

Lubya

Palestinian Village in Galilee
An Unforgettable Symphony

Mahmoud Issa

Forward

Ilan Pappé's critique of "Lubya was a village in Palestine" Memory-history-culture-identity

On March 10, 1948, the Jewish leadership in Palestine, after years of contemplation and preparations, decided to execute the ethnic cleansing of the local Arab population. Ever since its appearance in Palestine, in the late 19th century, the Zionist leadership asserted that the only way for a successful implementation of its wish to create a Jewish state in the land, depended on its ability to take over as much of Palestine as possible with as few Palestinians on it, as possible. The leadership waited for the opportune moment when the balance of power would enable it to carry out the Zionist program. The British decision to leave Palestine in February 1947 and the UN intervention in November that year as mediator provided that moment.

In front of such determination, the Palestinians were quite helpless. The local Palestinian society was almost leaderless since the Great Revolt of 1936-1939. Most of the leaders were exiled by the British and their place was taken by politicians from neighboring Arab states, whose rhetorical commitment, ever since 1945, to save the Palestinians from the impending ethnic cleansing did not match their actual policies.

Originally, the Jewish leaders planned to wait until the end of the Mandate (15 May, 1948), But, the growing global anxiety about the events on the ground raised the possibility of an international intervention that could have disrupted the Jewish plans. Hence, the leadership decided to begin the operations already in March 1948.

The country was divided to four areas and each Jewish military brigade had a list of villages or urban areas that were to be evicted. In most cases, the population was put to flight at gun point and after a heavy bombardment; in some cases a summary execution of few people was 'needed' to persuade the inhabitants to leave in few hours a place where they lived for hundreds of years and in more than thirty cases massacres were perpetrated in order to advance the uprooting of the population.

By the end of 1948, hundreds of Palestinian villages were emptied in such a manner. Their houses and lands expropriated by the new state of Israel. Bulldozers leveled the ground to make way for either a Jewish settlement quite often with a name resembling the destroyed Palestinian village (as was the case described in this book when Lubya became Lavi) or for the planting of a forest made out of European trees alien to the area and its natural fauna (as happened to part of the original Lubya that became the forest named the South Africa Forest).

As the years went by these details about the catastrophe were forgotten by the outside world, but memorized and safeguarded by the refugees and later by the PLO as its representative. The peace process that begun in earnest after 1967, however, ignored the Nakbah, its memory and its relevance for the future of both Israel and Palestine. The

occupation of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip brought with it more refugees, massacres and atrocities.

Although the historiographical picture of the 1948 Nakbah is far clearer today than it was ten years ago, it is still incomplete. There were three waves in the scholarly attempt to reconstruct the catastrophe. The first was in the 1960s when Palestinian historians out of their private collections and connections succeeded in drawing a picture that showed clearly that in that year the indigenous population of Palestine was uprooted by the Jewish forces during 1948. This reap had to compete with an Israeli narrative that included such mythologies as a Palestinian voluntary flight and depiction of Israel as a David fighting a Palestinian Goliath.

The second wave emerged in the 1990s. Professional academic historians both on the Israeli side (the 'New historians') and on the Palestinian side used the newly declassified archival material in Israel, Britain and the UN, to validate many of the claims made by the early generation of Palestinian historians and invalidate the Israeli propagandist perspective on the war. The archival documents revealed that the Palestinian community was almost leaderless and unaware of the coming catastrophe and that the Jewish leadership was systematically preparing for a vast ethnic cleansing operation.

But questions remained opened. The documents were mostly Israeli and not always reliable. The collective memory of Palestinians, carried out throughout the generations, painted a harsher reality than the one reconstructed by the professional historians. It was clear that in many cases the written documents concealed more than they revealed.

This is when in the second half of the 1990s a third wave emerged. It had two main characteristics of which this work is a fine example: first a tendency developed to go back to micro-histories as part of an overall effort to reconstruct painstakingly the big picture and secondly, oral history became an important tool in the hands of these historians. It was such a combination that enabled Teddy Katz to reveal the massacre in Tantura in 1948 and encouraged others to reveal in full details what happened in places such Al-Dawayyme, Ein Zietun, Sasa and others locations where massacres took place.

The fusion of micro history and oral history was used therefore for exposing the brutal face of the 1948 ethnic cleansing. But more importantly it enabled historians to reconstruct the kind of life that was interrupted by the catastrophe. This is for me the most powerful aspect of this book: the sense of the catastrophe is reinforced here not just by the description of the actual expulsion, but by the abrupt termination of normality that came with it. It is so clear that the Lubyans were traumatized for life, not just by the loss, but also by the way it happened. And this is just one story out of hundreds of similar stories.

The thick description of both the rural reality and the way it was destroyed have to become public knowledge. The total denial in Israel and in the West of the catastrophe

and the subsequent Israeli refusal to admit its responsibility for the ethnic cleansing had affected the history of peace making in Palestine. The denial informed the Israeli, the American and the Western positions on the most important aspect of a prospective solution: the Palestinian right of return. This right was internationally recognized in 1948 by the UN but nonetheless was ignored by the peace makers in the conflict. It is only through deep historical knowledge – on a micro historical level, as it is done here and on a macro historical level as is done elsewhere – that this right can be understood, respected and eventually validated. Without such a process there will never be peace in Israel and Palestine.

The incredible work done by Mahmoud Issa, a son of the large Lubya community of refugees, is a landmark in this third wave of historiographical reconstruction. Issa's book is more than just a research: it is a personal journey into the past, beginning in the present for the sake of a different future. It is only with the power of those who still remember – such as his parents – and those who do not wish to forget – such as himself – that we can understand why the evil against the Palestinians has not ceased for one day ever since 1948. It is only through this insistence of knowing what happened to Lubya in 1948 and to the Lubyans ever since, that one can hope one day to advance the chance of peace and reconciliation in Palestine and Israel. By knowing what happened we provide an alternative explanation to the conflict raging in Palestine and to the successive failures to solve it. The western media and politics still accept the Israeli representation of the conflict as a process begun in 1967 and its solution as a compromise over the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. While what this book makes abundantly clear that the key for understanding the conflict and its prospective solutions lie elsewhere. The root of the conflict is the Nakbah of 1948 and the key to its solution is an Israeli acknowledgment of its responsibility for the ethnic cleansing that should lead to an international recognition of the right of the Palestinians to return to their homeland and to be compensated for their losses throughout the years.

Preface

Numerous people have contributed enormously to bring to fruition this research project about the Palestinian village of Lubya. The Danish Research Committee for Humanities (SHR) provided support for one and a half years of research in Israel, Palestine, and collection of documentary evidence in London and in Jerusalem. The Danish Institute of Damascus provided support for nine months of research in Lebanon and Syria. Without the generous help of these two institutions, this research project and the entire interview process would have been extremely difficult.

Direct support from the Danish Refugee Council-Information Department allowed me to expand the research to cover Lubyans residing in Denmark. I would like to express my special gratitude to the Department for providing me with every facility to produce this work.

Many people generously extended time and a place to stay while I conducted research in Israel, Palestine, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, Germany, Sweden, Denmark and Britain. The list of the hundreds of people to whom I am grateful is too long to mention, however, many of these people are mentioned in the interviews in this book. I am extremely thankful to all these people for their warm welcome, Arab generosity and the many hours of time they contributed to this project, despite the hardships and anxieties of past tragedies evoked by the interviews.

I would like to especially recognize those individuals who have subsequently passed away before they had the occasion to see their own history of Lubya in print. Only a Danish version of the book is printed by Tiderne Skifter, Copenhagen, in 2005. In short, this book is their book. It is their accounts, their memories, and their dreams. It is their history. My role has only been to present, arrange, and knit together these monumental memories. These 'unknown people' – who lived and died unnoticed by the larger world – are the souls, flesh and bones, the essence of our modern identity and hope, even as they died in exile deprived of a minimum level of their human, personal, legal, and historic rights.

In 2014, approx.- 40.000 people from mandate Palestine gathered in Lubya to protest against the injustice done to the Palestinian refugees and their uprooting from their homes and fields since the Nakba in 1948, where 2/3 of Palestinians were expelled, in one of the biggest ethnic cleansing operation after WW11. After 68 years, still half of the 12 million Palestinians are still refugees.

Last year, on the first of May 2015, a group of South African Jews, together with Palestinians from Scandinavia, and People from Zochorot demonstrated in Lubya to protest against the naming of South African Forest on the debris of the demolished village of Lubya: an act that is intended to cover the crimes committed against the people of Lubya and to bury the witnesses of the past under a huge green forest that bears the name of South African Forest.

Thomas Thompson, in a word following this preface, wrote about the historiography of Lubya from the bronze age up to date, presenting the village Lubya as “ a looking glass, through which we might glimpse the historical associations which once existed in Palestine from a subaltern perspective”,. Thomas will use Lubya as an example in an international project that is based at Copenhagen University: “Palestine History and Heritage”, which aims to produce evidence based critical historical texts and materials related to Palestine and its regions from prehistoric times to the present , in an inclusive effort to describe the complex multi-cultural, religious, ethnic and linguistic traditions reflected through Palestine’s long history. For more info see homepage: <http://teol.ku.dk/Pahh> or <http://mahmoud.dk>.

Special thanks to my parents who accepted with reluctance my stubborn insistence to undergo the painful journey to show me our village and the ruins of our home, 46 years after they were uprooted from Lubya. Without their courageous visit to Lubya with me in 1995, documented by Danish Radio (Den Faedrene Jord), millions of Danes who subsequently saw the documentary film would know nothing about this tiny Palestinian village and its exiled people.

Many people have given their own insightful notes in editing the material. Jorgen Baek Simonson, Ellen Khoury, Michel Irving, Karma Nabulsi, Illan Pappé, Efrat Ben Ze’ev, and Terry Rempel figured highly throughout this project. I would like to express my deep thanks especially to Terry for his suggestions, critical notes on thematic arrangements and careful editing.

Finally, a word for my family, Lis and my three daughters, Luma, Yara, and Fida, accepted my absence from home for several months at a time during long stints that I spent conducting interviews abroad. To them I would like to say thanks for your patience and your understanding.

Mahmoud Issa
Copenhagen

Thomas Thompson

Lubya: Investigating Palestine's Subaltern Heritage

In structuring this theoretical and methodological framework, we wish to describe an inclusive and critical history of the landscape of eastern Lower Galilee as a representative model for the small-region oriented Palestine History and Heritage project. Lubya/ Lavi (Pal. Coord.: 1905.2424), consists today of the remains of a Palestinian village, destroyed in 1948. Some three thousand Palestinians were expelled. This process of depopulation, destruction and dispossession has not succeeded, however, in wiping out the memory of this village and its surroundings. Today, it provides us with a microcosm for the some 600 other demolished villages from mandate Palestine, which have left some 5.5 million refugees today.

The village functions as a looking glass, through which we might glimpse the historical associations which once existed in Palestine from a subaltern perspective. As we understand it, this village, but one of many within the greater landscape of the Galilee, emerges as a palimpsest in which a mosaic of prehistoric, ancient and more recent Palestinian remains visibly mix with contemporary and twentieth century Israeli architecture.

Lubya lay in the Eastern Lower Galilee, midway between the towns of Nazareth—with remains going back to the late 1st or early second century CE—and Tiberias, which, before its destruction in 1948, had hosted a rich and integrated Jewish, Christian and Muslim cultural and literary center of considerable importance and great antiquity. The 1948 town of Tiberias was founded in the Roman period by Herod Antipas (18-22 CE), when it was given its function as the financial center of the Galilee. A yet more ancient town was found on Tall al-'Ureima, one of the largest Bronze Age sites in Palestine (2009.2528),

Lubya's fields lie just South of Qarn Hittin and the Wadi al-Amud in the Lower Galilee, a densely settled area, rich in antiquities, especially from the Bronze Ages (e.g., Qarn Hittin: 1933.2450, near the battlefield on which Saladdin decisively defeated the Crusaders in 1187 CE). At the end of the fifteenth century, Tiberias became a city of refuge for Jewish survivors of the Spanish Inquisition. This led both to the development of the town's silk industry and its role as a trade center between the Hijaz and Damascus. Many yet more ancient sites mark the countryside, among which might be considered are the rich Paleolithic remains, which were found in a cave above the Wadi al-Amud, including the skull of "Palestine Man" (since 1948, renamed "Galilee Man"), the earliest of a homonin found in Western Asia and now in the Rockefeller (formerly Palestine) Museum. A number of rich Middle and Late Bronze Age sites under the influence of the patronage kingdom of Hasura/ Hazor were Syrian in both economic orientation and

culture. Bronze Age Hasura was in conflict with the patronate of Anaharet to the South, as well as that of Shechem, dominating the central highlands. This region reflects the considerable political, economic and demographic continuities between the Bronze and early Iron Ages. The cultural and language associations of the Eastern lower Galilee linked this small sub-region to the great sites of Hazor, Dan and, eventually, Damascus, until the region came under direct Assyrian imperial control in the late 8th century.

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Introduction

*To be free is not merely to cast off one's chains,
But to live in a way that respects and enhances the freedom of others.*
Nelson Mandela

After I sailed for many years through the stormy oceans of Joseph Conrad's fiction, I found that the time was ripe to alight on my own piece of land, the place where I should have been born and brought up half a century ago – namely, my parents' village of Lubya located in northern Palestine, nowadays Israel.¹

The idea to research the history of this little Palestinian village began to stir in me long ago while I was still living in a refugee camp in Lebanon. My parents and thousands of others arrived at Wavel refugee camp in the Lebanese city of Baalbek in the Beqaa valley in 1948 seeking safe refuge from the war in Palestine. Despite the extreme winter cold, we decided to live in one of the tents provided by the Red Cross. At the time we thought that we would soon return to Lubya. My father's first wife, their son, and many other refugee children died that year.

Year after year the United Nations affirmed the right of Palestinian refugees to return to their homeland and year after year the exile dragged on.² Protests and petitions were of no avail. As a child born in a refugee camp I soon began to pose questions. Why are we refugees? Why is everything so temporary? Why does father refuse to buy things for our house, like a refrigerator, television or washing machine? Why don't we have the same rights as the people we live among, such as the right to work and the right to a nationality? Why are we treated so differently even though we speak the same language and share a common history? Where do we come from?

By the time I was seventeen I had been expelled from several Arab countries and briefly imprisoned simply because I had publicly declared my loyalty to my homeland – Palestine – and my desire and right to go home to my village of Lubya. After years of exile in seven different countries, I finally landed in Denmark, thousands of miles away from Palestine. As a refugee in a foreign country I was constantly faced with the

¹ Joseph Conrad's fiction was the subject of my PhD in English Literature from the Faculty of Humanities, Copenhagen University (1993). The thesis, "Involvement and Detachment in Joseph Conrad's Fiction," was later published as a book. Mahmoud Issa, *Involvement and Detachment in Joseph Conrad's Fiction*. Copenhagen: Regnbue Publishing House, 1995.

² See, UNGA Resolution 194(III), 11 December 1948. Paragraph 11 "*Resolves* that the refugees wishing to return to their homes and live at peace with their neighbours should be permitted to do so at the earliest practicable date, and that compensation should be paid for the property of those choosing not to return and for loss of or damage to property which, under principles of international law or in equity, should be made good by the Governments or authorities responsible; [and] Instructs the Conciliation Commission to facilitate the repatriation, resettlement and economic and social rehabilitation of the refugees and the payment of compensation"

question: Where do you come from? The answer – Palestine or Lubya – was never sufficient.

It was all these questions, together with the stories about Lubya recounted by my family, the discriminatory policies of the Lebanese authorities towards Palestinian refugees, and my life of forced displacement from one country to another that finally motivated me to visit Lubya. That first visit to Lubya in 1994 only became possible after I had obtained Danish citizenship. Unlike my refugee documents, however, my new passport did not list my place of origin. To the Danish authorities Lubya had ceased to exist. Nevertheless, my Danish passport enabled me finally to visit my homeland, if only as a tourist.

My first visit to Lubya was followed by a second visit one year later during which my parents and a Danish Radio film crew accompanied me in order to produce a documentary about Lubya's history. The documentary, *Den Faedrene Jord* (The Ancestors' Land), was later broadcast on Danish television.³ A working paper about Palestinian refugees from Lubya now residing in Denmark followed.⁴ These two encounters, the general lack of information about Lubya, and my own thirst for knowledge about my village compelled me to embark on a journey to uncover Lubya's buried history. Need, as they say, is the mother of invention.

Local history

Some three thousand Palestinians lived in the village of Lubya before their expulsion in 1948. Some of the inhabitants of Lubya found refuge in neighbouring villages and cities now located inside Israel. The majority, like my family, were uprooted and dispersed across the borders of their homeland. Today, there are an estimated forty thousand refugees from Lubya residing in forced exile in as many as twenty-three countries around the world.

Hundreds of books have been written about the Palestinian people and the catastrophe (*Nakba*) that befell them in 1948. With few exceptions, however, the voices of those Palestinians who lived and continue to live this history are largely absent. This was by and large true for my village of Lubya. The individual stories of the men, women, children, and the elderly who were forced to leave their homes in search of safety, as millions of people have done throughout the many wars and civil conflicts of the past century, were simply buried beneath Israel's victorious historical narrative.

For the Zionist movement, which aimed to establish an exclusive Jewish state, Palestine was 'blank piece of paper' on which the movement would inscribe its own exclusive history. Palestinian refugees and their villages were of little interest, apart from the fact that they complicated Zionist claims to the land. Commenting on the fate of the nearly

³ *Den Faedrene Jord* (The Ancestors' Land), 31 March 1995. A copy of the documentary may be obtained through Danish Radio. Danish Radio, TV-byen, 2860 Søborg. E-mail: dr@dr.dk.

⁴ Mahmoud Issa, "Dreams and Realities, Palestinians from Lubya in Denmark," Copenhagen: Danish Refugee Council, 1995.

one million Palestinian Arab refugees, the Israeli Foreign Ministry observed that “the most adaptable and best survivors would ‘manage’ by a process of natural selection and others will waste away. Some will die but most will turn into human debris and social outcasts and probably join the poorest classes in the Arab countries.”⁵

Following the depopulation and destruction of hundreds of Palestinian villages, the newly-founded state of Israel began construction of new Jewish settlements on the lands of these villages. In the case of Lubya, Israel established a settlement called Lavi. A second settlement named Giv’at Avni was built on the eastern side of the village in 1992-93. The Jewish National Fund (JNF), with support from the Women’s Zionist Organization of South Africa, subsequently planted a pine forest on the remains of Lubya and named it ‘The Forest of the Republic of South Africa.’ Lubyans, like all other Palestinian refugees and internally displaced persons, were not permitted to return to their village and repossess their lands.

This process of depopulation, destruction and dispossession, however, has not succeeded to wipe out the memory of this little Palestinian village. For those Palestinians who were born in Lubya and for their children and grandchildren, most of whom have never seen this place called Lubya, the village remains alive through the stories passed down from generation to generation. This is true for the more than five and a half million Palestinian refugees and displaced persons who were uprooted from their villages and cities in Palestine over five decades ago. Their historical narrative is not intended to silence those who drove them into exile, but rather to decode more than five decades of denial, marginalization and negation.

Too often, the only remedy for the powerless, the displaced and the exiled is the power of memory, the unfettered effort to repossess their own images of the past through various oral traditions – to remember, to register, to recount, to sing, to draw, and to dance. The individual stories of men, women and children, what I refer to as local history, thus plays a fundamental role in preserving, reconstructing and reinterpreting the history of forgotten or marginalized peoples in different corners of the world. ‘Localism’, with its specific culture, traditions, and lively social networks, still stands as a locus for millions of people deprived not only of their human dignity and basic human rights, but also deprived of the opportunity to narrate their own historical experiences.

When I visited South Africa in November 2003 I discovered that Mr. Ronnie Kasrils, Minister of Water Affairs and Forestry in the African National Congress (ANC) government, and a South African Jew, had planted a tree in memory of my village Lubya in the city of Pretoria.⁶ The memorial reads as follows:

⁵ Middle East Information, *The Problem of Arab Refugees*, State Archives, Foreign Ministry, Refugees, 2444/19 cited in Tom Segev, *1949: The First Israelis*. New York: The Free Press, 1998, p. 30.

⁶ The memorial tree was planted in 2000 in response to an official protest to the Deputy Minister, Department of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Aziz Pahad, by Uri Davis, an Israeli researcher, and Iqbal Jassat, Chairman of the Media Review Network in South Africa. On 23 August 2002, Iqbal Jassat wrote a letter to Deputy Minister Pahad concerning the abuse of the name South Africa by the Zionist organizations involved. The letter stated, in part: “Given the information detailed in the Eyewitness Report of Uri Davis,

LUBYA

Dedicated by the Honourable Minister

Ronnie Kasrils

(Minister of Water Affairs and Forestry)

to the Palestinian village of LUBYA upon whose ruins a forest was built where cows were permitted to graze but the displaced occupants are not allowed to return.

The simple act of a South African minister planting a tree with a plaque reinstating the original name of this little Palestinian village is part of the process of undoing the injustices that befell Lubya and the hundreds of other Palestinian villages that were depopulated in 1948 and later destroyed. Just as South Africans were able to chart a path towards reconciliation only after exhuming the horrors of apartheid, reconciliation cannot come about between Palestinians and Israeli Jews as long as the debris of lives and homes lie hidden beneath places like the South African Forest. Equality, non-discrimination, and respect for basic rights, including the right of refugees and displaced persons to return to their homes and properties provide the foundation for reconciliation.

While this book does not address the ongoing tragedy of all Palestinian refugees, in many ways, the experiences of refugees from the village of Lubya mirror the experiences of Palestinian refugees from the other 531 Palestinian villages and localities depopulated in 1948.⁷ I have chosen to give those refugees from my home village of Lubya an opportunity to narrate their own historical experiences. It is their lively stories and vivid images, their unfailing dreams and still fresh if sometimes fragile memories that reveal the indigenous face of this particular village and transform the overgrown ruins into a specific geographic and human place.

Uncovering Lubya

My relationship to Palestinians, both personal and public, arose from my work within the Palestinian trade union movement and other institutions. This work gave me the

notably the apparent complicity of the Jewish National Fund, the friends of the JNF and the Women's Zionist Organization of South Africa with the cover-up of the ethnic cleansing of the 1948 Palestine refugees and related war crimes, should the JNF, the friends of the JNF and the Women's Zionist Organization of South Africa be declared illegal organizations acting in violation of the Constitution of the new South Africa and be ordered to disband?" I also saw that in addition to Lubya's tree there were trees dedicated to the destroyed Palestinian villages of Tantoura and Dayr Yasin, both sites of massacres during the 1948 war in Palestine.

⁷ For a list of the Palestinian villages depopulated in 1948 see, S.H. Abu Sitta, *The Palestinian Nakba 1948, The Register of Depopulated Localities in Palestine*. London: The Palestinian Return Centre, 2000. For a description of the life in each village, the circumstances of its depopulation and the status of the village lands today see, *All That Remains: The Palestinian Villages Occupied and Depopulated by Israel in 1948*. Walid Khalidi (ed.). Washington, DC: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1992. Also see, www.palestineremembered.com, which includes a special page on Lubya (www.palestineremembered.com/Tiberias/Lubya/index.html). Many Lubyans in exile communicate through this website where they can also contribute photos and comments.

opportunity to be in daily contact with Lubyans all over the world. My Palestinian origin, my involvement in the Palestinian cause, and my long stay in Europe, provided me with a dual vision placing me between the oriental culture in which I was born and brought up in, and the western one in which I have lived for the past twenty years.

My knowledge of, and contact with those Lubyans who remained in Israel, as well as with several of the Israeli Jews who occupied Lubya in 1948 could be considered as my 'first contacts' with my new field of study. These contacts along with my first visit to Lubya in 1994 also opened new horizons and understandings. When asked by a journalist about how I felt standing in Lubya for the first time, I answered: "It is as if I was born in and lived in an airplane and I have landed for the first time."

It took me almost five years to assemble this piece of ethnography. When I started, I did not have any written documentation or texts about Lubya. As I met with Lubyans in various places of exile, however, I began to uncover a number of interesting collections about life in the village written by Lubyans themselves. These included a small booklet written by Ibrahim Shihabi⁸, the diary of Muhammad Khalil (Abu Isam)⁹, and the genealogical trees of the Samadi, Kilani, 'Atwat, and Shihabi families (These are reproduced in Appendix II). Other documents uncovered during the research process included photos, marriage papers, deeds and titles of land, and personal letters. These provided a rich source of information, which helped me in reconstructing life in Lubya before and after 1948.

The Israeli State Archives in Jerusalem, the Central Zionist Archives in Jerusalem, and the *Haganah* Archives in Tel Aviv (the *Haganah* was Israel's pre-state militia), also proved to be a source of information about Lubya. Archival documents included land registration papers, correspondence between *makhateer* (appointed village leaders) and the Jewish Colonization Association (JCA), and hundreds of letters exchanged between the JCA and the British Land Commissioner concerning registration of land in Lubya. Recently released documents from the 1940s and 1950s revealed vital information concerning the history of Lubya, including, for the first time, accounts by Jewish officers and soldiers who participated in the occupation of Lubya in 1948.

British Mandate documents provided statistical data gathered in two national surveys of Palestine in 1922 and 1931. The 1931 census was updated annually until 1946. British archives also included petitions from Lubyans to the JCA, documents on the establishment of a local council, as well as reports on health standards in the village. This information was not available from any other source. While I was doing research in the British Archives Department, the Public Records Office in the Kew, the Oxford Library, St. Anthony's College, and the House of Commons Archives, I could not find any trace of land registration documents. Copies of these documents are dispersed in different

⁸ The book was originally published in 1954 and subsequently republished in 1994 by Birzeit University. Ibrahim Shihabi, *Qaryat Lubya* [The Village of Lubya]. Bir Zeit: Bir Zeit University, 1994.

⁹ Muhammad Khalil passed away before I had an opportunity to get to come to know him. Years later, however, I was introduced to his wife, Um Isam, and his sons who are living in Nazareth. I am grateful to the family for allowing me to use Abu Isam's diary for my research.

Israeli archives and other relevant institutions in Nazareth, Jerusalem, and Tel Aviv. Land documents are also available at the UN Archives in New York.¹⁰

I also conducted around 700 interviews with Lubyans living in various places of exile. In a case like Lubya, every old man and woman is a lost library. In addition to eight months of work among Lubyans in Denmark, I spent fourteen months living as a participant-observer among Lubyans in Israel and Jordan, and later on, an additional nine months in Syria, Lebanon, Gaza and the West Bank. I also conducted a number of interviews with Jewish Israelis including several interviews with two retired officers who participated in the military offensive against Lubya in 1948.

Innovative and diverse approaches were necessary to cope with the widespread net of Lubyans, from Gaza and Ramallah in the Palestinian self-rule areas, to Dayr Hanna, Nazareth, Um al-Fahm, and al-Makr in Israel, from Irbid and 'Amman in Jordan, Wavel camp, 'Ayn al-Hilwe, Bourj al-Shamali, and Bourj al-Barajni in Lebanon, to Lubyans in Berlin, Denmark and Sweden. Although there is a pattern of a common historical narrative and plight that traverses this wide spectrum, the responses to the interview questions were at times as different as the places in which the respondents live.

Different psychological factors, such as fear and insecurity, played a vital role in the narrative. Exile and life as refugees has left a heavy toll on Lubyans in terms of oppression and marginalisation, both in their private and public lives. These feelings complicated the interview process. An interview with a Palestinian refugee, who visited Lubya in 1994, for example, resulted in him being barred from ever returning. Only when assured of anonymity, would the interviewee start to speak, and only a few consented to their full name being given. This was not a problem for the Israeli officers. They spoke with confidence and without reservation.

Oral history as a methodology for uncovering the past has its own shortcomings. Nevertheless, there are ways to avoid memory lapses such as forgotten names, dates and events. In the case of Lubya, comparing the responses of the various interviewees to the same question about the same event, and the availability of written documents from British, Israeli and Palestinian sources among others, served to clarify and bring out the 'reality', bearing in mind that 'pure facts' do not exist. Documents, literature and data are, therefore, when available, the main source of reference, supported by interviews conducted with Lubyans who witnessed the events personally.

Despite the well-known shortcomings of oral history, it is the only means available today to reconstruct the history of Lubya from the perspective of the villagers themselves. Refugees from Lubya, like other Palestinian refugees, left few written documents behind. None of the inhabitants of village foresaw what their future held in store for them. More than fifteen old men and women from Lubya whom I interviewed in the last five years

¹⁰ For an overview see, e.g., Michael Fischbach, *Records of Dispossession, Palestinian Refugee Property and the Arab-Israeli Conflict*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2003.

have now passed away. Without their record and words, part of our modern history would be lost. Much is already lost.

In the end, and in the literal sense of the word, there was not a stone in Lubya that was not turned over to recover the hidden stories of this once lively village that is now buried beneath the South African Forest. This book draws upon only a small portion of the more than one thousand pages of interviews, photos, and documents that I collected. The whole collection of pictures, original recorded tapes, video films, maps, more than one thousand related papers and interviews in this manuscript, and the Danish Radio documentary film about Lubya, will be available at the Carsten Niebuhr Institute (CNI) and the Danish Refugee Council in Copenhagen. Most of the material will be included in an exhibition about Lubya in 2006 and hopefully, when it comes into being, in the Palestine National Museum.

Chapter One provides a general overview of memory in the lives of elderly Lubyans. *Chapter Two* traces the origins of the different families and tribes in the village. The *third chapter* examines the landscape and places in Lubya as remembered by Lubyans themselves. *Chapter Four* describes some aspects of everyday life in the village, including education, harvest, local disputes and wedding celebrations. The *fifth chapter* elaborates on relations between Lubya, neighbouring Arab villages and Jewish settlements, as well as with British mandate authorities. The *sixth chapter* examines the role of land in the conflict. *Chapter Seven* looks at the role of Lubyans in the 1936-39 uprising. This is followed by stories of Lubyans about 1948 – i.e., the *Nakba* – in *Chapter Eight*. *Chapter Nine* looks at life in exile and in the final chapter, *Chapter Ten*, Lubyans reflect about their ongoing attachment to their home village, the future and the possibility of return.

Chapter One

The Archaeology of Memory

The struggle of people against power is the struggle of memory against forgetting.
Milan Kundera

Before his death in 1989, Muhammad Khalil (Abu Isam) recited to his son several pages of information about the history of Lubya. As far as I know, Abu Isam, who was a teacher in Lubya and a director of schools in ‘Illut and Nazareth, is the only Lubyans of the elderly generation who kept a diary about life in the village. Two small booklets about the village were later published by Lubyans Ibrahim Shihabi and Yousef Abu Dhais. Both are now residing in Syria. Nothing could hold back the lively memories of the early years these men spent in Lubya.

Today, men and women in their sixties, seventies, and eighties still reminisce about the past, both for their own sake as well as that of their children who still pass on, more or less accurately, those same stories and traditions to their own daughters and sons. While the image of this little Palestinian village may be somewhat “ambiguous, contradictory ... multiform and strangely composite,”¹¹ in the minds of the young generation, that is not the case for those who were born and grew up in Lubya before its depopulation and destruction in 1948.

Reminiscences, eyewitness accounts, and collective historiography based on lore and tradition have become the primary source of inspiration for the elderly and the cornerstone of identity for the young generation of Lubyans. For teenagers, the middle-aged and the elderly alike, Lubya is a subconscious point of reference, a cultural framework, and a past and present mental image that continues to shape, inspire and impact their personal lives. Recollection of historical incidents dating back hundreds of years gives an indication of the social continuity that underlies the village's history.

Even for those Israeli Jews who participated in the military operations against Lubya in 1948, like Izra Lavi and Nahom Abbo, the memory of Lubya has not faded, laying concealed barely below the surface of their present lives. These memories have also become part of the history of this little village. More than fifty years on, the depopulation of Lubya, the razing of it to the ground, and the subsequent construction of several new Jewish settlements in its place have not succeeded to erase the life of this Palestinian village.

¹¹Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*. Quintin Hoare & Geoffrey Nowell Smith (eds.). New York: International Publishers, 1971, pp. 324 and 423; *Selections from Cultural Writings*. David Forgacs & Geoffrey Nowell Smith (eds.). London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1985, p. 189, cited in Ted Swedenberg, *Memories of Revolt, the 1936-39 Rebellion and the Palestinian National Past*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995, p. 27.

Memorial landmarks

Throughout more than five decades of exile, Palestinian refugees have struggled to revive, reshape, and retain the past through re-establishing social relations and networks, recreating cultural life, recounting the history of their places of origin through anecdotal stories, and passing on songs, proverbs and jokes from one generation to the other.

Abu Sameh al-Samadi¹², who lives in Yarmouk refugee camp¹³ near the city of Damascus, is one of them. I remember meeting Abu Sameh for the first time as a young boy during a visit to Damascus with my father. Abu Sameh obtained his high school degree when he was over fifty years old. He has managed to assemble a private library that fills the walls of three rooms in his house. The library includes old Arabic manuscripts that recount different historical events that took place in and around Lubya. Today, many researchers looking for documents about Arab and Islamic history visit his personal library. Less than one hour after entering his home, all the relevant books that mentioned Lubya, directly or indirectly, were piled up in front of me. Both Abu Sameh's memory and his library were an invaluable source for verifying details of Lubya's history.

While I was in Yarmouk camp, Abu Sameh suggested I make a visit to another elderly Lubyan who was also known for his sharp memory. Fifty years after he saw Lubya for the last time, Haj Muhammad Samir Karzoun (Abu Mahmoud)¹⁴, who was a shoemaker (*kundarji*) in the village, woke up one night and started drawing Lubya on a piece of paper until he had drawn all of its houses and marked down the names of its inhabitants. Abu Mahmoud showed me his map of the village during my visit. He talked for hours, describing every household and plot of land. At the end of the interview he said to me: "Excuse me if I have missed two or three names which I am not quite sure about, but I will write them in the new version of the map." When I gave him an old aerial photograph of Lubya before its destruction he held it as he would his own child and silently wept and kissed it. As he placed it beside the map he had drawn, it was very difficult to distinguish between the 'imagined' Lubya he had drawn from memory after fifty years and the real one.

In Burj al-Shamali camp¹⁵ in Lebanon one can meet two or three families from Lubya every hundred metres. I visited the camp in early 1999 to conduct a number of interviews. Not long after I had arrived I was surrounded by young people who had come to meet me. All of them seemed to know me. They had heard about the research and a few of them had already seen *The Ancestors' Land*, the documentary about Lubya. During my

¹² Abu Sameh al-Samadi was born in 1926. The interview with Abu Sameh al-Samadi was conducted on 25 November 1989 in Yarmouk refugee camp in Damascus.

¹³ Yarmouk refugee camp was established in 1957. It lies 8 kilometres from the centre of Damascus and is inside the city boundaries. The camp is home to the largest Palestine refugee community in Syria. On 30 June 2002, there were 112,550 registered refugees.

¹⁴ Haj Muhammad Samir Karzoun (Abu Mahmoud) was born in 1928. The interview with Abu Mahmoud was conducted on 26 November 1998 in Yarmouk refugee camp in Damascus. A second interview was conducted one year later in 1999.

¹⁵ Burj al-Shamali camp is located 3 km east of Tyre in south Lebanon. The camp was established in 1948. On 30 June 2002, there were 18,134 registered refugees living in the camp.

visit I met a shopkeeper named Muhammad Thyab who was born and grew up in Lubya where he also had a small shop. He showed me a copy of his loan book from his shop in Lubya, which he has kept until this day, hoping to be paid for the goods he sold on credit more than fifty years ago. When I showed a copy of the book to a few Lubyans now residing in Damascus, they became angry and denied that they owed any money to Muhammad Thyab. Fayiz al-Fawaz (Abu Majid)¹⁶, one of the Lubyans from Yarmouk camp in Syria, insisted on opening the file. “Those people must not forget their past when they were poor,” he said. “Even after fifty years they should give back the money.”

I knew Abu Majid when I was a child living in the camp in Lebanon. Once he came from Syria illegally to say hello to my uncle. He jumped over the wall of the camp so as to flee the Lebanese *mukhabarat* (intelligence) as it was forbidden for Palestinian refugees living in Lebanon and Syria to visit one another without prior permission from the government intelligence offices. From that time on I was fascinated by Abu Majid's accounts, and the way he told his stories. Abu Majid recounted to me, as if by rote, all the historical events that took place in Lubya over the past 200 years. He remembered the first inhabitants of the village and those who followed, as well as all that happened in and around Lubya. He talked for hours, and when I had run out of tape cassettes, he said to me: “If you are tired now you are welcome to come back tomorrow.” More than twelve hours of taping over a two-week period had not tired him out. The people who come to listen to Abu Majid highly enjoy the emotional way in which he recounts the history of the village. His narrative is often interspersed with singing and many entertaining episodes from the lives of the people of the village.

Historical events in Lubya

I was also amazed to realize while interviewing elderly Lubyans, that certain historical events are enthusiastically recounted as part of their own personal heritage. It often seemed to me as I sat listening to Lubyans recount stories of life in exile after the *Nakba* in 1948 that the more hardships one faced the more one needed to search for one's roots.

The five main historical events that elderly Lubyans most vividly remember and most often recount are the battle of Hittin in 1187, Lubya as the birthplace of the famous Muslim scholar Abu Bakr al-Lubyani, the death of Damascus Governor Suleiman Pasha in 1743, Napoleon's march to 'Akka (Acre) in 1799, and the role of Khalil Ibrahim Azzam, an officer from Lubya, in the battle against Napoleon.

The name Lubya appears as early as the Middle Ages as the battlefield where the European Crusaders were defeated on 4 July 1187. Although named after the heights of Hittin, the actual battle was fought on the land of Lubya. After this decisive battle, other

¹⁶ Fayiz al-Fawaz (Abu Majid) was born in 1925. Interviews were conducted on 6 February and 8 October 1998 in Yarmouk refugee camp in Damascus, Syria. During the first interview six other Lubyans participated by correcting, adding and sometimes contradicting Abu Majid's views. The intervention of *Sheikh* Mahmoud Samadi, an Islamic writer and researcher in both Palestinian and Syrian circles, was very useful in fixing the dates of incidents, the location of places, and the names of prominent personalities who played a fundamental role in shaping the modern history of the village and its surroundings.

cities fell to the Muslim forces, one after the other, including Jerusalem, which fell on Friday, 2 October 1187.

Salah al-Din, the Kurdish Muslim leader who defeated the Crusaders, established his headquarters south of Lubya in the village of Kufr Sabt where he could clearly observe the battle. During the battle, the Crusaders attempted to reach the large reservoirs in the villages of Tur'an and Lubya, but found them empty. Lubya was well-known as a natural source of water as was nearby Hittin. Following a fierce battle and no access to water the Crusaders were forced to surrender.

The famous Arab historian Ibn al-Athir (1160-1232/555-630 *hijri*¹⁷) described the battle as follows: "Those who saw the dead thought that there were no prisoners, and those who saw the prisoners thought that there was no one killed".¹⁸ *Damya* (*dam* in Arabic means blood), one of the famous fields of Lubya, is said to have derived its name from the blood, which flooded the field during the battle.¹⁹

Abu Isam's diary describing life in the village, provided yet another geographical and historical reference to the battle Salah al-Din fought on Lubya's land.

North of Lubya is a land called al-Rik where the battle between Salah ad-Din and the Crusaders took place. This is what was written by Hilal Ibn Shaddad in his book *Tarikh Salah al-Din* (The History of Salah al-Din). Hilal accompanied Salah ad-Din on all his battles. In the battle of Hittin, he wrote in detail about the tactics employed by Salah ad-Din, including how cutting off the water supply from the springs of Hittin played a fundamental role in the victory, because the army of the Crusaders was thirsty and the weather was hot. Among the prisoners was Arnaud, leader of the castle at al-Karak [located today in Jordan]. Arnaud used to harass the pilgrims, and once imprisoned the sister of Salah al-Din. For this reason Salah al-Din killed him, refusing him the mercy he granted to other imprisoned leaders.

Abu Bakr Abdel-Rahman Bin Rahhal Bin Mansour al-Lubyani taught Islamic religious sciences in Damascus in the 15th century. He was known as the "*Fikhist* and Muslim's *Mufti*".²⁰ *Fikhist* and *Mufti* are titles given to an authoritative Islamic personality for his ability to interpret the Qur'an, the *hadeeth* (spoken words) of the Prophet Muhammad, and the capability of passing his own judgement, based on his scholarly knowledge of Islam and the holy text of the Qur'an.

¹⁷ The Islamic calendar is based on twelve lunar months totaling 354 days.

¹⁸ Ibn al-Athir, *Kamil fi al-Tarikh* [A Comprehensive History]. Vol. II. Beirut: Dar Sadir, 1979, pp. 532-537.

¹⁹ *al-Maoso'a al-Falastiniyya* [The Palestinian Encyclopaedia]. Vol. II. Damascus: Committee for al-Maoso'a, 1984, p. 408.

²⁰ Muhammad 'Abd al-Ghani Hasan. *Tarajim wa al-Siyar* [Dictionaries and Biographies]. Cairo: Dar al-Ma'arif, 1955.

Suleiman Pasha al-Athim was the governor of Damascus in the 18th century. He died on 24 August 1743, while he was on his way to the village of Dayr Hanna, near Lubya, to challenge the dissident Dhahir al-'Umar. al-'Umar had refused to pay his taxes to the central government in Damascus. Ironically, the majority of Lubyans who stayed in the newly-established state of Israel after Lubya's destruction in 1948 are now living in Dayr Hanna.

Dhahir al-'Umar became one of the most powerful leaders in the area, especially after annexing the cities of 'Akka (Acre), Haifa, and Jaffa, and the whole area around Lubya, including the villages and towns of Saffuriyya, Shafa 'Amr, Tiberias and 'Ajloun. Dhahir al-'Umar was also known as the "Prince of the Galilee."²¹ Some historians consider al-'Umar as the first Palestinian who tried to build an independent Palestinian entity free from the control of the Ottoman authorities.

Napoleon Bonaparte's attack on Egypt and Syria (1798-1801) marked the beginning of the struggle between the French and the British in the Middle East, which lasted more than a century. The successor to Dhahir al-'Umar, Ahmad Pasha al-Jazzar (1722-1804), succeeded in defending 'Akka against the French. The British sided with al-Jazzar, while the French succeeded in occupying Safad and Nazareth. The Ottoman forces, arriving from Damascus, occupied Tiberias and the village of Lubya, but were defeated near Mount Tabor southwest of Lubya.

The French burned many villages on their way through the Lubya area to besiege 'Akka. Nine consecutive attacks failed to defeat Ahmad Pasha al-Jazzar. The first attack on 'Akka took place on 28 March 1799. Napoleon gave up the siege of the city, and ordered his forces to return to Egypt. It was the beginning of a new era of conflict in the region between the emerging powers of the industrial revolution in Europe.²²

Khalil Ibrahim Azzam from Lubya was a prominent officer in al-Jazzar's army. Abu Isam's diary contains the following account of the internal conflicts within the ranks of al-Jazzar's army.

The Shanashri family was known because of its influence in the area. Khalil Ibrahim Azzam was an artillery officer in the army of al-Jazzar. He was well-known for his role in the battle against Napoleon, but later on disagreed with al-Jazzar who imprisoned his father Ibrahim Azzam for a ransom, which he refused to pay. While in prison his father met the Prince,

²¹ *Ibid*, p. 834 quoting Sheikh Ahmad al-Bidairi al-Hallak, *Hawadith Dimashq al-Yawmiyya* [Daily Incidents of Damascus]. Ahmad Izzat al-Arabi (ed.). Cairo: al-Jam'iyya al-Misriyya al-Tarikhiyya, Lajnat al-Bayan al-Arabi, 1959, pp. 42-47. See also Khalidi's reference to Musa Abu Dayya (ed.), *Zahir al-'Umar wa hukkam jabal Nablus, 1771-1773* [Zahir al-'Umar and the Rulers of Mount Nablus]. Edited and Annotated Text of a Manuscript by Ibrahim al-Danafi al-Samiri (d. 1790). Nablus: al-Najah University, Center for Documentation and Research, 1986, p. 19. Cited in *All that Remains, The Palestinian Villages Occupied and Depopulated by Israel in 1948*, *supra* note 7, p. 527.

