberg. Other Jewish newsreels and documentaries followed, but until the early 1960s these films remained a synonym for Zionist propaganda, aiming to represent the Holy Land as a desert made to bloom by its Jewish settlers and confirm the thesis of 'a land without people for a people without land'. Arab Palestinians, if they were to appear in that scenery, represented nothing more than uncivilized nomadic troublemakers. In the Arab world and particularly in Egypt (which developed the first Arab film industry) the Palestinian question became part of two competing anti-colonial discourses during the 1930s: secular nationalist and Muslim fundamentalist. However, it is only after the proclamation of the Jewish state in 1948 and the subsequent flight of more than 900,000 Palestinians that commercial Egyptian cinema produced its first full-length fiction touching the issue, *Fatat Min Filastin/A Girl from*

[1] Viola Shafik, *Cinema in Palestine*, in Middle Eastern and North African Film, edited by Oliver Leaman, London, Routledge, 2001. P-518.

Palestine (1948) by Mahmud zu-l-Fiqar. During the 1960s, before and after the Arab debacle in 1967, other Arab countries (such as Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, Algeria and Tunisia) followed the Egyptian example and produced about a hundred documentaries and fiction films tackling the occupation or dealing in general with Palestine. It was the atmosphere of pan-Arab solidarity prevailing in the 1960s and 1970s that supported this productivity. Some of these solidarity films were highly acclaimed within and even outside the Arab world, including the three Syrian public productions: *Kafr Kassem* (1974) by the Lebanese Borhane Alaouié, *al-Sikkin/The Knife* (1971) by the Syrian Khaled Hamada and *al-Makhdu'un/The Duped* (1973) by the Egyptian Taufiq Salih.

Only in 1968 did Palestinians themselves attempt, under extremely difficult conditions and in the light of the acute political conflict, to make use of cinema. After the defeat of Egypt, Syria and Jordan by Israel during the Six Day War in 1967 and the Israeli occupation of all Palestine, the Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO) decided to take up armed resistance. Thus, born under the auspices of Yassir Arafat's Fatah movement, the first film unit founded in Jordan by Mustafa Abu 'Ali, Hani Jawhariyya and Sulafa Jadallah Samir Nimr, Qassim Hawal and Hassan Abu Ghanima—all of whom handled a camera as others would a gun. Jawahiriyyah was to be killed on the sets in war-torn Lebanon. Most of the first Palestinian filmmakers were trained by Jordanian television, though rather superficially.[1]

The first Palestinian cinema unit, established in Amman after the 1967 war, under the auspices of Fateh, was richer in political commitment than in money, its processing laboratory was a small kitchen and its first film, *No to the Defeatist Solution* (1969), was screened for its sponsors on the rubble wall of an underground shelter. In 1972 its production of *Bi al-Ruh, Bi al-Dam* (With My Soul, With My Blood) was awarded a prize at the Damascus festival, the first time Palestine was mentioned as a nation at a film festival. Other film units were set up by the PFLP in 1971, the PLO 1972 and by the Democratic Front in 1973.

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[1] Viola Shafik, *Cinema in Palestine*, in Middle Eastern and North African Film, edited by Oliver Leaman, London, Routledge, 2001.

Around 1968, groups such as Al-Fateh, the PFLP and the PDFLP began making short films. There were several dozen of these. In 1972 an Association of Palestinian Cinema was formed with the aim of bringing together film makers attached to one or other movements who until then had been working separately. It was inspired in particular by the filmmaker Mustapha Abu Ali and the critic Hassan Abu Ghanima. It proposed channeling the energies of all Arab filmmakers, Palestinian or not, who were working to depict the Palestinian cause.[1]

The Association of Palestinian Cinema, which was succeeded by Palestine films in 1974, could be a determinant pole in the evolution of Arab Cinema. By questioning the existence of Israel, the Palestinian issue is a fundamental dimension of the contemporary Arab world, as much from a political point of view as from a cultural point of view.[2]

The titles of the early Palestinian films are revealing: Mustafa Abu Ali's *No to the Defeatist Solution* (La lil-hall as-silmi. 1969), *With My Soul and My Blood* (Bir-Ruh bid-Dam, 1971), *Fatahland* (al-Arqub, 1972), *Zionist Aggression* (Udwan sahyuni, 1972), *Scenes of Occupation in Gaza* (Ihtilal fi Ghazza, 1973) or Samir Nimr's *Zionist Terrorism* (1973)—all short or medium-length films: documentaries, testimonies, interviews, often didactic, if not naive. But these films intended 'to awaken the conscience of the Arab masses' and to sensitise them to Palestinian culture and history, were in tune with the militant 'interventionist', if not propagandist films in fashion in the 1970s. The best of these cineastes, however, deplored the appropriation of their cause by other Arab filmmakers, whether Egyptian, Iraqi, Syrian, Lebanese or Algerian, who extended substantial returns by claiming that the *fidayeen* (freedom fighters) were invincible supermen.

The near absence of genuine Palestinian feature films can be best explained by technical and human—-and not just the financial—factors. Moreover, documentaries were easier to control politically, whereas features were considered less efficient in this regard. The situation worsened when the PLO and its President, Yasser Arafat, were expelled from

[1] Malek Khoury, *Origins and patterns in the discourse of new Arab Cinema*, Arab Studies Quarterly, Wntr-Spring, 2005.

[2] Ibid.

Beirut in 1982. The centre of Palestinian cinema shifted to the occupied territories, where it extended the faint revival, previously witnessed during the passage from documentary to features at the beginning of the decade. Today, the Palestinian Authority has priorities other than the financing of feature films.

The 1980s and '90s, were marked by a handful of very gifted Palestinian cineastes. Some of them are Israeli citizens whose grandparents chose not to be uprooted in 1948 and remained behind in the new Israeli State. They vote and elect representatives to the Israeli Parliament (*Knesset*). Others have become citizens of Western countries and their films are funded abroad. Whenever Arab governments censor or ban those Palestinian films that do not fit into their political framework, some find an outlet on television at home or in film festivals, mainly in Europe.[1]

Birth of a Distinctive Palestinian Cinema

It was Michel Khleifi, born in 1950, in Galilee who took Palestinian cinema from the documentary form to feature. He is now both an Israeli and Belgian citizen. Khleifi graduated in theatre, radio and TV from the famed Brussels National Higher Institute of the Arts and Performing Arts (INSAS), where he currently teaches cinema. Like most of his compatriots, he made both documentaries and feature films. In 1978, he made *Le Sinai Occupe* (Occupied Sinai) with the Belgian André d'Artevelle—a documentary on Israeli reactions after the Camp David Agreement, which virtually enjoined them to vacate the Egyptian Sinai. With the same co-director, he made *Las Palestiniens et Ia Paix* (French original title, Palestine and Peace, 1979), on the mobilisation of Palestinians for their rights and for the recognition of the PLO as the sole representative of the Palestinians. *Ma'lul celèbre sa Destruction* (French original title, Ma'lul is the name of the village, 1984) was on a Galilean village razed to the ground by the Israeli army in 1948 and its inhabitants chased away. Since then, on Israel's National Day, former

[1] Note: To be fair, one must mention the strong commitment to the Palestinian cause of many Israeli documentarists and/or filmmakers from the late 1970s to the '90s: Yehuda Ne'eman's *The Fellow Travelers* (Magash ha-Kessef 1983), Daniel Waxman's *Khamsin* (1982), Uri Barbash's *Beyond the Walls* (1985), Nurith Aviv's *Kafr Qar'a* (1986, the name of a destroyed village) Amos Gitai's *Riots in Wadi Salib* (Meoraot Wadi Salib, 1979); *The House* (Ha-Bayt, 1980), *Diary of a Campaign* (Yoman sade, 1983), *Esther* (1986), *Wadi, 10 years later* (1991), and also Eyal Sivan's *Israland* and *Remembrance* (Iskor), both in 1991 and, among other Fyal Halfon's *Circus Palestina* (original title, 1999), to name a few.

inhabitants come for a picnic to the spot where their village was wiped off the map. *Mixed Marriages in the Holy Land* (1995), takes a sensitive look at the lives and loves of eight couples, who come from different ethnic and religious backgrounds.

