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Researching the General Union of Palestine Students from the Diaspora

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Researching the General Union of Palestine Students from the Diaspora

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in Anthropology

by

Saliem Wakeem Shehadeh

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Researching the General Union of Palestine Students from the Diaspora

by

Saliem Wakeem Shehadeh

Doctor of Philosophy in Anthropology

University of California, Los Angeles, 2023

Professor Jemima Pierre, Co-Chair

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This dissertation is an examination of the General Union of Palestine Students (GUPS) and its role as a diasporic Palestinian organization deeply situated in Palestinian social movements. Applying the term diaspora to Palestinian dispersal is a debated identification given the ongoing objectives for Palestinian return and the end of Zionism's settler-colonial project. I argue that diasporic frameworks are a means to analyze the flow and exchange of ideas, culture, resources, and politics that can connect Palestinians, and that GUPS acted as a nexus of these connections. Chapter one outlines the debates regarding scholarship on Palestinian diasporas. Chapter two is an ethnography of my research methods. Chapters three, four, and five discuss the formation of GUPS and its international growth as a diasporic institution. These chapters also analyze the structural pressures operating on GUPS at the local and international levels and how actors responded to these challenges. This dissertation relies heavily on oral histories I compiled and published oral histories compiled by other scholars. In turn, I offer an anthropological and historical analysis of the material conditions at hand that were acted upon by generations of Palestinian students to advance the Palestinian liberation movement.

The dissertation of Saliem Wakeem Shehadeh is approved.

Rabab Ibrahim Abdulhadi

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2023

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND FIGURES

’48 Area	A term used by Palestinians to refer to the Israeli side of the 1949 Armistice Line
ANM	Arab Nationalist Movement- A pan-Arabist political party founded in 1951 largely by Palestinian students at the American University of Beirut.
Ba’ath	Arab Socialist Ba’ath Party- Ba’ath, meaning renaissance in Arabic, held a political platform of pan-Arabism, socialism, and anti-imperialism.
DFLP	Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine- A Marxist political party that split from the PFLP in 1969 led by Nayef Hawatmeh.
Fatah	Palestine National Liberation Movement. Founded in 1959 the party has risen as the predominant party in Palestinian politics through the PLO and the PA. Its political platforms include Palestinian nationalism, secularism, and limited socialism oriented within a capitalist economy.
GUPS	General Union of Palestine Students
Hamas	Islamic Resistance Movement. Formed in 1987 the party emerged out of the Muslim Brotherhood and holds an Islamist political platform.
OAS	Organization of Arab Students- a pan-Arabist student organization in the United States of America and Canada that formed in the early 1950s.
oPt	Occupied Palestinian Territories- The territories of the West Bank and Gaza, though it can include East Jerusalem and the Golan Heights which were illegally annexed by Israel.
PA	The Palestinian Authority- Formed in 1994 as part of the signing of the Oslo Accords, the PA is the Palestinian government in the West Bank and governed Gaza until 2007.
PFLP	Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine. A political party with Marxist platforms formed in 1967 by George Habash, Wadie Haddad and several others.
PLO	Palestine Liberation Organization. Formed in 1964, the PLO operated as the recognized political representative of the Palestinian people.
PSU	Palestinian Student Union- It formed in 1940 in Cairo, Egypt. It was reactivated in 1951 and led the efforts to establish the General Union of Palestine Students.

FIGURE

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Introduction

As Zionist colonization was consolidated in Palestine, students joined the massive liberation movement for a free Palestine. Within a decade of the formation of the state of Israel in 1948, the General Union of Palestine Students (GUPS) formed in the Palestinian dispersal that colonization created. For reasons explained throughout this dissertation, I argue that the structure and global presence of GUPS provided a medium for students to generate diasporic ways of being out of these dispersals. GUPS formed in Egypt in 1959 and immediately sprouted chapters in Syria, Lebanon, and Jordan. These states both surround Palestine and house millions of Palestinian refugees that have resided there for several generations since the late 1940s. When the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) formed in 1964, GUPS endorsed it as the only student group that attended and was then selected as the exclusive student-based Popular Organization of the PLO. As Palestinians traveled internationally to study at universities, they formed GUPS chapters wherever they went. This dissertation contextualizes the local, national, and international histories of GUPS as a student movement. It helps us to understand why GUPS and its chapters formed and what came before them. It helps to situate an understanding of how students engaged their broader societies to create a sense of community and develop their leadership. It also helps us to understand how student organizing formed and transformed in relation to wider Palestinian diasporas.

The General Union of Palestine Students represented the majority of Palestinian students in the second half of the 20th century with active chapters in colleges across Asia, Africa, Europe, and the Americas. At its height in the 1980s, GUPS had approximately 55,000 active students spread across 55 countries. Palestine advocacy played a prominent role in campus-based activism on an international scale.

The General Union of Palestine Students operated under a democratic system outlined by its constitution. The GUPS system resembled the Leninist ideal of democratic centralism where the political decisions reached through a voting process are binding upon all members (Abu Samra 2020, 201). One had to fulfill three requirements to join GUPS, (1) be Palestinian, (2) be enrolled at a university or college, and (3) pay annual dues to GUPS. Annual dues were very minimal, the intention was not to create a financial barrier to entry but to establish a means of certifying enrollment and active membership. At the basic level, GUPS was organized around city-based chapters. If there were several universities in one city, they were registered in the same chapter. This intentional design was to prioritize and collectivize student efforts and break feelings of isolation and fear of organizing. It worked to bridge students together who lived within proximity to one another and de-emphasized campus-based distinctions. Campuses provided resources and bases for their organizing, but their efforts were focused on Palestinian liberation in the homeland and rallying those in their host countries into the global movement; their efforts were not placed on reforming the academy though that did occur sometimes. Rising in the organizing ranks were nationally based branches. Each country had a designated branch and all the city-based chapters fell under the jurisdiction of its national branch. The leadership of the national branches was elected by the general members of city chapters. The city chapters also elected delegates to send to the international GUPS conferences.

The highest authority in GUPS was the conference body. The constitution outlines that the conferences are to be organized every three years by the Executive Committee. Among the responsibilities of the conference was to issue articles and policies that set bylaws and commitments for all GUPS chapters. Conference membership was composed of delegates from each of the chapters, the number of delegates sent was proportional to their registered members

on a sliding scale. Chapters with 15-50 members were allocated one delegate, and for the largest chapters with more than 2501 members, the maximum number of delegates they could send was 12. During the conference, the delegates voted to elect the 25-person Administrative Council. The Administrative Council held several duties, the primary among them was to promote from among its members an eleven-person Executive Committee to lead GUPS. The constitution outlines the Administrative Council's role as an intermediary between the general assembly and the Executive Committee. The Executive Committee's duties included organizing the conferences, producing reports that analyze the activity of the various branches, maintaining the financial accounts of GUPS, and issuing policy directives (in addition to those issued by the conference). The Executive Committee was comprised of the President of the Union; three Vice Presidents designated for External Relations, Internal Relations, and Awareness and Media; a treasurer; a secretary; and five department-specific secretaries titled external relations for international affairs, external relations for Arab affairs, internal relations for the branches of the Arab world, internal relations for branches outside the Arab world, and awareness and media affairs. Importantly, their role was also that of diplomat and politician. From among the Executive Council members, they were elected to serve in reserved seats in the PLO's legislative body, the Palestinian National Council (PNC).

The Palestine Liberation Organization was organized around an interconnected system of various departments and councils headed by PLO chairman Yasser Arafat from 1969-2004. GUPS was incorporated into the Department of Popular Organizations. Among the other Popular Organizations included the General Union of Palestine Workers, the General Union of Palestine Women, and the General Union of Palestinian Writers and Journalists. Leading the Department of Popular Organizations was Ahmed Hussein al-Yamani (his nom de guerre was Abu Maher).

He held the position until 1974 when his party, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), withdrew from the PLO higher bodies to register its rejection of the new ten-point program Yasser Arafat pushed the PNC to adopt as discussed further in this dissertation. In addition to his lifetime achievements in labor organizing and coordinating armed resistance against Israel, Al-Yamani was also a student organizer in his youth and later a teacher. Al-Yamani co-founded the Association of Palestinian Students in Lebanon that went on to join GUPS at its founding conference in 1959; he also helped in establishing the Palestinian Division of the Arab Nationalist Movement composed of Palestinian youth (Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine 2013). The General Union of Palestine Students was considered one of the strongest and most well-organized bodies of the Popular Organizations because of its international reach and effective leadership. The Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) spied on the PLO and its affiliated unions, including GUPS, and in a 1975 report wrote,

> The so-called 'popular organizations' include labor unions and student groups with membership in Palestinian communities throughout the Middle East and Europe. The most prominent are the General Union of Palestine Students, which has offices in many European and Middle Eastern countries" (Central Intelligence Agency 1975).

As I discuss later in the dissertation, the policing apparatus of the USA, the CIA, FBI, and local law enforcement, played a large role in intimidating the Palestinian student organizers and created a chilling effect throughout GUPS's activities in the USA.

The GUPS Constitution reflects the founding principles of the organization and its membership. The Constitution opens with a preamble. Preambles provide an introduction that establishes the document's purpose and its guiding principles, philosophy, and spirit. The preamble to the GUPS Constitution outlines the duties and responsibilities of how they envisioned their role within the Palestinian diaspora and the liberation movement.

> We, the Palestinian students, believe that:
>
> The democratic popular organization is the basis for the Palestinian revolution, which is the only path to complete liberation.
>
> The recognition of an independent Palestinian character is a fundamental pillar of support for our people's struggle for liberation.
>
> The struggle of the people of Palestine is the path of Arab mass unity. The unity of the Arab mass is the essential step for liberation.
>
> It is the duty of every Palestinian student to be in the vanguard of the people's struggle.
>
> We therefore announce the establishment of a national union for Palestinian students as a foundation of the Palestinian revolution. This union works for the liberation of Palestine by all means provided for by the articles of this constitution (GUPS Constitution 1959).

The opening principle is a testament to the commitment to grassroots social movements as the means for liberation. As a tenet of socialist strategy, the revolution of the masses, and not the politicking of elite state actors, would bring about liberation. In the preamble, GUPS is presented as a national union. To help understand what a national union is, it is instructive to establish definitions of nation, national, and nationalism. Nation has several definitions. Benedict Anderson defined the nation as "an imagined political community- and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign" (Anderson 1991, 6). Another definition of a nation is a group of people who share an ancestral descent and a culture "bequeathed from one generation to the next" that organize themselves into a polity that the living, the dead and the unborn share (Scruton 1990; Uberoi 2015, 511; and Wootton 1996). Others define the nation as a polity constituted by consent that is comprised of individuals who desire to live a common life (Miller 1995; Pecora 2001; and Uberoi 2015, 511). For the purposes of this research, a composite of these three definitions is applied in the analysis of Palestine. The second term, national, can be defined as a social unity or a collective that conceives collective challenges, goals, and interests

(Uberoi 2015, 512-513). Third, Anderson suggests nationalism is an ideology that is generated through love and belonging to a nation; this is generated through cultural production of the state and its members (Anderson 1991, 140-141).

The second and third principles in GUPS's preamble emphasize the dualism of Palestinianness and Pan-Arabism. On the one hand, the constitution references the Palestinian character and not Palestinian nationalism to center Arab unity. The path to pan-Arabism is through the Palestinian struggle, again making no reference to Palestinian nationalism thus recognizing Palestinianness but not bounding it to nationalist discourses. It suggests two concomitant prerequisites for liberation. First, that Arab unity can only be achieved through the struggle for Palestine, and second, that the struggle for Palestine can only be achieved through the Arab unity it generated. This worldview, in turn, created an obligation for Palestinian students to be politically active since Arab unity and Palestinian liberation could not come to fruition without their leadership. They were entrusted with a responsibility to every Palestinian and every Arab whose freedom required their intervention. This is reflective of a worldview of politics that they position themselves at the center of. In his review of a draft of this dissertation, Dr. Robin D.G. Kelley advised that this dualism of Palestinianness and Pan-Arabism along with the definitions of nation/nationalism "have to be understood in the context of 1959, a high point in the Third World independence movements. These are part of a world-wide struggle of nationalist movements to bring nations into being, and Pan-Arabism on that character as well." The final principle of the preamble provided the first mention of nation when it announced the formation of a "national union." The significance here is how a national union was conceptualized within the diaspora. Here the national union is understood as belonging to a socially connected community the world over. The national union it conceptualized had to be

international and bridge the Palestinian diaspora. It could not rely on notions of the nation-state as a sovereign body on a bounded geographical territory. A sovereign Palestinian state did not exist. Using the term national union placed the diasporic Palestinian students into a shared cultural and political project.

The GUPS Constitution and its preamble went through several changes over the years during its international conferences to reflect current political contexts. The constitution itself laid out the structure of the organization including that of the Administrative Council, Executive Committee, Conference protocols, how representatives were allocated, and requirements for active membership. It was the preamble that outlined the political principles of the organization. In 1964 the preamble was amended "to give it a more Palestinian nationalist character (as opposed to its former Arab nationalist stance) and to stress the centrality of armed struggle" (Brand 1988, 77). In 1978 GUPS amended its preamble again to bind the union to the Palestinian National Covenant which was the charter of the PLO. While GUPS officially joined the PLO in 1964 and was designated its official student popular organization, it took until 1978 for GUPS to update its constitution to reflect this relationship (Brand 1988, 141; and Nassar 1991, 61). In 1978 the Palestinian National Council of the PLO, which had splintered over the controversy of the ten-point program four years earlier, came back together and closed ranks following Anwar Sadat's visit to Jerusalem and the signing of the Camp David Accords (Muslih 1990, 19). Some Islamists in GUPS voiced their opposition to binding GUPS exclusively to the PLO and the secular nature of the Palestinian state the PLO envisioned. In Kuwait 80 GUPS members, out of the 790 in the branch, split in 1980 to form a separate Palestinian Islamic Students' League (Brand 1988, 141). This episode highlights that the amendments reflected the majority's ideological commitments but were not necessarily shared in unanimous consensus.

Oral Histories, Social Movements and Palestinianness

This research was largely formed through an analysis of oral histories. Oral histories, like preambles, provide a telling methodology to examine the ways in which our pasts are recounted and told publicly, they are embedded with cultural and political implications and reflect a style of 'being' in and 'knowing' in the world (Masalha 2012; Sa'di and Abu-Lughod 2007; and Slyomovics 1998). My research project also examines the collective action of Palestinians. Such experiences in social movements are embedded in the continuous projects of meaning-making and the reshaping of individual and collective identity formations. Here I utilize Charles Kurzman's work on meaning-making which he defines as "a set of ready-made–though always contradictory–interpretations that allow people to assimilate information into established categories of understanding" (Kurzman 2008, 6). Kurzman also argues that meaning making is key to how we understand various tools and resources for social change. This is true of social movements among diasporic communities. The point is important and laid out concretely by Robin D.G. Kelley when he argued, diasporic identity is "a dynamic process of identification rooted in time and space (history and geography) and the circulation of ideas" (Kelley 2018, 199). And as Rabab Abdulhadi argued in the Palestine case, the issue of whether a singular definition of "Palestinianness, or the unity of Palestinian identification" among the diaspora can exist is questioned by the "multiplicity of locations and experiences Palestinians had since the *Nakbah*, or the disaster of 1948" (Abdulhadi 2000, 50). Diaspora scholars have long understood this phenomenon, and chapter one of this dissertation is devoted to theories on diaspora and its connection to Palestine. I unpack the questions of what the experiences of Palestinian student organizing can elucidate about the diaspora; about the political and economic powers operating on and within academic institutions; and about the relationship of students and the wider society

at multiple scales and points of disjuncture. Key to GUPS organizing is that the university was a base from which students could organize but the organizing work was always situated within the wider community and international liberation movements.

The Palestinian liberation movement and GUPS's role within it are forms of social movements. Arturo Escobar defines social movements as the process of bringing about new social practices and transformation that are, in part, created through new cultural meaning; as he puts it, "they link together economic, social and political within an overarching cultural field" (Escobar 1992, 408). In a generalized sense, culture is understood as transmitted social learning, and defined as "the symbolic representations that constitute human knowing are, in their various groupings, classifications and manifestations, the *cultural*" (Jenks 1993, 8). Cultural analysis is productive in analyzing social movement theory. A major intellectual source of this is The Birmingham School of Cultural Studies especially while under the leadership of Stuart Hall as Dr. Abdulhadi pointed out to me while thinking through various chapters of this dissertation. Adam Kuper argues that culture is not a body of symbolic and societal features that can stand alone nor is culture a *cause* of collective action as Homi Bhabha argues– rather there is a strong and organic *relationship* between culture and collective action (Bhabha 1996; Kuper 1999; Salman and Assies 2009, 214). For those reasons, anthropologists Salman and Assies argue that cultural analysis should "take into account the hybrid and often contradictory nature of cultural formations and try to show how the crucial dimension of (contested) meaning, in concrete ways, penetrates into the decisions taken by the agents involved in social and political configurations triggered by social movements" (Salman and Assies 2009, 210). Sociologist and *New Social Movement* theorist Sydney Tarrow argues that the following theorists played informative roles in the development of various social movement frameworks but that each has limitations. Karl

Marx inspired *collective behavior* theorists, Vladimir Lenin inspired *resource mobilization* theorists, Antonio Gramsci inspired *framing and collective identity* theorists, and Charles Tilly inspired *political process* theorists (Tarrow 1994, 28-29). Tarrow defines social movements as "well-structured social networks and galvanized by culturally resonant, action-oriented symbols, contentious politics leads to sustained interaction with opponents" (Tarrow 1994, 6). Social movements must take the form of contentious politics where ordinary people join together to confront elites, authorities, and opponents; contentious politics emerge out of the "normative pressures and solidarity incentives that are encoded within networks" that move people to action (Tarrow 1994, 29-31). Rabab Abdulhadi's analysis of Palestinian women's social movements adds that social movement work is situated within contexts that either create political opportunities or prohibit the manifestations of resistance based on changing international, regional, and local conditions. Abdulhadi further argues that political opportunities are an active and constructed phenomenon, actors do not wait for a political opportunity to arise and instead actively carve out opportunities from the political context at hand (Abdulhadi 1998, 670). Anthropologist Leith Mullings argued that various actors in social movements take different risks and have different stakes in the outcome of social movements.[1] For those reasons, class, race, gender, and position within the global north and south must be taken into consideration when analyzing how social movements take form. Further, social movements themselves

[1] As the former president of the American Anthropological Association, Leith Mullings was a leader in the field and recognized for her work on social movements, race theory, and African Diasporas. She was also an advocate for Palestine sitting on the international advisory board of *Insaniyyat*-The Society of Palestinian Anthropologists where in 2017 she attended their Development Workshop in Palestine. In 2020 she was the co-facilitator of the *Reprieve/Tanfeesah Project* along with the Palestinian American Research Center and formed a committee to support Black artists in the USA to spend a few weeks in Palestine.

produce reoriented cultural identities from among the dynamics in which they formed (Mullings 2009, 3-4).

Whether or not non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and civil society organizations can be considered part of social movements is debated on a case-by-case basis. For Palestinian philosopher Muddar Kassis, NGOs are non-profit professional organizations that depend on external funding for their work and carry out their activities through definable projects. Civil society organizations can include NGOs but their institutions largely rely on voluntary and charitable works and can include universities, museums, and cultural centers as long as they are non-governmental and non-profit. Importantly, civil society excludes all political institutions that seek or are likely to be in power such as political parties, and in some cases religious institutions (Kassis 2020, 21-22). Given GUPS's deep connection with political parties and organizing within the liberation movement, seemingly they would be exempt from civil society status by Kassis' definitions. Yet Kassis's arguments on civil society's relationship with the state highlight an important dynamic GUPS was locked within. Kassis argues that civil society itself is a contested and liminal space that sits between the interests of the state and open rebellion. As states tighten their grasp over permissible political positions in attempts to maintain hegemony, the ground civil society can hold shrinks and its actors face a choice; join the elites of the state or join the rebellion (Muddar Kassis interview with author). This is an extension of Antonio Gramsci's theories on hegemony. There are two sides to the work of civil society organizations. These institutions constitute a mediator, or a barrier, between power and its subject, and its most remote and important role lies in maintaining the balance and stability of power; or, in Gramsci's expression, maintaining hegemony. There are two ways civil society works to stabilize hegemony, (1) contribute to the subjugation of subservient parties by those who have the means

of repression, and (2) work to raise the interests of parties that do not possess the means of repression. Thus, hegemony always creates is counter-hegemony (Coutinho 2012; and Gramsci 1971). This contentious relationship with the state is an ongoing struggle among Palestinian student organizers irrespective of GUPS's status (or lack thereof according to Kassis's definitions but not Gramsci's) as a civil society organization. On the one hand, GUPS held friendly relationships with many of the states it operated in, on the other hand, some GUPS chapters were heavily criminalized and driven out of their host states. There are several examples of both outcomes in this dissertation.

Cultural and symbolic meanings of Palestinianness are powerful influences in defining identity for Palestinians the world over. This is a well-studied phenomenon in case studies of Palestinian refugee camps. In this literature, refugees fighting for Return to Palestine are powerful cultural images of Palestinian nationalism, anti-coloniality, and steadfastness (Sa'di and Abu-Lughod 2007; Sanbar 2001; Sayigh 2011; and Slyomovics 1998). It is rooted in a political disposition of refusal and resistance: refusal to forget the injustices, refusal to forgo their rights, and refusal to forfeit in the long fight. Refugees hold symbolic meaning as the epitome of Palestinian calls for the Right of Return, and since Return cannot exist within Zionist colonial frameworks Return is an anti-colonial project. This is because settler-colonialism relies on the elimination of indigenous people with the aim to acquire land dominated by the settler along with exclusive social, political, economic and legal privileges and rights; to challenge these structures is anti-colonial. The cultural interpretations of Palestinianness that evoke a nationalism of resistance are not held exclusively among refugees. Yasser Arafat once commented that the Palestinians in Israel (termed the '48 Area) were the bravest of the Palestinians for not having left their home. Further, it is widely understood in Palestine that the

commandos fighting for a free Palestine are held in high esteem. All Palestinians killed by Israel or in the freedom struggle fall as martyrs. This is not unique to the Palestinian case, as Susan Sontag argues, "to those who in a given situation see no alternative to armed struggle, violence can exalt someone subjected to it into a martyr or a hero" (Sontag 2002, 86). Palestinians in Israeli jails are all considered political prisoners, when they rebel in prisons and go on hunger strikes it is of nationalist importance. Political grassroots organizers and leaders of Palestinian institutions are respected. Raising the Palestinian flag is understood as a brave act. Planting an olive tree is a claim to the land as Israel uprooted the native trees and planted evergreen forests to hide the remains of Palestinian villages they destroyed. Even eating falafel and hummus and calling it Palestinian is political in an arena where Israelis claim the Palestinian culinary traditions. The list goes on. Any public display of Palestinianness and the sharing of Palestinian narratives is political since Zionist colonial narratives actively seek to erase Palestine or render it insignificant and forgotten. Rabab Abdulhadi argued that in analyzing the work of James Scott, "the weak deploy their home-grown repertoires of resistance, especially discourse, which explains why Palestinians have a rich oral memory archive and a poor record of documentation" (Abdulhadi 2000, 91; and Scott 1990). And evoking James Scott's theories on "lower-scale, nonconfrontational responses to oppressive conditions," Frances Hasso argued, "we should focus more deeply on what different types of resistance, and again, accommodation, tell us about the genealogies, forms, and (institutional, individual, and cultural) sources of power in any given context" (Hasso 2001, 607). As Lila Abu-Lughod argued, analyzing resistance is a *diagnostic of power* in which we can see "all forms of resistance as signs of the ineffectiveness of systems of power and of the resilience and creativity of the human spirit" (Abu-Lughod 1990, 42). GUPS provided a public space to resist Zionist colonial erasure, and to empower Palestinians in both

their individual and collective identities. It is no wonder that the group proved a popular collective for students to channel their energy. Furthermore, this is the key to how I deploy theories of social movements in my dissertation. The act of writing histories of Palestinian social activism is a praxis of social movement theorization. Much of the work in this dissertation is among the first of its kind to write mutli-sited social histories of GUPS or the first to do it from a perspective of centering theories of diaspora.[2]

In this regard, the aims and accomplishments of the General Union of Palestine Students highlight the empowering spirit found in joining GUPS as a social movement. Throughout its constitution and in interviews with GUPS leaders, building the Palestinian spirit was a consistent pillar of its organizing. The several references to unity include the unity of the student movement, closer relations with Arab and foreign student organizations, developing collective awareness of sound popular organizing, and strengthening the links between GUPS and other Popular Organizations. GUPS was very clear that it must be conscious of the vanguard role it perceived itself holding among Palestinian people. Its work to empower Palestinians also included preparing Palestinian youth for the battle of liberation. As discussed elsewhere in the dissertation, while GUPS did not form an armed division itself, its members worked closely with the armed wings of the political parties during times of war. GUPS also worked on exposing imperialist and Zionist conspiracies aimed at undermining the Palestinian cause. Here GUPS and its members are very clear, interpretation (be it historical, current events, or national narratives) is political and must be critically approached for the liberation movement. Nadia Abu El-Haj argued that widely accepted and reproduced epistemology is dynamically interlinked with

[2] There are brilliant books and PhD dissertations written by Laurie Brand and Mjriam Abu Samra whose work compiled and analyzed the oral histories of GUPS in Arab States that helped me immensely when thinking through the early formation of GUPS. Each work is distinct with its focus and area of study, as is mine, but I want to honor their intellectual labor and their support of my work.

broader social and political processes. In so doing, possessing knowledge has political implications and is used to justify and legitimize the national and cultural interests of a given society (Abu El-Haj 2001, 7). GUPS also worked to improve the condition of its students by providing them with a network they could rely on. This included providing students with the knowledge of the university system such as helping them fill out forms and register for courses, it also included helping them transition into new cities for their education such as helping them find housing or acquire groceries when money was tight. Further, it raises the questions of university student status as a class formation; this status can generate greater social and political opportunities, facilitate mobility, and inform the nexus of their selfhood and their community standing. Lastly, GUPS envisioned its political representation as a means of empowerment because it brought student voices into the decision-making and authority-holding institutions among the Palestinian liberation movement as well as joint Third World internationalist struggles.

Here I engage the three worlds theory from its historical usage. The terminology of the Third World as a political and economic position in global relations is accredited to French anthropologist Alfred Sauvy (Sauvy 1952; and Solarz 2012). Yet, some scholars argue it was Frantz Fanon's work that pushed for the politicization of the Third World as a collective subject (Fanon 1961; and Bose 2019). Under the paradigms of the existence of a hierarchical and tiered world, the breakdown is as follows. The First World being the military alliance states of NATO representing the capitalist bloc in Europe and North America. The Second World being those aligned in the Warsaw Pact representing the Soviet Union. And the Third World being the non-aligned states and notably their shared principles of liberation from foreign exploitation. The Chinese Communist Party's Three World theory differs greatly and emerged in the 1970s as a

product of the Cultural Revolution. The Three World theory as articulated by Vice-Premier Deng Xiaoping at the United Nations in April of 1974 placed both the United States and the Soviet Union in the First World. Belonging to the Second World were industrialized and capitalist powers Japan, Europe, and Canada. While the Third World incorporated Asia, Africa, and Latin America with China firmly in this camp (Emadi 1997). Third, Immanuel Wallerstein's World Systems theory that he first proposed in 1974 split the world in three based on the flow of goods, resources, and services within the global economy. These included (1) the core states which dominated the flow of global capital; (2) the semi-periphery which both are exploited by the core, and exploit the third category; and (3) the periphery which is the least developed (Wallerstein 2000). In any of the frameworks that split the world in three, Palestine continues to be categorized among the Third World. My usage of Third World, and Third World Internationalism stems from the anti-colonial movement that was forged in solidarity across Asia, Africa, and Latin America, and socialist groups in Europe and the USA to challenge oppression (Abdulhadi 2008; Field, Krepp, and Pettiná 2020; Ohene-Nyako 2018; Rodriguez 2006; Tabar 2017; and Zhiguang 2018).

Preliminary Studies

My master's thesis focused on the General Union of Palestine Students at San Francisco State University. I split my thesis into three body chapters to narrate the oral histories of GUPS from the years 2000-2017. I described specific and recurring events within the oral histories that narrate the experiences and legacies of GUPS members. The first chapter of my MA focused on GUPS in 2002 and it introduced the mistreatment of GUPS by SFSU administrators. Through a chronological series of case examples, I tracked the university's responses to and targeting of GUPS's demonstrations on campus. Further, that chapter described the hostilities faced by

Palestinians, Arabs, and Muslims in 2002 heightened by anti-Arab and Islamophobic racism during the al-Aqsa Intifada and after the 9/11/2001 attacks in the United States. I described the sentiments expressed on campus as GUPS members felt the reverberating effects of imperialism at SFSU. I detailed the sanctioning of GUPS by SFSU President Corrigan following an SF Hillel Israel rally on May 7, 2002, that brought negative international attention to the university and stigmatized GUPS. I concluded the chapter by showing how President Corrigan organized a task force whose suggestions brought about several structural changes affecting activism and educational programming on campus.

The second chapter discussed the struggles faced in commissioning the Palestinian Cultural Mural (also called the Edward Said Mural) on campus between 2005-2007. I detailed GUPS's attempts to safeguard self-representation over the Palestinian mural from university administrators' censorship. In the process, GUPS members learned about power dynamics and struggles for Palestinian justice. The oral history of this period demonstrated the tacit ways in which political activism on campus contributes to the cultivation of critical consciousness among students who take their knowledge with them as they leave the institution. Lastly, in the third chapter, I discussed the smear campaigns launched against Palestinian student activists and Dr. Abdulhadi from 2013-2017. The smear campaigns held serious consequences as they exacerbated the vulnerabilities of diasporic Palestinians at SFSU. Further, these campus campaigns have threatened academic freedom and free speech as they relate to Palestinian and anti-colonial movements. I detail the responses taken by SFSU administrators and the attacks against GUPS made by national Zionist organizations, and the effect both have had on threatening and harming Palestinian students. Lastly, I detail the proactive stance taken by GUPS

members, Dr. Abdulhadi, and their allies as they launch defensive campaigns to redefine the experiences of diasporic Palestinians on campus and demand an end to campus hostilities.

Student and Palestine Activism

During my undergraduate studies, I was trained as a Political Scientist and as an Area Studies scholar in the Middle East and South Asia. When I began my graduate studies in Anthropology I engaged with topics of positionality, experimental fieldwork, and the role of insider research. Anthropology has a long-standing tradition of engaging embodied knowledge where one can begin to understand through experience (Ahmed 2000; Chadwick 2017; Lock 1993; Rajan-Rankin 2018; Rosaldo 1984; Throop and Desjarlais 2011; and Zubair, Martin, and Victor 2012). Anthropology has applied many terms to this positionality of writing from "within," each with its own concepts and framings. The scholarship is rich regarding discussions on research proximity and methodologies of conducting ethnographic fieldwork as an insider (Hurston 1935; Jacobs 1997; Hoffman-Jeep 2005; and Meisenhelder 1996). These discussions tell of the advantages of holding an organic understanding of what takes place during ethnographic research. I detail my experiences in Palestinian student organizing to reflect my involvement in and understanding of student activism.

My first experience with campus activism occurred in the first quarter of my freshman year at UC Davis during the 2010 Occupy Movement. Students set up encampments on campus to protest the privatization of higher education and the system of student debt. Soon after, campus police pepper-sprayed the student demonstrators sparking national outrage. The largest rally recorded in UC Davis' history followed shortly after. I remember being in awe of a Palestinian student organizer as she spoke about soothing the pepper-sprayed faces of the students with her *keffiyeh*, a checkered Palestinian scarf, that she soaked in milk; a tip she had

learned from demonstrators while in Palestine the summer before. I resolved to meet her after the rally and to join the Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP) chapter where she was President. A year later, various SJP chapters across the University of California system organized campus divestment resolutions linked to the wider Boycott, Divestment, Sanction (BDS) campaign aimed at Israeli colonial violence and its military occupation. Our SJP chapter committed to the campaign which I co-authored and led as the coordinator. I spent two years working on the mobilization efforts that put us in a position to finally pass the resolution in its third year. I graduated by the end of the campaign's second year but stayed in contact with the organizers and attended the student government meeting where it passed. Our efforts were later documented in the censored Al Jazeera documentary *The Lobby* which was released through a leak to the Electronic Intifada (*Electronic Intifada* 2018). The documentary confirmed what we knew all along, that the students of the Zionist groups on campus (Hillel, Israel on Campus Coalition, The Israel Project, and The David Project) had direct links to the propaganda and intelligence/surveillance branches of the Israeli state.

I later joined the General Union of Palestine Students (GUPS) at San Francisco State University when I started my masters in 2015. As an organizer within GUPS, I worked on several campaigns including a campaign to push for increased university support and financial backing for the College of Ethnic Studies and the Arab and Muslim Ethnicities and Diasporas (AMED) program (Abdulhadi and Shehadeh 2020; and Qutami and Shehadeh 2021). Another campaign was to defend GUPS from threats of university sanctions. The university intended to punish GUPS for a protest of a campus visit by Nir Barakat who, at the time, was the mayor of occupied Jerusalem (Shehadeh 2017a). There was a campaign to protect GUPS, their allies, and Dr. Rabab Abdulhadi from a violent smear campaign organized by the David Horowitz Freedom

Center and Canary Mission (Abdulhadi 2018b; and Shehadeh and Zahzah 2021). And, as I was graduating, we started another campaign to defend myself, student allies and staff from Zionist and university backlash for organizing a Know Your Rights Fair on campus without giving a platform for racist and Zionist groups despite their demands (Shehadeh 2017b).

In the summer of 2017, a Zionist law firm by the name of the Lawfare Project filed lawsuits in federal and state courts concerning the abovenamed activities. They alleged that SFSU administrators and Dr. Rabab Abdulhadi fostered an antisemitic climate because Zionism remains contested on campus. I played a leading role in the team that organized a public legal campaign and defeated the federal lawsuit against her in October 2018 (Abdulhadi 2018a; and Palestine Legal 2018). In December 2018 the campaign and Dr. Rabab Abdulhadi filed two affirmative lawsuits against SFSU for their attempts to dismantle the AMED program and their harassment targeting her scholarship on Palestine (Spero 2019). The lawsuits were dismissed due to legal case mismanagement beyond her control, and she is in the process of writing this narrative. We have organized numerous speaking engagements and have written extensively on the battle to teach Palestine in the academy, and we have raised over $100,000 towards the legal campaigns. Since then, she along with her colleague Dr. Tomomi Kinukawa have filed three grievances against the SFSU administration for its violations to academic censorship on Palestine, failing to ensure an online classroom event with Leila Khaled when Zoom shut it down, and reneging on its hiring contract with Dr. Abdulhadi. I helped strategize the arguments in these grievance hearings and gave testimony as a witness in them (International Campaign to Defend Professor Rabab Abdulhadi 2022a; and Kinukawa 2022). All three grievances were unanimously upheld by the randomly selected faculty hearing panels that adjudicated the cases (International Campaign to Defend Professor Rabab Abdulhadi 2022b).

While at UCLA I was a lead organizer of Graduate Students for Justice in Palestine (Grad SJP). We hosted Palestine-centered programming and worked collaboratively with undergrad SJP and with Jewish Voice for Peace (JVP). Grad SJP hosted lectures and presentations, we also worked within campus coalitions to pass resolutions reaffirming commitments to divest from imperialism (including Israel) and the weapons industry as a whole. We also worked to support the National SJP conference held at UCLA in 2018 where I co-hosted a workshop on the anti-normalization of Zionism on campus and moderated Dr. Abdulhadi's keynote address. The conference was met with fierce opposition by UCLA administrators and Zionist groups alike (McMenamin 2021; and National Students for Justice in Palestine 2018). In May 2019, the university opened an investigation into allegations of antisemitism in an anthropology course on race and racism taught by Dr. Kyeyoung Park for which I served as the teaching assistant. I worked to invite Dr. Rabab Abdulhadi to give a guest lecture on Islamophobia in the course where Dr. Abdulhadi drew parallels between Zionism and white supremacy. A student was upset by the lecture that she and another disrupted during the question and answer period and filed a complaint with the university (Anthropology Graduate Student Association 2019). After several months, the university concluded the investigation finding that no wrongdoing occurred, and that the student had her feelings hurt. Later, Zionist groups led by Stand With Us filed a complaint with the Department of Education against UCLA alleging discrimination of Jewish students because of the National SJP conference and Dr. Abdulhadi's guest lecture (Committee on Academic Freedom-MESA 2020; and Palestine Legal 2020). Further, for one year, from February 2018 to February 2019, I was a co-host and producer on the Los Angeles radio station KPFK working with JVP leader Estee Chandler on the daily show *Middle East Minute Plus*. The show covered news on the region and Arab diasporic communities in the USA. Our segments

made sure to produce news coverage from anti-colonial frameworks that challenged the trained Orientalism in the mainstream US news industry. The show was canceled after the new leadership in KPFK decided to cut back on Palestine and broader Arab-related programming.

On the Dissertation Structure

This dissertation consists of five body chapters. Chapter one is concerned with theories on Palestinian diasporas. I begin with an overview of the literature on diaspora. I then go on to discuss how Zionism led to the mass dispersal of Palestinians. While there are trends within Palestinian scholarship to resist the usage of the term diaspora, in this chapter I make an argument why this term can be used to describe Palestinians within GUPS. Further, this chapter defines Zionism as a settler-colonial project, and how the racialization of Palestinians is a core aspect of the ongoing colonization of Palestine and informs their diasporic experiences.

In chapter two I discuss my research field methods in detail. This chapter is largely an ethnographic take on how I was able to collect data and how the ongoing Israeli occupation created several structural impediments in my research process. Further, this chapter gives insights into the contemporary constraints facing Palestinian student organizers in the West Bank. As a university graduate student based out of the USA and as a Palestinian American conducting this research, there are class and social dynamics that informed my field research experiences I discuss. Furthermore, my strategy to include oral histories and ethnographies into my methods section is key to the framework of this dissertation. Writing the history of social activism and giving it central stage is the core of the *theory* that informs the whole dissertation.

In chapter three I discuss three case studies on the formation of GUPS. The first case study is a historical analysis of the cultural and political impacts on Palestinian students in Egypt in the 1950s. These students formed the General Union of Palestine Students in 1959 alongside

Palestinian student organizers in Lebanon and Syria. Their ideals of Pan-Arabism and Palestinian Nationalism set the organizing principles for GUPS. As students traveled abroad to access universities, they created and/or joined GUPS chapters around the world. The second case study examines the formation of the GUPS branch in the USA. The USA had the Organization of Arab Students (OAS) which formed in the 1950s as a pan-Arab group with a large Palestinian student membership. In doing so, Palestinians in the USA broke the global pattern of forming GUPS. Relying on oral histories, I construct a narrative of how Palestinian students made the shift out of the OAS and established a GUPS branch in 1978-1980. In the third case study, I discuss theories of why a GUPS branch did not form in Palestine. These three case studies highlight that Palestinian students across the diaspora and in the homeland share a collective aim, that is the liberation movement, but take different actions based on context-specific structures. The plurality at hand emphasizes that being diasporic is not a monolithic condition. Instead, it is a connection and an exchange of ideas and commitments that are analyzed and acted up in different ways.

