DEFENDING CHILDREN'S RIGHTS:
GLOBAL DISCOURSE AND LOCAL INTERPRETATIONS
AMONG PALESTINIAN CAMP REFUGEES IN JORDAN

by

LAURE J. LEVINE

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty
in Anthropology in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy,
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This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Anthropology in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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Abstract

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by

Laure J. Levine

Adviser: Professor Vincent Crapanzano

This thesis examines local interpretations and effects of children's rights in Palestinian refugee camps in Amman, Jordan, where a large Palestinian refugee population has been waiting for a solution that would put an end to their hardship and would make them return to Palestine, their homeland.

The objectives of this thesis are: 1) to analyze how Western secular children's rights embodied in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, or UN CRC, become articulated with local understandings of rights among a camp refugee community with cultural, religious, and political traditions; 2) to explore the impacts of the reformulated local discourse on camp children, adolescents and their families.

Fieldwork was conducted over a period of fourteen months (in 2000 and 2004) in the camps of Al-Wihdat and Jabal Nasser in Amman. I focused on activities of aid agencies, responses to them by educators, parents and refugee children, and on the views of each group regarding children's rights. A description of the camps and of family socialization practices in their historical context is presented in order to examine the complex relationship between politics, religion, culture and rights.

This thesis, based on a critique that the UN CRC and the proposition that its Western character is "universal", shows the reformulation of the children's rights discourse and ideology in local refugee cultural terms through the agency of educators, children and adolescents. By describing Palestinian camp refugee children and adolescents as participants in the social lives of their communities and as contributors to the making of their own culture, it is argued that the local interpretations of children's rights bear several contradictions. They are at the same time a source of ambivalence, and empowerment and hope for the Palestinian camp refugee community broken by over fifty years of exile.

DEDICATION

To the memory of my father and of my companion Richard Harvey Brown.

To the Palestinian refugees and their children in Al-Wihdat and Jabal Nasser refugee camps.

And to my children, Kate-Alexandra, Jessica and Sophie.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Many people in the Middle East, the United States and the United Kingdom have supported me through this decade-long journey. I could not have completed this work without their help and support. My most sincere thanks to all - friends, professors, fellow anthropologists and family.

I am deeply grateful and indebted to the Palestinian refugee community with whom I shared a heart-felt experience while doing my research. They are Palestinian refugees living inside and outside the camps, in Jordan, Palestine and Lebanon. In the course of my work I have been very privileged to bond with many Palestinian children, adolescents, and adults. My thanks go to all of them, especially the Walid family. Their warmth, hospitality, generosity with their time and their life experiences provided much valuable information and gave me the courage to continue to work. My most sincere thanks go to Umm Jihad, Nadia Shamrook, and Dr Hala Hammad for holding my hand and guiding me through the bumpy terrain of fieldwork. Many thanks to Hanan Abdallah, Mouna Darwasa, Sawsan Isshaq, Hazar Khasawneh, Amira Rimawi, Bashar Sharaf, Hayat Yaghi, Khalil Radwan and all the people at UNRWA,

Department of Palestinian Affairs, Jordanian Women's Union, Jordan River Foundation, Lina Khamis at UNESCO, and Dr Vivian Khamis for her help with setting up my interviews. I hope this thesis will give voice to their long refugee struggle in defending their rights.

I am grateful to all the members of my committee who believed in me and supported me through the difficult moments of grief that I encountered. Professor Vincent Crapanzano, my advisor, served as intellectual guide. He kept opening new horizons and ways of thinking while constantly encouraging me. Professor Shirley Lindenbaum was my "fairy godmother" from the beginning when I enrolled in the anthropology program. She relentlessly helped me through the several drafts of this manuscript by broadening my perspective. Her always accurate editorial comments helped me better shape my ideas. Professor Roger Hart's work with children was my inspiration. His generosity and enthusiasm about my work deeply touched me. These scholars have helped me in more ways than those mentioned. They conveyed a passion for ideas that nurtured me and helped me clarify my own. I also want to acknowledge the support of Professor Amal Rassam who encouraged me at the early stage of my work. My thanks go to Julie Peteet, my outside reader for her keen interest in my work.

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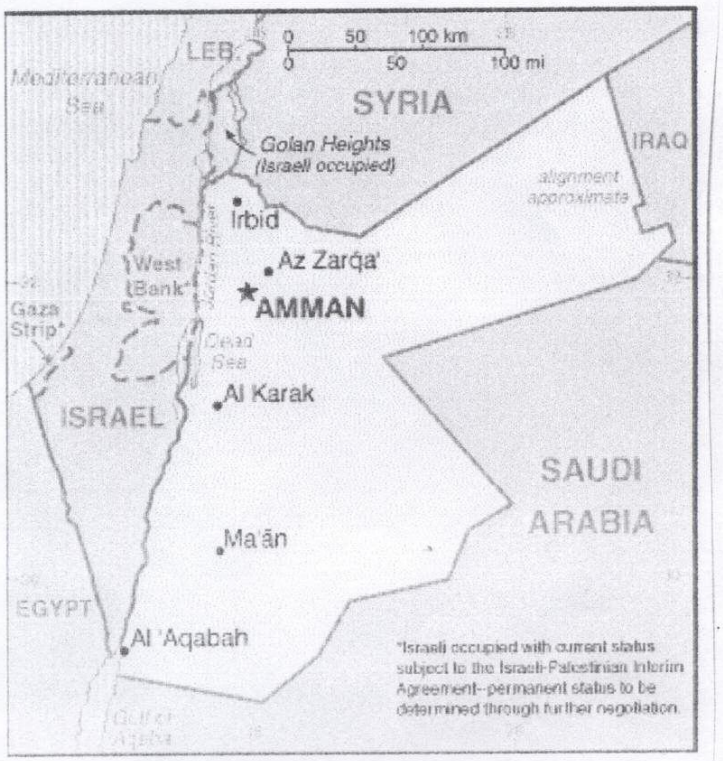
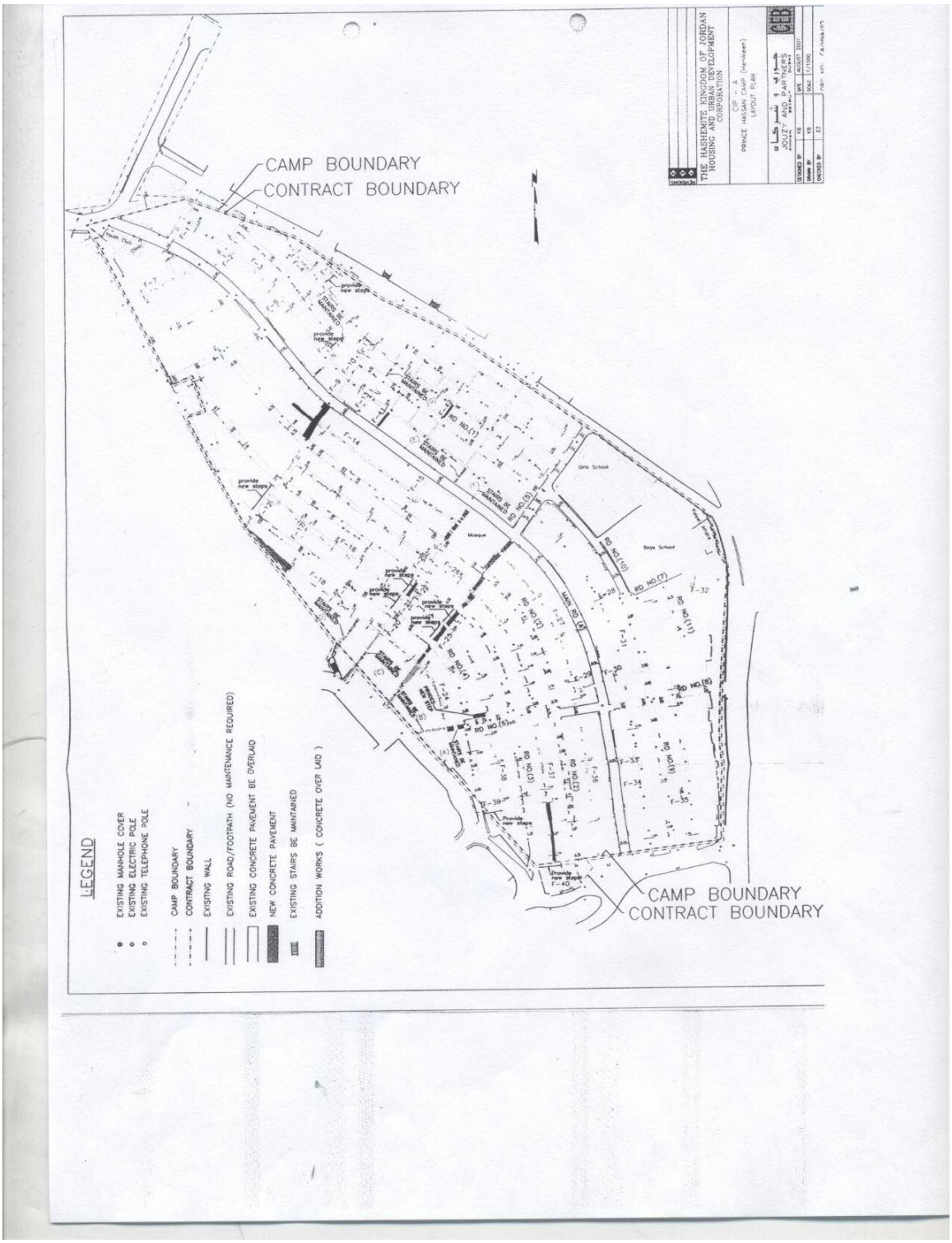
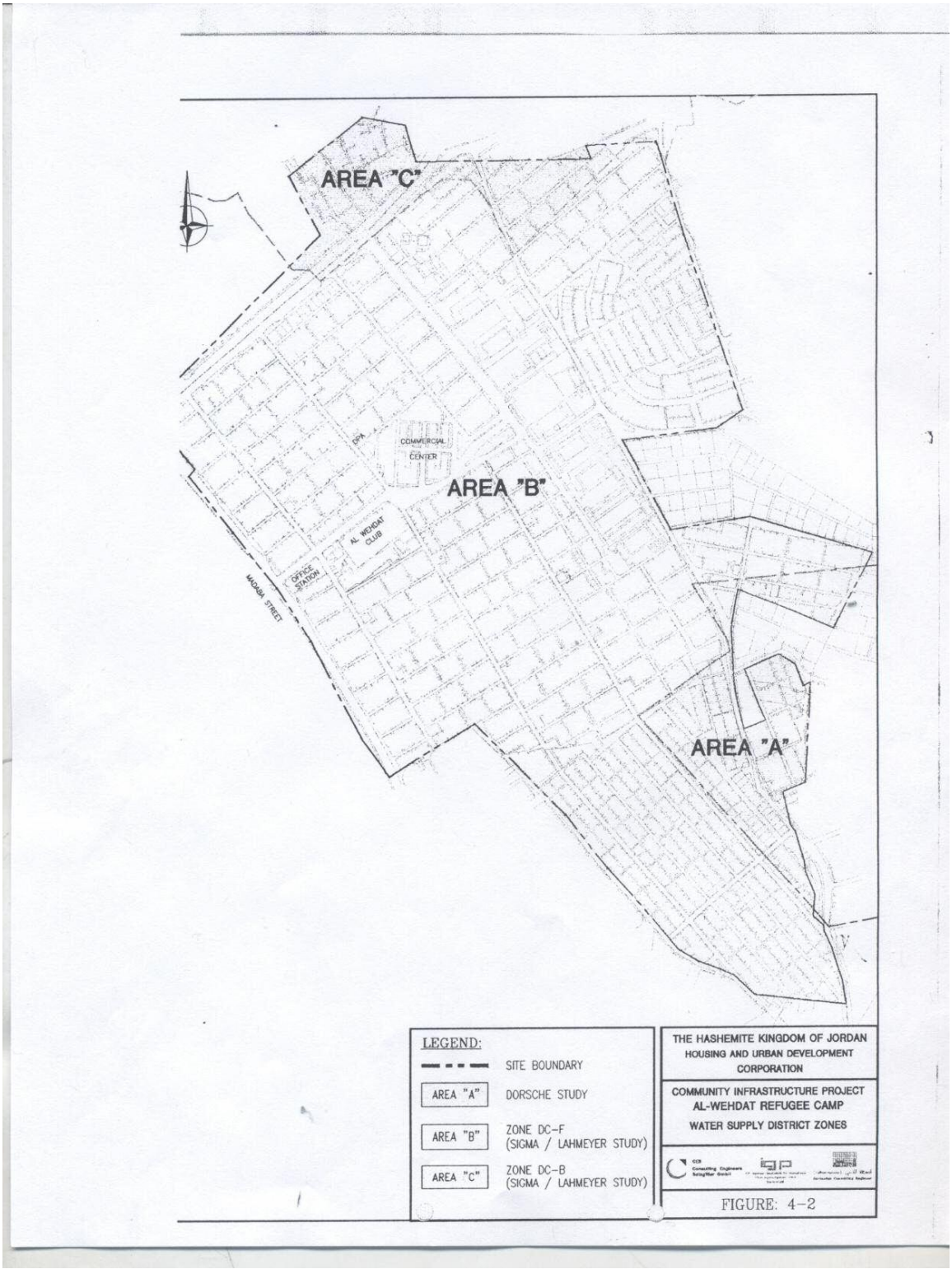


http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/cia06/jordan_sm_2006gif


CAMP BOUNDARY
CONTRACT BOUNDARY
THE HASHEMITE KINGDOM OF JORDAN
HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION
CIP - Lot A
PRINCE HASHAM BIN GHAZI (Heliken)
LAYOUT PLAN
JOUZY AND PARTNERS
LEGEND
EXISTING MANHOLE COVER
EXISTING ELECTRIC POLE
EXISTING TELEPHONE POLE
CAMP BOUNDARY
CONTRACT BOUNDARY
EXISTING WALL
EXISTING ROAD/FOOTPATH (NO MAINTENANCE REQUIRED)
EXISTING CONCRETE PAVEMENT BE OVERLAID
NEW CONCRETE PAVEMENT
EXISTING STAIRS BE MAINTAINED
ADDITION WORKS (CONCRETE OVER LAID)
Girls School
Boys School
Mosque
MAIN RD (A)
CAMP BOUNDARY
CONTRACT BOUNDARY

Map 2


AREA "C"
AREA "B"
AREA "A"
COMMERCIAL CENTER
AL WEHDAT CLUB
OFFICE STATION
MADABA STREET
LEGEND:
SITE BOUNDARY
AREA "A" DORSCHE STUDY
AREA "B" ZONE DC-F (SIGMA / LAHMEYER STUDY)
AREA "C" ZONE DC-B (SIGMA / LAHMEYER STUDY)
THE HASHEMITE KINGDOM OF JORDAN
HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION
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Source: All photographs taken by author during fieldwork.

GLOSSARY

Arabic Words

abu*:*	father
amm:	uncle (father's brother)
ard:	woman's honor
balad:	village, homeland
bint al'amm:	niece on the paternal side
dhat:	self
durum:	unit of measure equals 0, 247 acre
fedayi: *fedayin, plural*	freedom fighter, revolutionary
fellah: *fellahin, pl*	peasant(s)
hawiya:	identity, identity card
hamula:	patrilineal descent group
hara:	neighborhood
huquq al—atfal:	children's rights
intifada:	Palestinian uprising in the West Bank and Gaza.
jabal:	hill, mountain
jawaz:	citizenship
jinisiya:	nationality
khal:	uncle (mother's brother)
mahaba:	dignity

mahr:	bride wealth
mukhayyam:	refugee camp
mukhayyamji:	refugee camp dweller
nakba:	catastrophe; refers to the war of 1948 and the Palestinian exodus from their homeland
shab: *shabab, pl.*	young male
sharaf:	man's honor
umm:	mother
umma:	Muslim community
wasta:	personal influential connections
watan:	homeland
wihda:	unit

PART I

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

How the Global Meets the Local: Human Rights Day Celebration.

On Tuesday morning, June 20 2004[1], I was going to UNRWA to attend a human rights day celebration in Amman, Jordan. Samar, an English supervisor and teacher with UNRWA, United Nations Relief and Works Agency, a UN agency in charge of Palestinian camp refugees had invited me to

[1] It is the end of the school year in Jordan

this event. I had been in the field for about six months and I was looking forward to it although I was not sure what to expect. The Palestinian taxi driver knew exactly where I was going that morning when I asked him to take me to the "Wakala" (the agency), which is how the UNRWA offices have come to be called by the Palestinian refugees. As we got closer, I was able to rapidly identify the place by the whitewashed low buildings, blue doors and windows (the colors of the United Nations are blue and white), and the faded light blue UN flag floating on a pole in the compound. It was in fact, as I found out, a UNRWA training center for young people, not an office for social services.

Many teachers, school principals and students – male and female - were gathered for that occasion. It was a bright sunny day and several groups of people were talking outside. I saw Samar among the crowd. She was dressed in a long beige Palestinian dress with multicolored embroidery matching her light beige headscarf. The long embroidered dress is the traditional outfit for Palestinian women when they dress up. There were several other women wearing similar dresses mostly made up in darker colors. I recognized familiar faces among the teachers, students, principals and some other heads of UNRWA departments whom I had met in the last few months. People soon started

entering the building where the event was going to take place. It was a large hall with a stage and many rows of chairs. Some people were already sitting inside. The rest of the crowd slowly walked in and got settled. People were chatting, students were busy moving about: Some were dressed up in costumes, others wore white and blue UNRWA T-shirts that read "Human Rights Jordan" below a United Nations flag, and white and blue matching caps. Many students were part of the audience. I was invited to take a seat in the front row to the right of the stage with the staff from UNRWA.

Suddenly, a child's voice singing verses of the Qur'an arose above the ambient chatter. The crowd became silent at once. On stage stood Khaled. He was about 14 years old and he was one of the children I had been interviewing in the camp of Al-Wihdat[2]. He was wearing a UNRWA human rights white and blue T-shirt and a UNRWA cap. He was chanting a cappella with a clear and sweet child voice. His singing of the Qur'an marked the beginning of the celebration. Khaled's performance was followed by Khalil R, a "UNRWA Supervisor for human rights", who gave a brief historic background of human rights in Arabic going

[2] Al-Wihdat is an urban refugee camp where I conducted my research. It is the oldest refugee camp among the 13 refugee camps existing in Jordan; it was established in 1955 by the United Nations.

back to 1948 and Eleonore Roosevelt. As he was speaking, a group of children and adolescents, boys and girls, all excited looking were walking towards the sides of the stage in line, coached by teachers, ready to get on stage. Among them several young girls, about 6 and 7 years old, were giggling. They were dressed with bright red and white T-shirts, which read in large capital letters FREEDOM, JUSTICE, LEARNING, PARTICIPATION.

Now it was Dr Abbas's turn to speak. Dr Abbas, a UNRWA Field Chief of Education Programs, gave a short speech that started with "In the name of Allah most gracious, most merciful, on behalf of myself and the Education Department I welcome you all. We meet today to celebrate the success of 'Human Rights' activities carried out this past year. The idea of integrating human rights issues into other subject matters is becoming an irreplaceable approach adopted by our schools. We hope that our schools carry the mission of raising students' awareness of their due rights, and of protecting them from the violation of those rights […] Quality learning is a basic right for our children at UNRWA schools ….] UNRWA has the privilege of implementing a human rights program in its schools, therefore, proper application and transfer of the program should rank among our top priorities to create

a sound generation which is aware of his rights and duties".

Teen-age girls wearing embroidered Palestinian traditional long dresses were patiently waiting on the side of the stage. Their heads were covered with a religious headscarf except for one, and as she whispered something to her friend's ear, I noticed that she was wearing a white and blue UNRWA cap over her headscarf. None of the 6 and 7 years old in red and white T-shirts had their heads covered though. Now on stage, they sang together a song in English and in Arabic entitled "Give us a chance" I was not sure I understood exactly the meaning of the song. What chance? A chance to exist, a chance to live, a chance to have a country?

Some agitation and change were taking place on stage to prepare for the play that followed, as announced in the scheduled program. The play was entitled "The Bird's Nest". It involved Palestinian music and dance and was a metaphor for the occupation of Palestine by Israel: A young bird couple was getting married and as they moved into their new nest they found it occupied by a big black crow. It took some fighting and organized resistance to finally get the mean crow out of the bird's nest. Justice triumphed

at the end, and the newly-wed bird couple was now able to move peacefully into their home.

The play was followed by a presentation on human rights and children's rights by a middle-aged man, Dr Hussein Yaqoub, dressed in a suit, and introduced as a "human rights specialist". "Such rights", he stated, "have been established on the basis of all the religions in the world". He opened a discussion with the children and adolescents in the audience by strongly emphasizing the right to participate and thus encouraged them to speak out. He asked the children and adolescents to name some of the children's rights. The right of return was the right that most children wanted to talk about. They also voiced that "there are no rights for children in Palestine: no right to education, nothing". One female student said, "We have to go back to the Qur'an because all our rights are there". She received strong applause. Another student, a young adolescent male wanted to "have verses of the Qur'an inserted into the United Nations Convention".

As I was watching on the elevated stage the playing out of the "universal" aspect of children's rights and its local representations through the speeches of UNRWA officials, the dramatization, and the youth's comments, I was wondering how such constructed, presumed notions of

self, child and childhood, were being perceived by the audience at that moment.

Bourdieu in "Outline of a Theory of Practice" refers to the anthropologist's work when looking at cultural practices in similar ways that one looks at a painting[3] or a spectacle (1972:96), hence his use of the term "representation" that also means performance. For Bourdieu, the social world appears as a painting and a performance. It is something to be looked at from a distance, and as a stage on which actors perform and play roles. In a similar way, this is what I was watching: a "representation" of human rights and children's rights on stage that Palestinian children and adolescents, and their teachers had produced. What was happening on stage clearly symbolized the meeting of the local and the global - and its ensuing contradictions - embodied through the dancing, singing, playing and speaking of the Palestinian children and adolescents. It illustrated and illuminated the issue that I had come to research in Amman, that is, the playing out of two discourses, the UN discourse of children's rights and human rights, and the local interpretations and effects of those rights, on the children and adolescents.

[3] The word "esquisse" that Bourdieu uses in the original French title of his book belongs to the pictorial art vocabulary and means outline or sketch.

This Human Rights celebration was a metaphor of what I was seeking to understand and elucidate. It crystallized my research question and provided clear evidence for my investigation concerning the local understandings of children's rights. At that moment, it felt as if a veil had been lifted from what I had been seeing in a blurry way and a landscape appeared clearly defined.

This work describes the intersection of children's rights discourse with the Palestinian refugee camp community in Jordan: how it happens and how all actors interpret and adjust to this new discourse. It examines the ambivalence the Convention of the Rights of the Child, CRC, produces among the local refugee camp community and the subsequent frustration and pain such ambivalence may create among a refugee population living a long exile. Palestinian refugee camps were established in Jordan and other Arab countries by the United Nations for a fleeing local Palestinian population, soon after the birth of the state of Israel - over 50 years ago. Since then, the refugee population living in camps has been waiting for a solution to the Israeli-Palestinian war (euphemistically known as conflict) that would put an end to their difficult condition and would make them return to Palestine, their homeland. Such a condition has durably impacted the

structures of the Palestinian camp refugee community, resentful and broken by half a century of exile. In such a context, rights discourse, and children's more specifically, becomes important and meaningful among the camp population. I argue that the local children's rights discourse while it may be a political idiom, a tool of negotiation and empowerment for Palestinian camp children and adolescents, is also a source of major ambivalence. The paradox between the universal protective-rights-for-children discourse it purports and the local everyday reality of Palestinian camp children has a wrenching effect on the children and their families who are suffering the effects of being long-term refugees inside the camps.

Palestinian Refugees in Jordan

In order to explore these issues I conducted fieldwork in Jordan for fourteen months, first in June and July of 2000, then during twelve months in 2003-2004. Most of my time was spent in Amman where I studied several groups of people: 1) officers of aid agencies such as UNICEF and local NGOs involved in the implementation of children's rights; 2) UNRWA educators; 3) camp refugee parents; 4) refugee children and adolescents in urban refugee camps of Al-Nasser and Al-Whidat. Interviews were

conducted mostly in English with office workers and NGO officials, and in Arabic with the camp refugee families, parents and children. It was war and chaos just across the country borders, in Palestine and Iraq, where human rights were being abused and violated, as the world watched on TV destruction of homes in Palestine, and torture at Abu Ghrayb prison. Children's rights did not seem to exist either in Palestine or Iraq, as many Palestinian children would often tell me.

As a developing nation that has enjoyed strong long-term links to Western nations, the Kingdom of Jordan is home to a large number of international agencies and governmental and non-governmental organizations. In the last decade the country has been undergoing political, economic, and social transition. In this climate of on-going change and with war at its borders, the United Nations Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) and many local NGOs are operating to distribute resources to poor Palestinian refugees while trying to promote and protect the rights of children according to the terms of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. The population of Jordan is largely young, children under fifteen representing about half of it. Over 300,000 Palestinian refugees, including children, live in camps in Jordan. They

constitute nearly 20 per cent of the 1.7 million[4] Palestinian refugees currently residing in Jordan, which hosts the largest population of Palestinian refugees, partly because it shares Israel's longest border. Refugees came over the Jordan River during *Al-Nakba*[5] (the Disaster), when they were expelled from their villages in Palestine during the 1948 war and the establishment of the state of Israel. Later, after the Israeli-Arab war in 1967, more Palestinian refugees fled to Jordan when Israel occupied the West Bank. Again, during the Gulf war in 1991 another wave of Palestinian refugees arrived from Kuwait. Those living and working in Kuwait were expelled because Jordan and the PLO had sided with Saddam Hussein. Today, after all this time, the refugee camps still remain concentrations of poverty.

The social performance that I experienced was indeed a symbolic re-presentation in which the UNRWA school stage provided a frame, a theater with actors and an audience. It is not my purpose here to engage in an ethnography of performance. Suffice to say that anthropologists and folklorists (see Van Gennep 1908/1960, Geertz 1973, Taussig 1987) refer to "cultural performance",

[4] UNRWA figures December 2005.

[5] *Al Nakba*, or the catastrophe refers to the Palestinian exodus from their homeland.

with its images and symbols as a unit of analysis in a given privileged time. Victor Turner in his study of performance (1987) finds it to be not only a reflection and expression, but often a critique – direct or veiled - of social life. He suggests that "cultural performances are not simple reflectors or expressions of culture or even of changing culture but may themselves be active agencies of change, representing the eye by which culture sees itself and the drawing board on which creative actors sketch out what they believe to be more apt or interesting 'designs for living'". Thus it is important to note that the cultural performance I watched was not only a performance involving actors, but also a creative enactment of the contradictions and the paradoxical position in which refugees find themselves. Thus the Celebration may serve to highlight this paradox and attempt to resolve it.

Similar to an allegory, as Clifford (1986) calls it, this re-presentation was telling a story that was encompassing many issues that I was exploring. Turner's notion of liminality, or limen, borrowed from Van Gennep's "rites de passage", as an in-between space, is a process that Turner expanded to performance. It helps understand the meaning of the performance I was watching, which, in many respects, was clearly occupying a place between a

reflection and a critique. Thus, this liminal space, outside everyday life, may be, on the one hand, a representation in the Bourdieu's sense, and on the other, a space where children performed - in the performativity sense - a critique of their condition. Crapanzano (2004), suggests Turner did not fully explore the limen, and takes the concept of the in-between further. He examines its internal disjunctions and external effects. Accordingly, I wonder if the limen created by the cultural performance may contain the efforts of the camp refugees who try to resolve their ambivalence, or it may do the opposite and intensify it. That notion may also be used for looking at childhood and adolescence as liminal periods or stages of growth punctuated by rites de passage. But I come back to that in Chapter Three in this dissertation.

Starting from the questions, what are the conditions that have influenced the evolution of a global UN children's rights discourse into a local discourse in Palestinian refugee camps, and how does it affect camp refugee children and adolescents, I present an ethnography that explores processes involved in its localization and reveals the ways in which the global, secular children's rights discourse, an often contested concept by both governments and subjects of rights policies and practices,

criticized by local refugees for being hegemonic and Western, hence secular, has generated a hybrid local, Muslim, refugee discourse in the refugee camps in Amman. Thus my thesis is based on their critique of the UN CRC and the proposition that the Convention is problematic for its "universal" Western character. I contend that for the Palestinian refugee community, which has remained trapped in refugee camps for a long time, the reformulation of children's rights discourse and ideology in their own cultural terms carries many contradictions. It is at the same time a source of ambivalence, and also of empowerment and hope. This reformulation is not without tensions and negotiations for the refugee families as the basic concepts of children's rights, assumed to be universal, are constructed differently by refugees. Camp refugees on the one hand, may be willing to accept children's rights for their children, since as a refugee community they have been deprived of many rights including the most important, the right of return to their country. On the other hand, they are disillusioned and the benefit of children's rights may not have much meaning to them and add confusion and pain to their paradoxical existence. Such concerns may be individual but also collective, as I analyze in Chapter Four.

The “explication de texte” that follows analyzes the limen, to use Turner’s term, of the “human rights day celebration”. To specifically promote children's rights, UNRWA, a UN agency, was using performative strategies and showing a local representation. I analyze in Chapter Six the relationship of the local UNRWA and a wider context. The performance provided a reading, as an open book, on main analytical themes of my research that I discuss in the following chapters. Those include childhood, religion, modernity and tradition, identity, in-between space, and hope. The interplay of these themes is crucial to grasp in this study.

Every Picture Tells a Story

Indeed, the image of the teen-aged Palestinian girl wearing a white and blue UNRWA cap over her black headscarf is allegorical. This refugee girl “wearing two caps”, so to speak, personified and epitomized the relationship between the two discourses on children’s rights. She had not substituted one for the other, but she was wearing them both together. That image suggests a position of conjunction, not of opposition. I understood this staged representation to be serving as a mirror for my research questions: how the global children’s rights

discourse had shifted to become local, and how it was impacting the refugee children and adolescents. Thus, as Turner suggests, this mirror was reflecting and critiquing at the same time the meanings of children's rights for the camp refugees and their interpretations, within their local context.

Being part of the audience watching the Human Rights Day Celebration and reading its subtext was similar to looking at images in a slide show, as it were.

The first symbolic message was contained in the opening speech starting with an invocation of God and the singing of the Qur'an by a young student. Here was God, juxtaposed to the secular, Western concept of the UN human rights and children's rights. On the one hand, the invocation of God, *Allah*, is not unusual in public speeches in Jordan. God is ever present in the everyday lives of parents and children, and many spoke about observing Islam as part of their daily routine. Overt religious practices, such as women wearing a headscarf, or men having beards or praying in the street, are readily identifiable observances in public space. On the other hand, Dr Abbas's speech about human rights in UNRWA, and United Nations schools, had indeed been integrated into the curriculum in subjects such as social studies and religious education.

The second eye-catching image was that of Khalil R, the Supervisor for human rights, who retraced the genesis of human rights to the creation of the United Nations, naming Eleonore Roosevelt as a significant influence, suggesting the universal and historic aspect of human rights.

A few moments later, a different speaker was explaining that human rights were based on all the world religions. Thus in a single performance the origins of human rights were presented consecutively in both religious and secular ways, and rights were shifting from a secular onto a religious space. Human rights (and children's rights), coming from God, acquired a holy and untouchable aspect, and therefore could not be contested[6].

The next outstanding image was that of Dr Abbas, a UNRWA Field Chief of Education Programs, emphasizing the importance given to the rights of children, such as awareness, quality learning as a "basic" right, and protection given to children by the CRC. These rights were implemented through the UNRWA, he said. Such a vignette was remarkable for the several key notions it contained. A basic right implies that other rights are less basic, but to which children are entitled, and that there are

[6] This is discussed in Chapter Five

different categories, or layers of rights involved in the discourse on children's rights. What were here viewed as "basic" were not only the right to education, but also most importantly the right to "quality" learning, a value given to education by refugee parents and children. Both see education as a passport to freedom. UNRWA schools rank high in student performance, according to William Lee, head of the Education Programs for UNRWA. Their education program follows the same education structure, same curricula and textbooks as Jordanian schools.

Awareness, on the other hand, is not a right, but a state of mind that one acquires with information and learning, and that goes hand in hand with rights. Rights start to exist with awareness of them. UN agencies such as UNICEF and UNRWA, and local NGOs base their programs on such children's rights as the right to cognitive, emotional, social and physical development, or the right to education, emphasizing the right to participation in order to make boys and girls aware individuals.

Education in the refugee camps is provided by the UNRWA schools. The UNRWA agency, as a whole, is central to the life of Palestinian refugees living in camps. It was specifically created for Palestinian refugees in 1948, at the time of the *Nakba,* or catastrophe, and has since

provided social, health, and education services to the refugees. The UNRWA agency has come to be perceived by the refugees as theirs, and has thus become localized not only because of its humanitarian presence in refugee camps, but also because it employs mostly Palestinian staff. It is all the more interesting at this time when many Palestinian refugee families that I met demonized the United Nations as driven by the US.

The words “Freedom” “Justice”, “Learning” and so forth, printed in white letters on the young children’s red T-shirts were the embodiment and the echo of the voices of the children and adolescents in my interviews, and were yet another surprising image. These children were quite young (6 and 7 years), and the words they were parading on their chest and on stage may not have meant much to them. However, for the audience, which consisted of refugees, they must have carried powerful although ambiguous and contested universal concepts intertwined with complex relationships of rights with subject and citizen, as I discuss in Chapters Five and Seven.

That stage performance thus provided a window into the broad debate on the claims of universality of human rights versus local meanings and implementations of those rights. For several months I had listened to many refugees

- mainly children and adolescents - express their views on freedom, justice and citizenship. I understood those to be value-laden concepts, especially when linked to the roles and rights of women and children. Since their creation by legal codification - "human rights" in 1948, and children's rights in 1989, the UN Conventions have become a kind of sacred text in Western and other modern secular societies. In effect, the language of human rights, though of Western origin, has become transnational and trans-religious. Yet these very features create problems and tensions in a region where the dominant discourse is one of religious community, and not of secular individual rights, as I discuss later. Further, notions of subject and citizen, which are basic to human rights, interplay with the Palestinian refugee children's ambiguous national identity, and intersect with kinship relations and local traditions, including women's freedom – an important issue, also analyzed in later chapters. Jordan is undergoing rapid changes eliciting concern especially among the camp refugee population, which is generally more "traditional".

The slide show unfolding on stage provided a metaphor for the various aspects of what children's rights and human rights have come to suggest and encompass in general, and especially locally for refugee children. For

example, the play," The Bird's Nest", which was clearly a Palestinian play, represented Palestinian identity and concerns of refugees about their right of return to their country as stated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Moments later, Dr Hussein Yaqoub, the "human rights specialist" presenting the religious basis of children's rights as "based on all the religions in the world", opened up a broad realm by exposing a universal religious aspect of rights. The ensuing discussion about children's rights between Dr Yaqoubi and the children and adolescents was another re-presentation of rights, including the right of return. I had already heard similar claims in interviews and conversations with refugee young people. However, in those discussions they were expressing deep religious concerns and at the same time, their anxiety and complaints over their refugee predicament. They were demonstrating a high level of political awareness and consciousness, similarly to that of Irish children who have experienced many years of war (Cole 1986). The lives of Palestinian people waiting in the camps as refugees, are indeed determined and shaped by the 57 years of the Arab-Israeli conflict. Not surprisingly, political issues were almost always underlying, or at the core of our exchange.

Parents, and children and adolescents closely followed the news and they were, in general, well informed about issues in the Middle East. TV was more often than not present in the homes that I visited.

During the exchange between students and the 'human rights specialist", which concluded the Human Rights Day Celebration, children and adolescents were complaining about the lack of rights in neighboring Palestine and were voicing their disappointment with rights - more especially the people monitoring them - that "were not able to protect civilians in times of war". Those young people were touching upon important concerns about human rights, including children's rights, and its violations which legal, political scholars (Ratner & Abrams 2001, Mertus 2004) have studied, and that human rights monitor groups, like Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International and others, keep exposing and reporting. Such concerns were embracing at once the global, the universal and the local, and were elicited by the images of war they watched every day on their TV screens.

Critical Perspective

Foucault's understandings of discourse as empowering and empowered are relevant to my argument. He

conceived of discourse as inseparable from practices and institutional settings and exercising power over people and the structure of society (1971:180). Taking the example of the discourse of madness in psychiatric sites (1961), or scientific discourse in hospitals (1973), he viewed discourse as a vehicle of power subjugating the individual. He used the structure of language to reveal structures of power, a power that he takes to be decentralized. He associated knowledge, power and the concept of discourse. He writes in 1976 " What makes power hold good, what makes it accepted, is simply the fact that it doesn't only weigh on us as a force that says no, but it traverses and produces things, it induces pleasure, forms knowledge, produces discourse. It needs to be considered as a productive network which runs through the whole social body, much more than as a negative instance whose function is repression"; or in 1972 " power is employed and exercised through a net-like organization. And not only individuals circulate between its threads; they are always in the position of simultaneously undergoing and exercising this power. Drawing on Foucault, I look at the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child in a critical perspective as a global discourse, hence a discourse of power. Accordingly, I focus in this study on the discourse

on children's rights produced by UNICEF, local NGOs and UNRWA workers and its local interpretations among refugee families. I raise questions about power, the hegemonic role and influence of the United Nations Convention and the universality of children's rights. I offer ethnographic examples of how the global discourse of children's rights becomes reformulated locally through the agency of Palestinian refugees and thereby acquires a real-life local embodiment.

Taking the Palestinian refugee camps in Jordan as an example, I argue that the relation of the UN CRC, a global discourse, with the local camp refugee discourse may be described both as one of conflict and as one of adaptation due to the struggling circumstances of the camp refugees. The camp refugee population lives entrapped and housed in box-like units. They are thus rendered "docile bodies" by power players such as UNRWA and Jordan, the local host state. The Jordanian kingdom receives a vast amount of international financial aid that helps significantly the country's modest economy. Through education and various NGO programs, UN agencies and the Jordanian government convey the message of children's rights that is received with a general silent consent by camp refugees who become subjects-objects of the discourse

of the powerful. The local children's rights discourse - inspired by the UN CRC - has become for the Palestinian refugee children and adolescents a political idiom, a hidden tool of negotiation and empowerment, thus benefiting the local camp population. Although children's rights bear contradictions and elicits ambivalence for camp refugees, the new empowered generation carries their hope for change and return to their homeland.

I thus provide data to demonstrate that Palestinian refugees are turning the global and universal *huquq al-atfal*[7], or children's rights, to their own advantage by reformulating it in their own cultural and social terms. In this ethnography, I examine how the global becomes local, and the processes through which the shift occurred. The various chapters present detailed illustration of such processes in connection to issues of agency and opposition. The meanings of the reclaiming of children's rights by refugees, children and adolescents, as a local and religious discourse are also part of my narrative.

[7] *Huquq al-tefal* (singular), or rights of the child; *huquq al-atfal* (plural), or children's rights.

Refugees, Children and Rights in Anthropology

Earlier social theorists had conceived of refugees (Kunz 1973, Stein 1981) as an ideal type going through several "evolutionary stages" in her or his resettlement, thus essentializing the refugee condition. Anthropologists have described refugees as victims in urgent need of protection (Liu 1979) as they suffer loss, acculturation, and misperception by the host culture (Proudfoot 1990), without addressing such impacts on children and adolescents. Other studies of Palestinian refugees tend to focus on international legal issues including right of return and on psychological repercussions of violence and trauma for children (Baker 1991; Khamis 1993, 2000). In such studies refugees are presented as disempowered victims.

On the other hand, refugees, often bounded by the enclosed space of the camps, have also been viewed as agents of social construction of "nationness" and history (Malkki, 1995), capable of reconstructing their Palestinian identity through popular memory (Farah 1999). Likewise, anthropological scholarship has been interested in the predicament and ordeals of Palestinian refugees since 1948, in their agency in organizing resistance in Lebanon (Sayigh, 1979,1994), and the efforts of refugee women at

political mobilization in camps in Lebanon (Peteet, 1991). Those studies demonstrate the refugees' ability to change their social behavior under conditions of oppression. These two kinds of data provide different perspectives on refugees as victims and agents; they complement each other and are not mutually exclusive. None of that scholarship, however, addresses directly the crucial role of practices and policies of humanitarian aid organizations protecting the refugee population, which is central to my research.

International and local aid organizations are some of the main actors interplaying with the refugees. In recent years anthropologists have examined critically the work of such agencies in non-Western settings (Morris 1991, Hobart 1993). Local knowledge and perceptions have been ignored by programs - often based on and biased by Western assumptions - and imposed on culturally different local populations, frequently leading to the ineffectiveness of such programs or to unnecessary disruption of recipient communities. To wit, recent theories of development and domination (Escobar 1995, Ferguson 1990), have been mostly concerned with adults in rural areas. Anthropological theory about hegemony and power, influenced by the works of Gramsci and Foucault, has construed colonizing processes as domination through forms of representation (Mitchell 1988),

religion (Comaroff 1991), race hierarchies, and the reconstruction of history through the Western lens (Asad 1993). However, what have been largely unaddressed are the effects on people's lives, children's in this case, of a homogenizing discourse of a hegemonic convention such as the CRC, on the one hand, and local resistances, adaptations and counterhegemonic assimilations of it, on the other.

In the broad debate on the CRC, local culture is indeed one of the most crucial points. Hence, notions of childhood need to be redefined according to different cultures in relation to the CRC for policies to be at all effective and useful. Different societies and social categories produce different children and different expectations from parents, hence social constructions of childhood are variable and context specific. Policies directed toward children are usually predicated upon a Western conception of childhood (Boyden 1990, 2001) and they become problematic when implemented among children living in developing countries like Jordan.

All Arab countries, including Jordan, have signed and ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (Save the Children Report, 1999). However, some Muslim countries have entered reservations on articles in the

Convention, which they felt contradict Islamic law, notably those relating to freedom of religion and adoption. These are significant points of contention. Consequently, these countries reserve the right not to implement these articles (UNICEF, 1995). Yet Jordan, an Islamic monarchy, is making important national efforts to promote and implement child's rights from the CRC through UNICEF and local NGOs and programs and initiatives.

Children's rights and human rights are based on a key concept that is "the modern subject". The works of Hegel (1807/1977), Mead (1934), Mauss (1938/1979) Dumont (1986), Taylor (1989), Crapanzano (1992) discuss the complex question of the meaning of the subject. The literature on rights emphasizes the concept of individual rights, and debates over the notion of "rights" are expressed in secular terms (Wright 1979; Veerman 1992; Alston 1994; Wallerstein 1997; Falk 1999).

The CRC itself is not without certain inner contradictions or tensions. At the center of the debates concerning the Convention is the very concept of childhood: on the one hand, children are constructed as depending on adults to protect them - as passive objects; on the other hand, children are viewed as having their own rights - as active agents - and therefore as no longer being the

property of their parents. However, in 2005 the concept of the "evolving capacities" of the child has been introduced as a new principle of interpretation of the CRC (Lansdown 2005). This principle, central to UNICEF and other organizations working with children and adolescents, recognizes that, as children become more competent, they need less protection and are more capable to take responsibility for decisions affecting their lives. Thus children are described as both victims in need of protection, and agents capable of shaping their social roles and identities. Such perceptions are similar to those on refugees, that is, powerless and also agents. In the view of children as being in need of protection, some critics argue that children are marginalized by the dominant discourse of adults, namely the CRC (Qvortrup, 1993). Those critics perceive adult society as "paternalistic", that is, it presumes to know what is best for the children. Conversely, other critics of the CRC claim that by assuming universality of children's rights, the CRC in fact expounds certain Western norms of individualism and personal agency and, consequently homogenizes and subordinates non-Western values and knowledge concerning childhood, gender, or child labor.

Individualism has emerged in the West through centuries of European history. The human being perceived as an individual is the cardinal modern "value", and individualism is deemed to be originally a Christian, hence Western, concept (Dumont 1986). Individual rights appear in 1789 with the Déclaration des Droits de l'Homme et du Citoyen, which in turn is a key source of human rights and children's rights. Consequently, Western criteria have become used as the yardstick against which all such ideas or discourses are measured. The CRC offers an excellent example of an ideoscape resulting from the Enlightenment worldview (Appadurai 1996).

The presumed universality of human rights (and children's rights) effectively results in the imposition of standards, constructed by Westerners, on other nations and peoples (Dwyer 1991). Thus, in the Middle East where there is a strong rejection - and adoption too - of many things Western, it is hardly surprising that human rights and children's rights elicit resistance and/or compliance. The concepts on which human and children's rights are based also exist outside the West, but are perceived in different ways in different cultures as Palestinian refugees are demonstrating. Universal rights often appears to be another hegemonic language of the West that core countries are

"forcing" peripheral countries (Wallerstein 1997) to speak in a similar way that English has become the language of the global economy. Asad (1993:13) contends that when a project is translated from one site to another or from one agent to another, power and subjection are produced. The CRC offers a good example of such project.

My research challenges the assumption of the universalism of the CRC, and reconsiders its Western origin and influence. Thus I pose questions about the coexistence and competition of the Western discourse of the CRC and the local discourse of Islam, and their implications for refugee children. I will discuss the debate in anthropology on the universalism vs. relativism of human rights in Chapter Five dating it back to the 1940's with the establishment of United Nations Convention on Human Rights, and the ways the CRC has become locally reformulated among refugee children/adolescents and their parents in the camp.

The study of children in anthropology has been patchy. Until recently childhood had been studied mostly in relation to personality formation (Kardiner 1939; Benedict 1946; LeVine 1973). Children were viewed being part of the process of life cycle (Piaget 1937/1954; Ariès 1962). However, several anthropologists (Stephens 1995, Boyden 2001, Scheper-Hughes, Sargent, 1998) have expressed concern

for children at risk of becoming “street children” or “child-soldiers” - new concepts that describe children as social actors interacting within a context of inequality of resources and power. In recent theory of sociology the child is perceived as a full agent (Jenks 1996, James & Prout 1990). In other studies of childhood, in which the relationship of structure and agency is a key theoretical issue, the concept of the child as both object and subject has elicited two different kinds of policies regarding children: one protects the child whereas the other empowers her. Those two approaches generate two fruitful strands of research that are seemingly distinct but in fact come together in the sense that participation - that stems from empowerment - is key to protection (Hart 1999, Prout & James 1990). This is why “evolving capacities” is so important a point of the UN CRC, because participation, empowerment and protection are all elements of that concept: by learning to participate in a group or a community, a child becomes empowered and is more able to protect herself and be able to take on responsibilities and hence act accordingly. Thus the concepts of refugees, both victims and agents, as well as the concepts of childhood and children, both objects and subjects, are framing the debate on the UN CRC.

Human rights have been formulated in global contexts. As a discourse of the West it is being transformed according to various locales. Several examples include local communities that use the discourse of power to reassert themselves politically and reinvent for themselves an alternative modernity, such as that of the Anganen people in Papua New Guinea (see Foster 2002) through the function of money incorporated in their ritual. Likewise, indigenous or religious rights are claimed as human rights among indigenous people (Jackson 1995), or among the Maya in the Highlands of Chiapas Mexico (see Kovic 1997); and local adaptations of women's rights occurring in Hilo, Hawai, are combined with Hawaiian cultural examples and images (see Engle Merry 2001). Accordingly, Palestinian camp refugee children and adolescents, a Muslim community that has resented their displacement and exile for generations but remains economically dependent on UNRWA support, and receives children's rights education in the UN school system, are holding on to their traditions and religion. Through several processes analyzed in this dissertation, they have reformulated the UN CRC, a secular convention and a transnational discourse, into an alternate local religious discourse, thus using it as a tool of empowerment (cf.

Willis 1981). They do not accept their condition of oppression and refuse to be passive recipients of a Western ideology. Drawing on recent works on power and domination, and new theories on childhood I raise two main questions: How does a hegemonic discourse based on universal rights, namely the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) affect the Palestinian cultural constructions of childhood? How do local interpretations of the CRC by refugee children in camps in Amman, and its implementations and practices, which come from UN agencies and local NGOs, challenge the universal authority vested in the CRC?

Indeed, the relationships of Islam and Human Rights have been well explored (Mayer 1991, Moussalli 2001). Moreover, in Jordan human rights and local interpretations of Islam are often the focus of local debate in mass media. Since the collapse of communism and the end of the Cold War, Islamic discourse has increasingly gained more adepts in the Middle East, partly as a reaction to Western hegemony. Modern perceptions and practices of Islam (Laroui 1986, Starrett 1998), and Muslim society (Eickelman 1976, Gilsenan 1982, Gellner 1995) are part of the literature. Aspects of Islamic law (Messick 1993, 1996, Welchman 2000), and of Islam and politics (Esposito 1987, Kepel 2004) have also been documented. There is in

Jordan competition between the government and the Muslim Brotherhood for appeal to Islam (Al-Khazendar 1997:137,149). Members of the Brotherhood conceive modern life according to Islamic philosophy and reject both capitalism and socialism. The Hashemite monarchy itself claims descent from the Prophet Muhammad from which it draws legitimacy to rule the country. Yet the King and the Queen - who chairs several local NGOs - have a more secular view of Islam and, hence, an active involvement in promoting children's rights through the CRC, which is a secular convention. Such a position, coming from a theocratic government, creates tensions between modern and traditional values and practices.

Organization of Dissertation

This dissertation examines the intricate relationship between rights, culture, religion, power, and politics in order to analyze how the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child discourse has morphed into a local discourse in Palestinian refugee camps in Jordan. It is organized to tell and bring together two interconnected stories as it examines their complexities: on the one hand, processes of localization of the global discourse on children's rights and, on the other hand, the

story of Palestinian camp refugees in Jordan. It also shows the mismatch operating between the global and the refugee camp discourses.

It is structured in two sections: Part I includes the first four chapters and presents a historical background and a context to those stories. Following this introduction, Chapter Two describes my early field experience, virtual and real, and outlines the setting, my circumstances, diverse actors and a methodology. In Chapter Three I describe the space of the camps, an organized place of transition and survival. To look closely at the refugee environment I zoom inside the camps. Through the experience of exile of a camp refugee grandmother, this chapter examines the question of who is a refugee in past and present contexts. I present the social and spatial organization of the camp community that involves processes of power and resulting tensions. Chapter Four takes us inside refugee homes and focuses on family life. I explore the social and economic conditions of camp families and their strategies for surviving after having undergone a radical social change from rural peasants to urban proletariat. I analyze local, modern processes of child socialization inside the home and outside through NGO policies. This chapter also describes changing family

structures, some religious practices and values, and the ways in which an ubiquitous television informs various family members of the household, including young people. This first section on camp refugees in their environment is important for understanding the discussion on children's rights, education and identity that follows in section II.

Part II consists of four more chapters, including a final chapter of portraits of several refugees. This section examines meanings of children's rights from the refugee perspective and their interpretations through processes of localization mediated by education, and subsequent construction of multiple identities among young camp refugees. In Chapter Five I start with the abstract concept of children's rights and examine how such a concept has been developed in the West, and discuss relevant definitions and debates. This is an important chapter as it gives voice to children's interpretations of children's rights while it presents a critique of the "universality" of children's rights as an idiom of power. It also looks at the connections and role played by NGOs. I examine education in Chapter Six focusing on United Nations education in the camps and the critical space it occupies in child socialization. UNRWA is discussed in detail in its historical dimension, with its financial difficulties, the

education it provides and its political complexities. This chapter explores the ways in which UNRWA, an aid provider, exercises hegemony as it elicits general consent - although a tensed one – and has become an integral part of the Palestinian refugee entity. It also looks at teachers as mediators – "organic intellectuals" - and active agents of resistance to the structure of power of the UN agency. Chapter Seven examines the complexities of identity construction, in relation to children's rights and Jordanian citizenship, in the context of history, the politics of Jordan, camp environment, and socialization including religious values and school education. It looks at the ways children and adolescents make sense of those rights and how self and plural identities are informed by their interpretations. Although their identities are "composed" in psycho-social processes, their self-awareness is enhanced by their children's rights knowledge that teaches them about themselves as individuals, and makes them more aware and self-reflective.

To sum up and illustrate this ethnography, Chapter Eight portrays the lives and experiences of specific characters. In order to render the issues I am tackling such as power, resistance, identity and agency, more vivid, I draw the portraits of several camp dwellers such as

M'hamed, a eleven year-old boy sixth grader; Fatimeh, a fifteen year-old high school girl; Umm Tareq, an older former guerilla fighter, now a middle-aged woman; Iman, a director of a women's union and a "feminist"; Samar, a UNRWA cadre and supervisor in a camp school system.

I believe this study, which demonstrates the crucial importance of a close cultural analysis for the efficacy of rights programs, will initiate more research that will be attentive to the needs of local communities. It contributes to anthropology in the fields of human rights and of refugees, and the anthropology of children.

The "new" category of individuals that children represent has been little explored by current anthropology. My work underscores the need to rectify this gap, and study children in traditional societies not only separately, but also as part of a larger group, within their family and their community. Hirschfeld (2002) insists that the absence of children in anthropology impoverishes theory as did the absence of women - before the feminist turn. If the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, children policy makers, and NGOs include and encourage the teaching of the right of participation and evolving capacities to children - clearly acknowledging the agency of children,

anthropology cannot continue to ignore children and adolescents and perceive them as passive objects. They must be perceived not only as full participants in the social lives of their communities, but also as contributors to the making of their own culture.