However, it was as a subtle director of features that Khleifi gained international recognition. He began with documentaries: *The Fertile Memory* (Dhakira Khasibah, 1980), is a portrait of two Palestinian women— Farah Antun, a 50-year-old widow who lives in Nazareth in Galilee, and Sahar Khalifa who lives in Ramallah in occupied Trans-Jordan. The latter is also a prominent novelist and at least two of her novels are masterpieces translated in many Western languages: *Chronicle of the Barbarian Fig tree* (As-Subar, 1975) and *Diary of an Unrealistic Woman* (Mudhakirat Imra'ah Ghair Waqi'iyya, 1980). But it is in the splendid feature film, *Wedding in Galilee* ('Urs al-Jalil, 1987), that Khleifi really displayed his aesthetic and thematic control. In Galilee, part of the Israeli State since 1948, a Palestinian *mukhtar* (mayor) has to ask the Israeli governor's permission to marry his son. This is accepted, on condition that the governor and his staff attend the feast (obviously in order to uncover terrorists). The mayor accepts, despite the turmoil in his village, and the wedding finally takes place. Though in love with his ravishing bride, the young bridegroom is struck by impotence on the wedding night, a symbol both of the submission of young people to Arab patriarchal order and to military occupation.[1] This powerful allegory on oppression and the reciprocal fascination between two peoples (for instance, the Hebrew and Arabic languages are very close, stemming from the same Semitic roots) offers the most beautiful work ever inspired by the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. It dwells both on a possibility of fragile Arab unity and a tactful but firm plea for the reconciliation of two peoples, who have much in common. One scene is particularly symptomatic: it is very hot in the mayor's vine-laden garden and a young and beautiful Israeli woman officer loses consciousness. She is attended to in the Palestinian women's quarters; the women massage her, make her try on their embroidered gowns, give her tea, fruit juices and cakes, and when she awakens, it is as if she is in her own home.

[1] Rosen, M, *Wedding in Galilee*, Cineaste, 1988, 16 (4).

Though a trifle wordy, his *Canticle of the Stones* (Nashid al-hajar. 1990), focuses on the encounter of two Palestinians, a girl from Galilee and her friend from Trans-Jordan, who had met and fallen in love in Jerusalem at the beginning of the 1970s. The man was actively involved in the resistance and was sentenced to life imprisonment by the Israelis. The girl, grieving bitterly, settles in the US. They meet again 15 years later during the first Intifada and their passion flares up again...

Equally strong is his *Tale of the Three Jewels* (Hikayat al-Jawahir at Thalatha, 1995), in which he places the traditional imagery of the *Arabian Nights* (Alf Layla wa Layla) in the service of modernity, mixing the epic with the documentary style of politics and war. Here, Khleifi aims at going beyond the usually poor and uniform political rhetoric on the revolt against the occupation. Amidst the first Intifada, when the bloody 'war of stones' or street guerilla warfare raged between the Palestinians and the Israeli occupation army, a young boy, whose father is in jail and brother underground, falls in love with a gypsy girl from his neighbourhood. She is the leader of a group of children. To win her love, he must find three jewels missing from the girl's family necklace. His quest is inextricably intertwined with the daily struggle for life and liberation among the people of Gaza, their dreams, poetry, violence and death.

Though less well-known than Michel Khleifi or Elia Suleiman, Rashid Masharawi is widely considered to be one of the best Palestinian filmmakers working today. Born in 1962 in the Shatti refugee camp in the Gaza Strip, Masharawi has made close to a dosen films, a number of which have met with considerable success in various international film festivals. His first feature, or rather docu-feature film, *Curfew* (Hatta Ishaarin Aakhar, 1993) won the Golden Prize in the 1993 Cairo Film Festival and was shown at the Cannes Festival as part of Critics' Week. His second full-length film, *Haifa* (1996) was screened at Cannes in the framework of 'A special Look', which presents films selected by the festival's directors but not shown in the official competition. His most recent feature film, *Ticket to Jerusalem* (Tathkara li al-Quds, 2002), was screened at the New Directors/New Films Festival in New York in 2003.[1] He was the first Palestinian filmmaker to work almost exclusively in the occupied territories, and his first feature

[1] Nurith Gertz, *The Films of Rashid Masharawi*, Journal of Palestine Studies, No. 1, (Autumn 2004).

film, because it was made with a Palestinian-based production house, has been called the 'first truly Palestinian film'[1] *Travel Document* (Watha'iqat Safar, 1987), is the much-coveted piece of paper without which Palestinians cannot work, or move outside their perimeter and without which they are nothing; and *House or Houses* (Dar aw Dur, 1991), on a Palestinian from Gaza, who was once a metal-smith but lost his livelihood when the Israelis destroyed his shop while widening the street. He now works as a housecleaner in Israel. He has seven children and has to try daily to go to work in Israel without ever being sure that he will be allowed to enter. *Haifa* (a Palestinian-Dutch-French co-production), bears the name of Israel's third most important city situated on the Mediterranean, features a vagabond in rags, Nabil, who is nicknamed Haifa, who roams the streets of Gaza and could be taken for a madman, he shouts "Haifa! Acre! Jaffa!". In fact, he is just obsessed by a burning desire to return to the city whose name he bears even as the drama of the refugees in the camps haunts him. Once more, no pathos, only the simple ordeal of all uprooted refugees wherever they are in the world. In 1997, Mashrawi shot a short film, *Rabab*, on the silent and passive Rabab, a woman in jail, a jail inside a woman. He shot *A Ticket to Jerusalem* (Tazkarat lil-Quds) in 2002 during the second Intifada, the story of a stormy love on a background of the couple's involvement to back the survival strategies of the refugees in that camp.

Another wunderkind is Elia Suleiman, an Israeli Christian Arab, like Khleifi, born in Nazareth in 1960. As a self-taught filmmaker, he lived in New York from 1982 to 1993, where he made two polemical, documentaries, one entitled, *Introduction to the End of an Argument* (original title, 1991), and another on the representation of Arabs on television and in Hollywood productions. After a stay in London, he settled in East Jerusalem where the Palestinians are in the majority. His *Homage by Assassination* (Takrim bi al-Qatil, 1992) was part of five short films made by five Arab filmmakers, called *The Gulf War and After* (al-Khalij wa ba'd, 1991-92). At the Carthage Film Festival in Tunisia, it stunned the audience. Sulayman, then in a 'cinematic self-exile' and in a phase of 'theoretical sublimation', was asked to make a film on the Palestinians. What emerged was a completely unstructured work on film, shot overnight inside his New York

[1] Samir Farid, *Palestinian Cinema in the Conquered Land* (in Arabic), Cairo: Public Administration for Culture, 1997, quoted by Nurith Gertz in JPS, No. 1, Autumn 2004.

apartment, made up of clips, photographs, newsreels, interviews, etc. Suleiman's contribution lies in avoiding a stereotyped image of Palestinians.

His next film and first feature, *Chronicle of a Disappearance* (Sijil Ikhlifa, 1996), an Euro-Israeli-US production (a Prize in Venice) is much more accessible. It is a quest for Palestinian identity made through a fragmented narration. Set in his native town of Nazareth, it features his joint family and his friends—Jamal who runs the souvenir shop 'Holy Land', Abu Adnan, the eccentric neighbor, all of whom lead ordinary yet surreal lives. These dreamers talk a lot but do not signify much. Yet when they are silent, that silence says a great deal about their endurance. Suleiman himself is the main thread in the film, caught in a dilemma between his homeland and himself. He is both narrator and mediator, teller of the story and a part of it. Here, he juxtaposes his own burlesque universe and sense of caricature with the ironclad credo and clichés on violence, sparing neither the Israeli occupants, nor the bias and weaknesses of his own people. An anecdote suggests the tone of this kind of ideological *opera buffa*: after getting permission from the Israeli police to dress up Palestinian actors as Israeli policemen urinating on the Israeli Law Court, on the set, he had to persuade real Israeli policemen that their colleagues' were not threatened by the crowd of Palestinians present, who were part of the film crew.

In 2001, Suleiman made a cold, though aesthetic shoestring 16-minute film, *Cyber Palestine* (original title), that features an ordinary Palestinian couple in their one-room flat. There, a man is stuck to his computer next to a pregnant woman, who reads on the Annunciation and the Nativity (of Christ) in the New Testament. 'Joseph' and 'Mary' of today then leave for Bethlehem where she wants to give birth. But they are interrogated at the border—though they are Israeli citizens—the man revolts and is taken away. Their only possession is a box containing a key that opens their house on the Palestinian soil, while the final shots show the Gaza strip in revolt. At Cannes 2002, his *Chronicle of Love and Pain* (Ila Dhikri Abi) tackles with the dramatic fate of the Palestinians by using derision and humour far from any kind of manicheism. The author was awarded the Special Prize.