In chapter four I discuss how Palestinians in the diaspora and Palestine utilized the internationalization of higher education as a means to build institutions for political organizing connected to the liberation struggle. I discuss how systems of scholarships across the globe, relations with the Palestine Liberation Organization, military engagement, and the material conditions of Palestinian student migration impacted Palestinian diasporas and the presence of GUPS globally. In other words, the conditions for migration that higher education created allowed for the international growth of GUPS. Attention is paid to socialist educational policies that generated opportunities for a generation of Palestinians to enter university. One of the main arguments for how a diaspora can form is that a flow of ideas/projects connects this dispersed

population; for Palestinian students, GUPS provided that means of exchange. Chapter five discusses what organizing in GUPS was like within the USA branch. I discuss the relationship students had to community organizing and organizing for the liberation movement. Importantly, I analyze how racialized state policing mechanisms adversely impacted the organizing of GUPS.

As this dissertation is structured around oral histories, I found it necessary not to use pseudonyms. For interlocutors that requested that I keep their names anonymous, I have issued each one a unique number and referred to them in the text as anonymous #1, anonymous #2, and so on. My interview guide is located near the end of the dissertation to help the reader keep track of the various names as well as the anonymous numbering guide.

Chapter One - Theories on Palestinian Diasporas

Salient to my research focus is the crucial fact that an international Palestinian student organization did not emerge in Palestinian lands, but in its neighboring country, Egypt. I came to realize that understanding GUPS required understanding the nature of diaspora for Palestinians. The term, when used to label communities and individuals, evokes political, analytical, and emotional responses. This chapter is concerned with engaging the discourse on diaspora within the Palestinian context. Does the Palestinian diaspora exist? And, if so, is it singular or pluralistic? Is Diaspora a useful term to embrace? And, if so, what does it tell us about Palestinian subjecthood? What does the usage of Diaspora in the Palestinian context distract us from? This dissertation addresses how GUPS as an organization served to channel individual and collective identities. But can these identities fit within the existing frameworks and theoretical analysis of the paradigm on diaspora? If it can fit, is this relationship organic or forced? I argue throughout the dissertation that Palestinian diasporas do exist and that GUPS members performed in diasporic ways and understood themselves within the nexus of those diasporas. I also argue in this dissertation that GUPS as a structure and an institution bridged the Palestinian diasporas internationally. In this chapter, I lay out the theoretical background that informs that conclusion.

Diaspora- The Term

Diaspora is a popular term in 21st-century American scholarship. As it is linked to a mode of mobility and positionality, many communities have laid claim to the term. Its usage is so varied it is hard to bound it to rigid definitions. While it was traditionally reserved to label the scattering of an ethnic group from their homeland, contemporary scholarship and the emerging usage of ideological or social categorization diasporas transgress these notions. Examples

include the notion of a gay diaspora or even the racialized concept of a "terrorist diaspora" as evoked by FBI Director James Comey (Gopinath 2018; and Statement of FBI Director James Comey 2017). The term diaspora offers flexibility and I find it an advantage, not a limitation. I see the term diaspora as a potent worldview for those who evoke their diasporic membership and belonging.

The term Diaspora is borrowed from the Greek *diaspeirein* meaning to scatter across. From its usage to describe Greek dispersal, Jewish communities applied the concept to themselves tracing centuries of forced removal. A common narrative of this history extends back to the 8th century BCE with the Assyrian conquest leading to the dispersal of Hebrews, further scattering resulted from the 6th century BCE conquests by the Babylonians, and again with the Roman destruction of Jerusalem and the recognized *start* of the Jewish diaspora with the forced removal of Hebrews after their failed revolt in 70-73 CE. Stephane Dufoix argues that while this specific retelling of Jewish narratives of diaspora is the most common, it is historically inaccurate since "diaspora always meant the threat of dispersion facing the Hebrews if they failed to obey God's will, and it applied almost exclusively to divine acts" (Dufoix 2008, 4). Martin Baumann places the second century BCE as the beginnings of the term Jewish diaspora that meant a collective religious identity residing outside of Palestine. Early Christian groups in the first century amplified the notion of a Jewish diaspora to mock them and mark their religious differences because Christians saw their real home as the "heavenly city of Jerusalem" and the earth-based return to Palestine of Jewish traditions was deemed an incorrect biblical interpretation (Baumann 2000, 317-319). Further, Dufoix argues that the common start of Jewish diasporas with the fall of Jerusalem in 70 AD is not accurate as Jews largely stayed in the area until after the collapse of the Western Roman Empire in the 4th century (Dufoix 2008, 6). What is

remembered and largely applied in narratives of Jewish diaspora is the mythology and legends of displacement and fears of divine expulsion and not the accurate historical record.

In Khachig Tölölyan's historical account of the term diaspora in the English-speaking academy, he argues that the term has been applied to Jewish histories as the paradigm-defining case. Armenian histories are also included within the paradigm since it follows the typical model of diaspora as a dispersal from a homeland whose members seek return. He argues that it was not until the late 1960s that terms such as diaspora, transnational, overseas communities, ethnic and racial minorities, and exile groups increased in popular scholarship and literature to refer to "recent communities of dispersion… formed in the five centuries of the modern era" (Tölölyan 1996, 3). Since then, the term diaspora has been the most common and routinely applied term for "any notion of expansion and scattering away from a center," as he put it, "where once were dispersions, there is now diaspora" (Tölölyan 1996, 10; and 3). On an academic basis, Jemima Pierre describes the adaptation of the term in the field of anthropology, documenting that "diaspora entered the anthropological lexicon through the early ethnographic and theoretical work on the communities of African descent in the New World and has since attained new epistemological and political resonances" (Pierre 2013). Tölölyan suggests several reasons for the discursive wide-scale adoption of diaspora frameworks in the late 1960s[3]. These include accelerated immigration to the industrialized world; the host country's legal, political administrative and cultural-ideological apparatus for addressing immigration; and the degree of existing institutional organization in the national homeland, and the extent to which those

[3] As Dr. Jemima Pierre pointed out to me, St. Clair Drake and Horace Cayton used the term diaspora back in 1945. In their book *Black Metropolis,* they discuss a *Black Diaspora* referring to the Great Migration of African-Americans from the US south to the north during the First World War (Drake and Cayton 1945, 58). And as Dr. Robin D.G. Kelley pointed out to me it was also used in John LaFarge's review of Richard Wright's *Twelve Million Black Voices* and was titled, "The Negro Diaspora" (LaFarge 1942; and Wright 1941)

organizations accompany the immigrants (Tölölyan 1996, 20-21). Add to this list "the emergence of the Israeli state as a figure of diasporan achievement" which as Tölölyan demonstrates operated in the following manner,

> After 1967 and especially after 1973, the successes of the exceptionally well-organized pro-Israel lobby also led to the perception that the Jewish-American diaspora shaped US foreign policy towards the Middle East. Cuban, Arab, Greek, Cypriot-Greek, Irish and Armenian ethnic leaders quickly found that by citing the Jewish example, they could tap economic, political and even cultural energies within their own communities, which had previously remained inaccessible. These energies are most easily mobilized when focused towards Washington with the purpose of obtaining assistance desired by the homeland's legitimate government, but they may also enhance the ability of elites to mobilize their own followers for internal purposes (Tölölyan 1996, 24-25).

So entrenched was the sentiment that the term diaspora belonged to Jews that "in 1989, the *New York Times* published a letter by two American Jews who were offended that what they took to be exclusively 'the term for the dispersion of the Jewish people' was being applied to the Palestinian enemy in America's newspaper of record" (Tölölyan 1996, 9; and *New York Times* 1989). In short, this period was marked by the Jewish archetype of diaspora and the large-scale adoption of diasporic analysis on any population that experienced dispersal.

There are several issues raised with this mode of diasporic study that situates it as a synonym for dispersal modeled after Jewish archetypes. First, diaspora theorist Avtar Brah has argued that diasporic consciousness is not exclusive to those outside of the homeland. In a shared sense of *diaspora-space* peoples, both in and outside of the homeland, communicate social and moral connections and relationships that lead to various entanglements (Brah 1996). Further, as Jemima Pierre argues, diasporic approaches of dispersal have focused on the concept of homeland and return which has resulted in an unsettledness in the diasporic condition. While engaging the work of Elliot Skinner (1982), Pierre notes the contradictions in homeland and

diasporic return politics. Where the concept of homeland may center a goal of liberation for peoples of shared ancestry, at the same time, the concept of return can be understood as a physical or mythical concept that is at times outright rejected by those in the diaspora or those in the homeland thus forming a dialectic relationship (Pierre 2013; Skinner 1982). Dufoix refers to this relationship between homelands and their dispersed populations as *referent-origin* relations comprised of four types: Centroperipheral mode where the home state controls diasporic relations; Enclaved mode where localistic collectives of emigrants maintain an identity of a shared origin but seek no relationship with the homeland; Atopic mode where the large-scale diasporic collective draws on a common origin without efforts to engage with the flow of ideas, peoples, and resources extended across the homeland or other diasporic groups; and Antagonistic mode where the diaspora organize against the home state (Dufoix 2008; and Waldinger 2008 xv). The significance of these interventions is that they challenge the presumed end goal of return for diasporic groups and break open this constricting paradigm.

The second issue with that version of diaspora is its overutilization in academic scholarship when describing any dispersed populations. Tölölyan argued that trends in the mass application of diaspora have put it "in danger of becoming a promiscuously capacious category" (Tölölyan 1996, 8). As Rogers Brubaker put it, "If everyone is diasporic, then no one is distinctly so. The term loses its discriminating power- its ability to pick out phenomena, to make distinctions. The universalization of diaspora, paradoxically, means the disappearance of diaspora" (Brubaker 2005, 3). He goes on to argue that one corrective to this over usage is the application of definitions of when a diaspora forms that he breaks into three parts: Dispersion, Homeland Orientation, and Boundary-Maintenance or the preservation of a distinctive identity (Brubaker 2005, 6). Several scholars have called for applying definitions to what constitutes a

diaspora. A particularly robust definition of diaspora is provided by Ato Quayson and Girish Daswani.

> For a diaspora to emerge out of the dispersal of a given population several conditions have to be met. These often include the time-depth of dispersal and settlement in other locations; the development of a myth of the homeland; the attendant diversification of responses to homeland and host nation; the evolution of class segmentation and conflict within a given diaspora alongside the concomitant evolution of an elite group of cultural and political brokers; and the ways in which contradictions among the various class segments end up reinforcing different forms of material and emotional investment in an imaginary ideal of the homeland. (Quayson and Daswani 2013, 3).

What the definition highlights is that for dispersal to form into a diaspora, conscious and collective efforts must take place to make that shift. Further, diasporic relations are fraught with conflicts over representation. The structure of these contestations of representation work to inform diasporic consciousness as discussed later in this chapter.

Third, the archetype of Jewish diaspora is problematic as it works to collapse Jewish identity into a monolith that is intimately tied to Zionism and the settler-colonial return of Jewish dispersal. As Judith Butler argued, "the effort to suppress the complexity of the category of 'Jewish' is thus a political move that seeks to yoke a cultural identity to a specific Zionist position" (Butler 2013; and Topolski 2020, 268). Many diaspora scholars do not identify a problem with how Zionism is deployed in diasporic frameworks, and some glorify it. But the Jewish archetype has other issues including the attempt to force fit other diasporas into the Jewish model. As James Clifford argued, "we should be able to recognize the strong entailment of Jewish history on the language of diaspora without making that history a definitive model. Jewish (and Greek and Armenian) diasporas can be taken as non-normative starting points for a discourse that is travelling or hybridizing in new global conditions" (Clifford 1994, 306). Further, Clifford addresses the point that the contemporary utilization of diaspora pushes an

analysis beyond the notion of dispersal. Rogers Brubaker highlights this point when he argued, "we should think of diaspora not in substantialist terms as a bounded entity, but rather as an idiom, a stance, a claim. … As a category of practice, 'diaspora' is used to make claims, to articulate projects to formulate expectations, to mobilize energies, to appeal to loyalties. It is often a category with a strong normative change. It does not so much *describe* the world as seek to *remake* it" (Brubaker 2005, 12). As Paul Gilroy argued a decade prior in his work on diaspora, "The history of the black Atlantic yields a course of lessons as to the instability and mutability of identities which are always unfinished, always being remade" (Gilroy 1993, xi). The analysis of identity as an ongoing process reveals that identities can be shaped by larger structures and influences of power.

This understanding of diasporic subjecthood and identity are key pillars in diaspora theory. These points of analysis were applied by Stuart Hall in his arguments on the connection between cultural identity and diaspora. "Perhaps instead of thinking of identity as an already accomplished fact, which the new cultural practices then represent, we should think, instead, of identity as a 'production' which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation" (Hall 1994, 392). Here, Hall and Gilroy make similar arguments. The impact of this argument remains that diasporic identities are constructed; they don't simply exist as a natural and singular fact. In turn, how structures of power are operationalized locally and globally means that diasporic identity is not the same everywhere even among those that understand themselves as part of a larger diaspora. Hall goes on to argue that to understand diasporic identity in the colonial experience, we must approach cultural identity as "a matter of 'becoming' as well as 'being'. … Far from being eternally fixed in some essentialized past, they are subject to the continuous 'play' of history, culture and power" (Hall

1994, 394). This is significant in the formations of diasporic identities linked to de-coloniality where identity does not mean a return to the pre-colonial past. Hall further argued that the continued production of cultural identity and the creation of meaning in those identities are both central to diaspora and a never-ending process (Hall 1994, Gilroy and Gilmore, 2021). Gilroy and Hall's teachings have made a deep impact on the field of diaspora studies. In Ghassan Hage's book *The Diasporic Condition* he argues, "Diaspora is a way of being in the world and a way in which the world comes to be" (Hage 2021, 2). What Hage adds with this analysis is that the positionality of diasporic subjecthood informs its worldview and that diasporic culture is a fluid medium in which transnational networks are situated and constituted (Hage 2021, 12). Susan Ossman's work on serial migration argues that the act of moving matters in the formation of subjecthood. She argues that for serial migrants the *self* is a construct of the varied political, cultural and linguistic environments they engage with throughout their life. Ossman argues that subjecthood is made "in process of ongoing consideration of what links the places of one's life (besides oneself) as well as how different institutions and histories distinguish them;" to Ossman, borders matter (Ossman 2013, 4-5). Ossman's work also highlights the significance of serial migration, those who live in at least three different places, as an area of study in diaspora. And, as Dr. Jemima Pierre helped me think through in her feedback on an early draft of my dissertation, the formation of subjecthood is always structured in *material fields of power*. Thus, diasporic identities are constantly in formation, and these identities are impacted by and at the same time also impact larger structures of power. This definition leads to an understanding of diaspora that is fluid and exists in the realm of consciousness as well as in the varied connections of culture, power, and ambitions. What these scholars show is that there is a need to understand diaspora as a *condition* that informs personal and collective subjecthood.

The literature on diaspora also engages a discourse on its role within global migration and transnational movements. The theory of Rhizomatic Diaspora is one approach to the study of migration within diasporas. Initiated by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari (1987) and Paul Gilroy (1993), it was later reworked by Kyeyoung Park into a theory that frames diasporic migration as a "haphazard set of material conditions and realities" which "conceptualize how migratory processes are culturally organized" (Deleuze and Guattari 1987; Gilroy 1993; and Kyeyoung 2014, 484). The unique quality of this theory is its ability to weave together an understanding that there exists a fundamental relationship between culture and structure that is ever-present in dispersal and the making of a diaspora. The study of material conditions of migration is a common theme of research. Migration theorist Everate Lee argued that migration decisions can be broken down into four factors. Those factors are conditions in the place of origin, conditions of the destination, intervening factors and obstacles, and, lastly, personal factors (Lee 1966). The internationalization of higher education, as both an industry and a means of global accessibility, is a significant push and pull factor within mobility and migration paradigms (Brooks and Waters 2021). The naming of these two paradigms, mobility and migration, is relevant, though at times they are used interchangeably. Theorists debate the cloudy distinctions between mobility and migration because they are mediated through particular political contexts, for example, migration includes aspects of integration pressure not felt within the presumed transience of mobility (Weinar, Bonjour and Zhyznomirska 2018). Regarding emigration, how much of it is intentional state policy or an individualized choice is a growing field of study. In the former, for example, state strategies that have a national economy reliant on remittance payments do build structures for planned emigration (Cabanda 2017). Further, early theories of transnationalism have posed the subject as "the process by which immigrants forge and sustain multi-stranded social relations

that link together their societies of origin and settlement" (Basch, Schiller and Blanc 1994, 7). Other theorists put it as "Transnationalism encompasses not only the movement of people, but also notions of citizenship, technology, forms of multinational governance, and the mechanisms of global markets" (Quayson and Daswani 2013, 4). Under this argument, ideas people, resources, and culture can all move in transnational ways including diasporas.

Contemporary works developed theoretical links between transnationalism and diaspora in meaningful ways beyond the centrality of the nation-state. Myriam J.A. Chancy writing on transnationalism in the African Diaspora argues that diasporic affiliation occurs through transnational cultural production and transhistorical kinship mediated through an understanding of African-ness as an embodied expression that "reveal citizenship not to a nation but to a larger, transnational body similarly expressed" (Chancy 2020, 6-7). In this way, the center (homeland) and periphery (dispersal) models of diaspora are challenged for a de-territorialized diasporic multitude. A usable definition of culture is helpful to understand this argument, "The symbolic representations that constitute human knowing are, in their various groupings, classifications and manifestations, the *cultural*" (Jenks 1993, 8). That cultural production moves across these networks and interacts across the phenomena of globalized migration is key to Arjun Appadurai's arguments on the de-territorialization and re-territorialization of diaspora (Appadurai 1996). *Diasporic public spheres,* Appadurai argues, are a way of understanding one's belonging to a cultural diaspora that is publicly constructed and consumed. This framework can be understood in the same way that shared cultural production led to nationalist ways of belonging evoked in Benedict Anderson's work *Imagined Communities*. So, on the one hand, he argues that *diasporic public spheres* are transnational in their relationships and modes of exchange that create and center nationalist ways of thinking, but at times they can also be

imagined as post-state when cultural productions transgress the centrality of the state (Appadurai 1996, 21-22). The frameworks that locate diasporic productions outside of nationalist ways of thinking are not necessarily universal, but what they do is break open and challenge a paradigm where the state is front and center.

How do Palestinians approach the term diaspora?

In the Palestinian and Arabic-language contexts, there are two common ways to understand the English term diaspora. The first and more popular is the Arabic term *al-shattat* referring to the forced dispersal and scattering of Palestinians. The second is the *al-ghurba* referring to estrangement or separation and "is typically used to refer to the state of being a foreigner in a land away from home" and in the Palestinian context refers to a state of exile (Dakkak 2019). If Palestinian scholars and writers want to use the term diaspora, they can use the Arabic script to phonetically transliterate the word, and I have seen it done. But the vast majority, when writing in Arabic, do not use the term. First, it is so steeped in Jewish discourse that Zionism has co-opted. Stuart Hall criticizes this Zionist narrative of diaspora, "diaspora does not refer us to those scattered tribes whose identity can only be secured in relation to some sacred homeland to which they must at all cost return, even if it means pushing other people to the sea. This is the old, the imperializing, the homogenizing, form of 'ethnicity.' We have seen the fate of the people of Palestine at the fate of this backward-looking conception of diaspora- and the complicity of the West with it" (Hall 1994, 401). Second, referring to scattering or exile forces a confrontation with Zionist history, it highlights that the displacement of Palestinians was and is an ongoing and active process, something that the word diaspora does not immediately evoke. Third, Stuart Hall argues that the concept of diaspora refers to the "scattering and dispersal of peoples who will *never* literally be able to return to the places from which they

came" (Hall 1995, 206). This, of course, stands against everything sacred to the Palestinian anti-colonial liberation movement seeking to dismantle Zionism and ensure the Right of Return for Palestinians. This is a Return that means liberation, the end of Zionist settler-colonialism, restitution of stolen and destroyed homes and communities, reparation for a pillaged and occupied country, redress for death and mass incarceration, and the free choice to live a quality life in Palestine. Bassma Kodmani-Darwish captured that earlier sentiment when she wrote, "to identify the Palestinians as refugees is to recognize that there is a problem requiring a solution. To label them a diaspora is to eliminate by the very language the need to change their situation" (Kodmani-Darwish 1997, X; and Harlow 1998, 81). Here, the term diaspora is a political tool in an ongoing struggle over Palestine and the continuous erasure of Palestinian claims, legitimacy, and narratives. According to Julie Peteet, the various and current state of Palestinian experiences cannot be practically reduced to a singular label of diaspora, refugeehood or exile, since the Palestinian condition can be all of this at once and each has its interwoven ideological and political values (Peteet 2007). Yet there are ramifications for the usage of the terms and categories that must be taken seriously, no category is neutral.

What if we change the terms of the discussion? If an aversion to the term diaspora stems from the constant battle to resist dominant Israeli colonial narratives, why not remove that Zionist counterclaim in this dissertation? I do not take Palestinian realities for granted: this dissertation makes clear that Zionism is a settler-colonial project that has illegitimately and unjustifiably ushered in mass violence onto Palestinians and Palestine. I write with clarity and a purpose intended not to obfuscate this fact. If I engage an audience that agrees to these terms, then it is one that takes the Right of Return as a foregone conclusion. If you are legally oriented it is an inalienable right enshrined in international law and UN resolutions. If you are spiritually

oriented it is a sacred and divine right. And if you are anti-colonially oriented it is the only path to justice. In fact, all three sentiments have been put forth under the banner of Return. In this scenario does Palestinian writing always need to be armed and tooled to defend its legitimacy? Under these conditions, I argue that diaspora can be safely used to elucidate constructive ways of being and connection.

On the Palestinian Dispersal and Diaspora Formation

Palestinian sociologist Sari Hanafi analyzed the criteria of how and when Palestinian dispersals can be considered a diaspora. Hanafi was elected in 2018 as president of the International Sociological Association. He is a professor at the American University of Beirut, and an editor of *Idafat*, the Arab Journal of Sociology. Hanafi argues that "Palestinians abroad do not constitute a real diaspora, but rather a 'partially diasporized people'" (Hanafi 2005, 98). His theories rely heavily on material and economic connections between historic Palestine as a center of gravity and those abroad, or more precisely the lack of these connections. Importantly, he writes that "In this respect, the discourse on diasporic networks has been overstated and almost mythic. Little attention has been paid to the absence of networks or to networks that were damaged or torn, disconnected as a result of many factors (such as the impermeability of the inter-state borders, absence of relationship following a long period of separation, and so forth)" (Hanafi 2005, 104). While his argument is much more teased out, his point is clear, diaspora is not understood as a single unitary phenomenon, details and historical context matter. Hanafi puts forth a definition of diaspora, he states, "a group of dispersed people, far from their homeland, can be considered a diaspora when it fulfills two necessary conditions: first, the group has an accepted legal presence in the host country, and second, members of this group are tied together by a variety of different networks which also link them to their real or mythical homeland"

(Hanafi 2005, 105). Hanafi argues that the bulk of Palestinians outside of Palestine resides in legal precarity in Arab states amounting to what he categorizes as a "population in transit", this includes the 3.7 million Palestinian refugees registered as of 2000 (Hanafi 2005, 107). He also argues that some Palestinian populations abroad have well assimilated into their host communities thus placing them outside of diasporic connections. He provides a graph of the conclusions of his argument that I attach below.

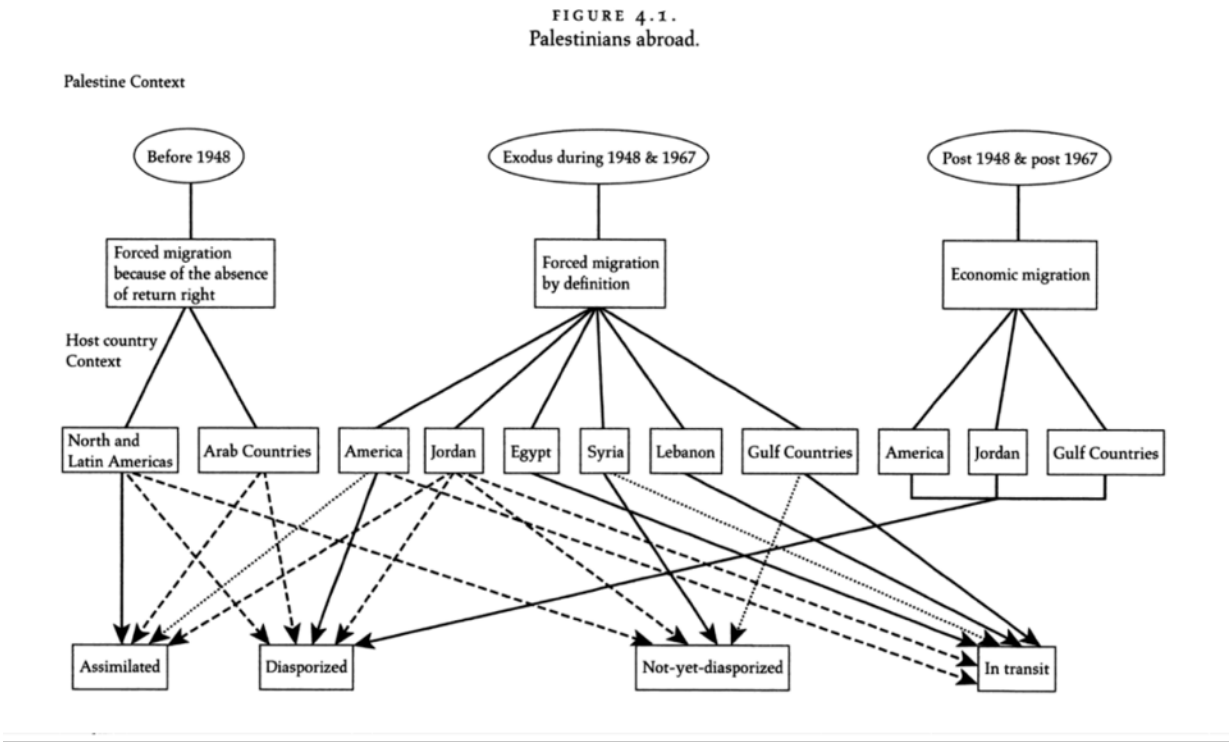

Figure 1: Sari Hanafi's graph of Palestinian migration titled "Palestinians Abroad" (Hanafi 2005, 110).

Not all Palestinian scholars agree with Hanafi's conclusions. For example, Nadim Bawalsa's 2022 book *Transnational Palestine* is devoted to analyzing the deep-seated diasporic identities and transnational activism of Palestinian immigrants to Central and South America before 1948 which Hanafi argues are largely assimilated (Bawalsa 2022). Bawalsa gives a prime

example of the formation and production of a Palestinian Diaspora as an active and conscious process. His study focuses on Palestinian migrants in Latin America in the 1920s and 1930s fighting for access to Palestinian citizenship created under British colonial rule through the 1925 Palestinian Citizenship Order-in-Council. Bawalsa writes the Palestinian-Latino collective action demonstrates a subjecthood positioned in the relationship between a Palestinian homeland in which they claim membership and their dispersed status in host countries such that collectively "these stances, claims, processes, and articulations *are* the first Palestinian diaspora (Bawalsa 2022, 10-11). While Hanafi's analysis is set in the post-Oslo Accords period, nearly sixty years after the period in which Bawalsa studies, more contemporary case studies in South America include those undertaken by Rasem Bisharat, and Yousef Aljamal and Philipp Amour further challenge Hanafi's arguments and situate the robustness of Palestinian diasporic practices (Aljamal and Amour 2020; and Bisharat 2019). The reason I include Hanafi's article is to highlight that not all Palestinians consider themselves part of a larger diaspora, and when they do, there is no universal definition of what that means.

Several scholars have addressed the formation of Palestinian diasporic consciousness. Rashid Khalidi argues that a shared narrative of history is central to this construction. Khalidi writes that the forced displacement of Palestinians in 1948 is a centralizing theme in Palestinian identity that is present across all Palestinian identities, whether they be diasporic or not. He argues that the historical narrative "reinforced preexisting elements of identity, sustaining and strengthening a Palestinian self-definition that was already present. The shared events of 1948 thus brought Palestinians closer together in terms of their collective consciousness, even as they were physically dispersed all over the Middle East and beyond" (Khalidi 1997a, 22). The significance of Khalidi's argument within the debated application of a Palestinian diaspora is that

it frames shared historical narrative of colonialism as the connecting nexus. Rabab Abdulhadi takes the analysis of the centrality of colonialism to Palestinian diasporic identities further when she argued, "While no shared essence between those in the 'diaspora' and the place from which they descended exists, the construction of Palestinianness as the 'other' of Zionism highlights the unity and sameness of Palestinianness rather than difference among Palestinians" (Abdulhadi 2000, 97). Further, this collective identity is not the articulation of victimhood since Palestinian narratives of settler-colonial trauma are paired with a call to action, a collective resolve to resist, and steadfastness. Svenja Gertheiss's work on Palestinian diasporic activism highlights this notion. She argues that consciousness of being diasporic informs, in a major way, the structural conditions for social movement activism (Gertheiss 2016). What Khalidi does not do is center homeland or return as the defining factor of identity. Edward Said agreed with this position as he rejected the articulation of a homeland-oriented diaspora for Palestinians. Said stated, "the idea that there is a kind of redemptive homeland doesn't answer to my view of things" (Rushdie and Said 1991, 173). Edward Said argued that exile is a more apt label, even above that of refugee, since exile highlights the plight of the individual over a loosely connected collective (Said 1984, 54). He was referring to a recognition that being Palestinian is not a monolithic experience or subjecthood. As Dr. Slyomovics pointed out to me, Edward Said and other Palestinian scholars used the Arabic term *manfa* when referring to a place or a state of exile or banishment, and its Arabic root *nafa* means to expel, eject, oust, evict, exile, and banish (Hans Wehr 1994; Hassad 2015; and Said 2000). Further, Helena Lindholm Schulz argues that the role of homeland within the Palestinian diasporic consciousness is not an entirely fixed entity. She argues that Palestinian diasporas show how "a transnational existence" can contribute to "new, less territorialized identities, even in a diaspora community as tightly knitted around the idealized homeland as

Palestine" (Schulz 2003, 4). Thus, Palestine as a homeland is part of the diasporic consciousness but it does not have to be the center of attention nor is the role of the homeland the same for everyone. This, she argues, is achievable through shifting the paradigms of analysis. She presents a mode of analysis that is not bound by "the context of remembering, longing and struggling" for Palestine and keeping the possibility open for new contexts of identity and consciousness formation (Schulz 2003, 4).

Juliane Hammer's book *Palestinians Born in Exile: Diaspora and the Search for Homeland* was an informative resource for thinking through Palestinian diasporas. It is a rich scholarly review of the debate on whether Palestinians are a diaspora or not, as well as a historicization of Palestinian diasporas and ethnographies of diasporic praxis. She argues that in Palestinian diasporic spaces there exists strong notions of the Right of Return and analysis of the (im)possibilities of return, sophisticated understanding of homeland politics (before the signing of Oslo), a heightened awareness of Palestinian origins, and a consciousness that Palestinian identity is political (Hammer 2005). Further, she argues, these shared identities are present at different intensities across Palestinian societies irrespective of whether they are in the homeland or not. Hammer shows that the collective historical narrative does not end with 1948, it continues to rearticulate itself and resonates with the fact that not even an inch of Palestine is free since it is colonized and under military occupation. So, on the one hand Palestinians *abroad* articulate a diasporic consciousness, but on the other hand, Palestinians in the *homeland*, and everywhere else, can articulate themselves as a people made diasporic.

The subtext throughout this analysis of Palestinian diasporic consciousness is that the Palestinian homeland exists to be returned to. But return in the Palestine context is multifaceted; the first is political and the second is physical. The political Right of Return is an anti-colonial

call to action, but it is not a dictate that every person of Palestinian indigeneity must or even will physically return to Palestine to fulfill a mythical destiny. Right of Return is an obligation; return to a free Palestine is a choice tempered by structural conditions. Scholarship on Palestinian diaspora must differentiate the two returns or else risk producing misconceptions. When figures like Edward Said reject that "redemptive homeland," as he put it, they are not rejecting a concern for Palestine; rather they are rejecting the essentializing notion that every Palestinian's rightful place is locked to that land. Further, I am convinced Palestinians can claim to be diasporic. This claim does not erase the reality of exile and refugeehood, rather it compliments it and expands our understanding and the possibilities of what it means to be Palestinian. What I am not convinced of is that this claim undermines Palestinian liberation movements, in fact, I argue it can expand the possibilities for a praxis of revolution. Evidence of this is the role diasporic student organizing plays in the anti-colonial movement, resistance against Zionism, and the empowerment of Palestinian communities and their political power as experienced by the General Union of Palestine Students and discussed in this dissertation.

Formation of Palestinian Dispersal

I turn to the historical background of the Palestinian dispersal. Palestinian emigration can be traced back to the Ottoman period in the 19th century. They migrated for several economic, political and social reasons ranging from collapsing regional industries to religious discrimination. Following the defeat of the Ottomans in the First World War, the Triple Entente of the Russian Empire, France and Great Britain divided the fallen empire among themselves. Enshrined in the 1916 Sykes-Picot Agreement, Palestine was given to the British as a colony to rule over. That they would refer to these new colonies as mandates is a matter of legal distinction; this is why anti-colonial scholars, such as Rabab Abdulhadi in her work on *Teaching*

Palestine, refuse to use the term in their analysis of the period. Since authority to govern Palestine was conferred by the League of Nations it was called a mandate while the term colony was reserved for territories acquired through the powers of a sovereign country. On the eve of the Ottoman defeat, the British issued the Balfour Declaration of 1917 announcing official government policy in support of Jewish colonization in Palestine. During the British Mandate for Palestine Jewish settlement ballooned from less than 100,000 in 1919 to approximately 600,000 in 1948 (Encyclopedia Britannica 2023). Further Palestinian emigration resulted from the conditions of British colonial rule and Zionist incursion. In 1946 the League of Nations officially dissolved due to its failures as an international body. The year prior, in 1945 the United Nations was formed and much of the former responsibilities of the League were conferred to it. The League of Nations mandates were transferred to the United Nations Trust Territories, but the Palestine mandate was not among those transferred and the British maintained control but only temporarily. In 1947, facing resistance from both Zionists and Palestinians, the British relinquished Palestine to the United Nations which established a Special Commission on Palestine (UNSCOP) to determine Palestine's fate. The UN concluded in Resolution 181 to partition Palestine in two granting the formation of a Jewish state on Palestinian land, and the British pledged to terminate its mandate in Palestine on May 15, 1948. On May 14, 1948, General Alan Cunningham, the last British High Commissioner of Palestine, arrived at the port of Haifa, lowered its last Union Jack and boarded his ship signaling the official end of British rule. It is a moment so entrenched in Zionist national mythology to signify, in their terms, the end of colonialism in their revolutionary war. To Palestinians, it is yet another example of the inevitable collapse of foreign occupying powers akin to the fall of Ottoman rule, Crusader kingdoms, or the Byzantine Empire. But this moment was not of peace and prosperity for the

Palestinians as an emerging colonizing power took its place. That same day, on May 14th, Ben Gurion declared the creation of the state of Israel.

The declaration of Israel marked a new political order that changed the Palestinian world. It established a Jewish ethnostate backed by the might of Western imperialism. It marked the defeat of Arab armies on the world stage unable to prevent the rise of this new settler-colonial state while many, though not all, in Africa and Asia were gaining independence. And among the approximately 1.4 million Palestinians, more than half became refugees scattering the wider region as Palestine was ripped into thirds. Israeli forces colonized the lion's share of the coastal region and the Naqab desert under Plan Dalet, Egypt held Gaza where the *All-Palestine Government* would be established but be governed largely under Egyptian rule, and Jordan annexed the west bank of the Jordan River. Israel militarized its new borders and seized Palestinian land titles preventing their return. This made them both refugees and exiles and catapulted the course of the Palestinian dispersal. Those who were able to stay in their homes in what was now Israel, termed the '48 Area or *al-dakhil* meaning the inside, were placed under martial law as Jews enjoyed the freedom and full privileges of their citizenship and nationality- an important distinction in Israeli law. These aforementioned injustices were coined the *Nakba* (meaning catastrophe) by the Lebanese Arab intellectual Constantine Zurayk and inspired mass Palestinian resistance in the attempt to right these wrongs (Zurayk 1948). In 1967 Israel invaded and occupied the remainder of Palestine. In the immediate wake, another 350,000 Palestinians fled military occupation and many more lost their residency rights (Hanafi 2005). These colonial histories have translated to a reality where those that managed to stay in the land of Palestine either fell under Israeli military occupation (West Bank and Gaza) or lived as besieged citizens in Israel (the '48 area). Anthropologist Nadia Abu El-Haj argues that colonial violence "operates

different vis-à-vis Israel's Palestinian citizens- subjected to ethnoracial purging- than vis-à-vis those in the territories who are cordoned off behind the Wall in the lock-up facility that is Palestine today, who are subjected to physical and social death and to politicide" (Abu El-Haj 2010, 36). As is evidently clear, the Palestinian homeland is not free.

Palestinian Immigration to the USA

Arab migration to North America occurred over several waves. The first was the migration between the 19th and mid-20th centuries predominantly from the region of Greater Syria including present-day Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, and Jordan (Suleiman 1999). The USA stymied Arab migration with the passage of the 1924 Johnson-Reed Act setting a 1,000-person migration quota for the Middle East that lasted decades (Little 2022). Still, there were significant waves of Palestinian migration to the USA since the 1930s as a result of Zionist settler-colonialism (Suleiman 2000, 6). In the immediate years after World War II, the USA created quota exemptions for those with professional skills including doctors and engineers leading to a wave of well-trained Arabs to the USA. Another significant wave came to the USA with the passing of the Refugee Act of 1953 that paved the way for 2,000 Palestinian families to immigrate. In the late 1950s and early 1960s, the USA admitted another 985 Palestinian families. Migration skyrocketed with the passage of the Hart-Celler Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 which eliminated the quota system, and from 1966-1990 nearly 400,000 Arabs immigrated to the USA. The vast majority were educated professionals and international students, but these numbers also included Palestinians displaced by Zionist colonialism especially after the 1967 occupation, and refugees created by the Lebanese Civil War and Israeli invasions (Little 2022).

Village and town-based associations, especially from Ramallah and Bethlehem areas, formed across the USA connecting generations of immigrants and their children to others who

had made the same journey from their hometown. They built a community in the North American diaspora among their kin. The creation of these hometown associations (or HTA as designated in scholarly literature) is fairly a common facet of immigrant and diasporic populations. HTAs function as community organizing spaces and are a cultural, political and cultural nexus. The literature on HTAs has theorized their role in mediating localized politics, mobilizing social movements, and as an avenue through which the home state can impact politics abroad. It has also theorized their economic role regarding facilitating chain-link migration and remittances, as well as the gendered dynamics of HTA participation (Goldring 2003; Lacroix 2014; Lee 2023; and Pierre-Louis 2006). Ramallah and Birzeit families are some of the communities known for migration and achieving a level of prosperity in the USA, these are also historically Christian towns in Palestine. In 1959, immigrants from Ramallah formed the Ramallah Federation and chapters were initiated nationally (Ajlouny 2009). Their migration figures are staggering: the population of Palestinians from Ramallah in the USA was approximately 4,000 in 1960, it ballooned to 10,000 in 1970, and in 2008 there were over 30,000 in the USA while only 2,500 to 3,000 remained in their hometown (Ajlouny 2009, 6). This downward trend is not unique to Ramallah, the Christian population in all of Palestine today hovers around 2%, down from around 4.7% in 1970, 7.3% in 1947, and a high of 10.7% in 1890 (Sabella 2018). These emigration trends are observable across Christian communities in Arab states where their total population hovers around 5% in 2015, down from 14% at the turn of the 20th century (Zurlo 2018). There exist sentiments of anxiety in Palestine among its Christian communities regarding their minority status. In an interview I conducted during fieldwork in 2022 with Father Louis Hazboun, the priest of the Catholic Church in Birzeit, he said that working towards keeping Palestinian Christians from emigrating out of Palestine is one of the

most important projects of the network of churches in Palestine. This raised several ethical and structural questions. Who stays steadfast against colonial brutality and the abuses of military occupation? Who gets to escape these abuses, who gets to choose to leave, and who is stuck? Who can return and under what conditions, and who chooses to return? Who protects the churches and Christian life in Palestine? Whose continued physical presence on Palestinian land will confront Zionist erasure? What responsibility do those of us Palestinians living outside have to these besieged stewards? These questions are ever more complicated by the seeming (im)possibilities of Return.

