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Gendered Politics of Location: Generational Intersections



I went back to my hometown Nazareth in late December 1997 to conduct a comparative analysis of the socio-political experiences of three generations of Palestinian women, citizens of Israel, from 1948 to 1998 for my dissertation. It was my first long stay at home since I started my graduate studies in the United States in 1993. The first inter-generational group I interviewed in Nazareth in mid-January 1998 was my family. I interviewed consecutively my mother, aunt, grandmother, and cousin.

The 'Beginning': My Grandmother (Rahija Farah)

I spent the morning of 17 January 1998 talking to my grandmother in Arabic about her life experiences, how she defines herself, and her memories of the first years of the creation of the state of Israel. I sat next to her and wrote down every word she said. My grandmother recounted:

In 1948, I was twenty-seven years old. George was eleven months old, and I was six months pregnant with Siham. Before 1948, people were simple. In 1947 when the British left, the revolution took place. Your grandfather was a policeman with the British, and they [the Jews] asked him to leave his job. There were one hundred and fifty policemen; they kept fifty and fired one hundred. He was with the communists, and they told him that he might get his job back, but they never took him back. He had a retirement allowance from the British, and for five years he was without a job. It was an extremely difficult period (*inharaina fiha hariy*). I sold my gold. Afterwards, he worked in construction and his hands used to bleed.

When they first came there was a patrol, and there was curfew during the day and at night. The curfew would be lifted for two hours a day. Between

1948 and 1950 they gave us a very hard time (*nashafu riqna*). If you wanted to go somewhere, to Haifa for example, you needed a permit from the military governor. Men were without work; only those who had permits could work. One afternoon your grandfather wanted to go to the neighbours to play cards, and they ordered him to remain inside. Refugees came [to our neighbourhood] from Ma'aloul and El-Mjaidel, and they had nothing. We had some stored food and I used to help out [the refugees]. We needed someone to help us, though.

When the Jews came in May 1948, we were asleep. During the occupation night, a man from the Fahoum family came to our house, and called on your grandfather to bring his rifle and follow him. That night, my brother-in-law came with his wife and kids. They lived in the centre of town and there was more fear there than here [in the market area]. At two in the morning your grandfather left for Saffourieh to fight. The Jews threw a bomb at them, and it made a hole in the ground. As he was running, he fell and sprained his ankle. In the morning he came home. The man from the Fahoum family fled with his family to Lebanon. The British stood with the Jews and gave them rifles. During the first and second weeks they warned people to hand in their rifles. Your grandfather hid his rifle instead of throwing it in the well.

The nuns started to distribute clothes and food to the refugees and widows at the Baptist school. They said, 'Come and we'll give you some food'. We were shy and felt like beggars. I used to carry the aluminium pot and they would give us milk. The nuns liked me a lot and used to add butter in the milk for cooking. The missionaries helped out. During the first four to five years [of the creation of the state of Israel] we had a very hard time (*shufna fiha nujum el-duhr*). After the kids grew up, time was running, and God knows how we survived.

In 1952, I worked in the cigarette factory. Michel, my youngest [and fifth] child, was two years old. I was supposed to be a teacher. The kids were young and people were shy. After a few months the cigarette factory closed down, and I was without a job. I hated the Jews because everything in our lives was turned upside down.

I define myself as an Arab Palestinian.... Israel is better for us; we have rights and they help us. If only the politics were different and they would love the Arabs. They are good if you do not get close to them. We did not see much in Nazareth, especially us, the women. No Jew lived in Nazareth. I did not come and go. I had small kids to care for. They used to give me a hard time when I wanted to see my brother and sister [in Jordan], and the Abu-Saleh family [the family of her brother-in-law in Jerusalem]. I could not see them for ten years. I did not interfere in their [the Jews'] business; I did not have any interaction with them.

The communists were fighting back, and it was not my business. I wanted to care for my children. It is enough that your grandfather ruined our lives (*kharrab baitna*). They used to treat the communists badly (*yhrqo dymhin*). They never jailed your grandfather. During the beginning of the occupation, the communists used to have a meeting once a month. We were unable at the time to pay the electricity bill, and they wanted to have a meeting at our place. I asked them not to have meetings at our place, because we could hardly afford to eat. Your grandfather was very committed to communism, and I was angry with him for that. After ten years we got used to them [the Jews].