A Palestinian cineaste and a Muslim Israeli citizen, 50-year-old Ali Nassar graduated in cinema from Moscow University in 1981, became a photo-journalist in Haifa where he made a television documentary—*The Story of Ali's City* (Hikayat Madinat Ali) in 1983, and founded a theatre group. His first feature film, *The Baby-Sitter* (al-Mardha'ah, 1993), is the story of an infertile Israeli couple who adopt a Romanian orphan. It is later revealed that the child was born of a brief encounter between a Rumanian girl and a Palestinian student in Bucharest who had left her overnight. It is a sarcastic allegory on the backfiring of the Law of Return (for the Jews to Palestine). His *The Milky Way* (Darb al-Tabbanat, 1997), a powerful and captivating film, is set at a time, when the direct military rule in Galilee after the 1967 war is about to be lifted by Israel. In the Arab community, the patriarchal order is still embodied by the traditional figure of the mayor, who is the Israeli governor's puppet. In this film of anti-heroes, the inhabitants of a rather wealthy village hold their tongue in spite of the abuses of both the Israelis and their omnipotent mayor's cronies. It takes a supposedly possessed young man, a traumatised girl, who was raped by a Palestinian villager, and nationalist leftists to break the villagers' passivity.

Hanna Elias, born in Palestine and later a student in the USA, is the author of a promising 34-minute fiction film, *The Mountain* (al-Jabal, 1991). This critical, humorous and well-photographed work looks at patriarchal mores in a charming Palestinian mountain village, through the case of a present-day girl whose family opposes her marriage to her beloved. Her old grandmother, witness to so many matrimonial tragedies in her long life, finally helps the girl elope and avoid the curse of an arranged marriage. He has recently completed *The Olive Harvest* (Mausam al Zaytun, 2002), a sensuous story set in the blooming Palestinian modernity.

Mai Masri, a Palestinian-American woman filmmaker born in 1959, was a cinema student at San Francisco University in the US. She is mainly a documentarist and her work is closely associated with her husband's, the Lebanese director Jean-Khalil Chamoun, with whom she founded the Nour Productions unit. Together, they jointly made three powerful docu-features in the 1980s, on the Civil War in Lebanon. Her own films, include *The Children of Fire* (Awlad an-Nar, 1990) on the life of children during the first Intifada in Nablus, her native city; *Hanan Ashrawi, A Woman of Her Times* (Hanna Ashrawi, Imra'ah fi asrha, 1995), a portrait of an outstanding spokeswoman of

the PLO at the time of the 1993 Palestinian Israel peace Agreement—a woman who reconciles her family life with political responsibilities (she was later the Palestinian Minister of Culture) and with her work as a writer; and another film, *The Children of Shatila* (Awlad Shatila, 1998), shot in the eponymous refugee camp of Shatila in Beirut, notorious for the massacre of Palestinians in 1982, during General Ariel'Sharon's occupation.

Other prolific and distinctive filmmakers from Palestine whose works have earned local and international appreciations and various awards include: Mohamad Bakri, who is well-known for his award-winning documentary, *Jenin Jenin* (2002), Hany Abu Assad, who's *Paradise Now* was Oscar-nominated for the award of this year's best foreign films with other contenders like *Munich* and *Good Night and Good Luck.*[1] And Omar Al-Qattan, known for *Al-Aouda* (Going Home, 1996), and *Ahlam fi Faragh* (Dreams and Silence, 1991). Others, Hanna Musleh, Sobhi Zobaidi, Hasan Nizar, Yahya Barakat, Ismail Habash, Darwesh Abu al-Rish—to name a few.

National Question on Palestinian Cinema

Feted by critics and public alike, Palestinian cinema remains a culture in exile, an industry without a home. In 2002, the Hollywood establishment rejected Suleiman as an Oscar contender on the grounds that 'Palestine is not a country'. At this year's Golden Globes, *Paradise Now*, was described as a 'Palestinian Film'. Oscar Academy's official website said "the film is from Palestine" which resulted in complaints that no such country exists; fudging the issue, the Oscar night referred it as a picture from "the Palestinian Territories"[2]

Palestinians have no distribution networks, Palestinian movies are made entirely for export proposes, inside Palestine cinema barely exists. One can only just say with certainty that there is a cinema, the Al-Qassaba, in Ramallah, and nothing anywhere

[1] *The Delhi Times*, a supplement of The Times of India, Monday 20 February 2006.
[2] Xan Brooks, *We Have No Film Industry Because We Have No Country*, The Guardian, Wednesday, 12 April 2006, also, *The Delhi Times*, Monday 20 February 2006.

else.[1] "And this is probably the biggest problem", says actor and director, Mohamad Bakri, "we are not reaching the people we are talking about. For me it is painful, because obviously I want my people to see my filoms"[2]

Palestinian directors have a harder task than most—yet their talent shines through.

[1] Edward Fox, *New Statesman*, Vol. 130, Monday, 1 October 2001.
[2] The Guardian, Wednesday, 12 April 2006.

Palestinian Documentaries

Introduction to Documentaries & its Makers

Emergence of Documentary

In the beginning, the form of the film was *actual* as distinct from *fictional*—it analysed natural growth or movement and when projected, it put together moving phenomena. Today in common parlance, the word 'film' has come to connote the cinema images on the screen, more from the time playwrights and artistes adopted cinematography of motion picture production as the broad base of fiction, drama and fantasy. Alongside this mainstream, the newsreel, alone, remained true, in essence, to the first traditions of the cinema—it has always registered and projected actuality. But aside of this fidelity to its ancestral aspect of the filmic contribution it has made to the archives of twentieth century history, the newsreel can lay little claim to originality in film art. It has appeared regularly in the same, conformed tradition and pattern of presentation.

About the middle of the 1920s, however, a new school of film art came into existence and revived the first form of the film: the *actual*, in art form. This school was devoted to film production based on the 'creative treatment of reality'. The factual film took the name of "avant grade," "Pure Cinema," "Experimental Cinema" or "Documentary". The word "Documentary" seems to have gained popular preference and great usages.[1]

France, Russia and Germany were leading in the early years of documentary progress. Its adolescence was nourished by the Soviet directors and men of talent, interested in film technique in Great Britain. By the middle of the 1930s, the Documentary had grown into a precocious adolescent and some of its aspects and traits began to influence even the entertainment form of film.[2]

In the rise of the Documentary Films, Britain has played a major role and contributed some of the most outstanding Short Films. Realism, to use a very ambiguous word for the lack of a better one—had already been brought to the screen by Flaherty in his most pictorial and romantic films like *Nation of the North* and *Moana*. They were different to the usual screenplay films in that the camera went right to far-off locations,

[1] Jag Mohan, *Documentary Films and National Awakening*. Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, New Delhi. 1990.
[2] Ibid.

predominantly primitive and natural. Flaherty brought to the screen the 'exotic'. Flaherty was a master-craftsman in semi-documentary screenplays of this genre. Only Eisenstein was in equal, if not a greater master at such technique of which the world saw his best creation, *Que Viva Mexico*, in its most mutilated form, and in which form too, it was a masterpiece.[1]

But before Flaherty was invited to enter the arena of British Documentary, Grierson had laid the foundations with the staunch cooperation of Sir Stephen Tallents of the Empire Marketing Board. It is difficult for anyone except a Britisher to say why of all bodies; the Empire Marketing Board took first to the sponsorship of Documentaries. But such a thing can happen only in England. It did produce screenplays too. Within twenty years of the first Documentary, launched under the aegis of this Board, the British Documentary had attained unexpected heights of success, when it became a medium for diffusion of news and dissemination of propaganda during the Second World War.[2]

Beginning of Documentary in Palestine

It is mentioned earlier that the Arab Palestinians, due to the political circumstances, did not make any use of the audio-visual media before late 1960s. Until then, the representation or misrepresentation of Palestine and its people was left to others. But the documentaries in Palestine started, as a whole, just as in other Arab countries, in the early silent period by newsreels, travelogues and documentaries exclusively shot by foreigners.[3]

Ahlam Laylatin (The Dream of a Night, 1948) by Salah Badrakhan is supposed to be the first Palestinian documentary; apparently no copy of it remains now. The first Palestinian cinema unit was established in Amman after the 1967 war under the auspices of al-Fatah. *No to the Defeatist Solution* (La lil-Hall as-Silmi, 1969) by Mustafa Abu Ali, was its first film. Around 1968, groups such as the PFLP and PDFLP and Fatah began making short films.