Camp refugees children and adolescents are engaged with adults – parents and educators - and other children in mutual processes of socialization that include children's discourse. Thus childhood must also be viewed as a significant cultural variable of social analysis, which is conceptually interconnected with others such as class, gender, or ethnicity.

The subject matter of children's rights in Palestinian refugee camps leads anthropology and the role of the anthropologist into areas of grave global socio-political concerns and thus challenges her responsibility as an advocate for social justice (see Messer 1993). Further, the refugee population has become a fast-growing component of the Middle East and the rest of the world, making more anthropological studies on refugees critically important.

CHAPTER TWO

BEGINNINGS

The question I explored, how two children's rights discourses - one secular and global, the other religious and local - are playing out in the lives of children and adolescents, and their families in Palestinian refugee camps in Jordan, emerged as a result of a preliminary trip to refugee camps in the Middle East. Yet, in the most unusual fashion, my fieldwork had already started earlier: a virtual fieldwork, that is. The internet was to be the initial facilitator of my research.

Imagined People and Communities in the Information Age: First Ethnographic Encounter through the Net

Sitting on my chair in my apartment in New Rochelle, New York, behind my computer screen, in October 1999, I embarked on my fieldwork. I had no idea at the time that starting a bibliographic research on Palestinian refugee children would precipitate virtual fieldwork.

In search of reports on children in refugee camps in Palestine I scouted the shelves of the New York UNICEF and the U.N. libraries with little success. Their reports were more suitable for an ethnography of bureaucracy than of children. I decided then to go on the Internet to look for up-to-date information.

I began my search by looking up web sites of names that seemed obviously relevant to the realms of refugees, Palestine and children, for example names such as UNHCR - The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. The name alone was impressive to my ear and somewhat daunting. UNHCR, located inside the U.N. building in New York, appears as an inaccessible fortress from the outside, although it has an easy-to-access website. Once inside, UNHCR opened its doors at the click of my mouse.

What seemed to be impossible to accomplish, that is, actually walking into the office and talking to

someone, could become possible on line. A channel or passage was emerging before me. The different options and fields displayed on the screen focused my research. I readily spotted a link for the UNRWA, United Nations Relief and Works Agency, a UN agency for Palestinian refugees. Such sites have a home page listing fields and links to other sites, and also give out an e-mail to contact with a last name preceded by only an initial for the first name. This makes it impossible to visualize the person (gender, age, and the like) to whom I will write. I wrote to the UNRWA and other similar agencies, explaining my purpose and my research. A week later I received precious information on Palestinian local agencies working directly with children. These agencies had no Web site but a phone and a fax number, which I thought of using while in the Middle East. One link led to another in a fashion that stimulated my curiosity and interest, like a child on a treasure hunt. I thus began to ”surf the Web”, although it felt more like being on a flying carpet!

At first, as I surfed the Web I was fascinated by the processes involved, but mostly by the discovery of new sites that were unfolding before my eyes. I was getting close to a new community situated in cyberspace. That moment was probably similar to what I had read about the

ethnographic encounter: Being in a new world, and seeking to understand those imagined others. It was a new dimension of space-time I was experiencing: a world that appeared unlimited in scope and available right now.

Some NGOs were based in Geneva, Switzerland: They presented an alternative route for me where I could use my French identity and language to reach individual people whom I imagined were hiding behind the sites such as the ICRC, International Committee of the Red Cross. This organization led me to local Red Crescent agencies, which did not appear to have a Web site, but had a phone number and a fax. Those I thought would be valuable contacts once in the actual field.

I was exploring several routes simultaneously. Although this cyber world had become penetrable, it nevertheless remained mysterious. Journeys to some sites on which I landed were magical, such as my “flying carpet” arrival at the Dheisheh refugee camp in Palestine. The image of the refugee camp, which appeared on my small screen, was a sunny colored picture of a white village under an unbroken blue sky. I was flabbergasted and pleased that a camp would have a Web site. Naturally, the community living in that camp would want to connect with other Palestinian communities, especially those in diaspora. I

sadly heard later that the Dheisheh camp computers had been destroyed by the IDF, Israeli Defense Forces, at the beginning of the second Intifada in 2000 – although since then, their vibrant web site has been rebuilt. The Internet represents a perfect medium for both individuals and communities to exchange information and contacts, and otherwise interact. Such a network helps constantly create and recreate a united political culture of "imagined communities". The Information Technology revolution brought about by the Net that Manuel Castells (1996) describes in terms of economic globalization can also be perceived in terms of cultural preservation. Communities of affinity throughout the world are no longer isolated, insofar as they can interact faster and maintain stronger cultural solidarity through the Internet.

I spent hours connecting and visiting one site and another, and onto another, in the peaceful silence of the late night. Turning off my computer brought me back to my everyday reality of being in New York. I was able now not only to receive the information offered by the sites I visited, but I was also able to take direct action and write to those almost anonymous persons whose names had appeared on the sites next to some e-mail address. A myriad of sites were scattered through the cosmos of the net with

over 150 sites for “Palestinians” alone. For example, I was able to access the Library of Congress on line. This represented another fortress that I had entered. The experience was similar to going into a sacred vault. I could also visit the site of Birzeit University in Palestine, and Palestinian journals.

I was now acquiring a strategy: I was not only exploring actively the sites in this cyber fieldwork, but I was also developing personal contacts on line at the same time. One person led to another one, the same way as a Web site had led to another one. I was beginning to have a small network that I had been able to build only in a few months. From my apartment in New Rochelle, I was “inhabiting” the Middle East in the cyber-field as an anticipation of being in the actual field.

The interaction that was taking place through an exchange of e-mails made the sites become a little more animated, although they still held a lot mystery. For example, exactly where some of my e-mail messages were going was unclear. To this day it remains mysterious. I could be communicating with someone in a New York office as well as with some one in a desert village or in a Palestinian camp. I had heard stories of fieldwork involving anthropologists sometimes waiting long hours for

a meeting. The Internet contact was faster and more instantaneous. Sometimes I would fly from one site to the other and end up landing on a site of particular interest to me, but I would be unable to retrace the on-line route that had carried me there. Such a route felt real because it had taken me to a site that I wanted to explore, but it also felt unreal, as I could not trace a path back to it.

However fascinating those sites were, I soon became aware that I was only meeting or visiting a certain category of people, the wired ones. What about the non-wired community including children with whom I could not connect through the Web? The net had excluded them from my research, creating a virtual divide due to income, development and literacy.

I also began to explore the role of NGOs in implementing children's rights by going to web sites such as CRIN, Children's Rights International Network, UNICEF and Save the Children. A project director of one of the agencies in Lebanon with whom I had established a friendly exchange reported that a substantial number of reports written on children were kept in their archives in Lebanon, which he kindly offered to open for me. Thus this journey on the Internet was enabling me to access information about people and also to locate archives.

As I explored the Internet further, I became increasingly aware of the wide extent of the Palestinian network. Some people provided help spontaneously while others were more reticent.

My brief preliminary fieldwork on the Internet connected me to these imagined communities, which are tightly linked and very real in terms of interacting and preserving their culture, even as they reinvent it. The Palestinian diaspora represents only one group of imagined communities. Similarly, other Web sites provide virtual communities for other diasporas such as Basques, Berbers, or Armenians. Through the Internet a multitude of ethnic and political groups can access a unique way of interacting in immediate time in a culturally bounded space.

I also saw myself as a participant observer proffering multiple cultural identities according to the community with which I was interacting. I can trace the progress of my journey from October into the Spring 2000. The Web was the field: I had arrived there but did not know my whereabouts, whom I was going to meet, to whom I should be talking, and how to communicate in the least gauche way. Much like the ethnographer in the field, each time I established a dialogue with a person I felt that I was moving forward a great deal. I was becoming bolder and more

enthusiastic as I surfed the net and hopped from one site to the other.

Some e-mail exchanges were as useful as a conversation if I needed straight information and to clarify questions. Like real fieldwork, some days were more productive than others: some days I would go to my computer and open up the screen to this vast imagined world to find the positive feedback of helpful responses, whereas other days I was not moving as fast as I wished. This early journey on the Net did not bring me much information on existing bibliographic literature though. Instead, it helped me get used to the field and to an entire network of people. “Hanging out” on the Internet meant visiting sites and learning how, where, who, and what to look for. It was certainly rewarding when I would find finally an ally and at the same time a friendly informant!

The Net enabled my first encounter with the Palestinian community. Through that first encounter I made several findings: I discovered first hand a new frontier where a community preserves its culture in spite of its lack of a common territory. It helped me get in touch with potential informants who answered some of my preliminary questions. But it is a not a panacea, because I was not able to talk with children and adults who had no access to

the Internet, as indicated above. I was interacting with a more limited group of people: NGO staff and intellectuals.

This first encounter provided me with a connecting thread in my journey directing me through a process that facilitated my first steps. It was a stepping-stone toward the real encounter in the real field.

Arrival in Amman. Outline of Methodology

I arrived in Queen Alia International airport in Amman in December of 2003 at midnight on a cold and damp Sunday night. I was going to the Hotel Hisham, a small local hotel, where I would spend the night. I was tired but excited as I sat in my hotel room and watched the TV news - about the war in Iraq and in Palestine. There I was, in Amman, really near those two countries, where things were happening. The adventure of my fieldwork was starting.

I had in fact visited Amman in the summer of 2000 while I was visiting several refugee camps in Jordan, Lebanon and Palestine. This was during the Camp David Peace Talks, which was a period of high hopes for Palestinian refugees. It was an exhilarating time as everybody in the region was talking about peace. For the Palestinian refugees in the camps especially, it meant the end of their plight and the return to their homeland, Palestine. I had

chosen to work in Palestinian refugee camps in Jordan because it presented several important advantages for my research, in contrast to other countries with Palestinian refugee camps such as Lebanon, Syria or Palestine. Jordan was a politically stable country where I could safely undertake research; it had the largest Palestinian refugee population in the Middle East; it had established a special Ministry or Department of Palestinian Affairs, a valuable help in accessing information, documentation, statistics and local contacts in the camps.

Al Wihdat and Al-Amir Hassan camp (also called Jabal Nasser camp[8]) were the two camps that I had selected as field sites. Al Wihdat is the oldest camp, the first one established in Amman in 1955, and is large by camp criteria. It is about 479 *dunums*[9], about 118 acres. Emir Hassan - as camp dwellers call it - is more recent. It was established in 1967 and it is smaller: it is about 96 dunums, or 23 acres. Al Wihdat is a registered, or official camp, with UNRWA, whereas Amir Hassan is not registered[10], or unofficial. "Unofficial" means here that the land on which it is established is not leased by UNRWA, making it a

[8] I use either name as locals do.

[9] One dunum = 0,247 acre.

[10] I explain in Chapter Three "registered" and "not registered".

“squatter” area, although it benefits from all the UNRWA services.

Returning now to Amman I wanted to visit those camps and other camps again - Jordan has 13 Palestinian refugee camps. Finding a map of the city was not easy. There were indeed tourist maps of Jordan distributed by the Jordan Tourism Board that are available in hotels, but not a map of the city itself. People do not go by street names, although the streets have plaques - written in Arabic and in English. Nobody, including taxi drivers, seem to know or pay attention to street names and prefer to use markers such as a small local supermarket, a nearby coffee shop, or an empty lot. I needed to adjust to my new environment and the ways local people were mapping out their space. I soon learned to identify streets and markers as I moved about the city and I interviewed and met many people from different social groups.

My focus on children’s rights had been prompted by a long-term personal interest in children/adolescents. My discovery of the fact that children and adolescents - often disempowered victims of oppression by parents or outside power – now had rights granted by the UN CRC, and thus could become empowered actors, had been ground-breaking for me and prompted my keen interest. Palestinian

children certainly provided a good example as social and political actors during the first Intifada, or uprising, of 1987 when they fought the Israeli occupation in Palestine with stones. The children and adolescents with whom I worked were 9 to 18 years old. The age of majority in Jordan is 18, as well as in the UN CRC, a child is no longer a child after 18. I chose to interview children older than 9 years, because by this age they are capable of communicating well about their knowledge and experiences.

My study takes place not only in two refugee camps in Amman, but also in other field sites such as UNICEF, UNRWA, and two local NGOs: River Jordan Foundation, a "royal" NGO chaired by Queen Rania of Jordan – the present queen, helps women and abused children; and Jordanian Women's Union, a grass root organization for women and children, which operates centers in the refugee camps with more modest resources. This multi-sited ethnography of somewhat unconventional anthropological sites, is also an ethnography of Palestinian refugee populations including children and adolescents. I interviewed refugee families, parents, grand-parents, children and adolescents; UNRWA educators including teachers and principals; UNICEF and other international aid agencies; local NGOs officers; refugee camp officers and Mukhtars, heads of the camp;

women's associations, children's rights and human rights lawyers; psychologists; academics and intellectuals; and a Minister of State and Government Spokesperson. I met with government bodies such as the Department of Palestinian Affairs, the National Council for Human Rights, and the National Council for Family Affairs, the Ministry of Education, the Family Protection Department, and members of the Hashemite royal family. Some people I already knew from my first trip.

In concentrating on the activities of these aid agencies, responses to them by educators, parents, and especially refugee children, and on the views of each group regarding children's rights, I draw a detailed study of the processes involved in their reformulating the hegemonic aspects - discursive and material - of humanitarian aid and development work embodied in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. Thus my focus is on more than one group, and is not exclusively concerned with children and adolescents, although this social group occupies an important place in my research.

The Jordanian government required a resident permit - including an AIDS[11] test - and research permits. I also needed a government authorization not only to do

[11] AIDS is not easily discussed. It is a kept-quiet issue.

research in Jordan, but also to go to the refugee camps. I was eager to start, as thus far my organized research only existed on paper. I kept remembering my previous trip to Amman a few years earlier. This time it was different in many ways. The political situation in Palestine was seriously aggravated by a second Intifada that had started in September 2000, and the war in Iraq was casting a shadow of gloom in the region. I was mourning the death of Richard, my beloved life companion, and painfully experiencing feelings of deep loneliness. I was feeling depressed, homesick and grieving. Many times I thought of Malinowski's diaries in which he confessed how he disliked the tribes he was studying, as I was disliking everything "en masse" during this cold, windy and rainy winter in Amman.

In 2004 Amman enjoyed an early spring. Bright sunshine and a strong blinding white light came pouring in through my window. That immediately reconciled me with the outside world. The signal of my mood change hit me when I realized that I was actually enjoying the ubiquitous recording of a music box-like tune that small trucks selling propane gas bottles play driving through the Amman streets to let people of the neighborhood know that they are present. Propane gas is used at home for cooking and

heating. It sounded like the tune of an ice cream truck in the U.S., a familiar short melody that I would instantly recognize. I also had fondly imagined living inside the camps, as I wanted to be among the refugees with whom I was going to be working. When I inquired with Jordanians officials, Palestinian refugees and the few friends I had then about residing in the camps, I was unanimously told that, as a non-Palestinian-non-refugee, this would not be possible. I then thought that living just outside the camp could work too. In effect, the boundaries of the camps are ill defined, since the camp is not fenced in, and has widely outpoured its original limits. Only a main road marks the limit between "inside" and "outside". The area outside the camp is just as poor as inside the camp, and in both areas, houses look similar[12]. Again, it was not recommended, I was told by Jordanians, for a single woman and a foreigner, under the on-going political climate, to be living even in the areas right outside the camps. Reluctantly, I also abandoned this idea. I rented an apartment at the *Dawar Talata*, or Third Circle, in the center of Amman, an area that was deemed "safe" for researchers - who are often perceived with suspicion by the

[12] See Chapter Three for a detailed description of the camp and its invisible borders.

local population. It may have been safer in the camps, though, as less than a year after I finished my fieldwork, a bomb exploded around the corner from where I used to live, killing and injuring several people.

Although Jordan has managed to remain out of harm's way in an explosive region, it was not spared natural catastrophes. At the time of my research, Amman experienced small earthquakes on two separate occasions. They did not cause any great damage. Both quakes were said to have come from the Dead Sea. Only about 20 miles outside of Amman, below sea level, the Dead Sea, often-alleged location of the biblical Sodom and Gomorrah, is situated on a telluric seism axis[13]. In addition, a little later in the year, a red locust invasion was announced in the news. Coming from Egypt and Israel it threatened the south of Aqaba on the Red Sea and the Jordan River valley, a farming area. Unlike in biblical times or in the images of Cecil B. de Mille's version of that period, local farmers were spared, as agriculture authorities eradicated the invasion before it could ravage the crops. But the event reminded people of the precariousness of their location.

[13] Like Californians, Jordanians did not seem to pay too much attention to the quakes.

Jordan and Palestine: Entangled Destinies

The population of Jordan – 5.5 M - is Palestinian for the vast majority, and a minority of about 30% is Jordanian of Jordanian descent, that is, descendants of Bedouins, peasants and town dwellers who had migrated from Arab lands before and during Ottoman rule. Jordan also counts other minorities that came from the former Ottoman Empire such as Armenians, Circassians that both represent about 1% of the population; Egyptians, Syrians, Iraqis, Lebanese, Kurds, and Chechens who amount in total to less than 1% of the population. The main ethnic divide of Jordan remains, however, between Jordanians and Palestinians. Islam is the main religion, and about 6 to 8% of the population is Christian. It was impossible, however, to obtain accurate figures, as they are not made public in an effort from the Jordanian government to officially homogenize the Jordanian population and call for "Jordan First" with no ethnic divide.

Jordan is a new country, originally established in 1921 by the British who supposedly wanted to bring stability to a decentralized tribal region. Transjordan, as it was then called, was created as a principality headed by the Amir Abdallah after the collapse and dismantling of the Ottoman Empire at the end of World War I. Thus Arab

provinces formerly under Ottoman rule shifted from one dominating power to two others colonial empires, namely, the French and the British who shared their influence in the region. Consequently Palestine became ruled by British Mandate. During the years 1946 to 1948 Jordan became an independent kingdom, the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, which included Palestine. The histories of Palestine and Jordan are thus tightly intertwined, a determinant factor in the lives of Palestinians and Jordanians.

Since 1948 – marking the birth of Israel and the exodus of Palestinian refugees, and the Israeli-Arab wars of 1967 and 1973, over 1 million Palestinian refugees have fled their homeland to the nearest border. In 1967, Jordan, which was then situated on both the east and west banks of the Jordan River, lost the West Bank to Israeli occupation. Consequently, Palestinians from the West Bank retreated to the East Bank of Jordan and are now considered "displaced"[14]. UNRWA uses these two categories as they follow the UNHCR, UN High Commission for Refugees, which makes a distinction between "refugees" (outside their country) and "displaced" (within their own country). Since the borders of then- Jordan included the West Bank,

[14] Some of these were forcefully migrating for the second time (first time was in 1948) and became classified by UNRWA as "refugees-displaced". The other West Bankers who were migrating for the first time were classified as "displaced".

Palestinians fleeing the West bank to the East Bank became "internally displaced". In local camp refugee lingua, they are all called refugees. Accordingly, following the local idiom, and in order to be clear, I call both refugee and displaced populations "refugees" tout court, without distinction of date.

In the next chapter I explain the various categories of camp dwellers and the policies that have created them. Refugees and displaced persons have been defined and conceptualized (Zolberg 1989; Takkenberg 1998; Phuong 2000) by the UN and international law in different ways and have been ascribed a complex separate legal status, which deeply shapes their social and economic lives and that of their children. Palestinian refugees are now residing in the several countries that share common borders with Palestine such as Syria, Lebanon, and Egypt. Their largest concentration is in Jordan, which, as noted, has harbored three waves of Palestinian refugees and where there are over 1.3 million Palestinian refugees [15] - one third of whom still live in camps. However, the total population of Palestinian refugees is about 4 M people including refugees and displaced persons living in the West Bank, Gaza, Lebanon, Jordan and the rest of the world

[15] UNRWA statistical report of June 2000

(Zureik 1994). Refugees registered by UNRWA represent approximately three quarters of Palestinian refugees worldwide.

The UNRWA refugee registration system goes back to 1950 which was the year UNRWA commenced operations. Being a registered refugee is central to the survival of the families living in the camps as they depend on the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), a UN agency providing support to Palestinian refugees such as education, health, relief and social services. Currently, half the population residing in the camps is estimated to be under 16 years of age. It makes children issues even more salient. The camps are small and very densely populated. For example, Emir Hassan camp in Amman hosts a population of about 7000 inside less than 25 acres.

As stated by the Department of Palestinian Affairs, DPA, Jordan gives “full rights and obligations of citizenship to all its nationals without distinction of ethnic group”. The majority of Palestine refugees in Jordan enjoy full Jordanian citizenship, which gives them access to governmental services and development assistance. Being Palestinian legally refers to an ethnicity rather than a nationality, and Palestinian refugee status does not exclude Jordanian citizenship.

Jordan relies heavily on Western donors' funding and increasingly so these past three years since the beginning of the Iraq war. It offers a stable enclave in a troubled region and hence seeks to project an image of a progressive Arab country in the forefront of the Arab world by signing the CRC, granting rights to women, and creating institutions such as the National Center for Human Rights, the Council for Family Affairs, or the Family Protection Department. In its effort to westernize, Jordan, has readily introduced new education structures in several government schools, such as a system of child parliaments for children aged between 13 and 18. Such parliaments aim at providing gender equality in having an equal representation of both boys and girls. Child-to-child methods of interaction are also used and they encourage children to have their own voice, participate, be creative, and express themselves freely.

The UNRWA schools in the refugee camps are implementing such initiatives as well as "Human Rights and Conflict Resolution" programs. There are twenty schools in Al Wihdat and four in Jabal Nasser, the two camps where I worked. All UNRWA schools have a double shift system in which students attend school part time either in the morning, or in the afternoon. Accordingly, educators and

principals are part of this double shift system. In reality, one school building operates as two schools with two separate sets of students, teachers and administrators. As I was visiting Al-Wihdat camp and interviewing educators and students, the school was implementing a Human Rights program funded by the US and Germany. Several principals were extremely mobilized around it and were teaching it not only in the social studies and religion classes, but also by having students illustrate posters with local references to several human rights articles relevant to their needs and aspirations - right to education, right of return, right to play - that were displayed in the halls of the schools and in their office. In addition, UNICEF organized summer camp trainings for high-schoolers coming from various schools, including UNRWA, on teaching children's rights.

Jordan, by signing and ratifying the UN CRC, takes a conspicuous step toward child empowerment in a culture in which, on the one hand, the father holds the authority, but children and adolescents are politically aware, and on the other, religion means submission to God, thus creating both submitted subjects and empowered actors.

Multiple Identities and Safety

To gain access to the community of people in the camps was not an easy enterprise. I had to go through UNRWA and the local NGOs that acted as go-betweens, as it were. UNRWA had to clear the authorization from the Department of Palestinian Affairs, DPA. I could not have gone to the camps without proper clearance. The Palestinian camp refugee population is kept under tight control by Jordanian authorities since a major Palestinian upheaval in 1970, referred as Black September, in which the camp refugee population was totally mobilized. As indicated earlier in this chapter, although it was my intention to reside in the camps, I was not able to do so. As a result, my freedom to select the camp families I wanted to interview was limited in some ways to the selection that UNRWA and local NGOs had made. Whether there was any systematic bias in their selection I cannot say. If there was such bias, it could have been in the way of selecting the “better” families, in order to make a good impression, or of selecting the “hardship cases” that, by virtue of their labeling, could not have been taken as a generality. I can only assume that the variation in the lives of the camp families that I met was so great that the effects of a possible bias would cancel themselves out.

Another concern may come from the fact that my fieldwork was carried out during the wars in Iraq, and in Palestine (West Bank and Gaza), both bordering Jordan. Thus war felt very close, making camp refugees react strongly to bombing. They almost always wanted to discuss the explosive political situation in the Middle East in connection to US and Israel politics. Many did. They expressed much as they felt toward these foreign powers, that is, resentment and sometimes anger, and not as any authority, like the state government, might have wished them to. Consequently, to preserve confidentiality I have changed all their names.

Fairly rapidly my network of informants had expanded inside and outside the camps though my national identity was puzzling for many. When taking taxis or talking to strangers I was asked immediately "what country do you come from?" This question did not have a straight answer.

Similarly to Palestinians in Jordan, I had more than one national identity. I had three. I was born in Tunisia from a Tunisian father and a French mother. I was raised in Tunisia and France, moved later to the U.S. and became an American. Rapidly, I discovered that different situations called for different identities. For example, for the Jordanian administration and bureaucracy issuing my

permits I was as a Fulbright recipient, a white American female. With total strangers I found that claiming my Tunisian heritage was not a good idea - although better than being American. In a culture where reputation is highly valued, Tunisian women, in general, do not enjoy a good reputation in Amman. They are often sex workers and deemed too independent and free. So by default France was my country of origin when I was asked in brief street encounters. However, for the people I knew, informants and friends, I was Tunisian and French. I was often asked about my life story which I would willingly share with the families. Frequently at the end of an interview with refugee parents or children, I would ask them if they wanted to ask me questions. This was a well-received proposition: Through this two-way interview I could reciprocate information about my family life and thus feel closer to my interviewees. It was a way of bonding and breaking the researcher-on-a-pedestal image. I became more "human". I had a life, a family and concerns just like everybody. In addition, my identity as a mother of three children made it easy to connect with women and children. In the camps I was introduced as a Tunisian-French researcher on "*huquq al-atfal*", or children's rights, who lived in the USA and was affiliated with a US university.

Many Palestinian people have a member of the family or a relative who resides in America. So they readily understood that a person could live in a country without being a native or espousing its government policies, as it was the case of their brother from Chicago, or cousin from New Jersey, or their own case in Jordan, for that matter. They are themselves originally Palestinians living in another country.

Later, as I was going regularly to the camps I was told by Jordanian and Palestinian people outside the camps not to go by myself as I may be taken for an American or an Israeli spy, hence a dangerous enemy. That possibility had a chilling effect on me. Consequently, I could not “hang out” by myself with young people as I had anticipated, but I had to be accompanied by someone. My position as an anthropologist may have been somewhat confusing to an outsider: not a social worker, or a humanitarian aid worker, I was there to ask questions. Refugee camps are hardly places where a woman “hangs out”. There is no local café or a fountain where as a woman I would feel comfortable to sit and observe people quietly. Al-Wihdat and Jabal Nasser camps have a commercial area in the middle of the camp, which attracts many people from the camp and also from outside as the prices of goods are cheaper than

in the *balad* (downtown Amman). It is too dense and crowded to wander and stroll around. If I had stepped aside and observed the market scene I would have looked suspicious, as my friends would tell me. However, I would often buy fruit and vegetables there in the open market in the midst of a heavy traffic of pedestrians, men and women, loaded with large shopping bags, making their way through the cars, mainly taxis, in the narrow space that the main street of the camp provided. I describe the camps at length in Chapter Three.

In the UNRWA schools and in the alleys of the camps I was looked at as a novelty. My Tunisian identity was not visible and in people's gaze I was a foreign, Western looking woman walking alone. I actually noticed that when I was walking by myself in the camps, people were generally courteous and did not stare at me, only children did. I got more overt attention when I was walking with a Palestinian person. I could hear in the comments from the young men, which were directed at me, that foreigner meant American for them, as they were clearly taking me for nothing else but an American.

Officers from UNICEF or NGOs whom I interviewed in their office perceived me differently than people in the camps. They asked me if I was feeling safe doing research.

One of them at UNICEF also added that many foreigners with whom she was working had canceled their trip to Jordan because of the war in Iraq. They did not feel secure to come to the Middle East as foreigners. Such report did not bother me. I was not concerned as, I did not feel much as a foreigner in some way, although I was.

At first, I did not have much sense of my own personal security although it was fairly obvious that the world had changed drastically since September 11, but that was the case everywhere. I was eager and restless to begin my interviews and carry out that stage of the study. As I perceived my environment becoming increasingly more visible and real, I started to notice armed guards standing outside embassies and foreign offices carrying automatic machine guns. I also received e-mails from the local Fulbright commission that included warnings from the US embassy. I admit to not paying too much attention to such warnings, thinking that embassies are often overly cautious. Besides, such warnings went against my natural sense of adventure. After all I was Tunisian, I came from another Arab country. But I was not assuming that in the streets people identified me less as a Tunisian than as an American. Americans in Jordan who had been evacuated at the onset of the war against Iraq, today often claim to be Canadian. I

soon learned that a US official had been killed the previous year in Amman, and it had created a strong wave of shock and fear among the American community in Jordan. Since then, Americans were invisible in the streets of Amman as they drove cars bearing white Jordanian plates like Jordanian cars instead of yellow plates, as other foreigners.

Seeing the guards in their fatigues with their machines guns would at times challenge my feeling of safety. If there had been recent taking of hostages, or beheadings of Westerners in Iraq or Saudi Arabia, I would walk in the camps looking over my shoulder. But after a few days, as TV focused on another news spotlight, I would relax. That would last until another hostage was taken or beheaded, and I would feel a latent threat again. During that intense period of hostage-taking and beheadings in Iraq and Saudi Arabia, broadcast almost in real time on TV news, only men seemed to be the target. But when two Italian women aid workers in Iraq were taken hostage, I realized that as a woman I could also be at risk. Subsequently, additional warnings were issued by the US and French embassies in Amman discouraging their nationals to go to the camps or near the camps, and near a mosque at prayer time. Meanwhile, newspapers and TV news were filled

with dismaying images: demolished houses by Israeli forces in Rafah refugee camp, near Gaza in Palestine at the border with Egypt; the killing of Sheikh Yacin, the chief of Hamas and an emblematic figure of the Palestinian resistance, by the IDF; gruesome photos of Abu Ghrayb prison. Clearly, the political climate in the region was not in favor of the West. The local population, in general, felt threatened as a people by those attacks and demonized the West and its abuse of power. France, however, had a good image for several reasons. Its government was not engaged in the war in Iraq, and had spoken strongly against it. It has traditionally conducted a pro-Palestinian policy and maintained good relationships of post-colonial power with its former colonies such as Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Lebanon and Syria. President Chirac had received a triumphal welcome when he had recently visited Algeria, an Arab country. France had officially welcomed ailing Chairman Arafat in a military hospital before he died. Besides, the Institut Francais du Proche Orient (IFPO) to which I was affiliated, was well regarded here among local[16] intellectuals for its scientific activities and research projects.

[16] I use local to include Jordanians and Jordanian-Palestinians, but also Circassians, Armenians, Palestinians and other local ethnic groups.

My fears about my safety in the camps only existed when I was outside. When I was inside refugee homes or in the schools I felt safe and protected. There, people knew my national identity and trusted me as a researcher. I figured that I ran a much higher risk of being injured and hit by a car when I was trying to cross the busy *Dawar Talata*, or Third Circle, a large roundabout in Jabal Amman where I lived, in which there was no space for pedestrians, but only for speedy car drivers.

Palestinians perceived my topic in different ways. Inside the camps, refugees were pleased that with my research I would make their condition and predicament known among the international community. They wanted me to tell their story of injustice to the world that did not know the true story. Refugees' lives are hard and difficult, but they often provide wonderful examples of achievement. Several refugees hold university degrees and value scholarship. They understood the significance of academic research and writing. UNRWA employees, and teachers, Palestinian and also Jordanian NGO employees all gave their best efforts to help facilitate my research. Outside the camps, they showed some satisfaction when hearing about it. I was a foreigner from an American university doing research on their people. Although some suggested I study

something different about Palestinian youth. I should do research instead " with other poor children, not specifically Palestinian", as a Palestinian scholar suggested, or "with Palestinian children in Jordan, but the ones outside the camps", a Palestinian professional woman recommended, or as a young Palestinian-Jordanian journalist, was proposing " focus exclusively on the right of return and no other right".

The earlier "imagined" Palestinian community on the net had become a tangible reality and part of my daily experience. This ethnography captures a moment in time and space in which I shared an often privileged relationship and a heart-felt individual experience not only with Palestinian families, including children and adolescents, but also with NGO workers, educators and Palestinian refugees outside the camp. This moment, which was circumscribed by the intense political context, came to exist through the dialogues I had, that is, between me, what I represented in the eyes of my interlocutors, and those interlocutors. It has stayed with me and is ingrained in my study, my perceptions and my interpretations.

According to UNRWA records, the Palestine refugee population in Jordan is the largest in the Middle East.

They are 1,780 701 individuals[17], that is, 41% of the total number of refugees registered with UNRWA. Some 20 per cent - 283,183 people live in *mukhayyam,* or refugee camp, in Jordan. Thus not all Palestinian refugees live in camps; in Jordan, a large number of the refugee population lives outside the camps. It is important to know that the majority of the Jordanian population is Palestinian. "Palestinian refugee", as I explain in the next chapters, is a generic term that includes the population that fled Palestine. They have become a diaspora and a community stratified by class. On one hand, upper-class Palestinians represent a social group that has been well assimilated into Jordanian life and economy; on the other, the camp dwellers and Palestinian families that live inside the camps and in the neighboring slum areas, are for the most part poor and disadvantaged.

The following two chapters are concerned with refugee life in the camps. In the next chapter I examine the space of the camp as habitat, its ambiguous character as a lasting organized structure of transition, and the symbolic meanings it represents for refugees.

[17] All refugee figures come from UNRWA source 2005.

CHAPTER THREE

AN IN-BETWEEN SPACE:

THE CAMPS OF Al-WIHDAT AND Al-AMIR HASSAN IN AMMAN

Introduction

The space of the *mukhayyam*, or camp, is much more than a habitat for refugees, it is also a symbolic bastion of Palestinian memory and identity. While it is the product of historical processes, it represents UNRWA enduring organization of refugee space and social life through its bureaucratic policies, and Jordanian government rules and laws. This imposed structure, a heavy apparatus of organized power, includes both UNRWA, a UN agency, and the Department of Palestinian Affairs (DPA), a national state

agency. Thus refugees fall under different categories that include or exclude them. Their membership in those categories is not self ascribed, but UNRWA and DPA ascribed, and is based on their policies.

An organized space of transition, the camp is also a place of commerce and mediation in which many actors are involved. Those are not only the camp residents, but also the various secular and religious organization employees, including UNRWA teachers, and business owners. I argue that the refugee camp presents contradictory characteristics, and occupies a liminal space, an "in-between" in several respects: 1) it is a symbolically bounded space for refugees, although many have also settled outside its impalpable limits; 2) it is a symbol of Palestinian territory for refugees, and also a site of state power; 3) it is a place of entrapment for refugees located between past and future; 4) originally temporary, it has become long-lasting. I contend that that liminal space oscillates between quasi-stability and movement. A space of waiting, although not a static place, but also a dynamic place of transformation, as I demonstrate in this chapter.

This chapter examines several blurry aspects of the camp and the ways in which camp refugees are coping accordingly. I provide examples that show how dispossessed

refugees have nevertheless become important makers of their own reality.

Both Inside and Outside

Located in South-East Amman, the poor section of the city, away from residential, affluent West Amman, Al Wihdat and Al-Amir Hassan (also called Al Nasser) camps have epitomized for four succeeding refugee generations the Palestinian exodus and the unresolved political Israel-Palestine conflict. Both camps were originally established at a fair distance from Amman, on the southeast periphery. However, over the past three or four decades, Amman has seen a remarkable urban expansion and the camps and their surroundings have since become part of the city. As noted earlier, the camps have outgrown their ill-defined borders and are now indistinguishable from the large area of low-cost housing of which they have become part. In Al-Wihdat and in Jabal Nasser camps the only easily identifiable limit of the camps is a main road with two-way traffic. This entire part of town does not show any sign of temporary housing. The earlier emergency, short-term aspect of tent housing described by the older refugees has completely disappeared.

Since my first visit to the camps, the name of Al-Amir Hassan camp had intrigued me. Why such an unattractive place had grandly been named after Prince Hassan, the late King Hussein's brother, a former Crown Prince? When I asked around in the camps for an explanation nobody seemed to know or care. Finally, an officer at the Department of Palestinian Affairs (DPA) explained that in the 1980's the then-Crown Prince Hassan had visited the camp, and presumably had been very generous to the refugee population there. "This is the most likely reason for renaming the camp after him", he concluded. It is otherwise, and more commonly called Jabal Nasser camp because it is located on Jabal Nasser, one of the seven *jabal,* or hills, on which the capital city of Amman is built. The use of Jabal Nasser name by the camp refugees rather than Prince Hassan's name may indicate the Palestinian refugee attitude - one of resentment and dislike - with respect to the Jordanian monarchy. Palestinian camp refugees hold Jordanian authorities responsible for their marginalization as Palestinians, and for the job discrimination to which, they say, they are subjected (Cf.Chapter Seven).

From the outside, the area of the camp looks like any poor neighborhood. As I walked inside the narrow alleyways off the main road, the space around me became

narrower. Getting closer to the houses, I noticed more details. It is not easy to find one's way in a space where most houses look the same. *Wihdat* is the plural form of *wihda*, singular, which means unit. They are indeed housing units. Camp houses typically have a main floor, sometimes a second or third floor. This part of town is entirely different from West Amman where streets and avenues are wide and laid out like in a modern Western city. At first, I was struck by the narrowness of the streets. They are only about six feet wide. People live in a close and dense space. Walking inside the camp on a hot summer day offers some shade, as the narrow alleyways keep the sun's rays from entering, as in a small old Arab town or village. It is not picturesque in tourist terms: no old stones or old doors, just plain and poor. Children play in the streets since they have nowhere else to play. In a sense it creates tight and safe feelings of community as there are few narrow streets and mostly alleyways; hence occasional cars have to move slowly. Children as young as two or three years old and a little older interrupt their game and flatten their small bodies against the wall to let the car go by. They appear to be used to having cars drive so close to them, as they resume their game without taking any notice. Yet Umm Tareq, a refugee woman from the camp who

became my informant, told me that even so accidents sometimes occur, involving cars and children playing in the street.

Most housing units have whitewashed walls, although some houses retain the original drab gray color of cement blocks, probably for lack of resources to paint them. Hence each unit may look different according to the dwellers economic situation. Unlike the walls of houses of the camps in Lebanon and Palestine, which bear many large graffiti, there are hardly any graffiti in the camps of Jordan that I visited. I was astonished in both Al-Wihdat and Jabal Nasser camps not to see an image of the Al-Aqsa Mosque, one of the most popular icons of Palestinian culture, also called the Dome of the Rock, located in *Al-Quds* (Jerusalem). In the camps in Jordan there was no such representation like the large colored fresco-like graffiti that I had seen in Sabra and Shatila, or in other camps in Lebanon. As indicated, the camps are kept tightly monitored by the DPA, and camp refugees, I was told, are not allowed to draw graffiti. Here, the whitewashed walls of the houses of the camps are almost always plain with a few exceptions of inconspicuous graffiti representing a famous

cartoon character, Hanzala (bitterness[18]), created by Naji Al Ali, a famous Palestinian political cartoonist, who was shot and killed in 1987, and remains a hero for Palestinians, even more so since he grew up in a refugee camp in Lebanon. He is sometimes called the Palestinian Malcolm X. Hanzala, his character, has since become one of the icons of Palestinian resistance, though to a lesser extent than the image of Al Aqsa Mosque. Hanzala may have looked less oppositional and disturbing to Jordanian authorities. It also seemed significant that I did not notice any Palestinian flag in the camps. When I asked if this most powerful symbol could be displayed in the camps, I was told by Abu Jihad[19], the *Mukhtar*[20] of Al-Wihdat camp, that Jordanian authorities did not allow the Palestinian flag to be flown in the *mukhayyam*.

On that afternoon of February 2004, as we got close to the camp of Al-Wihdat, the taxi in which Umm Tareq and I were riding had to make a detour in a middle of congested traffic because of construction works on the main artery of the camp. There was a bulldozer in the middle of

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[18] First names in Arabic always have a meaning.

[19] Men are often called Abu, father of the eldest son, and women are Umm, mother of the oldest son: Abu Jihad, or Umm Tareq.

[20] The Mukhtar can be compared to a chief of a tribe. He is the representative of the community and also the person to whom refugees go to resolve domestic problems and conflicts.

the street about to tear down a house. Umm Tareq, my informant, explained: “The Jordanian government wants to enlarge the main roads in the *mukhayyam* for cars. But people in the camp don’t want it. They’ll only get a small compensation for their home, or their shop, after it is demolished. They don’t want improvements in the camp”. I must have shown some surprise upon hearing that camp refugees would oppose what seemed an improvement in their living conditions, so she continued: “They are afraid that if the camp is improved they’ll stay here for ever. They’ll no longer be refugees. Therefore they won’t be able to go back to their village in Palestine”. I understood then that refugees wanted to maintain the transitional and temporary aspect of the camp, as part of their struggle. Perhaps, by settling in they would appear to be relinquishing their right of return and be consigned to oblivion. Their refusal to improving their housing would mean an acceptance of permanent exile and hence imply an impediment to their right of return, a right they want to continue to exercise. I come back to that point later in this chapter.

We got out of the taxi and started to walk in the crowded commercial segment of the main street. We passed shops that were going to be pulled down in which the proprietors - I supposed – were rushing to empty them of

all their goods before the staring eyes of bystanders. Meanwhile, the bulldozer was outside waiting to proceed. Umm Tareq looked unhappy and upset, but we were walking in the middle of a crowd and were not able to talk any more about it at that time.

Although the inside and outside of the camp look similar, the camp is still called the "*mukhayyam*", and more significantly the whole neighborhood, or *hara*, is, by extension, also called the "camp". Boundaries are usually markers of identity (see Lavie 1996, Donnan & Wilson 1999). But, in the camps, those limits are indistinguishable except on a map. Thus the case of the camps is ambiguous. Refugee families living in the surrounding poor areas often choose to live near the camp to stay near their family and also for the UNRWA services provided in the camps. Those people also consider themselves *mukhayyamjieh*, or camp refugees, as Palestinian camp identity now encompasses all the area. What does make the camp still exist as a special territory for the Palestinian camp community?

Surviving The Nakba: The Story of Umm Tareq

The story of the camps begins with the story of the *Nakba*, the Palestinian exodus of most refugees. The present life of Umm Tareq, like all other refugee families,

is deeply embedded in the history of Palestine in the last hundred years.

> "I was born in Qawnya, a small village near Jerusalem, which Israel occupied in 1948. There were many clashes between Palestinians and Jews in other villages nearby. My family and also other families got scared and fled our village. We thought they were going to kill us. We had to escape on foot. We thought we would go away for a while. We wanted to be safe until the fighting would end. Then we wanted to go home. In my family we were four children, my father and mother, my four grandparents, and my uncles and aunts. We had a horse that we loaded with all our belongings. Soon after we had left my mother realized that, in the rush, she had forgotten her gold jewelry at home. [Women call it their 'gold' because when a woman gets married she receives gold jewelry from her husband and his family. This 'gold' belongs to her forever even if she gets divorced or repudiated. So the 'gold' is not only important for the ornamental aspect, but it is economically significant for the woman. It represents her wealth.] She [my mother] decided to go back. She wanted to take her gold with her. When she was trying to go back home, the Jews

> shot her in the leg. She was able to get her jewelry though. But she was injured. She was bleeding. Still, she walked with the rest of us till Ramallah, some 20 Kilometers (about 13 miles) away. We had no home there. At the beginning we were sleeping outside under the olive trees, some of us were sleeping in mountain caves. Then a Christian family lent us a house where we could settle down for a while. Two years later my father was able to open a small shop".

El Nakba, "the catastrophe" is how Palestinians refer to the exodus from their homeland in 1948 and the ensuing loss of their homes to Israelis. The *Nakba* marks the historic point when "all hell broke loose" for Palestinians, and thousands of Palestinian families became refugees. I heard many stories similar to Umm Tareq's. They are recounted time and again by the camp refugees I interviewed. The painful, collective event, a Palestinian narrative of dispossession and injustice, has created a shared past now embodied in every Palestinian living inside and outside the camp.

As noted earlier, several historic events have contributed to the occurrence of the *Nakba* and help explain how Palestinians refugees, a rural population for the most part, are currently living in the predicament of urban

camps. The key moments which I now describe, provide the episodes that constitute the Palestinian complex history.

One year after the *Nakba*, in 1949, the United Nations put forth a partition plan that enabled Jordan to take control of the West Bank and Jerusalem, while Egypt annexed Gaza. Palestinian refugees who had fled massively to the West Bank of the Jordan River and Gaza - regions not part of Israel – were now under the control of Jordan and Egypt. UNRWA was created that same year in 1950 to assist Palestinian refugees with health, lodging, social services, and education. Even if they were critical of the Agency, as explained in Chapter Six, refugees indicated that throughout the different stages of the Arab-Israeli wars UNRWA relief actions have been vital to help them survive under the most urgent difficulties.

As Umm Tareq explained: “At first the camps were made of canvas tents that the Red Cross had given. Little by little they were replaced by cement blocks”. Such change in type of habitat, that is, from a tent to a hard wall, was both welcomed and met with resistance from the refugees. As Umm Tareq reports, at this early stage refugees feared that a quasi-permanent home could mean a permanent situation, or at best a long-term one for them. “Soon things would get better. This is only temporary, we

thought", says Umm Tareq. In the meantime, several other camps were established in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria and Gaza.

Soon after, in 1952, the entire population of the West Bank – now part of Jordan - including the refugees, was granted Jordanian nationality. That happened one year after the assassination of King Abdallah I in 1951 at the Al-Aqsa mosque in Jerusalem during the Friday prayer by a Palestinian nationalist who, according to Umm Tareq, thought the king would make a separate peace with Israel excluding Palestinians. This event is revealing of the insecurity and fear of being marginalized of many Palestinians and of the tensions between Palestinians and Jordanians. It evidently jeopardized the relationship between the Jordanian regime and Palestinians, who had just newly become Jordanian citizens. The Jordanian monarchy grew suspicious of Palestinians and kept them distant from positions of power (see Abu Odeh 1999, Massad 2001)

"Then in 1967… there was the war again and the Israeli occupation of Ramallah and all of the West Bank", Umm Tareq continues. "We had to flee once again. My father and many other families remembered the Israeli attack in 1948 of the village of Deir Yassin and other villages. We were afraid that it would happen to us in Ramallah. The family had expanded. We were now nine children". My father

feared for our lives." The village of Deir Yassin is remembered by Palestinians as a brutal massacre of Palestinian civilians by Israelis. It is the My Lai of Vietnam, or Sakiet Sidi Youssef for the Algerians. It was one of the 400 Palestinian villages "erased" by Israel (Said 1980, Morris 1987, Khalidi 1992).

1967 remains an important date in the history of the refugees, as the borders of Palestine changed once again in the West Bank and Gaza from those of 1949. In addition, it was the defeat of the Arab armies against Israeli forces, who then occupied the West Bank and Jerusalem. About 250,000 Palestinians left the West Bank and Gaza and fled to Jordan. For many other families like Umm Tareq's, it was the second time they had to leave their home. Umm Tareq went to Kuwait where she was a teacher for a couple of years. Many other poor refugees found work as teachers, artisans or technicians in Kuwait and other Persian Gulf bordering countries, such as Saudi Arabia and Oman that offered better job opportunities than Jordan as a result of the oil boom of the 1970s and early 1980s. Not all Palestinians left their homes. Palestinian families, who remained in the West Bank and Gaza, are currently living under Israeli occupation and share another experience.

The debacle of Arab armies in 1967 was soon to be followed by the emergence of the Palestinian Liberation Organization, PLO, as an organized, military and political power that now included a modern guerilla movement (Khalidi 1997). Since the *Nakba*, there had not been a major Palestinian political voice, as by virtue of its emergency the refugee problem had been limited to helping refugees, and to the immediate humanitarian crisis created by their displacement.

The PLO base in Jordan enjoyed strong support from the refugee population in the camps, including young people, as refugees, then teen-agers, reported. It provided the Palestinian leadership with an organized resistance. Such resistance grew into a powerful movement, by which Jordan soon felt threatened. It accused the PLO of aiming at overthrowing the regime.

In September 1970, after a large Palestinian upheaval, which came to be known as “Black September”, the Jordanian army responded by attacking all the camps in Jordan where the *fedayin,* or guerilla fighters, were thought to be hiding. The *fedayin* movement was crushed by King Hussein, and resulted in the expulsion in 1971 of the PLO from Jordan to Lebanon. “Black September” remains one important marker in Palestinian and Jordanian histories.

For camp refugees, it was their uprising against the dominant power, that is, Jordan, and against their subordinated position as camp refugees. For Jordan, it was the end of the Palestinian resistance and a tightening of the control of Palestinians by the government.

History is inscribed in the space of the camp, as much as through the narrated experience of exile of refugees like Umm Tareq. Her story clearly reveals that the camp represented for Palestinian refugees a locus of mobilized resistance, and a strong nationalist and political space due to a physically close network. The various waves of refugees who flocked to the shelter that the camps provided are also markers of history. Such waves have greatly affected the demography and dynamics of the camp habitat.

"Enframing"

The "official" perimeter of the camp is undefined to the eye of the observer. Hence, the fluidity of the space is in sharp contrast with its highly organized institutionalized structure. Mitchell uses the concept of "enframing" (1988:38) that he applies to processes of domination exercised by colonial powers through military order and regulation in late 19th Century Egypt. I view the

spatial organization of the camp in a similar perspective. The term "camp" belongs to military vocabulary, hence refers to order and discipline in a specific confined space. Spaces such as prison institutions, factories and hospitals, have been analyzed by Foucault (1975; 1979) as apparatuses of control and discipline. Accordingly, refugee camps are another example of social spaces in which a differentiated and marginalized population becomes objectified and amenable to control. Over the years the camp space has become a site of power that "disciplines" refugees and renders them powerless subjects kept in a condition of statelessness. They are unable to go back to their homeland and have been waiting for more than half a century regardless of Resolution 194 of the United Nations General Assembly, voted in 1948, for their return to their home country. The camps also symbolize the unresolved situation of a long conflict of which refugees have fallen victims: Al-Wihdat initially harbored refugees from 1948 and Jabal Nasser from 1967.

Thus, the vast majority of Palestinian camp refugees, who are also Jordanian citizens,[21] fall under the umbrella of both authorities that control the camps, namely

[21] See later in this chapter an explanation of citizenship of refugees.

UNRWA and DPA. These institutions, similar to the ones Foucault describes, are heavy apparatuses that seek to circumscribe and bound the space according to their own agendas: DPA is responsible for paying the rent of the leased land to private landowners, and UNRWA falls under its authority. In Jordan, UNRWA services such as education, health care and social welfare are provided within the public sector. Hence the Agency cooperates closely with governmental authorities, namely the Department of Palestinians Affairs, DPA, which is an independent department linked to the Prime Minister's office; it is responsible for administration, security and public services in the camps[22]. The Agency is a large outfit[23], which currently carries out and sponsors over 900 installations with some 24,000 staff throughout its area of operations in the Middle East – Jordan, Syria, Lebanon and Gaza.

The camp, as a structure, bursts at its seams. In Al-Wihdat, for example, there are twenty UNRWA schools, which occupy the largest buildings in the camps; but there are also offices, social services, health centers, women's training centers, a rehabilitation center for the disabled,

[22] UNRWA mandate does not include administering the camps.

[23] For an extended discussion of UNRWA, see Chapter Six.

Al-Wihdat sports club, and eight mosques. In addition, several other organization groups work in the camps. There are Zakat committees (Islamic Charities) under the Ministry of Awqaf (endowment) and Islamic Affairs; local, secular NGOs including women's NGOs; a myriad of shops including eleven pharmacies and ten bakeries; one post office, one police station serving an estimated 50,0000 refugees. It is astonishing that so many activities involving many people are included in such a small area. Drawing on Foucault, Malkki, in her work on Hutu refugees in Tanzania (1995:237), reminds us that institutions of power such as refugee camps, mine compounds, or nursing homes, essentialize people, and hence perceive them as passive. Earlier studies of refugees (Kunz 1973, Stein 1981) tended to reinforce the stereotypical image of the refugee: powerless and lacking agency. But Malkki's study that involves a comparison between camp and non-camp refugees, suggests that the Hutu camp refugees have become agents of transformation. The camp has enabled them to produce a mythic-history and generate a historical consciousness. Similarly, I argue that Palestinian refugees have made the camp a dynamic space which enables them to survive and be active agents, as I discuss in this chapter.

Each camp is run by an UNRWA hierarchy, and also has, like in any Arab village, a *Mukhtar*, or representative of the community, designated by the DPA. The camp provides a structure that is organized administratively and socially according to UNRWA categories of "registered" or "non-registered" that ascribes a legal status of inclusion or exclusion to the camp dwellers. In the office of Abu Walid, a camp service officer, a large board on the wall shows a precise accounting of the various UNRWA-created categories of the camp population, as well as a breakdown of doctors, nurses, and social workers working in UNRWA health centers. In some camps, such as Al-Baqaa, another camp just outside Amman, the organization of families into housing was done by village of origin. In Al-Wihdat though, Abu Walid, the camp service officer, indicated, the allocation of *wihdat*, or units, was done randomly. However, people from a same village would often come to register together in order to stay together. "But since 1955", he pointed out, "the units have changed hands so many times and now with the arrival of non-refugees like Egyptians or Gypsies[24], we are far from an organization by village". Interestingly, it is the area

[24] A marginalized Gypsy (called Nawar) community has lived in the region for centuries (since the Crusades). I was told there were a few thousands Gypsies in Jordan. Some live in refugee camps. Mostly Muslim, some came from Palestine, and others from Iraq.

outside the camp that retains village names. That was done by the refugees, which indicates their desire to identify symbolically with their village.

