

# **The Palestinian Refugee Camps: From Crisis to Cultural Heritage**

By  
Reem Awad

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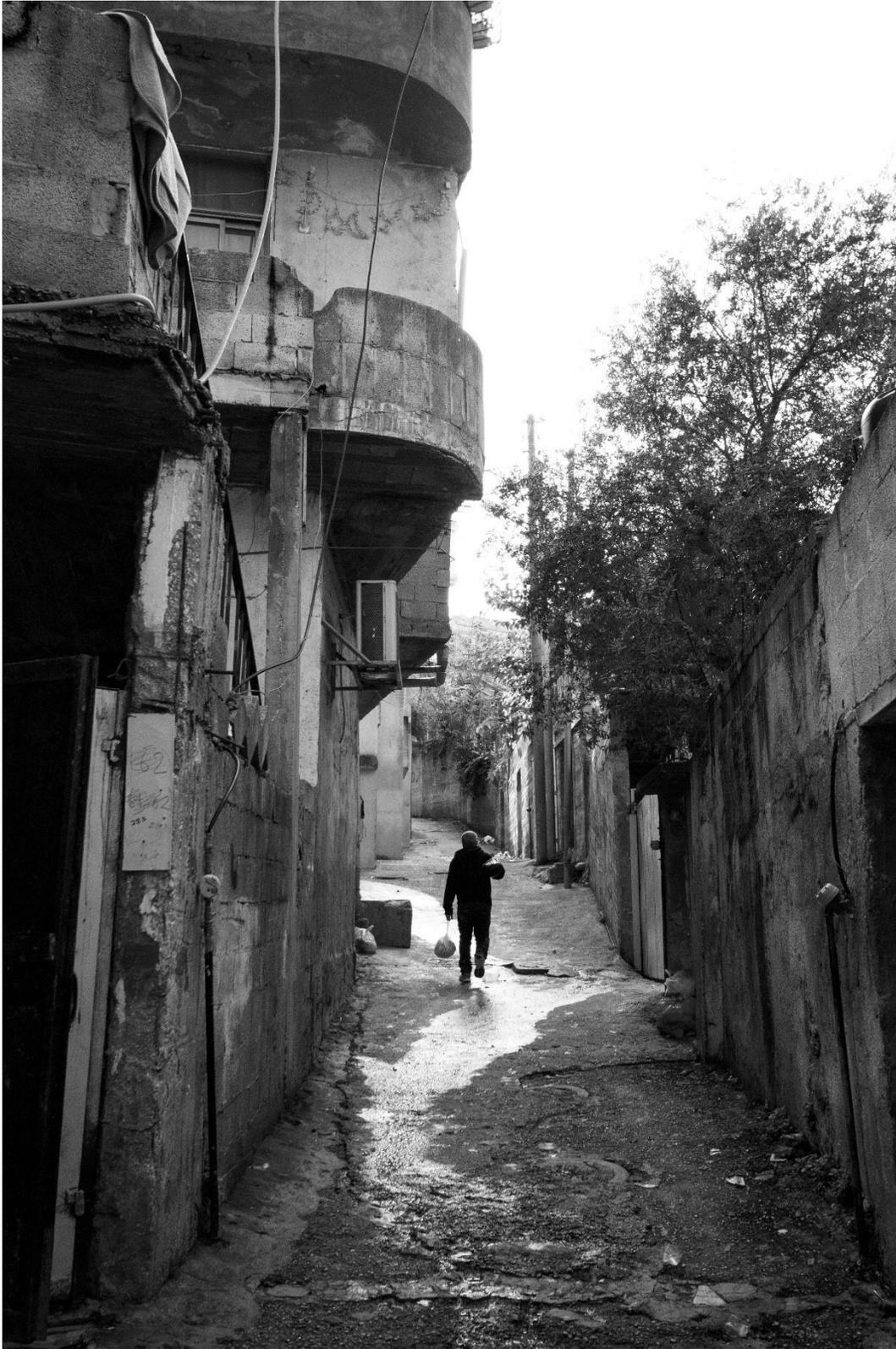


Figure 1: Al-Jalazone Camp, West Bank, Palestine (Awad 2018)

# Abstract

According to UNHCR (*United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees*), “a refugee camp is intended as a **temporary** accommodation for people who have been forced to flee their home because of violence and persecution.”<sup>1</sup> When refugee camps are described as “temporary”, it begs the question — what is the definition of temporary? Is it a few days, weeks, months...? What happens when one cannot determine the end to it? What happens when the temporary becomes the indeterminate? When what was once defined as temporary becomes the only reality that someone knows?

After seventy years, the stacked tents of the first Palestinian refugee camps have grown into dense and vibrant urban environments. However, in the narrow streets, there are lingering stories of over 500 lost villages. This thesis investigates the temporary nature of Palestinian refugee camps, through the study of a single module in the camp. It tells the story of a seventy-year-old temporary architecture, as an effort to communicate knowledge of the events and factors that shaped these temporary architectures to become what they are today. This thesis also explores the social and cultural values embodied in the refugee camps and the transgenerational memories that bind refugees to the lost villages that are somehow still "home". The storytelling follows the journey of three generations of a refugee family, starting from their village of origin, to the events that led them to the camp and shaped their space and lives.

In order to define “temporary” in the context of the Palestinian Camps, it is important to try and understand how the people living in the camps understand a more rooted sense of being in a place — in a phenomenological sense, “dwelling”.

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<sup>1</sup> "What Is a Refugee Camp? Definition and Statistics | USA for UNHCR." UN Refugees. Accessed September 26, 2018. <https://www.unrefugees.org/refugee-facts/camps/>.

*In storytelling we preserve memories, memories that construct our  
history and identity. (Awad 2018)*

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To Palestine ...

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*Figure 2: Al-Jalazone Camp Mosque (Awad 2018)*

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# Introduction

Who are Palestinian Refugees?

*“Palestine refugees are defined as persons whose normal place of residence was Palestine during the period 1 June 1946 to 15 May 1948, and who lost both home and means of livelihood as a result of the 1948 conflict.”*<sup>2</sup>

*UNRWA definition of Palestinian Refugees*

The Palestinian refugee crisis appeared in 1948; when the State of Israel was established on eighty percent (80%) of Palestine. As result, 800,000 Palestinians were displaced to become refugees within different regions of Palestine and the neighboring countries in Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon. As an emergency action to the birth of 800,000 Palestinian refugees, the United Nations (UN) established United Nations Relief for Palestinian Refugees (UNRPR) to provide relief to the refugees until regional peace could be achieved and they could go back to their homes. A year later, the UN created the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA), which was established temporarily to deal with the refugee problem. However, Israel never allowed the refugees to go back to their homes. As a result, the refugee camps have remained and so has UNRWA. Over seventy years have passed, yet the Palestinian refugee problem remains unsolved and refugees still claim their right to return to their homes. The temporary accommodations that UNRWA provided took an unplanned turn, as the tents were replaced with concrete block rooms, refugees started building additions to their shelters to accommodate their minimum needs. Host countries did not allow for the geographical area of the camps to be expanded. As a result, new forms of architecture appeared,

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<sup>2</sup> "Palestine Refugees." UNRWA. Accessed September 30, 2018. <https://www.unrwa.org/palestine-refugees>.

and the camp started to grow vertically. With the transformation the refugee camps have gone through, the typical image of a temporary camp no longer exists in Palestinian terrain. Despite this, the space and the status of the refugees is still officially “temporary”.

This research is an attempt to define the temporary in the context of Palestinian refugee camps. It will investigate the events and factors that were behind the establishment of this architecture and its continued existence through the stories told by a temporary architecture that is now seventy years old. The research will narrow its focus to the investigation of a single module in the camp, that represents the journey of three generations of a refugee family through the past seventy years. The focus of the research aims to introduce the human experience, perception, and actions within the camp, and how those are reflected on the camp’s architecture.

The first chapter presents an introduction to Palestinian refugee camps, as understood through the theories of the political philosopher *Hannah Arendt*. It will define refugees’ status and space in the public realm to formulate the thesis questions and the research methodology.

The second chapter tells the story of Palestinian refugee camps, by introducing the historical events that led to the birth of the Palestinian refugee crisis. The events go back from the 1880s to the summer of 1948, to Al-Nakba<sup>3</sup> and the beginning of Palestinians’ displacement.

Chapter Three recounts the events of 1948 to 2018, starting from the lost villages of Beit Nabala and Rantiya, to Al-Jalazone Refugee Camp in the West Bank, Palestine. This part of the story introduces the voices of four refugees from a refugee family that was interviewed in December 2018 for this research in Al-Jalazone camp. The narratives of the refugee members

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<sup>3</sup> Al-Nakba: an Arabic word which means ‘the catastrophe’. Al-Nakba represents the events when around 800,000 Palestinians were expelled from their homes, and the day the State of Israel was established 15 May 1948.

are inserted in the form of a first-person account, where they tell the stories that shaped their lives and space in the camp during certain periods of time in the past seventy years.

In Chapter Four, we go back to the village of origin before 1948, to the memories of the life and home recalled by the first-generation refugee. The first-person account is augmented by '*All That Remains*', a book in which the Palestinian historian Walid Khalidi documented 413 of the Palestinian lost villages.

The second part of this thesis includes information that was collected for the sake of this research from fieldwork. The information includes visual illustrations of refugee camp physical evolution, maps, historical photographs, on-site photographs, contextual photographs, in addition to the researcher's journal and news captions from the twenty-seven days spent in Palestine for the research fieldwork. This information is an important asset to establish a better understanding of the context in which the architecture of Palestinian refugee camps has evolved and the context in which this research was conducted.



*Figure 3: Al-Jalazone Refugee Camp 1950, one year after the establishment of the camp (Poll 1950)*



*Figure 4: Al-Jalazon Camp Refugee 2018 (Awad 2018)*

# Chapter One



*Figure 5: Al-Jalazone Camp Architecture (Awad 2018)*

## Introduction to **Palestinian Refugee Camps**

This chapter defines Palestinian refugee camps through the understanding of Hannah Arendt's theory on 'The Public: The Common', in addition to her definition of refugees and refugees' status. It will define the status of refugee camps in the common as a space of action and how this definition is reflected on Palestinians' recognition of their own space in the camp on one hand and the State of Israel on the other.

*“No human life, not even the life of the hermit in nature's wildness, is possible without a world which directly or indirectly testifies of the presence of other human beings”<sup>4</sup>*

Hannah Arendt's argument suggests that in order for someone or something to be, it has to be recognized in the public realm. Hannah Arendt defines 'The Public Realm: The Common'<sup>5</sup>, as the space in which everything can be seen by everyone, where the assurance of the reality and existence of something depends on the presence of the others who can testify of its presence. It is the realm where we can all agree on what appears through it to be the reality.

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<sup>4</sup> Arendt, Hannah, and Margaret Canovan. *The Human Condition*. 2nd ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998, 22.

<sup>5</sup> Arendt, Hannah, and Margaret Canovan. *The Human Condition*. 2nd ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998.

*“The common world is what we enter when we are born and what we leave behind when we die... a common world can survive the coming and going generations only to the extent it appears in the public”<sup>6</sup>.*

Hannah Arendt notes that the common world is not an absolute but rather a result of actions that require a space of action in the public. The survival of this world or this reality is dependent on the evidence, the space and others who can testify of its existence.

In the Palestinian context, Palestinians appeared in the public realm as refugees in 1948, after their common world in which they were born in as citizens did not survive and was completely altered with the establishment of the state of Israel. This action took place by the denial of Palestinians existence and rights of the land. Palestinians were thrown outside the ‘common’, first by destroying their space in the villages of origin, where they lost their homes, their social fabric and their distinct place in the world, and then by excluding the Palestinian villages from history, by removing them from the map, maps that are available to the public that represent the common reality of what existed on the land. These actions destroyed the space that formed the evidence of Palestinians’ existence on the land as citizens.

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<sup>6</sup> Arendt, Hannah, and Margaret Canovan. *The human condition*. 2nd ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998, 55.

When Palestinians were deprived of their space in the common, they lost their status as citizens that gave them rights and protection. Palestinians' status to become the rightless "*people who lost the right to have rights, a right that could only be guaranteed by nation-state they left or were expelled from or by a nation-state that accepted them and naturalized them as citizens*".<sup>7</sup> This emphasizes the concept that human rights are not granted just by one's existence as a human being, but rather by one's recognition within a state-nation as a citizen, the state's recognition is what grants one their human right.<sup>8</sup>

With the exclusion of Palestinian refugees from the common world they were born into, a new space appeared in the public realm: Refugee camps. This new space became the new reality for first-generation refugees, and the reality that the second and third generation refugees were born into. The space that Arendt called "*the only 'country' the world had to offer the stateless*"<sup>9</sup>.

The camp became the only space that Palestinian refugees can appear through; however, their reappearance was associated with the international recognition of those spaces, and more specifically by being recognized by the UNRWA as an official Palestinian refugee camp. Refugees' new space in the camp gave them some sort of status, which gave them humanitarian rights, rather than human rights. Those rights can only be granted to refugees by the International recognition of their space and status.

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<sup>7</sup> Herscher, Andrew, Nikolaus Hirsch, and Markus Miessen. *Displacements: Architecture and Refugee*. Berlin: Stenberg Press, 2017.

<sup>8</sup> Arendt, Hannah. *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. New ed. With Added Prefaces. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1973, 292.

<sup>9</sup> Arendt, Hannah. *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. New ed. With Added Prefaces. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1973, 284.

Within the refugee camp, Palestinian refugees who lost all means to the familiarity of a home have created their own space, by the reconstruction of their social life and common language in those camps. The early organizations of the camps were by refugees settling in groups from the same village. The spaces in the camp became identified by the names of each group's village of origin. These early actions were the bases to the reconstruction of refugees' lives from the villages of origin, to become a space that represents the memories, culture, and identity of the lost villages.

However, their reconstruction was not an attempt to replace or forget their lost homes, land and rights but rather to create a space for action, where they could claim the rights they were deprived. Refugee camps became the physical evidence of their loss.

*“In acting and speaking, men show who they are, reveal actively their unique personal identities and thus make their appearance in the human world, while their physical identities appear without any activity of their own in the unique shape of the body and sound of the voice.”<sup>10</sup>*

Analyzing refugees' practices in the camp can be understood through Arendt's theory of the human need for action and speech to be recognized. However, action needs to be in the presence of others, to be visible in the public realm to take place. Therefore, the camp's space value is embodied in the refugees need to take the action to be recognized and seen in the public realm, not as those who are out of the law and have no rights, but those who have the right to claim their lost rights.

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<sup>10</sup> Arendt, Hannah, and Margaret Canovan. *The human condition*. 2nd ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998, 179.

In order for one to claim something, evidence is needed. In the case of Palestinian refugees claims, the camp became the physical evidence. The legitimacy of this evidence is assured by the State of Israel's recognition of refugee camp status.

In *Hollow Land*, Eyal Weizman writes about Palestinian refugee camps and the Israeli's perception of those spaces and how Israel Defense Forces (IDF) see refugee camps as a threat. *"In the eyes of the IDF, refugee camps were seen not only as the place in which the resistance is located and organized but as the socio-physical environment that creates it."*<sup>11</sup> Referencing a study by Palestinian sociologist Norma Masriyeh Hazboun, Weizman states that the threat Israel sees in those camps is the reason that formed the Israeli strategic thinking of rehousing refugees since the 1967 war. In that war Israel took over the West Bank and Gaza Strip, where many refugee camps were located. Rehousing refugees in city-village-dwellers was seen as the solution to 'the refugee problem'<sup>12</sup>. That strategy took a violent turn when Israel targeted many camps to push refugees out in an attempt to disassemble the camps and dismantle the environment of resistance. This was reflected in Ariel Sharon's words regarding the case of destruction of Jabalia and Rafah camps.

*"The destruction in Shati, Jebalia and Rafah refugee camps in 1971-72 by military forces under Ariel Sharon, the Chief of Southern Command, was undertaken with the intention not of widening the internal roadways and creating a controllable urban plan but making the refugees homeless and in need for new homes and thereby forcing the government to implement*

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<sup>11</sup> Weizman, Eyal. *Hollow Land: Israels Architecture of Occupation*. London: Verso, 2007, 229.

<sup>12</sup> Weizman, Eyal. *Hollow Land: Israels Architecture of Occupation*. London: Verso, 2007, 230.

*a refugee resettlement programme. In his autobiography, Sharon later explained that the camps 'bred the most serious problems... It would be to our great advantage to eliminate them once and for all... [and] we should take pains to provide decent housing...''<sup>13</sup>*

While *Sharon's* words seem like he is advocating to provide a better form of life for refugees, he is actually promoting the removal of refugees' space of existing as refugees, the space that gives them the right to claim their rights. This sense of threat that the State of Israel feels, and the actions it takes against the camps and the refugees, in a way endorses the idea that by removing someone from the camp, you remove their right to act as a refugee, and remove the space and status that identifies who they are and what they fight for.

Although the camps were initially built as temporary solutions for a temporary condition on land that was leased by UNRWA, the camp shelters evolved to more permanent structures, which changed the typical image of a camp. The identification of those spaces as camps carries a deeper meaning to it. It brings the temporary condition of the space that lies beyond the physical status and raises the continuous question and recognition of why this architecture was first established and what does it represent. The transformation of the camps to more permanent structures does not contradict with the temporariness of the refugees' status within the camp. Many Palestinian refugees believe that by preserving their address in the camp, the space where refugees reconstructed what forms evidence of the life they once had in the villages of origin and the rights they lost, they are preserving their address in the lost villages and their right to return to their villages of origin.

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<sup>13</sup> Weizman, Eyal. *Hollow Land: Israel's Architecture of Occupation*. London: Verso, 2007, 230.

Understanding the importance of refugee camps as a space of action defines the status of 'temporary' in the context of the Palestinian refugee camps. Through refugees' action within the camp, they preserve their temporary status by claiming their rights, which can only be granted by returning to their homes as citizens who have human rights rather than humanitarian rights.

The research will explore refugees' action through tracing the journey of displacement of a Palestinian refugee family of three generations.



Figure 6: Al-Jalazone Camp graffiti. A Palestinian behind Israeli bars reading with a dove on his shoulder.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Dove represents peace while the book could be seen as a method of resistance. Even though Palestinians are deprived of their freedom but cannot be deprived of the act of resistance through knowledge

# Thesis Question

## Main Question

What defines temporary in the context of Palestinian refugee camps?

## Sub Questions

How has the temporary architecture of the Palestinian refugee camp evolved throughout the past seventy years to become what it is today?

To what extent does the architecture of the camp represent what was lost in the villages of origin?

How do refugees perceive their status and space within the refugee camp?

What are the cultural and heritage values represented in the architecture of the Palestinian refugee camps?

# Research Methodology

While architecture responds to human needs it also affects human behavior. To understand the response and the effects manifested in the architecture of the Palestinian refugee camps, we need to recognize the events that took place in creating and shaping these edifices. Palestinian refugee camps were not built to stay. They were not designed by architects, but rather by the refugees themselves; they were built out of necessity. In studying architecture, it is not only about the space but rather studying everything around it that led to its existence-the designer, the builder, the era that it was built in, and the technique and materials available at that time. We cannot address the architecture of refugee camps in isolation from those who have shaped it and the lives that have been affected by it.

The research explores Palestinian refugee camp architecture through three perspectives that take place in creating and shaping this architecture. The first is based on historical events behind the creation of the Palestinian refugee crisis. The second stage is through analyzing the physical evolution of the camps. The third and most important part, is the human experience, which combines the first two stages through the experience of three generations of a refugee family.

1. **Historical Events.** The first and largest scale investigates historical events and the evolving spatial practices that shaped the borders of the State of Israel on the account of Palestinian Land. This information was obtained from the literature of several historians, and historical and contemporary maps of Palestine and Israel. These events were translated through a series of maps of Palestinian and Zionist land since the early twentieth century until today, illustrating how the Palestinian refugee crisis was associated with the birth of the State of Israel and its continuous expansion while Palestine disappears. (see figures 37-48).

