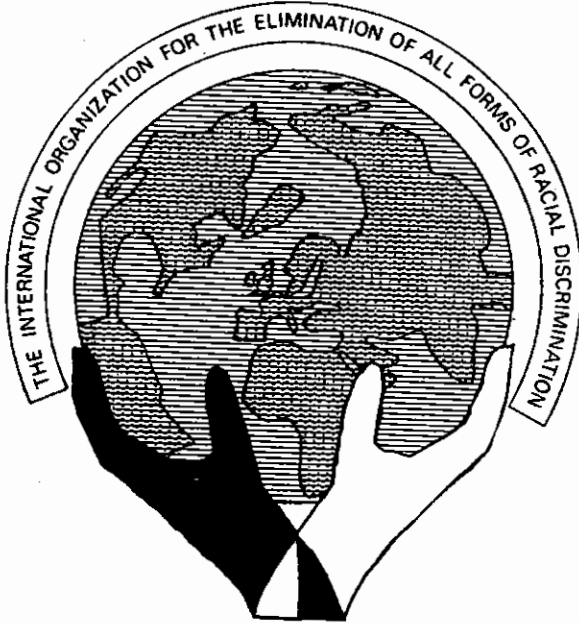


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**THE INDEPENDENT PERSONALITY OF THE
PALESTINIANS THROUGH THEIR ARTS**

by

Prof. Dr. Türkkaya Ataöv

The views expressed in this Paper are those of the author, and do not necessarily represent those of EAFORD.

All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.

Universal Declaration of Human Rights

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Prof. Dr. Türkkaya Ataöv*

Introduction

The exodus and the dispersal of the Palestinian people after the occupation of their land by the racist Zionist entity could not hinder the tradition of national expression. This expression, linked to the national question, was even developed as a reaction to foreign invasion. No doubt, the Palestinian armed struggle, following the Israeli attack in 1967, has caused an explosion of a potential energy not only in terms of military force, but in the realm of culture and arts. Palestinian culture, in the form of poetry, folk tales, popular singing, dancing, national costumes, embroidery, ceramics, carving, glass and metal work or various other forms of expression, is the vivid proof of the existence of a homeland and a people's yearning for it.

The Palestinian masses, under occupation or in exile, are gathering, safeguarding and developing their own culture, knowing full well that the preservation of culture is an effective way of resistance to attempts undermining national consciousness. The Zionist entity has not only looted the land of the Palestinians, but is also suppressing their culture and what is more trying to usurp it from them. But the Palestinians are engaged in a struggle to obtain recognition of their independent personality and existence. In spite of Zionist aggression, the roots of a people, deep in the Palestinian soil, cannot be erased.

Assertion of a Personality

The Palestinians were aware of the dangers posed by Zionist immigration, much earlier than generally accepted. Throughout many centuries, the Holy Land prospered under the tolerant rule of Arab and Ottoman Turkish sovereigns, who safeguarded the rights of all faiths. The Zionists, on the other hand, were planning to transform this land into an exclusively Jewish state. This drive for immigration, aggression and conquest, often referred to as "exclusiveness", was characterized "as a form of racism and racial discrimination" in Resolution 3379 adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations on November the 10th, 1975.

Nine years after the first wave of Jewish immigration to Palestine, which occurred in 1882, came the first official Palestinian protest in the form of a petition to the Ottoman Porte requesting prohibition of entry and land

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purchase by the Zionists.¹ This reaction did not emanate from naught. Palestine was inhabited by a people whose sons and daughters were the indigenous legitimate heirs of successive Palestinian generations. Nevertheless, Theodore Herzl's report on his visit to Palestine in 1898 did not have a single word on the Arab population.² All other Zionist leaders pursued the same line of denial. The former Israeli Premier Golda Meir, for instance, had inquired "Where is this Palestinian people?"

The Palestinian people were in Palestine before recorded history and have been completely Arab since the Arab conquest of Syria in the Seventh Century A.D. They have been waging against Zionist immigration and armed resistance, the signs of which appeared as early as 1886, coupled with certain forms of political protests. The second wave of Zionist immigration, which began in the first decade of the Twentieth Century, laid the foundation of the policy of Jewish labour, from which the indigenous Palestinians suffered. Arab writer Naguib Nassar began to utilize his paper *Al-Carmel* (1909) as an instrument facing Zionist settlement. Naguib Azuri, an Arab from Jerusalem, had already founded (1905) a society in Paris called the *Ligue de la Patrie Arabe*. He had also published a book entitled *La Reveil de la Nation Arabe*. Just before the break of the First World War, several organizations were founded, one being the Palestinian Association at the American University of Beirut (1913).

