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**Forgotten in the Diaspora:**  
**The Palestinian Refugees in Egypt, 1948-2011**

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Middle East Studies Center (MEST)

Spring, 2013

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## **Chapter One**

### **Part One: Introduction**

#### **Aim of the project:**

The present thesis examines the question of how political tensions affect refugees' rights through analyzing the course of Egyptian-Palestinian relations spanning the different Egyptian regimes. Political tensions here refer to instances when Palestinian factions either grew directly at odds with the Egyptian regime, or entangled within the web of regional struggle for power. This thesis examines how shifting political discourses and interests affected the civil rights of stateless refugees in a host country. The project addresses the securitization of the Palestinians with special emphasis on refugee status and regime stability. By researching official political narratives, this research interrogates the deployment of "national security" discourse and its impact on refugees' basic civil rights, or denial thereof. This project explores if and how the Camp David Accords of 1978 and the Egyptian-Israeli Peace Treaty of 1979 changed the official Egyptian attitude towards the Palestinian refugees in Egypt. Other questions will include; how has Egypt's status as a signatory to international and regional treaties related to the protection of the refugees affected the state's policies regarding the Palestinian community? In this respect it is worth noting that Egypt ratified without reservations the Casablanca Accords of 1965 which stipulated that the Palestinian refugees in signatory Arab host countries should be treated as equals to nationals.<sup>1</sup> Additionally, despite some reservations Egypt and Tunisia were the only Arab countries to ratify the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of

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1. <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/460a2b252.html> [accessed on 16 September 2011]

Refugees issued by the United Nations Higher Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) on 22 May 1981.<sup>2</sup> Egypt formulated reservations to articles 12 (paragraph 1), 20 and 22 (paragraph 1), and articles 23 and 24. Egypt expressed a reservation to article 12 (paragraph 1) because it contradicts the Egyptian internal laws. The original article provided that the personal status of a refugee shall be governed by the law of the country of his domicile or, failing this, of his residence. This formula, however, contradicts with article 25 of the Egyptian civil code which stipulates that: “in the case of persons without nationality or with more than one nationality at the same time. In the case of persons where there is a proof, in accordance with Egypt, of Egyptian nationality, and at the same time in accordance with one or more foreign country, of nationality of that country, the Egyptian law must be applied.”<sup>3</sup> Concerning articles 20, 22 (paragraph 1), 23 and 24, Egypt expressed reservations because those articles considered refugees as equal to nationals in terms of accessing primary education and welfare services. The Egyptian authorities argued that it is more convenient to the competent authorities to approach the topic of the refugees on a case-by-case basis.<sup>4</sup> It is also of importance to take into account that Egypt’s Palestinians fall under the terms of article 1D (paragraph 2) of the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees issued by UNHCR.<sup>5</sup>

This convention shall not apply to persons who are at present receiving from organs or agencies of the United Nations other than the United Nations Higher Commissioner for Refugees protection or assistance. When such protection or assistance has ceased for any reason, without the position of such persons being definitively settled in accordance with the relevant resolutions adopted by the

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2. United Nations Treaty Series, Vol. 189, 137

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid.

5. <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/pdfid/4add77d42.pdf>

General Assembly of the United Nations, the persons shall *ipso facto* be entitled to the benefits of this Convention.<sup>6</sup>

This case applies to the Palestinian refugees in Egypt, who unlike their counterparts in Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, the West Bank, and the Gaza Strip, do not fall under the mandate of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), established in 1949 to provide humanitarian assistance to Palestinians displaced in 1948. However, the fact that the 1951 Convention failed to define dispersed Palestinians as refugees rendered them vulnerable vis-à-vis the host countries. The rationale behind this exclusion was based on the fact that Palestinian refugees were already receiving assistance from another UN organ; UNRWA in this case. But UNRWA offers only humanitarian assistance and not legal protection for refugees and it does not operate in all Arab countries hosting Palestinian refugees. Further, during the drafting of the Convention, Arab states opposed including Palestinians under the mandate of UNHCR, arguing that such inclusion will weaken the prospect of their right of return. By excluding Palestinian refugees from its wide definition, the Convention left the refugees in limbo with no concrete international legal protection enforcing the implementation of its articles by signatory states.<sup>7</sup>

The project will also address the role of the press in shaping public opinion and narratives on issues such as national security. The project will also explore the role of the press in pushing certain topics to the forefront while pulling others to the background. It will also address the question of how the Egyptian press constructs the image of the Palestinians with special emphasis on moments of political tensions between Egypt and

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6. Ibid.

7. Lex Takkenberg, *The Status of Palestinian Refugees in International Law*, (Oxford University Press, 1998), 65-67

the Palestinian factions (i.e. signing the Camp David Accords and the Peace Treaty, tensions rising between Egypt and Hamas across the Gaza Strip borders).

The research addresses the political shifts in Egypt for over six decades. It begins with an analysis of Nasser's pan-Arabism. It then moves to Sadat's nationalist oriented (Egypt First) discourse and his close ties with the West generally and the United States specifically. The thesis will then explore the Mubarak era, which is largely a continuation of Sadat's legacy. This project contributes to the existing scholarship investigating protection gaps in refugees' studies, since it examines how shifting political discourses or conflicting interests would affect enacting refugees' civil rights in host countries. The research investigates the extent of the integration and implementation of the terms of regional and international treaties within the Egyptian domestic legal apparatus. It is worth mentioning that whenever Egypt signs a treaty whether regional or international it automatically becomes integrated into the Egyptian legal system the day following its publication in the official gazette. Thus, it is important to examine whether or not such treaties are effectively enacted and what are the obstacles hindering their implementation. In other words, the project examines the gap between refugees' realities and theoretical protection mechanisms.

### **Literature Review:**

There are limited sources that directly address the status of the Palestinian refugees in Egypt. The lack of official records or statistics revealing their exact number, locations, and activities further complicates this project. However, the fieldwork conducted between years 2003 and 2005 by Oroub El-Abed provides useful insights



regarding the livelihood of the Palestinians in Egypt since 1948.<sup>8</sup> Additionally, studies by Abbas Shiblak, Maher Bitar, and Laurie A. Brand, provide a useful theoretical framework on the legal status of the stateless Palestinians in Arab host countries.<sup>9</sup> These sources also pay special attention to the ways in which internal Arab politics and fluctuations in the relations between the Arab regimes and the Palestinian factions define and affect the status of the Palestinian refugees.

Further works essential to the project will include studies in international refugee law, providing a theoretical legal framework situating the Palestinian refugees in Egypt in a wider global socio-legal context. In this respect the seminal study by Lex Takkenberg provides an in-depth analysis aiming at defining Palestinian refugee status within the paradigms of international protection laws along with addressing their status in the Arab world from a legal perspective.<sup>10</sup> Furthermore, a set of independent reports provides a comprehensive approach to examine the status of Egypt as a host country including those of Sherifa Shafie, Asem Khalil, and Katarzyna Grabska.<sup>11</sup> Such studies analyze the status of Egypt as a refugee receiving country over different decades; those reports also address the different types of refugees residing in Egypt and their respective socio-economic and legal status.

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8. *Unprotected: Palestinians in Egypt since 1948*, 2009

9. "Residency Status and Civil Rights of Palestinian Refugees in Arab Countries," *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. 25, No. 3 (Spring, 1996), 36-45

"Unprotected Among Others: Palestinians in the Arab World," University of Oxford, Refugee Studies Center, Working Paper Series, Jan. 2008, RSC Working Paper No. 44

*Palestinians in the Arab World*. Columbia University Press, 1988

10. *The Status of Palestinian Refugees in International Law*, 1998

11. "Palestinian Refugees in Arab States: A Rights – Based Approach," CARIM Research Reports 2009/08 "Who Asked Them Anyway? Rights, Policies and Wellbeing of Refugees in Egypt," Forced Migration and Refugee Studies, American University in Cairo, Egypt, July 2006

For examining the press' role in shaping public opinion, Ghada Hashem Talhami's comparative study on the process of constructing the image of the Palestinians through the lens of both the official and independent Egyptian press across the past six decades is very useful.<sup>12</sup> Additional sources include studies by Mustapha K. El-Sayed and Karem Yehia; both examine how the Egyptian press portrayed Palestinians during the late 1970s and early 1980s a crucial era when Egyptian-Palestinian relations deteriorated rapidly following the signing of the Camp David Accords of 1978 and the Egyptian-Israeli Peace Treaty of 1979.<sup>13</sup>

Furthermore, examining the various shifts within the official Egyptian political discourse and the ways in which such shifts affect and define the Palestinians in Egypt is an integral component to this project. To this end such studies by Ghada Hashem Talhami, Maha Ahmed Dajani, and Muhammad Sa'id Hamdan examine the ways in which Egypt both defined and situated its political and regional identity through the lens of the Palestine question.<sup>14</sup> Additionally, the present thesis aims at exploring the historical background addressing both the historical ties between Egypt and Palestine and the rise of the Palestinian refugee problem. In this respect Ilana Feldman's study provides a comprehensive historical analysis examining the historical socio-political relations between Egypt and Palestine through the lens of Gaza which holds a special status as the

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12. *Palestine in the Egyptian Press: From Al-Ahram to Al-Ahali*, 2007

13. "Egyptian Popular Attitudes toward the Palestinians since 1977," *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. 18, No. 4 (Summer, 1989), 37-51

"The Image of the Palestinians in Egypt, 1982-1985," *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. 16, No. 2 (Winter, 1987), 45-63

14. *Palestine and Egyptian National Identity*, 1992

*The Institutionalization of Palestinian Identity in Egypt*, 1986

*Siyasat Misr Tijah Al-Qadiyah Al-Filastiniyah 1946-1956 [ Egyptian Politics toward the Palestinian Cause 1946-1956]*, 2006

eastern gate to Egypt.<sup>15</sup> As for analyzing the history of the Palestinian refugee problem, Benny Morris's study although relying heavily on Israeli archives, remains the most detailed account exploring the question of the Palestinian refugees.<sup>16</sup> Moreover, the case of the Palestinian refugees cannot be properly addressed without examining the causes leading to the defeat of the Arab armies in 1948 in what is referred to as the *nakba*. The Palestine war led to the expulsion of more than 750,000 Palestinians from their homeland representing the first official wave of Palestinian refugees. In this respect studies by Avi Shlaim and Eugene L. Rogan utilize the various recently declassified Israeli and British archives to shed new light on the events leading to the creation of the state of Israel on 15 May 1948, the subsequent intervention of the Arab armies and their ultimate defeat.<sup>17</sup> This new reading into the history of the 1948 war aims to deconstruct long established facts regarding the creation of Israel and the outcome of the war. Israeli scholars like Avi, Shlaim, Benny Morris, and Ilan Pappé, attempt to utilize the available archives in order to reexamine the unchallenged Zionist version historicizing the 1948 war.<sup>18</sup>

### **Methodologies:**

This project will use a combination of both primary and secondary sources. The primary sources will include analyzing presidential speeches and interviews, and reviewing press editorials published the Egyptian newspaper both official and independent depending on availability. Other primary sources will include various Egyptian laws, which were issued during the decades under study and had a direct impact

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15. *Governing Gaza: Bureaucracy, Authority, and the Work of Rule, 1917-1947*, 2008

16. *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem Revisited*, 2004

17. "The Debate about 1948," *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 27, No. 3 (Aug. 1995), 287-304

*The War for Palestine*, Second Edition, 2007

18. Shlaim, "The Debate about 1948," 288

on the Palestinian refugees in Egypt as well as international treaties to which Egypt is a signatory.

## **Chapter Outline**

### **Chapter One**

This chapter is divided into two parts. The first part introduces the aim of the project, brief literature review, and methodologies. The second part traces the origins of the Palestinian refugee problem and early Egyptian-Palestinian relations. This part also examines the Egyptian government reaction toward the early waves of Palestinian refugees on the eve of the *nakba*.

### **Chapter Two**

This chapter focuses on the Nasser era, 1954-1970. It examines the place of the Palestine cause within Nasser's pan-Arabism. It will also investigate the ways in which Palestinian nationalism was utilized to promote Nasser's vision of pan-Arabism. The chapter also attempts to analyze the era's press and laws relating to Palestinians with special emphasis on moments of political crisis.

### **Chapter Three**

This chapter examines Sadat's era, 1970-1981. This era represented a significant breach with Nasserism especially during the second half of the 1970s which witnessed the shift from pan-Arabism to Egyptian nationalism. The assassination of Egyptian Minister of Culture Youssef al-Sibai in February, 1978, the signing of the Camp David Accords of 1978, and the Peace Treaty of 1979 led to a rapid deterioration in Egyptian-

Palestinian relations. The chapter in this sense attempts to examine how political conflicts affect refugees' social and legal rights as Egypt's Palestinian refugees were the direct victims of the Egyptian-Palestinian clash.

#### **Chapter Four**

This chapter examines the Mubarak years, 1981-2011. This era is mainly characterized by being a continuation of Sadat's political and economic discourse. Mubarak maintained a close dependency on the United States and posed as a peace mediator between the Arabs and Israel. Palestinian refugees' status did not witness significant improvements as all Sadat's regulations remained intact. The only noteworthy improvement occurred with the issuing of Law 154 Of 2004. This law gave Egyptian women married to foreigners the right to pass their citizenship to their children. Palestinian children however, remained excluded from the application of this law until May, 2011. Egyptian-Palestinian relations remained stable throughout the Mubarak era until the Fatah-Hamas split in 2007. The Egyptian regime sided with Fatah and attempted to isolate Hamas by sealing the Rafah cross border, thus, intensifying the Israeli blockade suffocating the Gaza Strip. The Mubarak era ended with his resignation on 11 February 2011 following an eighteen-day mass revolution against his regime.

#### **Conclusion**

This part briefly examines the Egyptian political arena following the 25 January 2011 revolution, and the extent to which the post-Mubarak era affected the course of Egyptian-Palestinian relations and the status of Egypt's Palestinian refugees.

## **Part Two: The Rise of the Palestinian Refugee Problem**

What led to the emergence of the Palestinian refugee problem? And what are the historiographical debates on the 1948 war? I will address these questions and examine the evolution of Egypt's official response to the developments in Palestine during the 1920s and until the 1948 war. This section ends with assessing the Egyptian government official response to the early waves of Palestinians seeking refuge in Egypt.

The Palestinian refugee problem resulted from the defeat of the Arab armies in the 1948 war, which became known in Palestinian historiography and narratives as *al-nakba* (catastrophe). The Arab states rejected the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) Partition Plan approved on 29 November 1947.<sup>19</sup> Accordingly, the Arab League (AL) decided to send Arab armies (from Egypt, Jordan, Syria, and Iraq) into Palestine despite lacking adequate military preparation and unified strategies. During the war, Palestinians suffered from brutal attacks carried by the Haganah (a Jewish paramilitary group). The attacks followed the pattern outlined in Plan Dalet (Plan D), which aimed at expelling as many Palestinians as possible to include their villages into the proposed Jewish state.<sup>20</sup> In the wake of the defeat and the signing of the armistice between the Arabs and Israel on Rhodes Island between January and July 1949 more than 750,000 Palestinians became stateless refugees. During the war Israeli forces pushed hundreds of thousands of Palestinians toward the neighboring Arab states. On the eve of the war the

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19. Charles D. Smith, *Palestine and the Arab-Israeli Conflict: A History with Documents*, (Boston New York: Bedford / ST. Martin's Seventh Edition, 2010), 212-214, Document No. 4.2 "UNSCOP's Plan of Partition with Economic Union." The plan proposed the partition of Palestine into seven sections: three parts controlled by the Arabs, the other three by the Jews, while keeping Jerusalem and Bethlehem under the administration of the UN.

20. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Plan\\_Dalet](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Plan_Dalet), Plan D is argued to be at the core of the Zionist project and served as a guide to the ethnic cleansing of the Palestinians during the 1948 war.

coastal Palestinian cities, later called Israel, held an Arab population of about 860,000. By the end of the war, the population decreased dramatically to reach 133,000. This means that over 700,000 Palestinians became refugees dispersed in camps in Jordan, Lebanon, the Gaza Strip (under Egyptian rule), Syria, and lesser numbers in Iraq.<sup>21</sup>

The outcome of the defeat was tremendous. Thousands of forcibly dispossessed Palestinians lost their homeland, their relatives, and their means of livelihood “in one of the biggest ethnic cleansing operations in modern times.”<sup>22</sup> The psychological trauma resulting from the horrors of the war and the sense of dispossession was immeasurable. The unfolding of the *nakba* narrates not only Arab political failure, but challenges the myths surrounding the creation of the state of Israel.

### **Al-nakba between Myth and Reality**

The state of Israel was officially created on 15 May 1948.<sup>23</sup> Israeli historians portrayed its creation in biblical terminology as a miracle where a small Jewish population (small Jewish David) managed against all odds to score a decisive victory over a coalition of Arab armies (Goliath) aiming at destroying the newly-born state.<sup>24</sup> The narrative also claimed that the Palestinian refugee problem is not an Israeli creation. Instead the problem came into existence because the Arab states called on the Palestinians to leave their cities until the expulsion of Israeli settlers. This portrayal, however, ignored the fragmented Arab front, the role of the British mandate (1922-1948)

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21. Ibid. 203 also see Edward W. Said, *The Question of Palestine*, (New York: Vintage Books), 1992, 14-15

22. Mahmoud Issa, “The *Nakba*, Oral History and the Palestinian Peasantry: The Case of Lubyah,” in Nur Masalha, ed. *Catastrophe Remembered: Palestine, Israel and the Internal Refugees*, (London New York: Zed Books, 2005), 181

23. Smith, *Palestine and the Arab-Israeli Conflict: A History with Documents*. Document No. 4.5, “Declaration of the Establishment of the State of Israel, May 14, 1948,” 218-220

24. Avi Shlaim, “The Debate about 1948,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 27, No. 3 (Aug. 1995), 287-304, 294

in facilitating the creation of a Jewish homeland in Palestine, and more importantly the settler colonial nature of the Zionist project. In this sense, Israeli version of history was utilized to build a specific national consciousness. It is a form of *official nationalism* as Benedict Anderson puts it: “a conscious, self-protective policy, intimately linked to the preservation of imperial-dynastic interests...The one persistent feature of this style of nationalism was, and is, that it is official – i.e. something emanating from the state, and serving the interests of the state first and foremost.”<sup>25</sup>

From its premise, the Zionist project adopted Israel Zangwill’s slogan: a land without people, for a people without land.<sup>26</sup> The language used in the Balfour Declaration of November 1917 carried a resemblance to this theme through explicitly ignoring the actual presence of an indigenous population entitled to the right of self-determination. The Declaration states:

His Majesty’s Government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people and will use their best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country.<sup>27</sup>

By referring to the Palestinians as non-Jewish communities, the Balfour Declaration aimed at denying Palestinians their political and national rights by virtually denying their existence as nationals entitled to the right of self-determination. This explains the policies adopted by the British mandate, which focused on hindering any attempts to create any semi-official Palestinian governing body with a minimum level of authority. By denying the establishment of a quasi-official Palestinian authority the British aimed at controlling

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25. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, (London New York: Verso, 2006), 159

26. Said, *The Question of Palestine*, 9

27. Smith, *Palestine and the Arab-Israeli Conflict*, Document No. 2.2, 96-97



all the Palestinian affairs in a manner that would not empower Palestinian Arabs with any level of self-rule otherwise prevailing in the other Arab states during that time period.<sup>28</sup>

Edward Said argues that the structure of the Declaration shows the extent to which Zionism is yet another manifestation of imperialism. Said explains that the Declaration was in fact made by a foreign power (Great Britain) regarding a foreign territory with the promise of establishing a national homeland for a foreign community regardless of the presence and wishes of the existing indigenous population.<sup>29</sup> Accordingly, like most colonial projects, Zionism was rationalized as a higher mission to fulfill God's promise to the Jewish people and to end anti-Semitism in Europe. Similar to the discourse of colonialism, European Zionists argued that their project is the by-product of Western culture that would bring civilization to the backward land of the inferior orient.<sup>30</sup> This argument assumed that the land of Palestine is the rightful Jewish homeland regardless of the presence of an indigenous population, which was Arab (Muslims and Christians). In fact the British Census of Palestine conducted in 1922 shows that Palestine held a population of 689,272 persons of whom only 60,000 were Jews. The demographic statistics thus reveal that seventy-eight of the population was Muslim, about ten percent

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28. Rashid Khalidi, "The Palestinians and 1948: The Underlying Causes of Failure," in Eugene L. Rogan and Avi Shlaim, eds. *The War for Palestine*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, Second Edition, 2007), 19

29. Said, *The Question of Palestine*, 15-16

30. Ibid. 23-25, in his book *Orientalism*, Said also argues that by denying the *nakba*, Israeli historians perceive the land of Palestine and its Arab-Islamic heritage as a vintage site to evoke a sense of authenticity albeit devoid of its indigenous population. Said refers to this form of narrative as "Israeli Orientalism," in which Israeli historians like Western orientalists construct an imaginary version of the timeless authentic "Orient" regardless of the present realities of the place and its inhabitants. In Edward W. Said, *Orientalism*, (New York: Penguin Book), 2003, 79-85

Christians (mostly Arabs and few foreigners), and eleven percent were Jews (the majority of whom were not Palestinian but European immigrants).<sup>31</sup>

Further, Israeli historians argue that during the war Israel faced a monolithic coalition of Arab armies sharing common goals and strategies. They also argue that Israeli forces practiced self-restraint and did not adopt systematic expulsion tactics.<sup>32</sup> However, recent declassified Israeli and British documents related to the 1948 war provide a counter-argument to traditional Israeli historiography. Israeli historians (known as revisionists) like Benny Morris, Avi Shlaim, and Ilan Pape embarked on a process of deconstructing the Israeli narrative chronicling the events of the 1948 war and the creation of the state of Israel.<sup>33</sup> Despite gaining a wider recognition within Western scholarship, the Israeli revisionists' discourse is not entirely a pioneering one. Oral Palestinian historiography documenting the events of the war and the demolition of Palestinian villages provide a body of first-hand testimonies. Several Palestinian intellectuals like Arif al-Arif, Walid Khalidi, and Edward Said voiced similar narratives albeit receiving less scholarly circulation.<sup>34</sup> Joel Beinin argues that the historical account presented by Israeli revisionists is not in fact entirely new. He explains that in addition to oral Palestinian historiographies, the circumstances leading to the *nakba* were known to Zionist political and military elites, soldiers, and kibbutz members who "actively

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31. Ibid. 17, for a detailed account of all Palestinian villages and their demographic details prior to 1948 see Walid Khalidi, *All that Remains: The Palestinian Villages Occupied and Depopulated by Israel in 1948*, (Washington D.C. : Institute of Palestine Studies, 1992)

32. Shlaim, "The Debate about 1948," 288

33. Ibid. 287-288

34. Joel Beinin, "Forgetfulness for Memory: The Limits of the New Israeli History," *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. XXXIV, No. 2 (Winter 2005), 6-23, 8

expelled Palestinians, expropriated their lands, and destroyed their homes—knew very well what happened to the Palestinian Arabs in 1948.”<sup>35</sup>

Traditional Israeli accounts of the 1948 war claim that Israel faced a unified Arab front sharing common strategies. However, analyzing the Arab political scene on the eve of the war opposes the Israeli narrative. On one hand, Rashid Khalidi attempts to study the reasons behind the defeat in the 1948 war from a Palestinian perspective. He argues that Palestine represented a unique case in the sense that unlike other Arab states during the inter-war period Palestine did not have a clear unified political context representing its national cause on the international level. In other words, Palestine under the British mandate, 1922-1948 did not enjoy any form of a para-state or a minimum of political and legislative autonomy like the cases of other Arab states including the likes of Egypt, Iraq, Syria, and Transjordan. Although the former states did not enjoy complete independence, yet several indigenous figures maintained some form of rule over several national affairs.<sup>36</sup>

In glaring contrast to their policies toward the Palestinians the British aimed at empowering the Jewish agencies in Palestine with enough independence to create a semi-official apparatus in Palestine. The British in this respect facilitated the Jewish community's attainment of international recognition as a future state. The British mandate purposefully overlooked the growing number of Jewish migration into Palestine; the British also provided great assistance into the establishment of the Jewish Agency. The mandate empowered the Agency with enough support and elevated it to an official

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35. Ibid. 9

36. Khalidi, “The Palestinians and 1948: The Underlying Causes of Failure,” 18

status while at the same time denying the Palestinians any chance at creating any form of self-governing structures.<sup>37</sup>

Khalidi also argues that the lack of a unified Palestinian national leadership led to the fragmentation of the Palestinian society. This consequently undermined their struggle for statehood as they lacked a unified political front representing the Palestine question on the international level. This political fragmentation was largely the byproduct of the failure of what Albert Hourani referred to as the politics of notables in Palestine.<sup>38</sup> For several decades the elites dominated the Palestinian political scene as the representatives of the Palestinian people. However, the notables failed because of their apparent inability to overcome their personal and ideological differences. The intense clash between Hajj Amin al-Husayni the grand *mufti* of Jerusalem and Raghib al-Nashashibi the former mayor of Jerusalem is a prime example of a bitter conflict that polarized the Palestinians and divided them into rival factions.<sup>39</sup> Such bitter rivalries weakened the Palestinian national struggle, thus, depriving it from having a unified leadership and a clear national strategy.

Khalidi adds that the Great Arab Revolt of 1936-1939 provides another manifestation of the failed politics of the notables. Instead of seizing the opportunity of the revolt to create a unified national front, these elites created more divisions and polarization into an already fragmented social fabric. This also explains the fact that the base of the revolt consisted of the frustrated subaltern classes who saw in the martyrdom of Shaykh Izz al-Din al-Qassam in 1935 a catalyst to galvanize national sentiments.

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37. Ibid. 19-20

38. Albert Hourani, "Ottoman Reform and the Politics of the Notables," in W. Polk and R. Chambers, eds. *Beginnings of Modernization in the Middle East: The Nineteenth Century* (Chicago, IL: 1968), 41-68

39. Khalidi, "The Palestinians and 1948: the Underlying Causes of Failure," 22-23

Shaykh al-Qassam a preacher based in Haifa succeeded in reaching out to the population's sentiments more than any of the competing notables. His death in confrontation with the British forces in 1935 became glorified as a demonstration of martyrdom for the national cause thus, sowing in the Palestinian national consciousness the seeds for the Great Arab Revolt.<sup>40</sup> However, the revolt's base failed to compose a coherent strategy. The revolutionaries suffered from internal divisions among themselves between urbanite, subaltern, and the peasantry classes. They also lacked a common leadership. Elites' rivalries intensified during the course of the revolt and created more divisions than cohesion.<sup>41</sup> In this respect Khalidi argues that the outcome of the 1948 war could be seen as being predictable given the fact that the Palestinian front never recovered from the defeat of the 1936-1939 revolt and the growing fragmentation of the Palestinian social fabric.

the Palestinians in 1947-49 seem to have been even less organized and even less centralized, and to have had even less of a national focus...Given the course of Palestinian history until 1948, the underlying causes of what happened in Palestine in that year should be perfectly comprehensible, and the final outcome should not have been unexpected, shocked and surprised though many Palestinians clearly were by it.<sup>42</sup>

On the other hand, contrary to the Israeli account, Zionists during 1948 did not face a unified Arab front. In fact, although the Arab states declared a state of war with the intension of restoring Palestine to its inhabitants, they lacked common strategies and secretly aspired to secure hidden regional interests. Eugene L. Rogan argues that the case of Jordan is integral to understand the mechanisms directing the politics of the Arab

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40. Ibid. 24-25

41. Ibid. 28-29

42. Ibid. 31

states on the eve of the war.<sup>43</sup> Relations between King Abdullah and the Zionists date back to the early years of his reign where he aimed at securing financial support for his kingdom, which suffered from limited resources. Rogan explains at the outset of the war Abdullah signed a deal with the Jewish Agency; the mutual agreement between the two parties proposed to divide the land of Palestine between the Jewish Agency and Transjordan. Based on the Partition Plan of 1947, Abdullah hoped to expand the territories of Trans-Jordan through occupying that part of Palestinian land adjacent to his frontier. Abdullah envisioned that the proposed plan would provide him with necessary territorial expansion and abort the creation of a Palestinian state headed by his rival the *mufiti* of Jerusalem, Hajji Amin al-Husayni.<sup>44</sup> Therefore, it could be argued that Abdullah's decision to enter the Palestine war served as a pretext to facilitate his plan for territorial expansion into Palestine. In other words, in the case of Jordan narrow national interests and regional competition gained priority over Arab and Palestinian nationalism.<sup>45</sup>

For Egypt, Syria, Iraq, and Saudi Arabia, participating in the war was the only convenient pretext to preserve a regional balance of power and contain Abdullah's ambitions.<sup>46</sup> In the case of Egypt, King Farouk came under massive public pressures demanding the dispatching of the Egyptian army into Palestine. In a futile attempt to

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43. Eugene L. Rogan, "Jordan and 1948: The Persistence of an Official History," in Rogan and Shlaim, eds. *The War for Palestine*, 104-124

44. Ibid. 109-110, also see Smith, *Palestine and the Arab Israeli Conflict: A History with Documents*, 220-221

45. Rogan, "Jordan and 1948: The Persistence of an Official History," 120-121

46. Joshua Landis, "Syria and the Palestine War: Fighting king Abdullah's 'Greater Syria Plan,'" in Rogan and Shlaim, eds. *The War for Palestine*, 176, also see Madawi Al-Rasheed, "Saudi Arabia and the 1948 Palestine War: Beyond Official History," in Rogan and Shlaim, eds. *The War for Palestine*, 230, also see, Charles Tripp, "Iraq and the 1948 War: Mirror of Iraq's Disorder," in Rogan and Shlaim, eds. *The War for Palestine*, 128-129

deflate the opposition, curtail freedoms, enact emergency laws, and regain the support of the masses Farouk decided to dispatch the army into Palestine. On the regional level, he envisioned building an Arab leadership for himself as the liberator of Palestine. He also like the rest of the Arab leaders, decided to enter the war to block Abdullah from establishing his envisioned kingdom of Greater Syria.<sup>47</sup> Farouk, however, ignored the fact that for a long time the army's role became confined to maintaining internal security. British policies in Egypt aimed at limiting the Egyptian army's capabilities to justify the presence of its troops in Suez under the pretext of defending the Canal Zone. Consequently, the army lacked essential training, equipment, and preparation combined with the presence of unqualified chiefs in leading positions.<sup>48</sup>

The previous analysis aimed at disputing the Israeli claim that during the 1948 war Israel faced the formidable Arab Goliath. The British archives reveal that the Arab states were unprepared and waged a miscalculated war where mistrust combined with narrow political and territorial ambitions surpassed the ostensible aim of liberating Palestine.<sup>49</sup>

### **The Palestinian Refugees and the Myth of self-defense**

One of the most recurrent themes in Israeli historiography is the claim that the Israeli army always reacts in self-defense and does not intentionally target unarmed civilians. Israeli historians also claim that the Zionists did not intend to expel the Palestinians adding that the Arab states were the ones who called upon the Palestinians to flee their lands to make way to the Arab armies. However, contrary to the prevailing

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47. Laurie A. Brand, *Palestinians in the Arab World: Institution Building and the Search for State*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 41-43

48. Fawaz A. Gerges, "Egypt and the 1948 War: Internal Conflict and Regional Ambition," in Rogan and Shlaim, eds. *The War for Palestine*, 152-175

49. Ibid. 156

Israeli version of history Morris asserts that “Regarding April-May and the start of the main stage of the exodus, I have found no evidence to show that the AHC or the Arab leaders outside Palestine issued blanket instructions, by radio or otherwise, to the inhabitants to flee.”<sup>50</sup>

Morris’s thesis is the most detailed account utilizing both Israeli and British archives to dispel the myth claiming that the Zionists never called on the Palestinians to flee and that they left because the Arab leaders told them to do so through radio broadcasts. However, despite its importance, his argument addressing the rise of the Palestinian refugee problem raises several critical observations. For instance, the book relies heavily on Israeli sources; he treats them uncritically although he admits that much of such documents were subjected to political censorship and partial distortion.<sup>51</sup> Morris based his entire argument on the assumption that the Palestinian refugee problem was born of war not by design.<sup>52</sup> In other words, the refugee problem resulted mainly from the growing hostilities before and throughout the 1948 war. Thus, he concludes that expelling the Palestinian population was a military byproduct and not a pre-calculated systematical political strategy. Morris stressed that prior to the war Zionist leaders “did not enter the war with a plan or policy of expulsion. Nor was the pre-war ‘transfer’ thinking ever translated, in the course of the war, into an agreed, systematic policy of expulsion.”<sup>53</sup> He

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50. Benny Morris, *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem Revisited*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, Second Edition, 2004), 594, same argument explained by Ilan Pappé in “Were They Expelled?: The History, Historiography and Relevance of the Palestinian Refugee Problem,” in Ghada Karmi and Eugene Cotran, eds. *The Palestinian Exodus 1948-1998*, (London: Ithaca Press, 1999), 37-61, (41-45)

51. Norman G. Finkelstein, *Image and Reality of the Israel-Palestine Conflict*, (London New York: Verso, 1995), 52-53

52. Ibid. 52

53. Morris, *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem Revisited*, 588



also explains that during the war's early months there were no reports regarding mass expulsion or leveling of villages.

This however contradicts his conclusion that the exodus resulted from both the brutal Haganah attacks such as the massacres of Deir Yassin and Lydda, along with the use of psychological warfare mechanisms that instilled fear which led to mass flight. Morris also argues that in the months preceding the war the Haganah and the Israeli army acted on the grounds of self-defense and retaliation against Arab attacks and not according to systematic expulsion policies. This argument however fails short from explaining that in many cases the fine line between self-defense and violence grew increasingly blurry as with cases of collective punishment for entire villages or mass executions. Additionally, Morris places an emphasis on denying the presence of a predetermined expulsion policy, although he explains that Plan Dalet (Plan D) proved useful in providing a pretext for mass evacuations. He argues that Israeli military commanders utilized the provisions of Plan D to justify expelling hundreds of Palestinians allegedly for protecting the wellbeing of the Yishuv.<sup>54</sup>

Contrary to Morris's argument regarding Plan D, Ilan Pappé argues that the ultimate goal of Zionism focused on the creation of a purely Jewish state in Palestine with a Jewish majority. In this respect Pappé asserts that Plan D "was a master plan for the ethnic cleansing of Palestine" where "the main objective was clear from the beginning – the de-Arabisation of Palestine."<sup>55</sup> He adds that despite the use of the

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54. Ibid. 165, also see [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Plan\\_Dalet](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Plan_Dalet)

55. Ilan Pappé, *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine*, (London: Oneworld Publications Limited, 2006), 49, also see Beinín, "Forgetfulness for Memory: The Limits of the New Israeli History," 11

defensive pretexts to justify armed attacks the integral goal of acquiring as much territories as possible remained in the forefront.<sup>56</sup>

To conclude, this section presented the historical background explaining the emergence of the Palestinian refugee problem which resulted from the defeat of the Arab armies in the 1948 war. It traced the political and military reasons behind the defeat, along with attempting to dispute several widespread myths surrounding the birth of the state of Israel. This part aimed at utilizing the new scholarship analyzing the reasons behind the *nakba* in order to further problematize the defeat as the result of both political and military failure and disintegration. Additionally, the arguments presented here deconstruct some of the prevailing historical accounts addressing the 1948 war. They also serve as a general historical prelude situating the problem of the Palestinian refugees in a wider historical framework. The next part will examine the evolution of Egyptian official response to the Palestine problem beginning in the 1920s through the 1940s.

### **Egyptian Official Response to the Palestine Cause during the Monarchal Era**

Egyptian official response to the Palestine cause developed gradually between the 1920s and 1940s. During the 1920s, Egyptian nationalism shaped itself in new ways. Also, Egypt officially gained its independence with the end of the unilateral ending of the British protectorate on 28 February 1922.<sup>57</sup> In 1923 Egypt held its first free parliamentary

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56. Testimonies and details of systematic murder and expulsion of Palestinians from their villages by the IDF and al-Haganah are explained in Victor Kattan, *From Coexistence to Conquest: International Law and the Origins of the Arab-Israeli Conflict, 1891-1949*, (London New York: Pluto Press, 2009), 194-202

57. The British High Commissioner Allenby persuaded the British government to end its protectorate over Egypt to contain the social anger persisting since the banishment of Saad Pasha Zaghlul and the eruption of the 1919 revolution. Egypt gained its independence, drafted a new constitution, and formed a Wafdist government with Saad Zaghlul serving as the Prime Minister. However, Britain retained the Four Reserved Points which gave Britain the authority to: 1) protect imperial communications in Egypt, 2) defending Egypt against any foreign aggression, 3) protecting foreign interests and the minorities, 4) the

elections with the Wafd Party winning the majority of the seats. During the 1920s and 1930s, Egyptian politicians focused their efforts on domestic political issues, the struggle to end all British presence in Egypt, as well as promoting a sense of nationalism largely confined in Egyptian cultural and historical heritage.<sup>58</sup>

During the 1920s, Egyptian intellectuals utilized themes and motifs evoking Egypt's "Pharaonic" heritage. Egyptian writers and artists stressed the importance of creating artistic and literary works based entirely on ancient Egyptian motifs to evoke a sense of continuation between modern Egypt and its ancient history.<sup>59</sup> It was a process of creating "territorial Egyptian nationness...[t]he crux of this discourse's impact is what might be called the "Misrification" [*tamsir* in Arabic] of space and subject."<sup>60</sup> Therefore, Egypt during that era developed an essentially inward sense of nationalism that was largely detached from Arab affiliation.<sup>61</sup> Nonetheless, Egypt during the 1920s was the region's intellectual capital with the recognition and expansion of Cairo University, as

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administration of the Sudan. In Arthur Goldschmidt Jr. and Lawrence Davidson, *A Concise History of the Middle East*, New Revised Edition, (Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 2009), 249-250

58. James Jankowski, "Egyptian Responses to the Palestine Problem in the Interwar Period," *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 12, No. 1 (Aug. 1980), 1-38, 2-4

59. An example of this pharaonic trend is illustrated in Mahmoud Mokhtar's huge statue "The Revival of Egypt" [Nahdat Misr]. The statue which stands at the entrance of Cairo University depicts a huge sphinx-like figure sitting next to a woman dressed in peasant attire. The writings of Taha Husayn also glorified Egypt's pharaonic heritage at the expense of its Arab-Islamic one. In one of his weekly articles, Mohammad Zaki Abdel Kader called for creating a distinctive national Egyptian literature based entirely on Egyptian historic, cultural and geographic heritage. An article published in *al-Siyasa al-Ushbu'iyya* [Politics Weekly], 12 July 1930 [Arabic Source]. Additionally, Tawfik al-Hakim called for reviving all things Egyptian. He asserted the essential difference between Egypt and the Arab world. In his book *Under the Sun of Thought* [Tahet Shams al-Fikr]; al-Hakim explained that Egypt and the Arabs stood for two opposing sides. In his novel *The Return of the Soul* [Awdet al-Rouh] published in 1928, al-Hakim explained that Egypt's uniqueness stemmed from it being a complete self-sufficient unit with its distinctive historical and cultural values. He also stressed that the Egyptians of the Twentieth century are in fact completing the thousand-years old cycle of ancient Egyptians. Those themes are further explained in Anis Sayegh, *The Arab Idea in Egypt* [al-Fikra al-Arabiya fi Misr], (Beirut: 1959) [Arabic Source]

60. Gabriel Piterberg, "The Tropes of Stagnation and Awakening in Nationalist Historical Consciousness," in James Jankowski and Israel Gershoni, eds. *Rethinking Nationalism in the Arab Middle East*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 42-61, (53)

61. Jankowski, "Egyptian Responses to the Palestine Problem in the Interwar Period," 2

well as a remarkable surge in the numbers of newspapers, magazines, publishing houses, radio stations, film and recording industry.<sup>62</sup>

Egyptian politicians showed very little attention to developments occurring in neighboring Palestine. During the 1920s, several Palestinian delegations visited with the aim of promoting the Palestine cause. Also, Palestinians residing in Egypt sponsored committees to spread awareness on events in Palestine and appeal to Egyptian official support. However, such activities generated very little official response, which did not go beyond sponsoring some fundraisings to restore *al-Aqsa* Mosque in Jerusalem. The state, for its part, “did not involve itself in the Palestine problem in an official way in the 1920s.”<sup>63</sup>

This attitude however, gradually changed in the wake of the Wailing Wall disturbances of 1929. The disturbances occurred in August 1929 over a dispute between Arabs and Jews concerning the rights of access and worship in the Wailing Wall – Dome of the Rock area. The situation escalated and turned into violent confrontations between the Muslim and Jewish communities.<sup>64</sup> The rising violence in Jerusalem generated the first significant Egyptian response toward developments in Palestine during the interwar period. However, it is important to differentiate between Egyptian official and nonofficial responses. Several independent associations issued statements defending the rights of Palestinian Arabs while criticizing both Jewish and British policies in Palestine. Further activities included raising funds and sending medical aid. Most of the organizations involved in such activities fell under two categories: first, Islamic associations like the

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62. Goldschmidt Jr. and Davidson, *A Concise History of the Middle East*, 256-257

63. Jankowski, “Egyptian Responses to the Palestine Problem in the Interwar Period,” 3

64. Ibid. 4

Young Men's Muslim Association (YMMA), the Society of the Islamic Banner, and the Islamic Guidance Society. The second category consisted of Syrian and Palestinian groups like for instance, the Syro-Palestinian Conference in Egypt and gatherings of Palestinians living in Egypt.<sup>65</sup> By contrast, the Egyptian government along with the secular political parties seemed "to have done nothing in relation to the Wailing Wall disturbances; no protests, no meetings, no appeals for assistance."<sup>66</sup> Islamic organizations in this respect perceived the violence from a religious rather than a political perspective. During that era the political dimension of Zionism had not been fully materialized. Islamic circles argued that the whole dispute stemmed from Jewish rather than Zionist encroachments. They argued that the issue could be resolved if the British government interfered and officially recognized that as a majority, the Muslims had religious privileges in the disputed area. Liberal politicians like Prime Ministers Adli Yakan, Muhammad Mahmoud, and Moustafa al-Nahas did not issue any statements regarding the violence in Jerusalem. There were not any mass protests, and King Fu'ad declared that the entire incident was a matter of the British government.<sup>67</sup>

The 1930s witnessed a gradual growth in Egyptian concerns with the Palestine problem. This shift stemmed from both domestic and regional factors. Regionally, the rising numbers of Jewish immigrants to Palestine raised fears that the British government was moving forward with its plan to establish a Jewish national home in Palestine. Indeed, the first half of the 1930s witnessed an influx in European Jewish immigrants

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65. Ibid. 4-5

66. Ibid. 5

67. Ikbāl Alī Shāh, *Fuad: King of Egypt*, (London: 1936), 309

escaping anti-Semitism in Nazi Germany.<sup>68</sup> Driven by depression and high rates of unemployment, European states and the United States put several restrictions on immigration. This left Palestine an easy destination for European Jews escaping Hitler's repression. Records show that numbers of Jewish immigrants showed steady increase from 30,327 persons in 1933 to 42,359 in 1934, while peaked at 61,854 persons in 1935.<sup>69</sup> By mid-1930s the Jewish population in Palestine reached a total of 400,000 people.<sup>70</sup> Palestinian-Jewish tensions escalated culminating with the eruption of the Great Arab Revolt of 1936-1939. The revolt started as a general strike protesting British policies in Palestine and the influx of Jewish immigrants. It soon transformed into a large-scale rebellion considered to be "the longest anticolonial rebellion in the east during the interwar period."<sup>71</sup> The rapid developments in Palestine gradually gained visibility in Egyptian official and public opinions.

During the 1930s Egypt witnessed an intellectual shift from a liberal-westernized approach to the emergence of a pan-Arab pan-Islamic attitude. This shift from an Egyptian-centric orientation to a larger Arab-Islamic framework resulted from several domestic factors. Egyptian society during the 1930s opted for embracing Islamic trends

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68. "The 'Final Solution': Nazi Extermination of European Jewry," in Smith, *Palestine and the Arab-Israeli Conflict: A History with Documents*, Document No. 4.1, 212

69. Kattan, *From Coexistence to Conquest: International Law and the Origins of the Arab-Israeli Conflict, 1891-1949*, 91-92

70. Jankowski, "Egyptian Responses to the Palestine Problem in the Interwar Period," 9

71. Aaron David Miller, *The Arab States and the Palestine Question: Between Ideology and Self-Interest*, (New York: Praeger, 1986), 57. The British government would later send an investigation committee known as the Peel Commission of 1937. It issued its report in July 1937 recommending the partition of Palestine and was firmly rejected by Palestinian Arabs, in Smith, *Palestine and the Arab-Israeli Conflict: A History with Documents*, Document No. 3.2 "Palestine Royal (Peel) Commission Report," 157-160. Faced with Palestinian rejection to the partition suggestion, the British government issued the White Paper of 1939. The paper stipulated that Jewish immigration into Palestine was to be permitted for a period of five years starting in 1939 and ending in 1943. Further immigration would not be permitted unless an advance agreement with Palestinian Arabs had been secured. The paper also stipulated that land sales to Jews would be strictly regulated. (Same Source), Document No. 3.3 "The 1939 White Paper," 161-164

in response to the rising activities of the YMMA and the Muslim Brotherhood as well as the failure of the liberal experiment in fulfilling national aspirations. The liberal parliamentary experiment fell short from achieving full Egyptian independence from British dominance. It also failed in bridging social and economic gaps as “[a] few landowning families held vast amounts of land, while the mass of the population eked out a living on small estates or as landless laborers. The largest landholders by far were members of the royal family, reputed to own no fewer than 180,000 acres.”<sup>72</sup> The parliament largely dominated by wealthy classes voted against social and land reform laws to preserve the existing status-quo and protect their economic interests. Against such failures and glaring inequalities, Hassan al-Banna, the leader of the Brotherhood, called for a return to authentic Islamic practices and traditions as a solution to current social and political problems. Al-Banna further argued that “parliamentary governance was a sham imposed by the wealthy and powerful on the poor to keep them in their place.”<sup>73</sup> Al-Banna’s argument combined with persisting political and economic grievances appealed to the masses and nurtured their religious sentiments. Aside from the westernized elites and members of the royal family, Islam remained an integral component of ordinary Egyptians’ everyday lives. King Farouk would also encourage nourishing religious rhetoric in an attempt to bridge the cultural gap between the ruling elites and the masses, he stressed that Qur’an “is the key of happiness; it is the key of life.”<sup>74</sup> The 1930s

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72. Robert L. Tignor, *Egypt: A Short History*, (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2011), 255

73. Ibid. 252, for a detailed analysis of this trend see Charles D. Smith, “The 'Crisis of Orientation': The Shift of Egyptian Intellectuals to Islamic Subjects in the 1930's,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 4, No. 4 (Oct., 1973), 382-410

74. Gershoni and Jankowski, *Redefining the Egyptian Nation, 1930-1945*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 55

witnessed a significant rise in religious writings discussing the life of Prophet Muhammad and early Islamic history and civilization.<sup>75</sup>

This era also witnessed the emergence of pan-Arab ideas in Egyptian political thought as a means of identifying Egypt with a larger entity.<sup>76</sup> In fact cultivating the seeds of Arab nationalism within Egyptian identity had more popular appeal than integral Egyptian nationalism of the 1920s. It formulated a supra-Egyptian nationalism through a unique mixture of “elements of both Islamicism and integralism as well as of earlier territorial nationalism, but reshaped to fit its particularly Arab perspective.”<sup>77</sup> The rise of Islamic sentiments during the 1930s introduced the Egyptian public to the many “cultural, religious, and political ties that bound Egypt to the other Arab states, thus “increas[ing] awareness of the Arab and Islamic components of Egyptian national identity.”<sup>78</sup> The revival of Arab and Islamic orientation brought into the public’s conscious a new perception of the Palestine question. The public got to know that fellow Arab and Muslim Palestinians struggle against alien occupation. The Great Revolt of 1936 increased the public’s awareness and interest in the Palestine problem. The public identified with the revolt politically and religiously, since Palestinians were fellow Arabs and Muslims fighting against colonial oppression.<sup>79</sup>

The rise of pan-Arab sentiments during the 1930s gained the encouragement of both King Farouk and Egyptian politicians as political vehicles to score popularity among

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75. For further analysis see, “The Return of Islam: the New Islamic Mood in Egypt,” in Gershoni and Jankowski, *Redefining the Egyptian Nation, 1930-1945*, 54-78

76. For further analysis see: “Egyptian Arab Nationalism,” in Gershoni and Jankowski, *Redefining the Egyptian Nation, 1930-1945*, 117-142

77. Gershoni and Jankowski, *Redefining the Egyptian Nation, 1930-1945*, 117

78. Michael Doran, *Pan-Arabism before Nasser: Egyptian Power Politics and the Palestine Question*, (Oxford New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 96

79. Miller, *The Arab States and the Palestine Question: Between Ideology and Self-Interest*, 57



the masses. Both the king and his rival the Wafdist leader Mustafa al-Nahas used pan-Arabism and the Palestine issue “as useful propaganda tools...to enhance their own reputations.”<sup>80</sup> After signing the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty of 1936, Egypt hoped to engage in the diplomatic efforts regarding the Palestine question.<sup>81</sup> However, the Egyptian official interest in the Palestine question did not stem solely from sentiments, but largely from national and political considerations. Egyptian politicians hoped that adopting the Palestine problem would enhance Egypt’s political prestige as an Arab leader, score political leverage against Britain, and deflate the opposition to the 1936 treaty.<sup>82</sup> During the 1936 revolt Egyptian diplomacy offered very little other than rhetoric. In deed journalist Abdel Qadir al-Mazini criticized the government’s stance where “ministers “talk” about Palestine, yet the government of Egypt is not participating in any other way [than talk] to stop the bloodshed and to achieve justice.”<sup>83</sup>

The release of the Peel Commission’s report of 1937 recommending the partition of Palestine between Arabs and Jews raised much attention and concern in Egypt. Various Egyptian organizations such as the YMMA, the Muslim Brotherhood, Young Egypt, and the Egyptian Women’s Union as well as youth and university students’ groups

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80. Ibid. 58

81. The treaty signed on 26 August 1936, ended the British occupation and stipulated the withdrawal of British troops except for the Canal Zone for defense purposes. Egypt was recognized as a sovereign independent state. Ambassadors were exchanged between the two countries, and Britain agreed to help Egypt join the League of Nations. The treaty also included an agreement between Egyptian and British governments to extend assistance in war including the British right to use Egyptian infrastructure and ports. The treaty would have lasted for a period of twenty years. For the treaty’s full text see: <http://www.britains-smallwars.com/Canal/Treaty/html> , also see: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anglo-Egyptian\\_treaty\\_of\\_1936](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anglo-Egyptian_treaty_of_1936)

82. Doran, *Pan-Arabism before Nasser: Egyptian Power Politics and the Palestine Question*, 96. Both liberal nationalists and the Muslim Brotherhood attacked the treaty of 1936. They argued that the treaty did not meet Egyptians’ aspirations for full independence. The treaty maintained the presence of British troops in Suez and other locations in case of war. It also gave the British forces the right to defend Egypt until the Egyptian army was ready to hold its military responsibilities. Critics of the treaty added that the British know that the Egyptian army needed extensive training and preparations. The British hoped to elongate this process to justify their military presence in Egypt.