I was twenty years old when I got married. I was sixteen when I graduated from school. After graduation, I went to Beirut, to study for six or seven months, after which I taught at St Joseph school in Acre for six or seven months. My mother did not allow me to go back to Acre and get the education certificate; she was afraid that I would become a nun. I was not daring (*fitna*), and I had pride (*'izzat nafs*). Now I regret it. At the time, if you got engaged you were required to quit school. During the British Mandate, married women used to work at the post office or as teachers. I had a chance to work at the post office, but my family would not allow me. If you wanted to work, you had to challenge your family, and if you were timid you missed your chance. I got engaged to a guy from the Danial family, but we did not get along. At age eighteen, I was learning to sew at Umm Emil's. Your grandfather was a policeman in Gaza, and we were engaged for one and a half years before we got married.

Your mother wanted to be a teacher and her father did not want her to continue her education. The day she was supposed to go for an interview in Tel-Aviv to be a teacher, she got engaged. Your mother, God bless her, is smarter than those who had graduated from universities.

Before the Jews came, I was the best off in the neighbourhood. Your grandfather worked as a policeman, and we were doing well economically. When I was fifty-one I had a stroke. I had had [high] blood pressure since I was thirty-six. There was too much fear, tension, and worries (*ra'abe wa-munaqateh*). I was sick from what we went through and from the changes that took place. In 1971, your grandfather was injured at work [construction site], and he could no longer work. He got a monthly allowance from the National Insurance and our situation improved.

After about two hours we ended our conversation. I heated my grandmother's lunch. She insisted that I drink some lemonade before I leave, and asked me to come back and stay with her that night. My grandmother had lived on her own since my grandfather's death in 1995. By the time I arrived at her place at about midnight, I found her unconscious. I called an ambulance, but it was too late. She had suffered a heart attack and died that night at her home at the age of seventy-seven.

The Loss of My Grandmother: A Last-Minute Glimpse into Her Life

The sudden loss of my grandmother was overwhelming, and that close encounter with death was horrifying. She is gone. I will never see her nor talk to her again. I will never be able to ask her any more questions about who she was, and how her experiences shaped and were shaped by the political changes around her.

Many questions still haunt me regarding the death of my grandmother. Was it the questions that I asked, or the memories that our conversation brought to her mind that contributed to her death? Was she so overwhelmed by what was left unsaid that only death would liberate her from the traumas and burdens of the past? Was it just a coincidence,

implied by a friend who once told me: 'Consider her last words a present. She shared part of her life with you'.

I will never know what went through my grandmother's mind after the interview. I can never ask her for clarification nor for more details. The life story of my grandmother, as well as the life stories of the majority of Palestinian women of her generation, will remain absent from the official history books and academic analyses. They are the 'invisible and marginalised' whose story does not count. They are the 'reproducers of society', but not necessarily recorded as the 'makers of history'.

Writing this essay is a personal search for meaning, and a means to understand the continuity and discontinuity between the lives of my grandmother, my mother, and myself. The intersection between our generations is the focus of this essay.

The 'Beginning': My Mother (Elham Nusair)

I spent the morning of 16 January 1998, the day before I spoke with my grandmother, talking to my mother in Arabic about her life experiences, how she defines herself, and her feelings towards the state of Israel. I sat across the table from her and wrote every word she said. My mother recounted:

I define myself as a Palestinian Arab living in the state of Israel. I respect the state's law and order but do not consider myself to be an Israeli.

During the period between 1949 and 1966, people (*el-nas*) were without jobs. They needed permission from the military governor to work. They [the Jews] took the land from Nazareth to build Nazareth Illith. People started to demonstrate against land confiscation. They did not know what was going to happen, and they were afraid for their daughters. My father was a policeman with the British. After the British left, he was without a job. We were kids, and my mother had to sell her gold and the house furniture. They got him out of his job because he was a communist. My mother worked in the cigarette factory for seven or eight months. Fear and poverty is what I remember about that period. My father used to cry. Afterwards, he worked as a construction worker. His feet used to swell, and blood would drip from his feet and hands.