²² Muhammad Omar Hamada, *A'lam Filastin* [Palestine Media]. Part I. Damascus: Dar Kutaiba, 1985, pp. 162-63 and pp. 720-27.

Yousef Shihabi, then governor of Lebanon. The guards found a paper in the latter's food on which Azzam promised to free both the Prince and his father from captivity. Azzam deserted and fled with a contingent of soldiers. al-Jazzar followed him to Lubya, partly destroying the village in revenge. I have been told by elderly people who were present when Lubya was destroyed by al-Jazzar forces that the villagers have always been able to communicate with each other by mimicking the sound of birds and animals. This is how they were able to escape from al-Jazzar's men.

Abu Isam is a relative of Khalil Ibrahim Azzam. They both come from the Shanashri family.

Chapter Two

Hamayil, Shuyukh and Makhateer

*All families invent their parents and children,
give each of them a story, character, fate, and even a language.*
Edward Said

Yousef Awad Abu Dhais (Abu Bassam)²³ resides in Homs refugee camp²⁴ in Syria. He is in his seventies. When I first met Abu Bassam in Damascus he was trying hard to finish his book about Lubya.²⁵ I met with him in his house in the camp a few days later when the book was finally ready. His enthusiasm for our interview was as great as it was for writing the book. The main theme of one third of the book concerns the different *hamayil* (families; singular, *hamula*) in Lubya and where they are living today.

The patriarchal system that dominated the social and cultural structure of Lubya was mainly based on its family-oriented pattern of life. Exile has inspired many Lubyans, like Abu Bassam, to create *shajaraat al-'ailaat* (family trees). The family tree of the 'Ajaynis drawn by Yousef al-Yousef (Abu Walid)²⁶ with the assistance of most members of his *hamula*, for example, goes back to the seventh century. The original copy is some nine metres long and about forty centimetres wide. Abu Walid's son, an engineer, helped transfer all the names onto one large sheet of paper in the form of a family tree. Many local *makhateer* (village heads) and other authoritative persons consider the genealogy authentic.

When I visited Abu Sameh and his library in Yarmouk refugee camp in Syria, I was surprised to find that my name and that of my brother were there as part of a detailed genealogical tree of the family dating back to the seventh century and to Caliph Ali's sons, Hassan and Husayn. Caliph Ali was one of four main followers (*al-Khulafa' al-Rashideen*) of the Prophet Muhammad after his death. To what extent this family tree is correct, how credible it is, and what role it plays in the collective consciousness of the community requires further research. Thanks to this map, however, Abu Sameh was invited to Iran as a member of the dynasty of the Prophet Muhammad.

²³ Yousef Awad Abu Dhais (Abu Bassam) was born in 1928. The first interview with Abu Bassam was conducted in Homs refugee camp in Syria on 10 February 1998.

²⁴ Homs refugee camp lies within the town of Homs, 160 kilometres north of Damascus. The camp was established in 1949. On 30 June 2002, there were 13,825 registered refugees residing in the camp.

²⁵ Yousef Abu Dhais, *Lubya, al-Ard wa al-Sha'b* [Lubya, the Land and the People]. Damascus: Dar al-Mustaqbal, 1998.

²⁶ Yousef al-Yousef (Abu Walid) was born in 1938. He is the brother of Abu Sameh al-Samadi. The interview with Yousef al-Yousef was conducted in Yarmouk refugee camp in Damascus, Syria together with Ibrahim Shihabi on 13 October 1998.

According to Abu Muhammad Kilani²⁷, one of the few elderly Lubyans who remained inside Israel not far from the village, these family trees “teach the new generation about their origins and not to forget their cousins.” Some families, including mine, trace their origins back to religious and otherwise well-known personalities. This is not uncommon in the Arab world. Many Arab kings and presidents, for example, trace their origins to descendants of the Prophet Muhammad. To what extent these connections are true is an open question and requires further study.

Earliest remembered families in Lubya

One of the earliest recorded references to the population of Lubya is from 1596. Lubya was described as a village in the *nahiya* (district) of Tiberias and *liwa'* (province) of Safad. Total population of the village was 1,117 persons.²⁸ Almost three hundred years later in 1886, the population of the village was estimated to have doubled to 2,730 persons.²⁹ During the 1930s, the *Imam* (preacher) of the al-Hula district in northern Palestine, *Sheikh* Sha'ban Salman, visited Lubya and observed that the population of the village was around 3,000 persons.³⁰

During the period of the British mandate in Palestine (1922-1948)³¹, officials conducted two national censi of the country. The 1922 and 1931 surveys gave the population of the village respectively as 1,712 and 1850 persons. British officials updated the last census of 1931 to 1946 estimating the total number of Lubyans in that year at 2,350 persons.³² According to information about Lubya collected by Zionist officials for the purpose of settling Jewish immigrants in the country there were 2,400 Palestinians living in the village in 1943-1944.³³ By 1948 it is estimated that Lubya had a population of 2,726.³⁴

While recollections about the first families to have settled down in the village vary among elderly Lubyans, accounts of the families living in the village at the beginning of

²⁷ Abu Muhammad Kilani was born in 1932. The interview with him was conducted in Lubya on 19 October 1995.

²⁸ Rafik Abdel-Karim, “Palestine in the Ottoman Era, From the 19th Century until 1918,” *al-Maosa'a al-Falastiniyya* [The Palestinian Encyclopaedia]. Vol. II, *supra* note 19, pp. 850-976.

²⁹ Shumacher cited *ibid*.

³⁰ From a report written by Sha'ban and Nasir al-Khalidi to the Muslim leadership in Jerusalem. Letter to Qism Ihya' al-Turath al-Islami-al-Quds on the 26 August 1936. [On file with the author].

³¹ In 1922 the League of Nations entrusted the temporary administration of Palestine to Great Britain until such a time as the population of the country was deemed ready for independence. The League considered Palestine as a “Class A” Mandate or closest to independence. A copy of the Mandate for Palestine is archived on the website of the UN Information System on Palestine (UNISPAL), www.un.org/Depts/dpa/docs/unispal.htm. In early 1947 the British government informed the UN of Great Britain's intention to withdraw from Palestine, which it completed in May 1948.

³² British statistical information is reproduced in *Survey of Palestine*. London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office, Reprinted in Full by the Institute for Palestine Studies, 1991. Also see, Justin McCarthy, *The Population of Palestine, Population Statistics of the Late Ottoman Period and the Mandate*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1990.

³³ Lubya (Tiberias District) 1943-1944; Haganah Archives, File No. 105/222. [Copy on file with the author] The document further notes that of the entire population, 480 persons were men aged 18-48.

³⁴ Abu Sitta, *supra* note 7, pp. 52-53.

the twentieth century are much more similar. Abu Majid from Yarmouk camp in Syria turned out to be one of the primary oral accounts about families in Lubya over the past two centuries. He is well-known for the sharpness of his memory, and the detailed information he is able to recite about Lubya's past. Like many Palestinian refugees, Abu Majid learned about the history of his village from his grandparents. "As a child, I liked to be with my grandfather and mother and hear from them the stories of the people of Lubya. I never got tired of questioning them. That is how I have all the knowledge of Lubya's history."

According to Abu Majid, the 'Ajayni was the first *hamula* to settle in Lubya. "The 'Ajayni family consisted of four brothers. Each one of them had their own house (*dar*). Every house had its own gate." Abu Majid belongs to this family. His main eight grandfathers were Subuh, 'Umar, Nasir, Ali, Husayn, Muhareb, Fawaz and Fayiz. The first to arrive in Lubya was Subuh. Lubya was uninhabited before the arrival of the 'Ajayni. If one takes an average of thirty years between the ages of each of Abu Majid's grandfathers, the period of settlement in the village would go back 240 years.

The next family to settle in the village was the Shanashri. "They came from a small village in Syria named Ghazali," said Abu Majid. "At that time people used to band together in order to protect themselves from Bedouin attacks. Farmers paid them a *khawa* (money or other assets paid by the weak to be protected by the strong) to leave them alone. Lubyans used to pay a *khawa* to a Bedouin tribe from eastern Jordan by the name of Bani 'Azzam. Some of these old customs were still in practice until recent times."

Almost half of Abu Isam's diary deals with the origins of the inhabitants of Lubya. All the *hamayil* of Lubya are mentioned in detail. Abu Isam started with the history of his own *hamula*, the Shanashri. "There were two brothers who came from a village named Kufr Allaban in the Tulkarem area from a family named Aboudi. Those two brothers were Shanshir and Madi. These were the first two people known to have settled in Lubya. The sons of Shanshir lived in the eastern part of the village and the sons of Madi lived in the western part."

"The village's inhabitants multiplied during the years, but a dispute occurred between the two families. As a result, the Shanashri family took control of the village after defeating the Madi family. Some of the Madis were killed and others emigrated to neighbouring villages. A few of them settled in Saffuriyya, in the Nazareth region known as Dar Abu Haite. From the family descended the Abbassi and Touba families who were large landowners in the village."

"Another group from the Madi family settled in the village of Mujaydil. They were known by the family name of Lubani. They were landowners and of good standing. Others from the Madi family lived in the village of Ja'oni village. Today it is named Rosh Pina. A branch of the family named 'Amayri left for Lebanon and Syria, and another part of the family, from which the Jabir family is descended left to Beit Fourik east of Nablus. A few of them lived in Nablus itself. There was also the Hardanin family who settled in

Hamama village near Jerusalem. Others settled in Ijzim in the Haifa region. They retained the name of Madi.”

The house of Madi is still intact in Ijzim, together with the mosque and the school of the village. Abu Isam wrote that other members of the family “also settled in Tantoura, a village on the coast near Caesaria and ‘Itlit. These were intelligent, well-educated, and renowned for their generosity. All left for Lebanon in 1948.” Tantoura (35 km south of Haifa) was the site of a large massacre of civilians during the 1948 war. Recent research revealed that on the 22-23 May 1948, after the establishment of the state of Israel, around 200 Palestinians from the village were killed by Israeli Jewish forces.³⁵

According to Abu Isam, family dispersion and poor transportation throughout the area during the early years of settlement in the village weakened the relationship between different members of each *hamula*. “In the past it was difficult to be in contact with all these people scattered in different villages.” Members of the *hamula* nevertheless remained connected and “as the roads between villages improved, the original close relationships were re-established. Today members get together as one family even though they continue to be dispersed throughout the country.”

Some families from Lubya derived their name because of their early settlement in the village. Issa Lubani³⁶, for example, was a poet and a novelist living in Nazareth. He was well-known among Palestinians in the area both as a writer and for his long period of political activism in the Communist Party in Israel after 1948. He was very sick when I visited him in 1995 and could not move from his bed. Although he wept when he remembered the tragic events that involved his brother’s death after 1948, he looked very fresh at the end of the interview.

“I was born in Mujaydil as was my father who was born in 1884,” said Issa. “As far as I know we emigrated from Lubya a long time ago. The village *mukhtar* was from our family. I heard the story of our grandfathers from my sister Fahima al-Najjar who was born in 1925. She told me that there were seven brothers who came to Lubya 200 years ago probably from somewhere in the West Bank area. Three of them settled in Mujaydal, but no one knew where the other four went. But it is certain that our origins are from Lubya. That is why they called us first Lawabni and later on we registered ourselves as Lubani.” This confirms Abu Majid’s account of Lubya’s history.

³⁵ Jorgen Pedersen, *Bryllupet I Ramallah* (Wedding in Ramallah). Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 2003, p. 82, citing the tapes of the interview between Israeli researcher Teddy Katz and Mordechai Sokoler. Sokoler put the number of dead at 230. According to Katz’s research, which generated considerable controversy at the University of Haifa, the Alexandroni brigade was responsible for the massacre. For eye-witness accounts of the massacre see, “The Tantara Massacre, 22-23 May 1948,” 30 *Journal of Palestine Studies* 3 (Spring 2001), pp. 5-18. For an overview of the research by Teddy Katz see, Ilan Pappé, “The Tantara Case in Israel: The Katz Research and Trial,” 30 *Journal of Palestine Studies* 3 (Spring 2001), pp. 19-39. A book about Tantoura, written by Yihya Mahmoud, from the same village was printed many years before Teddy Katz made famous the events and the massacres that followed Tantoura’s occupation. But because the first book was written in Arabic, no one in the international media mentioned it.

³⁶ Issa Lubani was born in 1931. The interview with him was conducted in Nazareth on 19 September 1995.

A few days after my visit, Issa's wife, Manwa Zu'bi, called me to say that because of the interview Issa was healthy and fit again and had left his bed for the first time in a month. Undoubtedly, memories of the past are not only crucial elements of one's identity, but a curative factor as well. Issa later contacted me in Copenhagen in hope of finding someone to publish his novels.³⁷ Two years later in 1999, however, Issa died in Nazareth before having the opportunity to see all of his books in print.

Tahir Mahmoud Husayn (Abu Tal'at)³⁸, who was the *mukhtar* of Lubyans in Jordan until his death in 2000, noted that "other family branches that go by the name of Lubani are now living in Huwwara and Sal villages in Jordan." Abu Tal'at and his wife, Um Tal'at, knew all the Lubyan households in Jordan and Syria. "Those who live in Huwwara carry the family name of Lubani because one of them emigrated to Lubyia with his pregnant wife, and when she died, his son bore the name Lubani. He was the original grandfather of the Lubani family in Jordan."

"There are now about 3,000 Lubyans, either by origin or through family relationships, in different parts of the Kingdom of Jordan. They originally came from 'Ajloun, where a dispute had at one point taken place between the brothers. As a result, some of them walked over to Lubyia and settled there. These are the 'Ajayni, a deviation from the word 'Ajalni (from 'Ajloun). Others stayed in Samad, also in the 'Ajloun area, and still go by the name of Samadi."

Families

Organization of social space according to family and tribe has prevailed in the Middle East for hundreds of years.³⁹ A *hamula* (*hamala* is the Arabic verb 'to bear') is a group of people connected to one another by a special contract based on mutual agreement rather than blood relations. This pattern of organizing social space is an expression of collective solidarity. At harvest time, for example, all the members of the *hamula* in Lubyia shared responsibility for bringing in the crop. Members of a *hamula* were also obliged to support one another when a member of the *hamula* was killed or otherwise hurt.

A good example of this phenomenon is the relationship between the Hamzat and the 'Ajayni tribes from Lubyia. They are from the same *hamula* but do not belong to the same original great grandfather. It is the same with the 'Athamni, 'Asafri, and the Za'atri. They

³⁷ Issa Lubani's books included: *Urs al-Dam* [Bloody Wedding], a trilogy entitled, *al-Sukoot* [The Fall], *al-Kalak* [The Anxiety and Worry], and *Waja' al-Qalb* [The Pained Heart], and another trilogy, *Yamshoon A'la Had al-Mousa* [Walking on the Razor's Edge]. In total he had fifteen books ready to be published.

³⁸ Tahir Mahmoud Husayn (Abu Tal'at) was born in 1914. The interview with him was conducted in Irbid, Jordan on 1 April 1996.

³⁹ Ibn Khaldun, one of the main Arab scholars who studied this phenomena refers to the central concept of 'asabiyya or "group feeling". Cited in Dale F. Eickelman, *The Middle East, An Anthropological Approach*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1989, p. 24. Eickelman observes that this "group feeling need not depend upon blood relationships existing between those persons who share it, but the bonds of solidarity must be such that they take precedence over all other bonds of association". *Ibid*, p. 25.

are all part of the 'Atwat *hamula* but have different great grandfathers. According to Abu Bassam from Homs camp in Syria, who spoke in detail about the meaning of the *hamula*, there were no 'asha'er (tribes connected through blood lines; singular, 'ashira) in Lubya, only *hamayil*.

The advent of Islam in seventh-century Arabia witnessed the integration of family and tribal loyalties within the newly emerging Islamic community. Nevertheless, these older social patterns still function today, taking different shapes and forms, especially when employed as a means of political legitimacy. In Palestine, village social structure and family and tribal loyalties continued to prevail in all rural areas in Palestine on the eve of the *Nakba* in 1948.

Abu Muhammad Kilani remained internally displaced inside Israel throughout his life. His son, Yousef Muhammad Ibrahim Yousef, contacted me after having read an interview about my research project in the Arabic newspaper *as-Sinnara* and *Kul al-Arab* magazine inside Israel. Abu Muhammad spoke as if he was still living in Lubya. On a visit to the village in 1995 he started by telling me about the family network in Lubya, while seated on the ruins of his home.

“Lubya was a network of interrelated families because there was a lot of intermarriage. Your family belongs to Hassan Issa. You were landowners and farmers. We owned eight *dunums* (1 *dunum* = 1,000 m²) between your fields (*kuroum*; singular, *karim*), the *Karim Sheikh Saleh*. There were eight families in the village: Shihabi, 'Atwat, 'Ajayni, Samallout, Fukara, Kafarni, Hajajwi and the Shanashri. The Ali Yasin al-Kafri family is from Kafra. The Hajjo family is originally from Hajji, in the district of Hebron. Abu Fathi went there before he died. The Samadi family is from Samma, in the Hauran area of Syria.”

Abu Isam's diary gives a more detailed picture of the origins and names of each *hamula* and its members. According to the diary the families of the village were the Shanashri, 'Atwat, Kafarni (Hajjo), Samallout, Karazni, Kilani, and Rifa'iyya. Family members were spread over a wide area in and around Lubya, as well as in various parts of Palestine. The dispersion of families usually took place after a family dispute. “The Shanashri family descended from the sons of Rashdan from Saleh. Issa al-Rashdan and his sons left for Syria where they worked as merchants. Haj Kasim and his sons, and Yasin and his sons descended from Saleh. al-Ghaith, the descendant of Azzam, moved to Lebanon. The Shanashri family was influential in the area.”

“The Shihabi family was renowned as fighters. Originally they came from Lebanon where they were the followers of Prince Yousef Shihabi who fought in vain against Ahmad Pasha al-Jazzar [who defended the city of 'Akka against Napoleon] and was executed by him. Ali al-Ahmad from Lubya was executed in Nazareth in the Monday Market, while Ibrahim al-Azzam was set free because of the intervention of friends. After the execution of their leader Yousef Shihabi, his followers joined the forces of Khalil Ibrahim in Lubya. Khalil settled them on land named al-Shafa where the Circassians (*Sharkas*) lived in Kufr Kama. After the death of Khalil Ibrahim, his son Abdel-Qader

took over the responsibility for the whole region of Tiberias and invited the Shihabi family to settle in Lubya.”

“The ‘Atwat family include the ‘Athamni, Za’atri, ‘Asafri, and Samallout families. It was said that they originally came from Samallout in Egypt. The ‘Ajayni are also called Samadiyya from the Samadiyya tribe in East Jordan. The Hajjo family, also named Kafarni, comprised the ‘Aidi and Karzoun families. The Rifa’iyya family were called Fukara or Darawish. They followed a special religious sect and had a place named al-Zawiya where they would meet together. The Kilani or Za’idiyya were also followers of a special religious sect.”

“During the Ottoman period the families of Yasin and Hamzat from the ‘Ajayni emigrated to Tiberias and to Jordan. Sharif Mansour and his sons Muhammad and Ahmad emigrated to Haifa. The latter became known as eminent merchants. Muhammad Sharif also became very well-known as a property owner and had good standing among the merchants. His sons, Adib and Hassan, studied at the Arab University in Beirut, but in spite of their good grades, they chose not to become teachers and continued to work with their father.”

According to Abu Isam, Lubya was also home to a number of other families who had come from other parts of Palestine. “Many foreign families lived in Lubya, such as the Tallouzi, and the Abid and Badir families who were descended from the former and originally came to Lubya from Tallouza, in the Nablus area, during the Ottoman period. So did the Shara’an sons, Mustafa, Mahmoud and Abdel-Rahman, who originally came from Silet al-Thahir, and the Shahin family who came from ‘Arrabit al-Battof. There were also families from Libbid in the Nablus area, and the Jamal family from Gaza, and the Jalila family from ‘Arrabit Nablus.”

Sameeh Jawhar Shihabi⁴⁰, another Lubyman who I met in Yarmouk camp in Syria, recounted the origin of his family going back hundreds of years. “The Shihabi family is originally from Bani Makhzoum from a tribe called Bani Sheeba. They came to play a role in the events that took place in Greater Syria (*Bilad al-Sham*) in the period of Mahmoud al-Din al-Zinki. The latter had asked for the assistance of Prince Munkith al-Shihabi to protect the coastal areas of Lebanon against the crusaders’ attacks.”

“After the battle, Zinki awarded the Prince the area between Hasbayya and Shakeef Castle (in Lebanon) and Safad in the south. The Shihabis allied themselves with different families, such as the Jumblats and Arslans, against the Ma’niyeen. In the battle of ‘Ayn Dara in 1449, the Shihabis took the lead under their Prince Haydar. After him came Prince Yousef who took care of Bashir Shihabi who was still a child. The latter changed his religion and took power after killing his uncle Yousef. After the death of Prince Yousef, his sons left Hasbayya to Lubya under the leadership of Princes Kasim and Haydar. Kasim stayed in Lubya while Haydar moved on to Egypt and settled in a village

⁴⁰[Mahmoud add bio]

called Meet Koum in the Suez area. The descendants of Kasim were the original members of the Shihabi family who remained living in Lubya until 1948.”

“The Shihabis maintained their relations with other leaders in the area such as Prince Said al-Jaza’iri, the son of Abdel-Qader al-Jaza’iri, the Syrian fighter Ahmad Maryoud who came to Lubya many times, Kamil Beik al-As’ad, and Sultan Pasha al-Atrash. In 1925, during the time of French colonial rule, Sultan Pasha al-Atrash asked for help from the Shihabi family and 350 camels loaded with seeds and beans were sent from Lubya to Sultan Pasha.” Sultan Pasha was a famous Druze leader who fought fiercely against French colonisation of Syria. The Druze in the Golan Heights erected a memorial in the middle of the town of Majdal Shams as a sign of respect.

Abu Majid continued with more information about the Hamzat family, which was a branch of the 'Ajayni *hamula*. The latter now reside in Jordan. “Hamza Agha was another member of the 'Ajayni tribe and also a descendant of one of the four original 'Ajayni brothers. His descendants who now live in Jordan go by the name of Hamzat. He was loyal to the Turks and together with his son Yasin was responsible for the city of ‘Akka. Because of this, Ibrahim Pasha persecuted him and chased him out of the region.”

“Before his departure, Hamza left his daughters and one of his sons, Ismail, with the 'Ajayni tribe in Lubya. Later on in his journey, another one of his sons became sick, and Hamza left him in Damascus with the *mukhtar* of Kufr Harib in the Golan Heights. Ibrahim Pasha captured the latter and asked him to tell him who his father was. To protect himself, the child answered, ‘You are, sir’. Upon hearing this, Ibrahim Pasha took the child with him to Cairo where he stayed for the next ten years.”

(See Appendix I – *Families as Remembered by Lubyans*).

Documents I discovered in Israeli archives also describe the family structure in Lubya. Intelligence collected by the *Haganah*, the pre-state militia of the Jewish *Yishuv* (the modern Jewish community – i.e., literally settlement – of Palestine), listed six main families in the village.⁴¹ Both the *Haganah* and the Jewish Agency were involved in collecting information on as many Palestinian villages and towns as possible for the purpose of land acquisition, settlement of Jewish and possible future transfer or expulsion of the indigenous Palestinian Arab population.⁴²

According to the dossier on Lubya, the Shihabi family from Tal Shihab in the Hauran region were among the original inhabitants of the village. They possessed three-fifths of its land and property and were considered of moderate financial means. The ‘Atwat family are described as the descendants of the original village inhabitants while others are originally from the town of Aboud in the Ramallah area. They owned two-thirds of

⁴¹ Lubya (Tiberias District) 1943-1944, *supra* note 33.

⁴² For more details and documentation *see*, Nur Masalha, *The Politics of Denial, Israel and the Palestinian Refugee Problem*. London: Pluto Press, London, 2003.

the land and their financial situation was good. The 'Atwat family consisted of two sub sub-groups; the Hajajwi and the Shanashri families.

The dossier further states that “information sources on [the 'Atwat] tell us that there was no corruption among its members; however, there were rumours of sporadic violence because there is evidence that these families did not think well of each other.” The file also gives an estimate of the size of each family. The largest families were the Shihabis and the 'Atwats. Each numbered around 500 persons. The next largest family was the Shanashri who numbered 300 persons, followed by the 'Ajayni and Fukara (200 persons each), and the 'Asafri and Za'atri families (150 persons each).

The above genealogies do not comprise all Lubyans due to the difficulty of keeping tabs on their numbers in the twenty-three countries in which they now live. Today, only a few families keep the tradition of drawing up a family tree where only male members of the family are registered. Abu Walid in Damascus, Abu Muhammad Kilani in Israel and Abu Rif'at Samadi in Jordan still have their family trees. The Shihabi family tree goes back four centuries. It was passed down from the grandfather to the father and now to the son Sameeh Jawhar Shihabi. He spent many months recreating the original manuscript.

(See Appendix II – *Selected Family Trees of Lubya*)

While all the Lubyans I interviewed belonged to different tribes and families their self-image varied from one form of loyalty to another, ranging from total loyalty to the family towards total loyalty to the people or nation. When reminiscing about the recent past of Lubya, Abu Bassam wishes that the new generation of intellectuals could leave the tribal mentality behind and only remember what will be helpful for their future. Abu Bassam felt that this phenomenon, in a sense, went against one's loyalty to the homeland.

“There is no need to write about Basheer al-Shihabi and about the origins of the Shihabi family. It is useless to go back hundreds of years to prove one's origin. Our family origins go back to Bani Hilal Ibn 'Amir Ibn Sa'sa'a Ibn Kais Ibn 'Ailan Ibn Mudar Ibn Nizar Ibn Ma'd Ibn 'Adnan. This is what was written in 'Aref al-'Aref's book, *Kaba'il Beir al-Sabi'*, but I doubt this account. Even the author said that this was not first hand information. Dabbagh in his book takes the 'Atwat back to Ma'ath Ibn Bakr Ibn Wa'il Rabi'a Ibn Nizar Ibn Ma'd Ibn Adnan. Which of the two authors was right? We'll never know.”

Abu Bassam's experience, and by consequence his perception of past forms of social organization in the village is different from the experience of other Lubyans I interviewed from the older generation, like Abu Majid, Ibrahim al-Shihabi and Yousef al-Yousef. This can be explained by the fact that others, unlike Abu Bassam, did not participate in other forms of social organization that transcended their own *hamula*.

Shuyukh and Makhateer

The *sheikh* and *mukhtar* (plural, *shuyukh* and *makhateer*) functioned as the heads of their communities. They constituted a link between Palestinian communities and those in power, whether it was the Ottomans, the British or the Jewish *Yishuv*. They also played a fundamental role in resolving disputes among villagers themselves.

One acquired the title of *sheikh* through good relations with one's family, *hamula*, and the wider society in which one lived. Every neighbourhood (*hara*) had its own *sheikh* who carried the title of *sheikh al-'ashira* (*sheikh* of the tribe), and represented the tribe in happy as well as in sad occasions," said Abu Majid. "Every *sheikh* had a meeting place called a *madafi* or *manzool* (guesthouse) in which tribe members, as well as foreigners and guests, would gather on various occasions. The *sheikh* took a tribute (*mashyakha*) of five *liras* for every girl who married outside the *hamula*, and ten *liras* from the bride groom if he married a girl from outside the village. Those who married from within the *hamula* had nothing to pay."

"*Sheikh* Abu Ahmad used to cook *borghul* (cracked wheat) in a big pot in the yard in front of a holy place (*maqgam*) named *Abu Gazi* on the eastern part of the village," said Abu Majid. "He would shout at the passersby: '*al-'Aish ya joo'an, tfaddalu* (Food for the hungry, please come and eat).' He was the only authority to whom people turned to to resolve their problems. Ali Ahmad's authority reached until Safad, in the Galilee, where he opened a free restaurant (*takiyya*). He had a daughter and a son."

"In the spring time he would survey the different plots of land and record in his notebook the names of those farmers who didn't cut the extra grass from their fields (*al-ta'sheeb*). He would then send two men to call the farmer to his *madafi* where he was punished with a whip (*kurbaj*). '*jildak lakashru* (I will take you skin off.),' he said." One of the participants in the interview protested against me writing down this story, but I insisted. "On the contrary," I said, "it is a good story."

Lubians I interviewed listed the names of the last ten *shuyukh* of the village until the *Nakba*.

' <i>Ajayni</i>	Mahmoud Husayn Issa (Abu Saleh)
<i>Kafarni or Hajajwi</i>	Ahmad Suleiman Hajjou (Abu Zaki)
<i>Samallout</i>	Ibrahim Thyab Hamdan (Abu Thyab)
' <i>Atwat</i>	Hassan Abu Dhais (Abu Mustafa)
' <i>Asafri</i>	Yousef Mousa al-Thyab (Abu Muhammad)
<i>Za'atri</i>	Hafith Issa al-Mahmoud
<i>Shanashri</i>	Khalil Abdel-Qader
<i>Kilaniyyi & al-Rifa'iyya</i>	Ghareeb Abu Ismail
' <i>Awaydi</i>	Nayif al-Younis
<i>Shihabi</i> (two)	Fawaz al-'Ali & <i>mukhtar</i> Yihya al-Sa'id

The title of *mukhtar*, on the other hand, required recognition by the authorities concerned. Relations with neighbouring villages fell within the authority of village *shuyukh* and *makhateer*. This included issues ranging from trade to assistance during periods of crisis.

Makhateer from Lubya, for example, attended high-level meetings with *Sheikh* Iz al-Din al-Qassem in 1935 and met with king Abdullah of Jordan in 1948. For less important issues the son of a *mukhtar* was often sent.

The *mukhtar* was also named as a *sheikh* by his own *hamula* as an additional sign of respect. *Makhateer* were often the wealthiest members of their own *hamulas*. They owned more plots of the land than others, and due to their relations with the authorities they had more commercial opportunities. In Lubya, for example, Mustafa Abu Dhais, the son of *mukhtar* Hassan Abu Dhais, was known for his relations with both the British and Jewish officials and businessmen. He was employed as a manager for the British buying horses and food and had joint business interests in Tiberias with two Jewish families. These relations eventually became a source of conflict in the village.

The position of *mukhtar* was often passed down from one generation to the next. Abu Tal'at, for example, became *mukhtar* of Lubyans in Irbid, Jordan, following the death of his father. "The eldest of the family normally took over responsibility for his family or for the tribe as a whole. Whenever the oldest of the tribe died, the one next in age replaced him. First we had Younis, then Joudi, then Mousa, and then my father. In 1949, after we came to Jordan I became *mukhtar* of the Lubyans. I do not get paid for doing this job. I have served to this day without financial compensation, although I encountered some opposition from my own family, the Samallout and my cousins."

Other people in the village were assigned to help the *mukhtar* and served as a link to the people – the *nawateer* (guardians; singular, *natour*). Abu Majid recalled a few stories about the *nawateer* in Lubya. "Two people worked for the *mukhtar* in Lubya. They were called *nawateer*. They cleaned the streets of the village once every two months and passed the *mukhtar's* messages on to the villagers." The two guardians in Lubya were 'Awad al-Qatamish and Abdullah Abu al-Sheikh.

"When a medical team arrived in the village, for example, the *natour's* job was to inform the villagers of its arrival. The medical team used to come to visit every four to five months carrying first aid equipment such as eye drops and embrocations. It was usually made up of two British and one female Christian Arab staff members. Whenever the villagers asked the *natour* to intervene with the British staff in order to give them what medicine they wanted, he used to answer in a funny way: 'Even we the officials didn't get any.'"

"Another example of a guardian's job was to make announcements about lost property. He used to roam the streets and call out in a loud voice: '*ya sam'een al-soot, salloo 'annabi, awalkoo Muhammad, thaniko Ali, ya min shaf halbakara al-day'a, willi bilakiha ilo hilwan* (Those who hear my voice, give mercy on our prophet, Muhammad is the first and Ali is the second. He who finds the lost cow and returns it would will receive a gift in return).'"

"Thyab Dandash, who came originally from Baalbek and lived in al-Maghar, was one of the *nawateer*. When the Turks wanted to call someone to the army, he used to sing loudly

in order to give the individual concerned advance notice and allow him to flee. '*winkannak farari fir, winkannak farari fir, 'ala dal'ona 'ala dal'ona*' (If you intend to desert from the army, run away).' He would alter some of the words of well-known songs, usually a wedding song, to convey the intended message and then revert to the original wording of the song and continue singing."

Until the 1800s, the *mukhtar* in Lubya had always been appointed from outside the village. According to Abu Majid, "The village hired a *mukhtar* from Hittin, a nearby village. The latter's term of office was one year, and the villagers were glad to collect money for his salary due to his ability to read and write. Towards the beginning of the 19th century, however, Lubyans decided that they did not need the hired man's services any more due to the fact that he used to leave the village every time he got angry at one of the villagers. So the 'Ajayni men got together and decided to call upon one of their relatives, Ali Ahmad al-Ruhayyil (*Sheikh* Abu Ahmad), who was one of the four original brothers and living in the village of al-Shouneh [located in the northern Jordan Valley] to replace him. Ali al-Ruhayyil was well-known to Lubyans who slept at his house in al-Shouneh when they travelled to Jordan."

"Ali Ahmad Ruhayyil arrived in Lubya in the year 1810 and told the Lubyans that he would accept to be their *mukhtar* on condition that they give him a free hand in managing the affairs of the village. The 'Ajayni built a *madafi* for the new *mukhtar*, which had enough room for 200 men and which went by the name of *al-'ikd*. Ali Ahmad Ruhayyil (Abu Ahmad) became *sheikh* of the whole village and not only of the 'Ajayni tribe. The villagers used to support their *sheikh* by offering him one-day's worth of work."

"When Ibrahim Pasha [the son of Egyptian leader Mohammad Ali who controlled Palestine between 1831 and 1940⁴³] arrived at Nazareth, Ruhayyil worked with him against the Turks. This was at least the report written against him. When Ibrahim Pasha retreated to Egypt, the Turks executed Ruhayyil and his son in Nazareth around 1848. (Abu Sameeh put the date of his death in the year 1832-1833). The man who wrote the report against Ruhayyil was from the village of Tur'an from the 'Adawi family. The man who carried out the execution was from the 'Abd al-Hadi family."

"Later on, he tried to propose to Ruhayyil's daughter, but Ruhayyil's wife refused to accept the proposal accusing the man of executing her husband. The governor tried to put more taxes on 'Ajayni, and if they didn't meet his demands he threatened to put the whole family in prison. Ruhayyil's wife gave him all her jewellery in return for not persecuting her family, and her daughter was married to Yasin al-Hamza who was at that time the governor (*Ka'im Makam*) of Tiberias."

"After the death of Ruhayyil and his son, the 'Ajaynis chose Younis al-Ali as *sheikh* of Lubya. He was followed in his post by Younis Ali, Kwateen and Khalil al-Abid,

⁴³ Ibrahim Pasha became "Palestine's most impressive modernizer. Ruling the lands in his father's name," writes Israeli historian Ilan Pappé, "[Ibrahim Pasha] introduced agricultural reforms, centralized taxation, safe roads and a constitutional system that gave fair representation to the local elite." Ilan Pappé, *A History of Modern Palestine, One Land, Two Peoples*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004, p. 3.

respectively who were all *makhateer* for the whole village. When Khalil al-Abid resigned, the British appointed Hassan Abu Dhais [the father of Mustafa Abu Dhais], Yihya al-Sa'id, and Suleiman 'Atiyyi, respectively, to the post of *mukhtar* of Lubya.”

Abu Muhammad Kilani knew personally the well-respected *mukhtar* Haj Khalil, the father of Abu Isam, in his later days. Kilani lamented the miserable situation in which Haj Khalil lived. “I know Haj Khalil’s story very well. He lived in my house in 'Arrabi in 1948, but when he became seriously ill he moved to his son’s house in Nazareth. There he encountered some problems at home, so he returned to 'Arrabi and lived with my uncle Haj Ahmad from the Shanashri family.”

“Later on we found him a house near that of the Yasin family, but when he became terminally ill, we moved him to the hospital. He stayed there two weeks and then died and was buried by the municipality three days later. He was well respected by all the people of Palestine; even small children respected him.” He died alone in a hospital in Nazareth in 1952 at the age of sixty-five.

Documents from *Haganah* archives list three main *makhateer* in Lubya in the period 1943-44.⁴⁴ This included Khalil al-Abid who was from the 'Atwat family. The dossier describes al-Abid as an old *mukhtar*, appointed by the British government and accepted by the inhabitants of the village. He was a leader of the local council of Lubya (*majlis mahali*).

The second *mukhtar* described in the document was Hassan Abu Dhais who was also appointed by the British government and was a well-known personality and well accepted by the people. He was married to Sa'id Afandi's daughter from Tiberias and through this marriage he also gained influence in the Tiberias area. The other *mukhtar* listed in the document was Yahya Sa'id. Sa'id was from the Shihabi family. He was also appointed by the government with which he had good working relations.

The same dossier also provides a list of the *mukhateer* of each family in Lubya. The *mukhateer* of the Shihabi family were Yihya Sa'id and Fawzi al-Ali. The *mukhtar* of the 'Atwat family was Hassan Abu Dhais. This clan consisted of two sub-groups: the Hajajwi family whose *mukhtar* was Ahmad Suleiman and the Shanashri family whose *mukhtar* was Haj Khalil al-Abid. Mahmoud Husayn as the *mukhtar* of the 'Ajayni family. Yousef al-Mousa was the *mukhtar* of the 'Asafri family, Hafith al-Issa was the *mukhtar* of the Za'atmi family and Gharib al-Mughawish was the *mukhtar* of the Fukara family.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ Lubya (Tiberias District) 1943-1944, *supra* note 33.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

Chapter Three

Landscape

*At least I'm still alive, as you
Can see
I'm like the man who took a brick
To show
How beautiful his house once used
To be
Bertolt Brecht*

Through their shrouded memories, whether fresh or withered, refugees remain attached to this piece of land called Lubya. Never mind the fact that the village itself has been demolished and erased from the map of present day Israel. Lubya still exists in the remaining debris of wells, fields, the cemetery, and the olive and cactus groves. The geography of Lubya will always be part of the identity of exiled Lubyans whether they are living nearby or thousands of kilometres away in Europe or North America.

The writings of Yousef al-Yousef, now residing in Yarmouk camp in Syria, animate every piece of Lubya's history and landscape. Yousef's earliest memories of the village landscape stretch back to a time when he was a boy of nine. His Shakespearean-like descriptions of the flowers and herbs, trees and mountains personify the landscape into a lively and god-like creature. "That huge creature which fascinated me as a pantheistic God made me wonder why old people didn't worship such mountains, beautiful and full of pride. I thought I would climb it when I grew up."

Yousef Muhammad Issa⁴⁶ visited Lubya in 1994 for the first time since 1948. There was not a piece of land or place that escaped his memory after forty-six years in exile. As he walked amid the ruins of the village homes, he started showing me the remains of the five wells in the area. He found four. Then he started looking for the fifth. Only after digging a few centimetres with his fingers, the fifth well was located. I was astonished at his extraordinary power to remember a piece of stone and an iron nail as a cover for the well. "Even after one hundred years, and how much they have done to the land," he said, "they will never succeed to erase my memory of the land I lived in twenty-eight years of my childhood."

During the interviews that I conducted for this research project, refugees from Lubya identified by name 126 places, six caves and nine *maqamaat* (religious places; singular, *maqam*) associated with their village. These memories give each plot of land a special meaning and offer a unique insight into the people who lived in this little village for centuries before their exile in 1948.

⁴⁶ Yousef Muhammad Issa was born in 1920. The interview with Yousef Muhammad Issa was conducted in Copenhagen, Denmark on 15 January 1995. Yousef is my father.

Origins of a Name

There are many references to the origins of the name Lubya in modern times. According to the Arab historian Bin Katta, Lubya is a kind of bean if it ends with the Arabic letter *alif* – i.e., lub(ya) – however, if it ends with the letter *ta* – i.e., Lubi(eh) – then it is the name of a city in Egypt between Alexandria and Burka.⁴⁷ Another historian, Abu al-Rihan al-Beiruti writes that ‘Lubieh’ was the name of the land south of Egypt according to the Greek division of the planet into three parts with Egypt as its center. The other two parts were ‘Aoraki and Asia.

Scholar Ihsan Hakki claims that the name Lubya is a Greek word, which means ‘white countries’ (*bilad al-beed*). The name refers to those countries which lie in modern Libya and to the north of the lands known as the ‘black countries’ (e.g., Ethiopia).⁴⁸ Ahmad Daoud states that ‘Libya’ is the name of the daughter of the king of Tiro.⁴⁹ The historian Mustafa Dabbagh writes that Lubya was the name of a plant as well as the name of an old Greek city.⁵⁰ Dabbagh also refers to a book entitled, *al-Daw’ al-Lami’* [The Shining Light], which confirms the link between the well-known Islamic scholar Abu Bakir bin Abdel Rahman bin Rahhal bin Mansour al-Taki al-Loubyani and the village of Lubya.⁵¹

In his diary about life in the village, Abu Isam writes that “Lubya is originally a word that means *labwa*, or the feminine of the world lion. It was so named because of its strong position, built on the hills and surrounded by valleys. It was a fortified castle, difficult for anyone to attack.” Abu Majid told me that the origin of the word Lubya is *al-jadir*, an Arabic word derived from the word *jadeer* meaning ‘worthy of.’ The name Lubya was carried by word of mouth by Kamil al-Huwayin from al-Shajara village. He took the name from Ali Ahmad al-Shajrawi, a writer, poet, and a religious man. Abu Majid claims that Shajrawi found this explanation in an old book.

Ibrahim Shihabi, who is the author of the first booklet on Lubya published in 1954, told me that the name Lubya was mentioned three times in a book by Abu Shama al-Makdisi entitled, *Ktab al-Rawdatayn* (Vol. III), published in the thirteenth century. Lubya is also mentioned in a classical poem written to celebrate the defeat of the crusaders: ‘*Amar a’aytum futooh al-Qadissiya fi, Aknafa Lubiyya Tajalla, wa tha ‘umroo* (Have you not seen the holy victory around Lubya so decisive and clear, and that is ‘Amro)‘.

⁴⁷ Bin Katta, cited in Shihab al-Din al-Hamawi al-Roumi al-Baghdadi, *Mu’jam al-Buldan* [Atlas of the Countries]. Vol. V. Muhammad Abdul Rahman Mar’ashli (ed.). Beirut: Dar Ihia al-Torath al-Arabi-Libanon, 1376/1975, p. 25.

⁴⁸ Ihsan Hakki, *al-Jaza’ir al-Arabiyya – ‘Ard al-Kifah al-Majid* [The Arab Algeria – Land of the Glorious Struggle]. Beirut: al-Maktab al-Tijari, 1971, p. 15, cited in Shihabi, *supra* note 8, p. 11.

⁴⁹ Ahmad Daoud, *al-Arab wa al-Samiyoon wa al’Ibraniyoon wa Banu Israel wa al-Yahood* [The Arabs, the Semites, the Ivrites, the Israeli People and the Jews]. Damascus: Dar al-Mustaqbal, 1991, p. 13, cited in Shihabi, *ibid*.

⁵⁰ *Biladuna Filastin* [Our Country Palestine]. Vol. VI. Beirut: Dar al-Tali’a, 1965, p. 424.

⁵¹ *Ibid*.

A number of Jewish sources also discuss the meaning of the name Lubya. The *Official Guide to Israel* traces the name of the village to “a Jewish town from the Roman Byzantine period whose name was retained by the Arab village of Lubya.”⁵² The *Comprehensive Ethnological Dictionary of the Hebrew Language* claims that the name is related to the Hebrew word *lavan*, which means ‘white’, and also to the Arabic word *laban*, which is a type of yogurt.⁵³ During my research at the Zionist archives in Jerusalem I also discovered references to the name Lubya in documents relating to land transactions in the village. These documents referred to Lubya in five different languages: German, French, Arabic, English, and Hebrew.

After 1948, the name Lubya disappeared from official Israeli files. A new Jewish settlement established on village lands was named Lavi. Lubya was only one of around 9,000 Arabic names of villages, *wadis* (valleys; singular, *wadi*), mountains and other places were systematically Hebraicized after 1948 as part of the simultaneous process of establishing Zionist claims to the land and wiping out Palestinian Arab claims, including those of the refugees.⁵⁴ Today, few Israeli Jews are familiar with the original Arabic place names of refugee villages like Lubya.