2. **Camps Physical Status.** The second stage analyzes the physical evolution of the camps' structures, from the fragile temporary tents to the dense multistory concrete structures. This is based on the researcher's observation and analysis of UNRWA photo archives of Palestinian refugee camps since their establishment, in addition to existing literature on Palestinian refugee camps. The observations were reflected through illustrations of UNRWA photos, in association with the researcher's interpretation and reflection on how those changes affected the camps' urban form and density in the plan view. (see figures 25-36)

3. **Human Experience.** The third scale investigates the architecture of Palestinian refugee camps through the human experience. The evolution of a single architectural module in the camp is explored through the narrative of one refugee family. The narrative reflects the family's experience through the first two scales and how their lives and space were shaped in the camp. This is explored by tracing the journey of three generations of the refugee family, starting from their home in the village of origin, the different places they took refuge in until they arrived at the camp, and the seventy years of living in exile. This involved multiple steps:

3.1. **Ethical Clearance.** Considering that the research requires human interaction by interviewing members of Palestinian refugee families, the researcher was required to get ethical clearance from Carleton University Research Ethics Board (CUREB). The process took two months, which started on October 11<sup>th</sup>, 2018 with meeting one of the CUREB employees to discuss the protocol procedures and requirements. The ethics protocol form went back and forth multiple times, each time with more questions, comments and concerns from the CUREB-B committee regarding the research purpose and questioning the necessity for human involvement in the research and the possible risk that the

research might cause to the participants considering that the targeted participants are Palestinian refugees who are considered a vulnerable population. Eventually, CUREB granted the ethical clearance on 11 December 2018, the first day the researcher arrived in Palestine to conduct the field work. This process was one of the major challenges, as any part of the research involving human interaction was on hold until the CUREB clearance, which meant contacting the possible participants for recruitment was all delayed until December.

**3.2. Identifying Refugee Families:** the constraints of identifying the family was to locate a first-generation refugee who was born in the village of origin (currently occupied by the State of Israel) and was old enough when displaced in 1948, to remember living in the village/city of origin and the events and journey of displacement. This person lived both in the village of origin and the refugee camp. Interviewing the first-generation refugee would add another dimension to the refugee camp beyond its current boundaries, to connect the architecture of the camp with the village of origin and the seventy years of living in exile. The first-generation refugee witnessed life in the village of origin, the events of 1948 and the displacement, and the different places where they took refuge until the UNRWA established Palestinian refugee camps. The first-generation refugee experienced the stages from living in a tent to the different interventions within the camp by the UN agencies, host country and the refugees themselves. Asking questions about the first-generation refugees' lives before displacement might reveal important connections and justifications of what has been created in the camp in relation to how and why things took the shape they did, and if there is any relationship between their home in the village of origin and the current dwelling in the camp. These relationships might remain imperceptible unless we ask questions and try to understand and compare the different conditions, spaces and the time that one family has lived in and how their lives may have been altered

by architecture, both in the village of origin and the camp. As for the second and third generation interviewees, those who were born in the refugee camps and only know their village of origin from the stories told by the first-generation, their definition and perception of their space within the camp might be different from the first-generation as they never knew a place before the camp, and their identity as refugees was inherited from their parents just as their right to return to their village of origin.

Since it was not possible to recruit before CUREB granted the ethical clearance, the researcher turned to media coverage (news, reports, article, and documentaries) with Palestinian refugees to try to determine possible participants that could be recruited once the ethical clearance was granted. Three possible groups of participants were identified from an article, and a documentary about Palestinian refugees in Al-Jalazone camp.

**3.3. Participants Recruitment.** Once the research was granted ethical clearance, the researcher started to contact the possible participants for recruitment. However, the process was delayed due to the unstable conditions that Ramallah and the surrounding area in the West Bank were going through at that time. The Ramallah area was shut down by Israeli forces for few days, and three Palestinians were killed, while many others were wounded and detained. After the situation calmed down, other challenges arose, when all three groups of participants that were identified were either unreachable or did not fall in the research criteria. Finally, a new group of participants was identified and recruited two weeks later, on 29 December 2018. The family's current place of residence is Al-Jalazone refugee camp located north of the city of Ramallah in the West Bank, Palestine. (Refer to Chapter Three for the family's story)

3.4. **Field Work.** Once the family was identified, three members of the family were interviewed. Based on the interview, the different settings of the research were established, the village of origin, the path of the journey of displacement and how their space evolved in the camp during the past seventy years. The family's current residence was documented using photography, 360-degree photographs and photogrammetry to build a 3D point cloud model as a reference to model the current condition of the dwelling and reconstruct how the family's shelter evolved since 1948. As for documenting the village of origin, it was not possible considering that the village of origin is now located within the Israeli State territory. It was inaccessible for the researcher due to the fact that a Palestinian from the West Bank would need a permit from the State of Israel to cross an Israeli checkpoint to get into the Israeli side, a permit that the researcher was unable to obtain.

# Chapter Two

Historical Background to Palestinian Refugee Camps

## The Promise of Exile

While the Palestinian refugee crisis appeared in 1948, it rooted back to the Zionist movement plan of establishing a Jewish homeland in Palestine. The movement was initiated in the late 1880s in central and eastern Europe as a national movement of the Jewish people supporting the establishment of a Jewish homeland. By the beginning of the twentieth century, this national revival became associated with the colonization of Palestine.<sup>15</sup> Most of the Zionist energy and resources were directed towards buying land in Palestine to facilitate and encourage the immigration of European Jewish people to Palestine.

The system in which the Palestinian land was bought and later the villages were attacked was according to a Zionist systemic plan that was based on a detailed registry of all the Arab villages. The idea of the inventory was proposed by a historian from the Hebrew University, Ben-Zion Luria<sup>16</sup>. The Jewish National Fund (JNF) conducted this inventory as the principle Zionist tool for the colonization of Palestine, where detailed files were created for each of the Palestinian villages including aerial photographs, topographic location of each village, access roads, quality of land, water springs, main sources of income, its relationship with other villages, the age of individual men (sixteen to fifty) and many more.<sup>17</sup>

*“We had to study the basic structure of the Arab village. This means the structure and best to attack it. In the military schools, I had been taught how to attack Modern European city, not a primitive village in the Near East. We could not compare it [an Arab village] to a Polish, or an Austrian one.*

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<sup>15</sup> Pappé, Ilan. *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine*. London, England: Oneworld, 2015, 10

<sup>16</sup> Ibid, 17.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid, 19.

*The Arab village, unlike the European ones, was built topographically on hills. That meant we had to find out how best to approach the village from above or enter it from below. We had to train out 'Arabists' [the Orientalists who operated a network of collaborators] how best to work with informants.*"<sup>18</sup>

In the early twentieth century, the Zionist population and its actions were not noticed by the local Palestinians. Many of the Zionist immigrants were living within the Palestinian community, farming the land together and even living in the same neighborhoods where there were no ethnic divisions. Even though several Palestinian leaders suspected and discussed the Zionist political movement of purchasing land, they did not expect the destructive consequences to this movement.

It was not until the 1917 Balfour declaration; the Zionist agenda became known to the local population and globally. The United Kingdom's Foreign Secretary, Arthur Balfour sent a letter to Lord Rothschild, expressing the British support of the Zionist plan for establishing a Jewish homeland in Palestine. It was a promise made by a European power regarding a non-European territory to another foreign group, regardless of the consequences it had on the indigenous people living on the land.<sup>19</sup> Not only did this promise cause tension in the region, but also opened the door to endless conflict.

By late 1947, the Jewish community owned almost six percent (5.8%) of the land of Palestine<sup>20</sup> (see figures 7, 39 & 40). Most of the land was bought from absentee landlords who were living at some distance from their land or even outside the country and did not know to whom the land was being sold.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Pappé, Ilan. *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine*. London, England: Oneworld, 2015, 19.

<sup>19</sup> Said, Edward W. *The Question of Palestine*. New York: Vintage Books, 1992, 16.

<sup>20</sup> Pappé, Ilan. *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine*. London, England: Oneworld, 2015, 18.

<sup>21</sup> Pappé, Ilan. *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine*. London, England: Oneworld, 2015, 17.

On the 29th of November 1947, the UN proposed a plan to create two separate states in Palestine: the Zionist movement was given a state that stretched over fifty-six percent (56%) of Palestine, while the majority, the native Palestinians were given forty-three percent (43%) of the land. Jerusalem, the one percent (1%) would be under an international regime administered by the UN. (see figures 7, 41 & 42)

Immediately the Zionist movement leaders started negotiating with the UNSCOP (United Nations Special Committee on Palestine) and proposed a map with the state they wanted, which included eighty percent (80%) of Palestine. The UNSCOP refused the proposal and asked the Zionist leaders to be satisfied with fifty-six percent (56%) of the land.<sup>22</sup>

In December 1947, just a month after the announcement of the UN partition plan, the ethnic cleansing of Palestine began. A series of attacks took place on the Palestinian villages and towns, where those attacks were severe enough to cause the evacuation of substantial numbers of Palestinians. Within six months, 531 Palestinian villages had been destroyed, eleven urban neighborhoods had been emptied of their inhabitants, resulting in about 800,000 native Palestinians being uprooted.<sup>23</sup> (see figure 48)

On 15 May 1948, the same day the British pulled out of Palestine, the Zionists immediately declared the establishment of the State of Israel over eighty percent of Palestine including Jerusalem. May 15th became the day that Israelis celebrate every year as their Independence Day while Palestinians mourn their catastrophe and loss and refer to it as “Al-Nakba”<sup>24</sup>. (see figure 7, 43 & 44)

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<sup>22</sup> Pappé, Ilan. *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine*. London, England: Oneworld, 2015, 32.

<sup>23</sup> Pappé, Ilan. *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine*. London, England: Oneworld, 2015, xiii.

<sup>24</sup> Al-Nakba, an Arabic word which means the catastrophe

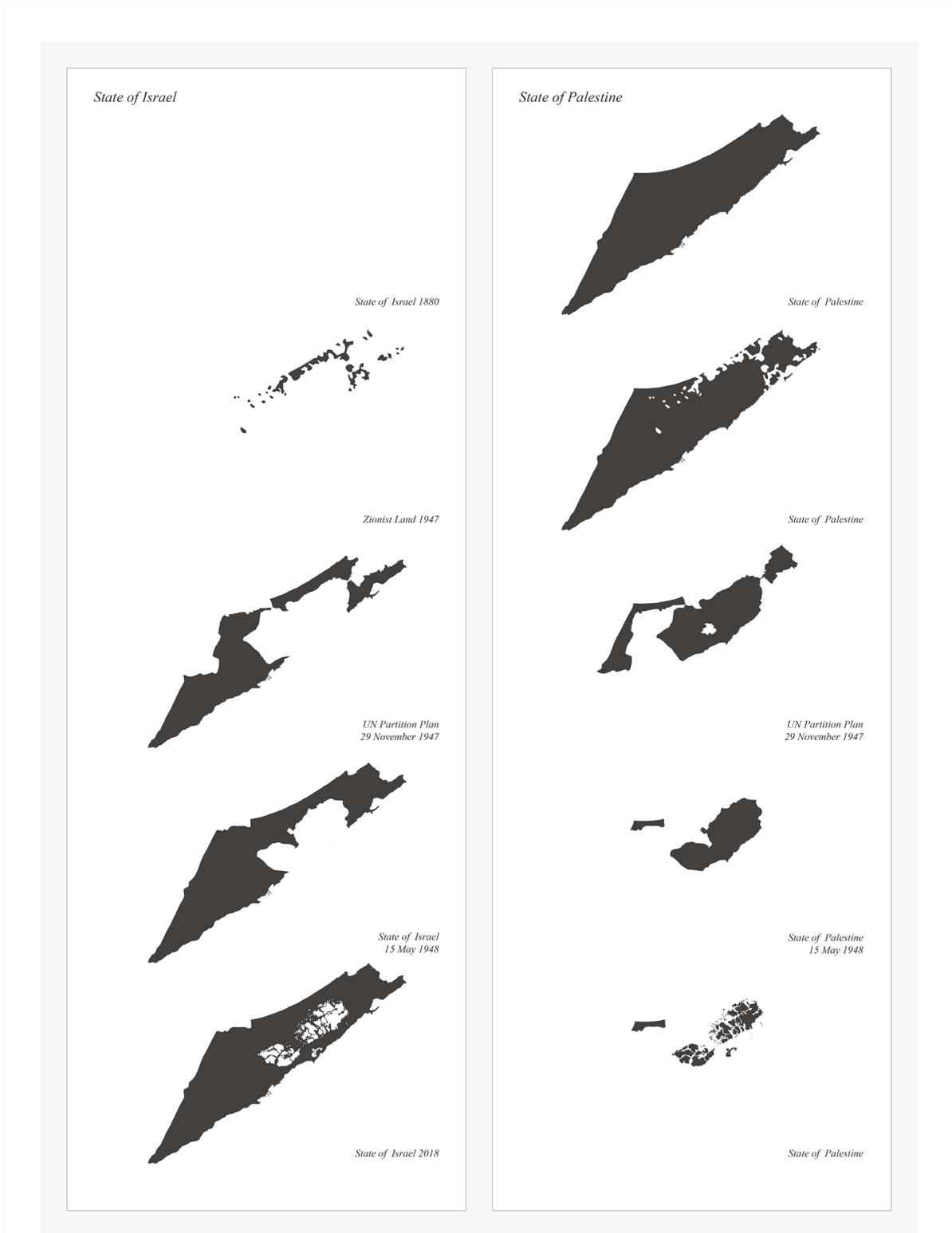


Figure 7: Maps of the Disappearance of Palestine and the Birth of the State of Israel<sup>25</sup> (Awad 2018)

<sup>25</sup> Produced based on data obtained from (Khalidi 2015), (Pappe 2015) and (Shoshan 2010)

# **Chapter Three**

The Story of a Refugee Family

## The Beginning of the Temporary

*“We heard gunfire and bombing coming from the north, and people started debating whether we should leave before Beit Nabala’s turn comes next. The Mukhtar (المختار the title of the head of the village/town) of Beit Nabala asked everyone to stay in their homes. When we heard the sounds of bombs getting closer, we like everyone else were terrified of the stories we heard, of what had been happening in the neighboring towns, girls were being raped, men were gathered and shot in dozens in front of their families. We left, everyone left that day leaving everything behind, thinking that we will return when the war is over. It has been seventy years already and I still have hope to return to Al-Balad<sup>26</sup> (Beit Nabala).”<sup>27</sup>*

The narrative of the evolution of a Palestinian refugee camp module is based on the testimonies of a Palestinian refugee family living in Al-Jalazone Camp in the West Bank, Palestine. The first-generation members are a couple who got married in Al-Jalazone camp, years after they were both displaced with their families from their villages in 1948. The husband (I.K) a first-generation refugee, is originally from the village of Beit Nabala<sup>28</sup> while his wife (R.H) is from Rantiya, Their son (H.K). The narrative also introduces (H.KH) who is also a first-generation refugee from the village of Beit Nabala. (see figure 9)

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<sup>26</sup> Al-Balad, Balad is an Arabic word that means a certain area of land that people inhabit. In the Palestinian context, people refer when talking about their home cities, towns and villages as “Al-Balad”, “Al” is used to define their own.

<sup>27</sup> H.KH. "Al-Jalazone Refugee Camp, 1st Generation Refugee." Interview by author. December 21, 2018.

<sup>28</sup> Refer to the chapter “The Lost Village”

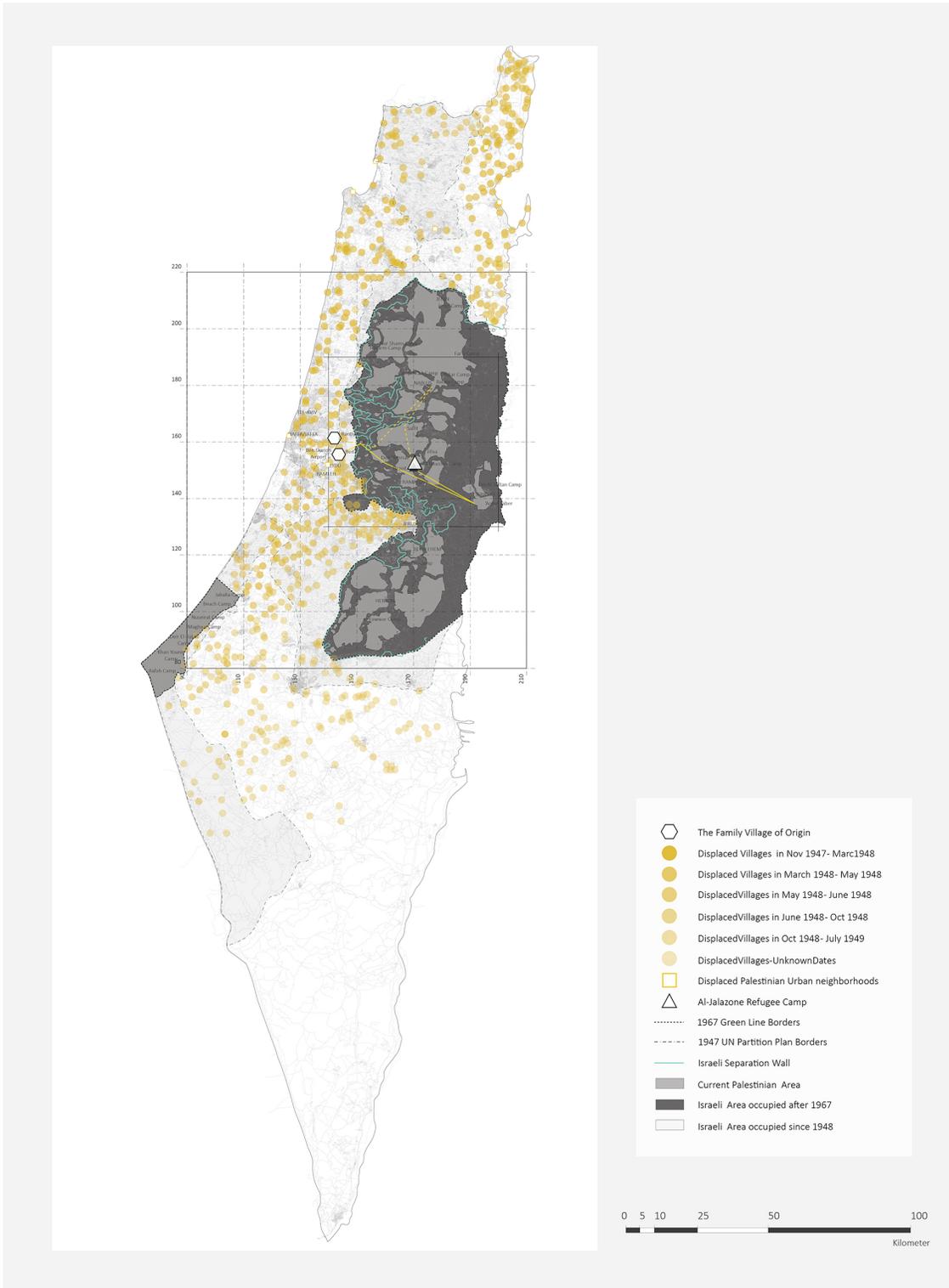


Figure 8: Palestinian Displaced Villages<sup>29</sup> (Awad 2019)

<sup>29</sup> Produced based on data obtained from (UNRWA, Palestine Refugees ) and (Sitta 2014)

*“The attacks on Beit Nabala started just before the wheat harvesting season. We went east to the mountains between Beit Nabala and Rantis. We stayed in the mountains for a month until we went to Deir Ammar in the shade of the olive trees, it was dew cold in the evening, and burning hot during the day. As we were getting closer to winter it became harder to stay in the open, people started getting sick, and many had died that winter. Later on, members from the Iraqi army who were fighting against the Zionist militia at that time asked the people of Deir Ammar to take us in their houses. We stayed in Deir Ammar for six months until we were told that there was a camp welcoming refugees in Jericho, ‘Aqbet Jaber Camp. We went to Jericho since it was warmer, I stayed with my mother and six siblings in a tent, as my father had passed away a few years before we were displaced in 1948 from Beit Nabala.”<sup>30</sup>*

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<sup>30</sup> I.K. "Al-Jalazone Refugee Camp, 1st Generation Refugee." Interview by author. December 29, 2018.