There are 13[25] UNRWA refugee camps in Jordan, which are classified in three categories: ten of them are "official" or registered camps like Al-Wihdat, and three are "unofficial" or unregistered camps, like Jabal Nasser. "Official" camps are built on land that UNRWA leases; "unofficial" camps are similar settlements of refugees, but are built on land that is not leased to the UNRWA. However, the same UNRWA services are provided in both camps. Dating is also a variable for the third category, which is the time of establishment of the camps in relation to the waves of refugees. First, soon after 1948, five camps, including Al-Wihdat, were created after the *Nakba* to shelter the refugees. Then, to respond to the new refugees, victims of the 1967 Arab-Israeli war, eight other camps, including Jabal Nasser, were established.

Al-Wihdat camp was established in two stages, in 1955 and 1957, to house the 1948 refugees. UNRWA officially calls it Amman New Camp, but refugees refer to it as

[25] Since the war in Iraq other refugee camps have been created for Palestinians and other nationals who were living in Iraq and have asked for political asylum. The United Nations High Commission for Refugees, UNHCR, administers them, and not the UNRWA. I am strictly concerned here by UNRWA camps.

"Wihdat". "New camp", because it was the first camp in the Middle East, which was built in concrete blocks of fiber cement and no longer consisted of canvas tents. For refugees it was better than a tent, but it also meant that their situation was going to last. Each grey concrete house is a unit - *wihda* (singular) — of 100 m2, about 1000 square feet that each refugee family was given upon their arrival. Since the 1970's the camp has acquired a relatively decent infrastructure with paved main roads, and in-door plumbing. Older refugees recalled the times where there was no running water in the camp, but they made do. Currently, the camp of Al-Wihdat houses in the same space ten times more refugees than it was originally meant to accommodate, that is, about 5000 refugees, Not surprisingly, the water, sewage and garbage systems are shaky and on the verge of breaking down, as UNRWA officials openly reported. In addition, in the past fifteen years, major budget cuts pose serious problems for operating services in the camps. In fact, refugees' complaints were often about the declining of social services. The camp represents a complex international and local structure for precarious but lasting living conditions for refugees.

Legal Status and ID-Entity

In that organized space several processes are operating within the structure and under the authority of the DPA and UNRWA, through what Foucault (1983) calls "dividing practices", by determining membership and exclusion through a system of registration cards differentiating registered from non-registered, refugees from displaced, yellow cards from green cards. This is another way of enframing the refugee population and rendering individuals "docile bodies", meant to be disciplined and ordered. These categories shape the quotidian life of refugees.

But who is a refugee? This definition is problematic, as there is more than one meaning. There are: UNRWA, Jordanian and Palestinian refugee concepts. 1) For the UN, the term refugee applies to the first wave of refugees, those from the *Nakba*. The UNRWA definition of a Palestinian refugee is "a person whose normal residence was Palestine during the period of June 1946 to May 1948 and who lost both their homes and means of livelihood as a result of the 1948 conflict and took refuge in one of the countries or areas where UNRWA provides relief, and their descendants through the male line". As an UNRWA officer explained giving me the UNRWA official definition, refugee

status implies UN registration, which took place soon after the *Nakba* in 1948. But not all refugees are registered. There are other Palestinians who also left Palestine but do not fit into the UNRWA set dates, hence do not meet the UNRWA definition. However, they also call themselves refugees. This definition promotes gender inequality as refugee status is only transmittable to children through patrilineal descent (Cf. Cervenak 1994). Thus "refugee" is a fluid concept that applies to categories which kept changing according to transnational and local history and ensuing changing borders. (For the relationship of Palestinian identity and Jordan history, see Chapter Seven).

2) The Jordanian concept of refugees pertains to 1967 refugees, who are considered "displaced" by Jordan, since they were coming from the West Bank which was then part of Jordan. Those are the "internally displaced". Although they benefit from UNRWA assistance just like the earlier refugees of 1948, they are under DPA protection. In reality, Jordan pays back UNRWA for such services. But for UNRWA[26], 1967 refugees constitute two categories: "displaced" and, as just explained, a sub-category of "refugee-displaced", that is, those who came from the West

[26] See my earlier explanation in Chapter Two.

Bank in 1967 but were already 1948 refugees. These extremely nuanced categories are confusing thus, as mentioned earlier, I use the term “refugee” that is inclusive of all categories. The divide between registered and non-registered is mainly due to economic reasons. Refugees who were financially well-off did not need the basic services of UNRWA, hence did not register. Others, who had fled outside the UNRWA registering areas such as Saudi Arabia or Kuwait, could not register. Also excluded from UNRWA registration was the Bedouin population from Palestine, a nomad community that could not provide any evidence of ownership, or work.

3) The Palestinian refugee concept of a refugee does not include any of the limitations that UNRWA or Jordan has imposed. It is all inclusive.

However, the tangible evidence of refugee status is enclosed inside the camps and lies in another complex issue, that of identity cards. The refugee identity card is important to refugees for several reasons: it gives a person access to a registered refugee status, and thus entitles a family to UNRWA social benefits such as housing, education and healthcare. It has become a political and cultural identity for refugees and has been transmitted through generations.

The number of non-registered refugees is unknown, as there is no census. So the numbers of registered refugees available are only estimates, which show the fluid and changing nature of the category. Yet, the largest concentration of registered refugees is in Jordan. The latest UNRWA figures indicate that there are now 4,255,120 Palestinian registered refugees in total.

In addition to their UNRWA registration card making them official refugees, most Palestinian refugees in Jordan, as mentioned earlier, enjoy Jordanian citizenship. Those two identities are not mutually exclusive. But who is a Jordanian citizen among Palestinian refugees? Camp refugees often brought to my attention another complex and confusing issue, that of the yellow or green ID cards that some Palestinians carry. They were trying to show me the divide and the resulting ordeal to which they are subjected. In trying to understand the ID card system, I received explanations from refugees that vary according to their age, their level education, and direct implication. But they all knew it affected education and jobs. The most accurate explanations came from the older generation or UNRWA officials. The youth and their parents were themselves confused. In fact, after annexing the West Bank in 1949 Jordan granted citizenship to West Bank

Palestinians in 1952 in an attempt to have a unified territory on both sides of the Jordan River, thus helping refugees socially and professionally to resettle (see Khalidi 1997, Massad 2001, Al Husseini 2004). But in 1983, Jordan reversed that decision. West Bank residents could no longer be Jordanian, but only Palestinian. Palestinians, who left the West Bank before 1983, carry yellow ID cards and are entitled to a 5-year Jordanian passport like any Jordanian; whereas those who left after 1983, carry green ID cards. The yellow card is not as limiting as the green card which limits their rights to a two-year renewable Jordanian passport, and does not entitle their children for public education and government positions.

But the wrong ID card, or the lack of it, can affect refugees economically, as is the case for camp refugees from Gaza who do not enjoy the same rights as other refugees in Jordan. There are about 100,000 refugees who are originally from the Gaza Strip, which was formerly administered by Egypt until Israeli occupation in 1967. Only eligible for a temporary Jordanian passport, they do not have full Jordanian citizenship rights. Consequently, they cannot vote, or work for the government, and their children cannot go to public schools and universities. Samaa whose family comes from Gaza goes to Jabal Nasser

UNRWA school. She is an eighth grader. She does not know what will happen to her after 10th grade which is when free UNRWA education stops. She may go to an UNRWA vocational school, if she does not agree to get married off by her parents, a possibility she is dreading. There is a high level of insecurity among Gazan refugees are not protected by the UNRWA system and thus are made vulnerable by not benefiting from the UNRWA services and also by a short-term Jordanian passport.

The complex inclusive and exclusive granting of Jordanian citizenship may be a way for the Jordanian government to control access to education and political power by excluding Palestinian camp refugees.

The legal status of both Jordanian citizen and Palestinian refugee defines the paradoxical situation of the double identity of camp refugees. But the camp remains a virtual homeland for the refugees, and, as importantly, a stronghold of Palestinian identity. Jordan is the only Arab country offering citizenship to its refugees. This is not the case of Lebanon, Syria and Egypt that also have harbored refugees.

A closer analysis of the UNRWA and Jordanian systems reveal something more complex than these categories suggest. When I asked for explanations, refugees were often

confused and uninformed. But such “dividing practices”, seemingly routinized, were eliciting resentment from those who could not go to the West Bank to visit relatives for lack of proper documents. They expressed feelings of insecurity as a result of their short-term Jordanian citizenship, which they feared could be not renewed and would marginalize them even more.

Thus the legal status of camp refugees appears to be a mismatch between their status as refugees from Palestine, a quasi-stateless nation, and their citizenship in Jordan, a nation-state, to which they owe mixed allegiance. This mismatch contributes to the characterization of the “in-between” of the camp refugees’ predicament.

Between Past and Future, Memory and Hope

Both parents and children were born in the camps. It was the grandparent generation that fled and came to seek refuge in the *mukhayyam*. That first generation of camp refugees was for the better part made up of rural people who relied on agriculture for their subsistence. They were small farmers or sharecroppers - *fellahin*, or peasants - from villages in Palestine, which names I soon learned to recognize from the accounts of adults and children and

adolescents. It was striking to hear young people who never failed to give the exact name of the village or town from which each side of the family - maternal and paternal - originated. They often did not know exactly where it was, however. Just “somewhere in Palestine” was enough to remember.

Parents and grandparents seemed to enjoy engaging in constant production of narratives of their history. When I was sitting with a family, the older person would trace back the original village they came from, and it was almost always a subject of animated discussion and reminiscence with the rest of the family. In camp refugee collective memory, the homeland is a golden land, a land of milk and honey. The old generation described nostalgically the unique smell and taste that food had back home. “The smell of the fields of cucumbers could be smelled from far away.” “The figs tasted like nowhere else.” “We would make the best olive oil from our own olive trees.” Such was the Palestinian rendering of Proust’s “petite madeleine”. Through their senses they remember their homes and their pasts. Memory and remembrance are central to the camp refugee experience. Memory articulates Palestinian identity, and it is the depository of their history. Pierre Nora, writing about the “history” of memory (1989), notes

that the transformation of memory implied a shift from the historical to the psychological, from the social to the individual, from the objective message to its subjective reception, from repetition to rememoration. These are some of the processes evident in Palestinian refugees' accounts as their repetitive narratives keep looking for their lost land through memories.

Although the grandchildren may know the village where their family comes from, they are fairly ignorant of Palestinian history in general. At present the historic narratives of the grandparents are preserved by a camp refugee collective memory. What will happen when the old generation will no longer be alive?

If memory is conceived in metaphorical terms, as Crapanzano suggests, and if we consider the space about which he writes, between remembrance and the remembered event (2004:156-157), the camp occupies that in-between space and has thus become a metaphor of a metaphor. It may be viewed as a monument of sorts, a commemoration of the *Nakba* and Palestinian exile. Unlike usual places of commemoration where rituals take place in a timely fashion, the camp is part of the everyday life of the refugees, a space of historical memory, a "lieu de memoire", or site of

memory, to use Nora's term. The Palestinian camp is metonymic of the *Nakba*.

The loss of the land, or "*watan*", for rural people like the camp refugees who lived off their land, is still a painful reality. Their symbolic attachment to their lost land has remained powerful. It was a central point in refugees' accounts. The loss of the *balad*[27] is a reason for grieving. Identity and place are indeed part of the same equation: a strong symbolic relationship that links people to a specific space or piece of land. The "place" is the refugee's own plot of land, and also the homeland. The loss of their homeland has strengthened their Palestinian identity as much as their struggles to regain it, and makes the symbolism of the village even more important. The attachment to the *balad* is an emotional and cognitive experience, which has also deep meanings culturally, historically, and socio-politically (see Low 1992, Hidalgo & Hernandez 2001). At home, it is reinforced by powerful symbols, such as the key of their former home, a picture of Al Aqsa Mosque in *Al-Quds* (Jerusalem), or a small Palestinian flag – although these are forbidden outside in the camp. Sometimes the old title deed of their former

[27] The word *balad* means both village and homeland

house in Palestine has been kept as a treasured piece of their memory and also as evidence of their claim of return.

In the summer of 2000 in South Lebanon, I had had a first-hand account of the Palestinian attachment to their land. Hundreds of Palestinian camp refugees in Lebanon had traveled by bus to the South Lebanon border with Israel. This area had just been recently liberated from a long Israeli occupation. There, they met with family relatives, who had come from inside Israel, on the other side of the border. For camp refugees, it is “Palestine”. They were meeting over and through a barbed-wire fence guarded by Israeli soldiers. Yet, looking over the fence onto “Palestine” was like seeing a mirage, many Palestinians told me. They had traveled not only to see their relatives but also to see their homeland. They were having deep emotional reactions of joy and sorrow. They described their feelings to me as both appeasing and painful. From their location in south Lebanon, which was dry-looking since it had been militarily occupied and not agriculturally developed, they were looking across the border at “their Palestine”, a green area planted with trees, lush and prosperous-looking. An older refugee woman was saying, “this is the Palestine we have left. It was beautiful like that.”

This loss is felt as a source of humiliation as the land was to the peasant his "raison d'être". Since they have settled in the camps their former agricultural practices have ceased and only now exist mimed in Palestinian folkloric dances, which they view as symbols of a happy and careless past. They suffer from a psychological trauma of having lost everything and having had their internal worlds violated. In having been deprived of their land, a symbol of honor in a rural society, their lives have lost their value. They have been stripped of their *sharaf*, honor, and *mahaba*, dignity, highly significant values in their lives. The older generation recalls the days at the beginning of their refugee-camp life when, as tent dwellers, they had to line up with other refugees, often under a blazing sun, and wait to receive their food rations of rice or flour from large bags off the food trucks. It was a shameful experience, they say, to depend on welfare assistance.

For them life has become "bare life", they are merely bodies, as Agamben (1998), a philosopher, writing about the individual in relation to law and sovereign power, calls the life of concentration camp detainees. Agamben conceives of life as constituted by two meanings: One is the natural biological life (Greek: *zoë*) and the

other is political life, or life in the polis (Greek: *bios*). Agamben extends his argument to state and space of exception such as other "*zones d'attente*", or waiting areas, zones of indistinction in airports or elsewhere, where illegal immigrants are held, sometimes for days, pending a judicial decision. Camp refugees have been deprived of their rights as human beings, as political individuals. I do not mean to say in any way that Palestinian refugee camps are concentration camps. My point here is to emphasize the sense of deprivation and loss of camp refugees, who have been broken by a long exile and wait. As I discuss in next chapter, by becoming *fedayin*, or fighters, camp refugees sought to regain their honor. This is why memory and remembrance are so crucial in the camp refugee collective psyche, since it is about fighting for their land and honor.

Collective memory has helped camp refugees oppose the misrecognition of history. By remembering Palestine camp families have created their self-recognition as a nation, hence have ceased to be victims but political agents who refuse to be negated, not only as individuals, but also in relation to the land and territory they embody. Acceptance of being negated would deprive them of hope and a great deal hope is vested in the new generation of

children and adolescents who represent a large part of the population of the camps. In losing their land, they have recreated another common Palestinian space in the camp, that is, the space of the *mukhayyam*, a space of temporary replacement. The camp provides both a spatial and political site for imagining their past homeland and the broad refugee community outside the camp. Old refugees keep dreaming of their land, of a village that often does not exist any longer since the mythical Palestine that they remember from 30 and 50 years ago, has been partially destroyed, redesigned, restructured, and renamed by Israel. Going back to their land and village is a recurring theme of the camp refugee discourse, among all age groups, even if most of them have never seen Palestine.

The drastic social change from a rural to an urban life and the uncertainty of their in-between situation contribute to complex defense mechanisms. Remembering, imagining and hoping, transport camp refugees back and forth in time, into the "hinterlands", as Crapanzano (2004: 25) calls such "beyond" imaginary spaces. For camp refugees those spaces are their past and future. Imagining is used for constructing a future based on memories of places and practices, often reconstructed through their senses in images, smells and songs. Both memory and hope are framed

in time, and hope is evoked almost always with "God willing" or other invocations of God's mercy. Refugees are torn between their existence in a limen, at the margins, and their hope of return to their land. The community is made fragile by the in-between of their situation: between a quasi-stability conferred by many years of camp living in exile, and the constant threat that the exile could become permanent and they could again lose their home in the camp, if UNRWA stops its operations. Abu Khaled, who was born in the camps, and whose children were also born there was saying that his generation may not go back, but God willing, his children will. Yet he was not totally sure, maybe things will get better, or maybe worse. He is a religious man and for him God will decide.

Thus, a collective, spatial, cultural identity has emerged among the refugees based on a historical past and daily living in camps for now four generations (Farah 1999, Hart 2005). Refugees are the "*Mukhayyamjieh*". Even today, the younger generations of refugees identify themselves with the year of their parents crossing over the Jordan River in 1948 or 1967. "My family is from '48…." or "We are from '67". Similarly, young children, born in the camps, would refer to their parents' village in Palestine as their own place of origin. For some older refugees the village is

still their primary identity (see Chapter Seven on identity). Such refugee identity is shared by thousands of other imagined Palestinian refugees living in similar conditions, not only in Jordan, but also in other Palestinian *mukhayyamat*[28], or refugee camps, in other Middle East countries, who are also stigmatized by neighbors not living in camps.

The small space of their house in the camp may be today the only evidence refugees hold of their belonging to their former homeland. In remaining inside the camp, refugees claim they demonstrate their opposition to political and cultural forces from Jordan, which wants to assimilate them, and from Israel, which rejects them. The act of living in the camps purportedly allows them to express their political will of not giving up their rights as refugees. The political stance they take gives them pride and is remindful of the Hutu refugees in Tanzania who perceived exile as part of a process of purification, a test of strength and moral worth (Malkki 1995). For these refugees purity was associated with a Hutu awareness of the collective past and a source of pride as the "true natives", even if they were in a subordinate position, opposed to the Tutsi who were constructed by the Hutu as

[28] Plural form of *mukhayyam,* or camp

not belonging to the true nation of Burundi from which they had become refugees. So purity which had been acquired in exile was associated with the authenticity of belonging to the nation, what Malkki calls ”nationness”. I suggest that in the case of the Palestinian camp refugees in Jordan similar processes are taking place.

Accordingly, the camp crystallizes the Palestinian ”refugeeness” and the right of return. For example, Souad, the oldest daughter of a family I interviewed said: ”Even if I become rich I would still live here because if I leave the camp I won’t be a refugee any longer”. She comes from a family where the father fought like many other Palestinians during the Palestinian uprising of the 1970s. In her family there is a tradition of political mobilization, but it goes back to long ago; Souad, who is in her mid-thirties is an active member of a women’s association, but this is as far as she can be politically engaged under the tight control of the Jordanian government. It thus appears clear that the camp refugee argument of wanting to live in the camp is a way of being politically engaged for a second generation of refugees who have not fought in the 1970’s like their parents.

Mouna, a woman lawyer that I met in Jabal Nasser camp, lives in the camp. She was married off at the age

fourteen to a rich, older man, she says. After having her children she went back to school to acquire a law degree against the will of her family and husband. She says she could surely afford living outside the camp, but she wants to remain a camp resident because if every refugee leaves the camp, it would mean giving up their right of return to their land. The pride of being a refugee may hide deeper feelings and contradictions. It may hide their humiliation of having been dispossessed and living in camps. Camp families who have been recipients of UNRWA benefits for decades, take such benefits as their legitimate right. The early feelings of shame have been superseded by stalwart feelings of entitlement.

At the same time, the camp offers for many refugees, who were the original occupiers of the *wihda*, or unit, free housing, and for others low rent in a city like Amman where real estate has skyrocketed. So allegiance to the camp co-exists with economy and also a desire for upward mobility, as Umm Tareq told me that she hoped her son will be successful in his business so that they could buy a house and move out of Wihdat. Umm Tareq's position at the same time is against any improvement in the camp as described earlier. This may seem contradictory, but illustrates the quasi-stability and movement dynamic in

which refugees are caught. Umm Khaled also would like to have more children, but when she moves out of Wihdat.

The camp also represents a “here-now" as refugees strive to find ways of surviving in a temporary space. Accepting their home as definite and final is an idea they refuse although they are unaware of how long UNRWA and the camps will continue to exist. If they were to accept their camp condition as final, which would then be the end of UNRWA, it would be devastating for them. Refugees are thus trapped in a liminal space, between a mythical past and an uncertain future, in which they live from day to day in a dynamic of quasi-stability and movement they create to survive.

***«Un Etat dans L’Etat»*: A Site of Construction and Commerce**

Palestinian refugees in Jordan are mobile and are not prisoners in the camps. They often work outside the camp. Tareq, the oldest son of Umm Tareq, works outside the camp in a furniture company, and her daughter works for an electric equipment company in the center of Amman. Many refugees have relatives living in other camps in Jordan, or in the West Bank. Some families who left their villages in the West Bank have relatives still living there in close-by villages, only a few miles from the ones they escaped from

in 1967. Until the second Intifada in 2000, they were able to go to the West Bank on their Jordanian passport to visit, or reunite with the rest of the family. But now, crossing the border at the Allenby Bridge or the King Hussein Bridge – both bridges lead to the West Bank of the Jordan River now under Israeli occupation - has become, according to many accounts, a lengthy and humiliating ordeal for Palestinians as they interact with Israeli border authorities. As a result, for some these visits have become rare. Only a few refugees are willing to endure the long travel - often a whole day to cover some 40 or 50 miles - for a happy event like a wedding, or a sad family occasion like a funeral.

Al-Wihdat camp also houses a famous Jordanian soccer team and a sports club of the same name, which has been since the 1960s an important place for Palestinian identity construction and the pride of young residents and their families.

The camp is also a significant locus of mediation for UNRWA and local secular and religious NGOs workers who are working and interacting on a daily basis in various ways with refugees, as they educate, carry social work and implement policies (Cf. Chapter Six on UNRWA). The UNRWA and NGO workers are Palestinian refugees for the most part,

which creates a bond and also a divide between the camp dwellers and the other Palestinian refugees, non-camp dwellers. Every day a large number of refugee workers come to work and a large number of camp residents leave the camp to work outside. Some camp workers live in other camps and commute to the camp where they work. The camp community participation in NGO community improvement programs, or their general embracing of *huquq al-atfal*, or children's rights, by camp families as a discourse of empowerment, show some of the strategies camp refugees seek to construct themselves as agents. UNICEF and local NGOs have funded several community projects, which have focused on the camps. They aim at improving the camp structurally while empowering the entire community including women and adolescents who participate. Again, the camp refugee refusal of a permanent settlement, including housing improvement, may appear ambiguous and contradictory due to their participation in community improvement. To be sure, they are not against better living conditions. But, strong resentment of an enduring exile, and their long-standing entitled claim to UN aid make them accepting at the same time of the very power structure that enframes them.

As the temporary situation persists and the camp keeps outgrowing its original boundaries, new strategies are used to cope with the hard economic living conditions. The several financial strategies of refugees, such as the sale of their units, or transforming them into places of commerce contribute to the fluid character of the camp.

The camp space is fragmented into housing and business areas. Some refugees divide part of their unit to open a small store. I was told by Aida, a camp refugee, that people who own small businesses are wealthy because the camp provides a highly profitable commercial location. Some local "outsiders" have opened small businesses in partnership with insiders "mukhayyamjieh" in order to reap good profits from the inexpensive goods they are selling. The affordable prices of that "open mall" of sorts, or *suq,* in the center of the camp attract numerous buyers from outside creating thriving business operations. According to Al-Hamarneh (2002), those businesses do not provide much employment to camp residents though, as less than 8% of residents are employed inside the camp; the others work outside the camp.

The latest wave of camp refugees has included the Palestinians from the Gulf – about 300,000 - who came back in 1991 at the onset of the Gulf War. The vast majority

settled in the urban areas of Amman and Zarqa, located 14 miles outside of Amman. Some had relatives already living in the camps, which motivated their settling in the low-rent housing that the camps and its expanded areas provided. Some had a difficult time to find work, whereas others invested in small businesses in the camps or renovated houses. Hence a number of new shops and service companies have appeared since their arrival.

The camp has inevitably been caught in the movements of capitalism. After many decades of living inside the camps, the refugees have come to view their housing units as commodities to negotiate and trade not only for use as commercial space, but also for housing non-refugee outsiders.

The informal economy has been also flourishing. Al-Wihdat has become the main trade and service center of South Amman and its spatial and economic expansion is indeed related to the increasing expansion of the capital city. More recently since the war in Iraq, a great deal of Iraqi money has been invested in Amman eliciting a boom in real estate development in the city. Consequently, the urban camps are seeing its repercussions, as the camps also provide a lucrative real estate market, depending on the areas: the central market section is a prime location. In

contrast, other areas of the camps unsuitable for commercial investments are gradually becoming distressed pockets, housing impoverished residents. Could some camps, or parts of the camps, become new gentrified areas attracting capital? Al-Hamarneh (2002) argues for an assimilation of Palestinians in Jordan and envisages that an increasing economic and infrastructure development could lead to a new urban economic situation that may not require the international protection of the UNRWA. True, the commercial improvements of the camp may represent a significant space for economic integration. This explains why Umm Tareq's reaction frowning at the bulldozer enlarging the main road: integration through economic improvement would work against the right of return for refugees.

The population of the camp is not completely homogeneous. Low-income housing in the camps attract migrant workers, mostly Iraqi and Egyptian. I was shown an area of Al-Wihdat which is particularly run-down and dirty, and where Gypsy families live. Abu Walid, a camp officer, explained that the garbage truck could not get into these streets because they were too narrow and hence camp dwellers had to be responsible for their garbage. He was

critical of the Gypsies for their lack of civic sense that he compared to the Palestinian camp dwellers'.

These transformations escape the enframing of UNRWA and DPA. Abu Walid, the camp officer and a refugee, is aware of the mobility and fluidity of the camp. I asked him how could camp refugees build and expand their unit over the one the additional floor allowed by Jordanian policies. He casually answered that the Government knew about it and looked the other way.

For a vulnerable community like that of the refugees, the camp creates a shield, a symbolic, bounded space. The limiting UNRWA rule of transmission of refugee status through patrilineal descent has inevitably elicited endogamy among the community concerned to keep its refugee rights, and makes the community tighter. That and an explosive population have made the camp space an even closer community. As Olfat (Umm Tahir) from Jabal Nasser camp told me, she feels at ease and secure when her children are playing in the streets because neighbors look out for them. She could not possibly leave them to play in the streets outside the camps, she says. In fact, I had noticed that when I was walking inside the camps, teen-aged schoolgirls I knew would sometimes accompany me back as far as the main road marking the border of the camp. They would

stop there as they were not allowed to go out of the camp, as it were.

"Can refugees vote? " I asked Umm Tareq. "Of course. We are Jordanian citizens", she answered with pride. The right to vote was visibly an empowering right for her and she knew that other Palestinian refugees in other countries did not have these rights. Although she is critical of Jordan, like all camp refugees, and has a strong Palestinian identity, here she readily identified with Jordan in using "we". She explained that people living in the camps vote as part of a larger electoral district included in the province on which the camp depends. They do not represent an electoral force per se. So their power is weakened as a social group since Jordan government policies consistently try to assimilate the refugee population. Umm Tareq was accepting of that fact. The power that the right to vote conferred on her may have superseded the belonging to a distinct electoral group.

Conclusion

Portraying the camp is not an easy task, as the primary transient aspect of the camp has given way to a theater of all kinds of "in-between", "inside-outside", and inclusion-exclusion processes stemming from international

and national policies of control that have varied according to history.

The liminal space of the camp makes it a place of entrapment and also of mobility. The refugee wait fueled by fear, pain, hope, distress, and remembrance has given way to a collective transformation. To the rules of order and discipline that bind them, camp refugees have responded by recreating village solidarity, the creation of commerce and trade, an extension to their housing unit, and taking on non-Palestinian refugees.

The camp refugee discourse concerning their insistence on residing in the camp expresses their ambivalent feelings nourished by the in-between space in which they live: on the one hand, they want to be part of Jordan while resisting it, and on the other hand, they are strongly determined to hold onto their right of return to their homeland.

The camp has also enabled the occurrence of considerable social change, that is, the passage for thousands of refugees from rural lives to urban lives after the *Nakba* and the 1967 war. Such global processes have shaped the local experience of camp refugee families, which is described in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR

CAMP FAMILIES AND SOCIALIZATION PRACTICES

Introduction

The family cell has been the pride of Palestinian refugees through exile. Strong family ties have consistently provided strength, endurance, resistance and identity to camp refugees and have thus enabled the reproduction of a Palestinian camp refugee culture.

Yet, upon inquiring among children and adolescents if they knew about children's rights, the general response I received summed up the four main sources of their socialization: they had learned about it from their parents, from the Qur'an, from TV, and from school (See Chapter Six on education).

This chapter explores the family life of camp refugees and describes practices of socialization and enculturation at home that include not only parent disciplinary authority and religion, but also agents of modernization such as TV, and NGO aid programs. I give examples of the ways the space of the family is a site of transmission of religious knowledge, socio-cultural change, negotiation of refugee claims, and ensuing contradictions and tensions.

What is it about the Palestinian camp refugee family that distinguishes it from other Palestinian refugee families living outside the camp, and other Arab families, and fosters - rather than suppresses - a new local discourse on the rights of the child?

The Making of the Urban Camp Refugee Family

Refugees who went to Jordan came mostly from regions such as Jerusalem, Al-Khalil (Hebron), Gaza, Tulkarm, Jenin, Al-Ramla, Jaffa. Jordan, their host country numbers 5,5 million people and has been experiencing a severe, chronic problem of poverty and unemployment that has affected all regions of the country, especially urban areas, and bears heavily on camp refugee families. The private sector, however, has been

increasingly expanding especially since the Iraq war, and Jordan has largely benefited from new Iraqi investments, including money laundering. Such expansion has only broadened the gap between wealthy people and poor people. In Amman, there is a high polarization of income between rich and poor. The rate of poverty is 12,5 percent[29]; unemployment rate is 12 percent and the minimum monthly wage JD 85 (about $ 120).

In the span of the past five decades, significant structural transformations have taken place in the lives of Palestinian refugee families and affected their cultural practices. By becoming refugees, Palestinian families of Al-Wihdat and Jabal Nasser and other urban refugee camps, who were formerly peasants, were involuntarily turned practically overnight into urban workers and, as Marx would have it, were prime candidates to grow the ranks of the proletariat. Their consciousness, however, seemed to have been oriented less toward class than toward a political and national struggle. In Lebanon, during the war of the camps in the 1980's, Palestinian camp refugee families, former *fellahin,* or peasants, became *fedayin*, or revolutionaries, (see Sayigh 1979). Similarly, camp refugees in Jordan

[29] Jordan Times, October 14, 2004

demonstrated during the uprising in 1970 that they were able to fight and organize a resistance.

Just as E.P. Thompson (1963) looked at the English working class between 1780 and 1832 during the Industrial Revolution as active agents of social change who contributed to the making of their own history, I contend that camp refugees between 1948 and 2005 have not been passive victims of their fate, but actively engaged in the making of their own social and cultural circumstances in the new camp environment, in spite of their suffering and pain.

The “depeasantization” of camp refugees has not been a positive process, as many refugees became poorly integrated into urban centers (Cf.Peretz 1977). As peasants, they lacked the skills needed to survive in an urban environment, and thus remain largely dependent on UNRWA benefits which have been considerably diminishing. UNRWA has had difficulties to meet the needs of refugees adequately, for since the 1990s the agency has had to deal on the one hand, with significant budget cuts, and on the other hand, an increase of birth rate among refugee families. Camp families have been importantly affected by those cuts: reimbursements of hospital costs have been reduced, hence the quality of care has deteriorated; and

free school-lunches and free clothing are no longer distributed to children. Camp refugees complained about the lack of free medication for their children, and the increase of UNRWA referrals to public hospitals. They said they often ended up paying for medication and hospitalization out of their own pocket. All refugees, however, are able to receive free basic health care, family planning and pre-natal care through UNRWA.

That hard economic situation has not been without consequences for the daily lives of the refugees who have financially been stranded and have seen more domestic violence, physical abuse, and child labor, which I discuss later in this chapter. During the mid 1970s until the mid 1980s, many camp refugee families benefited from remittances from family members in Kuwait or Persian Gulf countries. But those have stopped since the Gulf war and the return of Palestinians from Kuwait. Today, camp refugees work for the most part in trade and manufacturing or are wage laborers. They are skilled and unskilled factory workers working outside the camp, or small shop owners or peddlers. They range from poor to “lower middle class”, including cab drivers, bank clerks, or bookkeepers.

When I first met camp families and was introduced as a researcher working on children’s rights, women

immediately voiced their complaints that rights - children's basic rights - were not met. They wanted good healthcare for their children and also for them as parents; more living space for the family and playing space for children. Such was their perception of children's rights. It was usual that refugees would speak out to me about their difficult living conditions in the camp in relation to children's rights. Their main concerns were poverty, the shortage of education opportunities, the political situation in the region, that is, the Israeli occupation, and the American occupation of Iraq. I listened to them with a lot of empathy.

Jordan provides many administrative jobs to Jordanians, but those are not realistically accessible to camp refugees who find themselves objects of job discrimination. Administrative jobs are very coveted in Jordan as they provide financial security, a stable career track and good social benefits. Numerous refugee accounts unanimously reflected strong resentment of job discrimination. It makes them hold on even more to their Palestinian identity (See Chapter Seven on identity). About 17%[30] of refugee camp residents are self-employed, since they have no *wasta,* personal influential contacts, to

[30] Fafo. Survey 427. 2003

acquire jobs with the Jordanian administration. In Jordan, *wasta* is a crucial means to obtain social and professional privileges, but it mostly works for Jordanians. The right connections are key to land a good position in a government administration, a bank or a private company.

In the camps few women manage to work because of their large number of children. Some women are found among teachers both in UNRWA schools and public schools. UNRWA has been for decades the main employer of refugees at all levels of positions and thus has largely contributed to bringing upward social mobility to many refugees (see Chapter Six on UNRWA). Although many teachers and UNRWA employees were born in the camp, they have now moved out for the most part.

The lack of urban economic success among camp refugees is in sharp contrast with refugees outside the camp who thrive mostly in the private sector, as administrative and army positions traditionally go to Jordanians (see Abu-Odeh 1999). Some old Palestinian elite families, originally from the West Bank, settled in Jordan, where they enjoy high status and prestige and are close to the monarchy. This elite Palestinian social group has produced several ambassadors and government ministers. The current government spokesperson and Minister of State, is a

Palestinian woman. But inside the camps, as camp refugees perceive their situation as transitory, the “in-between” aspect of their existence may be a hindrance to their totally engaging in the country’s economy.

Camp Refugee Family Types

There are three distinct groups of camp refugee families: the first and main group is typically the nuclear family, a family of two parents with seven or eight children in which only one member – generally the father - works; the second group consists of the extended family that includes parents, grandparents, unmarried adult children, and younger children, in which several members are working. The extended family group fares better than the other groups. Hardship cases represent the third and smallest group of families. This latter group is often eligible for both Jordanian welfare benefits and UNRWA benefits. They are families that include a widowed or divorced mother with children, or families with 7 or 8 children in which the father - deemed to be the provider - is handicapped and unable to work.

1) The Nuclear Family.

The family of Umm Khaled is an example of a nuclear family. Umm Khaled is 32 years old and has 6 children. With Abu Khaled, her husband, they live in three rooms. She would like to have more children but "not in Wihdat", she says. She wants to move out of Al-Wihdat as soon as the family can afford it, and raise her children in a better environment. Her husband, Abu Khaled, is a bank clerk, and she is a homemaker. There is only one income in their household and housing is free. The unit belongs to Abu Khaled's father. This seems a good reason to stay in the camp. One *iftar* night, or Ramadan dinner, I came to their house to find Abu Khaled in the kitchen helping his wife prepare the *kneffeh*, a dessert pastry made with cheese. He is thirty five years old and gets involved with his children when he is at home, unlike the patriarchal model.

Ramadan is a time of getting together for the family. The *iftar* is usually a large meal because it is the only meal of the day and the extended family gets together. The various family members take turns for *iftar* dinner, and it may take place in different households during the week. Everybody pitches in with many dishes and that way families can produce a spectacular display of food. At Umm Khaled's

home, everyone sat on the floor and ate delicious food on a plastic sheet put on the floor of the main room.

The nuclear family – a recent trend - is a new pattern due partly to the older generation dying out, and partly to economic reasons. It is difficult to support seven children on average plus a wife and grandparents in Amman on one salary. Thus it is not uncommon for the older generation to live with a son or daughter who is not married.

2) The Extended Family

Seventeen people live in Umm Tareq's house, which is not unusual for an extended family group. In Umm Tareq's case, the family consists of two brother families with parents, unmarried children and younger ones, a divorced daughter - which is fairly rare, and two grandmothers, all living in a space on two levels, one level for each brother's family. Umm Tareq's son from the family upstairs is engaged to be married to his younger cousin from the family downstairs. They are first cousins. Hence Umm Tareq had her son build an extra room on the roof for the future couple.

Another example of extended family is Souad's family. Souad is not married. She is probably in her late

thirties and runs the Jordanian Women Center for women and children in Al-Wihdat camp. She lives with her extended family, as this is the only way in camp refugee families and also in Jordanian families. The family includes Souad's both parents, her two married brothers with their spouses and six children, and two unmarried brothers who are 20 and 22 years old. The extended family presents the economic benefits of a pooled income and shared expenses. A woman gains her social identity through her husband and children, hence being a single woman, or *aazba*, like Souad, carries a stigma in a community that highly values marriage.

Like many other refugees, Souad wants to remain in the camp, and hold on to her right of return. She claims that as refugees they are victims of a political conflict involving the international community and for which they carry no responsibility. She contends that her current status is the responsibility of the United Nations. She is in fact referring to a 1949 United Nations Resolution 194 promising Palestinian refugees a return to their homeland, of which specific number she may be unaware.

3) The Hardship Case Family.

This is the case of Umm Amir's family. They live in Al-Wihdat camp and come from Lydd, a village in

Palestine. Many refugees in the camp come from Lydd. The family includes the father, the mother, and eight children, three girls and five boys. Umm Amir, like many women of her generation, went to a vocational school, got married at seventeen, had children, and now works at home raising a large family. She used to live in Jabel Hussein camp before she got married and then moved to Al-Wihdat camp. The father cannot work because he has rheumatism. They live on cash assistance. They are very poor and in spite of their dire situation they looked happy, at least when they saw me. I call them "the happy family" because the children are always smiling and the mother is a jovial woman. They probably smiled more for me to make a good impression, but the social worker who works with them told me that the family has an optimistic disposition. They do not own furniture. When I was there, part of their home was being demolished and turned into a store. Umm Amir explains that part of the unit belongs to her husband's brother who is building a store. Their house is messy. We sat outside in the patio on old plastic garden chairs. I was sitting next to the washing machine in the middle of a lot of junk and rubble. Unfortunately, I finished my fieldwork before I could see the store finished. Umm Amir explained: "My husband's brother, who owns the unit, or part of it, is

financing the store. The house came from my father-in-law. When he died, it went to his three sons and two daughters. One of the sons died and left eleven children. So now our unit belongs to five families". I asked if this was an oral agreement. "It is a written agreement", she said, "done between families, which was made legal".

Most women like Umm Amir who has eight children do not work outside their home. With all her children going to school and not always on the same double-shift schedule, she finds it hard even to work at home doing the Palestinian hand-embroidery that she could sell through the Jordanian Women's Union. Her daughter, Deema, may continue for two remaining years in a Jordanian public school outside the camp in order to complete her high school education and get her *tawajihi*, or high school diploma. She may also go to a UNRWA vocational school where she will learn a trade. According to an UNRWA Social Studies teacher, 80% of the camp refugees children and adolescents learn a trade at a vocational school and only 20% go onto a public school from 10th to 12th grade to complete their high school education.

Camp refugees mothers like Umm Amir, would like UNRWA schools to go until 12th grade instead of 10th and

enough money for higher education for children. Education is compulsory in Jordan from 1st grade to 10th grade.

Another hardship case family is the Hassan family. The father has a physical handicap and cannot work. Hence the family is labeled by UNRWA as a hardship case, and consequently receives money from UNRWA social services. The mother is 32 and has 8 children. When I asked if she wanted to have more she said no, but the father said yes. He continued to say that he could take another wife to have more children if his wife did not want to. She did not seem to take it seriously as if he was showing off. I asked how he thought he could support more children. He answered, "God will provide". I interpreted his self-assured answer to mean that his children were his wealth since he was not able to work. I discuss later in the chapter the relationship of poverty and family size.

Inside a home

When I was visiting a family I was almost always sitting in the 'saloun" with the entire family, whether it was an extended or a nuclear family. Families are large and everybody instantly gathered and wanted to sit and chat with me.

Typically the inside of a camp home is laid out like a traditional Arab house. The rooms are organized around a central area, which size may vary according to the way the family utilizes the space. It is usually open, has no ceiling and forms a small patio with a cement floor. Sometimes that open space may be covered with a roof top of corrugated metal. It is often used to hang out laundry to dry and also as an outdoor space in the warm months, which are about nine to ten months a year. A unit consists in general of two or three rooms, a small kitchen and a washing area with just a sink, or sometimes a small bathroom. One room is for the parents and the younger children, and the second room is for the older children (and the grandparents, if they live at home). The latter room is also a multi-functional space, which during the day is used as the “saloun”, living-room, for the family and guests. Generally three or more persons share the same room. Often some rooms do not have a window. The presence of furniture depends on the resources of the family. Umm Amir’s home does not have furniture, but only thin foam mattresses that are used to sleep on at night, and sit on during the day. The extra mattresses are piled up in a corner of the room waiting to be used at night. The family

owns several old garden plastic chairs and a small low plastic stool used as a table.

During the hot months of summer, only some families are able to afford fans. The blocks of concrete that are used for building the house are not hermetic insulators. The homes are hot in the summer and cold and humid in the winter. The concrete floors retain the cold and make the house even colder. Families who can afford heating use propane gas heaters, which are not very efficient.

On the walls of almost every home, including the poorest, one can see calligraphic quotes from the Quran in a picture frame, or the more ubiquitous picture of Haram El Sharif with Al Aqsa Mosque, in Al Quds, or Jerusalem. It is the third holy place for Muslims and its highly symbolic image is displayed inside Palestinian homes in a photo, or painting, or wall tapestry.

Children have no indoor or outdoor playing space for sports or outdoor games. Boys often play in the narrow alleys of the camp, as indicated earlier, or go to the UNRWA school when the school is still open to play ball in the playground. This is the only available open space. Girls indicated they sometimes play ball on the roof, or inside their house. It may not be easy to do given the

restricted space of their home and the number of people in the family.

Al-Wihdat and Jabal Nasser camps have running water and electricity in every house, which is the case for all urban camps, but not in all rural camps. Water is a highly precious commodity in Jordan, and as in any home in Amman, water trucks deliver water once a week to residents. Umm Khaled asked me: “What do you think of Wihdat?” A difficult question to answer.

Family Practices and Gender Roles

The rural system of life of the first generation of camp refugees has been broken, but not their family structure. The family has remained a strong base of social organization and the support system of the camp refugee family (see Sirhan 1975).

The Palestinian camp refugee family retains many characteristics of the Arab family (see Barakat 1993, Fernea 1995) such as a traditional emphasis on male dominance – father, brother, son, grandfather, and father’s relatives and stratification by gender and age. Men have the right to polygamous marriages according to Islamic law, although it is not common in the camps since it represents an expensive family arrangement in terms of money and

space. Marriage and parenthood are of supreme importance to camp refugees.

Families are patriarchal. Most children's accounts reported that the father was the "boss' in the family, but some indicated that the mother was equally involved in decision making. I am not sure if they wanted to please me because I was a woman, or whether they were expressing a reality. Housework is usually the task of the women. The mother and the daughters cook and clean with little help from the husband and brothers. Although it is not always the case: in Abu Khaled's home everybody helped, when I was there. But in Umm Amir's house, her daughters were unhappy with the fact that their brothers did not help in the house and had more advantages in terms of freedom, education, etc… than they did. The boys are allowed to play outside with their friends or go to youth centers, whereas the girls stay at home and are not allowed to go out on their own apart from going to school. In addition, most refugee parents invest more readily in the boys' education than the girls. The girls are expected to get married, have children, and not work. Hence they are deemed not worth the financial investment and subsequent return that a boy represents. Girls often said that they wanted to be treated like boys; whereas boys seemed to enjoy their privileges

and openly said they were satisfied that religion dictate prevented girls from being equal to boys. They were happy to reproduce the traditional patriarchal roles. In the context of limited resources that the camp provides, and, more broadly, that Jordan offers camp refugees, boys may feel threatened by girls' potential access to opportunities which were so far only available to them as males. I suggest this explains the boys' more vested interest in tradition.

Many children and adolescents, boys and girls, reported that it was easier to talk to their mother than to their father. Some also said that they had tried to have a frank conversation with their father and as a result had been hit. Adolescence as it is experienced in America is a special period of growth with characteristics such as rebellion, and often a lack of respect for the elders including parents. That is not the case among camp families. Respect for parents and elders is *de rigueur* among children and adolescents, who do not make demands and are generally in total acceptance of their family. The camp family forms an organic unit and a nest, but a nest so large that children do not have to leave.

Many marriages are arranged by the parents of the couple. Although every young girl with whom I talked wanted

to choose her husband, it is not often the case. It is the man who chooses his spouse. The girl is presented with a candidate, and at best she is given the choice to refuse him. Many young girls expressed that they wanted to get married after finishing university at twenty two or twenty three years old.

Young men find it difficult to get married, as they may be unemployed, hence unable to afford the *mahr.* Consequently, the lack of financial resources has prevented many young people from going to university and from getting married, especially since the amount of the *mahr*[31], has been steadily increasing. This is a general issue in Jordan. In Islamic terms, the *mahr* is perceived as a wedding gift, which is presented to the bride by her husband and is included in the nuptial contract. The *mahr* is in principle not transferable to her father or husband. In anthropological terms, the *mahr* money is a commodity, a symbolic sum for an act of exchange, or reciprocity (see Levi-Strauss 1969). It is meant to insure financial security to the woman in case of divorce, although under Islamic law she may also get alimony. In order to get married, a man must be able to come up with the *mahr*, which

[31] Or bride wealth. It is property or money transferred from the groom, or his family, to the bride and sometimes to her family (cf Khuri 1970).

amount is agreed upon after negotiations between both families. Marriage is a business which financial terms and percentages are highly variable according to the families. It all takes place outside the bride's control. In case of a divorce, only part of the *mahr* is given back to the husband, but a portion is not returnable and will be kept by the bride or her family, even if the family is not supposed to be the beneficiary. In some cases though, the *mahr* of a daughter goes to help the son get married, a common practice among many ethnic groups according to Levi-Strauss. The husband is responsible for providing a home for the couple, furnishing it, and giving gold jewelry to his bride, which will be hers if they divorce. It is usually a jewelry set that consists of a gold necklace, a pair of earrings, and a bracelet. She will add it to her own jewelry that she may have inherited from her mother. The groom also pays for the wedding party. This is also the custom for Arab marriages in the Middle East.

There is not much intermarriage among poor Jordanians and Palestinians, as both sides are reluctant to enter such alliances: Jordanians feel socially superior and Palestinians want to preserve their identity and refugee rights that they could loose if a Palestinian woman marries out. Thus I was told by a Jordanian young woman who had

married a Palestinian from a camp – an exception - that her family did not want him at first, but after a while he was finally accepted because his family was a "good religious family". "Being from a religious family", she says, "was a plus" (*to be accepted in a Jordanian family*)[32]. The value of observing religion offset the fact he was a camp refugee, a looked- down-upon identity.

Marriages between cousins, often first cousin, or cross-cousin marriages, are therefore a good way for poor families not to spend too much money, as the *mahr* may not be necessary since brothers are mutually obliged to take care of each other's children. Many women in the camps married their cousins. Cross-cousin marriages and marriage among kin are not uncommon in the Arab world and are generally favorably considered by both sides of the family, the most favored being the daughter of the father's brother cousin, or *bin't al-amm*. Those marriages are not prescribed by the Qur'an or the Hadith. Camp refugee families were always surprised when I was mentioning that in America marriage between first cousins was *haram*, or forbidden. There have been several explanations for cross-cousin marriage: it keeps property in the family, and enhances the man's influence in the family and lineage (see Barth 1953,

[32] My italics.

Patai 1965, Baer 1964, Levi-Strauss 1969, Khuri 1970). Tillion suggests in her study of endogamy in Algeria (1966) that she traces back to the beginning of agriculture, and not to Islam, that endogamy prevented the circulation of assets and kept the family patrimony together. However, these explanations are valid in the case of politically powerful or wealthy families and may not really apply to poor camp refugees. Another argument is that marriage to outsiders may expose the girl to dishonor and shame for the family if she does not conform to social norms (Granqvist 1931, Antoun 1968). It is better to keep her within the family under her father's control. It seems that the most appropriate explanation in the case of the camp refugees is that it is cheaper for the groom's family, as the other family may not be demanding financially to a brother or a close relative and there is a common background and understanding between families. Thus camp refugees may have retained the old custom of cross-cousin marriage, not only for economic reasons, but also for the social solidarity it provides in the limited environment of the camp.

Refugee mothers indicated that in the camp many young unemployed males had to postpone marriage until their pecuniary circumstances become more favorable. Consequently, there are more single girls and they marry

around 22 or 23 years old, later than their mothers did. Virginity for girls, not for boys, is strictly expected among camp refugee families and there is no dating for young people. Marriage is the only way for intimacy between a man and a woman. Young people live at their parents' home until they get married and often after they marry, the couple lives in the parents' household. Once married, it is difficult for a woman with children to leave her husband, as she has nowhere to go. In case of a divorce, the daughter would have no choice, but to come back to her family. Her parents would tell her:" When you got married you were one person, so you may come back as one person, but without your children", a hard proposition that women are not likely to accept. There are indeed few divorces, which are stigmatizing for the family. So people do not talk about it to family and neighbors, and pretend they are still married.

Unlike America, the steady rates of birth seen in the camps do not necessarily reflect a steady family economy. The birth rate is high in the camps. Each family has an average of 5 to 7 children. In economically difficult times refugee families continue to have many children. A large progeny is seen as wealth (see Schwartz 2003, Caldwell & Caldwell 1987) as large families provide

more labor force and economic security for old age for parents. A strong desire for sons also drives families to have more children. While demographers and population studies have connected high fertility with infant mortality, the main argument of Palestinian camp refugees for having many children is different. Camp refugees claim that Palestine needs many fighters for its liberation, and that as a people they have suffered many losses. They recall the *Nakba*, the upheaval in Jordan in 1970, Sabra and Shateela in Lebanon, and the long war in Palestine. I heard it time and again.

Thus Palestinian women's reproductive roles have a highly political significance for refugees, and have been the object of several books and studies (Farah 1999, Kanaaneh 2002). Having many children is a way of replacing those lost lives, escape dissemination, continue their struggle and keep their hope of returning home. Birth control was not an easy subject to discuss with camp mothers, especially when I was sitting with them and their children. But I know from local NGO workers that contraception is a proposition that not many families accept: while some mothers think that the Qur'an does not allow it, other families may use birth control methods but only once they have given birth to enough boys, which is

usually a minimum of two after having already had several girls. However, the NGO workers confirmed that the general thinking among camp families on birth control is that the future of Palestine is largely determined by a high fertility rate.

However, family arrangements have also changed according to UNRWA family policies in relation to diminishing aid. Welfare, available to needy families, excludes aid to families with an “able-bodied male between 18 and 60”, as UNRWA puts it, living at home; but includes a female-headed household, mother or a wife of a jailed husband, or persons who are over 60 years old. Refugees find strategies around those policies. For example, I visited a camp family, which had been categorized as a hardship case, according to Samar, a social worker for UNRWA. Their home had recently been remodeled. It contrasted with the other units as it was freshly painted in white with green doors and windows, and green painted cast iron work on the windows and the gate. The grandmother was our hostess with the two teen-age daughters of the family. When I asked questions about the family structure, the grandmother replied that the father was no longer living there; the mother was living at home but was in the hospital. Samar explained to me later that she had doubts

about the accuracy of the grandmother's explanations concerning the composition of their household. Samar thought the father was most likely working overseas, and hence not present, and the mother probably not in the hospital, but working during the day. By portraying their family in dire need, they could qualify for hardship help, she suspected.

Family ties provide strong social networks both inside and outside the camp. Social life evolves almost exclusively around the family and the neighbors who are often relatives. During religious holidays, especially Ramadan, engagements, or weddings the extended family gets together and likes to cook large meals, thus reinforcing the camp shared culture.

Views on Religion. Discourse and Practices.

Religion is central to the life of Muslims and especially camp refugee families. In Al-Wihdat and Jabal Nasser camps, according to Samar, the social worker, there are no Christian families, all camp dwellers are Muslims. The Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs[33] generously finances the implementation of several social welfare

[33] The Ministry of Religious Endowments, *Awqaf*, and Islamic Affairs is a charitable trust part of the government ministries in Muslim countries.

programs through *Zaqat*, or charity, committees present in the camps. The Muslim Brotherhood[34], or *Jamiat al-Ikwan al-Muslimeen*, which holds seats in the Parliament, is also present in the camp. There are several mosques in Al-Wihdat and Jabal Nasser camps, which are not only places of worship, but also offer after-school activities such as Qur'an learning, computer classes, sewing and handicrafts. Friday is a holiday and men go to the mosque. Some camp women said they generally are not encouraged to pray at the mosque because they should stay away from men. They said they did not mind. Camp women are generally "traditional" and comply with social norms.