Location and topography

The village site of Lubya lies 10.5 km west, southwest of the city of Tiberias on the road to Nazareth in the Galilee. Lubya was built on a hill 3,235 metres above sea level. Its lands extended in a plain that covered the area to the east, as well as to the northwest to a hill named Jabalah, which is 294 metres above sea level.

Lubya was the largest village in area in the district of Tiberias during the period of the British Mandate in Palestine. It was also one of the largest villages in the country. As of 1946, total village lands amounted to 39,629 *dunums*.⁵⁵ The built-up area of the village was 210 *dunums*. The Zionist dossier on Lubya lists the total area of the village at 22,000 *dunums*.⁵⁶ Of this area, almost 5,000 *dunums* was described as unproductive land. The dossier notes that, later on, an extra 200 *dunums* of land were cultivated.

Scholarly writing and the diaries and memoirs of foreign travelers provide rich descriptions of the historical, religious and archaeological sites in Lubya. "More than

⁵² *The Official Guide to Israel*. Tel Aviv: The Ministry of Defence, Carta, Israel Maps and Publishing Co. Ltd., p. 287.

⁵³ Ernest Klein, *A Comprehensive Ethnological Dictionary of the Hebrew Language*, Carta, 1987, p. 292.

⁵⁴ For more details about the renaming process, see Meron Benvenisti, *Sacred Landscape, The Buried History of the Holy Land*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000. This was not the first time, however, that Zionist officials had dealt with the renaming of places in Lubya. In the 1940s there is a letter written in French advising against the use of the name ‘Sarjonia’ (the name of a piece of land in Lubya) for a new center in the Jewish settlement of Hazariim. Officials argued that the name referred to a king who was hostile to the Israelites. “le nom d’un roi assyrien (Sergon) hostile aux israelites.” File No. J15/7591. Zionist Archives, Jerusalem. [Copy on file with the author].

⁵⁵ *Village Statistics 1945, A Classification of Land and Area Ownership in Palestine*. Beirut: Palestine Liberation Organization Research Center, 1970, pp. 72 and 172.

⁵⁶ Lubya (Tiberias District), 1943-1944, *supra* note 33.

three thousand books and travelogues on Palestine were written by Europeans throughout the nineteenth century,” writes Israeli historian Ilan Pappé.⁵⁷ However, all of them “[paint] a picture of a primitive Palestine waiting to be redeemed by Europeans.” Rarely do these sources mention Lubyans – i.e., the primitives – themselves. Nevertheless, these records are important given the fact that Lubyans themselves left few written records of their village.

J.S. Buckingham, a British traveler who visited Palestine in the early nineteenth century described Lubya as a large village situated on top of a high hill.⁵⁸ The Swiss traveler Johan Ludwig Burckhardt described the wild artichokes that covered the plain on which the village was located. Burckhardt was nicknamed ‘*Sheikh Ibrahim*’ because of his long beard and the Arab clothes and turban that he wore on his journey through Palestine.

...From hence the road continues on a gentle declivity, in the midst of well cultivated Dhoura fields, as far as a low tract called Ardh el Hamma [al-Hima was Lubya’s largest plain]. The whole district is covered with the thorny shrub Merar. On the west side of Ard el Hamma we again ascended, and reached the village of Kefer Sebt, distant two hours and a half from Tabaria.... About half an hour to the N.E. is the spring Ain Dhamy (known for Lubyans as Damia), in a deep valley. From hence a wide plain extends to the foot of Djebel Tor; in crossing it, we saw on our right, about three quarters of an hour from the road, the village Louby, and a little farther on, the village Shedjare (al-Shajara). The plain was covered with the wild artichoke, called Khob; it bears a thorny violet coloured flower, in the shape of an artichoke, upon a stem five feet in height.⁵⁹

The *Survey of Western Palestine* described Lubya as a stone village on top of a limestone ridge.

Lubieh – Caves, tombs, and sarcophagi; several rock-cut wine-presses and cisterns were observed at this village, which probably represents an ancient site. There is a photo for a house in Lubya “built of cut stones of medium size in the direction of east and west appears to occupy the site, and to be built out of old materials formerly used for a Christian church - Guerin”.⁶⁰

Baedeker’s *Palestine and Syria* (1898) also refers to Lubya.

⁵⁷ Pappé, *supra* note 43, pp. 34-35.

⁵⁸ James Silk Buckingham, *Travels in Palestine*. London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme and Brown, 1821, p. 491. *Also see All That Remains, supra* note 7, p. 527.

⁵⁹ John L. Burckhardt, *Travels in Syria and the Holy Land*. London: John Murray, 1822, pp. 332-333. The names of the main villages were also written in Arabic. Burckhardt also mentions the encampment of Bedouins from the Subeih tribe. Lubyans had several clashes with this tribe.

⁶⁰ Lieut. C. R. Conder, R.E., & Lieut. H. H. Kitchener, R.E., *The Survey of Western Palestine, Memoirs of the Topography, Orography, Hydrography & Archaeology*. Vol. 1. London: Adelphi, 1881, p. 412.

From Kafr Kennâ the road leads to the E.. through the broad, fertile, and well-cultivated *Wâdi Rummâneh*, a side-valley of the plain of Battôf (p. 276). After 50 min. *Tur'an* is seen to th left. In $\frac{3}{4}$ hr. we pass the ruins of *Khirbet Meskana*, and turn due E., and in 20 min. more see *Lûbiyeh* on the right. In April, 1799, the French under Junot fought heroically against the superior forces of the Turks near Lûbiyeh. We next reach (23 min.) the ruins of *Khân Lûbiyeh*, cross the caravan route (to the N. rises the *Karn Hattîn*, see p. 285), and traverse a hilly tract to th E. to (1 hr. 25 min.) the hill above Tiberias, which we reach in $\frac{3}{4}$ hr. more.⁶¹

Two kilometres from Lubya there was a caravansary built during the Ottoman period. There was also a destroyed pool and ruins of old houses at the same site. Lubya was also known as an archaeological site. Many caves and tunnels were discovered under the village.⁶²

Murray's *Handbook for Travellers in Syria and Palestine*, published at the beginning of the twentieth century also includes a short description of Lubya.

Our road lies across the plain to the E., and there is nothing of interest to detain us by the way. After 5 m. (1 $\frac{1}{2}$ hr.) we pass Lûbieh on our rt., standing on top of a low rocky hill, and surrounded by hedges of prickly pear. Several caves, tombs, and sarcophagi, rock-cut winepresses and cisterns are to be found in this village, which thus probably occupied some ancient important site.... After crossing the caravan-road from Damascus to Jerusalem and Egypt, by the side of which are some deep wells, we come in sight of a saddle.... The horns of Hittin, the scene of the famous victory of Saladin over the Crusaders on July 5, 1187. The battle itself was fought on the irregular plateau between Hittin and Lûbieh, which we are now crossing. The Crusaders were nearly annihilated in this desperate conflict.⁶³

The dossier on Lubya collected by Zionist intelligence sources provides a short description of the village. "Lubya is located at the Tiberias-Nazareth road. There was a *khan* (inn) two kilometres from the village. The houses are from stone. The roofs are made of wood or cement. Cactus trees form the walls of the village. There are two valleys, *al-A'laka* and *al-Hima*."⁶⁴

In contrast to the descriptions of travelers, academics, and scholars, and Zionist intelligence officials, Lubyans memories of the village are full of life, detail and emotions, which express the relationship between the villagers and their place of origin. It

⁶¹ *Baedeker's Palestine and Syria, Handbook for Travelers*. Karl Baedeker (ed.). London: Dulau and Co., 1898, p. 286.

⁶² *All That Remains*, *supra* note 7, p. 527.

⁶³ John Murray (Firm), *Handbook for Travellers in Syria and Palestine*. Mary Brodrick (ed.). London: E. Stanford, 1903, p. 244.

⁶⁴ Lubya (Tiberias District), 1943-1944, *supra* note 33.

is like the relationship between a mother and her daughter or a father and his son. As Tamam ‘Ajayni (Um Hassan)⁶⁵, who spent half of her life in Lubya and the other half in exile in the nearby village of Dayr Hanna inside Israel, stated to me: “Lubya was the mother of all the land (*um al-bilad*).”

The interview with Um Hassan had the tone of past memories that refuse to wither or die. Her feelings toward the people also had undertones of tenderness and love. “May God compensate you for your trouble,” she said in Arabic, when she knew that I had two daughters. Before I left Dayr Hanna, she insisted on giving me 2,000 shekels from her savings as a present for my daughters. To avoid upsetting her, I took the money and gave it to her son-in-law, to give back to her. Um Hassan died at the age of 100.

The feeling of Lubyans towards the land is expressed in both the spoken and written word. Abu Majid expressed his connection to Lubya in the following poem.

<p><i>Ya Za'ir In Ruhit la-bladak ziyara</i> <i>Boos trabha boos lihjara</i> <i>Itha mayyalt 'a lubya al 'thbi</i> <i>byihiznak ya za'ir manthar atharha</i> <i>Shammil 'ala ilhara il-shmaliyyi</i> <i>wi zoor il-balad hara ba'id hara</i> <i>Lamma jarrabat il-kuwwat il-isra'iliyyi</i> <i>'ala lubya tshin ghara</i> <i>Dabbabat wa tayyarat wa madfa'iyyi</i> <i>wa rashashat tzikh bi ghazara</i> <i>Kan il 'adad wahad lamiyyi</i> <i>wa darat ilma'raka min dar la dara</i> <i>Wa bkina bihlokhim shoki kawiiyi</i> <i>kat'een il-tareek imshaddidden il-hisara</i> <i>Ila in ja'at ilkuwwat ilkawokjiyyi</i> <i>sallamatna bi'amir madroos wa sadir</i> <i>karara</i></p>	<p>You who will visit your land kiss its soul kiss the stones If you pass by the sweet Lubya you will be melancholic at its sad ruins Go to the northern suburb and visit the village suburb by suburb When the Israelis forces tried to invade Lubya Tanks and airplanes and mortars and machine guns shooting rapidly The numbers was one to one hundred the battle was from door to door We stayed in their throats a pick disrupting their roads and strengthening the besiege Until Qawuqji⁶⁶ forces came and deliver the land by orders from above.</p>
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In his diary Abu Isam described the village as “situated on the caravan road between *al-Sham* (Damascus), Egypt and southern Palestine, and at the crossroads between Hauran in Syria, and the coast [of the Mediterranean Sea] where the port city of ‘Akka was known as a main starting point for caravans from the coast. There was a road that crossed Lubya from north to south called *Tariiq al-Sham*, or *al-Sham* road [*Bilad al-Sham* is the old name of all the area roughly comprising Syria, Palestine, Lebanon and Jordan] and another road crossed the village from east to west called *Tariiq Hauran*. Thus caravans

⁶⁵ Tamam ‘Ajayni (Um Hassan) was born in 1898. The interview with her was conducted on 7 October 1995 in Dayr Hanna, Israel.

⁶⁶ Fawzi Qawuqji was the leader of Arab volunteer forces during the 1936-39 uprising in Palestine and was later commander of the Arab Liberation Army (*Jaysh al-Inqadh*) formed under the Arab League to assist Palestinian Arabs in the 1947-49 conflict and war in Palestine.

passed through Lubya from east to west and from north to south. From Hauran, the caravans carried seeds to 'Akka and goods were carried from Syria to to Egypt and vice versa."

The location of Lubya would later play a key role in the relation between the village and the British as well as Jewish forces during the 1936-39 Palestinian revolt and the war of 1947-49 as discussed in subsequent chapters. According to Abu Isam's diary, "There were two wells where rainwater was gathered. East of the village there was a reservoir. The walls of the reservoir were built of stone, which made it strong and durable even though it was built long ago. The fields of Lubya are fertile with black and volcanic earth. Lubya was well-known for its seeds that were exported to Nazareth, 'Akka and Haifa. There were two harvests annually, in summer and winter. In the south west of the *Hima* plain was located a very rich area called *Khirbat Damya*, which was known for its spring water. In this area there was an old reservoir used for watering cattle, sheep, cows and camels. The fields nearby were irrigated as well. South of the plain on the slope of the mountain was *maqam Bassoum*."

The peasants used to put their field instruments at night in the *maqam* because thieves were afraid to enter. They thought that God would punish them. Even in 1999 when I visited Lubya I was warned by the man accompanying me not to go inside the *maqam*, which still stands.

The diary also states that "there were also springs in *al-Bassoum* and *Wadi al-Nassa*, and from these the Jews took water to their two kibbutzim. In the north of *al-Hima* was located *Khirbat Sarjouni*. Its name was taken from the Roman word for 'sergeant.' Later on the *Arab al-Khawalid* inhabited this area. There were Roman ruins in '*Ard al-Tal* east of the village. The inhabitants of the village were prosperous farmers because of its rich and extensive fields. They extended to the east to the borders of Tiberias (*Tal al-Ma'oun*), which is a land owned by the Tabari family (*Sheikh Sa'id al-Tabari*). It is a high hill. To the east of this hill was '*Ard al-Manara*, a wide field overlooking Tiberias and *Sahl al-Hima*, a wide plain with a high temperature. To the north of the village, the land of Lubya bordered Hittin's land and the horn of Hittin. To the west are the lands of Tur'an and al-Shajara, and to the south al-Shajara and Kufr Sabt."

Ahmad Khalil Joudi (Abu Sameeh)⁶⁷ was one of the few Lubyans lucky to stay in Palestine close to Lubya because of a relative of his mother who lived nearby. Today Abu Sameeh's primary past time is visiting the ruins of Lubya. When he visits the village he never forgets to clean the cemetery, to fix a gravestone here and there. Today this is the only sign of life in the village. Abu Sameeh can identify the men's graves from the women and children through the size of the grave and the way the stones were placed on the tomb. Only two people can be identified by their gravestones: Haj Dawwas and Muhammad Mufaddi.

⁶⁷ Ahmad Khalil Joudi (Abu Sameeh) was born in 1932. The interview with him was conducted in Dayr Hanna, Israel on 9 May 1999.

When we walked together among the ruins of Lubya's homes, he insisted on showing me the place and on giving me the names of various plots of land and of their owners. "*Tallet Kindeel, al-Ruwaise, al-Shubbabi, Jor al-Khail, Birkit 'Saisi, Wadi al-Godran, and 'Ard al-'Akaba. al-Sanasil* is still the same as when we left it," he said. "[T]his here is '*Ard al-Sadir*, which belonged to the Shihabis. Here was *manzool* (a house for guests and meetings) 'Ajayni and here was the mosque."

"Up there on the slope of the hill was *Jablat al-'Owaini* where we used to collect *sabr* (cactus). This is *Karim Mas'oud* where Muhsen Khalil Joudi owned an olive grove. It is now a playground for the children of the Jewish settlement of Giv'at Avni. This here is the cave where we used to hide when the airplanes attacked in 1948, and that is the road we used to take to go to the nearby village of Hittin."

Abu Sameeh was very sick when he returned from his pilgrimage to Mecca in 1998. He even asked his cousin to let him visit Lubya before he went to Mecca because he was afraid he might die there and never see his village again. But he survived the pilgrimage and the first place to visit when he returned, before his house in Dayr Hanna, was Lubya. For Abu Sameeh, Lubya was not just a pile of old ruins. It is a lively village even until today. His cousin told me how he became active and enthusiastic again when they were at the entrance of Lubya. The moment he realized that had arrived Abu Sameeh whispered: "*ya habeebti ya Lubya* (Lubya my love)."

Remembered places in Lubya

Each piece of land in the village has a specific meaning and historical significance for Lubyans. An entire book is needed to explain the origins and the meanings of each piece of the land and the various historical connotations of the places, as remembered by the elderly people. The cave of *Magharit al-'Ariis*, for example, is where the bridegroom took his bath on his wedding day. Another cave named *Magharit al-Shuhada* is where they buried Lubyans who died while defending the village.

Oral history is an important tool for reclaiming information about the land and various sites in the village considering the fact that many Lubyans left their village in 1948 without land titles, tax forms, and other documents related to the land. Even the nineteenth century biblical expeditions and later Zionist archaeologists and cartographers used this method to collect correct information about the land in order to rename and Hebraize it, according to the way they heard it from the 'native Arabs'. The names of the pieces of most of Lubya's land was collected in this way.

Lubyans identified by name 126 places, six caves and nine religious *maqamaat* in the village. (See Appendix II for a complete list). Some of the plots of land in Lubya are named after seven villages, which date back to the Roman period. When he was a boy, Abu Majid used to hear stories about these places from his grandmother. He memorized by heart the accounts he heard from the elderly generation. Abu Majid's recollections are similar to those of other Lubyans.

(See Appendix III – *Place Names in Lubya*)

Bassoum was the burial site of a sacred man (*wali*) named Bassoum. There was also a small lake at this site. A stone to the north of the village where Jesus distributed bread to his disciples was known by villagers as *Hajar al-Nousrani*. *Damya* was the name of a lake fed from a nearby spring called *Ra's al-Nabi*. The lake was square-shaped and used by cattle as a water source. The lake is mentioned in Burkhardt's description of Lubya as 'Ain Dhamy. *Tallet al-Khaima* was the name of a hill located opposite the *khan* where travellers used to stop on the journey from Istanbul to Cairo. The name of the hill means hill of the tent. One of Salah al-Din's officers used the hill as a headquarters during the battle against the crusaders.

The place where the battle between Salah al-Din and the crusaders took place was known as *al-Kasayir*, which means the vanquished. It was located on the eastern side of the village running all the way up to Tal al-Ma'oun, where an Israeli hospital now stands. The place referred to as *Nabi Shwamin* was named after one of the son's of Jacob in the Old Testament. One of Lubya's most famous olive groves was known as *Karim Issa*. Finally, 'Ajayni lake is located on a small one *dunum* plot of land. During the winter, excess water seeped into the valley below, which was named *Wadi al-'Ayn*. These are only a few of the 143 names for places, caves and *maqamaat* that have special meaning for Lubyans.

Erasing the landscape

Like hundreds of other Palestinian villages located inside the territory of historic Palestine that became the state of Israel, Lubya was destroyed almost totally after the war of 1948. This was part of a general policy employed by Israel to prevent the return of Palestinian refugees after the end of the war.⁶⁸ (The fate of the village and its inhabitants during the 1947-48 war itself is discussed in further detail in Chapter 8.)

The mosque in Lubya was also demolished with the rest of the village. Today, visitors to the village can see clearly the remnants of the mosque and the school. When I visited Yousef al-Yousef in Yarmouk refugee camp in Damascus and showed him pictures of the village site he pointed out that "the last wall in Lubya, still standing until now, belonged to my grandfather Ali Yasin al-Kafri." I sent an aerial photo of Lubya taken in 1942 to Yousef in Damascus. His reply was full of emotional connotations of the past. The last sentence of the letter read: "This is the best present I have received during my whole life in exile."

⁶⁸ A 'Retroactive Transfer' plan prepared by Yosef Weitz, director of the Jewish National Fund's Land Department (Development Division) and chairman of two Israeli transfer committees established after 1948, in June 1948 outlined a package of six methods to prevent the return of Palestinian refugees. This included the demolition of Palestinian refugees, settlement of Jews in these areas and the adoption of laws to prevent refugees from returning. Weitz, *Diary III*, p. 294, entry for 30 May 1948, cited in Benny Morris, *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem 1947-49*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987, p. 136.

Mustafa al-Said (Abu Khaled)⁶⁹, who I met in Burj al-Burajni refugee camp⁷⁰ in Lebanon near Beirut, visited the village secretly in 1950, hoping to find a few possessions that they had hid before their rapid departure in the summer of 1948. According to Abu Khaled, most of the homes and buildings in the village had already been razed to the ground. Salah Shehada (Abu Nimr)⁷¹ is the last half-Lubyan who still partly lives there as a guardian of the remaining trees of the village. He told me that most of the buildings were still standing up until 1960.

A number of the Israeli Jews who I interviewed shared memories about the fate of Lubya after 1948. Nahom Abbo⁷² was an Israeli officer who participated in Lubya's occupation and was later responsible for the quarry in Lubya. "When I worked in Lubya as a stonecutter after 1948, I had seventy-five Arab workers working for me in the quarry (*rujmi*). I used to obtain permits from the authorities to allow them to work in Lubya. I stayed there until 1955 and up to that time, the village still stood as it was."

Nahom added that "it is a lie that bulldozers destroyed it. Infiltrators (*mistaninim*) from Jordan hid in Lubya and Kufr Kanna for years after 1948, in the hope of returning to their families undetected. I can tell you also that people from other villages came to salvage iron, copper, and used materials from Lubya. I can also tell you that my own workers used to fetch wood, copper and iron from there." The so-called infiltrators referred to by Nahom were in fact Lubyans who crossed the border to check on the situation in their village and retrieve personal possessions.⁷³

Israel subsequently established new Jewish settlements on the lands of Palestinian refugees, including the land of Lubya. "Jewish villages were built in the place of Arab villages. You do not even know the names of these Arab villages, and I do not blame you because geography books no longer exist," said former Israeli Defense Minister Moshe Dayan. "Not only do the books not exist, the Arab villages are not there either. Nahlal arose in the place of Mahlul; Kibbutz Gvat in the place of Jibta; Kibbutz Sarid in the place of Huneifis; and Kefar Yehushu'a in the place of Tal al-Shuman. There is not one single place built in this country that did not have a former Arab population."⁷⁴

The construction of new Jewish settlements on so-called abandoned Palestinian refugee lands also aimed to prevent the return of the refugees. In the book *The Official Guide to*

⁶⁹ The interview with Mustafa al-Sa'id (Abu Khalid) was conducted in Burj al-Shamali refugee camp in Lebanon on 10 February 1999.

⁷⁰ Burj al-Barajni camp is situated near Beirut International Airport in south Beirut. The camp was established in 1948. On 30 June 2002 there were 19,526 registered Palestine refugees living in the camp.

⁷¹ Salah Shehada (Abu Nimr) was born in 1930. The interview with him was conducted in Dayr Hanna, Israel on 29 May 1999.

⁷² Nahom Abbo was born in 1923. The interview with him took place at his home in Tiberias on 22 June 1996.

⁷³ For more on this period and Palestinian refugee attempts to return home see, Benny Morris, *Israel's Border Wars, 1949-1956, Arab Infiltration, Israeli Retaliation, and the Countdown to the Suez War*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993.

⁷⁴ Moshe Dayan in an address to the Technion (Israel Institute of Technology), Haifa (as quoted in *Ha'aretz*, 4 April 1969), cited in *All That Remains*, *supra* note 7, p. xxxi.

Israel, Lubya is replaced by Lavi, which was, according to the official narrative of the Israeli authorities, “a Jewish town from the Roman Byzantine period whose name was retained in that of the Arab village of Lubya. It was founded in 1948, and in 1949 moved to the present site to the lands of the abandoned village of Lubya. During the disturbances of 1936-1939 and war of independence the village served as a base for Arab gangs.”⁷⁵

Committees were established to rename *wadis*, mountains, villages, and other features of the natural landscape, often according to the names of the Old Testament in order to clean the geography from its Arabic names and connotations.⁷⁶ The announcement of the new name for Lubya was made on 8 February 1949 by Y.A. Arikha, secretary of the special committee established by the Israeli government to replace Arabic place names with Hebrew names. Arikha was addressing the religious 'pioneers' at the agricultural center of the Poel Ha Mizrahi.

We have the honour of informing you that at its meeting yesterday, the names committee discussed the selection of an appropriate name for your settlement which is going to be established on the land belonging to Lubya in Lower Galilee. After a thorough discussion, the committee decided to select for your settlement the historical place name from the Second Temple period "Lavie" It is worth noting that aside from the historical considerations, the name Lavie symbolizes the revival of the Jewish people and the establishment of Israel their land.⁷⁷

The word ‘abandoned’ dominates much of the official Israeli narrative concerning the displacement of the Palestinians. It gives the impression that Palestinians willingly left their homes and villages in 1948. In reality, however, Palestinian refugees, like refugees elsewhere, only left either because they felt their lives were in danger or because they were expelled by military forces.

The village site of Lubya has since been forested and renamed South African Forest. Two new Israeli Jewish settlements were built on a small area of the village lands after 1948 – Lavi (1949) and Giv’at Avni (1992-93). Israelis also use some of the land for grazing cattle and recreation. Even to western historians and anthropologists, the village site is difficult to recognize without assistance from remaining Lubyans. Ted Swedenburg, while researching his book, *Memories of Revolt, the 1936-1939 Rebellion and the Palestinian National Past*, accidentally came across a pine forest, and wrote:

One day in March 1985 I accompanied Sonia Nimr’s family on a picnic outing to the Sea of Galilee. Driving from Nazareth to Tiberias, we spotted a clutch of cacti, an unruly patch of desert growth amid the bucolic order of a planted pine forest. Sonia’s father an electrical engineer in his late fifties, exclaimed, “I remember, there used to be a village here, it was

⁷⁵ *Supra* note 52.

⁷⁶ For more details on this issue see Benvenisti, *supra* note 54.

⁷⁷ Central Zionist Archives, 8 February 1949 [On file with the author].

called Lubya.” Later I consulted a map and discovered that the Jewish settlement across the road from the forest was a kibbutz, founded on village lands in 1949 named Lavi - presumably a Hebraisation of Lubya. The ruins of the village are buried under two JNF [Jewish National Fund] forests, one planted in the name of the Republic of South Africa. Former rebels in the Galilee recalled Lubya as a major smuggling post where they used to purchase rifles and ammunition for use in the revolt.⁷⁸

Still, more than fifty years later, ninety percent of Lubya’s extensive lands are not built on.

During my visit to Lubya in 1999, Lubyans were protesting to the Israeli Ministry of Religious Affairs because someone had defaced the remaining graves in the village with Hebrew graffiti. Nayif Hajjo⁷⁹, who is living in Dayr Hanna accompanied me to see the graves and take photos. He is active in the National Committee for the Defence of the Rights of Internally Displaced Palestinians inside Israel and was wounded by Israeli police forces on Land Day in 1976.

The graffiti sprayed on the remaining graves in the village cemetery read: 'A dog is buried here.' The photo of the defaced graves was later published in local newspapers.⁸⁰ Nayif wrote a letter to the Israeli authorities requesting permission to fence off the graveyard after this incident. I accompanied about thirty Lubyans to the cemetery to show the representative of the Ministry the graffiti and the condition of family graves that are hardly recognizable. The request to fence off the graveyard for protection has not been met to this day.

Abu Nimr, who accompanied me in his Land Rover to see all of Lubya’s lands, told me the story of the attempts by Israelis to uproot the cemetery, and how he managed to stop them from doing so at the last moment. He spoke very cautiously during our first meeting. Many of the remaining Lubyans in Israel viewed Abu Nimr with suspicion because he managed to obtain the consent of the Israeli government to remain on village lands. They questioned why he was allowed to stay. Nevertheless, he was extremely generous and provided many details about Lubya over the past fifty years. He later asked me for copies of the land registration documents for Lubya that I had obtained from the Israeli archives so he could give a copy to his children.

I also found that a new cemetery for Israeli Jews, which is called Beit Ra’il was built in the midst of Lubya’s old cemetery. A quick look at both cemeteries spoke, without any comment necessary, of the intended fate of each: the total neglect of the older cemetery, and the marble stones and modern fences and flowers of the newly established Israeli one.

⁷⁸ Swedenburg, *supra* note 11, pp. 62-63.

⁷⁹ Nayif Hajjo was born on 7 June 1948. The interview with him was conducted on 11 September 1995.

⁸⁰ *al-Sinnara*, 1 September 1995.

Chapter Four

Rhythms of Life

*The village - with its special arrangements of houses and orchards,
its open meeting - places, its burial ground, its collective identity -
was built into the personality of each individual villager
to a degree that made separation like an obliteration of the self.*

Rosemary Sayigh

Before its destruction Lubya had its own vibrant life, gentle culture, and intricate social network. Cohesion and harmony in the village grew out of agreed upon internal social codes. Schools, cultural clubs, family relations, and religious and social traditions formed the foundation of civil society⁸¹ in Lubya. Political society in the form of state institutions, including an army, police and central administration, was absent from the village.

“We had everything we needed to live a decent life,” said Um Hassan. Some of Lubya's men joined the British police and other civilian sectors, its peasants had their cattle and sheep, and its merchants traded within Palestine and abroad. In a word, we were independent.” Others spoke in more detail about aspects of everyday life: the barber, the butcher, the dentist, etc. “Life was very simple and primitive,” said Nayif Muhammad Hassan⁸², “but it was beautiful.”

Many Lubyans related common memories of harvest time and wedding celebrations in the village. These stories illustrated the sense of continuity between the people and the land, which continues until this day. “Our social life was established on happiness,” Nadmi Othman (Abu Khalil)⁸³ told me during a visit to Homs refugee camp in Syria. “Every day I sat outside our door and listened for the sound of music. Then I would join the wedding party.”

Despite its incorporation into the Ottoman Empire, and the subsequent imposition of the British Mandate until 1948, Lubya remained, to a large extent, an identifiable and separate socio-economic entity, living in social harmony, and depending mainly on agriculture for its survival. This unique social and cultural identity of the village prevails up to the present among Lubyans in exile.

⁸¹ Civil society is a complex term describing the relationship between the state, the citizen and civil institutions. Here I am using the term simply to identify the social structure in Lubya and the inter-relationships between its people. For more information about the history of the term *see*, Azmi Bishara, *Musahama fi Naqd al-Mujtama' al-Madani*. Ramallah: Muwatin, 1996.

⁸² Nayif Muhammad Hassan was born in 1925. The interview was conducted with him in Amman, Jordan on 4 April 1996.

⁸³ Nadmi Othman (Abu Khalil) was born in 1929. The interview with him was conducted in Homs refugee camp in Syria on 18 November 1998.

Village life

Memories of harvest, education, and wedding celebrations were a common thread running through many of the interviews. Nayif Muhammad Hassan, however, was one of the Lubyans who spoke in detail about other aspects of life in Lubya. He served with the British police force in Palestine together with Abu Majid during the troublesome years of the forties. He knew the village and its life well, although he spent twenty-five years as a soldier in the Jordanian army. For Nayif, village life was not as rosy as others had remembered it.

“We were brought up in the fields where a farmer used to work for a whole year and was still not be able to buy clothes for his son. For example, one bag holding twelve *saa'* [5 kg] of corn cost sixty *kirsh*. It would have been better for the farmer to buy one bag at one *lira*. Lubya's corn was famous in the whole region, but nowadays corn is used as bird feed. You could smell the bread from far when our mothers were baking. Bread has no smell nowadays. Generally speaking, a farmer in those days lived better than the people in the city, but poverty in the village was part of the government's policy.”

Some young men from the village joined the British army in Palestine in order to supplement their income from the land. Yousef Issa, for example, served in the army “five to six months every year from 1941 to 1946. I used to collect taxes on the kettle tax (*tharayib*) from the farmers from the whole area of Tiberias. In 1947 they sent after me, but I didn't go. They used to give us thirty Palestinian pounds as a salary. The rest of the year when I was at home, I used to work in the fields planting corn. At the time, one kilo of corn cost twenty *kirsh*.”

Nayif Hassan continued describing other aspects of life in the village. “The barber was also the dentist and used a *kalbi* (crimp) to pull out teeth. There was neither a doctor nor a clinic in the village. My cousin Abdel-Rahman died after being bitten by a snake. I was also bitten by a one while I was playing with my friends. I put my finger in a hole in the ground to retrieve a ball when I realised that something had bit me. My uncle came and turned the stone over and saw the snake. It was 11 a.m. and the farmers were coming back from the fields. So they bound my arm, stopped a car on its way to Tiberias, and took me to a hospital in Nazareth. The director of the hospital was Mr. Bathket, who, when the bandage was removed, expressed his satisfaction at the treatment I had received at the village, because it had prevented the bleeding.”

“He cleaned my hand and put it in warm water three times, but I had to spend one night at the hospital. I was astonished at how they left me alone in there. I was less than seven years old. I also remember that a nurse there gave me a lecture about Christianity, but I understood nothing. My mother and brother came the next day with two donkeys and took me out of hospital. On the way home we stopped in Nazareth to eat. I remember my brother found a fly in the food and protested to the owner of the restaurant, and we left without eating. When we arrived back at the village, I saw a lit torch on the fence (*sinisli*) of our house. All my close relatives, my uncle Saleh, 'Awad Shawish and many others had come to see me, wish me well and give me sweets.”

“There was only one radio in the village in the house of Mustafa Abu Dhais [the son of the *mukhtar*]. Its batteries worked through a fan fixed to a stick connected to a dynamo. There was also one tailor in Lubya, a Circassian named Durdah. He could make Arab and foreign suits and used to iron them by putting hot coals in the iron. His work was very professional. He used to live in Suleiman Sayid’s house on the eastern side of the village, and paid a rent of twenty *kirsh* a month.”

“There were two barbers in the village, Mahmoud Shar’an and 'Awad Qatamish, whom we used to pay once a yea. Sometimes we even gave them corn. Whenever our hair became too long, we went to them and they never refused to cut it. At harvest time, he used to collect corn from the different families, according to how large this or that family was. Mahmoud Shar’an had another job as a fruit and vegetable vendor and he used to buy his merchandise from Tiberias. Sometimes people from the ‘Atwat met him on his way back from Tiberias and destroyed all what he had with him, accusing him of having bought from the Jews.”

Nayif also remembered a story about “an unemployed man in Lubya whose name was 'Awad al-Zaini. One day he passed by the house of Abu Dhais and the latter gave him two empty sacks to buy him coal and put it in them. 'Awad took the money and went on his way. While he was walking towards the Shihabi area, he met 'Awad Tallouzi (known as Abu Sa'id) who had camels with him, and sold him the two sacks. Two days later, Abu Dhais asked around about the coal sacks and was astonished to hear from Tallouzi that 'Awad al-Zaini had sold them to him.”

From the time he was a young boy, Nayif “frequently went to the mosque to pray. The *Imam* of the mosque then was *Sheikh* Ali Shihabi.” According to Abu Majid’s diary, Lubya’s mosque was built by Mas’oud Madi in 1822. The mosque was built between the homes of two brothers, Shanshir and Madi, of the Shanashri family. It was constructed on special basalt pillars in the same architectural style as the white mosque in Nazareth and the upper mosque in Tiberias, but it did not have a tower (*mi'thani*). The mosque was large enough for 300-400 worshippers.

Abu Sameeh told me that the Madi family came originally from the Wahidi tribe, who were Bedouins from the *Naqab* (Negev) area. “Mas’oud was a large feudal lord from Ijzim, a village in the Haifa district and a supporter of the Ottoman regime, whose family had its own courts and laws. When Ibrahim Pasha arrived in Palestine in 1834, however, he had Mas’oud executed. *Sheikh* Ibrahim al-Joudi had married Mas’oud’s daughter, Zayna (Um Khalil), and in honour of this marriage, her father had built the mosque in Lubya.”

With the army Nayif Hassan also had a chance to work in different places and even accompany famous personalities visiting the region. “While in the army, I worked on the film *Lawrence of Arabia* in 1960-61. My job was to operate a crane for three months. Anthony Quinn played the role of *Sheikh* Odeh Abu Tayeh and Peter O’Toole the role of Lawrence. The film was made partly in the Tabuk area, east of Ma’an, and partly in *Wadi*

Rum, in Jordan. A friend of mine from the Ta'amra Arabs found a narrow-mouthed jar with decorations on it and sold it for twenty-five Jordan dinars to someone from Bethlehem, who then sold it for 75,000 dinars."

Lubyans also shared various other memories related to life in the village. Abu Majid, for example, told me a story about a man from the Kilani tribe who wrote a poem about Lubyans eating cactus. The poem had negative connotations, which displeased many among the 'Ajayni family, however, Abu Majid insisted on reciting the popular folkloric poem.

<p><i>Dabbas wibnu wibn akhoo</i> <i>Nizlu 'assabir hafoo</i> <i>Kamo il-'ajayni shafoo</i> <i>'Imlu toshi 'omomiyyi</i> <i>Mahmoud Husayn hazza'im</i> <i>Kassam issabir takseem</i> <i>wakul nafar a'too miyyi</i> <i>Khalil il'ammori ya ghawi</i> <i>In 'assamit kaif biddak itsawi</i> <i>Darbak 'ala innamsawi</i> <i>Idrib ibri kawiiyi</i> <i>Wittallozi bihki ilhak</i> <i>Willi biji dukkoo dak</i> <i>Sa'id o 'Arif sinji tak</i> <i>'Assabir harbajiiyi</i></p>	<p>Dabbas and his son and his brothers' son ate greedily all the cactus 'Ajayni saw him which resulted in a big feud Mahmoud Husayn the leader distributed the cactus among the parties and each took one hundred pieces The arrogant Khalil al-Ammori What will you do if you couldn't excrete You should go to the Austrian and have an injection Tallouzi speaks rightly Hit the one who interferes Said and Arif were always ready Fighters to defend the cactus.</p>
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This poem is still recited by Lubyans until now. Dabbas, Mahmoud Husayn, Khalil 'Ammori, and Tallouzi, were all names of people living in the same *hara* (neighbourhood) with Abu Majid. In the poem he was poking fun at people eating cactus fruit, which was famous in the village.

Even until now, the cactus trees in Lubya still bear fruit, and Lubyans from Dayr Hanna come every year to collect and eat it. Before 1948, many of the villagers used the large cactus plants as fences for their livestock. While hundreds of villages were razed to the ground after 1948, many of the cacti remain and provide a visible reminder of life before the *Nakba*. In many places just a little amount of digging and searching in the undergrowth reveals the stones, wells, grave stones and other remnants of village life.

Memories of harvest

All the inhabitants of the village, women, men, children and the elderly, contributed to the livelihood of the community. The fertile and extensive village lands provided not only what the village needed for its own sustenance but every year yielded produce for export to neighbouring towns and villages. In 1944-45, the last year for official British statistics, a total of 31,026 *dunums* were allocated to growing cereals; 1,655 *dunums* were irrigated

or used as orchards⁸⁴; and 1,520 *dunums* were planted with trees.⁸⁵ Letters addressed to the agricultural office in Tiberias requested permission to plant different kinds of trees, including olive and apple.

According to Jewish intelligence sources, Lubya's olive trees produced about 600 *jarra* (containers made of earth used for domestic purposes) of oil. Village lands also produced 10 *kuntar* (one *kuntar* is about 330 kg) each of figs and grapes. Four different kinds of fruit trees produced about 15 *kuntar* in total. The dossier on Lubya also notes that villagers owned 1,800 sheep, 400 cows, 100 horses, 80 donkeys, 40 camels, and 3,000 chickens in the village.⁸⁶

For Lubyans, the land was their livelihood. "Lubya had the best agricultural land in the whole area and its inhabitants were wealthy," said Um Hassan. "There were those who lived well and earned a good income, those in the middle, and those who were poor which meant that they had no land to plant and no permanent job," said Yousef Issa. "Those people used to work on the land of others. Their salary was four *kail* [One *kail* = 20 Palestinian *kirsh*. One Palestinian *jinah* = approx. one English Pound], while their wives received 1½ *kail*. This meant that a couple could earn 5½ *kail*, or about 75 kilograms of flour. This was enough to cover the family's needs for the whole year."

There were only two families in the village who did not have land of their own. By the time they had settled in Lubya the land had already been distributed among its people. Intelligence collected by the *Haganah* observed that in 1943-44 approximately fifty village families had no land at all and earned a living by working as hired hands, breeding cattle, and/or as merchants. The difference in numbers can be explained, in part, by the different definitions of family. According to the dossier on Lubya each family owned between 100 and 150 *dunums* of land in the village.⁸⁷

According to Yousef Issa "many transient workers came with their camels from Julise, Kufr Yassif, and al-Bi'ni to transport the sheaves. For every twelve *kails* [one *kail* = 12 *saa*], one '*ulba* = 6 *saa*', one *mid* = two *saa*', one *saa*' = 5kg] they transported, they would be given one. In the late thirties two *hamulas*, about twelve families from the 'Asafra and Samallout in Lubya, bought a tractor and used it for their own benefit as well as rented it out at the usual rate, which was one *kail* for every twelve."

Memories of harvest illustrate the kind of community solidarity that prevailed in the village. "The whole family used to work in the fields at harvest time and there was no pollution in the air," recalled Nayif Hassan. "Sometimes landowners employed seasonal workers who were called *murabi*' meaning those who worked for a quarter of the land's produce. In summer, the farmers used to build a shelter out of vine branches ('*arishi*)

⁸⁴ *All That Remains*, *supra* note 7, p. 527. Also see, *Village Statistics 1945*, *supra* note 55, p. 122.

⁸⁵ *al-Maosoaa al-Falastinia*, *supra* note 19, p. 55.

⁸⁶ Lubya (Tiberias District), 1943-1944, *supra* note 33.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

under which we used to sleep and gather at night to talk for most of the night in a wonderful atmosphere.”

Those who did not own land or other means of production also had the possibility of earning a decent living. People helped one another. The shepherd, barber, merchant, teacher, and *imam* of the mosque, as well as every other villager, were connected to one another either socially or by virtue of their shared interests. The entire village, men, women and children all participated in the harvest. Normally, the men were responsible for cutting the grain. The women collected and transported the sheaves to the threshing floor.

Sa'idiyya Younis⁸⁸, who is married to Yousef Issa, still remembers the harvest days in Lubya. In 1995 she visited the village for the first time since 1948. It was one of the happiest and most sad moments of her life. Unlike other women from the village, Sa'idiyya was not afraid to be interviewed, speaking about the past without any hesitation. As with all the women from the village, her memories of daily life in the village were warmer and more detailed than those of men from the village.

“We used to collect the grain in a place called *hilli*, a gathering place for sheaves. We made many *hillis* depending on the size of *maris al-'ard* or field. Then a man from the family came with a camel and transported the sheaves to the threshing floor. In April we began picking by hand: beans, lentils, and lentil vetch. When it was dry we sent it to be threshed. Then in May, as usual, we started reaping the wheat and barley.”

Village women made braziers, which were the stoves of that time, from clay and water that would then be dried in the sun. They used a kind of soil called *hizria* to make jars, vessels and vats. “I remember that when I was a child we did not have a *primus* (kerosene cooker),” said Sa'idiyya. “We used to cook and warm ourselves on the brazier for which we collected wood from the nearby villages of “Aylabun and al-Maghar. The *primus* was used in Lubya only later, just before our expulsion in 1948.”

During the interview Yousef interrupted Sa'idiyya to add a well-remembered phrase, which used to announce the beginning of the harvest season: “*fi khamistash ayyar ihmil minjalak wa ghar*. (On the fifteenth of May carry your scythe and start working).”

Normally one mule, cow or horse with a threshing sledge was used to thresh the grain. The type of animal used depended on the financial situation of the family. According to Yousef, “Children were mainly used to drive the animals. After we separated the grain from the straw with wooden pitchforks we would put each in different sacks. Our family used to produce about 15 to 20 *kail* (one *kail* is about 60 kgs) and store what it needed in clay bins for the year. The rest we would sell. The extra straw we sold as animal fodder.”

⁸⁸ Sa'idiyya Younis was born in 1930. The interview with Sa'idiyya Younis was conducted in Copenhagen on 10 October 1998. She has eleven children now living in Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Israel and Copenhagen. Sa'idiyya Younis is my mother.

Yousef continued his story about the harvest and recollections of the usual workday, which started early in the morning. “First I would pray, then we would prepare the donkeys and horses and start our journey to the fields. It took us one hour or a little more to arrive at *mawarisna* (our plots of land). Normally we would be five to six from our family. The few people who had no children hired a *muzari*’ (sharecropper) who would be paid 5 *kirsh* for his trouble (one *lira* = 100 *kirsh*). We started by harvesting the beans, lentils and lentil vetch (*kirsanni*), which dried earlier than other crops. If we didn’t harvest the *kirsanni* in time it would fall to the ground.”

“After we completed the harvest, we gathered the sheaves, which took four days to accomplish, and then camels transported it to the threshing floor in Lubya. The families who did not have enough men to do the work used to hire boys to do the threshing. The boys would work from eleven until four and we would give each of them one *kail*, about 60 kilograms, for threshing the whole *baydar* (threshing floor). It took about twenty days to finish the beans and lentils. Then we started collecting the wheat. All during the month of May we would harvest the wheat. The work lasted well into August.”