In the summer of 1948, about 800,000 Palestinians became refugees in the West Bank, Gaza Strip, Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon. Humanitarian organizations started working in the sites where refugees gathered. As an emergency reaction, the UN established a temporary agency UNRPR (United Nations Relief of Palestinian Refugees), to provide minimum aid needed for Palestinian refugees to survive until they could go back to their homes, considering that the refugee problem was supposed to be solved within a few months. On 11 December 1948, the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) issued a resolution giving Palestinian refugees the permit and right to return to their homes.

*“The UN General Assembly resolves that the refugees wishing to return to their homes and live at peace with their neighbors should be permitted to do so at the earliest practicable date, and that compensation should be paid for the property of those choosing not to return and for the loss of or damage to property which, under the principle of international law and in equity, should be made good by the Governments or authorities responsible.”* UN GA resolution (III), 11 December 1948<sup>31</sup>

However, Israel never allowed Palestinian refugees to return to their homes. This forced the UN to adopt other solutions to accommodate Palestinian refugees. In December 1949, the UN decided to establish UNRWA (United Nation Relief Work Agency for Palestinian Refugees), which began its work on 1 May 1950 as a temporary agency responsible for 950,000 refugees<sup>32</sup>. It worked to provide rapid rehabilitation of the refugees by providing the minimum aid needed for survival. Host countries prepared suitable sites to accommodate the refugees which the UNRWA leased from the host countries and supplied tents.

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<sup>31</sup> Pappé, Ilan. *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine*. London, England: Oneworld, 2015, 235.

<sup>32</sup> By May 1948, the estimated number of Palestinian refugees was about 800,000. However, the number increased as the Zionist cleansing operations continued into the year of 1949. Ilan Pappé wrote about those operations in details in “The Escalation of the cleaning operation June-September 1948” and “Completing the Job: October 1948-January 1949” (Pappé 2015, 179).

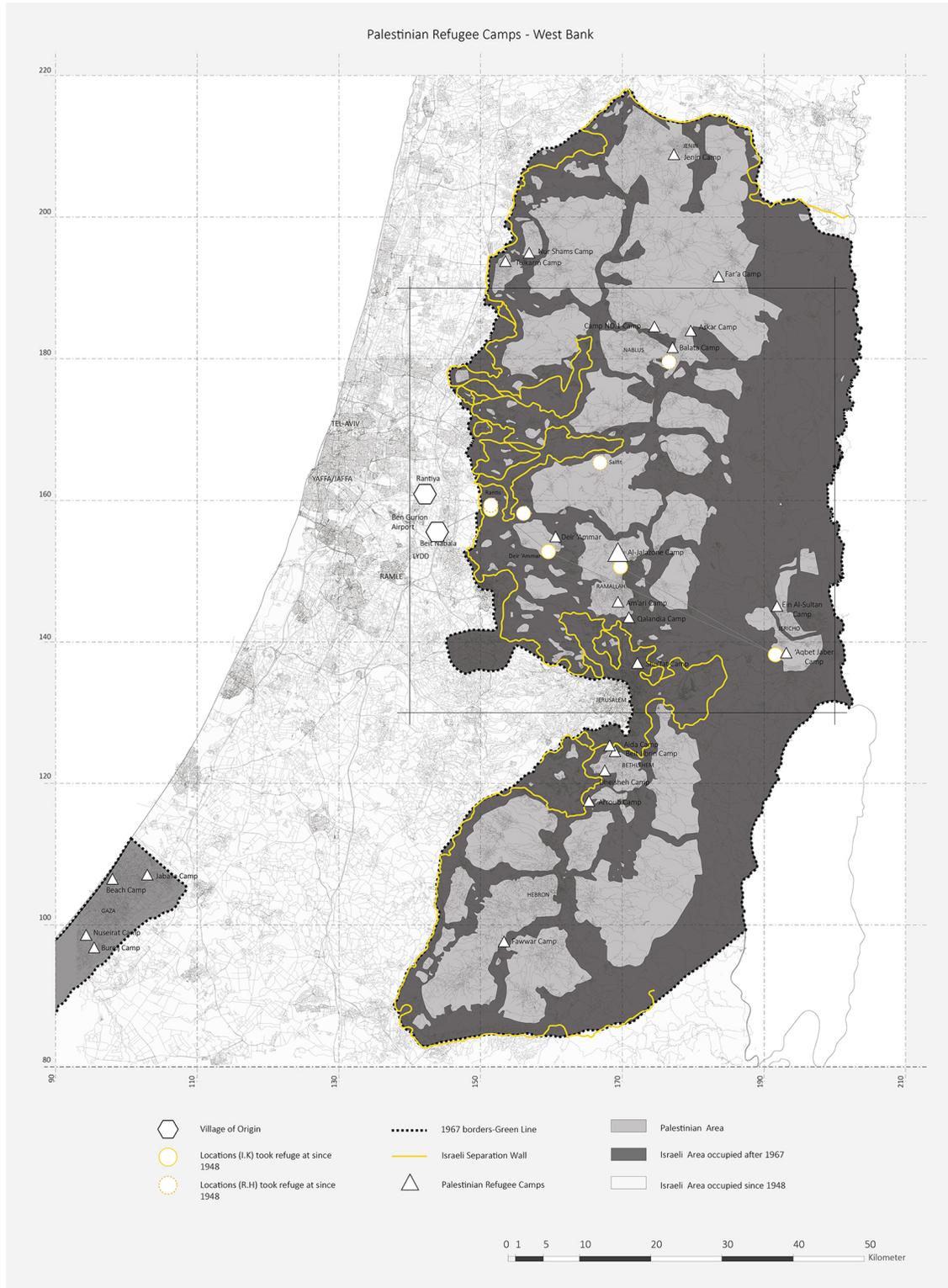


Figure 9: Palestinian Refugee Camps<sup>33</sup>- West Bank, Palestine (Awad 2019)

<sup>33</sup> Produced based on data obtained from (UNRWA, Palestine Refugees), (Shoshan 2010), (R.H 2018) and (I.K 2018)

*“I was too young to remember much, but I remember my mother’s stories of when we left Rantiya [their village of origin], we stayed in the mountains near Rantis<sup>34</sup> where we took refuge in the shades of the olive trees, and my mother took off her scarf and covered me and my sister. My father kept on sneaking back to Rantiya like many others to get blankets and some other stuff. After two months in the mountains near Rantis, we went to Aboud<sup>35</sup>, where we also stayed under the trees for another month until some members of the Iraqi army asked each family of Aboud to host a refugee family. We shared a room with another family for almost four years. We left Aboud to Balata Camp in Nablus<sup>36</sup>, where my uncle and his family were staying. We were six, me, my three siblings and my parents sharing a tent with my uncle, his wife, and daughter, and after six months in Balata camp, we again moved to Salfit<sup>37</sup>. We stayed in a relative’s room who was originally from Rantiya and married to a man from Salfit. They hosted us until my father took us to Jalazone camp in the early 1960s, where we were given a tent. We stayed in the tent until a contractor by Al-Wakaleh (UNRWA) started building us rooms, a family of six people or less were given a room of 3X3m, while larger families got two rooms.”<sup>38</sup>*

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<sup>34</sup> Rantis, a Palestinian town in the West Bank, located northwestern Ramallah.

<sup>35</sup> Aboud, a Palestinian village northwester of Ramallah. (See figure 9 & 10)

<sup>36</sup> Nablus, a Palestinian city in the northern West Bank. (See figure 9 & 10)

<sup>37</sup> Salfit, a Palestinian city in the central West Bank, north of Ramallah. (See figure 9 & 10)

<sup>38</sup> R.H "Al-Jalazone Refugee Camp, 1<sup>st</sup> Generation Refugee." Interview by author. December 29, 2018.

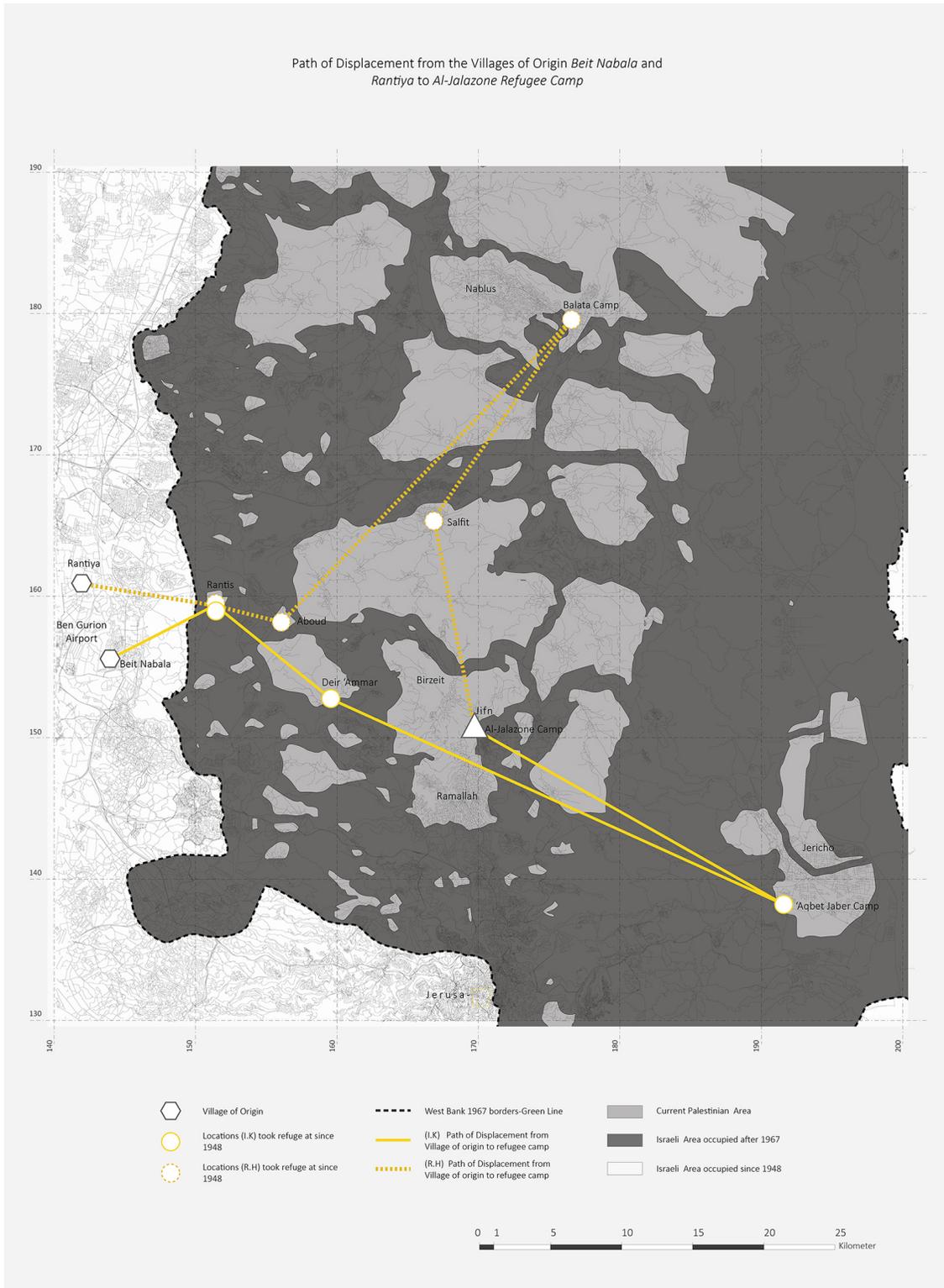


Figure 10: Map of the Path of Displacement from the villages of origin to Al-Jalazone camp<sup>39</sup> (Awad 2019)

<sup>39</sup> Produced based on data obtained from (R.H 2018) and (I.K 2018)

## Al-Mukhayyam<sup>40</sup> المخبيم

*“Six months after we moved to Jericho [June/July 1949], it was summer time again. Tents could not shield us from Jericho’s harsh summer sun, and we could not bear it anymore, so we complained constantly to the UN staff to move us to another place. Eventually, they responded to our request and moved us, and that was when we first arrived at Al-Jalazone camp. When we got here, it was all planted with trees and wheat.”<sup>41</sup>*

Al-Jalazone camp is a Palestinian refugee camp that was established in 1949 after the 1948 Arab-Israeli war. The camp is located in Ramallah and Al-Bireh Governorates, six kilometers north of Ramallah in the West Bank. The camp was built over 0.253 square kilometers<sup>42</sup> of land that is owned by people from the village of Jifna. The land was leased by UNRWA for ninety-nine years starting from 1949.<sup>43</sup> Residents of Al-Jalazone camp are originally from thirty-six Palestinian lost villages, the majority of the residents (99%) are originally from villages in Lydd, Ramleh and Haifa that were ethnically cleansed in 1948. One percent of the camp’s population is originally from the villages of Nuba and Emmaus who were displaced after the villages were destroyed by the Israelis in the 1967 Arab-Israeli war<sup>44</sup>. The war ended with Israel occupying the rest of Palestine, East Jerusalem, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip in addition to

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<sup>40</sup> Al-Mukhayyam, the Arabic word for the Camp.

<sup>41</sup> H.KH. "Al-Jalazone Refugee Camp, 1st Generation Refugee." Interview by author. December 21, 2018.

<sup>42</sup> "Jalazone Camp." UNRWA. Accessed October 30, 2018.

<https://www.unrwa.org/where-we-work/west-bank/jalazone-camp>

<sup>43</sup> Ibid

<sup>44</sup> Popular Committee for Services Jalazone

the Syrian Golan Heights and the Sinai Peninsula of Egypt. According to the UNRWA's latest statistics, 13,000 Palestinian refugees are UNRWA registered at Al-Jalazone camp<sup>45</sup>, while the estimated density in Al-Jalazone camp is 51,383 per square kilometer.

The structure of Al-Jalazone camp, like other Palestinian refugee camps, is based on the villages that the residents came from. When refugees first settled in the camp, they settled with groups of people from their village of origin. Those early decisions led to the current organization of the camp, where the camp's Harat<sup>46</sup> are now defined by the name of the village of origin of the people living there, such as Haret Al- 'Abbasiyya [in reference to the people of the village of Al-Abbasiyya in Jaffa subdistrict]. In organizing their spaces, refugees attempt to reconstruct parts of what was lost in their villages of origin. In addition, they attempt to preserve their culture, lifestyle, and traditions, which they have brought from their lost villages.

*"We were from the first people to set up a tent here, it was a small tent that the UN gave us. When it snowed, we used to go to al-Ain Mosque in Al-Bireh, we once stayed there for two months. What we suffered during the first period of our displacement was unbearable, poverty, hunger, hot burning mornings and cold nights, only God knows what we went through."*<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> "Jalazone Camp." UNRWA. Accessed October 30, 2018.

<https://www.unrwa.org/where-we-work/west-bank/jalazone-camp>

<sup>46</sup> Harat, plural of Hara which is an Arabic word that means neighborhood

<sup>47</sup> I.K. "Al-Jalazone Refugee Camp, 1st Generation Refugee." Interview by author. December 29, 2018.

Throughout the 1950s the UNRWA started replacing tents with more durable/permanent shelter. The land was divided into 80-100 m<sup>2</sup> plots<sup>48</sup> with 12m<sup>2</sup> unit shelters (see figure 31 &32). A family of 4-6 members was given one unit, and a family of 6-8 members was given two units. According to the testimonies of the refugee family members, the first-generation member stayed with his three brothers and mother in a tent for about five to six years until their turn to get a more durable shelter came.

The UNRWA hired refugees from the camp as UNRWA employees to work within the camp in different sectors such as builders, teachers, and many other jobs. The UNRWA shelters, referred to by the refugees as Al-Wakaleh<sup>49</sup> rooms, were built by refugees from Al-Jalazone camp as employees of UNRWA, and the materials and builders' salaries were provided by the UNRWA. (see figures 60 & 61)

By the early 1970s, I.K was at the time a UNRWA employee started building additions to his family's shelter. While Al-Wakaleh room was still there, I.K built what he could afford: two rooms using cement blocks, rubble stone, and concrete. Corrugated steel sheets were used to roof the space between the new rooms and Al-Wakaleh room. (see figures 13)

Whenever they had some money, they tried to improve their dwelling to accommodate their basic needs, from paving the area around their dwelling, to changing the roof. In 1976, I.K demolished part of Al-Wakaleh room, turning what was left of it into a bathroom (before that they had an outdoor standalone bathroom, which was built of corrugated steel sheets). During the same year I.K built another two rooms, one to be used as a kitchen while the second as a living room. (see figure 14)

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<sup>48</sup> Rueff, H., and A. Viaro. "Palestinian Refugee Camps: From Shelter to Habitat." *Refugee Survey Quarterly* 28, no. 2-3 (2009): 339-59. doi:10.1093/rsq/hdp041.

<sup>49</sup> Al-Wakaleh, is an Arabic word that means 'the agency', which refugees use to refer to UNRWA



*Figure 11: Al-Jalazone Refugee Camp 1949. (Kharoub 2008)*



*Figure 12: Al-Jalazone Camp 1960- UNRWA Rooms (Digital Palestinian Archive 2019)*

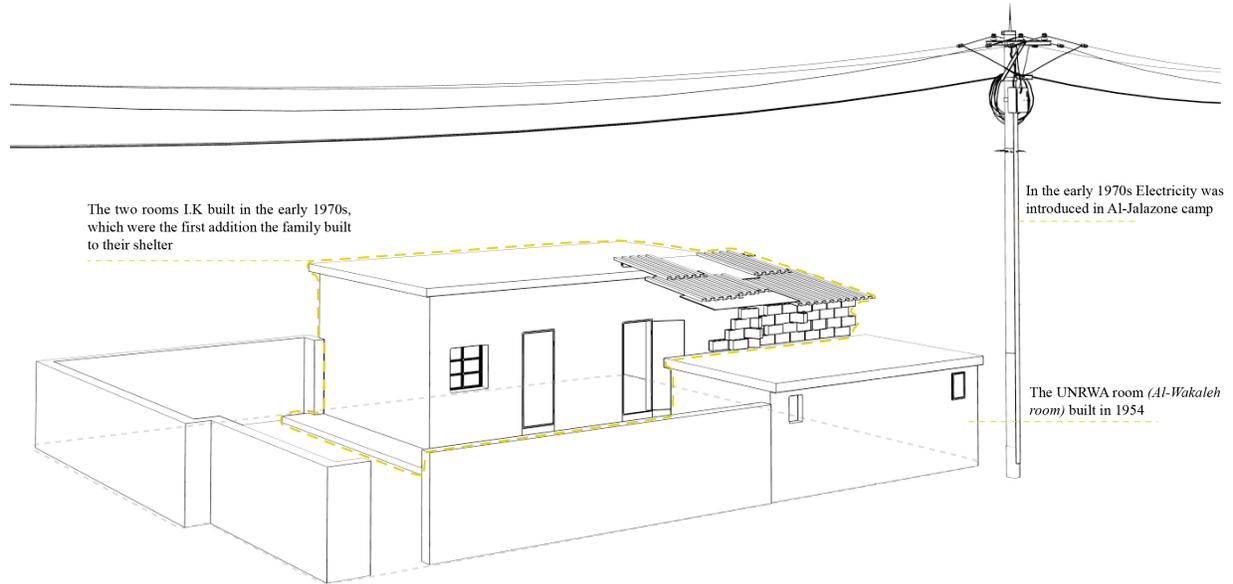


Figure 13: The Family's dwelling in the early 1970s, Al-Jalazone Camp. (Awad 2019)

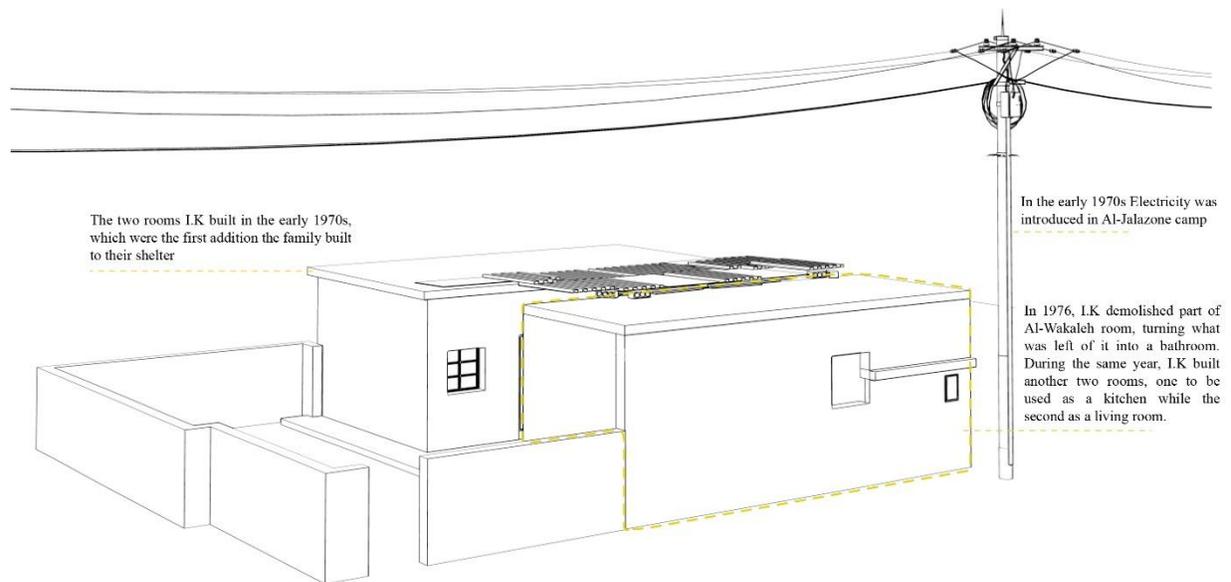


Figure 14: The Family's dwelling in 1976, Al-Jalazone Camp. (Awad 2019)

## Digging into the ground

For almost two decades after the additions made in 1973, the structure of the family's dwelling did not go under any major changes. By 1998, the second generation was about to start their own families. Considering the limited space they had, the only option was to grow vertically. The rooms built in the 1970s were not built to tolerate building another floor on top. That was when the second generation decided to build a new structure to support a multistory building.