On Return

While I gave a brief overview of the Palestinian Nakba above, I engage it with greater detail here as it relates to Return. In 1929, the World Zionist Organization (WZO) established the Jewish Agency as the political authority for Zionist settler-colonialism in Palestine. The Haganah, a Zionist paramilitary group in Palestine, having formed in 1920, was incorporated into the structure of the WZO as the main military wing to protect the settler-colonial project underway. In 1947, David Ben Gurion, in his capacity as chairman of the Jewish Agency, reorganized the Haganah and implemented Plan Dalet (Plan D). This Plan D laid the military strategy for a massive Palestinian population transfer out of Palestine for the creation of a Jewish state (Khalidi 1997b). As invading Zionist armies besieged Palestinian towns and villages, people fled for their lives or were forcibly removed from their homes, and those who could fight stayed to do so to protect their communities. Israel maintained four POW labor camps detaining over 5,000 Palestinian civilians and combatants who were expelled at the end of the war as documented by the International Committee of the Red Cross (Abu Sitta and Rempel 2014). Narratives of Zionist brutality spread quickly such as the 1948 Deir Yassin massacre where

Zionist troops destroyed the village killing Palestinians indiscriminately which inspired fear throughout Palestine. Arab League states of Egypt, Jordan, Syria, Iraq, and Lebanon sent their armies to fight against Israel, and Saudi Arabia also sent troops to fight. Armies battled each other for every inch of land, fighting took place in neighborhoods, among streets and homes, and on roads and open fields. But the Zionist militias and later the Israeli army was much better equipped and armed. Families were split up in the months of destruction. Plan D created a method to channel Palestinian refugees across land and sea into surrounding Arab states where camps were established around the borders. Ghassan Kanafani's 1969 novella *Return to Haifa* provides a harrowing retelling of the battle of Haifa and the scramble at its port to board ships as Zionist armies invaded the city. Not all who fled crossed international borders, and many who fled became internally displaced as refugees just a few kilometers away from their ancestral homes. Susan Slyomovics's work on Ayn Hud is a striking example of Palestinian refugees who live within eyesight of their stolen village and homes (Slyomovics 1998). Putting this into perspective, one-third of Palestinian refugees still live in UN-recognized refugee camps, and 80 percent of Palestinian refugees live within a 100-mile radius of Palestine (Weighill 1999; and UNRWA 2023). Many Palestinians thought they would return home after the war ended, and while many tried, they were unsuccessful.

After the armistice agreements Israel, Egypt, Lebanon, Jordan and Syria signed in 1949, the Israeli parliament, the Knesset, passed a series of laws barring the return of Palestinians while creating a pipeline for Jewish settlement of Palestine. The first includes the Law of Return (1950) which enfranchised every Jew in the world to Jewish nationality in Israel. Israel practices a dual-rights system that distinguishes between nationality and citizenship. So, while the Palestinians who stayed in their homes in the areas Israel took over were issued Israeli

citizenship, they were denied legal rights reserved for Jewish nationals (Erakat 2015, 85). These roughly 160,000 Palestinians in the ’48 Area were placed under martial law until 1966. The second is the Citizenship Law (1952) which repealed the right of Palestinians to Israeli citizenship who were made refugees during the Nakba and thus *denationalizing* two-thirds of the Palestinian population approximately 750,000 persons (Erakat 2015, 88). To prevent their return, Israel militarized its borders. As Ella Shohat historicized, Israel resettled Jews arriving from across the Arab states and racialized as Sephardim or Mizrahim on its “frontiers” to have settlements act as guard outposts (Shohat 1988, 15-19). The citizenship/nationality policies inform the series of land ownership laws that have worked to dispossess Palestinians of private property and to consolidate land ownership between several state agencies for the exclusive benefit of Jewish nationals. These laws include the Absentees’ Property Law (1950) in which the state confiscated the land of the Palestinian refugees without compensation. The state then enfranchised various quasi-state agencies to administer the property; one such legalized relationship is enshrined in the Jewish National Fund (JNF) Law (1953). The JNF’s mandate is to serve Jews in Israel and around the world (imagined as the Jewish nation) as it avoids serving the citizens of Israel which would include Palestinians. These laws have ensured that 93% of the land in Israel is state-owned and managed by state agencies for the benefit of Jewish nationals which “directly correlates to the disadvantage and dispossession of its native Palestinian inhabitants” (Erakat 2015, 93). This is the core of Israeli settler-colonialism and these 70-year-old laws are consistently added to. For example, the Nationality Law of 2018 capped a set of legislation, 185 laws, that were passed between 2015 and 2018 meant to govern and adapt to the changing realities of occupation and apartheid assisting the Israeli state in its settler-colonial project (Pappé 2019, 190).

A second wave of displacement took place in the 1967 war after which Israel annexed East Jerusalem and later the Golan Heights and placed the West Bank and Gaza Strip under military occupation. Palestinians responded in a similar pattern to 1948, families moved to safety by crossing borders thinking they may be able to return later, and others had their families split as some stayed to fight. As the Israeli occupation began in 1967, a census was taken by the military, and those refugees who were not in the occupied territories at the time of the census were denied recognition and prevented from returning (Tamari 1996). Further, many Palestinians left because of economic hardship and the abuses of the occupation. Between Israeli, Jordanian and UN figures, approximately 220,000-250,000 Palestinians left Gaza and the West Bank in the months after the 1967 war (Segev 2007, 15). Many became refugees the second time over. Once they left, they were not allowed back into Palestine. Tom Segev, one of the Israeli *New Historians* as coined by Benny Morris, provides a summary of the scene.

> The plight of the refugees was a photogenic subject. Israeli ambassadors overseas wrote to Jerusalem that television broadcasts from the bridges and tent camps set up by the UN on the eastern side of the river were damning. They reported pictures of Israeli soldiers firing shots into the air to hurry the refugees over the bridges. Correspondents estimated that the new tent campus housed some 80,000 refugees from Gaza and the West Bank. Winter was coming, threatening to make conditions intolerable. 'The most terrible impression is made by scenes of fathers with children in their arms begging our guards to let them go back to their wives and children still on our side,' wrote Israel's ambassador in Germany (Segev 2007, 18).

Family reunification is a deeply political and contested tool. From 1967-1994, 88,000 Palestinians were permitted to return to Palestine under agreed-upon Family reunification policies (Tamari 1996). In 2008-2009 another 32,000 reunification requests were granted but since then approvals have largely been revoked by Israel (Reuters 2021). There are only three documented groupings of return to Palestine, and all are within the occupied Palestinian territories (oPt), not the 48' area. When approximately 300,000 Palestinians fled Kuwait during

the Gulf War of 1991, only 30-40,000 of them who had maintained their Palestinian ID cards and residency status in the oPt were permitted to return. Second, Palestinians with U.S. passports who were able to secure ID cards and residency status for themselves and their children account for approximately 30,000 returnees typically concentrated around the economic and metropolitan hub of Ramallah. And anywhere between 60-100,000 Palestinians, typically PLO affiliated and their families, returned to Palestine with the signing of the Oslo Accords in 1993 to work for the newly created Palestinian Authority (Hammer 2005, 93). These figures do not include the nearly 30,000 Palestinians, by 2021 Israeli estimates, who live in Palestine undocumented and illegally in the eyes of the Israeli occupation (Lazaroff 2021). But these returnees, or *Aidoun*, did not return to a free Palestine, so it is not the Return whose capital R shoulders all the promises of liberation.

The struggle for the Right of Return has a long history entirely intertwined with Palestinian dispersal and diaspora. Achieving the Right of Return would signal the end of Zionist settler-colonialism, a free Palestine and the empowerment of Palestinian subjecthood. What it does not mean is that every Palestinian would revert to ways of being set in a pre-Zionist era. Nor does it mean that every Palestinian would physically return to Palestine or even that their rightful place is in Palestine sheltered from the rest of the world. Return is the aspiration and struggle for an anti-colonial revolution. These two aspects, aspiration and struggle, are intrinsically tied. At several points across the Palestinian liberation movement, politicians have acted in ways that undermined this anti-colonial ethos. The effects are politically and emotionally devastating. It raises the question of representation and the power to speak within the Palestinian struggle. Did it belong to the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) during its former status as the sole, legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, does it belong to the

politicians of the Palestinian Authority or the grassroots organizers among our communities and the Palestinians of the world? When the Fatah-led PLO passed its ten-point program in 1974, it splintered the PLO over the issue of recognition of Israel and the Right of Return (as discussed in greater detail later). The program was interpreted as a shift away from striving for the complete and whole liberation of Palestine towards half-measures of partial regional control. It signaled that Yasser Arafat and the Fatah party he led were no longer going down the path of anti-colonial revolutionaries, but rather statesmen and politicians. This was cemented with the signing of the Oslo Accords in 1993 and 1995. I cannot stress enough the impact this shift had on the movement and student organizing. Palestinians at the time questioned everything about the struggle for Palestine. Where once Palestinians were striving and sacrificing for a just cause of anti-coloniality, liberation, and Return, now they were unsure what they were being asked to sacrifice for. What Palestinians got out of the Accords was a quasi-Palestinian state under Israeli military control. The newly created Palestinian Authority (PA) abandoned the right to resist occupation and colonialism and assumed the function of controlling Palestinians under this agreement. The move towards statecraft happened under the confines of colonialism, they had not won a war of independence nor achieved the withdrawal of colonial forces from the land. Soon enough, the authority to represent Palestine was entirely monopolized by political actors and parties inside the West Bank and Gaza. The diaspora's standing in Palestinian governance was stripped away from Palestinians living on the outside since their former authority was mediated through the now-withering PLO. The nationalist movement was territorialized to inside pockets of occupied Palestine. The era of a diasporic democracy through the PLO was over. And the push toward statecraft had the consequence of seriously hampering the movement for a Right of Return.

Palestinian statecraft has alienated Palestinians in the diaspora from the politics on the ground. The Aljazeera leak of 1,600 documents pertaining to negotiations between Israel and Palestinian chief negotiator Saeb Erakat details such a policy. At a meeting between Erakat and the Belgian Minister of Foreign Affairs in March of 2007 to discuss the terms of a proposed vote on a peace deal, the Belgian Minister asked about the role of the diaspora in a referendum. As recorded in the minutes of the meeting, "I never said the diaspora will vote," stated Erakat, "It's not going to happen. The referendum will be for Pals [Palestinians] in Gaza, the WB [West Bank] and EJ [East Jerusalem]. Can't do it in Lebanon. Can't do it in Jordan" (The Palestine Papers 2011). The Belgian Minister's response was to advise Erakat to avoid a referendum altogether and to pass it through the President's office or the Palestinian Legislative Council (which would permanently cease to function just months later). Erakat responded that he already proposed bilateral agreements with Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon who refused the approach. This leaked exchange showed that as a matter of official policy, the diaspora has no role in the matters of the Palestinian state functions as far as the Palestinian Authority was concerned. Eventually these talks led nowhere, no referendum was held, and no new peace deal was signed. Still, this episode showed that the diaspora is not to be considered long-distance nationals.

I witnessed this firsthand during my fieldwork. Elections were underway on March 26, 2022, across all 50 governorates of the West Bank to determine the makeup of the mayors and council members to run the local municipalities. During my time in Palestine, I lived in the city of Birzeit at my parents' home. I can trace my lineage in Birzeit on both sides of the family to the founding of the city thanks to church record keeping and oral histories. When I walked throughout the city, elders I had not met before used to stop me to introduce themselves saying I

have a strong resemblance to both my mother and father who had immigrated decades ago. I am related to hundreds of people in the city by varying degrees of separation. On election day I walked to the main voting center at the public girls' school, I was welcomed in, and I joined discussions on the progress and turnout of the elections, I sat with the official observers, wished the candidates luck, and mingled in the social space. I met with several cousins there who introduced me around, I met distant relatives who shared stories of my parents and grandparents. I could do everything any other adult Palestinian could do in that space, but I could not vote, I had no residency ID and I cannot get one. 112 countries allow expatriates to vote in country-of-origin elections, again the criteria are that they hold official state-sanctioned citizenship (Blais, Cakir, Mekik and Sevi 2019, 4). In a place like the West Bank, where Palestinians have no citizenship but, rather, are issued residency ID cards jointly controlled by the PA and the Israeli military, you must be recognized by the state's form of recognition, you must be registered. An anti-colonial way of recognition, or even one outside of the bounded definitions of statecraft frameworks did not apply—no residency ID card means no vote. So, I could not participate in the state-sanctioned electoral system, I had insufficient credentials, I was diasporic. There are several colonial implications to this structure. Among them is the fact that Palestine is a not a state, and the IDs do not grant citizenship nor any legal or constitutional rights, they exist to manage residency status. Further, management of the IDs ultimately falls to decisions by the Israeli military, the Palestinian office can process requests but must comply with Israeli policies. In effect, the IDs are not a product of Palestinian sovereignty but rather a product of the occupation. Further, the exclusive reliance on IDs to establish Palestinian enfranchisement into the democratic electoral system means millions of Palestinian refugees who do not possess residency IDs are systematically cast out of Palestinian representation, in effect furthering their

dispossession from the land. The consequences of the inaccessibility of the diaspora to social and political rights in areas under the Palestinian Authority raise serious concerns about who can *legitimately* call Palestine their home.

Palestinianness- racializing Palestine and diaspora

Anthropologist Leith Mullings argues that many times in social movement building, a claim of a collective identity is produced, either as an ethnic group emphasizing shared culture and community or as a racialized group sharing in historical and current injustices (Mullings 2009, 6). This is an active and two-way process between group identity and social movements. These approaches fit into Palestinian social movement theory narratives when taking into account Palestinian identity as a cultural phenomenon as much as it is a nationalist label. As Rabab Abdulhadi argues "the deployment of *Palestinianness* as a strategy of resistance in a colonial context afforded a greater mobilizing space for the emergence of social movements" (Abdulhadi 2000, vi). *Palestinianness* has a changing meaning deeply impacted by popular movements in the liberation struggle. As Spivak argues, "the colonized subaltern *subject* is irretrievably heterogeneous" (Spivak 1994, 79). There exists no pure consciousness of Palestinianness as it is structured across various social positionalities such as class, sex, and place. A unified definition of Palestinianness is not possible. As Stuart Hall argues, "without relations of difference, no representation could occur" (Hall 1994, 397). His theory of *hybridity* takes center stage here, that diasporic identity is mediated through difference not despite it (Hall 1994, 402). What is relevant is that the idea of being Palestinian exists. Individuals believe Palestinianness is a communal identity and act in individual and collective ways under its banner. The other side of that coin is also at play. Palestinians are treated in patterned ways based on others' interpretations of the label including racialized ways. Mullings argues that there

exist two theories of racism in the Western academy. The first conceptualized racism as a "set of psychological orientations, prejudices, and beliefs, linked to in-group/out-group phenomena, the source of which is human nature" (Mullings 2005, 668). But she argues that the second theory, and "the more persuasive perspective links racism to structures of power that emerge through processes of accumulation and dispossession within local and transnational contexts" (Mullings 2005, 668). Within this understanding, she applies an analysis of the meta-structures of society, that of the nation, and argues that "in the context of modern nation building, racism facilitated the social construction of homogeneity through exclusion, but it also functioned to consolidate elites by neutralizing class and legitimating inequality" (Mullings 2005, 672). In this way, she argues that racialization is a central feature of nationalism, and part of the creation and the modus operandi of the state.

Zionism, as a settler-colonial and nation-building project, positions racialization and racism as the ideological core of its political projects advantaging Jews and dispossessing Palestinians. In this context, Palestinians are collapsed as an Arab-Muslim monolith where Islamophobia, anti-Arab and anti-Palestinian racism are inextricably linked. Fayez Sayegh defined the markers of settler colonialism as dispossession of indigenous populations from political control and physical inhabitation of their land thus depriving them of self-determination and the right to exist on their land by an alien power (Sayegh 1965, v). Patrick Wolfe defines settler colonialism as a land-centered project that constantly seeks to acquire more land informing what Lorenzo Veracini calls "a mode of domination [that] thinks geopolitically" (Veracini 2017, 1; and Wolfe 2006). In order to achieve this goal, settler colonialism relies on a logic of elimination rooted in the convergence of indigenous and settler racialization (Wolfe 2006, 387). Racialization and colonialism are deeply intertwined structures. Michael Omi and

Howard Winant define race as "a concept which signifies and symbolized social conflicts and interests by referring to different types of human bodies" (Omi and Winant 1986, 1). Further, they define racialization (or racial formation) as "the sociohistorical process by which racial categories are created, inhabited, transformed, and destroyed" and would later go on to define it as the "extension of racial meaning to a previously racially unclassified relationship, social practice or group" (Omi and Winant 1986, 2; and Omi and Winant 2015, 111). Western racialization positions itself as the supreme people and society under a paradigm of white supremacy. And global white supremacy is a structure and a logic of domination that "placed white, European men at the pinnacle of the social hierarchy and all others in various positions of subordination" (Bonds and Inwood 2016, 720). This structure of white supremacy is further articulated as "European domination of the planet for the past several hundred years that has left us with the racialized distributions of economic, political and cultural power" (Mills 1994, 108). It is the way in which social, capital and governmental systems function to consolidate power and resources. It is an understanding that being white confers social, political and economic value that has increased generationally (Beliso-De Jesús and Pierre 2019).

Edward Said expanded this analysis when he argued that Zionism mapped onto European imperialism and race logic which created the possibility for settler-colonialism in Palestine. That is not to say European Jews were racialized as equals to their Christian counterparts nor was 20th-century antisemitism in Europe eradicated. Rather it connected European Jewish racialization to the notion that they, like the other European races, had the right to colonize the world. As Fayez Sayegh argued in the question of Jewish racialization, "Zionist *racial identification* produces three corollaries: *racial self-segregation, racial exclusiveness,* and *racial supremacy*. These principles constitute the core of the Zionist ideology" (Sayegh 1965, 22).

Jewish colonization and seizure of land were conditional to this racialization that not only positioned itself as unique but also as a system of control and for the accumulation of power in Palestine. On the other side of that same coin, Western racialized logics had already cast Arabs and Muslims as the *orientalist* other. In this way, Arabs, Muslims and Palestinians have been racialized epistemologically as the barbaric threat to Western civilization protected by the Jewish fortress at its easternmost border (Abdulhadi 2004; Cainkar and Selod 2018, 170; and Said 1979b). Said described this imaginary as, if Israel falls, the hordes of Asia will descend on Europe. Thus, Jewish racialization aligned within and among Western racialization and the white supremacy that buttresses it. The outcome of this was Zionism developed into "practical systems for *accumulation* (of power, land, ideological legitimacy) and *displacement* (of people, other ideas, prior legitimacy)" (Said 1979b, 11). And, significantly, the formation of Jewish supremacy in Israel tied to this accumulation has also been labeled Apartheid (Abdulhadi 2019; Erakat 2015; Farsakh 2015; Jacobs and Soske 2015; Al-Haq et al. 2022; and United Nations A/HRC/49/87).

Edward Said historicized this racialized epistemology in his book *Orientalism* where he argued that contemporary media technology has standardized stereotypes on how the East, or the Orient, is viewed. Racialized epistemologies of Palestine, Arabs and Muslims are rooted, he argues, in popular anti-Arab and anti-Muslim prejudices in the West; American liberalism that has sided with Zionism; and "the almost total absence of any cultural position making it possible either to identify with or dispassionately to discuss the Arabs or Islam" (Said 1979a, 26-27). This has translated into a paradigm of dichotomies between "freedom-loving, democratic Israel and evil, totalitarian, and terroristic Arabs" where the public ability to think beyond this dichotomy is

shrunk (Said 1979a, 27). Edward Said goes on to discuss his own racialization in the diaspora, stating,

> My own experiences of these matters are in part what made me write this book. The life of an Arab Palestinian in the West, particularly in America is disheartening. There exists here an almost unanimous consensus that politically he does not exist, and when it is allowed that he does, it is either as a nuisance or as an Oriental. The web of racism, cultural stereotypes, political imperialism, dehumanizing ideology holding in the Arab or the Muslim is very strong indeed, and it is this web which every Palestinian has come to feel as his uniquely punishing destiny (Said 1979a, 27).

His last sentence strikes at the heart of the matter, the racialization of Palestinians is intimately tied to imperialism. It leads to an understanding that to challenge the punishing racialization of Palestinians is to challenge imperialism and Zionism and the systems of white supremacy and Jewish supremacy they generate.

The forms of racialized ways of *knowing* Palestinians are encoded in the American academic tradition. As Rabab Abudlhadi, argues, there exists a "foreign/domestic divide" that positions Palestine within Area Studies and Palestinian diasporas in the USA within American Studies; these divides create silences and silos of who can speak and who does not (Abdulhadi 2014, 335). Area Studies lends itself to foreign policy frameworks where Palestine is approached as a matter of competing nationalisms among Palestinians and Israelis or a religious conflict between Muslims and Jews, and the question of colonialism is erased. On the other side of that coin, Palestinian-American studies can gravitate toward assimilation studies and omit dealing with Palestine as a contemporary issue or ignore scholarship produced in Palestine. Diaspora and Palestine should not be approached in isolation from one another. Further, Rabab Abdulhadi, Evelyn Alsultany and Nadine Naber argue that the gendered and sexed racialization of Arabs and Arab-Americans has cast them outside of USA body politics, as not *real Americans*, and has also paradoxically cast them as white/white-passing/not quite White (Abdulhadi, Alsultany, and

Naber 2012, xxiv).[4] Further, they locate Zionism and imperialism as primary modes of racializing Palestinians. Resistance to colonialism and occupation is labeled as terrorism, and under this framework the right to self-defense is denied to Arab, Muslim and Palestinian communities. These racialized discourses deny the colonial oppression of Palestinians and are replaced with blaming Arab culture as the source of oppression (Abdulhadi, Alsultany, and Naber 2012, xxxii-xxxvi). Under this paradigm Arab, Muslim, and Palestinian communities are racialized as being exceptionally misogynistic, transphobic and homophobic and, in so doing, it informs the imperialist fantasy of *white men saving brown women from brown men* as phrased by Gayatri Spivak's 1988 *Can the Subaltern Speak* and later applied in detail by Lila Abu-Lughod's 2013 *Do Muslim Women Need Saving*. This take on culture is rooted in orientalist and imperialist notions that construct barbarity and incivility as characteristics of these communities. Further, Islamophobia is a core component of Western forms of Palestinian racialization, perceiving Palestinians as racialized Muslim subjects ever submissive to the urge to destroy the West. Sohail Daulatzai and Junaid Rana expand on this dichotomy as manifest in US racial logics.

> The historical legacy of U.S. colonialism and empire building- a political economy that draws on European colonial and imperial histories- is a foundation for the devastation of racial capitalism wielded through slavery, genocide, and conquest in the Americas. Both as jingoistic foreign policy and all-out war, the geographies named 'Middle East' and 'Muslim world' are yielded in relationship to U.S. empire and fundamental to the making of U.S. nationalism within the global order. In this formulation of national consciousness, the idea of 'American' is made in relationship to the specter of the category 'Muslim' (and its various guises: immigrant, fundamentalist, 'terrorist,' suicide bomber, etc.) that is rendered other, foreign, undemocratic, and, finally, anti-American. (Daulatzai and Rana 2018, xii).

Racialization always has to do with power.

[4] Scholars in the field have theorized that Arab white-passing concepts can provide "insights into how groups considered marginally white can change race", or the "racialized feeling of being invisible", or the "fluidity of racial ideologies, and representations", or, lastly, contribute to "the formation of an Arab American pan ethnicity" (Cainkar and Selod 2018, 167).

Racialized epistemology determines the dominant colonial discourses rampant in American media culture that is friendly to Israel and prejudicial to Palestinians. These forms of epistemic violence, as Edward Said argues in Orientalism, function as the dominant worldview in colonial societies and are codified in law. Scholar of Arab-American history Pamela Pennock provides a succinct overview of the American colonial worldview of Palestine. She argues that antisemitism in the USA declined after World Ward II and support for Israel in the US grew. This was due in part to growing awareness of the Holocaust and the Israeli victory in 1948-49 against Arab states they perceived as antisemitic. This was also due in part to the growing reliance on imports of petroleum coming from Arab states that they feared were too friendly with Socialism and the Soviet Union during the Cold War, and perceived Israel as their reliable ally in the region. At the Israeli military victories in the 1967 War, the US increased military support for Israel with bipartisan and public support (Pennock 2017, 4). And as Pennock goes on to argue,

> Harsh denunciation of Israel by activists opened them to the charge of anti-Semitism, often estranging them from American progressives who had been very welcoming to American Jews. Headline-grabbing incidents of Palestinian terrorism and the Arab oil embargo fueled anti-Arab sentiment. Throughout this period, widespread sympathy for Israel in the United States resulted in the suppression of Arab political perspectives from mainstream discourse and the proliferation of negative perceptions of Palestinians and their supporters (Pennock 2017, 4).

Louise Cainkar argues that "Arab Americans were spared the worst of white supremacy until the second half of the twentieth century when systemic efforts to silence and police them unfolded" (Cainkar 2021, 7). Building off the work of Alixa Naff, Cainkar, argues that the rise of the USA as a superpower, the creation of Israel and the 1967 war were foundational to the prevalent view of Palestine to an American audience (Naff 1985; and Cainkar 2021, 7). "Arab American studies points to 1967 as the year in which emerged the systematic mass media framing of Arabs as barbaric, uncivilized, and inherently violent people, largely in the context of U.S. news coverage

of the 1967 war" (Cainkar 2021, 7). Policing and surveillance of Palestinians in the USA intensified after this period under the pretext of fighting terrorism. By the late 1960s the FBI included Arabs and Palestinians as targets in its COINTELPRO surveillance program with an emphasis on collaboration and solidarity between Black and Palestinian liberation struggles (Abdulhadi 2022; AMED Studies YouTube 2014; and Pennock 2018).

While state-sanctioned policing of Arabs and Palestinians existed, one of the first mass-organized policing campaigns exclusively targeting Palestinians and Arabs in the USA was Richard Nixon's Operation Boulder (Intelwire 2010; Jabara 1974; and Pennock 2018). Operation Boulder authorized aggressive spying against Arabs and Palestinians, the FBI monitored bank accounts and conducted intimidating interviews, and the INS was instructed to enact special measures to bar entry and deport Palestinian and Arab political organizers. It was initiated in 1972, less than two weeks after the Munich Olympics where a Palestinian militant organization, the Black September Organization, carried out a commando operation kidnapping 11 members of the Israeli Olympic team who were killed during negotiations by either the commandos, the West German police, or both as the facts are still disputed. Israel's Prime Minister Golda Meir responded to Munich by authorizing the Mossad to carry out a broad-based assassination campaign and setting new policies permitting assassinations in Europe (Horovitz 2018). Mossad assassinated several Palestinians in Paris, Rome and Beirut under this operation, and Paris would come to be known as "Mossad's playground" for the sheer number of assassinations it carried out in the city over decades (Follorou 2018). The logic is clear in both the Israeli and USA case, Palestinians are terrorists who must be hunted and killed or are terrorists in the waiting who must be watched carefully. As Cainkar argues "Representations of Arabs as terrorists, and only terrorists, saturated the American news and film industry after 1967 in an ideological effort to

construct a ‘common sense’ understanding for interpreting events on the ground, both in the United States and globally” (Cainkar 2021, 7). Common sense, as understood in the Gramscian notion as a cipher through which we interpret the world, consistently changes. Tied into the assemblage of hegemony and the consensus of the masses, its existence by nature produces its own counterhegemony and the impulse to challenge power (Gramsci 1971; Coutinho 2012; and Hanchard 1994). The narratives of activist diasporas embody this ethos of resistance.

“No longer framed solely as a project of territorial, national liberation, Palestine is conceived as one of the most visible, present-day materializations of the ‘coloniality of power’- a spatial articulation of power that has been constitutive of modernity since the 16th century Atlantic trade” (Salih, Zambelli, and Welchman 2021, 1136; and Quijano 2000). Encompassing one political trajectory of Palestine advocacy, this quote places Palestinian diasporic consciousness and culture within an internationalist and anti-colonial framework. For many, Palestinian diasporic praxis must be political. This position is not contemporary, it has its roots in the long arc of Palestinian colonial resistance. It is witnessed with congressional advocacy in the USA by Palestinians since at least 1917 (Davidson 1999), grassroots political organizing in Latin America by the 1920s (Bawalsa 2022), Palestinian student organizing in Egyptian universities since 1944 (Abu Samra 2020; and Brand 1988), political partnerships with China and Algeria in the 1960s, the list can go on. In these cases, Palestinian diasporic subjecthood does not imagine itself in isolation, but as part of a wider matrix of colonial resistance as well as locating possibilities of activist engagement in their new homes. Though, the recognition of colonial violence may not be immediately recognizable since it is prefaced on the erasure or obfuscation of said violence. For this reason, you will find some Palestinians state they are the most oppressed people. In fact, you will find that exceptionalizing discourse in many

marginalized communities. *Internationalism* as a political framework works to re-frame the conversation. All forms of colonial violence are unacceptable. Rather than compete for the title of the most oppressed, or find community in a shared state of oppression, *Internationalism* allows us to understand how the power to oppress operates globally and locally and positions our movements and our subjectivities in joint efforts of liberation- or an *Indivisibility of Justice* as Rabab Abdulhadi has taught (Abdulhadi 2022). As transnational theorists argue, "Transmigrants take actions, make decisions, and develop subjectivities and identities embedded in networks of relationships that connect them simultaneously to two or more nation-states" (Basch, Schiller and Blanc 1994, 7). The distinction is that while *transnationalism* traces activism across a singular network of diaspora and homeland, *Internationalism* has greater nodes of connection across and within varied diasporic and indigenous politics. These, I argue, are the diasporic political practices utilized by the organizers of the General Union of Palestine Students.

Chapter Two – Research Field Methods

In 2014 I graduated from the University of California, Davis. I spent my four years there sure I would go on to law school. I took the LSAT, spoke to faculty about my letters of recommendation, and even joined a pre-law student organization my sophomore year. I had long known the law was a tool of the state to exact its authority, but I had held out the belief that in the right hands, the law could be wielded for liberation, or at the very least for harm reduction. As graduation approached, I felt the myth of the law as a tool of the oppressed fade away. Confused about my life choices and worldview, I turned to what I knew. I enjoyed my time as a research intern for Dr. Suad Joseph and the mentorship she provided me along with her team of graduate students I worked with. I found empowerment in learning about Palestine and anti-coloniality through my studies in the Middle East/South Asian department and took as many classes as I could with Dr. Noha Radwan whom I saw as an unyielding model of a scholar-activist. And I found my voice as a Palestinian through my organizing in Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP) and the multi-year campaign to divest UC funds from the Israeli occupation. Instead of law school, I thought I ought to go to Palestine, visit the place I had devoted years of study and activism to and experience the roots of my heritage. Dr. Suad Joseph connected me with Dr. Lena Meari at Birzeit University who accepted me as an intern and I bought a three-month ticket to Palestine- the longest period a U.S. passport is allowed by Israel. I stayed in my parent's house in Birzeit, Palestine living with my aunt, and I met countless family members for the first time. At the university, Dr. Meari and her research partner at the time Dr. Ala Alazzeh had me work to my strengths. Holding a dual B.A. in Middle East/South Asian Studies as well as Political Science, they had me read and analyze international documents on Palestine regarding policies governing Area C of the Occupied Palestinian Territories. Near the end of my three

months, I was certain I wanted to continue in an academic career. I sat with Dr. Meari and we brainstormed ideas for my proposed project for graduate school applications. Having rejected the ideas I came up with (rightfully as they were terrible), she told me to *study what I know*. She said I was a student activist for years, that I have the experience and knowledge to study the role, and that it should be my focus. Perfect. I flew back to the Bay Area to live with my parents and applied to master's programs to study Palestinian student organizing. After getting into San Francisco State University's (SFSU) anthropology program in 2015, Dr. James Quesada accepted the role as the chair of my committee. It was Dr. Quesada who taught me that SFSU did not have an SJP, instead, they had the General Union of Palestine Students (GUPS) and suggested that I focus my research on that organization. Dr. Quesada taught at SFSU for years and saw first-hand both the abuse GUPS was subject to as well as their organizing prowess. Soon he introduced me to Dr. Rabab Abdulhadi at SFSU, who was not only the GUPS advisor but also the leading Palestinian scholar at the university. She is the one that steered my research focus into a social history of GUPS and accepted me as an intern where I grew my knowledge of Palestine. I then joined GUPS at SFSU for my two years there. I have committed my graduate research to GUPS ever since.

Given the fact I was born in 1992 and GUPS collapsed internationally in the early 1990s, I was not alive for the period in which I study. I was, however, a Palestinian student organizer, and I joined the last standing GUPS chapter in the USA at SFSU. For those reasons, my work is neither purely that of participant observation nor of oral history, I situate my work in their intersections. My years in student activism provided me an insight and a shorthand with which to understand the testimonies of those I interviewed. Often participants would say to me "well, you know how it is" which signified that temporal considerations were sometimes irrelevant. Some

things simply do not change, like how hard it is to recruit new students or the struggle of keeping morale up after a particularly devastating setback in the organization. At other times, participants asked me to turn off my recording device, informing me that I needed to know this context but that it was too sensitive to record and should not be written about. In these scenarios, I was not an anthropologist graduate student, but a member of the community learning from an elder. In fact, credentials were the primary way I was able to conduct this research.

I argue that two means of credentials facilitated the willingness of participants to take part in the research- who I was and who I knew, and they could not be separated. I am Palestinian, I was born in the USA, but both my parents are from Birzeit. Saying this situated my background, Birzeit is known as a Christian town, but the Shehadehs of Birzeit have no outstanding or popular lineage to speak of. Further, I use my real name when I organize, the result has been that Zionist organizations have been able to identify me and smear me online such as *Canary Mission*. A quick search of my name will pull up several articles bashing me, as well as several articles honoring my academic achievements, and my political organizing work. When I emailed the Palestinian Ambassador to China Fariz Mehdawy asking for an interview, he let me know he had searched my name before responding and was proud of the work I had done given how badly I had upset the Zionists who smeared me. In this case, it was a badge proving my commitment and credentials. Further, I am a graduate student, I am affiliated with a university, I had some traceability, and I was not independent. Before heading to Palestine, I was awarded a fellowship from the Palestinian American Research Center (PARC). PARC is known among the Palestinian academy, so it provided the notion that I was at least vetted. Also, its Palestine Research Director, Dr. Ghada alMadbouh, introduced me to Mohammed Alatar who provided me with a great interview and introduced me to others in a snowballing effect. Most

significantly, I could claim to work with Dr. Rabab Abdulhadi who has a long history in Palestine as a scholar, an educator, and a trusted community leader and organizer. Her introduction spoke volumes to many people. I relied on her status in Palestine to open doors and many people were willing to give me an interview because of her. I firmly believe that any of these positions alone would not suffice to be able to get participants to agree to meet with me. I had to be a Palestinian graduate student with years of activism under my belt and have my own academic achievements and a well-known professor vouching for me.

My research process fell under three categories: Archives, Interviews, and Mobility. To conduct the field research portion of my studies, I spent four months in Palestine in 2022 and one month in Amman, Jordan. It was the third time I had been to Palestine. The first time was for three months in 2014 for an internship at Birzeit University. And the second was for an intense two-week conference and delegation in 2018 as part of Dr. Abdulhadi's *Teaching Palestine* project (AMED Studies YouTube 2018a; and AMED Studies YouTube 2018b)

First, I will discuss searching the archives. This was largely a technical endeavor. During my first years at UCLA, I searched its library database for anything related to GUPS and found very little. As my time at UCLA progressed the library updated its search algorithm and I found more related materials. What UCLA did not possess, I was able to access through the interlibrary loan system they maintain with hundreds of other libraries. I was also able to access UCLA's special collections and oral history archive where I found relevant materials. When I went to Palestine, I had access to a large set of library materials in Arabic regarding Palestine studies and social history archives. I found the most promising set of archival and research materials at Birzeit University while working with the research librarian. My cousin is the Library Director at Birzeit University, and I am sure the family connection helped smooth over access to the

materials and explained the commitment through which the librarians were willing to help me. To be fair to their generosity, they said they do this for all researchers. I utilized the services of other libraries in Palestine and Jordan including the Ramallah City Library, Al-Bireh Municipality Library, the A.M. Qattan Foundation Library, The Palestine Economic Policy Research Institute (MAS) Library, The Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies in Amman, and the Abdul Hameed Shoman Foundation Public Library. Further, several libraries in the USA held archival materials on GUPS activities. One consequence of the Covid-19 pandemic was that libraries closed their doors and resorted to working in-house to provide digital copies of their materials. As a result, I was able to access the archives at Michigan State University and Eastern Michigan University. Both universities hold archives on Palestinian and Arab-American student organizing due to the fact that Michigan has the largest concentration of Arabs anywhere in the USA. I tried to do the same with the National Security Archive at George Washington University, but the librarians informed me they did not have the capacity and resources to do so. I had to wait for the pandemic regulations to be lifted before I could visit the library. I got the notice while in Amman that they are easing into opening the library and that I was the first on the list of outside researchers to be granted permission. I was given half a day to visit, a Friday, I either made the appointment or missed my opportunity. After a month of research in Amman where Dr. Mjriam Abu Samra was very supportive and instructive, I made my way back to the USA. Movement and crossing borders were a common feature of my research, and this episode was no different. Having found no direct flight from Amman to Washington D.C., my plane landed in New York. I planned to arrive in D.C. on Thursday night, visit the library on Friday, and leave D.C. on Saturday morning. Upon arrival, I was flagged by US Customs agents, a division of the Department of Homeland Security, and taken into a large room with nearly two

dozen empty seats and agents standing behind a row of desks with plexiglass between us. In the waiting room with me was a young Arab man who was soon called into a back room for what I imagined was a private interrogation. On the other side of the room was an agent going through the luggage of two African women. He accused them, preemptively, of trying to break the terms of their tourist visa and stay in the USA permanently as he found original copies of their birth certificates in their suitcases. My flight out of Amman was delayed due to staffing shortages and we had to wait for stewards to land from a different flight before ours could take off, this delay meant I only had twenty minutes to make it through customs onto my next flight. I told the agent this and he told me firmly and loudly that he did not care. I missed my flight waiting in that holding room. After a few more minutes I was called up for questioning, I explained I was conducting research for my Ph.D., their demeanor changed, and I was told it is clear I pose no risk or threat but policy dictates that they finish their questionnaire of me. At the end, I asked him why I was even brought into questioning in the first place, he said I raised several flags since I had spent more than 30 days in the "Middle East" and that I had crossed land borders in the region instead of flying. As he put it, "bad guys" fly into Amman and then cross land borders into Syria. In other words, my research travel method was flagged as terrorist-like behavior. After I let go, I made my way to the information desk to have my ticket rescheduled. The earliest flight would leave New York at 2 pm resulting in a missed appointment at the university. Instead, I rented a car and made the 4-hour drive to D.C. on my own getting there at 3 am. When I got to the hotel, I checked my email and found out that the librarian had canceled the appointment earlier in the day since the archival materials had been misplaced. Upset and jetlagged, I emailed back saying I wanted to keep the appointment. When I got to the library in the afternoon, she informed me the holding house that stores their archival materials could not

find the boxes I needed, but since I came in person, she would look for them in the library itself. In the meantime, she gave me an adjacent research box to go through on COINTELPRO. I went through it, but it did not sit well with me that I made it all that way just for them to misplace the box. I offered to help search through it myself. The reading room I was in had nearly a hundred boxes stacked in 4 rows on shelves pushed against each other that covered the entire wall of the room. To access the row behind, one had to remove all the boxes on the wall-length self, then move the wooden shelf. I asked an undergrad research intern to help me, and we moved all the boxes and shelves until I finally found the right box on the very last shelf. I then moved all the boxes and shelves back to their place. But there were only 2 hours left before the library closed and my appointment ended. The librarian helped me unbind the papers and run them through the large automatic scanner they had, it took us about 45 minutes to do it all. She did the majority of the work in what I presumed was an attempt to preserve the integrity of the prints. The irony was not lost on me, this is the same librarian who said she did not have the capacity to digitize the archival material for me and was now doing exactly that. These were the documents pertaining to the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request on ten years' worth of FBI surveillance of the General Union of Palestine Students.