“We used to say: '*in fatak 'ab wa ma tharrait ka 'innak bilhawa ingharrait* (If you do not thresh in August, it is like falling in love with air).' At the end of August we started to collect the corn, and after the corn the *miktha* (watermelon), then the okra, tomatoes and zucchini. We also learned the art of planting *miktha* without water.”

“At the end of September the olive season began and we usually did not have enough, so we bought what we needed from ‘Aylabun and Rami. There were two oil mills in Lubya, one owned by Hassan Abu Dhais [the *mukhtar*] and the other by Qwateen. They used to halter a horse to the main stone, and it would circle around the stone. Normally the owners of the mill took one pitcher of oil for every twelve pitchers produced. al-Sharkasi, his real name was Sa'id al-Shami [his brother was an officer in the British border army], owned a grain mill. He originally hailed from Kufr Kama. For every *kail*, he took two or three *kirsh*, or a *rub 'iyyi* (a pot used by villagers to weigh the grain), which is one quarter of the *saa*’, one *saa*’ = 5kg.” The millstone can still be seen though the mill was demolished in 1948.

In winter, the people prepared for spring by sowing and planting. Sa'idiyya Younis remembered a proverb about the necessity of being ready to work in December. “*illi ma bishid bilijrad, 'ind al-salayib bihrad* (He who does not work hard in December will be sorry when harvest time comes).”

Education

Lubya had its own modest educational institutions. The establishment of a school and attempts to establish a cultural club and an agricultural school illustrate an early awareness of the necessity of coping with the modern needs of the community, especially the youth. One of the village *makhateer*, for example, suggested that the village open a school for girls. “Instead of sending a stone to the neighbouring young man,” said Yiyha Shihabi, “girls should write a letter instead.”

The first school in Lubya opened in 1896.⁸⁹ Villagers financed the construction of it themselves. This school continued to function throughout the period of the British Mandate. The two-year curriculum was considered equivalent to the normal five-year preparatory school. Subjects offered included religion, geography, history, arithmetic, Arabic, English (from grade four), drawing and sports. There were twenty students in each class. Jewish intelligence sources state that there were around 135 students in the government school in 1942-1943.⁹⁰

There was also a one-room school headed by *Sheikh* Ali Shihabi. Approximately sixty pupils attended the school. The school provided religious education for the predominantly Muslim village, and helped students prepare for entry into the regular school. This school was not part of the official Ottoman and Mandate education system, nevertheless, all the male students of the village attended the school.

After grade five, children were sent to Tiberias to continue their education. Very few children from Lubya, however, were able to continue their education. Further education depended on the economic situation of each family. Nayif Hassan recalled that one resident of the village, “Awad Abu Dhais, *alma ‘thoun* (a man who gives the official authorization for marriages) used to tell his son that he was willing to sell his mother and sisters so that he can go on with his studies.”

Some villagers sold pieces of their land in order to pay for their children’s further education. In the 1940s, for example, Hauran Abdel-Rahman sold a plot of land and part of his cattle to pay for his son’s education at the American University in Beirut. After two years, however, the money ran out and the son, Abdel-Rahman, returned home. Two other students managed to study abroad: Muhammad Khalil Abdel-Qader, and Fawzi Abu Dhais.

Some Lubyans, like Tahir Mahmoud Husayn (Abu Tal’at), dropped out of school at an earlier age. Abu Tal’at, with his ironic way of laughing at the past, was generous in providing me with many details that helped to uncover Lubya’s history. “I attended the village school until the second grade then left school altogether. At that time people were not very interested in education.”

“I returned home from school one day crying and my mother, who loved me a lot, asked me why I was crying. I told her that the teacher hit me. So she picked up a stick and went directly to the school and threatened the teachers with it. This was exactly what I was hoping she would do. My teachers then were Ahmad Afifi, Sami Khouri and *Sheikh* Mustafa ‘Anabtawi. I used to spend my time in the fields with the sheep and cattle, drinking milk, riding horses, and paying visits to the neighbours.”

⁸⁹ Ministry of Education, *Yearbook*, 1321, p. 443. Also see Mustafa Dabbagh, *Biladuna Falastin*. Kufur Kari’: Dar al-Huda, 1991, pp. 424-426.

⁹⁰ Lubya (Tiberias District), 1943-1944, *supra* note 33.

School also provided a link to neighbouring villages and towns, including Nazareth. This was mainly due to the efforts of teachers from Nazareth who taught in the village. “We used to compete with Nazareth schools in different sports: football, jumping, etc.,” recalled Nayif Hassan. He started school in 1932 at the age of seven and continued until the fourth grade. “The director of the school bought us shirts, but we soon realised that the Israeli Star of David was drawn on them. People began to laugh at us in Nazareth. I don’t know why the other teachers, Muhammad Abdel-Qader and Safrini, didn’t object.”

Nayif also reflected on funny episodes that took place in the village school. These memories give an impression of student life more than half a century ago. “When *Sheikh* Mustafa died, Abdullah replaced him. When he entered our class and asked us what we had on that day’s program we told him dictation. He said: ‘Ha!’ Whenever he opened his mouth, we laughed, so he came towards me and hit me saying, ‘I am forty-five years old and no one laughed at me before.’ He had no teeth.”

“The teachers Muhammad and Safrini used to wear a *tarboush*, but later they changed to a *hatta* and *ikal* (Arab headdress and head band). Younis al-Mani⁹¹ and Yousef Issa still remember the order given by the leader of the revolution, *Sheikh* Iz al-Din al-Qassam, that all people must wear the Arab *koufia* (headdress) and were forbidden to wear the *tarboush*, the Turkish traditional head dress. The order had been obeyed throughout Palestine.

“A crazy teacher, Najib al-Khadra from Safad, used to let us run from the class to *Wadi al-Shomer*, the field where the battle of Salah al-Din al-Ayyoubi against the crusades took place. No one took the advice of the teachers in the village. There was, however, a garden in the schoolyard, located near *babur* al-Sharkasi (Sharkasi mill) and surrounded by a fence, in which we used to plant potatoes, beans and other vegetables. No one transgressed.”

Other elderly Lubyans, like Ibrahim Shihabi⁹² from Syria, also shared fond memories of their student days in the village. I first heard about Ibrahim when I was in Palestine starting my research. Saleh Jawad from Beir Zeit University told me about a manuscript about Lubya that he had received from a man named Ibrahim Shihabi in Damascus. When I later met Ibrahim in Syria, he generously offered me all of his documentation on Lubya, including his booklet about the village that was published in 1954. “As children sometimes we used to have fights with other children, especially the ‘Atwat children. We used to collect stones and hurl them at the other kids with slings, and usually we defeated them.”

“One day, after such an incident, their *mukhtar* came over and spoke to my father who promptly came to the school and asked Nasri to take all the pupils inside except for the ‘Atwat and the Shihabi children. He then made us kneel on the stone pavement and

⁹¹ Younis al-Mani was born in 1928. The interview with Younis was conducted in Denmark in 1995 together with Yousef Muhammad Issa.

⁹² Ibrahim Shihabi was born in 1933. The interview with Ibrahim Shihabi was conducted in Damascus, Syria together with Yousef al-Yousef on 13 October 1998.

started hitting us fiercely. Then he allowed all the other children to go into the school building except for me. He continued hitting me a while longer and then delivered me into the hands of the teachers in order to continue the job. They kept on hitting me from 8 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., but from that day onward we all became friends. I still would like sometimes to behave like the child I was in Lubya.”

At the beginning of the 1940s a Mr. Bowman was inspector of the village school. School principals were Sami Khouri and Nasri Nakhla, both from Nazareth. According to Lubyans, school teachers included Abdullah al-Kartabil (Tiberias), Muhammad Abdel-Qader (Tiberias), Abdel-Rahman Hajjo (Lubya), Muhammad Johar (Lubya), Najib al-Kadra (Safad), Muhammad al-Sifrini (Sifrin, West Bank), and Mustafa al-‘Anabtawi (‘Anabta) who was the religion teacher.

There is somewhat of a discrepancy between the teachers as remembered by Lubyans themselves and the information collected by Jewish intelligence sources that I found in the *Haganah* archives. The latter identifies the teachers in Lubya as Nasri Nakhla (Nazareth) who was also the director, Muhammad Ali Fahoum (Nazareth), Hassan al-Haj (Safad), and, Muhammad Abdel-Qader (Raini).⁹³ This discrepancy can be explained by the fact that Lubyans tend to remember those teachers who taught at the school at an earlier date.

Abu Isam, who kept the diary about life in the village, was a teacher in Lubya and director of schools in ‘Illut and Nazareth. His son Hashim gave more details about his father’s career, both in Lubya and after the *Nakba*, teaching in the villages around Nazareth. “My father taught for one year in Lubya. He obtained his degree in 1933 from a well-known school in Kadouri and then went to teach in al-Mansi, ‘Arraba, Samakh and ‘Illut. The director of the school in ‘Illut resigned from his post after he was attacked and robbed and my father took over his responsibilities. The school was ranked first in the Galilee.”

The Kadouri Agricultural School was established in the city of Tulkarem now located in the northern West Bank. The school was meant to be open to both Jews and Arabs but Jews refused to be taught except in Hebrew. Therefore, another school with the same name was opened for Jews only. The position was consistent with the Zionist policy of separation from the indigenous non-Jewish people.

This spirit of separation, isolation and redemption was expressed clearly in a speech by David Ben Gurion (one of the leaders of the Jewish *Yishuv* in Palestine and Israel’s first prime minister) to the meeting of the *Va’ad Leumi*, the *Yishuv*’s National Council in May 1936: “If we want Hebrew redemption 100 percent, then we must have a 100 percent Hebrew settlement, a 100 percent Hebrew farm, and a 100 percent Hebrew port”.⁹⁴

⁹³ *Ibid.*

⁹⁴ Masalha, *supra* note 42, p. 17, quoting David Ben Gurion, *Zichronot* [Memoirs] Vol. III. Tel Aviv: ‘Am ‘Oved, 1971-1972, p. 163.

Lubya also had an education club. On 29 July 1941, letters were sent from Lubya to the District Commissioner of Tiberias and to the Assistant District Commissioner for the Galilee requesting the establishment of an Educational Club in the village.⁹⁵ Six additional letters were subsequently written to clarify the aims and specify the regulations of the Club. The Club was to be affiliated with the British Council in Palestine.

Committee members from Lubya were to include: Fawzi Shihabi (chairman), Hafith Saleh Yihya (vice chairman), Muhammad Lafi Kayid (secretary), Nayif Yihya Shihabi (treasurer), and Husayn Ali Yasin (editor). The original request was signed by both Fawzi Mahmoud Shihabi and Nayif Yihya Shihabi. On 8 August 1941, however, Nayif Yihya Shihabi asked to be relieved of his position on the committee.

Several months later, on 5 December 1941, a group of thirty people from Lubya sent another petition signed by committee members. The petition included twenty articles of the Club's rules and urged the British authorities to grant their request for the establishment of the Educational Club.⁹⁶ The petition was headed as follows:

Name of the Society: *The Lubya Educational Club*

The address: Lubya village –Tiberias

Aim of the Society: to encourage education, agriculture, trade and development.

The request, which was addressed to the Tiberias District Commissioner, asked for his permission to establish the Club according to Article 6 of the Ottoman law governing the establishment and regulation of societies. On 2 January 1942 the divisional police headquarters in Tiberias sent its response to the Assistant District Commissioner concerning the request. "I am not very much in favour of the formation of such a club in Lubya village. The responsible persons are not altogether trustworthy and are reported to be inclined towards agitation."⁹⁷ Following the involvement of Lubyans in the 1936-39 uprising, which is dealt with in more detail in chapter seven, British authorities did not trust residents of the village.

This was not the only objection to the Club. Some of the village *makhateer* also protested against the establishment of an educational club in Lubya. Within the paternalistic hierarchy that dominated Lubyian society at the time, there was very little tolerance among *hamula* leaders for anything that could eventually pose a threat to their authority. This was implicit in the letter sent by the Chairman of the Club, Mahmoud Shihabi, to the deputy governor (*ka'im makam*) in Tiberias in which he thanked him for his help in spite of the objections of a number of villagers.

Also implicit in the answer of the District Commissioner of the Galilee was the fact that the establishment of a society or club could not be rejected except on political grounds.

⁹⁵ Israel State Archives (Jerusalem). Documents 3634/R, 8073/N, 3624/R, 13657/N, and 323/524/P. The dates of the documents range from 1942-45.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

The letter states: “The police, however, is at liberty to lodge its objection against those members who were sentenced for a crime or to deprivation of rights of citizenship, or who are under the age of 20, section 5 of the law of societies. I observe from paragraph one of the rules of the club that members under 18 years of age are also admitted. This is not allowed and I am asking the promoters to amend rule one to read 20 years instead of 18.”⁹⁸

Finally, on 24 January 1942, the chairman of the 'Lubya Educational Club' received the approval for the establishment of the society from District Commissioner D. Headly of Galilee District, after amending article one to read “20 years of age in lieu of 18 years”.

Conflicts in the village

Conflicts and disputes between Lubyans were relatively rare, especially when the village faced an outside threat. When they did occur they were more often than not temporary and centered around relations with the British authorities and Zionist officials, marriage relationships, and disputes over the distribution of land. Elderly Lubyans I interviewed remembered both the good times and some of the darker episodes in the village.

Local problems were usually handled by the village *makhateer*. Abu Majid told me a story about a man from the village of al-Ja’ouni who stopped in Lubya and stayed over night at the *mukhtar*'s house. In the morning while they were drinking coffee, they heard a furious man shouting outside and threatening to kill those who stole three of his ploughs (*ski*). The *mukhtar* paid the man three *liras* and the episode ended.

When asked by the guest if he knew the man who stole the tools or had anything to do with the angry man, the *mukhtar* answered negatively, saying that his only purpose was to stop a feud that could end in someone's death. The *mukhtar* told his guest that in the ten years since he had become the *mukhtar*, he had not known of any revenge killings in the village.

Villagers practiced their own traditional form of reconciliation. When one villager was killed by another from a different *hamula* or other village, for example, the accused was required to appear before an assembly of the victim's *hamula* and offer his life in exchange for reconciliation. The victim's family would usually grant mercy to the accused in front of all the people gathered to witness the reconciliation process.

Um Hassan remembered a story about “two men from Sakhnin [who] killed Husayn Hajjo near ‘Aylabun. First his kin suspected that people from ‘Aylabun did the killing, but later on everyone knew who the killer was. He arrived one day in Lubya holding a handkerchief, stood in front of one hundred men and said: ‘Kill me if you will, I committed a mistake and ask for your mercy.’ Reconciliation then took place.”⁹⁹

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹⁹ In this particular case, however, villagers continued to hold a grudge against the people from the village of Sakhnin. According to Um Hassan a man from Sakhnin once proposed to a girl named Khadra from

From time to time a *hamula* or one of its members was forced to leave the village as a result of a dispute. This included the Shihabis. According to Abu Majid, “the five sons of Ali [Shihabi] formed one cohesive group. When one of them was in trouble, the others moved quickly to support him. After a feud in the village, the five brothers left to a nearby area located to the south of Lubya, nowadays called Kufr Kama and belonging to the Bani Sakr tribe. The feud occurred when the brothers killed one of the villagers who went by the nickname of *al-‘at’oot*.”

“Even after moving away from the village, they once intercepted a Lubyian, Mustafa Yasin, from the ‘Asafri tribe, and killed him just because he was from Lubya. What complicated the situation even further was that *Sheikh* Younis [who replaced *Sheikh* Ali Ahmad Ruhayyil] sent a man from the village named Joudi to burn down the tents of the Shihabis to avenge the killing. The Shihabis sent a poem to Joudi warning him against executing the orders of the *sheikh*. It read: '*Joudi La thid il-Bait tit'ab, Yijeeek Shihab yiskeek sam 'Akrab* (Joudi don't destroy the house, for if you do, you will face the consequences and Shihab will give you scorpion's poison).”

“The Bani Sakr tribe gave the five Shihabi brothers protection, but their exile continued until the arrival of [the new Governor of the Galilee] ‘Akil al-Hasi. When al-Hasi passed by the Shihabi brothers’ tents one of them, Yihya, stopped him and insisted on inviting him in for a meal. Yihya reminded al-Hasi that their support for him against the wishes of the rest of the village, which resulted in the death of a man, was at the origin of the feud that ended in their exile from Lubya. Upon hearing this, al-Hasi decided to intervene with the family of the murdered man to reconcile them with the Shihabi brothers.”

“When the news of al-Hasi’s arrival in Lubya reached the family of the murdered man, however, they climbed on the rooftops and when he arrived threw ashes on him (*sakan*), as a sign of rejection of his reconciliation bid. The men who accompanied al-Hasi on his visit to the family tried to kill the women who threw the ashes on their leader’s head, but the latter ordered them not to, saying, ‘He who walks down this road should take what comes.’ In the end, however, the parties were reconciled and the Shihabis returned to Lubya.”

Another conflict in the village remembered by Lubyans was the death of Saleh Rukiyyi, a well-respected revolutionary who was killed during a trivial family dispute in 1944. According to Abu Tal’at, “Saleh hit [Ramzi] the son of the *mukhtar* and that cost him his life when he returned to the village after having left it for a period of time. He was killed by the iron counter-weight that shopkeeper Mas’oud, who was a relative of my uncle Hassan, used in his shop.”

Yousef al-Yousef was one of the only witnesses to the incident. “Saleh said to [Mustafa]: ‘If I survive this attack, I’ll show you ‘Atwat.’ The British wanted my testimony. My

Lubya, but her husband objected to the marriage saying that we will not give one of our daughters to the enemy.

grandmother Khadra said to me: ‘Tell them you didn’t hear or see anything otherwise tomorrow the ‘Atwat will burn down our home and olive trees.’ But I refused to be silent. In Yiyha al-Said’s *madafa* I revealed everything that I had seen.”

Abu Tal’at, who respected Saleh as a fighter against the British and Zionists, tried his best to reconcile the two men but in vain. Both were members of the same group of the revolution. “He was brave but unreasonable,” said Abu Tal’at. “I asked him later on to come with me in order to resolve the problem with my uncle, Hassan Abu Dhais, the *mukhtar*, but he refused. Had Saleh accepted my advice and made peace with my uncle, he would not have met his tragic end as a result of a trivial family dispute.”

Yousef al-Yousef said that eventually “reconciliation took place between Saleh's family and Hassan Abu Dhais through Suleiman ‘Atiyya, the father of Saleh’s wife and *sheikh* of his *hamula* . But it seems that the sons of Hassan Abu Dhais didn’t agree to the resolution of the dispute. I witnessed al-Kulla, Saleh’s brother, refusing to reconcile after his brother’s death, but in the end he agreed and shook hands with Ramzi. All of the village sided with the Shanashri.”

Abu Majid remembered a story about the “Shihabi’s grandfather, Shihab, [who] married two women. From the first wife he had Ali and from the second Saleh. In those times, exchanging women was one of the acceptable forms of marriage and Ali Shihabi, after meeting people from the Kilani tribe, proposed to exchange his daughter for a woman from their tribe. The Kilani tribe accepted the proposal thinking it to be a good deal, because Ali as an old man in his eighties would probably soon die leaving behind his rich and young widow whom one of them would then marry.”

“Ali’s young brother, Saleh, rejected the deal and hit his older brother to make him change his mind. Instead, Ali went to Ahmad Ruhayyil [the *mukhtar*] and raised a case against his younger brother. Saleh was summoned to the *madafi* and *Sheikh* Ahmad ordered that a big candle (*mish’ali*) be lit for there was neither electricity nor oil lighting at that time. He then asked Saleh again if he now accepted the deal and this time his answer was positive. The men then went to the Kilani tribe and asked for the young woman’s hand in marriage. The wedding took place sometime around 1812-1815. After the ceremony sweets were distributed to the entire village. The old octogenarian succeeded in having five sons, while Ali’s daughter (*badilitha*) gave birth to two crazy (*jodob*) daughters, Hasson and Noof.”

Lubyans rarely consulted Ottoman or British authorities when disputes took place among them. In some cases, however, especially when a conflict resulted in one or more persons being killed, British authorities did intervene. This included the arrest and execution of Hassan Taha. Some Lubyans I interviewed, however, felt that the British had a double standard when it came to issues of law and order. Mustafa Abu Dhais, the *mukhtar*’s son, for example, was able to free his brother Ramzi from prison where he was sentenced to death for the killing of Saleh Rukiyyi, simply because of his close relations with the British.

According to many from the elderly generation conflicts between the two big families in Lubya, the Shihabis and the 'Atwats, dominated the life of the village. Abu Tal'at remembered that "the village at that time was living in the shadow of a large dispute between its two biggest families, the Shihabis and the 'Atwats. The Shihabi family was poor in comparison with the 'Atwat, which had large property holdings and owned a number of small factories." This picture was contrary to Ibrahim Shihabi's account of the harmonious relations between the big families.

"I remember how this dispute started in the 1930s as a result of having forced a beautiful young girl from the 'Atwat family to marry an old man from the Shihabis. The girl refused the arrangement, especially because she had already fallen in love with Fayiz al-Fawaz. The couple eloped to Jordan and then settled in Tiberias. However, the girl's uncle, Hassan Taha, managed to locate their house and to avenge the family honour. He burned the house with the woman inside. The British Government later executed Hassan in 'Akka prison. This incident had already poisoned the social life of the village. This sort of incident happened as a result of people's ignorance at that time."

"The conflict between the two big families of Lubya, al-Shihabi and al-'Atwat, continued even in exile," said Nayif Hassan. "The two big rival families, in particular the young men, did not attend each other's weddings." He attributed the ongoing disputes between *hamayil* even in exile to lack of education. He thought that teachers should take the role as leaders of the community and not the *makhateer*. "People had very little education. Both Hassan Abu Dhais and Fawaz Ali, the *mukhtar* of Lubya, were not well-educated."

Other disputes centered around the distribution of land in the village. Early in the 1920s, a council was established in Lubya, which had the power to resolve local disputes. Younis al-Mani, a friend of Yousef Issa, told me about "an interesting conflict between two men from two different families, Muhammad Azzam and Mahmoud Husayn Shihabi. They disagreed about who had the right to a plot of land in al-Faik. At that time there were no strict lines between different plots. Mahmoud Shihabi was from a strong and influential family in Lubya, and Muhammad Azzam was from another big family, though not as strong as the former. Shihabi asked Ahmad Shuqayri (the first Chairman of the PLO) to be his lawyer and Azzam asked Hanna Asfour to defend him.

"After two sessions of the court in Tiberias, Azzam, who had officially lost the case, could no longer afford the cost of the court or his lawyer. However, since he was certain that the land was actually his, he asked a committee from the village to conduct a thorough study of the situation and then decide once and for all who should have the land. At the committee's meeting, he asked Husayn what had been planted on the land in the last two years and the latter said 'olive and fig trees'. Azzam countered by saying that he had planted grapes. The committee went over to the disputed land, turned the earth over, and found vine roots, not fig or olive trees as Husayn had claimed. So they judged in favour of Azzam and he got his land back."

Weddings and celebrations

Weddings have always occupied a special place in the life of Lubyans. The wedding ceremony (*al-urs*) was not just the beginning of a new life for the sons and daughters of the village. Weddings also provided opportunities for prospective marriage candidates, relatives and friends from other villages to meet each other. “We were not very rich, but we had pride,” said Zahra Ibrahim Kahlil¹⁰⁰, the wife of Abu Tal'at, the *mukhtar* for Lubyans in Jordan. “We were so happy on those occasions when all the relatives and close friends came together.”

Wedding celebrations lasted anywhere from several days to two weeks, depending on the status and position of the wedding couple. When Mustafa Abu Dhais, the *mukhtar's* son, got married, for example, the celebration lasted for two weeks. Abu Tal'at's wedding lasted one week. “It was a big party in which all the village and other neighbours participated.” “I insisted on having a big wedding,” said Ahmad Hajjo (Abu Hassan)¹⁰¹ who was married in 1935. “My wedding took place in *al-Middan* near *babur al-Sharkasi* (Sharkasi mill). More than thirty horses marched in the wedding.” Guests used to bring with them presents, such as sheep or cows. Poorer families would contribute produce from their fields and trees such as olive oil, corn or other products.

For some elderly Lubyans, however, the painful experience of exile had silenced all fond memories of life in the village, including wedding days. Tamam ‘Ajayni (Um Hassan) was one. Two of her sons died early, one from snakebite and the other when he fell from a horse. Her third son died of cancer. During my two months of research in the Galilee she refused to talk about Lubya. “Lubya is gone (*rahat*),” were the only words she uttered. But I did not give up. I continued encouraging her to speak, and she continued to ask me only about the few old people who had left for Lebanon and Syria.

One day, unexpectedly, she began to talk. She started with the story of a wedding in the ‘Atwat neighbourhood of Lubya. She recalled wedding songs and other broken bits and pieces from her memory. Her first story was about a dispute between two singers (*haddayi*) from the villages of Dayr al-Asad and Hittin. The dispute revolves around kinship relations, and respect for the rules of marriage. Generally, villagers would marry within the same *hamula*.

¹⁰⁰ Zahra Ibrahim Khalil was born in 1923. The interview was conducted in Irbid, Jordan, on 6 April 1996.

¹⁰¹ Ahmad Hajjo (Abu Hassan) was born in 1904. The interview with him was conducted on 11 September 1995.

Kas insab 'al masab
La t'adini ya min sab
Kahwi soda hijaziyyi
Lal-afandiyyi btinsub
Ya minsub la t'adini
Wa bint 'ammi btihmini
Ma'ha saif wa sikkini
Bitkhalli dammak
yitba'thar
kumi itla'i waish 'alaiki
Khalli ilhaki minni
walaiki
Kannak za'lan bardiek
Mindal janah al-warwar
Mindal mana rayidlak
Willi las'ar bakutlak
Akhalli akhoy yisabbiklak

Tabbish rasak bilihjar
Khalli akhook yilakini
Ya bistarji yihakini
Ma'ay saif wa sikkini
Bakhalli dammu
yitba'thar
Kumi itla'i waish 'alaiki
Khalli ilhaki minni
walaiki

A cup was poured
 don't antagonise me
 Hijazi coffee is poured
 only to the noble
 Take care and don't antagonise
 me
 my cousin will protect me
 She carries a sword and a knife

with one blow she'll shed your
 blood
 Stand up and don't be afraid
 let speech only be between us
 I'll turn your anger into peace
 Necromancy is the bee-eater's
 wing
 My brother would interrupt
 and crush with stones your head
 Let your brother meet me
 if he dares to speak
 I have a sword and a knife
 I will scatter your blood
 Stand up and don't be afraid
 let speech only be between us.

Um Hassan went on to share memories of her own wedding in Lubya. "I was married in 1942. I was thirty-four years old when we left Lubya. My marriage was the result of an exchange with the family of my sister's husband Muhammad Ibrahim. The big wedding celebration (*al-urs*) in which all the village and other neighbours participated lasted for a whole week."

"We lived in one house with my husband Abdel-Rahman and his five brothers Issa, Abdel-Rahim, Muhammad, 'Eid and 'Ayid. All of them were married and had their wives and children in that same house. When people came to visit, they thought that we were sisters. The six brothers were married to women from different families. One of them, Ghazali al-Wahsh was from al-Maghar."

"In the house there was also an inner patio (*qa' al-dar*) and above it there was an open attic (*siddi*). When you sat there, you felt as if you were sitting in the sky (*bil'alali*). The entire village was jealous of the six brothers. I was married to the youngest who also happened to be the strongest among them. Our *mukhtar* was Mahmoud Husayn [the father of Abu Tal'at]. He had four wives, while Yousef al-Mousa had six." Other

interviewers confirmed that Mahmoud Husayn married four women, but not at the same time.

Some elderly Lubyans, like Nayif Hassan from Jordan, remembered humorous anecdotes about local weddings. “Sa’id Younis wanted to get married and the man who was responsible for drawing up the marriage contracts was ‘Awad Abu Dhais, so he called us to come over as witnesses the event. He told the bride-to-be that Sa’id wanted to marry her, and we, who were not older than seven at the time, signed our names like a scratch on the paper.”

Zahra’s accounts about weddings provided clues about the family structure and the patriarchal relations that prevailed at that time. “I was married in 1941. My husband and I lived in a house with eight pillars and four domes (*kanatir*), together with my uncle Rashid. My grandfather, who was not on good terms with his family, divided the house into two. When I was twenty, however, my uncle refused to allow me to marry from outside the family. The family I was supposed to marry into lived next door, and there was no cement barrier (*kawayir*) between our house and theirs so we could hear them speak among themselves. My brother was engaged to their daughter and I to their son for six months.”

“One day, someone stole clothes from our house and my father complained to the British police, who came and took my fiance and his brother Lisho [his nickname] to prison. After they were freed, my uncle ‘Ayid’s mother asked them to give her the stolen clothes so she could say that she herself had stolen them, but they refused to admit the theft even to her. My younger sister, however, was sure that it was our cousin who had stolen the clothes.”

“My brother Mahmoud, the one who was engaged to their daughter, went over to their house and took some clothes from Ammoni, his fiancée. He wanted to create a situation where an exchange would be made, the stolen clothes in return for the ones he took from his fiancée. Although they accepted the conditions, my father said that if it ever took place, he would have my marriage to their son annulled (*katb al-kitab*).”

“Eventually, this is what happened. My father got my brother engaged to another girl, even though she was already engaged to my uncle’s son, and my own marriage to the one who had stolen my clothes was terminated. I then got engaged to my present husband, and my brother to my husband’s sister, as this kind of exchange was common at that time.”

Preparations for the wedding usually involved the entire household. “They began preparing for a wedding many days before the big day,” said Zahra. “Normally, they would invite the whole village, but later on it became limited to the bride and bridegroom’s neighbours. The men used to invite the other men of the village and they would all join in a beautiful Palestinian folk dance (*dabka*).” There are five different kinds of dabka known to Lubyans: Sha’rawiyyi, Nseiriyyi, Shmaliyyi, Maghribiyyi, and Ingliziyyi.

“The *hinna* night was commonly held for both the bride and the bridegroom. The bridegroom had to put henna on his right hand only, while the bride put it on her legs, hands and head.” Zahra then recited for me the song that was usually song on this occasion.

<i>Hannou ila 'rayis wala tihannou</i>	Put henna on the pair's hands not on mine,
<i>dayyati</i>	O how beautiful it is to sleep on the girls'
<i>Mahla ilnami bihidaini ilbinayyati</i>	bosoms;
<i>Tli 'ait mini dari ma wadda 'ti</i>	I left the house without bidding farewell to my
<i>khayyati</i>	sisters,
<i>Ya limmi ya limmi hay 'ili makhaddati</i>	O mother, O mother, prepare my pillows;
<i>Tli 'ait mini dar ma wadda 'ti khayyati</i>	I left the house without bidding farewell to my
<i>Ya lahli ya lahli ma yogbbor likum</i>	sisters,
<i>khatir</i>	O my relatives, O my relatives, I ask God not
<i>Ishnalla 'amak 'an ibn ila 'm hashatir</i>	to forgive you,
<i>Ishnalla 'amak 'an ilkhali wila 'mami</i>	Why were you blind to my uncle's clever son,
	Why were you blind to my cousin's son.

The groom would pick up the verse and continue: “*Wantini bintak ya Ismael, Wabshir bi 'ajjat ithakhir* (Give me your daughter, Ismail and you will hear the ammunition thundering).” During the interview Zahra revealed that this was the only time she had sung since she had left Palestine in 1948.

Like some of the elderly women from the village who spoke about wedding days, Nayif Hassan also recalled some of the songs that were sung at the wedding. “The women held their own gatherings and their own *dabka*. The men would collect the bride from her father's house and together with the women would march in a parade, singing and dancing, behind the bride.”

<i>Zillo zillo ya nasara</i>	Move away Christians
<i>Zillo 'an adarb zillo</i>	move away from the road
<i>Tatitmarrak bint alamara</i>	Give way to the princess
<i>Yitmarrak ada 'in killo</i>	to all her relatives to pass.

“We had only one Christian, in the village, Nasri Nakhli, and this song made him angry,” said Nayif, “but they told him that it was just a song, and no more should be made of it.”

Zahra also described various other preparations for the wedding. “On the morning of the wedding, the butcher prepared a big plate of *mansaf* [a dish made up of mutton, rice and dried yoghurt] in a special way reserved for weddings and sent it to the bride's house. During the day, the men would sing to the bride while seated on the back of a horse and holding a white scarf as a symbol of her virginity and honesty. This was also a sign that the bride held the honour of her family in her hand. In the afternoon, the bridegroom arrived and joined the party. He would uncover the face of his bride, and the party would

continue for a while longer. The guests would then depart, leaving the couple alone. They used to hit the bridegroom four to five times in mock encouragement to go and see his bride.”

Horse parades, songs, the *dabka*, and other small details were also part of the memories of elderly men that I interviewed. “Horses for use on wedding days were brought from nearby villages not only from Lubya. There was an area for the horses named *Zatounat al-Shanbeeshi*, east of the flour mill owned by Abu Dhais. There, the bridegroom used to sit during the wedding while the horses paraded in front of him. Once when Abdel Razzak was riding a horse during a wedding party, the horse went crazy, fell down and died, but the wedding party continued without interruption. His brothers had bought the horse in a place named *Tal al-Faras*, and he had become an important symbol for the villagers.”

“In the afternoon a singer, usually a poet, arrived at the wedding accompanied by the men of the village. Barbeesh (his nickname) used to put a special flag on the horse to protect the bridegroom against the evil eye. There was also a habit of sewing the suit of the bridegroom with thread but without making knots. The contents of whole bottles of perfume, named Mikado, was usually poured over the bridegroom and a bottle of another kind was poured on his head. They used to buy the perfume from Mahmoud Shar’an’s shop. 'Awad Abu Dhais had a gun in the shape of a baton and he used to shoot it during the weddings. We would look with amazement at the gun when we were kids. Life was very simple and primitive, but it was beautiful.”

The traditions of social life in the towns and cities were different than those in the village. Tiberias is not far from Lubya, nevertheless, one can observe the different reactions toward women’s behaviour in both localities. “On the morning after the wedding, the bride would go to the spring to collect water,” said Zahra. “Mariam Abbas used to make fun of the habit because she was from the city of Tiberias, where, unlike Lubya, they had faucets in their houses and did not have to go to the well for water. A bride in Tiberias also did not have to leave her house to throw the rubbish outside or to fetch bread from the bakery, as was the case in Lubya. Two days after the wedding, both families would come bearing presents for the couple.”

These scenes were still taking place among refugees in the camps of exile until recent times. After the revolution took over the administration of the camps, however, revolutionary songs and festivals replaced the older ones.

Chapter Five

Village Relations

The one who marries my mother will be my uncle.
Arabic proverb

Social, economic, and cultural relations created strong bonds between Lubya and neighbouring Palestinian villages. The strength of these bonds manifested itself during periods of conflict when other villages were in danger. As I traveled throughout the Galilee conducting interviews, I frequently heard complimentary words about the bravery of Palestinians from Lubya, especially from the elderly generation.

This included remarks from several Jewish officers who participated in the occupation of Lubya in 1948. “If you mention the name Lubya, others will immediately remember it as a brave village,” said Nahom Abbo, one of the retired Israeli Jewish officers I interviewed who lives in Tiberias. “They were the most steadfast in the area (*alkada*). Their word was well-respected in all the surrounding villages.”

Lubya was also renowned for its hospitality, prosperity and generosity. Situated between major urban and rural centers, travelers would often stop for an overnight rest, a meal, and to feed their animals, all free of charge. Attached to every family home was a guesthouse (*manzool*) where merchants would eat and sleep. According to the villagers, foreigners were always to be seen about Lubya.

Lubyans also spoke about relations with their Jewish neighbours. “We used to invite our neighbours the Jews for a cup of coffee when we worked near one another,” said Yousef Issa. “We used to greet one another, and trade between use was good. Even in the worst conditions they used to send delegations to our *makhateer* asking for the continuation of good relations between us and the nearby settlements.”

Several Israeli Jews shared similar stories about inter-communal relations in the nearby city of Tiberias. Ester Lavi, who is married to Izra Lavi, one of the Jewish officers who occupied Lubya during the 1948 war, interrupted to tell me that her Palestinian “neighbour Husayn used to say: ‘I will marry you.’ We played together and we helped each other. We used common facilities, sharing our building with the Arabs.”

By contrast, most Lubyans considered Ottoman, British, and Zionist officials and institutions as outsiders (*khariji*), each imposing its own dominant and repressive narrative on Lubya to serve its own particular political and economic interests. As Abu Hassan succinctly put it: “The British were responsible for our tragedies.” Both Lubyans and Israeli Jews that I interviewed attributed the problems between the two communities to the arrival of Jews and Arabs from outside Palestine.

Relations with Arab communities

The social history of Lubya was affected and influenced by the different movements of the tribes and people who were settled in or nearby Lubya. This included the Dalayki tribe, the Circassians, the Chechens, the Subeih tribe, and the Moroccans (*al-Maghariba*).

Abu Majid spoke in detail about the different communities around Lubya. “The Dalayki tribe settled near Lubya during the Ottoman era. Later on the Jews built two settlements on their land, Beit Jan and Yamma. The majority of the inhabitants of these settlements were Russian Jews from Kiev, while in the settlement of al-Shajara all of them were from Kiev. The Ottoman authorities installed a special military observation post on top of a hill near al-Shajara to protect the settlers from the Arabs.”

Some of those who settled in or near Lubya during the Ottoman period came to Palestine seeking refuge from conflict in the Caucasus. Abu Majid continued, “During this same period, Russian elements were repeatedly attacking and wreaking havoc in villages and towns of the Caucasus. The mostly Muslim Circassians (*Sharkas*) and Chechens (*Shishan*) inhabitants of these areas left their villages and fled south to Islamic countries such as Palestine. The *Qa'im Makam* [governor] settled the new immigrants in Tiberias and later on in al-Shajara.”

“al-Shajara sold half of its lands to a Lebanese family named al-Mudawwar. The villagers sold their land because a man from al-Shajara killed another from the Subeih tribe, so the population left the village for fear of a revenge attack. The Subeih Bedouins were well known for their fierceness. The people of al-Shajara resettled elsewhere, scattering themselves between Lubya and the surrounding villages where they stayed for almost two years.”

“The people from al-Shajara asked to reconcile with the Subeih tribe provided the latter paid a tribute as a price for the murder they had committed. The amount demanded by the Subeih was not readily available, which prompted al-Shajara people to sell half their land and settle only on the other half. al-Mudawwar was ready to buy the piece of land, even though he already owned half of the village’s spring (*nabi*’).”

“The new owner wanted the *Sharkas* (Circassians) out of the village. The District Commissioner offered them a piece of land nearby and proposed to al-Mudawwar to pay the cost of rebuilding the houses while the *Sharkas* would do the rebuilding themselves. This is how the village of Kufr Kama came to be built in the same style as Russian houses using tiles for the roofs.”

“al-Mudawwar also built in the village a two story-building on about two *dunums* of land. He used the first floor for the animals and the second for his own residence. After two or three years time, his business enterprise began to lose money, so the Jews bought his land and established on it what is known nowadays as the Jewish al-Shajara, two kilometres away from the original Arab al-Shajara.”

The inhabitants of Kufr-Sabt were originally from Morocco. They emigrated from their country in the period of Abdel-Qader al-Jaza'iri, from Algeria, who fought against the French and was expelled with his followers to Syria. Prince Abdel-Qader remained in Syria but the others came to live in the south of Lubya in a land called al-Shafa. They established different villages: Kufr Sabt, 'Olam, Ma'thar. A few of them lived in Samakh and others lived near Shafa'Amr, al-Kasair, and Kokab.

According to Abu Majid, the land of Kufr Sabt “belonged to Palestinians from the Bareedi family. One day, an unknown person ignited the dry grass on the land, and because a western wind was blowing, the fire spread to a wide area. A man from Lubya passing by attempted to put out the fire using his *'abaya* (traditional Arab cloak), but was killed when it caught fire.”

“When news of his death arrived in the village, the villagers responded by attacking Kufr Sabt in the belief that they had killed Muhammad Mustafa on purpose. All the inhabitants of Kufr Sabt left their village except for one family, al-Hamid, who claimed that they were related by marriage to Lubyans. The Government, just as it did in al-Shajara before, settled the *al-Maghariba* (those from the Maghrib), who arrived with Abdel-Qader al-Jaza'iri, in the quasi-abandoned village.”

Despite a few negative incidents between the inhabitants of Lubya and Tur'an, 'Ajaj Sa'd 'Adawi (Abu 'Ajaj)¹⁰² retained fond memories of the relationship between the two villages. I met with him at his home in Tur'an, a village near Lubya, in May 1999. The house was full of activity because of the upcoming elections for the Israeli Knesset (Parliament). Abu 'Ajaj's sons were busy distributing pamphlets and arranging meetings for Azmi Bishara (Balad party) who was running for a seat in the Knesset.

“Our relationship to Lubya was common knowledge in the village. Lubyans always sided with the people of Tur'an every time there was a crisis. The *makhateer* of Lubya always visited the *makhateer* of Tur'an whenever they were passing through the village. A few small incidents occurred, however, that muddied the waters between us. For example, there was a pool in *Maskana*, an area between our two villages, which belonged to our village. The Lubyans insisted that they had the right to it. Some of the disputes occurred over land, but these were few and far between.”

The conflict with the Arab al-Subeih Bedouin was mentioned by many of the elderly Lubyans that I interviewed. The story, in which the tribe took revenge for the killing of the head of their *hamula*, is part of the mythology that Lubyans bestowed upon themselves as brave people. While the account is real, there is an exaggerated dimension to the story because Subeih was a powerful tribe and the source of fear among other villages.

¹⁰² 'Ajaj Sa'd 'Adawi was born in 1932. The interview with 'Ajaj Sa'd Adawi (Abu 'Ajaj) was conducted on 9 May 1999 in Tur'an, Israel.

The Subeih tribe settled in the area around Lubya, according to Abu Majid, during the Ottoman period. “Akil al-Hasi, a Bedouin Arab from the Hanadi tribe, was appointed Governor of Galilee. When he arrived there he brought with him the tribe of al-Subeih. There was a habit that when a tribal leader became powerful enough he sent a message to Istanbul requesting to be appointed governor of the area in which he resided. ‘Akil was such a leader, and as such was accorded his request in return for paying taxes to the central administration in Istanbul.’”

When asked to recount what she remembers about Lubya and its history, Ramzia Hassan Abu Dhais (Um Isam)¹⁰³, who is the daughter of *mukhtar* Abu Dhais, chose to begin with the battle against Arab al-Subeih. Um Isam is also the wife of Abu Isam. She is the mother of ten children, eight boys and two girls. Um Isam is almost as strong as her father, both in appearance and in the way that she manages the daily affairs of her household. All Lubyans in Dayr Hanna and al-Makr knew her and viewed her with respect and admiration. The man killed in the story was Um Isam’s grandfather. It is likely that she heard the story in her house when she was a young girl.

“The battle between Lubya and the Subeih, a tribe well-known in the whole area, happened long ago in the time of my grandfather. The Subeihs came to Lubya, ate, slept, and received all the hospitality required from us, but left the village stealthily after stealing a few cows from the farmers. My grandfather followed them, accompanied by a small group, which included my father. A known fighter from the Subeih, named Jalmoud, and my grandfather were killed in the ensuing battle. My father returned home and vowed to disperse the Subeih tribe, which is exactly what happened later on.”

Ahmad, Um Isam’s son, continued reciting the events that took place against the Subeih tribe during the Ottoman era. This story is part of the family heritage. “My grandfather was fourteen years old when his father was killed. One year after the first battle with Subeih, the latter tried again to invade Lubya, but the Lubyans this time were ready for them. The Subeih had a brave fighter named Jalmoud. Among the Lubyans there was a man named Kayid who was so blind that he sometimes rode his horse in the opposite direction. Kayid killed Jalmoud during the battle because Jalmoud didn’t pay due attention to him.”