*“We had to demolish the roof of the ground floor to be able to excavate for the new foundations. We planted fourteen foundations below grade, 1.5x1.5meter each (see figure 15) and poured the slab on grade before we went to the first floor. The ground floor walls have no structural function, as the fourteen new columns are carrying the load of the upper floors. The first-floor reinforced concrete skeleton was finished in the same year of 1998, however, the block and finishing works were not completed until 2000. Two years later, we started with the structure of the second floor, which was divided into two apartments for two of my brothers. Now there are three floors in addition to the ground floor, the third floor was added in 2018.”<sup>50</sup>*

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<sup>50</sup> H.K. "Al-Jalazone Refugee Camp, 2nd Generation Refugee." Interview by author. December 29, 2018.



In 1998, fourteen foundations were planted below grade, 1.5x1.5 meter each. This new structure enabled the second generation to grow vertically.

*Figure 15: The Family's dwelling 1998, Al-Jalazone Camp. (Awad 2019)*



*Figure 16: The Family's dwelling 2002, Al-Jalazone Camp. (Awad 2019)*



*Figure 17: Render of the Family's dwelling 2018, Al-Jalazone Camp. (Awad 2019)*



Figure 18: The third-floor view of Al-Jalazone Camp. (Awad 2019)

According to the interviews with refugees from the second and third generation, there are no rules or regulations on building in the camp. H.K says:

*“When we want to build new additions, we refer to a master builder. We show him the building’s condition, the number of columns and their location, and he would advise us on how many stories this structure can support, and that is how we build in the camp. However, none of this is officially legal, we are building on land that was leased in 1949 by UNRWA for ninety-nine years. We do not own this land, and we do not have any documentation giving us any kind of ownership of the dwellings we are building. In thirty years, people of the village of Jifna would have the right to claim their land back.”<sup>51</sup>*

In the early 1970s electricity was introduced into Al-Jalazone camp. However, power in the camp goes out frequently due to the high load. That is due to the fact that the same amount of power that used to supply nearly 5000 people back in the 1970s is currently supplying over 10,000 people. This forces Al-Jalazone camp refugees to try to accommodate the conditions and services they have, such as using power saving light fixtures and avoid using electric heaters. As for water supply, refugee camps’ water problem is common in all Palestinian cities and towns: water supply is controlled by the Israeli authorities, which only supply water to Palestinian territories once or twice a week. In the case of Al-Jalazone camp, water runs only once a week, which explains why rooftops are stacked with water tanks, another way to accommodate the living conditions, because people need to preserve enough water for the rest of

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<sup>51</sup>H.K. "Al-Jalazone Refugee Camp, 2nd Generation Refugee." Interview by author. December 29, 2018.

the week. Considering the low water pressure and that water tanks are placed on the roofs, people need motors to be able to pump water up to the tanks on the third or fourth floor. This issue was mentioned and discussed during the second and third generation interviews, where they described the mornings when water ran into the camp, people would be heard calling out asking if the water is running, and then they would hear the noise of the water pumps as they are all turned on at the same time. If someone did not notice that the water was running and did not turn on the motor, they would not have water for the rest of the week.



Figure 19: Roof Water tanks- Al-Jalazone Camp (Awad 2018)

# Chapter Four

The Village of Origin

# The Lost Village

*“Beit Nabala subdistrict of Lydd and Ramleh ... From the west side, there was just the asphalt that separated the land of Beit Nabala from Al-Lydd airport [the name was changed in 1973 to Ben Gurion Airport to honor Israel’s first Prime Minister, David Ben-Gurion], while the village of Rantis was east of Beit Nabala. My family’s land that I used to farm was just across from Al-Lydd Airport, we had four pieces of land planted with olive trees and grapevines... and now all we have left are those pieces of shelters”<sup>52</sup>*

*“In the village, our house along with several houses shared a courtyard with one entrance. The first six meters of the courtyard’s entrance were roofed, which then led to an open courtyard, known as Hoosh<sup>53</sup> Bab Al-Sebat, the entrance to our house was from Hoosh Bab Al-Sebat. Our house was a 10x10m stone cross-vault, with two levels. The lower level was for the animals and storage while we would sleep on the upper floor. The walls were thick with niches that we used as storages for olives, wheat, sesame, corn, and barley.”<sup>54</sup>*

*“Beit Nabala... I remember it very well as if I have never left, I knew every stone of it.”<sup>55</sup>*

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<sup>52</sup> I.K. "Al-Jalazone Refugee Camp, 1st Generation Refugee." Interview by author. December 29, 2018.

<sup>53</sup> Hoosh (حوش) an Arabic word which means the house’s yard, courtyard.

<sup>54</sup> I.K. "Al-Jalazone Refugee Camp, 1st Generation Refugee." Interview by author. December 29, 2018.

<sup>55</sup> I.K. "Al-Jalazone Refugee Camp, 1st Generation Refugee." Interview by author. December 29, 2018.

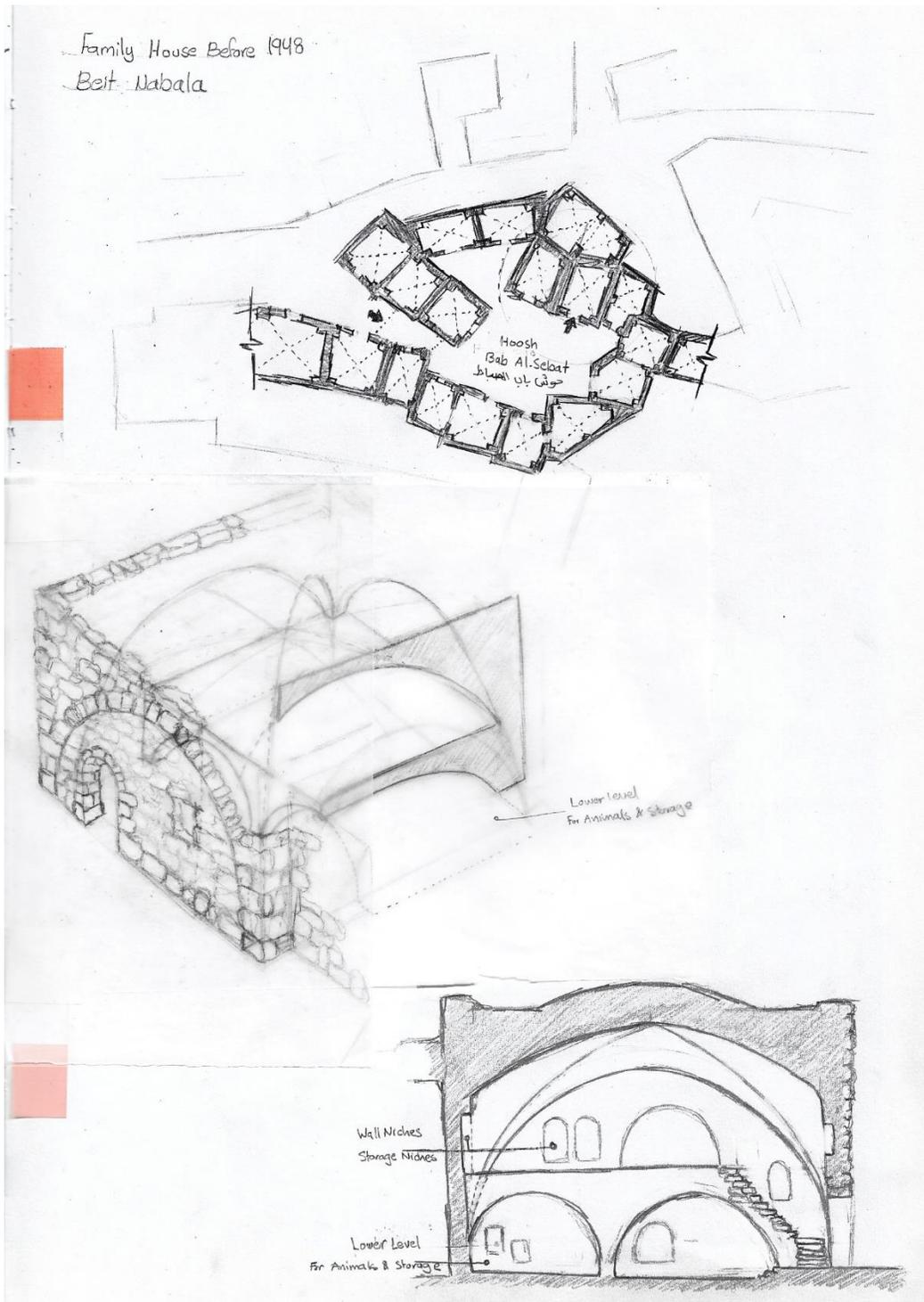


Figure 20: Sketches of I.K. House in the lost Village of Beit Nabala<sup>56</sup> (Awad 2019)

<sup>56</sup> Sketches are based on the description of the first-generation refugee (I.K. 2018) of his family house in Beit Nabala. (see figure 23 & 58 for Beit Nabala Map)



Figure 21: Cross-vaulted house- Deir Ghassana, Palestine (Riwaq 2014)



Figure 22: The ruins of a cross-vaulted house in the depopulated Palestinian village of Lifta (Beiler 2014)

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The top sketch represents the houses I.K mentioned which shared Hoosh Bab Al-Sebat, while the axonometric and the section show the cross-vaulted house. The lower level used for the family's animals and crops storage, while the upper level was the living area. The above photographs of houses of the same architectural style described by the first-generation refugee for their house in the village of origin Beit Nabala. The stone cross-vaulted house with two levels and wall niches.

Beit Nabala, Al-Ramle Subdistrict. One of the Palestinian villages that were evacuated and destroyed by the 1948 Zionist attacks. Beit Nabala was situated on a rocky hill, east of Al-Lydd airport and east of a highway leading to Al-Ramle, Jaffa and other cities.<sup>57</sup>

*“The village was laid out in a rectangular grid. Its secondary streets ran parallel to two main streets that intersected at the center. A mosque, a number of shops, and an elementary school were clustered at this intersection. The school was founded in 1921 and had an enrollment of about 230 students in 1946-47. The villagers, most of whom were Muslims, built their houses out of mud and stone. They earned their living from agriculture, cultivating grain (particularly wheat), olives, grapes, and fruits such as citrus and figs. Agriculture was primarily rain-fed, but the citrus groves were irrigated from artesian wells. The village was ringed by farmland except in the west-southwest half quadrant. In 1944/45 a total of 226 dunums (1 durum = 1000 m<sup>2</sup>), was devoted to citrus and bananas and 10,197 dunums were allocated to cereals; 1,733 dunums were irrigated or used for orchards. Two khirbas stood south of the village.”<sup>58</sup>*

The village of Beit Nabala is one of the Palestinian villages that was erased from the map. The village was attacked and depopulated during the summer of 1948, however, the exact dates of when the village was evacuated and later destroyed are not known, as the events were documented based on the testimonies of Beit Nabala’s refugees. According to the testimonies of the first-generation participants in this research, the

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<sup>57</sup> Khalidi, Walid. *All That Remains: The Palestinian Villages Occupied and Depopulated by Israel in 1948*. Washington, D.C.: Institute for Palestine Studies, 2015.365.

<sup>58</sup> Khalidi, Walid. *All That Remains: The Palestinian Villages Occupied and Depopulated by Israel in 1948*. Washington, D.C.: Institute for Palestine Studies, 2015.365.

village was over-populated with people who were displaced from the western villages which were attacked earlier. When the people of Beit Nabala and those who were taking refuge in it heard the fire and explosives closing in, they fled out of Beit Nabala except for a few who stayed in the village and fought with the Arab Liberation Army against the Haganah. Due to Carleton University Research Ethics Board concerns for the participants' security, the interviews did not address or investigate the events of the attack and depopulation, which may reveal possible involvement of the research participants or that might identify other individuals whom might have been involved in any military or armed activities. However, in "All That Remains" Walid Khalidi presents 418 of the Palestinian villages that were destroyed in 1948, including the village of Beit Nabala. The book documents the events in which the villages were occupied, depopulated and destroyed.

*According to the Israeli historian Benny Morris, "Israeli forces were ordered to attack Beit Nabala, where the Arab Legion had stationed a second-line company (of around 120-150 soldiers), after the capture of Lydda and Al-Ramla. On 13 July 1948, the people of Lydda were expelled from their city and many were forced by Israeli soldiers to go to Beit Nabala (which was still in Arab hands). The village probably fell a few days later, before the end of Operation Dani on 18 July. The New York Times reported that a unit of Israeli commandos stormed the outskirts of the village on 11 July to foil an Arab attempt to recapture the nearby Wilhelma, an agricultural colony founded by German Templars before World War I. But a later dispatch said that Arab forces recaptured the village on 12 July to establish shelling positions and counter Israeli attacks against Lydda. The Times story reported that the village was entered by Arab Legion armored cars; however,*

*they were sent too late and were unable to relieve Lydda. The wire services reported that on 13 July, after a “stiff” fight in which Israeli tanks and armored cars clashed with Arab Legion armored cars, Beit Nabala was taken by the Israelis. The next day, it was reported to be a no man’s land, but “no longer a threat to Lydda or Ramleh,” both of which were in Israeli hands. A few days later, the New York Times said that the village had been taken before the second truce was signed on 18 July. [M:203; NYT:13/7/48, 15/7/48, 19/7/49: T:255]. A formal request for its destruction was made to the Israeli Ministerial Committee on Abandoned Property by Prime Minister Ben-Gurion on 13 September 1948.”<sup>59</sup>*

Today, Beit Nabala’s land has overgrown with grass, bushes, cypress and fig trees<sup>60</sup>. What was left of it are some ruins of the village cemetery (see figure 54 & 55), and a few water wells. In the west side of the village, one can find the headstones of a few graves in addition to a building that was part of Beit Nabala boys’ school (see figures 52 & 53). The school is occupied now by Israelis and used as the Jewish National Fund in Beit Nehemia.<sup>61</sup>

*“When we moved from Jericho to Al-Jalazone camp in the summer of 1949, I went back to Beit Nabala, it was not Beit Nabala anymore, it was just all piles of stones. You would know where your house was but the house itself was not there, they demolished everything.”<sup>62</sup>*

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<sup>59</sup> Khalidi, Walid. *All That Remains: The Palestinian Villages Occupied and Depopulated by Israel in 1948*. Washington, D.C.: Institute for Palestine Studies, 2015, 366.

<sup>60</sup> Khalidi, Walid. *All That Remains: The Palestinian Villages Occupied and Depopulated by Israel in 1948*. Washington, D.C.: Institute for Palestine Studies, 2015, 366.

<sup>61</sup> Beit Nehemia is an Israeli settlement that was founded in 1950 on the land of the village of Beit Nabala, towards the south.

<sup>62</sup> I.K. "Al-Jalazone Refugee Camp, 1st Generation Refugee." Interview by author. December 29, 2018.



*“After seventy years I went back. A journalist took me and another two old ladies from Al-Jalazone camp, hoping that we will identify the village. We were walking between the grass, it was all gone... they demolished everything so that we will not recognize our own homes, and with bulldozers they pulled out all the trees. We kept on walking around not sure where we were until suddenly, I knew where I was. I started calling and screaming to my nephew who was with us, here was my father’s house... here was your grandfather’s house... I recognized our water well. They asked me how I knew that it is my family’s well, I said our water well shape was unique with a narrow opening and a cover so that kids do not fall into it. None of the wells outside the village had that shape, in addition, there were four water wells across from my father’s house. I remember the names of all four of them, Beir<sup>64</sup> Judeh, Beir Al-Kas’aa, Beir Hamdan and Beir Za’tout, and I found all four of them.”<sup>65</sup>*

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<sup>64</sup> Beir, بئر is an Arabic word that means water well

<sup>65</sup> H.KH. "Al-Jalazone Refugee Camp, 1st Generation Refugee." Interview by author. December 21, 2018.



*Figure 24: A souvenir H.KH brought from her visit to what was once Beit Nabala (Awad 2018)*

# Chapter Five

## Reflections and Analysis

Since refugees settled in the camp a series of spatial practices began to take place. Early interventions in the camp were by building walls around their tents as an attempt to define their private space in the camp (see figures 29 & 30). Over the first decade following their displacement, tents collapsed repeatedly during the winter. As a human survival instinct, refugees began intervening by building more solid and permanent shelters. Interventions were made with the intention to accommodate their basic needs.

When refugees took the lead in shaping their space and began building additions to their shelters, an interesting image started to appear. What was observed in many dwellings in Al-Jalazone camp, was that while the structures revealed dense and enclosed spaces from the outside, one can notice that within the walls, the rooms were arranged around the boundaries of each family's space creating a courtyard and within the courtyard a staircase was built to serve the upper levels. The ground floor which is the residence of the first-generation represents the foundation of both the family and the new architecture. The upper levels accommodate the second generations' families. This form gathers three generations of a family vertically around the courtyard which serves as a social hub for the family. This spatial organization reflects the previous layout of Palestinians' residences in the lost village, in Palestinian villages the urban fabric is a result of family's concentration in the same area, members of the same family build their homes in the same neighborhood, where the father and his sons' homes were arranged around a courtyard horizontally. The courtyard serves as a social hub for family gatherings and social events. The form in the camp was altered due to space limitations that took a more vertical organization; however, the concept of the family living in the same area and sharing a communal space is still being maintained.

It can be argued that these spatial practices were both intentionally applied in reference to Palestinian social practices while it subconsciously recreated a replica of the village of origin urban fabric but in a more vertical space.

On an urban scale, the camps are seen as multiple social hubs that represent the different communities of refugees from different displaced villages. It goes back to the fact that when Palestinians were displaced, they moved with groups of people from their village, and when they settled in the camp, they settled with the same group. Refugees gathered in groups that formulate what they were familiar with before their displacement. People who shared the same culture, traditions, and lifestyle. Palestinian refugees reconstructed the new space in the camp to represent their former lives from the villages of origin.

Another observation on the camp's urban scale was how the camp has expanded. The boundaries of the camp's land have not been expanded since their establishment because the host states never allowed for more land to be given to the camps. However, due to the growth of the population of the camp, refugees began to expand beyond the boundaries of the camp. This expansion was a result of refugees purchasing land on the edge of the camp to accommodate the growth of their families. Even though Palestinian refugees in Al-Jalazone Camp have the choice to leave the camp, many chose to stay in the camp or on the edge of the camp. Many Palestinian refugees want to stay in the camp because they want to be close to their community and the people they know, they want to stay close to the camp because the camp represents what is left of their homes and culture. The existence of Palestinian refugee camps gives Palestinian refugees the rights to fight for their right to claim their lost homes.