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[1] Jag Mohan, *Documentary Films and National Awakening*.
[2] Ibid.
[3] Viola Shafik, *Cinema in Palestine*, in *Middle Eastern and North African Film*, edited by Oliver Leaman, London, Routledge 2001.

Reviews of the Documentaries

Since the Embassy of the State of Palestine in New Delhi had some problems in importing resistance documentaries from Palestine, I could get only a few movies (about 10) to watch. Although I found writings on many documentary, drama and fiction films, which helped me a lot in understanding those movies and their aesthetic aspects. There were article that placed before me a familiar idiom of criticism and aesthetic language. Here is a brief sketch of the documentaries that depict Palestinian struggle and resistance and portray true lives of Palestinian masses under the Israeli terror. These are the movies either directed or produced by Palestinians, within the territory or from abroad as most of the Palestinian filmmakers are living exilic lives. Though these two conditions; Palestinian & documentary, have excluded many acclaimed and prize-winning films on Palestinian cause by Palestinians and non-Palestinians like, *Private,* (2004) by Saverio Costanzo an Italian director, *Promises* (2001) by Goldberg, Bolado and Shaprio; and Palestinian fictions *Olive Harvest* (2003) by Hanna Elias, *Wedding in Galilee* (1987) by Michel Khleifi, *Ford Transit* (2002) and *Nazareth* (2000) by Hany Abu Asad, and *Divine Intervention* (2002) by Elia Suleiman, to name a few.

The reviews do not touch the technical, critical or aesthetic aspects of the films; as it requires expertise. Only the central characters, themes, narrations and pedagogical scopes of the films have been discussed briefly.

A Boy Called Muhammad, released in 2001, directed by Najjar, Najawa. In Arabic with English subtitles.

For *A Boy Called Muhammad*, Najwa Najjar met a young boy from the Qalandia refugee camp, which lies near the Israeli checkpoint that separates Ramallah from the rest of Palestine. Thousands of Palestinians cross this obstacle trying to move between Jerusalem and Ramallah. This young boy knows of the destroyed village from which his family originates, and he relays with hope the stories of his mother and grandmother and draws pictures of a better life in a village he could call home, helping himself to forget the reality of the refugee camp.

Najawa Najjar currently lives in Jerusalem. She has written and directed a number of documentaries and is currently in production on her first feature-length film.

Ali and his Friends [*'Ali wa Ashabhu*] released in 2000 and directed by Subhi Zobaidi. In Arabic with English subtitles, its duration is 12 minutes.

Subhi Zobeidi believes that dreams come true for those who wish them and hope is redeeming even in the most abject of situations. Ali and his Friends from the Jalazone refugee camp near Ramallah have a dream and they make it come true. They will take the rest of their dreams one at a time.

Al-Zobaidi, Subhi was born in Jerusalem in 1961 and grew up in Jalazon refugee camp near Ramallah in the West Bank. In 1986 he received his B A from Birzeit University and received an M A in Cinema Studies in 1994 from NYU. In 1996 he returned to the West Bank, where he founded refugee camp productions which aims at offering support for local filmmaking. He has made several documentary and fiction features and many short films that have been shown internationally.

All That Remained, released in 2005 and directed by Nada el-Yassir. In Arabic with English subtitles.

The Negev desert, which accounts for 60% of historic Palestine, has been peopled by Arab Bedouins for countless generations. With the creation of Israel in 1948, the Bedouin population has been displaced into seven townships or living in one of 46 unrecognized villages without the comfort of running water, electricity, education, or medical aid. The film follows the current day situation of Bedouins in the Negev, which forms a particular segment of Palestinian society, as they struggle for recognition of their land that is intimately linked with their identity.

El-Yassir, Nada left the field of neurophysiology for cinema several years ago. She presently lives and makes films in Nazareth.

Amani [My Dream] was released in 2002 and directed by Ismail Habash. In Arabic with English subtitles, its duration is 17 minutes.

In this understated short piece, Habash allows children talk about their dreams; some claim not to dream, others speak disarmingly cheerfully of the violent images that come to them in their sleep, while still more appear to find in sleep a world of tranquility and beauty scarcely imaginable in their waking surrounds of the occupied West Bank in the Intifada.
Habash, Ismail works as a camera man in Ramallah.

Ashes, was released in 2001, directed by Rima Essa, in Arabic with English subtitles. Its duration is 37 minutes.

This short film by Palestinian citizen of Israel, Rima Essa, focuses on the plight of the villagers of the Palestinian village of Bir'am, expelled by Israel during the establishment of the Zionist state. Initially the villagers were informed that their 'removal' from their ancestral and national homes and expulsion from what became the state of Israel, was to be for a matter of only 15 days. However, it soon became apparent that Israel had no more intention of allowing these Palestinians to return home than they did the other 750,000 expelled in the creation of the state. Essa's study examines the gaps that separate three generations of Bir'am refugees and seeks to understand the way in which powers of forgetting, remembering, bitterness and despair combine to keep villagers longing for a physical as well as a moral restitution to what is rightfully theirs.

Children of Fire [*Atfal Jebel Nar*] released in 1990, directed by Mai Masri. In Arabic with English subtitles, its duration is 50 minutes.

When the filmmaker Mai Masri returned to her hometown of Nablus after a fourteen year absence, she discovered a new generation of Palestinian fighters: the children of the Intifada. Winner of the Award of Public at the Freminin Pluriel Festival, *Children of Fire*

captures their courageous story on film and paints a daring portrait of the first Palestinian uprising. Brought together by dispossession, despair and hope for a better future.

Masri, Mai originally from Nablus, is based largely in Lebanon. Born in 1959, she received a Bachelor's degree in film production from San Francisco State University. She has directed and produced several award-winning films that have been broadcast and shown internationally. With her husband, filmmaker Jean Chamoun she set up Nour productions and MTC.

Children of Shatila [*Atfal Shatila*] was released in 1998 and directed by Mai Masri. In Arabic with English subtitles, its duration is 50 minutes.

Many people first became aware of the Shatila refugee camp in Lebanon after the shocking and horrific Sabra-Shatila massacre that took place there in 1982. Located in Beirut's 'belt of misery', the camp is home to 15,000 Palestinians and Lebanese who share a common experience of displacement, unemployment and poverty. Fifty years after the exile of their grandparents from Palestine, the children of Shatila attempt to come to terms with the reality of being refugees in a camp that has survived massacre, siege and starvation. Director Mai Masri focuses on two Palestinian children in the camp: Farah, age 11 and Issa, age 12. When these children are given video cameras, the story of the camp evolves from their personal narratives as they articulate the feelings and hopes of their generation.

Curfew, released in 1994, directed by Rachid Masharawi. In Arabic, its duration is 75 minutes.

A unique dramatization of the human cost of the Arab-Israeli conflict. Set during an endless curfew in a quiet Palestinian quarter of occupied Gaza. *Curfew* tells the story of a day in the life of a Palestinian family living in a refugee camp on the Gaza Strip. It takes place in 1993, just before peace negotiations began. Shot in a naturalistic style with the feel of a documentary, *Curfew* puts a human face on headline news.

The film opens with a high-angled long-shot view of the city of Gaza, after which the camera descends to a refugee camp. This is a very static camera, its immobility emphasizing the absence of motion in the camp, which is shown as an unpeopled, lifeless world, bare and strange, a place of exile. The camera then zeros in on a small playground where some children are playing, proceeds from there to a narrow apartment into which a family is crowded, and remains stuck there for the rest of the film.

The plot of the film is simple. The family sits in its small, cramped house. A postman gives a letter to a young son of the family, Radar, from his brother, who is in Germany, and Radar runs home with the news. The brother's letters like those of so many refugee sons working abroad, arrive periodically from distant exile seems an extension of the family's exile depicted in the film, which has been shrunk to this one camp and to this one small apartment. While Radar is reading the letter aloud, but is interrupted by the sound of an Israeli patrol truck announcing an immediate curfew. If up to now the camp's alleyways were more or less empty, now they are utterly deserted. And if before it was possible to leave the cramped house, now it is out of question. The result is a heightened sense of claustrophobia and suffocation, an inside with no outside. What is happening outside can only be guessed at from the sounds (shots, pursuits, house demolitions) or from what Radar reports as he peeps from an aperture high in the wall. The family leaves the house only once during the entire film, for a military search, and then the narrow apartment seems a protected nest compared to the darkness outside, the wall against which the people are lined up, the fear of the Israeli soldiers.