Yousef Issa told me another story about Kayid. When people crossed over from Jordan to steal cattle from Lubya, Kayid without fail would follow them because he could not stop his horse. So he would shout, “*khayyal il-khail Kayid*” (Kayid is a brave rider) and the thieves would run for their lives, abandoning the stolen cattle. They came to Lubya one day and asked to meet this brave man. They were astonished to find out that he was very small and short. They felt ashamed that he was, in fact, the one who prevented them from stealing.

¹⁰³ Ramzia Hassan Abu Dhais (Um Isam) was born in 1925. The interview with her was conducted in Nazareth on 25 September 1995.

Abu Khalid, who is a friend of Abu Khalil, also knew about the battle with the Arab al-Subeih. "I am from al-Shajara. We are located in the middle between the Subeih tribe and Lubya. As far as I know from different oral sources, this incident took place in 1902." This incident continues to be a source of controversy between the Subeih and Lubyans in exile. Abu Khalil told me a story of a young man from the Subeih who claimed that the Subeih defeated the Lubyans. He found an elderly woman from Lubya, Um Mahmoud al-Jalili, who was 120 years old at the time, who told him the details of what happened.

Um Mahmoud told him how the Shihabis and 'Atwat *hamayil* had bad relations, but after *mukhtar* Abu Dhais was killed, Fawwaz al-Ali, the head of the Shihabi family invited all the village to his home. He addressed the village: 'It is either we or the Subeih tribe in this area.' Women began giving their gold, and for one week the village bought guns. Fawwaz al-Ali previously had a problem with Lubyans and had left the village and took refuge with the Subeih tribe. He therefore knew the area where the tribe was living as well as other details that helped the Lubyans to defeat the Subeih as revenge for the death of the *mukhtar*. The Arab al-Subeih who stayed in Palestine live in a village named Arab al-Shibli near Tabor mountain.

Abu Majid also remembered a story about 'Akil al-Hasi, the Governor of the Galilee, and the Ottoman authorities. The story gives some insight into the relationship between the Ottoman authorities and the constituent parts of its empire. "The Ottomans asked Shimdeen Agha, the leader of the Kurds in Damascus, to arrest al-Hasi for refusing to pay the required taxes. Shimdeen sent one of his sons, Hassan Agha, with two hundred horses on a mission to confront al-Hasi and arrest him. But the latter knew about the impending event in advance and succeeded in deflecting the surprise element of the attack. The confrontation between the two parties took place in Lubya near *Hajar al-Nousrani* and lasted from morning till mid-day with the Lubyans watching it unfold from the rooftops of their houses."

"The area where Hassan Shimdeen was killed is known to the Lubyans as *thra' Shimdeen* (Shimdeen's arm). It is also the place where Giv'at Avni [the new Israeli settlement built in 1992] is located. His grave is still there, in Lubya, near that of the Prophet Shwameen. In the confrontation, the Lubyans sided with the Kurdish leader. When the latter was defeated, al-Hasi addressed them saying, 'Now you can collect the dead body of your chief (*agha*).' The mother of Hassan Shimdeen used to pay yearly visits to her son's grave on one of the holy Muslim feast days. Lubyans children who saw her arrive and recognized her shouted: '*Um al-Agha*' (mother of the *agha*) is coming." When I visited Lubya with Abu Nimr, he showed me the place where the battle took place "at al-Kinnara on the north side of the street where some factories were built on the land of Lubya."

"When the father of Shimdeen knew about his son's death, another detachment was sent under the leadership of his other son, Rasool, to avenge him," said Abu Majid. "He addressed his son saying, 'Either you die like your brother or you bring me al-Hasi dead.' Rasool arrived with his detachment near 'Ayn Mahil, not far from Kufr Kama, on the borders of Lubya. The Bedouins started to leave the area to al-Karak [in today's Jordan], and so did al-Hasi, without confronting the detachment. In Karak he asked to be given

asylum with a local tribe by the name of Huwaitat. As for Rasool, he became the new leader of Nazareth.”

“Later on, al-Hasi lived with the *sheikh* of ‘Ibillin village for almost a year, but couldn’t bear to live much longer among the Bedouins. He therefore went in search of Abdel-Qader al-Jaza’iri [the Algerian fighter who was expelled from Algeria after his defeat by the French army], who was held in very high esteem in Damascus. al-Hasi asked Abdel-Qader to reconcile him with Shimdeen and the two of them went together to the *al-Muhajireen* in the Kurdish area of Damascus where reconciliation took place according to the old tradition. The *ikal* (head band) was placed around the neck of the guilty party, who in this case was al-Hasi, and although the Kurds were angry at the latter, their leader offered him mercy and told him that whoever killed his son must be a brave man. He gave al-Hasi permission to stay on in ‘Ibillin which was in fact where he died and was buried.”

Relations with Jewish communities

The life of Jews who were living in Palestine before the advent of modern political Zionism was very different than the life of the Jewish community in the country after the arrival of successive waves of Jewish immigrants. Many of the elderly generation of Lubyans spoke of the good relations between Palestinian Arabs and Jews in Palestine prior to the advent of political Zionism and the 1917 Balfour Declaration under which the British government committed itself to the establishment of a Jewish state in the country.¹⁰⁴

“We had normal relations,” said Amina Ali Ismail. “We bought wares from them in Tiberias.” “We used to invite our neighbours the Jews for a cup of coffee when we worked near one another,” said Yousef Issa. “We used to greet one another, and trade between us was good. Even in the worst conditions they used to send delegations to our *makhateer* asking for the continuation of good relations between us and the nearby settlements.”

The town of Tiberias, not far from Lubya, was an example of early relations between the two communities. Izra Lavi¹⁰⁵ was one of several Jewish Israeli officers who occupied

¹⁰⁴ On 2 November 1917 the British government issued the famous Balfour Declaration, signed by then Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs Arthur J. Balfour. According to the Declaration, the British government gave its support for the establishment of a Jewish national home in Palestine. The letter reads as follows: “His Majesty’s Government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a National Home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine, or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other countries.” The text of the letter is reprinted in *A Survey of Palestine*. Vol. I, *supra* note 31, p. 1. It is noteworthy that the declaration recognizes Jewish political rights not only in Palestine but elsewhere, while at the same time only recognizes the civil and religious rights of the indigenous Palestinian Arab population in Palestine.

¹⁰⁵ Izra Lavi was born in 1926. The interview with Izra Lavi and his wife Ester took place in their home in Tiberias, Israel on 18 September 1995.

Lubya in 1948. “I was born in Tiberias on 26 January 1926. I still remember my old Palestinian friends, Abu Harb, Naim al-Hallak, and his sons Nathmi and Adil. They worked as officers in the Syrian army.” Ester Lavi¹⁰⁶, who is married to Izra, interrupted to tell me that her Palestinian “neighbour Husayn used to say: ‘I will marry you.’ We played together and we helped each other. We used common facilities, sharing our building with the Arabs.”

“*Sheikh* al-Tabari and the Mayor Moshe [Sahar] were friends, and agreed that they would never get involved in the fighting,” said Izra. “In 1948, there were 3,500 Muslims and 4,500 Jews in Tiberias. Formerly, the Muslims were in the majority and the mayor was a Muslim. When the Jews became the majority a Jew was elected mayor. The Jews and the Arabs were brothers. The leaders of the two communities told each other that they didn’t want any problems between them. In Safad, for example, there were problems. When Arabs from Safad came to Tiberias they used to say, ‘The Muslims from Safad are flowers while Muslims from Tiberias are bullshit and cowards.’”

Elyahu Antibi¹⁰⁷, one of Izra's friends who participated in the interview also confirmed the good relations he had with Palestinian Arabs when he was secretary of the Tiberias municipality in the 1930s. His comments highlight again the friendship between Jews and Palestinians in Tiberias. He spoke fluent Arabic. “I was born in Tiberias. When I was 19 years old I started working at the Tiberias Municipality. In 1936, I became its secretary. I got my pension four years ago. We lived as brothers here in Tiberias where there were 6,500 Jews and 5,000 Arabs. Both Muslims and Christians lived in the city. We still have a lot of friends among the Arabs.”

“When the troubles started in 1948, the leaders of the two communities met to resolve various issues. In 1947 we worked with the secretary of the city, Sidki al-Abdullah, Abu Ramzi, an Arab, from 7 a.m. to 2 p.m. every day. The battle for Tiberias started on Thursday and Abu Ramzi warned us that the situation was deteriorating, and ordered us to close the municipality. He went home but we stayed on after contacting the mayor. At 9 p.m. the shooting began. This is proof that we lived together and cared about each other. When I visited Jordan, I visited my friends from Tiberias whom I had not seen since 1948.”

Abu Wajdi¹⁰⁸, a friend of mine, was well-known in Tiberias and had good relations with a number of the Jewish officers who occupied Lubya in 1948. He was still working in Tiberias even after the *Nakba*, selling gas and practicing his hobby of painting. “Once I was in the house of Abu Nimr (Habib Kahhala) and heard him say to Sahar: ‘You kicked the Arabs out of Tiberias, why didn’t you and the Mufti succeed in controlling the situation?’ Sahar answered: ‘No, that is not true. I still have the paper, signed by the *Mufti*

¹⁰⁶ Ester Lavi was born in 1937. The interview with Ester Lavi and her husband Izra took place in their home in Tiberias on 18 September 1995.

¹⁰⁷ Elyahu Antibi was born in 1924. He attended the interview with Izra and Ester Lavi at their home in Tiberias on 18 September 1995.

¹⁰⁸ [date of birth] Abu Wajdi was born in _____. Abu Wajdi attended the interview with Izra and Ester Lavi at their home in Tiberias on 18 September 1995.

and myself, which says that we agreed that no hostilities should take place in Tiberias. An Arabic proverb says: 'The one who marries my mother will be my uncle.' The Jews and the Arabs must stay in the land.'"

Nahom Abbo is a writer and the officer who took part in all of Israel's wars, before and after its establishment. He was another one of the officers who entered Lubya in 1948. He speaks fluent Arabic and is well acquainted with Lubyans. He showed neither fear nor hesitancy in delving into almost every little detail, and only in a few minor cases, such as that of the shooting of an Arab in Tiberias, was he reluctant to speak. He began the interview with the origins of his name dating back a thousand years ago in the Old Testament so as to prove his link to the country.

"I was born here. Our family has been in the chronicles for the last 250 years. The first letters of our family name were taken for the *Torah*, the Old Testament, ('Ayn means 'Asolim, B means Biamona, and O means Viyashar - i.e. we are made honest and upright). Our family bought many plots of land in Rosh Pina, Safad, Maroun, and al-Shajara. My uncle, whose name was Shlomo al-Khayal, stayed in al-Shajara until 1922. A group of men from Lubya and Kufr Sabt worked with him. I used to meet Palestinians from different villages, and when they would hear my family name they would start telling me different stories about the Abbo family. I still have friends among the Arabs."

Elderly Lubyans and Israeli Jews who fought against Lubya in the 1948 both identified the arrival of foreigners, whether Jews from abroad, or Arabs from neighbouring countries, as the spark for the beginning of the problems between Arabs and Jews in Palestine. "The problem began when the Jews from outside came to Palestine," said Amina Ali Ismael.¹⁰⁹ "They made problems for us and for the national Jews." Izra recalled that "in 1948 volunteers from Iraq and Syria arrived in Tiberias. That is when the problems started. Moshe Sahar [the mayor of Tiberias] wrote about the arrival of those men from abroad. One day, they opened fire on Jews and burned a car. Soon after, the *Mufti* and Sahar met to affect reconciliation between them, but a month later the problems between the Jews and Arabs resumed."

"I had once an Arab friend from the Najjada Party and we played on the same football team in the club. He said to me: 'Izra, why do you come here every day? There are foreigners here who might shoot you.' I said to him: 'Look, I am from Tiberias, and this land is my homeland, and I want to go where I want.' I was walking one day through the narrow streets of Tiberias near the fish market, accompanied by a friend, David Shibi, who was also my guard and spoke fluent Arabic. I saw ten men waiting for me. I was not sure where they were from. I asked David to take another direction to avoid the ambush I suspected they were preparing for me. The Arab guards asked: 'Who is there?' and my friend David answered them in Arabic. From that moment I realised that I was in danger. I've told you this story as testimony of our good relations until the foreigners came."

¹⁰⁹ Amina Ali Ismael was born in 1929. The interview with her was conducted in Denmark on 12 April 1995.

Nahom, who was condemned to death by the British because of his alleged involvement in the death of an innocent Palestinian in Tiberias in revenge for the death of his own friends by Palestinians, had similar recollections on the beginnings of the conflict between Arabs and Jews in Palestine.¹¹⁰ “In Tiberias, excuse me saying this, Arabs and Jews lived as brothers, but the problems started when those foreigners interfered. Even when the riots of 1929 erupted in Hebron and Safad, nothing happened in Tiberias. Arab leaders such as *Sheikh* Nayif al-Tabari held meetings with Nour Abu al-‘Afia and Shimon Dahan. *Mufti* al-Husayni, however, did not like the relations between Jews and Arabs in Tiberias, so he sent his groups to create problems.”

For some the early relations between Jews and Arabs lasted even after 1948. Husam Abu Dhais¹¹¹, the grandson of *mukhtar* Khalil al-Abid, told me about the good relations between his grandfather and Chaim Lavikov, a high-ranking officer in the Israeli army. “I know for a fact that a Jew by the name of Chaim Lavikov who came with his family from Poland in 1915 was working on my grandfather’s farm. I paid him a visit a few years ago at his house in Holon in the Tel Aviv area. He told me how his father had instructed him to run to *mukhtar* Haj Khalil’s house if the Arabs won the war. In the event that the Jews won, he should take care of Haj Khalil’s family. My uncle Sa’id, who lives in Jordan, lost contact with his son during the revolution, so I went to see Chaim, who was then a high-ranking officer responsible for minorities in the Israeli army, to ask for his help in locating my cousin in an Israeli prison. Chaim said to me: ‘Because of the respect I had for Haj Khalil, I will do my best to help you.’ We found out later that my cousin was killed in Lebanon.” I tried to find Chaim in Tel-Aviv, but I was informed that he had died recently.

Abu Nimr, one of the only Lubyans that is still allowed to use some of the land in the village, also spoke of ongoing relations with Jews who settled on Lubya's land. “I was in Lubya from the age of seven till 18 and I loved it dearly. I did not have any problem with the religious settlers of Lavi and Giv’at Avni [the two Jewish settlements which were built on the land of Lubya],” he told me. “It will surprise you to know that six years ago there was a demonstration by the inhabitants of Kibbutz Lavi, during which they proceeded to block the main road to Tiberias. They were asking the government to open a special road for me to facilitate access to my agricultural land – *dairakh jisha li Salah Shehada* (a road for Salah Shehada). Even the government was astonished that the settlers went as far as blocking the road for one whole hour. I was not there when this incident took place. Another incident of the same nature took place in 1967 when a gas tank fell on my land. The people from the kibbutz came and dug a ditch around my plantation to protect it from being consumed by the fire that ensued.”

¹¹⁰ In a letter addressed to the British District Commissioner on 19 August 1942, D. Headly gave a negative response to the petition for clemency he had received from Mazal Abbo, Nahum’s mother. The letter reads: “I can see no reason for recommending clemency as the murdered Arab was not in any way connected with the earlier attack on the prisoner’s brother and there appears to be no mitigating circumstances in a particularly brutal murder which has not been already met by the Court in passing sentence of death.” Israel archives, file no. 2692/T.461/N.

¹¹¹ Husam Abu Dhais is the son of Ramzia Hassan Abu Dhais (Um Isam). The interview with Husam Abu Dhais was conducted in Nazareth on 25 September 1995.

Relations with the British

Relations with the British authorities in Palestine were tenuous from the start due to British support for the establishment of a Jewish homeland in the country. The Palestinian Arab leadership had also rejected the decision by the Great Powers to grant the British a mandate over Palestine. Frustration with British policies concerning the loss of land and Jewish immigration frequently boiled over culminating in the 'Great Revolt' that last from 1936 to 1939.

During the period of the British mandate, around forty-six persons from Lubya worked for the British, including teachers, policemen, tax collectors and guards. For some Lubyans, like Nayif Hassan, joining the police forces was a way to evade hard work on land. "I went with a group of twenty-seven men to join the police because I found working on the land was very hard for me, and they accepted only six of us. My uncle Abdel-Rahman was very angry at Joudi and scolded him for sending his son to the military. I left Lubya on 18 November 1942 and joined the border police in Zarka, near Amman. Later on I was transferred to the border between Turkey and Syria for two months to prevent smuggling between the two countries. Then I returned to Jordan to work as a driver."

Like the Ottoman regime before them, the British also used Palestinians as pawns in their game of political chess in the region. Nayif remembered when "the police were ordered to go to Iraq to suppress the Rashid Ali Kilani movement¹¹² in Baghdad. When they arrived at Rutba, on the border between Jordan and Iraq, Arab units refused to obey the order to join the British in quashing the revolution. The Iraqis wanted to free their land from the British, and the Arabs in the police, who were majority Palestinian, did not feel they ought to be helping in suppressing their rebellion. The British punished this particular unit and dissolved it. This took place during World War II."

Sometimes, when a conflict arose between two families or tribes, certain family members tried to entangle the British in the affair with the hope of having them intervene in their favour. "Once Mustafa Abu Dhais and Zaki Ahmad Suleiman, from the Hajjo family, decided to go on a hunting trip," recalled Yousef al-Yousef. "Ali al-Kiyam, from the Shihabi's saw them leave and advised them against it, but they paid no attention to him and continued on their way. Suddenly, Ali began to shoot in the air to attract the British police to the village, and when they arrived, Ali told them that revolutionaries were planning to enter the village that night. The English usually relied on a few recruited spies who kept an eye on those suspected of being involved in the revolution."

"On another occasion, Mustafa al-Hauran, a relative of Abu Dhais, took shots at the British police who were stationed close to the small factory of Mustafa Abu Dhais, with

¹¹² Rashid Ali al-Kilani initiated a movement against Britain on the 31 of March 1941 after Nuri Sa'id resigned. But British forces interfered and on 30th of May Rashid Ali and his party flee for Persia and Nuri Sa'id was again in power, supported by the British.

the hope of making them suspect Mustafa of doing the shooting and thus destroy his factory. Mustafa had good relations with a certain Jew named Tadres from Tiberias. The latter had given him his shops in Tiberias to prevent the Palestinian revolutionaries from taking them over. Tadres had also given Mustafa the right to administer a quarry (*al-kassara*). Mustafa was a policeman with the British while the others were enlisted in the border brigades stationed on the frontiers with Lebanon or between Jordan and Iraq.”

Mustafa Abu Dhais was one of the few Lubyans who was remembered as having good relations with both the British, Zionist officials, and Jewish businessmen. “My uncle Mustafa had great influence with the British,” said Husam. “A good example of that was his being able to free his brother from prison only days before he was due to be executed. His brother [Ramzi] had killed a Lubyan [Saleh Rukiyyi] in a family dispute, but Mustafa succeeded in obtaining a pardon for him from the British Ministry for Colonial Affairs.” When I interviewed Ramzi in Jordan, I was advised not to ask him about that subject, due to its sensitivity.

As the conflict with the British administration and the Zionist movement intensified, suspected or actual relations between Lubyans and British officials increasingly became a source for potential disputes in the village. Once the leadership of the revolution ordered Abu Tal’at to kill his own cousin Mustafa Abu Dhais because of the latter’s relations with Jewish and British officials. He categorically refused. Had he carried out the order, enmity would continue until now among the same *hamula*. According to Abu Tal’at these disputes claimed the lives of several people in the village.

“[A] man named Yousef al-Jalili, who hailed originally from ‘Arraba but was living in Lubya, was killed when some people suspected him of working with the enemy. Suleiman Fatroush was killed by revolutionaries because he used to go to British camps and drink alcohol. He and another man from the Dalayki Arabs were killed by the revolution as outsiders (*khariji*).” Having religious connotations, the word *khariji* refers to the group of Muslims who did not accept or support the representatives that Ali and Mu’awiyya had appointed to decide who should be the next Caliph of Islam. They were called *khawarij* and deemed by both Sunnis and Shiites as outsiders – i.e., outside religion.

Yousef also remembered a disagreement between two Lubyans named Mutlak and Mustafa. “The former accused the latter of being a spy for the English. Once he even pointed a gun at him and said: ‘Take that bullet,’ but the people intervened and prevented him from shooting.” While some Lubyans spoke about spies in the village, both British and Jewish sources, confirm that they had no collaborators in Lubya itself. According to documents from the *Haganah* archives, “The relationship between the villagers and the government was normal. There were no *mukhbirin* (spies) for the government among the villagers.”¹¹³

¹¹³ Lubya (Tiberias District), 1943-1944, *supra* note 33. This was confirmed to me by Hillel Cohen, an Israeli researcher who did his research at Hebrew University in Jerusalem about the Palestinian collaborators with Jews before 1948. Cohen also wrote a book about internally displaced Palestinians in

The men who played a fundamental role in the 1940s struggle against the British, according to Abu Majid, included “Ahmad Tobi (Abu Ghazi) [who] lived in Saffuriyya but was originally from the Shanashri tribe of Lubya. He died ten years ago in an airplane crash while on his way to the *Haj* in Mecca. He had volunteered to kill the British Commissioner in Galilee, Andrews, because the latter had insulted the *mukhtar* of al-Shajara by calling the Arabs dogs. The leader who took the decision to kill Andrews was Khalil al-Issa, Abu Ibrahim al-Kabeer, from al-Mazra’a District of Jerusalem. He was one of the students of *Sheikh* ‘Iz al-Din al-Qassam when the latter fled from Syria and became the preacher (*al-khateeb*) of al-Istiqlal mosque which still exists in Haifa.

“Andrews used to repeatedly say, ‘In all the colonies I served, I did not find anyone bearing any resemblance to you except the dogs. You are producing children without any care. You are ‘*mukh-tar*’ [a play on the Arabic words that mean ‘without a mind’]. Andrews was killed in Nazareth one day while he was on his way to church. Kenneth Blackburne, Andrew's successor, later wrote a letter to his mother concerning the killing of the Lewis: “ I don’t want you to get worried about me because I am not the same as Andrews. The Arabs have always mistrusted him and been determined to hit him – he was mixed up in all sorts of queer transactions with Jews – and the Arabs knew it. He also knew too much about the Arabs and so they feared him. I have found all sorts of things among his papers-any of which would be sufficient to rouse the Arabs.”¹¹⁴

Israel, recently published in Arabic. *Also see*, Hillel Cohen, “Land, Memory, and Identity: The Palestinian Internal Refugees in Israel,” 21 *Refuge* 2 (February 2003).

¹¹⁴ Letter dated Sept. 28, 1937, Blackburne Papers, box 5, file 1, cited in Swedenburg, *supra* note 11, p. 211.

Chapter Six

Land Disputes

There is no greater sorrow on earth than the loss of one's native land.
Euripides, 431 BC

The great revolt of 1936-39 and the meaning of 1948 for Palestinians can only be understood in the context of the conflict over land. The establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine was dependent upon the acquisition of land. "If there are other inhabitants there, they must be transferred to some other place," said Menahem Ussishkin, a leading Zionist figure and chairman of the Jewish National Fund (JNF). "We must take over the land. We have a greater and nobler ideal than preserving several hundred thousand of Arab *fellahiin*."¹¹⁵

For Lubyans, one's livelihood was dependent on the land. Language was modified to reflect and voice the natural colors of the land, its trees, and fruits during the four seasons of the year. "I learned to love my land when I was still very young and used to accompany my father to Lubya," said Abed 'Ajayni.¹¹⁶ "Once I saw a snake and wanted to kill it, but my father stopped me from doing so saying: 'Don't kill it. It is from our village (*bint baladna*).' I knew that my father hated snakes because one killed his brother, but he didn't want me to hurt that particular one. This is how I was brought up."

All of the Lubyans I interviewed stated that they would never sell their land. "We are living by God's will a good life and we do not need to sell our land," said Abu Muhammad Kilani. "If you talk to any Palestinian about exchanging or selling his land he will just laugh," Ahmad Hajjo told me. "It is unthinkable. I believe that a collective solution must be found for our dispute with the Israeli authorities concerning our confiscated land." Nevertheless, most of the same interviewees also acknowledged that before 1948 village land was sold to Zionist land agents and others acting on their behalf.

The transfer of land from the residents of Lubya to Zionist colonization associations began as early as the late 1800s, often facilitated by large absentee Arab landowners. Still, on the eve of the 1948 war, the Zionist movement had yet to acquire sufficient land reserves for the creation of a contiguous Jewish state in the country. The massive displacement and expulsion of the Palestinian Arab population during the war was therefore regarded as a miracle by many in the Zionist movement. One of the first measures adopted by the new state was legislation enabling the transfer of refugee land, including that of Lubya, to the state as the inalienable property of the Jewish people.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid*, p. 14. Quoting *Doar Hayom* (Jerusalem), 28 April 1930.

¹¹⁶ Abed 'Ajayni was born in 1963. He is the son of Subhiyya Muhsen Goudi who now resides in Dayr Hanna, Israel. The interview with him was conducted on 17 September 1995.

The beginnings of land acquisition

Nearly all of the residents of Lubya owned land in the village. According to Abu Majid, distribution of land was divided equally into four parts among all the *hamayil*. Each quarter was given to a group of families according to their size as follows: 'Ajayni and Hajajwi; Samallout and Shihabi; 'Atwat and 'Asafri; and, Shanashri, and Fukara. "The officer in charge of this operation, Yasin al-Hamzi (from the Hamzat-'Ajayni family), was known as *ma'moor al-tabu* (land registration officer). The land involved in the distribution was either *aradi 'utul*, owned by the government and usually rocky and not fit for cultivation, known to the Turks as *jiftlik*; or *al-masha'*, land owned by no one, and commonly shared by the whole community."

In his diary, Abu Isam wrote that "From the north of Lubya to the borders of Tiberias belonged to the Shanashri family. Every family took land parallel to their houses. The plain of *al-Hima* was divided equally among all the families of the village.¹¹⁷ Every *hamula* distributed the land between the families, and then to the different members of each family. They used the measure unit with the name *faddan*, which is equivalent to 200 *dunums*."

Also included in the land distribution scheme were *Tallit al-Khayimi*, situated 200 metres from the wells of the *khan* where Arnaud, the Crusader leader killed by Salah al-Din al-Ayyoubi is said to have pitched his tent (*khaimi*) and '*Ard al-Kasayir*, named to commemorate the defeat of the Crusaders. The dossier on Lubya compiled by Zionist intelligence also noted that there were 100 *dunums* of *waqf* land (religious endowment property) registered in the name of the mosque and valued, according to the land registry, at 65 Palestinian *liras*.¹¹⁸

Jewish organizations began buying land in Lubya and other areas of the Galilee at the end of the nineteenth century.¹¹⁹ The Jewish Colonization Association (JCA)¹²⁰ along with the Jewish National Fund or *Keren Kayemet Leisrael* (JNF) were among the most influential and effective organizations in buying land from Palestinians. After World War I, a separate shareholding company, the Palestine Land Development Company (PICA), was founded for the purpose of managing Jewish holdings in Palestine.

At that time, the long-term policy of those Jewish organizations was unclear to Palestinian Arab farmers. For the Zionist movement, however, the acquisition of land was

¹¹⁷ *al-Hima* consisted of different pieces of land: al-Khallalat, Dami, al-Akkoba, al-Ghodran, al-Ma'abir, al-Bassas, Um-Alsuyouf, Bassoum, Sarjoni, al-Karasi, Halhoul, al-Zaafaraniyi, al-Boskandiyi, al-Mu'tirda, Um Al-Khait, al-Mila'abi, al-Baranis, al-Jamra, al-Sahin, al-Kinnara, al-Kuroum, al-Arid, al-Karroubi, al-Tal, Ras-Alzaytoun, and al-Maddan.

¹¹⁸ Lubya (Tiberias District), 1943-1944, *supra* note 33.

¹¹⁹ Reference to an unpublished doctorate by Sahar Huneidi, *Sir Herbert Samuel, Zionism and the Palestine Arabs 1920-1925*. Manchester: University of Manchester, 1995. Quote from *al-Hayat* daily newspaper nos. 12222-3).

¹²⁰ The Jewish Colonization Association (JCA) was founded as a private organization with a capital of two million *liras* Sterling by Baron Moritz Hirsch in 1891 and registered as a shareholding company under British law.

a critical element of creating a Jewish homeland in Palestine. Prior to 1920, for example, Jews owned less than three percent (650,000 *dunums*) of land in the country, the majority of which was in the coastal regions and in Jerusalem.¹²¹

Even more problematic was the fact that Palestine was not a land without a people as characterized by Zionist movement and one of its leading figures, British Zionist writer Israel Zangwill.¹²² Acquisition of sufficient land to establish an exclusive Jewish state in Palestine would inevitably result in the displacement of the indigenous Arab or non-Jewish population. According to Theodore Herzl, the founder of the Zionist movement,

When we occupy the land we shall bring immediate benefit to the state that receives us. We must expropriate gently the private property on the estates assigned to us. We shall try to spirit the penniless population across the border by procuring employment for it in the transit countries. While denying it any employment in our own country...The property owners will come over to our side. Both the process of expropriation and the removal of the poor must be carried out discreetly and circumspectly...Let the owners of immovable property believe that they are cheating us, selling us something far more than they are worth... But we are not going to sell them anything back.¹²³

The process of land acquisition in Palestine was facilitated by the adoption of new land legislation by the Ottoman government and later by the British Mandate administration.¹²⁴ This included the Ottoman Land Law and the 1928 Settlement of Tithes Ordinance. These laws failed to protect the largely rural Palestinian Arab population and left them vulnerable to land takeovers.

Many of the Arab *fallahin*, for example, feared that land registration lists could be used by the authorities to conscript men into the army. Others found registration fees too expensive. Palestinians who were able and dared to register their land often had to borrow money from the bank in exchange for mortgaging their share of it. The *mukhtars* and the heads of families were the main beneficiaries of this system, and played further on the fears of landowners. By 1914, no more than a quarter of Palestinian land was registered.

¹²¹ Cmd. 1785, *A Survey of Palestine 1945-1946*. Jerusalem, Vol. I, Chapter 8, pp. 244, cited in Sami Hadawi, *Palestinian Rights and Losses in 1948, A Comprehensive Study*. London: Saqi Books, 1988, p. 44.

¹²² Masalha discovered that this clause was actually coined earlier in 1851 by Lord Shaftesbury and not by Israel Zangwill. Masalha, *supra* note 42, p. 13. Also see Chaim Weizmann, later president of the World Jewish Congress and the first president of the state of Israel, stating in 1914, "In its initial stage, Zionism was conceived by its pioneers as a movement wholly depending on mechanical factors: there is a country which happens to be called Palestine, a country without a people, and, on the other hand, there exists the Jewish people, and it has no country. What else is necessary, then, than to fit the gem into the ring, to unite this people with this country?" Masalha citing a speech delivered by Weizmann at a meeting of the French Zionist Federation in Paris, 28 March 1914 in *Letters and Papers of Chaim Weizmann*. Vol. I, Series B, Paper 24. Jerusalem: Israel University Press, 1983, pp. 115-16. *Ibid*, p. 12.

¹²³ Raphael Patai (ed.), *The Complete Diaries of Theodore Herzl*. Vol. 1 New York: Herzl Press and T. Yoseloff, 1960, pp. 88-89.

¹²⁴ For an overview of relevant legislation see, e.g., Hadawi, *supra* note 122.

In order to avoid taxation, land would sometimes be registered in the name of an absentee landowner or the village *mukhtar* who would then turn around and sell the land for a profit without the knowledge of the landowner. When the farmer could not pay the tax, the mortgaged land remained the only way to pay the debt. Some families from Lubya emigrated in order to avoid paying the tax. Abu Majid remembered that the Bakrawi family moved to Hauran in Syria, however, later on their son returned to Lubya.

Most of the land sold by Lubyans was the result of negotiations between Abdel-Ghani Beidoun, a Lebanese absentee landowner, and Jewish colonization organizations. Beidoun, Sursok and other rich families were known to own large areas of land in Palestine, and landowners like them had, in general, good relations with the Ottoman regime. Lubyans borrowed money from Abdel-Ghani Beidoun in return for mortgaging their land. Transactions took place at the agricultural bank in Samakh.¹²⁵

The first land transaction in Lubya took place in 1880. A few plots were sold to Zaki Affandi Beidoun, who later sold them by auction to Abdel-Ghani Beidoun. He in turn sold them to the representative of the Jewish Colonisation Association, Nathan Narcis Levin, who was of French citizenship. Another transaction took place in February 1888, between Mustafa al-Ali and Abdel-Ghani Beidoun. The former mortgaged property registered in his name as per *kushans* no. 113 and 112.

In 1902 Baron Rothschild bought part of the land of Lubya, but Lubyans “refused to deliver the land to its new owners in spite of receiving the total price of the land.”¹²⁶ This incident was one of the first of many confrontations between the two communities in Lubya and al-Shajara. One of the main reasons for the confrontation is that the deal took place between Beidoun and the Jewish Colonization Association without the knowledge of Lubyans themselves.¹²⁷

According to material in the British archives the first requests and petitions to acquire land in Lubya during the period of the British mandate in Palestine were presented in 1923. The majority of land acquisitions in Lubya actually took place between 1920 and 1943. Between 1922 and 1948 Jewish ownership of land across Palestine increased from

¹²⁵ Yousef Ka'war was also remembered as someone who used to lend Lubyans money in return for mortgaging their land.

¹²⁶ Ben Zohion Mikhaili, *Sajara, Tuldotaih V'ashaih, 75 years of its Establishment, 1899-1973* (Sajara, its History and People). A'm Ovaïd, Culture and Education, pp. 20-21.

¹²⁷ The sale between Abdul Ghani Beydoun and Nathan Narcis Levin was also referred to in a document in French under the title: 'Acquisition Terrian Loubieh,' dated 31 March 1943. The text of the letter starts by saying: “It was around 43 years ago that we bought the land in Lubya.” (*Le terrain de Loubieh a ete achete (en Mucha) ... il y a 43 ans environ.*). Zionist Archives – J15/7459, p. 1 The exact amount of land purchased by PICA until the 4 February 1945 in two areas named Lubya and Sarjouni was the following: In Sarjouni, 2,682 *dunums*, in Lubya, 3,446 *dunums*. *Projet De Colonisation A Lubya-Sarjouni. Ibid.*, J15/5587.

approximately 1,020 km² (1925) to around 1,734 km² (May 1948).¹²⁸ According to British mandate sources, Jews owned 1,051 dunums of land in Lubya in 1944/45 out of a total area of 39,629 dunums.¹²⁹ Jewish sources state that out of the total village lands (39,629 *dunums*), PICA acquired 3,484 *dunums* in Lubya and 2,682 *dunums* in neighbouring Sarjuni.¹³⁰

Land agents in Lubya

Lubyans I interviewed remembered several Jewish individuals responsible for facilitating land sales in the village. Yosef Nachmani was the person whom all elderly Lubyans had heard of or knew about due to his position with the Jewish Colonisation Association in Haifa. “If I say to you that we didn’t sell, the documents will show the opposite,” said Abu Tal’at. “Yes, a lot of people sold plots of land to the Jews.”

“They sold the land through a man named Nachmani. Once a *Sheikh* from the Khalidi family came and urged us not to sell the land to the Jews. He said: ‘How you can sell one *dunum* for one pound? This land has been for your grandfathers for thousands of years? You have to be afraid of God.’¹³¹ The Arab Committee proposed to buy from those who would sell their land, but nothing happened as a result of this offer.”

According to Um Tal'at, “land was sold to Arabs and to Jews. The sons of Hamza sold land to their uncles in exchange for gold, but they did not draw up official documents to that effect, so they went to Tiberias and sold the same land to the Jews. Nachmani was the Jews’ representative in the affair. Sometimes the Jews gave Lubyans a piece of land nearer to their village in exchange for one nearer to their settlement.”

Abu Wajdi remembered “a meeting when Nachmani came and proposed to our elderly men to come and settle in Tiberias as part of the Tawafra clan, but they refused to accept the offer out of fear of being accused of collaboration. They told him, ‘We stay with our people, wherever destiny may take us.’” Nahom Abbo confirmed Nachmani’s role in acquiring land in the village. “Nachmani bought a lot of land in Lubya. The Jews were raising money to buy the land. It was not that they wanted to expel the Arabs, but they did want to own land. The Arabs were seeking to sell their land.”

“Four people from the village helped Nachmani buy land from Lubyans,” said Abu Majid. Due to the sensitivity of the subject, I was asked by the interviewees not to mention their names. “Nachmani pitched a tent especially for the four men and every day slaughtered a sheep and distributed it among them. Mr. ‘X’ was known as the outsider (*khariji*), because of the help he gave to Nachmani. He had to hide for what he did, until

¹²⁸ Walter Lehn, *The Jewish National Fund*. London: Kegan Paul International, 1988, p. 85. Table III, “Jewish Land ownership in Palestine,” *ibid*, p. 74. Also see, A. Granott (1956), *Agrarian Reform and the Record of Israel*. London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, p. 28.

¹²⁹ Khalidi, *supra* note 7, p. 527. Also see, *Village Statistics 1945*, *supra* note 55, p. 72.

¹³⁰ *Ibid*. J15/5587.

¹³¹ From a report written by Sha’ban and Nasir al-Khalidi to the Muslim leadership in *Jerusalem*, *supra* note 30.

the end of the revolution in 1939. After that the people stopped selling land, but continued exchanging those plots that fell in the vicinity of the two communities' lands.”

Abu Muhammad Kilani spoke about another Lubyian “who was a middle-man (*simsar*) and sold land to the Jews during the time of Nachmani. In 1975, ‘M’ came here and I met him at the house of Abu Mahmoud in al-Makr. We stayed all night together. I asked him how much land he owned. He told me that he owned 1,000 *dunums* which he got from Nachmani, who officially registered them in his name. He had found the land deeds in Amman at the Land Registration Office and distributed the plots as follows: 400 *dunums* to his son Muhammad, another 400 to his second son Mahmoud, and the remaining piece of 200 *dunums* to his wife. It was actually his cousin ‘K’ from Tur’an who invited him to come over from Jordan to visit the country.”

“People repeatedly used to ask ‘M’ to sell land in exchange for payment,” said Um Tal'at. “Every *dunum* at that time coast 90 *kirsch*. ‘M’ used to work with Nachmani, and even as recently as two years ago, when he visited Lubya before his death, he asked around for Nachmani’s wife in Tiberias.” When I interviewed the brother of ‘M’ in Irbid, I asked him about the accusations against his brother. He denied them categorically. He said that some Lubyans themselves asked him to exchange their land with the Jews.

Different groups from Lubya targeted the main persons who were entangled in land sales. This included the Black Hand Band (*‘Isabat al-Kaf al-Aswad*). In the late 1940s a revolutionary activist tried to assassinate one Lubyian who was well-known for co-operating with Nachmani. Younis al-Mani “witnessed the killing of a Moroccan Jew named Abu Riha, who worked at exchanging our land with neighbouring Jews. I was in Tiberias in 1946 when I saw a man wearing a *gallabiyya* (an Arab loose dress for men) approach another and suddenly raise his hand and shoot. I shouted: ‘He killed him, he killed him!’ Before falling to the ground, the dying man tried to hold on to the shoulders of *Sheikh* Abu Khalil al-Tabarani, and the two fell down together.”

“I later saw another Jew holding Abu Riha and lamenting. The man who killed him, Yousef Abdel-Ghani, was from the *‘Isabit al-Kaf al-Aswad*, a military branch of the revolution. That same man also killed the mayor of Tiberias a few months later during the fighting, which broke out between the Palestinians and the Jews.” When I was in Jordan in 1996, I tried to meet Yousef Abdel-Ghani, who was one of the main active personalities against people engaged in land sales, but was told that he had died a few months before. He was originally from a poor family in Lubya.

Land sales in the archives

During my research in the Israeli archives I discovered literally hundreds of papers relating to the issue of land in Lubya. At the same time, I found few documents among Palestinians. This illustrates one of the major differences between Zionist and Palestinian relations to the land. The indigenous inhabitants of Lubya took it for granted that the land they planted, harvested and used for grazing livestock was their land.

The following letters from the British Registrar of Lands in Tiberias and Jerusalem and the administration of the Jewish Colonisation Association (JCA) based in Haifa illustrate the level to which the organised land-purchase operations reached and the extent of the co-operation that existed between the British authorities and Zionist officials. From a whole file of papers about Lubya, I have chosen a few letters that will highlight the main *modus operandi* of the Jewish Colonization Association in Palestine and its impact on Lubya.

On 31 July 1923, the British Registrar of Lands in Tiberias sent the following letter to his headquarters in Jerusalem concerning JCA's demand to partition the village of "Loubieh".

The Jewish Colonisation Association bought from Abdel-Ghani Beidoun un-partitioned shares of many plots in the village of Loubieh [Lubya]. Said society requested partition many times during the Turkish Regime and many cases were brought to court on this subject but without success. Lately, the villagers agreed to partition by agreement and a general survey was made in the whole village. The village was partitioned into plots according to boundaries described in the *kushan*. The excess area of the locality if any was divided in equal shares to the *kushan* holders of that locality. After measuring and fixing the plots, the JCA and the villagers agreed that the society should take, for all their shares in the 12 plots of which the village is composed, the whole plots of three or four localities in proportion with their shares in the 12 localities. The remaining plots will be allotted to the villagers, so that the society may have all of its land combined into one plot.

The register in which the purchase of the JCA was entered also some of other *kushans* found in the hand of villagers are missing, also the documents relating to the said *kushans* are not found in the office, but there is a booklet legalised by the *Ma'mur el Tabu* [A Turkish word meaning registrar] of 1328 *hijri*/1910 in which it is clearly shown the number of shares, date, the name of the villagers who sold their land to the said Mr. Beidoun, which figures conform with the *Daftar Assas* [An Arabic word that means the original registration book] of Loubieh which is found in the office.

The *kushans* of JCA are existing and many of the villagers have their *kushans* in hand so that it will not be difficult to find traces of all the present registered owners of said village.

The Registrar of Lands in Tiberias submitted two transactions to the Jerusalem office as examples of how he thought this partition should proceed, and asking for approval for his plan. The plans were based on the original one that had been signed by landowners in the village. The document reads:

The *kushans* of the two parties in file no. 479 are produced but in file no. 498 the *kushans* of Diab el Joodi are lost. He claims that some were lost by the government and he produces the bill of the agricultural bank obtained back after the occupation - in which the numbers of *kushans* are mentioned. We have an order of the public custodian to register some in the name of Diab el Joodi as he paid his debt. (29/22 order no. 285 of 14 February 1922). I require your guidance as to whether: a general plan will be accepted as basis for the all transactions or a separate form L.R.27 should be prepared for partition....”

Signature_____Registrar of Lands/Tiberias

The Department of Lands in Jerusalem sent an answer to the Registrar of Lands in Tiberias on 29 August 1923, approving the contents of the letter but demanding additional information and asking for *kushans* to be presented, signed by the *mukhtar* and countersigned by two notables. In the case of Khalil Ibrahim Mustafa, a certificate was requested to confirm that, “He is the undisputed owner of 16/24 shares in the two plots Foka and Koudrat (Koudran¹³²) and that this land was neither sold nor mortgaged. Also Saleh bin Amin El Ali Osman has not empowered Mahmoud El Ksein (Husayn) to make partition on his behalf and until this is done the partition cannot be effected....”

On 26 December 1923 and in answer to a letter from the Registrar of Lands/Tiberias, the office of the Department Lands in Jerusalem wrote: “There is not sufficient evidence to prove that Um el Suyuf, Tloul, Mahabeh Baraness, Maatordeh, Maabar, and Um Leben (names of plots of land in Lubya) were previously registered in the name of the JCA. You should therefore collect 5 percent of the market value as registration fees, for the share of the JCA subjects to a special clause being added to the *mukhtar*’s certificate and the co-owners admission stating clearly that the period of undisputed possession exceeds 10 years.”

On the same day another letter from the Land Department /Jerusalem confirmed that:

The agent of the JCA must lodge a written declaration to the effect that, though the registration appears to include the whole of the 11 plots, the JCA owns only 21/24 shares and that the remainder 3/24 shares belong to Abdil Rahman Ibn Abdil Aziz B’Akkar.