The refugees who came from Ma'aloul lived opposite our house. People received them well. Their kids went to school and people thought that it was a short and passing period. People were confined (*mahsurin*). They were afraid that new people were coming to our neighbourhood. They accepted the refugees but did not know what would happen. There were no Jews in Nazareth. The military governor was in El-Qashle [a hilly area in Nazareth], and the police department (*maskubiyya*) had a Jewish administration with an Arab police force [at the centre of the city].

When I was thirteen [in 1957] there were demonstrations against land confiscation. People started to organise against the occupation. My brother was

jailed during the students' demonstrations. Three years later, I was engaged and got married. The Jews were modern, and people [Palestinians, citizens of Israel] were afraid that their daughters would become loose. The main reason for my early marriage was fear and poverty.

During the 1967 war, people had hopes that the situation would improve. We heard the news about the defeat (*hazima*). That allowed people [Palestinians, citizens of Israel] to accept their destiny. They lived with the state of Israel and allowed it to do whatever it wanted to them. They gave up, and except for the political parties no one was organising. In six days they occupied all of the Arab countries. There was no hope, and whatever we heard on the radio during the Abdel-Nasser period was pure demagoguery.

They [the Jews] did not bother us nor interfered in our affairs. No Jewish family lived in Nazareth. People continued in their way of living. We lived as if in a ghetto, without openness to the outside world. There were few opportunities for education. After 1967, the situation improved, and the economy improved. People started to work to improve their social condition. In the beginning they were closed off and later there was more openness.

It is hard to compare fifty years ago to today. The gap is very large. People modernised under Israel more than they did in the Arab countries. I support that. The daily life has improved. People accepted the occupation, and until today I still consider it an occupation. Only when Palestinians receive full rights and justice will I belong to the state of Israel that is not Jewish. We are residents and not citizens. Before 1967, there was no oppression. After 1967 we understood that the state is expansionist. It is an oppressive state that believes in something on behalf of another people [the Palestinian people]. They took the land from us without a fuss (*'ala el-saket*). People did not resist, as if they were in shock not knowing what would happen next.

As a mother I suffer for the death of the Palestinian and the Jew, because a human being is a human being. I am in pain because the occupier has everything and the weak have nothing. I see power and weakness, and justice is lost in between. I brought up my kids to understand what goes on around them, and not to give up. I am not satisfied, because I can do more than this. I did not do anything for myself. I worked for my family and kids. I am trying to change but do not know how.

The Israelis never scared me. I consider them an occupying and cruel people. They know what is theirs but do not recognise the rights of the other (*bie'arfu illi el-hin wa-la bi'arifu illi 'alaih*). I do not know much about them except from what I see on television, and from our friends in Tiberius. Our generation, the generation of the occupation, suffered the most. Before [1948], people were satisfied, and it was a closed society. We grew up under occupation. We grew up in fear and terror of the unknown. Your dad was strict, and I believe that I gave up. Our generation gave to you what we could not get. I see my success in your generation, and that is my only consolation.

The Communist Party resisted all along, and they had a women's organisation. People started to work in factories, and workers' unions and local councils were being established. After 1967, there was work and people with their own initiative improved their situation. Television had an impact. They

also lifted the military rule, and we had a chance to go out and see the world (*nitla' winshuf el-dinya*).

The occupation affected us. We could not finish our education. People were afraid of something that they did not know what it was. For fifty years now we have been going on the road of development. Still, if Israel had not come the development process would have been better. The state of Israel is an occupying state, and it became more obvious after the 1967 occupation [of the West Bank and Gaza]. It is an arrogant and militarised state that does not want peace. I live in a state where I am not satisfied with anything it does. I feel marginalised and have no influence. I do not feel I belong to their political parties. I belong to the *jabha* (Democratic Front for Equality and Peace), and not to the communist party because I am not a communist. Violence and dominance are seen and felt on a daily basis. I did not experience it directly, except through the television and radio. I do not like the violence on both sides.