However, such assertions of national consciousness did not prevent the Zionist challenge reaching its aims. The Balfour Declaration (1917) and the ensuing British occupation facilitated the establishment of a "national home for the Jewish people", which meant for the Palestinians their own uprooting and the destruction of their own organic unity. In spite of the usual Zionist arguments that the Jews were fellow Semites returning home and that they would respect Arab culture,³ all the investigating commissions sent to Palestine in the wake of every outbreak of disturbance concluded that the Arabs were opposed to the establishment of a Jewish national home in Palestine.⁴

After the United Nations decision to partition Palestine, the people of that land faced a programmed attempt aiming at eliminating its existence and obliterating its national identity. The land was divided between Israel and the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, the latter receiving the West Bank. In addition, Al-Hammah in the North was to be administered by the Syrians and the Gaza strip in the South by the Egyptians. A blow was dealt on the unity of this people, by subjecting part of it to Israeli rule and annexing the other half to Jordan, in the process of which "refugees" were dispersed to the four corners of the world. The Zionist circles and their friends presented the question to world public opinion as a "refugee problem" involving relief, housing, employment, food and compensation.

The question itself was, for a time, reduced to a conflict between Israel and the Arab states over borders.

Thus, between the catastrophe of 1948 and the 1960s, the Palestinians sought the revival of their independent national identity. "Al-Fateh" went ahead of all other organizations in this respect. Its review entitled *Our Palestine*, issued in Beirut, stressed Palestinian thoughts and concepts, based mainly on Palestinian sources. This also meant rejection of patronage over the Palestinians by any party. The victory of the Algerians in 1962 was another proof for the Palestinians that any people that holds its own cause firmly in its own hands was capable of achieving its national aspirations. Hence, the formation of the Palestine Liberation Organization was announced in the first session of a conference held in Jerusalem in 1964 and attended by 388 delegates. The PLO soon completed its substantial structures, enabling the Palestinian personality to assert itself. The first Arab official recognition of the PLO occurred two weeks after its establishment. The signs of international recognition appeared in the conference of the non-aligned states in Cairo the same year. The People's Republic of China was the first foreign state to recognize the PLO in 1965. And a year later, the World Peace Council decided to consider Palestine as one of its members.

Following the Israeli aggression in 1967 and the Karameh victory in 1968, the freedom fighter became the symbol of the Palestinian personality. The resistance movement is now the expression of the existence of a people, and the PLO is the mechanism through which the actual embodiment of this personality can and should be attained. The vote of the UN General Assembly in 1974, granting the PLO an observer's status, is another assertion of the Palestinian people's unity and representation. In spite of split, dispersion and exile, its national identity is inalienable. The "Land Day" uprisings (March 30) of the Palestinians living under occupation are glaring proofs of their independent identity, unity and loyalty to unified leadership.

Palestinian leadership believes in the masses as the only force capable of achieving victory. The revolutionary war advocated has the clear political objective of restoring to the Palestinians their own homeland. The political and the armed struggles are two complimentary means to achieve this objective. Tawfeek Zeyad, the Palestinian poet, expresses the mobilization of the masses in the following lines: "It is much easier for you / To pass an elephant through a needle's eye / Or catch fried fish in galaxy / Plough the sea / Or humanize a crocodile / Than to destroy by persecution / The shimmering glow of a belief / Or check our march / One single step."

Usurpation of Culture

The Palestinians now realize that Israel has not only occupied their own

land, but also wants to suppress all signs of independent national existence and tries to steal away their culture in any way it can. The Palestinian people has preserved an old culture, with all forms of expression such as blue glass work in Hebron, glass blowing in Jerusalem, carpets and rugs in Nazareth and Gaza, embroidery in Bethlehem and Ramallah, wood and pearl carving in Jerusalem and Bethlehem, ceramics in Gaza and copper and silverware in other areas. As well known, the whole of Palestine has an architectural personality peculiar to its own. These manifestations are not confined only to the holy cities; they can be found in the towns of the Arab coast, Nablus and other places.

But Israel is eager to erase features of Palestinian national identity. A variety of popular produce, stamped with the label "Made in Israel" and which appear in publicity material such as *Israel - 25 Ans* or which are sold in the shops of Batsheva (Tel Aviv), Wizo (Women's International Zionist Organization) and the Maskit, are actually Palestinian handicrafts. These pieces are simply bought cheaply from the Arab population and sold or exported to foreign markets as Israeli products. A comparison of such produce with the recent publications on Palestinian popular art will reveal the widespread arrogation of a culture that belongs to another people.⁵

Hence, one of the aims of SAMED, or the Palestine Martyrs' Work Society, was to encourage Palestinian production. SAMED provides vocational training for the children of the Palestinian martyrs and also employs other people in associated workshops with the purpose of producing folkloric objects or any other products needed by those involved in the Palestinian struggle. Workshops in all Palestinian camps turn out products associated with Palestinian history and culture. Twenty-five different styles of national costumes are being produced and marketed. SAMED also has an agricultural section, the first project of which is now underway in Somalia, Sudan and Uganda. SAMED has permanent exhibitions in several Arab countries and also participates in several annual fairs.