The declaration must state clearly that the JCA admits that Abdil Rahman owns 3/24 shares not only in the localities Mahabeh Tahta, Mahabeh Foka, Kita’at Sheikh Ahmad, Um Leben, and Hajar for which *kushans* were produced, but in all the 11 plots mentioned in the petition.... You may register the 21/24 shares of the JCA by way of correction in accordance with the order of Court charging the usual fees, together with the 3/24 shares of Abdel-Rahman by way of new registration.

¹³² Corrections to the names of plots, in brackets, were introduced in the course of interviews with Lubyans.

The JCA owned only a small portion of the land and the Governor in Jerusalem refused to sanction partition. In a letter, dated 27 December 1923, the answer came to the Registrar of Lands/Tiberias:

1. The petition for partition is wrong. Um Enick and Tell cannot be partitioned, since according to the *mukhtars*' certificate and your explanations the shares owned by the JCA and the heirs of Younis el Ahmad amount together to 1/5 only, and the validity of a partition depends upon the agreement of all the parties having interest in the land.
2. No *kushan* is produced by the JCA for the plot called "Baraness" and no registration can be allowed unless a certificate of *mukhtar* is produced stating clearly that the JCA is in an undisputed possession for a period of ten years.

The headquarters of the Jewish Colonisation Association in Haifa was dissatisfied with the way the registration process was conducted. Its representative, therefore, wrote to the Director of Lands in Jerusalem on 8 January 1924 asking for either partition or exchange with the lands owners (the Lubyans), and protesting against the registration fees demanded by the Mandate authorities.

This document gives us insight into the concept of partition (or exchange), which resulted in the separation of neighbours, and in laying the groundwork for a future separate social and political entity. This concept was already encompassed within the Balfour Declaration of November 1917 that speaks of the establishment of a Jewish home in Palestine.

The letter reads as follows:

Sir,

The registration of Lubieh village as comprised in the Turkish registers consists of small plots, having some *dunums* each.

Our society possesses some shares in each plot, sometimes represented by two or more *kushans*, and which are entered on the name of Nathan Narcis Leven, as nominee. We are at present arranging for the correction of Nominee into the name of our society and partition or exchange with our co-owners. We obtained the necessary order of court and applied to the Land Registry, Tiberias for registration.

On passing through the registers we have found that the Turkish registers are missing so we were compelled, in accordance with instructions, to survey the lands in question consisting of nearly the whole of the above mentioned village. Said extensive work cost us many troubles and

expenses but the result is of great use to the *Tabu* as it is helping for the arrangement of registration up to date.

It seemed to us that this work should have been met by the Land Registry with the greatest help in order to facilitate transactions in the villages, which were blocked to the present for reason of missing registers and villages being unable to pay survey fees for the new registration of their lands.

On the contrary we have noticed that the Land Registry is creating great difficulties as regarding the payment of fees. We paid ½ percent fees to the Land Court and we were prepared to pay P.25. for correction of Nominee for each plot as prescribed by the Schedule of fees and ½ percent for partition fees, but we are amazed to see that your Department is asking us to pay another P.25. for each *kushan* as fees for correction of area. It is well known that the Turkish registration never did correspond with reality and no *kushan* could be exact on Survey. Moreover the survey of our lands in Loubieh show generally a diminution in the area stated in the *kushan* and we see no profit in order to pay so much for the correction of area.

We are not guilty if registers were lost from the Land Registry and we do agree voluntarily that new registration should be effected in accordance with Turkish *Kushans* and without survey.

We have to pay at present registration and partition fees for us and for the inhabitants of the village, then are prepared to combine our share into one *kushan* what amounts to nearly the whole value of the land itself.

We are therefore asking your Excellency for the reconsideration of area and order the Land Registry Tiberias for charging only P.25. for each plot as correction of Nominee or at the maximum to charge only one P.25. for each *kushan*.

Hoping that our request meets your kind consideration.

We remain, Sir, yours faithfully

Jewish Colonisation Association
(Signature)

On 27 May 1924, a letter from the Land Office in Tiberias to Jerusalem's Director of Lands confirmed the refusal by the villagers to register the JCA plots through Nachmani. "The agent of JCA applies for registration of eleven plots the registers in which same were entered are missing *kushans* for same as well as Masbata is produced. The society owns of said plots only 12/24 and the other half belongs to other persons who are not willing to co-operate in the registration applied...."

Another example for the way land was mortgaged was given in a letter dated 21 January 1931, and written by the Tiberias Registrar to the Director of Lands in Jerusalem, concerning a villager whose mortgaged share of his lands ended in the hands of PICA.

1. From the records available in this office, I discovered that Mustafa bin Ali originally owned 7 plots of land in whole and 2/5 shares in three other plots.
2. On March 1298h\ 1880 the above sold 1/2 of his properties to Abdel Mejid Ramadan, which share has in January been mortgaged to Ziki Eff. Beidoun, sold by auction to Abdel-Ghani Beidoun and then to Nathan Narcis Leven (PICA)...
4. On Shebat 1306h\ 1888 Mustafa el Ali mortgaged the properties registered in his name as per *kushans* Nos 113-122 to Abdel-Ghani Beidoun.

The last official papers referring to transactions, registration processes, and petitions concerning land up to 1935 can be found in documents available at the Israeli State Archives. It was natural for the period 1936-1939, known to the Palestinians as “the Great Revolt” to witness the highest number of confrontation incidents between Palestinians and Jews.

There was, however, one other reference to land sales in Lubya, attributed to a preacher who came to Lubya to preach. Sha’ban Salman, preacher of al-Hula district, visited Lubya for three days in March 1936. In his report he wrote that the Jews had bought plots of land on which they had established a settlement. In his religious preaching throughout Tiberias and al-Hula district villages, he urged people not to sell their land either to the Jews or to Arab brokers. He added that an individual from the Arabs of al-Samairi who lived in al-Ghowair near Tiberias, had sold 4,000 *dunums* to someone from ‘Akka, and that the latter had then sold them to PICA.¹³³

In his report, dated 3 March 1936, preacher Sha’ban mentioned in detail how 65,000 *dunums* of the lands of al-Hula were sold to PICA. The Lebanese Salam family, and Syrians owned 100,000 *dunums* in the area, while the people from al-Hula owned only 30,000 *dunums*. The Turkish Sultan Abd al-Hamid also owned a large part of the land. He gave the right to A’l-Salam to dry the lake of al-Hula. After twenty-five years the Salam family still failed to do that; so the Turks gave PICA permission to finish the project. In return, PICA was given part of al-Hula.

The last document concerning the matter to be found in the Israeli State Archives was written by Muhammad Abdel-Rahman Muhammad and his brothers Hauran and Mutlak, as well as their nephews Muhammad Said and Lutfi Said. It was written on 16 July 1947,

¹³³ From a report written by Sha’ban and Nasir al-Khalidi to the Muslim leadership in Jerusalem, *supra* note 30.

not to the British authorities but in Arabic to the vice president of the Higher Arab Committee, Mufti Amin al-Husayni.

The subject matter of the letter concerned the 50 *dunums* of land bordering Hazoriim settlement. Their complaint was that,

The Zionists are using our land all the time, summer and winter, by roads that cross the land. The intention of the Zionists”, the letter continues, “is to oblige us to sell our land, which we will never do as long as we live.” They wrote: “PICA accepted the exchange of land for another much nearer to our houses, and they will give us two *dunums* for every *dunum* of our land”.

“We saw that this exchange is to our advantage and does not harm our national interest, and, instead of committing a crime in retaliation against the aggressive actions of the Jews, we would like to receive your approval for the deal”.

“If we committed a mistake which could discredit the interest of our nation, which has the highest priority, we would be willing to sacrifice a piece of our land for it (*al-Watan*). The Tabu papers and the registration offices are the best witnesses on our behalf”.

(Signed, Muhammad Abdel-Rahman Muhammad)

This letter entered the files of the Arab Committee on 26 July 1947. From the interviews I have conducted, I learned that the answer to their request was negative. It was forbidden to sell or exchange any piece of land with the enemy.

The 'Absentees'

On the eve of the war in Palestine in 1948, the Zionist movement had yet to acquire sufficient land to establish a viable Jewish state. The mass displacement and expulsion of the Palestinian population during the war, however, proved to be what many Zionist leaders referred to as the “lasting and radical solution” of this “most vexing problem of the Jewish state.”¹³⁴ Without the extensive lands and homes of the Palestinians it is unlikely that a Jewish state would have survived.¹³⁵

One of the first measures adopted by the provisional government of the new state was a series of abandoned property laws regulating the expropriation and confiscation of movable and immovable property within any area conquered by Israeli forces or deserted

¹³⁴ Foreign Minister Shertok [Sharett] (Tel Aviv) to Goldman London), 15 June 1948, in Israel State Archives, *Documents on the Foreign Policy of the State of Israel, May-September 1948*. Vol. I. Yehoshua Freundlich, p. 163.

¹³⁵ Israel State Archives, FM2447/2, Eytan to de Boisanger (Lausanne), 25 May 1949, cited in Morris, *supra* note 69, p. 255.

by part or all of its residents. The government also established an office of a so-called Custodian of Abandoned Property. In 1950 Israel adopted a new law known as the Absentees' Property Law.¹³⁶

According to this law all Palestinians who left under conditions of war lost the right to their property, even if they fled to a nearby city or village in Israel when it was established in 1948. The government also accorded itself the authority to 'legally' transfer the property of Palestinian refugees – i.e., absentees – to the state by virtue of a government payment to the Israeli Custodian of Absentees' Property who replaced the Custodian of Abandoned Property. Israeli officials thus claimed that the refugee properties had been acquired in a 'legal' manner.

While I was conducting interviews with Lubyans in Israel, I made a visit to the Nazareth Land Registration Office. There I discovered a document listing the names of 240 Lubyans who were declared absentees under Article 30(a) of the 1950 Absentees' Property Law. I also discovered a bill of sale, No. 40/53, in the Land and Registration Department of the Ministry of Justice. The contract of the sale was dated 24 December 1952. According to the terms of the contract, Ibrahim Akayba, representative of the Israel Development Authority¹³⁷, paid 87,894 *liras* and 280 *bruta* to Mordachai Shitner, representative of the Office of the Custodian for Absentees' Property.¹³⁸

(See Annex IV – *Names of 240 'Absentees' from Lubya*)

This amount, without interest, is equivalent at today's prices (1999) to 1,007,264 shekels or US\$ 308,314. (If the consumer price index is added to today's prices with the due interest of 4 percent per year, the price would be 1,558,407 shekels or US\$ 477,014). This is the theoretical price of the entire land of Lubya. It does not, however, correspond to the real prices of today, for only professional people in the high income bracket can afford to rent an apartment in Giv'at Avni, one of the Jewish settlements built on Lubya's lands.

Only two Lubyans were permitted access to some of the land of the village after 1948. This included Mustafa Abu Dhais, the *mukhtar's* son, who was known for his close relations with British and Zionist officials before 1948. "My uncle came to Israel in 1973," said Husam Abu Dhais. "He stayed until 1984. When he arrived here, he lived in our house. Then they gave him two apartments in Tiberias. They gave him two plots

¹³⁶ *Laws of the State of Israel*. Vol. 4, 5710-1949/50, pp. 68-83 and *Laws of the State of Israel*. Vol. 5, 5711-1950/51, pp. 63-72. For more details see Usama Halabi, "The impact of the Jewishness of the State on the Status and Rights of the Arab Citizens in Israel" in *The Palestinians in Israel, Is Israel the state of all its citizens and "absentees"?*, edited and translated by Nur Masalha, Haifa: Galilee Center for Social Research, 1993, pp. 7-33.

¹³⁷ The Development Authority was established in 1950 to facilitate the sale and development of lands held by the Custodian of Absentees' Property to the state and the Jewish National Fund (JNF). Dividends from the sale of the property were to be held by the Custodian until the state of emergency, under which the law became operational, came to an end. The state of emergency is still in place. In practice, however, the dividends were returned to the Development Authority in the form of a loan.

¹³⁸ The amount of 87,894 *liras* and 280 *bruta* was equivalent to US\$ 49,000.

(*kasayim*) from the land in Dayr Hanna, in exchange for his land in Lubya.” This was confirmed by other Lubyans, including Yousef al-Yousef, who said Mustafa had around seven or eight *dunums* of land, which he exchanged for land in Dayr Hanna.

In addition to the land in Lubya, Husam said that his uncle “also had 23 *dunums* in Daboria. He had good relations with the Jews before the war in 1948. When he came here all the leadership of the state, including Moshe Dayan, Chaim Bar Lev and others, received him. He had a lot of friends in [the Jewish settlements of] al-Shajara and Yamma. He refused to give us a piece of land in Daboria. The sons of my uncle in Jordan were totally against him.”

Abu Muhammad Kilani, another Lubyan who remained inside Israel after the 1948 war, refused to invite Mustafa to his son’s wedding because of the bad reputation that shrouded Mustafa after the rumours were spreading that he sold his land in Lubya to the Israelis. “Mustafa came here at the time my sons were getting married. A friend of mine, Abu Nasir from Kufr Kanna, asked me to invite him to the wedding. I apologised to him, for I believed that it would have been better for Lubya’s reputation had he not come back at all. He came back, discredited himself, and left.”

The only other Lubyan still allowed to use part of the village land is Salah Shehada (Abu Nimr). “In 1955 I started renting land in Lubya from *Minhal Mikarka ’én*, the Israel Lands Administration, to plant trees and for other agricultural purposes. I started by paying 4,000 Israeli *liras*, and now I pay almost 10 to 15,000 shekels per year. I am now renting 180 *dunums* for olive trees and 50 *dunums* for other agricultural products. I was also given permission to build on this land for 49 years. I am now there already for 45 years. All the deserted villages were for rent after the people left. The villages that the Jews did not choose were rented to the Arabs who stayed in Palestine.”

“In 1959-1960 the Lands Administration came to Lubya and started planting pine trees in the graveyard. I protested against this, especially after a shepherd told me that he saw the bones of the dead in the graveyard. After I lodged my protest, the manager came carrying a *fatwa* (a religious order) from *Sheikh* Taher al-Tabari in Nazareth, stating that the latter had given his agreement according to a Muslim tradition that does not forbid people to plant trees in graveyards. But I protested again, because I saw that they were uprooting the whole graveyard under the pretext of planting the trees, and I succeeded in stopping the project. I actually have land both in Saffuriyya and Lubya. It was always my wish to live in Lubya. I am the only Arab who continued to rent Arab land.”

Chapter Seven

al-Thawra al-Kubra (the Great Revolt)

If you shoot the past with a bullet, the future will mow you down with artillery.
Vietnamese proverb

The year 1936 marked the emergence of an advanced awareness in the consciousness of the villagers towards both their own identity as Palestinians, and towards the rest of Palestine. The revolt against British rule and Zionist colonisation in Palestine is referred to in Palestinian history as *al-Thawra al-Kubra* (the Great Revolt). While most Lubyans took 1948, the year of the *Nakba*, as the starting point for their narratives, a small number of elderly people from the village began their narratives with 1936.

According to Jewish and British sources Lubya was central in the “disturbances” that took place across Palestine between 1936 and 1939. Lubyans sent delegations to neighbouring villages to offer support and also sought support from Arab leaders in the region. Ahmad Okla and Abu Tala’t were among those who actively participated in the Great Revolt. They also reflect the two main political tendencies in the village concerning relations towards the British and the Zionist movement.

During the revolt Lubya came under attack by both Jewish and British forces. The British employed a series of draconian measures to quell the revolt. Lubyans I interviewed remembered the various methods used to bring the population of Lubya to heel. “The English forces used to besiege the village, imposing curfews from six at night until seven in the morning,” said Amina Ali Ismael. “They used to gather all the men at *Wadi al-'Ayn* and kept them there the whole day under the hot summer sun. Then they collected cactus leaves from the fields and ordered men to walk on them.”

Other measures included burning of the village harvest, curfews, and arrest and imprisonment of men and young boys from Lubya. By the time the British had managed to put down the revolt in 1939, some 5,032 Palestinians had been killed and 14,760 injured. Many of the leaders were forced into exile. Conflicts with the British forces in Palestine, however, continued up until the time the British left the country in early 1948.

Disturbances and riots were the preferable words used by British and Zionist officials to identify the Palestinian Arab uprising of 1936-1939. This is not how people themselves viewed these movements. The accounts of villagers themselves paint a picture of a period marked by curfews, repression, and daily harassment by British forces.

Early awareness

The great revolt of 1936-39 was actually the culmination of a struggle that ebbed and flowed throughout the country from the time the British government declared its support

for the establishment of a Jewish homeland in Palestine. Already in the early twenties, meetings and conferences held in Lubya and other localities in Palestine (e.g., Hebron, Ramla and Tulkarem) attested to the early awareness among Palestinians of the dangers posed by British support for Jewish immigration and settlement in Palestine.

Lubya was an active centre for political activities, involving not only neighbouring villages, but also representatives from towns and cities throughout Palestine. In 1921, for example, the first conference of the workers union was held in Lubya.¹³⁹ Another popular meeting took place in September 1921 concerning the impact of the 1917 Balfour Declaration on the rights of the Palestinian people. Between 30 and 50 people from different parts of the country participated in this meeting. These meetings were held secretly to evade the angry reaction of British authorities.¹⁴⁰

In April 1936, the Supreme Arab Committee, which would later be known as the Arab Higher Committee, was established with the *Mufti* of Jerusalem as its President. The Committee acted as an umbrella organization for the Arab community. One of the first acts of the Committee was to declare a general strike aimed to pressure the British administration to change course, and, in particular, bring a complete halt to Jewish immigration.¹⁴¹ Demands also included nullification of the Balfour Declaration and recognition of Palestine as an independent state.

The general strike lasted six months and involved entire sectors of the Palestinian Arab community. When the Arab Higher Committee issued an order on 11 October 1936 to end the strike, some sectors opposed the decision, not giving much credence to the promises of the British administration. This sparked the beginning of the armed uprising led by *Sheikh* Iz al-Din al-Qassam that lasted until 1939. While it lasted, curfews were imposed and emergency regulations were brought into force throughout Palestine.

Lubyans in the revolt

Lubyans played a role in the 1936-39 revolt that exceeded their capacity as a village, especially in relation to the rest of Palestine. Contingents from the village were dispatched to Nablus, Tulkarem and the Jenin district. Iz al-Din al-Qassam visited Lubya, praised their courageous stand, and succeeded in recruiting the majority of young men to his side. Even village *makhateer* who were traditionally very cautious towards such events gave their support to the movement, siding with al-Qassam rather than Haj Amin al-Husayni, the *Mufti* of Jerusalem.

¹³⁹ Mudar Youssef Odi, *Baldat Lubya al-Jaliliyya, Shahada Littareekh* [The Galilean Village of Lubya, a Historical Account]. [On file with the author] Concerning the meeting in Lubya in 1921 and other towns see, Abd al-Wahab Kayyali, *Tareekh Falasteen al-Hadeeth* [A Modern History Palestine]. 9th Edition. Beirut: al-Mu'assasat al-Arabiyya Lil-dirasat Wa al-Nashr, 1985, p. 156.

¹⁴⁰ Not one of the people I interviewed mentioned these episodes, either because they were young, or because no one left written documents concerning these meetings. There are fewer written and oral sources from the 1920s as compared to the 1930s, in part due to the fact that events in Palestine had greater regional and international dimensions.

¹⁴¹ *A Survey of Palestine*. Vol. I. *supra* note 32, p. 35.

Unlike other elderly Lubyans, Ahmad Okla chose 1936 as the starting point for his account about Lubya. I contacted his family in Lebanon, and they confirmed the information I had already collected from the archives of *al-Ittihad* newspaper in Haifa. Other elderly Lubyans also added their comments to the interview¹⁴² with Ahmad conducted fifteen years ago in ‘Ayn al-Hilwe refugee camp¹⁴³ in Lebanon. Okla was apparently more conscious of this period because of his personal involvement as a leader of a resistance group, his awareness of the dangerous implications of Jewish immigration to Palestine, his personality as a respected and brave leader among Lubyans, and his continued work in the modern revolution in Burj al-Shamali refugee camp where he was a member of the popular committee responsible for camp affairs until his recent death.

“When we began the struggle against the British and the Zionists in 1936, we formed three groups, each having 40 fighters. The leaders of these groups were Saleh Muhammad Taha al-Shanashri, Ahmad Muhammad Abdel-Qader Shihabi and me. We were in contact with the revolutionary leadership who supported us with a few weapons. Our relatives, under the leadership of their *mukhtar* Hassan Abu Dhais, also gave us support with men and weapons. We started by attacking enemy positions in the eastern Galilee. We were in contact with the leaders of the revolution in the Galilee, Abu Mahmud and Ahmad Tubi [the latter was originally from Lubya], and we undertook common action against the enemy.”

Abu Hassan remembers how a group of young people went to Nablus “to revive the revolution in 1937. Muhammad Abed al-Qadir B’ Akkar died, and another from Dar ‘Asi was wounded.” Nayif Hassan, who was in school at the time, remembered how “[the students] began to call for demonstrations, but the teachers refused to allow us to demonstrate, saying that they were not helpful at all. The next day we noticed a wire near the school and notified the director, who sent the students home. It proved to be a bomb. The British soldiers came and exploded the bomb. At that time they were encamped in Dam’on’s house in a place called al-Kaffi and we thought then that they themselves had planted the bomb, but it was probably the Jews.”

Another Lubyan active in the 1936 revolt was Tahir Mahmud Husayn (Abu Tal’at) who later became *mukhtar* in Irbid, Jordan. I knew Tahir when I was in Jordan and used to visit him many times a year. His sense of humour and his way of analysing the evolution of the Palestinian struggle in the 1970s symbolized the wisdom of the elderly, which we, as young generation didn’t always appreciate. “In 1936, many young men, about forty to fifty, joined the revolution of Iz al-Din al-Qassam and *Mufti* Haj Amin al-Husayni. As a result we had direct contact with Abu Ibrahim al-Saffori and Ahmad Tubi who were the representatives of the revolution. I also remember Ahmad Muhammad from the village who died (*istashhad*) in the Nablus area.”

¹⁴² Interview with Ahmad Okla, conducted by Wajih Jabir in *Falastin al-Thawra*, 1 January 1981, pp. 137-143.

¹⁴³ Ein el-Hilweh is the largest Palestine refugee camp in Lebanon, both in area size and population. It is situated near the town of Saida 45 km south of Beirut. The camp was established in 1948/49. On 30 June 2002 there were 44,133 registered Palestine refugees living in the camp.

Abu Tal'at provided a great deal of insight into what happened during the 1936 revolt, how Iz al-Din al-Qassam came to the village and those who participated with him in the battle that ended with the death of al-Qassem, together with three revolutionaries from Lubya. "When the revolution escalated, Iz al-Din al-Qassam came to Lubya with a big delegation, which included *Sheikh* Nooh Ibrahim, Abu Ahmad Haifawi, and *Sheikh* Suleiman. They met with all the *makhateer* of the different *hamayil* and the main active personalities of the village: Hassan Abu Dhais, Mahmoud Qwatin, Jawhar Hamid, Sheikh Fawaz Ali Shihabi, *Sheikh* Yihya Said Shihabi, *Sheikh* Ahmad Suleiman Hajjo, *Sheikh* Mahmoud Husayn, *Sheikh* Ibrahim Diab and Mufaddi Muhammad. They praised the courage of Lubya and asked for its assistance."

"In response, the Lubyans readied a battalion and participated with Iz al-Din in the big battle in Ya'bad (Jenin district), which lasted eight hours. The Lubyans withdrew when they ran out of ammunition after losing three men: Muhammad Muhsen, Mahmoud al-Khatib and Ali Ahmad. We got more ammunition and headed south where a battle was going on near Dayr al-Ghosoun under the leadership of Farhan al-Sa'di. The leader Abdo Farhan died in this battle and from Lubya, the leader of the group Ahmad Muhammad Abdel-Qadir Shihabi and Muhammad al-Gharibi were also killed."

While Abu Tal'at was one of the main actors in the revolution, his views about Palestinian-British-Jewish relations at that time, are contrary to the majority of the people his age. "I think that had we given the leadership to Mustafa Abu Dhais, nothing bad would have happened to us. He had a good relationship with the Jews and they respected him. He also had good relations with the British and his business in Tiberias was very successful. He convinced one of the Jews to come and testify in the court case against his brother Ramzi in Tiberias that the accused was with him when the slaying of Saleh [Rukiyyi] took place."

During the revolt Lubya was visited by various other public figures seeking support for the revolt. Abu Majid recalled a visit to the village in 1937 by *Sheikh* Nooh Ibrahim. "Nooh Ibrahim, a poet and public speaker, came to our village one day in 1937 and addressed us saying: 'Leave your women tonight. We are going to occupy Tiberias'. The men of Lubya reacted enthusiastically to his call and were given the task of cutting the telephone lines between Nazareth and Tiberias. Abu Ghazi (Mahmoud al-Ammouri) fell from the electricity post while cutting the wire and the administration of the revolution sent him to Sadat Hospital in Damascus [now called al-Tawfiq Hospital]. The doctor who took care of the wounded man was Kamil Shasheet."

According to Nahom Abbo, the attack on Tiberias "remained a sore point between us and Lubya. Zaki Hudaif was killed in the riots of 1938. He was the mayor of Tiberias. Actually, I suggested to the leaders to do something against the Arabs, but they refused. Yigal Alon, personally sent me away from Tiberias to prevent me from carrying out a revenge attack. When my brother was injured, the leader knew that I was determined to take revenge, so they ordered me to punish those responsible for the massacre, and I

carried out the orders.” I later learned in an interview with one of the Lubyans that Hudaif was shot by Yousef Abdel-Ghani from the Black Hand Band.

“In 1938 I was put in prison in ‘Akka for killing an Arab. I was the first of the *Haganah* forces to be condemned to death by the British court. But because I was young, 16 years old, they changed the death sentence to unlimited imprisonment. I remained in prison until 1945.” In a letter dated 19 August 1942, to the British District Commissioner, D. Headly, the Commissioner refused a petition for clemency to Abbo. “I can see no reason for recommending clemency as the murdered Arab was not in any way connected with the earlier attack on the prisoner’s brother and there appears to be no mitigating circumstances in a particularly brutal murder which has not been already met by the Court in passing sentence of death.”¹⁴⁴

When I asked Nahom if he had killed a civilian he denied doing so. “No, I killed someone who was involved in the massacre.” Other Jewish Israeli officers, however, said that the Arab who was shot was an old man who was not involved at all in the riots. The name of the Palestinian killed on the 7 May 1939 was Rajab Ibn Haj Beid.

Due to its location at the crossroads between Palestinian villages and Jewish settlements in the Galilee, Lubya occupied a strategic position. The war of the roads was a reciprocal weapon between the Jewish forces and the Palestinian revolutionaries. Ahmad Okla participated in many of the battles with British and Jewish forces around Lubya. “I remember our participation in many attacks on enemy convoys near Kufr Kanna and one near *Maskana* on the road between Afula and Tiberias. Once we imprisoned the guard of Wadi al-Hamam settlement with its cattle, and took them over to the leadership of the revolution. I remember that Mahmoud Qwatiin, Nayif Abu Dhais, Mithkal Hassan, Ibrahim Hassan, Muhammad Ibrahim and Ahmad Ali participated in this attack.”

“In the battle of Tiberias, under the leadership of Nooh Ibrahim and Abu Atif, we succeeded in occupying, among other buildings, the headquarters of the police where one of us made the *adhan* (the Islamic call for prayer). The battle lasted four hours. Many from Lubya and Hittin took part, among them sergeant Mit’ib Kuftan, Sergeant Muhammad Abdullah, Abdel-Latif Ibrahim and Muhammad Saleh. In another raid later on, Muhammad Abdullah and Abdel-Latif were killed. Many of us assisted the revolution in Safad as well. I remember that the leader died in that battle.”

“Once we took the initiative and attacked Yamma settlement, one of the biggest settlements in eastern Galilee. Seventy-five men from Lubya joined us. The leader of the settlement, Elyahu Bin Hayim, and three of the guards were killed, and from our side, Durgham Mutlak Abdel-Rahman was injured. Enemy airplanes attacked us and three of our group were killed, Younis Rashid, Mufaddi Hassan and Suleiman Mustafa.” Another time “a group of boys captured a Jew from the settlement of al-Shajara and killed him,” said Abu Tal’at. “So the settlers took revenge by attacking the village and massacring a whole family. They entered the village wearing British army uniforms.”

¹⁴⁴ Israel archives, file no. 2692/T.461/N.

Whenever there were clashes with the British and Jewish forces, Lubyans would send delegations to assist neighbouring villages. "I went with Muhammad Hassan Yihya al-Shihabi as part of the delegation that attended the meeting at the house of Abdu al-A'idi, leader (*za'im*) of al-Maghar village, near Lubya," said Abu Tal'at. "A few among those present at the meeting suggested sending a group from every village to support Lubya. I remember a priest from Rami village saying that they had no modern guns and suggesting that we send instead a delegation to the leadership of the Arab Higher Committee to ask them for modern weapons. Muhammad Shihabi said to him: 'Have you fought against the Jews before? They are girls, and you are afraid of them? We don't want either you or your help.' The priest answered him, 'This is my point of view and I have spoken it.'"

Lubyans also undertook visits to neighbouring states in order to seek material and political support for the revolt. In 1936, Lubyans visited Damascus seeking help from Syrian authorities. According to Abu Tal'at, the delegation consisted of "Nayif Abu Dhais, Ibrahim Mufaddi, Mahmoud Hamaidi, Saleh Mahmoud Saleh, and Muhammad Hassan Shihabi [who] met with the leaders of the revolution. The latter included Abdel-Hamid Fahoum and Abu Ibrahim al-Kabir, [Palestinian representatives of the revolution in Syria] who promised to lend their support."

Another Lubyan known for his participation in the struggle against the British was Saleh Rukiyyi who was later killed by Ramzi Abu Dhais, the son of the *mukhtar*, in a personal dispute. "I remember how once, when Saleh Rukiyyi had reached Nimrin on our way back to our village," said Abu Tal'at. "Saleh insisted on visiting nearby Lubya in spite of my objections, for I was at that time a member of the revolution. The British had been with Mustafa Abu Dhais (the *mukhtar*'s son) and I saw that they were driving a military Land Rover with a machine gun on it and heading in our direction."

"I shot a few bullets at the car and a British soldier shot Saleh in the shoulder. Saleh fell, and the British officer got out of his car with a pistol in his hand, thinking that Saleh was dead. The latter aimed his pistol at the officer and shot him. I was astonished to see that the rest of the British soldiers left their officer lying there and fled. I picked up Saleh, and with the help of people from Nimrin, took him to the revolutionary headquarters. The British tortured the people in Nimrin to tell them where Saleh was, but they refused."

Amina Ali Ismael had similar recollections of the same incident. "Saleh Mohammad (Rukiyyi) was seen by the English soldiers holding a gun while he was riding his horse. They began to shoot at him. We were looking at the scene, and we were sure that he would fall dead. He killed two of the English soldiers and wounded three others. He succeeded in reaching Nimrin, near Lubya, where he disappeared. We heard later that people from Hittin village took him to their house and helped him until he left for Damascus. He was wounded in the leg."

"A few men who worked with the English tried to follow him to Damascus to shoot him. One shoemaker helped him to hide in a roll of leather at his shop. They besieged the streets for three days while he was hidden in the shop. He was saved and he returned to

the village.” “After this incident,” said Yousef al-Yousef, “the women in Lubya sung the following song: '*Saleh Ya Saleh Ya bo Shalishi, Katalt iddabit ma' ishawish*' (Saleh, O Saleh with the beautiful hair, You killed the officer and the seargent.)

The role of Lubyans in the revolt was carefully documented by both the British and Zionist officials. A document from the Zionist archives named eighteen people who were involved in the fighting.

Ahmad Muhammad	leader of the revolt, killed by government forces in battle
Sa'id Mufaddi	killed in battle
Suleiman Fatroush	
Fadil al-Hassan	
Younis Rashid	
Muhammad Shahin	
Ahmad Ibrahim	
Ahmad Kasim	
Saleh Muhammad	
Ali Husayn	
Abid Husayn	
Muhammad Husayn	
Mahmoud Shar'an	
Radi al-Hamaidi	
Fadil Yousef	
Hassan Thib	
Ali Mustafa	

Jewish intelligence sources also collected information about weapons in the village and British measures taken against Lubyans who participated in the revolt.

The village had the following weapons: 20 guns and 15 pistols. No one from the village was killed by the terrorists (a word used by the Jews to identify the revolutionaries). The government confiscated no weapons and no villagers were expelled or became refugees as a result. As a punishment for the disturbances the government demolished the houses of: Saleh Muhammad (costing about 400 Palestine *lira*), Ali Husayn (1000 *lira*), Abid Husayn (400 *lira*), Muhammad Husayn (400 *lira*).

Another document from the archives also included the names of leaders of the special unit from Lubya.

Isabat (bands) in Lubya against the Jews and the English, 10/1938, Abid Abu al-Ghamas, representing the band in Lubya, Mahmoud Abdel-Rahman al-Fawaz, leader of a band in Lubya 24/3/39, Muhammad Mar'i,

representing the band in Hittin. These bands attacked Tiberias and Jewish settlements.¹⁴⁵

Attacks on Lubya

As the uprising went on Lubya also became a target for attacks. On 20 June 1939, young Jewish activists under the command of Shlomo Shamir, a future battalion commander in 1948, and Yigal Alon, one of Israel's most famous commander in 1948, fired on a home in Lubya. The night attack resulted in the death of two children, two men and a woman in childbirth, whose infant died with the mother.

When I asked Nahom Abbo if Yigal Alon personally gave orders to commit the massacre he denied it, but confirmed the fact that Alon was the leader of the group who intercepted the attacking Arab force on Tiberias. He said the *Etzel* (The National Military Organization), a Zionist militia established by Revisionist leaders of the *Yishuv* in Palestine, was responsible for the attacks on civilians. The British hung one of them, Bin Yosef, because of his involvement in placing a bomb in the village of al-Ja'oni (now Rosh Pina). Nahom knew three of Bin Yosef's friends.

According to one eye-witness to the massacre, Husayn Muhammad Saleh, the son of his brother Hafiz Suleiman, his two sons and his wife, Fatima Muhammad, who was giving birth were all killed. The mid-wife, named Hafida, and one other woman survived the attack. British forces imposed a curfew on the village that lasted from six at night until six the next morning. The site of the attack was in an area of Lubya known as *Harat al-Maddan*.

On Wednesday, 21 June 1939, the Arabic newspaper *Falastin* confirmed the details of the attack. The *Histadrut* daily *Davar*, whose editors still had not come to terms with the new turn of the Zionist Labor Youth Movement wrote the next day:

A new crime was committed in the village of Libiya [Lubya], a frightful crime which shows that its perpetrators have lost the last remnant of their capacity for sound judgment, and that the last spark of human feeling in them has been extinguished... The memory of the Libiya action ... will doom its destructive perpetrators to ignominy, whoever they may be.¹⁴⁶

At the time, the attack was attributed to *Ezrel*. David Ben Gurion, the leader of the socialist wing of the Zionist movement, and others in the Jewish community officially condemned it and described those who committed the attack as criminals and terrorists. On 21 June 1939 Ben Gurion wrote in *Davar Hayom*: "These bloody explosives will pour oil on the fire which the terrorist leaders want to rekindle..."¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁶ *The Haganah History Book*. Vol. III, p. 72; *Davar*, 22 June 1939 cited in Uri Ben-Eliezer, *The Making of Israel Militarism*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998, pp. 34-35.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

The *Haganah's Histadrut* newsletter attacked the “minority of terrorists” who kill innocent civilians. Ironically, it was later revealed that the attack had in fact been committed by *Haganah* forces associated with Ben Gurion.¹⁴⁸ *Haganah* forces attacked civilians, not only in Lubya, but also in the village of Balad al-Sheikh village, albeit without the knowledge of the *Haganah* leadership.¹⁴⁹

But the strongest condemnation appeared in the *Histadrut* daily *Davar* on 22 June, under the title: 'Devastation was given a badge'.

Another new crime took place in Lubya. A shameful crime that shows that its people have lost any possibility to differentiate, and have lost the last sense of human feeling in the historical struggle between the builders of the land and its destroyers. The building hand will be victorious and the memory of the criminal act in Lubya will equal all the preceding malicious operations. An eternal curse will fall on those who took part in this operation, because they are terrorists, whoever they are.¹⁵⁰

Etzel justified the attacks committed by the *Haganah* against Lubya and the Balad al-Sheikh villages as an appropriate response to an earlier attack carried out by Palestinians. The following incident was kept secret by the Jewish administration until October 1939.

On 15 June 1939, the guard of a vegetable truck from kibbutz Avikiim was injured in an ambush in Lubya while on his way to Haifa on the Tiberias-Nazareth road. Four days later, at 3 a.m., a group of *Haganah* forces picked one of the houses with light seen through the window, and attacked it with pistols and a -machine gun. Two men, a woman and two children were killed. One of the leaders of the attack said: ‘The situation was very tense among those who participated, but I knew that Lubya was not prepared and was able to calm the anxiety of the group, and so the operation ended without any injuries among our men who retreated peacefully before the police arrived with their tracker dogs to start the investigation.’¹⁵¹

According to the leader of the operation, this was “a revenge attack. It was necessary to enter the village as it had to be a direct revenge operation. It is unclear whether *Haganah* had practised such attacks before.”¹⁵²

Three days before the Lubya operation, on 12 June 1939, a few men disguised as mechanical workers entered Balad al-Sheikh village, near

¹⁴⁸ David Niv, *Etzel Battles, from Defence to Attack*. [Hebrew] Part II. Tel-Aviv: Klausner Institute, 1965, pp. 245-251.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid*, p. 245.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid*.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid*, pp. 245-251.

¹⁵² *Ibid*.

Haifa, kidnapped five of its inhabitants and shot them. The leader of the operation said: 'The operation should have been carried out in army uniform so that everyone would know that the Jews committed it. A few days before, a Jewish train driver had been killed near the village, and the *Haganah* operation was in retaliation for it. It was a warning for the future as well. Balad al-Sheikh was accused, like other Arab villages, of supporting and protecting the band members.' He added: 'They knew that a leader of the band was from the village and planned to kill him; but in case he was not there, three or four men should be killed instead.'¹⁵³

Through secret radio broadcasts, and after a few days of more such operations against Lubya, the secret organisation sent grateful greetings to Israel's young men who had ignored the orders of their leaders and followed *Etzel* fighters in their war against the Arab enemy, and committed the operation in Balad al-Sheikh, near Haifa, and Lubya, near Tiberias.

The responsibility for these operations was not known to the leadership of the organization until October 1939, when it was announced in the newspaper *Bahairak*. They confirmed that all the operations were committed by the *Haganah*'s leftist members who entered Lubya and Balad al-Sheikh without permission from their leaders.

The secret organisation wished to show, by these operations, the new spirit that imbued our organisation and dominated the Jewish areas. This spirit, which was not apparent in the summer of 1936, came to predominate after the third bloody year, and was a strong blow against Macdonald and his *White Paper*.¹⁵⁴

After numerous protests were lodged to commander Yohanan Ratnar, Ben Gurion moved to establish order and prevent random killing. "Orders were given not to harm innocent Arabs," however, those who took part in killing Arabs did not comply with those orders.¹⁵⁵

When I gave Nahom Abbo a copy of the article from *Davar*, he said that despite his wide knowledge of the history of the country, this was the first time he had heard such attacks committed by *Haganah* groups. He insisted that "it was impossible that Yigal Alon

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁴ In May 1939, the British Government announced in a White paper (Cmd. 6018) its intention to limit Jewish immigration to Palestine to 75,000 persons for the following five years, and to grant Palestine its independence within ten years. The paper provoked widespread protests from Jewish organisations, both in Palestine and in Britain.

¹⁵⁵ *Ben Gurion Diaries*, 6 June 1939-13 June 1939.

ordered the killing of civilians as revenge against Arab attacks. Even if I see it with my own eyes, as the Arabic proverb says.”¹⁵⁶

Response of the British

As elsewhere in Palestine, the British authorities attempted to quell the uprising with a series of repressive emergency measures. These included mass arrests, detention, curfews, and house demolitions. Lubya and its inhabitants were not spared.

“I was 13 years old when the British army imprisoned me,” said Yousef Issa. “We used to cut the telephone wires. When the old men interfered to free me because of my age, the English officer responded: ‘The young are more dangerous than the old.’ I stayed in prison for three months, two months in Julia, at the eastern part of al-Bus village, and one month at Khaduria, near Mount Tabor. It has the same name as the school. This was in the year 1939. When the Second World War began, they freed us from prison.”

“There were 24 people, including myself, imprisoned by the British army. British forces came and surrounded the village under the pretext that revolutionaries were in the village. An airplane spread papers ordering a curfew on the village. The following were the names I can remember: From the 'Ajayni: Yasin Awad, Abdullah Ammouri, Mahmoud Ammouri, Yousef, Saleh Mofaddi, Salah Hussein, and Salim Mihammad. From the 'Atwat: Muhammad Ibrahim Mansour, Ayid al-'Ata, Mahmoud Yousef Musa. From the Shanashri: Mahmoud Ibrahim Ahmad, Husni Abed Ruhman, Mustafa Abed Ruhman. From the Awaidi: Muhammad Ali Warda. From the Shahabi: Muhammad Kasim.” He could not remember the remaining nine Lubyans.

Ahmad Okla remembered one particular incident when “the British army entered Lubya and arrested 40 men including the leaders Hassan Abu Dhais and Fawaz Ali Shihabi. Lubyans reacted by forming a fighting force named *al-Kaf al-Aswad* (The Black Hand). Reprisal killings subsequently took place, such as the killing of the mayor of Tiberias Zaki Hudaif who was killed by Yousef Hassona and Nayif Abu Dhais. The head of Department of Lands was also killed by Khalil al-Tabari as was an Arab policeman who collaborated with the enemy. The latter’s killers were Sa’id Mufaddi and Aboud Fandi.”

“The British army responded with violence against the village,” said Abu Tal'at. “They imposed a curfew from 9 p.m. till 9 a.m. and used to cut cactus, lay them on the ground, and make suspects walk on their prickly leaves. Amina Ali Ismael had similar memories. “They used to gather all the men at *Wadi al-'Ayn* and kept them there the whole day under the hot summer sun. Then they collected cactus leaves from the fields and ordered men to walk on them. The English came to our village and burned the harvest of the season. We used to fill our houses with all kinds of food: wheat, corn, olive oil, beans and

¹⁵⁶ Another book written by Uri Ben Eliezer confirmed the direct involvement of Yigal Alon in the civilian attacks. Nahom nonetheless insisted that Yigal Alon was a very humanitarian person and wanted peace with the Arabs and that he used to invite Arabs to his house: “I knew him personally, and he gave me orders to kill those responsible for the troubles.” He even showed me a copy of the order, as published in his book, *The Struggle for Tiberias*.

other things. The English forces came and threw all the sacks on the ground, mixing the different kinds of beans together, thus destroying all our stores for the winter season."

Amina followed this with a deep sigh, as if the incident had just happened in front of her eyes. "The English forces used to besiege the village, imposing curfews from six at night until seven in the morning. They shot Said Abid al-Rahman dead while he was on his way to feed his horse in the morning. They were there with their forces in the houses of my uncles: Damoun, Miziad and Issa Mahmoud. They appeared at our house at night with a translator, his name was Abu Ishak, as I remember, asking my father about a terrorist that had come to the house. My father denied the allegations and prevented them from entering the house."

According to Ahmad Okla's account, in 1938 the British finally "decided to occupy Lubya and establish a small military post in the village. Sa'id Abdel-Rahman was one of those killed by these British forces." Some Lubyans said that Sa'id Abdel-Rahman was shot dead one morning as he was preparing for morning prayers. Villagers did not welcome the British presence in Lubya. "Lubyans continued their resistance against the British forces hurling stones and other projectiles at them. Harassed, the British forces in the end were obliged to vacate the post and retreat to a place named al-Khirbi, south west of Lubya."