To a believer, the Qur'an is eternal and a source of constant reference. Religion is holistic as Islam is not only a religion, but also represents a legal system and way of life. It is common among camp refugees to punctuate any human action or story told with the word of the Qur'an as the ultimate truth. Through the praying cycle - five times a day, religion paces the daily life of individuals whether at home or in a public place. It is also part of the

[34] The Society of Muslim Brothers was founded by Hassan Al-Banna in Egypt in 1928. It aimed at establishing an Islamic community ruled exclusively by the Shar'ia, or Islamic law. It was banned by Nasser in 1954. The influence of the Muslim Brotherhood in the Arab world has been significant because it brought about a renewed vision of Islam, that is, a return to the mythical original *Umma* formed by the Prophet Mohamed and his companions. It conceives of Islam as an organic system of life.

curriculum in Jordan schools. So children and adolescents are taught religion in both UNRWA schools and in public schools.

Inside the camps, religion is observed by everyone; whereas outside the camps, there is more freedom regarding various interpretations of Islam. Palestinian refugees outside the camps perceive camp families to have a conservative interpretation of religion. An UNRWA teacher, a Palestinian returnee from Kuwait, said: "Islam is good, but camp refugees are ignorant of the Qur'an". She made a distinction between interpretation of the Qur'an and traditions, and added that the traditions of the camp refugees often went against the Qur'an, and were indeed poor interpretations of the book. She spoke about girls in the camps who are forced into marriage by their parents, although it is written in the "holy" Qur'an that the girl may refuse the candidate. "The Qur'an protects women", she said, "but camp refugee traditions do not. They [camp refugees] don't respect the Qur'an. They want to marry their daughter as soon as possible. That way, they won't have to support her. Her husband will". But not very many families see it this way. Thus religion is often interpreted and constructed as tradition that is strictly

followed, although it becomes adapted to socio-economic circumstances.

Boys and girls in the camps reported that they did not have the same rights because of Islamic rules: teen age girls could not go out to a movie on their own, or sit and play with boys, but boys could play sports and had more freedom. A woman's right to inheritance, her share is half of that of a man, is a law from the Sharia[35]. Umm Amir did not disagree with that law: "the man is financially responsible for his wife, children, parents and sisters. This way, women are protected by men and they do not need to inherit as much money as a man." In a Muslim household the structure of authority is regulated by Qur'anic law (see Mernissi 1987, Nasir 1990, Ahmed 1992, Sharif 1999, Mir-Hosseini 2003) which stipulates that within the context of marriage the man is endowed with authority over the woman and has the obligation to provide for her financially. "Such are our customs and our traditions", Umm Amir explains. The material protection for women that the law provides may counterbalance her husband's control over her.

[35] Islamic law system inspired by the Qur'an and the Sunna (practices of the Prophet.

Discussing Islam is beyond the scope of this chapter and I only look here at the ways people, including children and adolescents, interact in relation to religion in public and private space. In a bus, men tend to sit on one side and women on the other side. As I was sitting on a bus coming back from Jerash, 50 kilometers (31 miles) from Amman, two *muhajiba*, or women wearing the Islamic scarf, got on the bus. As soon as they saw that the only sitting space left was in the front seat next to the driver, they were ready to get off the bus and wait for the next bus, one hour later. I understood at once that they did not want to sit next to a man, so I switched seats – I was sitting in the back - and sat next to the driver. This seemed to be acceptable to everyone. I was not a *muhajiba*, or veiled woman, and therefore it was all right for me to sit next to the bus driver. Both women were then able to sit on the back seat and we thus resolved the problem and they did not have to wait for the next bus.

Women residing in the camp wear a *hijab*, or headscarf, and a *jilbab*, long dark robe down to their feet, not to reveal the shapes of their body. Young girls usually start wearing a *hijab* when they turn twelve, or thirteen. Sometimes it is imposed by their parents, but frequently girls around twelve, thirteen years old want to wear the

hijab as a marker of graduating to womanhood, similar to wearing make-up for American teen-age girls. Occasionally younger girls, as young as seven or eight years old, cover their head, which makes them look like little women. In rural camps many more girls of that age wear a headscarf. Among Palestinian refugee children and adolescents, most teen-aged girls wear headscarves and boys the same age, often too young to grow a beard, dress in Western clothes namely blue jeans, T-shirt and sneakers. The rule of modesty does not apply to them.

However, inside their home, or among other women, women take off their head-scarf. The only man who may see an unveiled woman at home is her husband, father, son or brother. The Muslim custom of veiling (See Mernissi 1987, Ahmed 1992, Badran 1995) has long been a subject of scrutiny from Westerners, in general, during the colonization period, and more recently, from Western feminists, in particular, as it has been perceived as a sign of woman submission to male patriarchy. It has provoked heated dispute in French public schools especially where it has been banned, and also in Turkey, a Muslim country. In the last decade, many Muslim women have become religious independently of their husbands, as in Syria or Egypt where women get together to learn the Qur'an (see

Bottcher 2002, Mahmood 2005). Some women told me that they feel protected from the men's gaze by wearing the *hijab*. They say it makes them feel less threatened by male sexual energy, hence more relaxed in the presence of a man. There are many variations of wearing a *hijab* and women may take liberties with it by wearing it loose, showing some hair, or wearing make up. However, most camp refugee women wear it in a strict fashion. In camp homes, I would try to figure out the family kinship by looking at which woman had kept her hijab, and which one had not. Family and social pressure are strong for women to veil in the restricted space of the camp. Not wearing the veil for a woman would be a major transgression, not only of religion, but also of social norms. I noticed that a few Muslim women working in the UNRWA offices in the camp would wear the veil during "business hours". As soon as they finished working and were outside the camp, they would take the hijab off. Thus camp culture requires a Muslim woman to appear religious, hence traditional.

People in the camps comply with religion, that is, what they understand the Qur'an to say, or what they say "tradition requires". In camp refugee culture, "tradition" as social norms and religion are intrinsically connected and often overlap, as I realized that many camp refugees

did not make the distinction between the two. Islam means submission to God and, as Muslims, they have to submit, people would often make that statement.

As a non-religious person, I was at first overwhelmed by the omnipresence of religion. At the beginning of my stay I had obtained a written authorization from the DPA, Department of Palestinian Affairs, which I went to pick up. I wanted to thank the gentleman who had given it to me and I held my hand out to shake his hand. He did not give me his hand to shake; instead he put his hand to the upper left side of his chest. I did not immediately understand his gesture, as I could not see any evident religious signs in the way he looked – Western clothes, no beard. I still kept holding my hand out and he kept patting the upper left side of his chest. It suddenly dawned on me that he did not want to shake my hand for religious reasons. Some observing Muslim men do not shake a woman's hand, and believe that women carry strong sexual energy.

At that moment I felt I had committed a cultural *faux pas*. Later, in other encounters with men inside, or outside the camps, before holding my hand out I would ask them if they shook a woman's hand, as I had seen some Palestinian women ask. If they did not, I would smile,

slightly nod and put my hand on the upper left side of my chest. That was totally acceptable.

In the summer when it was hot, women complained that their *hijab* was uncomfortable. Camp refugee homes have neither air conditioning, nor do the UNRWA schools. Almost everybody in the girls' schools, including the teachers and principals, are covered from head to toe. I was sitting in the office of the principal and her assistant told me: "You are so lucky you can wear light clothes and not be veiled. We can't, because if we do, we go to hell." I immediately joked without thinking: " Oh! And there, you will be even hotter!" Everybody laughed. I felt then that my joke had broken the uneasy feeling that I had about religion. I was now able to respectfully joke about it with religious people, and it was all right. Soon after, I told that same story to a religious woman who also burst out laughing.

In a taxi[36] or in shops inside or outside the camp, I often heard the Qur'an chanted on the radio. However, when the cab driver - more often than not a camp refugee - was young and "cool-looking", he played instead loud Michael Jackson music and Arab disco on his car radio.

[36] Taxis are inexpensive in Amman. One can drive across the city from one side to the other for a maximum fare of US $ 4.

Socialization and Imagination: Television

A more recent form of socialization through easy access to global TV now parallels more traditional paths for information, such as religion and family. The net revolution has not yet affected camp refugees, as too few have access to the Internet from home. It was surprising though that among all the various stores doing business inside both camps of Al-Wihdat and Jabal Nasser there was no Internet café. The cost of the equipment may have still been too high to attract a potential investor, or camp refugees may have been too poor to qualify as potential customers. Their social networks operate differently, outside the internet networks; they are more limited but more personal and tight and more often than not family-related.

A TV set is present in every household including the poorest ones. As in many countries, in Jordan the media are state-controlled. The various TV products, namely news programs, movies and shows, which are consumed daily by camp families come not only from the Middle East, but also from the US. In every camp family there is a strong sense of cohesion, and continuity through kinship, village affiliation, a common experience and meaning of being a refugee, and purpose of going back to the homeland making

the Palestinian community less imagined. Such “mechanical solidarity” as Durkheim conceived it, is enhanced not only by nationalism, religion, and Palestinian camp traditions, but also by living in a diaspora that is experienced everyday in real time, and also virtually while watching TV because of the centrality of the conflict with Israel for camp refugees.

Everyone in the family watches the news and there is a plethora of breaking news to watch on the Middle East. The lives of the refugees in the camps are undeniably directly connected to the political situation in the region and the information TV brings, which has become an integral part of the socialization process. They closely follow the latest developments on Al Jazeera, a channel from Qatar, Al-Manar from Lebanon, and Al Arabiya, from Dubai. Many refugees have family members in Palestine hence are even more concerned. The US election was of much interest for camp refugee families as US policies in the Middle East affect them first-hand, although, by their accounts, some have grown quite jaded over the years regarding hopes of a new peace process. They told me that for them whether it was Bush or Kerry was “same same”, that is, the position of the elected American President toward Palestine would remain the same and thus would not change their lives.

Camp families thought along these lines during the fatal illness of President Arafat, although every camp family was glued to their TV screen during his last days. At Umm Tareq's home we watched together his funeral and burial at the Muqataa compound in Ramallah. "Poor old man, the Israelis would not let him rest in Jerusalem". "He was poisoned. Look how fast he went". " Abu Amar [Arafat's nom de guerre] is our leader". "He fought until the end for our right of return. God bless him, and may God have mercy upon his soul". "Look at all these people I wish I could be there too, in our land of Palestine". It was as if everyone in the family had put their criticisms aside. He was the *Rais*, or leader, and they watched in awe. Yet Arafat's wife, who was attending the funeral, was the object of disapproval: "Where was she when he was besieged? She was spending money in Paris !". Arafat's wife is a secular non-traditional-looking woman who lives in Paris and has been widely criticized for her lavish spending which, Palestinians deem, did not match the frugal way of life of her semi-sequestered husband in his bombarded compound in Ramallah. The incertitude of the aftermath as to who was going to succeed him was the subject of many conversations inside and outside the camps. Abu Khaled was saying: "Nothing will change even with another leader than Arafat.

We'll have to wait thirty or forty years to see a change". Abu Baker, another camp refugee: "This is the end of a period. We need young blood now".

News - local and global, entertainment and advertising produce an idiosyncratic discourse that TV impassibly projects and brings inside camp refugees' homes. Eickelman & Anderson in their work on media in the Muslim world (1999) find it to represent a new form of authority different from the word of God and from traditional paternal authority. Besides the numerous news programs available, other TV programs offer families a broad range of choices where many models are offered. Thus camp viewers receive a great deal of various messages depending on which channel they are watching. The mixed messages that TV sends include among others symbols of religion, modernity, secularism, Western and traditional values, and create the dynamics by which tradition and modernity play off each other. Abu Lughod (2000) studied Egyptian television melodrama in Cairo. She showed how this genre is used as a tool of local political ideology to produce "modern" citizens and subjects for an audience for whom kinship, Islam and ethics are essential. She suggests that such melodramas appeal to people's emotions hence to their inner world and sense of self and thus seek to create a modern

sensibility and a new kind of self by encouraging the individuality of ordinary people. Thus modernity is connected to selfhood and creates other kinds of modern subjects than the Western modern ones.

Many social theorists including Marx, Weber and Durkheim have toyed with the concept of modernity. For Marx, capitalism was a central feature of the modern world; Weber was critical of modernity and the dominant rationality of Western society resulting in his metaphor of the iron cage; and Durkheim opposed tradition to modernity in his notion of mechanical solidarity versus organic solidarity. Modernity in Western society, however, is conceived as a drastic change and a new social order brought by the Enlightenment and bearing new liberal ideas, including scientific rationality (Cf Tomlinson 1991). How does Western modernity projected on TV affect children and adolescents and their self understanding? What is modernity or its experience for Palestinian camp refugees ? What does it mean to be modern? From a Western perspective, Inkeles (1983) identifies modernization in a people in terms of education, factory employment, urban residence, contact with mass media and ownership of technological objects. Thus when I asked Umm Amir, a religious woman, if she was a modern or a traditional woman, she readily answered without

giving it any thought “modern”. Yet to me, she looked traditional. She made a gesture with her hands that meant it was obvious to her. “Look! I have a TV, and a washing machine. I would like to have a computer and a cell phone. I like modern things”, she said. For her, technology is “modern”. She also watches LBCI TV and American movies. So perhaps, watching LBC TV, the Lebanese MTV channel, is modern. Such objectification of what it means to be modern that includes cell phones, computers and the like may make Umm Amir feel empowered and in control. Umm Amir’s definition is not far from the Western perspective.

Theorists of modernization have thought that television exposure would elicit a “modern” consciousness and change gender roles in non-Western culture. Postman (1982) argues that TV in America reveals adult secrets to children by exposing issues and images hereto reserved to adults. TV thus erases the boundary parent-child and also because watching TV is enjoyed altogether “en famille” regardless of the generation. However, the collapse of such a boundary was not observable to me among Palestinian camp families. On the contrary, in the patriarchal model of the camps, the divide parent-child is clear and strongly exists, even though TV is the only family entertainment in homes with no privacy for lack of space.

If television is an object of consumption that viewers consume, Palestinian children are selective consumers as they pick and choose what they can assimilate into their culture. They leave aside Western models which do not fit their traditions, although they may be using them only for entertainment. My observation showed mostly compliance with the family model and acceptance of and subordination to the "traditional" cultural family environment. In other words, Palestinian children and their families do not "buy" Western modernity as they see it, contrary to Berman's theory (1983, cited in Tomlinson 1991), which conceives of modernity as inescapable and irreversible in a process of limitless self-development in an ever-changing world. If the modern world is a world of flux and instability, as Berman describes it, Palestinian camp refugees caught in an unstable "in-between" situation preserve their tradition as a security blanket. To wit, many refugees were opposing the early "blissful times" of Islam to the Western model.

TV consumers can also choose among popular shows on religion hosted by male preachers and broadcast on several Arab TV stations (see discussion on Amr Khaled in Chapter Seven). Egypt and Lebanon are important producers of serials, movies and entertainment programs projecting a

glossy model of urban modernity opposed to the backwardness of rural life. Many families have access to LBCI TV, the Lebanese MTV. This TV station airs music video clips 24 hours a day, portraying sexy uncovered blond Lebanese girls and also Western female singers singing and dancing in a choreography and attire that religion would not approve. Young people in the camps unanimously admitted to enjoying these shows. They were familiar with the names of famous American or other Western pop singers such as Britney Spears or Madonna who they would watch perform on American programs with which the U.S., a major exporter of TV productions, floods them. Such programs portraying "liberated" women are also successful among women and girls who are *"muhajiba"*, a woman who covers her hair. In some families though, children are not allowed to watch those shows. Critics of these programs find them immoral as they are deemed to violate Muslim beliefs and thus are evil and sinful. Samah, a teen age girl from Jabal Nasser told me: "I love watching those programs and I love Madonna" When I asked if she wanted to look like Madonna, she smiled shyly and said no. While some are rejecting the West for its lack of traditions, they may be simultaneously attracted to the glamour of Lebanese music videos, to the stunts of

Jacky Chang and other action movies, or to fancy cars and clothes of Arab and American celebrities.

Children and adolescents all enjoy watching “Friends”, a popular US comedy series based in Manhattan about a group of six friends and their struggle to find success and happiness in life. Some indicated that they liked the closeness and the dynamics of the friendships portrayed in the TV show. Others enjoyed the setting in a New York apartment and the views of Manhattan. Thus the friendship ties may have been familiar to them, and at the same time interestingly different from the family ties that they know. Similarly, decades earlier the series “Dallas” and “Dynasty” were very popular among Arab audiences for the extended family arrangement it portrayed to which they could identify.

In addition to news and entertainment programs, Jordan TV has been airing several shows in which family issues are discussed. Every week a popular show hosted by an eminent Jordanian female child psychologist, Dr Hala, explains to parents how to deal with children’s issues. Viewers can call in and ask specific questions. I asked the camp refugees what they thought about that program. Some criticized the show for being too “modern”, that is, based on a new concept of the child, more individualized, hence

doing away with their ownership of children as parents, and more traditional attitudes. Others found it generally helpful and were willing to receive advice in child rearing and psychology.

IGO and NGO Socialization

Jordan is a hub of aid organizations such as IGOs and NGOs. This aid is welcomed by the government and the organization workers for its economic value. The role of IGOs and NGOs has been often criticized for exercising top-down control over local communities. Using Foucault's theory of power the literature on development (see Ferguson 1990, Escobar 1995) has explored community development in the Third World in a critical fashion. Similarly, the new "modern" Western concepts conveyed by UNICEF and local NGOs, such as children's rights, on which humanitarian programs are based are meant to affect traditional camp refugee family values and cultural practices by educating families and teaching them "modern" values. UNRWA, as the education provider in the camps, has been an important socializer for several generations of camp refugees (See Chapter Six). On the other hand, many government and non-government programs have contributed to reduce the number of poor families living under the poverty line in

conjunction with the current population explosion. Those programs often deal with family planning, healthcare, and education and are operated with Western funds. They also tackle current family issues such as domestic violence through rights education. Thus many families involved in the programs are made aware of the limits of their control and ownership of children. They learn that they could be sanctioned by the Jordanian police[37] if – as parents – they did not go by the rules of children's rights, including protecting their children from physical discipline and domestic violence.

Jordanian Women's Union, a grass root organization that does not get UN support but sometimes works in partnership with UNICEF, operates centers inside most camps across Jordan to help women and families through awareness programs. The women working at the union are both religious and non-religious and are very committed to their work. Palestinian women have had a history of political activism, in Lebanon, the West Bank and Jordan (see Sayigh 1979, 1994, Peteet 1991, Hasso 2005). "Women who learn about their rights are also learning to feel empowered, and are able to assert themselves", Chada, who works at the Union,

[37] The Jordanian police has been trained in child defense programs based on children's rights.

indicated. “Husbands don’t want their wives to come to the Union. They want them to remain weak and powerless. Sometimes it even creates problems at home”, she added.

During a Summer camp in Aqaba that UNICEF organized with the Jordanian Ministry of Youth, adolescents between 16 and 18 years old were being trained to be trainers on conflict resolution and sexual issues related to AIDS. The site had a panoramic view on the Red Sea and had common quarters and individual gender segregated housing. Sexual and gender issues were discussed, but appeared to create tensions among the young people when it came to gender equality. Some boys were holding a patriarchal perspective on girls, and consequently girls openly expressed resentment. Professional trainers had come from Beirut, Lebanon, a less traditional place than Jordan, to teach them about sexuality and AIDS.

Subsequently, a problem arose among girls and boys who wanted to use the pool together. The temperature was over 100 degrees. The educators were opposed to the idea of gender mixing. They were willing to let both boys and girls enjoy the pool together, but were afraid of the parents’ reaction, which surely would have been negative and problematic for them. It was already a sign of “modernity” for parents to have sent their daughters to a co-ed camp.

Those parents had shown “open-mindedness”, a word which is often equated with being “modern” in camp refugee vocabulary. Consequently, the only way young people could enjoy the outdoor pool was by making it gender segregated. This example shows the ambiguities of the modern discourse conveyed by these programs. On the one hand, educators were teaching and advocating gender equality, but on the other hand, heterosexual activities were impossible, despite the insistent request of the teen agers. Thus NGO workers, had made the assessment that tradition and religion were too important to camp refugees to try to challenge them. Hence, gender equality may be acceptable, although with some tensions, by camp refugees, but does not imply gender mixing.

In addition, seminars on family “guidance” were held by Jordan River Foundation, a local NGO, in different venues, or by government agencies, such as the National Council for Family Affairs. Such workshops or seminars are meant to empower the community and try to make changes in child rearing and perception of childhood among families to prevent domestic violence. Thus, such socialization seeks to create mental processes for change among the families and the younger generation, although this change is hard to

reconcile in practice with more traditional roles, as seen earlier.

IGO and NGO notions of socialization seem to operate at a double level. I suggest that, like development discourse, these new concepts and discourses are force-fed on the camp refugees who may participate in these programs, but may not agree with some practical aspects like gender equality, implying freedom for women. They draw the line by opposing instead their own social religious values.

Family Issues: Domestic Violence, Child Abuse, Honor Crimes

Refugees had to reconstruct their lives in the camp within the constraints of UNRWA policies regarding social benefits, education and allocated housing space. The crowded space offered by camp housing and the limitations on building size are impacting families and creating stressful conditions. A 2003 FAFO[38] report shows that camp refugees have, not surprisingly, higher rates of chronic illness and psychological distress than refugees outside the camp.

Hard economic conditions are at the core of family problems and cannot be understated. Often husbands are

[38] FAFO is a Norwegian center for social research

unemployed, sometimes alcoholic[39] and beat their wives and children. Other males in the family, such as the father, brother or the son may be abusive too, physically and verbally. The importance for a man of being the breadwinner runs deep in traditional families like the camp refugees. The threat of a man taking another wife, as religion allows, is present but suppressed in the minds of the young women I met in the camps. Young girls vehemently told me that they would not want their future husband to take another wife. When I asked several boys and girls if they were beaten up at home, the first answer was generally negative, but moments later some sheepishly said "sometimes". It was hard for them to express. It must have been painful to them and they also probably wanted to give a good impression of their family.

But domestic violence is a serious problem in Jordan and consequently, the Jordanian government created in 1997 a special unit called "Family Protection Department" with the police department to help protect victims of domestic abuse by identifying the families of the abused children and then referring them to the appropriate NGOs. These provide legal advice and psychological counseling to the families. The Jordan River

[39] Although alcohol consumption is not permitted in Islam.

Foundation and Jordanian Women's Union are among the NGOs involved.

Jordan River Foundation, JRF, has a center in Jabal Nasser refugee camp in which it helps women and families with domestic problems. JRF follow several articles of the UN CRC on prevention of abuse and right to education for children and adolescents. I attended one of their sessions. Only women came, and no man was present. The JRF workers mentioned that this was their usual audience. Women may be more concerned with these issues as they and their children are the primary victims of domestic violence[40]. In addition, the Jordan River Foundation operates Dar El Aman, a shelter for abused children - the only one in the Middle East - that protects and hosts many children from disadvantaged families including camp refugees. Their social workers reported that boys were more physically abused by their fathers than girls, and that in some families some children were not schooled.

Similarly, the Jordanian Women's Union runs a shelter for battered women and abused children and operates a busy hotline. Although it was hard for children to discuss domestic violence or child abuse with me, some expressed acceptance of parental beating, as being part of

[40] Zenid report 2002

socialization and culture. “If a child is not good at home, it is okay for the father to hit him. He deserves it”. Or “I am afraid to have my right of opinion at home. My father would beat me. So I don’t say anything at home, and that way I stay out of trouble. This is better for me”. Boys also reported being occasionally hit with a stick in the UNRWA school if they did not do their homework. I observed during recess that some male teachers were holding a long stick. When I asked about it they replied it was used as a pointer on the blackboard. Their answer was not totally convincing. This shows the contradictory position of UNRWA teachers who, while they were teaching children’s rights, were capable at the same time of hitting their students.

Some parents told me that at home their children were rebelling against corporal punishment by claiming children’s rights. Fathers are usually the disciplinarians and mothers are often too afraid to interfere and protect the children lest they could be hit too.

Preventing domestic violence at home is also done by way of economic help for families through micro financing, that is, making small loans available to women. They are successful NGO operations that are empowering women by improving family economy. Helping adolescents by teaching them to be agents of their own environment has

also proven successful, through community programs, after school programs or internships.

When I asked children if they worked after school or during the summer vacation, only few admitted to it. I only met one adolescent girl who had dropped out of school and was babysitting her newborn nephew. She wanted to get married, she said. In the camp this is the only solution for girls who drop out of school. The only male children I occasionally saw working were in a mechanic shop, or in a small convenient store, but I did not dare ask them questions in front of their boss. I was aware though, that child labor was a current problem in Jordan.

Reputation and honor are highly praised values among the camp refugee families. It is their symbolic capital (Bourdieu 1972). “When you have no money, honor is important,” says Abu Anwar. It is the wealth of the family. The Hassan family includes eight children: six boys and two girls. The eldest son, Anwar, is seventeen years old and was complaining that his father did not let him go out. Usually the girls are not allowed to go out, and the boys have more freedom. When I asked why Anwar, a boy, was not allowed to go out, the mother explained that there were drug problems in the camps and it was not safe for him to be out. The father said: “People in Abdoun [a wealthy

residential area of Amman] can afford being modern because they are rich. So their daughters and sons can go out. If their children get into trouble, the family has money to get them out of trouble. But us, we have no money. We must watch our children and keep our honor. If our children get into trouble, what will we do?" Damaging the reputation of a family may elicit an honor crime. The honor of the family is embodied in women's sexuality. I inquired about honor crimes with a male staff member of JRF, who indicated that "this year only (sic) 24 women have been killed". We were in November. The Jordanian Government has an ambiguous position in this matter resulting in often lenient sentences more favorable to the man: a brother killing his sister, or a father murdering his daughter "to cleanse the family's honor" (see Abu-Odeh 1996).

Although, the Palestinian camp refugee family is a haven in the difficult, fragmented world of exile, and it is also a place of abuse and oppression.

Slow Change at Home

The family space is not only a place of socialization but also a place of social change. It has been slower to change inside than outside the camps as camp

families have remained marginalized. However, the change that has come is mainly from children and adolescents.

In Palestine, Palestinian children and adolescents of the first Intifada[41] were shown to be active agents and mobilized the world attention with their “guerre des pierres”. Darweish (1989) observes that with the Intifada, youth acquired more respect, responsibility and status than in the past. The Intifada was a uniting social, political and psychological phenomenon that created solidarity, and brought social change, thus breaking with the Palestinians' past and inherited social structure. The second Intifada of 2000, also called Al-Aqsa Intifada, saw a second generation of children and adolescents who also became involved in resisting Israeli occupation in Palestine. Both Intifada brought to the fore a new category of children, no longer mute victims subsumed under their family. Children and adolescents were seen not only in the eyes of the world, but more importantly in the eyes of their parents and other Palestinian children as full participants in the Palestinian conflict. All this has had a strong resonance among Palestinian youth in refugee camps in Jordan, since

[41] Palestinian children uprising against Israeli occupation taking place in Palestine that lasted from 1987 to 1993.

TV images have become part of their virtual peer culture[42] and their "virtual collective imaginary" to use Appadurai's term (1996:31). The image of the "*shabab*"[43] or male youth, has been glorified in the Arab media, defying Israeli tanks with stones. Jordanian camp refugee children and adolescents, although protected from violence, feel connected to these *shabab* in Palestine whom they idealize for their courage. Many camp children, girls and boys, with whom I talked identified with the attitude of defiance of the *shabab*. Accordingly, they said they wanted to free their country from Israeli occupation and help children inside Palestine. Other girls and boys said they wanted to be martyrs[44]. Many young boys also talked about becoming pilots when they grew up – an iconic image of war hero.

Children and adolescents in refugee camps in Jordan find themselves in a predicament. As mentioned earlier, they are marginalized not only from other Jordanian young people, but also from other Palestinian youth in Palestine. They are unable to be young warriors

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[42] I could not observe peer culture being played out by "hanging out' with youth, as I was only able to be with young people under the authority of their family or the school.

[43] *shab,* singular form.

[44] See Chapters Five and Seven for a discussion on children and adolescents' construction of identity in relation to other young people living in Palestine.

like the Palestinian children and adolescents they watch on TV. “I can’t be a fighter here” says Khaled, fourteen years old, watching teenagers fighting in Gaza on TV. While they are protected from violence and trauma by not being on the front line, they are deprived of the heroic roles that war confers to young people. However, their drawings at school were almost always of war scenes, suggesting their internalization of TV images of war and their identification with Palestinian children on the other side of the border. Thus camp children and adolescents have developed a collective sense of resistance to their stateless condition and have come to represent a new generation, capable of fighting and resisting, unlike their parents whom they often blame for having accepted oppression.

Children and adolescents must submit to the father’s authority, or that of the older brother, or the uncle (on the father’s side preferably), if there is no father. Some camp parents felt that children’s rights might damage such authority and expressed an ambivalent acquiescence regarding children’s rights, although they liked the concept of empowerment - at least intellectually - and, like their children, connected those rights with the right of return. On the one hand, children and adolescents

are deemed to be submissive and, on the other, they embody the hope for a better future and the responsibility of making the situation change. Children are vested with the heavy task and role of liberators, ascribed to them by their parents and grandparents. The older generation has been the victim of history and has placed all their hopes in the new generation. Although the highest hope is that their children regain their lost land, at the same time, parents expressed their wish that their children would not be discriminated against and become doctors or engineers in Jordan. The uncertainty of their situation makes camp parents constantly oscillate between life here and now, and a mythical return.

Fatmeh, a UNRWA teacher, told me: “Fifty per cent of families respect their children and fifty per cent don’t”. She was talking about the ambivalent attitude of parents toward their children. Labiba, thirty two years old and a mother of five from Jabal Nasser camp, said:” Children must not be hit and have to be treated well and fairly to become good persons”. Her husband sets the rules for the children. He said, “Children have to be at home at a certain time. I don’t want them to be in the streets. I want to keep an eye on which friends my children choose”. He was talking about the boys, since the girls are not

allowed to go out. Mothers were generally less concerned about discipline than education and marriage for their daughters. “I want my daughters to finish their education, become teachers and then choose their husband and get married. It is modern to choose one's husband”, Labiba added. She may wish for that because she sees it on TV, but may have to succumb to her husband’s authority and final say concerning their daughters. Indeed, love marriage is seen as a symbol of modernity, compared to the arranged marriage.

Thus the role of children and the views on childhood may be slowly shifting as some children and adolescents claim their rights when interacting with their parents. Sometimes such claims are met with corporal punishment from some fathers, as children reported. The right to freedom for girls is always a very sensitive issue, especially for their fathers and brothers. Freedom, according to several generations of camp refugees, including the young ones, was to be approached with caution and had to be limited. They explained that the Qur’an was a source of restricting freedom, as were family and tradition. Loubnah, a camp mother, said: “Young people today have lost respect. They don’t obey anymore. I try to protect the boys from being with bad boys in the camp. They

don't listen to me. But my daughters are good. I have to be careful though they don't go out with boys. My husband would kill them".

As noted earlier, the rhetoric of educated, religious people was that some Muslim practices of the camp refugees were at odds with the Qur'an. True, most rural people, like the camp refugees, were originally illiterate and only knew the Qur'an and its traditions through oral transmission of stories and narratives. Camp families now struggle with the tensions created between what they view as "traditional" and "modern". As shown in several examples, their interpretations of these terms vary but are often tied to religion. However, in the Middle East, as Eickelman and Anderson (1999) suggest, religion has been transformed and religious authority is distributed in different ways in the Arab world through modern ways of communication. In the camps, religion has become more accessible as it is preached and interpreted by clerics on TV broadcasts and viewed in homes by refugees who, in turn, interpret and make sense of it.

"Actually Islam urges people to be modern and progressive", a male religion teacher at an UNRWA school, said. "One can me modern and Muslim at the same time. Modernity is essentially a matter of using technology, and

Islam is a matter of values. A Muslim person is allowed to use and enjoy technology such as a computer or a mobile phone. But he must keep his Islamic values at the same time. They are not in opposition. What is bad is technology, or science with no values, without ethics. One can be modern and be religious too".

Conclusion

The camp family or household is contained in a cramped space in which several complex processes are taking place: processes of structural change, movement from rural to poor urban life; and of socialization that includes ambiguities and contradictions about tradition, religion and modernity, creating subsequent domestic problems.

I have examined the Palestinian camp refugee family, religion, television, and NGO teachings in their roles as important agents of socialization of its members. At the same time, the notion of community of the Palestinian family that involves the *hamula*, or extended family related through one common ancestor, the imagined Palestinian community and the *Umma*, or Muslim Community at a broader level, weighs heavily on the new camp generation. The camp family has remained more attached to its culture than I had anticipated. Thus families wrestle with the

forces of Westernization and social change, by substituting their Palestinian family and religious values that they offer instead to their children. Palestinian children and adolescents accept such values and generally comply with established family roles, although female perceptions of gender roles are more liberal than male's.

The family space is an enclave in which families strive to shield themselves from poverty, lack of opportunity, oppression, and from the outside world which, they say, has abandoned them.

PART II

LOCAL INTERPRETATIONS

CHAPTER FIVE

CHILDREN'S RIGHTS: A HYBRID LOCAL DISCOURSE

VOICES OF CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS

Introduction

Camp children and adolescents are exposed to various ways of thinking and are sometimes able to challenge new attitudes with old "traditions" and vice versa, as last chapter showed. Hence refugee children do not say they disagree with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, but they demonstrate through their attachment to religious beliefs and local values the

ambiguity and complexity that such a discourse presents. They do not express verbally a reasoned resistance against the CRC; instead they reconstruct another form of discourse on children's rights more suited to their own concerns and agendas. I argue that camp refugee children's attitudes and claims regarding children's rights are negotiated through religion, local customs, identification with Palestine and political concerns in terms which are specific to the camp. Further, the liminal character of the space of the camp, and its hard living conditions contribute to elicit a quasi unanimous response from the camp youth to children's rights. While their awareness and views of such rights go beyond the text of the UN CRC, these were largely absent among other Palestinian children and adolescents from an elite social class living in Amman, outside the camps.

This chapter describes the context in which the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child has morphed into a "hybrid" local discourse. It analyzes definitions and discourses on rights and ensuing conflicts and debates. With a focus on children's rights, it examines through the voices of children some dimensions of the practices of "global" rights. The local implications of the new, appropriated discourse which children and adolescents are producing are explored. This chapter also offers a

critical perspective on United Nations "rights" as a form of cultural and political hegemony.

Definitions and Discourses on Human Rights and the Rights of the Child.

In the Abrahamic religions – Judaism, Christianity and Islam - human rights were thought to emanate from God, but since the creation or codification of a set of legal rights and laws in the later part of the 20th Century, they have become a new "sacred" text for the West and much of the rest of the world. International conventions on human rights and children's rights have set international ethical and legal standards on social justice and freedom.

The adoption in 1948 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by the United Nations was ground breaking in the wake of World War II as it tried to protect individuals at a state level. Paradoxically, the US for four decades has refused to ratify any of the human rights treaties that it had contributed to inspire.[45] Human rights during that period did not sit well with US racial segregation laws. It is only recently, well after the civil rights movement, with the work of social justice activists and lawyers, that a US Human Rights Network, a

[45] The Nation. June 27, 2005

membership group including community-based organizations, is now promoting US accountability to universal human rights standards and connecting local and international human rights movements, thus building an international culture of human rights.

From its creation in 1948, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) was deemed to be "universal" at a time when decolonization was underway but as yet the hegemony of Western rights discourse had not been put in question (Morsink 1999). The rights that the Declaration guaranteed, or promised, included freedom, dignity, equality, security, and social protection for children, and also led to other significant UN-based declarations and accords. These include the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights, the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (Helfer 1997:297), and in 1960, the United Nations Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples. These rights echoed and expanded those stipulated in the British Bill of Rights (1689), the American Bill of Rights (1791) and Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité of the Déclaration des Droits de l'Homme et du Citoyen from the French Revolution (1789),

which proclaimed the sovereignty of the people against monarchism and the divine right of kings to rule.

Thus a new category of person emerged from the French Revolution through the Déclaration des Droits de l'Homme et du Citoyen, namely a "citizen", and citizen soon came to mean a French national (Wallerstein 1997). Similarly, inspired by UDHR a new category of individual has emerged in 1989 through the Universal Convention on the Rights of the Child, namely, the child as agent. The Convention represents an important historical marker in ways of perceiving children as full human beings interacting with others in society.

Non-governmental organizations such as Amnesty International or Human Rights Watch also play a key role in human rights. For example, NGOs have pressured the U.N. and its agencies to question the principle that violations of human rights are internal to member states (Ignatieff 1999). Conversely, international NGOs are constantly criticized for deriving their views from the Western experience and for ignoring important economic, political, social and cultural problems faced by developing countries.

As a result, the language of human rights is not only Western in origin, but also secular, or at least

trans-religious. As indicated before, Jordan has ratified the UN CRC since 1991 and has taken a strong stand regarding children's rights. It has also recently established a National Center for Human Rights (NHCR) under the aegis of King Abdullah II, as part of the country reform process to improve the country human rights record. However, so far the Center's record of achievements against human rights violations has been modest, according to the local press in Jordan which attributes it to the government's mild cooperation in ignoring the NHCR reports[46].

Several Muslim countries have put forward their own Islamic human rights standards, which are meant to replace the standards set in international law. Accordingly, the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) – to which all Muslim countries belong – encourages Muslims to follow Islamic rights (see Mayer 1991). Many Muslims are claiming that their religion also includes children's rights: the Qur'an describes children as "the comfort of our eyes"[47], and several *Souras*, or passages of the Qur'an, and *Hadith*, or record of speech and actions of the Prophet, remind parents of their responsibility towards children. In

[46] Jordan Times. November 10, 2004.

[47] Soura 2:83; Soura 17:46.

Jordan, Islamic conceptions of the child prevail in cases of adoption and *kefala* law, or Islamic law on adoption, and is used instead of Western-style law. Nadia, who works for Mizan, a local human right NGO, explained that specific articles of the United Nations CRC on adoption and on the right to choose one's religion are rejected by Jordanian law makers. An adopted child retains her own biological family name and does not change her name to that of the adoptive family[48]. Adoption is not allowed in Islamic law because of the incest probability in the case of an adopted child marrying her sibling unknowingly. Foster care is thought to prevent such possibility. The right of choice of religion is problematic for Muslims, as it is contradictory to the provisions of the *Shari'a*, or Islamic law: If a child is born a Muslim, she must remain one.

Subsequently in the camps, Islamic NGOs are organizing seminars for parents who are taught about children's rights in the Qur'an and the ways to raise their children accordingly. Some families like Hanan's, whose

[48] An adopted child may inherit from her biological parents, but does not automatically inherit from her adoptive parents. Members of the adoptive family are not considered blood relatives. When the child becomes an adult, members of the adoptive family may be considered as marriage partners, and rules of modesty exist between the grown child and adoptive family members of the opposite sex.

husband is an Imam[49], attended those trainings and had a "perfect" politically correct discourse on children's rights which demonstrated a complete socialization into the discourse. Listening to Hanan was like reading a trainer's book on children's rights. It made me wonder how the concept of rights, which is abstract, could relate to her concrete basic needs as a camp refugee.

To be sure, a categorization is helpful to understand rights. To this effect, a UNICEF publication[50] classifies the rights of the child into several broad categories: economic and social rights are connected to a child's right to life, including her most basic needs such as shelter, nutrition, and medical care; development rights are needed for a child to develop her fullest potential and include education, play, leisure, education, and freedom of thought, conscience and religion; protection rights include identity, survival and development rights and deal with issues such as refugee protection, child exploitation and abuse, arbitrary separation from family and abuses in the criminal justice system; participation rights are about freedom of speech and opinion, and the right to join associations and peaceful assembly. Thus when camp women

[49] Prayer leader
[50] UNICEF "The Situation of Children, Youth and Women in Jordan". 2003.

are complaining about no place to play for their children they unknowingly are referring to development rights and survival rights which are at stake. Similarly, their claim to the right of return is included in protection rights and national rights, namely the right to one's country as refugee children and adolescents never failed to claim.

Which Rights? Which Individuals? Which Debates?

Conceptions of rights are highly contentious and have elicited extensive debates, disputes and discussions from Locke to Marx, from non-Western to Western views.

Both conventions, the CRC and the UDHR Universal Declaration of Human Rights, raise a central and recurrent political question (Wallerstein 1997), namely what exactly is the category of "human", that is, which persons are entitled to those rights, or who has the right to exercise these rights? But excluded from these categories are infants, the poor, aliens, or disabled individuals. Likewise, the Convention requires the state to provide assistance if parents, or others legally responsible, fail in their parental duties. Such assistance, notes Verhellen (1994), must be delivered at the local level, where local laws usually have priority over international ones.

Several perspectives challenging human rights have been set forth since their inception. While some embrace the universality of rights as advancing human aspirations of liberty and democracy, others insist on respect of cultural differences. The opposing arguments on universality and relativism, as posed by Max Gluckman and Paul Bohannan in the mid-1950s, have continued among anthropological debates. They were based on their reciprocal studies of juridical processes among non-Western communities. Gluckman argued that the legal procedures of the Barotse from then-called Northern Rhodesia could be interpreted through categories of Western law, as he identified similarities in legal reasoning. He thus concluded that juridical processes were universal. But Bohannan in his study of the Tiv from Nigeria argued the contrary, claiming that legal categories are culturally specific and cannot be translated or understood in Western legal terms.

The age-old debate in anthropology on rights being universal or relative goes back to 1947 when the American Anthropology Association rejected the proposed United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, UNDHR, as an expression of Western imperialism unsuited for non-Western cultures that may conceive of rights differently (Sandall

2000, Washburn 1987). In so doing, as Washburn (1995:1-2) noted, “Anthropology seemingly condoned practices such as female circumcision, killing of supposed ‘witches,’ and even ‘necklacing’ of factional rivals […] It also lost credibility by its active support of totalitarian regimes that oppressed their own citizens”. He goes on to say that “In a century coming to a close in which perhaps 100,000,000 people have been killed in wars, and in which there are now, according to the United Nations, 23,000,000 people classified as external ‘refugees,’ and another 26,000,000 as internally displaced persons, anthropology has been hard put to justify its celebration of the integrity of ethnic groups and their ‘cultures’ as opposed to the aspirations of individuals within such cultures to life, liberty and property against those who seek to deprive them of such hopes”.

In response to this type of thinking, some social thinkers, from the conservative Wilcomb Washburn to left-leaning Edward Said, have rejected simplistic or absolutist relativism. They argue that such extreme relativism tends to isolate and essentialize the topic “culture”, and thereby overlooks the various ways in which persons and groups within indigenous cultures, or developing countries get marginalized, punished, or killed for views, actions,

or identities that differ or dissent from the norms supported by the elites of their societies (Turner and Nagengast 1997, Sjoberg et al. 2001). Similarly, as French philosopher Finkielkraut criticized (1987), under the rubric of altruism or cultural sensitivity, many Western social scientists and non-Western intellectuals and elites viewed “the other” as a homogeneous bloc, destroying, or at least devaluing their plurality of cultures, thereby depriving the peoples of former colonies of dignity and democracy because these notions were thought of as “Western”. Although he recognizes the right of “small nations” to protect their culture, Finkielkraut defends universalism and brings into question cultural relative views which he blames for depriving the individual of her value judgment.

Moreover, extreme cultural relativists rarely notice how specific cultures are almost always deeply enmeshed within other cultures, nations, and global processes. Clearly, Palestinian refugees who live inside camps in Jordan are caught between the Arab-Israeli conflict and the politics of a small developing country like Jordan in relation to the West.

UN Conventions on rights are generally clear and persuasive in their claims to be universal only because

they tend to neglect to discuss the local aspects of their meanings and their possible implementation. That is, by ignoring and not acknowledging differences, particularities, and specificities of non-Western peoples, these declarations implicitly construct a "universal humanity" that often does not exist as a lived reality, or even an accessible conceptualization in many societies. For many countries such as Saudi Arabia, the Western secular perspective of the conventions is an obstacle for ratification. That aspect did not prevent Jordan's ratification of the UN CRC in 1991, although children rights law is still in the works in Jordan, as Saba, who works for the National Center for Human Rights, pointed out:" Ratifying the UN CRC does not make it a law in Jordan. To be a Jordanian law it needs to be voted in Parliament."

However, cross-cultural influences have encouraged the creation of regional standards and procedures such as the National Task Force in Jordan, or the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child. The central question remains whether human rights is a universal phenomenon that necessarily leads to imposing standards constructed by Westerners on other peoples. This seems to be a paradoxical question because universals in order to be

universal, must be adaptable everywhere. Conversely, the notion of the universality of rights tends to homogenize beliefs without accounting for cultural differences, and this may weaken the reception of the discourse of rights in particular societies or groups. Muslim intellectuals think along these lines: Muslims have their own concept of human rights that bypasses the Western concept. Camp children and adolescents made similar remarks, as is shown later in this chapter.

Muslim religious leaders insist that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is excessively influenced by Western secular and invidualistic concepts (Dwyer 1991:59). Similarly, other aspects of the UN conventions may also be controversial for other countries including the United States, a Western country, which has not ratified the U.N. conventions on human and children's rights because of cultural and political commitments, such as a policy of recruiting youth into its armed forces. In addition, the U.S. holds the view that the death penalty is not a violation of human rights, in spite of a recent Supreme Court ruling abolishing juvenile death penalty.

Critics of the individualism of rights have claimed that in a traditional community-based society children are protected by the family network and hence some

rights are “not applicable and irrelevant” to their particular cultural context (Pollis and Schwab 1980). Further, critics claim there is too much emphasis on the individual and not enough on the community in which she lives (Falk 1999:105). Political Islamic discourse dismisses not only the secular aspect of rights, but also resents it as neo-colonialism. It portrays the West as decadent in its representations through media, with its overtly revealing dressing and sexual freedom.

The UN CRC constructs children as depending on adults to protect them and as having the right to be represented by their parents (or other adult representative) who have the obligation to act as their advocates. One article of the Convention on the Rights of the Child asserts that “the best interests of the child” are to be the primary consideration in all decisions concerning him or her. But who determines what is best for the child – the state, the family, or non-governmental organizations (NGOs)? As Qvortrup (1993) suggests, through such protection children become marginalized by the discourse of adults. Such marginalization, Qvortrup argues, is paternalistic, that is, any dominant group is deemed to know what is best for the dominated group. This rhetoric strongly echoes that of the UDHR in which the Western

countries are constructed as the adult parents or child's advocates, whereas the Middle East or any other developing country is perceived as dependent, marginalized and weak and in need of protection from the adults. As Wallerstein observes, the Western discourse on human rights was inherited initially from the Western view of self-determination of nations, an idea put forth during the Enlightenment by Montesquieu's "Droit des peoples à disposer d'eux mêmes". This concept fostered the domino effect of independence and decolonization of many colonized countries by the French and the British, but it also implied for those powers that new nations had to acquire a certain maturity in order to show the West they were "ready" for independence. Such a view is similar to that of children being given rights while at the same time being kept in a state of dependency in which they are protected, but at the same time marginalized.

Hence, the age of maturity is not only an issue of debate about nations, but also about children, as that age varies according to cultures. Mahmood, from the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs explained: "In Islam childhood means that a child does not have the ability for reasoning. The age of majority changes according to the schools of theology. In Islam physical signs of puberty mark the end

of childhood. Some early scholars such as Imam Hanifa and Imam Malik[51] prefer setting the age of maturity at eighteen. Other later scholars have agreed on fifteen, whereas others have set the ages of sixteen or seventeen for female, and eighteen for male. In fact, it is the arrival of sexual maturity that determines the age."

The view that human rights, including children's rights, are a unitary, universal discourse is perceived to be essentialist and inadequate because it absorbs cultural differences into one Western standardized view of the individual and thus becomes synonymous to a discourse of power, which is discussed later in this chapter.

Local Interpretations and Voices of Children

In light of this brief exposé concerning the existence and history of human rights and children's rights, several questions are raised regarding human rights and children's rights in Jordanian society and specifically among Palestinian camp refugees. In which ways do camp refugees develop consciousness of *huquq al-atfal*, or children's rights? How does camp refugee culture accommodate questions of children's rights?

[51] Both Imams were founders of schools of jurisprudence in the early age of Islam during the 8th Century. Their interpretations of the Qur'an and Hadith are followed by a majority of Sunni Muslims.

Several UNRWA schools that I visited were participating in a two-year program funded by the US and Germany. The program dealt with conflict resolution and tolerance and was rights-based. As noted earlier, the teaching of human rights and children's rights is now incorporated in the curriculum in courses such as Social Studies, Arabic, and Religion (See discussion in Chapter Six on UNRWA education). Some schools, through the committed work of the school principals in Al-Wihdat camp, were mobilized and acted to promote rights, including having the teachers sign an agreement not to hit the children, or else be fired, and by displaying posters on rights in the halls. The posters were written in Arabic and English and had been made by students. They referred to rights in relation to the Qur'an, social customs and traditions. One read "The Right to Form a Family". It was attributed to the Prophet Mohammed who recommended that women or girls be consulted about choosing a husband instead of being forced into marriage. Another poster read: "The Pursuit of Knowledge is Mandatory for Every Muslim". I supposed that in UN CRC terms it was the right to education. A "Right to Freedom" poster was citing Omar Ibn Al Khattab, Mohamed's successor and the second caliph who ruled between 634-644 AD, captured Jerusalem, and is often

cited as a liberator. Other posters read: “The Right to Equal Job Opportunities” and “The Right to Receive Equal Treatment”, also attributed to Omar Ibn Al Khattab.

Camp children and adolescents, nine to eighteen years old, for the most part knew about children’s rights and had indeed developed an awareness of them which contrasted with the attitudes of other Palestinian adolescents not from the refugee camps, and from wealthy Palestinian-Jordanian families living in the affluent residential area of Abdoun in Amman, who I interviewed as a way to compare my data from camp refugees. In Abdoun, we are far from the congested and dense housing of the camps. No more cement-block housing units, but large quiet villas in dressed stone with bright pink or purple climbing bougainvilleas, swimming pools, and well-kept gardens spreading the delicate aroma of jasmine and honeysuckle, standing on wide and spacious tree-lined avenues and streets. These affluent Palestinian adolescents[52], do not go to UNRWA schools, but an American private high school run by a Jordanian. I spoke with a group of boys and girls in

[52] Also refugees originally, since Palestinians in Jordan are all refugees, registered or non-registered, living in camps, or not. See Chapter Seven for a detailed explanation of the Palestinian-Jordanian community in Jordan.

the quiet and pleasant conference room[53]. Their level of awareness of human rights and children's rights was not to be compared with the camp refugees'. They only vaguely knew about children's rights and were barely concerned. They appeared to be mainly interested to speak about freedom of expression at home as a child's right.

Unlike UNRWA schools, the American private high school was not implementing a funded program on rights and hence was probably kept out of the politics of UN funding. Social class plays a role among Palestinians in Jordan not only in the teachings of rights at school, but also in the general awareness and claims of children and adolescents. Thus rights may be more meaningful to camp refugee children and adolescents than to wealthy Palestinian elite children living in the rich neighborhoods of Abdoun and Schmeisani in Amman. For camp refugee youth, rights are their "symbolic capital" much like honor. Accordingly, the privileged Palestinian youth have many important resources, including access to private education, hence many rights may not be as important for them. I return now to Abu Anwar, a camp refugee father, who said earlier: "We don't have anything, so our honor is important".

[53] The American school is a co-ed school, unlike UNRWA schools which are not co-ed and where I met separately with boys and girls.

Camp children and adolescents were excited and eager to answer my questions and talk to me about their rights, perhaps because they had some knowledge on children's rights that they wanted to demonstrate. They may also have enjoyed the attention I was giving, and the ear I was lending to them by sitting among them, but probably, most of all, they valued the fact that I was asking them to express their views and be recognized as individuals. At school, the interview provided them no space in which they were encouraged to speak freely. Interviews in group settings were more frequent as the space of the group was always more favored. Being in a quite room alone with one student, however, did not seem to last for more than five minutes. We were frequently interrupted by a teacher, or the principal, or other intrigued children. It made me wonder if there was some surveillance of sorts at play, or just simple curiosity, or maybe both.

Here are some answers that I received when I asked a group of adolescents between the age of fourteen to seventeen what they knew about children's rights.
Farouk, a seventeen year old boy, said:

> *"I know the right to eat… the right to live. To live in your home country, in Palestine. The right to education in equality."*

For Palestinians "in equality" means equal access to public education as Jordanians. As noted earlier, UNRWA schools do not provide education beyond 10th grade. Consequently, children and adolescents feel insecure about completing their high school education, let alone going to university. Bilel, a seventeen year old boy, said:

> *"Children's rights are the right to learn. The right to own a house and have a family. The right to full freedom. The right to work."*

Marwan, a fourteen year old boy:

> *"The right to a house for my family to live in. The right to a family without problems."*

Bassem, a seventeen year old boy:

> *"The right to be free. The right to be protected by one's family and society. The right to be safe and secure."*

Ismael, a fourteen year old boy:

> *"I like the right to a safe life."*

Mohamed, fifteen year old boy, liked,

> *"The right to a safe life and the right to learn."*

Some identified freedom and independence as their favorite right.