Violations of holy places

Apart from usurpation of culture that actually belongs to another people, the Zionists are also guilty on account of a series of violations of the holy places, such as the fires in the Al-Aqsa Mosque (Jerusalem), the Convent of St. Catherine (Sinai) and the Church of St. John. Israel has violated all international texts and charters on the matter of abstaining from aggressive action towards other national cultures.

Jerusalem has been a holy city for Judaism, Christianity and Islam. The fact that it has always been *Al-Quds* (the Sanctuary) is well exemplified in the three major religious shrines within the Old City - the Wailing Wall, the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and the Haram al-Sharif. The kingdom of the Hebrews had made this city a holy place for the Jews. But Christ also left

his profound imprint on its destiny. And the Moslems regard it as one of the holiest of cities for Islam; it is believed that it encompasses the site of Prophet Mohammed's nocturnal journey to heaven. It was not by coincidence that Mu'awiyah had himself proclaimed Caliph there in 661 A.D., when the Arab Islamic Empire had already engulfed the whole Levant. Arab rule safeguarded the rights of all faiths and all communities, and throughout the period of the Ottoman Turkish sovereignty (1517-1917) the holy land has always been open to all men of different religions. The bulk of literature concerning this land testifies to the correctness of this statement.

Specific instructions to that effect were incorporated in the text of the Mandate granted to Britain. When in 1947, the Mandatory Power declared its intention to withdraw from Palestine, the United Nations re-affirmed the will of the international community to protect the unique character of Jerusalem. A "corpus separatum", under international sovereignty, was to be set up for Jerusalem and its environs. The Arabs of Palestine, then representing the two-thirds majority in Palestine, had refused the idea of partitioning their land into Arab and Jewish states for reasons valid now as they were then.

The seizure of the whole of Jerusalem was always a part of Zionist strategy, and this plan would have succeeded in 1948 had it not been for the intervention of the Transjordanian Army. Count Bernadotte, the U.N. Mediator, who recommended that Jerusalem be placed under effective United Nations control, was assassinated by Israeli terrorists in 1948. Three months later, a U.N. General Assembly resolution repeated that Jerusalem, Bethlehem and Nazareth be put under U.N. control. In 1949, it reiterated its intentions in even more resolute terms instructing the Trusteeship Council to draw up a Statute for the city. In 1950, the Statute was prepared and duly approved by the Trusteeship Council, but was never implemented. The announcement made the same year by the Israeli Government that Jerusalem was its capital has never been accepted by the U.N. In fact, it was condemned on several occasions.

The Zionist entity occupied Jerusalem and the rest of the West Bank in 1967. Within days, the demolition of historic buildings and the expropriation of religious and private properties began. The Arabs became inhabitants, not citizens of Jerusalem. They are being held in captivity, just like the city itself. The tolerance which has marked Arab and Ottoman Turkish rule, gave way to Zionist discrimination. The Israeli authorities have been trying ever since to modify the traditional face and the skyline of Jerusalem, to help change the balance of population and thus create a "new fact" with which they hope to block any U.N. decision to do justice to the city and its original inhabitants. Jerusalem, which is one of the oldest cities in the world, now has sections reminding one of Minnesota or Plonsk.

The Zionists also want to alter the traditional face of the city for theological purposes of their own. The demolition of historic quarters, the expropriation of Moslem and Christian properties and the desecration of cemeteries serve the purpose of converting Jerusalem into a Jewish city. The "restoration" of the Temple of Solomon, which is very close to the great mosques of Al-Aqsa and Omar, has already seriously weakened the foundations and structures of the two last mentioned. A fire has destroyed a large part of the Al-Aqsa, including the irreplaceable *minbar*, or the pulpit, of Saladin, which was one of the most successful specimens of Medieval Arab woodwork.