83. Jankowski, “Egyptian Responses to the Palestine Problem in the Interwar Period,” 17

protested the report.<sup>84</sup> They released reports denouncing the partition plan, arguing that Palestine is an Arab land and belongs to the Arabs. Religious arguments voiced through al-Azhar argued that the partition of Palestine meant the loss of the Holy Places and that it is the duty of every Muslim to defend Palestine.<sup>85</sup> Secular arguments stressed that the creation of a Jewish state in Palestine would lead to Arab Jewish hostilities which would eventually facilitate European intervention under the pretext of preserving regional peace. Further arguments explained that the proposed Jewish state would act as a barrier destroying Egypt's hopes of leading the Arab world, since Egypt would be culturally and economically isolated from the Arab east. The proposed Jewish state would thus become the region's financial center and transform the region into its "economic colony."<sup>86</sup> Politicians warned that the creation of a Jewish state would end all hopes for the unity of the Arab east. They also warned that such state would have an expansionist goal, which would soon go beyond Palestine and lay claims to other neighboring Arab lands.<sup>87</sup>

Wafdist Prime Minister Moustafa al-Nahas represented Egypt's official response to the Peel report. During a parliamentary hearing on 20 July 1937, he stressed that the Egyptian government was keen on defending Palestinians' national rights. Nahas voiced his rejection of the partition plan to the British ambassador to Egypt Sir Miles Lampson. He protested the fact that Palestinians were being "plucked up by the roots to make way for strangers in their native land," he further added "what was to prevent the Jews from eventually maintaining a right to Sinai in the future? Or provoke trouble with [the] Jewish

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84. Gershoni and Jankowski, *Redefining the Egyptian Nation, 1930-1945*, 176

85. Ibid. 173-174

86. Jankowski, "Egyptian Responses to the Palestine Problem in the Interwar Period," 25

87. Ibid. 22

community in Egypt itself?”<sup>88</sup> Nonetheless, Nahhas did not encourage Egyptian-Arab collaboration regarding the Palestine issue. He declined to send official representatives to the inter-Arab conference on Palestine, which was held in Syria in September 1937. The Egyptian delegation to the conference participated on a non-official basis and had very little to offer other than clichéd rhetoric.<sup>89</sup>

The year 1937 saw a limited Egyptian involvement in the Palestine question. There were two cases where the Egyptian government expressed solidarity and concern toward Palestine. The first occurred on 18 September 1937 when the Egyptian Foreign Minister addressed the League of Nations and stressed Egypt’s rejection to the partition option and its firm belief that “Palestine remain for the Palestinians.”<sup>90</sup> The second occasion came in the form of a petition to the British embassy drafted by members of the Egyptian parliament. They stressed the historical and religious ties binding Egyptians and Palestinians, and denounced the partition plan and British repressive policies in Palestine.<sup>91</sup> The limited Egyptian diplomatic involvement in the Palestine issue in 1937 resulted mainly from Egypt’s internal political crisis. The Wafd party had to deal with several domestic challenges. On the one hand, the rivalry between King Farouk and al-Nahhas crippled the political scene. On the other hand, the Wafd party, long known for its mass popularity, faced a rising challenge from a new generation of educated youth who questioned the credibility of the existing political order.<sup>92</sup>

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88. Gershoni and Jankowski, *Redefining the Egyptian Nation, 1930-1945*, 177

89. Ibid. 177

90. Ibid. 178

91. Ibid. 178

92. Ibid. 178-179

In 1938 and 1939, Prime Minister Mohammad Mahmoud adopted a more active policy toward the Palestine issue. It is however important to note that the rising public support of Palestine highly influenced the premier's stance. He delivered several public speeches on Palestine before the World Parliamentary Congress in October 1938 and before the joint meeting of representatives of Arab governments held in Cairo in January 1939. Mahmoud also sent an official Egyptian delegation to the St. James Conference on Palestine in February-March 1939.<sup>93</sup> When such meetings failed to resolve Arab-Jewish disputes, Mahmoud proposed negotiating with both the British and the World Zionist Organization. In April 1939 the governments of Egypt, Iraq, and Saudi Arabia formally rejected the resolutions of the White Paper of 17 May 1939. Following several unsuccessful negotiations with Palestinian representatives, Mahmoud delivered a public statement explaining that the proposed plan failed to serve as a base to solve the Palestine question.<sup>94</sup>

The 1940s witnessed an increasing Egyptian involvement in the Palestine issue coinciding with the establishment of the Arab League (AL) in Cairo on 22 March 1945.<sup>95</sup> The AL Secretary General Abdel-Rahman Azzam stressed Egypt's commitment to Palestine, and explained that Zionism was an imperialistic project in Arab land supported and financed by both Britain and the United States. He also warned that Egypt would resist any attempt to enforce the partition of Palestine.<sup>96</sup> Egypt based its official stance on Palestine during the 1940s on three foundations explained in the Palestine Conference held in London in 1946: first, Egypt's firm rejection to both partition and the

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93. Further details can be found in Jankowski, "Egyptian Responses to the Palestine Problem in the Interwar Period," 19-20

94. Gershoni and Jankowski, *Redefining the Egyptian Nation, 1930-1945*, 184-189

95. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Arab\\_League](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Arab_League) accessed on 11 April 2013

96. Miller, *The Arab States and the Palestine Question: Between Ideology and Self-Interest*, 58

establishment of a Jewish state in the Arab region. Second, Egypt would not remain passive in face of the mounting Zionist threat. Third, stressing Egypt's rejection to the proposals of the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry of 1946.<sup>97</sup>

However, the diplomatic efforts remained confined to repetitive rhetoric. In the year 1947, the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) formed the United Nations Special Committee on Palestine (UNSCOP), which released its report recommending the partition of Palestine into two states.<sup>98</sup> On 29 November 1947 the UNGA adopted this recommendation and issued its partition resolution.<sup>99</sup> Passing the partition resolution agitated the Egyptian public. Mass protests erupted demanding immediate military intervention on behalf of Palestine. The Muslim Brotherhood and Young Egypt were at the forefront of such protests stressing that defending Palestine is a religious duty on every Muslim. As of late 1947 and early 1948, the Brotherhood started training and sending independent fighters into Palestine to fight the Zionists.<sup>100</sup>

By the late 1940s, the Egyptian government suffered from mounting domestic turmoil. Negotiations with the British government dragged, the economic situation worsened, along with an influx in social disturbances and mass protests. Against this

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97. Awatef Abdel Rahman, *Egypt and Palestine* [Misr wa Filastin], (Kuwait: Alam al-Ma'rafa, 1980), 287-288 [Arabic Source]. The Anglo-American Committee failed to formulate progressive proposals. It proposed a vague binational state dominated by neither the Arabs nor the Jews. It recommended the continuation of the British mandate over Palestine as well as the admission of 100,000 Jewish refugees and the removal of land purchase restrictions applied since the White Paper of 1939. For further analysis see: Smith, *Palestine and the Arab-Israeli Conflict: A History with Documents*, 184-185. Also see [http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th\\_century/angch01.asp](http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/angch01.asp) [Full text of the committee's recommendations] accessed on 11 April 2013

98. Smith, *Palestine and the Arab-Israeli Conflict: A History with Documents*, "UNSCOP's Plan of Partition with Economic Union," Document No. 4.2, 212-214

99. <http://unispal.un.org/unispal.nsf/0/7F0AF2BD897689B785256C330061D253>, [Full Text of UN General Assembly Resolution No. 181 (II) of 1947]

100. Mohammad Said Hamdan, *Siyasat Misr Tijah al-Qadiyah al-Filastiniyah, 1948-1956* [Egyptian Policies toward the Palestine Problem] [Arabic Source], (Amman: Yazori, 2006), 127-129

troubled backdrop, King Farouk decided to send the Egyptian army into Palestine. Prime Minister Mahmoud Fahmy al-Nuqrashi had previously advised against formal military intervention in Palestine. He argued that the Egyptian army lacked essential training and necessary armament. He also added that he cannot declare a state of war while the British army is stationed on the banks of the Suez Canal right behind the lines of the Egyptian army. He proposed that instead of sending the formal army the government could support the Palestinians through supplying financial aid, arms, and volunteers.<sup>101</sup> However, without informing either the Prime Minister or parliament King Farouk decided to dispatch the Egyptian army into Palestine on 15 May 1948. He decided to enter the Palestine war as a means to achieve narrow national interests. He hoped the move would restore his shattered popularity; delegitimize the rising wave of nationalist opposition, that is, mainly the Muslim Brotherhood; and to divert the public's attention away from deteriorating national conditions. The war could also be used as a pretext to curtail freedoms and enact emergency laws. On the regional level, King Farouk envisioned building an Arab leadership for himself as the liberator of Palestine. More importantly his decision to enter the war like the rest of the Arab leaders came as a means to block Abdullah of Jordan from establishing his envisioned kingdom of Greater Syria.<sup>102</sup>

The war ended with a disastrous defeat for the Arab armies, since their miscalculated intervention lacked strategic co-ordination and underestimated the Zionists' strength. More importantly the war for the Arab leaders became by and large a competition for territorial and regional power. On 24 February 1949 Egypt signed the Rhodes Armistice with Israel to pull out its besieged army in al-Falujah pocket; it also

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101. Ibid. 111-112

102. Brand, *Palestinians in the Arab World: Institution Building and the Search for State*, 41-43

granted Egypt the administration of Gaza.<sup>103</sup> The Egyptian rule over Gaza lasted from 1949 until 1967 when it fell to Israeli occupation as a result of the war. Until then, the Egyptian governor-general in Gaza retained all the powers exercised by the former British High Commissioner in Palestine. Also, the name of the area changed to the Gaza Strip with the issuing of Law 255 of 1955, which legalized the general-governor's powers.<sup>104</sup> On 23 April 1950 the Egyptian government replaced the Palestine currency with the Egyptian one. The Strip from 1949 until 1962 was under emergency law and military rule. The situation changed in 1962 when President Nasser issued an official proclamation ending the military status of the area.<sup>105</sup> The Egyptian government stressed at this time that had no intention of annexing Gaza. Its temporary rule, the official narrative insisted, was a means of preserving a part of Arab Palestine in preparation for the liberation of the whole of Palestine.<sup>106</sup>

The previous section examined the evolution of the Egyptian official response to the Palestine problem beginning with the 1920s till the war of Palestine in 1948. This response shifted gradually from an Egypt-centric nationalism in the 1920s to a more Arab and Islamic orientation throughout the 1930s and the 1940s. The following section will examine samples from the Egyptian press during the interwar period and how the image of Palestine evolved during that era.

### **Palestine in the Egyptian Press during the Interwar Period**

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103. <http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Foreign+Relations/Israels+Foreign+Relations+since+1947/1947-1974/Israel-Egypt+Armistice+Agreement.htm> [Full Text] [accessed on 23 April 2013]

104. Ibid. 48

105. Ibid. 48

106. Hamdan, *Siyasat Misr Tijah al-Qadiyah al-Filastiniyah, 1948-1956*, 275-279, also see Ilana Feldman, *Governing Gaza: Bureaucracy, Authority, and the Work of Rule, 1917-1967*, (London: Duke University Press, 2008), 8

During the 1920s the Egyptian press focused largely on domestic issues and mainly the struggle for independence from the British occupation. Covering developments in Palestine occurred on occasional intervals and Palestine “was accorded no more attention than that given to other foreign areas of the world.”<sup>107</sup> During the 1920s many articles showed sympathy toward the Jewish national home project arguing that it will benefit Palestinians.<sup>108</sup> The press however, provided daily coverage on the Wailing Wall disturbances of August 1929. Nonetheless, the press coverage seemed largely detached. For instance, both *al-Muqattam* and *al-Siyasa al-Ushu'iyya* questioned the credibility of the Palestinian account on the disturbances and criticizing the Palestinian Arab leadership for resorting to violence.<sup>109</sup> Another trend of coverage used the disturbances to warn against religious strife and sectarianism. Papers like *al-Muqattam*, *al-Ahram*, and the Wafdist paper *al-Balagh* “used events in Palestine to caution [their] readers about the dangers of “religious controversy” in “Eastern” nations, advising that sectarian discord could only serve to weaken national causes.”<sup>110</sup> Unlike the reaction of the Islamic circles, which sided with Palestinians against Jewish transgressions, the liberal and secular press used the events in Palestine as a negative example to warn against the ramifications of religious intolerance.<sup>111</sup>

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107. Jankowski, “Egyptian Responses to the Palestine Problem in the Interwar Period,” 3

108. Examples of this approach appear in several articles published in *al-Ahram* and *al-Muqattam* (it was owned by a group of Syrians and was first published in 1889. *Al-Muqattam* was known defending the British interests in Egypt). Several articles expressed admiration to the architecture of the Zionist settlements and their modern agricultural and industrial techniques. Several editorials argued that the Jewish settlers would bring modern civilization and economic prosperity to Palestine after centuries of negligence under the Ottoman rule. *Al-Ahram* 18 February and 1 August 1913, *al-Muqattam* on 12 January 1905, 5 July 1913, 22 August 1913, 27 May 1914, *al-Siyasa al-Ushu'iyya* on 24 September 1927 and on 9 February 1929 [Arabic Sources]

109 *Al-Siyasa al-Ushu'iyya* on 1 September 1929 and *al-Muqattam* on 24 September 1929 [Arabic Sources]

110. Jankowski, “Egyptian Responses to the Palestine Problem in the Interwar Period,” 7

111. Ibid. 8-9



The 1930s and 1940s witnessed a shift toward Arab and Islamic concepts which in return lead to more interest in the Palestine issue. The eruption of the Great Revolt of 1936 captured the Egyptian public and revealed the depth of the Arab-Zionist conflict in Palestine. Through the revolt, ordinary Egyptians felt more related to their fellow Palestinians who fought both a national and religious battle against British and Zionist colonialism. Several writers praised the Palestinians' heroism and determination, explaining that their courage had inspired every Arab and Muslim.<sup>112</sup> Writers reacted more vigorously to the Peel Report of 1937, which recommended the partition of Palestine. Several editorials by the likes of Abd al-Qadir al-Mazini, Hafez Mahmoud, and Muhammad Husayn Haykal warned that the partition would erase Arab Palestine from the map, push Arab Palestinians outside their home land, and end any prospects of ever achieving Arab unity.<sup>113</sup>

The second half of the 1940s witnessed a surge in Palestine coverage coinciding with the impending UN-General Assembly partition resolution of 1947. *Al-Masri* (the Egyptian) newspaper reported extensively on Palestine during the year 1947. The paper attacked the passivity of the Egyptian government and stressed the necessity of preparing the Egyptian army to defend Palestine.<sup>114</sup> *Misr al-Fatah* (Young Egypt) ran many editorials criticizing the passivity of both the Egyptian government and the Arab League. The paper praised the voluntary brigades and called on the masses to donate money and arms, and enroll with informal fighters, since the Arab governments and the Arab League

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112. Ibid. 20

113. Ibid. 22, *Al-Risala* on 2 and 16 August 1937, *al-Muqattam* on 15 July 1937, *al-Siyasa al-Ushbu'iyya* on 24 July 1937, *al-Jihad* on 11 July 1937

114. *Al-Masri* on 22, 23, 24, 26, and 29 September 1947, 11, 15, and 18 October 1947, in Abdel Rahman, *Egypt and Palestine* [Misr wa Filastin], 293-303 [Arabic Sources]

had failed to provide any meaningful support to defend Palestine.<sup>115</sup> Leftist papers like *al-Fagr* (the Dawn) and *al-Dameer* (the Conscience), the mouthpieces of the Workers and Peasants Organization provided wide coverage on developments in Palestine. The papers ran several editorials explaining the Zionist project's hidden goals. The papers again strongly attacked the Arab League and accused it of collaborating with Western imperialism against Palestine.<sup>116</sup>

The previous part examined samples of Egyptian newspapers and their stance on Palestine during the interwar period. Press coverage on the Palestine issue shifted gradually from a limited stance during the 1920s to an increasing interest in the 1930s, culminating with extensive coverage during the 1940s till the eruption of the 1948 war. The next section will examine the Egyptian government's response to the early waves of Palestinian refugees.

### **The Palestinian Refugees in Egypt, 1948-1952**

Before the outbreak of the 1948 war many upper and middle class families especially from the coastal cities like Jaffa and Haifa fled to Egypt between the end of 1947 and early 1948.<sup>117</sup> Numbers of refugees increased as more people fled the Haganah's systematic assaults. The first wave of refugees (around 1250) arrived at Port Said between 25 and 29 April 1948. Before 15 May 1948 Egypt received between 5000-

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115. *Misr al-Fatah* on 12 January 1948, 8 March 1948, 19 and 26 April 1948, in Abdel Rahman, *Egypt and Palestine* [Misr wa Filastin], 293-303 [Arabic Sources]

116. *Al-Fagr* during June, and December, 1945, *al-Dameer* during October 1945 and May 1946, in Abdel Rahman, *Egypt and Palestine* [Misr wa Filastin], 293-303 [Arabic Sources]

117. Oroub El-Abed, *Unprotected: Palestinians in Egypt since 1948*, (Washington D.C.: Institute for Palestine Studies, 2009), 30-31

6000 Palestinian refugees.<sup>118</sup> When the war broke out the number of the refugees fleeing into Egypt increased, therefore, the government founded the “High Committee for Palestinian Refugee Affairs’ to organize the arrival of the early waves of Palestinian refugees to Egypt.”<sup>119</sup> Later on the government established another camp in al-Qantarah Sharq (on the Sinai side of the Suez Canal) to accommodate the growing number of refugees.<sup>120</sup> The Egyptian government also did not seek assistance from the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA).<sup>121</sup> This policy resulted from the government’s assumption that the situation with the refugees was temporary.<sup>122</sup> The government stance on the refugees seemed detached and unwilling to engage actively with their plight. The Egyptian government understood the refugees as an external problem outside the state’s mandate. Such a perception still dominates the government’s policies toward refugee communities until the present day.

Al-Nuqrashi’s government argued that Egypt cannot accommodate the refugees on a long-term basis. Officials used such domestic problems like inflation, over-population, and high rates of unemployment as pretexts to reject sustaining the refugees on a permanent basis.<sup>123</sup> In September 1948 the government moved the refugees housed in al-Abbasiyyah camp to the one in al-Qantarah; the total number of the Palestinian refugees was 11,000.<sup>124</sup> The government also established a committee to review the status

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118. Ibid. 31, also see Hamdan, *Siyasat Misr Tijah al-Qadiyah al-Filastiniyah, 1948-1956*, 302

119. Maha Ahmed Dajani, *The Institutionalization of Palestinian Identity in Egypt*, Cairo Papers in Social Science, Volume 9, Monograph 3, (Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, Fall 1986), 15

120. Brand, *Palestinians in the Arab World: Institution Building and the Search for State*, 43

121. UNRWA was created in December 1949 to provide relief and humanitarian assistance to the Palestinian refugees who fled during the 1948 war. It operates in five locations: the Gaza Strip, the West Bank, Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria, for further details see, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/UNRWA>

122. Ghada Hashem Talhami, *Palestine and the Egyptian National Identity*, (New York; Praeger, 1992), 85

123. El-Abed, *Unprotected: Palestinians in Egypt since 1948*, 34

124. Brand, *Palestinians in the Arab World: Institution Building and the Search for State*, 43

of the refugees on a case-by-case basis. The Ministry of Interior issued temporary residence permits for those who had enough funds and were familiar with an Egyptian national who would act as a guarantor, but the Egyptian government denied issuing work permits to the refugees who lacked financial resources. Also, the validity of the residency permits varied according to each case and the process itself took much time.<sup>125</sup>

Nuqrashi advised against settling refugees on long-term basis. He perceived the refugees, especially those associated with the communists or the Muslim Brotherhood, as a potential national security threat.<sup>126</sup> In this respect, the Egyptian government maintained a clear line separating Egyptian territories and the Gaza Strip. This is illustrated in adopting the policy of concentrating most of the refugees in Gaza mainly in the Maghazi camp which received 7,000 residents from the Qantarrah camp during September 1949. The government also encouraged those who had relatives in other countries to leave Egypt as well as transferring those who lack financial resources to Gaza.<sup>127</sup> By 1950 only a few thousand Palestinians remained where “[b]eginning June 5, 1950, Egypt Air, in a series of flights, transported 516 Palestinians to Jerusalem. And in August 1950 another group was sent to Gaza.”<sup>128</sup> The government’s treatment of early Palestinian refugees showed a clear sense of detachment and uneasiness. Al-Nuqrashi adopted the “national security threat” rhetoric as a pretext to justify policies that would otherwise raise public criticism.

## **Conclusion**

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125. Ibid. 43-44

126. Hamdan, *Siyasat Misr Tijah al-Qadiyah al-Filastiniyah, 1948-1956*, 303

127. El-Abed, *Unprotected: Palestinians in Egypt since 1948*, 34

128. Brand, *Palestinians in the Arab World: Institution Building and the Search for State*, 45

The first part of this chapter introduced the aim of the project. The second part examined the origins of the Palestinian refugee problem, as well as providing a deconstructive analysis to the historiography of the 1948 war. This section also examined the evolution of the official Egyptian response to the Palestine problem during the interwar period until the 1948 war. This response shifted gradually from a detached stance during the 1920s to a more active role during the 1930s and 1940s. It also analyzed how the Egyptian press reacted to developments in Palestine during the period under investigation. The last section investigated the Egyptian government's response to the early waves of Palestinian refugees. During that era, the government adopted a detached policy; treated the refugees as a temporary problem, and showed unwillingness to engage actively in settling them in Egypt.

## **Chapter Two**

### **The Nasser Era 1954-1970**

This chapter focuses on the Nasserist era and the course of the Egyptian-Palestinian relations during that period. The chapter in this respect attempts to analyze Nasser's political project and how the Palestine question fitted within its parameters. It will also attempt to examine the social and legal status of Egypt's Palestinian refugees during the era under investigation and the extent to which political tensions affected their rights.

#### **Historical background**

On 23 July 1952 the Free Officers Movement declared a military coup d'état which dethroned King Farouk and declared the establishment of the Revolutionary Command Council (RCC). The movement under the leadership of General Mohammed Naguib and Colonel Gamal Abdel Nasser delivered its first statement stating that the decision to dethrone the king resulted from "the persistence of the British occupation since 1882, the corruption and inefficiency of the political order leading to the defeat in the Palestine war of 1948, and the glaring social inequalities."<sup>129</sup> However, the question is: to what extent did the defeat in the Palestine war contribute to triggering the coup? To answer this question, it is useful to briefly examine the socio-political scene prevailing in Egypt on the eve of the 1948 war. Prior to the Palestine war political and social frustrations surfaced against the ailing monarchy. King Farouk lost his initial popularity among the population due to his inability to end the British occupation that had persisted since 1882 along with the spread of poverty and rural landlessness. In fact one of Farouk's

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129. The first revolutionary announcement, <http://ar.wikisource.org/wiki/1952>, [Arabic source] (Translations mine).

motivations behind participating in the war resulted from his desire to regain his lost popularity among the population and score a victory against the rising national opposition. He took this decision while ignoring the fact that the army lacked essential training and preparation combined with the presence of unqualified chiefs in the leadership.<sup>130</sup> Additionally, the political parties including the liberal Wafd failed to provide substantial alternatives to break the deadlock and achieve complete independence. In fact the first Wafdist government under the leadership of Saad Pasha Zaghlul hoped “to make a deal with the British government to reconcile Egyptian nationalist and British imperialist interests.”<sup>131</sup> In the year 1936 the Wafd government under the leadership of Mustafa al-Nahhas Pasha signed the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty of 1936. The treaty would have lasted for twenty years and it stipulated the withdrawal of the British troops from Egypt except for a number of 10,000 soldiers to protect the Suez Canal. The treaty also gave the British the exclusive right to train and supply arms to the Egyptian army and to step in for defense in cases of war.<sup>132</sup> However, given the fact that the Egyptian army at that time lacked sufficient ammunition, vital equipment, training, and experienced military leaders, the British secured a prolonged military presence in the Canal Zone along with bases in Cairo and Alexandria.<sup>133</sup> By early 1952 al-Nahhas Pasha unilaterally renounced the 1936 treaty sparking violent clashes between the British troops and the Egyptian policemen in the Canal Zone resulting in the death of more than fifty Egyptian policemen on 25 January 1952 (known as Police Day). Following news about the massacres in Suez, violence erupted culminating with the burning of Cairo where

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130. Fawaz A. Gerges, “Egypt and the 1948 War: Internal Conflict and Regional Ambition,” in Rogan and Shlaim, eds. *The War for Palestine*, 152-157

131. Goldschmidt Jr. and Davidson, *A Concise History of the Middle East*, 250

132. <http://www.britains-smallwars.com/Canal/Treaty.html>

133. Goldschmidt Jr. and Davidson, *A Concise History of the Middle East*, 257

thousands of demonstrators set fires in hundreds of foreign banks and hotels across the city on 26 January 1952.<sup>134</sup> The political scene would remain in turmoil until the Free Officers announced their coup and seized power on 23 July 1952.

The social and economic scene did not fare better. The majority of the population suffered from poverty, illiteracy and the wide spread of fatal diseases. The social gaps grew wider between the wealthy landlords and the majority of the poor landless population.<sup>135</sup> Also the fact that the capitalists and Pashas dominated the parliament hindered any attempts at social reform and improving the living standards for the masses.<sup>136</sup> Frustrated and disillusioned by the liberal-democratic experience, intellectuals started looking elsewhere for solutions to Egypt's social, economic, and political dilemmas. Some groups followed the Marxist communist doctrine. Others expressed a deep interest in the Italian and German experiences under the leadership of Mussolini and Hitler. However, the Muslim Brotherhood appealed more to the majority of the population arguing that restoring authentic Islamic institutions and abandoning "Western innovations" was the only way to solve Egypt's problems.<sup>137</sup> The Brotherhood argued that westernization did not benefit the average Egyptians who kept suffering while a tiny minority associated with the palace and the Europeans accumulated most of the country's wealth.<sup>138</sup> In this respect it is important to note that King Farouk's miscalculated decision to enter the Palestine war stemmed from a futile attempt to regain the support of the

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134. Ibid. 265-266

135. Ibid. 257-258

136. Ibid. 255-260

137. Ibid. 258

138. Ibid. 258



masses, divert the attention from the crumbling domestic affairs, and deflate the opposition especially the growing brotherhood.<sup>139</sup>

Against this turbulent landscape, the defeat in 1948 was the final factor that discredited the ailing monarchy and, shattered the government's credibility as well as the Wafd's liberal experiment. The defeat put much pressure on a severely frustrated and humiliated army. The defeat was not the sole trigger for the Free Officers' coup, but it constituted a decisive turning point.

In *The Philosophy of the Revolution*, Gamal Abdel Nasser reflects on his experience in 1948 also known as the *nakba* which he saw as a mirror foreshadowing the fate of Egypt.<sup>140</sup> Nasser explained that the seeds of the coup existed long before the eruption of the Palestine war and the debacle of the defective weapons. The Free Officers had begun circulating pamphlets advocating for the liberation of Egypt beginning in the early 1940s. Nasser narrates that while these group of soldiers fought in the trenches in Palestine and were latter under siege in the Faluja pocket, Egypt continued to be their preoccupation. Their "dreams were in Egypt. Our bullets were aimed at the enemy...but our hearts were hovering round our distant Mother Country, which was then a prey to the wolves that ravaged it."<sup>141</sup> Nasser and his military colleagues felt that the greater battle is in Egypt, whom a greater Faluja awaits if she remains besieged by the British and the King.

There is our Mother Country, a far, far bigger Falouja. What is happening in Palestine is but a miniature picture of what is happening to Egypt. Our Mother

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139. Gerges, "Egypt and the 1948 War: Internal Conflict and Regional Ambition," in Rogan and Shlaim, eds. *The War for Palestine*, 152-157

140. Gamal Abdel Nasser, *The Philosophy of the Revolution*, (Cairo: Mondiale Press, 1953) , 10-13

141. Ibid. 12

Country has been likewise besieged by difficulties as well as ravaged by an enemy. She was cheated and pushed to fight unprepared. Greed, intrigue and passion have toyed with her and left her under fire unarmed.<sup>142</sup>

The defeat added a surge to the mounting socio-political frustrations prevailing in Egypt in the decades prior to the war. In this respect the defeat combined with the Palestinians' trauma of dispossession proved that the time has come to overthrow the ailing political order. Nasser stressed that ousting Farouk became a national duty to liberate Egypt from corruption, tyranny, British domination, and above all to protect Egypt from the fate of Palestine.<sup>143</sup> The Palestine question would later become a crucial component in Nasser's quest to define Egypt's political identity and build domestic and regional support for his pan-Arab project. To this end the following section addresses the relation between Nasserism and the Palestine question.

### **The Egyptian-Palestinian Political Relations 1954-1970**

Nasser's political ideology did not crystalize until his presidency commenced in 1954 after ousting General Naguib. The year 1955 would have a considerable impact on shaping the course of Nasser's policies until the first half of the 1960s. Initially, Nasser focused on improving Egypt's social and economic conditions, while simultaneously negotiating the withdrawal of the remaining British troops. Nasser hoped to maintain open relations with the West and the United States in order to secure funds to revive the economic and industrial sectors. As for the Arab-Israeli conflict, Nasser called for abiding by the United Nations (UN) resolutions and following the path of political negotiations. He stressed maintaining order across the borders with Gaza in order to maintain the cease-fire with and deprive Israel of a premise to wage counter-attacks. This

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142. Ibid. 13

143. Ibid. 13

required imposing heavy surveillance on Palestinian activists in the Gaza Strip especially the militant groups in an effort to ensure Egypt's national security. Additionally, prior to 1955 Nasser expressed openness towards several proposals that aimed to resettle Palestinian refugees in the host countries. For instance, the Egyptian government discussed the prospects of the Northern Sinai project proposing the transfer of the Nile water to Sinai enabling poor Gazan families to cultivate some small plots. Aware that such plans would dissolve their national rights; Gazans strongly opposed any resettlement plans and insisted on their right of return. In February 1955 Gazans demonstrated against this proposal and forced the Egyptian government to drop the project altogether.<sup>144</sup>

However, an aggressive Israeli raid on Gaza on 28 February 1955, which killed thirty-nine Egyptian soldiers and injured many, signaled for Nasser a political rather than a military message.<sup>145</sup> The raid occurred at a time when there were no major clashes across the borders. More than anything it was a moment of Israel's performance of its military power. The raid highlighted the increasing vulnerability and ill equipped condition of Egypt's eastern borders. Nasser turned first to the United States but their insistence on defense supervision including dispatching their own inspectors to oversee arm's handling and use pushed Nasser to reject the deal.<sup>146</sup> He would attain his aims through a Soviet proposal to supply different arms including modern planes and tanks in return for Egyptian cotton and rice. On 27 September 1955 Nasser announced the finalization of the deal, which would be known as the "Czechs Deal." It marked Nasser's

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144. Brand, *Palestinians in the Arab World: Institution Building and the Search for State*, 49

145. Hamdan, *Siyasat Misr Tijah al-Qadiyah al-Filastiniyah, 1948-1956*, [Egypt Policies towards the Palestine Cause, 1948-1956], 360-370 [Arabic Source], see also John Zimmerman, "The Origins of the Fedeyeen in Nasser's Weltpolitik: Prelude to the Suez War," *The Historian*, Vol. 42, No. 1, 1979, 101-118

146. James Jankowski, *Nasser's Egypt, Arab Nationalism, and the United Arab Republic*, (Boulder and London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2002), 48-54

alliance with the Eastern bloc in a glaring challenge to the United States and the Western bloc in the midst of an increasingly embittered Cold War.<sup>147</sup> Thus the raid and Nasser's reactions to it fostered his status as a regional leader. He appeared to refuse to surrender to Western conditions and adopted a hardline stance towards Israel including supporting Palestinian armed attacks across the borders. Nasser explained that Israel's reliance on aggression deems peace unattainable. He added that after the Gaza raid and the inefficiency of the Security Council to stop Israeli aggression, Egypt had no choice but to defend itself and would use all its military capabilities to safeguard its national security.<sup>148</sup> Nasser would later recall that the Gaza raid proved that the Israeli threat is bigger than the occupied territories, in the sense that, since territorial expansionism lies at the heart of the Zionist project, then it would eventually expand to include more Arab lands. He added that Israel in reality is the tool of Western imperialism and the focal point for global Zionism.<sup>149</sup>

At the Bandung Conference in 1955, Nasser went on to announce Egypt's neutralism and support of anti-Western movements across the Arab world and Asia. He further defied the West by refusing any arm deals that mandated joining anticommunist alliances. Nasser solidified his relations with the Soviet bloc and condemned any Arab alliance with the West.<sup>150</sup> This is illustrated in the case of the Baghdad Pact of the 1955. A British sponsored union with the aim of protecting the region, the pact included in its membership Iraq, Turkey, Iran, Pakistan, and Britain. The pact in fact aimed at containing Soviet influence and to maintain enough power to protect Western interests in

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147. Smith, *Palestine and the Arab-Israeli Conflict: A History with Documents*, 238-239

148. A press declaration by Nasser to the Political Ahran, 15 December 1955 [Arabic Source]

149. A speech delivered by Nasser during the opening session of the People's Assembly on 22 July 1957 [Arabic Source]

150. Goldschmidt Jr. and Davidson, *A Concise History of the Middle East*, 305

the region. Nasser called Iraq's membership "a betrayal of Arab nationalist interests."<sup>151</sup> Nasser argued that Western powers are not really interested in protecting the Middle East from any threat, but rather focused on defending the region against the Soviet Union. For him, pro-Western alliances were imperialistic tools in disguise; they aimed to destroy Arab nationalism and subordinate the region.<sup>152</sup> Nasser insisted that defending the region should come from within the Arab nation through a unified defense system independent of external forces. He explained that by adopting an anti-Soviet stance, the pact was a distraction from the imminent Israeli threat and an attempt to dissolve the Palestine question. Citing the British Prime Minister Anthony Eden's declaration that the pact strengthened the West's influence in the Middle East, Nasser explained that acting against it to protect Arab nationalism and its borders was a necessity.<sup>153</sup> Nasser's most rebellious move came on 26 July 1956 when he nationalized the Suez Canal Company as an Egyptian Limited Company.<sup>154</sup> The move came as an act of retaliation when both Britain and the United States intentionally withdrew from financing the high dam project in Aswan in an attempt to humiliate him. Nasser claimed Egyptian sovereignty over the Canal and insisted that he would not surrender to imperialist schemes aimed at interfering in Egyptian internal affairs and dictating the course of its policies.<sup>155</sup> This bold direction triggered the Tripartite Aggression of Britain, France and Israel on 5 November 1956.<sup>156</sup>

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151. Smith, *Palestine and the Arab-Israeli Conflict: A History with Documents*, 236-237

152. A speech delivered by Nasser in Latakia, Syria on 1 March 1958, [Arabic Source]

<http://nasser.bibalex.org/Speeches/browser.aspx?SID=601&lang=ar>

153. A speech delivered by Nasser during the opening session of the People's Assembly on 22 July 1957 [Arabic Source]

154. Nasser's speech on the occasion of the revolution's fourth anniversary on 26 July 1956 declaring the nationalization of the Suez Canal Company,

<http://nasser.bibalex.org/Speeches/browser.aspx?SID=495&lang=ar> [Arabic Source]

155. Ibid.

156. The UN issued Resolution No. 997 (ES – I) on 2 November 1956 calling for an immediate cease-fire, <http://unispal.un.org/UNISPAL.NSF/0/5B887DCDB63624F7852560DF0066D4B0>

The Anglo-French troops withdrew on 23 December 1956 after a veto by the United States against the aggression. Israel would withdraw by March 1957 after agreeing to install the United Nations Emergency Forces (UNEF) to oversee the borders with Gaza and prevent the infiltrations of Palestinian armed groups.<sup>157</sup> The Suez crisis greatly enhanced Nasser's image as an Arab hero who defied the West, it proved "Nasser's contention that non-alignment and rejection of Western arms agreements were the best means to retain Arab freedom...and weakened those who argued for continued reliance on Western pacts."<sup>158</sup>

Following the Suez war, Nasser turned his focus to define Egypt's political identity and its regional position. As early as 1954 Nasser envisioned a central regional leadership for Egypt stressing its Arab roots through invoking shared geographical boundaries and historical heritage. Nasser referred to Egypt as "Arab Egypt."<sup>159</sup> In *The Philosophy of the Revolution*, Nasser asserted that "[t]he era of isolation is now gone" adding "[n]either can we ignore that there is an Arab circle surrounding us and that this circle is as much a part of us as we are a part of it, that our history has been mixed with it and that its interests are linked with ours."<sup>160</sup>

The Palestine question provided Nasser with a unique foundation for his pan-Arab project. From a strategic perspective, resolving the Palestine question became essential to safeguarding Egypt's borders. Nasser also realized that adopting the Palestine question

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157. UN – General Assembly Resolution No. 1001 (ES – I) on 7 November 1956, <http://unispal.un.org/UNISPAL.NSF/0/14BCD994EE8F6558852560DF0067939D>

158. Smith, *Palestine and the Arab-Israeli Conflict: A History with Documents*, 249

159. The first article in the 1956 Constitution stated that "Egypt and the Egyptian people are part of the Arab nation", <http://www.hccourt.gov.eg/constitution56.asp>, also see Al-Waqa'e al-Masriya, Issue No. 5 (Repeated), 16 January 1956 [Arabic Source], see also Ghada Hashem Talhami, *Palestine in the Egyptian Press: From Al-Ahram to Al-Ahali*, (London: Lexington Books, 2007), 165

160. Nasser, *The Philosophy of the Revolution*, 53-54

would be a cornerstone to unify the Arab world behind his pan-Arab project. Nasser envisioned a central role for Egypt within the realm of regional politics, adopting pan-Arabism secured this goal and provided a context to legitimize his policies.

I do not know why I always imagine that in this region in which we live there is a role wandering aimlessly about seeking an actor to play it. I do not know why this role, tired of roaming about in this vast region which extends to every place around us, should at last settle down, weary and worn out, on our frontiers beckoning us to move, to dress up for it and to perform it since there is nobody else who can do so.<sup>161</sup>

The Palestine question provided a unique venue to unify the Arab states behind one common goal which is to liberate Palestine and defeat imperialism. Pan-Arabism and Palestine became Nasser's pillars in establishing a regional role for Egypt. Nasser stressed that Palestine is the first cause of all the Arabs who share that same fate asserting that "fighting in Palestine was not fighting on foreign territory...It was a duty imposed by self-defense."<sup>162</sup> Such stances provided him with sweeping support among the Arab masses generally and Palestinians particularly. Nasser stressed that Israel was the by-product of the British mandate in Palestine. He added that the idea of establishing a Jewish state in Palestine would have remained unfeasible without the unlimited political and financial support it received from the British Empire.<sup>163</sup> From a strategic point of view Nasser realized that adopting the Palestine cause would rally the Arabs behind Egypt and his pan-Arab project, thus, securing a regional dominance for Egypt. Palestine and the defeat of imperialism were recurrent themes in Nasser's speeches during the

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161. Ibid. 55

162. Ibid. 57

163. Nasser, *The Philosophy of the Revolution*, 1953, 62

1950s and the 1960s. In Gaza, Nasser stated “conspiracies against Arab nationalism in Palestine are in fact targeting Arab nationalism in Egypt as well.”<sup>164</sup>

Further, on the occasion of declaring the new Egyptian constitution in 1956, Nasser stressed that Egypt is part and parcel of Arab nationalism and would support all Arabs in their quest for independence and freedom. He also blamed the loss of Palestine on imperialism and its agencies which isolated Egypt from its Arab roots.<sup>165</sup>

In this respect, it is important to explain that despite Nasser’s pro-Palestine stance, this position cannot be explained in isolation from the calculations of political strategies and national priorities. Egypt’s welfare and stability were at the core of Nasser’s political project.<sup>166</sup> Adopting the Palestine question was a strategic component of Nasser’s project to define Egypt’s political identity and role in the region. Also, from a military and national security perspective, solving the Palestine question was integral to protect Egypt’s eastern borders. Promoting Palestinian nationalism rested on conforming to Nasser’s vision of pan-Arabism. While projecting the image of Palestine’s liberator, Nasser kept the Palestinian factions under close check and wanted to avoid any miscalculated confrontation with Israel. Nasser repeatedly declared that he would not be dragged into an unprepared confrontation just to appease popular sentiments. He maintained a preference for a diplomatic solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict based on implementing the UN-resolutions. Despite his strong anti-Zionist speeches, Nasser was aware of the international balance of power and the influence of the Israeli lobby in the

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164. Nasser’s speech in the Gaza Strip, 29 March 1955 [Arabic source] [All translations mine]

165. Nasser’s speech on 16 January 1956 [Arabic source]

166. Talhami, *Palestine and the Egyptian National Identity*, 104



United States and Europe.<sup>167</sup> Nasser's long time confidant Mohammad Hassanain Heikal recalls the leader's position that a military option was unreasonable if diplomacy was possible. Nasser insisted in several public and private meetings that he would declare a state of war only when it was unavoidable must and in accordance with the political and strategic considerations of the region, he would never go to war for the sake of war only.<sup>168</sup> Nasser never attempted to wage a miscalculated sentimental war. Subjected to defeat resulting mainly from poor military strategies, Nasser stressed the importance of "choosing the right time and the right place to confront Israel's military might."<sup>169</sup> He emphasized that "exhausting all paths of diplomacy would provide enough time to strengthen the internal front and encourage the international community to support us in case diplomacy failed and we opted to the military option."<sup>170</sup>

Incorporating the Palestinian resistance movements in the Nasserist project was also a strategy to prevent opponents and competing alliances from absorbing them. For instance as in the case of the Baghdad Pact, 1955-1979, Nasser opposed any military pacts with Western countries labeling them as another manifestation of imperialism aiming at destroying Arab nationalism and dissolving the Palestine question. He stressed that military co-operation should be done within the frame of the Arab League (AL) only without any foreign interference.<sup>171</sup> After the demise of the United Arab Republic (UAR),

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167. Eric Rouleau, "Abd al-Nasser and the Palestinian National Movement: Chronicle of a Stormy Affair," in Camille Mansour and Leila Fawaz, eds. *Transformed Landscapes: Essays on Palestine and the Middle East in Honor of Walid Khalidi*, (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 2009), 175-196, 180

168. Mohammad Hassanain Heikal,

<http://nasser.bibalex.org/Besaraha/BesarahaBrowser.aspx?BID=613&PDFStart=null&PDFEnd=null&dir=next&activeLink=1&lang=ar>, published in al-Ahram newspaper on 04/12/1970[Arabic Source]

169. Talhami, *Palestine and the Egyptian National Identity*, 104

170. Nasser's Speech on the occasion of the opening session of the People's Assembly on 23 November 1967 [Arabic Source] <http://nasser.bibalex.org/Speeches/browser.aspx?SID=1224&lang=ar>

171. A speech delivered by Nasser on the opening session of the People's Assembly on 22 July 1957 [Arabic Source]

1958-1961, the Baathists in Syria would become another challenge to Nasser. The list would also include the Marxists and the Muslim Brotherhood in Gaza. Following the Gaza raid Nasser supported the fedayeen's operations against Israel to prevent the Brotherhood from advocating jihad (holy war) against Israel. However, this support had strings attached where Nasser made it clear that such operations should be carried out according to Egypt's guidance and approval, those who failed to conform to this condition would face detention and imprisonment.<sup>172</sup> The idea behind keeping the fedayeen under surveillance stems on the one hand, from Nasser's intolerance against miscalculated operations which could trigger Israeli counter-attacks. On the other hand, supporting fedayeen fits Nasser's rhetoric supporting Palestinians and liberation movements. This support relayed a political message to the United States and the Western powers invoking the presence of a regional military leverage that could counter Israel's military might. Finally, containing the fedayeen was a preemptive strategy to deprive anti-Nasserism from taking the upper hand especially the Brotherhood, which had been active in the Strip since 1948. In this respect, Nasser aimed at supporting albeit containing Palestinian nationalism in accordance with his pan-Arab vision.

During the Egyptian rule over Gaza 1949-1967 and especially following the 1955 raid, the Egyptian administration focused monitoring the Strip. Aside from sustaining the everyday needs, extending free university education and providing jobs for all university graduates, the administration had to maintain enough power to control any political

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172. Rouleau, "Abd al-Nasser and the Palestinian National Movement: Chronicle of a Stormy Affair," in Mansour and Fawaz, eds. *Transformed Landscapes: Essays on Palestine and the Middle East in Honor of Walid Khalidi*, 181

activities that might be perceived as a security threat.<sup>173</sup> In other words, the administration opted to adopt what Ilana Feldman refers to as “tactical government”, a term referring to the containment of potential social unrest through providing essential services including education, housing projects, and employment.<sup>174</sup> The logic behind this approach aimed to enhance the legitimacy of the administration and to shape the Strip in accordance with the Nasserist political project. The administration in this respect focused on monitoring the religious and educational institutions so as to control their output. The Egyptian administration promoted a religious education, which “sought to promote a kind of civic morality that would not threaten government power and could participate in its project of promoting a well-ordered public life.”<sup>175</sup> Through controlling both religious institutions and education the administration intended to eliminate the threat of political activism on religious basis a model promoted by the Muslim Brotherhood the main opponents to Nasser’s regime. Following a failed attempt by the brotherhood on Nasser’s life in 1954, the government heavily monitored any Palestinian activists linked to the Brotherhood; many would face detention and arrest based on mere suspicion of being collaborating with them.<sup>176</sup> This historical experience proves the extent to which refugees are vulnerable to domestic and regional political tensions. The administration sought to maintain an active but contained Palestinian nationalism. Egyptian education promoted non-political activism were “[t]he duties of the nationalist as described in schools were not immediately political ones, but cultural and moral ones, including care for others,

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173. Feldman, *Governing Gaza: Bureaucracy, Authority, and the Work of Rule, 1917-1967*, 102 & 153

174. Ibid. 153-154

175. Ibid. 203

176. Rouleau, “Abd al-Nasser and the Palestinian National Movement: Chronicle of a Stormy Affair,” 175-196

cooperation, and respect.”<sup>177</sup> Furthermore, the attempt to direct Palestinian nationalism was not limited to the historical period of Egyptian rule in Gaza; it ultimately affected the course of Egyptian political relations with Palestinian movements. This is evident in the formation of Fatah in 1959 and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) in 1964 as well as the ebbs and flows of Egyptian-Palestinian relations under Nasser.

Formed in Kuwait in 1959, the Palestine National Liberation Movement “Fatah” became the most prominent national organization. The leaders of Fatah descended from the middle classes and the 1948 refugees who took refuge in the Gaza Strip.<sup>178</sup> The key leaders of Fatah were Yasser Arafat and Salah Khalaf (Abu Iyad). Arafat settled in Kuwait as of 1957 after being frustrated by Nasser’s repressive policies against Palestinian armed struggle. Arafat an Egyptian by birth, and education (he had a degree in engineering from Cairo University in 1956) became the president of the Palestinian Student Union (PSU) in 1952, and served with the Egyptian army during the Suez war in 1956. He fully supported the Free Officers’ coup and subscribed to their discourse which blamed the loss of Palestine on the corruption of the Arab monarchies and the imperial conspiracies against Arab nationalism.<sup>179</sup> However, his enthusiasm gradually faded due to Nasser’s strict surveillance on Palestinian activists. Arafat along with other Palestinians came to the conclusion that “the new regime had turned out to be scarcely better than the other Arab regimes, all seen as unfriendly and deeply untrusted.”<sup>180</sup> Fatah did not

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177. Ibid. 215

178. Saker Abu Fakher, “Fatah Movement: The Beginnings and the Rise,” [Haraket Fatah: al-Bedayat wa al-Intelaka] <http://www.maannews.net/arb/ViewDetails.aspx?ID=452627>, 15/01/2012 [Arabic Source]

179. Rouleau, “Abd al-Nasser and the Palestinian National Movement: Chronicle of a Stormy Affair,” 175-183

180. Ibid. 177, see also Smith, *Palestine and the Arab-Israeli Conflict: A History with Documents*, “Inter-Arab and Arab-Israeli Tensions, 1958-1964,” “The Palestine Question in Arab Politics: The Palestine Liberation Organization and al-Fatah”, 270-272

subscribe to any specific political ideology, rather, their motive and goal focused on liberating Palestine as a whole. Unlike, pan-Arabism which preached Arab unity as the means to liberate Palestine, Fatah leaders argued that liberating Palestine would lead to Arab unity.<sup>181</sup> Additionally, they believed that military action should precede political initiatives.<sup>182</sup> This approach drew its inspiration from the success of the Algerian war of independence. For instance, Abu Iyad credited the writings of Frantz Fanon as the main source of his philosophy.<sup>183</sup> Fatah's founders insisted on the autonomy of their decisions and claimed that they would not interfere in Arab regimes' internal affairs nor take sides in regional conflicts. However, one of their undeclared goals focused on slowly preparing the region for a military confrontation with Israel.