The second major category of my research was interviews. First, Dr. Abdulhadi and I agreed to conduct joint interviews when possible as we shared research interests. This collaboration proved beneficial. It began in 2021 and continued until I began writing my dissertation in the fall of 2022. As an intergenerational research method, I, the junior scholar, and she, the senior researcher worked together to compile the oral histories of Palestinian student organizing. Our agreement to share research was always respectful, I would use the content for my dissertation, and she would use it for her ongoing research, each of us applying our own

analysis to the data so neither of us worried about redundant or derivative research of the other. I have a long history of working academically with Dr. Abdulhadi. She invited me at the start of her *Teaching Palestine* project to collaborate with her. Under that project title we presented at several panels and conferences together, she invited me to partake in several delegations she organized, and we worked together in the Open Classroom series of the same name. I have co-taught with her as a lecturer in the Arab and Muslim Ethnicities and Diasporas (AMED) studies she directs and founded. We co-published a book chapter together in 2020 titled "Resisting the US corporate university: Palestine, Zionism, and campus politics" (Abdulhadi and Shehadeh 2020). We also have organized politically together for years including through legal battles with the university against its abuse of her and Palestine studies. Regarding our joint interviews, they always occurred online as we interviewed people living across the globe. As Dr. Abdulhadi knows many people who organized with GUPS, we started with group sessions inviting people to participate that we thought would best complement each other. Some participants, at first, pushed back against the idea of group interviews; they saw it as too time consuming. But we found that this method allowed participants to support each other in remembering details, and they learned from each other's stories. The flow of information was not unidirectional from the participant to the interviewer, rather it was collaborative as each of us began to have conversations with one another. Given that the majority of people we interviewed already knew Dr. Abdulhadi, a lot of trust was already established. For the interviews where the person did not know us, the level of depth of their narrative was always striking. I found that many people wanted their stories told, and commented on how important it was for the next generation to know these histories. Some wanted to remain anonymous in publications but still participated to share their wisdom. And, in a way, I fit a model of elders teaching the future generation- it is not

a patronizing relationship but a loving and empowering one. Second, the majority of interviews I conducted in Palestine were on my own and they were one-on-one sessions. When possible, I met with participants in their offices, or at a local coffee shop. A popular spot where I held meetings was a bakery and coffee shop near downtown Ramallah. It was owned and operated by Leftists, and by this, I mean the Palestinian Left are parties with various Marxist political ideologies which I discuss in greater detail later. During my time in Palestine, I interviewed a lot of Leftists, this is partly due to the snowballing effect that, in a way, is more insular than the term applies. This is also due to the fact that GUPS was composed of Fatah supporters and leftist groups, while Hamas never joined GUPS because it was not admitted to the PLO. And, yes, I did interview Fatah members. Dr. Abdulhadi and I interviewed the President of GUPS International Dr. Nasser Al Kidwa and an Executive Committee member of GUPS Fariz Mehdawy, both of whom are longtime members of Fatah and grew in prominence in the party over their tenure. The former sat on Fatah's Central Committee, was appointed an ambassador to the UN, and is the nephew of Yaser Arafat; the latter sat on the legislative body of the PLO, known as the Palestinian National Council, filling the GUPS constitutional quota and has held several ambassador appointments on behalf of the Palestinian Authority with China as his current appointment. These are not their complete biographies, or even close to it, but they give you a sense that their testimony and narrative represent the Fatah position.

Significantly, during my research I learned how sensitive the matter of student organizing is under Israeli occupation. Except for Fatah, Israel has designated all major Palestinian political parties in the oPt as terrorist organizations.[5] The student groups at universities operate under a different name from the official parties in an attempt to mitigate this criminality, but it is

[5] Fatah and Hamas are by far the largest of the political parties with the PFLP being a trailing third party and the largest faction among the left. Further, it is common to refer to Palestinian political parties as factions.

fruitless. Israel does not distinguish between those in an organization and those that support an organization, both statuses are criminalized. Israel consistently arrests university students on campus grounds or in their homes. During my stay in Palestine, dozens of arrests were carried out in the homes of the students, in the case of Birzeit University, the *Right to Education* program systematically documents these arrests and provides both legal and public advocacy for the students (Right to Education website). Further, Israel systematically denies visas to researchers and educators. In 2018 alone, Israel delayed or denied visas for the 15 faculty members at Birzeit holding foreign passports (Khatib 2018). The imposed isolation of the Palestinian academy is part of Israeli policy, and the passage of the 2022 order "Procedure for entry and residence of foreigners in the Judea and Samaria area" will only expand this practice (Powell and Brand 2022). The unfortunate reality is that Fatah, the governing party over the West Bank, itself engages in harassing competing parties, including those on campus, while its own internal oppositional members are harassed by it and the Israeli military. In an anonymous interview I conducted at Birzeit I was told that informants are plenty on campus. I instinctively responded on how unfortunate it was that Palestinians would spy for Israel, the person clarified "no, these are spies for the Authority."

Students at Birzeit University are vocal about their politics and organized demonstrations are common at the institution. I will share one example. On January 10, 2022, undercover Israeli agents in civilian clothing infiltrated campus through one of its main entrances where they shot one student in the leg and then arrested him along with four other students before forcing them into an unmarked van and taken to an undisclosed location (Birzeit University News 2022). The students protested that the university was not doing enough to protect them, and their strike shut down the campus for two months. I arrived in Palestine just as the campus reopened.

Israel has criminalized Palestinian student organizing. It raised sensitivities regarding my ability to conduct my research. Granted my research focuses on the General Union of Palestine Students, an organization that did not operate in Palestine. I went to Palestine to meet with people who were former members of GUPS when they studied abroad and then came back to Palestine. I also went to meet with scholars and researchers whose life's work centered on the analysis of Palestinian student organizing, many of whom are mentors for its current iterations. They not only supported the student organizing happening in Palestine but the world over with their internationalized work. This includes their collaboration in forming and leading the politics of *Israeli Apartheid Week* and *Boycott, Divest and Sanction (BDS)* including the academic boycott of Israeli institutions. This also includes the materials they produce that are circulated online and read by scholars and student activists, and the international speaking engagements they attend whether in person or online. Being in Palestine also gave me a feel of current student political organizing. I witnessed protests, demonstrations, vigils honoring martyrs, lectures, and elections. I visited as many campuses as I could including Birzeit University, Bethlehem University, Al-Quds Open University-Ramallah, and An-Najah University. Each represents its own sphere in Palestine. Birzeit is arguably the leading academic research institution and Palestinians from across Palestine, including the '48 areas, compete for enrollment. Birzeit is known for its student organizing and politics, and its student election results are a matter of national media coverage since it is viewed as a representative sample of Palestinian political voting trends. This is because parliamentary and presidential elections have been suspended since the outcome of the 2006 elections was not in favor of Fatah. And the local municipality elections are seen as dominated by family and financial connections and politics. Bethlehem is a Catholic university. It is one of the smaller universities with roughly 3,000 enrolled students of

varied religious and non-religious backgrounds. It is well known that the church leadership discourages confrontational politics, though occasional protests of the occupation are organized by its students including marches to military checkpoints. When I asked faculty member Wisam Rafeedie about campus politics, he pointed out the window to a new building paid for through a million-dollar grant to teach marketing implying that this is what the administration wanted for its students. His antidote was to invite members of an agricultural cooperative to speak on campus regarding anti-capitalist income generation. Al-Quds Open University is designed with low barriers to access college education with affordable tuition and minimal entry requirements. There are several of these open universities in Palestine, and they largely accommodate commuter students and those who require online or night classes. I sat with one of the leaders of its student union who shared with me that a lot about of what they do politically is around advocating for student success when faced with obstacles stemming from faculty or peers. He also said that the student leaders organize visits to the families of incarcerated or martyred students as part of what they see as their social obligations of respect and community solidarity. And An-Najah University is known as the largest university in Palestine with 22,000 students, excels in the sciences and has the only medical school in Palestine. It is a public institution. The president of the university is Rami Hamdallah, a former Prime Minister of the Palestinian Authority, and his university administration is considered an extension of PA governmentality that does not tolerate political demonstrations, especially against its administration and the PA. Still, Fatah and Hamas supporters vie for student votes during campus elections and leftist groups get a few seats here and there. I do not intend to typecast these universities, but rather provide a glimpse into how I and the people I talked to interpret the political landscapes of these institutions.

The Palestinian political Left is particularly targeted by the Israeli occupying forces. During my field research I learned of the extent of this effort to suppress the Left on college campuses. Israel has designated the Leftist groups as terrorist organizations. They cannot legally operate, and the Israelis have escalated their repression of the Left in the last three years as traced across the following events. In August 2019, a family of Israeli Jews was hiking near a spring called Ein Bubin in the West Bank close to the Jewish settlements of Dolev and Nahliel which are not too far from the Palestinian city of Ramallah. The several settlements in the area have created a Jewish-only zone that has confiscated more than 15,000 dunams or 3,7000 acres of Palestinian land and blocked any passage or access for Palestinians (Hass 2019). Both Dolev and Nahliel were established in the 1980s through a handful of families who built temporary housing on Israeli state land that was confiscated from Palestinian villages. This is one of the means through which settlement building and expansion begins. Jewish squatters build temporary housing usually without electricity or running water on state-owned land and usually without obtaining government authorization. The reason they do this is that there are mechanisms to retroactively legalize their settlements if they build on state-owned land; this is a safeguard for the fact that any unauthorized building can be demolished by the Israeli state (Berger 2019). While the denial of building permits for Palestinians is exactly intended to justify home demolitions, this application of the law is relaxed when it comes to Jews. Jewish settlers systematically attack Palestinians who try to access their lands including for herding animals or harvesting trees, and the Israeli occupying army will either stand by to protect the settlers or contribute to the harassment of Palestinians. In turn, Palestinians avoid what are now dangerous places. As a result, the land typically becomes uncared for and within a few years is designated as neglected. At that point the Israeli state will then implement beautification projects and build

recreational activities including gazebos, vistas, and trails designated for Jewish-only usage. Of the nine natural springs in the area near Ramallah, five have been taken over in this manner, thus preventing Palestinians from using the water for their livelihood. In the Palestinian economy, agriculture and harvesting account not only as a primary source of income for many but is also a relied upon secondary source of income for hundreds of thousands of families in the captive and suppressed labor market. The settlements are all illegal under international law, and the unauthorized outposts are illegal even under Israeli law. But they continue to exist with nearly unchecked impunity- this is, after all, the nature of settler-colonialism.

The Jewish settlers hiking on that August day in 2019 surely must have known at least part of this reality, and the Palestinian who prepared the bomb that went off at this hiking trail must have experienced at least some of this firsthand. This reflection of colonial arrogance of entitlement to land use and an indigenous response through armed resistance is also a manifestation of the nature of settler-colonialism. Several scholars theorize the twinned violence inherent in colonialism- the violence to colonize and the violence to resist. These underpinning inevitabilities in colonialism are inextricably linked. They are not equal on any register of scale; colonial military power outweighs that of indigenous resistance in many instances. This is true in Palestine where Israel has a multi-billion-dollar army to maintain its colonialism bolstered by the USA which provided $150 billion in aid to Israel over its 75-year existence. And the Jewish Israeli population is well armed with generous gun policies, and Jewish settlers in the West Bank held 145,000 guns in 2018 (Congressional Research Service 2023; and Fox 2018). Guerilla resistance tactics and international diplomatic pressure are tools to survive in this disparity of power and turn the tide. But, as theorized in James Scott's *Weapons of the Weak* regarding everyday modes of resistance that can be quite mundane and Franz Fanon's *Wretched of the*

Earth where the path to decolonization is through mass violence, peace cannot exist under colonialism (Scott 1987; and Fanon 1961). The bomb that went off on that hiking trail killed a 17-year-old Israeli and injured her father and brother. Israel soon arrested three members of the PFLP on allegations they were responsible for the operation. Held under administrative detention, under which detainees of the military are not presented with any charges, the three were interrogated and tortured.[6] One was sent to the hospital as the Israelis nearly beat him to death as he suffered from broken ribs and kidney failure from the torture (Ashly 2019). As the *Jewish Press* reported "the Shin Bet received permission from a judicial entity to interrogate Arbid [the alleged ringleader] using exceptional means, and following the beatings he received during the interrogation, he was evacuated to the hospital with real concern for his life. He is now under induced coma and receiving artificial respiration" (Israel 2019). It was clear they wanted to inflict as much pain as possible. It is also clear they wanted to maintain a colonial narrative with Israel as the apex of law and order, hiding behind a judge's ruling when beating a man within an inch of his life.

In the months that followed, Israel undertook a massive campaign to arrest, interrogate and torture those affiliated with the PFLP. The state's internal intelligence organization, Shin Bet, believed that the PFLP was reorganizing itself for a political re-emergence. Just four months into the campaign, 50 Palestinians were held under administrative detention or arrested on alleged PFLP affiliation. Of them three were alleged to have carried out the bombing, four belonged to the political leadership including a senior party leader Khalida Jarrar who is a

[6] The *1984 Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment* defines torture as "any act by which severe pain or suffering, whether physical or mental, is intentionally inflicted on a person for such purposes as obtaining from him or a third person information or a confession." It goes on to state, "No exceptional circumstances whatsoever, whether a state of war or a threat of war, internal political instability or any other public emergency, may be invoked as justification of torture."

Deputy in the Palestinian Legislative Council and should therefore have immunity, and the remaining 43 were not involved in militant activities but were alleged to hold membership to the organization (Ziv 2019). The PFLP's student wing called the Democratic Progressive Student Pole, was implicated in the Israeli roundup. The Israeli military statement alleged that "In recent years, the PFLP has been recruiting student cells in the West Bank universities in order to carry out attacks" (Middle East Monitor 2020). As a matter of Israeli tactics, arrests are usually carried out in waves. "An arrest of one student is followed by arrests of all the students in their network and their political circle," Yara Hawari of *Al-Shabaka*, a transnational Palestinian think tank, explained, "Arrest campaigns are an effective technique to break Palestinian youth" (Ashly 2019). In August 2019 alone 18 students at Birzeit university were arrested, and by October another 46 university students were arrested from across the West Bank universities. They joined the other 196 students already in Israeli military prisons (Ashly 2019). Israel was resolved to destroy the PFLP. One year later, in August 2020 Israel designated the Democratic Progressive Student Pole an illegal organization under the law of Defense (Emergency) Regulations 1945 (Addameer 2020a).[7] Several people I interviewed commented that these arrests targeted women in an unprecedented manner. It was understood to be a mass escalation of policing and criminality on the part of the Israeli occupation forces. Mais Abu Ghosh was one of the students arrested during the roundup on charges of affiliation to the banned Student Pole and for "'communicating with an enemy,' [by] participating in a conference on the Palestinian Right of Return and writing content for an allegedly Hezbollah-affiliated news agency" (Addameer

[7] At the formation of the Israeli legal system, legislators enacted a reception statute known as the "Law and Administration Ordinance of 1948" which adopted British law during its colonial rule over Palestine into the formal legal code of the Israeli state. The Defence (Emergency) Regulations 1945 constitute the main legal pillars of the Israeli occupation in the West Bank and, historically, were the backbone of the martial law imposed on Palestinians in the '48 area until 1966 (Erakat 2019).

2020b). She was tortured for a confession, the details of which she has shared on international platforms. Statements regarding the torment she suffered and the denial of her right to legal consultation were concealed during her detention extension hearings, and at the end of an eight-month trial she was sentenced to 16-months imprisonment and a fine.[8] As Addameer reported,

> In the verdict, the military judge acknowledged the serious difficulty in establishing the sentence based on the conditions of the interrogation with Abu Ghosh, referring to the torture, to which she was subject and its legal implications for evidence. The judge also argued that although the core of the activities, over which Abu Ghosh is charged, is of civilian nature, such acts, nonetheless, should not be tolerated, for they cement the status of banned factions in the society. Notwithstanding their civility, these activities also reinforce the military activities that eventually threaten the security, the judge also claimed (Addameer 2020b).

I interviewed an Addameer lawyer, Tala Nasser, for clarity on the matter. She was around my age and graduated from Birzeit University where she was a student organizer. By means of example, she went through the charge sheets of several students that Addameer represented in military courts. This information is published on their website, so no privacy concerns were violated. She emphasized that all charges brought forth by Israelis against Palestinians in the West Bank are adjudicated in Israeli military courts. The laws of the occupation criminalize Palestinian social life as much as it criminalizes political activity, the line between the two is intentionally collapsed. As a result, student life itself is criminalized. We see this in the judge's ruling above where actions of civilian nature are deemed security threats. Israel has given itself free rein to arrest Palestinians for any reason. One example highlighting this is the *alternative cafeteria* the Democratic Progressive Student Pole organized on the Birzeit campus. As with many universities around the world, there exists entrenched neoliberal economics. At Birzeit, this has meant the cafeterias are no longer owned and operated by the university but are rather

[8] She was 22 at the time of her arrest. When she was 16 years old Israeli forces shot and killed her brother when he was accused of stabbing an Israeli, and, as further punishment, her family home was then demolished.

contracted out to private restaurants. In rejecting this capitalist model, the Student Pole organized an *alternative cafeteria* where students ran and operated their own kitchen on campus grounds. A student organizer of this kitchen was arrested and sent to military court on charges of smuggling falafel, that deep-fried garbanzo bean patty. It is entirely absurd unless we see this for what it is— the attempt to destroy Palestinian student organizing.

The Israelis deployed their campaign targeting the Left in an effort to silence and discredit Palestinian organizations that hold global recognition. In October 2021, the Israeli Military Commander of the occupied territories evoked Defense (Emergency) Regulations 1945 to designate six Palestinian NGOs in the West Bank as "unlawful associations" and three weeks later the Israeli Defense Minister evoked Israel's domestic Counter-Terrorism (Anti-Terror) Law 2016 to designate a Palestinian NGO in Israel as a terrorist organization. All were alleged to be "an arm of the declared terrorist organization, the 'Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine' [PFLP]" (Adalah 2022). The seven organizations are Adalah- The Legal Center for Arab and Minority Rights in Israel; Addameer- Prisoner Support and Human Rights Association; Al-Haq (a Human Rights organization); Bisan Center for Research and Development; Defense for Children International-Palestine; the Union of Palestinian Women's Committees; and the Union of Agricultural Work Committees. The international community has rejected this designation as meritless and condemned it.

I must reiterate, the attack on Palestinian student life and organizing is not only felt by the Left but all students irrespective of political ideology. The student supporters of Hamas, called *The Islamic Wafa,* are also heavily targeted. During the 2022 student elections at Birzeit seven members and candidates of the Islamic political bloc were arrested the night before voting day by Israeli forces. The election debates were streamed live on Palestinian social media given

the significance of the election discussed above. That night the political candidates were arrested on charges of engaging in Hamas activities. The day before the debates Israel sent threatening texts to students and their family members which said "Tomorrow (Wednesday), student elections will be held at Birzeit University, so you know that your son/daughter's vote for the Islamic bloc is considered to be Hamas activism, which gives us the right to deal with them according to the law." Once election results came in The Islamic Wafa bloc won 28 seats out of 51 earning an unprecedented landslide majority victory. The Fatah student support wing, called The Shabiba, got 18 seats, leaving 5 seats earned by the Democratic Progressive Student Pole. The impressive victory earned by the Islamic Wafa bloc has been attributed to the loss of popularity of Fatah within Palestinian society. The common explanation for this shift is the growing frustration of Fatah's negotiation and normalization political platform that has failed to improve Palestinian life, establish a free state, or even end the occupation.

The implications of the mass criminalization of the Left and student life in my research are of great concern to me. First is the personal toll it takes to bear witness to such atrocities. I have always been an anti-Zionist, and I knew the horrors committed in its name. But still, I was outraged and depressed after I read report after report of students describing the torture they were subjected to. But I also found renewed inspiration in the stories of political organizing and resistance. Being in Palestine is an emotional rollercoaster. No matter how much I read and study about Palestine, its consistent suffering has not numbed me. Second, there is a significant need to tread lightly. A researcher sending emails requesting a meeting about student organizing raises suspicions. Student organizing is, after all, criminalized activity. And this suspicion is compounded by the fact that I happened to ask a lot of Leftists for interviews, yet another criminalized group, given the direction my snowballing method took me. There is the real

possibility that my interlocutors can face retaliation or prison time for speaking to me or disclosing information that would lead to an arrest and a charge sheet if the Israeli forces were to find out. I must admit, there is a high level of sophisticated understanding of this risk. Those who spoke to me only did so once I was vetted and were strategic in what they disclosed to me and what they did not. They asked me to turn off the recorder and not take notes at times to give me context they did not want shared publicly. I raise this because there is a common concern in anthropological methodology regarding protecting interlocutors that, at times, fails to recognize how interlocutors exercise their agency to protect themselves. Further, there was an understanding of my positionality, and, in a way, they were my mentors passing on their wisdom. I did a lot of listening and information typically was told to me and moved in my direction. But I do not live in Palestine, nor did I grow up there, and I am sure their narratives were consciously constructed to address this reality. They were speaking to a Palestinian-American; I am *of* the Palestinian national body but I am not *in* the national body. I have no anxieties over this distinction nor am I concerned about loose discourses of Palestinian *authenticity*. Instead, I address the reality that these conversations would have been different had they been conducted by anyone else and that the research presented here is neither exposé nor secret.

The third main category of my methodology is the question of my mobility. Getting into Palestine is not an easy feat nor is traveling across internal checkpoints. In the three times I have traveled to Palestine, Israeli border control agents detain me for hours. As a US citizen, I have access to Palestine through travel and visa agreements between Israel and the USA. My US passport is not a guarantee of entry but rather the possibility of entry. The possibility of entry is denied to millions of Palestinians across the world. For example, Lebanon and Israel are

technically still at war and tourism is not permitted between the two countries meaning the Palestinian refugees there cannot enter Palestine. For them, it is life in exile from Palestine. Here is my narrative of how I got into Palestine.

I flew into Amman, Jordan around 10 pm. I made my way through their entry protocols and took a taxi to a hotel for the night. The next morning at 6 am I hired another taxi for the 45-minute drive to the Israeli border. I choose this path rather than enter through the Tel Aviv airport because if the border agent denied my visa, I would be sent back to Amman rather than put on a returning flight to the USA. At the border I completed the exit protocols for Jordan, including luggage and passport inspection, then made my way across the bridge on a designated bus route to the Israeli side. At the door to the Israeli building my bags were inspected, and I was briefly questioned before I could enter. There are two entries, one for Palestinian residents and one for everyone else. I got a glimpse of the Palestinian side, a huge maze of metal railings, body scanners, baggage scanners, and plexiglass separating Palestinians from the guards and border agents. Once in the building I approached an agent's desk to request a visa for entry. Upon stating I would stay with my family in Birzeit in the West Bank, I was asked to stay in the waiting room and my passport was kept. Hours later three men took me into a room where I was interrogated by an agent with an American accent. As the door opened, I overheard some Hebrew and the term "BDS" was used so I knew they had searched my name online, adding to my file of what they had already compiled from my previous entries to Palestine. In 2017 Israel passed "Amendment No. 28 to the Entry Into Israel Law" prohibiting entry to those who support the boycott of Israel, of which I have publicly supported and led campaigns. Infamously, US Congresswomen Rashida Tlaib and Ilhan Omar were denied entry in 2019 based on this law. I knew all this going in, but I was going to try nonetheless.

The issue of media presence is one consciously debated by many Palestinians in the diaspora. There are several approaches to this matter. Some believe that social media posts criticizing Israel or being smeared on Zionist websites like Canary Mission directly lead to denial of entry by Israel. Under these perspectives, Palestinians will refrain from posting online or they will create social media accounts under an alias. The same is true of political organizing where they will either refuse to join as members or even refuse to go to events hosted by Palestinian organizations. They avoid discussing Palestine publicly at all costs. Others may organize but do so under an alias. This is for a sound reason. Israel is known to deny Palestinians entry based on their social media presence or their activist histories. I have heard some Palestinians describe it as the threat of exile. Other fears and possibilities include concerns they will be arrested if they attempt entry, or that their families and loved ones in Palestine will bear Israeli retaliation for their actions, all of which have happened. There is a real chilling effect at play. The USA State Department will not intervene in these matters. Their position is that Israel is a sovereign nation that has independent control over whom they admit or do not admit into the state irrespective of any visa entry policy agreements the USA may have with them. Others have a different approach to the matter. Israel does not need an excuse to deny entry, they just can. In my experience, as well as in talking with Palestinians and discussing it with Dr. Abdulhadi whom I traveled with to Palestine in 2018, the Israelis do what they want, and their decisions can be quite random. It is this unchecked power to determine entry that many Palestinians in diaspora face. Insult to injury is of course added given it is Israel making decisions about entry to Palestine. Under these confines, Zionism has made Palestinians who hold “strong” passports in the diaspora tourists to their own state. The continued denial of a free Palestinian state and the denial of a Right to Return has ensured this. The analysis I and many other Palestinians hold is that in the political

reality of Zionism, where being Palestinian is in and of itself a criminalized condition, a logic where actions have consequences falls apart. Palestinians are not granted entry or denied based on “good Palestinian” and “bad Palestinian” distinctions. These distinctions are meaningless given Zionism seeks the erasure of Palestine and Palestinians. Those who are denied entry to Palestine are denied because they are Palestinian- full stop. It is not because they are being punished for speaking up about Palestine, that is simply a convenient cover for Israel to use. Those that make it through are just lucky.

When I go through the Israeli border screening, I put on a performance of American arrogance. This performance entails an entitlement to global travel, it also means being visibly annoyed, talking down to the bureaucrats and letting them know they are wasting my time, and asserting repeatedly I am an American. Palestinian righteous indignation will get me nowhere with the Israeli border agents, in fact they are used to harassing Palestinians and would revert comfortably to that role. So I deny them the performance they are seasoned actors in. Instead, the demeanor I evoke is that they are talking to an American. You cannot show fear and you cannot show intimidation as they will leverage your emotions to get information out of you or attempt to force you to admit to things that are entirely false. It is not easy to have your guard up 100% of the time at the border and during interrogations and I am not perfect, but I put my best effort forward and if I find myself slipping, I know that I cannot give up and must recalibrate. The Israeli agent who interrogated me at the border alleged I befriended Palestinians in Israeli military jails and that I communicate with them over Facebook. I denied the allegations. He demanded I open my Facebook and scroll through it in front of him. I refused to do so. He threatened that in not complying I was admitting I had something to hide and that it was grounds to deny my entry. I responded that I have a right to privacy regarding my personal Facebook

account and that I will not open my account. He would repeat the allegations and his direction to open my Facebook account. I would repeat my responses of denying his allegations and asserting my privacy rights to my Facebook account. This went on for over thirty minutes. He threatened to deny me entry several times. I found it strange that at times he raised his voice at me and other times gave me compliments in this sort of one-man-play of good cop-bad cop, he even called the land Palestine and not Israel. He asked if I wanted a drink, and I turned down the offer. I thought it was a ploy to collect a DNA sample. I later learned that Israeli interrogators usually offer food and drinks, and one school of thought among Palestinians is to always accept the offerings and to ask for more as a display of being unfazed by the interrogation.

Near the end of the questioning, he asked me if I was ever in a protest and what for. I said yes, about the occupation and Gaza. He was testing if I would lie since lying would mean an immediate rejection of my visa. He asked me what my opinion was on the matter of the occupation. I responded that I have an opinion just like every other Palestinian has an opinion and that I am sure he too has an opinion on the matter. I figured it was better to be vague rather than confront him with settler-colonialism. I wanted to get in, I did not care what he thought nor did I want to turn this into a "teachable moment." Next, he asked me if I support Hamas. I was wearing a crucifix necklace at the time that I strategically placed over my shirt. It is widely known Christians may have it easier at the border given all the Christian pilgrims that cross and the rampant anti-Muslim hatred that sometimes spares Palestinian Christians. Given what I was wearing I was confused why this man thought I supported Hamas, an Islamic political organization. And how would a young Palestinian-American living in the USA even be integrated into the party when there is no Hamas branch in the USA? I felt I was in an awkward position. I am not part of any Palestinian party, but I also did not want to condemn one party

over another. Irrespective of my political analysis, I wanted to maintain the integrity of Palestinian political pluralism where the various parties and ideologies are legitimate because of the backing of the people. So, I responded with a no and that I believe in one person, one vote. That seemed satisfactory to him. I was dismissed back to the waiting room where I sat for hours not knowing if I would receive the visa or be sent back. While in the waiting room, an elderly Palestinian woman was having difficulty breathing. She was there waiting with her middle-aged son, his wife and infant kids. The onsite paramedic was called over and examined her. The elderly woman was ordered an ambulance. She, her daughter-in-law, and the kids had already been issued visas and they were permitted to go together to the hospital. Her son was left behind waiting alone for his turn to be interrogated. I cannot imagine what was going through his head. Eventually, another agent called my name and I was given my passport back with a visa. Next, I hopped on a bus that sent me to the entry registration office for the Palestinian Authority in Jericho. In total, I spent over seven hours navigating through the Jordanian, Israeli and Palestinian borders, and six of those hours were spent in the Israeli office. It is an exhausting physical and emotional ordeal intended to humiliate you and dissuade you from doing it again.

I was issued a three-month visa that granted me access to the ’48 Area and the West Bank. But I knew I wanted to stay longer. From what I had gathered from family members and friends who travel to Palestine, for someone to renew their visa they must leave the country and then re-enter. What I came to learn is that you do not need to leave the country if a family member with Israeli citizenship sponsors your visa renewal. I did not want to leave and begin the entire ordeal again. Instead, my cousin called a friend who works in the Palestinian travel ministry for more information. He informed us that because I had registered my entry with the PA in Jericho, there was the possibility that I could submit a visa renewal application to the PA

who would pass on the paperwork to the Israeli military to make the final decision regarding visa renewal. The paperwork was only available in Hebrew and private businesses are set up outside of the ministry office in Ramallah just to fill out these forms given the general lack of Hebrew knowledge. The form requested an immediate family member (parent or sibling) with Israeli citizenship to fill out the form; I had neither so instead my cousin with a West Bank residency ID card sponsored me in the application. Between the translation service fees, the PA's filing fees and the Israeli visa fees I must have paid $150, a large sum in Palestine. I did not think I would be successful, but it was worth the gamble. To my surprise, I was issued a visa renewal, this time for 1 month and I was not permitted entry into the '48 Area or Jerusalem. The visa was designated as non-renewable, so I had to leave at the end of the term. I contacted the USA Embassy in Jerusalem informing them of the Israeli visa that barred my entry into the '48 Area and the fact that it meant I was barred from accessing my embassy. They requested information from me to open an inquiry which I provided. I followed up only for them to send me back a generic response with the embassy's phone number in case I needed something from them. That was the limit of the support they would provide.

As the departure date approached, I thought it wise to review entry protocols into Jordan regarding Covid regulations. What I discovered was that the only land port between Jordan and the West Bank does not issue Jordanian visas. This is not the case at the other land ports that connect the '48 Area to Jordan where you can in fact be issued both Israeli and Jordanian visas. Since I was no longer permitted into the '48 Area I had to book an appointment with the Jordanian consulate office in Ramallah to request a visa. They were overbooked but accepted me on stand-by given the time sensitivity of the visas since it was the second to last day before my Israeli visa was to expire. It took hours to wait for an opening, but when they closed for lunch, I

took the opportunity to explore the area and visited the museum and mausoleum of Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish. Located on a tall hill, the views from this compound are some of the most stunning in Ramallah. You see rolling hills of terraced orchards that stretch beyond the horizon and sprawling masonry homes constructed of Jerusalem stone that glisten under the sun and remind the observer that Palestine is enduring and here to stay. Palestine is beautiful. The next day I hired a private taxi and made my way to the Palestinian border control office where I registered my exit and then hopped on the designated bus to the Israeli border office to begin the process all over again, this time without an interrogation. I then made my way to the Jordanian side for review of my visa and luggage, also without trouble. I then hired a private taxi to take me to Amman where I spent the next month. I stayed at my aunt's house though I had the place to myself as she lives in the United States. As is on display throughout this section, family support was one of the most important resources during my fieldwork.

Borders and checkpoints are a common feature of the Israeli occupation of Palestinian life. With the passage of the Oslo Accords, Israel split the West Bank into three categories of governance, Areas A, B and C. Areas A and B are the areas of major Palestinian cities and the immediate surrounding area of Palestinian urban sprawl with approximately three million people (AlJazeera 2019). These include the cities of Ramallah, Bethlehem, Nablus, and Khalil which in the Hebraization of Palestinian place names is referred to as Hebron. In these areas the Palestinian Authority has limited control over governance concerns including law and enforcement, the municipalities, the economy and building codes. Area C covers 60% of the West Bank, it is where the majority of Jewish settlements are with nearly 475,000 settlers, and the area is largely designated as Israeli state land, firing zones, nature reserves and national parks for Israel. Palestinian life is systematically eradicated from the area through these land grab

mechanisms by Israel and the wholesale denial of building permits and restrictions placed on infrastructure. Area C winds itself through and between Areas A and B creating an archipelago of Palestinian communities in the West Bank. The geography is turned into "architecture of occupation" structuring control in the West Bank above, below and on top of the land (Weizman 2017). Hundreds of checkpoints dot the landscape ranging from these massive, high-tech sites equipped with scanners, metal gates, high-definition cameras and ID checks to wooden shacks on the side of the road with rising barrier gate arms (B'tselem 2021). Further, there are checkpoints to cross between the West Bank and the '48 Area. The main one I crossed was the Qalandia checkpoint located between Ramallah and Jerusalem. Palestinians with residence IDs are not permitted to drive through the checkpoint, they must cross it on foot, as only Israeli citizens are permitted to drive through (Ashly 2019). To cross, I took a bus from Birzeit to Ramallah, a roughly 20-minute drive. From there I would walk to another bus depot about 5 minutes away and board a bus headed to Jerusalem, and once the bus was full we made another 20-minute drive to the checkpoint. The bus dropped us off at the outskirts of the checkpoint. I walked my way to it and entered this metal fortress. First, we waited in line, where one by one we were let through a revolving metal gate made entirely of rods. Once through, we showed our IDs to a soldier stationed behind plexiglass. It was so scratched up I could barely see through it, and I doubt the soldier could make out anything on the IDs. Every few seconds they would shout orders in Hebrew; I never understood a word they said but it did not matter since it is intended to belittle you. I placed my belongings on a conveyor belt leading to a scanning machine, and I walked through a metal detector. Next, I made my way through the hallway until I saw a series of gates akin to what you find at a subway station. I did not have a magnetic ID card so I could not get through. Another soldier saw me and shouted something I did not understand, I held up

my U.S. passport thinking he would get the idea. He gestured to the far end of the gates, I walked to the last stall and tried to hand my passport through the slot in the glass to the soldier. She yelled in more Hebrew and pounded the glass. I interpreted the gesture as instruction to place the face of my visa on the glass at her eye level. Satisfied with her inspection, I heard a buzzing sound and the gate opened. I walked through and walked on foot across a long concrete bridge until I saw several taxis and buses. I had made it through, I felt a small sense of relief but also an unease as I always felt more comfortable in the West Bank than I did in the ’48 Area. The infrastructure changes, modern high rises and brand new roads line the landscape that feels manufactured and sanitized, Israeli police roam the roads casually and being there feels like one large outdoor checkpoint.

For my cousins who live in the West Bank, the only way they could cross into the ’48 Area is with a temporary permit. For my family, the most common way in which to obtain one is through the Church. Before a religious holiday, the Church sends out a questionnaire to the parishioners asking who would like to submit an application, and then the Church sends the request to Israel which approves or denies the request. It is very common for some members of a family to be denied while others are granted, usually no reason is given. The second part of the process is getting a biometric scan of your face and fingerprints at the border security facility, the information is stored on a magnetic ID card. Without undergoing facial recognition registration, no Palestinian with a residence ID card can enter the ’48 Area or Jerusalem. Many Palestinians reject this imposition, they refuse biometric registration and do not travel into the ’48 Area. For some 100,000 Palestinians who economically rely on employment in the ’48 Area or the Jewish settlements, submitting to biometric scans is an inevitability. For others, crossing the border clandestinely is the only option. Israel’s facial biometric registry is a tool of suppression in its

criminalization of Palestinian life. I remember watching the news during Ramadan while on fieldwork where thousands of Palestinian Muslims made their way into Jerusalem to pray at the Al Aqsa Mosque. Video after video showed Palestinians walking through the corridors of the city and seemingly out of nowhere Israeli police would rush into the crowd, arrest and drag away a Palestinian, typically a man. Journalists would comment that Israel's camera surveillance system in Jerusalem working in conjunction with its biometric registration facilitated these arrests. It is well known that access to one's face has serious ramifications. For generations, the covering of the face, typically with the Palestinian checkered keffiyeh, during political activities and demonstrations is a safety measure. The photos can be used to target you for arrest, can be used in military trials, or can be used to threaten one into serving as an informant. These arrests need not be immediate, they can come for you at any time in the years to come. For over a decade, American technology companies have been at the center of Israel's biometric identification system and population database servers, including installing and operating them or investing heavily in them. Some of these systems have been paid for by American taxpayers. These companies include Hewlett-Packard, DXC Technology, Amazon, Google, and Microsoft, all of which have been the subject of calls for boycott and divestment (BDS Movement 2023; and Times of Israel 2019).