Voices of protest against this "massacre" of the holy city have been raised throughout the world. First of all, a whole series of resolutions taken by the U.N. General Assembly and Security Council since Israeli aggression in 1967 have condemned continuing occupation of Jerusalem and the measures changing the status of the city. For instance, a Security Council Resolution, taken in 1971 by fourteen to none, once again confirmed that all legislative actions taken by Israel to change the status of Jerusalem, including the expropriation of land properties, the transfer of populations and legislation aimed at the incorporation of the occupied sector are totally invalid and cannot change that status.⁶

There have been similar reactions from scholarly persons and interested organizations. Italy's leading urbanist Prof. Bruno Zevi, for instance, has described the Zionist attempt to alter the universal character of Jerusalem as an example of "collective hara-kiri".⁷ *Time* magazine of March 1, 1971, observed that Israel was literally bulldozing its way to Jewish control over the limestone and sand of Jordanian Jerusalem before the peace negotiations could be held. Prof. Arnold Toynbee and Sir Geoffrey Furlonge, formerly British Ambassador to Jordan, made the same point in a letter published in the London *Times* of March 15, 1971. There are many other reports on the desecration of church property in Israel. For instance, the celebrated Kütahya tiles, brought especially from Turkey by the Armenian pilgrims in the Eighteenth Century, were ripped from the walls of the Church of St. Saviour, which is traditionally the burying-place of the Patriarchs of the Armenian Church in Jerusalem.⁸ Adjacent to the Armenian church is the Greek Orthodox cemetery on Mount Sion, in which practically every tomb is smashed. Likewise, Father Andres published several photographs showing smashed tombs belonging to the Latin church.⁹

Art as a weapon

Under the circumstances, it is no surprise that the Palestinians consider the safeguarding of their culture as a form of resistance. Hence, the first conference of the General Union of Palestinian Artists was held in Souk

al—Garb, Lebanon on July 4-7, 1979, under the following appropriate slogan: "Art is a weapon for Palestine". The Palestinian artists have created masterpieces full of determination to be masters of their own land. No matter what plastic tendencies they may have, they preserve what is specifically Palestinian. They understand art as a means for permanent struggle. The central theme is that of return and love for the land. Arab artists who are not Palestinians have found their own personalities in this unifying theme. Mouna Saudi, for instance, is from Amman (Jordan), who has studied sculpturing in Paris. Feeling like a Palestinian, she now heads the Plastic Arts Section of the PLO.¹⁰ The Palestinian painters participate in the struggle through their works. When Mouna Saudi visited the Palestinian camps in 1968, and gave crayons and paper to the children, they produced vivid images of the Israeli planes throwing napalm bombs and the Palestinian guerillas holding their guns against the invading tanks. These drawings, chosen from thousands collected from Baquaa' camp in Jordan from Palestinian children aged 5 to 14 years, were later published.¹¹ She had gone to the camp nearly a year after the Zionist aggression in 1967. She says:

"Spread under the burning sun, thousands of tents sheltered 50,000 of the Palestinian refugees who had sought shelter there . . . I went to the camp with the idea of giving the young Palestinians papers and crayons . . . to express themselves freely . . . What can innocence say about unjustified violence, aggression and the loss of a home? How tellingly can children play the game of adults? Those were the questions I hoped the children's drawings would answer . . . Their drawings began to take shape, telling the tragedy in colours bright as the sun. Watching their hands drawing I felt the crayons had turned into sharp knives. They had an obsessive desire to carve their experience into the paper with all the density of its full reality . . . These drawings . . . testify that the song of life and its joyfulness will overcome oppression . . ."¹²

Child or adult, the Palestinian artist is revolutionary, since he rejects imperialist and Zionist injustice without ceasing to acclaim the beauty of the world. Some of them work under the harsh realities of occupation. The appearance of the Palestinian flag on the canvass is a "crime", and so is the depiction of any kind of violence. Several Palestinians working in one branch of the seven arts have suffered imprisonment, torture or deportation. Yet, they continue to express their message, be it the folk costumes, the solemn faces of the peasant women or simply the land itself.

Painting

One of the earliest and best-known Palestinian painters is Ismail Shammout,¹³ whose simple but emotional style is very popular with the masses. Shammout occupies a special place because he has played an

effective part in creating a whole new succession of Palestinian artists. His works have a committed form, which appear connected to reality. Born in the Palestinian town of Lydda in 1930, he showed an early interest in arts, but the tragedy of 1948 turned his concern into another direction. Although he was born of middle-class parents, he found himself and his family in a desolate place far from home, having taken refuge in a tent. He eventually became a teacher with the U.N. Relief Agency for Refugees, and later went to Cairo to study arts. There he painted "The Little Refugee Girl", "Where is My Father" and "Whither". He had an exhibition in Gaza in 1953, the first one held by a Palestinian in Palestine. He pursued further studies in Rome, where he painted "Memories and Fire" in 1956. Successive disasters, such as the wars of Zionist aggression in 1956 and 1967, the Israeli massacre of 1966 in the Palestinian village of Sammua, the September 1970 wars in Jordan and the butchery of Tal al-Zaatar in 1976, forced him to interpret the feelings of his people.