[T]hey pledged to abstain from interfering in the internal affairs of the Arab states and from taking sides in inter-Arab conflicts. Fatah's undeclared agenda was to be the spearhead of the liberation of Palestine by organizing an armed struggle that would lead to a conflict between Israel and its neighbors – a conflict that they fully believed would end in an Arab victory.<sup>184</sup>

By October 1959 Fatah started publishing a monthly journal entitled *Filastinuna* (Our Palestine) which would last until the year 1964.<sup>185</sup> Published in Beirut and distributed in some Arab countries it started publishing anonymous articles explaining the organization's ideologies. The journal's articles reaffirmed the movement's political neutrality toward Arab regimes while stressing the necessity of armed struggle to liberate Palestine.<sup>186</sup> Fatah's project did not gain immediate popularity; its establishment came at

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181. Smith, *Palestine and the Arab-Israeli Conflict: A History with Documents*, 271

182. The Palestinian National Charter issued by the Palestine National Council held during 1-17 July 1968, stressed in article No. 9 that armed struggle is the only means to liberate Palestine, [http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th\\_century/plocov.asp](http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/plocov.asp) [Full Text]

183. Rouleau, "Abd al-Nasser and the Palestinian National Movement: Chronicle of a Stormy Affair", 183

184. Ibid. 182

185. Abu Fakher, <http://www.maannnews.net/arb/ViewDetails.aspx?ID=452627>, published on 15 January, 2012

186. Ibid.

a time when Nasserism had reached its zenith. On 1 February 1958 Egypt and Syria united forming the United Arab Republic (UAR) “thought to be the nucleus of a wider Arab union that, in the words of Abu Iyad, ‘would submerge the State of Israel.’”<sup>187</sup> Further, the overthrow of the monarchy in Iraq a major British ally strengthened Nasser’s position against the United States and Britain. From this vantage, it appeared that the achievement of Arab unity was merely a matter of time. A turn of events in 1961 pushed Fatah again to the forefront. On 28 September 1961 the UAR collapsed with Syria’s withdrawal due to mounting dissatisfaction with the Egyptian rule especially political and military hegemony and Nasser’s attempt to nationalize the economy.<sup>188</sup> Disillusioned by the UAR’s collapse many Palestinians expressed their frustration with traditional political parties and opted to join the ranks of Fatah. Further, various Arab states including Iraq, Algeria, Syria and Saudi Arabia aspiring to rival Nasser or contain his growing hegemony provided various forms of financial and logistical aid to Fatah.<sup>189</sup> As of 1964 Syria would openly sponsor Fatah with the aim of reviving its role as a key regional power and to discredit Nasser’s role. In this sense, Syria’s pro-Fatah stance stemmed from strategic national considerations camouflaged under the rubric of supporting armed struggle against Zionism. To this end Syria would supply Fatah with logistical support facilitating its commando operations in Israel albeit from non-Syrian territories.<sup>190</sup>

Sensing the threat of a surge in uncontrolled military attacks that would lead to war, Nasser decided to establish a Palestinian organization that would unify the various Palestinian factions. This came in the form of the Palestine Liberation Organization

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187. Rouleau, “Abd al-Nasser and the Palestinian National Movement: Chronicle of a Stormy Affair,” 182

188. Smith, *Palestine and the Arab-Israeli Conflict: A History with Documents*, 260-261

189. Rouleau, “Abd al-Nasser and the Palestinian National Movement: Chronicle of a Stormy Affair”, 183

190. Ibid. see also Smith, *Palestine and the Arab-Israeli Conflict: A History with Documents*, 272-273

(PLO), established in May 1964 under the patronage of the Arab League and the leadership of Ahmed Shuqayri. This also led to the establishment of the organization's military wing known as the Palestine Liberation Army (PLA) "with units to be stationed in Arab host countries and under their command."<sup>191</sup> Undeterred by this move and under Syria's patronage, Fatah secret military wing *al-Asifa* (the Storm) would carry several attacks on Israel. In retaliation Fatah members in Gaza faced detention and torture. Nasser also "called on all the countries bordering Israel to crack down on the perpetrators of the raids. He had already asked various Arab states to ban the distribution of *Filastinuna*, by then identified as Fatah's mouthpiece."<sup>192</sup> In the meantime Syria initiated a propaganda war accusing Nasser of relinquishing the Palestine cause and dismissing Shuqayri as a Nasserist agent. Nasser responded that Arab regimes are using the Palestine cause as a strategy card to score narrow national interests. He added that the problem with Syria is less about military competition and more about political distrust, explaining that conferences and the war of words are not the means to liberate Palestine. He also defended the creation of the PLO while dismissing claims labeling the organization as powerless. Nasser stressed that the PLO served as a unifying Palestinian entity resisting Israeli attempts to dissolve the Palestine question. Nasser would repeat that declaring war was a difficult decision, not a sentimental one.<sup>193</sup> Prior to the 1967 war, Nasser feared that the race for regional power and the unconditional support of Palestinian militants would create the pretext Israel needed to wage a preemptive war.

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191. Ibid. 184

192. Ibid. 185

193. Nasser's speech at the Palestinian National Congress, Cairo University on 31 May 1965, <http://nasser.bibalex.org/Speeches/browser.aspx?SID=1123&lang=ar> [Arabic Source]

It was thus that fedayeen action, encouraged by Syria for its own ends, set in motion the chain of events that ultimately proved Nasser's worst fears about the consequences of ill-advised armed struggle. The debacle of the June 1967 war radically changed the balance of power in the region, including that between the Palestinian resistance and Nasser's Egypt.<sup>194</sup>

The Six Day War of 5-10 June 1967 changed the dynamics of the region dramatically in favor of Israel, which emerged as a rising military power. The 1967 debacle and its consequences became the second massive defeat to befall the Arabs since 1948. The defeat in 1967 led to the loss of the Sinai Peninsula, Gaza, Jerusalem, the West Bank, and the Golan Heights. Further, it is estimated that more than 350,000 Palestinians became refugees who faced forced evictions from their villages, thus, intensifying the Palestinian refugee problem already persisting since 1948.<sup>195</sup> The scale of mass evictions and the permanent destruction of villages endangered the prospect of a return to the Arab Palestinians and discredited Israeli prewar claims "that it would not expand its borders."<sup>196</sup> In this respect it is important to briefly explain the political circumstances leading to the 1967 war. Norman G. Finkelstein argues that the 1967 war could have been avoided adding that Nasser never wanted to start a miscalculated war.<sup>197</sup> Finkelstein argues that Israel's reasons to wage a preemptive strike could be summarized as follows: First, the Israeli leaders argued that Syrian fighters constantly attack the Israeli northern settlements. Second, Israel also argued that Nasser's Egypt is preparing a massive strike against Israel citing the large concentrations of the Egyptian army in Sinai. Third, the closure of the Tiran Straits was presented as an act of declaring war and a violation of

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194. Rouleau, "Abd al-Nasser and the Palestinian National Movement: Chronicle of a Stormy Affair," 185, see also Smith, *Palestine and the Arab-Israeli Conflict: A History with Documents*, "The Syrian-Fatah Alliance," 272-273

195. El-Abed, *Unprotected: Palestinians in Egypt since 1948*, 38, see also Smith, *Palestine and the Arab-Israeli Conflict: A History with Documents*, 287

196. Smith, *Palestine and the Arab-Israeli Conflict: A History with Documents*, 287

197. Finkelstein, *Image and Reality of the Israel – Palestine Conflict*, "To Live or Perish: Abba Eban 'Reconstructs' the June 1967 War," 123-149



international law.<sup>198</sup> Finkelstein argues that to counter anti-Nasser propaganda launched by Syria and Jordan, Nasser decided to replace the United Nations Emergency Force (UNEF) with the Egyptian army across the borders in Sinai and Gaza. The UNEF functioned as a peace-keeping force stationed across the Egyptian-Israeli borders to maintain the cease-fire implemented since the Suez war 1956. Nasser's decision resulted from the mounting criticisms coming from Damascus and Amman accusing him of hiding behind the UNEF and using them "as a pretext for not confronting Israel."<sup>199</sup> Finkelstein adds that Nasser only wanted to readjust the positions of the UNEF not their entire withdrawal, however "[c]onfronted with an all – or – nothing ultimatum from UN Secretary – General U Thant that left him with no 'face – saving device', Nasser opted for a complete withdrawal."<sup>200</sup> In other words, Nasser's decision to deploy the Egyptian troops into Sinai on 14 May 1967 stemmed from his desire to preserve his image and credibility in Egypt and throughout the Arab world.<sup>201</sup> Further, Finkelstein argues that on the Syrian front the shelling from the Golan Heights "aimed to deter the Israeli encroachments."<sup>202</sup> When the 1948 war ended the Syrian – Israeli armistice agreement stipulated the creation of Demilitarized Zones (DMZs) on the borders between the Golan Heights and Israeli northern settlements. However, according to UN – reports Israel repeatedly violated those DMZs and gradually took control of large portions of those areas and forcibly evicted the Arab villagers residing there. Major – General Carl Von Horn, who served as chief of staff of the UN forces admitted that Israel used whatever

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198. Smith, *Palestine and the Arab-Israeli Conflict: A History with Documents*, "Abba Eban: Speech to the UN Security Council on Israel's Reasons for going to War," 6 June 1967, Document No. 6.3, 298-299

199. Finkelstein, *Image and Reality of the Israel – Palestine Conflict*, "To Live or Perish: Abba Eban 'Reconstructs' the June 1967 War," 125

200. Ibid. 127

201. Ibid. 127

202. Ibid. 131

means available to acquire most of the land. Illegal encroachments triggered resentment among the Syrians whose attacks on Israeli targets came as a means of defending their properties.<sup>203</sup>

Nasser's motivations behind the closure of the Straits of Tiran remain unclear, but Finkelstein argues that the entire case is debatable from an international legal perspective. Until the Suez war Israeli ships heading to Eilat were not allowed to pass through the Straits, Nasser defended his decision to impose this blockade as a response to Israel's insistence on disregarding the UN – resolutions calling for the return of the Palestinian refugees.<sup>204</sup> However, Finkelstein argues that Israel had not used the port of Eilat in the last two and half years prior to the war, adding that “a mere 5 per cent of Israel's trade passed through Eilat.”<sup>205</sup> Furthermore, the implementation of the blockade on the Egyptian side became less strict where “the Egyptian navy had searched a couple of ships after the establishment of the blockade and thereafter relaxed its implementation.”<sup>206</sup> Indeed the US envoy Charles Yost observed that the blockade “did not of itself constitute an armed attack, and self – defense did not cover general hostilities against the UAR.”<sup>207</sup> Nasser also expressed his willingness to go to the International Court of Justice to handle the case where legal experts themselves admitted that the case had not been settled legally.<sup>208</sup>

Further territories were lost to Israel along with an influx in the numbers of Palestinian refugees. The relations between Nasser's Egypt and Fatah also shifted in the

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203. Ibid. 131

204. Ibid. 137

205. Ibid. 139

206. Ibid. 139

207. Ibid. 139

208. Ibid. 138-139

post 1967 era. Following the defeat Nasser faced a series of moral and political dilemmas both nationally and regionally. The defeat sent shock waves throughout the Arab world and Nasser's status as an Arab hero faced a tough challenge, this became apparent during the Khartoum Arab Summit held during August and September 1967. During the summit the Arab delegations outvoted both Nasser and King Hussein of Jordan rejecting his proposal to be granted a mandate to negotiate on behalf of the states which lost territories to Israel. The summit released its famous resolution of the "three nos" which rejected negotiation, reconciliation, and the recognition of Israel. Nonetheless, Nasser gave Hussein his approval to pursue direct negotiations with Israel and the United States.<sup>209</sup>

By opting for diplomacy, Nasser sought to buy enough time to rebuild his military capabilities and restore his shattered credibility in front of a frustrated and angry Egyptian society. Despite loud Palestinian criticisms, Nasser accepted UN Security Council Resolution 242 issued on 22 November 1967 which called for Israel's withdrawal from all territories occupied on 5 June 1967. Palestinian criticisms stemmed from the fact that the resolution implied "recognition of Israel in exchange for Israeli withdrawal from the territories occupied during the war."<sup>210</sup> Further, unlike previous UN – Resolutions the text only called for a just settlement to the refugee problem without referring to their right of return.<sup>211</sup> From a strategic perspective Nasser needed something

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209. Rouleau, "Abd al-Nasser and the Palestinian National Movement: Chronicle of a Stormy Affair," 186  
210. Ibid. 186

211. For instance, UN – General Assembly Resolution No. 194 (III) of 11 December 1948 stated in its article No. 11 that refugees who wish to return to their homes should be allowed to do so as soon as possible. The article also called for compensation for lost or damaged property, as well as compensating those who do not wish to return,

<http://unispal.un.org/UNISPAL.NSF/0/C758572B78D1CD0085256BCF0077E51A> [Full Text]. By contrast, UN – Security Council Resolution No. 242 of 22 November 1967, did not mention the name Palestine in any of its articles, and its article No. 2 only called for a just solution to the refugee problem without mentioning the previously enshrined right of return, <http://unispal.un.org/unispal.nsf/0/7D35E1F729DF491C85256EE700686136> [Full Text]. Also, Fatah

concrete to negotiate with as a sign of good intentions. Additionally, he explained that although Resolution 242 is a feasible way to remove the ramifications of the offence, yet it is not enough to fulfill the rights of the Palestinian people. Adding that if the UAR had the right to accept the resolution it is understandable that the Palestinian resistance had the right to reject it.<sup>212</sup> On a parallel path, Nasser decided upon an advice from Heikal to receive the leaders of Fatah. Heikal convinced him that Fatah has no relations with the Muslim Brotherhood and had nothing to do with the failed assassination attempt back in 1954. Nevertheless, this change of heart resulted by and large “from a strategic standpoint, Nasser needed Fatah as a card he could play in case Israel would not agree to a settlement based on the return of the Occupied Territories.”<sup>213</sup>

Nasser’s decision to meet with Arafat among other Fatah members was a result of the power shift in the wake of the 1967 defeat. Fatah operations against Israel gained wide support among the Arab masses and many Egyptians started joining their ranks. The heroism and resilience shown by the Palestinian fedayeen in battles like Karamah in March 1968 gave hope and pride to the reeling Arab world following the humiliation of 1967 where; “enthusiasm for the fedayeen swelled to unprecedented heights.”<sup>214</sup> Further, Nasser hoped that Arafat known for his sympathy to Egyptian nationalism would be a reliable ally. Nasser envisioned that an alignment with Fatah would act as a pressure card

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reaffirmed its rejection to resolution 242 and any other diplomatic initiatives which ignore the national rights of the Palestinian people [Point No. 4 in Fatah: The Seven Points, passed by the Central Committee of Fatah during January 1969], in Walter Laqueur and Barry Rubin, eds. *The Israel Arab Reader: A Documentary History of the Middle East Conflict*, Seventh Revised Edition, (New York: Penguin Books, 2008), 130-131

212. Mohammad Hassanain Heikal, “Glimpses from the Story of the Last Battle” (Lamahat min Kesat al-Ma’rka al-Akhira), Al-Ahram 25/12/1970, <http://nasser.bibalex.org/Besaraha/BesarahaBrowser.aspx?BID=616&PDFStart=null&PDFEnd=null&dir=next&activeLink=1&lang=ar> [Arabic Source]

213. Rouleau, “Abd al-Nasser and the Palestinian National Movement: Chronicle of a Stormy Affair,” 187

214. Ibid. 188

in case Israel refused negotiations and the UN resolution 242's condition of Israeli withdrawal from the areas occupied on 5 June 1967.<sup>215</sup> To further cement his alignment and patronage, Nasser paved the way for Fatah to take over the PLO. Shuqayri resigned in December 1967. Nasser had secured his departure. Fatah won a majority of the seats in the executive committee and Arafat becoming the organization's president in March 1969.<sup>216</sup> Additionally, under Nasser's patronage the PLO established a permanent presence in southern Lebanon through the Cairo Accords, signed in November 1969.<sup>217</sup> With this move, Nasser hoped that opening a second front against Israel would benefit the progression of the war of attrition along the Suez Canal.<sup>218</sup> Nonetheless, Nasser and Fatah were at odds in July 1970 when Nasser accepted the Second Rogers Plan. The plan introduced on 19 July 1970, which Egypt accepted on 23 July 1970, proposed peace in exchange of an Israeli withdrawal from Egyptian and Jordanian territories while observing a cease-fire across the borders.<sup>219</sup> Nasser anticipated that the Palestinians would criticize the move but Egyptian national interests were his priority. However, he did not expect Fatah's harsh personal attacks. For instance, the central committee of the PLO condemned the plan and attacking its signatories. The committee's organ, *Fatah* published several articles that violently attacked Nasser and accusing him of being an agent of imperialism and Zionism. Other headlines announced that leaders no longer able to resist, should leave office. At the same time, the Baath Party in Iraq aimed to seize the

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215. Smith, *Palestine and the Arab Israeli-Conflict: A History with Documents*, U.N Security Council Resolution No. 242, 22 November 1967, Document No. 7.1, 336

216. Rouleau, "Abd al-Nasser and the Palestinian National Movement: Chronicle of a Stormy Affair", 189-190

217. Ibid. 190, see also Yehuda Lukacs, ed. *The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict: A Documentary Record, 1967-1990*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 456-457 [Full text of the agreement].

218. Ibid. 190

219. <http://unispal.un.org/UNISPAL.NSF/0/3E33D676AE43229B85256E60007086FD>, see also, Lukacs, ed. *The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict: A Documentary Record, 1967-1990*, 55-60, an address made by Secretary of the State William Rogers on 9 December 1969 in Washington D.C.

opportunity to outbid Nasser and his regional leadership.<sup>220</sup> Fatah's *Sawt al-Asifa* (The Voice of the Storm) and the PLO's *Sawt Filastin* (The Voice of Palestine) both stationed in Cairo mediated the criticisms. Initially, Nasser refused to shut them down saying that they should be given the chance to reconsider their position. He feared that closing the stations would send the message to the Jordanian government that Egypt no longer supported the resistance movement, and that it was vulnerable to Jordan's whims. Nasser also believed that it is part of Egypt's role to bare criticisms launching from within its territories against its official policies. Even after sending several envoys to Fatah leadership in Amman the criticisms intensified. The Palestinian party line refused any negotiations and insisted that the Palestinian resistance would continue the fight on their own. Eventually, this escalation led to the decision to close the two stations on 28 July 1970.<sup>221</sup> Nasser expressed his sadness about this decision and issued a statement reaffirming the UAR's support to the Palestinian resistance movement and its noble role, hoping that all the organizations would reach a healthy relationship in order to carry-on its role in liberating Arab land.<sup>222</sup> It remains unclear whether the decision to close the stations stemmed from Nasser's fear that such criticism would lead to domestic agitation against his policies. A breakthrough would later occur when Nasser agreed to meet Arafat. During the meeting Nasser explained that he did not expect Israel to commit to a

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220. Heikal, "Glimpses from the Story of the Last Battle" (Lamahat min Kesat al-Ma'rka al-Akhira), Al-Ahram 25/12/1970,

<http://nasser.bibalex.org/Besaraha/BesarahaBrowser.aspx?BID=616&PDFStart=null&PDFEnd=null&dir=next&activeLink=1&lang=ar> [Arabic Source]

221. Rouleau, "Abd al-Nasser and the Palestinian National Movement: Chronicle of a Stormy Affair", 190-192

222. Heikal, "Glimpses from the Story of the Last Battle" (Lamahat min Kesat al-Ma'rka al-Akhira), Al-Ahram 25/12/1970, <http://nasser.bibalex.org/Besaraha/BesarahaBrowser.aspx?BID=616&PDFStart=null&PDFEnd=null&dir=next&activeLink=1&lang=ar> [Arabic Source]

withdrawal from the West Bank. He added that accepting the Rogers Plan was a delaying strategy to rebuild the armed forces.<sup>223</sup>

This back and forth came to a halt with the impending signs of a full-fledged confrontation between the PLO and the Jordanian army culminating with the events of Black September 1970. The roots for those bloody confrontations go back to the 1967 defeat. Palestinian activists “decided to adopt guerrilla warfare tactics as the most effective method of attacking and defeating Israel.”<sup>224</sup> One of the popular organizations endorsing this strategy was the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) led by George Habash. He believed that their operations should carry a strong message to draw the world’s attention to the Palestinian cause. Accordingly, his group adopted the strategy of hijacking passengers’ airplanes beginning with El Al jet in 1968 and culminating with hijacking four European planes in September 1970.<sup>225</sup> The guerrilla attacks intensified across the Jordanian borders triggering major Israeli retaliatory attacks. The situation escalated between King Hussein and the fedayeen over the control of the country. Fearing that the fedayeen were creating a state-within-a state and posing a challenge to his rule, the government launched a large-scale assault targeting Palestinian civilians and fedayeen alike. The massive operations led to the destruction of the refugee camps, whole sections of Amman, and the death and detention of thousands of Palestinian refugees.<sup>226</sup> Nasser swiftly intervened, sending a military envoy with a message to King Hussein urging him to stop the fighting and to protect the Palestinian resistance. He warned him that this tragic assault would benefit the enemy and cripple the

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223. Rouleau, “Abd al-Nasser and the Palestinian National Movement: Chronicle of a Stormy Affair”, 192

224. “Jordanian Removal of the PLO”, <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/war/jordan-civil.htm>

225. Goldschmidt Jr. and Davidson, *A Concise History of the Middle East*, 340-341

226. Ibid. see also <http://www.country-studies.com/Jordan/Hussein---the-guerrilla-crisis.html>

region with an internal Arab civil war. Nasser explicitly said that he would not allow for the destruction of the Palestinian resistance movement, which he believed to be the noblest byproduct of the 1967 defeat.<sup>227</sup> He called for an Arab summit in Cairo on 21 September 1970 and under his patronage Arafat and Hussein signed a cease-fire agreement on 27 September 1970.<sup>228</sup> The agreement acknowledged the right of the Palestinian organizations to operate, but stipulated that the fedayeen should leave the cities and remain along the frontlines. However, after Nasser's sudden death on 28 September 1970, the clashes resumed and culminated with the expulsion of the PLO from Jordan by mid-1971.<sup>229</sup>

The previous sections focused on analyzing the Egyptian-Palestinian political relations in the light of the Nasserist project, an analysis which attempted to put such relations in their wider historical and political perspectives. The following section will analyze the image of the Palestinians in the Egyptian press during the Nasser era.

### **Palestinians and the Nasserist Press**

The Egyptian press underwent significant transformations during the Nasserist era. Nasser believed in the vital role of the press in presenting and legitimizing certain

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227. Heikal, "Glimpses from the Story of the Last Battle" (Lamahat min Kesat al-Ma'rka al-Akhira), *Al-Ahram* 25/12/1970, <http://nasser.bibalex.org/Besaraha/BesarahaBrowser.aspx?BID=616&PDFStart=null&PDFEnd=null&dir=next&activeLink=1&lang=ar> [Arabic Source] also see Nasser's messages to King Hussein and Yasser Arafat published in *al-Ahram* 20 September 1970, another message to King Hussein sent on 26 September 1970 and published in *al-Ahram* the next day where Nasser expressed his frustration against what seems to be an insistence from the Jordanian government to continue its onslaught on the Palestinian camps despite all the efforts exerted to reach a cease-fire. He added that the presidential delegate to Amman reported that a massacre defying all Arab and human morals is taking place in Jordan and he warned that this cannot be tolerated anymore, insisting that the Arab nation will remain bigger than all kinds of evil and manipulation [Arabic Sources]

228. Rouleau, "Abd al-Nasser and the Palestinian National Movement: Chronicle of a Stormy Affair," 194

229. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Black\\_September\\_in\\_Jordan](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Black_September_in_Jordan),

Smith, *Palestine and the Arab Israeli-Conflict: A History with Documents*, "The Jordanian Crisis," 314-316



policies. Nasser utilized the press in his propaganda against the Western-backed Arab states through the writings of Heikal and other Palestinian journalists like Nasser al-Din al-Nashashibi.<sup>230</sup> However, the establishment of a socialist one-party regime in this case, the Arab Socialist Union (ASU) limited press freedom and marginalized the opposition. The state consolidated its power over the press through nationalization, the firing of prominent journalists, and their substitution with those regime loyalists: “all heads of administration and chief editors of the nationalized press were expected to belong to the ASU. This mandatory membership was made a prerequisite for belonging to the Press Syndicate.”<sup>231</sup> Nasser asserted more control over the Press Syndicate by placing his close associate Salah Salem as its chairman. This move rendered the organization weak and incapable of securing media and journalists’ rights.<sup>232</sup> Therefore, despite the eloquence and analytical approach evident in the writings of figures like Heikal and Ahmad Bahaa al-Din among others, the press as a whole lacked diversity. It was essentially a regime-directed and government-controlled.<sup>233</sup>

The representations of the Palestine question in Egyptian press during the Nasserist era can be divided into two phases. The first starts with the crystallization of Nasser’s political project in 1954 and stretches till 1967. During this period the press adopted Nasser’s vision of the Arab-Israeli conflict which could be summarized in the following points: First, Israel was an alien body implanted by the imperial powers to weaken the Arab nation. Thus, the struggle to liberate Palestine was an integral part of the Arab nation’s struggle against colonialism. Second, the liberation of Palestine rested

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230. Talhami, *Palestine in the Egyptian Press: From Al-Ahram to Al-Ahali*, 170

231. Ibid. 171 & 201

232. Ibid. 171

233. Ibid. 175-177

on building a solid national social and military base that would shift the balance of power towards the Arab states. Arab unity was the most viable source to achieve this goal. Third, the liberation of Palestine was a long and difficult task given the international balance of power; unless Arabs drew on their national strength and resources this balance would remain unchanged.<sup>234</sup>

The three official papers *al-Ahram*, *al-Akhbar*, and *al-Jumhuriyah*, began publishing news about the guerilla activities inside Israel when they commenced in 1965. Despite focusing on the operations and their significance, none of the papers referred to the organization responsible that is Fatah and al-Asifa. The papers used the unspecified term “Arab groups” in their headlines in reference to the fedayeen.<sup>235</sup> This pattern reflected the Egyptian regime’s attempts to contain Palestinian politics within the framework of the PLO and its newly formed army the PLA.<sup>236</sup>

The 1967 defeat led to a major shift in media representations. The fedayeen operations began taking precedence in the three formal newspapers, marking the beginning of the second phase from 1967 till 1970. The defeat caused severe frustration and disillusionment among the Arab masses, a situation that needed a quick remedy to restore the peoples’ self-assurance and trust. This remedy came in the form a sudden interest in covering the news about the fedayeen and their operations in the occupied territories. This dramatic increase in press coverage might be attributed to the regime’s desire “to restore the spirits of the defeated Egyptian public. Much of this coverage was aimed at demonstrating that Arab resistance did not die and that the struggle of the

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234. Ibid. 166-167

235. The headlines of *al-Jumhuriyah* on 2 January 1965 and 28 January 1965, one title reads “Israel Admits the victories of the Arab fedayeen.”

236. Talhami, *Palestine in the Egyptian Press: From Al-Ahram to Al-Ahali*, 188-189

Palestinians in particular was far from over.”<sup>237</sup> This surge in coverage on the front pages and in bold headlines came also in accordance with Nasser’s statement referring to the Palestinian resistance after 1967 as the noblest phenomena resulting from the defeat, adding that the Palestinian revolution is destined to survive.<sup>238</sup>

The three papers reported extensively on the resistance operations and the fierce Israeli retaliations.<sup>239</sup> The press also reported in detail on the Karameh battle, which lasted for sixteen hours on 21-22 March 1968. The battle started with an aggressive Israeli attack aiming at destroying the Palestinian resistance in al-Aghwar area. The Palestinian groups along with the Jordanian army waged a counter-attack which managed to successfully force an Israeli withdrawal with significant losses on the Israeli side. The outcome of the battle despite the casualties was paramount and proved the resilience of the Palestinian resistance. Several writers praised the fedayeen, calling for unity and steadfastness among the Palestinian groups. *Al-Akhbar* published such headlines like “Israel launches a brutal assault in Jordan the next day the Palestinian resistance agreed to political and military co-ordination.”<sup>240</sup> *Al-Ahram* also published headlines which emphasized the necessity of unity while recalling Nasser’s words that Israel is an alien body created by imperialism to destroy the Arab world.<sup>241</sup> *Al-Jumhuriyah* published headlines that the Israeli assault was a preemptive strike that aimed at dismantling the Palestinian resistance movement.<sup>242</sup>

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237. Ibid. 190

238. Ibid. 189

239. *Al-Ahram* and *al-Akhbar* newspapers between October-November 1967

240. *Al-Akhbar* on 23 March 1968 [Translation is mine]

241. *Al-Ahram* on 22, 23 and 24 March 1968

242. *Al-Jumhuriyah* on 22 March 1968

However, since the press during the Nasserist era was captive to the regime, it got caught in the web of political tensions. This is illustrated in the case of the Rogers Plan and the Egyptian-Palestinian tensions ensued following Egypt's acceptance of the Plan. Heikal attempted to rationalize the decision in *al-Ahram*. He quoted Nasser's declarations to a Sudanese delegation explaining that he accepted the cease-fire only to buy more time to re-build his army and prevent Israel from Judaizing Gaza, Jerusalem, and the Golan Heights. He added that despite knowing that Israel would not commit to any agreements, he needed to accept the American proposals as a strategy to bring the United States into the Arab-Israeli equation. This is due to the fact that the United States was more capable than any other country to exert enough pressure on Israel to abide by resolution 242. Nasser insisted that accepting the plan stemmed from his obligations towards the Arab nation and Palestine rather than focusing solely on Egypt's national interests. Heikal also criticized those calling the struggle a Palestinian-Israeli struggle rather than an Arab-Israeli one. He maintained that despite its bravery and commitment the Palestinian resistance movement cannot win a decisive war against the enemy. He went on to explain that the case of Palestine is different from the cases of both Vietnam and Algeria, where the numbers, capabilities, and the geographical conditions (mountains, caves, forests, borders) are not in favor of the resistance groups. He also argued that only regular armies and the official backing of Arab states like Egypt are the only viable means to liberate Palestine, insisting that Egypt will not wage a guerilla war across its eastern borders.<sup>243</sup>

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243. Heikal, Besaraha Articles (Candidly Speaking) "Foundational Issues to Discuss" [Kadaya Asassyia Lelmonakasha] *al-Ahram* on 7 August 1970, [Arabic Source]

Other writers defended Nasser's decision, arguing that it was the leader's support that brought Palestinian factions international recognition. The Palestinian Marxist writer Muein Bisseiso wrote an article in *al-Ahram* entitled "Despite the Noise Rising in the Political Stock Market, I Vote with Abd al-Nasser."<sup>244</sup> He attacked the Palestinian groups which rejected the plan and argued that Nasser's Egypt supported them and the Palestinian rights through thick and thin; disagreements between them should not turn into an open confrontation. He went on to remind the Palestinian factions that Egypt was not the enemy and that Nasser's diplomacy saved them from crises in Jordan and Lebanon and afforded them a Soviet recognition.<sup>245</sup> Other writers like Musa Sabri harshly attacked the anti-Nasser propaganda accusing the propagators of having "hateful voices" that aimed to wage war at the expense of Egyptian sacrifices. Although not directly naming the Palestinians the meaning could be easily inferred since they maintained a hardline against the cease-fire.<sup>246</sup> In *al-Mussawar* magazine, Ahmed Bahaa al-Din expressed his anger at the out-bidding games waged against Nasser, and strongly defended his decisions. He concluded his article by "directing severe criticism at some Palestinian factions, accusing them of being no more than appendages of certain Arab political parties."<sup>247</sup> Additionally, the press reduced its coverage of guerilla operations, moving the news that did appear to the inside pages with limited coverage. By contrast, the press devoted a majority of the space to pieces that supported Nasser's decision to

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<http://nasser.bibalex.org/Besaraha/BesarahaBrowser.aspx?BID=597&PDFStart=null&PDFEnd=null&dir=next&activeLink=1&lang=ar>

244. *Al-Ahram* on 21 October 1968

245. Talhami, *Palestine in the Egyptian Press: From Al-Ahram to Al-Ahali*, 193

246. Musa Sabri, "The Hand of Peace" an article published in *al-Akhbar* on 7 August 1970[Private Collection]

247. Talhami, *Palestine in the Egyptian Press: From Al-Ahram to Al-Ahali*, 197, *al-Mussawar* magazine on 7 August, 1970

accept the plan.<sup>248</sup> Also, *al-Ahram* published a caricature by Salah Jahin depicting Nasser holding a chess-piece taking the shape of Rogers with the caption “checkmate”; Nasser the message screamed, was in control.<sup>249</sup> The course of the Egyptian press during that era shows that being a captive press tied its direction with that of the regime which limited its scope and freedom. In moments of political tensions the press became a political tool that promoted the regime’s policies and discredited those who opposed it.

### **Palestinian Social Organizations in Egypt 1954-1970**

Nasser incorporation of the Palestine question as one of the pillars of his political discourse necessitated certain measures. One example is the formation of Palestinian social unions in Egypt during the Nasserist era. The government encouraged the formation of several unions to promote the sense of Palestinianism within the context of Arab nationalism. The regime encouraged union activities as long as they did not interfere in the internal affairs of the state.<sup>250</sup> Again, here we see the dynamic of simultaneous social support and political containment. For example, the Arab Palestine Club was founded in 1953 in Cairo with branches in Alexandria, Al-Arish, and Port-Said. Despite its cultural orientation the club “boasted a strong Arab nationalist line, calling on Arab progressive forces to restore Palestine to its people.”<sup>251</sup> The Nasserist era also witnessed the formation of the General Union of Palestinian Students (GUPS) in 1959, but its origins date back to the 1940 activism of Palestinian students, which raised public

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248. For instance *al-Ahram* published two headlines on 1 and 7 August 1970 reporting on some Palestinian factions declaring their support to Nasser and criticizing the rejectionists.

249. *Al-Ahram* on 17 October 1968 in Talhami, *Palestine in the Egyptian Press: From Al-Ahram to Al-Ahali*, 192

250. Dajani, *The Institutionalization of Palestinian Identity in Egypt*, 18

251. Talhami, *Palestine and the Egyptian National Identity*, 87

awareness on Palestine before 1948.<sup>252</sup> GUPS, known to be the most active of Palestinian mass unions, engaged in “overt political activities and extra-Palestinian manifestations.”<sup>253</sup> The GUPS acted as a “training school that produced the political cadres in the Palestinian national movement”; when it joined PLO apparatus in 1964 it became “the Palestinian reserve army in exile.”<sup>254</sup> Due to its extensive political activism GUPS faced several crises in the Egyptian regime. Again, it is clear that political conditions affect the rights of refugee communities to express their own views and function independently. While boosting solidarity with the Palestinians, the regime would harshly react against any views that did not conform to its discourse. For instance, in 1961 following the collapse of the UAR the Baathists faced detention the same applied to the Baathist students in the union who faced mass deportation. Later the union resumed its activities in February 1964 when “the Arab nationalists (i.e. Nasserites) took over the leadership of the union in Egypt.”<sup>255</sup> Another confrontation occurred when GUPS members joined Egyptian students protesting the light sentences passed against some military officers accused of negligence during the 1967 war. GUPS participation in those protests marked the first time a Palestinian union openly demonstrated against the Egyptian regime, all the protestors were arrested.<sup>256</sup> The third clash occurred in 1970 when Nasser accepted the Rogers Plan. Palestinian students in Jordan who belonged to the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) and the Popular Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PDFLP) (both forming the rejectionist front which opposed any peace settlements with Israel) organized anti-Egypt demonstrations. In

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252. Dajani, *The Institutionalization of Palestinian Identity in Egypt*, 42

253. Ibid. 43

254. Ibid. 42-43

255. Ibid. 44

256. Ibid. 44

retaliation Nasser “deported all Palestinian students affiliated to the PFLP or PDFLP, and he arrested members of all Palestinian unions – Workers’ Union and the Women’s Union – who did not belong to Fatah.”<sup>257</sup> GUPS would face other major crises in the 1970s during Sadat’s era, which culminated with its permanent ban in 1977.

The General Union of Palestinian Workers was also established in this period in 1965. The union’s origins date back to the Palestinian Arab Workers. The latter was established in Haifa in 1925; it called for equality between Arab and Jewish workers. In 1965 the first congress of the Palestinian Trade Union Federation convened in Gaza and announced the formation of the union.<sup>258</sup> The union avoided involvement in political affairs and potential clashes with the Egyptian regime. Indeed, the union’s Domestic Charter “clearly forbade its members from intervening in the political and religious affairs of the Arab Republic of Egypt.”<sup>259</sup> In this respect, the union acted as a syndicate for the Palestinian labor force in Egypt. It focused on protecting workers’ rights including wages, work-permits, and legal appeals. The union also had several social initiatives including social welfare contributions, organizing cultural seminars, and acting as a social link bringing the different Palestinian unions in Egypt. The cultural activities organized by those unions helped in bringing Egyptians and Palestinians together.<sup>260</sup>

The third organization was the General Union of Palestinian Women (GUPW), established in 1965. Founded in Jerusalem in 1965, its origins date back to the Arab Ladies Association of Jerusalem founded in 1919 as the first Palestinian women’s union.

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257. Ibid. 44

258. Ibid. 47

259. Ibid. 48

260. Ibid. 48-56



The union had eleven branches in different host countries.<sup>261</sup> Similar to the Workers' Union, the GUPW avoided any political activities and its charter also forbade any involvement in internal Egyptian affairs. Its work focused on social welfare, education, and vocational training.

The fourth organization established in this period, was the General Union of Palestinian Writers and Journalists in Egypt. In 1966 the first congress of the Palestinian Writers convened in Gaza and announced the formation of the union.<sup>262</sup> The union focused on Palestinian public relations, it also organized several lectures to present the Palestinian political perspective. The union would later openly criticize Sadat's pro-American policies and the prospect of a peace settlement with Israel. This led to its disbandment in 1977 but it resumed its activities in 1983.<sup>263</sup>

The General Union of Palestinian Teachers (GUPT) was founded in 1969. The union focused on raising political awareness, improving the quality of education of Palestinian children, and monitoring the status of Palestinian schools. The GUPT succeeded in obtaining a permit from the Egyptian Ministry of Education allowing "Palestinian students to obtain the Egyptian two-year Educational Diploma."<sup>264</sup> This diploma improved Palestinian career, for those who could not afford the regular fees required for university degrees.<sup>265</sup>

Lastly, the Palestinian Red Crescent Society (PRCS) began operating in Egypt in 1970. The PRCS began operating in Jordan in 1968. However, following Black

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261. Ibid. 56

262. Ibid. 64

263. Ibid. 64-66

264. Ibid. 67

265. Ibid. 67

September all PLO related activities including independent medical services were banned in Jordan.<sup>266</sup> The union established the Gawad Hosni Polyclinic in Central Cairo and a small hospital in Heliopolis.<sup>267</sup> The PRCS enjoyed an autonomous status within the PLO. A resolution passed by the Palestinian National Council (PNC) in 1969 defined the PRCS as “an ‘independent’ formal organization within the PLO apparatus...capable of setting its provisional and operational plans, recruiting its health and administrative team, and implementing the relevant and most appropriate policies in each country in which it functions.”<sup>268</sup> The PRCS extended its medical services to Palestinians and Egyptians alike without any distinctions in payment.<sup>269</sup> Due to its medical and social services the PRCS did not pose a threat to the Egyptian regime, thus, the government did not restrict its expansion.<sup>270</sup>

### **The Legal Status of Palestinian Refugees in Egypt 1954-1970**

This section attempts to examine the legal status of the Palestinian refugees in Egypt during the Nasser years. During the early phases of their rule and before introducing concrete legal changes, the Free Officers “made education, health, and other services available to Palestinians.”<sup>271</sup> With the consolidation of his power in 1954 Nasser issued several laws with the aim of equating the refugees with Egyptian nationals in several venues. The articles referring to the Palestinians “did not apply the word foreign to Palestinians in administrative matters.”<sup>272</sup> Further, Egypt ratified without reservations

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266. Ibid. 70

267. Ibid. 70

268. Ibid. 78

269. Ibid. 69

270. Ibid. 83

271. El-Abed, *Unprotected: Palestinians in Egypt since 1948*, 55

272. Ibid. 54

the Casablanca Protocol issued on 10 September 1965. The protocol stipulated that Palestinian refugees in Arab host countries are entitled to the same rights accorded to nationals in such fields like employment, residency, and freedom of movement.<sup>273</sup> Despite providing a comprehensive legal framework to protect the refugees, the provisions of the protocol remained vulnerable to the internal politics of each host state and the course of political relations with Palestinian factions. For instance, following the collapse of the UAR Baathist students faced detention and deportation.<sup>274</sup> By 1970 and due to the Egyptian-Palestinian clash over the Rogers Plan, all non-Fatah Palestinians were deported.<sup>275</sup> Arbitrary deportation on the basis of political difference contradicts not only with the provisions of the protocol but with one of Nasser's presidential resolutions. According to the first section of Article 18 of Presidential decree 89, 1960 Palestinian refugees in Egypt fall under the special-residency category.<sup>276</sup> Article 26 of the same decree forbade the deportation of special-residency foreigners unless they prove to be a credible threat to national security and after conducting a thorough investigation through a special committee and providing clear evidence.<sup>277</sup> The deportation cases cited above are examples of political disagreement that does not mount to be a threat to national security. This is a case when refugee communities suffer the backlash of political

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273. League of Arab States, *Protocol for the Treatment of Palestinians in Arab States* ("Casablanca Protocol"), 11 September 1965, available at: <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/460a2b252.html> [accessed 16 September 2011]

274. Dajani, *The Institutionalization of Palestinian Identity in Egypt*, 43

275. Ibid. 18

276. Presidential Decree No. 89 of 1960 relating to the Entry, Residency, and Departure of Foreigners from the UAR

277. The Official Gazette on 24 March 1960, Issue No. 71, Article No. 29 stipulated that a deportation committee should be formed to investigate deportation cases. The committee consists of six members representing the Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, a representative for the state council, a representative for the department of general security, and the chief of Immigration, Passports, and Nationality.

tensions. The loose term of protecting national security serves as the perfect pretext disguising violations against refugees' rights.

### **Residency and Travel Documents**

Residency permits for Palestinian refugees in Egypt fell under different categories based on the time of arrival. In most cases the issue and renewal of such permits depend on providing a reason for staying in Egypt such as employment, marriage, or education enrollment. A document released in 1994 by the Department of Travel, Immigration and Nationality shows the number of travel documents issued for each category.<sup>278</sup> First, there is type (A), which refers to those refugees who arrived to Egypt prior to 1948 and includes a total number of 1,075 refugees. The permit for this category was renewable every five years. It could also be renewed for a period of ten years if the applicant could provide a proof of being a continuous resident in Egypt for a decade.<sup>279</sup> Second, type (B) refers to the refugees who arrived after the *nakba* and totaled 13,032. The residency permit for this category was renewable every five years.<sup>280</sup> Third, type (C) refers to the refugees entering Egypt proper during and after the Tripartite Aggression (the Suez War) of 1956, and their total number was 142. For this category the permit is renewable every three years.<sup>281</sup> Fourth, type (D) related to the refugees who arrived during the Six Day War of 1967 and totaled 6,417. The permit for this category was renewable every three years.<sup>282</sup> The fifth and final, type (H) was applicable to the refugees who arrived after the 1967 war and totaled 236,307. This category receives a temporarily residence permit

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278. Abdul-Kadir Yassin, "The Palestinians in Egypt," Center for the Palestinian Refugees and Diaspora (Shaml), (Ramallah: Palestine, 1996)

279. Ibid. also see, El-Abed, *Unprotected: Palestinians in Egypt since 1948*, 81-82

280. Ibid. same as note no. 148

281. Ibid. same as note no. 148

282. Ibid. see note no. 148

renewable every three years depending on the Egyptian laws of entry.<sup>283</sup> According to a report issued in 1994 the total number of Palestinian refugees in Egypt was 256,973. However, other sources point to the fact that their actual numbers do not exceed 100,000. The remaining number do not live in Egypt due to the restrictions imposed on their freedom of movement and their inability to re-enter Egypt despite having an Egyptian travel document. The Egyptian travel document for Palestinians carrying residency permits comes with very strict regulations. To secure a valid entry the holder of this document whether traveling or residing abroad must return to Egypt every six months. Alternatively, the authorities will issue a one-year return visa upon receiving a proof of work or education enrollment prior to the renewal date. Failing to meet such conditions will result in denying entry and deportation, knowing that such document cannot be renewed or extended from Egyptian embassies.<sup>284</sup> Further, in 1995 the Ministry of Interior conducted a survey calculating the number of the Palestinian Gazans living in Egypt proper and they totaled 89,000. The report also indicated to another inconclusive number revolving between ten to twenty thousand refugees scattered within different governorates and villages.<sup>285</sup>

Additionally, Egypt issues another type of travel documents for Palestinian refugees who do not have a residency permit. This document is valid only for travel purposes and does not include any residency rights. This document is held by thousands of Palestinians mainly from the Gaza Strip. During the Egyptian rule in Gaza this document was issued upon request for any resident from Gaza. This document is

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283. Ibid. see note no. 148, also see Asem Khalil, "Socioeconomic Rights of Refugees: The Case of Palestinian Refugees in Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria," The American University in Cairo, Center for Migration and Refugee Studies, 2010, 18-19

284. El-Abed, *Unprotected: Palestinians in Egypt since 1948*, 85

285. Yassin, "The Palestinians in Egypt," also see *Al-Wafd* newspaper on 7 March 1995

renewable through Egyptian embassies and most of its holders fall under category (H) referring to those refugees arriving after the 1967 war. However, this document does not provide any protection for its holders. A case in point, during the Gulf War 1990-1991 the Gulf States expelled thousands of Palestinians on the grounds of political tensions rising from Arafat's stance on the war. The majority of the Palestinians expelled from Kuwait held the second type of Egyptian travel documents and were refused entry in any state. Those who managed to arrive to Egypt faced prompt deportation. Only Palestinians carrying Israeli re-entry permit to Gaza were issued seventy-two hours transit visas.<sup>286</sup> This in fact contradicts with the provisions of the Casablanca Protocol the second article of which stipulated that refugees residing in signatory countries and in accordance with their interests "have the right to leave and return to this state."<sup>287</sup>

### **Residency Regulations during the Nasser Era**

Law 89 of 1960 related to the entrance, residency, and departure of foreigners from Egyptian territories divided residency permits into three categories: special, ordinary, and temporary. This law stipulated in its third section article 18 that Palestinian refugees residing in the "Northern Regions" which during the Egyptian-Syrian union referred to Syria would fall under the category of foreigners with especial residency. Members in this category are entitled to a ten-year residency permit to be renewed upon request.<sup>288</sup> Also, article 37 of this law gave the Minister of Interior the power to exempt

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286. El-Abed, *Unprotected: Palestinians in Egypt since 1948*, 85-88, also see Lex Takkenberg, *The Status of Palestinian Refugees in International Law*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 154

287. League of Arab States, *Protocol for the Treatment of Palestinians in Arab States* ("Casablanca Protocol"), 11 September 1965, available at: <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/460a2b252.html> [accessed on 16 September 2011]

288. The Official Gazette: Issue No. 71, 24 March 1960 [Arabic Source], also see Takkenberg, *The Status of Palestinian Refugees in International Law*, 152

any category of foreigners from “the application of (part of) the law.”<sup>289</sup> Additionally, the Egyptian government issued decision 28 authorizing the issuing of travel documents (TD) to Palestinians.<sup>290</sup> In 1961 the Minister of Interior issued decision 9 of 1961 to amend some of the legal provisions in decision 28 of 1960. The first article stipulated that article seven from the previous resolution should be amended to be read as follows: “the travel document is valid for two years since the issuing date. It is renewable for another two years, then one more year making the document valid for five years.”<sup>291</sup> Another resolution followed in 1964 amending some provisions in Law 89 of 1960. This came in the form of issuing decision 180 of 1964 where its article 13 exempted Palestinian refugees, their wives, and their underage children from paying fees to issue residency permits, they are also entitled to one free return visa annually. The article also gave the head of immigration, passports, and nationality the right to extend the validity of the exit visa for more than once.<sup>292</sup> Further, resolution 181 of 1964 related to the issue of travelling documents provided that Palestinian refugees in Egypt are entitled to issue temporarily travelling documents. The applicants should provide a proof of being classified as refugees and have a valid residency card to prove their status. The fourth article stated that the document is valid for two years, renewable for another two years and one more year. Thus, the document is valid for a period of five years. Article five stipulated that the travel document does not grant entrance or transit in Egypt without securing a valid entrance, transit, or exit visas in advance. While article ten states that the

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289. Takkenberg, *The Status of Palestinian Refugees in International Law*, 152

290. Maher Bitar, “Unprotected Among Brothers: Palestinians in the Arab World,” Refugee Studies Centre, Department of International Development (Queen Elizabeth House), University of Oxford, Working Paper Series, RSC Working Paper No. 44, January 2008, 19-20

291. The Official Gazette: Issue No. 179, 8 August 1961 [Arabic Source] [All translations are mine]

292. al-Waqa’e al-Masriya: Issue No. 94, 26 November 1964 [Arabic Source] [All translations are mine]

fees required for issuing the travel documents are twenty-five Egyptian piasters and for free for those who could prove their financial inability. The documents are also renewed for free, and the holders of those documents are exempted from paying the fees required for a return visa.<sup>293</sup> Despite the fact that Egypt strictly applies the provisions of those laws, their application was relatively relaxed during the Nasser years.<sup>294</sup> However, like most foreigners residing in Egypt, Palestinian refugees with a long-term residence “qualify only for a temporary residence permit, which is valid for one to three years.”<sup>295</sup> The second article of the Casablanca Protocol stipulated that Palestinian refugees residing in signatory countries have the right to leave and return to this state. Nonetheless, Palestinian refugees whether born in Egypt or lived there for a long period “have no automatic right to leave or reenter the country, but must renew their visas every six months to three years, depending on the category.”<sup>296</sup> Those who need to travel through Egyptian territories should secure a valid transit visa prior to entry date.<sup>297</sup> The Egyptian laws fell short from extending legal protection toward non-refugee Palestinians carrying Egyptian travel documents. This document is held by a substantial number of Palestinians from the Gaza Strip. The document is valid for five years and does not include a residency permit. Holders of this document cannot enter Egypt without securing in advance a valid entry, transit, or return visa and are not permitted to reside in the country.<sup>298</sup>

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293. Ibid. also see Takkenberg, *The Status of Palestinian Refugees in International Law*, 152

294. El-Abed, *Unprotected: Palestinians in Egypt since 1948*, 82

295. Takkenberg, *The Status of Palestinian Refugees in International Law*, 152

296. Abbas Shibliak, “Residency Status and Civil Rights of Palestinian Refugees in Arab Countries,” *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. 25, No. 3 (Spring, 1996), 36-45, 39-40, also see, Bitar, “Unprotected Among Brothers: Palestinians in the Arab World,” 19-20