I do not believe that I have a healthy marriage, despite my being satisfied with it. I believe that I was deprived of my childhood and adulthood, and I blame the occupation for that. The lack of jobs caused violence in the family. My father was short tempered. He was violent with my mother and older brother. He was not too violent, though. He stayed at home without a job and without authority (*inofuz*). People were neither happy nor relaxed.

I should have finished my education. Opportunity came and your father did not want to wait. My mother more than my father, wanted to marry me off. My father said, 'She is still young, leave her alone. What do you want from her?' My mother would say, 'I cannot continue to take responsibility for her'. I found it a way to escape from this life to a better one. I was a coward.

I am against the oppression of the Jews. I want them to live with us in dignity and justice. I am against violence and oppression, and do not believe that God gave them this land. There is no connection. It has to be a state of all its citizens. Other than this, neither they nor their God has anything to do here.

Demarcation Lines

As each interview had minimal intervention on my part, it was left for my grandmother and mother to determine the content and structure of the interview, and to construct a meaning through their memory and narrative. The interview is a moment in time and place. It is a reflection of how my grandmother and mother perceived their experiences, and the ways they wanted to present them to the 'outside world'. The only demarcating lines were those which enclosed the period covered in the research project (1948-98). Both my grandmother and mother took the year 1948 as a point of reference, and both eloquently presented the complex intertwining between the public and private spheres of their lives.

According to Sizoo (1997: 6), the question of how women 'face, negotiate, and shape the social space of their environment needs to be looked into from a time perspective as well as a cross-cultural place angle'. Sizoo wonders about the changes that we see over a certain period of time in a

given 'geographical context (multi-generational or 'vertical' perspective) and how a 'particular period in which a generation experiences a certain environment makes a difference (intergenerational or 'horizontal' perspective)' (ibid.: 6). Life narratives, concludes Sizoo, are a translation of a perception of events, and are intuitively analytical. They can be selective and full of contradictions.

Fifty Years After: National Symbols, Statehood and Assertion of Power

My research coincided with Israeli celebrations of fifty years of independence, and the Palestinian commemoration of fifty years of catastrophe (*nakba*). As a Palestinian, second-class citizen of the state of Israel, I found myself in a new position. I am the outsider from within, and the insider from the outside.

On Israel's fiftieth Independence Day I wrote in my journal:

The Air Force planes flew above our heads. Their voice was loud and overbearing. I glared at the sky and contemplated the celebrated power and asserted presence of the Israeli Air Force in my life. I spent the day with my family in our house in Nazareth. Life continued as usual. The only difference was that it was neither Sunday nor a 'holiday', and still my father, brothers, and sisters-in-law were off work. I guess it was a national holiday for the Jewish population of Israel, while Palestinians knew and were reminded (in case they forgot) that they were excluded from it.

I spent the day flipping through the Hebrew newspapers, Ma'ariv, Yediot Ahronot, and Ha'aretz. I looked for a glimpse or a mention of my/our presence. I looked for anything that I could relate to or identify with. The only article I could find was an article in Ha'aretz about a Jewish kid (now a professor at Tel-Aviv University) who was brought up by his communist parents on the margins of Israeli society.

A Canadian team was in town filming a documentary about the celebrations (or lack thereof) of Israel's fifty years of independence. My father told me that he saw the team filming in the old market in Nazareth. I could imagine them trying to capture the moment of 'life as usual' in Nazareth's old alleys, where parallel realities stand hand in hand. One reality is constructed and imposed by the state of Israel regarding its creation and independence, and the other is deconstructed and subverted by Palestinians who continue with their lives as usual and as they have been doing for the last fifty years.

On the afternoon of 'Independence' Day, the same Canadian team interviewed various members of my family (including myself) at my aunt's house in Nazareth about our thoughts and feelings on that day. I remember looking around and feeling suffocated by that dry but strong sense of isolation in a ghetto called Nazareth.

Palestinian Memory and National Symbols

During the first half of 1998, various activities commemorating the Palestinian Nakba took place in Nazareth and the Galilee area. Women were mostly absent, not only from organising these events but also from being represented in them. Even the local newspaper articles in *Kul-al-Arab*, *Fasl-Almaqal*, and *Al-Itihad* that attempted to register women's stories focused on women as mothers of martyrs and bearers of the Palestinian history. There was no analysis of the gendered politics of power in the Palestinian community itself.