Ibrahim Ghanam,¹⁴ born in 1930 in the village of Al-Yajour near Haifa, suddenly found himself a refugee in Lebanon. He generally expresses how happy they were in Palestine. "The Harvest", for instance, is a painting depicting the Palestinian farmers reaping their wheat. "The Wedding Feast" shows the peaceful life that Zionism has deprived them. He also paints the gloomy life in the refugee camps, showing the people standing in lines, each waiting to receive a small quantity of flour, rice or sugar. The Tal al-Zaatar massacre affected Ghanam, who painted a naked Palestinian girl, hands tied with a rope, being pulled by a Phalangist militiaman while other militiaman dance around.

One of the leading Palestinian painters living in exile in the United States is Kamal Boullata.¹⁵ Vladimir Tamari lives in Japan. Moustafa Hallaj told this writer in Beirut that since 1967 the members of his family have not been able to gather around one table. The leading Palestinian artists in the occupied territories like Suleiman Mansour, Kamel Al-Moghanni, Nabil Anani and Issam Badr reveal an all-dominating "Palestinianity".¹⁶ They follow a style rooted in popular art traditions, folklore, handicrafts and calligraphy. The themes are the people's aspirations, problems, needs and work. Open "political" expressions being forbidden in the occupied areas, they often resort to symbols, such as the use of the national colours in disguise. The Palestinian artists under occupation actively participate in the growing struggle of their people to preserve and develop their culture. In spite of all forms of suppression, they have succeeded in furthering the daily symbiosis with overall resistance.

The first Palestinian art exhibition took place in Amman. It reflected the Karamah reality, or the hopes for a future free from the chains of Zionism. The first exhibition abroad was held in London in 1976 and a year later in

the United States.¹⁷ The last mentioned encompassed the works of Mansour, Badr and Ibrahim Saba. In all these exhibitions as well as the numerous ones that followed the struggle of the Palestinian people was embodied, full with pain and bitterness, but also with hope for a just and peaceful future. Some like Abd-er-rahman Al-Muzayyen portray Palestinian and Canaanite mythology, using historical symbols. Others like Nassir Assoumi excel in engravings. Still others like Adnan Asharif derive their topics from stories written by the Palestinian writers. As new plastic exhibitions are being held, more and more artists try to re-create scenes of Palestinian life before 1948.¹⁸ As one of the more recent exhibitions, the one held in Japan, entitled "The Restoration of Human Beings and Nature", was in fact a cultural exchange between the Palestinian Revolution and the Japanese progressive movement.¹⁹ The Palestinian and Japanese artists have made an agreement to have more mutual friendship programmes and also to establish an International Art Camp in Beirut.

There has also been an exhibition of Palestinian posters printed between 1967 and 1979. With the growth of the Palestinian Revolution, such posters appeared on the walls in the Arab countries and in many capitals and cities all over the world. They help to spread the slogans and the symbols of the Palestinians. The exhibition, held in Beirut, was dedicated to the memory of the martyr Izzeddin Kalak, PLO's representative in France, who was working on a book about Palestinian posters when he was assassinated by the Israelis in 1978.²⁰

The Plastic Arts Section of the PLO has also organized an international exhibition of solidarity with Palestine.²¹ The PLO has sent invitations to several artists around the world to participate in the exhibition and to show their work as an expression of their solidarity with the Palestinian people in their just struggle for self-determination and restoration of their land. This exhibition was for the Palestinians a starting point for a militant cultural front that would enable them, through artistic expression, to convey their cause. In this exhibition, 184 artists from 29 countries proclaimed their support for the Palestinian Revolution against the Zionist enemy, which is racist, reactionary and aggressive. All the works were gifts, constituting the nucleus of the "Museum of Solidarity with Palestine". Seventeen Palestinian artists have taken part in this exhibition. There were also celebrated artists from other Arab countries such as Dhia Azzawi from Iraq, Hamed Abdullah from Egypt and Aref Rayes from Lebanon. Among them, Azzawi's works are really cries of anguish against injustice and oppression, bursting even from the lips of ancient stone heads.²² He has illustrated several books, such as *From the Land of Oranges*, a collection of writings by the martyred hero Ghassan Kanafani.²¹ Among the other foreign celebrities the following ought to be mentioned: Joan Miro (Spain), André Masson

(France), Renato Guttuso (Italy), Julio Leparc (Argentine), Cardenas (Cuba) and the like. Janet Vennbrown's (Australia) "Zionist Crime", Quanaes Netto's (Brazil) "Neo-Colonialism", Matta's (Chile) trilogy of "Palestinian Martyrs", Claude Larazd's (France) "Daily Life in Occupied Territories", Marc Wirich's (France) "The Bird of Death" and Valentin Schmidt's (F.R. of Germany) "Death to Fascism" are among those attracting the eye.