Furat, a fifteen year old boy:

> *"I like the right to freedom. But freedom must have*

limits."

Rabaa, a sixteen year old girl also expressed that limitations had to be put on freedom.

Rami, a sixteen year old girl:

"Absolute freedom is not good. Freedom must be limited"

Islam sets the boundaries that one must not transgress. She continues,

"If girls are given too much freedom, they'll go too far. Boys won't go too far."

When I asked how far is "too far", she answered:

"Islam tells us the limits of freedom, and I follow my religion."

Samaa, a twelve year old girl:

"I like the right to a happy life."

"What is a happy life for you?" I asked.

"It is a comfortable and safe life where I can learn and have an Islamic good life."

She continued:

" I also like the right to freedom. Freedom to express my ideas and to do what I want. But there is no total freedom for girls because of Islam rules".

Ossama, a sixteen year old boy:

"Children's rights give us the right to live in peace,

and the right to freedom. But freedom is limited by my religion."

I asked him to explain.

"For example, the way of dressing for women. My mother and sisters must be veiled. But for men there are no restrictions. They can wear whatever they want."

The West is broadly criticized for allowing too much freedom. Local traditional culture recommends limited freedom. "Out of control" or "unlimited freedom" is evoked in connection to women - and held responsible for many divorces and the break-up of the family, seen as a strong protection in the Arab world, and especially in the camps. Mazen, a sixteen year old boy, said about rights:

"The right to be protected from conflict and from abuse. The right to express oneself freely."

"What is freedom of expression for you?" I asked. Assem, a sixteen year old boy:

"In Jordan we can't speak about political issues."

Samir, a sixteen year old boy:

"I can't talk about family issues at home and at school."

Saad, a sixteen year old boy:

"There is no freedom of expression when we talk about

political issues".

Inside their home, they are not able to talk much or challenge their parents, especially their father's authority. They yearn to be sheltered from family problems and kept emotionally secure. Neither school, nor the state government provides much space to express oneself freely. On occasions, only a few people would speak out to me about the government, but it was never done openly and I knew they trusted me in doing so. The *Mukhabarat*, or secret police, is powerful and has infiltrated the high echelons of power. The monarchy does not enjoy popularity with the camp people. Nobody is able to speak freely about his or her resentment against the government and the monarchy, as public criticism could lead to imprisonment.

Samaa, a twelve year old girl, observed:

"Children's rights come from scientists and Islam, but first they come from Islam."

Ahmed, fourteen:

"I already knew about children's rights because they exist in Islam."

He further observed:

" If rights do not fit with our traditions people don't want to accept them. Children's rights, it is not about what they say, but what they do."

Iman, a fifteen year old girl:

> *" Islam gives us rights more than other democracy. Our rights come from our religion."*

M'hamed, ten:

> *"One should be in the mosque and pray. Children's rights say that."*

Furat, a sixteen year old boy added:

> *"I like children's rights because they come from Islam".*

He continued:

> *" Children in developing countries in general don't have rights."*

Najah, a thirteen year old girl:

> *"Children's rights give us the right to learn the Qur'an."*

So children's rights are deemed to come from God and thus are grounded on strong religious foundations, that is, on Islam which is viewed as the sole guardian of truth.

Hamzeh: a fourteen year old boy:

> *"The Qur'an recognized children's rights fourteen centuries ago".*

A Universal Islamic Declaration of Human Rights[54] based on the Qur'an and the Sunnah was established by Muslim scholars and jurists and confirms their statements. Such declaration claims that God is the sole lawgiver and the source of all human rights. Thus rights can only be conferred by God and include the "right to life, freedom, equality and prohibition against impermissible discrimination, justice, fair trial, protection against abuse of power, protection against torture, protection of honor and reputation, right to asylum, rights of minorities, right and obligation to participate in the conduct and management of public affairs, freedom of belief, thought and speech, freedom of religion, free association, protection of property, dignity of workers, social security, education, privacy, freedom of movement and residence".

Douaa, a fourteen year old girl:

> *" The right to a nationality is one of the rights of a child."*

She continues:

> *" Palestinian children have no rights. Jordanian children have more rights from the government.*

[54] Universal Islamic Declaration of Human Rights *21 Dhul Qaidah 1401*, September 19, 1981. Published by the Islamic Council. London. UK.

Jordanians don't like Palestinians."

Children often mentioned "the Right of children to have their mother's nationality" as an important right, but posing a problem in Jordan (see Chapter Three). Full Jordanian citizenship is much sought after among camp refugees - as a source of valuable social benefits. During an international conference on women, the current Queen of Jordan allegedly promised to change the law that prevented women from transmitting their nationality to their children. But nothing was done. Some camp people criticize the monarchy for having double standards by paying lip service and showing a modern image to international donors in order to attract aid money and funding, which are vital to the country. Yet, on the other hand, because of the coercion exercised by traditional values it makes implementing such promised policies a problematic issue. There are indeed tensions to reconcile rights (of women) with local traditions, as the very same women who want to be able to transmit their nationality to their children, and hence enjoy their rights as women, may be at the same time attached to their traditions and not open for change on other issues. Thus, boundaries between rights and local traditions and religion are slippery and hard to grasp, not only for an observer, but also for the very individuals

claiming their rights. In addition, the central position of religion in camp refugees' lives entangles religion and social customs and traditions.

Hayat a fourteen years old girl claimed her right of return to Palestine as a child right:

"Children's rights give me my homeland right."

She adds:

"But most rights do not apply at home and are not effective outside the home. Look ! Children play in the street. They have no other space to play and they don't have the right for a playground. And I am not even sure if my child right will help me go back to my country."

Saar, a fourteen year old girl, also complained:

"Some rights are not applicable. Rights like citizenship, or peace. Or to live in one's homeland. What about 'Freedom of Expression' outside the family?"

Similarly, Sahar, a sixteen year old girl:

"Jordanian children have homeland rights, but Palestinian children [in Jordan] don't have these rights."

Camp children expressed ambiguous feelings about their rights. On the one hand, they question the actual

applicable aspect of rights, and on the other hand, they feel empowered by their awareness of those rights. They were voicing the paradoxical situation of watching images on TV of human rights violations, while they were taught at school about their rights as children. Such paradox elicited their disbelief or skepticism in regard to their rights.

Wala, a fifteen year old girl, says:

> *"Children's rights make me feel stronger at home. I can communicate better with my family."*

Iman: *"Knowing that I have rights gives me the strength to assert myself."*

Ossama, fifteen:*"*

> *Children's rights give me power. I can express my opinion now and I will even more when I get older. Children's rights help me to do that."*

Adolescents participating in the Child Parliament[55] explained that the Parliament was "for children to know their rights."

Oroud, a sixteen year old girl:

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[55] It is an initiative of the Jordanian Women's Union that is also supported by UNICEF. It was established in 1996 as a model parliament for children and adolescents between 13 to 18 years old. It promotes children's rights and democratic practices among children. The Parliament is voted for two years, and provides gender equality by having equal representation of boys and girls including children with special needs.

" The Parliament teaches us how to claim our rights".

Helam, a sixteen year old girl:

"The Parliament is good for building a strong personality for children".

Boys and girls in unison admitted that gender equality did not exist for them because Islam did not allow it. Yet, Reem, a sixteen year old girl, wants the same rights as her brothers "including freedom". She adds:" *Parents should trust the girls".*

Dalal, fourteen year old girl:

" I would like girls to have the right to be treated like boys, because in reality girls don't have the same rights as boys".

Asma, sixteen said:

" I would like to have the right to do sports like my brothers, but I can't because it is mamnou, or forbidden, in the religion."

The ambivalence of these comments illustrate the tensions and contradictions that children's rights create, as discussed in Chapter Four, especially among girls who, while they are accepting of Islam, want more rights that religion allegedly gives them.

Sawsan, a fifteen year old girl:

" Boys can go out at night but girls can't. But in

some families girls can stay out until 2 in the morning."

I asked: *"Which families?"*

Ahmed, fifteen, replies*:*

"Rich families, I've heard about those families."

Hadil, a sixteen year old girl:

"Rich kids have rights, but poor kids don't."

Children and adolescents rarely made a social-class distinction; rather such distinction was made between camp refugee and Jordanian. Girls talked about the right to choose their husbands. It is a right of major importance for many young girls who often must accept their parents' choice. Parents usually favor the boys in the family, especially when acquiring a college education. Such practices are serious points of contention which women's groups, including lawyers and NGOs, are tackling as these practices trace back more to social customs and traditions than Islam.

Younger children, boys and girls of about ten years old, spoke more about physical abuse at home than adolescents.

Malak, a ten year old girl said:

"A father should not be hard on his son and hit him."

Farah said:

"A father must love his children and should not hit them."

Ala: *"Children should not get hit and parents should be good to their children and understand them better."*

Aisha, a fifteen year old girl, was accepting of corporal punishment:

"If I deserve it it's OK".

Although she admitted: *"Sometimes my father hits me hard."*

Amanda, sixteen years old, says that one of children's rights is the right of children not to be hit.

Children and adolescents find refuge with their mothers who are usually not as strict as their fathers and provide protective affection and moral comfort.

Deema, a sixteen year old girl, says:

"I obey my mother and I would relinquish all my rights for my mother".

Rifat, a seventeen year old boy:

"Children's rights should guide parents how to take care of their children."

Hala, a sixteen year old girl:

" What my parents know about children's rights is different that what I know. They don't know very much….. Well, not as much as I do. I try to teach

them about children's rights but it's not easy. When we try to have a discussion, it quickly turns into a fight."

Ali, ten:

"Children's rights give a person the right to learn. It does not have to be an obligation from his father, or mother".

The child, a free agent with rights (to learn), has his free will and is no longer subjected to imposed learning by his family. *"Parents don't understand that children are sensitive and should not be beaten up,"* he added.

M'hamed, nine:

"When a child becomes an adult he should take care of his parents".

Yesin: a ten year old boy:

"When someone gets old, he should be secure.

Palestinian camp refugee families like other Arab families take care of the elderly. Grandparents live with the family. Camp people expressed criticisms toward Western families in which older people live in retirement communities or on their own, but no longer with their family.

In one boy's school in Al-Wihdat camp adolescents made a video montage of various snippets of footage of the

Intifada showing gruesome pictures of wounded children. They showed attitudes of anger and frustration toward the Israeli occupation and the US occupation of Iraq, and also solidarity and empathy towards the other Arab children and adolescents caught in the fighting in those countries. Thus children and adolescents were expressing a strong political consciousness which fitted into their reformulation of children's rights.

M'hamed, thirteen, a student union representative, observed:

> *"All children in the world should have rights. But children of the Intifada don't have rights."*

Some adolescent boys of 17-18 years old talked about their nation, Palestine, as "a nation deprived of rights".

Khaled, fourteen year old boy:

> *" If I have rights I will be able to go and fight for my country, Palestine".*

Salim, ten:

> *"There should be no difference between kids. Iraqi, Palestinian, Jordanian, Egyptian kids, they are all the same. The rights of Palestinian children of the Intifada should be strongly supported."*

Mustafa, a fourteen year old boy:

> *"The right of forgiving does not mean we will forget*

to go back to Palestine."

Mutassar, a fourteen year old boy:

"Israelis don't implement children's rights when they deal with Palestinians. When I see children in Palestine I really think they need children's rights."

Saddam, thirteen:

"A child should live away from wars".

Hussam, a fourteen year old boy:

"Children's rights are good, but they are not implemented all the time. In the camp some children don't go to school and there is unemployment. But I know that a child does not have the right to work and bring money."

Anas, fourteen year old boy:

" Children sometimes are not given the right to finish their studies because they are forced by their parents to leave school and work. There are no equal rights for Palestinian here in Jordan. We don't have the same rights as Jordanian children. Palestinian people are not allowed to go into the army."

Through their discourse on rights the children and adolescents have created an imagined protected space against the Jordanian unequal policies and the difficult

living conditions they experience everyday. It enables them to verbalize their demands to Jordan, their claims to their homeland, their rejection of Western influence, and the claims for girls of gender equality. Thus their various concerns are expressed in a hybrid discourse on children's rights that they have constructed. "Detoured discourse" has been studied as one of the ways of resisting (cf Willis 1977, Comaroff 1991, Knauft 2002) and "hidden transcripts"[56] (Scott 1990) may be the new discourse on children's rights of the camp refugee children and adolescents. It represents a discourse of opposition, a new language which is created, used and modified in social interaction.

I suggest that such "hidden transcripts" on the part of the refugees is matched by a similar "hidden transcript" embedded in the hegemonic global discourse of the powerful.

Critique of the Global Discourse of Rights and its Emancipatory Message.

The question of whether human rights are a Eurocentric or a Western imposition, or a truly universal or natural inheritance, is especially pertinent in today's refugee camps in

[56] See James C. Scott on hidden transcripts, that is, how subordinate groups create "hidden transcripts" representing a critique of power spoken behind the back of the dominant.

Jordan, as rights are distributed as part of a "package" of unequal economic, political, and cultural influences between rich and poor countries of the globe. Thus, the context of inequality in which democratic values such as rights spread is itself basically undemocratic. Western cultural domination may have become a kind of cultural force-feeding endangering non-Western cultures by dismissing cultural diversity, and human rights. Camp families are fully aware of the inequality that exists between nations and the inferior position that developing countries in general, and their own community in particular, occupy. Reem, who works for a local NGO, indicated that many Palestinian-Jordanian NGO workers were delighted with the fact that the US did not sign the CRC: they felt that in this matter the Arab world was not associated with the US, and was thus demarcating itself from US hegemony.

I contend that the UN CRC is a globalizing, power-infused knowledge system deemed to contain all that is true. My argument is two-fold. On the one hand, the Jordanian elite have been co-opted into adopting the CRC which underlying disciplinary aspect "regulates populations" or "disciplines" camp refugees. This brings to mind some of Foucault's views of power as an instrument of control. As discussed in Chapter Three, Foucault holds that circumscribed spaces like army barracks, schools or

hospitals, and refugee camps for that matter, are disciplinary institutions, or “projects for controlling and correcting the operations of the body”. He refers to such projects as “dressage”, a term used for the training of animals. Foucault writes, “a body is docile that may be subjected, used, transformed and improved” (1977: 136). Extending his views of “docile bodies”, I suggest that the CRC project in the refugee camps is also a mechanism to discipline the minds.

On the other hand, the CRC may be construed as an ideological tool for global powers to influence others. While the CRC message conveys financial aid and technical assistance offered by UNICEF to local NGOs and ultimately camp refugees, it has become part of the politics involved with aid and development. Thus, the CRC is another tool of domination for powerful states over smaller nation-states. A space of insidious power diffused through discursive practices, decentered and disseminated through “manifold ramifications”, as Foucault (1975) would have it. During my fieldwork, Jordan received $ 18.5 Million in US grants to support democratic reforms. Similar grants are distributed throughout the Middle East region including

Jordan, Egypt and Algeria focusing on conflict resolution, education and women's leadership[57].

Critics of the West among Middle Easterners view the Western language of human rights as still tainted by colonialism in its "emancipatory" message. The language of modernity of the "Mission Civilisatrice" of the late 19th Century Western powers may well have been replaced by the human rights language of the West in our century. NGOs and IGOs may be playing a key role in disseminating the discourse of rights through their processes and "micro-physics of power" entailing information, legitimacy, methods, ideology, rating, surveillance monitoring and control through which resources are redistributed from UNICEF to local NGOs. Thus, practices and events, such as the Human Rights Day Celebration described earlier, represent subtle negotiations, in which mechanisms of power play out between UNRWA – a United Nations agency, local Palestinian-Jordanian teachers, Westerners from various countries who are heading the Agency (including the Director of operations in Jordan) and the camp children and adolescents.

At this point, a parallel can easily be drawn between the discourse of rights and the discourse of

[57] Jordan Times October 24, 2004

development in developing countries. The discourse of development is also associated with modernization on the Western model of economic growth bringing resources and authority from abroad in the form of capital investment, grants in aid, experts, institutions and international organizations (Ferguson 1990, Escobar 1995). In this framework, rights may also be perceived as providing an apparatus that performs a similar political operation.

Engle Merry (2001:38) suggests that "rights" can be viewed as part of a cultural process that develops and changes according to social, economic, and political forces. True, human rights perceptions have shifted over the past half-century and have become increasingly connected to global movements for social justice, yet the operation of the human rights system remains unclear. Although human rights represent a system of law, they do not function like the legal systems of nation-states. Instead, "rights" rely largely on informal mechanisms of shaming, public exposure, information exchange, and international power politics. Such a system depends on the work of non-governmental institutions, intergovernmental organizations, and a widespread public rights consciousness.

Similarly to religion, however, which has been a powerful vehicle of domination during colonization through the work of missionaries (Comaroff 1991), the UN CRC also may also be a vehicle for certain cultural representations and practices. That is, the CRC is experienced by many "recipients" as a foreign ideology and set of rules and policies, a new system of monitoring their implementation, and a new structure made to colonize their mind. However, the strong power of religion in the refugee camp community has emerged as a mechanism of self-defense against a "culture" of rights imposed by the West, and may function to counterbalance the potential power of the CRC. Thus put in historical terms, it can be said that the CRC, like the religion of the dominant group during colonization is met by the religion of the subalterns, as a form of resistance. Or it may also appear that the religious message of colonizers has been replaced by the secular CRC met in opposition by the hybrid discourse of children's rights.

In the same spirit, Gramsci's concept of hegemony, as I understand it, that he applied to social classes, refers to a capitalist control that is non-violent and coercive, but works insidiously through a hegemonic culture in civil society, eliciting general consent of the working class. In other words, the dominating group is able to

press ideas and values upon the dominated group and obtain acceptance. His concept enables us to understand how UNICEF and local NGOs help create a hegemonic consensus in which the dominated classes, namely the camp refugees, are meant to actively support the promoted secular values of the CRC. However, the picture is more complicated because UNRWA and local NGOs – like "organic intellectuals" - acting as the dominating group's agents or deputies are mediating[58] a local discourse of resistance using Islamic discourse (Cf.next chapter).

Khalil R, for example, the Human Rights supervisor for UNRWA, organizes workshops with parents in which he teaches parents – using the discourse of Islam - about the equal importance of girl's education in an effort to challenge local camp traditions which favor boys' education: "What will happen to a woman if she divorces or her husband dies? Who will take care of the children?" To be more convincing he uses the idiom of religion when he tells camp refugee parents that the Prophet Mohammed is cited to have said: "A father who has three daughters and educates them all to the highest degree will go straight to Paradise." Thus Khalil is able to further explain to

[58] See Chapter Six for a discussion on the role of UNRWA teachers.

parents, "To be sure, it means that Prophet Mohammed wanted girls to be educated and not left behind." Somehow disenchanted he adds: "But some people, especially fathers, are traditional and follow the holy Qur'an according to what they like." Khalil further explained that in the Hadith[59], it was said that every Muslim boy and girl had a right to acquire knowledge. It also says: "The best parents are the ones who give a good education (intellectual and moral) to their children". Or "Be fair, just and equal in the way you treat your children".

However, the UN CRC, some argue, is a legal instrument, which also helps legitimize the rights of children. It gives a structure in which the welfare of the child becomes legally bound by its policies. Primarily and most importantly, it is meant to protect and construct safe spaces of childhood. Accordingly, anthropologist Sharon Stephens (1995) suggests that such legal instruments are critically needed in the context of world systems and global processes that elicit rapidly changing notions of childhood, and new conditions that put children at risk throughout the world, inside or outside their home.

Other defenders of the UN CRC argue that it protects children by endowing them with a status separate

[59] Oral sayings attributed to the Prophet Mohamed.

from that of their parents and with their own rights, and that it empowers them as agents capable of exercising these rights "in accordance with their age and maturity".

Rights are deeply rooted social constructions shaping our lives and which are now part of our social and political reality (Donnelly 2003). The center Dar El Aman[60] in Amman provides child safety for abused children, and the caretakers and psychologists report that their approach is based on children's rights. Children, they say, learn about children's rights through the staff at the center and when they go back to their families they may be able to speak up and tell their parents that although they are children, they have rights now and, as parents, they don't have the right to hit their children. Children are thus socialized to become empowered agents able to speak for themselves. Rights provide them with that tool. Hence, in practice the UN CRC and its local interpretations may not be not in opposition, but reinforcing one another.

Conclusion

UN conventions on children's rights and human rights speak toward certain Western norms made to blend local values and knowledge and have come to be perceived as

[60] See Chapter Four.

symbols of the West conveying Western values. But, as Donnelly suggests (2003:61), in spite of the debates and ambiguities that rights elicit, the vision of human dignity they purport and seek to implement makes them authoritative, even if in practice they include deviations from those norms.

In the refugee camps, while the notion of human dignity is fundamental for Palestinian people who feel they have lost their dignity by losing their homeland, the hybrid discourse that children and adolescents produce becomes mostly validated by the authority of religion. It subverts the hegemonic meanings of the UN CRC and re-invents them anew, and better accommodates children's claims and struggles.

This is not to say that the hybrid discourse of children's rights is without tensions at home. They indeed exist as some children reported. However, while the local discourse allows the expression of the persisting struggle and the painful refugee condition, it is also a discourse of opposition, a site where refugee youth culture as well as a certain kind of Palestinian identity are created. The specificity of the refugee camp has helped create a local discourse of children's rights which is essentially constructed in camp refugee terms as my interviews with the

Palestinian privileged adolescents belonging to the well-assimilated elite - outside the camp - confirm. It appears that, unlike the camp refugees, those adolescents were not really aware of, or concerned by children's rights.

The voices of the camp children and adolescents underline the complexity of universal conventions of rights. Children's rights, as they are articulated and inculcated in UNRWA school education, and through IGOs and NGOs programs, are now part of camp refugee education which creates a new social reality that at minimum empowers them to become conversant in rights discourse. UNRWA education is the main focus of the next chapter.

CHAPTER SIX

UNRWA : "THE WHOLE IS MORE THAN THE SUM OF ITS PARTS"

Introduction

The UNRWA compound that encloses white and blue featureless concrete low buildings flying the UN flag is a strong staple of the camp refugee environment. The global iconic, secular image of international solidarity that the United Nations Relief and Works Agency is deemed to represent is in sharp contrast with the local reality of the refugees inside the camps, one of poor, hard living conditions and strong religious faith. Every camp refugee has constant interaction with the UN organization: as a

child or adolescent, by going to the UNRWA school, and, as an adult, by receiving health care and housing.

Focusing on UNRWA education in Al-Wihdat and Jabal Nasser camps of Jordan, this chapter offers a broad historical perspective of UNRWA, its temporary status and vulnerability under budget shortages. It gives examples of the ways in which UNRWA, a promoter of children's rights through its education programs, is an effective agent of social change and at the same time reproduces Palestinian identity and culture. For camp refugee children and adolescents, the UN agency has become an integral part of the Palestinian refugee entity. Presenting several complex faces, functions, and actors of UNRWA - a site of power, of humanitarian assistance, and of contestation - this chapter explores the ways in which a structure such as the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) interplays with camp refugees both at a global level, as a large UN agency, and at a local level, as a set of fragmented operations.

While Chapter Four discussed child socialization at home, this chapter is concerned with the role that the UNRWA school plays in child socialization. School is one of the sites where the global discourse on children's rights becomes local, that is, where children's rights discourse

is encouraged and taught and in which processes of deconstruction and reformulation materialize.

Historical Perspective

Soon after the creation of the United Nations in 1945, the United Nations Relief Program for Palestine Refugees Agency was established by the United Nations General Assembly Resolution 302 of December 8, 1949 in response to the humanitarian need of refugees following the *Nakba* in 1948. The Agency was thus vested with the task of carrying relief and works programs in collaboration with several host Arab states, and was soon renamed the United Nations Relief and Works Agency, UNRWA, by article 22 of the UN Charter. UNRWA relief operations began May 1, 1950 with the final goal of rehabilitating refugees through employment and resettlement (Buehrig 1950:8). Since that date, the refugee problem remains unresolved and solutions of repatriation and compensation of refugees have made no progress. Subsequently, the UN General Assembly periodically renews the UNRWA three-year mandate. Currently its mandate has been extended until 2008. Thus in about half a century, adjusting to an unexpected, lengthy turn of events UNRWA has expanded its initial structure of tent housing and emergency education system with volunteer

teachers, to an array of elementary and preparatory schools, vocational schools, teacher training centers, women's centers, healthcare centers, a micro-finance system and so forth.

In other emergencies, refugee communities have relied on UNHCR, United Nations High Commission for Refugees, which is specifically mandated to help refugees and displaced communities. Its mandate offers immediate solutions to refugees such as local integration, resettlement in other countries, or return to their home country. In response, refugees have to agree and willingly accept these options. But in the case of Palestinian refugees, such options pose problems as they purport solutions deemed inappropriate to their present situation: the latter option is rejected by Israel, and the two others are judged unacceptable to the refugees who want to go back to their homeland and refuse to settle permanently in a local host country, or be resettled in another third country.

Consequently, UNRWA has been required by the UN General Assembly to provide humanitarian assistance to refugees until a political solution is reached. Thus UNRWA's entity is unique in that it is solely dedicated to

Palestinian refugees' welfare. For Palestinian camp refugees it is undoubtedly "their" agency, the w*akale*.

Unlike other UN agencies that may depend on permanent UN funding, UNRWA depends on yearly voluntary contributions from donor countries. Its largest donors are the United States, the European Commission, the United Kingdom and Sweden[61]. Other major donors also include the Gulf Arab States, Japan and Canada. From the first decade of UNRWA existence and through the 1960's, the US, following their trend of "developing" the Third World as they feared a potential spread of communism, was the chief donor and enabled UNRWA to implement several rural economic development programs. "Some of those programs failed partly because refugees did not want to be resettled. To be resettled was the denial of their hope of return", Yasir, a UNRWA Public Information officer, explained.

The total camp refugee population has grown from approximately 300,000 to 1.4 million, and the total number of registered refugees, including the camp population, from 960,000 to over 4 million in 2005; hence UNRWA faces heavy demographic pressure that seriously challenges the financial viability of the agency. While families have

[61] Scandinavian countries are the major donors in terms of donations relative to population size and GDP per capita.

constantly been expanding, the perimeter of the land allocated to the camps has remained the same, thus creating overpopulation outside the camp limits, as discussed earlier.

Since it was created, UNRWA has been responsible for the wide spread of literacy among the camp refugee community, hence an important instrument of social change through which a large number of rural Palestinians became urban camp refugees. I will not delve here into high level UN politics involved in shaping UNRWA educational content as I am more concerned with the education aspect on the ground. Within the UNRWA education system several actors interact. They are the Palestinian camp refugees – parents and children, the educators, and state authorities, including Jordan and Israel. From 1967, subsequent to the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza, Israel has undertaken a wide censorship campaign of school books used by Palestinian students throughout the UNRWA school system. This issue is examined later in this chapter.

Accordingly, UNRWA teachers, key actors in the system, have had a long history of demands and resistance to the Agency including several episodes of ensuing strikes affecting the entire UNRWA system in the Middle East. In Jordan, they became unionized in 1954, but after 1970 and

the crushing of Palestinian resistance in Jordan by King Hussein, their actions and reactions at effective organization diminished. Such tentative organized work solidarity had come in response to UNRWA measures regarding salary, tenure and job security that teachers found unacceptable (see Brand 1988: 209).

Many teachers and technicians who were trained in UNRWA vocational and teachers' schools emigrated and worked overseas – mostly in the Gulf countries. In the 1970's, the new countries bordering the Persian Gulf were experiencing an oil boom and were in need of human resources and professional expertise that Palestinian refugees, male and female, were able to provide. Thus they largely contributed to education in the Gulf States, and also through their remittances to the Palestinian community economy at large, beyond the porous borders of the camps.

Over the years, UNRWA has been the object of critique and high controversy. Some critics charged UNRWA with being pro-Palestinian, blaming it on its Palestinian staff, while, in the eyes of Palestinians, UNRWA is a Western imperialist tool, complicit with its main donor, the US, a backer of Israel. During my fieldwork, in the fall of 2004, UNRWA was facing accusations from Israel which claimed that UNRWA was allowing Palestinians to

smuggle rockets in its ambulances in the West Bank and Gaza during Israeli military onslaught. Such claims were later dismissed by the Israeli Army, but did not prevent the Agency chief officer, the Commissioner-General, from being "retired" from its functions.

On a Tight Rope: UNRWA's Operations

UNRWA is the largest UN operation in the Middle East and employs about 25,000 people: almost all of them Palestinian refugees. Many are teachers, social workers, doctors, project managers, supervisors, area or field officers and so forth, and are part of a hierarchy in which the highest echelons are filled by Westerners. However, serious budget cuts have undermined many UNRWA programs, including education. This is much talked about among camp refugees who feel the financial pressure upon them.

UNRWA aid has become central to the making of Palestinian refugees according to its own definition of who is a refugee[62]. The brief overview of UNRWA operations that follows highlights its financial problems and the ways these impact refugees in terms of aid and psychologically. As noted, the agenda of UNRWA is not only to help refugees

[62] See Chapter Three for a definition of refugee

with humanitarian aid, but also to enable them to get back on their feet and be self-supporting.

The UN agency is a big apparatus, a large modern bureaucracy with a cash budget for 2005 of about US $ 339 million. It is an organic body with various inter-related areas: one area in urgent need affects the other areas. In cases of emergency, as in 2004 while I was in Jordan, UNRWA made appeals for funding for re-housing and food aid for refugees in Gaza and the West Bank. But funds fell short for that year, affecting not only the direct services to refugees in those areas, but also had repercussions in other areas. Camp refugees in Al-Wihdat and Jabal Nasser were worried about those Palestinian families left homeless, and, as importantly, about UNRWA's deeper budget crisis and its direct implications for their own daily lives. The financial concerns of the Agency render it vulnerable and precarious to the camp refugee community creating a psychological state of uncertainty which has become part of the transient, liminal aspect characteristic of the Palestinian refugee condition.

Since the inception of UNRWA, four generations of Palestinian refugees, that is, hundreds of thousands of people have benefited from its humanitarian aid. Over time, programs have gradually shifted according to the changing

needs of the growing refugee population, the country in which they were living, and UNRWA funding. For example, in the West Bank and Gaza, camp refugees live in a constant state of emergency. Refugees in Lebanon also have difficult circumstances as they are not allowed to hold a job because they are refused work permits, and have no right to Lebanese citizenship. Further, since 1982, food rations are no longer distributed to all registered refugees, but only to the neediest ones, namely the special hardship cases. However, in Jordan, this group represents about 3% of the refugee population as the country has achieved the highest level of social and economical assimilation of refugees[63].

To compensate for its budget cuts, UNRWA has established a micro-finance program to help create new businesses, or finance existing small ones. It also successfully enables women operating in an informal economy, who are unable to access a bank loan, to improve their business. This program also includes business training programs to help refugees acquire business skills. It makes refugees less dependent, and allows them to improve their lives.

UNRWA has built its own schools and clinics inside the camps and operates or sponsors more than 900

[63] UNRWA Sources 2005.

installations. It is the largest employer in the region after the national public sector, and an attractive one for refugees as it provides its employees with a secure position in a UN agency and confers on them the status of UN staff. Almost every refugee family that I met had one member who worked or had worked for UNRWA in various capacities. However, UNRWA employees – male and female, mostly Palestinian refugees themselves, were frequently complaining about their work conditions as UNRWA has had problems to raise their wages. UNRWA staff claimed that they were paid about 1/3 of what other UN staff received in the region. Thus funding, costs of programs and budget cuts have consistently been central issues of high concern both for camp refugees[64] and UNRWA employees. The latter have organized themselves into staff committees to voice their demands and concerns.

In each camp a UNRWA services office helps refugees with administrative problems. Such services are available to all registered refugees, both camp and non-camp residents[65]. Every day men, women and their small children visit the UNRWA offices to get some kind of assistance. In

[64] They are not allowed to get organized since their uprising in 1970 which was violently crushed.

[65] See Chapter Three and Seven for detailed explanations of the Palestinian refugee population in Jordan.

addition, free health care is provided by UNRWA through clinics and includes maternal and childcare centers and are staffed with doctors, dentists, nurses, gynecologists/obstetricians, midwives, and paramedics who are Palestinians for the most part. To my surprise, however, there were no female, but only male gynecologists in Al-Wihdat camp. I asked a project director for an IGO, formerly a female gynecologist, why this was so, and was told that in Jordan there were many more male gynecologists/obstetricians than women, and that male doctors were generally more trusted by camp families. Thus Palestinian camp families' highly valued notions of honor and modesty may be contradicting when it comes to medical knowledge. While a woman's body symbolizes the family honor, man's knowledge is deemed superior to a woman's and thus overrides honor concerns.

Despite its financial difficulties, UNRWA social services have remained fairly comprehensive. They include Women's Program Centers, Community Rehabilitation Centers, Youth Activities Centers and programs for special-need children and adolescents. Leyla, a project manager for UNRWA special program for children with learning disabilities, described one of the children's rights used in her program: "The right to learn is one of the most

important rights of children." But Leyla is concerned and anxious about her special education program that includes about 1000 students, as its viability is compromised for lack of funds.

Education

Education has become the main area of activity of UNRWA's apparatus. The UNRWA school system is the largest in the Middle East, with about 680 schools, approximately 500,000 students, and employs over 17,000 teaching staff. A UNRWA officer indicated that in the past decades, UNRWA has consistently been challenged in providing education to an ever-growing student population, in a limited school space with shrinking funds to pay teachers' salaries. Its size and importance make it comparable to any national education system, although its transnational structure renders it more complex. The UNRWA education institution is unique and ambiguous: it provides free mass education, but it is not really a public school, or a private school.

It is at school that refugee children and adolescents are formally taught about children's rights, and as a result learn to be autonomous, empowered agents. School is where new concepts of childhood inform parents' and children's perceptions, as discussed in the previous

chapter. Social sciences concerned with industrial societies, modern states and new nation-states have associated education with nationalism (see Hobshawn 1990, Mitchell 1988, Smith 1995). The role of public education is deemed to be central to nation building as it provides an ideology and a place in which citizenship can be exercised. Gellner (1983) viewed mass education as hegemonic strategy leading to the subjugation of a people. He saw it as a tool of the state to socialize individuals into a dominant, homogeneous culture by inculcating national principles and morals. Thus a centralized education system creates one standard and therefore one culture for those who are subjected to it. As a result, those who are educated in this system identify with others who are educated in the same way. The importance of education in national identity formation is discussed in Chapter Seven.

But how do these theories of nationalism apply to the paradox that UNRWA education presents where UNRWA teachers, all Palestinians, teach a Jordanian curriculum to Palestinian camp refugee students? In educating several generations of camp refugee youth, how did UNRWA teachers contribute to keeping Palestinian cultural identity alive, instead of creating, as intended, a Jordanian identity? In fact, how did UNRWA education in Jordan, initially designed

to encourage state nationalism, enable a Palestinian oppositional nationalism to emerge? The UNRWA school system appears to have become a site of political contestation in which several actors and power players are involved. Some make decisions about the curricula; others teach, supervise or learn.

1) At school

In the last decades, the UNRWA school has been a hotbed of struggle for several groups that include students, teachers, and state authorities. During the first Intifada in 1987, UNRWA schools in Palestine became places of confrontation and political resistance in which camp refugee students and teachers expressed and claimed their Palestinian identity (Brown 2003). This early demonstration indicated that both students and teachers were capable of opposing domination.

The schools are rundown inside, although they look clean from the outside with whitewashed walls. The schools of the camps where I worked, in Al Wihdat and Jabal Nasser, had no computers for either students or educators. As I was leaving Jordan at the end of 2004, schools in Al-Wihdat had just received computers which were waiting to be installed. There was no computer lab though. UNRWA bureaucracy and the

additional expense to an already overloaded UNRWA budget were most likely the reason for the delay in installing the equipment. Surprisingly, Omar, a particularly motivated and popular principal, was the only one to have a computer in his office. When I asked him the reason for such privilege, he replied that it was a donation from camp families as a token of gratitude for his dedication and he explained that the Al-Wihdat camp community was very concerned about the education of their children.

Indeed, all camp refugees place the highest value on academic and intellectual performance, and perceive education as a way of regaining their dignity and power. Parents are proud of their children's achievements and would often have their children show me their award certificates from school. There are several examples of camp refugee success stories like that of Amina who was born in Jabal Hussein camp and became a female lawyer, or Zeina, a young woman born in Al-Beqaa camp, who holds a Master in Sociology, or Aref, a young man born in a camp, now a Social Studies teacher in Al-Wihdat camp. As another UNRWA Palestinian teacher put it: "Education is the only passport for Palestinians." This value is deeply embedded in Palestinian culture, although Aref, the teacher just mentioned, was pessimistic about the chances of education

for this generation of children. He said that only a very small percentage of his students will be able to go to college. However, Palestinians refugees were proud to mention that they were the most highly educated group in the region as the West Bank and Gaza ranked first in literacy rate in the Arab world, and Jordan second, and, as they were quick to add, most of Jordan is Palestinian. Parents' concerns about educational achievement are in line with the hope they carry as refugees of a better life for their children - out of the camps and back in Palestine. UNRWA's emphasis on education has also been interpreted as a response to a strong demand from refugees in their will to compete with the technological advance of the Israelis (Cf. Al-Husseini 2003).

Sitting in several classes I was fully aware that the dynamics of the class were not the same as they would have been without me, a visitor who became the object of attention of the entire class. The teacher probably felt she was being observed, but the children appeared to welcome me as a new distraction and kept turning their heads in my direction. The classes in which I sat had "only" 35 to 40 students. I suspect those classes may have been selected by the principal because they had fewer students than usual UNRWA classes, which in general have

about 50 students. The classroom had no fan and no heating system. It was an overcrowded space with several rows of desks. Children were quiet and sat tight on their seats. In the English class[66] that I observed the teacher was teaching vocabulary words that the sixth grade boy students in turn repeated out loud, one by one. Starting with the first row, each young boy stood up and repeated the English word, with each student the tone of voice was going higher and higher, the word was getting more and more distorted, until the last row where it practically became a scream. In another class, in seventh grade, boys were learning mathematics. The lesson was about fractions. Every time a student had a good answer the entire class would applaud which made the class very lively which the teacher seemed to enjoy. We were in June, the end of the school year and the class was doing revisions, and hence the general animated response and participation.

Obedience as a way of showing respect is the general characteristic of the relationship between students and their educators. It is a cardinal virtue. Traditionally, age elicits deep respect. Students are expected to be obedient and respectful to their parents, and also to their teachers who represent authority both for

[66] English is taught from first grade.

the knowledge that they hold, and also as adults. I found UNRWA students to be well mannered, quiet and humble in the presence of other adults. In an eighth grade class, in a boy's school, the principal came in and interrupted the class. All the students got up immediately and stood straight as he walked in. With a serious face he walked up and down the rows of students in silence as if inspecting soldiers. I was sitting at the back of the class and I, too, was intimidated by his stern manner.

Not all principals were like that though. For example, Omar, the principal mentioned earlier, was enthusiastic about the children's rights program. He told me, and I observed, that he was very fond of his students and that the school was his family. There was indeed a warm and family-like feeling expressed in the interactions between him, the teachers and the students. Or in a similar way, one day, a young female student, a six or seventh grader, had fallen sick at school. A teacher and the principal took her to the hospital. The attention and tender care they gave her were striking, similar to those that her family would have had, I supposed.

At the same time, firm discipline - certainly firm by American school standards - is enforced at school.

Although educators had different styles, my observations inside and outside the classroom indicated that discipline and uncontested authority of the teacher and the *moudir* or *moudira*, or principal, were expected by students. Even when sometimes teachers hit children, as noted before, children and adolescents would minimize it and describe it as "light" hitting.

At the beginning of each shift students stand in the playground and line up in rows quietly waiting to go to class while they listen to Qur'an chanting through the school broadcast system. The *soura*, or passage from the Qur'an, I heard was about the virtues of education. Unlike public Jordanian schools, the Jordanian national anthem is not played, and nor is the Palestinian. I supposed that UNRWA stands for an international agency and thus no specific national anthem is favored.

The aforementioned illustrations show differences in UNRWA teaching. While the teaching of subjects like English was done by that teacher as rote learning, a traditional way in Qur'an learning, the class of mathematics had a different, more "modern" approach. "Pedagogical style", I was told by Samar, a school supervisor "is gradually changing. Rote learning practices are disappearing. We are going from a traditional

repetitive style based on memorization in general, to a more analytical and creative thinking orientation," she said. The teaching of children's rights partakes of such new direction as it inculcates "modern" concepts and encourages student participation. This difference contributes to a two-fold educational experience in which one part strives to be modern and the other to remain traditional.

The double shift system and the lack of space in the camps, render the teaching of after-school activities including sports, nearly impossible. To that end, a football field would be needed; instead there is only a concrete paved, gated playground. In spite of their difficult learning environment, UNRWA students regularly outperform local Jordanian schools[67] in national test scores, as UNRWA staff and refugee parents were proud to point out.

2) How the School System Works

With the technical assistance of UNESCO, United Nations Educational, Scientific, Cultural, Organization, UNRWA has administered the schools' education system and

[67] The teaching staff and the student body in Jordanian public schools reflect the Jordanian population, that is, for the most part of Palestinian descent, and Jordanian of Bedouin descent.

has socialized several generations of refugees. From the onset, UNESCO has worked with UNRWA in establishing an education system for the refugees, and has been in charge of "supervising" the programs. Books are issued by the host country, here Jordan, and refugee students take the Jordanian *Tawjihi* exam in order to (hopefully) access higher education.

UNRWA provides ten years of schooling. After 10th grade, UNRWA students are meant to go to public or private schools outside the camp to complete their high school education. If they are lucky, they will get a scholarship for the two last years of high school through a small, competitive UNRWA scholarship program(see Dickinson 1974). They may take the *Tawjihi* exam, a pass or fail exam, which enables students to enter the university, similar to the French baccalaureat, and requires assiduous preparation, hence a source of high anxiety for both students and parents. However, camp refugees who are financially insecure reported that there was not much hope for upward social mobility for them in the camps. Unemployment is high in the camps, and as a result several parents and children were unsure if they were going to be able to afford university costs. The graduation from UNRWA schools to

public high schools is a leap which families with six or eight children are not always able to make.

UNRWA has provided education to earlier generations of refugees, but the system is now under financial strain and camp parents complained about the weakening of the quality of education their children receive, which is no longer as good as that they received.

Although all camp families strive for educational achievement, only a few students are able to continue their education, because of families' lack of resources. Hence vocational and teacher training centers become alternative ways that help students earn a livelihood and contribute to the extended family economy. Easier to access than university education, vocational training partakes of the UNRWA education system. It starts when UNRWA school stops, that is, after 10^{th} grade, and is popular among refugees. It includes computer training for boys and girls, or small electronics classes in which male students hope to get jobs as TV or satellite dish technicians, or cell phone repair technicians. Girls learn sewing and can work in clothing manufacturing as several factories have been established in Jordan that subcontract and export to near-by Israel, Europe and the US. Such training programs, short or long term, depending on funding, are crucial to camp refugee

survival as they enable refugees to get better jobs to deal with the increasingly high cost of urban living. Recently, the first residential vocational training centre for women in the Middle East opened in Jordan. Ghada, a UNRWA employee, describes it: “It is ground breaking; but unfortunately, not enough students are able to attend these schools for lack of space.”

UNRWA teachers and education staff are Palestinian, and schools are not co-ed, as mentioned. Both boys and girls schools are located next to each other, often enticing boys to try to spy on girls or force their way inside the girls’ school, as I saw happen in Jabal Nasser camp girls’ school. The sudden irruption of two boys of about 10 to 12 years old in the playground created strong reactions accompanied by screams from some young girls of the same age, but a total indifference from older girls. In that same school the gate was locked with what appeared to be an unusually large iron chain and lock. I was surprised at the sight of that impressive locking system and asked a teacher about it. She indicated that the gate of the girl’s school needed to be locked, otherwise girls would escape. Her answer left me puzzled and wondering if gender-segregated schools could cause such reaction from girls, and what age group would want to

escape. Or was the big lock a deterrent to discourage boys from entering the girls' school?

3) Curriculum and Politics

The curriculum in UNRWA schools is a complex and contested juxtaposition of Jordanian, Palestinian and Israeli histories which, as noted earlier, are intimately intertwined. It includes paradoxically strong objectives regarding the camp refugees: on the one hand, of assimilation from the Jordanian government, and, on the other hand, of Palestinian identity construction from the camp refugees.

If, as Foucault (1975, 1979) contends, education institutions are sites of power and places of contestation, Palestinian education programs and book contents are places of ideological struggles, and UNRWA's are no exception (see Giroux 1983, 1998; Apple 1991). Thus Palestinian instruction, including UNRWA curriculum, has been for several decades a significant issue of contention between Palestinian and Israeli authorities who wanted to teach their version of a disputed history (Plascov 1981). The second Intifada has only intensified these tensions.

The UNRWA school in Jordan, follows the school curriculum of Jordanian public schools, and is developed by

the Jordanian Ministry of Education. It uses Arabic as the language of instruction. The UNRWA curriculum is embedded in the history of the region. At the onset, soon after 1948, when the West Bank was then part of Jordan, UNRWA schools followed the Jordanian curriculum; however, Gaza, which was under the administration of Egypt, adopted the Egyptian one. Both, Jordanian and Egyptian, included a slight amount of Palestinian history. Later, in 1967, with the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza, up until 1993 and the Oslo Accords[68], Israel exercised rigorous censorship on the UNRWA school books, as they allegedly found them offensive. Since 1993, Israel has taken over control of education in the West Bank and also interferes, although at a minimal[69] level, in the curricula of UNRWA schools in Jordan and Egypt.

UNRWA schools may also implement their own specific programs such as the Tolerance, Conflict Resolution and Human Rights Program, which was created soon after the second Intifada of 2000. This funded program,

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[68] The Oslo Accords were negotiated in Oslo, Norway, between the Israeli government and the Palestine Liberation Organization, PLO, as part of a peace process to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and were signed in 1993 in Washington, DC. For Palestinians, they proved to be a fiasco and a source of frustration as they saw a rapid development of Israeli settlements and a stronger Israeli military presence in the West Bank.

[69] It is the history books which are at issue, but in Jordan, Jordanian history is taught, and only a minimal amount of Palestinian history.

deemed to complement text books, has a strong political meaning for both foreign donors who sponsor it, and camp refugees who learn about it in classes of Arabic, Religion and Social Studies. Hence closer examination of UNRWA textbooks has been carried out in the form of research projects and studies in order to produce politically correct views for major donors such as the US in order to continue to receive funding (Cf. Moughrabi 2001).

Jordan, as a new nation-state, has been eager to create a Jordanian identity that would comprise the two main ethnic identities of the country, namely Bedouin-Jordanian and Palestinian-Jordanian, and has not been particularly interested in teaching Palestinian history to camp refugees. As a result, UNRWA social studies textbooks reinforce nationalism and Jordanian citizenship by only referring to Jordan as a new modern nation and praising its successful accomplishments in the medical, educational and industrial fields. The *Nakba* is briefly mentioned and Palestinian history occupies only a small place by being approached instead from a general Arab country perspective, and not particularly Palestinian. An official in charge of the Curriculum at the Ministry of Education explained the limited space devoted to Palestinian history in the UNRWA curriculum: “Jordanian citizenship is inclusive and

embraces all ethnic groups of the country, including Palestinians. We are here to give our students a Jordanian education".

Nevertheless, to ensure that Palestinian cultural heritage is transmitted to their students, UNRWA teacher groups have struggled to be influential agents of social change, given the limited choice of education manuals that represent Palestinian traditions and national history. The UNRWA curriculum includes, however, handicrafts such as Palestinian embroidery, metal and woodwork. Hand embroidery has long been a staple of Palestinian art and has become a signature of women's traditional work passed on through generations. It represents one of several strong symbols of Palestine. Embroidery patterns - different according to each village - are used to adorn women's dresses and shawls. Palestinian embroidery work is also very popular in home decoration for cushions, or framed and hung on a wall. UNRWA offices are almost always decorated with Palestinian artifacts that I could often admire as I sat in interviews sipping Turkish coffee undeniably enjoying the Arab tradition of offering a drink to a visitor or guest at the office or at home. In an art exhibit of UNRWA student works, the iconic images of Al-Aqsa Mosque, the Palestinian flag, and traditional embroidery motives were mostly

represented. The displayed students' drawings depicted scenes of war with guns, tanks, war planes throwing bombs, or, in contrast, images of peace with a white dove, or rural domestic scenes. These Palestinian symbols and art work shown exemplify Palestinian cultural reproduction and were evidently a source of pride for students and their teachers.

Thus, children and adolescents receive a Jordanian education through their textbooks, and at the same time they are able to develop their own sense of Palestinian identity through the indirect influence of their Palestinian teachers. For example, I was shown several student projects which were almost always about Palestine: there was a video montage project that included children in Palestine who had been killed or wounded; another project was a photo collage about refugee life in the camp; or one was a map of Palestine with former Palestinian villages which do not exist any longer. I asked the teacher if he had chosen those projects, and he said he was not supposed to teach students about Palestine, but only about Jordan. These projects were chosen and conceived by the students, he said.

The student knowledge and allegiance to their homeland may supersede the Jordanian goal of assimilation

embedded in the learning they receive. In Jabal Nasser camp school, a group of young girls in their teens were waiting for me in a classroom. During that time, they had drawn on the chalkboard the Palestinian flag, and Al-Aqsa Mosque and written in broad letters “Long Live Palestine” to show me, I supposed, their Palestinian identity. It was a drawing they had done together, like a joint gift. They were proudly offering me their artwork as a token of their Palestinian identity.

4) UNRWA Students, Palestinian Teachers and Teaching

The demographic boom in the camps has seen the entire UNRWA student enrolment triple since its inception. In Jordan, UNRWA counts about 13,500 students in the 190 UNRWA elementary and preparatory schools that it operates. Female enrolment represents about 50 per cent. When I asked about student associations I found that only Omar, the principal of the boy school mentioned earlier, was actively involved with the association. In contrast, in the other camp schools, students were not interested in an association. The need of solidarity and the social force that a student association represents may be superseded by the refugee bonding experience, the Palestinian “refugeeness”, which is enhanced at school by the fact that

teachers are also Palestinian refugees. There is a sense that students and teachers are part of the same family.

Accordingly, I also asked about parent-teacher association. There was no PTA either, I was told. Teachers and parents meet and communicate in informal ways as the UNRWA school and the camp refugee community form a close relationship. Mothers, generally more involved in the children's education, easily come to school to meet the teachers or the principal. As a refugee mother said, "we are all Palestinian refugees".

UNRWA girl students from elementary and preparatory schools can easily be recognized by their blue or green uniforms: blouses worn over a skirt or pant. Some teen age girls managed to wear them in a creative way to better show the clothes that the uniform was hiding, while other young girls, more observant of religion, wear the jilbab[70], and hence no uniform. Only girls wear the UNRWA uniform, boys have no uniform. The absence of uniform for boys brings to mind to the critique of UNRWA being gender biased, especially for its patrilineal definition of refugee (see Cervenak 1994).

UNRWA schools are secular, and operate on a Western model, and religion classes are taught by lay teachers, not

[70] Long full coat in a dark or drab color, generally worn over pants.

clerics. Starrett argues in his work on Islam in Egypt, that the study of Islam in the Muslim world has become more serious and systematic over the last century, especially since the 1970's (1998:9). What he calls the "functionalization" of religion is a new direction for Islam through which it can help support social and political projects. Religion experienced and used in this fashion is a recent phenomenon in the Middle East. Drawing on Starrett, I suggest that the teaching of religion in the UNRWA school follows this new direction and helps support a project such as children's rights, and thus contributes to its localization. Some teachers expressed their frustration and the difficult task of teaching rights to students who tell them that, "as Palestinians, they do not have any rights, and neither do Iraqi children, for that matter". Hind, who teaches religion, voiced her anger toward teaching rights to students: "Of course I like the idea of human rights and children's rights. But they are words with no meaning". She thinks that her rights come from her religion and only in an Islamic state will she have her full rights. She does not believe in the benefits of the UN good words, that is, the UN CRC. For her, Islam is immutable and the only source of good. She echoes Starrett who proposes that "the functionalization of religion is

opposed to the modernization paradigm, as Muslims claim that an Islamic model is compatible with 21st century world (1998:10).

Hamida, a social studies teacher in a Jabal Nasser school, teaches children's rights in her class. As other teachers had indicated, she, too, explained that children's rights is not a new concept, as it already existed in the Qur'an. "The Qur'an gives the UN CRC a seal of authenticity and makes it acceptable to the camp refugees", she said. She teaches her students that there are two sources of rights: The Qur'an and the UN CRC. She commented: "The UN CRC is organized as a convention and hence is easier to teach. "The Qur'an may be less clear about articulating rights, but it is our religion".

Thus the position of teachers, as educators, on the one hand, and, as Palestinian refugees, on the other, is conflicted, especially when challenged by such a contested concept as rights. Like Gramsci's "organic intellectuals" (1971) who by positioning themselves between dominant and oppressed groups help organize the latter to become agents of social change and form a counterhegemonic force, Palestinian teachers are mediators and enabling agents between the UNRWA structure and the camp refugees. For Gramsci, all individuals are intellectuals even if they

are not "traditional" intellectuals, whom he viewed as too detached and distanced from the working class reality. These Palestinian grass-root intellectuals, so to speak, are able to have empathy with the camp refugees and are key actors capable of resisting outside dominating forces, that want to teach alien Western values. Palestinian teachers are also capable of organizing unions to affirm their claims, as they demonstrated in the past in regard to textbooks. As mentioned earlier, teachers and students mutually influence each other and the dynamics of the two groups' relationship contribute to maintain Palestinian culture and identity.