According to Moghadam (1994: 2): 'the representation of women assumes political significance, and certain images of women define and demarcate political groups, cultural projects, or ethnic communities. Women's behaviour and appearance – and the acceptable range of their activities – come to be defined by, and are frequently the subject of political or cultural objectives of political movements, states and leaderships'. Moghadam adds that in so many contemporary political movements, women are assigned the 'role of bearers of cultural values, carriers of traditions, and symbols of the community' (ibid.: 4). The ideology of nationalism, argues Abdo (1994: 150), is a 'strong force capable of using, misusing, and abusing its female participants. Nationalism in general promotes a specific discourse on women. In this discourse, women are identified as maintainers and reproducers of "national soldiers, national heroes and manpower"'. Nationalism, she adds, can also be used as a potential force for gender and social liberation.

October 2000

I was born in 1967, the year Israel occupied the West Bank and Gaza. I learnt from an early age to associate my birth with war. I grew up in Nazareth, and, like many girls my age, I had to abide by the gendered restrictions imposed on my life. From an early age I started questioning why I, unlike my three brothers, had to help my mother with the housework, and why my society was so preoccupied with 'feminine beauty'. In fourth grade, watching Jordanian children singing their anthem on a television broadcast from Jordan, I first understood that we have neither a national anthem nor a flag, and I cried. At age fourteen I read in Arabic my mother's copies of Nawal El-Sa'adawi's *the Hidden Face of Eve* and *Woman and Sex*.

In 1982 Israel invaded Lebanon. During the war heavy trucks loaded with tanks used to pass through our town to be delivered to Israel's northern border, and military planes used to roar above our heads. Our schoolteacher would sarcastically say that they were on their way to distribute sweets to the people of Lebanon. I kept a war journal since war

was part of my daily life. I listened to the news about the war on the radio before and after school, and watched the news on television in the evening. At the time, I was still too young and timid to participate in the demonstrations in Nazareth against the Sabra and Shatila massacres.

In high school I questioned the absence of Palestinian history and literature from our school curricula, and designed, in response, my own curriculum. I used to hide Ghassan Kanafani's stories in my schoolbooks to avoid being scolded by my mother for not 'studying'. My experience growing up in Nazareth revolved mainly around my family and school. When I went to pursue higher education at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem (and later at Tel-Aviv University), my sheltered Nazareth world was shattered. I realised that Nazareth was not the world, and the education I received in its private schools was second-class in comparison to that of Israeli Jewish students. As a child and teenager growing up in Nazareth, I always knew my 'place'. I felt I belonged to my hometown though not to the Israeli collective. While growing up in Nazareth, within the limits of my place, I found it easy sometimes to ignore this location and continue living as if Nazareth was all there was.

In 1989, a year after I moved to Tel-Aviv University, I started working to pay for my education and gain economic independence from my family. I worked with the blind, the elderly, in a house for women prisoners, and at a human rights organisation. I was active on campus with the Arab Student Committee and leftist Israeli Jewish groups in protesting against the occupation of the West Bank, Gaza, and Lebanon. In 1993, I received a scholarship to study peace studies in the United States of America. I never thought that I would ever leave *liblad* (the country) to study abroad. My family was very supportive of the idea, but when I decided a year later to stay in the United States to pursue a Ph.D. in women's studies, my parents were hesitant. It was surprising coming from them, they who had had no chance to finish their high school education and who, as a result, were always encouraging my brothers and me to study. My grandmother was more forthcoming and wondered whether by continuing my education I would become too 'old' to get married.

I spent the years between 1993 and 1997 luxuriously studying feminist practice and theory. Those were the years of the Oslo peace process and its euphoria. In October 2000, I was still living, working, and studying in the United States.

In October 2000, the curtain fell. There were no more illusions or pretence, and peace and justice were not part of the 'new' equation. Power was the sole language of the moment. In October 2000, when Palestinians, citizens of Israel, protested against their treatment as second-class citizens in Israel and expressed solidarity for the rights of the Palestinian people in the West Bank and Gaza to live in dignity and freedom from occupation they were crushed. In one week of demonstrations, thirteen

Palestinian citizens of Israel were shot and killed by Israeli police and border patrol units, and hundreds were injured and arrested.