Checkpoints are not always open, which impacted my fieldwork research. I give one example. I contacted Nadera Shalhoub-Kevorkian, a professor at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem for an interview and to discuss my research. She was so welcoming and even offered to give me a walking tour of Jerusalem after our scheduled meeting which I was looking forward to. The day before we were set to meet, I prepared my bag. I did not want to carry anything on me that Israelis might confiscate at the checkpoint and corrupt the privacy of my research. I

bought a new notepad and made sure no interview audio files were on my phone and recorder. It was a standard tactic I used anytime I knew I would cross a checkpoint. As a safe measure, my handwritten notes were not an encompassing summary of the interview but rather loose bullet points of ideas for follow up questions. Still, I would rather the Israelis not get their hands on it. Before I left Palestine, I took photos of the pages of my notebooks and uploaded them to my UCLA-provided digital storage drives using a VPN, I then deleted all copies on my phone and burned the pages of my notebooks in the backyard. On the day I was to meet Dr. Shalhoub-Kevorkian I was only able to get to the Ramallah bus depot. I approached the bus manager to pinpoint the bus to Jerusalem but he informed me the Israelis closed the checkpoint and no buses are running the route. I asked him for a private taxi to take me to the checkpoint and he said it is not possible, the Israelis closed the checkpoint. I called the professor and we moved our meeting online. Israel closed the checkpoint as part of its ongoing hostilities at the Al Aqsa Mosque. During my fieldwork, Ramadan, the holiest month in Islam, began on April 2nd and ended May 1st with the Eid al Fitr celebration on May 2nd. The last ten days of Ramadan, called Laylat ul Qadr, are the holiest time of the month as it marks the occasion when Angel Gabriel revealed the Quran to the Prophet Muhammad. During the same period, the eight days of Passover in Judaism began on April 15th commemorating Moses leading the Jewish exodus from enslavement in Egypt. On the morning of April 15th Israeli forces stormed the Al Aqsa Mosque compound firing rubber bullets and stun grenades and beating worshipers with batons. Stun grenades are explosive devices that produce an intense flash of light that blinds onlookers for five seconds, and an extremely loud bang causes temporary deafness as well as disturbs ear fluid causing disorientation and loss of balance. Over 150 Palestinians were injured and 470 were arrested, of them, 18 were students at Birzeit University. Israel claimed they preemptively raided the mosque

compound to remove stones and rocks in anticipation that they would be thrown over a wall at Jews worshiping at the Western Wall (Lynfield and Homes 2022). The assault on the mosque and its worshipers during Ramadan continued for days. On the 17th Israeli armed police escorted a group of Jews around the compound further taunting Muslim worshipers. Images of the assaults dominated headlines and social media. It is a disturbing scene to witness worshipers hiding behind overturned tables and building columns as shots are fired at them, tear gas permeates the mosque and stun grenades explode all around. During the multi-day assault Muslims were denied entry to the mosque and those already inside were confined within. Al Aqsa was under siege. Some days would be worse than others in cycles of attack and retreat. When Laylat ul Qadr began, entry into Jerusalem from the West Bank was prohibited. Protests immediately ensued at checkpoints as thousands demanded entry. Eventually restrictions were partially lifted, and some days were limited to night-entries. During Ramadan, Israel's entry policy was amended so that women of all ages were allowed to enter without a permit on Fridays while only men over 50 and boys under 12 fell under the same exemptions. And 60,000 Palestinian men were issued permits to enter on the first and second Fridays of Ramadan (AlJazeera 2022b). One consequence of this was that protests at the closed checkpoints were predominantly led by women. In the end, 250,000 Muslims gathered at Al Aqsa on the night of the 27th which was believed to be the most accurate night of revelation among the ten possibilities (AlJazeera 2022a). The unfortunate reality is that Ramadan celebrations and worship are always contested by Israel in their perennial attack on Palestinian life (Barakat 2021). My research is trapped and informed by these structures.

Another phenomenon that impacted my research is the presence of nationwide general strikes. A general strike will be called for in the event of the death of a prominent figure or the

martyrdom of a Palestinian whose story has captivated Palestinian headlines. These are usually called for by the PA or political parties. Anyone who dies at the hands of Israel is called a martyr. There are several levels of strikes. A complete strike means the closure of all businesses, schools and universities. Social life is put on hold, and everyone stays home. During a limited strike some essential businesses like banks are permitted to open but must keep their doors only halfway open to maintain respect. In the event of a martyrdom, typically protests erupt in the following days. Participation in the strike is mandatory, if the PA calls for it then they will have their police shut and lock the door of any businesses that do not comply, or zealot party members also intervene to force compliance. This occurred several times during my fieldwork in Palestine. My meetings were canceled and rescheduled. Lectures I planned to attend were canceled, but sometimes I was lucky, and they were rescheduled. In this event, even online meetings are not an option. Honoring the dead and especially the martyrs is sacred, any attempt to subvert the strike is rude and a social taboo. Of these strikes, I highlight those that had a deep impact on my time in Palestine.

April 2022 witnessed several massive arrest and assignation campaigns by Israeli forces. On April 7, 2022, Ra'ad Hazem from the city of Jenin fired into a crowd in Tel Aviv killing three people and injuring six others. He acted alone and with no organizational affiliation. The next morning Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett announced Israel will respond with war. "There are not and will not be limits for this war. We are granting full freedom of action to the army, the Shin Bet and all security forces in order to defeat the terror," he went on to say, "Every murderer know we will find them, everyone who helps a terrorist should know that they will pay a heavy price" (BBC News 2022). The next day he was found in Yafa and killed in a shoot-out with Israeli forces. I have heard that if one does not die in these shoot-outs, the alternative is

unbearable torture where you wish you were dead. The next day the Israeli army invaded Jenin, both its city and the refugee camp, conducting a large-scale raid at 7 in the morning. Palestinian fighters armed with guns responded and two hours of heavy fighting in the streets and homes ended with Israeli withdrawal. It was also the 20th anniversary of the infamous Battle of Jenin during the Al Aqsa (Second) Intifada when Israel lay siege to the city for nearly three weeks killing over 50 Palestinians. Jenin has a long history of fighting against Israeli forces and its ongoing legacy is one of the symbols of national resistance (Ibrahim 2022). Its main militia is the Jenin Brigade which operates as an "umbrella organization for a diverse set of armed groups, and the political and factional ideologies of the various fighters in the Brigade have taken a backseat to the immediate objective of protecting the camp and repelling Israeli incursions" (Barghouti 2022a). In the following days Israeli forces carried out operations all across the West Bank in what Palestinians described as large-scale retaliation for the killing of Israeli Jews (Barghouti 2022b). This is a common tactic of the Israeli state to enact mass violence and collective punishment. The Israeli army invaded Jenin (several times), Nablus, Ramallah and Bethlehem conducting mass arrests and raiding homes. Palestinians fought back during these invasions. As news of Israeli troops traveling on the roads spread, the *shabab*, who are men in their teens to early 30s, lined the main roads and fought back. These are not militia; they are the average Palestinian. The *shabab* threw rocks at military convoys and the occasional Molotov cocktail and poured used motor oil in the streets so the cars would lose traction. Dr. Nadera Shalhoub-Kevorkian put it best in her interview with me when she said, "sometimes throwing a stone is in the best interest of the youth. It's to tell you I refuse to accept humiliation as part of my daily

life" (Interview with Nadera Shalhoub-Kevorkian 2022).[9] When attacked back in this manner, Israeli soldiers responded by either driving fast through the booby traps or stopping the car to fire into the crowd and set off stun grenades to cause them to disperse. The streets of Palestine were on fire, both literally and figuratively, and many talked about the possibility of this being the start of a third Intifada.

On April 14, the Israelis raided Silwad, a town on the outskirts of Ramallah, and the only main road was through Birzeit where I was staying (Ahmed 2022b). From the kitchen in my home, I heard gunshots and stun grenades going off that sounded like metal doors being slammed shut. Moments later I received a phone call from my cousin informing me the Israeli soldiers were in Birzeit and the *shabab* were fighting back. Israeli soldiers were in Birzeit for nearly an hour in a caravan of approximately 20 military jeeps. I was instructed to stay home, close the blinds, and stay away from windows. In the event Israeli soldiers conducted home searches in the middle of the night, I was to inform them that upon opening the door there will be a loud banging sound as the door locking mechanism is a large, rusted metal rod so please do not shoot. No warrants are issued, they knock on the door and you either open it or they attack their way in. I had not destroyed my handwritten notes at that point. I figured if they ransacked the house the integrity of my research privacy would be compromised, so I hid the notebooks as best I could and hoped the encrypted digital data would remain safe. I went to bed watching updates of the resistance on social media as Palestinians uploaded video after video. In the videos one can deduce that the more seasoned of the bunch always wore face coverings, the uninformed but eager novices did not, their faces on these videos surely entered Israeli databases.

[9] She recounted her rebuttal to criticism levied at her analysis of youth resistance at a conference at the Hebrew University. The criticism was she was too serious about her analysis of Israeli incarceration of Palestinian youth and that Palestinian boys throw stones simply because it's fun to do so.

The next morning, I got up early and took a walk through downtown as I wanted to see the aftermath. But at 4 o'clock in the morning the city municipality had ordered a mass cleanup, the thousands of rocks thrown at the soldiers were swept away and the roads made clear. That is, after all, the purpose of the municipality, build roads, issue construction permits, manage water and electricity infrastructure, and settle land disputes. From April 8 to the morning of April 14 Israel had killed nine Palestinian men, women and children and injured many more, and dozens of arrests were carried out (39 arrests on April 14th alone) on high-profile figures, their associates and family members, and anyone unfortunate enough to be caught in the sweep (Ahmed 2022a; Palestinian Center for Human Rights 2022; and IMEC News 2022). General strikes were called, and work ceased.

In following my timeline, you will remember that the next day Israel stormed and laid siege to Al Aqsa Mosque. Zionism never takes a break. Students at Birzeit University organized a massive march in protest of the assault on Palestinian life and Al Aqsa. Approximately 200 students started the march by meeting near the cafeteria. Those in the front held a large banner with the Al Aqsa name and image and several students held poster-sized portraits of martyrs, but holding the Palestinian flag on a short pole was by far the most common feature. I heard one student ask another which group organized it, and she responded it was the supporters of Hamas. But the following week I asked for clarity from a professor at the university and she said it was all the groups, it just seemed Muslim and thus Hamas-led, given the centrality of Al Aqsa. The students shouted political chants including reaffirming their commitment to its defense and gave short speeches on the same subject. Everyone was recording and uploading on social media, and the university administration's press department brought out a professional camera and large tripod to record the entire event. The phenomenon of photographing resistance and protest over

the last few days interested me so I asked for an explanation. Professor Rula Abu Duhou informed me it is a double-edged sword, on the one hand it is a public display that Palestine is here and will resist, and on the other hand it is evidence Israeli military courts can use against students. It is a calculated risk, and, arguably, a necessary one.

This chapter was necessary to show the constraints of conducting field research in Palestine under military occupation. It was also necessary to position my status as a Palestinian from the diaspora situated in the USA conducting research on GUPS. I choose to narrate my field methodology in this manner because I believe ethnography is a strong base that generates the framework and theorization of the nexus of diaspora, settler-colonialism, and student movements within the data collection and analysis process. With this background established, I move on to the next portion of my dissertation. The following three chapters focus on GUPS's role to bridge Palestinian Diasporic consciousness.

Chapter Three – Three Cases Studies on the Formation of GUPS

This chapter addresses the question of why the General Union of Palestine Students (GUPS) formed in some places and did not form in others in three case studies. First, I begin with an overview of the formation of GUPS in Egypt in 1959. Soon after its formation, a model emerged where migration of Palestinian students was paired with the opening of GUPS branches wherever they went. Second, the USA example is a marked difference in that its GUPS branch did not emerge much later until 1979 despite a large Palestinian student presence in the 1960s and 1970s. During that period, Palestinian students joined the Pan-Arab group the Organization of Arab Students (OAS). Third, I discuss theories of why GUPS did not form in Palestine. These case studies, Egypt, the USA, and Palestine provide insight into Palestinian diasporic activism. While GUPS offered a political and cultural medium in the transnational Palestinian liberation movement, this avenue was not the exclusive means for student-based participation in the movement. Still, the students involved acted on and reproduced a diasporic consciousness that situated them in political connection to each other. This chapter also examines how a shared sense of diasporic connection can exist while confronting varied structural conditions.

Formation of GUPS in Egypt

Before GUPS formed in 1959, the right series of events had to unfold to facilitate its development. Several consistent theories have been put forth of this history through rich oral history interview projects. Palestinians were very active in various parties and political movements in the 1940s and 50s that facilitated a strong political consciousness from which to build transnational Palestinian institutions. Among these ideologies was Arab Nationalism (wataniyyah) based on the notion that Arab nations could exist as racially, culturally and

politically sovereign bodies that had the right to independence.[10] This gave way and emerged alongside Pan-Arabism (*qawmiyyah*) which sought Arab unity into a singular polity (Muslih 1987, 79). These political formations were further developed into a strategy and rallying cry to undermine colonial structures that established Arab state boundaries and installed the various monarchies. Through nationalism and pan-Arabism Arab sovereignty could manifest. The Arab Socialist Ba'ath Party and the Arab Nationalist Movement (ANM) were two main political organizations of the time embedded in these ideologies. For the Ba'ath Party founded in 1947 that gained popularity in Syria and Iraq, socialist ideologies and Pan-Arabism resonated as means to achieve national empowerment and individual advancement (Sayigh 1991, 610). For the Ba'ath party, the three principles of "unity, freedom and socialism are considered fundamental and inseparable objectives" (Kaylani 1972, 6). For the Arab Nationalist Movement (ANM), founded in 1951 by a group of predominantly Palestinian students at the American University of Beirut, Pan-Arabism could only be achievable through Palestine's liberation. The ANM centered their efforts on Palestine, Palestinian nationalism, and bringing about change in Arab governments through socialism (Sayigh 1991, 609; and AbuKhalil 1999). A third, and also very popular organization, was the Muslim Brotherhood founded in 1928 on the platform of political and religious Islam. The Muslim Brotherhood embraced Arab nationalism but rejected secularism. And regarding its views on the legitimacy of government, Islah Jad argues, "it is still not clear whether the Islamists intend to establish a sovereignty based on the will of God rather than the will of the people… as their state project remains to be spelled out" (Jad 2018, 163-64).

[10] Muhammad Muslih provides a critique of these systems stating, "at the heart of this nationalism lay a set of principles derived for the most part from European political thought. Sovereignty and loyalty to a specific society and territory rather than to a dynasty or a religious doctrine were the bases of this ideology which deeply affected not only Palestine, but the entire Middle East" (Muslih 1987, 91-92).

These parties would have various degrees of influence on Palestinian student organizing in the 1940s and 1950s in Cairo leading up to the formation of GUPS in 1959.

In 1940 approximately 60 Palestinian students were studying at Al-Azhar University in Egypt. They decided to form the Palestinian Student Union (PSU) for all of Cairo. Their activities were largely social and cultural events as the Egyptian Monarch King Farouk suppressed political activities (Brand 1988, 213). In 1948 students suspended the PSU and its funds were reallocated to the students in financial need who had lost contact with their families during the Nakba. In 1951 the PSU was reactivated by students in Cairo including Esam An-Nazer as its president, Jamal Massud Al-Khayyat as Secretary Assistant, and Yasser Arafat and Salah Khalaf (his nom de guerre was Abu Iyad) as general members (Abu Samra 2020, 126). Several members perceived party divisions negatively controlled the PSU in the political environment fostered by its leadership. Yasser Arafat organized these students in support of his 1952 candidacy for PSU president and formed a coalition named the Student Union list comprised of six independents and one candidate from each party. His goal to prioritize the Palestinian national cause over party ideology was successful and a new Executive Committee was installed with Arafat as President, Salim Zanun as Vice President along with Hani Bsisu, Abdel-Fattah Hammoud, Salah Khalaf (Abu Iyad), and Zuhair Al-Alami (Abu Samra 2020, 128). Arafat won reelection campaigns until his graduation in 1956. Salah Khalaf (Abu Iyad) was Arafat's vice president for three years and was elected the president after Arafat's tenure.

Earlier, in the 1950s, Egypt's public universities were made affordable (not yet free until 1961)[11], and the state became a refuge for political exiles who found common ground in Nasser's

[11] In 1961 all public universities were made free of charge in Egypt (Saleh 2016, 704). Palestinians had access to free public education "on the same basis as Egyptian nationals" (El-

political ideologies. In 1954, while under RRC governance, Cairo accepted 50 students, the majority of whom were Palestinian, after their expulsion from the American University of Beirut (AUB) in Lebanon for their political activities (Abu Samra 2020, 117). They were fired upon by police as they protested the military alliance between the United Kingdom, Iraq, Iran, Pakistan and Turkey termed the Baghdad Pact and lobbied the Lebanese state not to join amidst ongoing pressure from the United Kingdom. The protest was led by the al-Urwa al-Wuthqa (The Firmest Bond) association at AUB that formed in 1918 as a literary club that published a magazine under the mentorship of Professor Constantine Zurayk who was an intellectual powerhouse of Arab Nationalism. It grew into a strong student organizing base especially after AUB permitted the formation of a Student Council in 1949 (Anderson 2008, 396-7). 15 of those 50 expelled students were members of the Arab Nationalist Movement and formed a party branch in Cairo that year (Sayigh 1991, 609). In 1959 another 80 Palestinian students from Baghdad University were expelled for their political organizing with the Ba'ath party (Abu Samra 2020, 117). The Ba'athist students failed in their rebellion against Iraqi Prime Minister Abd al-Karim Qasim when he reneged on his pledge to join Egypt and Syria in the United Arab Republic (Brand 1988, 71). The influx of politically active students into Cairo in the 1950s enhanced the political arena the students had already developed. But the contentious political relationship shared between the Free Officer's Movement, that Nasser was part of, and the Muslim Brotherhood when overthrowing the monarchy came to an end. Nasser deemed the Muslim Brotherhood a threat to his authority as they aligned with opposing factions in the Revolutionary Command Council that governed Egypt until the adoption of the 1956 Constitution and Nasser blamed them for an

Abed 2009, 97; and Abu Samra 2020, 124). Enrollment was open to all Palestinian students regardless of Egyptian residency and they could apply for scholarships and loans to offset the cost of living.

assassination attempt on his life. He banned the Muslim Brotherhood in 1954 which pushed Islamist organizing underground and weakened their position in the PSU (Fawaz 2018, 8).

Further, Palestinian students in the Palestinian Student Union (PSU) in Cairo placed great effort into establishing political connections. Key among them was fostering credibility with Gamal Abdel Nasser directly. In 1955 the PSU demanded a meeting with Nasser to discuss demands regarding Egypt's governance over Gaza. The Israeli army attacked an Egyptian military base in Gaza in February of that year as part of its ongoing raids into neighboring Arab territories. Palestinian students in Cairo felt the Egyptian government did not do enough to defend Palestine and started demonstrations and a hunger strike to get Nasser's attention. Nasser met with the 200 students of the PSU and agreed to their demands to get rid of the entry visa system in Gaza, to resume rail function into Gaza, and to sanction military training for Palestinians in Egypt under the Egyptian military's oversight (Abu Iyad and Rouleau 1978, 22; and Abu Samra 2020, 136). Another result of this meeting was a direct mode of communication with Nasser as the PSU was invited to send a second delegation to meet with him (Abu Samra 2020, 141). The members of that second delegation were Abdel Hamid al-Tayeh (Ba'athist), Izzat Auda (Communist), Fuad Ahmad (Arab Nationalist), and Salah Khalaf (Abu Iyad) as retold in Abu Iyad's memoir (Abu Iyad and Rouleau 1978, 22).

Furthermore, the PSU worked to position itself among the established student organizations of the time. This included formal admission into the International Union of Students (IUS) in 1958, a premier and UNESCO-accredited global association based in Prague, despite earlier rejections on the basis that Palestine was not a state (Zelkovitz 2015, 18).[12] As a

[12] The PSU was admitted conditional membership to the IUS in 1955 through efforts by Yasser Arafat and the PSU was permitted observer status to join the International Student Conference in Warsaw in 1956 (Zelkovitz 2015, 17).

marker of its success, at the 1958 IUS conference in Beijing, the PSU was elected to the Executive Committee. This gave the Palestinian students a platform to discuss strategies for international student organizing, and how these strategies could be applied in the Palestinian diaspora (Abu Samra 2020, 144). Third World Internationalism as an ideology for global revolution was popular among the students. In 1955, 29 African and Asian countries held what came to be known as the Bandung Conference to discuss anti-colonial cooperation. Their efforts led to the establishment of the Non-Aligned Movement in 1961 where Egypt's anti-colonial leadership and influence shined (Abdulhadi 2008). Through the IUS PSU leaders met with revolutionary leaders Che Guevara and Mao Zedong (Abu Samra 2020, 144). Salah Khalaf (Abu Iyad) recollected the students in PSU were reading the works of Vladimir Lenin, Marx and Hegel, the speeches of Mao Zedong, the theory of Frantz Fanon as well as a range of Arab political philosophy including Michel Aflaq's work that laid a foundation for Ba'athism, and Sayyid Qutb's work on Islamic political movements (Abu Iyad and Rouleau 1978, 34; and Zelkovitz 2015, 14). This is to say that internationalism was on the mind of the Palestinian student organizers. To the large base of Ba'athists in the PSU, transnational organizing and pan-Arabism complemented Third World Internationalism.

In 1959 the Palestinian Student Union (PSU) decided to create a transnational Palestinian organization they called the General Union of Palestine Students (GUPS). Per Egyptian state regulations, all organizations, including the PSU, had to be registered with the Ministry of Social Affairs. And Egyptian law prohibited these organizations from operating transnationally. The PSU appealed to Gamal Abdel Nasser. Nasser agreed to exempt the students from the restriction, and jurisdiction over the new organization was transferred out of the Ministry of Social Affairs and onto Nasser (Brand 1988, 71-72). The initiative to form the General Union of Palestine

Students is credited with the pro-Nasser Ba'ath party members of the PSU who comprised the majority of its membership. They were the ones to present Nasser with the proposal for GUPS and seek his permission. Nasser's full support of the formation of GUPS was paired with his offer to headquarter the organization in Cairo (Brand 1988, 71).

On November 29, 1959, the PSU called for a conference held at Cairo University to ratify the establishment of GUPS. Among those invited were Palestinian student groups from across the United Arab Republic and Lebanon, these included groups in Egypt based in Cairo, Asyut, and Alexandria and those in Syria based in Damascus, as well as groups from Beirut, Lebanon (Brand 1988, 71). The conference invitation read, in part, that the newly proposed General Union of Palestine Students would comprise "the beginning of unity in the entire Palestinian student sector, for the sake of the restoration of the looted homeland, by strengthening the ties between Palestinian students and other student organizations, both Arab and foreign. In this manner all efforts of the Arab student movements for sake of Palestine, and our joint path and struggle, will be coordinated" (Shahdi 1971, 181; and Zelkovitz 2015, 19). While Yasser Arafat left the PSU in 1956 after graduation, the political relationships he helped foster and the leadership of his tenure and that of various executive committee members are credited as putting the PSU on track to form GUPS. Such leaders include Abd al-Fatah Hamud, Abdelhamid At-Tayeh, Faruk Qaddumi, Fouad Ahmad, Hosni Z'arab (Abu-Hussam), Hussam Abu-Sha'ban, Iyad al-Hamuri, Izat Awda, Mohammad Abu Maizar, Nadim al-Nahawi, Salah Khalaf (Abu Iyad), Salim al-Za'nun, Zuhayr al-'Alami (Abu Samra 2020, 141-2; and Zelkovitz 2015, 16-18). Still, it was the Ba'athist party members of PSU that took steps in 1959 to form GUPS. This is interesting given that Yasser Arafat was not a Ba'athist. Early in his college career he was recognized as a supporter of the Muslim Brotherhood though not a formal member, then he ran as an independent in PSU

elections to center Palestinian nationalism as opposed to party divisions, and in 1959 he co-founded the Fatah movement which evolved into a party six years later. His evolving political consciousness is quite typical for many youth organizers whose political ideologies and actions are deeply impacted by context, mentorship, and collective creativity. Further, GUPS emerged out of ideals of Pan-Arabism and Third World Internationalism reflecting prevailing political thought and organizing principles of Palestinian students in Egypt, Syria and Lebanon. Adding to their global outlook, delegations from the General Union of Tunisian Students, the National Union of Moroccan Students, and the Muslim Algerian Students Union attended the first GUPS conference to help advise the formulation of its structure as a political movement (Brand 1988, 72).

In the years after its establishment, Palestinians created and joined new GUPS chapters and branches across the world. In 1970, just 11 years after its founding, GUPS had 81 city-based chapters across 23 countries (General Union of Palestine Students 1970; and Abu Samara 2020, 265). By 1985, Nasser Al-Kidwa said GUPS branches operated in 55 countries with anywhere between 50-60,000 members (Nasser Al-Kidwa interview with author and Dr. Abdulhadi). And Fariz Mehdawy recollects that number was much higher and closer to 85 GUPS branches by 1988 (Fariz Mehdawy interview with author and Dr. Abdulhadi). Further, Laurie Brand's accounting of the international leadership of GUPS outlines the historical shifts in its political leadership. She finds that from 1959 to 1963 the Ba'ath party held majority leadership, 1963-1965 the Arab Nationalist Movement led, 1966 independents briefly led the GUPS but were supported by Fatah, and from 1967 onwards Fatah was largely in leadership and sometimes led in coalitions with the PFLP or the DFLP (Brand 1988, 72). While the growth of GUPS, as discussed in the next chapter, spread alongside the flow of Palestinian students across the world,

the USA did not follow that model. I address historical narratives about why that was the case, and why a GUPS USA branch did not form until 1978-80.

Delayed Formation of GUPS in the USA

The emergence of GUPS in the USA is attributed to the Palestinian shift out of the pan-Arab organizing of the Organization of Arab Students (OAS). This case study analyzes the impact international Arab politics had on Palestinian students and how they changed diasporic networks as a result. The OAS formed as a pan-Arab student organization in the USA and Canada in the early 1950s. The organization was inspired by the Egyptian revolution and Gamal Abdel Nasser's pan-Arabism promoting nationalism and socialism, and from its start the OAS was political and anti-sectarian. The organization was mainly composed of Arab international students though Arab Americans did participate as members (Pennock 2017). As a result, the students brought their political commitments and ideologies with them to the USA which they applied in their organizing with the OAS. Abdelhamid Siyam, an OAS member from the New York University chapter in 1976 and one of the co-founders of GUPS after the OAS split, recalled that the OAS had a lot of Palestinian, Lebanese, Egyptian, Iraqi, Syrian, and Gulf state Arabs. The OAS consistently centered Palestine in its organizing and principles.[13] OAS membership operated on two levels, one being an individual's support for an Arab political party or faction, and the other an association with the OAS itself. OAS members balanced both alliances in their organizing.

George Bitar, a Lebanese student organizer and leader in the OAS, traced the emergence of GUPS to the political split of the OAS among its various Arab political groups. George Bitar immigrated to the USA from Lebanon in 1972 to attend Villanova University in Pennsylvania.

[13] It also debated current political developments such as the revolution in Dhofar where a 12-year-long war failed in 1976 to establish a separatist socialist state free from the Sultan of Oman's rule.

He joined the OAS and soon moved through the ranks to assume a leadership role sitting on its National Executive Committee and was elected the Vice President. He was also a supporter of the PFLP. Bitar traced a rise in Palestinian organizing in the OAS after the Israeli invasion and occupation of the remainder of Palestine in 1967 and the defeat of the Arab armies. Various Palestinian parties and organizers debated on how to mount a proper response. He notes that some of the popular positions among Palestinians included Fatah's Palestinian nationalism and the pan-Arabist socialism of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP). Interestingly, both parties emerged around this same period, Fatah transformed from a political movement into an official party in 1965 on the platform that Palestinians would be liberated by their own actions through Palestinian secular nationalism. The Fatah party rose quickly into a leading position and in 1969 Yasser Arafat, the Fatah Chairman, was elected the PLO Chairman. As a result of the defeat of Arab armies in the 1967 war, Gamal Abdel Nasser's prestige and the general trust in traditional leaders and armies waned. And in 1967 the PFLP formed out of a restructured union of pan-Arabist and socialist Palestinian groups including the Arab Nationalist Movement and the Palestine Liberation Front. Soon after the PFLP's formation, several splinter groups formed including the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP) in 1969 rooted in, what it believed to be, a more authentic and accurate Marxist-Leninist ideology. Another popular political perspective in the OAS was Islamism which was predominantly held by the Muslim Brotherhood of the Gulf states of Kuwait, Bahrain and Saudi Arabia. As the OAS entered the 1970s it held a multitude of political positions that were in tension with each other. At the same time, the OAS appealed to Arab students and reached nearly 8,000 members. During this period, pan-Arab organizing in the OAS took the form of pooling their organizing efforts to advance the struggle of Arabs against imperialism and oppression. Importantly, pan-Arab

organizing in the OAS did not necessarily mean that they were working towards the development of a singular Arab state in the region as in more traditionalist pan-Arabist ideologies.

Despite their differences in the early 1970s, OAS was able to maintain its cohesion through heated debate. Abdelhamid Siyam noted that the largest groups in OAS were the Ba'ath party supported by Iraq, the PFLP, and Leftist groups from South Yemen. Yet George Bitar observed that from 1969 to 1974 the leadership of OAS was led by the various Palestinian parties. Members from different Arab countries voiced their opposition to this structure. The various Palestinian parties were perceived to have little to no presence on campus, and, in turn, OAS leadership was deemed unrepresentative of the membership. In 1972, the OAS hosted two separate conferences, one in Long Beach, California organized by Palestinian leadership, and another in Indiana led by Islamists. At the 1974 OAS joint conference in East Lansing, Michigan, students from Libya and Saudi Arabia demanded a change in leadership that was more representative and inclusive of the membership of the campuses. Supporters of the PFLP and Fatah agreed to their demands as did the Ba'athists but hesitantly. Inclusion came at the expense of supporters of the DFLP losing its seat on the executive board of the OAS. At the 1974 joint conference Bitar, as a PFLP supporter, was elected the Vice President of OAS and became responsible for the internal relations of OAS membership and recruitment at the campuses.

Tensions arose again at the 1975 conference in Berkeley, California. That year Iraq signed the 1975 Algiers Agreement with Iran during the Shah's regime to settle a border dispute over the Shatt al-Arab, an important waterway for the export of oil by both countries. In the agreement Iraq conceded half the territorial rights of the waterway to Iran, in return, Iran stopped its aid to the Kurdish rebels in Iraq fighting for autonomy, although they were also aided by the CIA and Israel. The students from the Gulf states, especially Saudi Arabia, vehemently disagreed

with the Algiers Agreement and wanted OAS to protest it. The Saudi students believed this agreement infringed on Saudi sovereignty and its control over waterways in the Gulf. OAS leadership responded by suggesting a new policy position. Any agreement between any forces, Arab and otherwise, that surrenders any of the rights of the Arab Gulf on their lands will be rejected by the OAS. The Ba'athists in OAS and their large bloc categorically refused to approve the position, as Iraq was ruled by the Ba'athist party and the students did not want to go against their home government. The Ba'athists tried to convince the supporters of the PFLP to join their rejectionist group, but they did not. As part of their protest, the Ba'athists refused to join OAS leadership.

Fighting in OAS pushed the students to consider nationalist-based organizing as opposed to pan-Arab efforts. Bitar notes the Palestinian students seriously considered this trajectory as discussions of forming GUPS were already on the table, but it was quite idealistic for other groups. Bitar notes the climate was one where you could not question the Arab regimes or oppose them (but they still did), this extended to OAS and the risk of retaliation by the regimes onto the students or their families back home. Bitar observed that OAS provided a cover for Saudi students to organize politically in the USA despite the opposition from the Saudi state for its citizens abroad to do so and its ban on all political parties in Saudi Arabia to protect its absolute monarchy. Gulf students were stuck as OAS provided a cover for political activity and any anti-government/anti-monarchy Saudi-based organization was out of the question. Saudi Arabia would only tolerate its students abroad to join social or cultural clubs and religious community organizing was permitted and channeled through the Muslim Students Association that formed in 1963 out of the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. In fact, Bitar stated that many of the Arab states and regimes attacked the OAS because they did not like that students

from their countries were "training for political war" within the OAS by exercising their political ideologies (George Bitar interview with author and Dr. Abdulhadi). Despite this, the OAS received support from these same states publicly to facilitate an image of stewarding Arab empowerment. For example, Bitar cites that Muammar Gaddafi supported the OAS while prohibiting Libyan nationalists from participating in it, though many still joined and were very active. Libyan students even mustered some political opposition to Qaddafi but could not organize a union for themselves, so they stayed in OAS. And Lebanese students spent two years trying to find and develop by-laws to create an independent nationalist organization but failed according to Bitar.

While disagreements among the various Arab nationalities unfolded in the OAS, factionalism within the Palestinian liberation movement also played out its course. Adli Hawwari, a former OAS member and a co-founder of GUPS's USA branch, George Bitar and Abdelhamid Siyam all recount the 1978 conference of OAS as the defining turning point for Palestinians to leave the OAS. At the 1978 OAS conference at the campus of Eastern Michigan University in Ypsilanti, Michigan, Hawwari commented, "The story of an independent Palestinian state, a peaceful solution and related issues such as recognition of UN Security Council 242, were the subject of heated debate in those days. The conflict between the different political trends was at its most intense" (Hawwari 2015, 10). In 1974, the Fatah-led PLO adopted the ten-point program on its principles of liberation which was supported by the DFLP. This program included for the first time by the PLO a commitment to establish national authority over every part of liberated Palestinian territory *until* the complete liberation of all of Palestine. This signaled to many Palestinians that Fatah was willing to accept the partial liberation of Palestine thus reneging on the principle of total liberation and the "Three Nos" of the 1967 Khartoum Arab

League Summit: no recognition, no negotiations, no peace with Israel (League of Arab States 1967). As a result, several parties led by the PFLP formed the Rejectionist Front and boycotted PLO meetings to weaken Yasser Arafat's influence. Many resigned from the PLO Executive Committee and the PLO legislative body the Palestinian National Council (PNC) that year in response. They did not rejoin the PLO and the PNC until 1978 after Egyptian President Anwar Sadat signed the Camp David Accords securing US military aid to Israel and Egypt following his visit to Jerusalem in 1977 that broke the longstanding policy of rejecting normalization with Israel. The 1978 OAS conference in Michigan became a site to debate these heated political developments.

Fatah's politicking in the PLO ingrained in the minds of the other Palestinian parties, especially the Leftists, that Fatah was politically right-wing. This impacted the OAS greatly. In 1978 supporters of Fatah in the OAS invited Fatah politician Hani al-Hassan to speak at the national conference in Michigan. As Hawwari stated, "Hani al-Hassan was considered in those days of being right-wing, indeed every Fatah movement was considered right-wing. And the supporters of the Ba'ath Party (Iraq) and the PFLP considered inviting him to the conference as a provocation for them" (Hawwari 2015, 10). Hawwari goes on to describe what unfolded.

> One of the activities scheduled for the conference was a concert by the band of the Palestinian Martyrs' Children coming from Lebanon. After several people entered the hall and no more entered, the concert did not start on time. After a while Bishara [last name not given] entered the concert hall and announced its cancellation. He was beaten by the angry people in the hall, and the director of the Palestinian Information Office in Washington at the time, Hatem al-Husseini, rushed to defend him. And I remember his expression was red-faced and agitated while he was trying to protect him: 'No one touch him.' The feelings of those who remained in the conference hall and the members of the band were charged… During the days of the Ypsilanti conference, I could not imagine that a person could be so unwise as to cancel the concert of the sons and daughters of the martyrs. The martyrs are sacred, and their sons and daughters must be treated with respect and loyalty. This band comes from Lebanon and its journey is long and cannot be arranged easily. Those responsible for making the decision to cancel the ceremony justified that

> Hani al-Hassan, one of the officials in Fatah, tried to enter the hall. Before the cancellation of the ceremony, he was scheduled to deliver a speech in one of the sessions of the conference, but it was canceled (Hawwali 2015, 9-10).

Eventually al-Hassan gave his speech in a small grassy area near one of the campus buildings attended by Fatah supporters. Hawwari believes al-Hassan's original session was canceled because of the contentious attitudes towards Fatah.

Abdelhamid Siyam remembers this conference slightly differently. He recalls that PFLP supporters sent a letter to Fatah supporters condemning their choice of inviting al-Hassan, who was considered one of the symbols of the right-wing of Fatah, as a provocation during the brand-new reunification of the PLO. In turn, he says that "the reaction from Fatah was to accuse PFLP and their supporters of being demagogues, and instead of listening to Hani al-Hassan and arguing back with him, they chose to withdraw and make big chaos, a state of chaos in the hall, and it went very sour at that meeting" (Abdelhamid Siyam group interview with author and Dr. Abdulhadi). He recounts, "In fact, Fatah also brought a folkloric group from Lebanon, the very distinguished group that is called the children of Is'ad al-Tofula (Childhood Happiness) School, which is made of all orphans of the martyrs. And also there was a very tense moment when they started performing PFLP and the Ba'ath party withdrew and left the hall, leaving only the supporters of Fatah and Democratic Front (DFLP), and a few independent students from different countries" (Abdelhamid Siyam group interview with author and Dr. Abdulhadi). This was the last straw. Supporters of Fatah along with supporters of the DFLP withdrew from the OAS and worked on establishing GUPS. The other main Palestinian party, supporters of PFLP soon followed, "the PFLP remained with the Ba'ath party [in OAS], and we knew that this alliance will not survive. Iraq went into war with Iran, the Ba'ath students were called back to the country [Iraq], and the PFLP re-joined in establishing GUPS" (Abdelhamid Siyam group

interview with author and Dr. Abdulhadi). Palestinian students spent the next year preparing for the inauguration of GUPS at the 1980 conference. Khaldoun Ramadan, a member of the GUPS executive committee and a GUPS Vice President, recalls that the 1979 preparatory committee to form GUPS, in which he participated, was comprised of seven members representing supporters of the three parties, Fatah, PFPL and DFLP, and their first meeting was in Detroit. The first decision was to open membership registration with city-based chapters and start recruiting and registering students.

Given GUPS's official role in the PLO, GUPS USA joined the Popular Organization of the PLO and inherited the politics that surround it. Mohammad Alatar, a Palestinian documentarian and a GUPS USA branch member, said that GUPS was "a collection of representatives of the Palestinian factions" (Mohammad Alatar interview with author). The catch was that the PLO and the various parties within it were not allowed to operate in the USA, for that reason those organizing in the USA did so as supporters of the parties but never as official members. Before Adli Hawwari resigned from the OAS and organized under the GUPS name he waited for confirmation from the Palestine Information Office (PIO) in Washington, D.C. that the establishment of a GUPS branch in the USA would be authorized.[14] The understanding that the PLO was instrumental in pushing for the establishment of GUPS in the USA is also held by Dr. Rabab Abdulhadi. During the interview with Bitar and Siyam she stated, "My understanding is that in 1978, Yasser Arafat, Abu Ammar [his nom de guerre], Allah Yerhamo [God have mercy on him], decreed that in the United States there have to be branches for GUPS and the General Union of Palestinian Women. And that was after the Tripoli unified PNC in 1978"

[14] The PIO was established in 1978 by supporters of the PLO to open an office in D.C. that spread the PLO viewpoint in the USA. The PIO could not officially represent the PLO because the USA had banned the organization.