The family's situation, then, worsens as the space diminishes, from being crammed into the house, to being placed under the curfew, to being immersed in total darkness when the electricity is cut. Later the apartment fills with tear gas, and the family is not only in darkness but their eyes are shut tight against the stinging gas. Later still, soldiers break into the neighbor's house, expel the residents, and blow it up. When Akram, a younger son, complains "eat, sleep, prison, gas, we can't do a thing", his father replies, "Do you want to die? Do you want to go to prison? Do you want the house you live in to be destroyed?" Indeed, at the end of the film one of the family's older sons, Raji, is hauled

off to prison. Apparently every situation can be worse, the only consolation being that the previous was also terrible ("what difference does it make?" says one of the brothers about the curfew, "we were not doing anything anyway") or that the future may be even more terrible ("there are people who have lost their sons, and they are not crying," says the father to the mother, who weeps when her son is taken away).

The feeling of inescapable imprisonment with the camp is reinforced by the film's circular structure: it both starts and ends with a long shot of Gaza; it begins with the postman delivering the letter from the son in Germany and ends with the reading of the letter is completed; a curfew is announced early in the film and another is announced at the end. Time in the camp has stopped; the lives of the protagonists have gone nowhere.

With most of the film set within a single dwelling, the family home becomes a microcosm of Palestinian life under Israeli occupation--a life characterized by claustrophobia, tedium, and fear. Although *Curfew* was obviously made on a tight budget, director Rashid Masharawi elicits good performances from his actors, who persuasively play out the dynamics of a family unit shaped by the burden of an ailing father, sibling rivalries, political differences, and the frustrations of a disgruntled teenager. The film also suggests the stifling effects of the occupation on the development of Palestinian culture; in particular, the spiritual paralysis produced by the feeling of being hemmed in without any options.

Mashrawi, Rashid was born in 1962 in Shati refugee camp in the Gaza Strip. In 1996, he founded the Cinema Production and Distribution Centre in Ramallah where he currently lives. Mashrawi has directed a number of award-winning films that have received international acclaim. He considered one of the musketeers of Palestinian cinema in line with Khleifi and Suleiman.

Debris [*Radm*] released in 2001, directed by Shehada, Abdel Salam. In Arabic with English subtitles, its duration is 18 minutes.

In *Debris*, Abdel Salam Shehadeh from Gaza spent time with a number of Gazan farming families who have such a vibrant relationship with the land that they name the trees they plant after their sons and daughters. The problem with this land is that it is located in the area that separates the Israeli forces from the Palestinian community.

A Palestinian family's land, once covered with olive trees and crops, has been bulldozed by Israeli forces. *Debris* is not simply the story of a farmer whose house is bulldozed and whose farm is destroyed. *Debris* is a fantasy of dreams to fly far away in order to touch the sky, to break out of the despair of reality. *Debris* is the story of an entire generation who inherited humiliation and ignominy. It is a story of men crying...

Shehadeh, Abdel Salam is from Rafah in Gaza, Palestine. He has worked in television production and media and as a camera and sound technician, and has worked in various capacities for international news crews. Director for more than 15 documentaries, some of them had good impact in many international festivals.

East to West, released in 2005, directed by Muthaffar, Enas. It is a short film made in Palestine and Switzerland.

As the "wall" is being built nearby, the director's family must move in order to evade the segregation that its construction will create. This short film chronicles the last day of the family's move, as they pack up the last objects that remind them of the many years they remained at their home.

Muthaffar, Enas was born in Jerusalem in 1977 and is now based in London. In 2000, she graduated from the Higher Institute of Cinema in Cairo, Egypt, with BA in film directing. Besides writing and directing several short films during her studies, she had also worked with several Palestinian and Egyptian film directors as assistant director and script supervisor. She is currently doing her MA in feature film screenplay.

Fertile Memory [*Addhakira Al- Khasba*] released in 1980, directed by Michel Khleifi. It is a fiction-documentary film, in Arabic. Its duration is 99 minutes.

Written in 1978, *Fertile Memory* was the first film to be made by a Palestinian director inside Israel's pre-1967 borders. Neither a documentary nor a feature film, *Fertile Memory* recounts the lives of two very different Palestinian women: Farah Hatoum, a widow living with her children and grandchildren, and Sahar Khalifeh, a West Bank novelist. Their differing opinions and differing lives play an important role in underlining their shared status as Palestinians under Israeli rule, and as women in a male-dominated society. Yet despite these contrasts, both the mother and intellectual share the same struggle for freedom and dignity.

Khleifi, Michel a well-known director from Palestine, was born in Nazareth in 1950. In 1970 he traveled to Belgium where he studied television and theatre directing. He changed the Palestinian film scenario. His film *Wedding in Galilee* (1987) won the International Critics Prize at the Cannes Film Festival.

Frontiers of Dreams and Fears [*Ahlam al-Manfa*] released in 2001, directed by Mai Masri. Shot in Lebanon and Palestine. In Arabic with English and French subtitles, its duration is 56 minutes.

Award-winning Palestinian filmmaker Mai Masri's most recent work traces the delicate friendship that evolves between two Palestinian girls: Mona, a resident of the economically marginalized Beirut refugee camp and Manar, an occupant of Bethlehem's Al-Dheisha camp under Israeli control. The two girls begin and continue their relationship through letters until they are finally given the opportunity to meet at the border during the Israeli withdrawal from South Lebanon. When the intifada suddenly erupts around them, both girls face heart-breaking changes in their lives.

As in Masri's earlier films, *Children of Shatila* (1998) and *Children of Fire* (1990), this too focuses on the difficult plight of Palestinian children while exhibiting an optimism that defies their unbearable circumstances. *Frontiers of Dreams and Fears* was produced in association with ITVS.

See also *Children of Fire* above by Mai Masri.

Going Home [*al-'Aouda*] released in 1996, directed by Omar al-Qattan. In Arabic and English with French or English subtitles, its duration is 50 minutes.

In late 1947, Palestine is a country in the throes of war between Palestine's Arabs and Jews. The British government is officially responsible for maintaining law and order but it quickly loses control and decides to abandon the country on May 15th 1948, leaving behind a war which was to lead to the tragic dispossession of over three quarter million Palestinian Arabs of their homes and the creation of the State of Israel.

One man, Major Derek Cooper witnessed those final days of the mandate as an officer in the British Army, responsible for the protection of the Arab city of Jaffa. His experiences there marked him so deeply that he continued to work on behalf of the Palestinian refugees for most of his life. *Going Home* tells the story of Cooper's return to Palestine/Israel in the summer of 1995. In an effort to capture the past, Cooper and his wife revisit famous sites and talk to Palestinians and Israelis about the events of 1948. This film is a compelling look back at the beginning of a conflict that would last for generations to come.

Omar al-Qattan originally from Jaffa, lives in the UK, where he has worked as a director and producer of features and documentaries. Al-Qattan is the co-founder of A M Qattan Foundation, and the director of its Culture and Science Programme. *Dreams and Silence* (Ahlam Fi Faragh) is his well-known documentary.

Haifawi, was released in 2000 and directed by Darwish Abu al-Rish. In Arabic, its duration is 52 minutes.

This documentary film chronicles the lives of an elder Palestinian generation who decided to stay in their homes in Haifa after 1948. The film's subjects are women and men who are over seventy, still living in Haifa. The camera lens records the narration of

their personal experience through *al-Nakba* and the 1948 war, when their families were exiled and driven from their homeland.

Darwish Abu al-Rish is a filmmaker from Haifa.

Hopefully for the Best, released in 2004, directed by Raed Helou. In Arabic with English subtitles, its duration is 42 minutes.

Director Raed Helou describes Ramallah during the tense winter before the US invasion of Iraq as "calm, like snow on graves, and angry as an old woman who has lost everything." The curious monotony of life during an uprising is the subject of the peripatetic camera that roams the rain-slashed streets of Ramallah. In brief encounters with Ramallah's street sweepers, bakers and hummus makers, anxiety simmers below the surface, but everyone seeks a bit of 'normal' life in the early morning, before political realities take hold of the day.
Winner:
Best Film - Ramallah Film Festival, 2004
Silver Award - Jerusalem Film Festival, 2004

Al-Helou, Raed works as a cameraman in Ramallah. He has co-directed a documentary *Local (Mahalli)* with Ismail Habash in 2002.