297. Ibid. 20

298. Takkenberg, *The Status of Palestinian Refugees in International Law*, 153



## **Education**

In the field of education during the Nasser era, Palestinians were entitled services as Egyptian nationals. This approach resonates with provisions of the Casablanca Protocol and Nasser's stance on the Palestine cause and its centrality to his pan-Arab project. Education would nourish Palestinian nationalism while keeping it in check and in accordance with Nasserism. Palestinian students like their Egyptian counter-parts enjoyed free education in schools and universities. The government extended free university education to Gazans during Egyptian rule over the Gaza Strip.<sup>299</sup> The government also provided financial assistance of about forty-eight Egyptian pounds (about 110 US dollars) for 1,192 Palestinian students during the period of 1965-1966.<sup>300</sup> In one instance Nasser issued Presidential Decree 1223 of 1958 exempting five Palestinian students enrolled in the Police Academy from tuition fees for their entire period of study.<sup>301</sup> Outstanding students received one hundred Egyptian pounds (230 US dollars). Also, the government provided a number of scholarships to Palestinian students; these reached about 1,030 during the 1960s. Access to education and scholarships led to an increase in Palestinian enrollment in Egyptian schools and universities. Palestinians in universities exceeded 20,000 students and 5,642 were from Gaza alone.<sup>302</sup>

## **Employment**

Egypt has a highly regulated work environment where work permissions for foreigners are difficult to obtain and depend on the terms of reciprocity treatment. The

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299. Feldman, *Governing Gaza: Bureaucracy, Authority, and the Work of Rule, 1917-1967*, 102 & 153

300. Yassin, "Palestinians in Egypt," *Al-Majdal* (Summer 1999), <http://www.badil.org/en/al-majdal/item/486-palestinians-in-egypt>

301. The Official Gazette: Issue No. 30, 2 October 1958 [Arabic Source]

302. Ibid. also see Yassin, "The Palestinians in Egypt," 25, and Brand, *Palestinians in the Arab World: Institution Building and the Search for State*, 52-53

rationale behind those regulations “is the protection of the interest of Egyptian nationals.”<sup>303</sup> However, the first article of decree 21 of 1961 temporarily exempted foreign residents with both ordinary and special residency permits from fulfilling the condition of reciprocity treatment.<sup>304</sup> The provisions of this decree affect Palestinian refugees since they fall under the special-residency category as explained above. Also, during the Nasserist era unlike the monarchal days “Palestinians were permitted to obtain commercial registers and, unlike other Arabs, were accorded the right to import and export.”<sup>305</sup> By the 1960s several laws facilitated employment opportunities for Palestinians in Egypt. However, it should be noted that “the laws were not drafted solely for Palestinians. Rather, they were general laws promulgated to regulate professions and in each case an article dealing with Palestinians was included.”<sup>306</sup>

Presidential decree 66 of 1962 stated in its first article that it is permitted to appoint Arab Palestinians in state positions and the public sector on the same basis applied in hiring the citizens of the UAR.<sup>307</sup> Laurie A. Brand argues that the timing of this law had a political connotation. This decree came after the collapse of the UAR and the rapid deterioration of Egyptian-Syrian relations. Brand argues that this move may have been “a means by which Nasser sought to boost his pan-Arab credentials. Given the employment situation of Palestinians in other Arab countries, the move was certain to have substantial propaganda value.”<sup>308</sup>

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303. Takkenberg, *The Status of Palestinian Refugees in International Law*, 153

304. al-Waqa’e al-Masriya: Issue No. 3, 8 January 1962 [Arabic Source]

305. Brand, *Palestinians in the Arab World: Institution Building and the Search for State*, 52

306. Ibid. 52

307. The Official Gazette: Issue No. 58, 10 March 1962 [Arabic Source]

308. Brand, *Palestinians in the Arab World: Institution Building and the Search for State*, 53

Several other laws followed in the footsteps of the decree explained above. For instance, the Minister of Labor issued Ministerial decree 39 on 10 May 1962 exempted Palestinians from obtaining work permits.<sup>309</sup> Also, Presidential decree 46 of 1964 related to regulating the status of civil officials in state employment stipulated that Palestinians do not fall under the foreigners' category.<sup>310</sup> Further, Egyptian laws stipulated that practicing medicine, pharmacology, and dentistry is only permitted to Egyptian nationals and foreigners whose countries observe the principle of reciprocity treatment. However, those laws included articles exempting Palestinian refugees from those conditions. For instance, Article 14 of Law 537 of 1954 related to practicing dentistry stated that due to their status as refugees, Palestinian dentists are authorized to practice dentistry in Egypt given the fact that they have a degree in the field as required in article 2. In some cases the applicants could also be exempted from the required examination stated in Article 3 (related to those who carry non-Egyptian degree in dentistry).<sup>311</sup> Additionally, article 15 of Law 415 of 1954 related to the practice of medicine permitted Palestinian doctors to practice medicine in Egypt due to their status as refugees residing in the country. The applicants are also exempted from the required qualifying examination applicable for those who carry non-Egyptian degree in medicine.<sup>312</sup> Section seven of article 87 of Law 127 of 1955 related to practicing the profession of pharmacy allowed Palestinians to practice pharmacy in Egypt, due to their status as refugees. The applicants are also exempted from taking the qualifying examination required from those who carry non-

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309. al-Waqa'e al-Masriya: Issue No. 43, 5 June 1962 [Arabic Source]

310. Yassin, "The Palestinians in Egypt," 29

311. al-Waqa'e al-Masriya: Issue No. 83, 14 October 1954 [Arabic Source]

312. al-Waqa'e al-Masriya: Issue No. 58, 22 July 1954 [Arabic Source]

Egyptian academic degree under the condition that they carry the required degree stated in article 2.<sup>313</sup>

### **The Palestinian Private Sector during the Nasser Era**

The 1948 refugees suffered from their inability to secure legal jobs in Egypt. This stemmed from al-Nuqrashi's government orders to prohibit the employment of Palestinians.<sup>314</sup> For al-Nuqrashi, the refugees were a threat to national security that should be curtailed from a permanent stay in the country.<sup>315</sup> When the Free Officers seized power, they abolished the no-work restriction imposed on Palestinian refugees.<sup>316</sup> Early Palestinian businessmen faced several obstacles during their early beginnings in Egypt. First, their numbers were relatively small and they lacked enough knowledge of the requirements of the Egyptian market. Second, they also lacked enough capital and expertise to match the European investors already established in Egypt for decades. Third, they faced much opposition from "foreign establishments, especially the Jewish ones, who fought the birth of any Palestinian business."<sup>317</sup> Nasser had hoped that encouraging Palestinian investments would help in breaking the European monopoly over Egypt's economic sector. However, the earlier obstacles proved hard to overcome, as many early Palestinian businesses failed and the owners either left Egypt or enrolled in the public sector.<sup>318</sup>

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313. al-Waqa'e al-Masriya: Issue No. 20, 10 March 1955 [Arabic Source]

314. Dajani, *The Institutionalization of Palestinian Identity in Egypt*, 87

315. Hamdan, *Siyasat Misr Tijah al-Qadiyah al-Filastiniyah, 1948-1956 [Egypt Policies towards the Palestine Cause, 1948-1956]*, 303 [Arabic Source]

316. Dajani, *The Institutionalization of Palestinian Identity in Egypt*, 87

317. Ibid. 88

318. Ibid. 88

The Tripartite Aggression of 1956 created major shifts in the Egyptian economic sector. Following the war thousands of Jews left Egypt and the state seized all their properties. This created a new economic environment attracting Palestinian entrepreneurs mainly from Gaza to invest in sectors previously monopolized by Egyptian Jews including “manufacturing enterprises, wholesale and retail trade and small hotels and restaurants.”<sup>319</sup> Also, during the Egyptian-Syrian union many Palestinians residing in Syria decided to invest their capital in the Egyptian commercial and industrial sectors. This helped in generating and circulating Palestinian capital and proved beneficial to the Egyptian economic sector. Those private projects used Egyptian raw materials to produce export-quality products, and earned Egypt foreign currency and international reputation. Those projects also offered jobs for both Palestinian and Egyptian workers.<sup>320</sup> Following the 1967 war and Israel’s occupation of Gaza, most Gazans transferred their assets to Egypt with the aim of expanding their investments in the Egyptian markets. Between the years 1967-1973 the Egyptian economic sector included a total of 222 different Palestinian businesses. Their varied activities included the production of food, textiles, as well as jewelry making in addition to, tourist agencies, contractors, leather and carpenter workshops, and cosmetic factories.<sup>321</sup> Palestinians could invest in and cultivate agricultural plots. Although Law 15 of 1963 prohibited foreigners from owning agricultural or cultivable lands, yet, its first clause granted Palestinians a temporary

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319. Ibid. 89

320. Ibid. 89-90

321. Ibid. 93, also see Yassin, “The Palestinians in Egypt,” 31

exemption. Thus, Palestinian refugees in this period could own and cultivate agricultural plots just like Egyptian nationals.<sup>322</sup>

Nonetheless, economy and politics are mutually interrelated and political tensions negatively affected economic relations. Two incidents during the Nasserist era illustrate this point. First, the collapse of the UAR had its ramifications on the Palestinian private sector in Egypt. During the union many Palestinian businessmen came to Egypt to expand their activities, however, after the union's collapse and the rapid deterioration in Egyptian-Syrian relations many of them sold their businesses and returned to Syria. Additionally, some Palestinian businessmen faced arbitrary treatment where their properties were confiscated based on the mere suspicion of collaborating with Syrian reactionary elements.<sup>323</sup> The second incident occurred during the political crisis that ensued following Nasser's acceptance of the Rogers Plan of 1970. The PLO pressed Palestinian businessmen in Egypt to voice their opposition to Nasser's decision. However, Nasser's strong crackdown on PLO offices and radio stations sent a decisive message Palestinian opposition to Nasser's decisions was no longer tolerated. Businessmen in order to protect their capital tried to maintain a neutral stance during the debacle, since "[t]he penalties inflicted by the Egyptian government were great: they ranged from loss of employment to imprisonment or deportation."<sup>324</sup>

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, this chapter examined the Nasserist era and the status of the Palestinian refugees during that period. Nasser placed the Palestine cause at the forefront

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322. The Official Gazette: Issue No. 16, 19 January 1963 [Arabic Source]

323. Dajani, *The Institutionalization of Palestinian Identity in Egypt*, 90

324. Ibid. 94

of his political discourse in order to build a political leadership for Egypt and rally both domestic and regional support for his version of pan-Arabism. On a parallel line the Egyptian government and in accordance with Nasser's stance issued several legal exemptions to accommodate the Palestinian refugees residing in Egypt proper. The bulk of those laws equated Palestinians with Egyptian nationals in fields of employment, education, and healthcare. This however, does not negate the fact that political tensions affected segments of the refugees in the form of arbitrary detention, deportation, or the seizing of assets as explained above in the cases of the GUPS students or Palestinian investors. Although Egypt's residency laws stipulated that deportation cases should provide clear evidence of a credible threat to national security, and despite Nasser's rhetoric on Palestine, opposition to some of his political decisions triggered harsh repercussions. Laws in such cases proved inefficient, and the state could easily utilize and manipulate the loose term of national security to contain opposition, which could be little more than the expression of political differences. Nonetheless, it is important to note that the regulations and exemptions related to Palestinians in Egypt remained intact and fully effective during the entire Nasserist era.

## **Chapter Three**

### **The Sadat Era 1970-1981**

#### **Historical background**

This chapter will focus on the era of President Anwar Sadat, 1970-1981. Sadat was Nasser's vice-president and after Nasser's sudden death on 28 September 1970 took the position of a President. The chapter explores Sadat's foreign policy in post-October 1973 war era and the peace process with Israel. It will particularly focus on how such policies affected Egyptian-Palestinian relations and Egypt's Palestinian refugees.

Sadat's political project did not crystalize until the late 1970s after the October War. Following Nasser's death Sadat faced two political dilemmas. On the one hand, he had to deal with an internal political struggle with the Nasserists mainly the top members of the ruling party known as the Arab Socialist Union (ASU). The power struggle revolved around shaping the course of Egyptian politics after Nasser's death. From the outset Sadat and the newly appointed vice-president Ali Sabri subscribed to two opposing ideologies. Sabri along with other top members of the ASU close to Nasser believed that Sadat should consult them before passing any decisions. They assumed themselves more qualified to fill in his position.<sup>325</sup> Sabri stood for the pillars of Nasserism, mainly those of socialism, militancy towards Israel and maintaining close ties with the USSR. By contrast, Sadat had several reservations against Nasser's policies especially in relation to

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325. Najib E. Saliba, "The Decline of Nasserism in Sadat's Egypt," *World Affairs*, Vol. 138, No. 1 (Summer 1975), 51-59, 59



foreign policy. He believed that Egypt's isolation from the West had limited its foreign policy options.<sup>326</sup> Sabri was dismissed from his position on 2 May 1971 and imprisoned during Sadat's "Corrective Revolution" in early 1971. The latter targeted members of the Nasserist camp in the government and security forces. A group of prominent figures of the Nasser era were put either in prison or under house arrest. They were accused of plotting to overthrow Sadat and were put on trial.<sup>327</sup> The crack on the leftist cadres indicated a breach with Nasser's political circle and a sign of warning to their Soviet allies. In another turn of events marking further departures from Nasserism, Sadat embarked on a counter policy to gain domestic support through reconciling those who came under fire during the Nasser years. Those included hundreds from the Muslim Brotherhood, journalists like Ali and Mustafa Amin, members of the former royal family who received new passports, and civil servants dismissed under Nasser. The common thread between those beneficiaries was "the fact that they all suffered under Nasser. Although some leftists might have benefited, the Egyptian right was the major beneficiary."<sup>328</sup> Other measures included the restoration of former confiscated private property to its original owners. A high court verdict ordered that all private property expropriated under Nasser should be restored to the original owners, since the process of seizing such property was deemed illegal.<sup>329</sup> Additionally, Egyptian-Soviet relations suffered considerably during the Sadat era. Sadat expressed his openness towards the West in general and the United States in particular; he also expressed his preference

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326. Raymond A. Hinnebusch, Jr. *Egyptian Politics Under Sadat: The Post-Populist Development of an Authoritarian-Modernizing State*, Updated Edition, (Boulder and London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1988), 42

327. Saliba, "The Decline of Nasserism in Sadat's Egypt", 51

328. Ibid. 52

329. Ibid. 54, also see the *New York Times*, 25 May, 1974

towards capitalism and diversifying weaponry sources. Sadat complained that the Soviets were reluctant in supplying Egypt with necessary arms; ultimately, he ordered the dismissal of all Soviet experts and military advisors from Egypt. Sadat's decision to expel the Soviets probably stemmed from his desire to involve the United States as a mediator with Israel. The more Egyptian-American ties improved, the more its Soviet counterpart deteriorated. Following the October War Sadat argued that the Soviets "opposed military action against Israel and withheld arm supplies in an attempt to influence Egyptian policies."<sup>330</sup> Sadat would continue attacking the USSR on several occasions claiming that wherever the Soviets go they spread hatred and bloody class struggles.<sup>331</sup>

On the other hand, Sadat had to deal with the Israeli occupation of Sinai and the closure of the Suez Canal since the 1967 war. Sustaining the stationed army became a huge economic burden. Also, public pressures calling for ending this impasse made it clear that the state of "[n]o war – no peace was rapidly becoming more intolerable to Egypt than the risks of war."<sup>332</sup>

Initially Sadat showed openness towards diplomacy and negotiations to break the deadlock with Israel. However, he soon realized that Egypt has to fight to force a change on the ground and that is why he opted for the military option. Sadat's war strategy focused on waging a limited war that "would unite the Arab world behind Egypt, forcing

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330. Ibid. 55

331. A speech delivered by Sadat to the People's Assembly on 28 January 1980, <http://sadat.bibalex.org/speeches/browser.aspx?SID=915> [Arabic source] also see an interview with Sadat conducted by Mr. Anis Mansour for October Magazine published on 23 September 1979 where he stated that the Soviets never learn from their mistakes, he also narrated the Soviets' trials to impose a cease-fire the moment the October War commenced. He also accused the Soviets of fabricating and spreading false information throughout the Arab World, <http://sadat.bibalex.org/speeches/browser.aspx?SID=882> [Arabic source]

332. Hinnebusch, Jr. *Egyptian Politics Under Sadat: The Post-Populist Development of an Authoritarian-Modernizing State*, 46

use of the oil weapon; ... [and] shatter the myth of Israel's invincibility and hence her belief in security through territorial expansion and, above all, pave the way for an American-sponsored peace."<sup>333</sup> In this sense, the war was a spearhead which opened the way for peace negotiations and gave Egypt strategic leverage to secure a better political bargain.<sup>334</sup> In short, Sadat's strategy "was not to fight Israel directly, but to attack Israel's monopoly of support in the United States...the more Sadat tied Israel, Egypt, and the United States together, the stronger his position would be and the weaker Israel's."<sup>335</sup> During the October War, Egypt successfully crossed the Suez Canal by destroying the Bar Lev Line which stretched for 160 km along the canal.<sup>336</sup> However, the war ended with a cease-fire on 25 October 1973 after Israel regained its power and started a counterattack aided with extensive US military support.<sup>337</sup> Between 1974 and 1975 Egypt signed the Sinai Accords I and II.<sup>338</sup> The accords acted as a framework for disengagement and effectively eliminated the military option from the equation of the Arab-Israeli conflict. The accord only exchanged a minimal Israeli withdrawal in Sinai for a nominal Egyptian military presence and American observes stationed between them. The accord ended the war option for Egypt and largely naturalized its role in the Arab-Israeli power balance.<sup>339</sup> The accords also paved the way for the Camp David Accords of 1978 and the Egyptian – Israeli Peace Treaty of 1979. Such moves represented a glaring breach with

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333. Ibid. 46

334. Ibid. 46-47

335. Edward W. Said, *The Question of Palestine*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1992), 200

336. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bar\\_Lev\\_Line](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bar_Lev_Line)

337. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yom\\_Kippur\\_War](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yom_Kippur_War)  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yom\\_Kippur\\_War#Aid\\_to\\_Israel](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yom_Kippur_War#Aid_to_Israel)

338. [www.knesset.gov.il/process/doc/egypt-interim-eng.htm](http://www.knesset.gov.il/process/doc/egypt-interim-eng.htm) also see Laqueur and Rubin, eds. *The Israel Arab Reader: A Documentary History of the Middle East Conflict*, 194-200 "Egyptian-Israeli Accord on Sinai (September 1, 1975)."

339. Hinnebusch, Jr. *Egyptian Politics Under Sadat: The Post-Populist Development of an Authoritarian-Modernizing State*, 56-57

Nasser's pan-Arab policies; the accords seemed to be a unilateral deal which "decisively undermined the prospects of a general Arab – Israeli settlement. The agreement was also a first step in Egypt's withdrawal from the Arab world."<sup>340</sup> Egypt's leadership in the Arab world decreased significantly after signing the Second Sinai Accord as Arab financial aid decreased and Egypt started relying exclusively on US financial and military aid.<sup>341</sup> Relations with the PLO and the rest of the Arab states further deteriorated in the wake of the Camp David Accords and the Peace Treaty where "Arab sanctions were imposed: diplomatic relations were severed, the Arab League transferred from Egypt, aid payments and several joint enterprises suspended."<sup>342</sup> Further, the Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko referred to the agreement as anti-Arab stating that "[t]he separate deal between Egypt and Israel resolves nothing. It is a means designed to lull the vigilance of peoples. It is a way of piling up on a still greater scale explosive material capable of producing a new conflagration in the Middle East."<sup>343</sup> Additionally, between 1977 and 1979 the Arab League held several summits that condemned Sadat's Jerusalem visit and later his decision to pursue a separate peace treaty with Israel. For instance, on 5 December 1977 a summit held in Tripoli, Libya adopted a resolution to sever diplomatic, political, and economic ties with Egypt. Subsequent summits followed and stressed the same stance culminating with the Baghdad Summit held on 31 March 1979 which decided to withdraw the Arab ambassadors from Egypt and to remove the Arab League's

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340. Ibid. 57

341. Ibid. 57

342. Ibid. 68

343. Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko: On the Camp David Agreement (September 25, 1979), a speech delivered to the UN General Assembly by the Soviet Foreign Minister, in Laqueur and Rubin, eds. *The Israel Arab Reader: A Documentary History of the Middle East Conflict*, 229-230, also see a speech delivered by the Syrian President Hafiz al-Asad on 8 March 1980 stating that peace cannot be achieved through separate deals while the rest of the Arab territories is still under Israeli occupation, 231-232

headquarters from Cairo to the Tunisian capital, Tunis.<sup>344</sup> A war of words ensued between Sadat and the rejectionists compromising Syria, Algeria, Libya, Iraq, and South Yemen. Sadat severed diplomatic relations with those states and insisted that the Arabs envy Egypt and conspire against its prosperity. Envy, hatred, and conspiracy persisted in Sadat's speeches which emphasized on Egypt's sacrifices and the Arabs' ingratitude. Such themes reinforced and justified Sadat's Egypt First policy. In other words, Egypt fought on behalf of the Arabs but they deny it prosperity, so it's time for Egypt to focus on its own interests. A wave of harsh criticism dominated Sadat's speeches between the late 1970s and early 1980s. Recurrent themes included accusing the Arabs of aspiring to replace Egypt's leadership, hatred, and ignorance. He also claimed that Egypt does not need the Arabs, blaming Egypt's economic woes on its sacrifices for the Arab world. On several occasions Sadat argued that the Arabs offered nothing to Palestine except slogans while Egypt fought their wars and got nothing in return except ingratitude.<sup>345</sup> This discourse marked a glaring breach from Nasser's pan-Arab rhetoric which stressed a united Arab front as an essential prerequisite to confront Israel. The more Sadat's Egypt became isolated from the Arab world, the more dependent it became on US financial and military aid. Such dependency marred Egyptian political decisions in the following decades as they became closely tied to US interests.

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344. Lukacs, ed. *The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict: A Documentary Record, 1967-1990*, 466-477 [Arab League Summit Conference Declaration, Tripoli, Libya, 5 December, 1977, [Experts] / Summit of Anti-Sadat "Steadfastness and Confrontation Front". Algeria, Libya, South Yemen and the PLO, Damascus, 23 September, 1978 / Arab League Summit Conference, Final Statement, Baghdad, Iraq, 5 November, 1978 / Arab League Summit Conference Resolutions, Baghdad, 31 March, 1979]

345. A speech delivered by Sadat to the People's Assembly on 28 January 1980, <http://sadat.bibalex.org/speeches/browser.aspx?SID=915> [Arabic source] also see an interview with Sadat conducted by Mr. Anis Mansour for *October* Magazine published on 23 September 1979, <http://sadat.bibalex.org/speeches/browser.aspx?SID=882> [Arabic source], also see a press conference in Rabat Morocco on 22 September 1978, <http://sadat.bibalex.org/speeches/browser.aspx?SID=761> [Arabic source], also see a letter from Sadat to King al-Hassan of Morocco on 14 October 1980, <http://sadat.bibalex.org/speeches/browser.aspx?SID=961> [Arabic source]

The shift in Egyptian policies and priorities under Sadat resulted mainly from the change in the political leadership. Unlike Nasser, Sadat did not aspire to be a pan-Arab leader. He believed that pan-Arabism limited Nasser's political choices.<sup>346</sup> Sadat also showed more accommodation towards the West in general and the United States in particular. His political project had an Egyptian-centric stance. "Egypt First" would later become the emblem of Sadat's political discourse; an early indication toward this policy is illustrated in adjusting the state's official title and restoring the name Egypt. According to the Constitution of 1971, Egypt's official title changed from the United Arab Republic to the Arab Republic of Egypt.<sup>347</sup> It is worthy to note that despite the collapse of the Egyptian-Syrian union, Nasser retained the UAR as Egypt's official name. This shift towards a more Egyptian less Arab political order appeared since signing the Sinai Accords. Signing the accords seemed to be a unilateral move which neutralized Egypt's role in the Arab-Israeli struggle and eliminated all prospects of an Egyptian military intervention in the struggle with Israel. Later and despite Arab rejection, Sadat signed the Camp David Accords followed by the Egyptian-Israeli Peace Treaty. Those moves proved Sadat's Egypt-oriented policies and his desire to withdraw from the Arab political scene. He stressed that choosing war or peace is ultimately an Egyptian decision.<sup>348</sup>

Additionally, Sadat showed preference toward free market capitalism and more integration into the world capitalist market in what became to be known as *infitah* (the

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346. *Akhbar al-Yaum* December 10, 1977: Sadat stated that Nasser could not visit Israel because he attached himself with a set of old traditional ideas, adding that Nasser used to threaten the Arabs with the Palestine card.

347. The 1971 Constitution, Part No. 1, Article No. 1 stated the Egypt's official full name is the Arab Republic of Egypt (ARE) instead of the former United Arab Republic (UAR), [http://www.sis.gov.eg/ar/LastPage.aspx?Category\\_ID=73](http://www.sis.gov.eg/ar/LastPage.aspx?Category_ID=73) [Full Text] [Arabic Source], also see Talhami, *Palestine and the Egyptian National Identity*, 112

348. An interview with Sadat conducted by Mr. Anis Mansour for *October* Magazine published on 23 September 1979, <http://sadat.bibalex.org/speeches/browser.aspx?SID=882> [Arabic source]

open door policy). This breach with Nasser's socialism resulted from both "domestic demands and foreign constraints."<sup>349</sup> Sadat needed to attract foreign investments especially American ones and gain the support of the Egyptian bourgeoisie to consolidate his power. Further, since economic and political relations are interrelated, Sadat considered *infitah* as an integral component of his foreign policy. He hoped that abandoning state socialism for a neoliberal free market would win Egypt both investment and political support from the United States.<sup>350</sup>

### **Egyptian – Palestinian Relations during the Sadat Era 1970-1981**

Egyptian-Palestinian relations did not witness significant changes during Sadat's early years in office; in fact "Egypt was a cosponsor of the resolution at Rabat in October 1974 which officially proclaimed the PLO the sole, legitimate representative of the Palestinian people."<sup>351</sup> Also, in an attempt to prove himself as a democratic liberal, Sadat ordered the reopening of the PLO offices and radio stations closed by Nasser during the Rogers Plan crisis.<sup>352</sup> Signing the Sinai Disengagement Accords in 1975 put some strain on Egyptian relations with the PLO but did not have any impact on the status of the Palestinian community in Egypt. However, Egyptian-Palestinian ties started to rapidly deteriorate when Sadat announced his intention to visit Jerusalem in a speech delivered at the People's Assembly in November 1977.<sup>353</sup> The shocking announcement followed by

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349. Hinnebusch, Jr. *Egyptian Politics Under Sadat: The Post-Populist Development of an Authoritarian-Modernizing State*, 59

350. Ibid. 59-60, also see "Palestinians Discuss Sadat's Moves," MERIP Reports, No. 65 (Mar., 1978), 12-14

351. Brand, *Palestinians in the Arab World: Institution Building and the Search for State*, 60, see also Lukacs, ed. *The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict: A Documentary Record, 1967-1990*, 464-465 [Full text]

352. Dajani, *The Institutionalization of Palestinian Identity in Egypt*, 94

353. A speech delivered by Sadat on the occasion of the opening session of the People's Assembly on 9 November 1977 where Sadat declared that he would go to any extent even to the Israeli Knesset to negotiate peace, <http://sadat.bibalex.org/speeches/browser.aspx?SID=641> [Arabic Source]

the famous visit angered the PLO which responded by releasing the Six – Point Program on 4 December 1977 condemning the visit, rejecting UN – Resolution 242 and all international conferences based on its provisions including the Geneva Conference, and calling for severing all ties with Sadat’s regime.<sup>354</sup> The visit, the first of its kind by an Arab leader and specifically an Egyptian one perplexed the entire region. Egypt had a long history of wars against Israel since 1948. It acted as the uncontested leader of the Arab world. But the trip signaled an Egyptian formal recognition of Israel, Sadat’s insistence on ending the war option for Egypt, and his gradual withdrawal from the Arab-Israeli struggle.<sup>355</sup> The visit also triggered Palestinian students in Egyptian universities, thus, fueling several demonstrations against the regime. The government swiftly retaliated through expelling all active students and ultimately banning the GUPS in 1977.<sup>356</sup>

As noted earlier, since its inception, GUPS became highly involved in overt political activism leading to several clashes with the Egyptian regime during the late 1960s and throughout the 1970s. During the early 1970s GUPS organized several demonstrations; for instance during 1970-1971 the Palestinian students demonstrated against the Egyptian government inaction regarding the massacres of Black September. In 1972 the GUPS joined the Egyptian masses in large demonstrations against Sadat’s policies especially the “no-war no-peace” impasse. However, vocal opposition would no longer be tolerated leading to the banning of other active Palestinian unions like the General Union of Palestinian Writers and Journalists. Only unions focusing on social

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354. Laqueur and Rubin, eds. *The Israel Arab Reader: A Documentary History of the Middle East Conflict*, 215

355. <http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2007/871/fe1.htm> 15-21 November 2007

356. Brand, *Palestinians in the Arab World: Institution Building and the Search for State*, 61



non-political activities survived the onslaught including the unions of workers, women, and the Red Crescent.<sup>357</sup> In essence, the crack shows the regime's intent to contain all platforms that could incite opposition and rally Egyptian leftists and Islamists who strongly opposed Sadat's quick approach to a peace settlement without enough critical thought or social debate. During that period the regime imposed severe restrictions on opposition to the peace treaty, for instance, in 1979 the government passed a referendum forbidding "the formation of a party that stood against the Egyptian-Israeli treaty."<sup>358</sup> The problem with this stance is that the regime equated between opposing the treaty and opposing peace altogether, while in fact, the opposition called for a just peace and a more calculated approach regarding Egyptian-American relations.

The year 1978 marked a further turn for the worse for both Egyptian-Palestinian relations and Palestinians in the country. On 18 February 1978 a Palestinian armed group called Abu-Nidal Organization assassinated Youssef al-Sibai the Minister of Culture in Cyprus. The Egyptian regime perceived the assassination, although promptly denounced by the PLO, as an assault. There were severe repercussions that curtailed "many of the privileges that Palestinians in Egypt had enjoyed since the 1950s and 1960s" and many laws "were gradually reviewed and cancelled."<sup>359</sup> For instance, *al-Ahram* reported on 28 February 1978 that "discussions in the People's Assembly [were] calling for the re-examination of the status of the Palestinian residents of Egypt."<sup>360</sup> The assassination and the subsequent Larnaca airport debacle triggered further tensions. Following the carnage the government (without proper prearrangements) sent Egyptian commandos to free the

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357. Ibid. 47

358. Raymond William Baker, *Sadat and After: Struggles for Egypt's Political Soul*, (Cambridge Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1990), 112

359. Brand, *Palestinians in the Arab World: Institution Building and the Search for State*, 61

360. Talhami, *Palestine in the Egyptian Press: From Al-Ahram to Al-Ahali*, 262

remaining hostages but the Cypriot soldiers fired and killed them. This fiasco enraged the Egyptian regime and unleashed an anti-PLO press campaign where “[t]he Egyptian media, certainly with government approval, if not encouragement, began what was to be a three-and-a-half-year assault on the PLO in particular and Palestinians in general.”<sup>361</sup> In retaliation Sadat “in major breaks with precedent, denounced *fedayeen* raids on Israel and repudiated the claim of the PLO to be the legitimate representative of Palestinians.”<sup>362</sup>

The Egyptian-Palestinian relations faced further deterioration in the months preceding signing the Camp David Accords on 17 September 1978. Based on an American initiative the accords proposed a frame-work constituting basis for negotiating an Arab-Israeli peace settlement. However, Egypt ended up signing the accords as a separate Egyptian-Israeli peace settlement since the PLO rejected to participate. On 23 September 1978, the PLO joined the so-called Summit of Anti-Sadat “Steadfastness and Confrontation Front”, held in Damascus with participants from Algeria, Libya, Syria, and South Yemen. The Summit released an agreement which called for severing political and economic relations with Egypt and removing the headquarters of the Arab League from Cairo, while maintaining closer ties with the Soviet Union<sup>363</sup>. Arafat stated in an interview that the PLO along with the “Steadfastness Front” would fight in his words “the tripartite alliance – Carter, Begin, and al-Sadat.”<sup>364</sup> Surprisingly, Sadat’s declarations grew obviously inconsistent. Sadat insisted on several occasions that there is no real peace in the region without a just and meaningful solution to the Palestine question based

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361. Ibid. 61

362. Hinnebusch, Jr. *Egyptian Politics Under Sadat: The Post-Populist Development of an Authoritarian-Modernizing State*, 67

363. Lukacs, ed. *The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict: A Documentary Record, 1967-1990*, 469-470

364. An interview with the Algerian newspaper *Al-Sha ‘b*, in Laqueur and Rubin, eds. *The Israel Arab Reader: A Documentary History of the Middle East Conflict*, 230-231

on the complete Israeli withdrawal from the Arab land and east Jerusalem. He stressed that Egypt never sought a separate deal and that the question of Palestine lies at the very heart of the Arab-Israeli conflict.<sup>365</sup> However, in reality, his government nurtured an aggressive anti-Palestinian campaign and issued a series of laws discriminating against the refugees. Sadat also disregarded all domestic and regional opposition and preceded with the accords despite their flaws.

In this respect, it is important to briefly explain the reasons behind the PLO's decision to refuse signing the Camp David Accords. Since its inception the accords became promoted as a frame-work setting the basis for future negotiations. However, the clauses proposed failed to offer any tangible basis for the transition to self-governance or self-determination. From the onset the Camp David framework included within its clauses several terms that would eventually render autonomy and self-government ineffective. For instance, the responsibilities of the Palestinian authority governing both the West Bank and Gaza would later be defined through negotiations between representatives from Egypt, Jordan, and Israel. The Palestinian representation was confined to the stance of the Arab governments participating in the talks. Thus, denying Palestinians the right to choose their representatives. Further, this clause empowered Israel with the right to veto certain proposals or deny the admission of specific Palestinian representatives. Besides, the Palestinian delegation in this respect would be a

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365. An interview with *October* Magazine on 23 April 1978, <http://sadat.bibalex.org/speeches/browser.aspx?SID=729>, Sadat's message to the United Nations on the occasion of the Day of Palestine on 28 November 1978, <http://sadat.bibalex.org/speeches/browser.aspx?SID=774>, Sadat's speech to the Knesset on 21 November 1977, <http://sadat.bibalex.org/speeches/browser.aspx?SID=650>, *al-Akhbar* newspaper on 3 March 1979, *al-Ahram* newspaper on 13 March 1977 reported Sadat's declarations during the opening session of the Palestine National Council (PNC) where he stated that the Palestinians are never asked to give-up any of his rights or to provide any concessions. Sadat's interview to the Israeli television and reported in *al-Akhbar* newspaper on 27 March 1979, *al-Ahram* on 11 March 1975 [Arabic sources]

mere token representative of the Arab governments which selected its members rather than representing the Palestinian people in general.<sup>366</sup>

In essence, the Camp David Accords became more of a framework for further negotiations rather than providing substantial resolutions. It fell short from committing Israel to fully withdraw its forces from the West Bank and Gaza, it did not provide for measures to stop the expansion in building new illegal settlements. Further, the accords overlooked the status of Jerusalem and gave Israel the right to select which Palestinians are eligible for readmission. This clause essentially denied Palestinians the right to return to their homeland. It contradicted with previous UN resolutions affirming the unconditional right of return. Also the accords failed to acknowledge the status of Palestinian refugees displaced prior to the 1967 war.<sup>367</sup> In short “the explicit provisions and the implicit terms of the Camp David Framework exclude, in practice, the realization of the most fundamental Palestinian rights: to sovereignty, statehood, self-determination and return.”<sup>368</sup> Such shortcomings explain the reason why the PLO refused to sign the Accords as they significantly diminished the Palestinian rights and failed to provide concrete basis for a just solution to the Palestine question.

Regardless of Arab condemnation and vocal domestic opposition mainly from the Leftists and Islamists, Sadat signed the Camp David Accords on 17 September 1978.<sup>369</sup> He went on to sign the Egyptian-Israeli Peace Treaty on 26 March 1979; the two

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366. Fayez A. Sayegh, “The Camp David Agreement and the Palestine Problem,” *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. 8, No. 2 (Winter, 1979), 3-40, 7-8, also see Lukacs, ed. *The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict: A Documentary Record, 1967-1990*, “A Framework for Peace in the Middle East Agreed at Camp David, 17 September, 1978”, 155-159

367. Sayegh, “The Camp David Agreement and the Palestine Problem,” 9-23

368. Ibid. 28

369. Smith, *Palestine and the Arab-Israeli Conflict: A History with Documents*, Document No. 8.4, 391-393

countries exchanged ambassadors along with full diplomatic relations.<sup>370</sup> Egyptian-Palestinian-Arab relations remained turbulent until the early 1980s when a radical Islamic group known as al-Jamaah al-Islamiyah assassinated Sadat on 6 October 1981.

### **The Press during the Sadat Era**

As he consolidated his power, Sadat focused on the press establishment. Having headed the administrative board of *al-Jumhuriyah* newspaper, Sadat had acquired first-hand the influence of such establishment. In fact, during his era the press became known as “the fourth-estate.” He promised that the era of prosecuting and jailing journalists was over, and insisted that freedom of speech would be protected. Article 47 of the 1971 constitution stipulated that “freedom of speech whether written, spoken or photographed is guaranteed within the framework of the law and constructive criticism to safeguard the national structure.”<sup>371</sup> Article 48 stated that “freedom of press and printing is guaranteed, press censorship and suspending newspapers was forbidden. Limiting those rules would occur only during cases of national emergency and/or war where a limited form of censorship would be enacted in matters pertaining to social safety and national security purposes.”<sup>372</sup> However, implementing those laws proved to be a tough challenge to Sadat since “[h]is understanding of freedom of the press appeared to be only as a tool for conveying the political authority’s views to the public.”<sup>373</sup> He appeared to be less tolerant toward criticism and implied his intentions to rid the Press Syndicate from his opponents. The case of Haykal is an indicative illustration of Sadat’s limits tolerating criticism.

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370. Ibid. 355, see also Gregory S. Mahler and Alden R.W. Mahler, *The Arab-Israeli Conflict: An Introduction and Documentary Reader*, (London New York: Routledge, 2010), 167-173 [ Full Text of the Egyptian-Israeli Peace Treaty]

371. [http://www.sis.gov.eg/ar/LastPage.aspx?Category\\_ID=73](http://www.sis.gov.eg/ar/LastPage.aspx?Category_ID=73) [Full Text] [Arabic source] \*All translations are mine.

372. Ibid.

373. Talhami, *Palestine in the Egyptian Press: From Al-Ahram to Al-Ahali*, 206

Haykal, Nasser's closest advisor and *al-Ahram* editor-in-chief for seventeen years clashed with Sadat on various issues. He repeatedly criticized Sadat's failure to unify an Arab front against Israel and his stance from the Soviet Union. Haykal also expressed his concern about rushing into an alignment with the United States. He called for "a slower and more reasoned approach to the United States" mainly because he "was not convinced that the United States had actually shifted its policy toward more evenhandedness in the Middle East."<sup>374</sup> Impatient with his criticism, Sadat issued a decree dismissing Haykal from his position in February 1974, and appointed his rival Ali Amin as the managing editor of *al-Ahram*.<sup>375</sup> In order to justify this decision, "Haykal was accused of forming "power centers" and of turning *al-Ahram* to a "state within a state". He was further accused of "casting doubts on the President's intentions and of being involved in fomenting past student riots."<sup>376</sup>

Following the dismissal of the Nasserist figures from the press, Sadat pushed to the forefront figures that did not flourish during the Nasserist era like Musa Sabri and Anis Mansour, or those who suffered in Nasser's prisons like Mustafa and Ali Amin. Sadat had implemented his full control over the press establishment. He also aimed to nourish a new cadre of journalists who supported his policies and framed the dismantlement of Nasserism in a favorable light. Consequently, several writers launched a wave of articles highly critical of the Nasserist era. Topics varied between protesting arbitrary imprisonment, oppression, and the lack of liberty and justice. Other writings

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374. Saliba, "The Decline of Nasserism in Sadat's Egypt," 53

375. Ibid. 53

376. Ibid. 52-53

criticized transgressions against landowners including detention and confiscating their properties.<sup>377</sup>

In the post October war era, Sadat approved the emergence of independent press as a sign to win over the West prior to Camp David by posing as a liberal who tolerates and encourages opposition. It is however important to note that despite their status as independent, these newspapers were very much, dependent on the state owned printing houses.<sup>378</sup> An opposition press emerged including *al-Shaab* the mouthpiece of the Socialist Work Party which appeared in May 1979, *al-Ahali* the voice of al-Tagamuu Party, and *al-Daawa* an Islamic newspaper representing the Muslim Brotherhood. *Al-Daawa* first appeared in January 1951 but was soon suspended in 1952. It reemerged again in July 1976 with Omar al-Telmasani the Brotherhood's Supreme Guide as its editor.<sup>379</sup> The opposition press challenged the regime especially during the prelude to the peace negotiations with Israel. *Al-Ahali* for instance, spearheaded the opposition press by explicitly attacking the Camp David negotiations, the deteriorating domestic economy, and the rise of a new class of entrepreneurs closely related to the regime.<sup>380</sup> Due to its outspokenness the official press took an early aim at *al-Ahali* dismissing it and al-Tagamuu Party as a corrupt and insufficiently Islamic communist party.<sup>381</sup> After fifteen issues the paper was suspended in May 1978 only to be republished a month later. Before

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377. Ibid. 53

378. Talhami, *Palestine in the Egyptian Press: From Al-Ahram to Al-Ahali*, 228

379. Ibid. 229-231

380. The first issue published on 1 February, 1978 ran the following headlines: "There should be a firm stand with the 'American Friend'; the paper explained that they do not reject peace but they are questioning the means through which this peace could be achieved. The paper also questioned America's real motivations behind endorsing such initiative, the headlines appeared read the following: "The Conflict is not about Peace but rather about the Means," "The First Question: Does America Really Want to Participate in the Peace Process?," in Hussein Abdel-Razeq, *al-Ahali a Newspaper Under Siege*, [*al-Ahali Sahifa Tahet al-Hesar*], (Cairo: Dar al-Alam al-Thaleth, 1994), 35 [Arabic Source]

381. Abdel-Razeq, *al-Ahali a Newspaper Under Siege*, [*al-Ahali Sahifa Tahet al-Hesar*], 14-15 [Arabic Source]

suspending the sixteenth issue Sadat personally took an aim at al-Tagamuu and its newspaper. During one of his speeches, he dismissed the opposition as agents; he explained that while he did not oppose the Left but that it had to prove its loyalty to Egypt. As for *al-Ahali* Sadat accused them of stupidity and conspiring against social stability.<sup>382</sup> Further, on another occasion when Sadat met with the chief-editors of the official press he said that “*al-Ahali* had published about sixteen issues by now and that is enough for them”; it is not surprising that the government seized the issue scheduled to be published on that same day.<sup>383</sup> Upon its resumption the paper continued to openly attack the peace negotiations and the rising rates of corruption. By the time the paper reached issue number twenty-three “the state’s security agency charged the paper with such offenses as harming the interests of Arab and Islamic society, inciting hatred and rebellion, defying the law and committing the crime of publishing and spreading false news.”<sup>384</sup> Issue 23 of 2 August, 1978 ran bold headlines, which attacked Camp David and the American pressures on behalf of Israel. The initial headline questioned the fate of the initiative, given the Israeli formula of land for peace.<sup>385</sup> The same issue ran provocative editorials accusing the regime of approving the disposing of nuclear and atomic wastes in Egyptian soil. The subsequent issues faced prompt confiscating even before leaving the

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382. Sadat’s speech on the occasion of Labor Day on 2 May, 1978, <http://sadat.bibalex.org/speeches/browser.aspx?SID=730>, [Arabic Source], prior to this speech Anis Mansour the editor-in-chief of *October* Magazine and a close associate of Sadat wrote an article published in Issue No. 79 of 30 April, 1978, 12 which held the following headline: “The People should Save us from this Democracy,” the article in this sense alluded that the margin of freedom of speech should be reevaluated, in Abdel-Razeq, *al-Ahali a Newspaper Under Siege*, [*al-Ahali Sahifa Tahet al-Hesar*], 46-47 [Arabic Source]

383. Abdel-Razeq, Abdel-Razeq, *al-Ahali a Newspaper Under Siege*, [*al-Ahali Sahifa Tahet al-Hesar*], 46-47 [Arabic Source]

384. Talhami, *Palestine in the Egyptian Press: From Al-Ahram to Al-Ahali*, 257

385. Abdel-Razeq, *al-Ahali a Newspaper Under Siege*, [*al-Ahali Sahifa Tahet al-Hesar*], 69-72 [Arabic Source]



print station, the advertisements on national television were cancelled, and ultimately the printing-house refused to print the newspaper altogether.<sup>386</sup>

*Al-Daawa* represented another form of opposition from an Islamic perspective. Unlike *al-Ahali*, *al-Daawa* did not initially engage in a direct attack on Sadat's regime. Instead it focused on attacking "Israel, the Nasserite era, and the Soviets."<sup>387</sup> However, by mid-1978 it became apparent that Sadat is going forward with the Camp David initiative, therefore, the paper openly attacked the proposed agreement. Al-Telmasani argued that the Zionists usurped the Arab land of Palestine and that Islam delegitimized recognizing land usurpers. In another editorial, he claimed that the accords would fulfill the Zionist scheme "to pursue a peaceful settlement in order to establish Israel's control over lands conquered by war."<sup>388</sup> However, with the signing of the treaty, the paper moved toward analyzing its terms and their impact on Egypt and the Arab world. The paper warned that the treaty would become a means by which Israel would solve its problem of economic inflation. It explained that the treaty would open the Egyptian markets and later the Arab ones to Israeli products. This would eventually lead to an Israeli industrial expansion and facilitate controlling Egypt's economic sector.<sup>389</sup> The paper also stressed the fact that the treaty "left Palestine's political future vague and undetermined."<sup>390</sup> It also lamented that the annex to the treaty maintained the reference to Jerusalem as the unified capital of Israel. *Al-Daawa* further emphasized that the treaty

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386. Ibid. 610-614, the court verdict approving seizing issues No. 23 and 24 cited that the paper had published lies that jeopardized social security and promoted a discourse that offends Islamic feelings. This is in a time when the paper actually called for containing glaring corruption and promoted the sense of Arab nationalism [Arabic Source] [Full Text of the Two Verdicts]

387. Ibid. 249

388. Ibid. 248

389. Ibid. 250

390. Ibid. 251

gave a permanent position to the international troops in Sinai known as the Multinational Forces and Observers (MFO) as forces of protection since the treaty had stipulated that “[n]o more than one division (mechanized or infantry) of Egyptian armed forces will be stationed within an area lying approximately 50 kilometers (km) east of the Gulf of Suez and the Suez Canal.”<sup>391</sup> The treaty further stipulated that the Egyptian forces would be equipped with light weapons for normal security and police purposes. This in fact gave the international forces more precedence and a permanent presence in Sinai for protection reasons. Unlike the cease-fire signed following the Suez War of 1956 which gave Egypt the right to remove the international forces, this treaty stipulated that these forces “will not be removed unless such removal is approved by the Security Council of the United Nations with a unanimous vote of the five permanent members.”<sup>392</sup> Attacks against the treaty intensified especially from Egyptian journalists writing in papers published in the Gulf States. In Egypt *al-Daawa* continued publishing intense articles warning against normalization, which would facilitate Israeli penetration into the Egyptian and Arab cultural fabric. Further articles criticized the trend of promoting Israel as the only advanced country in the region and warned against the ramifications of Egypt’s isolation from the Arab world.<sup>393</sup> The regime first retaliated by issuing the Morality Law of 1980 that “defined certain actions as attempts to disturb the social peace and alarm public sensitivities.”<sup>394</sup> Law 148 of 1980 posed several restrictions on the press and eventually facilitated the arrest and dismissal of hundreds of journalists.<sup>395</sup> By August 1981 *al-*

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391. Camp David Frame Works for Peace (September 17, 1978) in Laqueur and Rubin, eds. *The Israel Arab Reader: A Documentary History of the Middle East Conflict*, [Full Text: 222-227] 227, Article (A) of Section (C) “Stationing Forces”

392. Ibid. Article (D) of Section (C) under the topic “Stationing of Forces”

393. *Al-Daawa*, May 1980

394. Talhami, *Palestine in the Egyptian Press: From Al-Ahram to Al-Ahali*, 264

395. Ibid. 264

*Daawa* and *al-Shaab* were closed followed by the arrest of several members from al-Tagamuu party. The regime's onslaught on the press known also as "Autumn of Fury" culminated with promulgating Article 74 of the constitution concerning the state of emergency.<sup>396</sup> This article allowed enacting several extreme measures to protect social security in cases of emergencies, a state that obviously did not exist during the clash with the press during September 1981. Despite the decisive curtail of freedoms and the imprisonment of hundreds of journalists including members of the Press Syndicate's executive council, the official press "applauded these measures as a "new revolution."<sup>397</sup>

The official press on the other side firmly subscribed to the regime's discourse and constantly promoted its views and policies. For instance, following the Jerusalem trip the official press ran headlines supporting the forthcoming peace talks and at the same time attacking the rejectionist front. On 10 December 1977 *Akhbar al-Youm* ran several declarations made by Sadat warning that anyone who had insulted the Egyptian people will be forbidden from entering Egypt, adding that the rejectionists who convened in Tripoli are searching for a fake leadership and motivated by hatred and envy.<sup>398</sup> On 12 December 1977 *al-Ahram* published another headline quoting Sadat stating that he severed diplomatic relations with the Arab states that participated in the Tripoli summit to prove their insignificance. He also accused the Syrian Baath of pressuring Arafat to reject the peace initiative.<sup>399</sup> Further the official press disregarded the voice of the opposition whether domestically or regionally and focused instead on reporting the wide

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396. [http://www.sis.gov.eg/ar/LastPage.aspx?Category\\_ID=73](http://www.sis.gov.eg/ar/LastPage.aspx?Category_ID=73) [Full Text] [Arabic Source], the article stipulated that the president is allowed to take exceptional measure in cases of extreme danger that threatens national and social security and disturbs the constitutional functioning of the state's institutions.