(Rabab Abdulhadi group interview with author). She also said that there was no consensus that this was the case when she asked other founders of GUPS USA. Some said it was entirely a grassroots effort, but she strongly disagrees. Still, there is evidence that its formation was a grassroots effort, at least in part. The DFLP, in their letter to the first GUPS conference in the USA, said that "We are very proud that we had the honor of launching the first spark in the project to build this branch in 1974" (Hawwari 2015, 15). This timeline makes sense given Bitar's comments that the 1974 OAS conference witnessed a backlash to Palestinian over-representation in leadership that led to the diminishing of the DFLP in the OAS executive committee and talks of moving the various Arab groups into independent nationalistic associations. Further, in an interview with Loubna Qutami George Bitar stated, "The PLO leadership agreed that Palestine work in the U.S. should go through the OAS, even though Fatah supporters were a minority in the OAS; in spite of that, Fatah supporters had a tendency to go organize on a Palestinian level- promoting the idea to create a GUPS long before its realization because that's where they thought they could flourish and play a leadership role that they lacked in the OAS" (Qutami 2021, 30). Still, both narratives that the GUPS USA branch formed as an organic response to developing conditions or that it formed as a directive from the PLO have credence, and it is most likely both.

The GUPS USA branch was officially inaugurated June 27-29, 1980 at its first national conference in DeKalb, Illinois. Khaldoun Ramadan recalls that by the first conference there were approximately 3-4,000 registered GUPS members in the USA spread across 30-40 cities. The conference was delayed on account of negotiations among the preparatory committee on who would lead. In preparation for the conference, all the initial chapters conducted elections to determine GUPS USA leadership. Hawwari recalls Fatah supporters did not gain an absolute

majority, so debates ensued on forming a coalition, or, as Rabab Abdulhadi put it, a compromise of proportional representation. In the end, Hawwari remembers that the PFLP and DFPL joined a coalition to form a majority bloc and held executive control of GUPS. Ramadan recalls this differently and said Fatah held the majority of seats while he was the only DFLP supporter to sit on the executive board as its Vice President. Still, for the duration of GUPS, supporters of Fatah were consistently in executive positions and constituted much of the membership. But they all agree that by the end of the conference, the executive board, called the National Unity List, was composed and business proceeded.[15] Palestinian parties sent congratulatory letters to the GUPS conference on establishing this effort and the business of the conference proceeded. Speeches were given, telegrams were read aloud to the association, membership discussed financial and political reports, as well as the reports produced by committees on the constitution, political principles, and trade unions.

Reasons GUPS did not form in Palestine

The establishment of Palestinian universities in the occupied Palestinian territories (oPt) of the West Bank and Gaza began in the mid 1970s. At the time, the PLO wanted to convert some of the colleges into universities to provide a university education for Palestinians. This policy was deemed necessary to strengthen the nation and to provide an opportunity for those who were unable to travel or enroll in universities abroad. Birzeit College turned into a university followed by Bethlehem University and An-Najah University, then the Islamic University of Gaza was established as well as Hebron University (Heneiti 2021, 24). As I began my research on GUPS, I was advised by Rabab Abdulhadi to question why GUPS did not form in Palestinian universities. Adding to the peculiarity of this omission was that other Popular

[15] While I have the list of their names, I have decided to omit this information as I have come to learn that some of these names were aliases used. Clearly, they did not want this information public.

Organizations of the PLO did establish branches in Palestine including the General Union of Palestinian Women. I hypothesized that Israeli repression on university campuses contributed to this fact. I made sure to ask those I interviewed their analysis of why GUPS did not form a Palestine branch. What I found were a multitude of reasons, none of which validated my hypothesis that I scraped. Instead, I consistently heard that students in Palestine did not need what GUPS as an institution had to offer. What I came to learn is that GUPS worked as a diasporic organization whose entanglement with the PLO brought with it conditions that many questioned. Working with GUPS meant working under a specific democratic framework controlled by the PLO that connected them globally. Students in Palestine had other means of connection locally, nationally and internationally that provided more flexibility and autonomy than relations with the PLO could. In this section I discuss the theories of why GUPS did not form in the West Bank.

First, student organizers in Palestine were considered self-sufficient by several standards. First, students joined the Palestinian parties at various ages. The parties all had youth blocs, or at the very least a youth groups, to support its growth. Many joined parties in high school as youth members and carried their membership into university. Professor Rula Abu Dohou, who entered university in 1985, recounts that the parties considered the universities innovative spaces and party leadership gave students the freedom to try out new strategies they came up with. The youth blocs were also charged with recruitment and teaching the ideology of the party in their social spaces. Dr. Walid Salem, a student at Birzeit University from 1975-84, gives the example that he spent a year giving lectures in the cafeteria on Marxism, the history of the Palestinian parties, PLO history, and the distinctions of democratic and national struggles as outlined by the

PFLP.[16] Wisam Rafeedie provides another example, as he was in charge of PFLP membership at Birzeit University while he was in university from 1979 to 1988. In 1984 Rafeedie co-created the student newspaper of the PFLP *Altaqaddom*. He was the head editor for three years, and they published monthly issues. The independence and leadership students exercised through their parties on campus were robust. The three recounted the series of demonstrations and organizing that took place, and direct confrontations with the occupying Israeli army. One example of student organizing occurred in 1978 when Birzeit University dismissed Dr. Suliman Bashear from the faculty. Dr. Bashear began as a scholar on socialism in Palestine and expanded into a historian of Islam. His work was criticized by Islamists for deviating from the traditional paradigms when historicizing Islam. He was also deemed a "troublemaker" by the administration for encouraging student demonstrations against the university. He was dismissed on the latter charges since the university had a policy of academic freedom. The students organized a hunger strike to protest Dr. Bashear's dismissal. Further, on anniversaries of Palestinian national holidays, like the *Nakba*, students marched through Birzeit city. If the students saw the Israeli army approach during the demonstrations they threw rocks at them, and many times the Israeli army arrested several protesting students. Many students were arrested during their time at university. Dr. Rula Abu Duhou was arrested in 1988, her third year at university, and spent nine years in prison. Dr. Salem Walid was arrested five times and spent over three years in prison accumulative during this period. And Wisam Rafeedie was arrested in 1991 and sentenced to one and a half years in prison for his role as editor of *Altaqaddom*, he was again arrested in 1994 and held in administrative detention for over three years.

[16] Salem was incarcerated by Israel several times as political prisoner during his time in university. The first time was in 1975 as a high school student when he was sentenced to 10 months in prison for political organizing with the Ba'ath party. In prison he joined the PFLP and completed his *Tawjihi*, the General Secondary Certificate Examination, a requirement to graduate high school.

A second theory of why GUPS did not form in Palestine is the existence of student councils. Student councils are composed of elected representatives that form a leadership body to advance the interests of students. The student blocs of the Palestinian parties ran candidates for seats in the councils that were assigned through proportional representation electoral systems. One role of the student council was the strengthening of Palestinian national identity and Palestinian steadfastness against colonialism among the students and Palestinian society at large. In the 1970s, student councils in Birzeit, An Najah, and Bethlehem universities organized the annual Palestinian Heritage Week where they put Palestinian national identity on display through traditional folklore dress and dance, the flag, the Palestinian marketplace/bazaar, and even held wedding ceremonies (Heneiti 2021, 29-30). The student councils also organized land-based activities to resist colonization, this included olive harvests especially in areas close to Israeli settlements, rebuilding Palestinian homes after Israeli demolitions, and organized visits to the ’48 Area (Heneiti 2021, 31). The student councils organized the collective labor of the various parties to commemorate important historical events and organized major community-centered projects. This is the same structure GUPS provided in the diaspora. While diasporic Palestinians had to contend with being a minority on other campuses, this was not the case in Palestine where they could manage campus-wide structures entirely through the student councils.

A third reason GUPS did not form in Palestine universities was a hesitation to work within the PLO structure. The PLO has its own democratic structure where the various Palestinian parties competed for leadership. Dr. Muddar Kassis shared that this structure fostered the sense that one always had to compete to have a voice in the institution and that PLO leadership of Fatah had an overwhelming voice that political actors had to deal with. Why should students in Palestine choose to join the structure of the PLO that came with these constrictions?

Students had more freedom to organize at will through the student blocs of the parties without having to answer to a centralized authority. Further, the PLO's logic was to get Palestinians under its umbrella to cement its role as the sole and legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. There are multiple issues with this attempt to aggregate everyone. First, the PLO was composed of secular nationalist groups which Islamists did not join including the Muslim Brotherhood and its offshoots The Islamic Jihad Movement in Palestine as well as Hamas. Second, Fatah was the majority party in the PLO and Yasser Arafat sat as PLO chairman from 1969 until his death in 2004. While other parties competed for leadership, Arafat held major sway, and when several parties of the Rejectionist Front left the PLO from 1974 to 1977/78 the PLO still continued to exercise its international leadership role. In fact, in 1974 the PLO was recognized as the representative of the Palestinian people by the United Nations and admitted into the UN with observer status, and in October of that year the Arab League recognized the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. For Palestinians, this all meant that engaging with the PLO meant dealing with the Fatah party and Arafat's immense influence. As Kassis went on to tell me, the student organizing at Birzeit university in the 1970s was largely that of the PFLP and DFLP. For them, the idea of creating a GUPS branch came with the "burden" of having to work with the PLO and Fatah. Further, the structure of the PLO and thus GUPS made recruitment and campaigning for elections a necessity that became another burden to hold leadership in the institution. Independence was seen as the better option as it directed the party's efforts into its political projects rather than election campaigns (Mudar Kassis interview with author; and Salem Walid interview with author). Still, the student organizers and other social institutions in Palestine supported the legitimacy of the PLO as a

representative body despite not joining them through their Popular Organizations (Heneiti 2021, 27).

Fourth, there were tensions between the PLO and other leadership institutions in the occupied Palestinian territories. I asked Dr. Nasser Alkidwa, president of GUPS international as well as a leader in the PLO and later in the PA, why he thinks GUPS did not form in Palestine. He recalled that when the PLO was outside of Palestine it belittled the role of those inside, and when they got inside they started to belittle the role of those outside (Nasser Alkidwa interview with author and Dr. Abdulhadi). Since the PLO operated outside of Palestine, it meant that *diasporic* Palestinian actors were the representative body of Palestinians, including those in the homeland. Some perceived that unified institutional leadership in Palestine posed a threat to PLO authority headquartered abroad (Heneiti 2021, 30). One threat came in the form of the Palestinian Village Leagues which was an effort by the Israeli government in the 1970s and 80s to give their backing to native and traditional Palestinian leadership that could control Palestinians and create a peace settlement with Israel. This effort of colonialism through native leadership ultimately failed with the rise of the massive resistance movement of the Intifada in 1987. Further, the PLO also felt threatened by the Unified National Command of the Uprising (UNCU) that formed in the oPt during the start of the Intifada in 1987 (Heneiti 2021, 28). The UNCU was composed of the political leadership that lived in Palestine and included representatives from Fatah, PFLP, DFLP, and the Palestine Communist Party. At the time, the PLO was headquartered in Tunisia after it was kicked out of Jordan and Lebanon pushing it further away from Palestine. This separation meant that the PLO could only tangentially support the organizing work of the UNCU. This was compounded by the fact that the Intifada emerged spontaneously and not by PLO design; so, when it broke out those living in Palestine assumed

the natural leadership. At the start of the Intifada the universities in Palestine were shut down by the Israeli military and remained shut for four years. Dr. Lisa Taraki at Birzeit University observed that shutting down the universities dispersed the students and their organizing efforts. Student organizing became more localized and students organized in the regions they lived in. Their political labor was put into everyday community-wide organizing rather than channeled through a centralized campus basis (Lisa Taraki interview with author). As a result, GUPS did not form in the late 80s/early 90s given campus organizing took a backseat to the uprising at hand that unified collective action into the ongoing popular resistance.

Before I end this section, I must state that I found one exception to the historical note that GUPS did not exist in Palestine. In my interview with Wisam Rafeedie he stated that a GUPS chapter briefly existed in Palestine from 1967 to 1970. He said that the GUPS Palestine branch started in 1967 during the Israeli invasion but was driven out of Palestine in 1970 by the Israeli occupation of the West Bank. I could not find records that support this note, and the GUPS members I interviewed and the published literature on GUPS I consulted stated otherwise. But I give Rafeedie the benefit of the doubt and have come up with reasons that may be the case. First, 1967 was a time of war and occupation. One can understand why students would turn to a Palestinian national organization at a time when Palestine was under attack. Second, given that until 1967 the West Bank was formally part of Jordan, it is plausible that students registered as part of the Jordanian branch instead of creating a new Palestine branch either for not having the minimum membership outlined in the constitution or the logistical ease during a time of war. Complicating this further, there were a few colleges in the West Bank and the first university was not accredited until 1972 several years after the start of the occupation. So, it is also possible that GUPS members attended these colleges in 1967 but did not form a distinct chapter or they

joined the Jordanian GUPS branch in Amman. The loose thread is why is this not accounted for in the historical accounts. GUPS international executive board members state that no chapter formed in Palestine, as do all the published research on GUPS. It is an interesting historical note for further research.

In Summary

Political conditions impact the possibilities for connection and organizing. The conditions of 1950s Egypt created an environment where an international diasporic organization could be imagined through the leadership of the Palestinian Student Union in Cairo, Egypt. Pan-Arabism, nationalism, and Third World Internationalism coalesced to inspire the formation of the General Union of Palestine Students that took action under these principles. The institution they established was adopted by Palestinians across the diaspora who traveled abroad for a university education. GUPS provided a platform to stay connected to the global Palestinian liberation movement and provided social services and support to students traveling abroad for an education. Where Palestinian students went, GUPS followed. In the 1960s and 70s the USA was a major exception of this pattern. Palestinian students in the USA joined the pan-Arab group the Organization of Arab Students. The goal of unifying their labor into the shared aim of Arab liberation was constantly in tension given competing notions of how to achieve liberation and what that liberation entailed. As the Palestinian actors in OAS found themselves in disagreements among themselves and with the trajectory of the OAS, they turned to the Palestinian nationalist model set by GUPS. Students in Palestine had their own political organizing structures that gave them the freedom they needed to confront Israeli colonization and occupation. In their situation, working with the various Palestinian parties connected them to the liberation movement; and student councils were sites for collective and democratic

representation. These three case studies highlight that Palestinian students across the diaspora and in the homeland can share a collective project, that is the liberation movement, but take different action based on context-specific structures. The plurality at hand emphasizes that being diasporic is not a monolithic condition. Instead, it is a connection and an exchange of ideas and commitments that are analyzed and acted up in different ways.

Chapter Four – Political Economy of Scholarships and GUPS

This chapter analyzes international movement among Palestinian students in the General Union of Palestine Students (GUPS) in the 1960s-80s. To hold membership in GUPS you had to be Palestinian and be enrolled at a college or university. The latter requirement was itself a difficult task to accomplish. The issue of access to higher education is key to understanding how GUPS could emerge as a global institution. Educational opportunity has been a driving force in the diasporic trends of Palestinians. International student migration is a tool of mobility and a tool for connection. In the case of Palestine, where Israeli settler-colonization and military occupation govern the realities on the ground, Palestinians in the diaspora and in Palestine utilized the internationalization of higher education as a response to the duality of Israeli state policy of Palestinian confinement and removal. The emergence of Palestinian educational migration in the 1960s and 70s was paired with the establishment and growth of GUPS branches. The fact that GUPS did not emerge in the USA during this period is a reflection of the organizing and predominant political strategies present among Arabs in the USA at the time. Further, the history of the USA, its migration policies, and its economic orientations created a different set of possibilities for Palestinian admissions at universities. The following sections will explore how systems of scholarships, relations with the Palestine Liberation Organization, military engagement, and the material conditions of Palestinian student migration impacted Palestinian diasporas and the presence of GUPS globally. I will also discuss how political economies of higher education carved the possibilities for Palestinian admissions at universities and the formation of GUPS globally. Understanding these phenomena is an entry point to understanding how GUPS as an institution worked to bridge the Palestinian diaspora.

GUPS officially joined the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) at its foundation and was designated its sole student Popular Organization. As a result, the PLO delegated GUPS the authority to disperse scholarships the PLO received from various states. In turn, thousands of students benefited from the scholarships GUPS managed. GUPS became a mechanism for Palestinians to access higher education. Local GUPS branches also played a role in helping students in relocating to new cities and cultivated Palestinian communities across the globe. GUPS connected Palestinian students across a vast political network to organize for a free Palestine. These systems were very effective in socialist states that provided aid to the PLO. In other states that either rejected the PLO or refused to offer scholarship aid, students relied on their own economic capacities to access higher education. In either scenario, GUPS remained a pillar of the student movement by supporting international Palestinian students and providing a platform to join the liberation movement.

The rise and establishment of contemporary universities in Arab states are deeply intertwined with colonial histories and post-independence state-building projects. During the 1940s 10 universities existed across the Arab states. Four were in Egypt[17], two in Lebanon[18], and a university each in Algeria[19], Morocco[20], Syria[21], and Tunisia[22]. According to historian André Elias Mazawi these institutions were either long established Islamic institutions, or private and foreign institutions modeled along European and American systems. As states achieved independence, expanding institutions of higher education became part of the policies for nation-

[17] Cairo University (renamed in 1953), The American University in Cairo, Alexandria University, and Al-Azhar University
[18] American University of Beirut, and the Université Saint Joseph
[19] University of Algiers
[20] University of Al-Qarawiyyin
[21] Damascus University (renamed 1958)
[22] Ez-Zitouna University

building. By 1975 there were 47 universities accredited across the Arab states, rising to 72 universities just 11 years later in 1986, and climbing to 132 universities in 1995 not including the nearly 500 colleges and technical institutes. In 1965, just 6 years after the start of GUPS, Mazawi used UNESCO and UN-gathered statistics to suggest that nearly 3 percent of 18-23 year-olds living in Arab states enrolled in higher education. By the 1990s, when GUPS collapsed, that figure would stand at 20 percent. These figures are not equal across the various states where war, regional imperialism, and the continued legacy of colonialism have led to disparate outcomes. But when Mazawi disaggregated the data, we find specificity to the Palestinian case. In Qatar, Bahrain, Palestine, Jordan, Lebanon, Egypt, Kuwait and Libya 25-50 percent of 18-23-year-olds attend or graduated from an institution of higher education by the 1990s (Mazawi 2005, 137-138). The connection to Palestine here is two-fold, first, several of these states surround Palestine and house several refugee camps. Second, the various Gulf states boast large numbers of Palestinian migrant communities thus highlighting the opportunities available. Further, this large shift towards high education over that thirty-year period is indicative of the state's role in developing these educational structures alongside its transforming economies. In many instances, Arab governments were the nation's major employer, meaning graduates often joined a bloated state bureaucracy. This policy emerged as a social program to provide jobs to the population in economies situated precariously within global capitalism and the legacies of colonialism which structured them for exploitation.

Israeli colonization led to mass impoverishment among Palestinians compounded by the work restrictions placed on Palestinian refugees in surrounding states (Fischbach 2003). Arab states' rationale was that by accepting work in the host country, Palestinians would become acclimated to their new setting and renege on the fight against Zionism. This held another

advantage of protecting the precarious labor markets in favor of the host country's citizens. These policies were neither universal nor permanent, but they highlight that just because a state developed institutions of higher education does not mean that Palestinians could easily access them. In the aftermath of the Nakba and the armistice of 1949, the Arab League developed social welfare programs for Palestinians. Among the services provided were need-based student subsidies for Palestinian university students studying in the Arab states. In 1951 the Arab League decided to cut off financial support for Palestinian university students. The reason for this decision was, in part, because the League approved cooperation with UNRWA the year prior thus placing the responsibility to address the needs of Palestinian refugees with UNRWA. Students responded by demonstrating at the League headquarters in Cairo, Egypt and "stormed and ransacked the office of Ahmad al-Shukeiri, at the time assistant secretary general of the League in charge of Palestinian affairs and later the first Chairman of the PLO in 1964 (Abu Iyad and Rouleau 1978, 19). Salah Khalaf (his nom de guerre was Abu Iyad) was one of the student demonstrators and was arrested for 49 days because of the action. Still, the students were temporarily successful and student subsidies were immediately reinstated. The next year, in November 1952 the Arab League once again cut off support for students, protests ensued, and the students were arrested but the League refused to reverse their decision. From henceforth, the Arab League did not support Palestinian students financially which further complicated access to universities and pushed the issues of access onto the various states.

The Egyptian case is an example of a state assuming financial responsibility to educate Palestinians. Under Gamal Abdel Nasser, Egypt's educational support programs and the revoking of work restrictions for Palestinians was a successful project in expanding university admissions. The Egyptian Revolution of 1952 brought about the fall of the Egyptian monarchy

which had operated under the hold of the British. The Free Officers Movement led the rebellion against the monarchy and formed the core of the Revolution Command Council (RRC) that led Egypt until 1956 when a new constitution was adopted. Gamal Abdel Nasser was a leading figure in the revolution and the RRC who pushed pan-Arab unity and socialist policies in Egypt. In 1956 he was elected president of the Egyptian state and implemented sweeping reforms to nationalize Egyptian industry and redistribute land ownership to the peasantry taking these resources out of the hands of European colonial powers. Famously, in 1956 he nationalized the Suez Canal leading to war with Israel, the United Kingdom, and France. Within days a cease-fire was signed, and Egyptian sovereignty was confirmed over the Suez Canal. This was heralded as an Arab triumph over imperialist powers. Nasser's prestige rose as did his pan-Arabist and socialist-oriented policies. In 1958, Nasser and the Ba'ath Party in Syria joined their states into the United Arab Republic (UAR). Ba'athism, pan-Arabism, and Nasser's popularity as a champion of Arab independence allowed the union to last until 1961. Nasser also heavily invested in educational reform. In 1950-1952, Arab intellectual Taha Hussein held the position of Education Minister in Egypt, his commitment to Arab nationalism led him to implement a series of reforms to bring free or affordable, and quality education to the masses at all levels of education. This policy was expanded by the RRC and later Gamal Abdel Nasser as a means of national development. In 1961 he implemented legislation making all public universities tuition-free and extended scholarships to offset the cost of living for those in need. Palestinians were extended the same benefits as Egyptian nationals in educational policy leading to a massive influx of students.

In Laurie Brand's research on GUPS, she found that Egyptian universities attracted large numbers of Palestinian students because the state offered scholarships and stipends and had a

low cost of living. In a ten-year period from the mid-1950s to the mid-1960s, Egypt admitted 5,642 Palestinian students from Gaza alone, which was under its administration since 1949. Many more Palestinians from across the West Bank and various refugee camps came to Egypt to study because the state offered such assistance. In the 1965-66 academic school year the Egyptian government issued 1,192 loans to Palestinian students in need and provided stipends to nearly 200 students from poor backgrounds in addition to free tuition for everyone (Brand 1991, 53). It is during this period that the General Union of Palestine Students formed in Egyptian universities and would soon expand. Salah Ta'amri, a member of GUPS in Egypt, discusses the excitement of Egyptian educational opportunities in his interview with Learn Palestine, though the interview series was originally named The Palestinian Revolution.

> I studied in the schools of Bethlehem, and around the time of my graduation in 1962 or 63, Egypt was the Mecca of poor students. This was in the days of Abdel Nasser, when education was free, so I went to Egypt and I enrolled in the Faculty of Literature at Ain Shams University. To be honest, I was more interested in joining the General Union of Palestine Students than in joining the university. I even signed up for the union before registering at the university! This was because we were deprived of student organizing in the West Bank which was part of Jordan at the time. With me at the General Union of Palestine Students, was the late Hayel Abdel Hamid (Abu al-Houl) as well as Lam'i al-Kundarji, Mahdi Bseiso, and Al-Tayeb Abdel Rahim, these are some of the people I recall. We entered the student elections on the Fatah list in 65-66. The union was controlled by the Movement of Arab Nationalists at the time and its president was Tayseer Quba'a. We entered the elections and won all the seats, and brother Abu al-Houl (Hayel Abdel Hamid) became the president (Salah Ta'amri interview with Learn Palestine).

He confirms that in the 1960s Egypt was a popular destination for Palestinian students, especially poor students. The main reason for accessibility in Egypt's educational system was it was structured for that purpose by a socialist-oriented policy as I will discuss further in this chapter.

Further, Salah Ta'amri highlights the reputation GUPS had built for itself even very early on in its formation. He registered to join GUPS before registering for his classes. He did so

because he said Palestinians in Jordan were deprived of student organizing and he was itching to be a part of the movement. Other GUPS members perceived 1960s Jordan very differently from Salah Ta'amri. Jordan banned all forms of organizing until 1953 when labor organizing was legalized (Brand 1988, 212). Further, the Jordan Student Conference was established in 1953 with the support of Ba'athists that brought together Palestinian and Jordanian students and its president was killed during a demonstration against the monarchy's connection to the USA and United Kingdom (Abu Samra 2020, 116; and Brand 1922, 213). Ten years later, in 1963, dozens of students were killed and wounded in demonstrations demanding Jordan join the rekindling of the United Arab Republic after the Ba'ath party overthrew the Iraqi Prime Minister renewing this possibility. The students chanted "No study or instruction unless there is unity with the President [Gamal Abdel Nasser]" (Brand 1988, 213). Mu'in Al-Taher recollects that Fatah, DFLP, and the Ba'ath parties of both Syria and Iraq extensively organized in Jordan and had very strong relations with GUPS (Abu Samra 2020, 255). Interestingly, one of GUPS's first political moves in 1959 was an agreement it signed with the General Union of Jordanian Students (GUJS) which also formed in Egypt that same year. The agreement guaranteed West Bank Palestinian students would only be allowed to join GUPS (Brand 1988, 73). This was an affirmation of Palestinian identity in Jordan and worked to challenge the Jordanian government's attempt to assimilate Palestinians into Jordanian nationals and prevent Palestinians from working in Jordan's social movements. According to Mjriam Abu Samra's research on GUPS, several players in GUJS and GUPS were imprisoned as a result of this agreement (Abu Samra 2020, 194). To understand this scenario, we must examine Jordan's nationalism-building projects at the time.

Joseph Massad argues that Jordanian nationalism was shaped through colonial legal systems and the military whose symbolisms were reinterpreted and applied by Jordanian

nationalists as anticolonial formations (Massad 2001). The multifaceted ways to define Jordanian nationalism were problematized by the fact that millions of Palestinians lived in the Jordanian state that had annexed the West Bank in 1949. After the annexation, Jordan implemented a series of policies to assimilate Palestinians into the nation and extended them citizenship. The Jordanian Monarchy's attempts to integrate Palestinians were an effort to secure its sovereignty over the state. They tolerated some forms of representation, such as creating reserved seats for West Bank representatives in parliament, but the overall intention was designed to co-op Palestinians into the assimilation efforts. But Jordan did not tolerate the formation of a separatist Palestinian national movement in the country, and it suppressed various forms of Palestinian political action that challenged Jordanian nationalism. Further, Jordan suppressed forms of Palestinian armed resistance stating that the security of its border was weakened by Israeli military raids into the West Bank allegedly in retaliation for Palestinian operations. In the 1967 war, Jordan lost control of the West Bank to Israel which led to increased armed resistance against Israel launched from PLO positions in Jordan. Jordanian tolerance for Palestinian public organizing ended in 1970 when the PLO called for an end to the monarchy and the installment of a new political order in Jordan friendly to the Palestinian cause (Brand 1988, 11). They were not attempting to implement a Palestinian state in Jordan, they wanted the fall of the regime they saw as conciliatory to Israel. The Jordanian army went to war with the PLO ultimately forcing them to leave Jordan. In interviews I had with Palestinians from Jordan, the feeling of having to hide your Palestinianness at the time was widely manifest. But even prior to the 1970s, the 1960s were a precarious time in Jordan's integration policies where the term West Bank was exclusively used, and the term Palestine was banned on all official documents. One can understand the eager excitement and empowerment Salah Ta'amari must have felt to finally be

able to join Palestinian organizing at university and to be out in the open and not hide clandestinely. 1960s Egypt with its Palestinian-friendly position and its socialist-oriented educational system was a thriving place for students.

The link between accessibility to higher education and socialism is a core component of Palestinian participation and the growth of GUPS. One main socialist body that opened its universities to Palestinians was The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). During the period of the very late sixties to late eighties, the PLO received its largest military and diplomatic support from the USSR (Papp 1986). The USSR provided thousands of scholarships to the PLO that GUPS then dispersed among a competitive application pool. Dr. Muddar Kassis completed his university education and Ph.D. in Moscow in the 1980s during the years of the Soviet Union's centralized educational system. He told me in our interview,

> Let me remind you, until the late 80s, the influx of Palestinian students into socialist countries was incomparable in numbers to those who go to the West. So, the Soviet Union, for example, in the year like 1988, right after the intifada, they gave something in the order of 1600, if I remember correctly, 1600 scholarships for Palestinians, *in one year*, and then you have East Germany, Czechoslovakia, then you have Bulgaria, etc. And you can imagine that the numbers on the sort of eastern side of the barricade are much more than those who could go to the West (Muddar Kassis interview with author).

Kassis highlights the large support for scholarships from not just the USSR but the larger Socialist Bloc in Eastern Europe it is a part of. Soviet scholarships were not unique to Palestine as the USSR held favorable support for several Arab states including Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, South Yemen, Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq, and periodically Egypt. Through these relationships, the USSR extended scholarships that trained a generation of Arab students. The Socialist Bloc's scholarship aid to Arab states as a whole was very generous. In 1970, the larger Soviet Bloc admitted 7,885 students from Arab states in South-West Asia and North Africa to study in their universities for free (Brun and Hersh 1990, 149). In 1975 that number increased to 8,640, and in

1977 it nearly doubled to 14,285. In 1978 the USSR admitted 8,650 students from Arab states, and Eastern Europe admitted 7,045. Collectively, Arabs would receive the second-largest academic aid package from the Socialist Bloc. African states were the largest recipient of academic aid that was also provided to Latin America and South Asia. The USSR aimed to train generations of people from the Third World in Marxist ideologies and culture who would go on to foster cooperation with the USSR in their home countries (Rabab Abdulhadi interview with author 2018; and Papp 1986).

The Socialist Bloc created a space to connect to Palestinians from across the diaspora. This included the Palestinians living in politically isolated regions such as the ’48 Palestinians inside Israel (Amara and Mar’i 2008). In 1949 Israel implemented a “military-run bureaucratic regime” applying to the roughly 160,000 Palestinians living within the Israeli state barring the ’48 Palestinians of their freedoms and mobility (Nassar 2017, 4). Once Israel lifted martial law in 1966, ’48 Palestinians were legally allowed to join Israeli institutions including the Israeli Communist Party, where they gained access to scholarships in the Socialist Bloc. In 1979, roughly 300 ’48 Palestinians holding Israeli citizenship studied in the USSR on scholarship, and between 1986 to 1996 1,096 Palestinian students with Israeli citizenship were awarded scholarships (Nakhleh 1979). This provided an opportunity for ’48 Palestinians to connect with other Palestinians who were living in the diaspora as well as people from across the world (Arar 2022). Upon reading an early draft of this section Rabab Abdulhadi commented that this is how she met Palestinian leaders of the Israeli and Jordanian Communist parties while studying in Leningrad from 1973-1976 on a USSR scholarship distributed through the Jordanian government. She met the likes of Tawfiq Zayyad who served as Mayor of Nazareth in the ’48 areas from 1975 until his death in a car accident in 1994; she also met with Emile Habibi who

was a co-founder of the Israeli Communist Party and its newspaper *Al-Ittihad* and served for nearly 20 years in the Israeli Knesset; and met with Tawfik Toubi, who was a member of the Israeli Communist Party and served in the Knesset for 41 years, through his sons who were studying in the Soviet Union at the time. She met leaders of the Jordanian Communist Party including its founder Tawfiq Nassar during her stops in Amman on her way to her hometown of Nablus, Palestine. Her story not only tells of the breaking of the physical isolation among Palestinians but also of the rich opportunities to network and engage with each other across generations among students and established leaders.

The Soviet Union's relationship with Palestine during this period was largely mediated through the PLO given the absence of a Palestinian state. Soviet support for Palestine was a strategic one. Palestine was a key site of anti-imperialist struggle, especially after the defeat of Arab armies in 1967 and the military occupation of the West Bank. US support for Israel served as further proof of Western aggression and Soviet relations were perceived as a check on Western imperialism in addition to socialism's appeal. The Soviets also gained access to military facilities throughout the region in collaborative defense pacts, they grew their weapon sales to the Arab states which brought much-needed cash into Moscow, and became a key political player in the region. But nothing lasts. The 1,600 scholarships given to Palestinians in 1988 are an important marker of the political shifts in Soviet relations. As Mikhail Gorbachev assumed the premiership of the Soviet Union in 1985, the politburo reassessed their strategies in the region and shifted away from supporting armed socialist resistance. This decision was in part a response to its defeat in the 10-year war in Afghanistan in support of the communist government that led to a complete USSR withdrawal in 1989. During this period, the economic power of the USSR was eroding severely, their financial obligations to the Third World were dropped and by

1991 the Soviet Union officially collapsed. Foreshadowing these events in the late 80s, the USSR's new approach was diplomacy, peace talks and reconciliation as opposed to confrontation with imperialism, the USA and NATO. They pushed for normalizing relations with Israel for themselves, the regional Arab states and for the PLO (Goodman 1988). Still, thousands of Palestinians lived and studied in the Socialist bloc, and GUPS branches operated out of the USSR and the eastern European communist states.

The People's Republic of China was another socialist state that supported the education of Palestinian students and GUPS. This support was mediated through official Palestinian parties, the PLO and its Popular Organizations. In 1959 Yasser Arafat, Salah Khalaf, Khalil al-Wazir, Intissar al-Wazir, and Khalid al-Hassan formed the Fatah political movement. This was the same year of the formation of GUPS. The Fatah movement platform believed that guerrilla tactics would achieve Palestinian liberation and found inspiration in the Algerian, Chinese, and Cuban revolutions. At the time armed struggle was condemned by many Arab states that would only tolerate conventional warfare. Fatah found common ground with China which openly supported armed struggle and guerilla warfare under a framework of the people's war. At the invitation of the Chinese Committee for Afro-Asian Solidarity, Yasser Arafat and Khalil al-Wazir visited China on March 17, 1964, to foster joint diplomatic support among Chinese and Palestinian officials (Behbehani 1981, 35-36). Earlier that year, in January 1964 Arab state leaders at the Arab Summit Conference tasked Ahmed al-Shukeiri with organizing Palestinians together into a political body.[23] In May of that year, he organized the first Palestine National Council which laid the infrastructure of the Palestinian Liberation Organization. Several

[23] Dr. Rabab Abdulhadi informed me in an earlier version that there remains a debate on whether Al-Shukeiri was instructed by Gamal Abdel Nasser through the Arab Summit or if it was a Palestinian initiative that coincided with Egypt's wishes.

Palestinian organizations approached the PLO with apprehension as they viewed it as a product of the Arab state leaders that brought with it political strings (Behbehani 1981, 37-38). It was through diplomacy with China that al-Shukeiri showed the world not only the PLO's autonomy from the Arab states but also the PLO's commitment to armed struggle (Behbehani 1981, 48). In March of 1965 al-Shukeiri visited China as part of the first PLO delegation to China and the PLO signed its first military and diplomatic agreement with another state (Behbehani 1981). It was a huge step for the PLO's recognition in the world, and China became an exciting site of ideas and inspiration for Palestinians in the 1960s. China pushed foreign policy for a total rejection of Israel, and firm support for Palestine. At a rally to honor this delegation Mao Zedong (previously spelled Tse-tung in English) announced "Imperialism is afraid of China and of the Arabs. Israel and Formosa [Taiwan] are bases of imperialism in Asia. You are the front gate of the great continent and we are the rear" (al-Anwar 1965; and Cooley 1972, 21).

Testament to the significance of Palestinian students in diplomatic achievements, they took a leading role in Chinese-Palestinian relations. In August of 1964, the All-China Student Federation invited a delegation of the General Union of Palestine Students to China where the Federation hosted a rally for the GUPS delegates. Taiysir Kuba'h, leading the GUPS delegation, affirmed a dedication to people's war by declaring "to achieve victory… one must rely on the armed struggle of the masses" (*New China News Agency* 1964; and Behbehani 1981, 39). Between 1964 and 1975 the various organization of the Palestinian liberation movement had a very friendly relationship with China, and the PLO and various Palestinian political parties were invited to many delegations in China and for military training. In that period, China hosted 25 official Palestinian delegations, on the other hand, the Soviet Union hosted only nine. (Behbehani 1981, 132). Fariz Mehdawy recounts that Palestinian students were only admitted to

Chinese universities after 1974. GUPS chapters formed in China during this period. In 1978 China admitted 35 students on scholarships from Arab states, while it granted 260 scholarships in total with the bulk, 140 scholarships, going to African states followed by South Asian states at 80 (Brun and Hersh 1990, 149). Political support from China cooled when the PLO turned to support from the USSR in the 1970s, but support for GUPS and student scholarships remained (Behbehani 1981, 131).

Scholarships were the primary avenues that Palestinians accessed college and informed their post-1948 diasporic journeys. While there were policies to control the system of scholarships it was never fully successful. Kuwait, which had no Palestinian refugee camps but where a growing Palestinian middle class worked, implemented a quota system on the number of non-citizens it admitted. In 1986, 200 seats were filled by Palestinians out of a max quota of 276, several other Arab states imposed a quota or reduced the allowance of non-citizens to their universities (Brand 1991, 142). The GUPS Kuwait branch responded by developing an office of scholarships and grants to help place Palestinian students "in universities in Arab, Islamic, or socialist countries" (Brand 1991, 142). But expanded scholarships were not an easy solution. When the PLO was made illegal in several states, scholarships linked to bodies of the PLO could not be accepted in those states- such as Jordan. Still, many Palestinians were attracted by low tuition costs and low costs of living across several post-independent states.

Here I provide a retelling of Ambassador Fariz Mehdawy's analysis of the matter of higher education in Asia. Mehdawy is the current ambassador of the Palestinian Authority to China. He was the elected President of the GUPS branch in Hyderabad, Pakistan. He has served on the Administrative Council and Executive Committee of GUPS and was assigned twice to represent GUPS on the Palestine National Council of the PLO. Before giving this oral history

interview to myself and Dr. Abdulhadi, Mehdawy had never been interviewed in depth about his role in GUPS.

> Ambassador Mehdawy: In Asia for example, Pakistan, I'm talking about Pakistan as a practical experience for myself. The students are coming from almost everywhere. Because, you know, Pakistan is a Muslim country, it is conservative somewhat. So most of our traditional society likes to send their kids to those kinds of countries. Two, it is affordable in terms of cost, you don't need a huge amount of money to finance yourself, it's 100 [in currency]. We never had something like scholarships for example. But we used to have free tuition. All what you need is to actually finance yourself. These are some of the reasons which pushed so many thousands of students to study either in India or Pakistan, up to the Philippines, even to China. Those are the countries that have been one of the destinations, favored destinations of middle-class families of Palestinians, especially those who are working in the Gulf countries to send their kids. Especially female young students like my sister who had done her post-graduate studies in Karachi because well the parents would feel alright for their daughter to study in such kinds of societies.
>
> Dr. Abdulhadi seeks clarity: Sorry, sorry. But was the free tuition only for Palestinians in India and Pakistan or were they for all international students?
>
> Mehdawy responds: No, the free tuition was for Palestinians but limited in numbers. For example, they will, let us say, assign us 10 seats for medical colleges, or 15 for engineering. And we do the selection according to the merit, of course, within GUPS.
>
> Abdulhadi: Is this the government giving the scholarship, the government of India and Pakistan? Or it is the universities themselves giving the scholarship?
>
> Mehdawy: No it's the government, there are no private universities, these are all government universities. And they are sent to the PLO actually, which used to have an embassy there.
>
> Abdulhadi: So the PLO nominates the students (Mehdawy: "exactly") who will be able to get these spots, and then the students are responsible for room and board and books or whatever but there is no tuition.
>
> Mehdawy: Yeah, yeah. Very few could apply directly to universities and they have to pay their tuition. And they have to finance their posts while those who are offered those types of 'semi' scholarships, if you like, have been given free tuition plus also hostel accommodation, and health insurance, as well. But to finance your own life cost, it is personal, it has to be financed, it has to be borne by the students themselves. The government never gave us anything like cash.