Several men from Lubya paid with their lives for their participation in the revolt. "Ahmad Muhammad B'Akkar, from the Shihabi *hamula*, a member of the Iz al-Din al-Qassam group, died in Dayr al-Ghosoun, in the West Bank area, during the 1936 revolution," said Abu Majid. "The English troops had at one point come to arrest him after receiving a tip from someone in their armed forces. They had even beaten a teacher, Muhammad al-Safrini, from Tulkarem district, when he refused to tell them Ahmad's whereabouts. The police had also searched the houses of Ahmad and Marzouk 'Odeh because Ahmad used to visit them often."

"After the shooting of Dawwas Othman by Jewish troops, the British got involved and killed two others, 'Arif Muhammad Abdel-Rahman and Ibrahim al-Mansour. To avenge their deaths, four men, Yasin al-Ammouri, Ibrahim Mousa al-Bakrawi, and Mousa and Thyab al-Saleh got together and hatched a plan to kill one of the Jews. 'I am against this sort of action,' said Abu Majid. 'They executed their plan by deceiving two of the innocent Jewish merchants who came to buy sugar from them. The four men are dead now.'"

While British forces had largely succeeding in suppressing the uprising by the end of 1939, they continued to seek out those Palestinians actively opposed to British occupation of the country. "I remember when the British found the revolutionary Saleh Muhammad Taha dead in the afternoon of Monday, 14 July 1944 (24 Sha'ban 1363 *Hijri*)," said Ahmad Olka. "The British brought him from the hospital of Tiberias and he was buried at midnight under the show of force of the British forces [as his family in 'Ayn al-Hilwe reported to me in an interview at the camp and his group hiding near Lubya]. The group

defended themselves, killing and injuring three of the British, including one of their officers.” Elderly Lubyans remember Taha as a symbol of resistance.

Chapter Eight

The Nakba

Memory is a battlefield.

Alistair Thompson

The year 1948 brought about a huge rupture in Palestinian society. Hundreds of thousands of Palestinians were forced to leave their homeland and flee to Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, and the remaining parts of Palestine not occupied by Israeli forces at the end of the war (i.e., West Bank and Gaza Strip). Like the residents of other villages, Palestinians from Lubya left everything behind.

Almost all of the men and women I interviewed started their reminiscences with the events of 1948. Both related details about attempts by Jewish forces to occupy the village. They also spoke with pride about the defense of Lubya during the war. The grave of Dawwas Othman, one of the men from the village killed during the fighting, is still in the cemetery in Lubya. It is only one of two names that are still legible more than five decades after the village was depopulated and destroyed.

I also spoke with several retired Jewish officers who fought against Lubyans and eventually occupied the village. Izra Lavi remembered Lubyans as brave fighters. “[They] did not flee as did those from other villages,” he told me. “They were strong and magnificent and the Jews were afraid of them.” After several defeats and heavy losses, Jewish forces were finally able to occupy Lubya in July 1948.

Elderly Lubyans remembered in detail the valleys, villages and mountains on the road to exile. Some described it as the road to hell. Others spoke of humiliation, hunger, of missing loved ones, fear, long nights under open skies, attacks by thieves and imprisonment. “All the people were marching north,” recalled Um al-‘Abid. “Thousands of people slept in the open under the live and fig trees. We were lucky to find a fig tree for ourselves to sleep under.”

After staying a few weeks or months in temporary shelters in border areas, the refugees from Lubya were forced to move on. Village life was exchanged for life in a refugee camp, and the endless monotony of queuing for basic necessities – things which the villagers had once provided for themselves through their own hard work.

It also signaled the beginning of an endless wait to return, a wait which few refugees could have predicted would last more than five decades. The 1948 war brought about what key leaders and thinkers of the Zionist movement had been talking about for decades – transfer. A decision was made that the Palestinian refugees would not be allowed to return to their homes.

Events leading up to the attack on Lubya

The whole of Palestine was put on alert after the United Nations recommended the partition of the country into two states, one Arab and the other Jewish.¹⁵⁷ The village of Lubya arbitrarily fell within the borders of the proposed Jewish state. Adjacent Palestinian villages with long-time relations to Lubya were located on the other side of the dividing line within the territory designated for the Arab state. The UN plan ignored the wishes of the majority of the native inhabitants of the country who were opposed to partition. No measures were taken to determine the wishes or obtain the consent of the residents of villages like Lubya.

Yousef Issa was 28 at the time. “The military situation deteriorated throughout the country following the resolution to divide Palestine into two states, one for the Arabs and the other for the Jews,” he said. “The majority of the Palestinians rejected the resolution and started to prepare for the consequences that they knew they would face. From then until the total destruction of the village on the 21 July 1948, almost eight months later, Lubyans fought with all possible means available to them, especially after they found out that Lubya, according to the partition plan, would be annexed to the Jewish State.”

Nahom Abbo, the retired Jewish Israeli officer from Tiberias who participated in the occupation of Lubya in 1948 echoed Yousef’s views of the events leading up to the war in Palestine. “[A]fter the Partition Plan was passed by the United Nations, riots exploded in the whole region. Before the establishment of Israel I was an officer, and at that time also the leader of a military group in Tiberias. The leadership asked me to move to [Jewish] al-Shajara in order to train Jewish youth, but I had the idea in the back of my mind that I should do something about the Lubyans. Because I speak fluent Arabic and dress like an Arab, I had no problem moving from al-Shajara to Tiberias through Lubya, though later on I became vulnerable.”

As had happened during the 1936-39 revolt in the country, the Jewish *Yishuv* sent envoys to various Palestinian villages in strategic locations to try to convince the residents not to take part in the resistance, attacks and counter-attacks that were spreading across Palestine. Lubyans remember several Jewish envoys that came to the village. This included Yosef Nachmani from Tiberias and Chaim Lavikov from Jewish al-Shajara. Both had been active in trying to arrange land sales between residents of Lubya and the Zionist colonization associations.

“The Jews at one point sent a man to the village, by the name of Nachmani,” said Amina Ali Ismael, who was around nineteen at the time. “[He came] with a letter asking the

¹⁵⁷ UNGA Resoluton 181(II), 29 November 1947. The plan was based on the majority recommendation of the UN Special Committee on Palestine (UNSCOP). *Report of the UN Special Committee on Palestine*, UN Doc. A/364, 31 August 1947. The proposed Jewish State, comprising 56 percent of territory of Palestine, had a population of 498,000 Jews and 497,000 Palestinian Arabs. Jews owned less than 10 percent of the land. The proposed Arab state had a population of 725,000 Palestinian Arabs and 10,000 Jews. The city of Jerusalem, which was to have international status, had a population of 105,000 Palestinian Arabs and 100,000 Jews.

Lubyans to live together with the Jews under Jewish rule. The young men of the village rejected the offer and accused [the *mukhtar*] Hassan Abu Dhais of being a traitor.” Ibrahim Shihabi recalled that “the Jews also sent an English officer to ask for the village’s neutrality. My father told him that he should consult with [Hassan] Abu Dhais. The young men who were at the meeting were very angry at the idea, and asked my father: ‘Has your treasury box been filled by the English?’” This version of events was confirmed by others from Lubya.

“I remember that we had only one telephone in the village, at the home of Mustafa Mufaddi,” said Abu Tal’at. “One day the telephone rang and one of the Jews, on the other end of the line, asked to speak to *mukhtar* Abu Dhais. The Jew told the latter: ‘We have no objection to your people joining the army, because ours are joining the army also, but let us not attack one another in this area.’ Some men, however, got on the *mukhtar*’s case for receiving this phone call and accused him of being a *khariji* (outsider).”

Members of the Abu Dhais family I spoke with continue to believe that their uncle, Mustafa Abu Dhais, could have saved Lubya from its fate because of his good relations with local Jews. “Chaim Lavikov, a Jew from al-Shajara who was responsible for minorities in the Jewish army, sent a message to the Lubyans proposing that they stay in Lubya,” Ahmad Abu Dhais¹⁵⁸ told me. “[A] few young boys, *zu’ran* (ruffians), spoiled everything.”

Like Nachmani, Lavikov was also known in the village for trying to arrange land sales between Arabs and Jews. According to Abu Tal’at “the *zu’ran* almost killed the man after he left the house. The people of the village, however, begged them not to harm him. ‘Let us live together and avoid problems’, they said, but the *zu’ran* accused Abu Dhais of being a traitor. The leadership of the revolution did not dare open their mouths out of fear of being accused of treason.”

Ahmad’s mother, Um Isam, had no qualms about naming those whom she thought were responsible for the clashes with the Jews. “The ones who made all that fuss were Muhammad Abdel-Rahman, Abu Nasir and Naboo, from the ‘Atwat family,” she said. Yousef al-Yousef and other Lubyans, however, viewed these people as brave revolutionaries. These two views of the events of 1948 and the Jewish offers for a truce with the village still prevails among Lubyans until now.

Not all Palestinian villages that entered into such agreements with their Jewish neighbours, however, were spared from attack by Jewish forces, as was the case with Dayr Yasin in April 1948 where Zionist forces massacred more than one hundred men, women, children and elderly despite a truce having been reached between the village and the Jewish community in Jerusalem.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁸ The interview with Ahmad Abu Dhais was conducted in Nazareth on 25 September 1995.

¹⁵⁹ Dayr Yasin was one of the most infamous massacres of the 1947-49 conflict and war in Palestine. The massacre was carried out by *Etzel* and *Lehi* forces with the prior knowledge of the *Haganah* and became a symbol for Palestinians of Zionist intentions in Palestine. For more details see, Walid Khalidi, *Dayr Yasin*:

When I mentioned the massacre to Izra Lavi he blamed *Eztel*. “It was not Ben Gurion who ordered the massacre,” he said. “It was *Eztel*. [They] caused a lot of problems. They killed and expelled Arabs in Haifa. They also worked against the English.” His wife Ester added that “it was not Menachem Begin [the leader of *Eztel*] personally. *Eztel* was against the *Haganah*. They were like Likud and Labor today. *Eztel* committed the massacre without orders from Begin. They were worse fighters than the *Haganah*.”

In another example in the north of the country the Israeli army gave assurances to residents of the two Palestinian villages, Iqrit and Bir'im, that once the area was secure they would be permitted to return to their homes. The villages were later destroyed and despite a decision in their favor by Israel's High Court, residents of these villages are still waiting to return.¹⁶⁰ Abu Isam remembered another incident in the village of 'Illut, where he remained until it was occupied by Jewish forces in 1948. According to his son Hashim, “The Jewish soldiers would kill a few of the young men in every village they entered. From 'Illut they chose 42 young men and shot them. The inhabitants didn't fight, nevertheless they were punished.”¹⁶¹

I asked Nahom Abbo about another massacre in the village of 'Aylabun that took place after villagers had accepted the terms of capitulation. “I know that episode very well,” said Nahom. “The villagers had captured four soldiers, killed them by cutting their heads off, and played football with them. When our troops entered 'Aylabun they rounded up 30 to 40 men from the village and asked a masked man, also from the village, to identify those who had taken part in the soldier's murder. A soldier put his hand on each man in turn, and asked the masked man to confirm or deny his guilt. They then picked twelve of them and killed them.”

In other cases, villages that had close relations with Lubya were singled out for harsh treatment by Jewish forces. In Tur'an, 'Ajaj Sa'd 'Odi remembered the days that followed the fall of Nazareth and Lubya and the decision of whether or not to capitulate to Jewish forces. “When Lubya and Saffuriyya fell, my uncle called for a meeting. Representatives from the Christian community accepted the proposal made by my uncle to send a message of surrender to the Jewish forces. The priest took the proposal to the priest of Kufr Kanna who then delivered it to the Israeli officer Amos. Amos told my uncle that he was waiting for Tur'an village to make one mistake in order to destroy it completely because of its close relationship to Lubya and to the Arab Salvation Army.”

al-jumu'ah, 9 nisan/abril 1948 [Dayr Yasin: Friday, 9 April 1948]. Jerusalem: Institute of Palestine Studies, 1999. Also see, www.deiryassin.org.

¹⁶⁰ Khalidi, *supra* note 7, pp. 15-17 and 460-61. For a summary of the legal proceedings see, Husayn Abu Husayn, *Right of Return – The Ever-Present Fear, The Iqrit Model and Land in Israel*. Working paper prepared for the 2nd BADIL Expert Seminar on Palestinian Refugees, 'Housing and Property Restitution in Durable Solutions for Palestinian Refugees,' 2-4 October 2003, Geneva. [Unpublished].

¹⁶¹ See, e.g., Muhammad Amin Bashar, *'Illut 'Ibr al-Tarikh* ['Illut During History]. Nazareth: Maktab al-Nawras Lil'inma'al-Tarbawi, 2002.

“One day Amos arrived in the village and asked for all the men to be rounded up. Then he chose seventy to seventy-three men from different families and imprisoned them in Telfinsky Camp on the coast [near the shrine of *Sayyidna Ali*]. We knew nothing about the fate of these men until they were freed eight or nine months later. They were kept fifty in one room. When Amos asked the villagers to tell him who had signed the surrender papers, he realised that ten of them were not present, so he gave the order for their houses to be destroyed.”

The people of Tur’an were lucky that none of the men were shot as had happened in other villages such as Dayr Yasin, ‘Aylabun, Tantoura, Balad al-Sheikh, Husayniyya, and Dawayma.¹⁶² ‘Ajaj ‘Odi told me that later on “the leaders of the revolution sent a message to his uncle to ask him why he had surrendered. His uncle, however, subsequently met with Wasfi al-Tal [who later became Prime Minister of Jordan], who apologised to him and told him that he had made a wise decision, but blamed the people of Hittin for fleeing with the Lubyans.”

While some Lubyans still believe that *mukhtar* Abu Dhais could have saved the village, others felt that Jewish attempts to keep Lubya out of the conflict were merely based on Zionist military interests. “The Jews knew that if they could win Lubya to their side,” said Yousef Issa, “all the other villages around it - Tur’an, Hittin, ‘Aylabun, Nimrin, and [Arab] al-Shajara would capitulate.” Lubya occupied a strategic position at the crossroads between Jewish settlements in the area and the city of Tiberias. If Lubyans were able to shut down the roads, Jewish settlements in the area would find themselves isolated from each other.

Izra Lavi was the man ordered by the *Haganah*, Israel's pre-state militia, to occupy Lubya in 1948. Meeting him had a special meaning for Lubyans. When I told Subhiyya Muhsen Goudi¹⁶³ who found refuge in the neighbouring village of Dayr Hanna after the war that I would interview Lavi she was astonished. “Aren’t you afraid?” she asked. This was the first time that they heard a first hand account from the man who had tried in vain to occupy Lubya, due to the resolute resistance of its inhabitants. Abu Wajdi, a Palestinian friend from al-Maghar village in the Galilee who knew Tiberias well introduced me to Izra.

The interview took place one evening at Izra’s home in Tiberias. Izra spoke Arabic and Hebrew and his wife Ester spoke Arabic, Hebrew and English. My friend Abu Wajdi intervened from time to time during the interview to translate from Hebrew into Arabic when the couple had difficulty expressing itself in Arabic. Izra’s wife, Ester, interrupted many times to clarify a few points, to enlarge upon what her husband was saying, and to give her own impressions about the war.

¹⁶² For a list of reported massacres by Zionist/Israeli forces during the war *see*, List of Reported Massacres, tbl. 5; Abu Sitta, *supra* note 8, p. 16. For details of individual massacres based on documents from Zionist and State Archives *see* Morris, *supra* note 68.

¹⁶³ Subhiyya Muhsen Goudi was born in 1942. The interview with her was conducted in Dayr Hanna, Israel on 17 September 1995.

Izra began his account by telling me about the good relations between Jews and Arabs in Tiberias before the war. He then turned his attention to the events of 1948. “[When the Arabs] closed the roads to Safad and to the Jordan Valley we could not enter Tiberias from any direction. The north, south and western approaches were all closed. We could only enter Tiberias from the sea at Kineret. The *Mufti* began to lose control of his followers, and the Jews began to feel upset and afraid. I received orders to enter Tiberias to show the Jews that the situation was not as bad as they feared. I realized that the situation was deteriorating. At night we were afraid while during the day the situation seemed normal. A week later I was order to leave Tiberias to train the military how to lead a squad.”

“After that I became a regular officer and returned to Tiberias. We had to come in by sea because all the roads were closed. Thirty Jewish soldiers were in Rabbi Ranu’s house. The hotel in Tiberias was the Arab Army’s headquarters. They also used the houses of Suleiman and Mahfod Nasir al-Din. Lubyans also closed the road near their village. Anyone who wanted to travel to Afula or Haifa was unable to do so. I had to enter Tiberias by trickery. All the Jews were to open fire on the Arabs in order to provide us with cover. That was how I got in.”

Nahom Abbo, another Jewish Israeli officer who participated in the attack on Lubya, also recalled the growing number of confrontations in the area between the two communities. “[O]ne night, due to interference from persons from outside the region, I was stopped by the group of men at a checkpoint. One of them recognised me by name, but all the others were strangers. Then Jamil, the leader of the Najjada party, arrived and escorted me out of the checkpoint to the outskirts of the town. I was thus able to pass the message on to my leaders that we should be careful because the number of foreigners in Tiberias exceeded that of the locals.”

The first attack on Lubya in the spring of 1948 was preceded by attacks and riots in Tiberias. “I heard from Arab friends that there would be an attack on the city,” Izra said. “Therefore, the Arabs were to leave Tiberias so as to avoid harm. They were ordered not to take anything with them. When we entered the Arab houses, there was still fire burning under the pots of food.” Nahom added that “a group from Lubya, between thirty and forty men, joined in the warfare. In March 1948 the situation erupted. The Arabs killed three elderly Jews, and four Arabs were killed and sixteen injured. We buried our dead in Hittin and the Arabs buried theirs in al-Majdal.”

“When the battle in Tiberias was over, I asked the Arabs to remain in Tiberias,” Izra told me, “but they refused. There were orders from abroad that all should leave. They refused to stay. They asked only to have their weapons with them. We didn’t want them to leave. They believed that the Syrian, Jordanian and Egyptian army would intervene and throw the Jews in the sea, and return not only their own houses but Jews’ houses as well.” The claim that Arab leaders ordered Palestinians to leave their villages would later become one of the factors successive Israeli governments would use to explain the mass

displacement of the Palestinian Arab population in 1948. Subsequent research, however, proved this claim to be false.¹⁶⁴

Attacks on Lubya

Many of the elderly Lubyans that I interviewed insisted on speaking about the details of the attack on Lubya and its defense. Accounts of the attack varied depending on the position of Lubyans in and around the village. Their stories conveyed not only the huge sense of loss with their defeat at the hands of Jewish forces, but also their pride in the defense of Lubya.

Unlike the Jewish *Yishuv* and its well-trained officers and soldiers, many of whom had participated in the second world war with British and allied forces, there was no centralized leadership to coordinate local efforts in Lubya. In February 1948, only several months after the adoption of the UN partition plan the Zionist leadership sent a force to Lubya to try to open the road. Nahom Abbo was the head of this unit. “Everyone realised that as long as Lubya resisted, the road from al-Shajara to Tiberias would remain closed. They had a canon in place that fired on any movement in and out of [Jewish] al-Shajara.”

“I was the leader of eighty people (*mihlaka mokairit*) and I sent a group of my men to open a route into Lubya. The Lubyans shot at them, killing one and injuring two. This happened in February 1948. I thought then that the Lubyans were crazy, because they were surrounded on all sides.” The details of this attack and counter-attack were confirmed by many Lubyans that I interviewed.

The first attack by Zionist forces on the village itself took place in March 1948. Nahom explained to me that the idea was that a plane should bomb Lubya and then the army would enter the village. This first battle was not a success.” According to Yousef Issa six Lubyans died after having killed seven attackers and destroyed their vehicles during this first clash on 24 March 1948.

The second battle to occupy Lubya over 10-11 June 1948 began on the night the truce was declared. It also proved to be a failure. “The Lubyans closed the roads and fired at al-Shajara Kibbutz from their houses,” said Izra. “At the start, we tried to open the road to *Maskana* (now called Tsomet Golani). Our men came from Tiberias. My brother Isaac was with them. They had sand bags with them to fill the craters in the road.”

“The Lubyans did not flee as did those from other villages. They were strong and magnificent and the Jews were afraid of them. My brother was shot dead and burned in the car. He was ambushed by Lubyans. After this incident the decision was made to occupy Lubya. Lubyans were strong fighters. The village was situated on three hills. The leader of the attack was Chaim Lavikov from al-Shajara. This battle was a failure for us.”

¹⁶⁴ It is estimated that 25 percent of the refugees were expelled by Jewish forces, 54 percent fled under military assault, 2 percent fled because of psychological warfare, 8 percent fled because of fear of Jewish attack, 10 percent under the influence of the fall of neighboring towns, and 1 percent on orders from Arab leaders. Abu Sitta, *supra* note 7. Also see, Morris, *supra* note 68.

Nasir Muhammad ‘Atwani¹⁶⁵ was one of the Lubyans who participated in the defense of the village. He is now residing in Aleppo, Syria. In exile he started to educate himself, taking one degree after another, until he obtained his PhD in English literature. He later taught at Aleppo University. Nasir is now retired, but continues to write articles about Lubya for newspapers in Syria and in the Gulf. His story starts with the battle on 10 June 1948. His memories of the past are as fresh as if the events he recounted had just taken place before his eyes.

“We defeated them in this battle which lasted ten hours. I went to Nazareth, where Fawzi Qawuqji [the leader of the Arab Salvation Army], Abu Ibrahim and Abu ‘Atif were stationed, with other people from Lubya to ask for ammunition. Lubya was at that time following Haj Amin al-Husayni. In a sign of dissatisfaction, the *Mufti* didn’t accept an invitation to visit the village while he was once on his way to Tiberias, and passing nearby Lubya.”

During the 1930s many Lubyans had been supporters of Iz al-Din al-Qassam as already mentioned in the previous chapter. After the British suppressed the 1936-39 uprising and the death of al-Qassam, however, many Lubyans, especially among the village leadership, threw their support behind Haj Amin al-Husayni. Nevertheless, there were those who were opposed to al-Husayni’s policies.

Abu Bassam was another Lubyan who participated in the counter attack against the Jewish convoy that attacked the village. He was nineteen at the time. Yousef was an early fighter in the modern revolution. He participated in all phases of the modern revolution in its preparatory stages in Jordan and later on in al-Arkoub in south Lebanon. He is now retired and lives in Homs refugee camp in Syria.

Abu Khalil fought alongside Abu Bassam. Their cousin 'Aref Abdel Rahman was killed in the attack. “Five of us got together and when the [Jewish] armed vehicle passed by we decided not to open fire on it because it was a useless act,” he said. “While we were waiting a truck passed. This time we decided to shoot. I went home and threatened my sister with a knife to tell me where my mother had hidden the gun, and to make my mother give it to me.”

“I provoked her anger by telling her that they had killed our cousin. She gave me the gun and I was thus able to participate in the clash with the convoy. When Dawwas went to see how many attackers were killed, a shot was heard and he fell dead. This provoked another fierce clash in which British troops and the entire village got involved. Lubya’s *hamayil* surpassed each other in bravery, but the battle proved bigger than they could handle.”

The grave of Dawwas Othman is still in the cemetery of Lubya. It is one of only two names that are still legible after all these years of not taking care of the tombs. When Abu

¹⁶⁵ Nasir Muhammad ‘Atwani was born in 1926. The interview with him was conducted in Aleppo, Syria on 16 November 1998.

Khalil's cousin who was with him during the battle asked him if he was afraid, he answered, "You are not braver than me."

Despite the strength of the forces allied against them, there was a high spirit of solidarity between Lubyans and neighbouring villages such as Nasir al-Din and Saffuriyya. Lubyans provided assistance to nearby villages that were also coming under attack by Jewish forces. Nayif Hassan remembered how he helped fellow Lubyans risking severe punishment, and even risking his life. "While I was in the police, I came once to Lubya with my military car, a Dodge. I saw a group of people gathered at the entrance of the village because they wanted to go help the besieged Palestinians of Arab Nasir al-Din near Tiberias."

"More than twenty men climbed into my vehicle and I drove with them to the headquarters of the police in Tiberias to ask for more military cars to accompany me. I did not tell the officer that I carried soldiers, nevertheless he asked me to wait for a couple of hours until the other vehicles arrived. But I decided to go alone and drove by Jewish military posts raising my hand to them each time as if I was one of them. I delivered a whole platoon of Arab fighters to their destination then went back to police headquarters."

Other Lubyans provided assistance to the neighbouring village of Saffuriyya. "One month after the battle of Lubya the Jews attacked Nazareth and Saffuriyya." Nasir 'Atwani and others from Lubya "went over to help them, but it was too late. When we arrived at al-Khanouk area, between al-Raini and Nazareth," recalled Nayif, "the Arab Salvation Army had already retreated to Ksal. Once back in Lubya, we began receiving messages from the headquarters of Qawuqji to the effect that the Jews wanted to take revenge and were preparing a big massacre in Lubya. The village elders took a decision to send women and children out of the village."

Other elderly Lubyans confirmed this sequence of events. "Saffuriyya asked for Lubya's help and the latter immediately sent a group of men to assist them, but Saffuriyya fell before they arrived," said Abu Ali Azzam.¹⁶⁶ Abu Ali was active in the popular committee in Baalbek refugee camp¹⁶⁷ in Lebanon but now lives with his family in Aarhus, Denmark. "This worried the people of Lubya tremendously for they felt that their turn was next. Sami 'Issa was with those who went to help Saffuriyya. When he came back he told me: 'Ahmad, go to your father and tell him to leave for Sha'b.'"

Fayad Abbas¹⁶⁸ was thirty years old at the time of the attacks on Lubya in 1948 and actively participated in the defence of the village. He did not have many stories to tell,

¹⁶⁶ Abu Ali Azzam was born in 1936. The interview with Abu Ali Azzam was conducted in Denmark on 2 January 1995.

¹⁶⁷ Wavel camp is situated 90 km east of Beirut in the Beqaa Valley, near the city of Baalbek. The camp was originally a French army barracks. On 30 June 2002 there were 7,357 registered Palestine refugees living in the camp.

¹⁶⁸ Fayad Abbas was born in 1918. The interview with him was conducted in Denmark on 11 February 1995.

not wanting to relive the bitter memories of the past. Fayad lost five young sons in the course of the struggle for Palestine in the modern revolution. For him, neither Denmark nor any other country can ever replace Lubya. Nevertheless, the clashes of 1948 were still vivid in his memory, even after forty-seven years of exile.

“I was a soldier in the British Army from 1946 to 1948, when it was preparing to leave Palestine and the Jews launched their war against us. Actually Lubya was the last village to be defeated in the region. Tiberias, Jaffa, and Saffuriyya all fell before it. I still remember how we took the bus to go and help Saffuriyya after we heard news that the Jews were besieging it. When we arrived we learned that the village had already fallen, so we returned to Lubya.”

Men, women and children banded together to defend the village. “Even the women carried water to the fighters while singing,” said Abu Khalil. “The boys collected empty bullet shells from the battlefield.” “We were happy when we were helping the revolutionaries,” recalled Amina Ali Ismael. “My husband, Abu Ahmad, sometimes sent me over to them with water and food. The Lubyans also helped their neighbours in al-Shajara, but the Arab Salvation Army (ASA) ordered a truce. When the Jews came back to occupy al-Shajara, the Arab Army did nothing to help its defenders. Instead, they directed their fire at al-Afouli. Three days later, they asked us to evacuate the village and Abu Dhais offered his own cars to help those who wanted to leave.”

Seeking assistance

As they had done during the Great Revolt in the 1930s, Lubyans sent delegations to seek assistance from neighbouring Arab governments. “The Palestinians sent a delegation from Lubya and other cities to Jordan to consult with King Abdullah in the year 1948,” said Isam. “The result of the meeting was negative. I think that there was a conspiracy to give the land to the Jews.”

“I remember that Sa’id Shami al-Sharkasi came to my father’s *madafi* (guest house) one day and asked his advice about the situation and what to do about it,” said Ibrahim Shihabi. “My father answered, ‘You are still the leader of your people, and I cannot even convince my brothers of anything. Anyway, go to King Abdullah (of Jordan) and ask his advice. He is the leader of the Arab Army’. When he returned from his trip to Jordan, he told my father that the King had told him to be calm and rational; however, if the Jews attack, they should defend themselves and not leave their land at all, because the Jews want the land without its people.”

According to Abu Bassam, “those who met with King Abdullah in February or March 1948 are only two, Hassan Abu Dhais and Kamel al-Tabari. I don’t know if there were others who joined the delegation from Tiberias. Kamel al-Tabari went to ask for support for Lubya and Tiberias. As I remember, the King told them to wait until the 15 May when the Arab Army was scheduled to arrive.”

Residents of Lubya also traveled to Damascus to seek assistance from the Syria government. Ibrahim Shihabi mentioned that his “father met with Jamil Mardam, then Syrian Minister of Defence, and asked him for weapons. Jamil hit the table and exclaimed: ‘Hey, you table, bring him some weapons. From where should I bring you weapons?’ Then my father asked him to send a well-qualified officer to help them, but the answer came also in the negative. ‘Even this, I cannot afford to do,’ the Minister said.”

Abu Bassam was with the delegation who met with Adeb Shishakli who later became president of Syria. “There were four of us, Mustafa Abu Dhais, my uncle Hassan Abu Dhais, Mahmoud al-Hamaidi and myself,” he said. “We asked Adeb to give us bullets, not men or weapons, but his answer was a categorical no. He said that he was stationed in the village of Safsaf near Safad, and that if the need arose, he could be in Lubya in two hours.”

“When the big battle started, Mustafa went to al-Maghar to see Abdu al-‘Aydi and met Adeb Shishakli there. Mustafa asked Shishakli: ‘You said you would be in Lubya in two hours if need be, and the battle has been going on now for three days. Why didn’t you move? We now forbid you to come to Lubya.’ When Adeb asked who would forbid him, Mustafa answered angrily by slashing his face.”

The same story was told by Abu Khalil who had heard it directly from a woman who witnessed the event. “Um Muhammad (Fatima Hlaihil) said that Mustafa took his pistol and wanted to shoot Adeb, but Akram Haurani [who became a high-ranking official in the Ba’ath party] stood between them and prevented the incident from going further.” When Shishakli later became president of Syria in the 1950s, Mustafa Abu Dhais was put in prison.¹⁶⁹

The last battle

For Lubyans the ‘D-Days’ of their expulsion was 18-21 July 1948. Jewish forces entered the village on 21 July after three days of continuous bombardment. It was the ninth day of Ramadan. neighbouring towns and villages, including Tiberias, Nazareth and Saffuriyya had already fallen to Jewish forces.

“In the second battle of 1948 on 15 July, Nazareth and Saffuriyya fell,” said Ahmad Okla, “and as the Arab army retreated, the Jewish army turned towards Lubya bombing it

¹⁶⁹ Abu Khalil went on to related that “on the last day of *Ramadan* we intervened with two officers, al-Qudsi and Omar Beik ‘Arna’ out, to get him released. They asked the president what to do, and when he told them how Mustafa insulted him, they reminded him that Mustafa was now a refugee while he was a president. Two months later he was freed from prison on condition that he not enter Syria again, so he went to Lebanon and from there to Jordan.” While he was in Lebanon, Mustafa “met Fawzi Qawuqji and asked him to introduce him to Jabir al-Sabbah, the Emir of Kuwait, who was vacationing at the time in the mountain resort of ‘Alaih. He went to Kuwait after the Emir promised to help him find work, but did not like it; so he returned to Israel/Palestine in 1969-70, and from there went to Canada, where he eventually became a Canadian citizen and died there in 1994.”

heavily. We had no more ammunition and the balance was totally against us. We evacuated the village, and when the enemy entered Lubya on Saturday 18 July 1948, they had only the elderly men left to kill.”

“After the cities and villages fell one after the other,” said Hashim, “the Arab army asked the Lubyans to leave for two weeks.” Fayad Abbas, who was among those who went to assist the neighbouring village of Saffuriyya, recalled that “on the way back we saw villagers from Tur’an, Kufr Kanna, al-Mashhad, and al-Raini leaving their villages. Then the battle around Lubya began.”

(For a written account from Jewish forces see Appendix VII).

Nahom Abbo told me that Jewish forces had “contacted the Lubyans by wireless from Tiberias, and said that they should give up, but the answer was negative. They continued fighting, and I began to see inhabitants fleeing from Lubya to [the nearby village of] Nimrin. We were ordered not to stop the retreat, otherwise the battle might have been more fierce.”

“It was *Ramadan* and we were fasting,” said Fayad. “They tried to occupy Lubya by attacking it from the north and south simultaneously, but we succeeded in capturing the military convoy that arrived from Tiberias and thought that the battle was over. Then one of the villagers, Mufaddi Mahmoud, told us that the Jews were trying to occupy the village from the south, so we quickly shifted our positions and mounted a defence of the village from the south.”

Yousef Issa had similar recollections of the battle. He was posted on another side of the village. “The battle began about 2 a.m. on the first day of *Ramadan*, but our people were ready for it. The civil guard was surrounding the village from all sides. We expected the attack to start from the south, from the direction of the al-Shajara settlement. Although the attack began from the east, from the direction of Tiberias, the main force in fact was preparing to attack the village from the south.”

“Three Land Rovers and a lorry arrived from the direction of Tiberias-Bouria but were destroyed by the ‘Ajayni who were guarding the eastern side of the village at Jablat al-’Oni. When the military convoy reached al-Sa’d point to the west of Bayyarit al-Khan, they destroyed it and killed its driver. One of the Jewish attackers threw a hand grenade, but Muhammad Dawwas, who was trained by the border police, caught it and threw it back at them. One of their trucks was filled with sand.”

“At 10 a.m., while the defenders were busy fighting on the eastern side of the village, Mufaddi Mahmoud, from the Samallout tribe, arrived on horseback and announced that Lubya was being attacked from the north. The fighters who were stationed elsewhere in the village quickly moved towards the northern area where the new front had opened. Some went to support the defenders already there, while others proceeded to surround the Jewish attackers from the rear, from the direction of Kufr Sabt and al-Shajara.”

Abu Khalil witnessed the same incident. “I was standing beside Mustafa Abu Dhais, the son of the *za’eem* (leader) Abu Dhais when Jamal Mufaddi Muhammad and Ahmad Salah came crying and asked for Mustafa’s help because the southern part of Lubya had already been attacked, the house of Hassan al-Abid occupied and many men were dead,” he said. “Without hesitation, Mustafa responded: ‘*yalla shabab, yalla ikhwiti ‘al hara al-kibliyyi*’ (let’s go men, let’s go my brothers, be ready to go to the southern neighbourhood).”

“The Jewish fighters had already reached the borders of the village, when one of our guards heard voices coming from their direction and shouted: ‘Who is there?’ The answer came, ‘Muhammad’, but the accent was clearly Jewish, for they could not pronounce the letter ‘H’ in Arabic. This is when the shooting began and the plan to take the village by surprise was foiled.”

“One of the attackers had a wireless phone, so the villagers arrested him and tried to obtain from him information about the attack. Najib Musleh took the wireless and contacted the Jewish leadership. After introducing himself as a fighter from Lubya, he defiantly said to the Jewish commander: ‘You can send more troops to Lubya, for those you already sent were wiped out.’ The answer from the other side was: ‘You Lubyans are crazy,’ followed by a series of curses.”

“In the meantime, a group of attackers had occupied the two-story house of Hassan al-Abid, which stood on the edge of the village. Hassan was killed in front of his house while he was defending it. The Jewish attackers put an automatic gun on a second floor window and shot from there at the villagers. They remained there for the entire day, which followed the night of the battle and retreated under cover of darkness.”

According to Yousef Issa, Lubyans did not shoot back because “the house was isolated from the rest of the village and stood in the middle of a clearing. However, the armoured vehicle that was taken by the villagers after they killed its driver was given as a present to the Arab Army. Abu Tal’at succeeded in taking seven guns from the dead attackers, one of whom was a woman. Other Lubyans collected the weapons left on the battlefield.”

According to Nasir 'Atwani, “The man who drove the armored tank we had captured from the Jewish army was Ahmad Hauran. When the Salvation Army came to take the tank a dispute erupted between two Iraqi soldiers. One of them shot at the other, but the bullet missed and struck a Bedouin who lived in Lubya, whose name I believe was Salim al-Mahmoud.”

The tank is still in the military museum in Damascus and the caption underneath it mentions that it was a present from the people of Lubya. In 1964 Khalid Sa’id visited Damascus. “I still have the photo in front of the lorry in 1964 with the written words in Arabic: ‘*Hadiyyi Min Shabab Lubya al-Bawasil Ila al-Jaish al-Arabi al-Souri* (A present from the brave men of Lubya to the Syrian Arab army).”

I wanted Izra Lavi, one of the Jewish officers who participated in the attack, to tell me concretely what happened from his side at the front. It was Izra Lavi and his men who had entered the house of Hassan al-Abid. “I led sixty soldiers and was ordered to occupy Lubya with this attacking company. We went from Tiberias to Yibnail, then to Yamma and then passed through Kufr Kama. Before we arrived at al-Shajara, we got out of the cars. I was wounded at the start of the battle.”

“There was a two-story building on the outskirts of Lubya, and in the plan they gave me, it said that an airplane and artillery would participate in the battle, but there were neither planes nor artillery. Another thirty soldiers were to assist us. These were situated to my right. This supporting platoon, the group of thirty men, began firing at the Lubyans to provide cover so that we could enter the village and prevent any help from arriving from other villages.”

“When we arrived at the village outskirts, I said to my soldiers: ‘I want to find out where I am going.’ So I entered the two-storey house [of Hassan al-Abid] and went up to the second floor. It was there that I was shot. There were those who said that our own protection force shot me because they had suddenly seen a man on the roof. I was shot in the morning. When I was shot, I fell down and realised that I was paralysed. I gave orders to evacuate me and for my deputy to take over the leadership of the company.”

“In the morning the Lubyans began the counterattack. I was out of the battlefield but I didn’t lose consciousness. Every time they shot at us I held my pistol up so that my soldiers would not leave me on the battlefield. They took me to the hospital, because my wound was deep, and an operation was carried out. They opened my stomach and cut out about a metre of my bowels. I was concerned about myself and I didn’t follow the news directly.”

Issa Lubani was another Lubyman who participated and was wounded in the war. “I stayed with the few who remained to the end in Mujaydil. Sami, from the Fahoum family, was responsible for us until the end of the war. I still have nightmares about those with me who died. Every time I remember them, Yousef, 'Awad, I weep. I saw them perish one by one. I told my friend Hamdoun that I was smelling the scent of death through the drops of rain. The distance between us and the Jews was 150 metres.”

“On that same day Hamdoun died. He woke up in the morning with a bullet in his front. I saw this again in a nightmare three weeks ago. Now I am writing a story with the name bloody wedding (*Urs al-Dam*). I remember the poet 'Abd al-Rahim Hammoud. He was with us in Nazareth in 1948. Someone came and asked for help (*faz'a*) for al-Shajara. Hammoud went to help, but was killed. I should have been with him. I don’t know why I delayed. He used to sit with Saliba Khamis in the Café in Nazareth.”

Neighbouring villages also sent men to help defend Lubya but it was already too late. “During the war we sent support to Lubya,” said Abu 'Ajaj from the village of Tur'an. “There was no doubt that the Lubyans fought bravely. The museum at the crossroads [Lubya lies on a crossroad between Tiberias and Haifa (east-west), and Afula and

Nazareth (south-north which is now named Golani Junction] was even named by the military commander Golani who died in the battle of Lubya. The plot of land on which the museum was erected was confiscated from our village.”¹⁷⁰

“Different groups arrived from the surrounding villages to assist Lubya,” said Abu Ali. “From Saffuriyya, Abu Mahmoud al-Saffouri arrived with 15 men, from ‘Aylabun a group arrived with the village priest, as did fighters from Hittin and Tur’an, but it was too late, the battle was already over. The Red Cross and other organizations then came to negotiate the retrieval of the bodies of the dead Jewish soldiers, but the Lubyans refused to agree to a deal, especially because they had been attacked in their own home town.” .

Others who remained inside the village recalled what it was like to be under attack. Amina Ali Ismael’s memory of past events, the people killed in the raid, including her uncle, and all the places and countries she travelled through while in exile, was recounted by her as if she was reading from a book. “The airplane dropped a barrel filled with gas-like material on our house. My cousin’s son, Younis Rashid Zu’aitir, and Mufaddi Hassan Taha, were killed. Another similar raid on the Okla house killed Ali al-Haurani and his son Subhi. Subhi had just returned home and was calling Fatima and Ali when the bomb fell nearby, killing him. There were no doctors at that time in Lubya, so they drove the father, Ali, to the Nazareth hospital but he died on the way there and was buried near his son.”

“We were in the fields one night, where we slept during the harvest season, when I heard shooting in the village. The next morning we saw the dead bodies of two Jews lying on the land of ‘Awad Ahmad, one of which was that of a woman. A priest came to take the bodies out but the villagers refused to hand them over. Twelve men from the Shihabi clan had been killed defending their houses.”

Lubyans also remembered the story of Harbi al-'Ammori, a ninety-year-old handicapped woman, and Salem al-Shabkoni, who was about eighty. Both were killed after *Haganah* forces entered the village. When I asked Nahom Abbo about these atrocities he totally denied that Jewish forces were responsible for the murder of the two elderly civilians. “I don’t think that a soldier would commit such an act,” Nahom told me. “After we captured Lubya, we stayed in it one day and then left. We handed the village over to the militia.” Lubyans who returned to the village a few days after the final battle had taken place saw the remains of Harbi and Salem at the entrance of the cave of Faraj al-Mas’oud.

“Every day they attacked the area with mortars,” recalled Um Isam. “We descended to the forest because our house was on higher ground. People began to say: ‘The teacher (*al-Ustath*) and his sons have been killed.’ I asked Abu Isam to send me to my father’s house. My son Hisham was hidden in a cloth box (*shakaban*). Another woman, by

¹⁷⁰ Jamiil Arafat mentions in his book that 87 Jewish soldiers were killed in and around Lubya. A monument for the Golani brigade was erected on the spot. He put the number of Lubyans killed in these battles at 57. Jamiil Arafat, *Min Thakirat al-Watan, Min Kurana al-Muhajjara*. [From the Nation’s Memoir, From Our Uprooted Villages]. Nazareth: al-Nahda, 1999.

mistake, carried him away. I nearly lost my mind, I ran out in the fields without shoes looking for him. We stayed in the valley until the morning.”

“My husband’s sister was married to my cousin *Sheikh* Naif al-Tabari. We ran together in the valley until we reached Tiberias. A woman, who was just giving birth to a child, was shot dead by Jewish troops. The airplanes were hitting the city. My mother refused to let me go back to Lubya. She begged me to move to Nazareth. Nevertheless, I returned to Lubya. The English forces took me there. Lubya was attacked from all directions. The Shahabi family lost most in the attack. They were buried in a cave. Priests and the Red Cross interfered to receive the dead Jews, but Lubyans refused.”

(Lubyans killed during the 1948 war - Appendix VI)

Lubyans spoke about the high price they paid in the battle to defend their village. According to Fayad Abbas, “more than 20 men were killed defending our village. The Arab Salvation Army came to our aid, but actually did nothing.” “The price was heavy,” said Abu Bassam. “Sixteen of our defenders were killed and the enemy losses were even higher.”

“The exact number of dead on the Jewish side was not known, but there were at least those who couldn’t retreat with the others and were left lying in the fields. They were found with chains on them, which indicated that there was an attempt to pull them out of the area.” Abu Majid insisted that he personally saw fifty-two dead bodies of members of the Jewish attacking forces in his own field alone.

When I asked Izra about the credibility of the official Israeli version of events around 1948 – that the Arabs ordered Palestinians to leave their homes – he answered: “Had there been no such orders, I would say that only the foreign Arabs would have left, not the locals. Their leaders promised them that they would return within a week. I also heard that they began to talk about distributing Jewish houses among them. I was told that by a Palestinian named Mu’in who still lives in Nazareth.” Izra denied categorically that Ben Gurion orchestrated the expulsion of Palestinians from their villages.

Official documents released from Israeli archives over the past two decades, however, provide evidence of various plans and orders to expel Palestinians from areas designated as the Jewish state under the 1947 UN partition resolution, especially during the second half of the war. Ester Lavi nonetheless disputed claims that Jewish forces expelled Palestinians during the war. “This is a lie. It is not true,” she said. “When I met an Arab who came here from Jordan he gave me a newsletter in which Yosef Nachmani wrote about taking land from the Arabs. I phoned his daughter and asked her about what her father said. She denied it categorically.”