Palestinian teachers come for the most part from the UNRWA Teaching Institute (or Teacher's college) established in 1964. In the early years of UNRWA, under emergency circumstances and with a large student body, the UN agency was in desperate need of teachers. Consequently, many teachers were rapidly trained, but their then-training came under criticism as it was deemed of poor quality[71] I met several teachers in their late thirties in Al-Wihdat and Jabal Nasser, who were model products of UNRWA education. Born in the camps, they had started school in

[71] See Ibrahim Abu Lughod (1973) for a deep study on Palestinian education.

UNRWA elementary schools and later graduated from the Teaching Institute.

The UNRWA classroom is a space where several interests meet: the Jordanian state, the UNRWA apparatus, the Palestinian students and their teachers. It presents several contradicting aspects as it is a site of power, a place of Palestinian cultural reproduction but also a place of social change where camp refugees become agents of that change, especially as they learn about their rights.

A Hybrid Structure: the Complexities of UNRWA

UNRWA is difficult to portray for the several ambiguities and the complex aspects of its power structure, which cloak its relationship with various actors, that is, the international staff, the local refugee staff, and the camp refugees.

First, on the ground it is a social space. The *wakale*, a set of fragmented local structures, is a space of interaction and sociability which enables camp refugees to create and maintain important social networks and ties. UNRWA also provides a space of solidarity and cohesiveness between the Palestinian care givers and the Palestinian care recipients, which is based on sharing the same status and a common bonding experience as a refugee. Any

Palestinian refugee whether a camp dweller, or not, is cognizant of UNRWA and some of its locations.

Second, UNRWA is a large, international, secular apparatus of humanitarian aid, comparable to a large corporation that uses the US dollar as currency, and operates liaison offices in New York and Geneva – both centers of UN operations and world financial centers.

Third, for over fifty years, UNRWA, a main employer in the region, has offered a large number of employment opportunities for Palestinian refugees from inside and outside the camps. This has resulted in tensions, as some employees reported, between the relative social upward mobility and security that UNRWA offers to its employees in a country with limited opportunities for camp refugees, and the resentment fostered by their second-class treatment as “locals”. They indicated that UNRWA did not really protect them, since it did not provide them with UN standards of benefits, such as tenure or retirement. Palestinian UNRWA teachers and other employees critical of these employment practices have accused UNRWA of being biased. Inequality of positions and salaries within the organization has been a contentious point among the UNRWA employees, thus adding to the refugee perception of

paternalistic control and the colonial stand of the UN agency.

Critics, including refugees, view UNRWA's hierarchical structure as colonial and paternalistic: top ranking internationals are paid high UN salaries, including additional substantial advantages like housing, car, tax exemptions; a middle strata constituted by local staff is paid lower local salaries as local recruits; and at the bottom lie poor camp refugees, recipients of welfare, who hardly survive. Thus the paternalistic critique of UNRWA echoes the message of children's rights conveyed in the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child which is also regarded as paternalistic, as discussed in Chapter Five. Hence, UNRWA position is perceived by camp refugees as a political institution.

The political character that UNRWA has acquired is inevitably tightly connected to the long lasting Palestinian-Israeli conflict, although it comes to contradict the UNRWA stance of being neutral and apolitical. Assimilationist critics claim that UNRWA has fostered Palestinian political consciousness and national identity among camp refugees, and has not helped them to assimilate and forget their claims to their right of return. Hence these critics view UNRWA as an organism of

assistance contributing to a refugee dependency. Schiff (1995) and other critics question UNRWA aid and social benefits to refugees which may have prevented them from becoming organized and resisting. I found, however, that in Jordan only a few special hardship cases were dependent on UNRWA assistance. Those families, categorized by UNRWA as hardship cases, live in absolute poverty and the Agency has a crucial role in providing financial support to them. They are in general female-headed households, or families that include one unemployed male, unable to work because of health problems, or who is over sixty. For example, Hala, a young widow with six children whose husband died a year ago, is unable to work outside the house and thus relies on UNRWA help, and *Zaqat*[72], or charity. Although her husband who was also her cousin, left her with strong kinship ties and networks that provide emotional support, she could not survive without UNRWA.

Camp refugees, accuse UNRWA of being complicit with the US, or at best of being under the hegemonic control of US power. They are extremely ambivalent about UNRWA's role: on the one hand, they owe the UN agency their housing, education and social services, a vital support

[72] Alms giving to the poor and the needy is one of the seven pillars of Islam and is expected from every Muslim.

system under hard socioeconomic conditions, and on the other hand, they see it as an agent of US imperialism. Mohamed, fifteen, an UNRWA student says: “Except for UNRWA and the aid it gives to refugees, UN organizations are not doing a good job. It is only a show of Western propaganda.” Accordingly, Palestinian UNRWA employees, recipients of UN salaries, are often criticized by camp refugees as being agents of the West.

Through the years and various programs, UNRWA has undeniably helped Palestinian refugees to survive their statelessness, not only economically, but as a political identity, and hence has become more than a humanitarian agency. While claiming the status of a non-political agency, it has come to transcend humanitarian issues and has undertaken human rights and political rights issues by implementing special education programs. On the other hand, it appears to be a giant with feet of clay, since its mandate must be renewed every three years. Hence, its very existence is threatened by its temporary aspect and constant budget cuts.

According to a foreign UNRWA official, the UN agency represents for the refugees the international community’s awareness, at best its concern, about their refugee condition and their right of return. The

Palestinians that I met did not express such optimism about the international community's concern. Instead, they talked more pragmatically of their entitlement as refugees and that UNRWA services provided the bare minimum of their rights that the "international community" could guarantee. They insisted on their special status as a responsibility of the international community. They view UNRWA not only as recognizing the Palestinian refugee issue, but also failing to find a viable solution to their exile. Like many refugees, Umm Tareq feels that the international community has cheated Palestinian refugees. "OK! UNRWA helps us, but this is our right as Palestinian refugees and it is owed to us as the basic, smallest compensation for our loss of homeland." Thus the UN agency embodies the *Nakba*, their long hardship, but also somehow the symbolic value of the UN presence, that is, the hope that their refugee plight will be resolved and they will not fall into total oblivion. Like a symbolic flame, the UNRWA entity may only keep the refugee struggle alive until their problem is resolved.

Clearly, as shown earlier in this chapter, UNRWA contributes to a large extent through the indirect work of Palestinian teachers and educators to the preservation of Palestinian cultural and national identity, in spite of

failed attempts from the Jordanian government to suppress Palestinian identity through assimilation, by imposing a Jordanian school curriculum. Teachers, refugees themselves, manage to socialize children and adolescents through solidarity of a shared history. As the performance of the Human Rights Day Celebration described in Chapter One demonstrated, UNRWA school teachers support the "traditions" of the camp community and enable children and adolescents to learn facts and roles to develop as a new generation of Palestinians. Teachers involved in teaching children's rights are even more active agents of child socialization and social change.

The impact of UNRWA budget cuts on the emotional aspect of the everyday lives of the camp refugees should not be overlooked. Camp refugees, who are yearning for a solution to their stagnating situation, are in a state of deep uncertainty and anxiety at the idea that UNRWA could discontinue its help. Amid the tensions that refugees experience of being between memory and hope the feelings of insecurity of a possible collapse and disappearance of the UN Agency, the comfort and haven that religion offers are a way of coping with such pressure. Camp refugees also know and fear that such an end may not necessarily imply the

resolution of their refugee condition and their return to their homeland.

For refugees any diminution in UNRWA services, in quality or quantity, is measured as a decrease in international support. They often construe UNRWA's financial deficit as a political "assault" against them, and the possible "liquidation" of UNRWA as their own liquidation as a people. "We don't like UNRWA, but we need UNRWA. It is part of our lives", says Umm Tareq.

Conclusion

UNRWA constitutes a large, significant part of camp refugee history and its influence is ingrained in every camp refugee. The ambivalence of camp refugees who both demonize and accept UNRWA reflects the economic, political and emotional tensions shared by the UN agency Palestinian staff and the camp refugees, and their interdependence.

Education is a powerful tool which both dominates and liberates. On the one hand, it is a product of powerful global political forces which control funding, curricula and programs, and on the other hand, of cultural forces from local refugee families and teachers, bearers of a refugee history of exile, of Palestinian traditions and

Muslim beliefs, who have struggled for over five decades to preserve and reproduce their culture and values through their children.

The UNRWA education system is the main arena for transformative change. Thus Palestinian camp refugees, including children and adolescents, weakened by their long predicament, are enabled at school through the mediation of their teachers - “organic intellectuals” - to use strategies, such as reformulating a concept of rights that fuses religion and nationalism, to empower themselves when they are confronted by a structure of power such as UNRWA. UNRWA education intended to produce Jordanian citizens out of Palestinian camp refugees, but it has created a counterhegemonic culture, a collective cultural consciousness, that includes Palestinian nationalism, a “functionalized” religion, and local children’s rights. Just as the content of books provided a site of contestation for Palestinian teachers, the hegemonic discourse on children’s rights taught at the UNRWA school has also become a site of resistance for teachers and students in which the former reclaim control over their teachings of rights, and the latter over their learning of those rights.

The next chapter examines how Palestinian students, socialized by family, TV and school, as discussed in the earlier chapters, think of themselves as individuals, and how their identities become constructed.

CHAPTER SEVEN

"MY HEART IS PALESTINIAN, AND MY PASSPORT IS JORDANIAN"

Introduction

The invisible borders of the camp holding Palestinian refugees inside, and Jordanians outside, delimit two distinct worlds and thus enable the construction and reconstruction of complex identities among Palestinians "*mukhayammjieh*", or camp dwellers, and Jordanians.

Outside the realm of the camps, Jordanians are often a mixed breed. Inter-marriage between Jordanians and non-Jordanians occurs, and is considered acceptable according to social class: in the educated elite and bourgeois middle-class intermarriages are more frequent than among working class population. However, in the camps

endogamy is the common practice; hence there is essentially one national identity, that is, Palestinian.

After describing in the previous chapters refugees' collective experience, including youth socialization in the camp - at home and at school, this chapter gives examples of the ways in which camp children and adolescents create and experience their self-identity, which are sometimes multiple identities. First, I discuss the ways and processes through which self-identity becomes constructed among camp young people in connection to children's rights and how they are shaped by each other. Then, I outline several historical conditions of Jordan - a country searching for its identity - and its official efforts at creating Jordanian unity, in order to understand how those inform Palestinian camp refugee identity construction. Finally, I highlight the ambivalence among camp refugees' youth concerning their Palestinian and Jordanian identities.

This chapter analyzes Palestinian camp refugee constructions of identities that hinge on prevalent, recurring themes of this study, such as refugee perceptions of being modern and traditional, multiple boundaries between Palestinians and Jordanians, and identity and empowerment.

Formation of the Individual: Notions of Identity Construction and Influence from Children's Rights

Much has been written and many approaches and theories of selfhood and the individual have been proposed (Cf. Freud 1920/1943, Mead 1934, Sartre 1943, Goffman 1959, Taylor 1985, Giddens 1991, Crapanzano 1992). Dwyer (1991) and other scholars of human rights and children's rights have questioned the validity of a single concept of identity applicable across cultures. Foucault's theories of "modern" subjectivity (1977, 1983) through which he analyzes the "modes", or processes by which human subjects are manipulated and made subjects in power relations are relevant to my argument. Thus I look at individuals, such as refugees living in the space of the camp, who are caught in the politics of power, historical forces and the global discourse of children's rights.

Accordingly, I explore Western concepts of selfhood and individualism, in constant creation and construction, that are closely entwined and at the core of children's rights, and what their local interpretations mean in practice, in connection to Palestinian children's and adolescents' sense of themselves as individuals. Such a sense of self is constructed in the context of the family environment and such other sources as UNRWA schools, NGO

programs, and TV. Thus a new generation of young people is learning to think about themselves as individuals and as agents, which provide new ways for them to construct their identity and to view old traditions in new terms.

"Identity" is a notion which has long been part of camp refugee socialization. The Arabic term *Hawiya*[73] means both identity and identity card. *Hawiya* [the identity card] is primarily connected to their UN status as Palestinian refugees and hence their welfare, as discussed in Chapter Three. Camp refugees learn from a young age that they are members of a refugee community through family narratives. However, there is more to camp refugee identity than an ID refugee card, or a passport as this chapter explores. For instance, camp young people do show a strong sense of belonging to a specific community, the *mukhayyam*, or camp, a community that has encountered many drastic changes in social patterns. Hence their identity is informed by political transitions and transformations in Jordan and Palestine. I return to this later in this chapter.

I asked camp children and adolescents the complex question of how they perceived themselves as individuals. They talked about *mahaba*, or dignity, and related it to

[73] *Dhatiya* also means identity from *dhat*, self, and *al-ana*, means the ego.

their perception of children's rights. When I asked what was meant by dignity, Ahmed, a fourteen- year-old boy, explained, "it is to know your own value". For Furat, a fifteen-year-old boy, it was, "not feeling like a second class citizen in Jordan." Other young people also talked about honor[74]. For example, Umm Mahmood, a local NGO worker in Jabal Nasser camp, explained how important it was "to raise the awareness of the youth in the camp". She defined awareness as "a sense of who one is". Or as Saar, a girl in nineth grade, tells me "children's rights teach me to depend on myself". Another girl, also a nine grader, says, "my rights will shape my personality". For Ossama, a 15 year old boy from Jabal Nasser camp, "children's rights give children a role in society." Some young people also expressed their frustration at "having no rights at all in the Middle East and not being valued as full individuals". These examples show how camp refugee children and adolescents refer to who they are in relation to themselves as individuals, to their family and the camp community, and to the "other" citizens of Jordan, namely the Jordanians. However, it is important to reiterate how receptive and responsive camp children, adolescents and their families

[74] There are two words for honor in Arabic. The honor of a man is *sharaf*, and that of a woman is *ard*.

are to *huquq al-atfal*, or children's rights, and how their perceptions of children's rights are mixed with other rights such as citizen and political rights, and come to include not only rights but also their needs and wishes. Hence children's rights are associated with all their frustrations, and because they often have the perception that "people in Western countries enjoy their full rights."

Although the anthropology of the Middle East has traditionally perceived the individual in Arab societies as conflated with the family, the community and more broadly the *Umma* (Cf. Fernea 1995), I contend that other collectivities are also important. For example, the teaching of children's rights in programs such as peer to peer learning, a method used in some UNRWA classes to develop peer relationship, as well as children parliaments established by Jordanian Women's Union, a local NGO, are profoundly transformative for not only children and adolescents, but for the Palestinian camp community. These enhance a sense of individualism and a subsequent sense of self, personal and social, among young people in this Palestinian community.

Likewise, the Jordanian Women's Union, JWU, that also operates daycare and women centers in the camps (independently from UNRWA) strongly encourage camp girls

and women – through right-based program for women - to participate in their community. “We want to enable them to become empowered actors”, one of their workers stated.

In addition, outside the camp and the school environment, UNICEF often organizes workshops in order to improve what UNICEF calls “social skills” and “self-awareness”. In these workshops teenagers – male and female - from different schools, including UNRWA schools, are gathered. UNICEF educators teach what they refer to as “self-respect”, and “self-esteem” related to issues such as body anatomy, sexuality, female reproduction and the like. Adolescents are thus exposed to topics and issues about their bodies that are not discussed at home. A UNICEF educator explained that these sessions are meant to encourage teenagers to learn about themselves in connection to such deemed taboo matters. She added, “We do not teach children’s rights, we live them”. Thus as this educator expressed, NGOs workers know that teachings of children’s rights are made real through their practices.

Abla, a social worker for the NGO Jordan River Foundation in Jabal Nasser camp manages a special program called “Child Safety and Child Abuse Prevention” to teach children ways to protect themselves from domestic violence and abuse. While she mentions that the program is based on

two articles of the UN CRC (Article 18 and 19[75]), she explains how the program works: "Children are taught not to fall victims of their parents' abuse and speak out. They feel empowered knowing there are ways to take action." She said that she teaches children skills to help them manage their anger, boost their self-esteem, and protect themselves. She encourages what she labels "self discovery" by teaching camp children expressive art such as painting, drawing or drama. "Most children are not aware of themselves and their inner feelings. Those programs teach them to identify and accept those feelings", she says. True, children do not experience the same sense of identity and empowerment once at home where they are part of an extended family, including many siblings, and under hard living conditions in which they may be strongly disciplined by their parents or siblings. But they are being shown other ways to view themselves and their environment, and to become actors and not victims. Abla has disparaging views on the families who do not respect children. "It happens because many parents have a wrong interpretation of the Qu'ran. The Qu'ran teaches us to respect children". In explaining her program she juxtaposed the UN CRC and the

[75] Article 18 is about parental responsibility for raising the child and recognizes that the State provide assistance to parents in child raising. Article 19 requires the State to protect the child from abuse and neglect.

Qur'an. That was in general the response of many educators in regard to the cultural adaptation of children's rights: one the one hand, they embraced the concepts of agency and individuality that children's rights carry and found them useful, and on the other hand, they referred to the Qur'an as the paramount authority, or more precisely the "right interpretation".

As camp children and adolescents are educated about these new notions, many NGOs also organize free *"warshat amal"*, or workshops (the English term is often used), for parents and provide them with counseling and help with raising children. Dalal and Said from the Jordan River Foundation, like traveling salesmen, go to several places in Jordan, carrying a projector and a screen, to hold those workshops in a community space provided by the local town or village. On one occasion when I went with them, the room was full. They were "sold out", although women were present in much greater numbers. I hardly saw a man attending. One of the mothers said about the absence of men: "they think because they are the fathers, they do not need anybody to tell them how to raise their children. For them, the *daress*, or lesson, is 'women stuff'". Thus the teachings to adults are only likely to influence the mothers, that is, one gender. It is hard to tell in

practice what effect such workshops have in the family when men have not been exposed to concepts that potentially limit their authority.

Thus UNICEF and local NGOs are the producers of such transformative discourses on children's rights and identity through which children and adolescents learn to think reflexively. An example of the impact of this rhetoric is Chorouk, a 16 year-old girl from Al-Wihdat who participated in several programs, and is "fluent" in the children's rights idiom using words such as "feeling empowered", or how the program boosted "her self-esteem" sense and how "open minded" her parents were. Feelings of "empowerment" were usually shared by both girls and boys although, as noted earlier, boys commented on children's rights discourse in a more "conservative" way than girls did. The boys' attitudes may come from the fact that they bear the responsibility of becoming fathers in their own families.

Accordingly, INJAZ[76], an offshoot of Save the Children, is an NGO which creates opportunities for young people and enables them to manage on their own, independently from their family. INJAZ helps high school students find internships and trainings in various private

[76] Injaz means achievement in Arabic

businesses. INJAZ centers are located across Jordan and include all students from Jordanian public schools and UNRWA schools. INJAZ is well-known among young people, as it has invested in a large national media ad campaign on TV and billboards that show a group of young people, male and female, smiling in a seemingly relaxed interaction. The girls on these ads, for the most part, do not wear a hijab. Thus the image that INJAZ seeks to project is one of "empowered" young people in a mixed gender situation where girls are directed to modify their conservative, religious behavior. At a job fair that INJAZ organized I saw many young people, boys and girls – more boys than girls – looking for a job and getting familiar with the job market. Dunia, from INJAZ, claims they teach young people about enterpreneurship and "interpersonal skills" and that students learn self-strategic planning of their careers and are encouraged to think individually about their choices of work.

To be sure, "interpersonal skills" teach young male and female to interact in the same work space, which is a situation that neither group is used to since most schools are gender segregated. For both male and female groups these methods develop at minimum a sense of gender identity by defining each one in relation to the other.

Camp adolescents were enthusiastic about the many possibilities and the potential opportunities that INJAZ presented to them. The response of their families varied. Some camp families who want their children, including their daughters, to move ahead welcome such initiatives although they perceive them as progressive and "modern" for their daughters. But other camp parents are against gender mixing and do not approve much of INJAZ for their daughters. In effect, there were less young girls than young boys at the job fair. But refugee parents who do not disapprove of gender mixing in the work place claim they place their trust in their daughters that they will not dishonor the family by dating young men. This is a negotiated issue between parents and children that hinges on the parents' views of tradition and modernity. Fatimeh explained: "I am the one who want to get ahead. I had to convince my parents. It took some time, but now they trust me and know that I would not go out with boys. I want to be worthy of their trust and not disappoint them". Such morality talk is not directed to their sons.

The various NGOs and also larger national projects, inclusive of all children in Jordan[77], which

[77] Many programs are not specifically geared toward Palestinian children and adolescents as they are national and hence include all Jordanian children regardless of their ethnic descent.

operate in the camps, strive to adjust to the local culture. But cultural adaptations pose problem in areas in which women, gender and sexual freedom are at stake. The sense of self that young girls come to experience through the teachings of the various programs does not sit too well at home which is ruled by traditional patriarchal family values, and creates tensions. Although many parents said and vividly express pride of their children's school achievements and welcomed *huquq al-atfal*, or children's rights, the idea of individuality is more easily accepted for boys.

On the other hand, the stories and images coming from the global media culture are also a powerful force of identity construction and are a potential source of different attitudes for women watching these programs. Some camp young people watch entertainment programs including movies and video clips - Western or Middle Eastern, and others watch religious programs. Or, as some reported, they watch both. Through the models they watch on TV they are able to experience almost simultaneously childhood and adolescence in the Western sense, that is, secular, individualized and consumption-oriented on some shows, and the next minute readings of the Qur'an on religious shows. There are two main strands of Islamic TV shows: some have a

radical conservative discourse, and others have what is locally regarded as a moderate "modernizing" discourse. For example, a popular Saudi-based station, Iqra TV, airs a program in which Amr Khaled, an Egyptian preacher, a Muslim "televangelist" of sorts, similar to other famous American Christian evangelist counterparts like Jimmy Swaggart, articulates what he claims to be a "modern" kind of Islam. What is new for people is that Amr Khaled is dressed in Western clothes (not as a cleric which is usual on Islamic channels), and he speaks of notions such as *dhat*, or self, and of the individual. He encourages all Muslims, men and women of the Umma, to take charge of themselves, and be active agents. Amr Khaled is very popular primarily among young people and women. His discourse is much less welcomed by men and the object of much controversy. Hence he is the subject of many family discussions. While his critics accuse him of being more radical than he looks or pretends to be, and of being, in fact, an extremist impostor, to his supporters he offers a different perspective on Islam.

Camp refugees, and local people in general, construe his discourse to be about bringing together what Amr Khaled calls a "modern changing world" and Islam, while remaining faithful to the Qur'an, to which he constantly refers. According to camp refugees accounts, his discourse

is about self-empowerment of the individual within the community at large. Thus Amr Khaled's hybrid discourse includes values which speak to the individual and also to the Muslim community.

Parents' and children's views differ as local constructions of being modern or traditional are not fixed and constantly negotiated according to different cultural and historical contexts. Age and especially gender are strong variables in children's rights interpretations. As a result, their practices have become gender biased among the camp refugee population. Social change and modernity are occurring in Jordan in a context in which what is at issue is not Western vs Islamic in the Middle East, but rather varieties of modern and traditional views in an Islamic society, as it is discussed later in this chapter.

Jordan, a Country in Quest of Identity and the Politics of Assimilation to "Jordan First"

For many Bedouins the formation of the state of Jordan marked the end of a nomadic life and a place of sedentarization. A new sense of self and of belonging to a new constructed entity, the nation of Jordan, emerged over the years among many nomad Bedouins. It is not my purpose here to discuss issues concerning tribalism in Jordan but

rather to focus on Jordanian-Bedouins and Jordanian-Palestinians in relation to national identity. From the onset, the Hashemite monarchy, which claims descent from the Prophet, and hence is a monarchy "by divine right", has sided with the tribal Bedouins. The monarchy is represented by the current King, Abdullah II, originally a Hashemite from Hijaz[78], a neighboring territory, and not a native Bedouin of Transjordan[79], and Queen Rania, a Palestinian from a prominent family that had immigrated to Kuwait. This royal alliance somehow embodies the divide in the country. The highest government positions - except for a few exceptions - typically go to Jordanians of Bedouin origin that hold the power de facto, while Palestinians thrive in the private sector (Abu Odeh 1999).

The king of Jordan has appropriated the Bedouin culture and tradition as Jordanian national culture and heritage. He has positioned himself as the chief of the Army and of all the tribes. Although he is not of Bedouin descent, both the tribes and the Army – composed mostly of Bedouins - are loyal to him as their supreme commander. The

[78] The Kingdom of Hijaz was located at the North West of what is now called Saudi Arabia and included the holy city of Mecca from where the Hashemite monarchy originates. They were the rulers of Mecca for over a thousand years: the King of Hijaz was Abdullah I's older brother until the takeover in 1925 by Ibn Saud and the creation of the new Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

[79] He is born to a British mother.

Jordanian national dish, the *mansaf*, a tasty dish made of rice and lamb marinated in yogurt eaten in convivial gatherings, has been borrowed from Bedouin culture. A famous tourist destination in Amman purports to be a typical Jordanian restaurant: the décor includes a Bedouin tent, and waiters are dressed as Bedouins. It is also of particular interest for the King to work closely with heads of tribes as their support is crucial to the stability of the Kingdom. In exchange, he rewards them with prestigious positions in the government and funds their social development projects, such as schools, and health clinics in resettling, urbanizing and integrating them in a modern economy (see Massad 2001).

The many shifts or ruptures in Palestinian and Jordanian histories over a relatively short period of time – only a few decades – and the various changes of rules of citizenship have raised the question of who is Palestinian or Jordanian, and elicited significant divisions among Palestinians in terms of eligibility to Jordanian citizenship[80]. These shifts have created complex identities both flexible and ambiguous among Palestinians and Jordanians. Although they share a common history, the boundaries between the several categories of the two groups

[80] See Chapter Two and Chapter Three

are often blurry. Basher, a Palestinian refugee working for an NGO told me, “Today, Bedouins feel threatened by Palestinians who outnumber them. Bedouins are afraid they could lose their privileges to the Palestinians.”

Indeed, since the beginning of the Palestinian refugee settlement in Jordan, the Jordanian authorities have been concerned with their separate status and have kept an eye on their political activities and formations (Plascov 1981:207). Even more so since Black September, the brutal crushing of the Palestinian resistance in September 1970 that caused a great number of deaths, the government has kept Palestinian camp refugees at bay and has strongly suppressed any further attempt of uprising.

Thus the two major ethnic groups, Bedouins and Palestinians, compete for privileges, namely positions in the Jordanian army and government. There are indeed several Palestinian-Jordanians in the army, but those, Basher says, could enroll because they were not *fedayin,* or guerilla fighters. Thus the issue of national identity is a most sensitive issue in Jordan because of its large Palestinian population. There is no unified position on the Palestinian question. Some are for total Palestinian assimilation, hence dissolving Palestinian identity. Others want to preserve Palestinian identity as a means of resisting the

Israeli project to liquidate the Palestinian cause (Cf. Hamarneh et al.1997).

Gellner (1983) conceived of nationalism as engendering nations and not the other way around. In Jordan the nation was constructed before nationalism was born. Transjordan, as a state, preceded the birth of Transjordan, as a nation. The actual Jordanian state is based upon two major powerful, rival ethnic groups. They form the two main categories of Jordanians. 1) Jordanians of Transjordanian descent, that is, tribal Bedouin, and 2) Jordanians of Palestinian descent (urban and rural) since 1948 and from the West Bank after 1967. Jordanian society also includes other divides such as Christians and Muslims, Caucasians and Arabs, Bedouins and non-Bedouins. Meanwhile, Jordan projects an image that seeks to encompass its various ethnic groups overlooking any underlying issues of identity at play. The official government discourse is one of unity and assimilation under the government slogan “Jordan First”. But, as seen previously, Jordan’s colonial legacy has largely contributed to additional loyalties among “all” Jordanians.

Thus the paradoxical situation of Jordan’s identity is that it reflects the Bedouin minority, not the Palestinian majority of the population. On the one hand,

Jordanians of "Jordanian" descent, that is, Transjordanians of Bedouin origin, belonged initially to a tribal structure and placed their loyalty to their tribe; they have become new citizens of a unified nation-state but they are not the majority; on the other hand, Jordanian-Palestinians of Palestinian descent are the majority[81],and have been claiming their right of return and compensation to their land, a territory outside Jordan's borders[82]. Accordingly, many Palestinian camp refugees have conflicting views on Jordan. They say it is merely a place of citizenship by outlining their lack of Jordanian nationalism. At the same time, they sharply react to "Jordan First" by saying that it is only words and that the reality is a far cry from the official discourse, because they are not really accepted, thereby showing their yearning of being fully assimilated and not being second-class citizens.

Yet the measures taken by the Jordanian government to build a nation and a state are also meant to keep in line with international powers' (valuable and economically indispensable donors) demands of modernization and

[81] Exact figures of both groups are not available as the country seeks to present a unified image of its population and there is no official census data on Jordanians of Palestinian descent in Jordan. Palestinian estimates indicate about 3 Million.

[82] These two groups are also called East Bankers and West Bankers, using the River Jordan as a dividing line.

democracy as Jordan's stability is crucial in a region of high voltage. Jordan has borders with Palestine, Israel, Iraq, Egypt, Syria and Saudi Arabia. Hence Jordan's efforts of development and assimilation are consistent with the government's projected image of a "modern" country at the forefront of the Arab world on issues of democracy, human rights, women, children and social development. Thus the government facilitates the implementation of many programs from UNICEF, and NGOs such as the Jordan River Foundation, or the Jordanian Women's Union, related to such issues. Jordan's high concentration of development agencies provides many jobs and helps the modest economy of the country. Not surprisingly, the representatives of government agencies, of UNICEF and NGOs, secular and religious, all embraced the projects and the concepts of rights, self awareness and empowerment on which they are based, not unrelated to the significant funding they carry.

However, the most important policy of assimilation is the granting of Jordanian citizenship since 1949 to Palestinians refugees. Although such policy sought to homogenize the population and avoid conflicts, it helped keep the camp refugee status alive because the refugees have been in fact all these years the international community's responsibility, as Plascov (1981) explains.

Thus Jordanian citizenship brings Palestinians a legal status and recognition, but it is also ambiguous and carries tensions when it intersects with their refugee status. The paradoxical situation of the Palestinian camp refugee/citizen of Jordan is discussed later in the chapter. Jordanian national policies of citizenship have created a divide among the camp population. Refugees from Gaza for example, have a problematic status, as explained earlier. ID cards also divide the camp population and create feelings of inequality and inferiority according to the benefits granted.

Thus Jordan is in a quest for identity for several reasons: first, as a state born before a nation was born; secondly, as a changing territory with changing borders deeply enmeshed with the history of Palestine; thirdly, as a country that hosts the largest refugee population in the world (1.7 M) which constitutes a demographic majority; fourthly, as a mostly desert country, hence largely dependent on foreign aid. While “Jordan First” unveils salient issues of identity and tensions among tribal Bedouins and Palestinian refugees, it helps camp refugees to define and reaffirm their Palestinian identity against the “other” Jordanians.

Multiple Identities and Loyalties of Camp Refugees.

"Identity is constructed through splitting that which one is, and that which is the other", as Hall (1997) notes. Other social scientists also remind us that sharing a cultural identity implies agency as individuals choose to identify with a particular group. The history of the new Jordanian state is rife with border and population changes, and hence fosters among camp refugees flexible, multiple overlapping identities and subsequent divided loyalties that involve complex processes. Camp refugee children and adolescents hold a plurality of identities. Those are informed by several conditions that include family and camp environment, Palestinian and Jordanian histories, religion, and UNRWA education. I examine here some of those identities.

Camp Refugee Identity

The identity works inside and outside the camp, across the symbolic boundary. Inside, camp children and adolescents construct together their belonging to the camp and their feelings of relatedness (see Hart 2005). The space of the camp is a marker of *mukhayyamji*, or refugee camp dweller, a Palestinian identity. This identity is reinforced as it was unanimously reported that, outside the

confines of the camp, government policies are preventing Palestinian camp refugees from accessing civil service or higher education.

However, the first marker of identity that children and adolescents were articulating with me was by identifying with the village of origin of their family, that is, the village of their grandparents. The village identity is deeply seated through narratives, myths, handicrafts, especially embroidery which patterns vary by village, folk dance like the dabkeh, and a number of peasant customs related to farm work like harvesting or sowing, no longer practicable in urban camps. These are often enacted in public performances, almost as rituals, for this originally rural camp population. The Palestinian *fellah*, or peasant, has been symbolized as a mythical hero of their struggle. Although many villages no longer exist, they remain imagined and legendary, and are important symbolic markers of the social networks of the camp refugees. Camp refugees are usually identified by their personal name and simultaneously the name of their village.

The young generation from 9 to 18 years old that I interviewed knew the village of their parents, but were not particularly cognizant of the story of their family and their historical background. They knew about the *Nakba*, but

only their parents and grandparents were able to narrate the story. This lack of knowledge from the new generation of their own Palestinian history comes mostly from the fact that the UNRWA school does not include a Palestinian curriculum to inform the young people about Palestinian history, as discussed in Chapter Six. So "Jordan First", the government effort of assimilation may be meeting its goal of blurring Palestinian memory[83].

The free UNRWA schools present in all camps are exclusively for Palestinian refugee children and they reinforce Palestinian camp refugee identity. There are indeed several other markers of camp identity, namely, the year in which they became refugees, represented through passports and ID cards, fateful dates of exile such as 1948 or 1967, which also carry meaning for aid eligibility and subsequent social benefits. Thus some refugees have more or less social advantages than others according to a history that transcends them.

The Gazan situation is the most marginalizing and stigmatizing. Selim, a teen-age boy, told me that he was from Gaza, but his mother came from another camp. Yet, he was allotted the Gazan refugee status and could not benefit

[83] Similarly, some recent second-generation Americans do not know the history of their immigrant family either, or World War II.

from his mother's. Refugee status is not transmittable through the mother, but only through the father as noted before. The other students around Selim knew and wanted to explain his predicament too. So children may not be cognizant of Palestinian history, but they are more often than not aware of how the UNRWA system works.

In 2004, the Jordanian Women's Union, JWU, organized a youth summer camp for refugees including children and adolescents from Sabra and Shatila camps in Lebanon, Deheisheh camp in Palestine and from several camps from Jordan. The young people expressed strong feelings of belonging and solidarity even though they came from camps located in different countries. As they demonstrated their camp refugee identity, they all expressed their "otherness" and a deep yearning to be able to have "equal rights" and access the same jobs as the "others", namely, the Lebanese, Israelis or Jordanians depending to which camp they belonged. "In government schools, they can use computers every day. In our [UNRWA] schools we don't have computers", says Marwan, the 12 year old son of Umm Amir. The only bright side for Marwan was that the school day was shorter, only half a day, in UNRWA schools, while in the Jordanian public schools they had a full school day. Children's and

adolescents' concerns reveal the stigma and humiliation that being a *mukhayymji* carries.

"People outside the camp have a better life", says Haithem 10-year-old boy. "They have better cars and better water". The social and ethnic boundaries of the camp include them and also alienate them from another world where the grass is greener.

Palestinian identity

By defining who is a refugee UNRWA has been an important agent of the construction of Palestinian identity, particularly among the refugee camp population. The definition contains in itself the loss of their land hence an enhanced Palestinian refugee identity (see Farah 1999). Palestinian identity is based on identification with a mythical land, a yearning for return to that land and a claim of entitlement to their land and compensation for its loss. Among the vast literature on nationalism, Khalidi (1997) provides a history of the emergence and construction of Palestinian identity over the past 20th Century since the Ottoman rule and suggests that the absence of a state has been central to reinforcing such construction. He points out that camp refugees outside Palestine were the first ones after 1948 and the *Nakba* to identify with Palestinian

nationalism, reorganize a national movement, and sustain it with their sacrifices. Such sacrifices are still made visible in the camp refugees' will to continue to live in the camps, as seen earlier.

Thus the long on-going Palestinian-Israeli conflict and Palestinian history of resistance movements have largely contributed to consolidate national identity among generations of refugees. TV also has a strong impact on the youth, and the second Intifada carries a deep meaning for them. For the generation of children and adolescents that I met this is the only Palestinian revolt that they have known. As Jordanians, they are not able to participate in it, and only watch it on TV. But they identify with other Palestinian children and adolescents of their age who are on the front line. Furat, a 15 year-old boy, says that although Palestinian camp refugees in Jordan are protected from Israeli attacks and house demolitions, they have their own problems, and he talks about the limits that Palestinians have in Jordan such as not being able to join the army which offers job security. So for Furat today, as for his grandparents and parents before him experiencing years of exile and encampment, the obstacles he is facing enhances his Palestinian identity and nationalism.

I suggest that their Palestinian identities have developed both in parallel and in contra-distinction with the Jordanian construction of national identity inside and outside the symbolic UNRWA camp boundaries. Interestingly, even young children six or seven years old from the fourth generation of refugees when asked to talk about Palestine said at once that it was the only place where they wanted to be. “Palestinians are the only people who carry their country inside their hearts”, says Khaled, a fourteen year old boy. He was referring to an imagined space that he has constructed, internalized, and deeply cherishes.

One of the powerful symbols of Palestinian identity is the flag, although camp dwellers are not allowed to fly it. But it was not unusual to see boys wearing the Palestinian flag made out as a shirt. The checked black and white *keffiyeh*, originally the rural headdress for men, worn on the head or around the neck as a scarf, is also undeniably a strong symbol of Palestine. It is mostly worn by adolescent boys, although the red and white Jordanian keffiyeh is more politically correct in Jordan. On a winter day at an UNRWA school, I asked Tawfiq, a Palestinian religion teacher in his thirties who was wearing a red and white *keffiyeh*, why he did not wear the

more symbolic Palestinian one. He knowingly answered with a smile, “but we are in Jordan.”

The strong Palestinian identity that the young generation demonstrates is indeed praised by the old generation. For example, a father may not completely approve of his son or daughter’s sense of self-empowerment, but in the name of “the struggle”, as their struggle for returning to their homeland is called, he may be more understanding as he knows that the new generation will continue and has now new psychological arms that he did not have.

Muslim identity

Muslim identity is shared not only inside the camp, but beyond those limits with the *Umma*, the Muslim community at large. As noted previously, religion is included in the UNRWA school curriculum and thus for children there is no gap in terms of religion discourse between home and school. Another source of Muslim identity is *Jamiat Al-Ikwan Al-Muslimeen*, or Muslim Brotherhood, which is present and active in the camp of Al-Wihdat. It contributes to maintaining a religious identity among camp dwellers and their children by sending other kinds of messages. Some in the camps hold critical views of

the Brotherhood as a political, religious association, for its radical inclinations. However, the Muslim Brotherhood also operate religious NGOs such as *Zakat* committees, or charities, which are also present in the camp and help several needy families as a complement to UNRWA help. Thus it cultivates different senses of self, including religious self, among camp refugees. In addition, the mosques located in the camp call for prayers five times a day and remind people of the duties of religion.

As I am writing, the sweeping victory of Hamas in the Palestinian Parliament in January 2006, indeed confirms that Islam resonates deeply with nationalism in the construction of Palestinian identity, and particularly for those living in the poor conditions of camps. The refugee camp is indeed circumscribed in the *Dar Al Islam*, or Muslim world, imagined space. As Umm Tareq told me, "I would not want to live outside of *Dar Al-Islam*. I would not feel comfortable."

Some children and adolescents go to youth centers after school where they study the Qur'an and also take on other activities such as computer learning, sewing and embroidery for girls. Many children and adolescents told me that they prayed everyday. All adolescent girls wear the *hijab* and some said that they often read the Qur'an at

home. “We are not forced by our parents and do not need to be forced”, they said. They say they enjoy the learning process of the Holy book. They may get a sense of righteousness that observing religion confers to one. A young girl who is a devout Muslim, is a better catch to marry as her devotion implicitly means she does not mix with boys. Similarly, a devout man enjoys high respect, especially when he has a brown spot on the middle of his forehead. This is the result of the frequent rubbing of the forehead on the ground when praying and is a respected sign of being a devout Muslim spending much time praying. Young male in their teens were equally proud of telling me that they were observant of Islam although they were generally more casual in their appearance of observing Islam.

Warda, is a Palestinian refugee who lives outside the Jabal Nasser camp but goes every day to the UNRWA school in the camp where she is in 10th grade. She wears a headscarf and says that she only wears it at school because “all the other camp girls wear it. Camp girls are more traditional.” Boys, in general, wanted their sisters and wives to-be to be traditional, which meant for them wearing the hijab and not befriending boys. Although girls may want to dress in a religious way, they were all hoping they

would go to college and not get married instead. Their interest in tradition has different motivations than boys.

Muslim identity is articulated differently for young girls. Gender identity is well defined among boys and girls as outside the family boys and girls evolve in separate social worlds. From a young age - as early as 7 or 8 years old sometimes - a girl who wears the hijab is cognizant of the social, religious requirements and expectations of her gender. Boys play together at boys' games and have more freedom than girls who stay home, work around the house, and sometimes read the Qur'an. Some teen age girls said they valued and praised their studying the Qur'an. They proudly said, "girls follow the Qur'an more than boys." Those same girls claimed they were not interested in going out like boys: "We don't need to. In Islam women are supposed to stay more at home." Getting married is a central part of a woman's identity and it is expected not only by the girl but also by her family. It was often part of our discussions with girls, but not so much with boys who did not seem to give it as much thought as girls. Abir, a thirteen-year-old girl perceives herself as "modern" because she wants to be married and also work. She will balance, she says, children and work.

Children and adolescents, however, did not really voice or claim their Arab identity with me. In the past, during the revival of pan-Arabism in the 1960's, Palestinians had enjoyed support and solidarity from the other Arab states and especially from Nasser in Egypt. Some camp families still have a framed picture of the Egyptian leader on their wall. But, as Peteet (2005) suggests, although Palestinian camp refugees consider themselves part of the Arab world, because of a common language, history, and religion, 1967 which marked the defeat of Arab armies against Israel was a drawback for them as they saw their hope of a solution to their exile vanish. As a result, since identity is not prescribed, Arab identity has not been much in favor as many camp refugees often reported that they had been abandoned by the whole world, including the Arab world.

Self-enclosed Outsiders, but Citizens within Multiple Boundaries.

Basher, a Palestinian refugee working for an NGO, talked about Jordanian identity and explained: "…In the old days, before today's Jordan was made up, before the British designed the country, the local population consisted of Bedouins who were nomads. What sense of belonging to a

particular land did they have? They were clannish people[84]. They identified first with their *ashira*, or clan. In the 1920's when King Abdullah I came from Hijaz to create what became called the Emirate of Transjordan he brought together several groups of people. They were Bedouins, Syrians, Hijazis, Chechens, Circassians[85], Kurds, Armenians, and Palestinians. Nobody was originally from this land." "A real Jordanian," he continued, "is like a *saber,* or cactus pear. You open it and you only find thorns. In fact, there is nothing inside." This was his metaphor to illustrate his concept of the category "Jordanian": for him, an empty concept. In deconstructing the Jordanian category, opening the *saber*, as it were, Basher found no substance, no matter. The complex history of Jordan and Palestine with fluctuating borders and subsequent fluctuating eligibility for citizenship has inevitably elicited ambiguous and ambivalent issues of citizenship and nationality. In that context of change, Palestinian refugee identity may have remained a constant identity for many poor camp dwellers.

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[84] Thus Bedouins experienced a sense of "related selves" or "relational selves" by acquiring their identities from the relationships in which they participated (cf. Strathern 1988).

[85] Circassians who came from Central Asia had been expelled from Russia and resettled at the end of the 19th Century in the Ottoman empire which included what is now Jordan. Chechens had the same fate and settled in the early 1900's.

Nationality, or *jinisiyya,* and citizenship, or j*awaz*, are ambiguous concepts and paradoxical in the case of Palestinian camp refugees, who are at the same time Palestinian refugees and Jordanian citizens, as noted earlier. The UNRWA school is the place where they learn these notions. While shifting national borders and symbolic camp boundaries have shaped the camp refugees' lives and contributed to their enframing, they have also enabled camp refugee children and adolescents to construct their "self" in relation to "other" and fostered complex identities both with Palestine, their nation, and Jordan, their host state.

Children in relation to citizenship have been an issue of debate among social scientists (De Winter 1997, Cockburn 1998, Roche 1999). Citizenship bears several meanings and becomes ambiguous when connected to notions of childhood which are also variable, as Jans (2004) suggests. However, writing about Belgian children, who, as children, cannot vote and in that respect cannot be full citizens, Jans notes that they are able to experience local forms of citizenship, but may not experience a more encompassing form of citizenship such as "European". Accordingly, when I asked some children and adolescents what was their nationality, they answered "Palestinian", and in the same sentence added that they were Jordanian citizens. M'hmed,

an 11 year-old student, said, “My passport is Jordanian but my heart is Palestinian.”. Another one put it, “I am a registered refugee with a Jordanian passport”. He was adding here another element of division, namely registered vs non registered, as discussed in Chapter Three. Khaled, a fourteen year-old boy, who is particularly articulate, says elegantly and properly, “my nationality is Jordanian; my origin is Palestinian”.

Wishing to elucidate Basher’s metaphor of the cactus pear, I asked the question “are you Jordanian?” to people outside the camps. I received several kinds of answers: the general answer from Palestinians was spontaneously “Palestinian” to which they at once added, “but we should not say so, we should say we are Jordanians.” Many Palestinians perceived themselves as Palestinian first, claiming allegiance to Palestine. In contrast, the others, the non-Palestinians, more often than not answered “Jordanian”. They may have been Circassian, Kurdish, or Bedouin. I also inquired about an exceptionally large Jordanian flag standing on its own in an area of Amman from which it could be seen from afar. “It is the biggest in the world,” I was told proudly, or ironically, by Jordanians, according to their descent. Jordanians of Bedouin descent tend to be nationalistic, as the government

favors them and has even adopted their culture. The Palestinian middle class and elite have well assimilated to the Jordanian economy and society and thrive in the private sector, and, as Massad (2001) suggests, do not perceive the state-sponsored Jordanian national identity competitive with Palestinian identity, but complementary. Thus the paucity of resources and hardship of camp refugees may intensify competition and exclusions, like passports and ID cards which by excluding some, increase Palestinian national identity.

The soccer field is a space for sport competition and where tensions between the two groups are at their peak. They are expressed through the two soccer teams, *Al-Wihdat* and *Faisali*. The *Al-Wihdat* soccer club, located in the Al-Wihdat refugee camp, symbolizes Palestinians and is one of the two best soccer teams in the country. The other team, *Faisali*, is not in the camp, and presents itself as Jordanian, although it has a large proportion of Palestinians. I went to a game between those two teams. The audience became heated as loyalties to one's ethnic group were playing out loudly on the field[86].

[86] I was unable to interview anybody from either club, as my phone calls were not returned, and my attempts although supported by camp refugees nevertheless failed.

The poor Jordanians of Bedouin descent also have a hard time surviving in a country where the cost of living keeps increasing and the average salary is 85 Jordanian dinars, about 120 US dollars. Muna, a Jordanian student of Bedouin descent says that, as a Jordanian, she feels like a minority. “Good jobs are available to “foreigners” [read “Palestinians”]. They receive more help than Jordanians”, she complains. Some Jordanians like Muna resent Palestinians who are critical of Jordan, “instead, they should be grateful to have been granted Jordanian citizenship”, she says.

As I was doing fieldwork, a census was conducted during Fall 2004 in Jordan. The previous census of 1996 did not reveal figures of Palestinians versus Transjordanians. Local intellectuals interpret it as a lack of transparency from the Jordanian government: the publication of official figures would show that Jordanians of Palestinian descent constitute a majority in Jordan. Hala, the fourteen year-old sister of Fatimeh, has a Jordanian passport and lives in Al-Wihdat. She says, “This country belongs to Jordanians not Palestinians. In the universities Jordanians have more chances to get in than Palestinians. In the army, it is the same, most of them are Jordanians.” In voicing her sense of exclusion and generalized inequality between “us and them”,

she clearly does not identify with Jordanians. Although Hala may not be interested to be in the army, which includes women, she deeply resents having no access to it. Because refugees do not feel full-fledged citizens, the *mukhayyamji*, or camp refugee carries the stigma of the underdog because she lacks the attributes that symbolize the true Jordanian such as being able to work for the government or the Army, and her attributes of a Palestinian camp refugee are negatively perceived (see Goffman 1963).

For camp children and adolescents, who are aware of the difference between nationality and citizenship, Jordanian citizenship is not a vested identity, but only a passport, a synonym of security until "the conflict" is resolved. Thus for camp refugees, like Basher, a Jordanian passport - and the identity it confers - is empty of its content, like a *saber*.

Conclusion

Camp refugee young people in Jordan are in a bind. They experience a strong national identity, but of the "wrong" kind, that is, Palestinian instead of Jordanian. Although Jordanian assimilation is officially encouraged and part of a national project, from a camp refugee perspective, "Jordan First" has failed to produce true

equality between Palestinians and Jordanians. After five decades of residence in Jordan, Palestinian identity remains deeply rooted in the camps in reaction to the ambiguity of Jordan and its assimilation policies.

The ambivalence of young camp people regarding their Jordanian identity is the reflection of an exacerbated notion of injustice that they want to correct. This is why children's rights and the discourse of rights in general are so important to them, and why they have constructed it in an all-embracing fashion. As some adolescents put it, "we want to regain our dignity which was lost by our ancestors who accepted submission".

However, multiple identities for young Palestinians from the camps may be like Russian dolls. Each one is different from the others. Thus their concept of "self" is a product of many institutional and ideological forces that include religion, family, gender, camp, Palestinian, Jordanian. They are able to coexist and fit together.

By showing that a sense of self has developed among camp children and adolescents through several structural sources, this chapter also reveals that self-identity presents less tensions and ambivalence at home for young boys than for young girls. The next chapter presents

portraits of several camp refugee individuals to illustrate several important issues raised throughout this study.

CHAPTER EIGHT

PORTRAITS

Among the various individuals' stories that support this study I want in this final chapter to shed light on five specific actors and draw their portraits. I started this ethnography with dramatis personae performing on stage. I end now with actors off-stage who offer a close-up and personal account of their life experience, and also of their views on the rights of the child. I have chosen them because they are representative of various Palestinian refugee types, a status that has created several distinct categories of refugees but which must not be essentialized. These actors have in common the camp experience, although Iman and Samar live outside the camp, a sign of upward

social mobility that not many refugees succeed in achieving. Their narratives capture issues that were important to them. They also serve to underscore some themes tackled in the past chapters, such as religion, what constitutes notions of modern or traditional, hope, self identity and childhood. I first draw the portraits of a child and an adolescent followed by portraits of three adult women[87], and then offer some concluding remarks.

Children and adolescents represent a large portion of the camp refugee population. Each family, nuclear or extended, includes many children, usually six or seven on average per parents. Palestinian children and adolescents have occupied center stage during the two *Intifada*, or uprisings, that have occurred in the past twenty years in Palestine, creating a generational shift in perceptions in a culture where traditionally children show respect and obedience to the authority of their father and older people.

M'hamed, a UNRWA student

M'hamed who is eleven years old at the time of my fieldwork was born and raised in Al-Wihdat camp. He goes to

[87] I have used pseudonyms for all portraits.

an UNRWA school where he is a sixth grade student. He has a round, open face with large green eyes and a wide engaging smile. He is very sociable and likes to play soccer at school as often as he has the opportunity. Like all the children and adolescents from Al-Wihdat camp, he is a supporter of the *Wihdat* team, the "in-house" Palestinian camp soccer team.

His father works in a bank as a computer technician and his mother is a home maker. His parents are related as is often the case among camp refugees, although they are not first cousins. M'hamed is the oldest of five younger siblings, two brothers and three sisters. The history of his family is similar to many other camp families. The family came to Amman in 1967 from Ramallah in the West Bank. M'hamed's grandparents came to Jordan when the West Bank was no longer part of Jordan. They call themselves refugees from 1967. The housing unit originally belonged to his paternal grandfather who built a second floor for M'hamed's family. His uncle and aunt live on the first floor in the same "*wihda*", or unit. The space that M'hamed, his parents and siblings – eight members - occupy would qualify in American terms as a two-bedroom apartment. It is just at the outside border with the camp, which is technically no longer the camp but is generically called

Al-Wihdat camp and is still considered the *mukhayyam* by camp dwellers. One has to take a first unpaved alley way leading to another narrower alley to get to their house. The dirt ground is rife with holes and crevasses that rain has dug, but M'hamed and his young friends have learned to negotiate them as they run fast on the uneven ground.

M'hamed has a broad vision of children's rights that goes well beyond the camp: "all children in the world should have the same rights; whether they are children of a king or a beggar". M'hamed's assertion sounds like a political declaration about social inequality. He expresses a deep concern about children in Palestine and in Iraq, who live in war conditions. Although he is eleven years old he has been quick to internalize and assimilate the message and the lingo of children's rights that he has learned at the UNRWA school and also through several NGO programs. He perceives *huquq al-atfal*, or children's rights, positively as a source of power for children. He is sure that "his" rights are going to help him defend "his right" to go home to Palestine. For M'hamed, as for other camp children and adolescents, the rights of the child have come to contain many other rights, including the right of return to his homeland, a central right for Palestinians. He talks about children's rights with a sense of ownership, "my" rights.