In the Al-Jalazone camp, Palestinians created an analogue of the lives and the social fabric they had in the villages. Whether it was consciously or subconsciously, refugees are preserving their social fabric and heritage in these new spaces in the camp to be their place of belonging and their link to their lost homes.

Most of the destroyed Palestinian villages have been completely erased, contemporary maps no longer identify these villages. What has survived from those villages are the people who were expelled and carry their memories and cultural heritage with them in exile. They have been preserving that heritage through their actions of reconstructing their space in the camp, in which they transfer the memories and culture of the lost villages from one generation to the other along with their status as refugees and their rights to claim their right to return to their stolen homes.

# Conclusion

The primary objective of this research was to define “temporary” in the context of Palestinian refugee camps through different factors. First, it investigates how the architecture of the refugee camp evolved throughout the past seventy years. This was reflected in chapter three, which was elaborated through the reconstruction of the refugee family’s shelter over the past seventy years. As a result, it revealed that refugees interventions, which led to more permanent structures, were not intended to establish permanent residences as much as a consequence of refugees survival attempts under the camp's circumstance to provide a safe shelter for themselves and their families.

Secondly, to what extent the refugee camp architecture represents what was lost in the village of origin was answered in the Reflections and Analysis section of this thesis. The architecture of the camp became the space that preserves what remains of the lost villages, by the use of architectural practices to reconstruct and maintain the social life and cultural heritage of the lost villages.

In reference to Hannah Arendt’s theory in Chapter One, Palestinian refugees took action in their new space in the public realm to reconstruct evidence of their former life to be seen in the common world. Palestinian refugees transformed the camp from a temporary space with no social and cultural value to a space that represents their lost homes and rights. When nothing was left to testify of their right of the land, they reconstructed what is beyond the physical, they reconstructed their social fabric within a space that maintains the culture and memories of their lost villages. The actions which the first-generation refugees took not only created an analogue of

their former life but also they have established cultural practices that maintain new space for refugees in the common world even after the life of the first-generation refugees. The survival of the camp in the common depends on the actions of its inhabitants, actions that became part of the culture of refugees that was inherited from one generation to the latter.

Thirdly, how Palestinian refugees perceive their space and status in the camp is reflected in the narratives of the refugees' lives. Even though the first-generation refugees have been living in the camp for seventy years, they still compare their current lives to what they had in Beit Nabala and talk about going back. They show great pride in their origin and pass on the memories and commitment to their right to return to their children. This was evident in second and third generation refugees who only know their village of origin from the first-generation stories, yet define themselves as being from the village of origin. This is an important part of Palestinian refugees' cultural heritage, where one inherits their refugee status along with the memories of their ancestors and commitment to their rights to return. This reflects on the fourth question regarding the cultural and heritage values manifested in refugee camps.

The architecture of Palestinian refugee camps evolved from temporary tents to more permanent structures as a result of the needs of refugees for a safer place that can protect them. It was not their intention to create a permanent solution or a permanent residence. However, subconsciously refugees created in the camp a representation of their former social life and culture. Further, the camp's architectural configurations became an imitation of the architecture of the lost villages, even though the materials and forms were altered due to the camp's limitations, but refugees maintained in their re-constructions of the camps the concepts that represent their social lives and culture from the lost villages.

Within this permanent structure, the temporariness appears through refugees' perception of their space and status, their attachment to their villages, the memories and the stories told in the camp every day, and their commitment to return to their home. The fact that all of this is passed on from one generation to the other became an important part of the Palestinian refugees' cultural heritage.

Palestinian refugee camps became a representation of the lost villages. They became the space that preserves the memory and social fabric of the villages. They contain the remains of over 500 lost villages, and those remains are used by the refugees to build up a life as a continuation of their lives in the villages of origin. They built a life that reflects their social life, heritage, and history. Palestinian refugee camps are live museums of the collective heritage of over 500 lost Palestinian villages.

If we asked, what would happen to Palestinian refugee camps if Palestinian go back to their homes? There is no straight answer to this, one can see that this architecture should be preserved for what it represents in Palestine's history. a new architecture that was a result of war and ethnic cleansing, while others may argue that this architecture should be demolished, this architecture is a result of a catastrophe and its existence will bring tragic memories. Palestinians should move on with their lives and the land should be given back to their original owners since the camps are built on leased land. In the context of this research, the value of the camp is embodied in its inhabitants' stories, their social fabric, their culture, and status. If one-day Palestinian refugees can go back to their original homes, the refugee camps become hollow structures, as the value of the camps is associated with the people and not the stones and mortar.

Throughout this research, the main objective was to understand and define what is temporary in the context of Palestinian refugee camps. However, during the course of the research, another question came in mind '*What is PERMANENT?*'

To be argued that nothing is absolutely permanent, it is a relative matter. Human existence on earth is temporary, while everything has an expiry date, we design and plan for things to last as long as possible, and then we fight the odds to preserve what we believe is valuable. While Palestinian refugee camps were not built to stay, they were planned as a temporary solution until Palestinian refugees go back to their homes. Seventy years have passed already. Palestinians are still waiting to go back home, and the refugee camps remain temporary.

## Personal Reflections

Throughout the past eight months, my understanding of Palestinian refugee camps and my own research has evolved. Through the first four months of this thesis, I developed the research methodology of how I wanted to conduct this research and involve the human experience. Based on my knowledge of the Palestinian political context, I had in mind different scenarios of what I may or may not be able to achieve. At that time, I was focussing on studying the physical evolution of the camp, even though I planned to ask questions about the events of the displacement and the villages of origin, but I was not sure what I was looking for. The human experience in this thesis was intended as the experience of the refugees throughout the past seventy years. This research ended up not only representing the experience refugees but my own experience in the camp and traveling in Palestine. My experience of trying to understand what has been so familiar that I have not questioned before.

I went to Palestine not sure of what I will find, I was so worried that I will prove myself wrong. I had my interview questions, which I had to justify the necessity of each of the questions to the CUREB. During the interviews, I was asking the questions and hoping that the interviewees will say what I wanted to hear. Even though I could not find all the answers and details that I was looking for, the interviews brought up the social and heritage layer that the camps have evolved. Today I see refugee camps as I have never seen them before, I see Palestinian refugee camps as a smaller but more concentrated imitation of Palestine that was lost in 1948.

The human experience is a major part of this thesis, therefore I decided to not only share the refugees' voice but also my own. I am sharing my experience as an attempt to give an insight and a better understanding of the context in which this research was conducted. I am sharing my personal experience through a journal I wrote during the twenty-seven days I spent in the West Bank, Palestine for this thesis fieldwork. This journal includes details of the different spaces my research took place at, the challenges I faced as a researcher and as a Palestinian, in addition to the multiple members I interviewed. This is expressed in section 'Fieldwork Trip-Journal' of the Archival Material (page 137-155).

# **Archival Material**

# **Refugee Camps Physical Evolution**

## **Through Analysing UNRWA Photo Archives**

The following illustrations highlight the physical evolution of Palestinian refugee camps from the early stage of the tent to the different practices by the UNRWA and the refugees themselves. This has been analyzed based on the observation made on UNRWA photo archives in addition to information obtained from (Zubeidat 2014) and (Rueff 2009). Those observations were also reflected in the plan view to demonstrate how those changes influenced the camps' urban fabric.

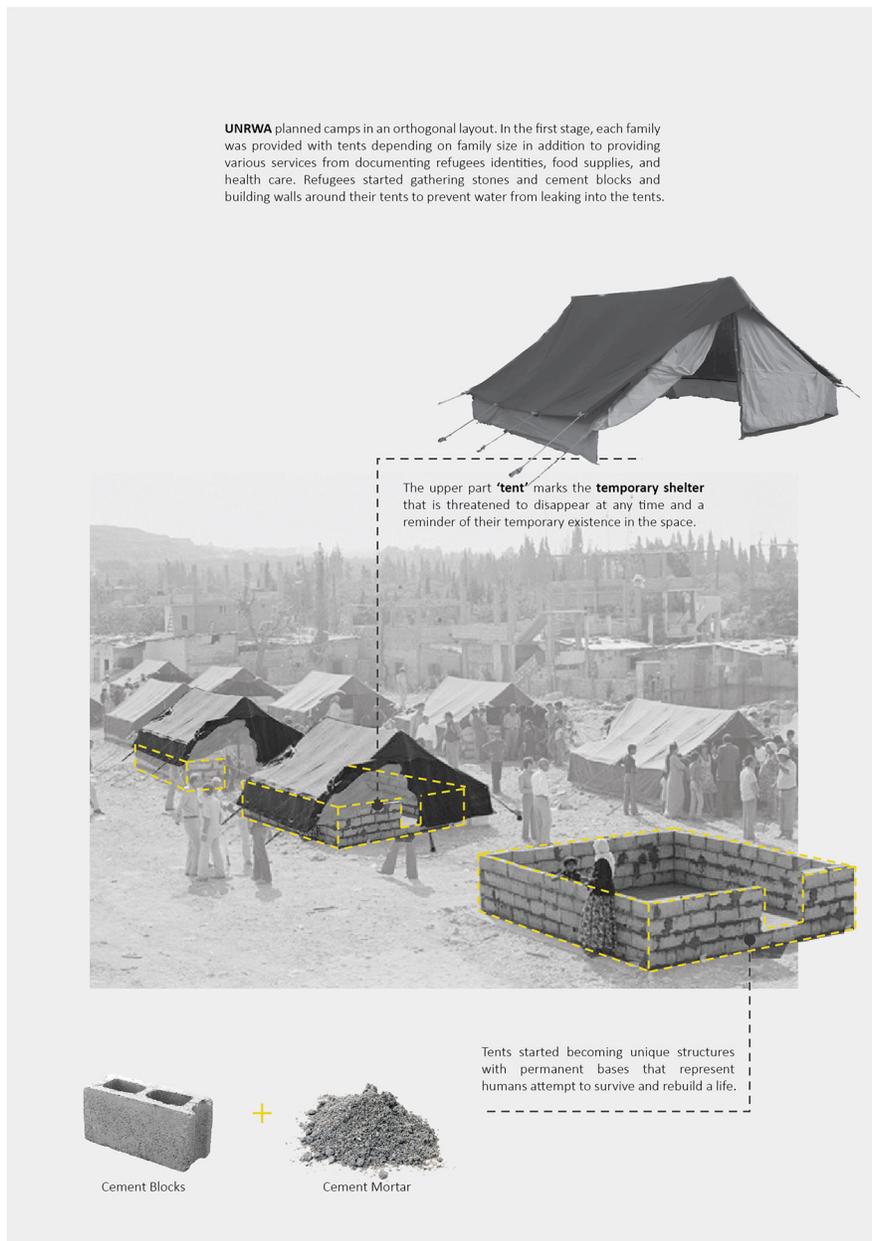


Figure 25: Camps' early interventions, tents base walls.<sup>66</sup> (Awad 2018)  
Base photograph (UNRWA 1970).

<sup>66</sup> The early interventions were when refugees started gathering stones and cement blocks and building walls at the base of their tents to prevent water from leaking into the tents. The upper part 'tent' marks the temporary shelter that is threatened to disappear at any time and a reminder of their temporary existence in the space. Tents started becoming unique structures with permanent bases that represent humans attempt to survive and rebuild a life.



Figure 26: Camps' early interventions, tents base walls - Top view (Awad 2018)

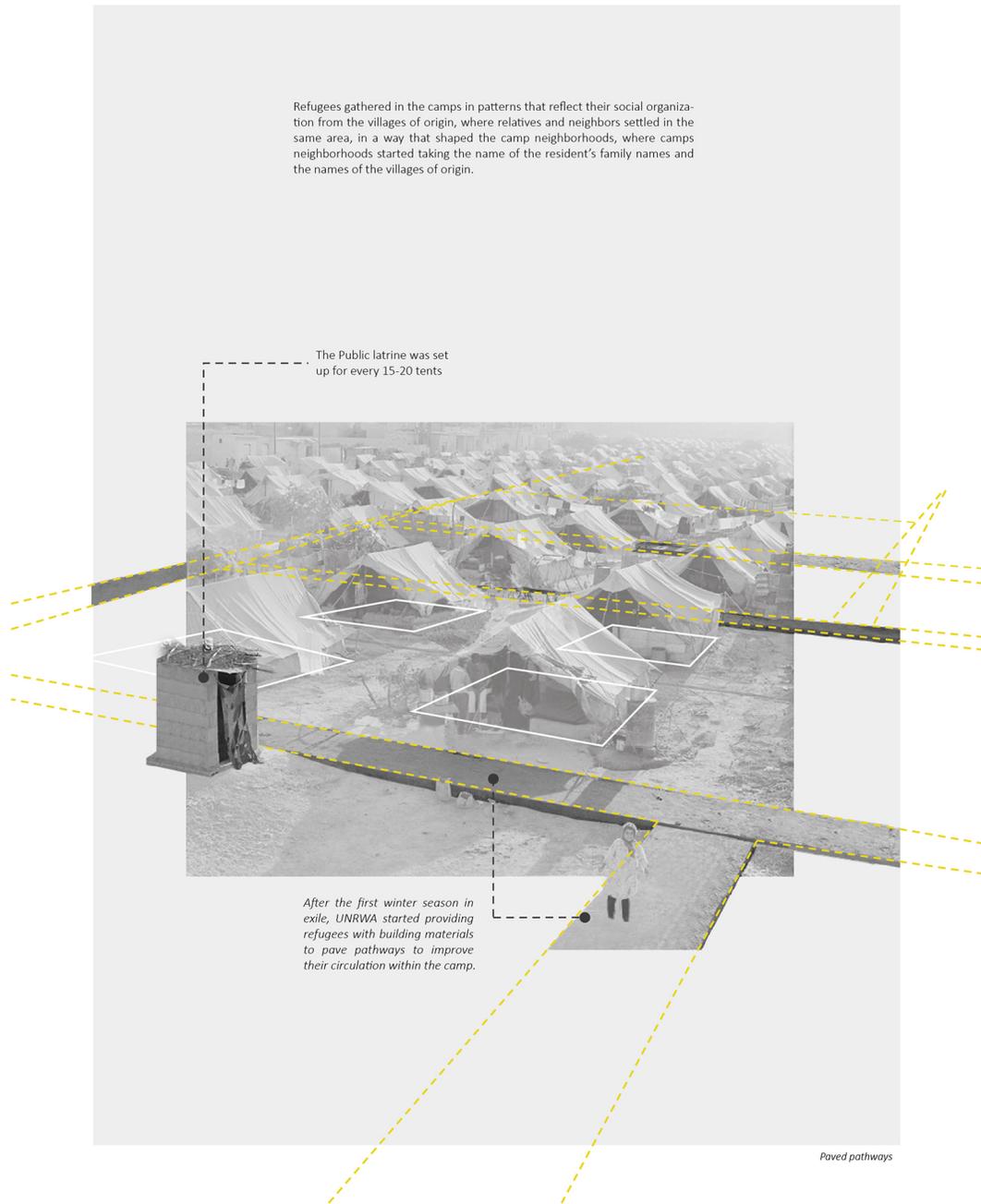
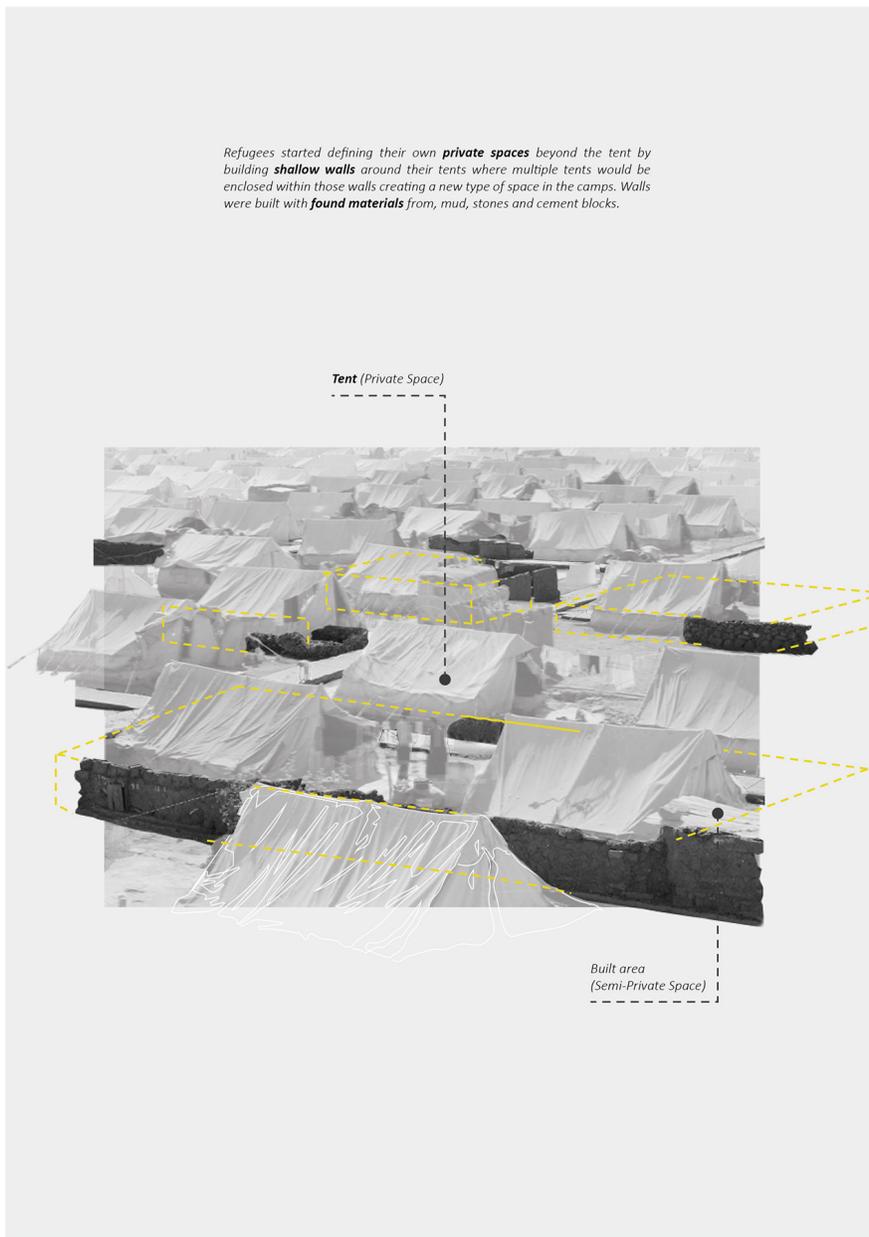


Figure 27: Refugee camps- pathways pavement<sup>67</sup> (Awad 2018)  
*Base photograph (UNRWA 1970).*

<sup>67</sup> After the first winter season in exile, UNRWA started providing refugees with building materials to pave pathways to improve their circulation within the camp.