397. Talhami, *Palestine in the Egyptian Press: From Al-Ahram to Al-Ahali*, 265

398. *Akhbar al-Youm*, 10 December 1977 [Arabic Source]

399. *Al-Ahram*, 12 December 1977 [Arabic Source]

approval given to the initiative.<sup>400</sup> The press coverage in this sense became one-dimensional stressing all views agreeing with the regime's discourse while belittling and strongly attacking any opposition. For instance, *Akbar al-Youm*, *al-Ahram* and *al-Jumhuriyah* ran headlines reporting the arrival of a Palestinian delegate from Gaza followed by other delegates from other Palestinian cities declaring their full support of Sadat's initiatives.<sup>401</sup> *AL-Akhbar* also ran declarations made by the head of the Gaza delegate stating that Sadat's initiative had finally revived the hopes of the people of Palestine. *Al-Ahram* ran other headings quoting declarations made by the Palestinian delegation from Rafah and Gaza stating that the rejecting minority are puppets to the Soviets.<sup>402</sup> Other headings quoted Sadat's claim that his initiative was motivated by from ending the struggle of the Palestinians whereas the rejectionists preferred empty slogans. He also called on the rejectionists to stop manipulating the PLO.<sup>403</sup>

In one of his articles, Youssef al-Sibai wrote that the popular reception which greeted Sadat upon his return from his visit to the United States was the best response to the rejectionists' anti-Sadat propaganda. He argued that peace was the choice of the Egyptians themselves who supported and identified with Sadat and his initiative. He claimed that those millions sent a decisive message to the rejectionist front, stressing that Egypt unlike them has no history of betrayal.<sup>404</sup> Additionally, *al-Mousawar* magazine ran

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400. *Al-Akhbar* 18 June 1978: "Kissinger: Sadat's Jerusalem trip is a historical event which shows great courage and wisdom," *al-Akhbar* 4 December 1977: "The former French Prime Minister Mendes France stated: Sadat's Knesset speech does not deserve any criticism from any Arab" [Arabic Sources]

401. *Akhbar al-Youm*, *al-Ahram*, and *al-Jumhuriyah*, 10 December 1977 [Arabic Source]

402. *Al-Ahram* 13 December 1977 [Arabic Source]

403. *Al-Akhbar*, 14 December 1977 [Arabic Source]

404. *Al-Ahram*, 9 December 1977, Youssef al-Sibai "The Egyptian People Respond" {al-Shaab al-Masry Yarud} [Arabic Source], also Ibrahim Seada wrote "This is what we Think" published in *Akhbar al-Youm* 3 December 1977 attacking the rejectionists as the enemies of Egypt and peace, and emphasizing that peace is not Sadat's own initiative but it is the decision of the entire Egyptian nation who had sacrificed enough and looking forward to a better future [Arabic Source]

several editorials harshly attacking the rejectionist front, claiming that their conspiracy against Egypt dates back to years prior to the Jerusalem visit. The article argues that the conspiracy aimed at maintaining the continuity of the no-war no-peace situation so they keep outbidding each other while the Palestinian refugees suffer in their camps. The article claimed that the rejectionists intended to nourish the internal strife in Egypt in an effort to abort its newly found democracy which in turn threatens the dictatorships in Iraq, Syria, and South Yemen.<sup>405</sup> Musa Sabri emphasized a similar argument by stressing that the Arab states were threatened by a strong Egypt, they instead wished that Egypt would always remain besieged by wars and internal economic troubles. He stressed that Sadat did not seek a unilateral deal, nor forced any Arab leader to join his initiative since he realized that the Arabs are more interested in posturing.<sup>406</sup> Another article called on the Arab peoples of the rejectionist states to rise and bring down their leaders who ruthlessly rule them.<sup>407</sup> Further, in his column entitled “Smoke in the Air” Galal al-Din al-Hamamsy wrote that some Arab states dealt with Sadat’s peace initiative from a narrow perspective. He emphasized that Egypt and the Egyptian people have suffered alone and sacrificed a lot and that the time had come to focus on Egypt and solve its chronic problems. He also insisted that Egypt was capable of overcoming present or

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405. *Al-Mousawar* magazine, 9 December 1977 [Arabic Source], in yet another editorial *October Magazine* published two articles on 11 November 1977, the first one written by Maryam Robin entitled “The Arab Ambassadors Agree, the Impertinent Arabs Reject,” 16-17 the second article entitled “The Convoy Continues on the Path,” 18 and written by Abdel-Aziz Saddek, the article stated that despite the screams and crazy howling of some Arab states, Egypt will never deviate from the path Sadat started. The same idea appeared in yet another article echoing a similar title and written by Said Sonboul published in *Akhbar al-Yaum* on 26 November 1977 [Arabic Source]

406. Musa Sabri, *Al-Sadat: The Reality and the Legend [Al-Sadat: al-Haqiqah wa al-Usturah]*, (Cairo: Al-Maktab al-Misri al-Hadith, 1985), 420

407. *Al-Mousawar* magazine, December 9, 1977, Sabri Abu al-Majad “A Frank and Direct and Direct Word to the Arab People in Algeria, Libya, Syria, Iraq, South Yemen: Those Leaders who Rule you with Steel and Fire should be brought down” [Arabic Source]

future problems without relying on any external support.<sup>408</sup> Helmi Salem wrote another article entitled “The Warriors of Words” he questioned the motivations of the rejectionists and their anti-Sadat campaign, and insisted that they have enough manpower, financial, and military resources to wage a war against Israel. He argued that apparently it was Egypt’s fate to fight and sacrifice its blood and resources to fight their wars. He also accused the Egyptian opposition of betraying their nation and selling their conscience for worthless Iraqi and Libyan Dinars.<sup>409</sup> Ibrahim Seada in his weekly column “Last Column” criticized the Nasserist and leftist opposition for their anti-Sadat declarations. He argued that their rhetoric was outdated and contradictory. He concluded his comment by reminding the opposition that the freedom of speech they enjoyed was the by-product of Sadat’s democracy insisting that they would have been crushed had they dared to oppose the Nasserist regime.<sup>410</sup> Other articles attacked the Soviet Union’s stance on Sadat’s peace initiative. In his column “An Idea,” Mustafa Amin criticized the Soviets as hesitant and contradictory. He explained that when Egypt decided to go to war the Soviets advised against it, and when Egypt chose peace they asked for war. Amin argued that the Soviets acknowledged Israel as a state five minutes after the Americans, adding that the Soviets refused to supply Egypt with vital arms and pressured Sadat to declare an immediate cease-fire. He stated that those same Soviets who attack Sadat now advised Nasser following the 1967 defeat that peace is the right choice. The Soviets argued then, that it is impossible to cross the Canal without an atomic bomb. He

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408. *Al-Akhbar*, November 11, 1977 “Civilized Steps and Looking Forward to the Better” [Arabic Source]

409. *Al-Akhbar*, 28 November 1977 [Arabic Source], the same idea is also repeated in another column in the same newspaper and in the same issue, Amer Assal a member of the Union of Writers wrote “To all the Enraged: Calm Down” where he directed his words for those wailing and viciously attacking Sadat’s trip to Jerusalem arguing that Sadat sent a brave message for peace to the entire world and he is sacrificing everything for the wellbeing of the entire Arab nation and not only Egypt.

410. *Akhbar al-Youm* 26 November 1977 “Those Who Said No” [Arabic Source]

concluded his article by stressing that Egypt's crime is that it refuses to be enslaved by the Soviets.<sup>411</sup>

Amin's remarks reflected the same stance adopted by the regime during that period. For instance, *al-Ahram* quoted Sadat accusing Moscow of spear-heading a manipulative campaign to raise doubts and pressure Egypt to reject the peace initiative. He also accused the Soviets of fabricating the separate deal rumors to divide the Arab world. He added that during Egypt's crisis the Soviets refused to sell much needed wheat, and they still refused to sell Egypt any arms or spare parts.<sup>412</sup> *Al-Akhbar* ran other declarations by Sadat insisting that the Soviets supply Syria with weapons that remained unused in storage while denying Egypt any military support. He emphasized that the Soviets chose Syria over Egypt because they knew that Syria cannot face Israel on its own.<sup>413</sup> The same argument was repeated in "*al-Ahram* Comment" which accused the Soviet Union of disrupting the region and spreading strife and disunity for its own ends.<sup>414</sup> Another article entitled "Moscow Attacks" criticized the Soviet propaganda against the Camp David negotiations. The article warned against the Soviet conspiracy against the Arab world claiming that their sole goal is to fuel tensions across the region in order to keep spreading communism and sell arms.<sup>415</sup>

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411. *Akhbar al-Yaum* 26 November 1977 [Arabic Source]

412. *Al-Ahram* 4 May 1977 [Arabic Source]

413. *Al-Akhbar* 26 February 1978 [Arabic Source]

414. *Al-Ahram* 6 September 1978 [Arabic Source]

415. *Al-Jumhuriyah* 6 September 1978 [Arabic Source], a similar argument appeared in "The Word of the Day" in *al-Akhbar* 6 April 1979, the article called the rejectionist front the second Baghdad Pact and are nothing but mere puppets to the Soviets who conspire against Egypt's stability and advancement, Ali Hamdi al-Gamal wrote the opening of *al-Ahram* on 5 December 1977 entitled "The Soviet New Game" stressing that the Soviet Union knows quite well that signing a peace treaty with Israel undermines its power in the region. Al-Gamal accused the Soviets of dividing the Arab world in order to maintain its power and the sales of its arms, also in the same issue a caricature by Salah Jahin appeared accusing the Arabs of being traitors without specifying betraying what and how? Another caricature published in *al-*

The official press maintained the same pattern of coverage following the signing of the Camp David Accords of 1978 and the Egyptian – Israeli Peace Treaty of 1979. Following his return from Camp David, the three official papers ran multiple headlines reporting the massive popular reception greeting Sadat and proclaiming him the hero of peace.<sup>416</sup> Also, the periodicals published by the official religious establishment al-Azhar had to follow the regime's footsteps by devoting several issues of *al-Din wa al-Hayat* (*Religion and Life*) to promote and justify the peace treaties. The sheikhs in all mosques had to follow the government's political line.<sup>417</sup> This is due to the fact that since the 1960s, al-Azhar came under the government's supervision to make sure that their religious output conforms to the regime's political and religious discourse. Further, the press devoted much space to report on international reactions to Sadat and the peace process.<sup>418</sup> Additionally, the press maintained a hardline against the rejectionist front. A repeated set of accusations dominated the official press of that era. Such accusations included labeling the rejectionists as Soviet agents and puppets envious of Egypt. Other

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*Ahram* on 6 December 1977 claimed that the Arabs are ignorant and unable to comprehend anything [Arabic Source]

416. *Al-Akhbar* 22 September 1978: "Hundreds of Thousands Greet Sadat Upon his Return from the Journey of Peace", *Akhbar al-Youm* 23 September 1978: "The President Arrives to Cairo Today: Egypt Prepares a Magnificent Reception for its Hero," *al-Ahram* 23 September 1978: "The People Came from all over Egypt to Greet Sadat", *al-Akhbar* 24 September 1978: "International Radios Report: the Egyptian People gave Sadat a Heroic Reception", *Akhbar al-Youm* April 1, 1979: "The Entire Nation goes to Cairo," the editorial describes how the Egyptian people came from all over Egypt to greet their leader who signed the Peace Treaty in the name of the entire nation. [Arabic Sources]

417. Talhami, *Palestine in the Egyptian Press: From Al-Ahram to Al-Ahali*, 251

418. *Al-Akhbar* 20 November 1979: "Top American Commentator: Sadat's Initiative created a Deep Change in History," *al-Ahram* 18 December 1978: "The Head of the European Parliament: the Peace Initiative deeply touched the Europeans and gained their appreciation, only peace can achieve social advancement for all our people", *al-Akhbar* 24 December 1979: "The Peace Initiative is the most important event of the 1970s," *al-Ahram* 28 March 1978: "The American public opinion supports Sadat's policy," *al-Ahram* 10 November 1978 quotes the French Express stating: "Sadat is a man of bravery and peace," *Akhbar al-Youm*: "in France too Sadat is the man of the year 1978," *al-Akhbar* 18 January 1980 quoted an American magazine saying: "Sadat appeared in a time where the world is in need for real leaders," *al-Ahram* 8 October 1978 reported that a German magazine had chosen Sadat as the most important international personality, *Roz al-Yusuf* magazine 30 October 1978 also reported in detail the news of Sadat winning the Nobel Prize for Peace along with the Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin [Arabic Sources]



unflattering comments claimed that the Arabs want Egypt to fight till the last soldier and blamed Egypt's dire economy on its wars on behalf of the Arabs.<sup>419</sup> In his column "Word from the Editor" Abdel Hamid Abdel Ghani wrote "Egypt and the Arabs after the Camp David Conference." He argued that the conference and the accords signed created new realities and gained worldwide support. He then proceeded to attack the rejectionists and their declarations dismissing them as irrelevant and unable to influence the Egyptian people. Abdel Ghani also emphasized the sacrifices Egypt endured over the course of four wars against Israel. Those wars resulted in the death of over hundred thousand Egyptians along with spending millions of pounds in military purchases to defend the Arab region ultimately crippling the Egyptian economy and burdening it with heavy debts.<sup>420</sup> Blaming Egypt's economic distress on wars against Israel became a recurring theme that the regime deployed to win over the people with the promise that peace would bring economic prosperity. For instance, a couple of months after the signing of the 1979 peace treaty, a report described how it had revived the economic sector and attracted investments in different economic arrays.<sup>421</sup> By equating domestic economic prosperity with peace, the regime sought to justify the peace settlement and allure the population.

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419. *Al-Ahram* 5 November 1978 Sadat stated that "The Egypt of October is always capable of isolating without being isolated" adding that "Egypt restored the Arabs their dignity and sacrificed its human and financial resources in a time when they did nothing but outbid each other" he also accused the Soviet Union of devoting most its efforts to destroy peace in the region, *al-Ahram* 6 August 1979 published headlines quoting Sadat stating that "there must be a new policy in dealing with the Arabs without compliments, adding that it was the Egyptian blood which doubled the prices of oil and enriched the Arabs. He insisted that Egypt is capable of building itself depending on its own resources, civilization, and its international status. In *Akhbar al-Youm* 23 September 1978, Seada wrote "Listen Arabs" where he viciously attacked the Arab regimes attacking the Camp David Accords describing them as self-centered, delusional, and nothing but a herd of walking corpses who failed to liberate their land and yet proclaim that they will liberate others' land. He said that Egypt offered a comprehensive peace deal to the entire conflict, but since they had rejected this offer then it is their own responsibility to restore those rights by themselves. He concluded by stating that no one can threaten the Egyptian people who had already made up their decision and chose peace, insisting that the Arabs are the ones who need Egypt and not the other way round whether they accept or reject this reality [Arabic Sources]

420. *Akhbar al-Youm* 23 September 1978 [Arabic Source]

421. *Al-Akhbar* 19 November 1979: "How Peace benefited the Egyptian Economy" [Arabic Source]

The regime orchestrated double-edge press propaganda. On one hand, official press launched an anti-Arab campaign and dismissed them as envious and ungrateful. On the other hand, the press repeatedly stressed Egypt's human and financial sacrifices. The Egyptians, were thus, made to believe that their economic distress resulted solely from external factors (the wars against Israel). The Egyptians had also to believe that the Arabs were not only ungrateful but they collaborated against the wellbeing of their country. This campaign attempted to distance the Egyptians emotionally and mentally from the Arab world and turn inward. This stance echoed Sadat's Egypt First rhetoric, and acted as a justification to his unwillingness to invest and lead the Arab world.

The official press coverage in the period between 1975 and 1981 witnessed turbulent political events. The official press remained captive to the state, just as it was under Nasser, albeit with different directions and priorities. During the Nasser era the press adopted the regime's anti-imperial anti-Western discourse while emphasizing Arab nationalism and non-alignment. Further, the press mirrored the regime's rhetoric in moments of political tension between Egypt and other Arab regimes as for instance the cases of the Baghdad Pact and the Rogers Plan debacle. Similarly, the official press during the Sadat era shifted its course and adopted the new regime's discourse. Sadat's regime used the press to dismantle several Nasserist foundations especially those of socialism and foreign policy. The official press played vital role in promoting the peace initiative with Israel. The press fully adopted the regime's discourse, viciously attacking all kinds of opposition and dismissed them as Soviet agents collaborating against the wellbeing of Egypt. The press in both eras lacked freedom and diversity, and was more repetitive propaganda than journalism. The press was confined and lacked neutrality. The

following section will be looking at the image of the Palestinians in the official Egyptian press during the Sadat era with special emphasis on the second half of the 1970s, which witnessed a rapid deterioration in Egyptian-Palestinian relations in the wake of the Jerusalem journey and the peace initiative which, soon followed.

### **Palestine in the Egyptian Press during the Sadat Era**

The image of Palestine remained stable during the first half of the 1970s with official statements stressing Egypt's commitment to a just solution to the Palestine cause. The three official papers maintained running headlines stressing that the PLO is the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, that the Palestinian cause is at the heart of the Arab – Israeli conflict, and that peace cannot be achieved without the complete withdrawal from the occupied territories and Jerusalem.<sup>422</sup> Prior to the October War the official press gave wide coverage to Palestinian guerrilla operations. For instance, the Munich incident of 1972 when a militant group from the PLO known as Black September organized an attack on Israeli athletes gained wide coverage and support from the major official papers.<sup>423</sup> *Al-Ahram* published the news of the attack on its front pages; the headlines stated that the incident is not an act of murder but a result of the Israeli pressures exerted on the people of Palestine. In a sense, the title implied that the operation is a sign of despair rather than an act of resistance. This shift in tone tried to downplay the futility of resistance in favor of negotiations. Other headlines argued that

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422. *Al-Akhbar* 9 June 1971, *al-Jumhuriyah* 8 September 1972, *al-Ahram* 13 March 1977, *al-Ahram* 11 March, 1975, *al-Ahram* 21 November 1977, *al-Akhbar* 28 October 1975, *al-Ahram* 22 March 1977, *al-Ahram* 9 February 1978, *al-Akhbar* 10 December 1978, *al-Ahram* 29 November 1978, *al-Akhbar* 9 March 1979 [Arabic Sources]

423. The group demanded the release of 234 Palestinian prisoners held in Israeli jails in return of the hostages. However, a secret attempt to rescue the hostages ended with their murder. "Olympics Massacre: Munich – The Real Story," <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/olympics-massacre-munich--the-real-story-524011.html#>, published on 22 January, 2006

the fedayeen were the victims of an Israeli intelligence trap and accused Germany of giving in to American-Israeli pressures. Further articles published in both *al-Ahram* and *al-Akhbar* defended the fedayeen arguing that the operation came as a response to Israeli violence and transgressions; the conclusion was that a just solution to the Palestine problem is the only way to put an end to such operations.<sup>424</sup> The official press also did not refrain from covering Palestinian attacks on Israeli targets while covering news of the October war at the same time.<sup>425</sup>

However, after the signing of the cease-fire and beginning in November 1973 the pace of coverage decreased in the face of prospects of an impending peace conference and a possible Palestinian delegation. During this period the official papers emphasized the necessity of Israeli withdrawal and the Palestinian right to self-determination and an independent state. Nonetheless, none of the papers managed to provide a clear comprehensive idea explaining the means to achieve the desired peace plan.<sup>426</sup> Slight cracks in Egyptian-Palestinian relations began surfacing prior to the signing of the Second Sinai Accord, when Sadat refused to meet with a PLO delegation in response to Arafat's unflattering declarations.<sup>427</sup> In 1975 Lebanese civil war began along with Syrian intervention and the massacre of the Palestinian refugees in Tel al-Zaater. The Egyptian press openly attacked the Syrian regime and accused it of coordinating attacks with Israel. However, after settling the political differences between Sadat and Hafez al-Assad

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424. *Al-Ahram* 7 September 1972, *al-Akhbar* 7-8 September 1972 [Arabic Sources]

425. *Al-Ahram* 19 October 1973 (news about Israel submitting a complaint to the UN because of the rising rates of guerrilla attacks), *al-Akhbar* published on 19 October 1973 a headline on its first page reporting that the Palestinian fighters had managed to carry 107 operations inside Israel, on 21 October, 1973 the paper published a report summarizing the most important Palestinian operations against Israeli targets during the October war and the locations of each operations [Arabic Sources]

426. Talhami, *Palestine in the Egyptian Press: From Al-Ahram to Al-Ahali*, 259

427. *Al-Akhbar* 28 February 1975 [Arabic Source]

those accusations disappeared from the official press. Further, the Egyptian press did not criticize the American intervention in Lebanon; it maintained a positive stance toward the United States. The regime clearly sought to improve ties with the United States and secure its sponsorship of the impending peace talks.<sup>428</sup> Further, following announcing his peace initiative, Sadat openly criticized the PLO's stance claiming that by joining the rejectionists whom he dismissed as terrorists the PLO thwarted all efforts to achieve peace. The leaders of the PLO, he added, had forgotten about their prisoners in Israeli jails, they preferred to live abroad and use terrorism in the name of being revolutionaries.<sup>429</sup> Accusing the PLO of terrorism marked a significant departure from the Nasserist discourse which hailed the resistance movement as the noblest outcome of the 1967 defeat. Sadat belittled the significance of such militant operations and obviously shifted to the Israeli-American stance regarding the PLO and its military operations.

Nonetheless, the official press continued reporting on the Palestinian military operations, stressing that Egypt fully supports the Palestinian resistance and condemns the violent Israeli repression and terrorism. The press also emphasized that a just and comprehensive peace settlement was the only way to put an end to those operations. However, a major change of tone emerged by late 1977, early 1978 in the months leading to the Camp David Conference. The official press began turning a blind eye to most PLO operations except for those that were impossible to ignore. For instance, the resistance carried a major operation inside Tel Aviv in which the fedayeen hijacked three buses killing thirty Israelis and wounding seventy others. The three official papers covered the operation on their first pages. However, unlike the late 1960s and early 1970s when the

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428. Talhami, *Palestine in the Egyptian Press: From Al-Ahram to Al-Ahali*, 259-260

429. *Al-Ahram* 28 December 1977 [Arabic Source]

press endorsed, justified, and fully supported the Palestinian resistance, the tone of this coverage coincided with the regime's "peace" discourse. For the first time the headlines used the term "armed men" instead of the usual Palestinian fedayeen. The reports depended on Israeli and foreign sources, while overlooking the PLO's account. Several editorials explained that the operation was a sign of desperation, not resistance. By arguing that peace was the only guarantee for security, the press seemed to directly address the Israeli public with an unusually sympathetic tone.<sup>430</sup>

Egyptian-Palestinian relations continued to deteriorate following Abu Nidal's assassination of Youssef al-Sibai the Minister of Culture and the head of the Board of Directors of *al-Ahram* on 18 February 1978 in Cyprus. The murder resulted in a massive attack on Palestinians who were now accused of treachery and ingratitude. The following day *al-Ahram* wrote under the headline "Black Terrorism" that the perpetrators of the crime harmed the Palestinian cause; it warned that terrorism would tarnish the nobility of the Palestinians' struggle to attain their national rights.<sup>431</sup> This heading was the first of its kind to openly utilize the term "terrorism" in reference to the Palestinian armed resistance signaling a massive shift in the regime's official stance and contradicting its discourse defending and supporting the national rights of the Palestinians.<sup>432</sup>

The assassination and its aftermath triggered a massive anti-Palestine campaign. For instance, in a letter sent to *al-Ahram* Sadat referred to the Palestinian factions as "paid agents," threatened severe repercussions, all the while stressing a firm commitment to

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430. *Al-Ahram, al-Akhbar, al-Jumhuriyah* 12 & 13 March 1978 [Arabic Sources], also see Talhami, *Palestine in the Egyptian Press: From Al-Ahram to Al-Ahali*, 260-261

431. *Al-Ahram* 19 February 1978 [Arabic Source]

432. Talhami, *Palestine in the Egyptian Press: From Al-Ahram to Al-Ahali*, 261

defend Palestinian rights.<sup>433</sup> In his speech at the Egyptian soldiers' funeral Sadat stressed that Sibai's murder was an act of treason; he proclaimed that he would go to the end of the world to avenge Egypt's dignity. He concluded that while Egypt fought for Palestinian rights, their leaders acted as agents and paid murderers. Egypt would step over the "dwarfs" and, no one would dictate or direct Egypt's will.<sup>434</sup> Another editorial written by Ali Hamdi al-Gammal directly attacked the PLO and Arafat accusing the organization of going astray and claiming that Arafat is clueless. He added that Arafat had lost all his legitimacy as a national leader the moment he joined the rejectionist summit in Tripoli. Gammal claimed that the PLO was lost; its leaders driven by individual interests and subject to certain Arab regimes serving the Soviets. He concluded by arguing that only Egypt struggled for Palestine.<sup>435</sup> The official press disregarded Arafat's condemnation and his repeated declarations stressing his gratitude to all the Egyptian efforts on behalf of the Palestine cause.<sup>436</sup> It also overlooked the fact that "Abu Nidal had been expelled from Fatah and the PLO with much fanfare in the early 1970s and was widely known to be their sworn enemy."<sup>437</sup> In this respect *al-Ahali* although clearly condemning the assassination directly criticized the regime's reckless operation in Larnaca Airport and held it responsible for the death of many innocent soldiers.<sup>438</sup>

On 28 February 1978 *al-Ahram* published a summary of the discussions in the People's Assembly, which called on reevaluating the status of the Palestinians residing in

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433. *Al-Ahram* 22 February 1978 [Arabic Source]

434. Sadat's speech during the funeral of the soldiers killed in Cyprus on 22 February, 1978, <http://Sadat.bibalex.org/speeches/browser.aspx?SID=709> [Arabic Source]

435. *Al-Ahram* February 25, 1978 [Arabic Source]

436. Talhami, *Palestine in the Egyptian Press: From Al-Ahram to Al-Ahali*, 262

437. El-Abed, *Unprotected: Palestinians in Egypt since 1948*, 56

438. Issues Nos. 4 of 28 February, 1978 and 5 of 1 March, 1978, in Abdel -Razeq, *al-Ahali a Newspaper Under Siege*, [*al-Ahali Sahifa Tahet al-Hesar*], 40-41 [Arabic Source]

Egypt, while disregarding other reasonable voices which rejected the onslaught on the Palestinian resistance movement and its leaders.<sup>439</sup> Additionally, the three official papers printed the transcript of Sadat's interview with an American television station in which he held the PLO responsible for Sibai's death despite its broad condemnation.<sup>440</sup> Mustafa Amin wrote that everyone at Sibai's funeral questioned if this was what Egypt deserved for its sacrifices. He argued that Egypt alone sacrificed its blood and money so other Arabs could live. Like so many before him, he blamed Egypt's poverty and economic distress on the four wars "waged on the Arab's behalf." He went a step further to claim that Egyptian students had sacrificed their places in schools and universities so that Palestinians could enjoy free education.<sup>441</sup> From thereafter, a new pattern appeared in the official press that would last until the death of Sadat in 1981. This pattern revolved on the internal conflicts between the leaders of the Palestinian factions along with promoting the image of the "bad Palestinian."<sup>442</sup>

The press unleashed a defamatory campaign and promoted myths. One such myth was the claim that Palestinians sold their land to European Jews before 1948 and were responsible for the *nakba*. The Arabs, for their part, were represented as ignorant, envious of a strong and stable Egypt, and wanting to exhaust Egyptian. The leaders of the Palestinian factions including the PLO were misguided and oblivious agents to these hostile Arab regimes and the Soviets. Another prominent theme stressed that Palestinians

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439. *Al-Ahram* 28 February 1978 [Arabic Source], *October* Magazine published an article on 5 March 1978 entitled "No More Privileges for the Palestinians in Egypt," which basically called for cancelling all the laws which stipulated treating Palestinians as Egyptian nationals in terms of accessing free education, working in the public sector, access to free health care, owning agricultural land among other regulations.

440. *Al-Ahram*, *al-Akhbar*, and *al-Jumhuriyah* 3 March 1978 [Arabic Sources]

441. *Al-Akhbar* 20 February 1978 [Arabic Source]

442. Karem Yehia, "The Image of the Palestinians in Egypt, 1982-85," *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. 16, No. 2 (Winter, 1987), 45-63, 46



lived abroad like millionaires and used their national cause to gain more profits.<sup>443</sup> Indeed, Sadat stated in an interview with Monte Carlo radio that in Egypt there are tens of thousands of Palestinians and most of them are millionaires.<sup>444</sup> Sadat's remark did not go unnoticed as the official press started running articles reproducing the image of the rich Palestinians to provoke resentment among the Egyptian population who were to believe that while they suffered from economic distress, the Palestinians sucked Egypt's wealth.<sup>445</sup> This hostile tone mirrored Sadat's claim that Egypt's wars on behalf of the Palestinians destroyed its economy, whereas "peace with Israel would bring prosperity to Egypt."<sup>446</sup> Besides, the under-lying tone of articles alleging that Palestinian investors are thriving and growing within Egyptian economy appeared to be an implicit invitation to the state in order to curb Palestinian enterprises. Surprisingly, this tone flourished at a time when the opposition press especially *al-Daawa* repeatedly warned against the flooding of Israeli products into Egyptian markets. The paper argued such economic collaboration would eventually empower and sustain Israeli economy. In return it will destroy the national industrial sector, increases Egypt's isolation from its Arab dimension, and foster its economic reliance on American aid. This trend manifested another glaring departure from Nasserism where Nasser had encouraged Palestinian

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443. Ibid. 46

444. Sadat's interview with Monte Carlo radio on 18 November, 1979, <http://sadat.bibalex.org/speeches/browser.aspx?SID=906> [Arabic Source]

445. This trend appeared in two articles published in *October* Magazine on 13 and 20 May, 1979, the first one entitled "All these Fortunes for Palestinians Living in Egypt!," the article claimed that 19 Palestinian businessmen owned more than 62 million Egyptian Pounds, the article also alleged that 60% of shops in Central Cairo and Port Said are owned by Palestinians as well as over 40 agricultural farms. The second article entitled "19 Palestinians Own 62 Million Egyptian Pounds in Egypt," the article repeated the same idea published a week earlier in an obvious attempt to not only enrage the public opinion, but to imply that the state should interfere against the Palestinian presence in the Egyptian economic sector, in Dajani, *The Institutionalization of Palestinian Identity in Egypt*, 95

446. Mustapha K. El-Sayed, "Egyptian Popular Attitudes toward the Palestinians Since 1977," *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. 18, No. 4 (Summer, 1989), 37-51, 39

investments to break the European-Jewish monopoly over the Egyptian economy during the first half of the twentieth century till the Suez war of 1956.

### **The Legal Status of Palestinian Refugees during the Sadat Era**

As explained earlier the legal status of Palestinian refugees residing in Egypt did not encounter any changes during the first half of the 1970s. The disengagement accords of 1975 although raising some Egyptian-Palestinian political tensions did not affect the community's legal status. However, the official tone toward the Palestinians hardened prior to Sadat's Jerusalem trip in November 1977. Palestinian students organized several rallies against the trip leading to the detention and deportation of hundreds of them and the permanent ban of the GUPS in Egypt. The assassination of Sibai in February 1978 marked a tragic turn of events against the Palestinians in Egypt, since the regime used the crime as a pretext to justify curtailing the legal exemptions accorded to the Palestinians since the Nasser era. The entire Palestinian community faced the repercussions of the assassination. The regime formulated the unjustified claim that since the perpetrators were Palestinian so the entire community should be blamed. Accordingly, on 28 February 1978 a ministerial decision stipulated the reconsideration of all regulations treating Palestinians as nationals. Sadat issued administrative regulations 47 and 48 which annulled "all regulations treating Palestinians as nationals."<sup>447</sup> In deed during Sibai's funeral, the Egyptian Prime Minister Mustafa Riyad declared that, "no more Palestinians

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447. "Palestinian Refugees in Egypt," <http://www.forcedmigration.org/palestinian-refugees-in-egypt.htm> , see also Maher Bitar, "Unprotected Among Brothers: Palestinians in the Arab World," Refugee Studies Centre, Department of International Development (Queen Elizabeth House), University of Oxford, Working Paper Series, RSC Working Paper No. 44, January 2008, 19-20

after today.”<sup>448</sup> The comment implied that Palestinians were no longer tolerated. In essence this meant that Palestinians could no longer work in the public sector, entry to Egyptian universities was restricted, scholarships and tuition subsidies got cancelled along the access to free health care. Like foreigners, Palestinians had to pay in hard currency in order to access education or medical care. The organized anti-Palestine campaign nourished by the regime and the official press led to a decrease in the sense of solidarity with Palestine among average Egyptians, since the press portrayed the resistance leaders as rich and corrupt, while blaming the Palestinians for dragging Egypt into four wars.<sup>449</sup> This occurred at a time when Egypt had ratified on 22 May 1981 the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees issued by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).<sup>450</sup> Egypt ratified the convention with reservations to some of its articles. For instance, Egypt had a reservation against Article 12 (paragraph 1) which stated that the personal status of the refugee “shall be governed by the law of the country of his domicile or, if he has no domicile, by the law of the country of his residence.”<sup>451</sup> This article contradicted Article 25 of the Egyptian civil code, which states that in cases of aliens without a nationality or with more than one nationality “the Egyptian law must be applied.”<sup>452</sup> In essence, there is no contradiction between the original article and Egyptian concerns since “it is obvious that no refugee with Egyptian

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448. Aaron David Miller, *Arab States and the Palestine Question: Between Ideology and Self-Interest*, (New York: Praeger, 1986), 64

449. Brand, *Palestinians in the Arab World: Institution Building and the Search for State*, 61

450. [www.unhcr.org/3b66c2aa10.html](http://www.unhcr.org/3b66c2aa10.html) [Full Text of the Convention and the Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees], The Official Gazette, Issue No. 48 on 26 November, 1981, it is important to note that when Egypt ratifies international treaties or conventions they become integrated within the Egyptian legal system the moment they are published in the official gazette.

451. Ibid. 20

452. Ibid. 20

citizenship would apply for refugee status from Egypt.”<sup>453</sup> Besides, there is nothing that could hinder applying Egyptian law in case of stateless refugees residing in Egypt.<sup>454</sup> Egypt also had reservations regarding Articles 20, 22 (paragraph 1), 23, and 24 of the convention. Those articles stipulated that the contracting states should accord refugees the same treatment as nationals in terms of rationing system, elementary education, public relief, and labor legislation and social security.<sup>455</sup> However, Egyptian authorities formulated reservations regarding the aforementioned articles which consider the refugee as equal to the national, preferring instead, to consider granting privileges to refugees on a case-by-case basis.<sup>456</sup>

Egyptian officials argued that Egypt’s economic burdens, overpopulation, and high rates of unemployment were the main reasons the state could not extend those services to include refugees. Yet, several studies revealed that Egypt’s subsidy program for instance, suffers from severe mismanagement as it is the costliest program in the world. Rearranging this program would help integrate refugees within its parameters.<sup>457</sup> In terms of social security [Article 24 (b) and 24 (3)], the convention included Article 24 (b) (paragraph 1), which stipulated that each contracted state has the right to determine the means of extending the provisions of social security to refugees.<sup>458</sup> The Egyptian reservation in this sense proves the government’s detached attitude that aims to exclude refugees from various governmental services. In the case of the right to elementary

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453. Gabriel Koehler-Derrick, “Egypt: Towards a culture of Legal Integration? Cairo’s Urban refugees and Egypt’s reservations to the 1951 Convention,” <http://www.altrodiritto.unifi.it/frontier/storia/koehler.htm>, 3

454. Ibid. 3

455. [www.unhcr.org/3b66c2aa10.html](http://www.unhcr.org/3b66c2aa10.html) 24-26

456. Ibid. 26

457. Derrick, “Egypt: Towards a culture of Legal Integration? Cairo’s Urban refugees and Egypt’s reservations to the 1951 Convention,” <http://www.altrodiritto.unifi.it/frontier/storia/koehler.htm>, 4

458. [www.unhcr.org/3b66c2aa10.html](http://www.unhcr.org/3b66c2aa10.html), 25

education [Article 22 (paragraph (1))], the government argued on one hand that public education in Egypt suffered from grave crises and was unable to stretch its resources to include refugees. On the other hand, the administrative documents required to apply in public schools exhausted parents. For instance, obtaining an embassy letter is inapplicable to stateless refugees. Besides, private schools established specifically to serve refugees like the Sacred Heart faced several problems enrolling their students in national exams. These schools, are not recognized by the government, had to pay high fees for their students to sit for the exams in accredited centers.<sup>459</sup> Egypt did not formulate a reservation against Article 17 of the Convention related to Wage-Earning Employment, which stipulated that the contracted state should provide refugees with “the most favorable treatment accorded to nationals of a foreign country in the same circumstance, as regards the right to engage in wage-earning employment.”<sup>460</sup> However, the government imposes severe restrictions on hiring refugees under the pretext of avoiding competition with national labor. Therefore, most refugees in Egypt fail to acquire legal work permits and they earn their living in the insecure informal sector.<sup>461</sup> Nonetheless, those reservations proved that the Egyptian government is unwilling to engage directly with refugees’ problems as Egyptian officials regard “refugees as not an Egyptian problem, it is a problem that comes from abroad.”<sup>462</sup> Placing severe legal barriers on refugees in Egypt cripples assistance programs and refugees are dependent solely on UNHCR and other NGOs to fulfill their basic needs. The situation of

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459. Derrick, “Egypt: Towards a culture of Legal Integration? Cairo’s Urban refugees and Egypt’s reservations to the 1951 Convention,” <http://www.altrodiritto.unifi.it/frontier/storia/koehler.htm>, 5-6

460. [www.unhcr.org/3b66c2aa10.html](http://www.unhcr.org/3b66c2aa10.html), 22

461. Derrick, “Egypt: Towards a culture of Legal Integration? Cairo’s Urban refugees and Egypt’s reservations to the 1951 Convention,” <http://www.altrodiritto.unifi.it/frontier/storia/koehler.htm>, 4-5

462. Ibid. 2

Palestinian refugees is further complicated because the provisions of the 1951 Convention excluded them from their scope as far as they receive protection from another UN organization. Palestinian refugees unregistered with UNWRA should fall under the mandate of UNHCR. But the ambiguity of the text left Palestinian refugees with less international protection and more vulnerable to host states' maneuvers.<sup>463</sup> Against this backdrop the next section will attempt to examine the ways in which political conflicts affect refugees' rights and render them vulnerable to the ebb and flow of political relations.

### **Residency**

In the wake of al-Sibai's assassination and in a prelude to the Camp David agreement, most of the laws pertaining to Palestinians' residency and employment were either reconsidered or cancelled altogether. The new administrative regulations annulled all laws and decrees stipulating the equal treatment of Palestinian refugees as Egyptian nationals. Consequently Palestinian refugees residing in Egypt became classified under the foreigners' category; they were required to pay renewal fees for their visas, and to show a proof of spending a certain amount in hard currency or its equivalent per month.<sup>464</sup> Failure to comply with those regulations could potentially result in deportation.<sup>465</sup> These strict provisions were yet another indication of the breach with Nasserist regulations, since during the 1960s Palestinian refugees did not pay renewal

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463. Brenda Goddard, "UNHCR and the International Protection of Palestinian Refugees," *Refugee Survey Quarterly* (2009), 28 (2-3), 475-510

464. Takkenberg, *The Status of Palestinian Refugees in International Law*, 153, see also, Asem Khalil, "Socioeconomic Rights of Refugees: The Case of Palestinian Refugees in Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria," *Center for Migration and Refugee Studies, The American University in Cairo*, 2010, 18-19

465. Abbas Shibliak, "Residency Status and Civil Rights of Palestinian Refugees in Arab Countries," *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. 25, No. 3 (Spring, 1996), 36-45, 39-40

fees.<sup>466</sup> Ministerial Decree 280 of 1981 stipulated in Article 3 that an amount of five Egyptian pounds should be paid upon issuing a residency permit of three years and the same amount upon its renewal.<sup>467</sup> Those conditions increased the financial burdens of the refugees; those who could not afford those expenses had to live in fear of being deported on the grounds of being illegally residing in Egypt.<sup>468</sup> Besides, stipulating a threat of deportation in case of failing to meet any of those provisions contradicts with Article 29 (paragraph 1) of the 1951 Convention, which forbids the contracting states from imposing any charges or duties upon refugees which are “higher than those which are or may be levied on their nationals in similar situations.”<sup>469</sup> Further, in order to secure a valid re-entry into Egypt, Palestinians holding Egyptian travel documents and travelled or resided abroad had to return every six months or provide a proof of employment or education enrollment, in which case a one-year extension would be allowed.<sup>470</sup>

Additionally, the government embarked on a policy of detaining and deporting hundreds of Palestinians especially male young adults under the pretext of preserving national security; the numbers of those detained or deported remain unspecified.<sup>471</sup> The police would raid Palestinian homes and arrest young males on the basis of mere suspicion or even rumor. The Palestinian poet Mourid Barghouti, for example, was deported from Egypt in 1977 despite graduating from an Egyptian university, being

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466. See chapter (2)

467. Al-Waqa’ e al-Masriya, Issue No. 26 on 24 February 1981

468. Palestinian Refugees in Egypt, [www.forcedmigration.org/Palestinian-refugees-in-egypt.htm](http://www.forcedmigration.org/Palestinian-refugees-in-egypt.htm)

469. [www.unhcr.org/3b66c2aa10.html](http://www.unhcr.org/3b66c2aa10.html), 28

470. El-Abed, “The Invisible Community: Egypt’s Palestinians,” al-Shabaka Policy Brief (June 2011), [www.al-shabaka.org](http://www.al-shabaka.org)

471. El-Abed, *Unprotected: Palestinians in Egypt since 1948*, 56

married to an Egyptian university professor and having his only child born in Egypt.<sup>472</sup> Barghouti writes that he never engaged in politics and did not voice any opposition to Sadat's initiatives; his deportation "was a preventative deportation, the result of a false accusation put together, as we found out after several years, by a colleague in the Union of Palestinian Writers."<sup>473</sup> He describes the humiliating process: six agents from the State Security Services arrived at his home took him to the Passport Department in the Tahrir compound in downtown Cairo. Later the same night the officers took him back to his home to pack his bags and accompanied him to the airport. During this whole process Barghouti remained handcuffed until boarding the plane when the officers finally took the handcuffs off his wrists.<sup>474</sup> Barghouti would remain banned from entering Egypt until the mid-1990s.

The case of Barghouti and other hundreds of Palestinians reveals the vulnerability of refugees to political tides, arbitrary deportation, and the lack of efficient protection frameworks. The regime would repeatedly cite preserving national security as an easy pretext to justify cases of deportation. In this respect no clear information exist explaining the investigation process, the validity of the charges, and whether or not the defendant had a proper legal representation before passing the expulsion verdict. Instead all deportation decrees follow the same identical format citing the phrase "for reasons related to national security and public order."<sup>475</sup> From a legal perspective arbitrary expulsion is

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472. Mourid Barghouti, *I Saw Ramallah*, translated by Ahdaf Soueif, (Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 2000), 89

473. Ibid. 90

474. Ibid. 90

475. Al-Waqa'e al-Masriya, Minister of Interior Resolution No. 827 of 1978 [the decree stipulated the deportation of two Palestinians], Issue No. 121 on 24 May, 1978, Minister of Interior Resolution No. 845 of 1978, Issue No. 133 on 7 June, 1978 [this decree stipulated the deportation of seventeen Palestinians all



forbidden and clearly contradicts Egyptian and international laws. In Egypt article 26 of Law 89 of 1960 forbade the deportation of special-residency foreigners (Palestinians fall under this category) unless a special committee had clear substantial evidence that such person poses a credible threat to national security.<sup>476</sup> On the international level Article 32 (paragraph 2) of the 1951 Convention stipulated that the decision to expel a refugee should go through the appropriate legal process. The article also stipulated that in cases where there are no compelling reasons threatening national security, the refugee “shall be allowed to submit evidence to clear himself, and to appeal to and be represented for the purpose before competent authority or a person or persons specially designated by the competent authority.”<sup>477</sup>

### **Education**

During the Nasser era Palestinian students enjoyed the same treatment as Egyptian nationals in terms of free education and scholarships. This consequently led to an increase in Palestinian enrollment in Egyptian schools and universities since the graduates could join the public sector without any discrimination. However, this situation changed altogether after the assassination of Sibai. Presidential Decrees 47 and 48 of 1978 annulled all legal provisions equating Palestinian refugees with Egyptian nationals in terms of employment, education, and health care. Consequently Palestinian students were treated as foreigners and had to pay for their tuition in private schools in foreign currency (an amount ranging between 600-1200 Sterling pounds). Those conditions even

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of them were students], Minister of Interior Resolution No. 1312 of 1980, Issue No. 176 on 29 July, 1980 [this decree stipulated the deportation of one Palestinian] [Arabic Sources]

476. See chapter (2)

477. [www.unhcr.org/3b66c2aa10.html](http://www.unhcr.org/3b66c2aa10.html), 29

included those holding permanent residency statuses.<sup>478</sup> Also, Palestinian students became forbidden from enrolling in certain colleges such as medicine, pharmacology, science, politics, economics, and journalism.<sup>479</sup> By contrast, during the Nasser era Palestinian students could join such faculties in the same manner as Egyptian nationals. The only students exempted from Sadat's restrictive laws were the ones whose parents worked for either the 'Ayn Jaloot Units (PLA units stationed in Egypt), or the public sectors in Gaza.<sup>480</sup> Further, despite the fact that newly issued laws should not be retroactive, these particular laws included a retroactive clause. Enrolled students had to abide by the new rates in order to receive a graduation certificate.<sup>481</sup> Such restrictions led to a significant drop in the numbers of Palestinian students in Egypt and threatened to cause an increase in the rates of illiteracy since many of the families could not afford the elevated fees.<sup>482</sup> Palestinian males reaching the age of eighteen risk deportation if they fail to show a proof of either employment or education enrollment.<sup>483</sup> The following table shows the number of Palestinian students enrolled in Egyptian universities (graduating classes and those enrolled in post-graduate studies) during the period from 1970 till 1981 to illustrate the impact of the restrictions imposed on accessing public education.<sup>484</sup>

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478. Yassin, "Palestinians in Egypt," (Summer, 1999), [www.badil.org/en/al-majdal/item/486-palestinians-in-egypt](http://www.badil.org/en/al-majdal/item/486-palestinians-in-egypt)

479. Ibid.

480. Ibid. <http://www.idsc.gov.ps/sites/STATE/arabic/roya/27/page11.html>

481. Shiblak, "Residency Status and Civil Rights of Palestinian Refugees in Arab Countries," 43

482. Yassin, "The Palestinians in Egypt," 26, also see Mohammad al-Kodosy, "The Ghost of Illiteracy Threatens 24 thousand Palestinian Student in Egypt," *al-Saab* newspaper on 4 February, 1992

483. Khaled Walid, "Palestinians in Egypt," [al-Filastinyoun fi Misr], 11-12-2005, [http://www.alqudscenter.org/arabic/pages.php?local\\_type=1288&local\\_details=2&id1=390&menu\\_id=10&cat\\_id=2](http://www.alqudscenter.org/arabic/pages.php?local_type=1288&local_details=2&id1=390&menu_id=10&cat_id=2) [Arabic Source]

484. Hassan Abu Taleb, *Egypt's Arab Relations, 1970-1981 (The Sadat Era)*, [Elakat Misr al-Arabiya, 1970-1981 (Marhalet al-Sadat)], (Beirut: Markaz Derasat al-Wehda al-Arabiya, February 1998), 187 [Arabic Source]

Further restrictions would later shut off Palestinian students from pursuing post-graduate studies in public universities.<sup>485</sup>

Table (1): Palestinian students enrolled in graduating classes and post-graduate studies:

1970	1971	1972	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981
3551	4031	3570	5107	5749	6589	7930	11739	10601	8680	7616	3915

The previous numbers show a steady increase during the period from 1970 till 1977, then starting in 1978 at the peak of the Egyptian-Palestinian crisis; the numbers began to decrease reaching their lowest in 1981. From 1979 until 1985 the rate of education scholarships provided to Palestinian students decreased dramatically to reach only eleven scholarships (constituting two percent of the total scholarships) compared for instance with 312 scholarships given to the Sudanese students (fifty-one percent) or students coming from Northern Yemen with a total of 113 scholarships (eighteen percent).<sup>486</sup> The following table shows the number of Palestinian students accepted in Egyptian universities during the period from 1970 till 1981.<sup>487</sup>

Table (2): Palestinian students accepted in Egyptian universities between years 1970-1981:

70/71	71/72	72/73	73/74	74/75	75/76	76/77	77/78	78/79	79/80	80/81
190	221	267	1272	1335	2340	2629	1397	340	434	415

The numbers again show a steady increase in enrollment reaching its height in the academic year 1976/1977. A noticeable decline appears in 1977/1978 and the lowest rate occurred during the academic year 1978/1979. The numbers showed a slight increase between 1979 and 1981 but fell far below the ratings prevailing during the 1950s, 1960s,

485. Dajani, *The Institutionalization of Palestinian Identity in Egypt*, 46-47

486. Abu Taleb, *Egypt's Arab Relations, 1970-1981 (The Sadat Era)*, 194

487. Ibid. 192

and the first half of the 1970s. Egypt is a signatory to the Casablanca Accords of 1965 which stipulated treating Palestinian refugees in Arab host countries in the same manner accorded to nationals. Those provisions remained theoretical without any practical frameworks ensuring their application regardless of any political tensions that might occur between the host state and Palestinian factions.