”In my heart I want to liberate Palestine and have peace in the world”, he says. Liberating Palestine is the imperative mission ascribed to the camp young people by the older generation. M’hamed takes such a mission as seriously as that of children’ rights, since he considers both to be connected. His rights as a child will help him in his calling to free his homeland. However, while M’hamed shows strong enthusiasm about children’s rights, at the same time he expresses reservations about the notion of “rights” in general. He says, “as refugees, we do have the right to return, but we did not return, because we are not allowed to”.

Although he and other camp children complain about the inequality of opportunities between Jordanians and Palestinians, his dream is to be a pediatrician when he grows up. In a similar fashion, other boys in the camp hope to become medical doctors, pilots or engineers. Thus while M’hamed is aware of the limited job openings for camp refugees, there is a high level of hope that haunts him, reinforced by his knowledge of children’s rights.

M’hamed observes the Muslim religion. He prays five times a day, fasts for Ramadan, reads the Qur’an and goes to the mosque with his father. The first time we met, he said that he did not feel comfortable shaking my hand.

He already perceives himself as a religious Muslim young man who is not allowed to shake a woman's hand. For him religion is an important matter not to be taken lightly. He says he is afraid of God. He is in favor of gender segregation and would like to see his sisters - when they get older - wear the hijab like his mother. "They are too young now. They are only between six and eight years old", he says. He is a serious, thoughtful child who shows a strong sense of responsibility as the oldest son toward his younger siblings. Unlike many of his peers, he is not really interested in music or movies. On the one hand, he claims his Palestinian identity, and on the other hand, he is able to differentiate national identity from citizenship. He says he is a Jordanian citizen.

M'hamed has a different attitude when he is at home with his family than at school. His parents look up to him and praise his maturity. They have high expectations for him. But in their presence he is quiet and lets them talk. He does not participate much in our conversations unless he is asked to. In contrast, at school, especially encouraged by his principal and teachers who see him as an outstanding student, he is more outgoing and expresses himself more easily. M'hamed is an A + student. When he

does not go to school he goes to a religious youth center in the camp where he learns the Qu'ran and computer skills.

M'hamed has traveled to visit his maternal grandparents who immigrated to Oman, as do many other Palestinians who live in the Arab Emirates where they were able to find work. He also went to Abu Dhabi, one of the United Arab Emirates, and speaks about Abu Dhabi city as a very large, modern place that he enjoys and where he likes to go shopping. There are many large shopping malls there, he says. But this modern urban center does not really interest him, because it is not Palestine, which is where he wants to go and live when he grows up.

Fatimeh, a UNRWA student

Fatimeh is 15 years old girl at the time of the interviews. She is in 10th grade and attends the UNRWA school in the camp. Her family like many refugee families became refugees in 1967 for the second time. They had already fled Haifa in 1948 to settle in a village outside Jenin in the West Bank. The family came to Jordan because they had family there. Fatimeh lives with her parents, seven siblings ranging from 23 to 3 ½ years old, and her old grandmother who was born in Palestine. Her father

repairs refrigerators. Her mother is a home maker. The family has lived in Jabal Nasser camp for 14 years.

Fatimeh has a modest demeanor and dresses casually at home with a pair of blue jeans and a sweat shirt like many girls of her age. She is not married. She is a member of the Child's Parliament[88], an initiative run by children on the model of a democratically elected parliament, promoting children's rights. While she expresses the pride of partaking in the Child's Parliament, she also says with resentment that the only right she is enjoying at the moment is limited to the right to education. In spite of her expressed ambivalence, however, she mentions that children's rights and conflict resolution programs taught at her UNRWA school help her to better communicate with her parents and have a discussion instead of fighting when a problem arises.

Fatimeh wears the *hijab,* or headscarf, in public. She says that if she wants to go to university she will have to keep wearing it. "Otherwise my parents won't let me go." She says that for many young girls the hijab is the condition imposed by camp parents on their daughters when after 10th grade, they graduate from UNRWA school to go to a

[88] A project of Jordanian Women's Union that includes all children and adolescents in Jordan See Chapter Five for a detailed explanation.

public school or vocational school. In the meantime, she sometimes participates in training that INJAZ, an NGO, organizes for young people like her (between 14 and 24)in a gender-mixed environment. Fatimeh is very motivated by the INJAZ program and feels it helps her better adjust to the real world, outside school and the camp. She is aware that the camp is limited and she wants to explore the outside world. She wants to become an agricultural engineer. It is an unusual choice for a girl of her age, as most camp teen age girls want to become lawyers or teachers. But Fatimeh's choice was made because she thinks that it will be useful when she goes back to Palestine.

Accordingly, Fatimeh hopes that the new leadership in Palestine will defend refugees' right of return to their land. She is yearning to go back to her family village, near Jenin, where she still has family. She knows she can have a good life there. She says she is not afraid of the change. "Look where we live here. It can't be worse than this." She has heard so many good descriptions of Palestine from her grandparents that she does not think it will be so much different from their narratives.

Like most young people in the camp she is politically aware and articulate about Palestinian politics

although she is not an activist. She perceives herself as a Palestinian and not a Jordanian.

Fatimeh and her mother think of themselves as "modern". Fatimeh's view of being modern is that a woman is allowed to have an education and is able to choose whom she will marry. These are very important issues for young girls of her age, as this is when parents think about marrying their daughters. For many refugee parents, their daughter's education and marriage are their choice as parents. Frequently, early marriage of their daughter takes precedence over education, because of the economic cost involved in college education. Fatimeh cites religion which "forbids pushing one's daughter into marriage if she does not want to." She says that being "modern" also means for her to be free and speak her mind, and to be "traditional" is the opposite because a girl is not allowed to speak out. She wants to get married once she finishes college, at about 22 or 23 and choose her husband. Fatimeh says that in her family there is no discrimination like in some other families as to who goes to college, the boy, or the girl. Her older sister, Haifa, who is 23, went to university. She is now a kindergarten teacher, lives at home and is not married. Daughters' education is an ambivalent issue among many camp families. One the one hand, it is costly, and on

the other, it delays or prevents early marriage. The latter is also seen as a way of lightening the economic burden in the family. Further, the investment in a daughter's education does not insure parents of a return as a son's would, since men are financially responsible for the women in the family. But Fatimeh's mother, who claims to be modern too, "although more traditional than her children", adds that she fully supports her daughter in her aspiration for getting an education.

Fatimeh's attitude towards boys is quite severe. She thinks that many boys create problems in her school. They come and "bother" the girls in the girls' schools. "They are trouble makers", she says, "and the school has the right to be very strict with them. They need to be punished even if it means corporal punishment." For the mother, who did not go to college and raised her family, gender segregation is important because of Palestinian values and customs. Accordingly, Fatimeh is concerned about practicing sports at school, "girls should feel comfortable when they do gymnastics, and they are not able to", she says. "This is because the boys from the boys' school next door are constantly coming to disturb the girls", she reports resentfully. Fatimeh used to do some sports, but it was limited to gymnastics once a week for 45 minutes. It

took a long time to get a gymnastic teacher because there are not many female gym teachers, she says. The school eventually found one teacher. But the class would often be canceled as it would rain in the winter and the only space they could use was the outside playground. But now she is in 10th grade there is no more sport.

Although they own a TV, the family does not have satellite TV, as some other families in the camp. The satellite network gives immediate access to a large number of channels from all over the world. In Fatimeh's house, they only have access to a few channels. For Fatimeh who observes religion watching LBC is *mamnou,* or forbidden, by her religion. LBC TV is a Lebanese cable pop music channel comparable to MTV in the US. She likes to watch occasionally Amr Khaled, the televangelist[89], on Iqra TV, a TV based in Saudi Arabia. He speaks of current Muslim family issues that are of interest to her. "I like his way about religion. It is new, because he talks about individual choice", she says.

Her life at home consists of many chores in a family of eleven persons. As one of the girls, she has to do housework. Once sitting at her place, I noticed that there were clothes hanging to dry in the small courtyard at

[89] See Chapter Seven for a discussion about Amr Khaled

the center of their home. I asked Fatimeh who had done the washing. She said she had. So I asked, “by hand?” She laughed and said, “Of course not, with a washing machine.” She laughed perhaps because she felt that the times of doing laundry by hand belonged to a remote past. Appliances such as TVs and washing machines are generally viewed as one of the prerogatives of modernity and are increasingly present in many camp refugee homes, especially in extended families.

The stories and life histories of the adult camp refugees differ from these of young people as they are full of personal references to the political situation in the Middle East, especially the long-running Israel-Palestinian conflict. The two women described below, former children and adolescents, have been politically active in trying to regain their homeland. Their experience of being “modern” is connected to education and political activism. The following portraits seek to illuminate the relationship these three women draw between politics, modernity and tradition, education and children’s rights.

Umm Tareq, a local NGO worker and my informant

She is fifty-eight years old at the time of the interviews. She lives in the Al-Wihdat camp and works for a local NGO based outside the camp. Umm Tareq was not religious when she was an activist in the Palestinian resistance movement in the 1970's. She now promotes children's rights and women's rights inside and outside the camps through her NGO's programs, workshops with parents and children, and a hotline for abused children and women. Umm Tareq was a woman *fedaia,* or guerilla fighter, in the 1960's and 1970's. Not many women were fighters, she proudly indicates; it was the men who were *fedayin* and belonged to the Palestinian guerilla liberation movement. Today she is dressed as a religious woman, with a *hijab* and dark-colored *jilbab*[90]. Her austere clothing is a sign of her devotion to God.

Her father was democratic and "modern", she says. He wanted his daughters to be educated. He wanted equal rights and chances for his sons and his daughters and for his daughters to marry after finishing high school. Being modern for many camp refugees is often connected to education for girls. Umm Tareq's father let his daughters

[90] Religious women wear long robes in dark colors like black or dark brown, instead of light colors considered more noticeable and attractive to men.

work, if they wanted to. He also believed that girls could choose their husband. “He was ahead of his time”, she says. Umm Tareq was born in 1946 in Qawnya, a village near Jerusalem that no longer exists on the map. Her family that included four children had to leave in 1948, when she was two years old, and find refuge in the West Bank. There they settled in Ramallah where more children were born. One of her sisters born in 1958 was named *Intissar*, or victory, after the Arab victory of the Suez Canal the previous year. Umm Tareq insists that because of the *Nakba* and their exile their lives and those of thousands of Palestinian rural people were destabilized, and therefore the struggle for the return has remained at the core of their lives.

When Umm Taraq finished high school, she went to Saudi Arabia to stay with relatives. She trained as a teacher and soon became an elementary school teacher there. She proudly mentions that at that time no Saudi woman was a school teacher. Most Saudi women were not educated nor allowed to work. Umm Tareq never fails to bring up her accomplishments as a woman, and that women have fewer opportunities than men in the Middle East. In 1967, her family had to leave again – Ramallah this time - to go to Kuwait. The entire family, who counted nine children then, settled in Kuwait city where the father opened a shop; but

soon after, she left her family to come back to Amman and join the Palestinian guerilla forces.

These were heroic times for Umm Tareq. She recalls in an intense narrative of interwoven personal and political events, the attack of Al-Wihdat camp by the Jordanian forces, the fighting with her companion, who later became her husband, and the many people who died, and were wounded. Her account of her struggle that includes participating in a hijacking of a plane, weapons training, arrests, and incarceration, is a far cry from the life of most traditional Arab women, she says. Umm Tareq thinks of herself as a strong, active, "take-charge" woman. She appears to embody the Palestinian resistance, leading a life where men and women were fighting together in a spirit of camaraderie. She strongly asserts her former identity of *fedaia*, or guerillera, and her sense of belonging to the struggle. "We were all comrades," she says. In the early 1970's she was chosen to be part of an official visit to China and Vietnam with twelve representatives from the PFLP, Palestinian Front for the Liberation of Palestine, that included five women. She points out again to the active role of women in her party.

In the midst of such epic of displacement, deportation, hiding, and imprisonment, Umm Tareq had three

children who are now 26, 32 and 34 years old, and live at home with her, the latter her divorced daughter. In 1992, the revolutionary party to which Umm Tareq belonged was dissolved. She says, “The dissolution of the party was the only way for our family to be able to live peacefully in Jordan.” Her husband died in 2002. Since 1996 she has worked for the same local NGO and is economically independent. She likes working with rights because it enhances her emotional connectedness with the camp community. Many camp women of her generation do not work. If they become widowed like Umm Tareq, they rely on their children to support them. Her activism and personality make her children proud.

For Umm Tareq, “modern” or “traditional” is not important. She became religious the last time her husband was incarcerated which was some ten years ago, she says. What is at stake for her, she points out, is that she has not given up fighting, but her struggle has shifted from being in the frontline of the Palestinian guerrillas to embracing children’s rights and women’s rights, since such rights are empowering and will enable the younger generation to act for change.

Iman, a director of a local NGO

Iman was born in Palestine in Dehesheh refugee camp, near Bethlehem. Her parents left in 1948 a small village outside Khalil, or Hebron. They wandered to many places staying with family until they settled in Deheisheh camp. Iman was born in 1957. In 1967, her family, like many other Palestinian refugees fearful of Israeli attacks, left Palestine again to settle in Jabal Nasser camp in Jordan. Iman was 10 years old. She went to an UNRWA school. She later got married and left the camp. Her parents and siblings left soon after and moved to the area outside the Jabal Nasser camp where they once lived. Today, she works as a director of a local non-religious NGO.

Iman, with her husband and two teen age boys live in Jabal Hussein, an old residential area in Amman, in a middle-class house. Her husband is currently working as a journalist in the Arab Emirates. It is not unusual among Palestinian refugee families for the husband to emigrate for a better job. The Gulf Emirates and Saudi Arabia have been offering better opportunities and higher salaries for many Palestinians. Iman explains they have bought a new home and need to pay off their loan. This is the price to pay, she explains, for not living together for a while.

Iman is about 48 years old at the time of our interviews. She tells her story as a success story. She was raised by her mother. Her father was not much home; he was working in Saudi Arabia, and was gone most of the time, she recalls. She had three brothers and two sisters. The oldest brother was a teacher at UNRWA, and became the ruler of the house, the male authority in the absence of her father. At the age of 11 Iman volunteered in a commando camp in Amman. It was after the 1967 Arab defeat to Israel when Palestinians reacted by organizing themselves in a resistance movement. As a girl, she was turned down. They were only enrolling boys. One year later, her school teacher formed a committee with boys and girls to help the Palestinian commandos. She describes her youthful enthusiasm being part of it. She recalls that she had been given by the *fedayin* a pair of military boots that she loved. One evening she fought with her older brother because he was opposed to her involvement in the guerrilla forces. He demanded that she returned the boots at once. She cried for two days, she says, until her older brother gave in. She was able to join the committee with other boys and girls and worked after school for two years supporting the guerrillas hiding in the mountains, bringing food to

the commandos from Fatah[91]. She was trained to use guns. She proudly says that she thus became part of the Fatah movement. After the demise in 1970 of the Palestinian insurgency in Jordan, called Black September, the PLO, Palestinian Liberation Organization, had to leave Amman. She was then between thirteen and fourteen years old and was chosen to go to Syria with a resistance network. Her mother did not want to let her go. Iman was devastated. She went into mourning, so to speak, she says. She did not want to celebrate the Eid[92].

When she turned sixteen, her brother's attitude changed. She was no longer allowed to play outside; from a Muslim traditional perspective, she was no longer a child but had become a young woman, an object of men's sexual desire, and hence needed to be kept inside the house. Several of her girlfriends were already getting married and her brother kept her on a tight leash. She had no say. In 1975, Iman was eighteen and went to the first public co-ed college in Jordan, although in her family going to college was barely acceptable for a girl. She kept secret from her family the fact it was co-ed. One day, a neighbor whom she

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[91] Arafat's new formed party. Fatah is a reverse acronym from the name Harakat al-Tahrir al-Watani al-Filastini (literally: "Palestinian National Liberation Movement").

[92] Eid El-Ftir is a joyous occasion that marks the end of the fast of Ramadan.

had turned down as a suitor told her brother that Iman was going out with boys. The alleged accusations that she had crossed the gender boundary provoked a violent psycho-drama at home with her brother. He hit her, which he had done before on other occasions, she says. Her father and her brother did not want her to mingle with boys, which they considered not admissible. They wanted her to transfer to a girl's college, cover her head with the *hijab*, and be like the other young women of her age. She was expected to be "traditional", not "modern", she says. For her brother and father who were the rule setters, these were serious points of tensions. She says that everybody in the family - male or female – had turned against her. She even stood up against her brother even when he threatened to kill her. Her oldest brother had taken on the role of guardian of family honor in the absence of their father. Iman used to fear him more than her father. Violating social and family traditions such as mixing with boys put the honor of the family at stake. But she did not give up.

Soon Iman graduated from the co-ed college and became a school teacher in a Jordanian public school. She reports that she was a "good" girl, not a "bad" girl. "Bad" in this context means dating boys and losing one's virginity and not abiding by the traditional family rules.

Her college education gave Iman authority in the family. It is only at that point that her father began defending her against her brother's persistent abuse. After college Iman got married to the husband of her choice. She has since won respect and admiration for her achievements from her entire family, including her older brother. Her husband is very supportive of her and proud of her success.

At 18 she read Nawal Al-Sadawi, a famous Egyptian feminist author, the Simone de Beauvoir, or Betty Friedan of the Arab world, in her ground-breaking work about women. Her cousin from Palestine had introduced her to the work. The Egyptian author had a strong influence on Iman, strengthening her identity as an Arab woman, she says. Accordingly, Iman would like other women to have the freedom to choose what they want for themselves. This is, she says, being independent from men's yoke. After having her two children, Iman went to law school. An activist, especially on Palestinian issues, a non-believer - she does not cover her head, she is unusually free in a camp refugee culture strongly attached to the traditional role of women where her work takes her. This generally means staying at home under the authority and economic dependence of their husbands and raising their children. While she does not observe Ramadan, she follows Ramadan schedule and cooks

traditional Ramadan food for her family. She has traveled to Europe and the US when she visited her younger brother who lives in California.

When Iman got married, she turned down the gold jewelry, which is part of the *mahr*[93]. The gold jewelry is the portion of the *mahr* that the wife keeps for ever even in case of divorce. It cannot be returned under any circumstances, unlike the rest of the *mahr*. By declining her claim she was shaking off traditions. She symbolically liberated herself from the financial upper hand the *mahr* contract confers the husband. It renders women dependent and inferior, she thinks.

Iman is not afraid to speak up. She is highly respected in her work. She relentlessly encourages women and protects them against abuse from men and domestic violence. Today she says: "I had already started my revolution before marriage. Marriage is only an episode. Women have to face up and take control of their lives. They must not be afraid to stand up for their rights, and their beliefs. They must confront and overcome obstacles."

[93] The mahr is originally an amount of money given by the man to the woman he is about to marry. The amount is negotiated between both families and is part of the Muslim marriage contract. In practice, the money usually stays with the father of the bride who, in turn, may use it to marry his son.

Iman was one of the initiators of the Child Parliament project in Jordan. Her interpretation of children's rights is that rights in general have to be viewed within a bigger picture. She explains they should not be perceived separately, because children's rights, woman's rights and human rights are interconnected and hence are only effective in relation to social and political issues. Protecting women and teaching them to be independent from men through rights and education programs, she says, is also working toward children's rights, because women are important agents of social change and they are the ones raising the children. However, she says it is a hard struggle because many women are afraid of their husbands and of social and religious norms.

Samar, a UNRWA educator

Samar was born in Amman in 1971, not in a camp. She comes and works everyday in Al-Wihdat camp for UNRWA, and lives in a residential area of Amman. She is thirty-four at the time of the interviews. Her parents came from Abassir near Jaffa. In 1948 they had to immigrate to the West Bank. They fled again in 1967 to go to Zarqa in Jordan and eventually came to Amman. Her father made his career at UNRWA as an elementary school supervisor in Al-Wihdat camp

schools. He went through the various echelons of the hierarchy: first a teacher, then a principal and then a supervisor. Her mother did not receive the same education. She dropped out of school in 5th grade; married very young, became a homemaker and had nine children.

Although her father received an education, he remains “traditional”, she says. She explains what she refers to as “traditional”, by giving the following example. Samar went to university and studied German and English. She even received a scholarship to go and study in Germany. She was 22. Her father did not let her go as he did not want his daughter to live outside the family realm. She fought with him but he threatened to put and end to her education if she did not give up the idea of going abroad altogether. She was finally able to convince him to let her continue studying English and promised to stay at home and go to the university in Jordan. She received an MA in Education from the University of Jordan, which is considered the best in the country. She is currently a supervisor of education for UNRWA in Al-Wihdat camp.

Samar was born a Jordanian as she belongs to the first generation of Palestinian refugees who were born in Jordan. She says that she does not remember experiencing hardship growing up. “We did not live in a camp”, she says.

She married a Jordanian-Palestinian like herself. Both are registered refugees. Both inherited their status from their fathers. She has three children. The family lives in a nuclear family arrangement.

One aspect of religious tradition which is very important to Samar is woman's dress, although she says jokingly that she dresses "*soqer hafif*", or "Muslim light", literally "light sugar". It means that she does not follow the strictest rules of Muslim dressing. While she covers her head with a *hijab*, she dresses in light colors; while her clothes conceal her shapes, she wears make up[94]. These are different categories of public dressing for religious women which reveal various degrees of observing religious tradition, namely, looking more or less austere by wearing dark or light colors, make up or not, clothes more or less revealing the shapes of the body, or showing body skin like the face, neck, or hands.

When Samar was younger she was religious, praying five times a day. She did not wear the *hijab* though. She was not ready to make the commitment, she says, although she worked at Beqaa camp where it was difficult not to wear the *hijab* as everybody else did in the camp. Only two years

[94] Some religious women wear dark colors and no make up outside in order not to be sexually attractive to men.

ago, she started to wear the *hijab*, because she realized that she did not want to dress any more like a Western woman and wanted to fully embrace her Muslim woman identity by wearing the traditional Muslim attire, she says. Her daughter who is 10 years old does not wear the *hijab* yet. Samar says that she is still too young. She does not approve of young girls of similar age who wear it. Children should be left as children and not considered adults at such a young age. "The *hijab*", she thinks, "belongs to the world of adults". Although Samar now rejects Western style clothing, at the same time, she is very fond of American movies and of the English language, that she speaks fluently.

Being "*soqer hafif*", or Muslim "light", also means for Samar that she may go to movies, listen to music, and attend parties where men and women are mixed. In contrast, she points out, with other "really" religious people who do not go to movies, or parties, do not listen to music, only "daf"[95]. Other instruments such as aoud[96], or qanoun[97], are not allowed. Samar describes her parents and in-laws as being also Muslim "light" too. Samar's explanations of

[95] Similar to a tambourine

[96] Lute

[97] Sitar

these categories of local religious traditions that people choose to follow indicate her understanding of tradition practices tightly connected to religion.

Children's rights for Samar were already included in the Qur'an centuries ago, since the seventh century. She thinks it is important not only for children to learn about their rights but also to teach their parents. It is only through teaching parents that children's rights can be useful and valuable to children. She refutes the teaching of UN-influenced children's rights, because of its general Western influence. As an educator, she claims that teaching children's rights through a religious perspective is the only way that camp people, children and parents, will understand them. For example, she says, "the right to freedom for girls is totally opposed to Muslim traditions and not acceptable here in the camps. The idea that boys and girls have the same rights is not applicable in the *mukhayyam*." However, she also says that it is only wrong interpretations of the Qur'an that favor men against women, because in the Qur'an they are equal. Hence she wants her daughters to be as educated as her son.

Samar is an "assimilated" refugee who unlike most camp refugees has no desire of going back to Palestine. Her life is here in Jordan, she says. In fact, if she had a

choice she would not go back. She was born in Jordan. Her life is here now. She has made a nice life for herself and her family in Amman. Although she admits that Palestinians do not have the same opportunities as Jordanians, she feels settled in Jordan and does not want to start her life all over again. But her husband is ambivalent about going back to Palestine. He lived there until he was 5 years old and has some vague memories. But for Samar, Palestine is not a reality. She says that she does participate in the "struggle", and believes that Palestine belongs to those fighting for it. However, if all Jordanian Palestinians were to go back to Palestine, she would go back too. She would not want to live as a minority in Jordan, and would want to be with her people. Thus although Samar is not interested in returning to her homeland, she affirms her sense of belonging to the Palestinian community.

These five portraits summarize several important points that emerge. These include the generational differences, and life experiences of refugees which result in diverse views about gender, religion, and politics. While some of the older people have more radical perceptions, the younger generation has grown more influenced by education, various NGO programs, including children's rights, and television

they receive in the camps. However, regardless of their age group all refugees hold the hope of return.

Toward a Conclusion

This thesis examines local interpretations and effects of the UN CRC in Palestinian refugee camps. It does not provide an analysis of the articles of the Convention from a legal perspective, although this would be an interesting study. Instead, the objective has been to illuminate the connections between the Western secular children's rights embodied in the UN Convention, and local understandings of these rights. The new articulation of children's rights reflects Palestinian camp refugee cultural traditions and political concerns. The impacts of the local discourse on children, adolescents and their families are explored and reveal significant ties to the Palestinian problematic. Such impacts uncover several contradictions and paradoxes which represent an important theme running throughout this study.

This oscillating movement of conflict and paradox affects camp refugees in many ways in their emotions and in their attitudes toward gender roles. It is also part of their complex relationship to UNRWA. It has prompted a

counterhegemonic quality to the discourse of children's rights that camp refugees have produced.

Thus for camp refugees who keep waiting in a liminal space between memory of their homeland and their hope to return to Palestine, the camp has become their new territory, a symbolic place from which they oppose a dreaded permanent resettlement in Jordan, but also a place of suffering of a long exile reinforced by a fear of the collapse of UNRWA, their safety net. They nostalgically remember the past and despise their hard present. In this context, children's rights are accepted with ambivalence by the local camp refugee community as they are a source of hope and empowerment, but also add resentment and frustration to their lives of misery. The paradox of the shielding message that children's rights convey, and the distressed life in the camps intensifies their pain and their sense of a long lasting injustice. Their resentment is not directed toward other Palestinian refugees living a better life outside the camp since they all share a common national identity; they admire them for having succeeded and made it "outside"; rather this resentment is directed outward to the Jordanian government for excluding them from opportunity and to the West for not caring about them.

The space of the camps is a peculiar site where camp dwellers, UNRWA, and local NGOs – religious and non-religious – co-exist. Their living in the camps for four generations represents a paradox in itself. The *mukhayyam* once created as a temporary housing structure for refugees, has become a permanent *hara*, a (working-class) neighborhood of Amman. Further, the definite character of the camp is a notion that camp refugees refuse as such recognition would negate their right of return. This paradoxical situation has emotional repercussions on refugees who experience uncertainty, insecurity, hence a high level of anxiety about their future and their children's. The quasi-stability of the camp translates into refugees' rhetoric. Camp refugees say they want to remain in the camp to assert their refugee status and their right of return, but at the same time they yearn for a better life outside the camp.

The problematic definition of the Palestinian refugee adds more ambiguity to the refugee predicament. The limitations and exclusions that the refugee status implies is a source of emotional stress to poor families who depend on UNRWA aid, especially for Gazan families not eligible for financial aid and who are left unprotected by the UNRWA system.

While the camp embodies the trauma of their long exile, it is also a dynamic place of interaction and transformation across the slippery boundaries of “inside” and “outside”, through the agency of camp refugees in their struggle for survival. Categories of “inside”/”outside” have been often used in anthropological analysis regarding the position and voice of the anthropologist and the person she interviews. Geertz (1983) on the other hand, applies these binary terms in his study of a Javanese community to their sense of themselves as persons. “Inside” refers to inward feelings and “outside” to outward actions. I have used these categories here in different ways, mainly to show the world of the camp both as a self-contained realm and also connected to and interacting with the outside.

Large camp families living in the limited space of the camp share a small housing unit allocated by UNRWA, and provide strong extended social networks. Ensuing tensions and sometimes domestic violence, influenced by difficult economic conditions and slow-changing gender roles, take place at home. Families, a main place of socialization and social change, combine traditional family values, including Palestinian camp culture and religion, with new models and conceptions of individuals promoted by TV and NGO programs such as those on children’s rights, producing

contradictions in their perceptions. While young people are attracted to the glamour or consumer-oriented images projected on their TV screens, they do not automatically identify with what they watch, and enjoy the ephemeral, instant pleasure television provides them and discard the deeper content.

Gender roles are mainly influenced both by Qur'an learning and children's rights training. Those are not incompatible. However, camp refugees perceive that rights come first from the Qur'an, and those are "*huquq sahihat*", or true rights. These unchallenged rights are inscribed in a current debate taking place in Muslim societies about "true rights" revealed in the Holy book. Some oppose such "*huquq sahihat*" including women's and children's rights, to patriarchal social norms that go against women's freedom and also dismiss child abuse. These critics of patriarchal customary behavior also claim that such behavior professes the wrong interpretations of the Qur'an, which protects women and children.

While girls complain they are treated differently from boys at home, the teachings of children's rights they receive at school and from NGO programs show them other ways to perceive themselves and empower them as individuals. The world of women and girls is more

fragmented than that of men. Girls have less freedom than boys which contradict what they learn about children's rights. They also have fewer chances to attain higher education than boys. Thus girls' perceptions of children's rights are expressed in more gendered terms than Palestinian vs. Jordanians. They yearn to have the same rights as boys. At the same time, gender equality is often interpreted by camp families as eliminating the distinction between genders which would produce a unisex world that culture and religion do not allow.

Generally, men - father, husband, brother - hold the authority over women and are the economic providers. Their authority comes with material protection of women. Women may resent, on the one hand, the male control and at the same time benefit from the financial security that men provide. Gender roles and the sense of individualism need to be examined not in Western terms but in local terms. The custom of veiling is not generally perceived as a burden by camp women. Some women comply with the demands and requirements of religion as part of usual social constraints.

Female perceptions of gender roles tend to be more liberal than men's. Women seem to be more inclined to learn about children's rights, as the family workshops that

Jordan River Foundation organized for both parents demonstrated in their largely female attendance. Thus it becomes the responsibility and the task of the mother not only to learn about children's rights and new ways of child rearing, but to internalize these new concepts and turn them into new practices with or without the help of her husband, and sometimes against his will.

UNRWA is part of the paradoxical situation in which camp refugees are caught. It is their main support as it operates as an aid agency and also as a provider of free education. UNRWA's role presents several contradictions. Created in 1950 as a temporary structure, it has since continued to exist. A structure of international power, its temporary mandate is renewed every three years which adds insecurity to the precarious lives of the refugees. An UN agency totally devoted to Palestinian refugees, it has the mission to create Jordanian citizens out of Palestinian refugees through its education system. While it has practically suppressed the teaching of Palestinian history in order to erase Palestinian identity, the UNRWA school system has fostered instead a strong Palestinian identity shared by the student body and the Palestinian staff. Although students are taught a Jordanian curriculum, they

have developed an oppositional Palestinian nationalism indirectly shaped by their teachers.

The UNRWA school is a place of transformation where processes of localization of children's rights take place through the central role of Palestinian teachers. While, on the one hand, the UNRWA school implements children's rights programs such as participation rights in the community, on the other hand, refugees are de facto excluded from the self-governance of the camps which belongs to higher centralized powers, such as UNRWA and the Department of Palestinian Affairs. Camp refugees may benefit from the help of UNRWA which is vital to their survival, but its role and structure remain a constant source of ambivalence and contestation for camp refugees and Palestinian teachers.

Local UN agency and NGO workers for the most part dealing with children or family programs are cognizant of the United Nations CRC, but once the message of rights is disseminated and trickles down to the camps it becomes localized. The UN CRC is not without its own contradictions, however, as the debates elicited by new concepts of childhood reveal. On the one hand, children are seen as dependent and powerless, in need of being protected, and on the other, as agents, capable of shaping

their social reality. In addition, the UN CRC is based on Western assumptions of constructions of childhood, individualism, gender and local knowledge. Accordingly, camp children and adolescents express their often-ambivalent views and demonstrate they are capable of reinventing children's rights by altering the global discourse to include their own cultural values. [They echo my critique of the power-infused UN Convention of the rights of the child.] Hence, through the agency of the camp community, including children, adolescents and their families, the counterhegemonic character of the local discourse of children's rights that has emerged has come to be embracing an all-encompassing category of rights, religion, nationalism, and a code of ethics. This hybrid discourse provides a new space to learn and discuss Islam in a different light.

Although camp children and adolescents express ambivalence concerning their Palestinian and Jordanian identities, they are not torn between the two. Both identities complement each other. While the former is heart-felt and a source of pride, the latter is not really vested, but Jordanian citizenship protects them and makes them feel less marginalized, even though they deeply resent not being fully assimilated to Jordan.

In this thesis anthropological key issues, such as power and hegemony, regarding international conventions and their subsequent policies are challenged, by postulating a critique of the hegemonic aspect of the UN CRC. The universal modernity that the UN CRC represents is deemed to shape the lives of "modern subjects", as Foucault would have it, but does not match the religious project that Muslim countries, in general, and Palestinian camp refugees, in particular, are developing. The local children's rights discourse is in keeping with the general pattern of *Al-Sahwa al-Islamiya*, or Islamic revival, which has been going on since the 1970's in the *Umma*, or the Muslim community at large, and is visible in the camps where mosques have multiplied and Islamic NGOs and their programs are active, often working in conjunction with non-religious NGOs. Children's rights, now localized, contribute to the expanding Muslim public sphere, an "espace public confessional" as Eickelman (2000) observes, that has emerged with the recent proliferation of Arab mass media including an array of TV shows.

This is not only an ethnography of children and families in the Middle East. It is not only an ethnography of children's rights, rather it is an ethnography of entrapment and survival. One of the central themes in this

thesis is the notion of limen, or in-between space. Camp families are stranded in the camps, suspended in time between memory and hope, in a no man's land of sorts; inside Jordan, but outside mainstream or real assimilation. Their long exile and their camp living conditions have made them disenchanted and because rights are not laws, their applicability may be more problematic and confusing to them. Thus children's rights may be adding feelings of hopelessness and pain to their lives. Children's rights are not only a local code of ethics[98] for both parents and children, but also a discourse of empowerment for children. By describing Palestinian camp refugee children and adolescents as participants in the social lives of their community and as contributors to the making of their own culture, it has been argued in this study that the local interpretations of children's rights bear several contradictions and are both a source of ambivalence and holds out grounds for hope of a better life and return to Palestine, for the Palestinian camp refugee community broken by over fifty years of exile. The new generation of camp adolescents is also situated in a liminal space,

[98] See Dworkin's distinction (1977) between rights-based and duty-based ethical codes. Rights-based are about the value of individual choice, whereas duty-based codes are about the morality of individual action in conformity with a code of proper conduct.

between childhood and adulthood, between a global culture of rights and its localization.

However, as Engle Merry's argues (2001), rights like cultures are in constant process of adaptation to fast moving, interacting global and local environments. Following her argument, I suggest that the internal camp discourse of children's rights is constantly negotiated and reformulated by the groups involved according to inherited cultural traditions, their religious adherence and their experience and needs as Palestinian refugees. The local discourse of children's rights may open a new political and psychological space for camp refugees that helps to transcend their grim refugee lives and their silent suffering. Children's rights give voice to their pain which has not been acknowledged. By thinking of themselves as transient they are constantly reinventing their lives in order to survive. Inspired by the children of the Intifada, the burden that camp children and adolescents carry of saving their country - under their living circumstances of high surveillance from the Jordanian government - may be alleviated when the local discourse of children's rights is interpreted as a discourse of liberation.

Thus children and adolescents, both subjects and objects of these rights, are paradoxically both agents of

resistance and agents of change. By revealing the practical limitations of such broad "universal" conventions the lives of children and adolescents suggest other ways of looking at cultural categories, not in a binary framework of opposed or oppositional "cultures". My work contributes to the understanding of children's rights in local communities in the Middle East and elsewhere by challenging notions of "modernity" as an appropriate monolithic model, as it has been conceived of in the West, when applied to children's rights in the refugee camps in Jordan.

Finally, inspired by the late anthropologist Sharon Stephens and her work on children at high risk involved in war conflicts as child soldiers, and concerned by the alarming number of child-victims of poverty as street children, or the consequences of war in many parts of the world, I urge anthropologists to take a stand and help with more research on children and children at risk, including refugees. My thesis which focuses on Palestinian camp children and their rights has at its core a quest for anthropological advocacy. This proposed position poses a dilemma to the anthropologist, as Hastrup & Elsass (1990) noted in their work with an indigenous community in Colombia, since anthropology is deemed to be concerned with staying outside of people's interests, and focus more on

context. However, recently more anthropologists, confronted with political issues, have contributed to the pursuit of an engaged anthropology (cf. Cook 2003, Hackenberg 2002, Sanford & Angel-Ajani 2005).

It seems impossible to write about Palestinian camp refugees without empathy. The day before leaving Jordan, I went to say good-bye to Umm Tareq in Al-Wihdat camp, having deep guilt feelings of leaving her and all the other refugees behind, people to whom I had been close and who had welcomed me in their homes so warmly. I felt guilty about going home to my cushy, comfortable life while they were staying in the squalid camps. It is the middle of the afternoon. I notice once more the narrow streets, the dirt, the foul smell, the constant dust, the decayed homes, the density of people – which during the day consist mostly of women and children. I knock on the metal door of the house. Hind, Umm Tareq's teen age niece half opens the door. As soon as she sees me, she lets me in with a big smile and a hug. She takes me upstairs where Umm Tareq, dressed in an oversized t-shirt, a black pair of leggings, and a bandana-style scarf on her head, is in the kitchen preparing stuffed grape leaves. I tell her I have come to say good-bye. I sit for a cup of coffee and sweets that she insists

I must eat. Her niece, her youngest son, her daughter and several members of the extended family who live downstairs join in. When I leave, Umm Tareq says crying and hugging me, “I hope to see you next time in liberated Palestine, insh’allah!” I think we both knew this was not going to happen soon. Her tears (and mine) and her goodbye words were full of both hope and delusion summing up the complex, difficult in-between position of the camp refugees.

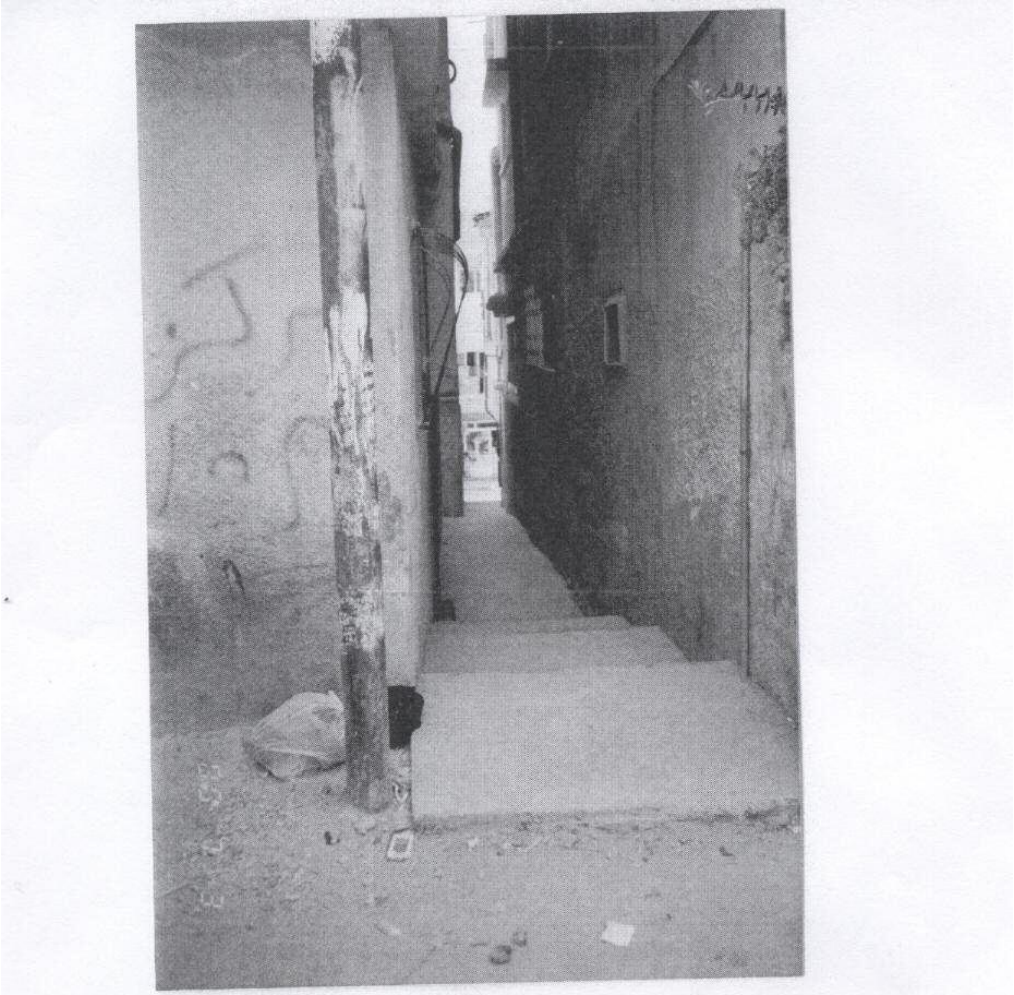


Photo 1

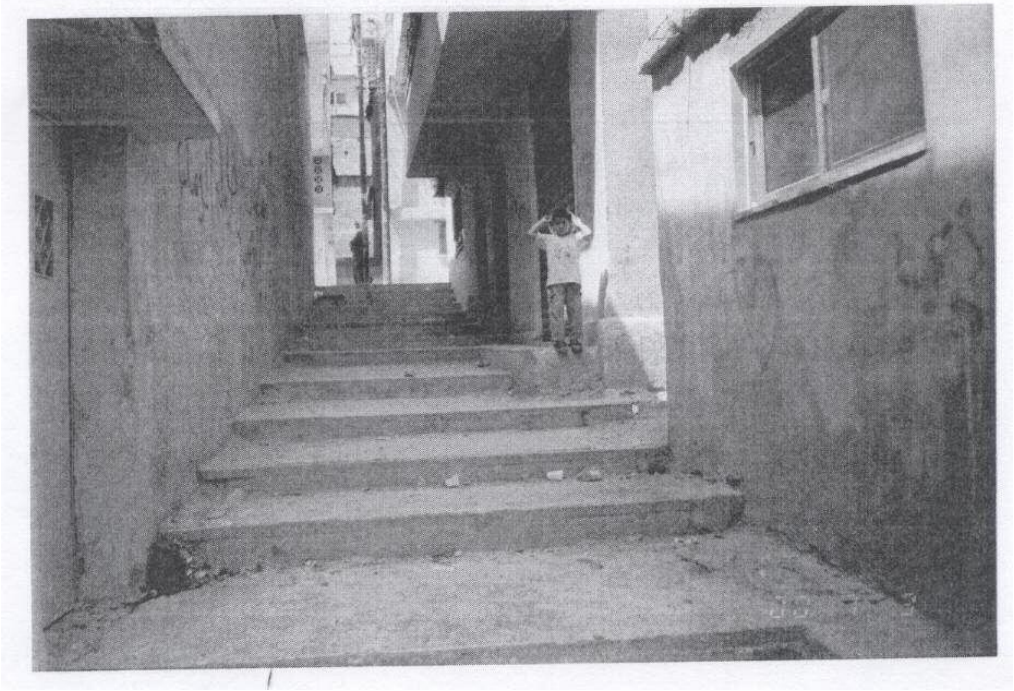
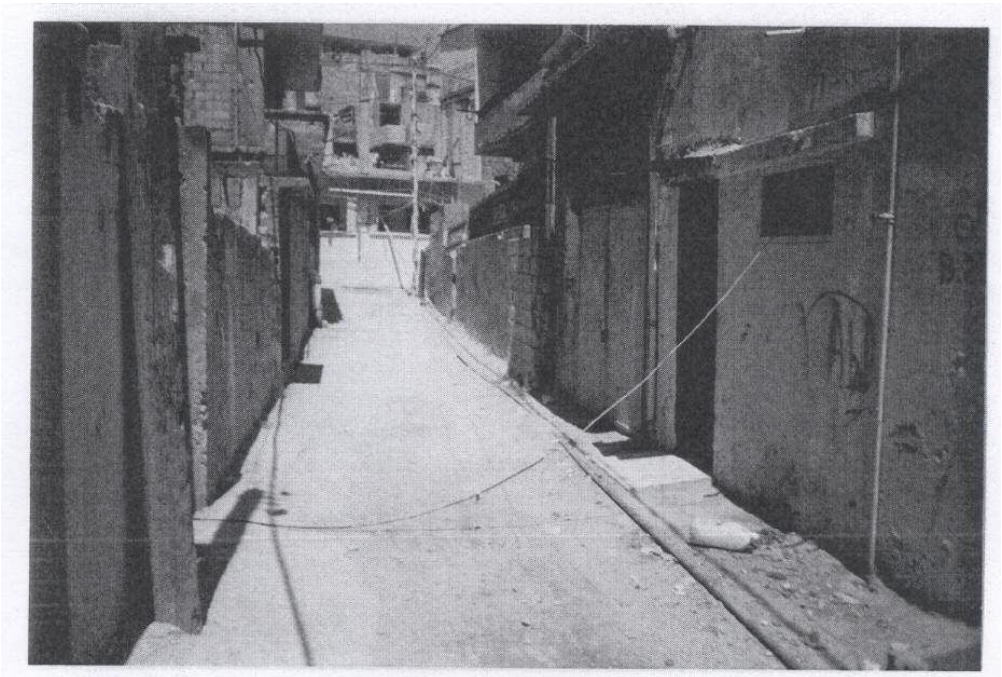
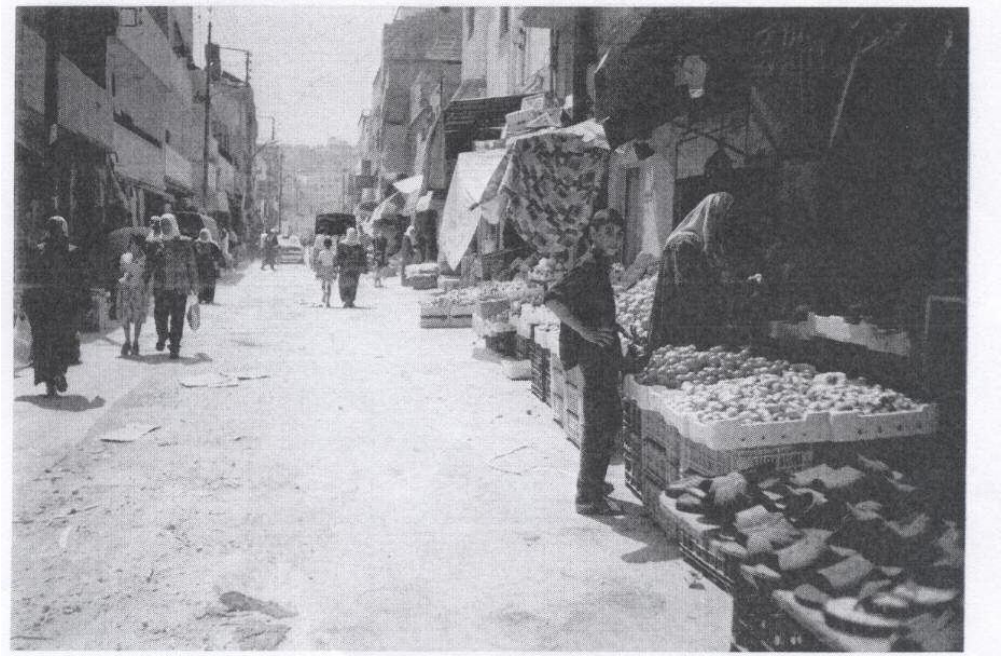