The Palestinian Revolution has exerted great influence not only on Palestinian or Arab plastic arts, but also on the entire democratic Arab culture.²⁴ What the Palestinian Revolution has brought to the seven arts in the Arab world shows that Arab culture is not a mere "arabesque" form. Many Arab writers, poets and artists are turning towards the Palestinian resistance. Not only they feel that it is a resistance of their own, but also they can express democratic ideas and revolutionary content in treating the goals of the Palestinian Revolution.

Novels, short stories and poetry

The struggle for Palestine has enriched arts in the Arab world. Even the Arab script itself is searching for a new realistic form. The wall posters and the headlines of the publications reactivate the form of the old Arabic script. One can perceive the old lines, but they are even developed further. The point may be better illustrated by giving the example of Nawaf Abu Al-Haija's latest novel entitled *You Are the Equator*.²⁵ This short novel treats the dialectical relationship between the Palestine problem and the national issue as well as the social objectives of the Arabs and the idea of total liberation, linked with the developing humanitarian spirit of Arab personality. The characters of the novel typify the personalities created as a result of the impact of the Palestine Revolution on the Arab mind.

The short stories written by the Palestinians reveal the same approach. Those who have prepared the translations of a selected group of such stories say:

"We Palestinians like to talk about our loved one – Palestine. Many a Palestinian loved his country and gave the flower of his youth and even his life to redeem her . . . The lovers who fell are transformed into candles to light the way for the heroes who come after them . . . They seized our land . . . changed the name . . . its features . . . They took Palestine's heritage to make it their own . . . We decided with this selection of stories to tell the world that . . . the Palestinian people are alive and will never die."²⁶

Take Tawfik Fayyad, for instance. He is a Palestinian novelist who lived in occupied Palestine, where he witnessed Zionist terror and racist practices. His series of short stories, entitled *The Yellow Road* reveal the sufferings and perseverance of his people under occupation. The peasant

Abu Hussein in Fayyad's "The Mare" represents any other Palestinian whose land, the only source of income, is confiscated by the Zionist authorities. "The Sea Became Blue", written by Yahia Rabah in the Dair Al-Balah Refugee Camp in Gaza, tells of a life between the sea and the desert, or between justice and the impossible. The main character Abu Al-Habbash, who has to go out fishing, never returns from the sea, which the Zionist authorities describe as a "military zone". The rope around the neck of Abdul Ghani Al-Ayyubi in Walid Rabah's "Inscriptions on the Wall of the Cell" is actually the bondage of a whole people. Yusuf Iraqi and many others have unfolded the terrifying massacre in Tal Al-Zaatar. In those writings lives the legendary battle of fifty-three days, in which the commune of the working people repulsed so many attacks. In Rashad Abu-Shawar's "The Ancestors", Mahmoud does not lose a second in picking up his rifle after having buried his father. Mahmoud Labadi's "The Room on the Roof" is only one of the episodes concerning the destruction of Arab dwellings. Faris Glubb's "The Return" is more than an analysis, it is a solution; to the old Jewish man, who has come to Palestine, many years ago, as pioneer with ideas of conquest and glory but who now sees what kind of destruction this foolishness has caused. Abu Adnan, hitching his veteran rifle more securely on his shoulder, says: "Palestine is still alive, and there is room here for you and us."

We may pause here for a few moments to re-live the memory of Ghassan Kanafani, a great Palestinian writer who was assassinated by Israeli agents in Beirut on July 9, 1972. He was born in Acre on April 9, 1936, at the beginning of the Palestinian Arab revolt against Zionist forces and the British Mandate Authority. The Deir Yassin Massacre also took place on "April 9", Ghassan's twelfth birthday. He never celebrated his birthday again. Every year on that date, Anni Kanafani, the Danish-born widow of Ghassan, stands in silence for him and for the innocent victims of Deir Yasin.²⁷ And on that same date in 1940, Anni's country, Denmark, was occupied by the German Nazis. Her father had joined the resistance movement, which also helped to rescue Jews from the occupying Germans. Years later, Israeli agents killed her Palestinian husband, for Ghassan seemed too dangerous for them as a writer and as a spokesman.