I had naïvely thought that Palestinians, citizens of Israel, were no longer orientalist, 'othered' and treated like a fifth column with an identity crisis by Israel's state institutions (including academic research). It was horrifying to read in Israel's major Hebrew newspapers during the early weeks of October descriptions of 'them' as an internal threat and a fifth column. Fifty-two years have passed and we are still at square one, a threat. I was terrified of what could happen next, since a rational mind cannot explain this excessive and brutal use of force.

I am finishing the last sections of this essay a few days after Israel's celebrations of its fifty-third Independence Day, and seven months into the Second Intifada. During these seven months, Israeli abuses of Palestinian human rights in the West Bank and Gaza have become the norm. Here I am in the United States of America, following closely what is happening at home through talking to my family, and reading on-line the Arabic and Hebrew newspapers that are published in Israel. The paradox of being there and here at the same time makes my self-imposed exile meaningless, and makes the connections between these two locations stronger.

By late October 2000, it was time to break away yet again from my sheltered life, and reach out to the community around. As a taxpayer in the United States, I was implicated, whether I wanted to admit it or not, in funding the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza. By November 2000, I was active in two political groups in the Washington, D.C. area, one focusing on Arab American feminist issues, and the other on United States tax-funded aid to Israel.

Gendered Politics of Location: Generational Intersections

Both my grandmother and mother related to the year 1948 as a demarcating event in their lives. In 1948, my grandmother's life was turned upside down. My mother would subsequently bear the results of that new situation of poverty and fear of the unknown. My grandmother acknowledged during our conversation that she had had limited contact with the state of Israel, and that she was mostly confined in her experience to the private sphere. My mother reflected a similar experience when she said that her main contact with the state of Israel was through radio and television. My grandmother acknowledged that the state of Israel treated the elderly well, and provided social services. 'If only they would treat the Arabs better', she said. My mother related to the state as oppressive and expansionist, and acknowledged that although the situation of Palestinians, citizens of Israel, has improved over time, it was they, not the state, who facilitated this. Both my grandmother and mother were

very clear in terms of their relation to the state. They felt, although in different ways, isolated, marginalised, and oppressed.

I, on the other hand, despite having experiences different from my grandmother's and mother's, feel the same way that they do towards the state of Israel. Israel embodied the 'other' for my grandmother and mother. It was hard for me to deal with this 'othering' language during the interview. I could not exactly tell if my grandmother and mother were othering the state of Israel in return for its continued othering of them, or if they were simply referring to the state of Israel in mythical and general terms. The interaction of my grandmother and mother with the 'other' was very limited. My grandmother did not know the Hebrew language. Although she recognised that everything in her life was turned upside down as a result of the creation of the state of Israel, she acknowledged that after ten years she got used to 'them' and hence continued to live her life in Nazareth as if nothing had changed. My mother interacted with the new reality of post-1948, and recognised the constraints that it imposed on her life. The fact that I left my hometown and went to the university, a site that is predominantly Israeli Jewish, deconstructed any myth of the other that I might have had. I interacted on a daily basis at the university and at work with the state's institutions and people.

While my grandmother blames the occupation for turning her life upside down, and while my mother blames the occupation for the loss of her childhood and adulthood, both take responsibility for their life choices. My grandmother's timidity and pride, according to her, prevented her from challenging her family, while my mother considered her marriage a cowardly escape. It was honour and fear that prevented my grandmother from continuing to work as a teacher, and it was honour and fear (compounded by the horrors of war) that drove my mother's family to allow her marriage at age sixteen. Both admit that they did not resist the gendered limitations and constraints imposed on their lives sufficiently.

I was not fully aware of the continuity between the experiences of my grandmother, mother and myself until I wrote this essay and attempted to understand our lives in relation to each other. Now I can see that I was able to resist the constraints in my life because of them. It is the continuity between our three generations compounded by education and political activism, that helped me carve an alternative path and challenge the gendered limitations in my life. After more than fifty years of resistance on different fronts, I keep wondering how many more generations it will take to move another square away from the politics of occupation.