### **Employment and Property Ownership**

Following the assassination debacle and the issuing of administrative decrees 47 and 48 of 1978 annulling all regulations treating Palestinians as nationals, Palestinian refugees faced an employment crisis. The Ministry of Labor issued a warning against hiring foreigners including Palestinians. The Ministry also forbade them from working in commerce and the import and export of goods with the exception for those married to Egyptian women for more than five years.<sup>488</sup> Further, the department of Immigration, Passports and Nationality stamped all Palestinian travel documents or residency permits, “forbidden from being hired whether with or without payment.”<sup>489</sup> Additionally, Article 16 (paragraph 1) of Law 48 of 1978 related to the work in the public sector, along with Article 26 of Labor Law 137 of 1981 stipulated that hiring foreigners should depend on observing the condition of reciprocal treatment, which is obviously inapplicable to stateless refugees.<sup>490</sup> Decree 25 of 1982 relating to the conditions for issuing work permits for aliens stipulated in Article 3 that granting work permits should not constitute competition to national manpower. The qualifications and the professional experience of the alien worker should conform to the requirements of the profession for which the

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488. Yassin, “The Palestinians in Egypt,” 29

489. Ibid. 29

490. The Official Gazette, Issue No. 33 on 13 August, 1981 [Arabic Source]

permit is requested. The decree also gave priority to aliens born and permanently residing in Egypt. Article 4 stipulated that the number of alien workers in any establishment should not exceed ten percent of the total workforce. Article 5 (sections A & B) stipulated that the required fees to issue a work permit for the first time is one-hundred Egyptian pounds with a renewal fee of fifty Egyptian pounds.<sup>491</sup> Such requirements complicated the process of securing a legal job in Egypt; many refugees either left to the Gulf States or joined the informal market which lacks any official protection or supervision.

Decree 52 of 1978 related to the conditions and regulations of exempting Palestinians from obtaining a work permit as stipulated in Article 1 that Palestinians holding valid Egypt travel documents were exempted from acquiring a work permit.<sup>492</sup> Nonetheless, this decree did not provide much help, since the regulations governing obtaining travel documents and renewing residency permits became increasingly complicated. Besides, most of the refugees in Egypt arrived after the 1967 war; thus, they fall under category (H) which stipulates that residency permits for this category are valid for three years depending on the prevailing Egyptian entry laws.<sup>493</sup> This category also required in case of residing outside Egypt to return every six months to secure a valid re-entry.<sup>494</sup> It could be concluded that the revised Egyptian labor laws did not differentiate between foreigners and refugees. Despite being a signatory to the 1951 Convention, the Egyptian government did not introduce any legal amendments to comply with the

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491. Al-Waqa'e al-Masriya, Issue No. 36 {a follow-up issue} on 13 February, 1982 [Arabic Source], also see Decision No. 22 of 1981 relating to the fees required to issue work permits for foreigners, published in the Official Gazette, Issue No. 127 on 31 May, 1981

492. Al-Waqa'e al-Masriya, Issue No. 53 on 4 March, 1979 [Arabic Source]

493. See chapter (2)

494. El-Abed, "The Invisible Community: Egypt's Palestinians," al-Shabaka Policy Brief (June 2011), [www.al-shabaka.org](http://www.al-shabaka.org)

provisions of the said convention. For instance, the government did not abide by the provisions of Articles 17 and 18 related to wage-earning employment and self-employment. The first article stipulated that the contracted state should provide refugees with the most favorable treatment accorded to other foreign nationals in the same circumstances in terms of engaging in wage-earning employment. The second article stipulated that the contracted state should provide a refugee with the most favorable treatment “as regards the right to engage on his own account in agriculture, industry, handicrafts, and commerce and to establish commercial and industrial companies.”<sup>495</sup> The convention also stipulated in Article 7 that the contracted state should consider exempting refugees from observing the condition of legislative reciprocity.<sup>496</sup> The Egyptian government passed decrees prohibiting Palestinian refugees from engaging in self-employment including commerce and import.<sup>497</sup> Insisting on the reciprocity condition effectively shut out Palestinian refugees from joining the official labor market.

Property ownership did not fare better. Law 81 of 1976 related to organizing owning property by foreigners forbade in its first article any foreigners from owning both buildings and vacant lands. The only exemptions provided in Article 2 included buildings owned by diplomatic consulates or other cases that could qualify for an exemption depending on the approval of the cabinet. The conditions applying for that case include: owning one property for personal use and transferring the price of the said property into foreign currency.<sup>498</sup> Additionally, Law 136 of 1981 stipulated that aliens renting properties would have their contracts revoked upon the expiration of their residency

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495. [www.unhcr.org/3b66c2aa10.html](http://www.unhcr.org/3b66c2aa10.html), 22-23

496. Ibid. 17-18

497. Laws No. 120 and 121 of 1982 prohibited aliens from engaging in commerce-intermediary as well as prohibiting them from registering in the list of importers.

498. The Official Gazette on 14 August 1976 [Arabic Source]

permits. Article 17 stated that in case the foreigner was married to an Egyptian woman, she and her children would retain the contract unless they have permanently left the country.<sup>499</sup> Those laws again did not differentiate between foreigners and refugees in contradiction with Articles 13 and 21 of the 1951 Convention related to movable and immovable property and housing respectively. Article 13 stipulated that the contracted state should accord refugees the most favorable treatment regarding the acquisition “of movable and immovable property and other rights pertaining thereto, and to leases and other contracts relating to movable and immovable property.”<sup>500</sup> Article 21 stipulated that the contracted state should provide the refugees residing in its territory with the most favorable treatment accorded in matters related to housing.<sup>501</sup> Further, Law 143 of 1981 banned foreigners from owning desert lands.<sup>502</sup>

## **Conclusion**

To conclude, the present chapter attempted to look at the Sadat era with the purpose of analyzing the impact of political tensions on Egypt’s Palestinian community. The Sadat era witnessed several major political events starting with the October war of 1973 through the signing of the Camp David Accords of 1978 and the Egyptian-Israeli Peace Treaty of 1979 and ending with Sadat’s assassination in 1981. The first half of the 1970s did not witness any social or legal changes in the status of Palestinian refugees residing in Egypt. The Sinai Accords of 1975 created some political tensions between Sadat’s regime and the PLO, yet this did not affect the Palestinian community. However,

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499. Abdu Allah Khalil, “The Egyptian Legislation related to the Refugees,” {The Refugees and the Law in Egypt Symposium} (Cairo: The Judges’ Club, on 4-5 May 2004), 27 [Arabic Source]

500. [www.unhcr.org/3b66c2aa10.html](http://www.unhcr.org/3b66c2aa10.html), 20

501. Ibid. 24

502. Nathalie Bernard-Maugiron and Baudouin Dupret eds. *Egypt and Its Laws*, (The Hague, The Netherlands: Kluwer Law International, 2002), 127

rapid deteriorations occurred starting with the Jerusalem trip in 1977, which led to the permanent ban of the GUPS and the deportation of hundreds of Palestinian students and writers. The assassination of Sibai in early 1978 became a crisis for the Palestinian refugees who faced the regime legal retaliation. The official press after the assassination and in a prelude to the impending Camp David conference waged an anti-Palestinian campaign stressing their ingratitude, blaming Egypt's economic problems on its sacrifices on behalf of the Palestinians, and stressing that peace with Israel was the only way to achieve the promised economic prosperity. The backlash against the Palestinian refugees clearly illustrate the ways in which political conflicts are utilized as a pretext to revoke whatever regulations exist and hold the state accountable to its refugee community. The second half of the 1970s and the early 1980s witnessed the issuing of several restrictive laws treating Palestinian refugees as any other foreigners residing in the country regardless of their statelessness. Such laws burdened them with extra financial duties, restricted their movement and effectively excluded them from education, health care, and employment. Those laws also marked Egypt's effective withdrawal from the Casablanca Accords of 1965, as Egypt no longer treats its Palestinians as equal nationals. Also despite ratifying the 1951 Convention in 1981, the state did not attempt to reevaluate its legal system or introduce amendments that would comply with the convention and extend its provisions to its refugees. This attitude shows that the government is unwilling to engage directly with the refugees. This also shows that the regime insists on alienating the refugees while approaching them through the security mentality assuming that refugees are a threat to national security that should be contained if not eliminated altogether. Indicative of this trend is the fact that the topic of the



Palestinian refugees in Egypt is handled through the Ministry of Interior. Further, the case of the Palestinian refugees in Egypt and the discrimination they endured during the Sadat era show that international conventions remain by and large theoretical and lack practical means to ensure the implementation of their provisions. It also shows that despite being a humanitarian non-political case, refugees remain vulnerable to the whims of the host state, its national and political priorities, and the course of its relations with Palestinian organizations.

## **Chapter Four**

### **The Mubarak Era 1981-2011**

#### **Historical background**

This chapter examines the era of President Hosni Mubarak stretching for almost three decades. Mubarak, who commanded Egypt's air force during the 1973 war served as Sadat's vice-president. He was sworn in as president following Sadat's assassination in 1981.<sup>503</sup> Mubarak's era is essentially a continuation of Sadat's political discourse. He maintained peace with Israel, close ties to the United States, as well as strengthening capitalism and the private sector. The chapter analyzes the regime's political framework and the course of Egyptian-Palestinian relations during that period. It also discusses the legal and social status of Palestinian refugees in Egypt by investigating how fluctuations in political relations and national priorities affect their rights.

Mubarak commenced his term by declaring a state of emergency. He tightened surveillance over universities and the press, and arrested many Islamists. But he released the political prisoners arrested under Sadat.<sup>504</sup> In an attempt to gain national trust, Mubarak promised economic and social reforms, and posed as an advocate of democracy. He stated that democracy is the best guarantee for a better future declaring his refusal to long-term presidential rule.<sup>505</sup> He explained his belief that a president "should not exceed

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503. Goldschmidt Jr. and Davidson, *A Concise History of the Middle East*, 386

504. Ibid. also see Galal Amin, *Egypt in the Era of Hosni Mubarak, 1981-2011*, (Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 2011), 143

505. Public Address delivered in April, 1982, cited in Maye Kassem, *Egyptian Politics: The Dynamics of Authoritarian Rule*, (Boulder London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc. 2004), 26

the period of two terms in office,” adding that “I will be the first President to apply such a rule.”<sup>506</sup>

While Mubarak’s foreign policy, and in particular with regards to the United States and Israel, was merely a continuation of Sadat’s, he attempted to consolidate and legitimize his position through “express[ing] his determination not to visit Israel, and he gave the impression that he was going to be much more cautious in his relations with the United States than his predecessor.”<sup>507</sup> On 25 April 1982 Egypt retained the rest of Sinai but talks with Israel stalled. The Israeli invasion of Lebanon forced Mubarak to re-call the Egyptian ambassador from Tel Aviv, transforming ties between the two states into the condition of so-called “cold peace.”<sup>508</sup> Regionally there were significant changes as well, Egypt received Arafat in 1983 for the first time since the late 1970s, and resumed its diplomatic relations with the Arab states in 1987.<sup>509</sup> In 1989 the Arab League reinstated Egypt relocating its headquarters to Cairo in 1990.<sup>510</sup>

Nonetheless, Mubarak did not attempt to alter Sadat’s dependency and alignment with the United States. Indeed, Egypt kept receiving millions of US dollars in economic and military aid.<sup>511</sup> Such dependency dictated Egypt’s “foreign policy, its policy toward

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506. A speech to the parliament in April 1984 [Arabic Source]

507. Amin, *Egypt in the Era of Hosni Mubarak, 1981-2011*, 143, see also Boutros Boutros-Ghali, “The Foreign Policy of Egypt in the Post – Sadat Era,” *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 60, No. 4 (Spring, 1982), 769-788, 777

508. Goldschmidt Jr. and Davidson, *A Concise History of the Middle East*, 386

509. In a press interview published in *al-Akhbar* newspaper on 3 January 1982, Mubarak stressed that the days of Egypt’s isolation from the Arab world were over. He insisted that restoring Egypt’s diplomatic ties with the Arab states was a chief priority [Arabic Source]

510. <http://www.aljazeera.com/focus/arabunity/2008/03/200852518428191556.html> , also see [http://topics.nytimes.com/topics/reference/timestopics/organizations/a/arab\\_league/index.html](http://topics.nytimes.com/topics/reference/timestopics/organizations/a/arab_league/index.html) , also see Boutros-Ghali, “The Foreign Policy of Egypt in the Post – Sadat Era,” 781

511. “Egypt: The Development of Foreign Policy,” <http://www.country-data.com/cgi-bin/query/r-4156.html>

the Arabs, its relations with Israel, and its economic policy.”<sup>512</sup> This political and military alignment did not strengthen Egypt’s position. Instead it focused on containing radical nationalist forces in the region such as the Baathist regime in Syria and Hezbollah in Lebanon rather than Israel.<sup>513</sup> The Egyptian regime maintained its ties with Israel despite the lack of any tangible progress in peace negotiations. The regime acted passively toward Israeli aggressions, including the Israeli attack on the Iraqi nuclear reactor in 1981, its invasion of Lebanon both in 1982 and 2006, and its bombing of the PLO headquarters in Tunis on 1 October 1985 in “Operation Wooden Leg.” The Egyptian regime also failed to react toward the US strike on Libya in 1986.<sup>514</sup> Mubarak appeared helpless in the face of US demands on Egypt during the second Gulf war, “Operation Desert Storm,” in 1990-1991.<sup>515</sup> The regime dispatched a military unit along with the US coalition in return for the exemption of some of Egypt’s previous debts and an increase in aid packages.<sup>516</sup> The United States, the Gulf States, and Europe “forgave Egypt around \$20 billion-worth of debt, and rescheduled nearly as much again.”<sup>517</sup> Mubarak’s regime acted as a US ally during the war on Iraq in 2003 known as “Operation Iraqi Freedom” through providing logistical aid.<sup>518</sup>

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512. Amin, *Egypt in the Era of Hosni Mubarak, 1981-2011*, 167

513. Ibid. 168

514. “Egypt: The Development of Foreign Policy,” <http://www.country-data.com/cgi-bin/query/r-4156.html>, also see Bassem Hassan, “Egypt: The Continuing Legacy of the Mubarak-Sadat Regime”, Al-Jazeera Centre for Studies, [www.aljazeera.net/studies](http://www.aljazeera.net/studies), 8 June 2011, also see Amin, *Egypt in the Era of Hosni Mubarak, 1981-2011*, 168, also see [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Operation\\_Wooden\\_Leg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Operation_Wooden_Leg)

515. Amin, *Egypt in the Era of Hosni Mubarak, 1981-2011*, 143

516. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gulf\\_War](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gulf_War)

517. <http://www.economist.com/node/319594>

518. <http://digital.ahram.org.eg/articles.aspx?Serial=482570&eid=1635>, Dick Cheney, *In My Time: A Personal and Political Memoir*, Threshold Editions, 2011, 375-377

Mubarak seemed content with Sadat's foreign policy and did not attempt to alter its course.<sup>519</sup> He believed that Egypt should play the role of a regional mediator especially between the Arabs and Israel in an attempt to push forward the peace talks.<sup>520</sup> This attitude significantly diminished Egypt's regional status as its foreign policy "was dependent and subservient to the US administration's positions, and by extension, those of Israel."<sup>521</sup> The result was the gradual erosion of Egypt's influence and its impact on decisions on the Arab, African, and international level. Cairo's political and cultural leadership waned; its participation and contributions in meetings and conferences were nominal and consistently marked by innumerable abstract declarations.<sup>522</sup> Egypt's foreign policy followed a static formula based on selling out its policies in the search for financial solvency. Egypt utilized its regional and international leverage in its attempts to resolve its persisting financial problems. The assumption was that foreign policy was a natural extension to the domestic one.<sup>523</sup>

The rapid decline in Egypt's regional and international status and its subordination to Washington's directives paved the way for states like Turkey, Iran, and Qatar to achieve prominence in Arab and regional affairs.<sup>524</sup> The political decline coincided with a cultural decline as well. During the first half of the twentieth century Egypt significantly contributed to culture, literature, and political thought through the

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519. Talal Salman, "Can Egypt's Foreign Policy End its Deference to US-Israeli Goals?,"

<http://assafir.com/MulhakArticle.aspx?EditionId=2286&MulhakArticleId=768450&mulhakId=4688>

520. "Egypt: The Development of Foreign Policy," <http://www.country-data.com/cgi-bin/query/r-4156.html> , Boutros-Ghali, "The Foreign Policy of Egypt in the Post – Sadat Era," 777-778

521. Talal Salman, "Can Egypt's Foreign Policy End its Deference to US-Israeli Goals?,"

<http://assafir.com/MulhakArticle.aspx?EditionId=2286&MulhakArticleId=768450&mulhakId=4688>

522. Amin, *Egypt in the Era of Hosni Mubarak, 1981-2011*, 159

523. Mustafa al-Fiki, "Notes on Egyptian Foreign Policy," <http://www.alkhaleej.ae/portal/20f91c4b-d607-4489-b38b-66279b7cd0ef.aspx> , published on 18 October, 2012

524. Samer Shehata, "The Decline Started with Mubarak,"

<http://www.nytimes.com/roomfordebate/2011/10/07/is-egypt-losing-its-regional-power/egypt-declined-during-mubaraks-rule>

writings of figures such as Taha Hussein, Abbas al-Aqqad, Tawfiq al-Hakim, Naguib Mahfouz, Ahmed Bahaa al-Dine, and Yusuf Idris. This role greatly diminished during the past two decades. Egyptian media also failed to compete with the rising Arab satellite channels like Al-Jazeera. This cultural decline stemmed from Egypt's mounting political and economic predicaments including its inability to force its will or deal with political crises. Egypt became a paralyzed "soft state," and in turn its intellectual production lacked both quality and creditability.<sup>525</sup>

Despite repeatedly denying normalization with Israel, the regime's policies in recent years proved quite the contrary. On 14 December, 2004, the Egyptian government signed the Qualified Industrial Zones (QIZ) treaty with Israel. The treaty stipulated the establishment of three free-trade zones in Cairo, Alexandria, and Port Said. The textile products of those areas qualify for customs-duties exemption upon entering US markets on the condition that they contain at least twelve percent Israeli raw materials.<sup>526</sup> The treaty was not new; in fact the US first offered it to Egypt and Jordan in 1996. Jordan signed immediately but Egypt at that time linked its approval to progress on the peace talks.<sup>527</sup> By the early 2000s the government altered its stance and finalized the agreement. Egyptian officials argued that the treaty would open international markets for Egyptian products, improve the derailed textile industry, increase revenues, and create new jobs.<sup>528</sup> Many Egyptians resented this treaty. It seemed to be another manifestation of the regime's subordination to US demands. It also came at a time when peace talks were (as always it seems) stalled and Israeli hostilities against Palestinians intensified. The

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525. Amin, *Egypt in the Era of Hosni Mubarak, 1981-2011*, 161

526. Elias Akelah, "QIZ...An Economic Penetration" "al-kouiz...Ikhteraq Iktesady," <http://www.alarabnews.com/alshaab/2005/07-01-2005/17.htm>, [Arabic Source]

527. Ibid.

528. [www.qizegypt.gov.eg/](http://www.qizegypt.gov.eg/) [Official Website]

opposition mainly the Leftist parties like al-Tagamuu and the Muslim Brotherhood further argued that the government acted in isolation from its people by joining American-Israeli economic alliances. They disputed the regime's claim that the treaty is only economic without political dimensions. Criticism against the treaty focused on its drawbacks including, weakening the national economy and threatening its independence, strengthening the enemy's economy, and opening Arab markets to a flood of Israeli products. The treaty had several economic and political implications. First, it rendered the national economy vulnerable to Israeli political interests. Second, the treaty mistakenly implied that the Arab world could co-exist with Israel with the Palestinian resistance as the only obstacle against such peaceful coexistence.<sup>529</sup>

But the QIZ was not the only Egyptian-Israeli treaty. In 2005 the Egyptian government signed a gas-export treaty with Israel. The deal again angered many Egyptians who argued that Israel received the gas for bargain prices. Critics also expressed their frustration that the government uses Egypt's natural resources to sustain the enemy's economy.<sup>530</sup>

By 2005 opposition against Mubarak's regime increased significantly. The regime failed on multiple levels. The state of emergency had persisted since 1981. There were innumerable reports of police brutality against opposition and dissent. The regime rigged parliamentary elections and suffocated freedom of speech.<sup>531</sup> At the onset of his reign, Mubarak promised to protect democracy and freedom of speech. By the 1990s the regime

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529. Elias Akelah, "QIZ...An Economic Penetration," "al-kouiz...Ikhteraq Iktesady," <http://www.alarabnews.com/alshaab/2005/07-01-2005/17.htm>, [Arabic Source], also see <http://www.eqtesady.com/site/index.php?go=news&more=38795> [Arabic Source]

530. <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2012/04/2012422191152438212.html>

531. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mubarak\\_era](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mubarak_era)

had transformed into an authoritarian structure dominated by Mubarak's ruling party, the National Democratic Party (NDP). The NDP maintained its majority in all parliamentary elections with only some token seats for the opposition.<sup>532</sup> Before 2005, Egypt never held presidential elections. Instead there were referendums to approve the president chosen by the ruling party.<sup>533</sup> Due to the growing domestic and international pressures calling for multi-candidate elections, a referendum to the 1971 constitution introduced article 76 of 2005.<sup>534</sup> However, the article included several strict requirements. For instance, the candidate should secure the approval of 250 elected members of councils and parliament, all of which are dominated by the NDP. The candidate should also belong to a party registered with the government for at least five years. At that time no opposition party could meet those conditions and compete with the NDP's candidate.<sup>535</sup> The NDP also included in its membership many of the wealthy tycoons who controlled most of the national economic sector. Social and economic gaps widened significantly. Recent reports suggested that eighteen percent of the population live under poverty line. The number increases to forty percent in rural Upper Egypt.<sup>536</sup> The regime barely fought, and indeed many argued it nourished, state corruption. In 2010 Transparency International released its Corruption Perceptions Index report (CPI) where Egypt ranked ninety-eight out of the 178 countries included in that report with a total score of 3.1 out of ten.<sup>537</sup> Political, social, and economic frustrations mounted and on 25 January 2011 thousands of protesters from different socio-economic and religious backgrounds marched to Tahrir

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532. Gaëlle Le Roux, "Mubarak: From his Long Reign to his Quick Demise," published on 25 April, 2011, <http://www.france24.com/en/20110425-mubarak-long-reign-quick-demise-profile>

533. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mubarak\\_era](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mubarak_era)

534. [http://www.sis.gov.eg/ar/LastPage.aspx?Category\\_ID=73](http://www.sis.gov.eg/ar/LastPage.aspx?Category_ID=73) [Arabic Source]

535. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mubarak\\_era](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mubarak_era)

536. <http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/egypt/overview>

537. <http://www.transparency.org/cpi2010/results>



Square in Cairo demanding the overthrow of Mubarak's regime. The protestors voiced several grievances focusing on political and economic issues including corruption, police brutality, the state of emergency, as well as high prices, inflation, and increasingly soaring rates of unemployment.<sup>538</sup> Violent clashes erupted between the protesters and the police in Cairo, Alexandria, and Suez leading to the death of over 800 and the injury of several thousands. On 11 February 2011 Mubarak resigned from his position as a president and turned power over to the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF).<sup>539</sup>

### **Egyptian-Palestinian Relations 1981-2011**

Egyptian-Palestinian relations stalled following the signing of the Camp David Accords and the Peace Treaty. Following Sadat's assassination, Mubarak in an attempt to consolidate his power and secure popular legitimacy focused on restoring Arab relations and limiting Egyptian-Israeli affairs to the diplomatic level.<sup>540</sup> The invasion of Lebanon in 1982 angered Egyptians who believed that the peace treaty had neutralized Egypt and empowered more Israeli aggression on neighboring Arab states.<sup>541</sup> The Egyptians' frustration with Camp David stemmed from unmet promises that peace would bring economic prosperity and a just solution to the Palestine question.<sup>542</sup> The President's advisors grasped the genuine popular sentiments toward Arab and Palestinian causes. They believed that extending formal support to the Palestinian cause would enhance the

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538. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2011\\_Egyptian\\_revolution](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2011_Egyptian_revolution)

539. Ibid. also see Tignor, *Egypt: A Short History*, 321-328

540. El-Sayed, "Egyptian Popular Attitudes toward the Palestinians since 1977," 40-43

541. "Egypt: The Development of Foreign Policy," <http://www.country-data.com/cgi-bin/query/r-4156.html>

542. Ibid. 39, during the 1980s, Egyptian economy suffered dramatically due to the rising rate of inflation, the growth of external debt, and the decrease in international prices of oil.

regime's legitimacy against the Islamist opposition.<sup>543</sup> In December 1983, Arafat visited Egypt amid the violence of the Lebanese civil war, 1975-1990.<sup>544</sup> The visit provided Mubarak with an opportunity to break the deadlock of Egypt's isolation from the Arab world and "assume patronage of the Palestinian resistance."<sup>545</sup> The Egyptian government believed that Egypt must actively engage in Arab politics and the Palestine question to secure a bargaining position with both the United States and Israel.<sup>546</sup> The regime's approach aimed to achieve a comprehensive peace settlement by fulfilling the prerequisite of Israel's withdrawal to the 1967 borders on all fronts.<sup>547</sup> In 1984 the NDP broke its complete silence on the PLO since 1980 and addressed it as the "legitimate representative of the Palestinian people."<sup>548</sup> While the party's initial program stressed its full support and commitment to the Camp David Accords, by 1984 the party erased all reference to that matter from its electoral platform.<sup>549</sup>

On the public level, the opposition, silenced during the Sadat era, openly condemned Israeli aggression and expressed solidarity with the Palestinian resistance. During the summer of 1982 representatives of various opposition parties, the Muslim

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543. Ibid. 43

544. During the Lebanese civil war the PLO and the Palestinian refugees were caught-up between the various quarrelling factions. The clashes engulfed various Lebanese ethnic and social segments including the PLO which started shelling northern Israel. The Syrian army interfered along with As-Sa'iqa brigade (a Syrian-controlled wing of the PLA) on the side of the Christian Phalangist forces and imposed a blockade on Western Beirut which housed most of the Lebanese Muslim population and the Palestinian refugees. Violent clashes erupted and led to the death of thousands of Palestinian refugees in Tel al-Zaatar massacre in 1976. The subsequent American-backed Israeli invasion of Lebanon destroyed the PLO and forced its withdrawal from Beirut following the massacre of Sabra and Shatila. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tel\\_al-Zaatar\\_massacre](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tel_al-Zaatar_massacre), and [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sabra\\_and\\_Shatila\\_massacre](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sabra_and_Shatila_massacre), Goldschmidt Jr. and Davidson, *A Concise History of the Middle East*, 389-392, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/PLO\\_in\\_Lebanon](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/PLO_in_Lebanon)

545. "Egypt: The Development of Foreign Policy," <http://www.country-data.com/cgi-bin/query/r-4156.html>

546. El-Sayed, "Egyptian Popular Attitudes toward the Palestinians since 1977," 49

547. Hassan A. Barari, "The Al-Aqsa Intifada as seen in Egypt," *Civil Wars*, Vol. 6, No. 3 (Autumn 2003), 86-106, 88-89

548. Yehia, "The Image of the Palestinians in Egypt, 1982-85," 51

549. Ibid. 52

Brotherhood, trade unions, professional associations, and university professors formed the National Committee for Solidarity with the Palestinian and Lebanese People.<sup>550</sup> The NDP declined to join this committee due to the sensitivity of its position as the ruling party and its commitment to peace with Israel.<sup>551</sup> The committee held several political meetings discussing the Arab-Israeli conflict, it also tried to raise some funds to help the victims of the Israeli invasion of Lebanon. However, the committee's attempts to reach the masses failed. Fearing that the committee's activities might unleash social unrest, the government quickly thwarted their efforts to organize public demonstrations.<sup>552</sup>

Egyptian popular support increased significantly during the first intifada (uprising,) of 1987-1993. The uprising against the Israeli occupation began in Jabalya refugee camp and swiftly spread to include Gaza, the West Bank, and East Jerusalem.<sup>553</sup> Several intertwined factors fueled the Palestinian uprising. These included the persistence of the Israeli occupation, its systematic brutality and oppression (including mass killing, detention, and deportation), and the failure of the PLO and the Arab states to achieve any meaningful progress to alleviate Palestinian suffering.<sup>554</sup> The immediate incident serving as a catalyst for the intifada occurred on 8 December 1987, when an Israeli army tank transporter ran into a group of Palestinians from Jabalya refugee camp. The incident led to the death of four and injured others. Subsequently, demonstrations against Israeli occupation broke in the camp and quickly spread throughout the occupied territories.<sup>555</sup>

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550. El-Sayed, "Egyptian Popular Attitudes toward the Palestinians since 1977," 40

551. Ibid. 42

552. Ibid. 41-42

553. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First\\_Intifada](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First_Intifada)

554. Benny Morris, *Righteous Victims: A History of the Zionist-Arab Conflict, 1881-2001*, (New York: Vintage Books, 2001), 341, 568

555. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First\\_Intifada](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First_Intifada)

In Egypt the uprising inspired a wave of solidarity and admiration and led to the establishment of the Egyptian National Committee in Support of the Palestinian Uprising. The committee focused on mobilizing support for Palestinians through raising awareness about the uprising, collecting funds, and organizing solidarity activities across the Arab world.<sup>556</sup> The committee succeeded in bringing together a myriad of political parties including the NDP, unions, professional syndicates, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and non-political unions. The committee also opened branches in different governorates.<sup>557</sup> In order to spread knowledge about the uprising, the committee edited and published a newsletter entitled *al-Intifada*, to document the developments in the occupied territories. Nonetheless, the committee's contributions in raising funds remained modest, as it succeeded in collecting only one hundred thousand US dollars compared to three million US dollars that the Republic of Yemen had raised.<sup>558</sup> The committee's call for an Arab peace march towards the Israeli borders did not materialize, since the governor of North Sinai declared his inability to guarantee the march's security.<sup>559</sup> The most remarkable achievement credited to the committee occurred on 11 October 1988 on the occasion of celebrating the birthday of Khalil al-Wazir (Abu Jihad). The celebration took place at the Journalists' Syndicate in Cairo, and held the title of the Day of Abu Jihad, the Day of Palestinian Independence. Abu Jihad's widow and Arafat were in attendance. The occasion succeeded in bringing together representatives of almost all active political and social forces in Egypt whether recognized by the

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556. El-Sayed, "Egyptian Popular Attitudes toward the Palestinians since 1977," 46-47

557. Ibid. 47

558. Ibid. 47

559. *Al-Intifada*, issues No. 4-6, April and June 1988

government or not in order to show “support of the national rights of the Palestinian people.”<sup>560</sup>

The regime’s official response to the uprising was more cautious. Mubarak seemed to prefer mediation to confrontation. During the spring of 1988 he proposed suspending the intifada temporarily in return of an Israeli promise to improve living conditions in the occupied territories. This proposal came at a time when the intifada had gained both regional and international momentum as well as wide domestic solidarity.<sup>561</sup> The Egyptian public opinion however, rejected and criticized the content and timing of the proposal. Ultimately Mubarak abandoned his proposal and declared that Egypt will not pressure the Palestinians to accept the terms of the Camp David Accords that concerned them.<sup>562</sup>

Following the second Gulf War, the PLO suffered diplomatic isolation resulting from the PLO’s opposition to the US intervention in the Gulf crisis.<sup>563</sup> In essence, the PLO did not endorse the annexation of Kuwait, but saw Saddam Hussein’s challenge to the United States and the Gulf states as a means of shifting regional balance toward more focus on the Palestine question. Kuwait and Saudi Arabia responded by suspending their financial aid to the PLO.<sup>564</sup> Palestinians in Kuwait faced systematic violence and mass deportation diminishing the population from 400,000 to less than 30,000 by 1998.<sup>565</sup> By

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560. El-Sayed, “Egyptian Popular Attitudes toward the Palestinians since 1977,” 48

561. Ibid. 49

562. A speech delivered by Mubarak on the occasion of Labor day on 1 May, 1988, and published in *al-Ahram* on 2 May, 1988 [Arabic Source]

563. “The Madrid Conference,” [http://www.merip.org/palestine-israel\\_primer/madrid-conf-pal-isr-primer.html](http://www.merip.org/palestine-israel_primer/madrid-conf-pal-isr-primer.html), published in January 2001

564. Ibid.

565. <http://www.gulfwar1991.com/Gulf%20War%20Complete/Chapter%2010,%20Palestinians%20in%20Kuwait,%20Terror%20and%20Ethnic%20Cleansing,%20By%20Hassan%20A%20El-Najjar.htm>

the end of the war the United States sought to stabilize its position in the region by promoting a resolution to the Arab-Israeli conflict.<sup>566</sup> Consequently, the United States and the Soviet Union jointly issued an invitation to the Madrid Peace Conference on 30 October 1991.<sup>567</sup> The co-sponsors of the conference explained that the objective was to achieve through direct negotiations a comprehensive and real peace between the Arabs and Israel based on UN-Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338.<sup>568</sup> The governments invited included those of Israel, Syria, Lebanon, and Jordan. Palestinians attended as part of a joint Jordanian-Palestinian delegation, while Egypt attended the conference as a participant. The framework proposed negotiating over a period of one year for setting an interim self-government. Once an agreement was reached the interim self-government arrangements would in turn last for five years. Negotiating the permanent status based on Resolutions 242 and 338 would commence during the third year of interim self-government.<sup>569</sup>

To a certain extent the Oslo Agreement signed on 13 September 1993 resembled the Camp David Accords of 1978. Both offered loose frame-works for further negotiations without any specific outcome. Both delayed vital issues like the refugees' problem, the status of Jerusalem, and the future of the Israeli settlements until the never realized negotiation of permanent status.<sup>570</sup> Lacking substantial Arab and international

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566. "The Madrid Conference," [http://www.merip.org/palestine-israel\\_primer/madrid-conf-pal-isr-primer.html](http://www.merip.org/palestine-israel_primer/madrid-conf-pal-isr-primer.html), published in January 2001

567. S. Mahler and R. W. Mahler, *The Arab-Israeli Conflict: An Introduction and Documentary Reader*, 193-194 [Full Text]

568. Ibid. UN-Security Council Resolution 338 of 22 October 1973 called for an immediate cease-fire and the termination of all military activities. It also called for an immediate implementation of Resolution 242 of 1967, 140 [Full Text]

569. Ibid.

570. [http://www.merip.org/palestine-israel\\_primer/oslo-accords-pal-isr-prime.html](http://www.merip.org/palestine-israel_primer/oslo-accords-pal-isr-prime.html)

diplomatic support, the PLO signed the accords despite their critical flaws.<sup>571</sup> Israel and the PLO signed the agreement and exchanged mutual recognition, while the United States and the Russian Federation acted as witnesses.<sup>572</sup> The agreement stipulated the creation of a five-year interim government and electing a council representing the Palestinians in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. The Declaration of Principles established an Israeli withdrawal from the Gaza Strip and Jericho; further withdrawals from unspecified areas of the West Bank were supposed to occur over the course of the five-year interim government.<sup>573</sup> The PLO formed a Palestinian Authority (PA) to rule the areas from which the Israeli forces had redeployed. In 1996 the PLO held elections for the Palestinian Legislative Council, and Arafat conveniently won the Presidency of the PA.<sup>574</sup>

Progression in the negotiations stalled during subsequent years. The various Labor and Likud governments showed obvious reluctance to commit to serious negotiations. Both governments permitted the construction of many new settlements, expanding existing ones, and establishing networks of roads to connect the settlements with Israel proper. The Oslo accords in this respect failed to develop any mechanism to halt Israeli unilateral violations.<sup>575</sup> The PLO also faced an internal challenge in the form of the rising Islamic movements like the Islamic Jihad and the Islamic Resistance

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571. "The Oslo Accords," [http://www.merip.org/palestine-israel\\_primer/oslo-accords-pal-isr-prime.html](http://www.merip.org/palestine-israel_primer/oslo-accords-pal-isr-prime.html), published in January 2001

572. <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/publisher,ARAB,,,3de5e96e4,0.html> [Full Text of the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements ("Oslo Agreement") (13 September 1993)], see also, "Agreement on the Gaza Strip and Jericho Area," (4 May 1994), "Israeli – Palestinian Interim Agreement on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip," (Oslo 2) (September 28, 1995), in S. Mahler and R.W. Mahler, *The Arab-Israeli Conflict: An Introduction and Documentary Reader*, 204-209 & 233-239 [Full Texts]

573. [http://www.merip.org/palestine-israel\\_primer/oslo-accords-pal-isr-prime.html](http://www.merip.org/palestine-israel_primer/oslo-accords-pal-isr-prime.html)

574. "The Oslo Accords," [http://www.merip.org/palestine-israel\\_primer/oslo-accords-pal-isr-prime.html](http://www.merip.org/palestine-israel_primer/oslo-accords-pal-isr-prime.html), published in January 2001

575. Ibid.

Movement (Hamas). Both groups preached armed struggle against Israel and rejected negotiations.<sup>576</sup>

The case of the Oslo Accords witnessed an obvious decline in the role of Egyptian diplomacy. The PLO accepted the accords at a time when it suffered from the lack of sufficient Arab political and economic support. Egypt joined as a participant, while the United States controlled the negotiations process. Despite its flaws, during the Camp David negotiations, Sadat stressed that regional peace is unachievable without restoring all Palestinian national rights.<sup>577</sup> By contrast, during the Oslo negotiations Egypt did not attempt to provide a counter-balance against US bias toward Israel. The Oslo accords failed to commit Israel to any measure until the final stages of negotiations. Egyptian diplomacy shaped its course to conform to US interests. This resonated with Mubarak's understanding of the role of Egyptian diplomacy in the post-Sadat era. He based his foreign policy on shifting Egypt's role from a key negotiator to a mere mediator between the Arabs, Israel, and the United States.<sup>578</sup> This shift in political attitude weakened the Palestinian position which needed a persistent negotiator rather than a weak mediator.

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576. "The Madrid Conference," [http://www.merip.org/palestine-israel\\_primer/madrid-conf-pal-isr-primer.html](http://www.merip.org/palestine-israel_primer/madrid-conf-pal-isr-primer.html), published in January 2001

577. An interview with *October Magazine* on 23 April 1978, <http://sadat.bibalex.org/speeches/browser.aspx?SID=729>, Sadat's message to the United Nations on the occasion of the Day of Palestine on 28 November 1978, <http://sadat.bibalex.org/speeches/browser.aspx?SID=774>, Sadat's speech to the Knesset on 21 November 1977, <http://sadat.bibalex.org/speeches/browser.aspx?SID=650>, *al-Akhbar* newspaper on 3 March 1979, *al-Ahram* newspaper on 13 March 1977 reported Sadat's declarations during the opening session of the Palestine National Council (PNC) where he stated that the Palestinians are never asked to give-up any of his rights or to provide any concessions. Sadat's interview to the Israeli television and reported in *al-Akhbar* newspaper on 27 March 1979, *al-Ahram* on 11 March 1975 [Arabic sources]

578. "Egypt: The Development of Foreign Policy," <http://www.country-data.com/cgi-bin/query/r-4156.html>



The regime did not attempt to alter its political stance through the 2000s. Oslo stalled, and several conferences convened in attempts to revive the waning peace process.<sup>579</sup> The United States posed as the key player in peace negotiations, whereas Egypt settled for such roles including being a witness, a mediator, or hosting a summit.

The peace process faced further setbacks by the early 2000s. On 28 September 2000 the second intifada also known as al-Aqsa Intifada erupted. The ongoing grievances of Palestinians under occupation, an occupation that Oslo had heightened rather than addressed, were the causes of the uprising. The trigger occurred when Likud leader Ariel Sharon staged a visit to the Temple Mount / al-Haram al-Sharif in Jerusalem during Friday prayers.<sup>580</sup> The way Sharon entered the holy site accompanied by nearly one thousand police officers and media personnel angered Palestinians. Violent clashes erupted protesting the visit. Between 28 September 2000 and the year's end, more than three hundred Palestinians were killed and thousands wounded.<sup>581</sup>

The intifada revealed the condition of the Arab world generally and the Egyptian regime particularly. It exposed Arab diplomacy's failure to pressure Israel or alleviate

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579. "Sharm el-Sheikh Memorandum," (4 September 1999), this memorandum was signed by Israel and the PLO with Egypt, the United States and Jordan as witnesses. Its main clauses reaffirmed the commitment to the Oslo accords and all subsequent agreements. It proposed a time-frame for further Israeli redeployments and the release of Palestinian prisoners. The memorandum also promised the resumption of Permanent Status negotiations with the aim of reaching a comprehensive agreement within a year. S. Mahler and R.W. Mahler, *The Arab-Israeli Conflict: An Introduction and Documentary Reader*, 252-254. By 2000, the two sides could not achieve tangible progression especially regarding such decisive issues like Jerusalem, the refugees, and the settlements. The United States called for a Peace Summit at Camp David during the period between 11 and 24 July 2000. The summit, attended and supervised by the US President released its resolutions on 25 July 2000. The summit failed to address the persisting key issues and its resolution contained vague statements about commitment to peace, further negotiations, and reaffirming the role of the United States as the vital partner in the peace process. In S. Mahler and Alden R.W. Mahler, *The Arab-Israeli Conflict: An Introduction and Documentary Reader*, 261

580. The date of the visit seemed to be carefully calculated. The date coincided with the fifth anniversary of signing Oslo II and during the ongoing negotiations at Camp David. The visit signaled Sharon's intentions to undermine the peace process, destroy the PLO, and reoccupy the West Bank, in Smith, *Palestine and the Arab-Israeli Conflict: A History with Documents*, 492-493

581. Smith, *Palestine and the Arab-Israeli Conflict: A History with Documents*, 492-493

Palestinians' ongoing political oppression. The Egyptian regime faced an awkward dilemma. Since signing the Camp David accords, Egypt posed as the regional peace broker and key player in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.<sup>582</sup> The eruption of the uprising and Israel's brutal retaliation proved the impotence of negotiations and highlighted the limitations of Egypt's influence.

The Egyptian regime had always been keen on preserving regional stability. The eruption of Palestinian-Israeli clashes threatened this proclaimed stability and perplexed the regime. Mubarak quickly warned that escalation would lead to disastrous consequences. He swiftly acted with the aim of defusing the tension, restoring regional stability, and resuming peace negotiations. Mubarak resorted to diplomacy as the only viable path; he stressed that war was an outdated idea and no longer an option.<sup>583</sup> In order to bridge the gap between the regime's preserved rhetoric and the enraged popular sentiments; Mubarak verbally attacked Israeli brutality but maintained diplomatic channels.<sup>584</sup> He also had to ward off radical Arab outbidding especially the Baathist regime in Syria, so he hosted a meeting on 17 October 2000 in Sharm el-Sheikh.<sup>585</sup> However, Egypt withdrew its ambassador in Israel in November 2000 due to Israel's

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582. Barari, "The Al-Aqsa Intifada as seen in Egypt," 86

583. Press declarations published in *al-Akhbar* on 20 October, 2002 [Arabic Source]

584. Mubarak declarations published in *al-Akhbar* on 30 January, 2001. Mubarak recalled Sharon's history at Sabra and Shattila. In another interview published in *al-Akhbar* on 19 February, 2001, Mubarak condemned Israeli brutality and stressed that violence only breeds counter-violence. He added that Palestinian fedayeen do not fear death because they had a long history of suffering and had many of their relatives either detained or killed by Israeli forces. [Arabic sources]

585. Barari, "The Al-Aqsa Intifada as seen in Egypt," 91. The meeting sought to ease the escalating tensions. It was attended by Ehud Barak, Yasser Arafat, Bill Clinton, and King Abdullah II. Barak and Arafat signed a fragile agreement to contain the military confrontations.

excessive use of force. This decision marked Egypt's frustration with Israel but was also a maneuver that intended to deflate domestic and Arab criticisms.<sup>586</sup>

During its first year, the intifada gained international momentum. However, the tragic attacks of 11 September 2001, the rise of the war on terrorism, and the election of Sharon as prime minister forced new realities and weakened support for military resistance. Mubarak realized that the prospects of US military operations in the Gulf were looming. As a US ally he aimed to assist in this effort by reducing Palestinian-Israeli tensions. He extended an invitation to Sharon to come to Sharm el-Sheikh to discuss the possibilities of resuming negotiations. On a parallel path, the Egyptian intelligence managed to get the Palestinian factions to sign a unilateral ceasefire within both the Occupied Territories and Israel proper.<sup>587</sup> In April 2002 Israel led a brutal assault on the

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586. Ibid. 92

587. Ibid. 93-94,

The peace process and the PLO faced a tough challenge during the Presidency term of George W. Bush. Bush openly sided with Sharon; he promised not to intervene in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and like Sharon blamed Arafat for the violence. During the first two years of his first term, Bush met with Sharon many times but never invited Arafat to the White House, in "Bush and Sharon Find Much in Common," *New York Times*, 21 March, 2001. By 2002, Bush adopted Sharon's claim that Arafat was not a reliable peace partner. On 24 June, 2002, Bush delivered the "Rose Garden Address," where he openly declared and for the first time in US policy that peace in the Middle East will not be achieved unless Arafat is replaced as the head of the PA, in "President Bush Calls for New Palestinian Leadership,"

<http://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2002/06/20020624-3.html>

British Prime Minister Tony Blair drafted the "Road Map," composed of the United States, the European Union, Russia, and the United Nations. Not much progress was achieved as Israel with US approval gained the right to choose which settlements were "legal" and which were "illegal." This contradicted with the Road Map which called for evacuating all outposts established after March 2001. The Arab League proposed a resolution on 27 March, 2002 offering full peace with Israel in return for its withdrawal from the West Bank and recognizing a sovereign Palestinian state. Sharon ignored the offer, see Document No. 11.6 "Arab Peace Plan Proposed by Saudi Arabia and Adopted at Arab League Summit, Beirut," 533-534 in Smith, *Palestine and the Arab-Israeli Conflict: A History with Documents*. The Geneva Initiative of October 2003 proposed Israeli withdrawal from ninety-eight percent of the West Bank, abandon most of its settlements in the West Bank and evacuate all settlements in the Gaza Strip. Jerusalem is to be a capital for both states with a Palestinian sovereignty over al-Haram al Sharif compound, and Israel over the Wailing Wall and the Jewish quarter of East Jerusalem. Arafat did not attend the negotiations but appeared to have given his approval. Hamas condemned the negotiations as an act of treason and betrayal of Palestinian national rights, in Israel, Sharon dismissed the initiative as much a serious historic error as that of Oslo. Sharon would later devise a unilateral disengagement plan to fully withdraw from Gaza without prior consultation with the Palestinian side. The plan gained the US approval and it was devised in a way to send

town of Jenin in response to a Palestinian suicide bombing of a Passover celebration. The massacre leveled most of the refugee camp; thousands were killed and injured while more than four thousand Palestinians became homeless. The Israeli army blocked medical and humanitarian aid from accessing the camp.<sup>588</sup> In Egypt huge demonstrations erupted denouncing Israel and calling on the government to take serious action and protect the Palestinians only to be confronted with the anti-riots police. The official Egyptian response however, did not deviate from cliché condemnations of Israeli brutality and empty warning against the ramifications of violence and counter-violence. Mubarak stated in a televised speech that Israel had gone too far and its attempts to undermine the PA and Palestinian rights will never be fulfilled. He explained his firm belief that negotiations were the only means to resolve the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. He also added that Palestinian attacks stemmed from “the sense of despair, frustration, and hopelessness.”<sup>589</sup> The choice of the words such as despair and hopelessness echoes the same themes used in Egyptian press and official statements during the post Camp David era. Prior to signing the accords the press praised Palestinian operations as acts of brave national resistance. Later the press changed its tone, and adopted the regime’s rhetoric that the operations were signs of despair. Mubarak expressed his understanding of

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a message that Israel was unable to find a reliable peace partner, thus evading pressures to resume negotiations, in Smith, *Palestine and the Arab-Israeli Conflict: A History with Documents*, 503-508 and 526-533 (documents no. 11.2, 11.3, 11.4, and 11.5)

588. There is an extensive literature on the invasion of Jenin including: Brian Whitaker, “Battle for Truth in Jenin,” *The Guardian* on April 23, 2002, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2002/apr/23/worlddispatch>, a detailed historical background on the invasion [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle\\_of\\_Jenin](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Jenin), Amnesty International, “Document - Israel and the Occupied Territories: Shielded from scrutiny: IDF violations in Jenin and Nablus,” <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/MDE15/143/2002/en/c79afe78-d7bc-11dd-b4cd-01eb52042454/mde151432002en.html>, Joel Greenberg, “Amnesty Accuses Israeli Forces of War Crimes,” *The New York Times* on November 4, 2002, <http://www.nytimes.com/2002/11/04/world/amnesty-accuses-israeli-forces-of-war-crimes.html>, Suzanne Goldenberg, “Israel blocks UN mission to Jenin,” *The Guardian* on April 24, 2002, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2002/apr/24/israelandthepalestinians.unitednations>

589. A speech delivered by Mubarak on the occasion of the liberation of Sinai on April 24, 2002

popular anger but reminded his people that they should be wise and rational so as not to jeopardize Egypt's political and economic interests.<sup>590</sup> The underlying message reaffirmed the regime's stance as a peace broker while eliminating any prospects for military options.

Arafat died on 11 November 2004 of an unidentified illness.<sup>591</sup> In January 2005 Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen) was elected as the President of the PA, Abu Mazen served as a Prime Minister between March and September 2003. With the advent of the Palestinian parliamentary elections, Hamas decided to participate. Hamas was founded in February 1988 during the peak of the first intifada, 1987-1993. Its founders including Sheikh Ahmad Yassin were linked to the Muslim Brotherhood of Egypt and adopted its ideologies. Like the Islamic Jihad, Hamas called for a holy war to liberate all of Palestine, refused Israeli negotiations, and posed as an alternative to the PLO. Hamas called for establishing a Palestinian state based on religious principles instead of the PLO's semi-secularism.<sup>592</sup>

Hamas gained popularity among Palestinians due to their commitment to national resistance to liberate Palestine. They rejected the PLO's negotiations path. Hamas gained

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590. Ibid.

591. During the intifada, Sharon with US support tried hard to isolate and delegitimize Arafat. Israeli forces claimed that Arafat supported terrorist attacks on Israeli targets and besieged him in al-muqta'a headquarters in Ramallah to force him to relinquish his powers. Later Arafat would agree to appoint Mahmoud Abbas as Prime Minister, see "Arafat Remains Defiant amid Rubble of His Compound," <http://www.nytimes.com/2002/09/22/world/arafat-remains-defiant-amid-rubble-of-his-compound.html>. Arafat's sudden illness and death in 2004 raised many suspicions. Recent reports suggested that he might have been murdered by poison. His body was exhumed for samples and an investigation into the circumstances of his death is underway, see "Samples Taken from Arafat Corpse for Poison Tests," <http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/11/27/us-palestinians-arafat-idUSBRE8AP1A120121127> and "Yasser Arafat: Palestinians Call for Poison Inquiry," <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-18695634>  
592. Hamas Charter: <http://www.thejerusalemfund.org/www.thejerusalemfund.org/carryover/documents/charter.html>, for a detailed account of Hamas see, Zaki Chehab, *Inside Hamas: The Untold Story of Militants, Martyrs, and Spies*, (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2007)

Palestinians' respect for their strength and the free-social services they provide during increasingly oppressive conditions. Palestinians identified more with Hamas than the PA which they perceived at best as "a corrupt and failing organization and at worst as a subcontractor for the bureaucracy of the occupation."<sup>593</sup> Hamas also established a military wing known as Ezz al-Din al-Qassam brigades, named after the shaykh who led a group of fighters resisting the British occupation during the early 1930s. The brigades' operations against Israeli targets garnered Hamas some momentum and revived the hopes of liberating Palestine.