Figure 28: Refugee camps- pathways pavement- Top View (Awad 2018)



*Building walls around the tents-creating a new private spaces*

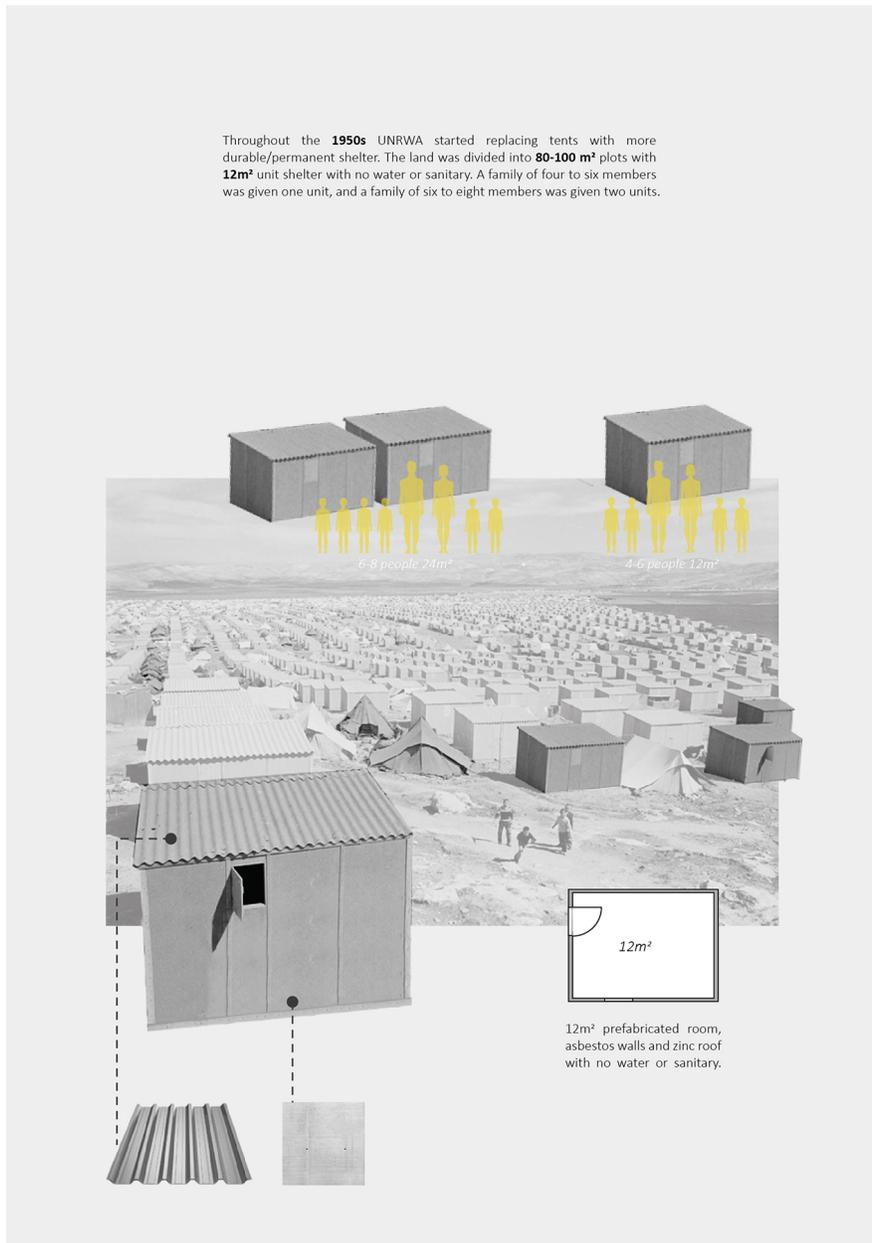
*Figure 29: Refugees started to define their private space in the camp<sup>68</sup> (Awad 2018)  
Base photograph (UNRWA 1970).*

<sup>68</sup> Refugees started defining their own private spaces beyond the tent by building shallow walls around their tents where multiple tents would be enclosed within those walls creating a new type of space in the camps. Walls were built with found materials from, mud, stones, and cement blocks.



*Building walls around the tents-creating a new private spaces*

*Figure 30: Refugees started to define their private space in the camp- Top view (Awad 2018)*



Replacing tents with prefabricated shelters-More permanent shelters

Figure 31: UNRWA Started replacing tents with more durable shelters<sup>69</sup> (Awad 2018)  
Base photograph (UNRWA 1969).

<sup>69</sup> Throughout the 1950s UNRWA started replacing tents with more durable/permanent shelter. The land was divided into 80-100 m<sup>2</sup> plots with 12m<sup>2</sup> unit shelter (Rueff 2009) with no water or sanitary. A family of four to six members was given one unit, and a family of six to eight members was given two units.



Replacing tents with prefabricated shelters-More permanent shelters

Figure 32: UNRWA Started replacing tents with more durable shelters- Top view (Awad 2018)

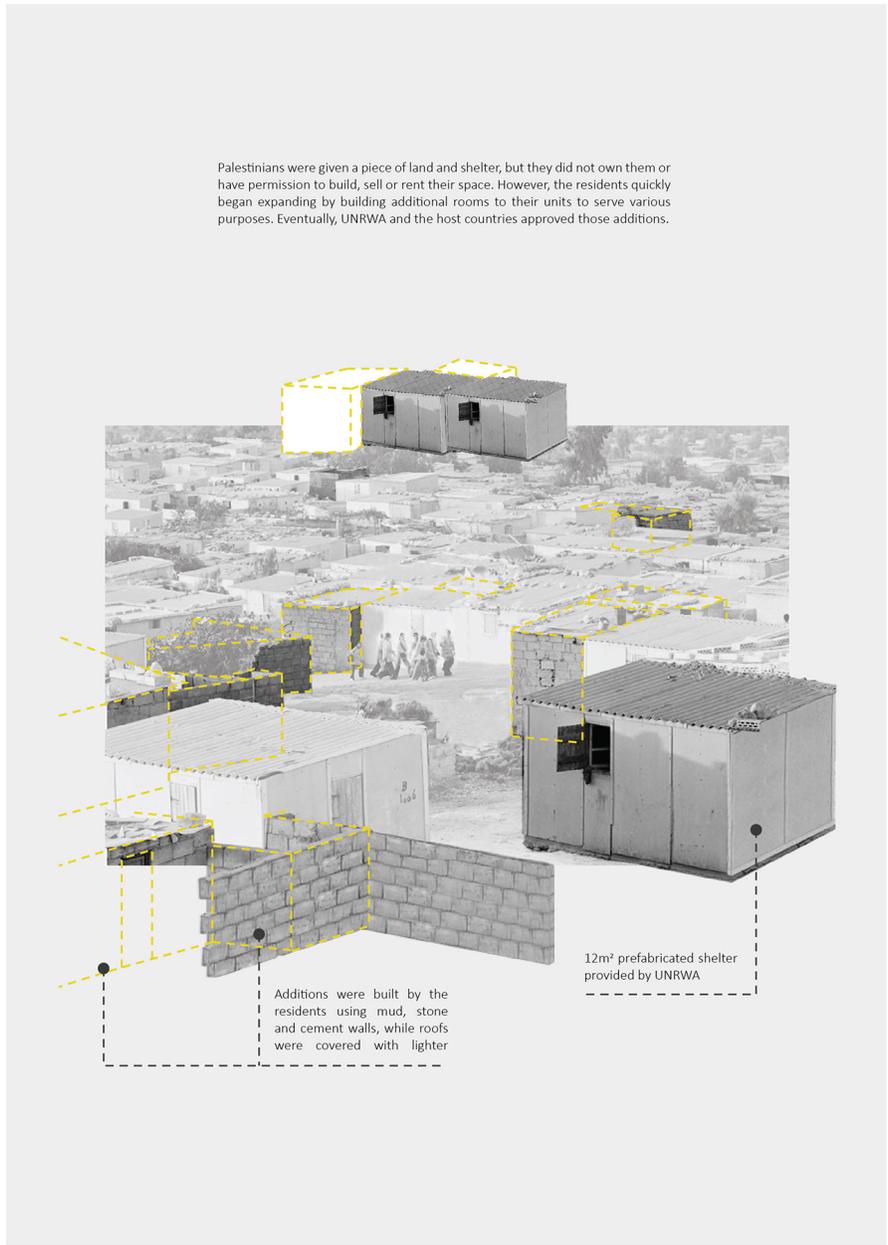


Figure 33: Refugees started to build additions to their shelters<sup>70</sup> (Awad 2018)  
Base photograph (UNRWA 1976).

<sup>70</sup> Palestinians were given a piece of land and shelter, but they did not own them or have permission to build, sell or rent their space. However, the residents quickly began expanding by building additional rooms to their units to serve various purposes.



*Building additions to the prefabricated shelters*

*Figure 34: Refugees started to build additions to their shelters- Top view (Awad 2018)*

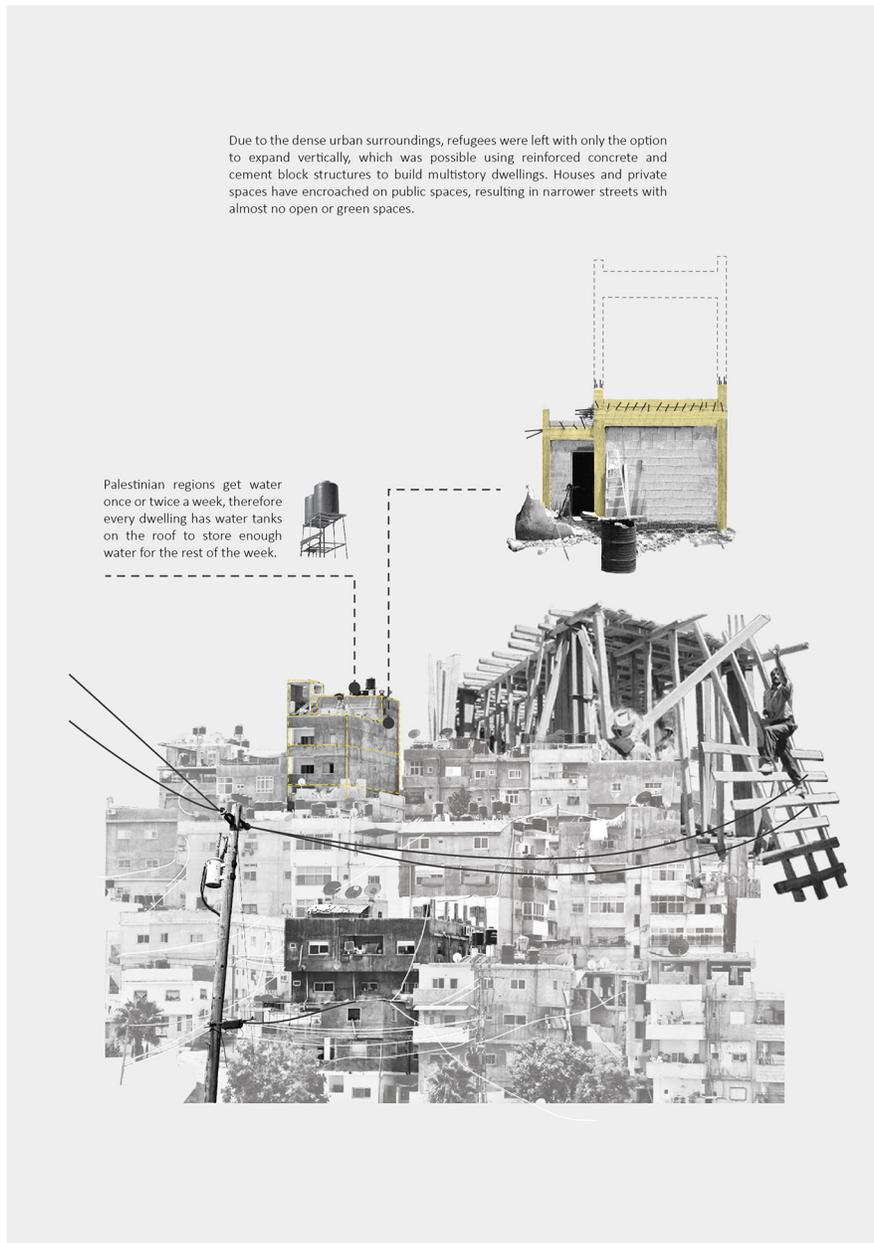
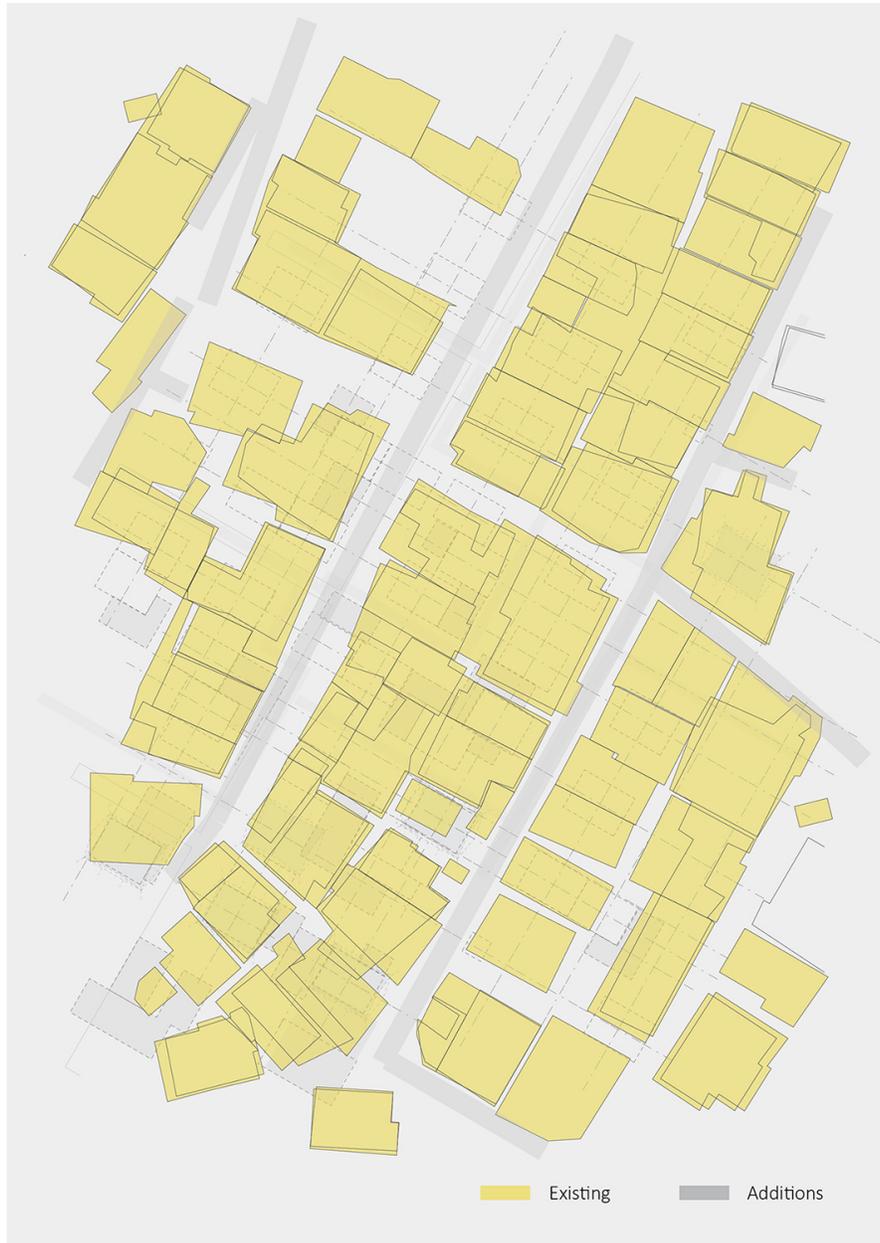


Figure 35: Building with reinforced concrete and expanding vertically<sup>71</sup> (Awad 2018)

<sup>71</sup> Due to the dense urban surroundings, refugees were left with only the option to expand vertically, which was possible using reinforced concrete and cement block structures to build multistory dwellings. Houses and private spaces have encroached on public spaces, resulting in narrower streets with almost no open or green spaces.



*Building with reinforced concrete and expanding vertically*

*Figure 36: Building with reinforced concrete and expanding vertically- Top view (Awad 2018)*

# Maps

## The disappearance of Palestine and The Birth of Palestinian Refugees

These series of maps illustrate the boundaries of Palestine before the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948, the distribution of the destroyed Palestinian villages and how Palestine started to disappear while Israel expands, leaving bits and pieces of land for the native Palestinians to live off. As a result, Palestinian refugee camps were established, to accommodate those who were displaced from their land that became to be known as the State of Israel.

The maps were produced based on data obtained from (Pappe 2015), (Khalidi 2015), (Shoshan 2010), (Sitta 2014), (UNRWA, Palestine Refugees ), (I.K 2018) and (R.H 2018)



*Figure 37: Palestine 1880*

*Figure 38: State of Israel 1880*



*Figure 39: State of Palestine 1947*



*Figure 40: Zionist Land 1947*



*Figure 41: State of Palestine- UN Partition Plan proposal 29 Nov. 1947*



*Figure 42: State of Israel - UN Partition Plan proposal 29 Nov. 1947*



*Figure 43: State of Palestine 15 May 1948*



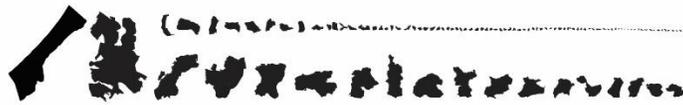
*Figure 44: State of Israel 15 May 1948*



*Figure 45: State of Palestine 2012*



*Figure 46: State of Israel 2012*



*Figure 47: What remains of Palestine today*

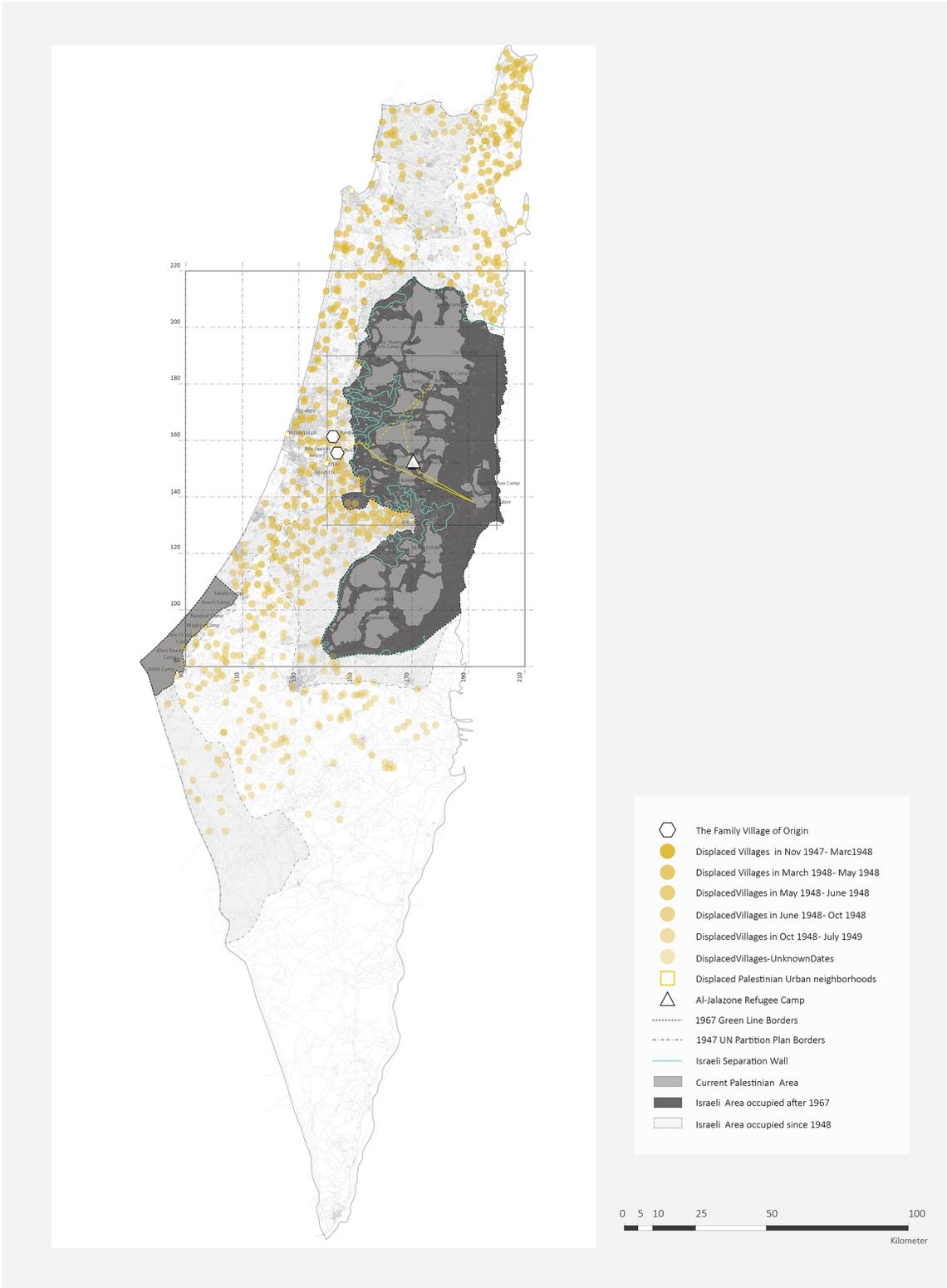


Figure 48: Palestinian Destroyed Villages (Awad 2018)