- commander had his offices indoors, the public was largely served outside the office, literally on the street). Most people lining up were men asking for permits allowing them to leave their village to look for work, or older women wanting to either visit relatives or do other chores. In addition to the pushing and shoving, the commander was very rude to people; he would shout, scream, and even scold them.
6. Wearing black in my culture is a sign of mourning. Upon the death of a family member, Arab women don black clothes, an often conservative type of attire which is not expected to show parts of the body. The period for wearing it varies according to the closeness and age of the deceased. Based on these customs, we thought that this teacher has lost a dear family member.
 7. The uniqueness of the Israeli state's relationship to the Bedouins is a striking example of how laws can invent culture rather than reflect a reality. Unlike the 'security' justification used as Israel's basis for confiscating Palestinian peasant lands, Bedouins' lands were confiscated on 'cultural' grounds. Perceived by the state as 'rootless nomads' and not communities who have moved on these lands for centuries, the Bedouins were used by the state as a tail to its own image. Thus, in order to assert its own power and domination over this population, Israel constructed the Bedouins as 'backward and incapable', while the Zionist project was 'modern' and 'Western'. For more on the Bedouins and Druze in Israel, see Ronen Shimmer, in Nahla Abdo (forthcoming), *Sexuality, Citizenship and the Nation State: Palestinian Experiences*. Syracuse: (Syracuse University Press), Chapter 3.
 8. The Jewish Agency was known prior to 1920 as the Zionist Agency. Before the establishment of the state of Israel, it had followed strict policies preventing Palestinians from working, leasing, or buying back land they had lost, mostly by force. These policies and practices remained intact many years after the lifting of military rule. In the mid-seventies, in a speech given to the settlers, the Israeli minister of agriculture was reported to have complained about the presence of Arab labourers in Jewish settlements, considering them a 'cancer which needs to be uprooted'. The same policies have been pursued after the establishment of the state of Israel. For more on this, see Abdo. *Sexuality, Citizenship and the Nation State*.
 9. Lawyer Leah Tsemel is a leftist, activist, anti-Zionist Jew. She took up the task of defending Palestinian political prisoners on principle and as a political cause she believed in. She has also written on the ordeal of Palestinian political prisoners and their torture and illegal incarceration by the Israeli authorities. Her public support of the Palestinians and political stance against Israeli aggression and racism marked her as a 'Jew hater' and a 'traitor' to Israeli officials. 'Bat zonah' (whore) was the only way prison officers would identify her when she used to come and visit me in prison.
 10. The difference between Zionism and Jewishness, or who is a Zionist and who is a Jew, is a matter of political position and social consciousness. As was stated earlier, this question is of no importance or consequence to an ordinary Palestinian, for whom both are equally oppressors. I must admit that it took me a lot of reading and hard work to develop a position on this issue and feel satisfied with it. The first articulation of this difference is found in my 'Nationalism and feminism in the Palestinian women's movement', in Valentine Moghadam (ed.), *Gender and National Identity: Women and Politics in Muslim Societies*, London: Zed Books, 1994: 148-70. Another articulation of this difference is found in an article co-authored with Nira Yuval-Davis, 'Palestine, Israel and the Zionist settler project', in Daiva Stasiulis and Nira Yuval-Davis (eds.), *Unsettling Settler Societies: Articulations of Gender, Race, Ethnicity and Class*, London: Sage, 1995: 291-322.
 11. For Benedict Anderson (1991), the concept 'nationalism' assumes a special role and importance in the life of communities in general because of the power it commands as a 'unifying force' people can depend on, take pride in, and develop a sense of belonging to. What is peculiar about this concept is that it can be used for all sorts of purposes, for the purpose, including 'love, unity, togetherness and group solidarity'.

Yet, when stretched to its logical extension it can lead to oppression, exclusion, and even racism.

12. This was true for most academic and activist feminists I met during the first Intifada. The slogan 'No going back' was a credo of most feminists at the time. In fact, this slogan inspired my earlier articles on the Intifada (1991; 1993).

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'Gendered Politics of Location'

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THREE

Life under Occupation