Ghassan's family had left Acre shortly before May 15, 1948, and moved first to a mountain village in Syria and then to Damascus. In 1955, he joined the Arab Nationalist Movement (ANM). Dr George Habash convinced him to come to Beirut in order to work on *Al-Hurriyah*. In 1962, he wrote the novel *Men in the Sun*, which became known throughout most of the Arab world. *The Land of the Sad Oranges*, published a year later, was a collection of short stories on Palestine and its people. In the latter, the author related how the family had to move out of Acre, leaving behind everything,

including the orange trees that his father had planted. While Ghassan was working as the Editor of a new daily called *Al-Muharrer*, he published at the same time the weekly *Falastin*. In 1965, he published *Essays About Resistance Literature*, which for the first time revealed to the Arab world that determined Palestinian poets existed in the occupied land. The ANM was soon to give its first martyrs. Hence, Ghassan dedicated his novel *All That is Left for You* (which received the Lebanese Literature Prize for 1966) to Khaled Al-Haj, one of those early martyrs. In 1967, Ghassan joined the daily *Al-Anwar* and later started the political weekly *Al-Hadaf*. In 1969, he wrote *Umm Sa'ad* (Sa'ad's Mother). The heroine was a dear old friend of the author, a symbol of the Palestinian woman in the camp. In 1970, he finished his last novel, *Back to Haifa*. When he was imprisoned in 1971 for an article in *Al-Hadaf*, he began to write *The Lover*, his long novel about Palestine. This was intended to trace the whole Palestinian struggle from its beginnings against the British and the Zionists up to the present. He was planning to finish it during the Summer of 1972.

The day after he was killed, *The Daily Star* wrote: "Ghassan was the commando who never fired a gun. His weapon was a ballpoint pen and his arena newspaper pages. And he hurt the enemy more than a column of commandos."²⁸ Ghassan Kanafani's books are read throughout the Arab world, but in his occupied homeland, Palestine, his writings are printed illegally. His widow says: "When the Palestinian people return home, they will meet Ghassan in every flower, in every tree – they will feel him in the soil and the air of Palestine."

Most of the Palestinian Arab poets now living under Zionist occupation were caught up in the tragedy of their usurped country in their childhood or adolescent years. The anguish and the prophecy in their verses prove that the struggle to liberate Palestine cannot be stopped.²⁹ As expressed in Tawfeek Zeyad's lines, the Palestinians are like a thousand prodigies spreading everywhere, singing their songs, filling dungeons with pride and spilling their dearest blood. In a beautiful long poem, Mahmoud Darweesh describes the lover from Palestine: ". . . Palestinian are your eyes, your tattoo, / Palestinian is your name, / Palestinian your thought, your clothes, / Your feet, your form, / Palestinian the words, / Palestinian the voice, / Palestinian you live, / Palestinian you will die." Sameeh Al-Qasem's poem in which the line "I shall not compromise!" repeats itself refutes the claim that the so-called "Israeli Arabs" have been taught to accept the Zionist state as a fact. As Fadwa Tuqan noted, when the black flood broke loose from barbaric shores upon the green good earth, the tree fell, but the roots never die. And we may join Mueen Bsayso, in addressing men and women of the world: "Be with us now!"³⁰

Popular Arts and Cinema

The Association for Theater and Palestinian Popular Art is one of the cultural institutions, that this writer has visited in Beirut. The performers put on stage a dance sequence reflecting their struggle against the occupying enemy. At the beginning, the Palestinian peasants plough and plant peacefully. Girls sing and dance to the traditional music. Suddenly there is an explosion with discordant sounds, seemingly having no relation with the land and the life on it. The Israelis enter with different uniforms but the land rejects them as the flute overwhelms the discordant music at the end.

Likewise, the Palestinian Cinema Institution and the Samed Cinema Production are both taking up the issue of a people whose land was usurped by force. In late 1978, "The Day of the Land", directed by Ghalib Sha'ath and describing the enduring resistance of the Palestinian masses, was awarded the "Golden Prize" at the Leipzig Film Festival. The film on Tal Al-Zaatar figured out prominently at the Carthage Festival in Tunisia the same year.³¹ Another one, done in 1979, in cooperation with the Palestinian Red Crescent Society, does not only show the latter's activities, but is also a testimony of Zionist atrocities. Sent to the International Film Festival in Varna (Bulgaria), this film was vetoed by the Americans, West Germans and the Swiss, but was shown outside the competition and awarded a special prize. "The Children of Palestine", showing the bombardment of schools, is another documentary record of Israeli destruction. This film, shown on channel 13 in the TV network of New York City, caused contradicting reactions. While some were shocked by the brutal Israeli attacks on the civilians in Southern Lebanon, the Zionist circles got the person, who had approved its showing, fired from his job. The same film, now circulating almost everywhere, received an overwhelming reception at the Internationale Dokumentar-und-Kurzfilmwoche in Leipzig. It was awarded the "Special Jury Prize". In Leipzig, another film, dealing with the Cuban Youth Festival, had its premiere. Ghalib Sha'ath is presently working on "The Olive Branch". "The Fifth War", on the Israeli invasion of South Lebanon in early 1978, is a co-production of the Palestinian Cinema Institution and the Samed Cinema Production. Another one on nursery schools is being done with the Palestinian Women's Union. A magazine entitled *Al-Sur Al-Falastiniyya* (The Palestinian Image) is being published, with the aim of reflecting Arab and world-wide revolutionary film-making as well as fighting Zionist film propaganda.