Hamas decided to run for the Palestinian Parliamentary elections of 2005. Hamas won with a landslide much to the shock of Israel, the PA, and the George W. Bush administration. The United States had been backing the PLO since Oslo; it contributed with a total of two million US dollars to assist Fatah during the elections.<sup>594</sup> The United States however, did not show much tolerance to other Palestinian factions. During the era of war on terrorism the Bush administration dismissed armed resistance as acts of terrorism. Following Hamas' victory the United States rejected the results and pressured the European community to cut-off funding to the PA.<sup>595</sup> This decision led to an economic crisis in Gaza which hosts a population estimated at 1.5 million depending

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593. Amira Hass, "How the PA Failed," *Haaretz*, <http://www.haaretz.com/print-edition/opinion/how-the-pa-failed-1.173107>, 2 November 2005

594. Scott Wilson and Glenn Kessler, "U.S. Funds Enter Fray In Palestinian Elections," *Washington Post* on 22 January 2006 <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/01/21/AR2006012101431.html>

595. Goldschmidt Jr. and Davidson, *A Concise History of the Middle East*, 447-448

primarily on UN and non-UN donor aid. It is also estimated that sixty-five to seventy percent of Gazans are considered impoverished.<sup>596</sup>

Gaza faced a serious economic crisis. Hamas also had its doubts about the loyalty of the Presidential Guards.<sup>597</sup> It was reported that the United States channeled an amount of eighty-four million US dollars in aid packages to enhance the fighting capabilities of the Presidential Guards loyal to Fatah.<sup>598</sup> Additionally, the United States asked the governments of Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates to aid Fatah financially and logistically.<sup>599</sup> Tensions emerged between Abbas and the newly appointed Prime Minister Ismail Haniya. Fatah commanders refused to take orders from the Hamas government. Fatah also launched a series of operations targeting Hamas cadres.<sup>600</sup> The first round of clashes occurred during December 2006 when Palestinian National Security Forces fired on a Hamas rally in Ramallah following Hamas accusation that Fatah conspired to assassinate Haniya. Several Palestinians were wounded during those clashes.<sup>601</sup> During March 2007 Fatah and Hamas agreed in Mecca to form a unity government.<sup>602</sup> However, tensions escalated and more than one hundred Palestinians were killed. Confrontations grew lethal between May and June 2007 with both sides

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596. Conal Urquhart, "Gaza on brink of Implosion as Aid Cut-off Starts to Bite," *The Observer* on 16 April 2006 <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2006/apr/16/israel>

597. For a detailed analysis of the Fatah – Hamas conflict and the role of the United States see David Rose, "The Gaza Bombshell," [April 2008] <http://www.vanityfair.com/politics/features/2008/04/gaza200804>

598. Ibid. see also

[http://www.nytimes.com/2006/02/14/international/middleeast/14mideast.html?\\_r=2&ei=5094&en=d28cff5caa1702fa&hp=&ex=1139979600&partner=homepage&pagewanted=print&oref=slogin&](http://www.nytimes.com/2006/02/14/international/middleeast/14mideast.html?_r=2&ei=5094&en=d28cff5caa1702fa&hp=&ex=1139979600&partner=homepage&pagewanted=print&oref=slogin&)

599. The Christian Monitor, "Israel, US, and Egypt back Fatah's fight against Hamas,"

<http://www.csmonitor.com/2007/0525/p07s02-wome.html> , also see <http://www.sfgate.com/news/article/U-S-training-Fatah-in-anti-terror-tactics-2465370.php> / "Hamas Seizes U.S.-Financed Weapons, Equipment,"

[http://web.archive.org/web/20070616141623/http://menewslines.com/stories/2007/june/06\\_15\\_1.html](http://web.archive.org/web/20070616141623/http://menewslines.com/stories/2007/june/06_15_1.html)

600. [http://www.vanityfair.com/politics/features/2008/04/gaza\\_documents200804](http://www.vanityfair.com/politics/features/2008/04/gaza_documents200804)

601. <http://english.aljazeera.net/NR/exeres/793DD747-A1B7-4BE3-B120-0CF17161249>

602. <http://www.iiss.org/publications/strategic-comments/past-issues/volume-13-2007/volume-13-issue-5/hamas-coup-in-gaza/>

committing atrocities. It is estimated that at least 118 Palestinians were killed and more than 550 wounded in the week leading to June 15.<sup>603</sup> On June 14, 2007 Abbas dissolved the unity government, declared a state of emergency, and dismissed Haniya as prime minister.<sup>604</sup> On June 15, Abbas appointed Salam Fayyad as a new Prime Minister. Hamas dismissed Abbas' actions as an attempt to overrule the results of a democratically elected Legislative Council. Hamas thwarted a CIA designed coup, took-over the Gaza Strip and removed Fatah officials.<sup>605</sup> Since 2007 a tragic internal split persisted with the PA ruling the West Bank and a Hamas-led government ruling over the Gaza Strip. During the past years several reconciliation initiatives were initiated, but a comprehensive settlement remains elusive.<sup>606</sup>

The internal Palestinian chasm disturbed the Egyptian regime. As an American ally, the regime believed that it had to preserve regional peace and thwart the rise of militant radicalism. The Egyptian regime was always keen on preserving the PA as it represented Oslo and the preference of negotiations over militancy. The victory of Hamas in 2005 troubled the regime on several levels. First, the results of the elections positioned Hamas as a viable political alternative to Fatah. The results also brought Fatah's weaknesses to the surface where Palestinians expressed their frustration with the impasse

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603. <http://www.icrc.org/eng/resources/documents/news-release/2009-and-earlier/israel-palestine-news-150607.htm> / <http://www.icrc.org/eng/resources/documents/news-release/2009-and-earlier/palestine-israel-news-080207.htm> / Alison Caldwell, "Hospitals offer no safety in Gaza strip," on 13 June 2007, <http://www.abc.net.au/pm/content/2007/s1950580.htm>

604. <http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,282195,00.html> / [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/6754499.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/6754499.stm)

605. Conal Urquhart, Ian Black and Mark Tran, "Hamas takes control of Gaza," *The Guardian* on 15 June 2007, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2007/jun/15/israel4> , for a detailed analysis of the US scheme to topple Hamas refer to David Rose, "The Gaza Bombshell," [April 2008] <http://www.vanityfair.com/politics/features/2008/04/gaza200804>

606. <http://uk.reuters.com/article/2008/03/23/uk-palestinians-yemen-deal-idUKL23831120080323/> / <http://en.rian.ru/world/20091002/156322997.html> / [http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/palestinian-factions-formally-sign-unity-accord/2011/05/04/AFD89MmF\\_story.html?hpid=z6](http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/palestinian-factions-formally-sign-unity-accord/2011/05/04/AFD89MmF_story.html?hpid=z6) / <http://www.haaretz.com/news/egypt-fatah-hamas-deal-deferred-due-to-inappropriate-conditions-1.5962>



of their cause, economic woes, and corruption allegations within the PA. The tide of change annoyed the regime, since many of the Palestinians' grievances especially those having to do with economic distress and state corruption echoed the complaints of the Egyptian middle and working classes. Second, Hamas with its Islamist doctrine and ties to the Muslim Brotherhood represented another vital concern. The Brotherhood was banned in Egypt since 1954 and the Mubarak regime had exerted much effort to suppress them. The regime feared that the rise of Hamas across the border would empower the Brotherhood and elevate the group's popularity (The Brotherhood has been sympathetic to the Palestinian cause since the 1930s and its fighters participated in the 1948 war).<sup>607</sup> Third, Hamas made it clear that militancy not negotiations was their ideology and stressed their refusal to acknowledge the existence of Israel. On the one hand, their philosophy challenged the post Camp David discourse which stressed that negotiations were the only feasible way to solve the Arab-Israeli conflict. On the other hand, Hamas attacks against Israeli targets appealed to the Egyptian masses that never really adhered to peace with Israel and rejected all forms of normalization. For the Egyptian regime, the rise of Hamas to power meant that the envisioned US peace was waning against the Egyptian popular desire for a more firm stand against Israeli transgressions. It also exposed the impotence of the Arab regimes dependent on the United States.

The news of Hamas' takeover of the Gaza Strip startled the Egyptian regime, which was quick to denounce Hamas. It also expressed its unequivocal support to Abu Mazen and the PLO as the legitimate Palestinian leadership.<sup>608</sup> The regime issued a

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607. Tally Helfont, "Egypt's Wall with Gaza & the Emergence of a New Middle East Alignment," [www.fpri.org/orbis/5403/helfont.egyptandgaza.pdf](http://www.fpri.org/orbis/5403/helfont.egyptandgaza.pdf), Summer 2010, 433-434

608. [http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/malam\\_multimedia/English/eng\\_n/html/egypt250607\\_e.htm](http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/malam_multimedia/English/eng_n/html/egypt250607_e.htm)

statement expressing its deep concern over the prospect of establishing a Hamas-led radical “Islamic emirate” supported by Iran and the Muslim Brotherhood. The statement claimed that the creation of such an entity on Egypt’s eastern borders was a clear threat to national security. Mubarak referred to the situation in Gaza as a coup against the legitimate Palestinian leadership and warned against its negative consequences for Palestinians.<sup>609</sup> The Egyptian government took several measures to regionally isolate Hamas and strengthen Abu Mazen. On 19 June 2007 the Egyptian Foreign Minister Ahmed Abu al-Gheit ordered the transfer of the Egyptian diplomatic mission from Gaza to Ramallah in the West Bank. The move reflected Egypt’s official recognition of Ramallah as the seat of the legitimate Palestinian authority. Egypt also recalled its security delegation which was stationed in Gaza on permanent basis. The government fearing from militancy flooding into Egyptian territories closed the crucial Rafah crossing between Egypt and Gaza without credible evidence of any imminent threats. Sealing the borders intensified the harsh Israeli blockade imposed on the strip since the advent of Hamas.<sup>610</sup> In an attempt to justify its decision, the government argued that the crossing operated and monitored by the PA under the supervision of the European Union (EU) monitors. The government further explained that the process was regulated in accordance with the Agreement on Movement and Access (AMA) of 2005 to which Egypt is not a signatory.<sup>611</sup>

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609. Press declarations published in *Al-Jumhuriyah* and *Al-Wafd* newspapers on 24 June 2007 [Arabic Sources]

610. [http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/malam\\_multimedia/English/eng\\_n/html/egypt250607\\_e.htm](http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/malam_multimedia/English/eng_n/html/egypt250607_e.htm)

611. “The Agreement on Movement and Access One Year On,” UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. November, 2006.

[http://www.ochaopt.org/documents/AMA\\_One\\_Year\\_On\\_Nov06\\_final.pdf](http://www.ochaopt.org/documents/AMA_One_Year_On_Nov06_final.pdf)

The Agreement was signed on 15 November 2005; the signatory parties included the PA, the Israeli government, and the European Union. Egypt is not a signatory to this agreement.

Deteriorating humanitarian conditions in Gaza intensified combined with several Israeli deadly raids. On 22 and 23 January 2008, thousands of Palestinians marched towards the Rafah Border crossing destroying parts of the barrier. Palestinians flooded into Egyptian territories seeking food and supplies.<sup>612</sup> Egyptian troops allowed the crossing, but Palestinians were not allowed to go beyond El-Arish. Further infiltrations occurred and the Egyptian police began repairing the breaches and closed the border on February 3, 2008.

Between 27 December 2008 and 18 January 2009, Israel launched a lethal operation against Hamas in Gaza known as Operation Cast Lead.<sup>613</sup> Palestinians suffered high rates of casualties and the sealed borders added intense complications where paramedics and hospitals suffered from power cuts and the scarcity of medical supplies. Doctors and humanitarian groups lined up on the Egyptian side of the border but “despite the severity of the situation Egypt maintained access to Gaza tightly restricted.”<sup>614</sup> Mubarak explained in a televised address on 30 December 2008 that Egypt cannot open the border crossing with Gaza without the presence of both the PA and EU. He added that Egypt is not a signatory to the AMA and opening the border without resolving the

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<http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Peace+Process/Reference+Documents/Agreed+documents+on+movement+and+access+from+and+to+Gaza+15-Nov-2005.htm> [Full Text of the agreement]

612. “Gazans clash with Egyptian Police at Rafah, 22 January 2008,” Al-Jazeera English

“Gazans make new border wall hole: Palestinians have bulldozed don part of the Gaza-Egypt border wall again, hours after Egyptian troops blocked holes recently made by militants,” *BBC News*, 25 January 2008.

“Clashes between Egyptian forces and Palestinians across the borders,”

<http://today.almasryalyoum.com/arcle2.aspx?ArcleID=92571&IssueID=941> / “Breaching the Rafah Border Crossing,” <http://www1.youm7.com/News.asp?NewsID=16243&SecID=12&IssueID=168> [Arabic Sources].

“Factsheet: Egyptian Role in the Siege of Gaza,” Factsheet Series No. 62, April 2009, Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East {CJPME},

<http://www.cjpme.org/DisplayDocument.aspx?DocumentID=387&SaveMode=0>

613. The operation destroyed most of Gaza’s homes and infrastructure. It also led to the killing of over 1,417 Palestinians, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Operation\\_Cast\\_Lead](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Operation_Cast_Lead)

614. “Factsheet: Egyptian Role in the Siege of Gaza,” Factsheet Series No. 62, April 2009, Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East {CJPME},

<http://www.cjpme.org/DisplayDocument.aspx?DocumentID=387&SaveMode=0>

Hamas-Fatah conflict would deepen the internal rift. He further argued that opening the crossing was an Israeli trap that intended to put Egypt in charge of the Strip. He held Hamas responsible for the Israeli attack claiming that their refusal to renew the cease-fire incited the aggression.<sup>615</sup> Various top Egyptian officials echoed Mubarak's rhetoric, they stressed that any Hamas presence across the border was rejected altogether. The officials added that this decision is final as Egypt only acknowledged the legitimacy of Abu Mazen and the PA and rejected any other alternative.<sup>616</sup>

By December 2009, the Egyptian government embarked on erecting a huge underground steel barrier to prevent smuggling across the tunnels between Sinai and Gaza. News about the barrier raised harsh criticism against the Egyptian government both domestically and regionally, since its creation frames Egypt as a complicit with Israel in strangling Gaza. Egypt's Foreign Minister defended the decision by claiming that the constructions across the border aim to protect Egypt's national security.<sup>617</sup> The regime in an effort to thwart opposition and legitimize its wall instructed Al-Azhar to release a *fatwa* (Islamic decision) "declaring that it was permissible in matters of Sharia law for Egypt to build the barrier."<sup>618</sup> The late Sheikh of Al-Azhar declared that Egypt has the right to defend its territories against uncontrolled smuggling across the tunnels. He added that those opposing the barrier were violating the commands of Islamic law.<sup>619</sup>

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615. <http://www.aljazeera.net/news/pages/9205fad6-7fa5-4acf-84d4-279535c457fb> [Arabic Source]

616. <http://www.alhayat.com>

617. <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2009/12/20091222134531894506.html>, also see, "Amid Protests, Egypt Defends Right to Build Gaza Wall," *Haaretz*, 30 December 2009 [www.haaretz.com](http://www.haaretz.com)

618. Helfont, "Egypt's Wall with Gaza & the Emergence of a New Middle East Alignment," [www.fpri.org/orbis/5403/helfont.egyptandgaza.pdf](http://www.fpri.org/orbis/5403/helfont.egyptandgaza.pdf), 434, also see, "Egypt Fatwa on Gaza Wall Stirs Controversy," *Al-Arabiya News Channel*, 3 January 2010 [www.alarabiya.net](http://www.alarabiya.net) It is important to note that Al-Azhar a renowned religious institution has lost its independency since the Nasser nationalization era. The institution once known for its influence on the population became by and large a state-owned institution utilized mainly to provide a religious legitimacy to state policies.

619. Ibid. 437

The *fatwa* triggered wide condemnation from the opposition, Hamas, and various Arab states. Hamas argued that it never attempted to threaten the stability of Egypt and questioned the logic behind the barrier. Hamas condemned the *fatwa* reminding Al-Azhar that the barrier does not protect Egypt from the Zionists but it shuts-off food and medical supplies urgently needed by children and patients entrapped in Gaza.<sup>620</sup> The aggressive blockade forced the Gazans to dig hundreds of tunnels under the Egypt-Gaza border in an attempt to secure their basic needs.<sup>621</sup>

In yet another televised speech Mubarak defended the steel barrier arguing that he would stop at nothing to maintain national security. He added that the construction is an act of sovereignty on Egyptian territories. Echoing Sadat's "Egypt First" discourse, Mubarak explicitly declared that Egypt will never abandon the Palestine cause, but Egypt's national interests come first and foremost. He referred to the death of an Egyptian soldier across the border and criticized Hamas accusing them of being evasive and contradictory. He added that although Hamas pledges resistance and opposes peace, they neither resisted nor achieved peace.<sup>622</sup> In return Hamas expressed its disappointment explaining that they would never threaten Egypt and that their sole aim is to end the Gaza blockade.<sup>623</sup> Mubarak's speech raised domestic criticism as well. Several legal and diplomatic experts explained that Mubarak's rhetoric was based on a political stance and

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620. "Press Release: We Disapprove of the Al-Azhar Fatwa Legalizing the Steel Wall, Which is Strangling Gaza," *The Islamic Resistance Movement- Hamas*, 2 January 2010. [www.palestine-info.info/ar](http://www.palestine-info.info/ar), also see "The Steel Wall Kills the Last Life Vessel Sustaining the Gazans," 25 January 2010.

<http://www.alarab.net/Article/244781> [Arabic Source]

621. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gaza\\_tunnels](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gaza_tunnels)

622. A speech delivered on the occasion of Police Day on 24 January 2010.

[http://arabic.cnn.com/2010/middle\\_east/1/24/mubarak.policeday/index.html](http://arabic.cnn.com/2010/middle_east/1/24/mubarak.policeday/index.html) also see the full text of the speech at: <http://www.youm7.com/News.asp?NewsID=181361> [Arabic Sources]

623. "Hamas Criticizes Mubarak's Declarations and Considers them Contradictory to his Promises," on 26 January 2010. [http://arabic.cnn.com/2010/middle\\_east/1/26/hamas-criticize\\_mubarak/index.html](http://arabic.cnn.com/2010/middle_east/1/26/hamas-criticize_mubarak/index.html) [Arabic Source]

not a legal one. Judge Ahmed Mekki explained that Mubarak's stance stemmed primarily from Egypt's inability to confront Israel as well as the strength of external and mainly US pressures. Mekki also explained that according to international law and the Geneva Conventions Egypt had to open the border crossing for humanitarian reasons since the gates are located on Egyptian territories and operate under Egyptian sovereignty. He explained that Egypt's actions legitimize the Israeli blockade and shift the blame from Israel. In other words, international condemnation toward Israel decreases since another Arab country contributes to the inhuman blockade of the Gaza Strip.<sup>624</sup> By the second half of 2010, Egypt partially opened the Rafah border crossing but mainly for people and not aid. The manager of the border crossing explained that the gates were open for patients, holders of foreign passports, students, and those who have a proof of residency in other countries. Nonetheless, Egyptian authorities denied the passage of much-needed aid supplies including food, medicine, electric generators for hospitals, and construction materials.<sup>625</sup>

It is however important to examine the Egyptian regime's stance on the border issue. Egypt's troubled relation with Hamas and its insistence on sealing the border despite domestic and regional condemnations stemmed from both internal and external pressures. Domestically, the regime had been engaged in a long battle to suppress the Muslim Brotherhood and curtail its power as an organized opposition with a sizeable

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624. <http://www.aljazeera.net/news/pages/f8035341-09b4-4b82-a849-86b4ecf66bfd> [Arabic Source] also see Abdu Allah al-Ashaal, "Egypt Breaches International Law by Sealing the Rafah Border," <http://www.aljazeera.net/news/pages/459b590a-eeff-48dc-92af-5f8ff2ca3d28> [Arabic Source], also see Paul Reynolds, "Gaza Sanctions: The Legal Argument," Associated Press, BBC on 30 October 2007. Egypt is a signatory to the Geneva Conventions in 1952 and its first and second protocols in 1992, but did not sign the third protocol. For the full text of the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and its subsequent Protocols see: <http://www.icrc.org/eng/war-and-law/treaties-customary-law/geneva-conventions/index.jsp>

625. "Rafah Crossing Open for Third Consecutive Day," Ma'an News Agency on 3 June 2010

popularity. The rise of Hamas, an offshoot of the Brotherhood, immediately next to the Egyptian border signaled a threat to the regime. Mubarak feared that the Hamas takeover might empower the Brotherhood and increase their popularity among the masses. However, the Brotherhood was only one among several external pressures exerted upon the Mubarak regime. On one hand, Abu Mazen urged Mubarak to seal the border so as not to strengthen Hamas and undermine Fatah. On the other hand, Israel initiated a campaign accusing Egypt of being passive regarding the smuggling of weapons through the tunnels, thus, contributing to threatening Israeli security. For several years the regime adopted a blind-eye policy toward the tunnels. However, the regime's lax attitude changed when Hamas started to use the tunnels to smuggle heavy weapons into the strip. In 2009 the Egyptian government discovered an elaborate multi-national plot linked to Hezbollah that involved smuggling weapons, and planned ultimately to target Israeli tourists in Sinai and to fire at ships in the Suez Canal.<sup>626</sup> The regime perceived such developments as a direct violation to Egypt's sovereignty, a credible threat to national security, and potentially jeopardizing its turbulent relations with Israel. More importantly, the United States pressured Egypt to keep the border closed and end the smuggling. Israel demanded that the United States make its annual 1.3 billion US dollars in military assistance to Egypt conditional on Mubarak's efforts to halt smuggling.<sup>627</sup> In return, the

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626. Michael Slackman, "Egypt Accuses Hezbollah of Plotting Attacks and Arms Smuggling to Gaza," *The New York Times*, 13 April 2009. [http://www.nytimes.com/2009/04/14/world/middleeast/14egypt.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2009/04/14/world/middleeast/14egypt.html?_r=0)

627. For a detailed analysis of this topic see Jeremy M. Sharp, "The Egypt-Gaza Border and its Effect on Israeli-Egyptian Relations." Congressional Research Service, 1 February 2008. <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/RL34346.pdf>

Egyptian regime deeply depended on US aid since Camp David, unable to face Israel, and battling wide domestic challenges had to bow and contribute to the Gaza crisis.<sup>628</sup>

The previous section attempted to analyze the Egyptian-Palestinian relations during the Mubarak years. It traced Egyptian official discourse regarding the Palestine cause in the post Camp David era. It also discussed the ramifications of the Hamas takeover, the internal strife with Fatah, and the Egyptian-Hamas conflict over the Rafah border. The next section will address the press during the Mubarak era and its attitude toward Palestine with a special emphasis on moments of political conflict.

### **The Press during the Mubarak Era**

Mubarak started his presidency by attempting to downplay the ramifications of Sadat's "Autumn of Fury." He released all politicians and journalists detained under Sadat, and promised to respect the role of the press and freedom of speech. By the mid-1990s, the regime grew less tolerant to rising criticism, issuing Law 96 of 1996, which posed several restrictions on issuing new papers.<sup>629</sup> For instance, article 50 banned those who are deprived from practicing their political rights from publishing papers. This article targeted mainly the Islamic opposition since most of its members faced imprisonment more than once in a variety of cases. Article 52 stipulated that private-owned papers must deposit a huge sum of money in an Egyptian bank prior to

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628. Ibid. also see Helfont, "Egypt's Wall with Gaza & the Emergence of a New Middle East Alignment," [www.fpri.org/orbis/5403/helfont.egyptandgaza.pdf](http://www.fpri.org/orbis/5403/helfont.egyptandgaza.pdf), 432-434. Also, Abigail Hauslohner, "In the Siege of Gaza, Egypt Walks a Delicate Line," 11 January 2010, <http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1953015,00.html>. "Factsheet: Egyptian Role in the Siege of Gaza," Factsheet Series No. 62, April 2009, Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East {CJPME}, <http://www.cjpme.org/DisplayDocument.aspx?DocumentID=387&SaveMode=0>  
"Egypt: Navigating the Gaza Crisis," <http://www.stratfor.com/sample/analysis/egypt-navigating-gaza-crisis>  
629. Law No. 96 of 1996 issued in the Official Gazette on 30 June 1996 [Arabic Source]



publication.<sup>630</sup> The law also expanded the role of the Higher Press Council headed by the President of the Shura Council.<sup>631</sup> The law stated that freedom of speech and the exchange of information were protected as far as nothing threatens national security or social peace.<sup>632</sup> Article 5 stated that seizing papers or canceling their licenses was forbidden. Nonetheless, the Labor's Party (Hizb al-Amal) mouthpiece *al-Shaab* was ordered to shut-down following the People's Assembly's Committee on Political Parties decision to freeze the party in May 2000.<sup>633</sup> Additionally, the law stipulated several penalties ranging from fines to imprisonment in matters related to criticizing the president, the government, or heads of foreign states.<sup>634</sup> However, private and party papers remained mostly depended on state-owned publishing houses for circulation. They also did not attract lucrative advertisements compared to those advertised in the official papers. Party journals exhibited the same weaknesses suffered by opposition parties. During the Mubarak era the few existing opposition parties (including al-Wafd, al-Tagammu, and the Nasserite Party) suffered from internal conflicts, weak leadership and a shrinking popular base. Set against the NDP hegemony, opposition parties and papers suffered from systematic weakening and marginalization.<sup>635</sup>

Although Law 96 of 1996 expanded journalists' rights and protected their freedom of speech, Mubarak did not refrain from criticizing opposition press accusing

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630. A daily paper should be financially backed with one million Egyptian pounds; weekly journals had to pay 250,000 pounds, while monthly publications were required to pay an amount of 100,000 pounds.

631. Articles No. 67 to 79 of Law No. 96 of 1996. The Council acts as an independent organization dealing with all issues pertaining press and journalism. It also oversees the finances of all issued papers. The Shura Council (mainly dominated by the NDP and half of its members appointed by the President) chooses the head of the Syndicate of Journalism along with chief editors and executives of official and party newspapers. The president appoints the heads of the three official papers, and the state holds a significant amount of shares in their capital.

632. Article No. 4 of Law No. 96 of 1996

633. Talhami, *Palestine in the Egyptian Press: From Al-Ahram to Al-Ahali*, 301

634. "Egypt: Freedom of the Press, 2002," <http://www.freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-press/2002/egypt>

635. Talhami, *Palestine in the Egyptian Press: From Al-Ahram to Al-Ahali*, 296 & 301

them of lacking enough knowledge about the priorities of the population.<sup>636</sup> Further, unlike his predecessors (Nasser and Sadat), Mubarak did not establish any special relations with particular journalists. He maintained normal relationships with chief-editors and met them during office hours only. He communicated with the press through telephones regarding official matters. He also opposed any negative press relating to both Nasser and Sadat.<sup>637</sup>

By mid-2000s and in response to pressures for more freedoms several independent newspapers appeared including: *al-Masry al-Youm* (The Egyptian Today), *al-Youm al-Sabi'* (The Seventh Day), and *Sawt al-Umma* (The Voice of the Nation). However, several reports surfaced documenting physical violence and harassment targeting opposition journalists.<sup>638</sup> Opposition papers focused on criticizing the regime's corruption, the impotence of the government, and Egypt's failing regional diplomacy. The official press however remained attached to the regime and largely adopted its discourse.

The previous survey examined the conditions of the press during the Mubarak years in light of Press Law 96 of 1996. The next section investigates how the Egyptian press handled the Palestinian cause and the image of the PLO in the post Camp David era. It also analyzes how the press reacts toward Egyptian-Palestinian political tensions.

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636. Ibid. 301

637. Ibid. 301-302

638. "Egypt: Freedom of the Press, 2005," <http://www.freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-press/2005/egypt>, this report details the case of opposition journalist Abdel Halim Qandil the editor of the Arab Nationalist Weekly *Al-Arabi*. Qandil known for his outspokenness against the regime corruption and its dependency on the US was abducted and brutally beaten-up by unidentified assailants in November, 2004. Further attacks, abductions, illegal detentions, and confiscating of equipment are detailed in: "Egypt: Freedom of the Press, 2010," <http://www.freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-press/2010/egypt>

From the onset of his presidency, Mubarak was determined to achieve full reconciliation with the Arab states and regionally reintegrate Egypt. In this respect he explicitly criticized the vilification campaigns initiated by the Sadatist press. He believed that such abusive campaigns had destructive ramifications and urged journalists to halt all anti-Arab propaganda.<sup>639</sup> Further, by early 1982 Egyptian press regained some interest in the Palestine cause after years of marginalization following the signing of the Camp David Accords. *Al-Ahram* published several editorials tackling the Arab-Israeli conflict. The editorials attacked Israeli systematic aggression and invoked the image of the oppressed Palestinian who resists with whatever means available.<sup>640</sup> However, the official press showed a preference toward the image of the “victimized” Palestinian over that of the “resisting” one. In resonance with the discourse in place since the late 1970s, the press stressed that peace was the most viable path to resolve the conflict.<sup>641</sup> The brutal invasion of Lebanon in the summer of 1982 gained wide and detailed coverage in Egyptian press. The press revived the term “Palestinian resistance” that had been out of use since Camp David. The press gave more emphasis to the image of the Palestinian fighter rather than the victimized one. Many editorials attacked the betrayal of the Soviets and the Syrian regime. The press praised Palestinian heroism and criticized the labeling of their courage in fighting as “acts of terrorism.”<sup>642</sup> More significantly, *al-Ahram* made numerous references to the PLO stating that the organization was the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people.<sup>643</sup> The paper also praised the organization’s

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639. Ghali, “The Foreign Policy of Egypt in the Post – Sadat Era,” 781

640. *Al-Ahram* on 14 and 30 April, 23 May, 1982 [Arabic Sources]

641. *Al-Ahram* on 23 May, 1982

642. *Al-Ahram* on 14 July, 8 August, 11, and 13, 30 September, 1982 [Arabic Source]

643. *Al-Ahram* on 9 and 14 February, 1985 [Arabic Source]

strength against Israeli attempts to liquidate it.<sup>644</sup> This attitude represented a significant departure from Sadatist press which dismissed PLO leaders as paid agents to the Soviets and reactionary Arab regimes. Nonetheless, the bulk of editorials gave precedence to images of “victimization” and “betrayal” over those of “resistance” or “fedayeen action.”<sup>645</sup> This approach reinforced “the dominant line in the Egyptian media, which favors a peaceful solution over the military option.”<sup>646</sup>

The eruption of the first intifada gained extensive coverage in Egyptian press as opposed to the rather limited analysis on national television.<sup>647</sup> *Al-Ahram* led Egyptian newspapers in providing extensive coverage of all developments in the occupied territories through dispatching its own correspondents. Opposition press mainly *al-Wafd* and *al-Ahali* reported extensively on the uprising. *Al-Ahali* famous for its rejection of Camp David as well as US hegemony more broadly praised the Palestinians and urged them to continue their armed struggle and capitalize on their gains.<sup>648</sup> The Islamist press represented in the Brotherhood’s mouthpiece *al-Liwaa al-Islami*, praised the intifada and expressed its support of the PLO. However, unlike the official and opposition press, the Islamist coverage depicted the uprising as a holy war referring to it as the “revolt of the mosques” instead of the more common “revolt of the stones.”<sup>649</sup> Further, Arafat’s stance during the Gulf War, 1990-1991 led to some anti-Palestine editorials. For instance,

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644. *Al-Ahram* on 30 June, 1982 [Arabic Source]

645. *Al-Ahram* on 3 and 16 October, 9 and 11 November, 1985 [Arabic Sources]

646. Yehia, “The Image of the Palestinians in Egypt, 1982-85,” 62

647. El-Sayed, “Egyptian Popular Attitudes toward the Palestinians since 1977,” 44

648. Abd al-Basit Abd al-Mu’ti, “A Content Analysis of the Egyptian Press,” [Tahlil Mohtawah al-Sehafa al-Masriya] published in *al-Ahram* on 12 October, 1988 in El-Sayed, “Egyptian Popular Attitudes toward the Palestinians since 1977,” 45

649. Fahmy Huwaydi, “Those Fundamentalists in the Occupied Territories,” published in *al-Ahram* on 12 December, 1987, and “Liberated Palestine Comes before Islamic Palestine,” *al-Ahram* on 2 November, 1988 [Arabic Sources]

Ibrahim Seada wrote an open letter to Mubarak calling upon him to not trust Palestinians calling them “killers” and “ungrateful cowards.” He also advised against allowing them to study or work in Egypt, and to prevent them from seeking refuge in it.<sup>650</sup>

Al-Aqsa intifada gained wide coverage in Egyptian media and initiated large demonstrations calling on Mubarak to sever all ties with Israel and protect Palestinians. The official press quickly ran several editorials reminding readers that Mubarak was a wise calm man and would not be dragged to a state of war. National press in this respect glorified Mubarak as the advocate of peace and the defender of Palestinian and Arab causes.<sup>651</sup> Mohammad Abdel Moneim explained that Mubarak had steel nerves and would protect peace at all costs.<sup>652</sup> The underlying message of this editorial and several others was to remind the people of Egypt’s ties with Israel and to reaffirm that declaring a state of war is out of question.<sup>653</sup>

The issue of Palestinian suicide bombers raised another concern for the regime. Although the national press reported extensively on the uprising, there was an obvious stance against glorifying suicide bombings. The official press, crippled within the regime’s parameters, repeatedly warned against the futility of the cycle of violence and counter violence. The government papers persistently praised Mubarak policies. The

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650. *Akhbar al-Youm* on 22 September, 1990 [Arabic Source]

651. Rajab al-Banna explaining the significance of Mubarak’s trip to Italy during October 2003, *October Magazine* on 14 September 2003, also see, Ibrahim Saadeh column in *Akhbar al-Youm* on 13 September, 2003 [Arabic Sources]

652. *Ruz al-Yusif Magazine* on 19-24 October, 2003 [Arabic Source]

653. Several writers ran editorials stressed that Mubarak’s wisdom and commitment to peace have spared Egypt several political crises. The editorials explained that Mubarak never posed as a hero and never bought into vague slogans like other Arab leaders. Writings of this nature include: Rajab al-Banna, “Rihlat Mubarak wa Tabiaat al-dawr al-Masri” [Mubarak’s Journey and the Nature of the Egyptian Role] in *October Magazine* on 14 September, 2003 [Arabic Source]. Hamdi Abdel Aziz and Samia Sadeq, “The Region Awaits Some Calm Following the Storm,” *Ruz al-Yusif* on 27 December, 2003- 2 January, 2004 [Arabic Source]. Karam Jaber, “Suqut al-Shiarat wa Suud al-Waqiiyah” [The Downfall of Slogans and the Rise of Realism] *Ruz al-Yusif* on 27 December, 2003- 2 January, 2004 [Arabic Source]

press repeated its clichéd condemnations of Israel and demanded that the United States and Europe pressure Israel to end its aggression and resume peace negotiations.<sup>654</sup> By contrast, the opposition and religious press praised the heroism of Palestinian fighters as sacrificing their lives to resist occupation. The Egyptian Mufti Dr. Ali Jumaa explained that Palestinian resistance is religiously legitimate and in defense of truth and justice. It was a form of *jihad* (holy war) against terrorism and was condoned by the sharia.<sup>655</sup> *Al-Ahali* took the intifada as an opportunity to attack the regime's passivity and question the legitimacy of the Camp David Accords. Nabil Zaki explained that on signing the agreements, Egyptians were promised peace and prosperity. Twenty-five years later none of those promises was fulfilled, and the region's reality remained lamentable.<sup>656</sup>

In another editorial, Mustafa Bakri attacked the regime's silence and lack of action toward Israeli aggression. He complained that the Arab rulers wasted Arab dignity by passively watching the growing line of Palestinian martyrs.<sup>657</sup> Further, Abdel Halim Qandil wrote several harsh articles criticizing the regime's passivity and its utter surrender to Washington. He attacked Mubarak's relentless attempts to put an end to the uprising and force a US-sponsored peace settlement. Qandil explained that the intifada inspired the oppressed Arab masses to rise against oppression and injustice; therefore, it threatened the US-backed Arab dictatorships. He added that the United States wanted to

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654. Editorials in *Akhbar al-Youm* and *al-Ahram* on 13 September, 2003. *Al-Ahram* on 25 October and 24 December, 2003 [Arabic Sources]

655. Ali Jumaa, "Palestinians who Commit Suicide Bombings are Martyrs, not Suicide Cases," *Al-Tassawuf al-Islami*, Vol. 25, No. 297 (November, 2003), 6-8 [Arabic Source]

656. Nabil Zaki, "Ya Jabal ma Yihizak Reeh," [O, Mountain No Wind will Shake you], and "Camp David: 25 Years Hence," *al-Ahali* on 24 September, 2003. Also see Hassan Fath al-Bab, "Mata Nusghi li-hathihi al-Surkhat?" [When Do We Listen to those Cries?]. Al-Bab criticized the Arab leaders for their passivity toward Palestinian sufferings and Israeli terrorism. *Al-Ahali* on December 24, 2003 [Arabic Sources]

657. Mustafa Bakri, "Lematha al-Samt?" [Why the Silence?], *al-Ushuu* newspaper on September 15, 2003 [Arabic Source]

end the intifada, and Mubarak as a US ally had to follow those orders despite Palestinian pain and blood.<sup>658</sup>

The Fatah – Hamas clash and the subsequent Gaza takeover initiated an organized condemnation campaign from official and non-official papers alike. The campaign reflected Egypt’s both uneasiness toward and suspicion of Hamas. This attitude stemmed from the historical ties between Hamas and the Brotherhood. Reports also stated that Gaza housed radical groups, which might infiltrate Egyptian territories through the tunnels and threaten national security. Other reasons encouraging negative press campaigns included the Egyptian-Fatah relations and Egypt’s perception that Fatah stood for Oslo and the peace option instead of Hamas militant strategy. Further, the reported ties between Hamas and Iran represented yet another challenge to the Egyptian regime. Egypt severed its diplomatic relations with Iran following the Islamic Revolution of 1979. Egypt feared that Hamas with its alleged Iranian ties across the borders would disturb regional power-order, compete with Egypt’s Arab leadership, and jeopardize Egypt’s national security. Indeed, several editorials appeared in the official paper, *al-Jumhuriyah* bitterly attacking Hamas and dismissing it as an Iranian proxy. The paper’s editor Muhammad Ali Ibrahim argued that Hamas’ ultimate goals were to fulfill Iran’s orders, harm Egypt’s political and economic interests, and threaten its national security. He called for an “Iron Fist” policy against Hamas whom he accused of being criminals aiming to stab Egypt in the back. In other editorials Ibrahim stated that Iran had been spying on Egypt and the Arab world through financing Hamas and Hezbollah with the

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658. *Al-Arabi* newspaper on 11 March, 2001 / 20 May, 2001 / 7 October, 2001 / 9 June, 2002 / 26 January, 2003 / 19 October, 2003 / 18 and 25 April, 2004 / 21 November, 2004 [Arabic Sources]. Also see Fahmy Huwaydi, “Misr fi al-Asel wa al-Sourah,” [Egypt in Reality and Image], in *Kheulana alati la Tashal [Our Horses that Don not Neigh]*, (Cairo: Dar al-Shorouk, 2006), 28-34 [Arabic Source]

sole aim of controlling the Arab world and spreading its “culture of violence and terrorism” camouflaged as resistance.<sup>659</sup>

The press campaigns adopted a one-sided anti-Hamas approach which maintained that Hamas had defied the legitimate authority. The coverage seemed to intentionally overlook the fact that Hamas won a democratic election and constitutionally had the right to form a cabinet. During June 2007 several editorials denounced the Gaza takeover and warned that Hamas threatened both Palestinian and Egyptian interests and national security. For instance, Makram Muhammad Ahmed argued that Hamas took the Gazans as hostages to serve its own ends. He added that Hamas was an Iranian protégée and they serve Iranian interests in regional expansionism.<sup>660</sup> Tareq Hassan warned that Hamas was the by-product of the Muslim Brotherhood and their rise would empower the Brotherhood to challenge the regime and threaten national security.<sup>661</sup> *Al-Akhbar*’s Editor-in-chief Muhammad Barakat echoed similar themes arguing that Hamas militancy would damage the Palestinian cause and endanger Egyptian and Palestinian security.<sup>662</sup> Karam Jaber and Abdallah Kamal of *Ruz al-Yusif* newspaper went a step further, claiming that Gaza under Hamas was in fact controlled by al-Qaeda radical terrorists. Kamal argued that the presence of Hamas in Gaza meant a full-fledged Taliban state across the Egyptian border.<sup>663</sup> Lutfi Nassef chose a different angle. He accused both

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659. *Al-Jumhuriyah* on 5, 7, and 8 August, 2010 [Arabic Sources]

660. *Al-Ahram* on 24 June, 2007 [Arabic Source]. The same idea was repeated by Abdallah Kamal where he deemed Hamas as a strategic threat to Egypt’s national interests. He also argued that Hamas damages the Palestine problem because it acts as a proxy to other regimes especially the Iranian one, its acts per their orders and serves their own ends regardless of Palestinian national interests. In *Rose al-Youssef* newspaper on 8 August, 2010 [Arabic Source]

661. *Al-Ahram* on 23 June, 2007 [Arabic Source]

662. *Al-Akhbar* on 20 June, 2007 [Arabic Source]

663. *Ruz al-Yusif* newspaper on 19 June, 2007. *Al-Jumhuriyah* ran another editorial written by its Editor-in-chief warning the Hamas takeover serves the interests of the Brotherhood and radical Islamists who want to establish an Islamic emirate on the ruins of any given state. *Al-Jumhuriyah* on 23 June, 2007. The same



Fatah and Hamas of destroying the Palestinian cause and fulfilling Israel's desire to eliminate Palestinians. He added that the long awaited dream of liberating Palestine was shattered when both parties decided to destroy each other for power instead of uniting against their common enemy.<sup>664</sup>

The breach of the Rafah border in January 2008 added further complications to the deteriorated relations between Egypt and Hamas. The press waged another attack condemning the incidents at Rafah and blaming Hamas for Gazans' suffering. Makram Muhammad Ahmed held Hamas responsible for the chaos across the border. He explained that Hamas used the humanitarian situation in Gaza to blackmail Egypt and force a change in Egypt's policies toward Gaza. He added that Egypt condemned the Israeli blockade but refused to jeopardize its national security. He also attacked Hamas and dismissed their resistance as nothing but vague slogans. He added that instead of fighting the Israeli occupation, Hamas turned its weapons against members of Fatah and committed atrocities in the Gaza Strip.<sup>665</sup> Other editorials echoed the same themes condemning the border breach as a threat to Egyptian national security, which they repeated was nonnegotiable. Karam Jaber explained that Mubarak would protect Egyptian national security against all internal and external threats and at all costs.<sup>666</sup> A similar argument appeared in Muhammad Ali Ibrahim's column in *al-Jumhuriyah*. He

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theme was echoed in Magdy Muhanna's article in *al-Masry al-Youm* newspaper on 24 June, 2007 [Arabic Sources]

664. *Al-Jumhuriyah* on 23 June, 2007 [Arabic Source]

665. *Al-Ahram* on 28 January and 4 February, 2008 [Arabic Sources]. Muhammad Ahmed repeated the same argument and accused Hamas of adopting an anti-Egypt agenda and that it has to either change its attitude or endure the ramifications of its actions. He reminded Hamas that for Egypt they are nothing but a mere Palestinian faction that does not represent all Palestinians. He added that Hamas leaders were mistaken to believe that they can force their will on the Egyptian regime. *Al-Ahram* on 11 January, 2010 [Arabic Source]

666. *Ruz al-Yusif* newspaper on 25 January, 2008 [Arabic Source]

praised Mubarak's speech on the occasion of Police Day. He warned against conspiracies targeting Egypt's stability and accused those who criticized Mubarak's stance on Gaza of being paid agents.<sup>667</sup> Abdallah Kamal explained that the border incident was a direct outcome of the harsh Israeli blockade. However, he stressed that no matter how much Egyptians may sympathize with the Palestine cause, they rejected the idea of threatening their own security to solve the Gaza problem. He added that Egyptian national security could not be subject to blackmail under any pretext.<sup>668</sup> Ibrahim Nafaa of *al-Ahram* and Muhammad Barakat of *al-Akhbar* chose to praise Mubarak's "considerate" and "humanitarian" decision to open the Rafah cross border for Gazans to buy food supplies. They did not attack Hamas but called for an unconditional Fatah-Hamas reconciliation. Barakat also blamed Israel and the West for the humanitarian crisis in Gaza. Egypt, he argued, had a historical role as a secure haven for the distressed Palestinians. It is interesting to note that Barakat chose to criticize the lack of a Western conscience, while overlooked the Egyptian regime's insistence on participating in the Gaza blockade.<sup>669</sup>

Usama Sarayia argued that the term "human rights" was more than often misinterpreted. He attacked the European Union (EU) and the international organizations calling for protecting human rights while ignoring the humanitarian crisis in Gaza. Sarayia explained that the Gazans were the victims of both the Israeli occupation and Hamas' recklessness; it was only Mubarak who effectively responded to the Gaza crisis by opening the border.<sup>670</sup> Sarayia failed to mention that Gazans had forced their way through the closed gates and Mubarak had to allow them into Sinai to avoid domestic

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667. *Al-Jumhuriyah* on 25 January, 2008 [Arabic Source]

668. *Ruz al-Yusif* newspaper on 25 January, 2008 [Arabic Source]

669. *Al-Ahram* and *al-Akhbar* on 25 January, 2008 [Arabic Sources]

670. *Al-Ahram* on 25 January, 2008 [Arabic Sources]

agitation. Ibrahim Seada argued in his daily column that the internal Palestinian conflict gave Israel the opportunity to freeze peace negotiations under the pretext that it cannot negotiate peace while Hamas shells Israeli settlements. Seada blamed Hamas for escalating the situation to serve its own ends and drag the Arab world into a web of violence. He accused Hamas of using the humanitarian crisis of over a million and a half Palestinians trapped in Gaza to achieve any political win regardless of price.<sup>671</sup>

Fahmy Huwaydi however, adopted a rare opposing argument. In a series of articles Huwaydi criticized the Egyptian regime's intolerant policy against Hamas and the Gaza Strip. In one of his articles, Huwaydi warned against the loose use of the term "national security." He argued that this term needed redefinition within a specified parameter. The regime had repeatedly utilized the term "protecting national security" beyond its original scope. He added that the Mubarak regime used this term to protect its own interests and silence the opposition.<sup>672</sup> In another article, Huwaydi criticized the government and its press for exaggerating the Rafah border incidents. He explained that a national security threat is defined as an imminent danger that jeopardizes the state's ability to protect its national interests. He added that the border breach cannot be defined under that rubric as the Gazans acted out of desperation and their urgent need for basic supplies. For Huwaydi, the Rafah incident did not mount to any threat to national security. He reminded the regime that the Gazans were Arab neighbors in need and not

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671. *Al-Akhbar*, "Akher Amoud" [The Last Column] on 25 January, 2008 [Arabic Source]

672. Fahmy Huwaydi, "Redefining National Security," in *al-Dostour* newspaper on 11 August, 2008 [Arabic Source]

enemies. The real threat to national security, Huwaydi maintained, was the Israeli occupation, its nuclear stations, and its numerous attempts to weaken Egypt.<sup>673</sup>

The previous section attempted to analyze the press during the Mubarak years. Like the Nasserist and Sadatist eras, the official press under Mubarak maintained its intimated attachment to the regime and adopted its discourse. The newly established independent newspapers provided an alternative venue to discuss crucial topics like state corruption and the decline of Egypt's regional role. Nonetheless, the opposition press suffered from various obstacles including lawsuits, intimidations, as well as organized campaigns questioning their credibility, and accusing them of bias and suspicious financing. On the Palestine question, the press maintained the regime's course. By the early 1980s Mubarak focused on regaining Egypt's regional status, the press started to report on the PLO and referred to it as the legitimate representative of all Palestinians. The two uprisings gained wide coverage in Egyptian press. Nonetheless, the official papers focused on the image of the victimized Palestinian rather than that of the fighter. This approach resonated with the regime's stance and its insistence on peace negotiations as the only viable path to resolve the Arab-Israeli conflict, and its dismissal of armed resistance as futile. Egyptian-Palestinian tensions occurred following the Gaza takeover in 2007. The regime sided with Fatah and the press waged an anti-Hamas campaign accusing them of being Iranian proxies plotting against Egyptian national security. The breach of the Rafah border in early 2008 raised more tensions. Egyptian officials made

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673. Fahmy Huwaydi, "Hakawa al-Amen al-Qawmy," [The Stories of National Security], in *al-Ahram* on 19 February, 2008. In another article Huwaydi criticized the Egyptian Foreign Minister for his aggressive declarations against the Palestinians and his threat that any attempt to breach the border will not be tolerated and would lead to severe repercussions. Huwaydi explained that Israel had repeatedly fired at the Egyptian borders and killed Egyptian soldiers but the regime maintained utter silence, while getting aggressive toward the helpless besieged Gazans. "Arrogant Diplomacy and Suspicious Media," in *al-Dostour* newspaper on 4 July, 2008 [Arabic Sources]

several hostile declarations and the government press initiated further campaigns blaming Hamas for the Gaza crisis and warning that Egypt would not tolerate their schemes. The independent papers showed more, running several editorials criticizing the regime's stance which aided Israel and defied international humanitarian ethics.

The following section will explore the legal status of Palestinian refugees in Egypt during the Mubarak era. It will attempt to investigate whether or not their conditions witnessed any improvement over the course of three decades.