I'm a Little Angel [*Ana Malak Sagir*] released in 2000, directed by Hanna Musleh. In Arabic, its duration is 40 minutes.

Shot in Bethlehem during the second Intifada, this documentary tells the touching story of three children who by the sheer force of circumstance became victims of indiscriminate violence by the occupation forces. As they and their families grapple with the trauma and its ramifications, the viewer gets a unique chance to witness the scale and the magnitude of the tragedy of the Palestinian people, children and adults alike.

Hanna Musleh is originally from Bethlehem and has directed a number of documentaries, both long and short including *Tear of Peace* (2003) and *Dignified Life* (2002).

In God's House [*Beit Allah*] released in 2002, directed by Yahya Barakat and edited by Fawwaz Al-zagha. In Arabic, its duration is 42 minutes.

In God's House documents the unprecedented forty day Israeli siege of the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem as told through testimonies of the Fathers who were besieged there. While people lay dead, injured, deprived from food and water, the film describes the harrowing story of the besieged as they continued to resist and sacrifice in this holy place.

Through interviews with three different priests and others involved in the Church, In God's House presents a different perspective of the event than what the Israeli media would have one believe. Barakat said that the media made it appear that the Palestinians, who actually sought refuge in the church, were holding the priests hostage. But in the video, one of the priests describes the Palestinian men as respectful.[1]

Winner: Golden Prize of Documentary Films, Eight Cairo Festival.

Yahya Barakat is a graduate of the High Institute of Cinema and Academy of Art in Cairo, Egypt. Barakat has directed seven documentary films, which have been screened in international festivals. Currently he works in the Programming Department of the Palestinian Satellite Channel and lectures at Jerusalem University.

Independence [*Istiqlal*] released in 1994, directed by Nizar Hassan. In Arabic, its duration is 25 minutes.

This film explores the dilemmas Israeli 'Independence Day' poses to Palestinian citizens of Israel. Forced by the economic realities of jobs that depend on Israeli authorities,

[1] Maureen Clare Murphee, The Electronic Intifada, 22 April 2003.

schoolteachers and truck drivers suppress their feelings of humiliation and observe Israeli national rites.

Nizar Hassan was born in Nazareth in 1960. He has written, produced and directed a number of documentaries, several of which have been featured in international festivals, like *Ijtiyah* (Invasion, 2003), *Kalemat* (1995) and *Ustura* (Mythology, 1998).

In the Spiders Web, released in 2004, directed by Hanna Musleh. In Arabic with English subtitles, its duration is 45 minutes.

In the Spider's Web was produced by Ramallah-based Human Rights organisation, Al-Haq, in order to provide a visual overview of collective punishment as it affects the daily lives of Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The film tells many stories, but focuses on two in particular – those of a woman in Nablus and another in Hebron. Each of them talks of the impact that the compounded measures of intimidation (curfews, closures) and other collective penalties have on their lives. This powerful film directly confronts the audience with the connections between Israeli violations of international law, and the social consequences suffered by many women, some of whom end up blamed for their own plight. More broadly, Musleh's film highlights the impact that collective punishment has had and continues to have on an entire civilian population.

See *I'm a Little Angel* above for director's detail.

Jenin Jenin, released in 2002, written and directed by Mohamed Bakri, produced by Iyad Samudi and Mohamed Bakri, edited by Leandro Pantanella. In Arabic with English subtitles, its duration is 54 minutes.

A camera crew filmed at the site of the Jenin refugee camp only a few days after the overwhelming attack of the Israeli army in April 2002. The cameras captured the camp at a time when the people still had not fully understood what happened. The film is not an informational report about these events, but a description of the traces left by the events

on the inhabitants. It depicts resistance, heroism, and victory despite death and destruction.

'Where is God,' an elderly man desperately wonders when surveying the debris in the Palestinian refugee camp Jenin.
The film, directed and co-produced by Palestinian actor and director Mohammed Bakri, includes testimony from Jenin residents after the Israeli army's Defensive Wall operation, during which the city and camp were the scenes of fierce fighting. The operation ended with Jenin flattened and scores of Palestinians dead. Palestinians as well as numerous human rights groups accused Israel of committing war crimes in the April 2002 attack on the refugee camp. *Jenin Jenin* shows the extent to which the prolonged oppression and terror has affected the state of mind of the Palestinian inhabitants of Jenin.

Bitterness and grief are the prevailing feelings among the majority of the population. Many have lost loved ones or are still searching for victims and furniture among the debris. A little girl, who does not seem to be much older than twelve, tells her story but knows no fear. The ongoing violence in her day-to-day life only nourishes her feelings of hatred and the urge to take revenge. She tells what she would do to Prime Minister Sharon if he visited the camp and she shouts that the Palestinians will never give up the struggle. They will keep on producing children, who can continue the fight against injustice.

The sad question forces itself on the spectator. What will become of a country, a people when its children are confronted with war and violence from a very early age?

Jenin Jenin was initially banned in Israel, and still a source of controversy, on the grounds that it is a 'propaganda film' that would upset the Israeli public and might lead Israelis "to mistakenly think that soldiers are systematically and intentionally carrying war crimes". Finally Bakri's appeal was accepted, and Israeli Supreme Court lifted the ban on 11 November 2003.[1]

[1] Arjan El Fassed, The Electronic Intifada, 11 November 2003. http://electonicintifada.net

This documentary is dedicated to Iyad Samudi, the producer of the film, who returned home to Yamun after the shooting of the film was completed. On June 23, as Israeli forces besieged Yamun, Samudi was shot and killed as he was leaving a military-closed area with three friends.[1]
Winner: Best Film, Carthage International Film Festival.

Muhammad Bakri originally from Bina in Galilee, is best known as an actor and star of Palestinian and international films such as *The Milky Way, The Tale of Three Jewels, Haifa*. Bakri is also an accomplished director.
Jeremy Hardy Vs. the Israeli Army, released in 2002, directed by Leila Sansour. In English and Arabic, its duration is 52 minutes.

British comedian Jeremy Hardy makes a rash decision to travel to Palestine in March 2002 just before the invasion of Bethlehem and the siege of the Nativity Church. He joins a campaign to protect Palestinian farmers against the hostility of settlers but finds himself caught up in the events of the invasion. He decides to return later, but this time—in a manner of speaking—to take on the Israeli army.

Leila Sansour was born in Bethlehem. She lives in London, and has made several short films. Her other film is a short documentary, *Global Coverage*, 6 min. UK, 2002.

Jerusalem's High Cost of Living, released in 2001, directed by Hazim Bitar. In Arabic with English subtitles, its duration is 52 minutes.

A few weeks after the beginning of the final stage in the Palestinian-Israeli peace process, a Palestinian-American filmmaker embarks on a journey back to his city of ancestry, Jerusalem. Instead of finding his Israeli neighbors mobilizing for peace, he encounters unexpected hostility. It was an ominous sign. Days later, the Jerusalem Uprising breaks out after Sharon's fateful incursion into the Noble Sanctuary (Al-Aqsa). The filmmaker finds himself in the eyes of storm as a witness to tragedies of fellow Palestinian Jerusalemites who are gunned down mercilessly by Israeli soldiers before his very eyes.

[1] Ibid.

At the Makassed Hospital in Jerusalem, the filmmaker lives the drama of a number of Jerusalemite families as they cope with death, injury, and injustice. As the toll mounted, one person symbolized the tragic losses of the first day of the Intifada. On Friday September 29, 2000, the 23 year old Osama Mohammad Jaddah, an African-Palestinian from the Old City of Jerusalem, was on his way to give blood but was gunned down by an Israeli sniper at the Makassed Hospital. According to the Israeli media, his mother Wafa sent him to die for cash reward and a photo opportunity. This could not be further from the truth...

Hazim Bitar lives between Washington DC and Amman. His film credits include the documentary *Uncivil Liberties, Secret Trials in America*, as well as *Jerusalem's High Cost of Living*.

Jerusalem: An Occupation Set in Stone? Released in 1995, directed by Marty Rosenbluth, produced by Palestinian Housing Rights Movements. In Arabic and English, its duration is 55 minutes.

Produced by the Palestinian Housing Rights Movement, *Jerusalem: An Occupation Set in Stone?* is a tribute to the thousands of Palestinians living in East Jerusalem without access to life's most basic amenities. Filmmaker Marty Rosenbluth details the devastating effects of Israel's urban planning policies that, according to many, aim to uproot the Palestinian presence in the Holy City.