Abdulhadi: And to your knowledge. Does this continue with Pakistan?

> Mehdawy: Yes, still but limited, limited dramatically. India still gives us also very limited numbers. Besides of course, as you see, the politics have changed totally. Actually, in India at some point, because I was supervising all those branches which are actually in Asia including Afghanistan, where we also used to have students, Bangladesh, which was passed from Pakistan, actually, we used to send [students] to Bangladesh when Bangladesh itself used to be called East Pakistan. That's when Palestinian students started to go there early 70s actually, and then even China. The first group who came to China did so in 1974… Of course, by that time, China was quite poor, and was not really appealing. So mostly those, you know, immigrants and refugees are coming from Syria and Lebanon, they are the ones who are really interested. Others, they [Chinese universities] were not really for them, really, because they have to study the Chinese language, which is quite difficult really to comprehend within even less than one or two years, at least (Mehdawi interview 2022).

Mehdawy's discussion outlined a robust international system that directed students' possibilities regarding higher education. Pakistan was perceived as a good opportunity, especially for women, given its generous scholarships, its low cost of living, its affordable tuition for those without scholarships, and its status as a socially conservative Muslim country. Thus, the middle and working classes gravitated toward Pakistan. Mehdawy commented that studying medicine and engineering were by far the most popular subjects of study for GUPS members in Pakistan and across the chapters internationally. Further, Mehdawy suggests that China was perceived less favorably for the language learning curve, its relative poverty, and its lack of Muslim foundations.[24] Still, China provided an opportunity for students from refugee camps to access higher education, though limited in number. India and the Philippines were other sites made accessible to Palestinians coming from working-class and poor backgrounds. He went on to explain that students from rich backgrounds were typically sent to study in Europe by their parents. His account shows that barriers to entry are relative to one's condition and that access to

[24] In 1980 approximately 5.5 million Muslim Uyghurs lived in the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region of the People's Republic of China.

various academic opportunities is mediated through social-economic stratifications. Free tuition through scholarships can be a means to undermine these barriers, but they are limited in number and competitive. In turn, class struggles to access university were individualized efforts. Blanket-level free tuition and open-enrollment policies would better serve as structural means to undermine academic gatekeeping and collectivize these class struggles. Mass-scale scholarships issued by the Socialist Bloc discussed earlier accomplished progress in this endeavor. Still, Mehdawy and other interviewees recount that they took gap years to work to save money to afford college. Mehdawy worked for five years in Kuwait before he could afford to enter university in Pakistan despite having a scholarship. He and other like him needed this money to afford traveling to new locations to attend university and pay their rent and food costs even if they were recipients of free tuition. Some who came from the middle class might have been able to rely on family support to cover these expenses. But those who came from working class and poor backgrounds typically had insufficient savings to cover these costs, or their immediate entry into the workforce was needed to cover the day-to-day expenses of the family. The outcome of the nexus of these economic barriers is that GUPS became an organization that included Palestinians from across socio-economic backgrounds. This is not to say that class was a non-issue; holding a university degree is both a means through which class stratification and distribution of wealth are mediated as well as being an investment in the "political economy of culture" within credential-oriented societies (Collins 1979). Rather it is to say that once students got into university, GUPS operated to facilitate the bonding of Palestinians into a diasporic collective that was both multi-classed and had components of classed access.

Mehdawy went on to describe other ways in which scholarships can be thought of. Mehdawy notes that Pakistan's support for the PLO and the Palestinian liberation movement

created an environment where GUPS in Pakistan thrived. According to Jaser Ahmed, the former chargé d'affaires at the Palestinian embassy in Islamabad, approximately 8,000 Palestinians resided in Pakistan during the 1970s (Siddiqui 2009). Mehdawy noted that GUPS Pakistan had approximately 1,000 members comprising a sizable chunk of the entire Palestinian presence in Pakistan. Not only did Pakistan welcome students into the state, but the government under Zulfikar Ali Bhutto did not interfere with the students' political activism and largely supported them and the PLO. This is of importance because the political organizing of Palestinian students was deemed a threat by several states at the time. One example of that is in 1977 Egypt when Anwar Sadat invited Yasser Arafat to a session of the People's Assembly on November 9th and announced his intention to go to Jerusalem thus breaking the Arab states' boycott with Israel. Palestinian students in Egypt demonstrated against Sadat, and the Egyptian state deemed their actions a threat to the regime. Many students were expelled from Egypt and the GUPS offices were closed down (Brand 1988, 61). Mehdawy's account of Pakistan-Palestine student relations is a marked difference.

> Of course, the background of Pakistan politics is relevant to Pakistan, let me tell you something which should not be surprising to anybody. Pakistan had been founded to be an Islamic country. I mean, that's the justification for the establishment of the country. The justification for establishing the whole country was Islam. So for them the issue of Jerusalem and that it's the holy place and is the first symbol, it was the real thing you know. So to be Palestinian, they used to kiss our hands and they really liked to be blessed by us so you can imagine what type of welcome that any Palestinian had. Let me also add a little bit of politics into that. During the period of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto the relation with Pakistan became strategic for Palestine. And I can tell you, all of the best characters of the PLO later, whether they are pilots, whether they are really the military ones in the navies, all have been trained in Pakistan. They have been financed, or sponsored if you like, by the Saudis, who would finance the cost of this, you know, very costly training, especially when you're talking about piloting them, especially military, and within the PIA. The PIA is the Pakistan International Airways. This is part of scholarships also, in a way I mean. So we used to have a lot of engineers, a lot of militants and a lot of everything. All the academies on all scales were open for Palestinians during Bhutto's time; this trend changed once Zia-ul-Haq [came into power]. Zia-ul-Haq

> the general who later on executed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and sentenced him to death. The change remained slightly because the public opinion about Palestine is something, up until now, fundamental for any government. Any government in Pakistan cannot afford but to stand with Palestine because this is actually the theme that gives some sort of legitimacy for the regime. That applies even to other countries like Malaysia, like Indonesia as well, those countries, which are all the time holding onto Islam. For them, Palestine is an issue of public opinion. It's not even for political parties to support or not to support so no government can change the course, no matter whether the regimes are really, you know, like them or not. So that's why the support for Palestine has been really fundamental. … When you have such a good environment, which is totally supportive, then you can imagine how much GUPS could be active in this sense. So, we have been given free access to everything that we like to do (Mehdawi interview 2022).

Mehdawy's account of scholarships discusses several key structures in the deeply intertwined politics of education. In his description of free tuition for Palestinians, we see the centrality of Palestine to the nationalism of Muslim-majority countries. The Palestinian cause is a discourse and politics of connection for both Arabs and Muslims. As he argues, support for Palestine is a facet of public opinion, and to move against Palestine would make the government illegitimate. Further, in his retelling that some Pakistanis kissed the hands of the Palestinians, we find the deep respect held for them. This is for several factors. There is the religious, "Palestine, for many Muslims existed as part of a collective imagination, solidified with unifying symbols such as Al Aqsa Mosque, and references to specific verses in the Holy Quran" (Baroud 2010). It is also the role of Palestine as a symbol of anti-colonial struggle and the steadfastness of the victims of injustice. There is a deep, palpable love for Palestine and Palestinians that is oftentimes demonized by Zionist narratives that discounts the significance of Palestine. For those reasons, we can read the issuing of scholarships to Palestinians as an act of love as much as we can read it as an act of international politicking. Further, the administration of such scholarships under the PLO was only possible as the PLO held friendly relationships with Pakistan. This relationship was cemented at the Second Islamic Summit hosted in Lahore, Pakistan in February

of 1974 and attended by the heads of all Muslim countries in the world. At the Summit the PLO was recognized by all Muslim countries as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, it also recognized Jerusalem's profound importance for Muslims. It was reported that Yasser Arafat stated in response that "Palestine was born in Lahore" (Abdi 2018). This may be a political exaggeration, but it reflected his sentiments at the time. By 1975 PLO missions in Pakistan received full diplomatic recognition.

Importantly, Mehdawy's discussion of the role of military academies as sites of Palestinian educational instruction cannot be ignored. While GUPS did not host chapters in military institutions, GUPS membership in armed struggle is an important point of collective action. GUPS chapters organized collection drives to send much-needed medical supplies, clothes and money during times of war against Israel. Mehdawy recounts that during the Israeli invasion of Lebanon he organized a three-day campaign among 1,000 GUPS members in Pakistan to collect the skins of animals sacrificed during the Muslim holiday, Eid al-Adha. They dispersed across Pakistan, from the villages in the countryside to the major cities talking about Palestine and collecting skins and cash donations. They sold the skins to tanneries and earned about $150,000 which they sent the cash straight to Lebanon to support Palestinians. Mehdawy confirmed GUPS's instrumental role in the armed struggle waged by Palestinians. This was on a voluntary basis during times of full-scale war such as the Civil War in Lebanon, the first Israeli invasion in 1978, and the second invasion in 1982. During the first phase of the Lebanese Civil War, 1975-77, all the Palestinian parties had a student division with a military wing (Abu Samra 2020, 270). Mu'in Al-Taher, who was a GUPS member and leader, organized and led the Fatah armed student division called the Student Battalion. His memoir *Olive Trees and Tobacco Leaves* provides a rich history of Fatah's Student Battalion as does Mohamed Soueid's

documentary *Nightfall* (Al-Taher 2017; and Soueid 2000). GUPS members joined in large numbers who felt it was their duty to serve the cause as there was no draft or compulsory service. GUPS member and commando Salah al-Ta'amri discussed this connection in his interview with Learn Palestine.

> The 1967 war erupted while I was sitting for my final exams, and I remember that I had only two courses left for graduation and I was about to receive my BA degree. However, we received a circular instructing us to leave Egypt and enter the occupied territories via Syria. Fatah had a training camp on the outskirts of Damascus in a location called al-Haameh. The nom de guerre [war name] of my colleague who delivered the letter to me from the martyrs Abu Jihad and Abu Ammar was Ribhi Ka'wash, his first name was real. I left Egypt and I went to al-Haameh camp and took a refresher military training course, for I had already taken a military course in Tanta, Egypt through the General Union of Palestine Students. I then went to Damascus and headed from there to Karameh, Karameh was a base for us; we used to spend a night or two there before crossing the [Jordan] river to the Occupied Territories (Salah Ta'amri interview with Learn Palestine).

GUPS's international executive committee supported the request of students to join the war efforts. But the logistics of joining the armed resistance was not official GUPS business, that was the responsibility of the various Palestinian parties. The military duties of the various student battalions included "guarding the camps, distributing statements, organizing demonstrations and participating in the funerals of martyrs" (Abu Samra 2020, 273; and Mohammad Ibrahim Awad interview with Learn Palestine). Former GUPS international President Nasir Al-Kidwa recounted in his interview with Dr. Abdulhadi and me the significant role of GUPS in military operations. He shared that it is not well known that it was a four-member unit of the Fatah Student Battalion and GUPS members who captured eight Israeli soldiers on September 3, 1982, in Lebanon. A prisoner swap the next year exchanged six of those soldiers for 4,765 Palestinians and Lebanese prisoners. In 1985 the remaining two soldiers along with a third captured elsewhere were swapped for 1,150 Palestinian prisoners. The many Palestinians killed in battle died as martyrs.

Memorial services were held by local GUPS chapters to honor their fallen friends. Images of the martyrs hung in public and in offices to honor their memory and sacrifice, GUPS members recall seeing their faces every time they walked into the parties' meeting spaces.

The USA was another popular destination for Palestinian students. The GUPS USA branch did not form until 1979. Still, thousands of Palestinians lived and studied in the country. The USA did not organize a domestic educational program for Palestinian scholarships, rather, Palestinians had to navigate the educational financial systems in place for the general public. Through the Higher Education Act of 1965 the federal government implemented a massive funding strategy through grants and loans dependent on the financial needs of the student. This period also ushered in massive legislative reforms across various states key among them was the 1960 California Master Plan for Higher Education that brought together in coordination the various universities of the state. Another was the formation of the City University of New York in 1961 along with its open admission policy implemented in 1970 at the behest of Black student activists that operated alongside its free tuition policy lasting until 1976 (Thelin 2013; and Brown 2019). Tuition was free or affordable at many public institutions as they were subsidized by either the state or federal government. Steadily through the years as inflation and unemployment skyrocketed in the 1970s alongside the turn to neo-liberalism, funding strategies incorporated greater reliance on student loans to the extent that they became the largest form of student aid (Hauptman 2007; and Harvey 2016).

The majority of Palestinians abroad seeking to access education in the USA did so on their own accord or with support from family, though it was difficult to obtain a visa to study in the USA. Muddar Kassis explained this in our interview.

> And you can imagine that the numbers on the sort of eastern side of the barricade are much more than those who could go to the West because they have to afford

> going to the West. In order to go to the West, you either have to be coming from a wealthy family, or have super good English and excel very high in your studies, etc. Or you have relatives in the US, like Ramallah people and Birzeit people, etc. But that's, that's not the typical kind of general Palestinian thing.
> (Muddar Kassis interview with author).

Those who could benefit from support from extended family did so, and others learned the know-how in navigating the USA's affordable college systems through word of mouth. Kassis also discusses the impacts of extended family-based migration on educational opportunities. His naming of Ramallah and Birzeit cities reflects the deep impact emigration has had on those cities that have dispersed globally. For them, immigrating to the USA means connecting to a support system whose benefits outweigh the comparatively large cost of relocating and cost of living. Those born in the USA and those immigrating to the USA for education navigated the same educational economic system, though some tuition subsidies exist for US citizens and residents especially in public universities. But, as I discuss in chapter five, the majority of members in the GUPS USA branch were international students with F-1 visas. There was no scholarship program specifically tailored for Palestinians. The one exception was the very few and limited scholarships offered through the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) and very few of those were for the USA (Al Husseini 2010). While the USA provided aid to UNRWA, they openly refused to engage diplomatically with or recognize the PLO for years. The official US position was as follows, "so long as the Palestine Liberation Organization does not recognize Israel's right to exist and does not accept Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338" they will not engage with the PLO (Israel- United States Memorandum of Understanding 1975).[25] Throughout the 20th century, the USA was

[25] Resolution 242 passed in 1967 called for four main objectives: Israeli withdrawal from the territories it occupied; the end of war among all parties; the recognition of the sovereignty of each

UNRWA's largest donor which it used instrumentally as a means to prevent a Palestinian turn to communism, as political leverage with Arab states, and as a means to placate and control growing Palestinian refugee populations from insurrection (Robson 2019). These university scholarships were so few in number that the majority of Palestinian students studying in the USA did so outside of this mechanism.

Dr. Adli Hawwari, an important figure who helped organize the GUPS USA branch when it first started, provides an account of his migration in his book on GUPS. The book is only available in Arabic, I translated portions of it to use in this dissertation. In 1976 Hawwari traveled from Jordan to Oklahoma to attend Oscar Rose Junior College. Hawwari stated that he enrolled in community college because it was much cheaper to complete course credits that he then transferred to the University of Oklahoma from which he graduated. This was a common tactic for many cash-strapped international students as a means to strategically maximize limited resources. Further, many I interviewed also recounted a need to learn the English language and relied on their time in a community college or local institutions like the YMCA or English as a Second Language (ESL) community classes to improve their language skills. After arriving in the USA Hawwari spent the night in a motel before going to the university registration office the next morning. When he could not provide an address in the USA to file in his records an employee paired him with another international Palestinian student from Kuwait for help. He let Hawwari stay in his home for a few days while he helped him open a bank account and find an

State in the region meaning Arab states would have to recognize Israel which none had done at that point; and achieving a just settlement of the refugees along with establishing de-militarized zones. Resolution 338 passed in 1973 reiterated the points of Resolution 242 and called for the start of negotiations. These Resolutions were the starting point for negotiations Israel would participate in with the Arab States, though Israel rejected various points or re-interpret them to their advantage (Dajani 2007 and Quigley 2007).

apartment to rent with another international Palestinian student (Hawwari 2015, 5-7). Not only was this support invaluable to Hawwari, but it also came from a complete stranger who felt an affinity to Hawwari because of their shared Palestinianness. This was not an isolated occurrence. Hawwari's entrance to the USA predated the USA GUPS branch he helped found. But once it was founded this support system became GUPS's common practice just as it was with GUPS branches across the world. Every interview I collected on GUPS remarked on the generous support system students had for one another. Support began immediately for relocating GUPS members as GUPS used to send members to the airport to pick up new arrivals. Helping navigate banking systems and finding apartments and roommates were also standard practices. GUPS knew money was tight for new arrivals and on many occasions they brought groceries for them to eat to help them out until they could find a job or money from abroad could be sent.

Hawwari recounts that the majority of Palestinian international students at the University of Oklahoma studied engineering. The university was widely known for specializing in petroleum engineering and ranked among the top in the nation. The university had Palestinians and other Arabs from Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, Libya, and Saudi Arabia, the majority of whom sought degrees in engineering they could apply in the booming petroleum extraction industries in the region. He commented that other students were surprised by the lack of interest in studying other disciplines. Further, Iranian international students in engineering outnumbered Arabs. And Arabs and Iranians were the subject of xenophobic contempt, and as Hawwari stated "to the Americans, we were all camel jockeys" (Hawwari 2015, 6). Iranian students in the USA faced fierce harassment for their protests in 1978-9 against the Shah of Iran whose political rivals Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, leftists, liberals, and Islamists alike were labeled anti-American. The racism they experienced intensified after Iranian students held over 60 Americans hostage at

the USA Embassy in Tehran. Further, the Arab-led OPEC oil embargo in protest of international support for Israel during the 1973 war with Egypt and Syria was blamed, in part, for the economic crash and hyperinflation of the 1970s. For Hawwari, this racism manifested through workplace exploitation. He recounts how employers used to shortchange him on his pay that he needed to fund his education. He worked clandestinely due to F-1 visa work prohibitions so he had no legal recourse to rely on. This was not an uncommon experience among his peers in the USA.

Conclusion:

This chapter analyzed how Palestinians and the General Union of Palestine Students (GUPS) navigated the political economies of higher education in the 1960s-80s within Arab states, Pakistan, China, the USSR and the USA. Everyone I talked to about their time in GUPS had a different perspective of what the rigors of the academy entailed when balancing other factors of student life, such as activism, work, and survival. Those in leadership positions, especially the national leadership, remember voluntarily being shuffled around various cities and countries to support GUPS chapters and help build new ones. Road trips lasted one month, sometimes two, in a non-stop marathon hopping from chapter to chapter. At other times, students that showed real devotion and organizing skills were asked to enroll in another college and relocate into a popular chapter by the national leadership where their impact would be greater. It was also not uncommon to extend one's time in college by years by delaying graduation or attending graduate school so that they could maintain GUPS membership and continue in their leadership roles. Inevitably, organizing got in the way of studying. For some, their grades suffered, for others, pulling all-nighters became the norm. A few asked other students to do their homework for them and found volunteers. They justified this cheating as it was an opportunity to

both maintain academic standing and organize politically. Still, many in GUPS leadership had excellent academic standing, many applied their leadership skills to other community-building projects, many entered the workforce across its wide spectrum, and a select few in leadership were able to stay in Palestinian politics advancing in their party's leadership positions, the PLO, and, for some, the Palestinian Authority later on.

Chapter Five - GUPS USA Branch- Social Organizing and State Policing

This chapter's focus is on the General Union of Palestine Students' branch in the USA. Emerging in 1978 and solidified with the first GUPS branch conference in 1980, the organization influenced an entire generation of Palestinians and Palestinian Americans who wanted to participate in the liberation movement. I argue that GUPS, as a nexus for a Palestinian social movement, was a political and cultural medium for Palestinian and Palestinian-American students to build and maintain diasporic identities. This was mediated through Palestine advocacy and the racialized consciousness of being Palestinian in the USA. To this end, I address what the experiences of Palestinian student organizing can teach us about the political powers operating on and within student organizing. This chapter is organized into two parts. First, I discuss the everyday organizing of GUPS members and its connections to practices of Palestinianness. Second, I discuss the impact of racialized state policing mechanisms on the organization.

Among the objectives of GUPS was to advance an anti-colonial ethos among the membership of the organization and the American public. After all, GUPS was an official Popular Organization of the PLO, and as such their task was to mobilize students into the cause for Palestine. This is explained in the 1985 informational pamphlet GUPS circulated, in the GUPS Constitution, and in the oral history interviews I conducted. The pamphlet summarized the official GUPS duties succinctly,

> GUPS is a popular organization, dedicated to organize and develop the capabilities of the Palestinian students to better serve themselves and their people, and to articulate the plight of the Palestinians to the world. … [GUPS] has played a visible role in preserving the Palestinian identity and voicing the just demand of the Palestinian people. … In short GUPS seeks to cement the just demand of our right to self-determination, to expose Zionism to its true face- a racist, exclusivist movement- and to tie in the Palestinian struggle with the just struggle of oppressed people everywhere (GUPS 1985).

Here we see the very deliberate connection between anti-colonial goals for Palestine and Palestinian identity. It is a tether between homeland and action in the diaspora to preserve Palestine in the mind and its land. Further, in interviews I conducted, Third World internationalist organizing was another component of GUPS organizing. They held that Palestinian liberation was tied to global anti-imperialist movements and connected with the anti-Apartheid struggle in South Africa as well as anti-US interventionist wars in Central America taking place in Nicaragua, El Salvador and Guatemala for socialist and anti-imperialist causes.

Khaldoun Ramadan, commenting on the success of GUPS, noted that at their peak the organization was able to put on 60 activities in 60 cities across the USA, all at the same time. The activities and commemorative events of GUPS emphasize the educational and outreach components of the group. "In their Chapters, GUPS' members hold seminars, forums, lectures, and sponsor speakers. They hold exhibits and show movies and slides besides distributing literature about the Palestinian people and their plight. In particular, GUPS played a role in rallying support for the PLO and soliciting worldwide condemnation for Israel's invasion into Southern Lebanon in 1982" (GUPS 1985). Their activities also entailed commemorating key historical events in Palestinian colonization and atrocities including the *Nakba* (commemorated as Palestine Day), Land Day, International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People (November 29th), and the Sabra and Shatila Massacre (GUPS 1985). Honoring the *Nakba* every year in May is a testament to remembering the colonial violence done to Palestinians and the land that continues to the present. This includes the making of refugeehood for many Palestinians as these wrongs have yet to be righted, the theft or destruction of hundreds of thousands of Palestinian homes, and the denial of national self-determination. Land Day marks a movement in 1976 by Palestinians protesting the confiscation of thousands of acres of

Palestinian land by the Israeli state and the martyrdom of six Palestinians on the 30th of March that year. November 29th commemoration remembers that on that day in 1947, the United Nations adopted Resolution 181 to partition Palestine in two pledging to hand over stolen Palestinian land to Zionist colonizers to form Israel. In 1977 the General Assembly of the United Nations called for the annual observance of that day as the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. And Sabra and Shatila events commemorate the massacre of Palestinians that took place on September 16, 1982, during the Israeli invasion and occupation of southern Lebanon. Shatila, a Palestinian refugee camp, and the adjacent neighborhood of Sabra in West Beirut were surrounded by the Israeli army that permitted Phalange militiamen into the encirclement. They erroneously thought Palestinians were responsible for the assassination of their party leader and President-elect of Lebanon, Bachir Gemayel. Further, Palestinians were targeted politically in order to destroy their organizing and force them to give up their struggle. There is no definitive total for the number of Palestinians massacred that day. The Israeli Kahan Commission placed the figure at around 800 people while the Palestinian Red Crescent Society, who were among the first on the scene after the massacre, reported more than 2,000 dead (Al-Hout 2004; and IMEU Staff 2012). It is clear remembering these events invokes deep emotional responses, and GUPS and the associated parties provided a communal venue to channel the energy it inspires into anti-colonial and nationalist organized actions. I do not mean that consciousness-raising itself necessarily leads to actions since we know that knowing about oppression does not intrinsically mean you will do anything about it. As Sherna Berger Gluck argues, "changes in consciousness are not *necessarily* or *immediately* reflected in dramatic alterations in the public world" (Gluck 1987, x). Instead, GUPS provided both an environment

for consciousness-raising linked to a practical venue through which to actualize political organizing.

GUPS USA branch labored to inform its membership, and those they found solidarity with, about the horrors of Zionism that have shaped Palestinian conditions. Commemorative actions in GUPS took on different faces. It could be in the form of speeches usually given in halls, rallies and demonstrations. Literature in the form of pamphlets or short articles was distributed. And they hosted screenings of documentaries and films. The discourse surrounding these events makes abundantly clear that Palestine is a colonial issue. And it ties closely to their goal of building alliances with other anti-colonial movements. "In commemorating such events GUPS members solicit and receive unwavering support from various student organizations that represent or work on behalf of other oppressed people. The solidarity we receive and share and the joint activities which are continuously held with the Nicaraguan, El Salvadorean, the South African and other student organizations are some examples" (GUPS 1985). An important distinction I think is missing from the GUPS statement is the point of unity is not the state of their shared oppression but rather their shared efforts to repel their oppression, a distinction echoed by Dr. Robin D.G. Kelley in his remarks at the *Teaching Palestine: Pedagogical Praxis and the Indivisibility of Justice* conference at Birzeit University, Palestine in 2018 (AMED Studies YouTube 2018a; and AMED Studies YouTube 2018b). GUPS members recall that deep cooperation existed among the activists and organizers with shared principles of justice. When demonstrations against apartheid in South Africa were organized in the 1980s GUPS members attended. OAS members recall joining the boycott of grapes in the late 1960s. Those who could do so participated in delegations to Nicaragua and so forth as Anonymous #4 explained. Hatem

Bazian, who enrolled in San Francisco State University in 1985 and was president of the Associated Students, provides greater detail on the role of GUPS in internationalist movements.

> Now, a particular strength for Palestine and GUPS on campus is the emergence of a progressive coalition, which for a period of time from 1988, up to its demise, I would say in 1992. It really pushed for almost every aspect of the progressive agenda on Palestine, on South Africa, on Central America, on Coalition on Homelessness in San Francisco, on anti-war mobilization. Also standing against Clinton and his NAFTA. All that really came out from the progressive coalition. People just are not aware that during the buildup to the Iraq War, most of the flyers and the mobilization for it came from San Francisco State University in terms of the printing of a flyer, even the stages that were used, where we took the stage out of the Student Union with its sound system and rolled it on the truck and took it down on 24th and Mission, took it down to the Chevron Building right by Market Street before Chevron moved to San Ramon. And this allowed for both GUPS and Palestine to be in the central, at least in the hub of the work, both domestically and transnationally (Hatem Bazian group interview with author and Dr. Abdulhadi).

Since Bazian was president of the Associated Students at SFSU, he was able to use presidential discretionary funds to support the organizing work of GUPS. In fact, he stated GUPS received the most financial resources compared to the other political student groups because of his commitment. Further, the date 1988 is very significant as it marks the start of the Palestinian Intifada which inspired renewed commitment to Palestinian liberation organizing. Further, Bazian noted that supporters of the PFLP at SFSU led the progressive coalition whose political ideologies committed them to socialist and international organizing. While Bazian did not formally join GUPS he remained a leader in the Palestinian student movement and worked closely with them.

Since GUPS members were both supporters of Palestinian parties as well as student organizers, their efforts united campus and city-wide organizing. Anonymous #4 discussed the campus organizing efforts during her time as a GUPS member in the early 1980s as a Ph.D. student at Michigan State University (MSU). Anonymous #4 has a long history of Palestine organizing in the USA after she moved to the country in 1962 on a scholarship from the Church,

while she left for Lebanon to teach briefly, she returned to the USA in 1967 after getting married. She joined several organizations over her life that provided her a platform to speak and educate about Palestine. These organizations included GUPS, the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, and the Greater Lansing United Nations Association as well as speaking at many churches. She devoted a lot of her time organizing with the Peace Education Center and co-founded the Middle East Awareness Committee (MEAC) as an official task force of the Center. When she joined GUPS in 1982 at MSU, she worked to build relations between the two groups and other Arab organizations. While there were only a handful of politically active Palestinian students at MSU, by combining efforts with the Arab Student Collective and the National Union of the Gulf and Arabian Peninsula Students (NUGAPS) they were able to form a union of 30 to 40 students. This strategy addressed resource issues that impact social movement organizing. As Anonymous #4 put it "sometimes you have a handful of active, sincere, committed people who can do a lot of work and reach a large audience at the same time. But you also need to have the means to do it. It costs to fly people. It costs to host people if they're coming from outside. It costs to even print copies" (Anonymous #4 group interview with author and Dr. Abdulhadi). The student organizations were able to access limited funds through the university's student activities fees, they had the ability to reserve rooms on campus to host events and meetings and they had access to a copy machine to distribute flyers and press releases. Still, their partnership with MEAC and the Peace Education Center gave them even greater access to a copy machine and private funds. Their relationship with MEAC would curtail any strings from the university and for that reason, it was easier for MEAC to be the main sponsor of events with GUPS listed as a co-sponsor. The Arab Student Collective would at times add their name as a co-sponsor and NUGAPS hardly ever listed their name as a sponsor and when they did it was only

for uncontroversial events such as a vigil. Also, whenever possible, speakers stayed in the homes of GUPS members to save on hotel accommodations.

Mohammad Alatar discusses a similar approach to community organizing with the supporters of the Palestinian parties. The parties' supporters typically hosted offices in the city, GUPS members used the city office of the party they supported for general meetings and discussion groups. When public venues were needed, GUPS members could reserve rooms and large halls on campus as a registered student group. He recounts that the administration of the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, where he studied, soon developed an uneasy relationship with anything related to Palestine and Israel given the confrontations and protests that would emerge at events, and that the administration sympathized with Zionism. Utilizing retaliatory mechanisms, the university would only allow seniors on track to graduate to reserve rooms. This way the university could threaten to revoke graduation rights in an attempt to control the student groups (Mohammad Alatar interview with author). Anonymous #4 describes these confrontations,

> We had many, many demonstrations. The Israelis, well, the Jewish students had also an organization on campus. They called themselves the peace, something or another. I have their name somewhere on my pamphlet here. But they were a Zionist movement, they declared themselves as a Zionist student organization on paper. Their objective was obviously to defend Israel. Every year, they celebrated the birthday of Israel, and they celebrated or commemorated those who died in the wars, and so there was that memorial for the dead, the veterans, let's put it this way. Whenever there was a celebration, we had a counter-demonstration. And that, of course, irritated them. But they attracted a lot of students who walked by, you know, people stopped when there was somebody speaking and they had the blue and white balloons, they had the Israeli flag and the American flag as well. But during those demonstrations, we were harassed as well, you know, we were harassing them, they were harassing us. I mean, we were not quiet either. We had posters, and we spoke out you know, slogans and stuff like that (Anonymous #4 group interview with author and Dr. Abdulhadi).

Seeking to educate various populations on the issue of Palestine, GUPS moved to create as wide of a platform as possible. Anonymous #4 retells how GUPS worked to get their speakers on media platforms including radio. Zionist student groups would fight to cancel GUPS events especially when they did not like the speaker or the message. Her GUPS chapter invited anti-Zionist Jewish author Lenni Brenner to give a talk after the release of his book in 1983 *Zionism in the Age of Dictators* which discusses Zionist cooperation with Nazi Germany. In the 1960s Brenner joined the civil rights movement and anti-war organizing, in the 1970s he joined the Palestinian organizing as a prominent anti-Zionist Jew, and in the 1980's he worked closely with Dr. Abdulhadi in the November 29th Coalition for Palestine and the Palestine Solidarity Committee. Anonymous #4 was in talks with WKR, the local radio station to have him speak during the call-in program they ran. Zionist organizations, on and off campus, put immense pressure on the station and they prevented him from getting on the air. Given the arrangement that MEAC would be the main sponsor of events, they received the majority of the public backlash and hate mail from Israel supporters. Some people read Brenner's work as anti-Zionist and antisemitic. Anonymous #4 disagrees with the accusations of antisemitism as she recalled a flyer that was distributed during the talk with quotes from the book, one of which discussed a Zionist leader's statement that given the choice of saving a large group of Jewish children to go to England, he would rather save half that number if they were to go to Eretz-Yisrael, the preferred Zionist term for biblical Israel. On another flyer there was an image of a soldier hitting a kneeling person, the caption read "A Nazi beating a Jew or an Israeli soldier beating a Palestinian." As a testament to their carefulness, before the event, a Jewish faculty member in the Math department and a supporter of Palestine did the work of providing a summary of the book

and cross-referencing it for accuracy finding no discrepancies.[26] Faculty support proved very helpful in general during Anonymous #4's time in GUPS. Many on campus were very informed on politics, and anti-war movements were very strong at the time contributing to a healthy network of Palestine advocates on campus that GUPS could rely on.

Engaging in GUPS activities also scared many members for the dangers it posed as an affiliated PLO Popular Organization. Responses to such threats differed from person to person. As Mohammad Alatar explained there did exist a fear of authorities since they could do a lot of damage, but many people did not let their fear of authorities prevent their political activity. As he put it, many Palestinians grew up under constant surveillance and threatened by authorities, and some were formerly incarcerated as political prisoners whether in Israel or the surrounding Arab states with intense policing mechanisms such as Jordan.

> I know I'm in a country where there's law and order, and as long as I'm not doing anything illegal, then why should I worry? And I remember one time I asked, I said, What is the worst thing that could happen? And they said they will deport you. And for me, it was like "pftt" deport you is not, I mean, I spent the first 10 years in America, and I'm still thinking it's a temporary situation because I don't really want to be in America. For the others, I think they were more scared than me because I know a lot of time I will ask students for like simple things, you know, we have a leaflet, can you distribute the leaflet? And it's either they say no, or, like, okay, just give it to me, I'll do it later. And later, you discover that they didn't really do it because they were scared. … But for the students from here [Palestine] it's worse because if America deports you they're going to tell the Israelis why they deported you. And it's basically when they deport you you're handcuffed, you're handcuffed until you get to your destination. So the Israelis will know why you've been deported. And for Israel GUPS was the PLO and the PLO was forbidden. So students from here, they were more cautious for you know, the obvious reason I just told you. But for me, I don't know I wasn't really that worried about it. Or maybe, I mean, in my subconscious, maybe I wanted to be deported then go somewhere else (Mohammad Alatar interview with author).

[26] Brenner's book has been reviewed by several scholarly bodies including the Journal of Palestine Studies (Obenzinger 1983).

Alatar went on to narrate a common understanding of intensive security cooperation between Jordan and Israel. Given travel restrictions placed on Palestinians living in the occupied West Bank, those who needed to fly internationally had to receive permission to cross into Jordan to fly out of Amman. Palestinians would be interrogated at both sides of the border crossings by Jordanian and Israeli authorities separately, but each side shared information with the other. I asked for clarity from Alatar on his notion of law and order, and he noted that the police in the USA are expected to follow a system of rules and that one can seek legal aid and appeals to their treatment under the law, this does not mean that justice is served, rather that it is different from his experience with police in Jordan who did whatever they wanted to. Further, Alatar's reluctance to stay in the USA is a commonly held perspective. Many GUPS members wanted a university education so that they could then apply in the job markets elsewhere. Popular destinations included the Gulf states that had a booming petroleum industry, another thought was they would go back to where their families lived and start a career in the cities and communities they grew up in. Many also wanted to stay in the USA after graduation for a multitude of reasons. Some who stayed entered the labor markets of the USA and built their careers while others opened a business of their own. Others who stayed were refugees who escaped war, especially from Lebanon because of its civil war and Israeli invasions, and they had no option to go back.

The lingering possibility of arrest in the USA was yet another point of intimidation for GUPS members given the connection GUPS had to the PLO and the general climate of criminalizing Palestinian political activities across the USA, Israel and some Arab states. This is significant given the membership background of GUPS. Dr. Rabab Abdulhadi recounts that the majority of GUPS members were international students, and only a small fraction were

Palestinian-Americans. She recounts that many were Palestinians from Jordan, Lebanon and Syria, some came from Libya, Tunisia, and the Arabian Peninsula, a few came from Egypt and the '48 area, but the vast majority came from the West Bank. Loubna Qutami sites the GUPS USA membership roster as 4,617 in July of 1983 with 30% coming from Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon, 25% from the Gulf States, 20% from Jordan, 10% from the West Bank, 5% from Gaza, 5% from '48 Palestine, and 5% being US-born (Quatami 2021, 31). Khaldoun Ramadan puts the figure at approximately 6,000 members at the height of GUPS USA in 1988 across 65 to 68 chapters.

Students had to navigate the criminalization of Palestinian activism in the USA and the laws in their home countries. For example, Abdulhadi recounts,

> For Palestinians who are under Israel, who had Israeli citizenship, they were barred from doing anything Palestinian related to the PLO. So even if they were involved, they never ever went public and said, we are involved. Never. You may be involved, but you actually are not registered anywhere as a member, whether you voted or not is a question. They could never run for positions. Because you could go back and you could be thrown in prison, I mean, right away. So that was something that people did not do at all (Rabab Abdulhadi interview with author 2018).

She went on to explain that having an eye towards back home was especially important as many were not immigrants with goals of staying in the USA. They were in the USA on student visas to study and then go back home. She explained that when there were Palestinian-Americans that showed a commitment to organizing, they were usually taken under the wing of Palestinian leaders in GUPS. To mitigate harm, tasks were distributed to members based on what they excelled in and what they could get away with without being arrested when they went back home. That meant the person who delivered a speech publicly was not necessarily the person who wrote the speech, but rather was the person who spoke English well, was a better orator and was not at risk to lose their student visa. At times, the Palestinian-American members of GUPS

fit these requirements although there was no pattern or overwhelming preference that they be public figures. This was especially true given the limited numbers of Palestinian-American students in GUPS.

Gloria Khoury, a USA-born GUPS member in the San Francisco branch stated, “I was the only local board member who was born in the U.S. I was specifically responsible for recruiting Palestinian Americans and encouraging them to play a role within the student movement, teaching them about Palestine and making them feel an emotional commitment to the struggle” (Qutami 2021, 31). Qutami, in her published article on interviews with GUPS members, goes on to explain that Khoury "found the task difficult because the Palestinian students who were USA-born sometimes felt ambivalent or even fearful about joining the organization. This was in contrast to many of those born in the Arab world who did so from an automatic sense of allegiance to the Palestinian struggle" (Qutami 2021, 31). I asked Alatar, whose tasks included general recruitment, about how GUPS members who were USA-born citizens felt about their participation in political activities. Alatar recalls that family pressure played a huge role in gauging comfort level in participation.

> I think they were worried about how their family will react. And in the 80s, by the way, Palestinian Americans were not much different culturally than the ones who come from here [Palestine]. Especially with the girls that need to send your daughter to another city. It was, and now she's in trouble with the authority and will be alone. And I also think, for the older generation, I mean, my dad, he died, hating the PLO. And he always told me they are nothing but a bunch of thugs. Of course, I used to look at him like he's an old man doesn't know what the hell he's talking about. But now you could see it, you could rationalize what he was saying. And no, the PLO was not really an issue for Palestinian Americans. I think they were worried about their families more than they were worried about the authority and the PLO (Mohammad Alatar interview with author).