Several productions in Arab countries now dwell on the issue of Palestine. In Iraq, for instance, "The Bitter Winter" (directed by Shukri Jamil) and "The Field" (director Sabeeh Abdul Karim) both confirm that the Palestinians cannot give up their land.³² The latter reveals the reaction of a Palestinian farmer who confronts the occupiers of his land and observes

enemy armour passing over his farm. The farmer, who becomes a fighter, leaves to his son a rifle and the land, symbolizing continuity of armed struggle against the racist enemy. Iraq has done several documentaries such as "Zionism: A Racial Movement", "Death in Lebanon", "Road to Victory", "An Event in June", "The Beginning" and the like.

Since 1973, Baghdad has been the host to successive Palestine Film Festivals. In the early 1970s, an enlarged discussion had taken place at a conference of the Arab States Broadcasting Union with the aim of collecting all film materials, television programs and documentaries and having them all screened in a biennial festival. Consequently, the first festival was held in the Iraqi capital in 1973. After the success of the first festival, it was decided that it be permanently organized in Baghdad by the Iraqi Broadcasting and Television Establishment. The second festival was also held in Baghdad in 1976, the third in 1978 and the fourth in 1980. "The Fourth International Festival of Films and Television Programs About Palestine" was organized under the following slogan: "The Liberation of Palestine is the Cornerstone of World Peace."

The Baghdad film festivals habitually screen documentaries, features and cartoons. For instance, the 57-minute Quebec Radio interview with the PLO leader Yasser Arafat is an important documentary. The 29-minute Yugoslav production called "Flame and Light" brings to the spectator the couplets of the Palestinian poets. The 45-minute Syrian film "The Roots" was actually a chronicle of Palestine. The last Baghdad festival screened many films critical of the Camp David Accords. For instance, the 20-minute "Treachery", produced by the PLO and the 2-minute Iraqi cartoon were short, but very convincing replies to pretensions that Camp David brings peace. Among the outstanding feature films were "And They Murder the Birds", "The Skirmisher" and "A Numberless Operation", all from Iraq.

The cause of Palestine has enjoyed support in various other festivals, notably the ones in Moscow, Tashkent, Carthage, Carlo Vineri, Karacove and Damascus. The Polish film, entitled "The Promised Land" and shown at the 9th Moscow Festival, traced the ties of the industrial bourgeoisie with Zionism. The Arab film, "Kafr Kassem", introduced at the same festival, narrated the story of the notorious massacre. "The Toy" (Iraq), shown at the 11th Moscow Festival, exposed the murder of Palestinian children. "Report on the Situation in Lebanon" (Iraq) focussed on the Palestine resistance in Lebanon. The Soviet film entitled "The Palestinians: The Right to Live" stressed the legality of armed struggle. "Kafr Shoba", shown in Tashkent, was based on Zionist aggression on that Lebanese town. "Men Under the Sun" won the silver medal at Carthage.

Conclusion

The Palestinian Revolution is asserting the unified entity of the people of Palestine. A long protracted struggle is being waged to change several wrong concepts. The Palestinian reality is already rooted in the Arab Palestinian conscience. It is taking root in the international thinking as well. All that have been done to further the political or cultural entity of this people are proofs that attempts to deface their independent identity have failed. What is more, the Palestinian personality is being promoted. The writers, poets, artists and other intellectuals of this people, scattered all over the world, are struggling to bring about real peace, which can only be based on the restoration of the rights of the Palestinians.

1981

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5. For instance: Shelagh Weir, *Palestinian Embroidery*, London, British Museum, 1970; Solidaritätskomitee der DDR, *Palästinensische Volkskunst*, Berlin, Ministerium für Kultur, 1978; Yusra Jouhairy Arnita, *Popular Art in Palestine*, Beirut, PLO, Research Center, 1968.
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