Due to its fairness and clarity, *An Occupation Set in Stone* was awarded an Honorable Mention for the Lindheim Award in the Third Annual Jewish Video Competition - an award that honors programs that best explore the political and social relationships between Jews and other ethnic or religious groups.

Light at the End of the Tunnel [*al-Dhou fi Akhar al-Nafaq*] released in 2001, directed by Subhi Zobaidi. In Arabic with English subtitles, its duration is 47 minutes.

Since 1997, thousands of Palestinians have been incarcerated in Israeli prisons. After the Oslo accords, some were released. These women and men had a difficult time in readapting after years of reclusion. Four men and four women share their difficulties with integration into a new life, their traumas and the tensions that exist in their families within a new Palestinian society.

Light at the End of the Tunnel takes a serious approach, dealing with the neglected but important social issue of how the half-million Palestinians who have spent time in Israeli prisons adjust to life outside after their release. The detention of such a large percentage of the population, often under the draconian rule (inherited from the British) of administrative detention, whereby a person can be held without charge for six months, is one of the heaviest burdens on Palestinian society, impoverishing families by removing their main breadwinner, damaging emotional bonds within families, and turning individuals into people who find it nearly impossible to resume a normal life. In this film, former prisoners tell their own stories, without elaboration or commentary, with heart-rending effect. Palestinians tend to assume a controlled and dignified demeanor when speaking publicly, even when talking of terrible personal experiences and the graceful restraint of the film's interviewees enhances the poignancy of their testimony.

See *Ali & His Friends* above for director's detail.

Like twenty Impossibles [*Ka'inna 'Ashrun Mustaheel*] released in 2003, directed by Annemarie Jacir. In Arabic, English and Hebrew with English subtitles, its duration is 17 minutes.

In a landscape now interrupted by military checkpoints, a group of Palestinian filmmakers attempt to reach Jerusalem. When they decide to avert a closed checkpoint by taking a remote and unused side road, the political landscape unravels, and the passengers are slowly taken apart by the mundane brutality of military occupation. Both a visual poem and a narrative, *like twenty impossibles* wryly questions artistic responsibility and

the politics of filmmaking, art and resistance, while speaking to the fragmentation of a people.

Palestinian filmmaker and writer Annemarie Jacir has written, directed and produced a number of films. Originally from Bethlehem, now lives and works between Palestine and New York. Jacir lived in Saudi Arabia until the age of sixteen and then received her formal education in the United States. She worked in the film industry in Los Angeles before returning to school to obtain a Masters degree in Film in New York. She is a founding member and chief curator of the groundbreaking 'Dreams of a Nation' cinema project. *Like Twenty Impossibles* won many awards at international festivals. Jacir lives in Palestine and New York and is in development on a feature length film.

Obstacle, released in 2003, directed by Nida Sinnokrot. In Arabic and English, its duration is minutes.
In June of 2002, on the brink of the US war on Iraq, the construction of a 230-mile barrier began. Though it is referred to as a 'security fence' by Israel, the form changes along the route, and near large cities it is actually a concrete wall twice as high as the former Berlin Wall. *Obstacle* is a feature documentary that explores the Palestinian/Israeli conflict through tracing the construction of the Israeli Apartheid Wall. The wall will serve as a thematic backbone, through which the documentary will examine several key issues: the silent yet critical war over natural resources, the threat to peace posed by Israeli settlements, and the idea of 'transfer' now openly discussed as a way to purge Palestinians from their ancestral land. *Obstacle* also explores the importance of the Israeli left, the many internationals in solidarity with Palestinians, and the emergence of a non-violent resistance movement. The film's unique approach immerses the viewers in the confusion and desperation the Palestinians encounter daily as they seek to understand this wall's impact on their lives.

Sinnokrot, Nida originally from Nablus (Khalil), is a Palestinian-American videographer based in Brooklyn, NY.

Palestine- A People's Record [*Filastin- Sijl Sha'b*] released in 1984, directed by Kais al-Zobaidi, shot in Palestine and Syria. In Arabic and English, its duration is 110 minutes.

This unique film explores Palestine in archive footage dating from 1917 to 1974, bringing together valuable rare footage in an historic account of Palestinian nationhood. The archive material is in itself remarkable and al-Zobaidi's knowledgeable editing renders the film an enthralling visual and historical document. This extraordinary documentary stands a major filmic testament to the complex modern history of Palestine.

Al-Zubaidi, Kais lives in Berlin and works as a director and editor. He has worked in films in both Europe and the Arab World.

Palestine Post-9/11, released in 2005, directed by Osama al-Zain. In English, its duration is 73 minutes.

In the wake of the terrorist attacks on the twin towers and the pentagon, the world witnessed a number of Palestinians celebrating on the streets of Jerusalem. *Palestine Post 911* is an examination of the tragic events of 9/11 from a Palestinian perspective.

Featuring interviews with scholars, experts and journalists in the US and Palestine, Al-Zain's film investigates the proposed relationship, or the lack thereof, between the issue of Palestine and terrorist attacks. The film explores the setback the Palestinian cause has suffered as a result of Al-Qaeda's actions and political rhetoric on one side and US and Israeli policies on the other.

Palestine Post 911 reveals how after September 11th, the Zionist-Christian Right alliance, very skillfully and rapidly moved to capitalise on the tragedy by claiming that Americans should relate what Israel "endures" to what the US public witnessed on 9/11.

In contrast to this version of events, the film presents a counterview as it follows Stanley Cohen, a Jewish lawyer from Manhattan, on his journey to Palestine. Through his eyes,

the film examines daily life under occupation, the Israeli-American strategic alliance, and the Israeli governments' use of 9/11 as a justification for violations of humanitarian law.

Al-Zain, Osama originally from Ramallah, lives in Washington DC. He received his Master of Arts in Film and Video from the American University in DC. He is currently working on *Ground Zero*, a feature length documentary about the events of 9 11 from a Palestinian perspective.

Rainbow, released in 2004, directed by Abdel Salam Shehadeh. In Arabic with English subtitles, its duration is 40 minutes.

Veteran Gazan documentary film maker Shahadeh's latest work takes as its starting point his own difficulty in coming to terms with his role as a news cameraman during the Intifada. Constantly facing experiences of horrific suffering and loss and yet struggling to find a sense of meaning or purpose on his side of the lens, he sets out to revisit friends, relatives, and - most painfully - those whose unfathomable personal losses he has documented from behind the camera. The film offers a rare glimpse of life after the cameras stop rolling, of the processes of healing and hurting that continue on both sides of the lens and as such it is a profound and moving study of the role of the news reporter.

Also see film *Debris* by Shehadeh, above in this chapter.

Route 181: Fragments of a Journey in Palestine-Israel, released in 2004, directed by Michel Khleifi and Eyal Sivan. In Arabic and Hebrew with English subtitles, its duration is 270 minutes.

Walls continue to be raised, barbed wires laid down, new borders succeeding those already present in the collective unconscious of both peoples. What can cinema do before a situation so desperately devoid of hope? Sivan and Khleifi, faced with the tragic torments shaking their societies, come together in a sort of filmic act of faith. They believe that the only 'realistic' solution rests in the prospect of a bi-national state where citizens share equal rights and duties for peaceful coexistence.

In the summer of 2002, for two months, a Palestinian (Khleifi) and Israeli (Sivan) directors traveled together from the south to the north of their country of birth, tracing their trajectory on a map and calling it Route 181. This virtual line follows the borders outlined in Resolution 181, which was adopted by the United Nations on November 29th 1947 to partition Palestine into two states. Their journey carries them to the heart of the many physical and social fault lines that today divide and define the peoples of this land.

See *Fertile Memory* above by Khleifi. Sivan is an Israeli director.

Sling Shot Hip Hop, released in 2006, directed by Jacqueline Salloum. In Arabic, no information available about its exact duration.

SlingShot Hip Hop is a documentary film that focuses on the daily life of Palestinian rappers living in Gaza, the West Bank and inside Israel. It aims to spotlight alternative voices of resistance within the Palestinian struggle and explore the role their music plays within their social, political and personal lives.

Salloum, Jacqueline originally from Beit Jala, lives and works in New York. She uses video and digital media to draw attention to the impact of the Israeli occupation and the culture of resistance in the occupied territories.

Staying Alive [*Bidna Na'ish*] released in 2001, directed by Ghada Terawi. In Arabic with English subtitles, its duration is 28 minutes.