### **The Legal Status of Palestinian Refugees during the Mubarak Era**

The legal status of Palestinian refugees residing in Egypt did not witness improvements during Mubarak's era. Most of Sadat's harsh laws of the late 1970s remained intact. Palestinian refugees remained legally defined as foreigners and never reverted to their status during the Nasser era as equal nationals. Although Mubarak repeatedly stressed his commitment to the Palestine cause, his declarations remained confined to the realm of rhetoric and did not aim to improve the status of the Palestinian community.

Residency laws for Palestinian refugees did not witness amendments. Palestinian refugees are granted either a special residency permit or a temporary one depending on the date of arrival.<sup>674</sup> Most Palestinians residing in Egypt arrived after the war of 1967 and fall under the temporary residence category. The permit in this case is valid for one

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674. For a detailed analysis of this point refer to chapter (2), 38-40. In 2011 the Minister of Interior issued Decree No. 1248 of 2011 related to the rates for renewing Traveling Documents (TD) for Palestinian refugees. The first article stipulated that the fees for issuing a TD are one-hundred and ten Egyptian pounds. The second article explained that there are two types of the TD. One is the ordinary type, valid for five years and could be extended for two more years only once. The second type is the mechanized TD; it is valid for a period of five years and cannot be extended. Al-Waqa'e al-Masriya: Issue No. 178 (Supplement) on August 3, 2011 [Arabic Source]

to three years depending on Egyptian laws of entry.<sup>675</sup> Residency permits also depend on providing a valid reason for staying in the country, such as, education enrollment, valid work permit, or marriage. Those who fail to provide a reason for their stay risk imprisonment or deportation. Palestinian business-men who have enterprises operating in Egypt for over twenty years face difficulty in renewing their residency permits. They explained that during the eighties and nineties the Egyptian government provided several incentives to encourage Palestinian investment in Egypt's economic sector. Among those initiatives was providing the Palestinian investor and his family a residency permit valid for five years. However, in 2008 a new rule stipulated that Palestinian investors have to renew their residency permit every year and the permit is valid for one year only. In a recent press report, Palestinian businessman Fayek Belal explained that the government informed them that this regulation was temporarily and meant to ensure the authenticity of the projects, however, the situation remained unchanged. Belal added that the process of renewing residency permits takes from three to six months to fulfill all the required documentation. The prolonged processes hinder the investors from properly running or promoting their projects. They also face other difficulties including their inability to drive their own cars as the driving licenses expire with the residency permit. Their children also cannot enroll in schools as education administrations require valid residency permits to accept enrollment applications.<sup>676</sup> Egypt is a signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention since 1981, yet very few Palestinians are registered with UNHCR. In fact Palestinians in

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675. Khalil, "Socioeconomic Rights of Refugees: The Case of Palestinian Refugees in Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria," 18-19

676. *Al-Ahram* on 18 October 2011, and 14 October 2012 [Arabic Source]. It is important to note that this regulation targeted Palestinian investors only and they ask for being equated in treatment with other foreign investors in Egypt. However, till now nothing has changed regarding this issue.

Egypt fall under the category of “others” in UNHCR Egypt Fact Sheets.<sup>677</sup> Those few registered with UNHCR and recognized as refugees receive six-month renewable residency permits.<sup>678</sup> Palestinian refugees with residency permit receive a five-year travel document. Whereas those registered with UNHCR should apply for Convention Travel documents at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. According to the 1954 agreement between UNHCR and the Egyptian government, such refugees should receive a travel document with a return visa valid for a limited but sufficient duration, except for matters related to public security. In reality, however, the government does not automatically issue the said documents, but grants them occasionally and on a case-by-case basis.<sup>679</sup> In addition, UNHCR hardly offers assistance or protection to Palestinian refugees who fall under Egyptian mandate.<sup>680</sup>

Thousands of Palestinians originally from the Gaza Strip hold Egyptian travel documents without residency permits. Those documents were issued during the period of Egyptian rule in Gaza and are used for traveling purposes.<sup>681</sup> During the crisis of the Gulf war and the expulsion of Palestinians from Libya in 1995, Egyptian authorities denied

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677. UNHCR Egypt Fact Sheet, December 2010, <http://www.unhcr.org/4d2ec46b9.html> UNCHR Egypt Fact Sheet, September 2011, [www.unhcr.org/4e9c46999.html](http://www.unhcr.org/4e9c46999.html), UNHCR Egypt Fact Sheet, December 2011, <http://www.unhcr.org/4f2a89fe9.html> UNHCR Egypt Fact Sheet, January 2012, <http://www.unhcr.org/4f4c956c9.html>

678. Khalil, “Socioeconomic Rights of Refugees: The Case of Palestinian Refugees in Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria,” 19

679. Sherifa Shafie, “Egypt,” <http://www.forcedmigration.org/research-resources/expert-guides/egypt/fmo029.pdf> , 10

680. Ibid. 11, There are about 200 Palestinians registered with UNHCR. Documentation processes for Palestinian refugees in Egypt go through the Palestinian refugees section in the Department of Migration and Citizenship and the Ministry of Interior and not through UNHCR. In fact referring Palestinian refugees to the Ministry of Interior indicates that the government approach the refugees file from a security mentality and not from a social and humanitarian perspective. This attitude shows the state’s detached approach toward refugee communities and its unwillingness to integrate them.

681. For further explanation see chapter (2)

holders of such documents from entering Egyptian territories.<sup>682</sup> Residency permits renewal regulations did not change from the Sadat era. Further, in 1984 the government issued the Law of Developing State's Resources. This law stipulated that all foreigners residing in Egypt including Palestinians had to pay forty-two and a half Egyptian pounds in residence fees. This newly added fee increased the financial burden on Palestinian refugees who were required to pay for renewing their residency permits, education, health care, and show a monthly proof of spending an equivalent of a hundred and eighty US dollars. It also should be noted that only two percent of Palestinian refugees in Egypt are considered financially able. The majority of face tremendous difficulties in obtaining formal jobs and had to depend on the less-secure informal market.<sup>683</sup> This law also contradicted with the provisions of the 1951 Convention. Article 29 stipulated that signatory states shall not impose upon refugees charges, duties, or taxes of any description higher than those levied on their nationals.<sup>684</sup> It is important to note that the second paragraph of article 1D of the 1951 Convention should be applicable to the case of Palestinian refugees residing in Egypt. This article stipulated that those refugees, who do not receive protection or assistance from any UN organs, should directly fall under the mandate of UNHCR.<sup>685</sup> Since Palestinian refugees residing in Egypt do not receive assistance from UNRWA, accordingly they are "*ipso facto* entitled to the benefits of the

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682. The Libyan regime took the Oslo Accords and the PLO agreements with Israel as a pretext to expel thousands of Palestinians working in Libya. Egypt: Human Rights Watch World Report 1992, [http://www.hrw.org/reports/1992/WR92/MEW1-01.htm#P89\\_40926](http://www.hrw.org/reports/1992/WR92/MEW1-01.htm#P89_40926) , also see Abbas Shiblak, "Residency Status and Civil Rights of Palestinian Refugees in Arab Countries," Palestinian Diaspora and Refugee Center (SHAML), 1996, 14

683. Yassin, "The Palestinians in Egypt," 32

684. Convention and Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees, [www.unhcr.org/3b66c2aa10.html](http://www.unhcr.org/3b66c2aa10.html) [Full Text] , 28

685. The Revised Note on the Applicability of Article 1D of the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees to Palestinian Refugees, <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/pdfid/4add77d42.pdf> [Full Text]



[1951] Convention.”<sup>686</sup> As a signatory of the Convention, Egyptian constitution stipulated that all UN-conventions signed by Egypt and published in the Official Gazette become part of its national legislative system.<sup>687</sup> Nonetheless, the government overlooked those provisions and seems unwilling to co-operate with UNHCR in the process of documenting and extending international protection to refugees.<sup>688</sup> In fact the state maintains the case-by-case method when approaching refugees’ needs. This method violates equality principles and renders refugees vulnerable to arbitrary decisions.

In 1996 the state issued Law 99 which amended some provisions in Law 89 of 1960 related to the Entry and Residence of Aliens in the Territories of the United Arab Republic. Article 8 stipulated that nationals from certain countries have to report personally within seven days of their arrival to the police station in their residency district. They have to explain the purpose of their arrival, the duration of their stay, and present all necessary documentation. Such nationals also have to notify the Aliens Registration Office or the police station in their residing area in case they change their residency address or move to another city.<sup>689</sup> Following this amendment the Minister of Interior issued Decree 7067 of 1996. The first article stipulated that Palestinians entering Egypt fall under the regulations introduced in Article 8 of Law 89 of 1960 as amended by Law 99 of 1996.<sup>690</sup> By including Palestinians in this decree, the state proved its securitization approach toward refugees. Palestinians pose a special situation where their

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686. Ibid.

687. Article No. 151 of the 1971 Constitution, [http://www.sis.gov.eg/ar/LastPage.aspx?Category\\_ID=73](http://www.sis.gov.eg/ar/LastPage.aspx?Category_ID=73) [Full Text, Arabic Source]

Article No. 145 of the 2012 Constitution, [http://egelections-2011.appspot.com/Referendum2012/dostor\\_masr\\_final.pdf](http://egelections-2011.appspot.com/Referendum2012/dostor_masr_final.pdf) [Full Text, Arabic Source]

688. “Egypt: A Quarter-Century after Camp David, Palestinians Face Discrimination, Says Experts,” <http://reliefweb.int/node/211832> on 21 June 2006

689. The Official Gazette: Issue No. 71, 24 March 1960 [Arabic Source]

690. Al-Waqa’e al-Masriya: Issue No. 231, 13 October 1996 [Arabic Source]

statelessness should provoke reliability instead of legal rigidity. Article 26 of the 1951 Convention called for granting freedom of movement to refugees within the territory of the contracting state. The article however, left the application of this condition depending on the regulations generally applied by each state regarding its alien communities. This leaves refugees vulnerable to the state's arbitrary laws and regulations.

Further, until 2004 Palestinian children born to Palestinian fathers and Egyptian mother were not entitled to Egyptian citizenship, as the Egyptian civil code did not grant the mothers the right to pass her nationality to the offspring. In this case those children do not fall under Egyptian laws as they are defined as foreigners despite having Egyptian mothers. Therefore, they would suffer from several difficulties including being deprived of the right to free education and health care. In the future they would also be deprived of their political rights; facing difficulty in obtaining residency permits, and securing a stable job.<sup>691</sup> In 2004 the government issued Law 154 of 2004 to amend certain provisions of Law 26 of 1975 on Egyptian nationality. Accordingly the Minister of Interior issued Ministerial Decree 12025 of the year 2004. The first article stipulated that Egyptian mothers can now pass their nationality to their offspring born to non-Egyptian fathers.<sup>692</sup>

The law did not name any exceptions and its provisions should have been applicable to all Egyptian women married to foreigners. Nonetheless, the government decided to exclude Egyptian women married to Palestinians from benefiting from this

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691. Safaa Essam al-Din, "Bureaucracy, Fees, and Palestinian Citizenship are Obstacles Facing Children of Egyptian Women," *al-Shorouk* newspaper on August 27, 2009 [Arabic Source]

692. Al-Waqa'e al-Masriya: Issue No. 166 (Supplement), 26 July 2004: Ministry of Interior: Decree No. 12025 of the year 2004 Concerning Certain Provisions Enforcing Law No. 154 of the year 2004 on Amendment of Certain Provisions of Law No. 26 of the year 1975 concerning the Egyptian Nationality.

law. The government argued that as a member in the Arab League, Egypt abides by its resolution of the year 1959 which stated: “Palestinians must not be granted any other nationality in order to preserve the Palestinian identity.”<sup>693</sup> However, this decision became in fact obsolete following a report submitted by the permanent Palestinian delegation to the Arab League on 30 September 2003. The delegation stressed that given Egypt’s historical role in supporting the Palestine cause, there is no danger in passing Egyptian citizenship to children born to Egyptian mothers and Palestinian fathers.<sup>694</sup> Therefore, the Ministry of Interior’s insistence on rejecting all requests submitted by Egyptian women married to Palestinians is in fact illegal. It also reveals an underlying political will that opposes the integration of half-Palestinian half-Egyptian into Egyptian society. The roots for this attitude date back to the Sadat era which fostered a series of misperceptions and dismissed most Palestinians as an untrustworthy security threat.

Following the January 25 revolution, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued Ministerial Decree 1231 on 2 May 2011. It permitted children born to Egyptian mothers and Palestinian fathers to acquire Egyptian citizenship and directed the Ministry of Interior to take all the necessary steps.<sup>695</sup> However, the process did not progress smoothly. Several applications faced unexplained delays and the Ministry of Interior

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693. “Children without Identity: the Consequences of Egyptian Nationality Law.” A joint report between the Egyptian Organization for Human Rights and the Egyptian Centre for Women’s Rights, 2 December 2004, 22

694. Ibid. 22-23

695. “The Ministry of Interior Approves Granting Egyptian Citizenship to Children Born to Egyptian Women Married to Palestinians,” <http://www.youm7.com/News.asp?NewsID=404069> on 3 May 2011, also see “Granting Egyptian Citizenship to 716 Children Born to Egyptian Mothers and Foreign Fathers,” [www.egynews.net](http://www.egynews.net) on 25 September 2011, also see “300 Palestinians from Gaza Seek Egyptian Citizenship on Monthly Basis,” <http://www.youm7.com/News.asp?NewsID=465955> on 1 August 2011 [Arabic Sources]. As of the year 2013 reports indicated that a total of 13500 Palestinian Gazans born to Egyptian mothers have legally acquired the Egyptian citizenship, <http://www.akhbarak.net/news/2013/02/28/2181657/articles/11556927> on 28 February 2013 [Arabic Source]

seemed to prioritize the applications of those who hold court orders entitling them to acquire the citizenship.<sup>696</sup> Other complications stemmed from the rejection of many applications without clear legal explanation except for citing the vague phrase of “rejected due to security concerns.”<sup>697</sup>

Palestinian refugees in Egypt have been subject to extensive arbitrary deportation since the Sadat era. Despite the fact that both Egyptian legislation and the 1951 Convention stipulate certain legal measurements before issuing a deportation verdict, the Ministry of Interior maintained deporting Palestinians based on the ambiguous phrase: “due to security concerns”. None of the deportation decrees explained the charges, nor did they indicate that the deported person got the right for legal representation or appeal.<sup>698</sup> The case of Tamim Barghouti is an example of many arbitrary deportation incidents. Barghouti was born in Egypt to an Egyptian mother and a Palestinian father.<sup>699</sup> He also finished his education in Egypt. Barghouti used to go to the American University in Cairo (AUC) located in Tahrir Square to study at its library for his post graduate studies. On 20 March 2003 news spread that the United States had started its war on Iraq. The opposition, students of the AUC, and Cairo University poured into Tahrir Square to protest the war and the regime’s passivity. Like most of the students, Barghouti participated in the peaceful protests. Two days later and after midnight, security forces

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696. Essam Hashish, “An Egyptian Mother’s Cry to the Minister of Interior,” *al-Akhbar* on 20 March 2011 [Arabic Source]

697. Sample Cases: Ministry of Interior Resolutions No. 1292 of 9 August 2011, 1368 of 22 August 2011, and 1441 of 7 September 2011. All the previous resolutions rejected applications submitted from Palestinians born to Egyptian mother to acquire Egyptian citizenship. All resolutions cited “security concerns” and “protecting general wellbeing” as reasons for rejecting the previous applications. Published in *al-Waqa’ e al-Masriya*: Issues: 202 on 4 September 2011, 215 on 19 September 2011, and 225 on 1 October 2011 respectively [Arabic Sources]

698. Refer to chapter (2), and chapter (3)

699. Refer to chapter (3), for the background on Mourid Barghouti

arrived at his home. They arrested him and searched the house without presenting a clear legal warrant. They took Barghouti to an unspecified location. A couple of days later he was forced to leave the country based on the claim that he was a security threat. Like the case of his father Mourid Barghouti who was deported in the late 1970s, Tamim went through the entire humiliating process. It took his father more than twenty years to return to Egypt, but in the son's case the persistence of Egyptian and international activists led to his return a month later.<sup>700</sup> Barghouti's case exemplifies the ruthlessness of arbitrary deportation. More crucially, it shows the ramifications of Sadat's backlash, which transformed Palestinians to foreigners and left them vulnerable to the regime's whims. In this case Barghouti was treated as a foreigner despite being born in Egypt to an Egyptian mother. In similar cases when Egyptian students are arrested in protests, they are released within weeks or months at most. As a foreigner, Barghouti was harshly forced to leave the only country he knew. The following tables show samples of the numbers of deported Palestinians during the Mubarak era.

Table (1): Palestinians deported from Egypt between years 1982 to 1990:

	1982	1983	1984	1985 - 1986	1987	1988	1989	1990
The Numbers	261	67	127-214-290	178-188	201-14	26-244	20-34-267	68-131-2
Reason for Deportation	General wellbeing	same	same	same	same	same	same	same
Decree No.	1788	308	370-867-	294-314	883-1768	25-1884	39-82-5070	1311-2268-

700. Mourid Barghouti, "The Dawn Visitor," in *I was Born There, I was Born Here*, translated from Arabic by Humphrey Davies. The American University in Cairo Press, 2011, 195-210

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Public- ation Date in al- Waq- 'e al- Masriy -a	17 Nov. 1982	19 Marc h 1983	30 May 198 4 / 19 Sept . 198 4 / 20 Dec. 198 4	4 Aug. 1985 / 15 Aug. 1985	7 Sept.1987/1 7 Jan. 1988	31 Jan.1988 / 30 Oct.1988	23 Jan. 1989 / 8 Feb.1989 / 23 Nov.198 9	20 Marc h 1990 / 7 June 1990 / 2 Jan. 1991

Table (2): Palestinians deported from Egypt between years 1991-1998:<sup>701</sup>

	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998
The Numbers	86-175- 215- 241- 249- 286- 271- 286	31- 130- 148- 163- 253- 6	35-39-81- 121-149- 149-201- 225-263- 290-19	39-69- 107- 199- 225-55- 55-55	76-258- 275-283	54- 100- 177- 280	58- 160- 260- 288	44- 133- 284
Reason for deportati on	General wellbei ng	same	same	same	same	same	same	same
Decree No.	1650- 3883- 4329- 4974- 5252- 52-73- 5524- 5859	238- 2290 - 2892 - 3303 - 5374 - 6693	940-959- 2113- 2847- 4624- 6322- 6576- 8393- 8814- 9428	1041- 1945- 2152- 3197- 7399- 8329- 11547- 11548- 12690	3248- 13278- 15217- 16452	470- 1380 - 4592 - 8153	164- 6495 - 1133 9- 2232	51- 1614- 1121 0

701. Tables (1) and (2) [Arabic Sources]

Publicati on Date in al- Waq'a'e al- Masriya	11 April /17 Aug. /24 Sept./ 26 Oct./4 Nov. / 30 Nov. / 17 Dec.19 91	5 Feb. 1992 / 7 June 1992 / 4 July 1992 / 21Jul y 1992 / 7 Jan. 1993	10 Feb. 1993/15 Feb. 1993/8 April, 1993/29 May,1993 /7 July 1993/8 Sept.1993/ 10 Oct.1993/ 12 Nov.1993/ 22 Dec.1993/ 22 Jan.1994	14 Feb.199 4/ 26 March 1994/ 12 May 1994/ 5 Sept. 1994/ 5 Oct.199 4/8 March 1995	2 April/ 13 Nov./ 3December /12 Dec.1995	7 Marc h / 8 May / 10 Aug. / 9 Dec. 1996	13 Marc h / 20 July / 16 Nov./ 18 Dec. 1997	24 Feb./ 16 June/ 13 Dec. ,1998
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The previous tables show that Palestinians faced arbitrary deportation on regular bases. All the cases cited “preserving social wellbeing” as the common reason for all deportation cases. All the ministerial decrees followed the same format with no legal information explaining the case or justifying the verdict. The tables also show that the period during the Second Gulf war between the years 1991 to 1994 witnessed a surge in the number of deported Palestinians. This might have resulted from the PLO’s stance on the war. Arafat denounced the US intervention, a rhetoric shared by many Egyptians especially the students and the opposition. The regime by contrast, supported the US operation and dispatched units from the Egyptian army to participate in liberating Kuwait. Deporting many Palestinians during that period reflected the regime’s frustration with the Palestinian stance, and its intolerance toward sources that might trigger mass opposition to its policies. This proves that refugees’ status remains highly dependent on

political relations and national interests. Deportation cases continued throughout the Mubarak era till after the revolution.<sup>702</sup>

Arbitrary deportation is not the only case of violating refugees' rights. Palestinian refugees since the late 1970s experienced systematic marginalization mounting to a state of invisibility. However, the case of Palestinian refugees in Canada camp in Rafah shows that the government intentionally ignored the presence of an entire community residing on its territories.

### **Canada Camp**

The Canada refugee camp is the only Palestinian refugee camp in Egypt. Its history dates back to the year 1973. Israeli forces decided to establish routes within Palestinian refugee camps in Gaza for security reasons. About five hundred Palestinians had to relocate to another spot in Rafah; a plot previously used by the UN that held Canadian forces. Following the signing of the Camp David Accords of 1978, the city of Rafah was divided into two halves on 25 April 1982. The area hosting the Canada camp came under Egyptian sovereignty. This split had major effects on the Palestinian refugees inhabiting the camp. Thousands of them were cut off from their families and their sources of income. In fact, the early wave of Gaza tunnels appeared during that era. Palestinians in Egyptian Rafah dug some tunnels to maintain ties with their relatives and help smuggle some goods. The tunnels came under attack in the Egyptian parliament since the

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702. Ministry of Interior: Decree No. 13485 of 1999, al-Waqa'e al-Masriya: Issue No. 267 on 24 November 1999/ Decree No. 958 of 2009, al-Waqa'e al-Masriya: Issue No. 130 on 6 June 2009/ Decree No. 1119 of 2009, al-Waqa'e al-Masriya: Issue No. 149 on 28 June 2009/ Decree No. 815 of 2010, al-Waqa'e al-Masriya: Issue No. 103 on 6 May 2010/ Decree No. 1129 of 2010, al-Waqa'e al-Masriya: Issue No. 138 on 16 June 2010/ Decrees No. 406-407 of 2011, al-Waqa'e al-Masriya: Issue No. 73 on 29 March 2011 [Arabic Sources]



1990s.<sup>703</sup> The expansion of the tunnel networks and their impact on Egypt's national security remain highly debatable till the present. After exhaustive negotiations, Egypt agreed to acknowledge the residents of the camp as temporary refugees. The government issued them Egyptian travel documents renewable every six month without a work permit.<sup>704</sup> Residents of the camp depended mainly on assistance provided by UNWRA, and engaged in small-scale agriculture and commerce activities. UNWRA fully financed primary education. Preparatory and secondary education depended on limited Egyptian aid of nearly twenty thousand Egyptian pounds equivalent to six thousand US dollars. Students seeking university degrees had to travel to al-Arish, Ismailia, or Cairo. However, when the camp's youth attempted to engage in the first intifada through Egyptian territories, the regime retaliated by limiting their numbers in Egyptian universities to a maximum of fifty students.<sup>705</sup>

The governments of Egypt and Israel agreed that the camp existed on a temporary basis and that Israel was committed to relocate the refugees into another area in Gaza. Between 1989 and 1991 Israel approved the relocation of one hundred and fifty Palestinian families in Tal al-Sultan area in the Gaza Strip. The PLO financed the relocation process but following its financial crisis during the Gulf war the process stopped. Further relocations occurred in 1994 after the formation of the PA. The process however, was interrupted following the second uprising of 2000, the peace impasse, and repeated Israeli raids on Gaza. The camp received newcomers fleeing Israeli raids on Gaza. Recent reports indicate that the camp holds about four thousand Palestinians who

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703. *Al-Ahram* on 2 March 1995 [Arabic Source]

704. Sari Hanafi and Olivier Saint-Martin, "The Palestinians in North Sinai," *Palestinian Diaspora and Refugee Center (SHAML)*, (Ramallah: Palestine, 1996), 55 [Arabic Source]

705. *Ibid.* 56

live in impoverished conditions. Following the Gaza takeover and sealing the border, the refugees lost UNWRA assistance and are completely ignored by the Egyptian government. They live on whatever assistance available through the residents of Rafah and al-Arish or their relatives who have a permanent residence permit.<sup>706</sup> Recent reports indicate that their living conditions are rapidly deteriorating. They are cut-off from their relatives in Gaza and unable to obtain any jobs in Egypt. Although residing in Egypt for years, the government never acknowledged their status and did not propose any initiatives to improve their living conditions.<sup>707</sup>

Since the Sadat years Palestinians like other foreigners had to pay to access education and healthcare services. Egypt had also made reservations regarding Article 22 [paragraph (1)] of the 1951 Convention regarding equating refugee children with nationals in term of accessing elementary education.<sup>708</sup> Palestinian children could only apply to private schools and pay their tuition in foreign currency. Ministerial Decree 162 of 1989 stipulated that each Palestinian student should pay what is equivalent to one hundred and twenty Egyptian pounds to enroll in primary schools. The amount increased to one hundred and sixty pounds for preparatory schools and reached two hundred and fifty pounds for secondary ones. Students also had to pay an equivalent of one hundred and fifty US dollars to receive their certificates. In 1991, the government increased university fees by twenty percent. Students in colleges had to pay an equivalent of two thousand Sterling pounds for their first year, and an equivalent of one thousand Sterling pounds for subsequent years. In scientific colleges, students in their first year had to pay

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706. Ahmed Farahat, "Palestinian Refugees in Egypt: The History and the Call to Support Them," <http://pulpit.alwatanvoice.com/articles/2011/03/04/221929.html> [Arabic Source]

707. Ibid. also see Abbas Shibliak, "Living in Limbo: Preliminary Observations on Canada Refugee Camp," 1 January 1992 [http://repository.forcedmigration.org/show\\_metadata.jsp?pid=fmo:2148](http://repository.forcedmigration.org/show_metadata.jsp?pid=fmo:2148)

708. See chapter (3)

an equivalent of three thousand Sterling pounds and an equivalent of a thousand and five-hundred Sterling pounds in subsequent years. Fees for post graduate studies required more than double the previous fees. Those rates complicated accessing education and burdened the already struggling Palestinian families, resulting in an increase in illiteracy rates.<sup>709</sup>

Refugee children unable to financially enroll in private schools access education through centers holding partnerships with UNHCR along with assistance from some church groups. For instance, the Catholic Relief Services implemented a partnership with UNHCR in 2002. It provides educational grants for school children and illiterate adults. St. Andrews Refugee Ministry, founded in 1979, provides educational programs for children including classes in English, Math, and Science and information technology. There also classes for adults in English, Business, Drama, and Computers. The Sacred Heart Church in Sakakini, Cairo runs five schools for educating refugee children.<sup>710</sup> However, those centers have limited spaces and resources. The government rarely acknowledges the centers' degrees. In order to get official certificates, the centers had to pay high fees to allow their students to sit for exams in officially accredited centers.<sup>711</sup>

In 1992, the Minister of Education issued Decree 24 related to procedures governing foreign children's access to Egyptian schools. Article 5 of the decree gave Sudanese, Jordanian, and Libyan children the right to access free primary education in state-owned schools just as Egyptian students. The same article extended its provisions to Palestinian students provided that their parents work for the Egyptian government, the

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709. Yassin, "The Palestinians in Egypt," 26

710. Shafie, "Egypt," <http://www.forcedmigration.org/research-resources/expert-guides/egypt/fmo029.pdf>

711. See chapter (3)

public sector, the military in Egypt, or if the parents are retired.<sup>712</sup> Nonetheless, the decree stipulated certain conditions to enroll Palestinian students in public schools. This in fact contradicted principles of equality and deprived children who do not meet those conditions from accessing free primary education. Further, issuing ministerial decrees instead of formal laws creates much confusion in interpretation. Formal laws become effective the moment they are published in the Official Gazette, while decrees go through a prolonged cycle from the ministerial level to school administration level. Abiding by the laws is mandatory, while decrees occasionally remain ineffective. Additional complications arise in case laws get amended; decrees in this case become obsolete.<sup>713</sup> Besides, the overall education system in Egypt suffers from several strains. The overcrowded Egyptian public schools, as well as high rates of drop-out and illiteracy show the government's inability to extend access to education to every Egyptian child which in return further minimalizes chances for refugees.

Following Sadat's regulations of the late 1970s that classified Palestinians as foreigners, they automatically lost eligibility to receive free healthcare in state-owned hospitals. Refugees recognized by UNHCR receive medical treatment through Caritas Egypt, UNHCR's main implementing partner. Caritas covers fifty percent of total medical expenses, twenty-five percent of doctors' fees, and in impoverished cases provides all costs of hospitalization.<sup>714</sup> In 2005, the Minister of Health issued a new regulation allowing all foreigners residing in Egypt to access primary and preventive

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712. Decree No. 24 of 1992. The Official Gazette: Vol. No. 54 on 3 March 1992 [Arabic Source]

713. Katarzyna Grabska, "Who Asked Them Anyway? Rights, Policies and Wellbeing of Refugees in Egypt," Development Research Center on Migration, Globalization, and Poverty. University of Sussex, July, 2006, 19-20

714. Shafie, "Egypt," <http://www.forcedmigration.org/research-resources/expert-guides/egypt/fmo029.pdf>

healthcare.<sup>715</sup> However, the deteriorating conditions of Egyptian public hospitals push refugees registered with UNHCR to wait for better care with Caritas. Those unrecognized by UNHCR like the majority of Palestinian refugees have to either seek low-quality public hospitals or charitable independent clinics.

Employment is another sensitive topic in Egypt. Egypt suffers from high rates of unemployment and hiring foreigners is a sensitive matter. Egypt did not formulate a reservation to Article 17 of the 1951 Convention related to wage-labor. However, Egyptian legislation set many conditions to restrict hiring foreigners. Many Egyptian officials hold negative perceptions of refugees including that they are “unskilled, uneducated, and illiterate” and, “compete for jobs with poor Egyptians.”<sup>716</sup> Until 2003, refugee identity card issued through UNHCR (also known as the blue card), carried the stamp “Not permitted to work.” Negotiations between UNHCR and the Egyptian government failed to lift this limitation. UNHCR approached the case thorough stressing the refugees’ right to work, while the Egyptian government argued that refugees are only prohibited from working in the public sector. Taking into account that the private sector is highly competitive and requires certain qualifications, refugees remain dependent on the insecure and unstable informal market.

Labor Law 12 of 2003, articles 27 to 30 explained regulations concerning hiring foreigners. Article 27 stipulated that hiring foreigners in any Egyptian economic sector must depend on observing reciprocity conditions. The regulations issued during the Nasser era included clauses clearly exempting Palestinians from meeting reciprocity

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715. Grabska, “Who Asked Them Anyway? Rights, Policies and Wellbeing of Refugees in Egypt,” 22-23

716. Ibid. 22

conditions due to their statelessness. But since Palestinians became defined as foreigners, the article left it to the competent minister to determine which nationals qualify for exemption from this condition. Articles 28 and 29 stipulated that obtaining work permits and valid residency was mandatory. Article 29 stated that the fees to be collected for issuing a new work permit would not be less than one thousand Egyptian pounds. Article 30 stipulated that aliens should not compete with the local workforce or exceed a total of ten percent of the total number of workers. The article also stated that the concerned minister should issue a decree determining which professions aliens are prohibited from practicing.<sup>717</sup> However, Article 6 of Resolution 136 of 2003 related to the procedures and conditions of work permits for foreigners exempted some foreigners including Palestinians from paying the high fees for work permits.<sup>718</sup> Since most Palestinian refugees in Egypt suffer from low-living standards and inability to access enough education, they lack sufficient skills to compete with other well-trained foreigners. Accordingly, Palestinians fall prey to the informal market, which fails to provide a stable job and adequate insurance.

The right to ownership did not fare better. Many Palestinians who settled in Egypt descended from a peasant background. When they arrived in Egypt, they bought small plots for cultivation purposes. Although Egyptian laws prohibit foreigners from owning agricultural lands, during the Nasser years Palestinians were exempted from this law.<sup>719</sup> However, in 1985 and despite the improvement in Egyptian-Palestinian relations, the government issued Law 104 of 1985. This law canceled the exception granted to

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717. Labor Law No. 12 of 2003 <http://www.egypt.gov.eg/english/laws/labour/default.aspx> [Full Text]

718. This exemption is applicable also to Greeks, Sudanese, and Italians based on bilateral agreements and special relations and not because of the special conditions of Palestinians as refugees, in Grabska, "Who Asked Them Anyway? Rights, Policies and Wellbeing of Refugees in Egypt," 21

719. First clause of Law No. 15 of 1963, refer to chapter (2), 47

Palestinians in Law 15 of 1963 related to land ownership. Despite the fact that new laws should not apply to preceding cases, this law contained a retroactive clause. In other words, it annulled all previous Palestinian ownership. It also prohibited Palestinian owners from selling their lands to their Egyptian wives and stipulated that they sell to unrelated Egyptian buyers. Those who failed to comply with this law faced the confiscation of their property and imprisonment.<sup>720</sup> This left refugees without any income, the law did not offer any compensation for the loss of property. Article 13 of the 1951 Convention stipulates that the contracting state should afford the most favorable treatment to refugees in terms of acquiring movable and immovable property. Article 18 stipulated that the contracting states should allow refugees the right to engage in self-employment including agriculture, industry, commerce and handicrafts. The Egyptian government violates these articles although it did not formulate any official reservations on signing the Convention in 1981.

### **Conclusion**

This chapter analyzed the Mubarak era, which in essence represented a continuation to that of Sadat. Mubarak made relations with the United States a strategic cornerstone of his foreign and economic policies. He was adamant that peace negotiations were the only viable way to resolve the Arab-Israeli conflict. He dismissed the option of war and always warned that armed struggle increases violence. Egyptian-Palestinian relations did not experience tough political tensions especially when Arafat opted for the negotiations path beginning with the Oslo Accords. Tensions did however occur, following Hamas' takeover of Gaza in 2007. The Egyptian regime sided with

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720. Yassin, "The Palestinians in Egypt," 32

Fatah and attempted to isolate Hamas through sealing the Rafah border, which was the only viable vein sustaining the already entrapped Gazans.

Domestically, the status of Palestinian refugees residing in Egypt did not change since the Sadat era. They remained classified as foreigners and struggled to provide for the costs of living, residency permits renewals, education enrollment, and the scarcity of secure jobs. The regime did not show any willingness to engage positively in improving the conditions of the refugees. Rather the regime approached the refugee issue with a sense of alienation and securitization. Palestinian refugees faced arbitrary deportations without clear legal procedures. It however remains to be investigated whether or not Palestinians residing in Egypt had experienced further complications in treatment following the Egyptian intense clash with Hamas between 2007 and 2010.



## **Conclusion**

The Egyptian revolution of 2011 stemmed largely from mounting domestic grievances including poverty, oppression, and the lack of social justice. However, Mubarak's foreign policies and Egypt's declining regional status added more fuel to the growing dissatisfaction with his regime. Some observers argue that early manifestations of popular anti-regime agitation appeared during the mass protests of the early 2000s. During the brutal Israeli invasion of Jenin in 2002 and the war on Iraq in 2003, hundreds of thousands of Egyptians organized demonstrations protesting the regime's passivity toward the massacres in both Palestine and Iraq. Solidarity with Palestinian and Arab grievances acted as a catalyst unifying Egyptian opposition from different trends including Leftists, Nasserists, Liberals, and the Muslim Brotherhood. This unified collaboration galvanized the opposition, culminating with the eruption of the revolution.<sup>721</sup> Mubarak stepped-down as a president on 11 February 2011 leaving the SCAF in charge of the transitional period which lasted till 30 June 2012. During this interim period, many Egyptians sought significant political changes that would restore Egypt's Arab leadership. The demands mainly called for a firmer stance toward Israel including ending all trade agreements such as QIZ and gas sales. Further calls demanded expelling the Israeli ambassador, opening the Rafah cross border, and reevaluating the

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721. For a detailed analysis on this topic see Reem Abou-El-Fadl, "The Road to Jerusalem through Tahrir Square: Anti-Zionism and Palestine in the 2011 Egyptian Revolution," *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. 41, No. 2 (Winter 2012), 6-26

terms of the Camp David Accords of 1978 which pose several restrictions on Egyptian military presence in Sinai.<sup>722</sup>

On 9 September 2011 hundreds of protesters stormed the Israeli embassy in Giza. They threw many documents and one protester managed to remove the Israeli flag and replace it with an Egyptian one.<sup>723</sup> The act came after months of Egyptian anger toward Israel in the wake of the death of five Egyptian border guards in July 2011 by Israeli forces. Israel stated that they did not target the Egyptian forces across the border but in fact were chasing militants smuggling weapons into Gaza. However, Egyptians demanded a firm stance to avenge the slayed soldiers and marched toward the embassy to evict it themselves.<sup>724</sup> Following the incident Israel recalled its diplomatic convoy and the United States expressed its deep concern and called upon the Egyptian authorities to take all measures necessary to maintain order.<sup>725</sup> The authorities in return, declared a state of emergency and dispatched thousands of police and military units to protect the embassy. However, the act itself remained significant as the first bold statement expressing Egyptian sentiments regarding diplomatic relations with Israel. During the Mubarak era, university students used to demonstrate against Israeli presence in Egypt and called for severing all ties with it in response to the mounting Israeli aggressions on Palestinians. However, the regime maintained a strict order and the anti-riot police always succeeded

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722. Refer to chapter (3), 20. Notes No. 67-68

723. "Egyptian Authorities Declare a State of Emergency to Maintain Security,"

<http://www.alarabiya.net/articles/2011/09/10/166157.html> [Arabic Source] also see

[http://www.bbc.co.uk/arabic/middleeast/2011/09/110909\\_israel\\_embassy\\_cairo.shtml?print=1](http://www.bbc.co.uk/arabic/middleeast/2011/09/110909_israel_embassy_cairo.shtml?print=1) and

[http://arabic.cnn.com/2011/egypt.2011/9/10/cairo.israel\\_embassy/index.html](http://arabic.cnn.com/2011/egypt.2011/9/10/cairo.israel_embassy/index.html) [Arabic Sources]

724. Michael Sharnoff, "Middle East Media Monitor:

Post-Mubarak Egyptian Attitudes Toward Israel," Foreign Policy Research Institute, October 2011,

<http://www.fpri.org/enotes/2011/201110.sharnoff.egyptandisrael.html>

725. "The Remaining Members of the Israeli Embassy in

Cairo Leave to Tel Aviv," <http://www.ahram.org.eg/Egypt/News/101265.aspx>, 15 September 2011 [Arabic

Source] also see [http://www.bbc.co.uk/arabic/middleeast/2011/09/110909\\_obama\\_concern\\_cairo.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/arabic/middleeast/2011/09/110909_obama_concern_cairo.shtml) and

<http://gate.ahram.org.eg/News/113854.aspx> [Arabic Sources]

in containing the protesters and confined them within campus gates. Through attacking the embassy, Egyptian protesters wanted to send a message that as a population they never really adhered to peace with Israel and still perceive it as their true enemy.

The attack on the embassy stirred a controversy. Although applauded by many Egyptians and Islamic-oriented groups such as the Muslim Brotherhood, many secularists and political activists condemned it. They argued that storming the embassy is not the solution and does not benefit Egypt's interests, since it rendered the state chaotic and incapable of protecting foreign establishments.<sup>726</sup>

Additionally, the gas pipes transferring Egyptian gas to Israel faced a series of anonymous attacks which left the lines inoperable. Talks between Israeli officials and the head of the Egyptian Company for National Gases (EGAS) regarding modifying sales prices have stalled since 15 September 2011. Egypt stopped supplying its gas to Israel indefinitely since early 2012.<sup>727</sup>

Despite visible Egyptian-Israeli tensions and the surge in popular anti-Israel sentiments, the Egyptian government asserted its commitment to its treaties with Israel. With an economy highly dependent on Western financial aid and a turbulent transitional period, the government could not afford a confrontation with Israel and the West. The government in an attempt to engage more effectively in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict

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726. Amer Hamzawy, "Storming the Embassy is not the Key to Change and Parliament will Amend the Peace Agreement," al-Dostour on 10 September 2011, <http://www.dostor.org/politics/egypt/11/september/10/53887>, also see Nora Fakhry, "Egypt Freedom Party Condemns the Attack on the Homeland and the Israeli Embassy," on 11 September 2011 <http://www.youm7.com/News.asp?NewsID=490463&SecID=97&IssueID=0> [Arabic Sources].

727. Sharnoff, "Middle East Media Monitor: Post-Mubarak Egyptian Attitudes Toward Israel," <http://www.fpri.org/enotes/2011/201110.sharnoff.egyptandisrael.html>

revived the prisoners exchange negotiations. On 11 October 2011 Egyptian officials declared that a prisoner exchange deal had been finalized between Israel and Hamas.<sup>728</sup> On 18 October 2011 Hamas exchanged Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit (captured in Gaza on 25 June 2006) for 1,027 Palestinian security prisoners.<sup>729</sup> However, Israeli prisons still hold thousands of Palestinian prisoners who suffer from inhuman treatment.<sup>730</sup>

On 30 June 2012, the transitional period in Egypt officially ended when Mohammad Mursi won the presidential elections. Mursi, a member of the Muslim Brotherhood declared that the “new Egypt” will regain its Arab leadership and play a fair role to reconcile Hamas and Fatah. He also stressed that he would end the Gaza blockade. On 28 July 2012 Egyptian officials stated that the Rafah cross border will resume operating on daily basis from nine o’clock in the morning till five in the afternoon except for weekends and official holidays where the gates shall remain closed.<sup>731</sup> Further, the government allowed the passage of construction materials to help rebuild Gaza after successive Israeli raids.<sup>732</sup> It is important to note that under Mubarak construction materials were prohibited from passing into Gaza through Rafah under the pretext that the cross border is designed for the passage of people only.

Nonetheless, the tunnels spreading across the border remained a highly contested issue. The tunnels increased rapidly since 2007 with the intensification of the Gaza

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728. “Israel, Hamas reach Gilad Shalit prisoner exchange deal, officials say,” on 11 October 2011, <http://www.haaretz.com/news/diplomacy-defense/israel-hamas-reach-gilad-shalit-prisoner-exchange-deal-officials-say-1.389404>

729. “ Gilad Shalit Returns to Israel,” on 18 October 2011, <http://www.globes.co.il/serveen/globes/docview.asp?did=1000690916> For further background, see [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gilad\\_Shalit](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gilad_Shalit)

730. <http://www2.youm7.com/News.asp?NewsID=958499&> [Arabic Source]

731. <http://digital.ahram.org.eg/articles.aspx?Serial=976635&eid=1761> [Arabic Source]

732. <http://www1.youm7.com/News.asp?NewsID=956181&SecID=65&IssueID=0> on February 23, 2013 and [http://akhbarelyom.org.eg/news136567\\_12.aspx](http://akhbarelyom.org.eg/news136567_12.aspx) on February 24, 2013 [Arabic Sources]

blockade. Despite the reopening of the Rafah border cross, thousands of tunnels still operate under the ground. Following the revolution, Sinai suffered from a state of lawlessness, and several reports warned that the tunnels are being used to smuggle heavy weapons and transfer radical Islamists between Sinai and Gaza.<sup>733</sup> On 5 August 2012 and during the holy month of Ramadan, a terrorist attack occurred in Sinai and resulted in the death of sixteen Egyptian soldiers and the injury of seven others. The perpetrators stole Egyptian military vehicles and drove them into the Gaza strip but Israeli forces managed to kill them.<sup>734</sup> Mursi vowed a strong retaliation and declared that he would lead the military operations in Sinai to arrest suspected radical elements.<sup>735</sup> However, investigations dragged and the attackers remain unidentified. The Egyptian army in return embarked on destroying the tunnels in an effort to contain suspicious activities.<sup>736</sup> Recently an Egyptian court ruled in favor of destroying all the tunnels to protect national security.<sup>737</sup>

During early November, 2012 Israeli forces assassinated a leader in al-Qassam brigades, Hamas military wing. Consequently, Hamas retaliated by shelling Israeli settlements triggering Israel to launch on 14 November 2012 a wide military operation in Gaza known as “Operation Pillar of Cloud.” The operation resulted in the death of over a

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733. <http://anbamoscw.com/opinions/20130216/380183237.html> on 16 February 2013 [Arabic Source] also see “Why Egypt Is Flooding the Gaza Strip's Tunnels,” <http://www.businessweek.com/articles/2013-02-13/why-the-egyptians-are-flooding-the-tunnels-of-gaza> on 13 February 2013

734. <http://www.shorouknews.com/news/view.aspx?cdate=05082012&id=e37d1461-9810-4b4c-88a4-e407862ce2c0> and <http://gate.ahram.org.eg/News/238078.aspx> [Arabic Sources]

735. <http://almesryoon.com/permalink/19684.html#.USo7FVcXX8c> [Arabic Source]

736. <http://www.alamalyawm.com/ArticleDetail.aspx?artid=250549> on 18 February 2013 [Arabic Source] also see <http://www.skynewsarabia.com/web/article/101012/> on 19 February 2013 [Arabic Source] also see “Egypt forces say 225 Gaza tunnels found under border,”

<http://www.maannnews.net/eng/ViewDetails.aspx?ID=565928> on 17 February 2013

737. <http://www1.youm7.com/News.asp?NewsID=960950&> on 27 February 2013 [Arabic Source] also see <http://edition.cnn.com/2013/02/26/world/meast/egypt-gaza-tunnels>

hundred Palestinians and the injury of another eight hundred.<sup>738</sup> The Egyptian regime rushed to contain the escalation. Mursi recalled the Egyptian ambassador to Israel, and called for an action from both the UN Security Council and the Arab League to pressure Israel to halt its aggression.<sup>739</sup> Mursi also dispatched the Egyptian Prime Minister Hisham Qandil to Gaza to stress both Egypt's solidarity with Gazans and its desire to restore its regional leadership.<sup>740</sup> Mursi's diplomatic actions seemed speedy when compared to those of Mubarak. During "Operation Cast Lead" of 2008-2009, Egyptian diplomacy was criticized for being too slow to respond to the human crisis in Gaza. This attitude stemmed largely from Mubarak's mounting dissatisfaction with Hamas and his desire to weaken their presence on Egypt's eastern border. Also, Mubarak's diplomacy had to follow the lead of its US counterpart which explicitly adopts an anti-Hamas stance.<sup>741</sup> Mursi's initiative succeeded in finalizing an Israeli-Palestinian cease fire on 21 November 2012. The agreement stipulated an immediate cease fire on both sides (Israel and Hamas) and opening crossing gates to facilitate the passage of people and goods. The agreement placed Egypt as a witness to observe the implementation of the cease fire by both parties.<sup>742</sup>

The Egyptian government also pushes toward finalizing the long-awaited Hamas-Fatah reconciliation. By early 2013 Egyptian officials invited representatives of both

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738. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pillar\\_of\\_Defence](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pillar_of_Defence) also see "Gaza Braces for Invasion as Death Toll Mounts," *The Observer* on 18 November 2012 <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2012/nov/18/israel-gaza-braces-for-invasion>

739. <http://www.nation.co.ke/News/africa/Egypt-recalls-Israel-ambassador-after-Gaza-raid/-/1066/1620468/-/duoj9kz/-/index.html>

740. Kevin Connolly, "Conflict Test for post-Mubarak Egypt," on 15 November 2012 <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-20343183>

741. Ibid. also refer to chapter (4), 28. Notes No. 109-110

742. <http://www.dostor.org> on 21 November 2012 [Arabic Source] also see "Israel and Hamas Agree to a Cease-Fire, After a U.S.-Egypt Push," *The New York Times* on 21 November 2012 [http://www.nytimes.com/2012/11/22/world/middleeast/israel-gaza-conflict.html?hp&\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2012/11/22/world/middleeast/israel-gaza-conflict.html?hp&_r=0)

organizations to settle their differences and draft a tentative timeline to finalize the reconciliation, set a date for new legislative elections, and form a unity government.<sup>743</sup> However, talks kept dragging and a concrete achievement remains elusive.<sup>744</sup> Further, Egypt's mounting political turmoil with Mursi struggling with social unrest and unprecedented economic decline enforce the state to turn inward. Egypt's domestic dilemmas pose a serious challenge to its ambitions in restoring its Arab leadership. It remains to be seen when and how will Egypt overcome its turmoil and head toward achieving the prominence envisioned by the revolutionaries in Tahrir Square.

Despite Egypt's diplomatic initiatives, the core of Mursi's political approach did not significantly differ from that of his predecessor. In other words, the government's stance focuses on the Palestine cause but not the Palestinians. Ever since the demise of Nasserism, Palestinians in Egypt faced systematic marginalization resulting in them being an invisible community. Much has been said about solidarity and commitment to the Palestine issue and Palestinians in the occupied territories. By contrast, neither the successive Egyptian governments, nor the media attempted to adopt any initiatives to improve the social and legal conditions of Palestinian refugees residing in Egypt. The only progression came in the form of issuing Law 154 of 2004 related to granting Egyptian citizenship to children born to Egyptian women and foreign fathers. During the revolution, Palestinian refugees mostly refrained from participating fearing that they

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743. "Egypt Pushes toward Achieving a Palestinian Reconciliation," on 10 January 2013 <http://arabic.peopledaily.com.cn/31662/8086769.html#> also see "Fatah Appreciates Egypt's Role in Backing the Reconciliation," on 18 January 2013 <http://www.youm7.com/News.asp?NewsID=913085> [Arabic Sources]

744. "Egyptian Correspondences with Hamas to Save the Palestinian Reconciliation," on 25 February 2013 <http://www2.youm7.com/News.asp?NewsID=958488&> [Arabic Source]

would be targeted by security forces.<sup>745</sup> The success of the revolution and the initial wave of popular solidarity with the Palestine cause revived hopes that the years of marginalization are about to end. Starting from May 2011 Palestinians born to Egyptian mothers could finally apply for their Egyptian citizenship. However, this was the only tangible improvement achieved while all the regulations defining Palestinians as foreigners remained intact. With Egypt's mounting internal crisis, it becomes rather difficult to predict when or how would the government address its responsibilities toward its refugee communities.

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745. Bisan Udwan, "Egypt's Palestinians and the Uprising," <http://english.al-akhbar.com/content/egypt%E2%80%99s-palestinians-and-uprising> on 13 October 2011, also see Sarah el-Rashidi, "Refugees Remain Invisible in post-Revolutionary Egypt," on 6 April 2012, <http://english.ahram.org.eg/News/38224.aspx>



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