He goes on to explain that for Palestinian-Americans he knew in GUPS, many would openly claim to be in the PLO through their membership with GUPS. The students on a visa would not

dare do that for the consequences were too great both in the USA as non-citizens and back home. It was a source of cultural legitimacy for Palestinian-Americans to connect to Palestine since they did not grow up in the Arab world and did not necessarily speak Arabic well. Palestinian-Americans were not the only ones who expressed anxiety about their Palestinian identity. In our interview in a coffee shop in Ramallah, Alatar recounted how just 30 kilometers away in Jordan he remembers a time when "you would not say you are Palestinian. You worked on your accent so the Palestinian accent will not come out, so they will not know that you are Palestinian" (Mohammad Alatar interview with author). His response was to turn to activism to promote Palestinianism.

On Palestinian Students and the Racialized Police State

Ronald Reagan was the President of the USA for the majority of the existence of the GUPS USA branch and his administration had far-reaching impacts. The 1980s witnessed massive shifts in the politics of immigration deeply impacting the climate for Palestine advocacy. Many of these policies were embedded in ideals of American exceptionalism, anti-Arab, anti-Muslim and anti-Palestinian racism, and the weaponization of the agencies of the federal government in the Reagan Administration.

In the 1980s, the USA's policy was to re-invent its image with the world's political refugees amidst a public relations campaign against the USSR. In July of 1981, near the start of the Reagan Administration, he issued the "Statement on United States Immigration and Refugee Policy" outlining a commitment to reform immigration and refugee policy. As he put it "Our nation is a nation of immigrants. More than any other country, our strength comes from our own immigrant heritage and our capacity to welcome those from other lands. No free and prosperous nation can by itself accommodate all those who seek a better life or flee persecution. We must

share this responsibility with other countries" (Reagan 1981). His statements of course obfuscate the history of settler colonialism and deportation in the USA. But his policy objectives were clear, he wanted fairer asylum and immigration policies and for other countries to take their share in accepting refugees and immigrants, he also wanted to put a stop to illegal and undocumented immigration in the USA. The next year, in its ruling in Plyer v. Doe, 457 U.S. 202 (1982) the Supreme Court made it illegal to deny free entry into all K-12 public schools based on immigration status. In 1986, Reagan signed into law the Immigration Reform and Control Act which provided a route for legal residency to nearly 3 million people already living and working in the USA without official immigration papers or those who overstayed their visas. The catch was he would increase the policing of undocumented and illegal immigration moving forward by making it illegal for companies to knowingly hire undocumented workers. Rabab Abdulhadi received her US citizenship through this policy after living in the USA for over a decade in violation of her entry student visa. Though GUPS had no official system in place to support students with legal aid regarding immigration and visa paperwork.

The next year, in 1987 Los Angeles, the USA arrested six Palestinian men and a Palestinian-Kenyan married couple under charges brought forth through the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) of 1952, also known as the McCarran-Walter Act. Those arrested became known as the LA8. The McCarran-Walter Act set the foundation for current immigration law as it laid out definitions and procedures still in use today. It ended race-based exclusion of immigrants, specifically the exclusion of Asian immigrants, it imposed a racialized immigration quota system that lasted until 1965 and incorporated ideological grounds for immigration exclusion and deportation which targeted communists that would last until the 1990s (Campi 2004). David Cole, their lawyer from the Center for Constitutional Rights (CCR), reported that

"the eight were accused of being members of, or supporting, an organization that advocated 'world communism'- specifically the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), one of the constituent organizations of the PLO" (Cole and Bennis 1996, 41). The lead attorney for the LA8 Dan Stormer commented "From the time of the McCarran-Walter's inception until the present Reagan Administration, not a single attorney general, until Edwin Meese, has been willing to use this law to deport aliens" (Soble 1988). The fact that the Reagan Administration did so was a maneuver in its battle with Congress. At the time Reagan was implementing an escalation of US policing power through his counterterrorism agenda across the federal government. Reagan fought to keep the right to deport people based on their ideological positions which he saw as another tool in his arsenal as head of the Executive branch tasked to administer and enforce federal laws and because he was a Cold War ideologue and committed to McCarthyism. Reagan worked to weaponize immigration policy into the policing mechanism of the state. Congress, meanwhile, exercised its constitutional power to set immigration law and, since 1984, representatives in Congress have pushed to revoke the ideological exclusion provision with mixed enthusiasm. In January of 1987 Reagan's administration had the LA8 arrested under the exact provision Congress was threatening to revoke, a last-ditch effort to push his weight around and assert Presidential dominance. But 11 months later, in December of 1987, with the signing of the Foreign Relations Authorization Act (FRRA) Congress prohibited the deportation and denial of entry based on "any past, current, or expected beliefs, statements, or associations which would be protected under the Constitution if engaged in by a U.S. citizen in the United States," it was marked as win for Free Speech rights to general American audiences (U.S. Congress 1987). At the same time, it added an exceptions clause that non-citizens can be deported or denied entry for reasons "such as national security purposes, or criminal or terrorist

activity," in doing so, reifying US logics of empire and racialized notions of violence and resistance (U.S. Congress 1987). Eliminating any confusion on the matter, title 10 of the FRRA, labeled the Anti-Terrorism Act of 1987, "determines that the PLO is a terrorist organization and a threat to the interests of the United States, and should not benefit from operating in the United States" (U.S. Congress 1987). Free speech would not include Palestine. Further still, in 1988 Congress amended its free speech clause to exclude immigrants seeking residency but secured free speech rights to "nonimmigrants" in the USA on a temporary basis such as students or transient workers who will return to their home country (Henthorne 1990). While Palestinian international students were given breathing room through this ruling, the government applied different criminal charges against them to achieve their goal of deportation.

Palestine and the PLO took center stage as Palestinians in the USA fought for their right to support Palestine. Given the status of the charges and the deportation proceedings in the LA8 case, they were taken to immigration court, a division of the Department of Justice in the Executive branch. At the same time, the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC) along with the LA8 challenged the provisions in the McCarran-Walter Act in Federal Court in ADC et. al v. Meese 714 F. Supp. 1060 (1989) and achieved a major victory. The Federal Court ruled that "all aliens who are legally within the United States are protected by the First Amendment" and that "the McCarran-Walter provisions are substantially overboard in violation of the First Amendment" (A.D.C. v Meese 1989). This did not stop the Reagan administration in Immigration Court. The INS dropped the McCarran-Walter Act charges on the LA8 of supporting "world communism" and instead charged the six who were non-US-residents with visa violations including not taking enough university credits on a student visa and working without authorization at a convenience store, and it charged the two permanent US residents with

associating with an organization the PFLP that advocates the destruction of property. It would soon be found out that the INS initiated the deportation proceedings at the urging of the FBI, and that “in one document, the FBI specifically urges the deportation of one of the eight because he is ‘intelligent, aggressive, and has great leadership ability,’ and therefore incapacitating him would hamper the group” (Georgetown University Law Center et al. 1999). Cole reports that public outrage was widespread nationally and that “the government’s expectation that the eight would be isolated because of their involvement with Palestinian issues was miscalculated” (Cole, and Bennis 1996). Significantly, Cole’s report addressed the climate of fear the American government knew it was fomenting and the chilling effect it worked to inspire.

This came to a head when the government's plan to detain and intern thousands of immigrants from six Arab countries and Iran was leaked to one of the lawyers of the LA8. Received in an unmarked envelope, the 40-page report had originated from within the INS developed by Group IV of the INS’ Alien Border Control Committee which was disbanded once the report was exposed. The plan was to intern nearly 10,000 legal immigrants from Libya, Iran, Syria, Lebanon, Tunisia, Algeria, Jordan and Morocco in a massive outdoor detention facility of 100 acres in Louisiana hosting 5,000 people at a time until they could be deported. The report included emergency measures of rescinding the right to post bond, excluding the public from deportation hearings, and the wide-scale use of confidential evidence in court. The Reagan administration claimed it was a hypothetical strategy of its counterterrorism agenda. The bureaucrats who drafted the plan stated in interviews that they were shocked that the INS would be retooled as a "terrorist-fighting organization" but still went along with drafting the plan as a standard technical procedure (Wofford 2016). The report made clear that the USA was prepared to enact massive violence against those they disagree with.

Michel Shehadeh, one of the LA8, was a student activist at California State at Long Beach (CSLB) when he was arrested. He discusses his experience during the LA8 trials in a published interview conducted by Joan Mandell in 1996. Mandell is an oral historian and documentary filmmaker, and for 20 years she served on the editorial board of *Middle East Report* a journal that publishes critiques of Zionism and USA imperialism in the region. In the interview, Shehadeh provided an analysis of the treatment Palestinian students faced as he responded to her question, "there were many other student activists. Why do you think you were singled out?".

> It is very simple, I was a vocal person. I was organizing. I was educating about the Palestinians and criticizing US policy in the Middle East. We were achieving a certain degree of success. At CSLB, we were the first university to get a decision from the students, faculty and administration to declare sister university status with Birzeit University. We were making front page news for our activities. We were visible within the community, organizing *haflahs* (social events) and so on. The FBI and other enforcement agencies were spying on these activities.
>
> In a report by Frank Knight, from the FBI office responsible for the Arab American community here, he reports that he along with another agent from New York, was inside one of these *haflahs* in a secret chamber, taking photographs, taping and taking notes. He submitted a 64-page report based on his surveillance as evidence that we are terrorists. If anything would prove our innocence, it is these reports. He claims that we were chanting and singing militaristic songs, dressed in terrorist clothes, so therefore we must be terrorists. The judge said that it was 'outrageous' for someone, who does not even speak Arabic, to go to these *haflahs*, and decide these people are terrorists on the basis of the tone of their songs and the color of their attire (Cole and Bennis 1996, 43).

Shehadeh's analysis addresses an important phenomenon of the police targeting successful community activist leaders. The targeting of leaders by the police is not unique to Palestinian organizing, it is a standard strategy to dismantle institutions. As the metaphor goes, cut off the head and the body follows. This is especially true of the charismatic leadership phenomenon, as defined by Max Weber, where an individual's capability to inspire action, loyalty and cohesion

were driving determinations of who was promoted into the ranks of leadership (Weber 1978/1922).

Despite the climate of surveillance and fear the FBI worked towards, Palestinian organizing continued. GUPS organizing increased around the start of the Intifada in late 1987 inspiring a rush of activities in the USA that would last two to three years. Organizing strategies remained largely the same with rallies, lectures, pamphlets, and commemorative events, but the Intifada motivated people and membership activity increased. This was a much-needed spark to the organization since membership in GUPS was deeply impacted by political changes among the Palestinian parties. In 1983, only three years after the GUPS USA branch's founding, supporters of Fatah, which were a majority of the GUPS membership, experienced leadership change in Lebanon that would stymie the group. Musa Muragha (Abu Musa) and Khalid al-Amiah (Abu Khalid), troubled over Yasser Arafat's leadership of Fatah and the PLO, formed a new party, Fatah al-Intifada, creating a schism in Fatah. Khaldoun Ramadan recalls that many of the lead organizers in the USA who were supporters of Fatah sided with Abu Musa. Supporters of the PFLP developed a political relationship with them, and both Fatah al-Intifada and PFLP were backed by Syria which upset other parties that saw it as foreign intervention. Supporters of the DFLP and supporters of Fatah that backed Yasser Arafat disagreed with this political turn. Ramadan says this manifested into "two GUPS", so to speak, which complicated organizing. It would not be until the Intifada that their activities reunited, and that too lasted 2 or 3 years until an escalation in FBI harassment slowed organizing.

Khaldoun Ramadan, GUPS USA branch Vice President, recalls FBI harassment of GUPS escalating in 1990 with the first Gulf War. He says, "I remember in the early 90s when Bush the father started the offensive into Iraq, I was in Chicago and I remember that the supports of

Sha'biyyah (PFLP) and Fatah closed their centers and went home because of the harassment of course" (Khaldoun Ramadan interview with author). Others state that party supporters did not close their offices but rather practiced greater oversight on who could access them. FBI harassment would be personal too. As he stated, "you know, they came to my house, they used to come almost every day in the morning at six o'clock to my apartment. Okay, every morning, just to bother you, just to let you feel that they are there" (Khaldoun Ramadan interview with author). I asked about any arrests but he could not recall any. But he emphasized the fear the FBI worked to instill in the organizers. He also emphasized that this harassment was routine, and organizers were trained in how to handle questioning and interrogation by the authorities.

> Khaldoun: I remember we in Chicago [1990 or 1991], we brought that guy [Ramsey Clark, former U.S. Attorney General, civil and human rights lawyer and anti-war activist]. We made a huge gathering in support against the war in Iraq, and we brought Ramsey Clark to speak. And there were about 20 to 30 FBI cars around the lecture hall where the people are gathering, trying to scare people. A lot of people got scared, like "don't talk to me."
>
> Saliem: They're telling you "don't talk to me" because if they talk to you the police will know that (he finishes my sentence).
>
> Khaldoun: The FBI will know that we know them. They will go and, and I'm sure they get a lot of help from collaborators. We don't know.
>
> Saliem: In the FBI records they say that there are collaborators, informants. It's in the record.
>
> Khaldoun: Yeah, they came to my house, "oh Mr. Khaldoun, good morning, How are you?" And one time they came to my apartment, and they knocked on the door. Maybe I went to sleep at 2 or 3 o'clock in the morning, I was asleep, I did not wake up. My wife went and she opened the door, and they wanted to come inside. She put her feet [to block them from opening the door] and told them "I'll call my husband." She woke me up. She was joking, "go see your lovers, they came over again." I woke up. We used to have a newspaper that came from Beirut called *al-Hurriya* [DFLP-affiliated newspaper]. They were stacked near the door of the apartment, about 100 or 200 copies. He said, "what's this." I said "*al-Hurriya*, do you want a copy? You got to pay me $2." He said, "no we want to talk to you about supporting Iraq." I told him "listen, go talk to my lawyer. You know him and he knows you. Go talk to him. I'm sleepy, I want to go to sleep." You know we were

> trained how to deal with them. But they were very active. They were scared, they were active. They need information. They were afraid in some sense that the Iraqis would do something in the United States (Khaldoun Ramadan interview with author).

Khaldoun Ramadan's account shows that police/FBI harassment operated on a collective basis by showing up at events, and also operated at the individual level by harassing people at their homes. In our interview, Ramadan noted that the police and FBI used to come to his door several times a month, and many times daily. He assessed that the FBI wanted him to know what they were doing, they wanted to disturb him, and they wanted him to feel watched. Not all surveillance operated so openly, much of it was also clandestine.

What I have presented so far about FBI surveillance is from the experiences of the organizers themselves. They experienced first-hand the coordinated surveillance efforts. What they could not know was the extent to which this was orchestrated by the FBI since the records were confidential. In 1995, six years after the initial FOIA filing, Dan Freedman, a newspaper reporter, received heavily redacted FBI documents detailing their surveillance of GUPS from 1979-1989. In 1996 he shared the documents with James X. Dempsey who at the time was the Deputy Director of the Center for National Security Studies and Assistant Counsel to the House Judiciary Committee's Subcommittee on Civil and Constitutional Rights focusing on privacy, FBI oversight, and surveillance issues (Stanford University 2023). Dempsey later donated these documents to the National Security Archive at George Washington University where I accessed them. 1,502 pages detail the FBI's efforts to spy and collect information on GUPS. The FBI reports include collections of newspapers and flyers produced by GUPS; agents' reports on GUPS conferences and public talks; photos of and quotes from GUPS members as well as background checks; reports of informant's testimonies as well as interrogations and questioning of various members; FBI's assessments of alleged threat risks of GUPS; and FBI collaboration

with local police forces. Dempsey analyzed the information-gathering strategy of the FBI on GUPS. He and David Cole noted that the use of informants was a main strategy of infiltration, "A memo explained that, based on the large number of interviews conducted, those members not personally contacted were made aware of the FBI's 'interest' in the organization. Others were propositioned by the FBI to serve as informants on GUPS activities, and the agents noted where GUPS members refused to do so" (Cole and Dempsey 2006, 56). The documents are heavily redacted and, at the time of their circulation, were stamped secret for FBI use only. Several documents refer to their objectives "(1) Ascertain the formation of the new GUPS subchapters throughout the United States; and (2) Determine the identity and whereabouts of GUPS leaders" (CNSS C). FBI agents surveilled GUPS activities across the nation. They did so in the full knowledge that GUPS was organized "for the purposes of providing assistance to Palestinian students in their education and settlement in the United States and to report, explain, correct and spread the Palestinian cause to all persons" (CNSS A). It is not accidental that the FBI would find it dangerous for Palestinians to organize even something as fundamental as community support. To the USA policing apparatus, it was their understanding that any Palestinian organizing was dangerous. Dempsey and Cole analyzed how widespread and far up this policing mechanism went in the government.

> The GUPS case further illustrated the limitation of the oversight mechanisms. The congressional committees never objected to the investigation. Indeed, it is not clear that anyone in Congress ever knew of the investigation's existence. If the intelligence committees posed any questions about the case privately, they had no impact. None of the monitoring and infiltration techniques used in the case required court approval. The Office of Intelligence Policy and Review (OIPR) in the Justice Department, which received periodic reports on the case, let it proceed *for five years* before pointing out that the FBI's summaries did not specify any facts showing that GUPS was involved in international terrorism. The FBI responded, "FBIHQ is confident that such information is available but perhaps not properly articulated [in the report to OIPR].' Headquarters promised to submit a supplemental report. OIPR

> allowed the case to continue for another five years until 1989 (Cole and Dempsey 2006, 56).

What we know is that once this FBI campaign on surveillance ended in 1989, their efforts would be immediately transferred to surveillance surrounding anti-war activism of the First Gulf War where a focus on GUPS once again emerged. GUPS remained under the FBI's watch.

Here are some examples of the FBI's surveillance of GUPS from 1979-1989. In 1982, the FBI increased surveillance on GUPS in Texas as they believed General Dynamics in Fort Worth, Texas would be a likely target for attack. General Dynamics had just finished production and delivery of 75 F-16 war jets to Israel which they used in Lebanon against the PLO. The FBI report describes sabotage and espionage plots stemming from the international students at the University of Texas Arlington numbering 2,000 and mostly from Middle Eastern countries but adds the qualification that these plots are unsubstantiated rumors despite their best investigative efforts. In their attempts to document everything, they document lies that sound plausible from a mindset that already presumes Arabs, Palestinians, Muslims and Iranians as enemies of the state. Further, what strikes me is the level of detail they provide regarding the arguments held between GUPS members. For example, this same document detailing a risk assessment of an attack on General Dynamics goes into detail on a fistfight between GUPS members from different parties over the refusal to display a photograph of Yasser Arafat at their table during the university's International Day rally (CNSS B). Its relevance is clear, they were documenting friction among GUPS to find a leverage point, and divide and conquer is a tested and successful strategy. Another document details their assessment of the failures of GUPS as a political group. "Historically speaking, GUPS-USA has been virtually non-active in the United States political system. Quite Frankly, GUPS-USA Palestinian Leadership has not been as sophisticated or constructive in its analysis of the potential benefits of attending United States

Democratic/Republican National Conventions" (CNSS D). GUPS efforts were placed on grassroots organizing rather than political lobbying. Their strategies reflect the mistrust Palestinian students had of Congress as an Israel-supporting institution. Still, the FBI observed that Congressional lobbying held immense political sway which they perceived was underutilized by GUPS as a sign of its inadequacy. The FBI viewed GUPS as a recruitment base for Palestinian international students and classified them as a foreign organization given the fact that most of their members were on F-1 visas. Their overt surveillance of GUPS was likely intended to scare the students into rejecting and abandoning the organization. With time, this disrupted recruitment and political capacity and achieved their main goal of weakening GUPS and keeping them exhausted.

In conclusion, this chapter has addressed the structural factors and ideological positions that have played major roles in the development, activities, and policing of GUPS-USA and its membership. Its everyday organizing of GUPS as it connects to Palestinianness, and the impact of racialized state policing mechanisms on the organization. Despite all the obstacles they faced, GUPS mobilized thousands of students across the USA developing a bond among the organizers that many times transcended political lines. We should also recognize that many international students on F-1 visas worked to build their lives in the USA and formally immigrated. GUPS in the USA existed long enough to establish intergenerational love for the organization. As a more recent GUPS member at San Francisco State University (SFSU), Anonymous #6, born in 1994, remembers, "as a kid, when I would visit my sisters on campus, it was a golden era I would say. There used to be protests, and there would be like thousands of people who show up at the protests, and it's not students, it's the whole community. I remember seeing my aunts show up, my family friends' aunts and uncles, and elders were showing up. And that's something I don't

see now anymore" (Anonymous #6 group interview with author and Dr. Abdulhadi). Anonymous #6 grew up witnessing an anomaly, the GUPS she knew, the San Francisco GUPS, persisted at the same time GUPS-USA dissipated and collapsed after the signing of the Oslo Accords in 1993 and 1995. As Khaldoun Ramadan put it, it was like a hydrogen bomb going off. The Accords would be the product of secret negotiations, it "was not a peace treaty; rather its aim was to establish interim governance arrangements and a framework to facilitate further negotiations for a final agreement, which would be concluded by the end of 1999" (Damen 2013). The Accords created the Palestinian Authority and gave it very limited governance over the occupied Palestinian territories that would remain militarily occupied. It also contributed to the decline of the PLO as the representative of the Palestinian people. As GUPS was a PLO Popular Organization its framework collapsed. People were confused and demoralized, monetary and political support from the Palestinian parties stopped, and leaders and members of GUPS gave up in frustration or shifted their efforts elsewhere. GUPS, like any student movement, can only exist if people are willing to lead and mentor a constant stream of students. Why SFSU was able to hold on to GUPS and remain its last chapter in the USA, even as other GUPS chapters at other Bay Area universities shut down is not clear. Some argue it has to do with the political affiliations in San Francisco that were entirely against the Accords from the start, so they rejected any changes it elicited. Others argue it was too strong of a cultural icon that young students were unwilling to part with the opportunity to claim GUPS as their own, just as their role models had done before them.

CONCLUSION

A main argument of this dissertation is that the General Union of Palestine Students (GUPS) provided a medium to generate diasporic connections. Trends in Palestinian studies have resisted applying diasporic frameworks to analyze Palestinian communities, this is due to the argument that it distracts from the ongoing political struggle for a Right of Return. If this concern is addressed head on, I suggest that it is safe to use the term diaspora when discussing Palestinians, and that it can expand our understanding of Palestinian ways of being. In this regard, my focus on Palestinian students is a means to understand their role in the liberation movement, their connection to wider political institutions, and their shared consciousness as anti-colonial actors. There exists great plurality among Palestinian students' ideologies, this contributed to the flow of ideas and defined their shared identities rather than isolating them. The unifying factor was that Palestine's liberation remained an uncompromising commitment.

This dissertation consisted of five body chapters. I presented theories of Palestinian diasporas. While diaspora has historically been paired with Jewish archetypes, current diasporic theories have transgressed this notion of a dispersed people seeking return to a homeland. Diasporic frameworks have expanded to an understanding of the exchange of ideas, and the effects of powers on lived experiences and how this impacts individual and shared identities. I discussed Zionism as a settler-colonial project that led to the mass dispersal of Palestinians. I also discussed Palestinian racialization within the diaspora and its relation to colonialism and imperialism. This materialized in American academic discourses that have cast Palestinians outside of the body politic of the US, labeled Palestinian resistance as terrorist acts, and treated Palestine as an issue of competing nationalisms rather than an anti-colonial issue. I also provided an ethnographic analysis of my research methods, and described how conducting fieldwork in

Palestine is constrained by the Israeli occupation. I discuss the issues of entry into Palestine, limited mobility given the series of internal checkpoints that close without notice, and the concerns of conducting student-based research given that Israel has criminalized student activism. I discussed the collaborative interviews Dr. Rabab Abdulhadi and I conducted together, as well as the research institutions I visited to reference their materials and archives.

The three chapters devoted to GUPS outline the various ways that they structured diasporic connections. First, I discuss how the popularity of Pan-Arabism and Palestinian Nationalism in the 1950s led to the establishment of GUPS. This effort was led by the Palestinian students in Egypt who were influenced by Gamal Abdel Nasser, and connected to the Palestinian student organizers in Lebanon, Syria, and Iraq. Without these ideologies, Nasser and the influx of Palestinian students into Egypt, GUPS would not have formed. In 1964 GUPS joined the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) as its exclusive student-based Popular Organization. Across the 1960s-1980s where Palestinians went to study, they formed and/or joined GUPS chapters and branches. Two exceptions to this model existed. First, Palestinian students in the USA joined the Pan-Arab group the Organization of Arab Students from 1950s into the late 1970s. As political tension in the PLO amplified in the 1970s, and as other Arab groups resisted the leading role Palestinians had in the OAS, the Palestinian groups decided to break away from the OAS and establish a GUPS branch in the USA. It remains debated whether this shift was a grassroots effort, or a directive from Yasser Arafat and the PLO, and my research indicated that it is most likely that both factors were key to its establishment. Further, a GUPS branch did not emerge in Palestine. I lay out theories of why that was the case. This includes that the students in Palestine were given autonomy by the political parties they were members of to organize on campus, that student councils functioned as organizations to collectivize their

efforts, and that joining GUPS meant dealing with the PLO and Fatah's dominance within it. This highlighted that GUPS operated as a diasporic organization at a time when the PLO, another diasporic organization, was leading the Palestinian liberation movement. As such, Palestinians on the outside were representing the Palestinian people on an international scale. Palestinians in the homeland had their own political structures that were connected to the Palestinian international but did not take a leading role until the Intifada, but they also had to face direct confrontations with Israeli forces on a daily basis that was spared on Palestinians abroad.

Further, I discussed how systems of scholarships across the globe, relations with the Palestine Liberation Organization, military engagement, and the material conditions of Palestinian student migration impacted Palestinian diasporas and the presence of GUPS globally. Within the nexus of the political economy of higher education and the Palestinian liberation movement, GUPS carved out a leading role. I described the political and economic conditions in China, Egypt, Jordan, Kuwait, Pakistan, the USSR and the wider Soviet Bloc, and the United States of America. Socialist educational policies and support for Palestine were major reasons for the generous aid issued to Palestinian students. These policies trained a generation of students and connected thousands of them together from all parts of the globe which broke the isolation that many experienced. The USA also had robust need-based assistance programs which Palestinian students utilized, the USA model was different from that of the socialist states and going to the West required a support system that GUPS provided. Then I discussed the political organizing and advocacy GUPS members did in the USA branch. I discussed the relationship students had between the campus, the community, and Third World Internationalism. I also discussed the major events GUPS organized on how they inspired shared Palestinian identity in the anti-colonial struggle. I also discussed the resource management skills of GUPS chapters.

Importantly, I analyzed how racialized state policing mechanisms adversely impacted the organizing of GUPS. The LA8 case, and FBI surveillance were key features of how this policing was operationalized by the state.

Implications of this dissertation on further research.

A main methodology I apply is analyzing what is happening in US politics, Arab states and the Palestinian Liberation Organization to understand the actions of Palestinians in the USA. This is significant given that many members of GUPS in the USA branch were Palestinians in the USA and not Palestinian-Americans. Further, their work was focused on Palestinian liberation where the PLO as a diasporic and democratic framework was making strides. In turn, their organizing was international and required an internationalist lens while keeping track of what was happening in the communities they lived. This multi-sited mode of analysis is key to understanding other Arab organizing taking place at the time in the USA; examples can include the United Auto Workers (UAW) organizing in Detroit in the 1970s led by Arabs, and the Arab Grocers Association which emerged in the San Francisco Bay Area. Further, as I discussed earlier, there was one exception to the historical note that GUPS did not form in Palestine. Wissam Rafeedie commented that in 1967 a chapter formed, despite all others saying it did not. Further research is needed to trace this led to and figure out how this fact was kept out of the historical narrative, or if this story is myth. Some myths have entered the narrative of GUPS that spread widely. The one that surprised me while conducting this research surrounded Yasser Arafat. Since I learned about GUPS in 2015, I have been told that Yasser Arafat founded GUPS. If you look at when he graduated and when GUPS formed, the dates do not line up, but it was dismissed from the narrative so that he could still be credited with the association. But what I came to learn is that it was the Ba'athist students in Egypt that led the efforts to form GUPS in

1959. Arafat is credited with establishing the prestige of the PSU that was needed to place it as a leading figure among the other Palestinian student groups, but Arafat was in Kuwait working on forming the Fatah movement when GUPS was created. The myth of Arafat as the embodiment of the Palestinian struggle enmeshed itself into GUPS's history. That GUPS was predominantly led by Fatah party members after 1966 surely added to the appeal to credit Arafat and bind him indefinitely to the organization. I am not clear at what point this occurred, 64 years have passed, and so much has changed in the Palestinian liberation movement. It highlights the need to focus on beginnings and to trace historical arcs.

APPENDIX
LIST OF INTERVIEWS

Individual interviews conducted by Author:

Anan Quzman	Moved to the UK in 2002 from Palestine and was a youth activist among a coalition of university students in the Manchester area. He worked on BDS campaigns and connecting the Right to Education campaign internationally. Interview conducted in person in Ramallah, Palestine on March 27, 2022.
Anonymous Interview #1	Interview with an international researcher and Ph.D. student at a US university. Conducted in Ramallah, Palestine on April 2, 2022.
Anonymous Interview #2	Interview with an international researcher and Ph.D. student at a US university. Conducted in Ramallah, Palestine on April 7, 2022.
Anonymous Interview #3	Interview with a Palestinian who was a student at Birzeit University from 2000-2004 during the Al Aqsa (Second) Intifada.
Anonymous Interview #8	Interview with a former legal researcher with Al-Haq. Conducted in Birzeit, Palestine on May, 24, 2022.
Anonymous Interview #9	Visiting researcher at Birzeit University. Was the spokesperson for GUPS in France 2008-2010. He was also a member of the Palestinian Youth Movement. Interview conducted in Birzeit on June 13, 2022.
Carmen Keshek	At the time she was the coordinator of the Right to Education Campaign at Birzeit University. Interview conducted in person at Birzeit University on April 6, 2022.
Ghada Almadbouh	She is the Palestine Director of Research at the Palestinian American Research Center in Ramallah, Palestine. She is a professor at the Department of Political Science at Birzeit University. Interview conducted in person in Birzeit and Ramallah, Palestine on March 7, 2022 and June 7, 2022.
Khaldoun Ramadan	Member of the GUPS executive committee, and GUPS Vice President in the USA. He was part of the preparatory committee that formed the GUPS USA branch. Joined GUPS in 1979 and left in 1985/6. Interview conducted in person in San Francisco, CA on July 23, 2022.

Laurie Brand	Professor Emerita at the University of Southern California. She wrote her Ph.D. dissertation on GUPS and later published it as a book. Interview conducted online on March 7, 2022.
Lisa Taraki	Professor at Birzeit University. She was one of the co-founders of the legal assistance services in 1988 that would eventually form into the Right to Education Campaign at Birzeit University. Interview conducted online on April 4, 2022.
Loubna Qutami	Professor at UCLA. Researcher on the Palestinian Youth Movement and GUPS. And was a member of GUPS at SFSU during her undergrad and masters until she graduated in 2013. Interview conducted online on March 24, 2017.
Louis Hazboun	The priest of the Catholic church in Birzeit, Palestine. Interview conducted in person at the church on April 2, 2022.
Mjriam Abu Samra	Postdoc researcher at UC Davis. She completed her Ph.D. in 2021 from Oxford University on the history of GUPS. Interview conducted in person in Amman, Jordan on June 19, 2022.
Mohammad Alatar	Palestinian documentary film maker. Alatar was a member of GUPS USA branch in Illinois and later Texas from 1987-1988. Two interviews conducted in person in Ramallah on March 8 and March 20, 2022.
Muddar Kassis	Professor at Birzeit University and until 2021 was the director of the Muwatin Institute for Democracy and Human Rights. He studied in Moscow from 1984-1992 and as a college student would work tangentially with GUPS but was not a member. Interview conducted online on March 28, 2022.
Nadera Shalhoub-Kevorkian	Professor at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Interview conducted on April 28, 2022.
Nettanel Slyomovics	Journalist at Ha'aretz and lecturer of communications and journalism at Haifa University. Interview conducted online on May 9, 2022.
Rabab Abdulhadi	Professor and director of Arab and Muslim Ethnicities and Diasporas (AMED) studies at SFSU. She was a mentor and advisor to GUPS USA in the 1980s and the SFSU chapter of GUPS at SFSU upon joining the university in 2006. Interview conducted at SFSU on August 17, 2018.

Rana Barakat	Professor at Birzeit University and director of the Birzeit University Museum. Two interviews conducted on April 20 and April 21, 2022.
Rania Jawad	Professor at Birzeit University and Director of the Institute of Women's Studies. Interview conducted in person in Birzeit on April 5, 2022.
Rula Abu Duhou	Lecturer at Birzeit University in the Institute of Women's Studies. Former Palestinian political prisoner. Two interviews conducted in Birzeit on March 29 and April 19, 2022.
Tala Nasser	Local Advocacy Officer at Addameer: Prisoner Support and Human Rights Association. Interview conducted in Ramallah, Palestine on May 27, 2022.
Walid Salem	Lecturer at Al-Quds University teaching in the master's program on Jerusalem studies and is the managing editor of Al-Quds's journal on Jerusalem studies. Was a student at Birzeit university from 1975-1984 though his time there was not continuous as he was incarcerated as a political prisoner. Interview conducted in Ramallah, Palestine on May 18, 2022.
Wisam Rafeedie	Lecturer at Bethlehem University in the department of Social Science. Former editor of the student newspaper of the PFLP *Altaqaddom*. He was a student leader of the PFLP at Birzeit University while he was in university from 1979 to 1988. Former political prisoner. Interview conducted in Bethlehem, Palestine on March 30, 200

Individual interviews conducted by Author and Dr. Rabab Abdulhadi jointly:

Fariz Mehdawy	Mehdawy is the current ambassador on behalf of the Palestinian Authority to China. He was the elected President of the GUPS branch in Hyderabad, Pakistan. In 1975 he joined the Administrative Council of GUPS as the representative of Pakistan branch and the all-Asia chapter. In 1983 he joined the Executive Committee of GUPS. Twice he served as the GUPS reserved seat representative in Palestine National Council of the PLO in 1984 and 1988. Interview conducted online on June 25, 2022.
Mohammad Hammad	Hammad joined GUPS at SFSU in 2012 and became the president in 2013. Interview conducted online on June 10, 2021.
Nasser Al-Kidwa	Al-Kidwa joined GUPS in its branch in Belgrade, Yugoslavia and joined its Administrative Committee before transferring to Cairo,

	Egypt in 1969. In 1973 he was voted into the Executive Committee of GUPS international and served as Foreign Relations officer. He was then elected the President of GUPS international until leaving the organization in 1985. He formerly sat on Fatah's Central Committee and was appointed the permanent observer of the PLO (and later Palestine) to the UN. He is the nephew of Yaser Arafat. Interview conducted online on March 31, 2022.

Group interviews conducted by Author and Dr. Rabab Abdulhadi jointly:

July 23, 2021, Interview with Jackie Husary and Loubna Qutami:

Loubna Qutami	Professor at UCLA. Researcher on Palestinian youth and student organizing. And was a member and leader of GUPS at SFSU during her undergrad starting in 2003 until she graduated with her masters in 2013. Interview conducted online on March 24, 2017.
Jackie Husary	Joined GUPS at San Francisco State University in 2005 where she completed her undergrad in 2009. She was an active leader in GUPS at SFSU for years. And enrolled for the master's program in Ethnic Studies graduating in 2015.

July 29, 2021, Interview with Zacharia Barghouti, Anonymous #6 and Anonymous #7:

Anonymous #6	Member and co-president of GUPS at SFSU from 2013-2018.
Anonymous #7	Was the co-president of GUPS at SFSU from 2012-2013.
Zacharia Barghouti	Was the co-president of GUPS at SFSU from 2012-2013.

November 3, 2021, Interview with Abdelhamid Siyam, Maher Abdelqader, Mary Harb, and Anonymous #4:

Anonymous #4	This person joined GUPS in 1982 as a Ph.D. student at Michigan State University (MSU). They organized with the Peace Education Center and co-founded the Middle East Awareness Committee (MEAC) as an official task force of the Center.
Abdelhamid Siyam	Siyam was a student at New York University in 1976 and joined the Organization of Arab Students. He helped form GUPS in the USA in 1979 and joined the organization. He is a lecturer at Rutgers University and a journalist accredited with the United Nations.
Maher Abdelqader	Abdelqader came to the USA in 1982 to study at the University of New Haven and later New York University. He joined GUPS in the USA but his first interaction with them was in Beirut. He currently manages an engineering company in New York.
Mary Harb	Harb came to the USA in 1964 with her family. In 1984 she helped establish the Palestinian Woman Association. She is affiliated with the United States Palestinian Community Network. She worked as a registered nurse.

November 10, 2021, Interview with Hatem Bazian, Abdelhamid Siyam, Anonymous #4, and Anonymous #5:

Abdelhamid Siyam	See Above
Hatem Bazian	Bazian came to San Francisco in 1985 and joined San Francisco State University. He worked in Palestinian political organizing in the area. He worked closely with GUPS but did not join them. He was president of the Associated Students at SFSU. He joined the board of the United States Students Association and chaired its National People of Color Student Coalition. He is a co-founder and Professor at Zaytuna College and a lecturer at UC Berkeley.
Anonymous #4	See Above
Anonymous #5	Came to the USA in 1986 and attended college at the University of Massachusetts Amherst where they established a branch of the Palestine Solidarity Committee.

June 27, 2022
Interview with Abdelhamid Siyam and George Bitar:

Abdelhamid Siyam	See Above
George Bitar	Bitar came to the USA in 1972 to attend Villanova University in Pennsylvania and quickly joined the Organization of Arab Students rising to sit on its National Executive Committee and its Vice President.

Discussion and planning series with students from the Right to Education at Birzeit University
April 19, 2022
May 5, 2022
May 14, 2022

May 21, 2022	Closed webinar co-organized by myself, Arab and Muslim Ethnicities and Diasporas (AMED) studies, National Students for Justice in Palestine, Right to Education at Birzeit University. *How Palestinian students and Palestine advocates are under attack, criminalizing our campuses from Palestine to Turtle Island*.

Interviews conducted by others:

Interview with Asad Abdel Qadir, whose nom de guerre is Salah Ta'amri, conducted by Learn Palestine and published on Dec. 12, 2016. Learn Palestine's series "The Palestinian Revolution" conducted over 80 interviews of Palestinian's experience in the revolutionary movement from 1948 to 1982. The project is led by Professor Karma Nabulsi at the University of Oxford. Salah Ta'amri was a member of GUPS in Egypt when he joined the commando forces to fight against Israel in the 1967 war. Accessible from: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=whTjgzpxcx0

Interview with Mohammad Ibrahim Awad conducted by Learn Palestine and published on September 28, 2016. Mohammad Ibrahim was a leader of the Fatah student division. Accessible in five parts from: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yqH0esRy0FM;

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aaXoORPaM5s;
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ilzwXAOye0g;
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6H32p6sjqF8; and
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KnJs3WJ8iSQ

Interview with Mjriam Abu Samra conducted by National Students for Justice in Palestine on March 24, 2021. This was a closed session for SJP members only. It was titled *Students Role in the Liberation Fight*. Mjriam Abu Samra provided an overview of the history and start of the General Union of Palestine Students that she had compiled while researching and writing her Ph.D. dissertation at Oxford University.

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