Staying Alive examines the motives of Palestinian youths who risk their lives to throw stones at Israeli soldiers. The director asks: why don't they fear death or injury? How aware they are of what is happening around them? What political thoughts drive them to go and possibly fight to their deaths?

See film *What Next* below in this chapter for details about director Terawi.

Until When... was released in 2004, edited and directed by Dahna Abourahme, produced by Annemarie Jacir. In Arabic with English subtitles, its duration is 76 minutes.

Until When paints an intimate in-depth portrait of Palestinian lives today.

With attention to the experiences of all generations, but particularly that of today's youth, Dahna Abourahme has directed a documentary which insightfully and poetically articulates the frustrations, fears and hopes of Palestinian refugees living in Dheisheh, a camp near Bethlehem.

Set during the current Intifada, this documentary follows four Palestinian families living in Dheisheh Refugee Camp.
Fadi is 13 and cares for his 4 younger brothers, the Hammashes are a close-knit family who pass on the lessons of life with humor and passion, Sana is a single woman who endures long commutes to do community work, and Emad and Hanan are a young couple trying to shield their daughter from the harsh realities of the occupation. They talk about their past and discuss the future with humor, sorrow, frustration and hope.

Dahna Abourahme is a media artist and activist. Originally from Acre (Acca) and Bethlehem, Abourahme grew up in Amman, Dubai, and Beirut. She received an MA in media studies at the New School for Social Research. Abourahme teaches video to youth in New York City and Palestine and has been involved in several community art projects. *Until When...* is her first feature.

We are God's Soldiers, released in 1993, directed by Hanna Musleh. In Arabic with English subtitles, its duration is 52 minutes.
We are God's Soldiers takes the viewer on an unprecedented trip inside the Islamic movement in the Gaza Strip. The film includes interviews with some of the Hamas leaders who had been expelled by Israel in 1992, giving a clear definition of the role of women.

The internal factions among the Palestinians are reflected in the story of two brothers: Islam is a veteran supporter of the PLO's Fatah while his brother, Ziad, is a supporter of the Islamic movement.

Also see above *I'm a Little Angel* by Musleh.

What Next? Released in 2004, directed by Ghada Terawi. In Arabic with English subtitles, its duration is 40 minutes.
March 29th, 2002 was a turning point in the history of Ramallah. Israeli troops armed invaded the city with tanks and aerial support, crushing all resistance and bringing all aspects of life in the city to a fearful, grinding, paralysing halt. In Terawi's film, which covers the period leading up to, during and immediately after these events, three friends share their experiences of anticipation, confusion, siege, and curfew.

Although united by shared feelings of frustration and anger, they are still able to laugh about their tragedy and are determined to withstand this latest aggression and to restore their lives and hopes all over again.
Tirawi, Ghada grew up in exile, and first visited Palestine when she was an adult. She now lives in Ramallah. *Staying Alive* is her first film.

Women Beyond Borders, released in 2003, directed by Jean Chamoun and produced by Mai Masri. In Arabic with English subtitles, its duration is 58 minutes.

Chamoun is the acclaimed Lebanese director of *'Shadows of the City'* and *'Hostage of Time'* and together with wife Mai Masri, of numerous documentary films including *'Suspended Dreams'* and *'War Generation-Beirut'*. This recent work explores the themes of loss, generational divide and women in war that are found in several of his earlier films. This time, Chamoun (with Masri serving as producer) turns the camera on female ex-inmates of the notorious Khiam prison, run by Israel in southern Lebanon until 2000.

Through the experiences of Kifah Afifi, the viewer is invited to reflect on an earlier generation of Palestinian women prisoners including poet Fadwa Tukan and activist Samiha Khalil. The film includes harrowing accounts of life in the brutal prison as well as inspirational personal testament to the power of survival and hope against oppression and dehumanisation.

See above *Children of Fire*, also by Mai Masri.

Conclusion

The Palestinian catastrophe and the creation of Israel over the soil of historical Palestine through the Balfour Declaration and the dispersion of the indigenous people have caused tremendous sufferings to the Palestinian people; damaging their national identity and proscribing their sovereignty and inalienable rights; ignited wars, bloodshed and terror—endangering peace and stability in this volatile region of the Middle East. Backed by the US and some EU countries, Israel has ignited many wars with Palestine and the Arab States, occupying more Arab lands in Palestine, Egypt, Syria and Lebanon, perpetuating massacres and atrocities against the innocent civilians and inflicting heinous crimes on the people under its occupation.

The official 'suspension' of the Palestinian nation in 1948, date of the first Arab-Israeli war, may lead one to conclude that Palestinian cinema could no longer exist since it is an industry, which demands a basic infrastructure. But the Palestinians signified their refusal to be wiped off the map by setting up the Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO) in 1964. Later, in 1967, the crushing defeat inflicted upon them by Israel prompted them to turn not only to literature but also to cinema, in order to present their situation themselves without depending on the fantasy-ridden and/or distorted Western or Arab films made between 1948 and 1967 *on* them but *without* them. It is in this context that documentaries appeared in 1967-68, under the supervision of the PLO or, more precisely the 'victory' (*Fatah*, the Arab acronym for 'The Movement for the Liberation of Palestine'). The Cinema Unit which became the Group of Palestinian Cinema, and later Films from Palestine—and disappeared two years later— was founded by Hany Jawhariyyah, Sulafa Jadallah and Mustafa Abu Ali, Samir Nimr, Qassim Hawal and Hassan Abu Ghanima—all of whom handled a camera as others would a gun. Jawahiriyyah was to be killed on the sets in war-torn Lebanon. Most of the first Palestinian filmmakers were trained by Jordanian television, though rather superficially. The first film shot in Palestine is supposed to have made by a Jewish immigrant, a certain Moshe Rosenberg, with *The First Film of Palestine* (Hasret Ha-Rishon shel-Palestina, 1911).

In Arab world and particularly in Egypt, the Palestinian cause became part of the cinema discourses during 1940s and early '50s. *A Girl from Palestine* (Fatat Min Filastin, 1948) by Mahmud Zul-Fiqar was first full-length commercial fiction from Egypt touching Palestinian issue. During the 1960, before and after the Arab debacle in 1967, other Arab countries such as Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, Algeria and Tunisia followed the Egyptian example and produced about a hundred documentaries and fiction films tackling the occupation or dealing in general with Palestine. It was the atmosphere of pan-Arab solidarity prevailing in the 1960s and 1970s that supported this productivity. Some of these solidarity films were highly acclaimed within and even outside the Arab world, including the three Syrian public productions: *Kafr Kassem* (1974) by the Lebanese Borhane Alaouié, *al-Sikkin/The Knife* (1971) by the Syrian Khaled Hamada and *al-Makhdu'un/The Duped* (1973) by the Egyptian Taufiq Saleh.

The Palestinian cinema landscape changed in late 1970s with the contribution of Michel Khleifi, Elia Suleiman and Rashid Masharawi from documentary form to feature. Their movies portrayed every walks of Palestinian lives: love, betrayal, tradition, rebellion, resistance, occupation and love for homeland. Their movies put Palestinian cinema in line with developed international cinemas, and won several regional and international prestigious awards and recognitions. *Wedding in Galilee, Fertile Memory* and *Tale of Three Jewels* by Michel Khleifi; *Curfew, Haifa* and *House or Houses* by Rashid Mashrawi and *Chronicle of a Disappearance, Introduction to the End of an Argument* and *Chronicle of Love and Pain* by Elia Suleiman are, a few in long chain, considered masterpieces of Palestinian cinema.

The new generation's prolific and distinctive filmmakers from Palestine whose works have earned local and international appreciations and various awards include: Mohamad Bakri, who is well-known for his award-winning documentary, *Jenin Jenin* (2002), Hany Abu Assad, who's *Paradise Now* was Oscar-nominated for the award of this year's best foreign films. And Omar Al-Qattan, known for *Al-Aouda* (Going Home, 1996), and *Ahlam fi Faragh* (Dreams and Silence, 1991). Others are Hanna Musleh, Sobhi Zobaidi, Hasan Nizar, Yahya Barakat, Ismail Habash and Darwesh Abu al-Rish—to name a few.

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سينما المقاومة في فلسطين -

الأفلام الوثائقية الفلسطينية

بحث جامعي لنيل شهادة ما قبل الدكتوراه

الباحث

نور الإسلام صادقي

تحت إشراف

الدكتور رضوان الرحمن

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