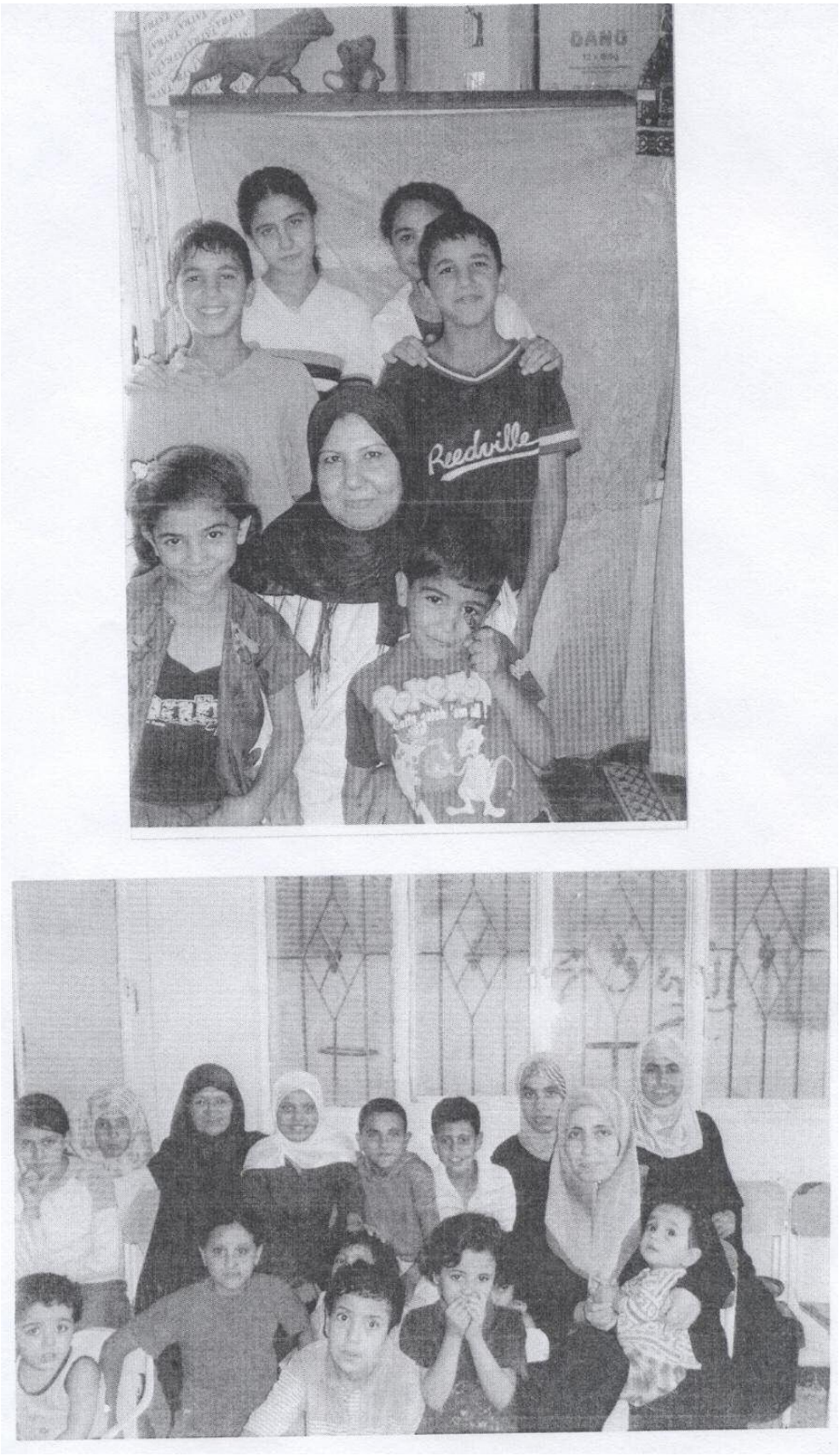
Photo 2

Photos 3 & 4

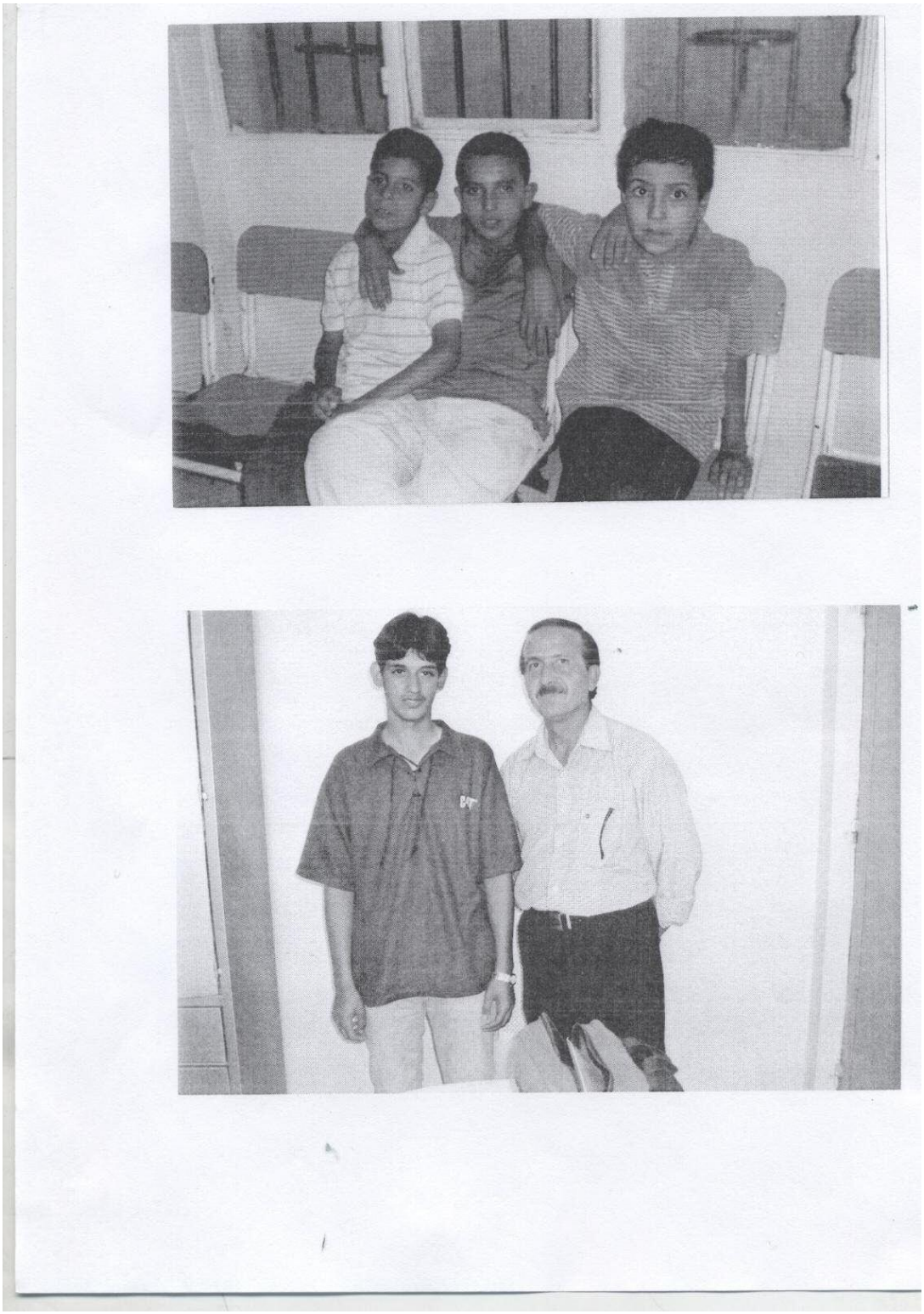




Photos 5 & 6



Photos 7 & 8



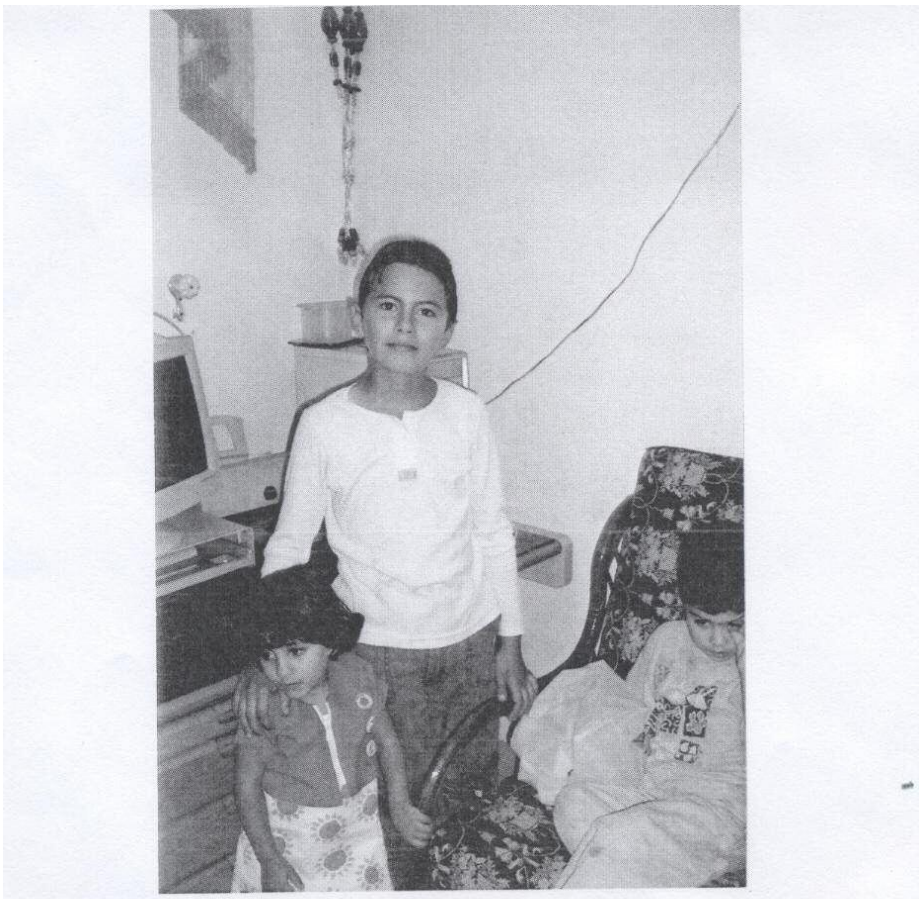
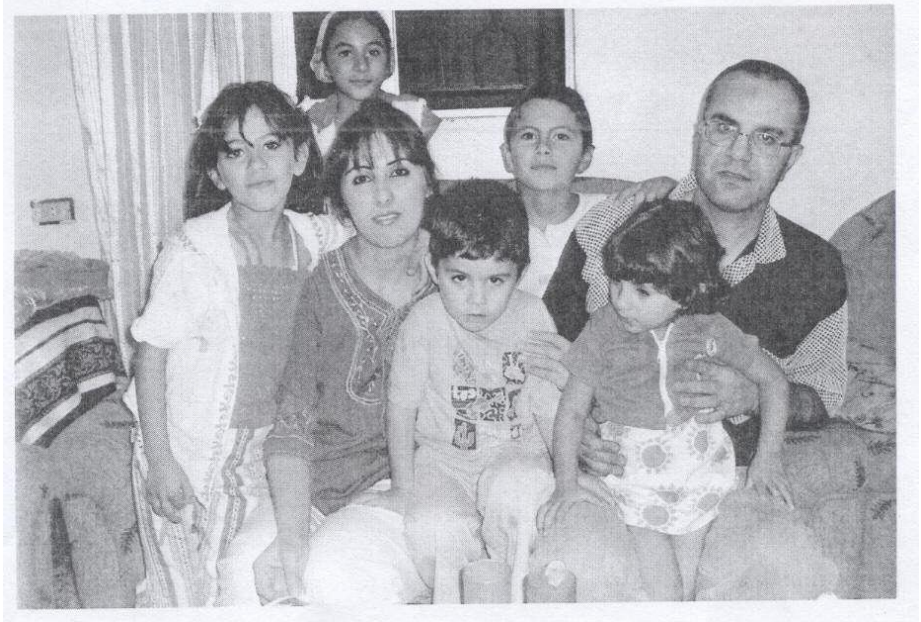


Photo 9 & 10



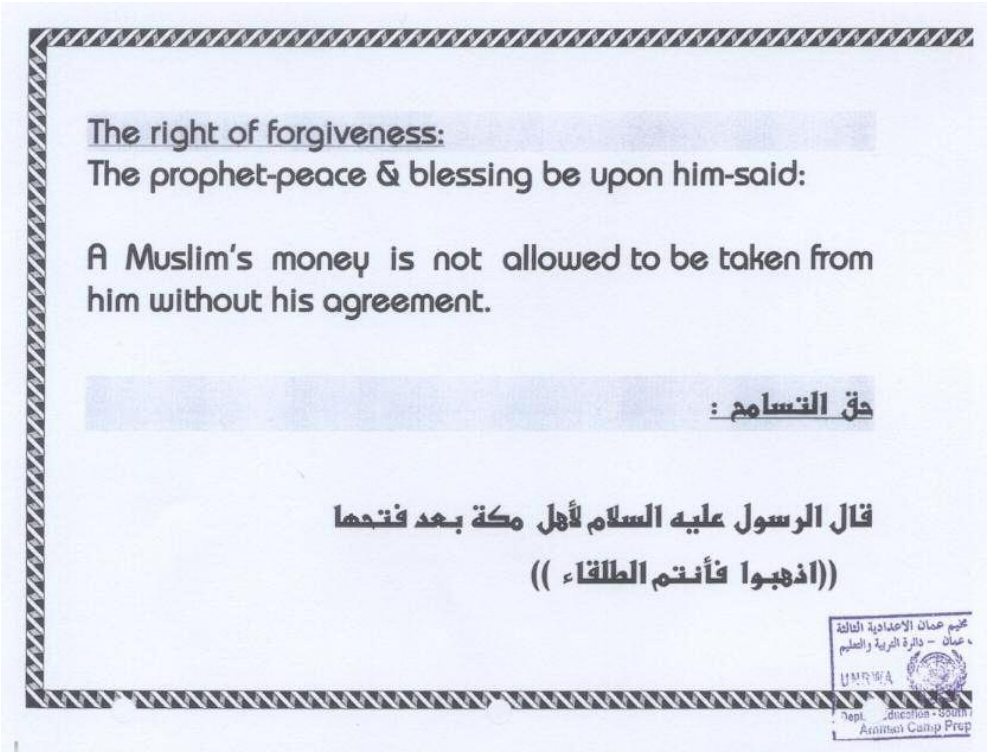

The right of forgiveness:
The prophet-peace & blessing be upon him-said:
A Muslim's money is not allowed to be taken from him without his agreement.
حق التسامح :
قال الرسول عليه السلام لأهل مكة بعد فتحها
((اذهبوا فأنتم الطلقاء))

Fig 1

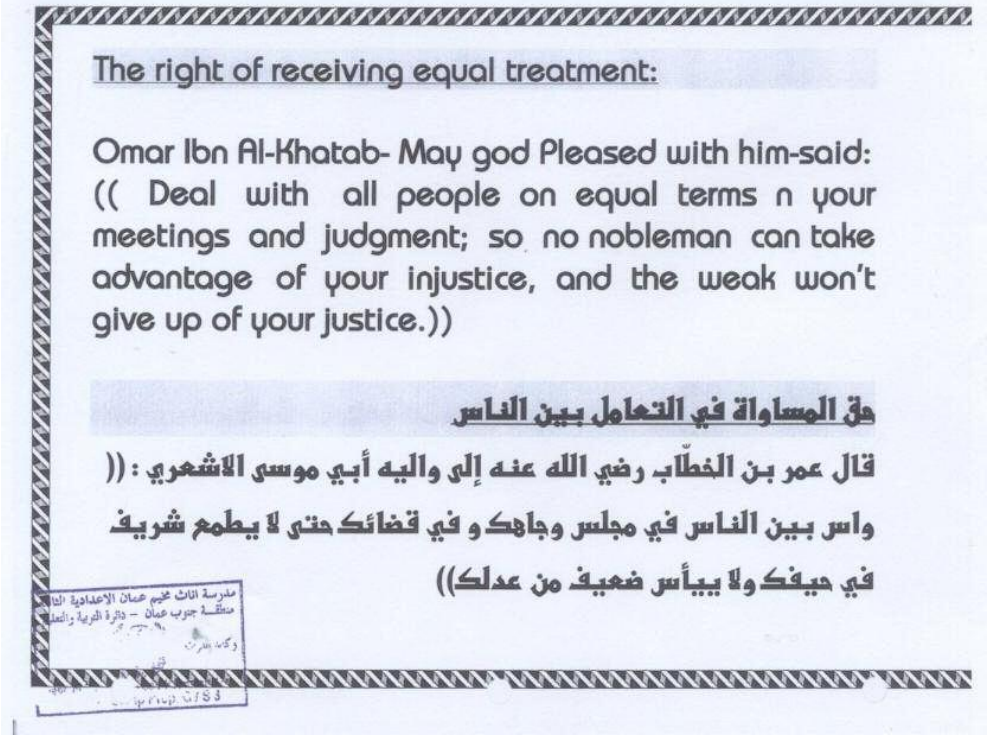

The right of receiving equal treatment:
Omar Ibn Al-Khatab- May god Pleased with him-said:
((Deal with all people on equal terms n your meetings and judgment; so no nobleman can take advantage of your injustice, and the weak won't give up of your justice.))
حق المساواة في التعامل بين الناس
قال عمر بن الخطّاب رضي الله عنه إلى واليه أبي موسى الاشعري : ((
واس بين الناس في مجلس وجاهك و في قضائك حتى لا يطمع شريف
في حيفك ولا ييأس ضعيف من عدلك))

Fig 2

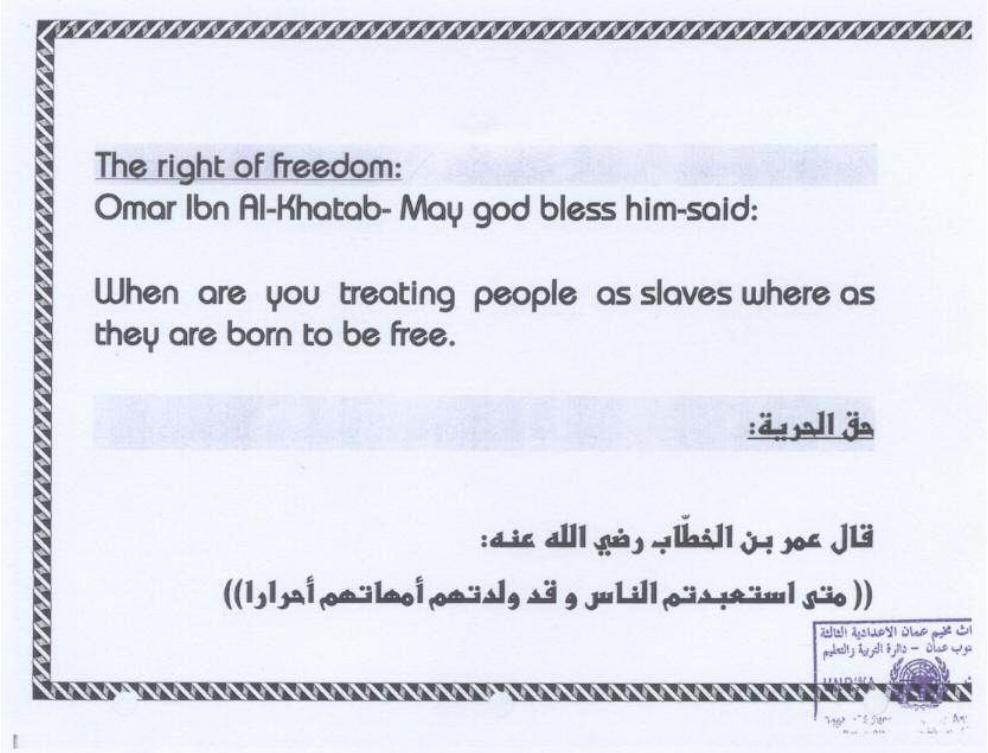

The right of freedom:
Omar Ibn Al-Khatab- May god bless him-said:
When are you treating people as slaves where as they are born to be free.
حق الحرية:
قال عمر بن الخطّاب رضي الله عنه:
((متى استعبدتم الناس و قد ولدتهم أمهاتهم أحرارا))

Fig 3

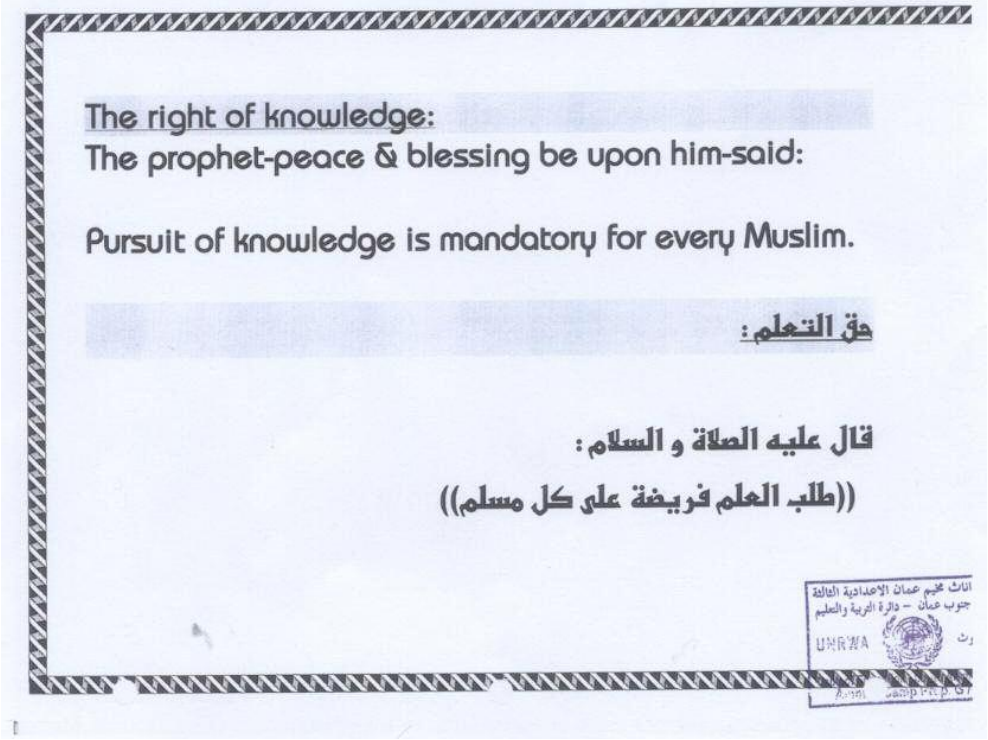
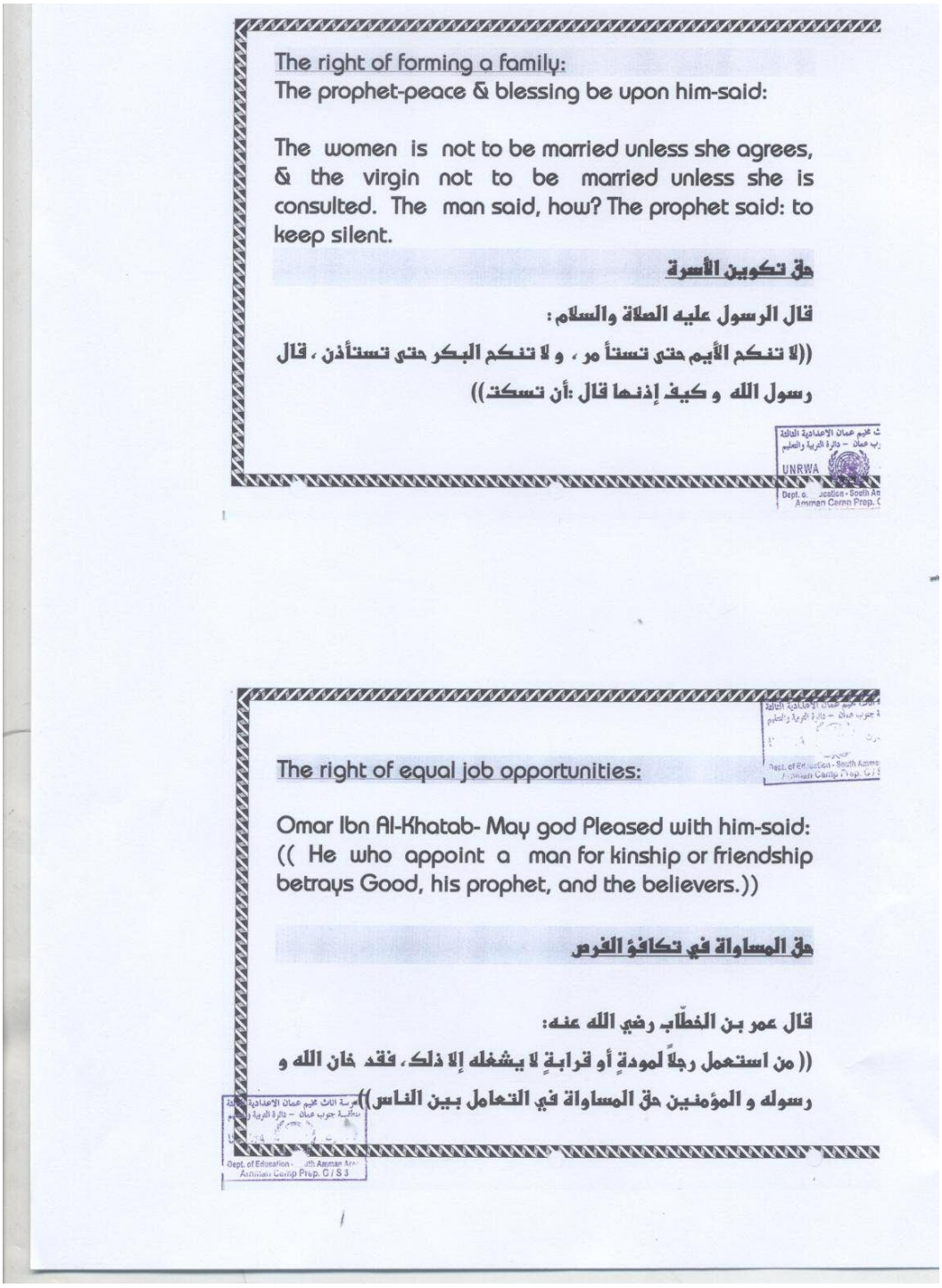

The right of knowledge:
The prophet-peace & blessing be upon him-said:
Pursuit of knowledge is mandatory for every Muslim.
حق التعلم:
قال عليه الصلاة و السلام:
((طلب العلم فريضة على كل مسلم))

Fig 4



The right of forming a family:
The prophet-peace & blessing be upon him-said:

The women is not to be married unless she agrees, & the virgin not to be married unless she is consulted. The man said, how? The prophet said: to keep silent.

حق تكوين الأسرة

قال الرسول عليه الصلاة والسلام:

((لا تنكح الأيم حتى تستأمر ، و لا تنكح البكر حتى تستأذن ، قال رسول الله و كيف إذنها قال :أن تسكت))

The right of equal job opportunities:

Omar Ibn Al-Khatab- May god Pleased with him-said:
((He who appoint a man for kinship or friendship betrays Good, his prophet, and the believers.))

حق المساواة في تكافؤ الفرص

قال عمر بن الخطّاب رضي الله عنه:

((من استعمل رجلاً لمودةٍ أو قرابةٍ لا يشغله إلا ذلك، فقد خان الله و رسوله و المؤمنين حق المساواة في التعامل بين الناس))

Fig 5

Fig 6

Convention on the Rights of the Child

Adopted and opened for signature, ratification and accession by General Assembly resolution 44/25 of 20 November 1989

entry into force 2 September 1990, in accordance with article 49

Preamble

The States Parties to the present Convention,

Considering that, in accordance with the principles proclaimed in the Charter of the United Nations, recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world,

Bearing in mind that the peoples of the United Nations have, in the Charter, reaffirmed their faith in fundamental human rights and in the dignity and worth of the human person, and have determined to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom,

Recognizing that the United Nations has, in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and in the International Covenants on Human Rights, proclaimed and agreed that everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth therein, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status,

Recalling that, in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the United Nations has proclaimed that childhood is entitled to special care and assistance,

Convinced that the family, as the fundamental group of society and the natural environment for the growth and well-being of all its members and particularly children, should be afforded the necessary protection and assistance so that it can fully assume its responsibilities within the community,

Recognizing that the child, for the full and harmonious development of his or her personality, should grow up in a family environment, in an atmosphere of happiness, love and understanding,

Considering that the child should be fully prepared to live an individual life in society, and brought up in the spirit of the ideals proclaimed in the Charter of the United Nations, and in particular in the spirit of peace, dignity, tolerance, freedom, equality and solidarity,

Bearing in mind that the need to extend particular care to the child has been stated in the Geneva Declaration of the Rights of the Child of 1924 and in the Declaration of the Rights of the Child adopted by the General Assembly on 20 November 1959 and recognized in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (in particular in articles 23 and 24), in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (in particular in article 10) and in the statutes and relevant instruments of specialized agencies and international organizations concerned with the welfare of children,

Bearing in mind that, as indicated in the Declaration of the Rights of the Child, "the child, by reason of his physical and mental immaturity, needs special safeguards and care, including appropriate legal protection, before as well as after birth",

Recalling the provisions of the Declaration on Social and Legal Principles relating to the Protection and Welfare of Children, with Special Reference to Foster Placement and Adoption Nationally and Internationally; the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the

Administration of Juvenile Justice (The Beijing Rules) ; and the Declaration on the Protection of Women and Children in Emergency and Armed Conflict, Recognizing that, in all countries in the world, there are children living in exceptionally difficult conditions, and that such children need special consideration,

Taking due account of the importance of the traditions and cultural values of each people for the protection and harmonious development of the child, Recognizing the importance of international cooperation for improving the living conditions of children in every country, in particular in the developing countries,

Have agreed as follows:

PART I

Article 1

For the purposes of the present Convention, a child means every human being below the age of eighteen years unless under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier.

Article 2

1. States Parties shall respect and ensure the rights set forth in the present Convention to each child within their jurisdiction without discrimination of any kind, irrespective of the child's or his or her parent's or legal guardian's race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, property, disability, birth or other status.

2. States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to ensure that the child is protected against all forms of discrimination or punishment on the basis of the status, activities, expressed opinions, or beliefs of the child's parents, legal guardians, or family members.

Article 3

1. In all actions concerning children, whether undertaken by public or private social welfare institutions, courts of law, administrative authorities or legislative bodies, the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration.

2. States Parties undertake to ensure the child such protection and care as is necessary for his or her well-being, taking into account the rights and duties of his or her parents, legal guardians, or other individuals legally responsible for him or her, and, to this end, shall take all appropriate legislative and administrative measures.

3. States Parties shall ensure that the institutions, services and facilities responsible for the care or protection of children shall conform with the standards established by competent authorities, particularly in the areas of safety, health, in the number and suitability of their staff, as well as competent supervision.

Article 4

States Parties shall undertake all appropriate legislative, administrative, and other measures for the implementation of the rights recognized in the present Convention. With regard to economic, social and cultural rights, States Parties shall undertake such measures to the maximum extent of their available resources and, where needed, within the framework of international co-operation.

Article 5

States Parties shall respect the responsibilities, rights and duties of parents or, where applicable, the members of the extended family or community as provided for by local custom, legal guardians or other persons legally responsible for the child, to provide, in a manner

consistent with the evolving capacities of the child, appropriate direction and guidance in the exercise by the child of the rights recognized in the present Convention.

Article 6

1. States Parties recognize that every child has the inherent right to life. 2. States Parties shall ensure to the maximum extent possible the survival and development of the child.

Article 7

1. The child shall be registered immediately after birth and shall have the right from birth to a name, the right to acquire a nationality and. as far as possible, the right to know and be cared for by his or her parents.

2. States Parties shall ensure the implementation of these rights in accordance with their national law and their obligations under the relevant international instruments in this field, in particular where the child would otherwise be stateless.

Article 8

1. States Parties undertake to respect the right of the child to preserve his or her identity, including nationality, name and family relations as recognized by law without unlawful interference.

2. Where a child is illegally deprived of some or all of the elements of his or her identity, States Parties shall provide appropriate assistance and protection, with a view to re-establishing speedily his or her identity.

Article 9

1. States Parties shall ensure that a child shall not be separated from his or her parents against their will, except when competent authorities subject to judicial review determine, in accordance with applicable law and procedures, that such separation is necessary for the best interests of the child. Such determination may be necessary in a particular case such as one involving abuse or neglect of the child by the parents, or one where the parents are living separately and a decision must be made as to the child's place of residence.

2. In any proceedings pursuant to paragraph 1 of the present article, all interested parties shall be given an opportunity to participate in the proceedings and make their views known.

3. States Parties shall respect the right of the child who is separated from one or both parents to maintain personal relations and direct contact with both parents on a regular basis, except if it is contrary to the child's best interests.

4. Where such separation results from any action initiated by a State Party, such as the detention, imprisonment, exile, deportation or death (including death arising from any cause while the person is in the custody of the State) of one or both parents or of the child, that State Party shall, upon request, provide the parents, the child or, if appropriate, another member of the family with the essential information concerning the whereabouts of the absent member(s) of the family unless the provision of the information would be detrimental to the well-being of the child. States Parties shall further ensure that the submission of such a request shall of itself entail no adverse consequences for the person(s) concerned.

Article 10

1. In accordance with the obligation of States Parties under article 9, paragraph 1, applications by a child or his or her parents to enter or leave a State Party for the purpose of family reunification shall be dealt with by States Parties in a positive, humane and expeditious

manner. States Parties shall further ensure that the submission of such a request shall entail no adverse consequences for the applicants and for the members of their family.

2. A child whose parents reside in different States shall have the right to maintain on a regular basis, save in exceptional circumstances personal relations and direct contacts with both parents. Towards that end and in accordance with the obligation of States Parties under article 9, paragraph 1, States Parties shall respect the right of the child and his or her parents to leave any country, including their own, and to enter their own country. The right to leave any country shall be subject only to such restrictions as are prescribed by law and which are necessary to protect the national security, public order (ordre public), public health or morals or the rights and freedoms of others and are consistent with the other rights recognized in the present Convention.

Article 11

1. States Parties shall take measures to combat the illicit transfer and non-return of children abroad.

2. To this end, States Parties shall promote the conclusion of bilateral or multilateral agreements or accession to existing agreements.

Article 12

1. States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.

2. For this purpose, the child shall in particular be provided the opportunity to be heard in any judicial and administrative proceedings affecting the child, either directly, or through a representative or an appropriate body, in a manner consistent with the procedural rules of national law.

Article 13

1. The child shall have the right to freedom of expression; this right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of the child's choice.

2. The exercise of this right may be subject to certain restrictions, but these shall only be such as are provided by law and are necessary:

(a) For respect of the rights or reputations of others; or

(b) For the protection of national security or of public order (ordre public), or of public health or morals.

Article 14

1. States Parties shall respect the right of the child to freedom of thought, conscience and religion.

2. States Parties shall respect the rights and duties of the parents and, when applicable, legal guardians, to provide direction to the child in the exercise of his or her right in a manner consistent with the evolving capacities of the child.

3. Freedom to manifest one's religion or beliefs may be subject only to such limitations as are prescribed by law and are necessary to protect public safety, order, health or morals, or the fundamental rights and freedoms of others.

Article 15

1. States Parties recognize the rights of the child to freedom of association and to freedom of peaceful assembly.

2. No restrictions may be placed on the exercise of these rights other than those imposed in conformity with the law and which are necessary in a democratic society in the interests of national security or public safety, public order (ordre public), the protection of public health or morals or the protection of the rights and freedoms of others.

Article 16

1. No child shall be subjected to arbitrary or unlawful interference with his or her privacy, family, home or correspondence, nor to unlawful attacks on his or her honour and reputation.

2. The child has the right to the protection of the law against such interference or attacks.

Article 17

States Parties recognize the important function performed by the mass media and shall ensure that the child has access to information and material from a diversity of national and international sources, especially those aimed at the promotion of his or her social, spiritual and moral well-being and physical and mental health.

To this end, States Parties shall:

(a) Encourage the mass media to disseminate information and material of social and cultural benefit to the child and in accordance with the spirit of article 29;

(b) Encourage international co-operation in the production, exchange and dissemination of such information and material from a diversity of cultural, national and international sources;

(c) Encourage the production and dissemination of children's books;

(d) Encourage the mass media to have particular regard to the linguistic needs of the child who belongs to a minority group or who is indigenous;

(e) Encourage the development of appropriate guidelines for the protection of the child from information and material injurious to his or her well-being, bearing in mind the provisions of articles 13 and 18.

Article 18

1. States Parties shall use their best efforts to ensure recognition of the principle that both parents have common responsibilities for the upbringing and development of the child. Parents or, as the case may be, legal guardians, have the primary responsibility for the upbringing and development of the child. The best interests of the child will be their basic concern.

2. For the purpose of guaranteeing and promoting the rights set forth in the present Convention, States Parties shall render appropriate assistance to parents and legal guardians in the performance of their child-rearing responsibilities and shall ensure the development of institutions, facilities and services for the care of children.

3. States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to ensure that children of working parents have the right to benefit from child-care services and facilities for which they are eligible.

Article 19

1. States Parties shall take all appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect the child from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse,

neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse, while in the care of parent(s), legal guardian(s) or any other person who has the care of the child.
2. Such protective measures should, as appropriate, include effective procedures for the establishment of social programmes to provide necessary support for the child and for those who have the care of the child, as well as for other forms of prevention and for identification, reporting, referral, investigation, treatment and follow-up of instances of child maltreatment described heretofore, and, as appropriate, for judicial involvement.

Article 20

1. A child temporarily or permanently deprived of his or her family environment, or in whose own best interests cannot be allowed to remain in that environment, shall be entitled to special protection and assistance provided by the State.

2. States Parties shall in accordance with their national laws ensure alternative care for such a child.

3. Such care could include, inter alia, foster placement, kafalah of Islamic law, adoption or if necessary placement in suitable institutions for the care of children. When considering solutions, due regard shall be paid to the desirability of continuity in a child's upbringing and to the child's ethnic, religious, cultural and linguistic background.

Article 21
States Parties that recognize and/or permit the system of adoption shall ensure that the best interests of the child shall be the paramount consideration and they shall:

(a) Ensure that the adoption of a child is authorized only by competent authorities who determine, in accordance with applicable law and procedures and on the basis of all pertinent and reliable information, that the adoption is permissible in view of the child's status concerning parents, relatives and legal guardians and that, if required, the persons concerned have given their informed consent to the adoption on the basis of such counselling as may be necessary;

(b) Recognize that inter-country adoption may be considered as an alternative means of child's care, if the child cannot be placed in a foster or an adoptive family or cannot in any suitable manner be cared for in the child's country of origin;

(c) Ensure that the child concerned by inter-country adoption enjoys safeguards and standards equivalent to those existing in the case of national adoption;

(d) Take all appropriate measures to ensure that, in inter-country adoption, the placement does not result in improper financial gain for those involved in it;

(e) Promote, where appropriate, the objectives of the present article by concluding bilateral or multilateral arrangements or agreements, and endeavour, within this framework, to ensure that the placement of the child in another country is carried out by competent authorities or organs.

Article 22

1. States Parties shall take appropriate measures to ensure that a child who is seeking refugee status or who is considered a refugee in accordance with applicable international or domestic law and procedures shall, whether unaccompanied or accompanied by his or her parents or by any other person, receive appropriate protection and humanitarian assistance in the enjoyment of applicable rights set forth in the present Convention and in other international human rights or humanitarian instruments to which the said States are Parties.

2. For this purpose, States Parties shall provide, as they consider appropriate, co-operation in any efforts by the United Nations and other competent intergovernmental organizations or

nongovernmental organizations co-operating with the United Nations to protect and assist such a child and to trace the parents or other members of the family of any refugee child in order to obtain information necessary for reunification with his or her family. In cases where no parents or other members of the family can be found, the child shall be accorded the same protection as any other child permanently or temporarily deprived of his or her family environment for any reason , as set forth in the present Convention.

Article 23

1. States Parties recognize that a mentally or physically disabled child should enjoy a full and decent life, in conditions which ensure dignity, promote self-reliance and facilitate the child's active participation in the community.

2. States Parties recognize the right of the disabled child to special care and shall encourage and ensure the extension, subject to available resources, to the eligible child and those responsible for his or her care, of assistance for which application is made and which is appropriate to the child's condition and to the circumstances of the parents or others caring for the child.

3. Recognizing the special needs of a disabled child, assistance extended in accordance with paragraph 2 of the present article shall be provided free of charge, whenever possible, taking into account the financial resources of the parents or others caring for the child, and shall be designed to ensure that the disabled child has effective access to and receives education, training, health care services, rehabilitation services, preparation for employment and recreation opportunities in a manner conducive to the child's achieving the fullest possible social integration and individual development, including his or her cultural and spiritual development.

4. States Parties shall promote, in the spirit of international cooperation, the exchange of appropriate information in the field of preventive health care and of medical, psychological and functional treatment of disabled children, including dissemination of and access to information concerning methods of rehabilitation, education and vocational services, with the aim of enabling States Parties to improve their capabilities and skills and to widen their experience in these areas. In this regard, particular account shall be taken of the needs of developing countries.

Article 24

1. States Parties recognize the right of the child to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health and to facilities for the treatment of illness and rehabilitation of health. States Parties shall strive to ensure that no child is deprived of his or her right of access to such health care services.

2. States Parties shall pursue full implementation of this right and, in particular, shall take appropriate measures:

(a) To diminish infant and child mortality;

(b) To ensure the provision of necessary medical assistance and health care to all children with emphasis on the development of primary health care;

(c) To combat disease and malnutrition, including within the framework of primary health care, through, inter alia, the application of readily available technology and through the provision of adequate nutritious foods and clean drinking-water, taking into consideration the dangers and risks of environmental pollution;

(d) To ensure appropriate pre-natal and post-natal health care for mothers;

(e) To ensure that all segments of society, in particular parents and children, are informed, have access to education and are supported in the use of basic knowledge of child health and nutrition, the advantages of breastfeeding, hygiene and environmental sanitation and the prevention of accidents;

(f) To develop preventive health care, guidance for parents and family planning education and services.

3. States Parties shall take all effective and appropriate measures with a view to abolishing traditional practices prejudicial to the health of children.

4. States Parties undertake to promote and encourage international co-operation with a view to achieving progressively the full realization of the right recognized in the present article. In this regard, particular account shall be taken of the needs of developing countries.

Article 25

States Parties recognize the right of a child who has been placed by the competent authorities for the purposes of care, protection or treatment of his or her physical or mental health, to a periodic review of the treatment provided to the child and all other circumstances relevant to his or her placement.

Article 26

1. States Parties shall recognize for every child the right to benefit from social security, including social insurance, and shall take the necessary measures to achieve the full realization of this right in accordance with their national law.

2. The benefits should, where appropriate, be granted, taking into account the resources and the circumstances of the child and persons having responsibility for the maintenance of the child, as well as any other consideration relevant to an application for benefits made by or on behalf of the child.

Article 27

1. States Parties recognize the right of every child to a standard of living adequate for the child's physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development.

2. The parent(s) or others responsible for the child have the primary responsibility to secure, within their abilities and financial capacities, the conditions of living necessary for the child's development.

3. States Parties, in accordance with national conditions and within their means, shall take appropriate measures to assist parents and others responsible for the child to implement this right and shall in case of need provide material assistance and support programmes, particularly with regard to nutrition, clothing and housing.

4. States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to secure the recovery of maintenance for the child from the parents or other persons having financial responsibility for the child, both within the State Party and from abroad. In particular, where the person having financial responsibility for the child lives in a State different from that of the child, States Parties shall promote the accession to international agreements or the conclusion of such agreements, as well as the making of other appropriate arrangements.

Article 28

1. States Parties recognize the right of the child to education, and with a view to achieving this right progressively and on the basis of equal opportunity, they shall, in particular:

(a) Make primary education compulsory and available free to all;

(b) Encourage the development of different forms of secondary education, including general and vocational education, make them available and accessible to every child, and take appropriate measures such as the introduction of free education and offering financial assistance in case of need;

(c) Make higher education accessible to all on the basis of capacity by every appropriate means;

(d) Make educational and vocational information and guidance available and accessible to all children;

(e) Take measures to encourage regular attendance at schools and the reduction of drop-out rates.

2. States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to ensure that school discipline is administered in a manner consistent with the child's human dignity and in conformity with the present Convention.

3. States Parties shall promote and encourage international cooperation in matters relating to education, in particular with a view to contributing to the elimination of ignorance and illiteracy throughout the world and facilitating access to scientific and technical knowledge and modern teaching methods. In this regard, particular account shall be taken of the needs of developing countries.

Article 29

1. States Parties agree that the education of the child shall be directed to:

(a) The development of the child's personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential;

(b) The development of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and for the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations;

(c) The development of respect for the child's parents, his or her own cultural identity, language and values, for the national values of the country in which the child is living, the country from which he or she may originate, and for civilizations different from his or her own;

(d) The preparation of the child for responsible life in a free society, in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality of sexes, and friendship among all peoples, ethnic, national and religious groups and persons of indigenous origin;

(e) The development of respect for the natural environment.

2. No part of the present article or article 28 shall be construed so as to interfere with the liberty of individuals and bodies to establish and direct educational institutions, subject always to the observance of the principle set forth in paragraph 1 of the present article and to the requirements that the education given in such institutions shall conform to such minimum standards as may be laid down by the State.

Article 30

In those States in which ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities or persons of indigenous origin exist, a child belonging to such a minority or who is indigenous shall not be denied the right, in community with other members of his or her group, to enjoy his or her own culture, to profess and practise his or her own religion, or to use his or her own language.

Article 31

1. States Parties recognize the right of the child to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts.

2. States Parties shall respect and promote the right of the child to participate fully in cultural and artistic life and shall encourage the provision of appropriate and equal opportunities for cultural, artistic, recreational and leisure activity.

Article 32

1. States Parties recognize the right of the child to be protected from economic exploitation and from performing any work that is likely to be hazardous or to interfere with the child's education, or to be harmful to the child's health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development.

2. States Parties shall take legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to ensure the implementation of the present article. To this end, and having regard to the relevant provisions of other international instruments, States Parties shall in particular:

(a) Provide for a minimum age or minimum ages for admission to employment;

(b) Provide for appropriate regulation of the hours and conditions of employment;

(c) Provide for appropriate penalties or other sanctions to ensure the effective enforcement of the present article.

Article 33

States Parties shall take all appropriate measures, including legislative, administrative, social and educational measures, to protect children from the illicit use of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances as defined in the relevant international treaties, and to prevent the use of children in the illicit production and trafficking of such substances.

Article 34

States Parties undertake to protect the child from all forms of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse. For these purposes, States Parties shall in particular take all appropriate national, bilateral and multilateral measures to prevent:

(a) The inducement or coercion of a child to engage in any unlawful sexual activity;

(b) The exploitative use of children in prostitution or other unlawful sexual practices;

(c) The exploitative use of children in pornographic performances and materials.

Article 35

States Parties shall take all appropriate national, bilateral and multilateral measures to prevent the abduction of, the sale of or traffic in children for any purpose or in any form.

Article 36

States Parties shall protect the child against all other forms of exploitation prejudicial to any aspects of the child's welfare.

Article 37

States Parties shall ensure that:

(a) No child shall be subjected to torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. Neither capital punishment nor life imprisonment without possibility of release shall be imposed for offences committed by persons below eighteen years of age;

(b) No child shall be deprived of his or her liberty unlawfully or arbitrarily. The arrest, detention or imprisonment of a child shall be in conformity with the law and shall be used only as a measure of last resort and for the shortest appropriate period of time;

(c) Every child deprived of liberty shall be treated with humanity and respect for the inherent dignity of the human person, and in a manner which takes into account the needs of persons of his or her age. In particular, every child deprived of liberty shall be separated from adults unless it is considered in the child's best interest not to do so and shall have the right to maintain contact with his or her family through correspondence and visits, save in exceptional circumstances;

(d) Every child deprived of his or her liberty shall have the right to prompt access to legal and other appropriate assistance, as well as the right to challenge the legality of the deprivation of his or her liberty before a court or other competent, independent and impartial authority, and to a prompt decision on any such action.

Article 38

1. States Parties undertake to respect and to ensure respect for rules of international humanitarian law applicable to them in armed conflicts which are relevant to the child.

2. States Parties shall take all feasible measures to ensure that persons who have not attained the age of fifteen years do not take a direct part in hostilities.

3. States Parties shall refrain from recruiting any person who has not attained the age of fifteen years into their armed forces. In recruiting among those persons who have attained the age of fifteen years but who have not attained the age of eighteen years, States Parties shall endeavour to give priority to those who are oldest.

4. In accordance with their obligations under international humanitarian law to protect the civilian population in armed conflicts, States Parties shall take all feasible measures to ensure protection and care of children who are affected by an armed conflict.

Article 39

States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to promote physical and psychological recovery and social reintegration of a child victim of: any form of neglect, exploitation, or abuse; torture or any other form of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment; or armed conflicts. Such recovery and reintegration shall take place in an environment which fosters the health, self-respect and dignity of the child.

Article 40

1. States Parties recognize the right of every child alleged as, accused of, or recognized as having infringed the penal law to be treated in a manner consistent with the promotion of the child's sense of dignity and worth, which reinforces the child's respect for the human rights and fundamental freedoms of others and which takes into account the child's age and the desirability of promoting the child's reintegration and the child's assuming a constructive role in society.

2. To this end, and having regard to the relevant provisions of international instruments, States Parties shall, in particular, ensure that:

(a) No child shall be alleged as, be accused of, or recognized as having infringed the penal law by reason of acts or omissions that were not prohibited by national or international law at the time they were committed;

(b) Every child alleged as or accused of having infringed the penal law has at least the following guarantees:

(i) To be presumed innocent until proven guilty according to law;

(ii) To be informed promptly and directly of the charges against him or her, and, if appropriate, through his or her parents or legal guardians, and to have legal or other appropriate assistance in the preparation and presentation of his or her defence;

(iii) To have the matter determined without delay by a competent, independent and impartial authority or judicial body in a fair hearing according to law, in the presence of legal or other appropriate assistance and, unless it is considered not to be in the best interest of the child, in particular, taking into account his or her age or situation, his or her parents or legal guardians;

(iv) Not to be compelled to give testimony or to confess guilt; to examine or have examined adverse witnesses and to obtain the participation and examination of witnesses on his or her behalf under conditions of equality;

(v) If considered to have infringed the penal law, to have this decision and any measures imposed in consequence thereof reviewed by a higher competent, independent and impartial authority or judicial body according to law;

(vi) To have the free assistance of an interpreter if the child cannot understand or speak the language used;

(vii) To have his or her privacy fully respected at all stages of the proceedings.

3. States Parties shall seek to promote the establishment of laws, procedures, authorities and institutions specifically applicable to children alleged as, accused of, or recognized as having infringed the penal law, and, in particular:

(a) The establishment of a minimum age below which children shall be presumed not to have the capacity to infringe the penal law;

(b) Whenever appropriate and desirable, measures for dealing with such children without resorting to judicial proceedings, providing that human rights and legal safeguards are fully respected.

4. A variety of dispositions, such as care, guidance and supervision orders; counselling; probation; foster care; education and vocational training programmes and other alternatives to institutional care shall be available to ensure that children are dealt with in a manner appropriate to their well-being and proportionate both to their circumstances and the offence.

Article 41

Nothing in the present Convention shall affect any provisions which are more conducive to the realization of the rights of the child and which may be contained in:

(a) The law of a State party; or

(b) International law in force for that State.

PART II

Article 42

States Parties undertake to make the principles and provisions of the Convention widely known, by appropriate and active means, to adults and children alike.

Article 43

1. For the purpose of examining the progress made by States Parties in achieving the realization of the obligations undertaken in the present Convention, there shall be established a Committee on the Rights of the Child, which shall carry out the functions hereinafter provided.

2. The Committee shall consist of ten experts of high moral standing and recognized competence in the field covered by this Convention. The members of the Committee shall be elected by States Parties from among their nationals and shall serve in their personal capacity, consideration being given to equitable geographical distribution, as well as to the principal legal systems.

3. The members of the Committee shall be elected by secret ballot from a list of persons nominated by States Parties. Each State Party may nominate one person from among its own nationals.

4. The initial election to the Committee shall be held no later than six months after the date of the entry into force of the present Convention and thereafter every second year. At least four months before the date of each election, the Secretary-General of the United Nations shall address a letter to States Parties inviting them to submit their nominations within two months. The Secretary-General shall subsequently prepare a list in alphabetical order of all persons thus nominated, indicating States Parties which have nominated them, and shall submit it to the States Parties to the present Convention.

5. The elections shall be held at meetings of States Parties convened by the Secretary-General at United Nations Headquarters. At those meetings, for which two thirds of States Parties shall constitute a quorum, the persons elected to the Committee shall be those who obtain the largest number of votes and an absolute majority of the votes of the representatives of States Parties present and voting.

6. The members of the Committee shall be elected for a term of four years. They shall be eligible for re-election if renominated. The term of five of the members elected at the first election shall expire at the end of two years; immediately after the first election, the names of these five members shall be chosen by lot by the Chairman of the meeting.

7. If a member of the Committee dies or resigns or declares that for any other cause he or she can no longer perform the duties of the Committee, the State Party which nominated the member shall appoint another expert from among its nationals to serve for the remainder of the term, subject to the approval of the Committee.
8. The Committee shall establish its own rules of procedure.

9. The Committee shall elect its officers for a period of two years.

10. The meetings of the Committee shall normally be held at United Nations Headquarters or at any other convenient place as determined by the Committee. The Committee shall normally meet annually. The duration of the meetings of the Committee shall be determined, and reviewed, if necessary, by a meeting of the States Parties to the present Convention, subject to the approval of the General Assembly.

11. The Secretary-General of the United Nations shall provide the necessary staff and facilities for the effective performance of the functions of the Committee under the present Convention.

12. With the approval of the General Assembly, the members of the Committee established under the present Convention shall receive emoluments from United Nations resources on such terms and conditions as the Assembly may decide.

Article 44

1. States Parties undertake to submit to the Committee, through the Secretary-General of the United Nations, reports on the measures they have adopted which give effect to the rights recognized herein and on the progress made on the enjoyment of those rights

(a) Within two years of the entry into force of the Convention for the State Party concerned;

(b) Thereafter every five years.

2. Reports made under the present article shall indicate factors and difficulties, if any, affecting the degree of fulfilment of the obligations under the present Convention. Reports shall also contain sufficient information to provide the Committee with a comprehensive understanding of the implementation of the Convention in the country concerned.

3. A State Party which has submitted a comprehensive initial report to the Committee need not, in its subsequent reports submitted in accordance with paragraph 1 (b) of the present article, repeat basic information previously provided.

4. The Committee may request from States Parties further information relevant to the implementation of the Convention.

5. The Committee shall submit to the General Assembly, through the Economic and Social Council, every two years, reports on its activities.

6. States Parties shall make their reports widely available to the public in their own countries.

Article 45

In order to foster the effective implementation of the Convention and to encourage international cooperation in the field covered by the Convention:

(a) The specialized agencies, the United Nations Children's Fund, and other United Nations organs shall be entitled to be represented at the consideration of the implementation of such provisions of the present Convention as fall within the scope of their mandate. The Committee may invite the specialized agencies, the United Nations Children's Fund and other competent bodies as it may consider appropriate to provide expert advice on the implementation of the Convention in areas falling within the scope of their respective mandates. The Committee may invite the specialized agencies, the United Nations Children's Fund, and other United Nations organs to submit reports on the implementation of the Convention in areas falling within the scope of their activities;

(b) The Committee shall transmit, as it may consider appropriate, to the specialized agencies, the United Nations Children's Fund and other competent bodies, any reports from States Parties that contain a request, or indicate a need, for technical advice or assistance, along with the Committee's observations and suggestions, if any, on these requests or indications;

(c) The Committee may recommend to the General Assembly to request the Secretary-General to undertake on its behalf studies on specific issues relating to the rights of the child;

(d) The Committee may make suggestions and general recommendations based on information received pursuant to articles 44 and 45 of the present Convention. Such

suggestions and general recommendations shall be transmitted to any State Party concerned and reported to the General Assembly, together with comments, if any, from States Parties.

PART III

Article 46

The present Convention shall be open for signature by all States.

Article 47

The present Convention is subject to ratification. Instruments of ratification shall be deposited with the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

Article 48

The present Convention shall remain open for accession by any State. The instruments of accession shall be deposited with the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

Article 49

1. The present Convention shall enter into force on the thirtieth day following the date of deposit with the Secretary-General of the United Nations of the twentieth instrument of ratification or accession.

2. For each State ratifying or acceding to the Convention after the deposit of the twentieth instrument of ratification or accession, the Convention shall enter into force on the thirtieth day after the deposit by such State of its instrument of ratification or accession.

Article 50

1. Any State Party may propose an amendment and file it with the Secretary-General of the United Nations. The Secretary-General shall thereupon communicate the proposed amendment to States Parties, with a request that they indicate whether they favour a conference of States Parties for the purpose of considering and voting upon the proposals. In the event that, within four months from the date of such communication, at least one third of the States Parties favour such a conference, the Secretary-General shall convene the conference under the auspices of the United Nations. Any amendment adopted by a majority of States Parties present and voting at the conference shall be submitted to the General Assembly for approval.

2. An amendment adopted in accordance with paragraph 1 of the present article shall enter into force when it has been approved by the General Assembly of the United Nations and accepted by a two thirds majority of States Parties.

3. When an amendment enters into force, it shall be binding on those States Parties which have accepted it, other States Parties still being bound by the provisions of the present Convention and any earlier amendments which they have accepted.

Article 51

1. The Secretary-General of the United Nations shall receive and circulate to all States the text of reservations made by States at the time of ratification or accession.

2. A reservation incompatible with the object and purpose of the present Convention shall not be permitted.

3. Reservations may be withdrawn at any time by notification to that effect addressed to the

Secretary-General of the United Nations, who shall then inform all States. Such notification shall take effect on the date on which it is received by the Secretary-General.

Article 52

A State Party may denounce the present Convention by written notification to the Secretary-General of the United Nations. Denunciation becomes effective one year after the date of receipt of the notification by the Secretary-General.

Article 53

The Secretary-General of the United Nations is designated as the depositary of the present Convention.

Article 54

The original of the present Convention, of which the Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish texts are equally authentic, shall be deposited with the Secretary-General of the United Nations. IN WITNESS THEREOF the undersigned plenipotentiaries, being duly authorized thereto by their respective governments, have signed the present Convention.

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