Path of Displacement from the Villages of Origin *Beit Nabala* and *Rantiya* to *Al-Jalazone* Refugee Camp

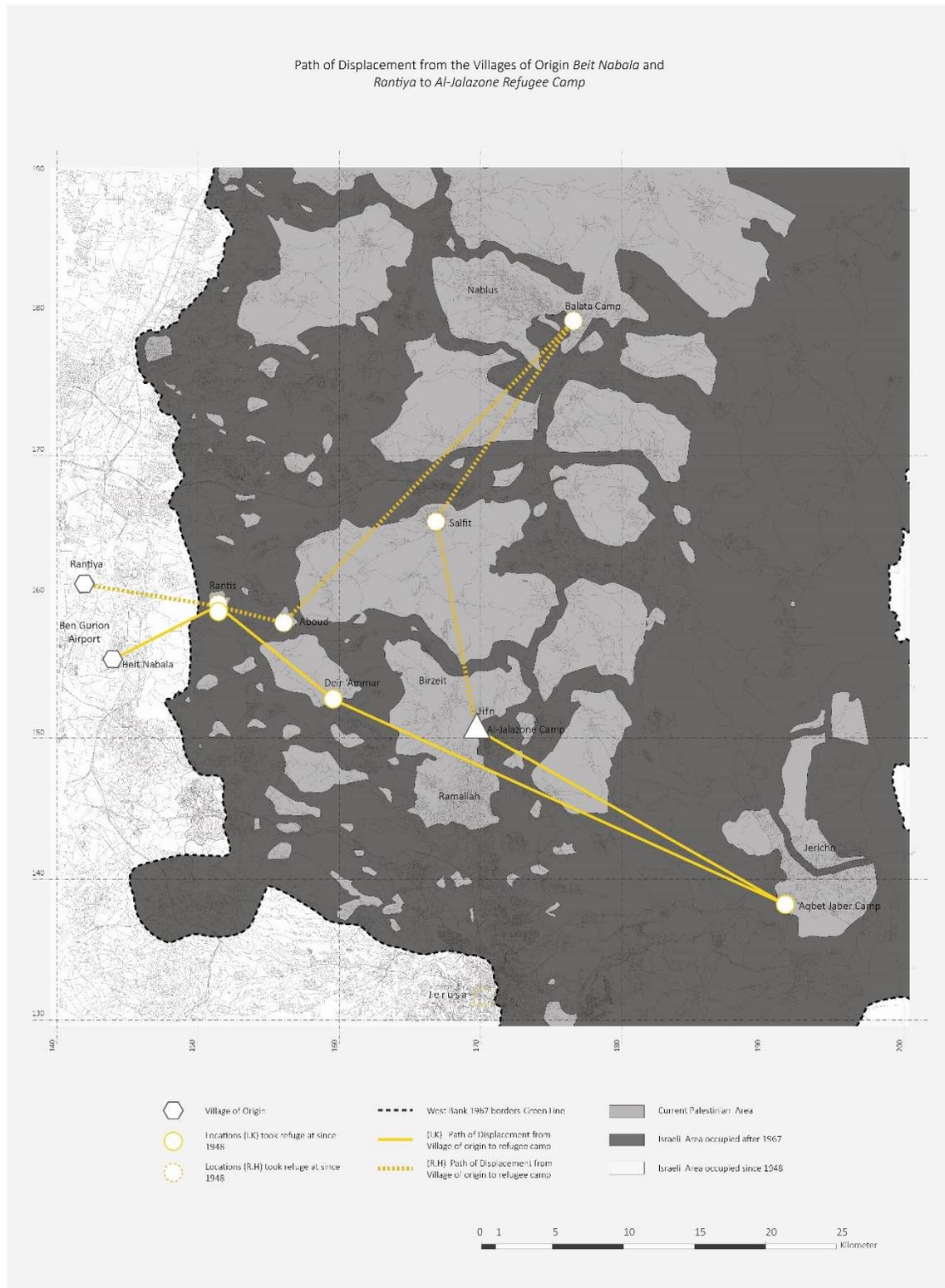


Figure 50: Map of the Path of Displacement of interviewees from the villages of origin to Al-Jalazone camp (Awad 2018)

The Journey of Return from Al-Jalazone Refugee Camp to the Villages of Origin Beit Nabala

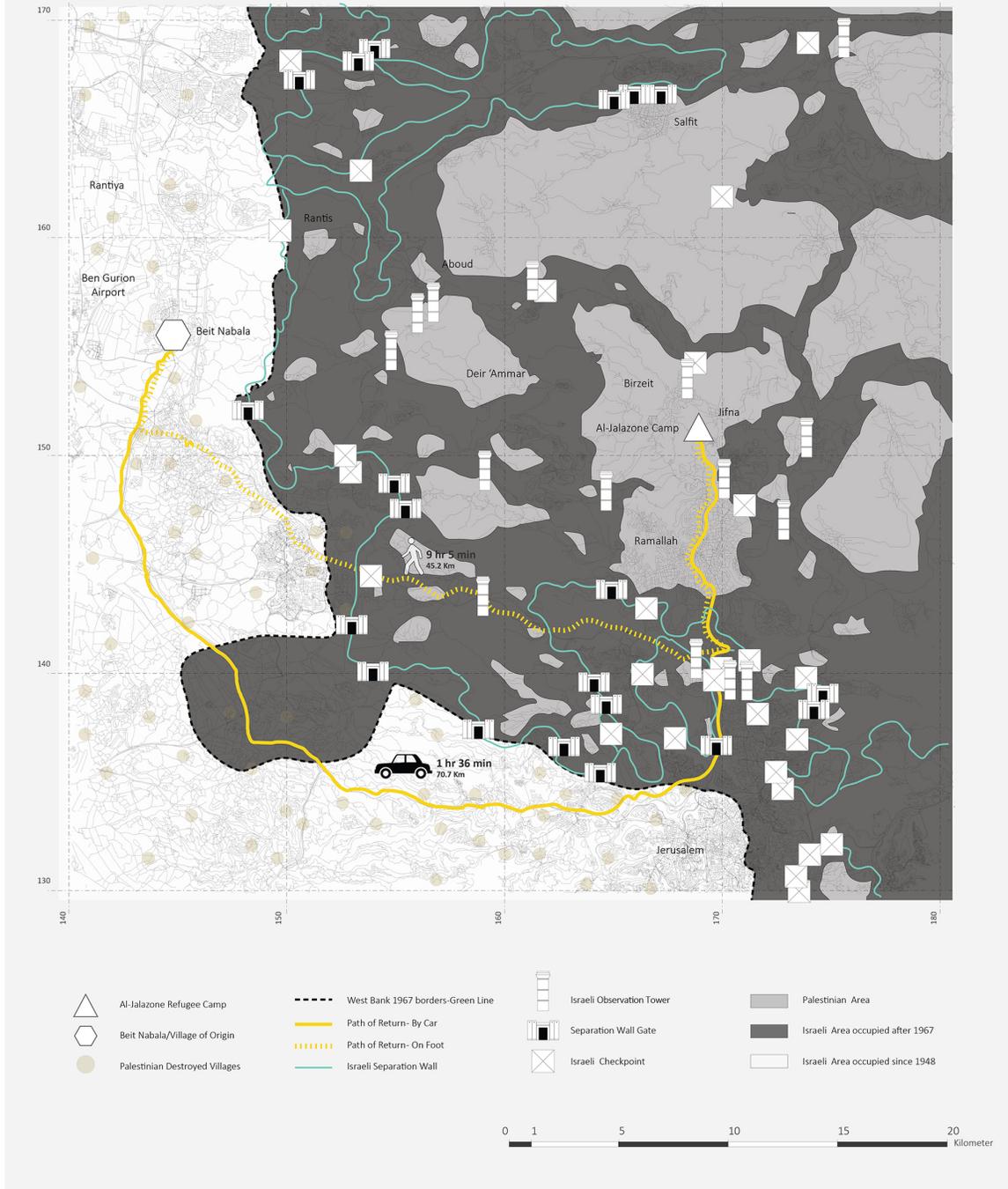


Figure 51: Map of the Journey of Return Al-Jalazone camp to Beit Nabala (Awad 2018)

# Photographs

## All That Remains of Beit Nabala



Figure 52: JNF office, originally Beit Nabala Boys School (Al-Ghubari 2015)



Figure 53: JNF office, originally Beit Nabala Boys School (Al-Ghubari 2015)



*Figure 54: Ruins of Beit Nabala Cemetery (Al-Ghubari 2015)*



*Figure 55: Ruins of Beit Nabala Cemetery (Al-Ghubari 2015)*



*Figure 56: All that remains of Beit Nabala (Jeires 2014)*



*Figure 57: All that remains of Beit Nabala (Jeires 2014)*



Figure 58: Ahmad Kharoub original map<sup>72</sup> of Beit Nabala (Awad 2018)

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<sup>72</sup> This photograph was taken at Ahmad Kharoub's house in Palestine. This map was a result of a ten-year project that involved interviewing people from his village of origin, who were living in Al-Jalazone camp in addition to others who were living in refugee camps in Jordan. Kharoub also managed to get permits for few of the elders to be able to go back to where their village was located to identify the location of their demolished house, their neighbors' and any other features of the village. Based on his research he was able to create a map of the village with the names of the families who owned each house in addition to a physical model.

# Al-Jalazone Refugee Camp

## Historical Photographs



*Figure 59: Al-Jalazone Refugee Camp 1950, one year after the establishment of the camp (Poll 1950)*



*Figure 60: Al-Jalazone Camp 1960- UNRWA Rooms (Digital Palestinian Archive 2019)*



*Figure 61: Al-Jalazone Camp 1959 (Kharoub 2008)*



*Figure 62: Al-Jalazone Camp 1978 (Palestine Remembered 2008)*

## Al-Jalazone Camp 2018



Figure 63: Al-Jalazone Camp UNRWA service office (Awad 2018)



Figure 64: Al-Jalazone Camp School



Figure 65: Al-Jalazone Camp (Awad 2018)



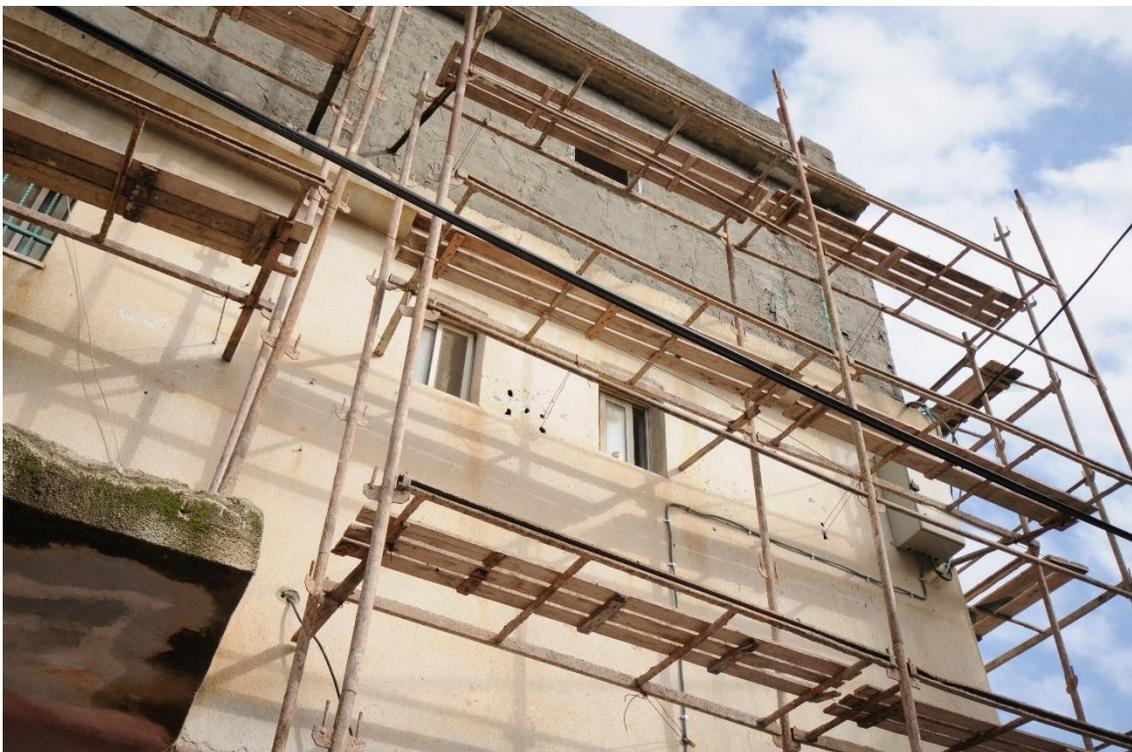
Figure 66: Al-Jalazone Camp martyrs' monument (Awad 2018)



*Figure 67: Al-Jalazone Camp alleys (Awad 2018)*



*Figure 68: Building under construction, Al-Jalazone Camp (Awad 2018)*



*Figure 69: Building under construction, Al-Jalazone Camp (Awad 2018)*



*Figure 70: Al-Jalazone Camp alleys (Awad 2018)*



Figure 71: Al-Jalazone Camp alleys (Awad 2018)



Figure 72: Al-Jalazone Camp alleys (Awad 2018)



Figure 73: Al-Jalazone Camp Graffiti (Awad 2018)

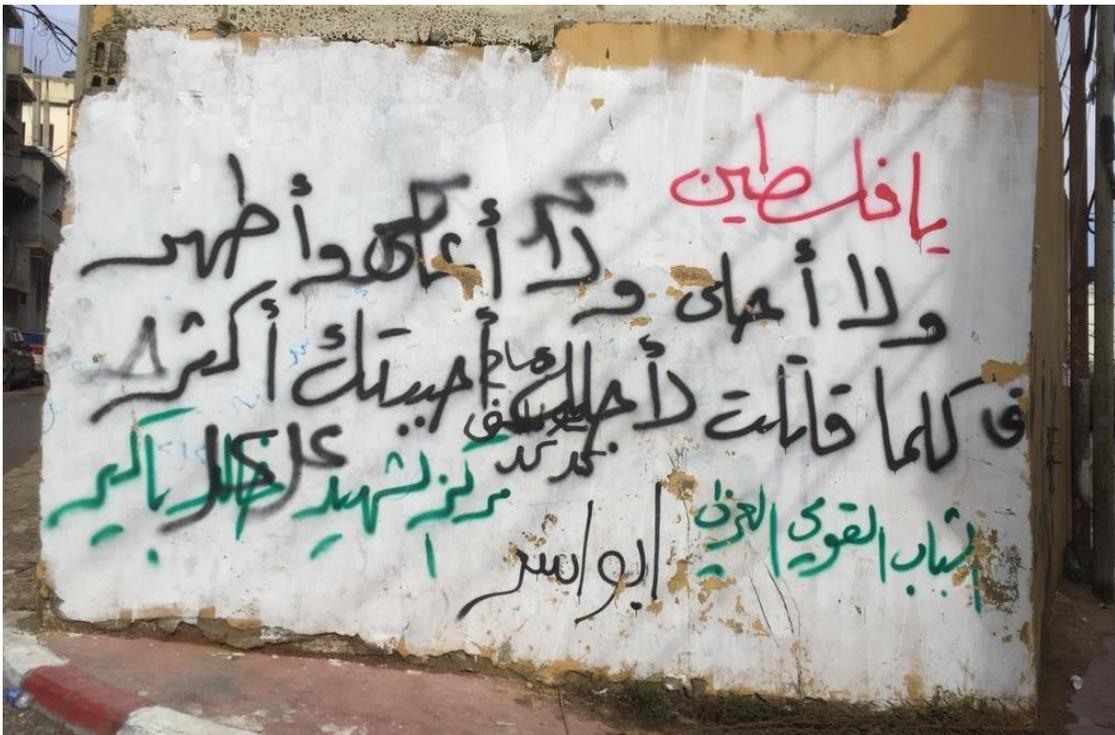


Figure 74: Al-Jalazone Camp Graffiti (Awad 2018)



Figure 75: Al-Jalazone Camp (Awad 2018)



Figure 76: Al-Jalazone Camp (Awad 2018)



*Figure 77: Ruins of a UNRWA room- Al-Jalazone Camp*



*Figure 78: One of the few UNRWA rooms that still stands in Al-Jalazone Camp (Awad 2018)*



*Figure 79: Al-Jalazone Camp- Extended reinforcement bars waiting for the next floor to be built (Awad 2018)*



*Figure 80: Al-Jalazone Camp (Awad 2018)*



Figure 81: Al-Jalazone Camp (Awad 2018)



Figure 82: Al-Jalazone Camp (Awad 2018)



*Figure 83: Al-Jalazone Camp (2018)*

## The Family Dwelling 360-degree Photographs









Figure 84: 360-Degree Photographs of the family's dwelling in Al-Jalazone Camp (Awad 2018)

## The Separation Wall and Checkpoints



*Figure 85: The road leading to Al-Jalazone Camp from Ramallah (Awad 2018)*



*Figure 86: Driving from Al-Jalazone Camp to Ramallah (Awad 2018)*



*Figure 87: Israeli surveillance tower- Qalandia, West Bank, Palestine (Awad 2018)*



Figure 88: Graffiti-Israeli Separation Wall-Qalandia Checkpoint, West Bank, Palestine



Figure 89: Graffiti-Israeli Separation Wall-Qalandia Checkpoint, West Bank, Palestine (Awad 2018)



*Figure 90: Qalandia Israeli Checkpoint, West Bank, Palestine (Awad 2018)*



*Figure 91: Qalandia Israeli Checkpoint, West Bank, Palestine (Awad 2018)*



*Figure 92: Israeli Separation Wall, West Bank, Palestine (Awad 2018)*



*Figure 93: Separation Wall Gate, West Bank, Palestine*



Figure 94: Israeli Separation Wall, West Bank, Palestine (Awad 2018)



Figure 95: Israeli Separation Wall, West Bank, Palestine (Awad 2018)



Figure 96: Israeli Checkpoint-West Bank, Palestine (Awad 2018)



Figure 97: Israeli Checkpoint-West Bank, Palestine (Awad 2018)

# **Fieldwork Trip - Journal**

## **Twenty-seven Days in Palestine**

In this chapter, I am sharing my personal experience during the twenty-seven days I spent in the West Bank, Palestine for my research fieldwork. The different spaces my research took place at, the challenges I faced as a researcher and as a Palestinian. I am sharing this as an attempt to give an insight and a better understanding of the context in which this research was conducted.

## **Crossing the Borders**

As a Canadian holding a Palestinian West Bank ID number I am not allowed to travel through Ben Gurion International Airport, therefore the only way to get into Palestine is by crossing Allenby Bridge [also known as King Hussein Bridge] that crosses the Jordan river connecting the West Bank with Jordan near the city of Jericho. The border is controlled by Israeli authorities. Passengers can cross the borders during the week from 9:00 am-9:00 pm while on the weekend, Friday and Saturday the hours are reduced to 9:00 am-11:00 am.

### **9 December 2018**

My trip started from Ottawa International Airport at 9:20 pm, arriving in Amman, Jordan on 10 December 2018, at 10:25 pm. Since the Allenby Bridge was closed by the time I arrived in Amman, I had to stay overnight in Amman until the borders open the next morning.

### **11 December 2018**

At 1:00 pm I took a taxi from Amman to Allenby Bridge, which is an hour drive. Crossing the borders is a different experience than traveling anywhere else. When I only needed my Canadian passport and a boarding pass to travel over five thousand miles from Canada to Jordan, I needed five documents in addition to three different bus tickets to cross a couple of kilometers over Jordan River. In order to cross those couple of kilometers I had to go through three different authorities procedures. First, I had to check in my luggage and get my papers checked by the Jordanian authorities. Then I would claim my luggage, get on a bus to the Israelis side where I go through checking my luggage and papers again but by the Israeli authorities, claim my luggage and get on a third bus to finally check in by the Palestinians authorities.

By the time I was done with all of this I was officially on Palestinian land in the city of Jericho, where my sister picked me up. While we were on our way to Ramallah, my father called me to warn us that Israeli forces have shut down the main entrances to Ramallah and recommended that we take a secondary route from the towns around Ramallah to avoid being confronted by Israeli forces in order for us to make our way safely into the city of Ramallah.

### **The closedown of Ramallah**

#### **12 December 2018**

Israeli forces were searching for two Palestinian men who were believed to be in Ramallah area. Israeli forces closed all the entrances to the city of Ramallah and invaded the city and the area around in search for the two men, therefore the city was closed for two days. As a result, Palestinians who came in the morning to work in Ramallah from surrounding cities and towns were stuck in Ramallah with no place to stay. On Facebook, people were posting that their homes are open for those who do not have a place to stay. Horrible memories of the second Intifada just flashed in front of me...

#### **13 December 2018**

I woke up to my mother's words to my sister "they have killed them both". I rolled in bed and checked my phone, photos of two men were all over Facebook home page, I recognized one of the men, he was a taxi driver on Ramallah-Birzeit route, a route that I took for twenty months when I was working at the construction project of the Palestinian Museum in Birzeit. Israel found and killed the two men... Israeli forces withdrew from Ramallah and the city was open again. Just another day in Palestine.

## **14 December 2018**

The morning subject of discussion was Em Saleh, a Palestinian refugee mother living in Al-Am'ari Camp in Ramallah. A mother of six men, five whom are detained in Israeli prisons and the sixth was killed by the IDF. Last night, the seventy-two-year-old mother was left homeless when Israeli explosives and bulldozers demolished her three-story home in Al-Am'ari refugee camp. Demolishing homes is a form of collective punishment Israel employed against Palestinians since 1967, a policy that Israel uses to cause harm to people who have done nothing wrong but being related to a Palestinian who took forms of resistance against Israeli forces or citizens.<sup>73</sup> Those forms of punishment go beyond just demolishing homes, to harassing and making the lives of the relatives unbearable by false detentions, and preventing them from traveling. In the case of Em Saleh, who became a refugee at the age of two, lost her home in Al-Am'ari camp three times, as Israeli forces destroyed the home of Abu Saleh's family twice before, in 1990 and in 2003, and again on 14 December 2018.

It was 12:49 pm, and I was on my way to a cafe' in a taxi to work on my seminar paper that was due the next day, when the taxi driver received a phone call from his family, that their house was being under attack by Israeli settlers of Beit El settlement. They sounded terrified... the taxi driver asked them to get away from the windows and call people from Al-Jalazone to help them as they were the closest to get to them... I got to my destination... I left him with a prayer that his family would be safe.

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<sup>73</sup> Btsekem.org

## **The Camp is Mourning**

**15 December 2018**

I submitted my seminar paper this morning, it was time to make some phone calls to arrange my interviews schedule in Al-Jalazone camp when a teenage boy from Al-Jalazone camp was killed by Israeli forces. A time that the camp was mourning their loss it was inappropriate to go in the camp and bring more tragic memories of their loss in 1948.

## **Visiting the Camp**

**18 December 2018**

Since the research involved human interaction by interviewing members of Palestinian refugee families, I had to go get research ethical clearance from Carleton University Research Ethics Board (CUREB). Therefore, I could not contact any of the possible participants before I got research ethical clearance. Therefore, I turned to media coverage (news, reports, article, and documentaries) with Palestinian refugees to try to determine possible participants that I can recruit once I get the ethical clearance. I was able to identify three possible groups of participants from an article, and a documentary about Palestinian refugees in Al-Jalazone camp.

I was finally granted the ethical clearance for my research on 11 December 2018, the night I arrived in Palestine; however, with the closure of the city of Ramallah and then the death of the boy from Al-Jalazone I postponed my first visit to Al-Jalazone camp until the situation settled down.

On 18 December 2018, I visited Al-Jalazone Camp for the first time. I met with the manager of the Popular Committee Services for Al-Jalazone Camp [founded in 1996 as a body legitimately represents Palestinian refugees under the framework of the Palestine Liberation Organization] to put me in contact and introduce me to the families I wanted to interview. Unfortunately, I could only reach out to one family out of the three that I had in mind, as the first-generation member of the other family was deceased, while the third family no longer lives in the camp.

## **20 December 2018**

Today I got to meet Ahmad Kharoub, a Palestinian engineer who is originally from the lost village of Beit Nabala. I was interested in meeting with him to discuss his work which I learned about from an article I read online. A ten-year project that involved interviewing people from his village of origin, who were living in Al-Jalazone camp in addition to others who were living in refugee camps in Jordan. He also managed to get permits for few of the elders to be able to go back to where their village was located to identify the location of their demolished house, their neighbors' and any other features of the village. Based on his research he was able to create a map of the village with the names of the families who owned each house in addition to a physical model. He was generous enough to share his work and give me permission to take photographs of the map he created.

We discussed the possibility of trying to create a digitized model of the lost village of Beit Nabala if I could manage to get a permit to go to Beit Nabala and document the current condition of the village and use his knowledge.

## **Meeting the First Family**

### **21 December 2018**

Today I conducted the first interview, which was with an eighty-three-year-old lady and her seventy-seven-year-old brother, first-generation refugees from the village of Beit Nabala. I was very excited about this interview, as I got to interview not one but two members from the first-generation who lived both in the village of origin and the camp. The conversation started with general topics about what was going on in the area and the boy that was killed last week who was his parents only child.

An hour later, after talking about their house in the lost village their journey of displacements and the places they took refuge in before arriving in the camp, the man said “We do not live in the camp, my father bought this land in the 1970s”, and that was an unexpected turn in the interview, where I was looking for the evolution of their dwelling within the camp, this family took refuge in different villages in the West Bank, between being hosted by friends to renting a room from another family, until the father could afford to buy a piece of land and build his own house. He chose to buy land next to Al-Jalazone camp where his relatives and friends from Beit Nabala were living. The fact that this refugee family did not live in the camp but yet after over twenty years of displacement they settled near the camp to be close to what they are familiar with.

My favorite part of this interview was when they were talking about their home in the village and remembering the little details of where they used to play, for a moment I saw the twelve-year-old girl with her little six-year-old brother sitting in front of me.

Even though the interview was very moving and informative, I left with the thought that I had to find a first-generation refugee who lived in the camp since its establishment.

### **In Search of New Participants**

**23 December 2018**

I had high hopes that I will interview the family during the first week and have the time to visit the different places they took refuge in before settling in the refugee camp and reconstruct how their dwelling evolved in the camp over the past seventy years. However, things did not go as expected, I was back to square one, in search for another first-generation refugee. My chances of finding new participants were low, as I was targeting a small group of people that will be extinct in a few years. I spread the word

between my friends in Ramallah to try to help me, while my parents suggested trying to look at Al-Aroub camp since this camp was built on the lands of my home town Beit Ommar north of Herbon. My relatives might know of first-generation refugees that could be possible participants for my research.

On the 23 December 2018, I went with my parents to Beit Ommer as I also wanted to see my uncles and aunts. Unfortunately, I could not find any possible participants at Al-Aroub camp, as all first-generation that my relatives were aware of by then were deceased.

### **26 December 2018**

I went back to Al-Jalazone camp for the third time. I was there with my father where I met again with Ahmad Kharoub, the man who created the map of Beit Nabala [He is currently living in Birzeit, a town north of Ramallah]. I asked him if he could show me where his family first settled in the camp and where he grew up. I was trying to get as much information as possible even if he was not the first-generation, but I had to make the best out of what I had.

### **27 December 2018**

I had been trying to find a way to get a permit from Israel since October 2018. I needed this permit to cross the separation wall through an Israeli controlled checkpoint, to go to the lost village of Beit Nabala, which is now part of the State of Israel. As a Palestinian with a West Bank ID, I am not allowed to go into Israeli territories unless I get a permit, which I can only get through an official invitation for work or treatment purposes. I tried contacting organizations in Jerusalem to send me an invitation that might grant me a permit, which was not a successful attempt. I even considered applying through a tourism agency that arranges trips to the 1948 occupied territories. It was holidays season, and the closest trip was on 12 January 2019, which would be a week after I leave Palestine, in

addition to the unstable situation in the West Bank it was too hard to get a permit. I expected that this might happen, and that I wouldn't be able to visit the village of origin and document the journey from the camp back to the village. This is part of the story. The reality that Palestinians have limited accessibility in their own land and the fact that their movement within the state or to even cross the borders to Jordan is controlled by Israel. That is all part of the story.

### **28 December 2018**

It was a rainy cold day in Ramallah, I was going through the interviews and the material I had so far, planning what else can I do during my last week in Palestine.

A friend of mine who is a journalist reached out to her colleague, third-generation refugee living in Al-Jalazone camp, who offered to take us the next day to visit few families in the camp that might help me with my research.

As excited as I was, I did not want to have my hopes high, I gave in to the fact that the conditions will form this research I cannot force my planned methods, it is a unique space and conditions, the struggle and challenges are part of the research and more specifically are what shaped these camps, let the circumstances guide me.

### **Finally Found New Participants**

#### **29 December 2018**

At 11:00 am, we met with Mohammad at Al-Jalazone camp entrance. He introduced me to a couple of families before I met I.K, a ninety-three-year-old first-generation refugee from the village of Beit Nabala. Despite what he has been through in his life and the way he spoke about his lost village, he amazed me with his positivity and sense of humor, it was an amazing interview, I had a pleasant time talking to him. Later that day I spoke with

two of his sons and his wife who is also a first-generation refugee, but she was about four years old when displaced with her family from the lost village of Rantiya. (Refer to chapter xx-xx for the content of the interview) I asked the family if I could come back to take some pictures and measurements of their current dwelling so that I can use them as a base to reconstruct how their dwelling evolved since the establishment of the camp based on the family's interviews.

### **31 December 2018**

10:30 am, Al-Jalazone camp. I am prepared with my cameras and sketchbook. This time my friend Hiba was there with me. We were welcomed in by the wife of one of the sons I spoke with two days ago. I explained to her what I wanted to do and got the permission to have access to certain rooms and areas of the four floors I would go into.

We took 360-degree photographs in the ground floor, first floor, the staircase and up on the roof. In addition to photogrammetry photographs of the exterior front façade and the courtyard to be used to generate a 3D point cloud model, as a reference to build a scaled 3D model of the family's dwelling.

While we were in the courtyard, the old man came in from his daily morning coffee at the camp's coffee house. He offered us to come inside for a cup of coffee once we were done. So, once we were done, we went upstairs and had a casual chat full of laughter with the old man, his daughter and law, and his grandchildren. They were such a genuine family, who welcomed me into their house and shared their lives memories.

### **01 January 2019**

Went into the new year with hope for better days and less suffering for Palestinians and all those in need for our prayers all over the world, to those who lost their homes and beloved ones.

## **Last Day in the Camp... Last Day in Palestine**

**06 January 2019**

My last day in Palestine, I interviewed the refugee family, documented their current dwelling in the camp, while my attempt to document the lost villages and the journey of return was unsuccessful when I could not get an Israeli permit. However, I would still want to document the part of the journey that I can go to and the part of the story that is being hidden from the public.

Today, I went to Al-Jalazone camp for the last time, I wanted to drive all the way from the camp to the checkpoint, the only way through to get into the areas occupied in 1948, to reach to the lost village of Beit Nabala. We started by driving around in the narrow roads of the camp with a 360-degree camera, to capture 360 videos so that when I describe the camp to those who have never been into a Palestinian refugee camp could get a sense of the space. When we got to the Qalandia checkpoint at the separation wall, we parked the car and went to walk along the wall to take some photographs, I was holding up a camera to capture a 360-degree video of the place when a man from an Israeli plate car approached us asking of what we were doing and told us that we were not allowed to be here. He was speaking to us in Arabic, but it obvious from his accent that he was Israeli. We continued walking towards the checkpoint while that man was still driving along with us and asking us to leave. We were in the view of the Israeli surveillance towers where Israeli forces pointing their guns, I sensed the danger of the space and starting to get nervous, I turned off my camera and decided to go home.

## **Going into Al-Jalazone Camp**

Within a few kilometers, you witness confusing facts and places. You would be driving in Ramallah, a Palestinian city in the West Bank going north towards Al-Jalazone camp when you pass by the Israeli concrete wall with surveillance towers and you can see Israeli soldiers pointing their guns from the towers, the concrete wall dissolves into a fence where you glimpse “Beit El”, the illegal Israeli settlement built on Palestinian land occupied in 1967. While you are still looking east at the Israeli settlement you pass by a school with the blue UNRWA sign, you know that you are there, the camp entrance is on the left side.

When you first enter the camp from its gate, your eyes get caught by what is written at the top center of the gate in Arabic (see figure 98)

*The right of return is a sacred right  
We will return  
AL-Jalazone Camp - The Camp of Martyrs*

I am impressed by this place, there is so much into it. the stories you find in every alley from the photographs of the camp’s martyrs, the quotes and graffiti on the walls, to having a cup of coffee and with an old man whose stories will jump from his village of origin to today’s news. The sense of life and hope that this place illuminates, the greetings and the beautiful smiles from the little kids to the generosity and kindness of the families who opened their hearts and souls.

I went home feeling so blessed to be at home with my family and to go into a new appreciation of how fortunate I am to have a place I can call home and be able to go to when I want to.



Figure 98: Al-Jalazone Camp Entrance  
The right of return is a sacred right- We Will Return

## **News Captions** from Twenty-seven Days in Palestine

This section includes news captions from the twenty-seven days spent in Palestine for the research fieldwork. The captions reflect the major events that were happening in the West Bank and more specifically Ramallah area, which have directly and indirectly affected the research fieldwork.

12 December 2018



رام الله : محاصرة بقعة سكنية والتعبئة العسكرية مستمرة  
A residential building is being besieged and the Israeli military operation continues in Ramallah.



Israeli forces detain 7 Palestinians across West Bank



Israeli forces shoot, injure 5 Palestinians in Ramallah

13 December 2018



Palestinian injured as Israeli settlers attack vehicles in Nablus



Israeli forces detained 100 Palestinians within 24 hours, from Thursday until pre-dawn Friday, across the occupied West Bank.



Israeli forces bomb Abu Saleh's family dwelling in Al-Am'ari Camp

15 December 2018



Israeli settlers attack Palestinian houses in Al-Birch



Israeli settlers throw rocks at Palestinian vehicles passing by the main Nablus-Ramallah in the northern occupied West Bank, on Sunday night.

17 December 2018



The Israeli military court of Ofer sentenced an 18-year-old Palestinian prisoner to 35 years of prison, late Sunday.



Israeli forces informed the family of Palestinian prisoner Khabib Jabbar that the Israeli authorities decided to demolish the family house in the southern occupied West Bank district of Hebron, on Tuesday.



Israeli settlers assaulted Palestinian farmers in the Masafer Yatta area of the southern West Bank district of Hebron, on Wednesday, and attempted to seize their lands.

19 December 2018

**Ma'an News Agency**  
December 19, 2018

Israeli forces took measurements of the warned Palestinian former prisoner, in the Kobbar village in the central occupied West Bank district of Ramallah, on pre-dawn Wednesday, in preparation to demolish the structure.



MAANNEWS.COM  
**Israeli forces measure home of Palestinian attack suspect**

**Ma'an News Agency**  
5 hrs · 🌐

Israeli settlers uprooted at least 100 trees belonging to Palestinian farmers in the Tarqumiya village in the southern occupied West Bank district of Hebron, on Tuesday evening.



**Ma'an News Agency**  
December 20, 2018

Israeli forces detained at least ten Palestinians from across the occupied West Bank, on pre-dawn Thursday.



MAANNEWS.COM  
**Israeli forces detain 10, raid house of Palestinian attack suspect**

21 December 2018

22 December 2018

**Ma'an News Agency**  
December 22, 2018

The Israeli municipality of Jerusalem ordered, on Saturday, a Palestinian family in the Silwan town of occupied East Jerusalem to evict their home after a part of a wall surrounding the house collapsed.



MAANNEWS.COM  
**Israel orders eviction of Palestinian family in Silwan**

23 December 2018

**Ma'an News Agency**  
December 23, 2018

Israeli forces detained three Palestinian students, including two teen girls, in front of a local school in Beituniya village in the central occupied West Bank district of Ramallah, on Sunday.



MAANNEWS.COM  
**In video - Israeli forces detain 3 Palestinian teens after school**

24 December 2018

25 December 2018

**Ma'an News Agency**  
December 24, 2018

Israeli forces detained at least 15 Palestinians from across districts of the occupied West Bank, on pre-dawn Monday.



MAANNEWS.COM  
**Israeli forces detain 15 Palestinians in West Bank raids**

26 December 2018

**Ma'an News Agency**  
December 26, 2018

Several Israeli bulldozers raked into western Beit Lahya town in the northern besieged Gaza Strip, on Wednesday morning.



MAANNEWS.COM  
**Israeli bulldozers raid Palestinian lands in northern Gaza**

27 December 2018

28 December 2018

**Ma'an News Agency**  
December 27, 2018

The Israeli Civil Administration approved, on Thursday, the construction of 1,451 new settlement units in the occupied West Bank and advanced plans for the construction of 637 additional units.



MAANNEWS.COM  
**Israel approves construction of new settlement units across West Bank**

**Ma'an News Agency**  
December 28, 2018

Palestinian human rights organization Al-Haq sent a joint urgent appeal to the United Nations (UN) Special Procedures regarding the enforced disappearance of Palestinian citizen Saleh Omar Barghouti, 29, following his detention by Israeli forces near the town of Surda, north of Ramallah in the central occupied West Bank, on 12 December 2018.



29 December 2018

30 December 2018

31 December 2018

01 January 2019

02 January 2019

03 January 2019

**Ma'an News Agency**  
January 2

Israeli forces detained at least 24 Palestinians, including seven minors, during search and detention raids across the occupied West Bank raids, on pre-dawn Wednesday.



MAANNEWS.COM  
**Israeli forces detain 24 Palestinians in West Bank raids**

**Ma'an News Agency**  
January 2

Israeli bulldozers demolished a Palestinian-owned house in Qalondiya north of occupied East Jerusalem in the central West Bank, on Wednesday morning.



MAANNEWS.COM  
**Israel demolishes home in Jerusalem - 143 demolished in 2018**

**Ma'an News Agency**  
January 3

A Palestinian journalist and a paramedic were injured by Israeli forces' fire as they escorted Israeli settlers raiding Joseph's Tomb in the northern occupied West Bank district of Nablus, on pre-dawn Thursday.



MAANNEWS.COM  
**Journalist, paramedic injured as Israeli settlers raid Joseph**

**Ma'an News Agency**  
January 3

Israeli soldier opened live fire and tear-gas bombs targeting Palestinian students who were leaving their school in the northern occupied West Bank village of Tell in Nablus, on Thursday.



MAANNEWS.COM  
**Israeli forces open fire at school students in Nablus**

**Ma'an News Agency**  
January 3

Israeli forces detain 11 Palestinians in overnight West Bank raids



MAANNEWS.COM  
**Israeli forces detain 11 Palestinians in overnight West Bank raids**

**وعدتة بين الجناح**  
January 3

من اشغال الاعتصام على بوابة المدينة على طريق رام الله الخزون  
<https://www.watani.tv/news/272700.html>



MAANNEWS.COM  
**Israeli forces close the iron gate on Ramallah- Al-Jalazone road**

04 January 2019

05 January 2019

**Ma'an News Agency**  
January 5

Israeli forces prevented Palestinians, including Palestinian Authority officials, from entering the Khan al-Ahmar Bedouin village of east of Jerusalem, on Saturday afternoon.



MAANNEWS.COM  
**Israel denies Palestinians, PA officials access to Khan al-Ahmar**

**Ma'an News Agency**  
January 4

Israeli settlers attacked Palestinian vehicles, on Thursday night, in the northern occupied West Bank district of Nablus.



MAANNEWS.COM  
**Israeli settlers attack Palestinian vehicles in Nablus**

**Ma'an News Agency**  
January 5

The Israeli army informed members of the al-Barghouti family from Kobar village, northwest of central occupied West Bank district of Ramallah and al-Birah, on Saturday, that the family would be expelled to the Jericho district, if their son, Assam, does not turn himself in to the Israeli army.



MAANNEWS.COM  
**Israel threatens family of**

<p>06 January 2019</p>	<p>07 January 2019</p>	<p>08 January 2019</p>
<p>09 January 2019</p>	<p>10 January 2019</p>	<p>11 January 2019</p> 
<p>12 January 2019</p> 		

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