The role of the ASA

Lubyans also spoke about the relations with the Arab Salvation Army. “When the Jews occupied part of Arab al-Shajara, we attacked the settlement,” said Ahmad Okla. “We

almost defeated them, but then a truce was signed and the Arab Salvation Army could not hold that area we have liberated from al-Shajara.”

Abu Ali had similar recollections. “Once, after part of the Jewish settlement of al-Shajara had been occupied, he ordered his soldiers to shell a bus that had stopped near it. However, when three cars loaded with weapons arrived at the settlement, he refused to fire at them, claiming that he had received no orders to that effect. I saw the burning bus with my own eyes while I was in the fields of Hassan al-Thyab.”

“In the ensuing battle, three men from Lubya were killed: Ahmad Gubaish, Abid al-Latif Ibrahim Rashdan and a third one. A dispute erupted as a result between the Arab Army and the people of Lubya. But an hour later, the Jewish forces began shelling the area where some soldiers from the ASA were stationed, and I later heard from the elders that an exploding shell killed six of them. The battle ended with the defeat of the Arab Army and the victory of the Jews, and soon after, the ASA leadership informed the inhabitants of Lubya that they would have to leave for the nearby village of Sha’b.”

Many of those I interviewed spoke about Jewish infiltration of the Arab Salvation Army (ASA). Ibrahim Shihabi remembered “two Iraqi officers in the village, ‘Amir and Madlul Beik. I once heard the latter speak Hebrew in the wireless and told my father,” said Ibrahim. “He told me that I understood nothing. Madlul was only listening to the Jews through the wireless. When my father protested to ‘Amir Beik about the way he was handling the al-Shajara situation and asked him to allow the Lubyans to do the job instead of him, his answer was, ‘Abu Nayif, take care of your own children, I will say no more than that.’ A Sudanese volunteer also protested against the way the officer in charge of the bombardment was dealing with al-Shajara and was killed in front of my own eyes.”

Nahom Abbo, however, insisted that Jewish forces “always had reliable sources on the other side. It is not a secret. I myself got information from them. For example, once the Arab informants told my brother that the revolutionary Arabs wanted to kill me. There were spies who worked for us. Some were captured, others were not. We also had spies among us working for the enemy, but very few, not as many as the Arabs, but I must say that I had no informants in Lubya.” I did not find any concrete evidence either of informants from Lubya.

The road to exile

The fall of Tiberias, Saffuriyya, and Nazareth to Jewish forces, and the evacuation of Arab Salvation Army from its headquarters in Tur’an left Lubya isolated among fallen towns and villages. Down to the last minute there was heated debate among Lubyans on how to deal with the crisis. Eventually, however, the decision of the majority was to let the women and children move to safe areas in nearby villages in the north, and let the men continue to fight regardless of the consequences.

The attacks on the village itself combined with news and rumors of atrocities committed by Jewish forces elsewhere in the country led to panic and chaos among the Arab

population across the country. This included Lubya. “The villagers became very afraid when on 10 June 1948 news of massacres in the Nasir al-Din and Safad districts reached Lubya, compounding the already alarming news of the Dayr Yasin massacre,” said Yousef al-Yousef.

“A decision was taken to evacuate women and children out of the village. We were near the cemetery when I saw enemy vehicles with my own eyes and counted thirteen of them. I will never forget that day in my life. We were evacuated to ‘Arrabit al-Battof and stayed with a friend of my grandfather’s there for two nights, until my father arrived and took us back to Lubya. After the fall of Lubya, we went to live in Kufr ‘Anan.”

The majority of the villagers headed towards the north. Even as some of the villagers began fleeing the fighting around the village, others were still calling upon them to stay. Ibrahim Shihabi remembered his father, *mukhtar* Yihya al-Shihabi, shouting: “*Khiyani*, *Khiyani* (Treason, Treason).” He also recalled that one of the followers of Abu Ibrahim al-Sagheer, a revolutionary commander loyal to Haj Amin al-Husayni, told the villagers that the ASA would retreat and eventually allow the villagers to return.

But it was too late to stop the exodus. *Mukhtar* Yihya started shooting to prevent people from leaving, but his brothers stopped him asking him not to put on their shoulders the burden of the blood of their cousins in case some one would be killed. “My father was against leaving the village and fired shots in the air to prevent the people from doing so,” said Ibrahim. “When we arrived in Rmaish, [a village in Lebanon] the Red Cross asked my father to take charge of the refugees, but he refused. When we arrived later in Hauran, my father became seriously ill for two months because of the tragedy.”

“My father, my brothers, my uncle Diab and my three sisters and I left to al-Maghar, then to Sha’b, to Suhmata, to Dayr al-Kasi, and at last to Bint Imjbail in Lebanon,” said Abu Ali Azzam. “We stayed there for two months until the Lebanese Army arrived and drove us to al-Kar’oon. Soon after, the Lebanese police moved us to ‘Anjar, and from there to the Baalbek refugee camp.” When all the cities and villages around us fell,” said Fayad, “we left for Bint Imjbail in Lebanon, then to Baalbek.”

Zahra Ibrahim Khalil, Abu Tal’at’s wife, was among other Lubyans who left in search of safe refuge following the fall of Nazareth and Saffuriyya to Jewish forces. “We left for Nimrin and we found that there was no one there, its inhabitants having left before we did so we slept in the nearby forest. In the morning my husband said that he wanted to return to Lubya to collect his father, and I asked to accompany him. There was no one left in the village, so I took from our house honey, sugar and flour and all the money we had left, which was 150 to 200 *liras*, as well as a pistol and two guns.”

“We lived for three or four months in a war situation with airplanes attacking us. Whenever one appeared, Fatima Diab used to shout, ‘The airplanes, the airplanes!’ We used to run to the caves to protect ourselves. Bullets were streaming past us when I left al-Za’atra cave with Salman Ayid’s wife. I carried two of my sons, Izzat and Tal’at, and my husband carried Rif’at.”

“Then we heard that there was a cease-fire, so the men stayed in the village while the women and children left for neighbouring villages. We went first to Nimrin, then to al-Mahgar where we stayed for three days. We returned to our village after a cease-fire agreement was reached. One month later, the war started again, and this time we left the village for good. My husband used to buy oil, sugar and rice. I asked him to leave a few *liras* for us in the house, but he refused. He was preparing for a long siege of the village.”

“I went to the fields only once, because my husband used to prevent me from going out there. I also knew that he sometimes looked at other girls (*kanat ‘ainai la-barra*).” This evoked a slight smile on Abu Tal'at's face. “On that very day my aunt Nasra al-Khalil was shot dead by the Jews and Hajji Zahra and Zakiya dug a hole in the ground and buried her. We were all busy avoiding the ravages of war. No one had any time for anything else. After we left Lubya, we slept another night in al-Maghar in the house of Abdu al-who was originally from Lubya. At night, however, we heard airplanes, and we all went out and slept in the street.”

“We were thirty families in all when we left Lubya,” said Abu Muhammad Kilani. “During the war my father chose to stay in Lubya and still wanted to stay even after everyone else left. Our uncle came over one day and told us that there was no one left in Lubya, but my father told him: ‘I want to die here. I don’t want to leave. Where should I go? I have no place else to go to. I will not become a beggar in another country.’ There were only my four sisters and myself, so the family convinced my father to leave after everyone else did.”

Mustafa al-Said found refuge first in Baalbek refugee camp and later in Burj al-Barajni in Lebanon since his expulsion from Lubya in 1948. Abu Khaled was a young boy when he left with his mother, first to the neighbouring village of Tur’an, and then to Lebanon. In Tur’an he remembered that a Jewish officer gathered the whole village and began asking them if they had seen among them any one from Lubya. The *mukhtar* of Tur’an answered: ‘Let the curse fall on Lubyans. All of them left to Turkey now.’

Then the Jewish officer put his trembling hand on his pistol and shouted: ‘Oh, if I had twenty of them in front of me now.’ Khalid returned to his mother and told her what he had heard. They decided to leave quickly and follow the rest of the family to evade the revenge of the Jewish forces. The same episode repeated itself in Dayr Hanna when it capitulated. In both villages the *mukhtar* lied to protect Lubyans who were hiding among them. The protection provided by the people of Tur’an stemmed from both the blood relationship with their daughters who were married with Lubyans, and out of respect to Lubyans who fought bravely against the Jewish forces.

“I was born in 1942, but I still remember the day when we left Lubya,” said Subhiyya Muhsen Gouda (Um al-‘Abid) who is now living in Dayr Hanna. Subhiyya, who is the sister of Abu Sameeh, accompanied me on many visits to Lubya. The hardships of life after 1948 and the responsibility of taking care of 12 children never seemed to prevent her from smiling. Unlike other women of the village, her character is strong, confident

and not afraid of any thing concerning her memory of the past, her personal life, her attack on Mustafa Abu Dhais when he returned to Dayr Hanna and refused to sell them the plot of land that he had taken from the Israeli authorities as an exchange for his land in Lubya. Actually she knew more than the old people about all the corners and alleys of her neighbourhood (*hara*) where she lived until 1948.

“I was very hungry and when I asked a woman in Nimrin, a nearby village, to give me bread, she refused. We continued our way to “Aylabun where my mother baked for us loaves of bread on a piece of corroded metal. We arrived in Dayr Hanna and slept in a cottage, then moved to another village where we stayed for three years. We rented one room for seven people. When my brothers started working, we were able to build an additional room. I still remember how the water penetrated through the roof. When it rained it sounded as if a herd of goats was running on the roof.”

Abdu al-‘Aydi was well known in al-Maghar village as one of the richest people in the area. He ended up in Yarmouk refugee camp in Syria borrowing packets of cigarettes from the shops in the camp because he was unable to pay for them. “My husband took us to *Wadi Sallama* [the famous *wadi* that most of the Lubyans took on their way to Lebanon] where we stayed another day. We had a horse and a donkey with us. All the people were marching towards the north. We only had 2 kilograms of flour with us, and I don’t remember how I managed to make bread out of that.”

“We then proceeded to Hurfaish, al-Bukai’a and Sa’sa’ [three Palestinian villages which were also demolished] and slept one night in each. They were beautiful villages with green countryside and many olive trees. The next day we again moved from Hurfaish to Aitharoun where we stayed for seven days. Our neighbours, Farah Mas’oud’s family, told us that our relatives were in Bint Imjbail in south Lebanon. Thousands of people slept in the open under the olive and fig trees. We were lucky to find a fig tree for ourselves to sleep under. We used to buy a tank of water for two piasters, and a few potatoes and a piece of meat cost one shilling. We stayed ten to twelve days in this situation until they distributed us among different refugee camps.”

Abu Majid who had tried to return to the village was subsequently forced to retreat to Nimrin. “The tanks entered Lubya under the cover of heavy shooting and we had to leave Nimrin after we heard the bombardment getting closer to us. On the third day the Jews entered Nimrin and I left to al-Maghar where I was told to meet up with the people from Lubya, so I gave the sheep to Naboooh and asked him to deliver it to my uncle S’ood. We ate a little *mujaddara* (lentils) and left after being told that the Arab Salvation Army (*Jaish al-Inkath*) was taking the guns away from the villagers. They took the gun of Sheikh Suleiman al-‘Abid which he had bought for 100 *liras*.”

“In al-Rami village, we met Abu Tal’at who had succeeded in taking four new Shiki guns from the Jewish force and we sold one of them for twelve *liras*. To avoid meeting up with the Arab Army, we side stepped the main roads and took a path through the olive orchards. We walked until we reached a village named Sa’sa’ and from there we joined people on their way to Yaroun on the Lebanese border. We stayed there for about a

month and then moved to Bint Imjbail in Lebanon, from where the army took the refugees and distributed them to different areas of the country (al-Kar'oon, 'Anjar, Baalbek). Others chose to continue on to Damascus.”

“I had with me 100 *liras*, given to me by the British Police when I finished my work with them. After some hesitation, I sold my gun for 35 *liras*. I then met up with Ali al-'Ashour and continued our way to Nabatiyya where we slept in a deserted mosque, without doors or carpets. My friend then proposed that we go and see a film, but I refused thinking it a crazy idea in such a situation.”

“The next day we left for al-Qunaitra in the Golan Heights, and on our way towards Damascus, the Syrian police stopped us. They proceeded to search us in a strange way. We had to raise our arms up and stick our tongue out so the policeman could see if there was a stamp under our arm and our tongue. They were acting on the assumption that the presence of a stamp meant that we were secretly working for the Jewish forces and that the stamp was a sign of identification.”

“In Damascus, while I was walking in Souk al-Hamidiyya, I accidentally met with Fawaz al-'Atroush, from Tiberias, who told me the whereabouts of the rest of my family. Once I joined them, I was told about the imprisonment of my brother 'Arif and his friend in a Lebanese prison (*Sijn al-Ramil*) in Beirut, because they had found with them a pistol and some ammunition. The judge sentenced them to two months in prison. After their release, Sidki al-Tabari met them in Beirut and helped them to come to Damascus. Because of this accidental meeting in Souk al-Hamidiyya, I changed my plans to continue to Jordan and stayed in Syria, where I still reside. That is the story of my exodus from Palestine.”

The stories of the exodus are still remembered in the most tiny details, especially when retold by women. “We stayed in *Wadi Salama* for five days and then moved to al-Maghar where airplanes still bombed the village,” recalled Amina Ali Ismael. “We then moved on to al-Jarmak, al-Bukai'a where we stayed for six days, then to Rmaish where a Lebanese border checkpoint was located. We asked for a pot of tea and they charged us five *kirsh* for it.”

Unlike others who fled north, Nayif Hassan left first to Egypt with the British forces and then back to Amman. He only discovered later on where his family had ended up. “On 15 May 1948, the British started their retreat from Palestine. I, myself, and three other Arabs, two from Lubya and one from Tur'an, Abid Aziz 'Adawi, accompanied the British officers to Port Sa'id in Egypt via Hebron, Beer al-Sabi', and al-'Areesh, and stayed there for one month before returning to Jordan,” said Nayif. “On our way back, we took a route through Aqaba because the Jews were already occupying parts of Jerusalem and Beer al-Sabi'. Once back home, they gave us some money (*mukafa'at*) in the range of 400 *liras*, and dismissed us. We later joined the Jordanian Arab Army as drivers, because they were in need of them at the time.”

“I knew nothing about what had happened to my family and the refugees who came from Haifa to Port Sa'id knew nothing about Lubya. Then I heard from different people that

my family had settled in Baalbek in Lebanon. So together with another Lubyian, Abu Taysir, I went to Lebanon, entering the country illegally. We saw the long lines of refugees moving in different directions and the old people who could not walk long distances dying on the way. In the end, however, we arrived in Baalbek and saw the catastrophic situation of the refugees there who even had no food to eat. So I stayed there three days then took the train back to Damascus, where I spent one night before returning to Jordan on foot. The whole trip was illegal. Later on, however, we only travelled the legal way.”

Trying to return

A few brave men from the village later returned to take what they could. Abu Majid returned to the village with two other Lubyians in an attempt to deceive Jewish forces by suggesting that there was still resistance in the village. Abu Majid hoped that a truce was on the way and that his actions could perhaps save the village. “The village had been empty for three days when I came from Nimrin, so I fired a few shots to show the Jews that we were still there. We left on Friday believing that the truce would start the following Monday.”

“Sheikha, an old woman from Lubya, saw me in your house [speaking to the interviewer], and I spoke to her as a Jew. I asked her: ‘*fein balad?* (Where is the village?)’ She answered, ‘*rahat yamma* (It’s gone), my child, if you want to kill me, kill me here and now.’ She then asked for water and we left her in my grandfather’s house. I took a sheep with me and gave it later to S’ood al-‘Ayid who stayed in the Golan with his cattle. Khadiji found the blind Zahiyyi, the grandmother of Hamad, and accompanied her out of the village, but refused the request of the handicapped Harbi to accompany them because she couldn’t walk. Zahiyyi died later in Damascus.”

“I left alone, for I had volunteered for guard duty at that time. We were positioned about one kilometre from the village to guard its eastern side, but when I returned to the village, I realised that it was empty, so we left to Nimrin. The artillery was bombing Lubya constantly, so I went back there with Husayn al-Mahmoud and Abu Zaki, the *mukhtar* of al-Hajajwi, followed us. We went in to collect a few things from our houses. I took a bed cover, a new blanket, and a sheep that was tied in front of one of the houses. My friend took a radio. A handicapped woman met us but did not recognise us. She thought that we were with the Jewish forces. She asked us to kill her: ‘*tokhooni*’ (*Shoot me*), but we couldn’t help her out. We left her with her daughter because we couldn’t carry her out.”

“We left again to Nimrin, but then I asked my friend to return back to the village to fire a few bullets in the air to give the impression to the Jewish forces that the village was still resisting. This was on Saturday, and there was a rumour that a cease-fire would start the coming Monday. On Sunday, I myself tried to re-enter the village, but on my way there met Husayn Ismail al-Hamza who told me that the Jews were already in Biarit al-Khan on the Tiberias side of the village. ‘Return from where you came,’ he warned, and we ran together until we reached Nimrin.”

In 1950 Abu Khalid crossed the borders from Lebanon with two friends in order to visit Lubya. They slept there one night, searching in the ruins of their homes hoping to find a few precious things that they had hid before the attack on their village. Nothing was found, only a village dog who was still living amid the ruins. “We used to call the dog Bobi. We thought that he was going mad. He ran from the north to the south of the village and then stopped beside us. He was left alone there with the handicapped people. The moment we arrived in Lubya, Bobi knew directly his owner Muhammad Ali Ismael, who came with me. He stayed with us until we left Lubya in the morning. He accompanied us until the borders with Nimrin. Even the dog didn’t want to leave his place.”

While sleeping that one night in Lubya, he heard the singing voice of a bird called al-Kata moving freely from place to place. The songbird inspired Abu Khalid to write the following two lines of poetry. The poem is like the emotional love story of the Arabic poet Kais, sometimes called *Majnoon Laila* (Laila’s fool) because of his deep love for a woman named Laila.

<i>Asrub al-Kata Hal Man Ya'irni Janah'uhu</i>	Who could lend me the wings of al-katta To visit those whom I love
<i>La'alli Ila Man Hawaytu Ateeru</i>	None will lend me the wings
<i>Wallati Lam Ta'irni Janah'uha</i>	to fly free, because the wings are broken.
<i>Fa'ayshun Bitayrin waljanah'kaseeru</i>	

“People should not leave their homes. It was a stupid decision to leave our homeland,” Nayif Hassan told me. “The Tatars arrived in Baghdad and burned everything down, but in the end they were defeated in Beisan. No meeting was held between the mukhtars of Lubya to decide whether to stay or not. Arab radio broadcasts helped the enemy indirectly when they began speaking about the Dayr Yasin massacre and how women were made to walk naked in the streets. What did they get in Baalbek compared to what they lost back home? Lubya was feeding them gold.”

Chapter Nine

Life in Exile

*We are here near there, the tent has thirty doors
We are here a place between the pebbles and the shadows
A place for a voice
Mahmoud Darwish*

Whether Lubyans live in Arab countries – Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Mandate Palestine, or in Europe – Berlin, Copenhagen, Stockholm, or Greece – all share a common experience – exile. Exile prolongs and enlarges the experience of the *Nakba*. Exile has become a source of collective identity for Palestinians everywhere, the majority of whom are refugees and internally displaced persons. “My uncle wept continuously after we left Lubya and died a year later in 1949 without having had the opportunity to see his village again,” said Um Tal'at.

The experience of 1948 was followed by further waves of displacement: from the West Bank and Gaza Strip in 1967; from Jordan in the 1970s; from Lebanon in the 1970s and 1980s, including the infamous massacres in the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps of Beirut; from Kuwait in 1991; from Libya in 1996; from the West Bank and Gaza Strip again during the first and second Palestinian uprisings (*intifada*); and, from Iraq in 2003. As Abu Hassan Hajjo said to me, “The story of the Palestinians is like a snake, it never ends.”

Like the hundreds of other Palestinian villages destroyed during and after the 1948 war, Lubya was ‘recreated’ in Palestinian refugee camps spread across the Middle East and in other far-flung places of exile. Wavel and ‘Ayn al-Hilwe refugee camps in Lebanon, Yarmouk refugee camp in Syria, Baqa’a refugee camp in Jordan, and later the suburbs of Berlin, Copenhagen, and Stockholm all became temporary ‘substitutes’ for Lubya. There Lubyans set up societies and clubs to deal with the serious and urgent problems of life in exile.

Lubyans played an active role in the modern revolution, which began in the 1960s, and the struggle to return home. Like most refugees, village identity, which remained strong, was subsumed within the larger construct of the nation, as represented through the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). Ongoing exile, however, has forced many Lubyans to confront practical and existential questions of integration. In this context, religion has assumed a greater role. Today there are some 40,000 Lubyans living in twenty-three different countries in exile. Past memories of the village history, social relations, and cultural life are interwoven with the hardships of present lives in the camps and in the suburbs of European cities.

Early experiences of exile

When I asked elderly Lubyans about their early experiences of exile, the complexion of their faces gradually became bitter and sad. Only Abu Majid, managed to tell the story of his long exile with a sense of humor. Most shared stories about the different stations of exile in the weeks, months and years following their exodus from Lubya. Many ended up in temporary makeshift shelters assuming that after the war ended they would return to their homes and villages in Palestine. A large number of refugees from Lubya ended up in Lebanon and Syria, which provided the closest place for safe refuge from the war.

“The majority of the Lubyans here came via ‘Anjar village,” said Ghassan Said (Abu Muhammad)¹⁷¹, who is now living in Burj al-Shamali camp in Lebanon. “‘Anjar became a staging post before the Lubyans were redistributed by the Lebanese authorities to various parts of the country in the aftermath of the *Nakba* in 1948.” Others like Ahmad Hassan Ibrahim¹⁷² and his family journeyed first to Syria “and then to ‘Anjar in Lebanon, before finally settling in the refugee camp of Burj al-Shamali in the south of the country.”

For others 'Anjar was a stopping point on the way to Syria. Amina Ali Ismael and her family arrived in Bint Imjbail five days after crossing the border into south Lebanon. “We were about twenty-five people in all and some of our children were sick with typhus, so a doctor came and took a few of us to Beirut. We then went on to ‘Anjar, in the Beqaa’ valley and stayed there two more months. Then we heard that Damascus was a better place to stay, so we left for Damascus.”

“From there we went to Aleppo where we stayed for two more months in the Nairab refugee camp. Then we were moved to al-Ziib camp where there were problems with water. Then we went to al-Sifri and stayed there for five to six months. We returned again to Baalbek in Lebanon to be with my father Muhammad Khalil, and stayed there for twenty-five days. Finally, my brother came and convinced us to move with him to ‘Anjar, which was about thirty-five kms from Baalbek, and we stayed there for seven years.”

Other refugees from Lubya, like Abu Tal'at and his family, ended up in Jordan. “I came with my father from Lebanon,” recounted Abu Tal'at. “The Arab Higher Committee decided to send us to the *muhajariin* (displaced) camp in Syria, but my father refused. He came here to be near to Lubya when we would return.” Um Tal'at's memory of the journey was much more detailed. “My uncle Mahmoud Husayn suggested that we move to Nu'aimi [a village near Irbid where Samadi families are still living] in Jordan where there were people who knew us and would care for us since they used to visit us in Lubya.”

¹⁷¹ The interview with Abu Muhammad was conducted in Burj al-Shamali refugee camp in Lebanon on 10 February 1999. Five other Lubyans living in the camp participated in the interview: Said Thyab, Abdullah Shanshiri who was born in 1938, Adnan Husayn Qasim who was born in 1956, 'Awad Kilani, and Mahmoud Qasim.

¹⁷² The interview with Ahmad Hassan Ibrahim was conducted in Berlin, Germany on 10 March 1996.

“Abu Tal’at, however, took us to Beirut in a bus. That night we had to sleep in a garage because King Faysal was due to arrive in Beirut. Anyone wishing to take a bath had to pay one shilling. Later on, we went to ‘Anjar in eastern Lebanon where we met people from Armenia. We could not travel to Damascus the normal way because we had no passports so we crossed the borders illegally. When we arrived there my aunt began to sing: ‘*assalihya ‘assaliyha, ‘asham il’aliyyi rayiha* (I am heading towards Salihya and the highly respected *al-Sham*). The others with us began to shout at her, ‘This is no time for singing!’ Again, we slept in a garage in Damascus and people came to see us with *baklawas* (sweet cakes).”

“Since my husband was active in the revolution, he thought that the Arab Higher Committee would facilitate our travel to Jordan, but that was not the case. We managed on our own to find a bus that drove across the Jordanian border at Ramtha. We were hungry and wanted bread but we could not find any. Later on, however, the people of Ramtha gave us two loaves. We finally reached Irbid that same day and slept in al-Bayadir area, which is now known as Cinema Street. That first night in Jordan, I could still continuously hear the sound of the airplanes.”

Only a very few Lubyans ended up staying in villages close to Lubya that were eventually incorporated into the new state of Israel. This included a number of the elderly, sick and disabled people from the village. Lubyans I interviewed remember the following people who stayed behind after 1948: a handicapped woman named Harbi, Sheikha al-Kanbar, a sick and bed-ridden man named Salem al-Shabkoni, an elderly woman named Zahra al-’Ammash, Ammoni al-’Ali who was the wife of ‘Odeh al-Ali, and, the blind daughter of Ismael al-Theeb.

Most of those who stayed behind, like the family of Abu Hassan Hajjo¹⁷³, found shelter with extended family. Abu Hassan accompanied me to Lubya while shooting the documentary film about the village. In 1948 he left Lubya with his wife and son Nayif, who was only forty days old at the time. “Because my mother is from Dayr Hanna and my wife was sick I chose to stay here,” he said. “In Dayr Hanna we were 150 refugees from different villages, but the story of the Palestinians is like the snake story that never ends. We stayed two years with friends and were able to go back secretly to Lubya to collect household items and clothes that we had hidden in the caves before we left the village in 1948.”

Issa Lubani was another Lubyan who stayed behind to care for a sick member of his family. He began to weep as he told me the tragic story of his brother. “In 1948 my brother became very sick. My uncle suggested putting him in the hospital. I refused to leave with the family for Lebanon and Syria. That is why I am still here. I stayed beside my brother in the hospital. I accepted the advice of the doctors to give him the injection which hastened his death. I feel guilty about him. Normal medicine nowadays could have saved his life.”

¹⁷³ Abu Hassan Hajjo was born in 1904. The interview with him was conducted in Dayr Hanna, Israel on 11 September 1995. He passed away in 1997.

Abu Muhammad Kilani's family left the village during the war but then decided to try to return to the Galilee rather than stay in Lebanon. Abu Muhammad had been blind since he was a small child and was a young man of sixteen when he left Lubya in 1948. He began to speak before I even had the chance to ask him any questions. "First we went to Nimrin and stayed for three days with Ahmad Suleiman (Abu Zaki). Then we moved to al-Battof Plain where we joined people already there from different places. The village of al-Bi'ni was already occupied, and a friend of my father's from 'Arrabi [about twenty kms from Lubya] from the Shalash family, came with a camel and helped us move there."

"The Arab Salvation Army was still in 'Arrabi, but did not stay for much longer. Then the Israeli army occupied the rest of the country right up to the Lebanese border in 1948. My uncles Ahmad Yousef and Nimir Saleh (Abu Lutuf) returned from Lebanon to take us there. They said to my father: 'We brought goods from Lebanon to sell in al-Maghar and afterwards we will take you back with us to Lebanon.' My father was very hesitant and told them: 'My life will not be better than that of the people over here. I will not go with you to Lebanon.' He tore up the special permit that he had received that morning and again said to my uncles: 'If the people here die, I will die with them. If they live, I will live with them.' Two years later, on 4 March 1950, my father passed away amid a season of heavy snowfall."

For those Lubyans who found refuge in Lebanon, the conditions were particularly harsh, despite assistance provided by the Red Crescent, the International Red Cross, and later on by the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA)¹⁷⁴. In the south of the country, Ghassan Said remembered the "tents through which rainwater used to penetrate." Yousef Issa lost his first wife and son in the camp in Baalbek where they were given shelter "in military camps [Wavel and Ghoro¹⁷⁵] named after English and French generals."

"The long corridors of the military building in which we were kept were divided by curtains into cubicles in which individual families were placed," said Yousef. "It was the worst winter in many years, with severe cold and snow. There was no medicine to cure even the simple illnesses. I remember that once an English nurse from the Red Cross gave me a few tablets for something, but to no avail. Many children died because of the lack of blankets and other means of keeping warm."

¹⁷⁴ UNRWA was established in December 1949 according to UN General Assembly Resolution 302(V), 8 December 1949, as a temporary agency mandated to provide emergency relief and assistance to refugees displaced from Palestine during the 1948 war. The Agency continues to provide basic education, health, and social services to Palestinian refugees due to the absence of a solution for the refugees in accordance with the terms set forth in General Assembly Resolution 194(III), 11 December 1948, *supra* note 3. For more on UNRWA see, www.unrwa.org.

¹⁷⁵ After 1969 when the revolutionary forces took over the responsibility of the camps according the Cairo agreement between the PLO and the Lebanese government, the camp was re named Galilee camp, while the other camp was moved south, and named Rashadiyya camp.

The harsh conditions were exacerbated by the fact that amid the panic and chaos of war, most refugees left their villages with few possessions, assuming that they would only be gone for a matter of a few days or weeks at most. Many Lubyans, like Ramzia Hassan Abu Dhais remembered that they Arab Salvation Army had told them: 'Leave for two weeks, then you can come back.' "We took nothing with us when we left Lubya," Yousef Issa told me. "I had to sell my gun in order to survive."

Um Tal'at and her family "left Palestine with only a few *liras*. We were, after all, a family of five. My sons were 4, 3 and 1 years old. UNRWA managed to give each one of us 1½ kgs of flour. My brother-in-law registered with the Agency as having been born in Nu'aymi. The other brother, Muhammad, registered as a policeman, while my husband became *mukhtar*. Later on, my husband succeeded in finding work as a guard in Khao, a Jordanian town until Fawzi Hassan gave him work in Dayr 'Alla in the Jordan valley, where he worked for fifteen consecutive years."

Some, like Abu Tal'at, were lucky enough to have extended family or friends who were able to help them out. "[My father Mahmoud Husayn] came here in order to be closer to Lubya when it was time to go back," Abu Tal'at told me. "In Nu'aymi, we lived with the Samadi family whom we had known for fifty years. We changed our name to theirs. Our relatives, al-Samadiyya in Nu'aymi, were very generous to us, especially in offering us food, shelter and other facilities. Later on I found work and we moved to Irbid where we have lived ever since."

Um Tal'at had similar recollections of their arrival in Jordan. "Our men met with friends from al-Nu'aymi, and together about twenty people in all went to their village near Irbid. They told us that according to Arab traditions and customs, guests are welcome to stay for three days, and only after those are over can their host ask them about their urgent needs. Before long they managed to find us a house and stock it with all the necessities, such as food, coffee etc. They also did all what they could to ensure that we were comfortable in our new accommodations. Some of us also stayed about one year as guests of the *mukhtar*, and during that time no one was allowed to leave the house without having breakfast."

In some places of exile, however, it was not long before the initial welcome and assistance of the local population faded. In 'Anjar, which had been an initial place of refuge for many of the refugees spilling across the border in 1948, problems with the local Armenian population who had representatives in the Lebanese parliament and city councils forced some refugees, like Amina's family, to pick up their few belongings and move once again. "The Lebanese authorities at one point broke my uncle's hand and tried to run over Abu Thyab with a truck," she said. "So we had to move again, this time to Dayr Tinail, a nearby village."

This was only one in a series of moves the family made in search of security during the first years of exile. "We lived in Dayr Tinail in tents for a while before picking up again and moving to 'Ayn al-Hilwe camp in south Lebanon. There was not enough food there for everyone, so we moved to al-Bus camp. Problems arose there also, however, between

people from the camp and the military authorities, so we finally moved to Burj al-Shamali camp where we finally built a house and settled down for good.”

Ahmad Hassan Ibrahim and his family who also ended up in Burj al-Shamali camp in south Lebanon stayed in the camp until the civil war broke out in the country in September 1969. “We were badly treated by the Lebanese police for the duration of our stay,” said Ahmad. “I rented a space to open a barber shop, but when I attempted to repair the walls which were in a poor state the police came and fined me 100 *liras*. At that time one *lira* was worth a lot.”

Refugees faced similar problems with local inhabitants in other countries of exile. In Jordan, Um Tal'at told me a story about how “a Pasha from the Hindawi family was killed in Nu'aymi by a Palestinian from al-Mujaydil. The people of the village began to speak ill of the Palestinians. ‘Tomorrow we shall kill Saleh al-Ali as he has killed the Pasha,’ they said, referring to a Palestinian from the village. We began to hear one negative story after the other. Two of our men went to UNRWA and asked them to find us a safe place because of all what was being said against the Palestinians.”

“The next day, while we were preparing to move to Irbid and my husband was out of the house, the wife of the *mukhtar* came over and asked me to stay. They were really very generous people, but I told her that I had to move with my family, and with those of Mousa and Suleiman ‘Ayid. She really tried her best to make us stay but I wanted to be with people who knew my past and understood my fears. We, the four families, collected all our belongings, put them on the back of the bus and drove to Irbid. When my husband returned from work, he became angry at me for leaving Nu'aymi.”

“They gave us a tent with three poles (*jamallion*). We lived in it for fifteen years until all our men found jobs in different places in Jordan. We then began, with help from UNRWA, to build walls and ceilings to replace the tent. My older son Tal'at had to leave school to help my husband at work and was very sorry to cut short his studies. Later on my husband opened his own shop, and another son, Rif'at, went to Germany and worked there for three years. Our economic situation thus began to improve after many years of living in poverty.”

Inside Israel, even those refugees from Lubya and other villages that managed to stay after the war were not safe. In many places, refugees were rounded up and deported across the armistice lines. “When the Israeli officer came and asked me why I was in Dayr Hanna,” said Abu Hassan, “I did not tell him the truth. I only told him that I went there before the clashes started because I didn't want to buy weapons for the revolutionaries. Other members of our family were rounded up by the Jewish police and expelled to the West Bank.”

Similar episodes took place in Palestinian villages across the country. “One hundred and fifty people remained in Saffuriyya [close to Lubya] after 1948 for about one year and obtained identity cards that mentioned their birthplace as Saffuriyya,” Abu Nimr told me. His mother was from Lubya, and it is there that he had spent most of his childhood before

the *Nakba*. “Then the Israeli army warned the people to evacuate the village within forty-eight hours. After that it remained empty for two years, during which, I believe, we still had a chance of returning. We missed a good opportunity to stay in our village especially because most of the Israeli governments at that time were politically left. After two years, however, the settlers began to arrive in Saffuriyya.”

Political activity

The uprooting of Palestinians from their homes and villages and their expulsion to the different corners of the world brought about new forms of social organization. Patterns of social organization in the refugee camps were radically different than those in the village. The authority of the *mukhtar* and the head of the *hamula* was weakened but not obliterated. Those refugees who were able began to organize politically in the different areas of exile to return to their homeland.

In most places of exile where the majority of refugees were living, however, Palestinians who attempted to engage in politics faced hard times. The situation in Lebanon was particularly severe where there was an almost total prohibition on any political activity what so ever. In the 1960s when I tried to arrange a peaceful demonstration in our secondary school, I remember being put in a toilet as a prisoner, until demonstrators from Baalbek came to the camp and the police were obliged to free me.

In Syria there was more opportunity for Palestinians to be involved in politics. Refugees in Jordan were allowed to work openly for a limited period, but most of the time it was forbidden. Inside Israel, the Palestinian population that remained was placed under military rule until 1966. After the 1967 war and the defeat of the Arab states, and especially after the 1968 Karama battle¹⁷⁶ in Jordan, however, Palestinian refugees, including those from Lubya, openly joined the armed struggle for independence. “We realized one fact,” said Muhammad Abu Dhais¹⁷⁷, another son of the *mukhtar* of Lubya, “that the land that was occupied by power could not be liberated without power.”

The founding of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO)¹⁷⁸ in 1964 provided a new form of social organization bringing the individual, family and tribe under the broad umbrella of the Palestinian nation. Between 1965 and 1982, ninety-three refugees from Lubya who participated in the national struggle were killed. The vast majority of those Lubyans who died in the national struggle to liberate and return to their homeland were young people. They were born outside Palestine. They had never seen Lubya. Their local

¹⁷⁶ Karama is a village in the Jordan valley where the first direct confrontation between Israeli and the newly emerging Palestinian *Fida'iyyen* movement took place on 21 March 1968. Israel lost many tanks and soldiers. and where the Israelis lost many tanks and soldiers.

¹⁷⁷ The interview with Muhammad Abu Dhais took place in 1981 when the PLO still held military positions in Lebanon.

¹⁷⁸ The Palestine Liberation Movement was founded in Jerusalem in May 1964 by refugee groups and local Palestinians, and with the aid of Arab nations through the Arab League. Its first Chairman was Ahmad Shukayri. In 1968, Yasir Arafat, head of the Fatah movement, became Chairman of the PLO.

identity was reformulated through their experiences in the modern revolutionary organizations.

According to Yousef Abu Dhais, the first man killed in the first operation of the modern revolution was from Lubya. “We Lubyans participated actively in the revolution from the beginning,” said Ahmad Hassan Ibrahim who continued naming those who had died in the struggle. “Sa’id Shar’an was the leader of al-‘Arkoub contingent¹⁷⁹ in 1971, the year of his death, and Abu Mahmoud Mustafa was one of the first leaders to help the martyr Abu Ali Iyad [a prominent leader of Fatah¹⁸⁰ who died in Jordan in 1971] in al-Hami Camp in Syria.”

Several men from the elderly generation that I spoke with recounted their involvement in the Palestinian struggle in exile. Yousef Abu Dhais (Abu Bassam), for example, established *Munathammat al-Shabiba* (the Palestinian Youth Organisation) in Syria in 1952. He later became one of the founding members of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP).¹⁸¹ In 1964, he joined the Fatah organisation. When I visited Abu Bassam in Homs refugee camp in Syria, he took out all the cards that proved his participation in many of the meetings of the Palestine National Council (PNC).¹⁸²

“I was contacted by Muhammad Zuhdi al-Nashashibi, who was then a member of our organisation, and asked to attend the National Council meeting. An officer from the Jarboo’ family from Tira, Yousef ‘Orabi, Ahmad Jibril, representing PFLP and Abu Jihad, representing Fatah, were also in attendance. The meeting started with an attack on the PLO because it had been established with support from Arab Governments. I raised my hand to speak and I told them that the decision to attack the PLO was wrong.”

“I also told them that the Palestinian people now had a small umbrella to gather under after being out in the open since our exile from Palestine. We should be careful not to lose the trust of the people. We are nine organisations gathered here that should unite into one. This would also be an apt response to the establishment of the PLO. My suggestion was accepted, and a committee composed of four people, Muhammad al-Nashashibi, Kaddora, Ahmad Jibril and Abu Jihad, was established to discuss the question of unity among the organisations. After three days, however, there was still no agreement. Only Fatah, our organisation, and two others from al-Fida’iyyeen Brigade¹⁸³ had agreed.”

“Another committee of four people took over the responsibility to start the armed struggle in Palestine and we promptly started planning our first operation, which was to be against the refinery installation in Haifa. Yousef ‘Orabi took overall responsibility for the

¹⁷⁹ al-‘Arkoub is the area in south Lebanon where the revolutionary Palestinian forces established their base also known as Fatah-Land.

¹⁸⁰ Fatah is the main leading political organisation in the PLO. It began military operations in January 1965 and remains the leading political organisation among Palestinians.

¹⁸¹ The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) was established by George Habash following the line of armed struggle of the Fatah organisation.

¹⁸² The Palestine National Council (PNC) is the Palestinian parliament in exile.

¹⁸³ No. 68 who were also called *Fida’iyyit Harasta*.

operation because he was trained as an officer in the Syrian army. The operation was supposed to consist of shelling the refinery with fifty-one shells then withdrawing back to Jenin, but the operation was cancelled when the man we sent to Jordan to buy weapons was captured. The next operation took place in al-Battof. Ahmad Mousa became the first martyr of the modern revolution. I knew him personally from Lubya. He used to live in al-Hima and was originally from the al-Dalayki Arabs.”

“The Syrians gave us a military training camp following an agreement we reached with the 8th March Movement in 1963. Yousef ‘Orabi (from ‘Akka), Ahmad Hajjo, Mustafa Sa’d al-Din, Mujahid Sarhan and Kassam Dakhil Allah joined our organization *al-Jabha al-Thawriyya* (Revolutionary Front). Ahmad Hajjo became the leader of the training camp, to be replaced later by another colleague. This was the extent to which we succeeded in putting our plans into action, and the revolution went onwards from that point. I then moved to South Lebanon where I worked with Abu Ali Iyad.”

One of the primary topics of Abu Bassam’s book, *Lubya, al-Ard wa al-Sha’b* [Lubya, the Land and the People], concerns those who died in the 1965 revolution. It took Abu Bassam almost two years to collect all their names. “I forgot many names, and there are of course many shortcomings in the book, but I did my best. Many people phoned me to remind me of names I had forgotten. Others wanted me to write personal stories about them as heroes, but I wanted to write a book about Lubya and not about individual people. There were those who did not die on the battlefield killed by the enemy. Therefore, I did not mention them and a few people got angry. I did not include any information that was not officially documented and it was better to talk about Lubyans as a whole.”

“We were optimistic when the revolution took over,” said Amina Ali Ismael. “I even tried to send them food, but they refused, saying that they had enough. In the beginning, the revolution was powerful and promising, but later our situation became very difficult and we felt let down by them.”

Later experiences of exile

Lubyans, both old and young, also talked about the ongoing difficulties of life in exile. Today there are about 40,000 Lubyans living in twenty-three different countries in exile. One of the common threads that ran through all the interviews was the sense of frustration at the loss of their village and so many decades of life in forced exile.

Abu Khalid, for example, began to evoke the times of Musa Ibn Nusayr, and Tariq Ibn Ziad the famous leader who reached Andalus. “Jesus was Palestinian. He is our son. We helped Salah al-Din against the European Crusaders. al-Franj, the Islamic philosopher is Palestinian. Abu Bakr al-Lubyani is from our village. Palestine is our paradise. And to those leaders who will end up in the rubbish heap of history I would say as the poet of al-Rafidain (Iraq) Ma’roof al-Rasafi said:

Wakam 'nd alhukuma min Rihal

How many men the government has
They look like **Sirs** while they are slaves

Tarahum sada wahum 'abeedo

They are dogs for the foreigners but

Kilab lil ajanib hum walakin

on their own they behave as lions.

'ala abna' jaldatihim usudo

He continued to recite poetry for more than half an hour, lamenting the losses and changes since the golden periods of Islam and ending in the miserable deterioration of today's politics. He ended his long *'Ataba* (Arab popular verses that can be sung in different occasions) with a plea and a critique of Arab leaders: "*Ya Rab trud kul ghayeb 'abitu, kafana 'atham min kul al-arab* (O God return the exiled to their homes, we had enough suffering from the Arabs)."

Many of those with whom I spoke, whether in Arab host countries or in Europe, related concerns about employment and how to provide for their families. The situation is particularly severe for Palestinian refugees in Lebanon. Today there are about 6,000 Lubyans residing in Lebanon. Palestinian refugees in Lebanon are barred from employment in some seventy different professions. In Burj al-Shamali camp, Adnan Husayn Kasim told me that there were 250 people from Lubya in his neighborhood alone, although there were disagreements among those present at the interview about the actual number of Lubyans in the camp. Adnan took a piece of paper and began to write all the names of the families and their children, 185-200 families in total. Based on an average family size of five persons, this would bring the total number of Lubyans in the camp to 1,000-1,200.

"The main employment opportunities in the camp are in the construction industry and street paving," said Ghassan Said. "Right now there are strict rules against building in the camp. It is not even allowed to bring in a water pipe, a piece of zinc or any other kind of construction material. These restrictions are imposed mainly against the residents of the camps located in the south, mainly the three camps of al-Rashadiyya, al-Bus and al-Burj. There are other groups of Palestinians in the south, but these three camps are the only ones recognized by UNRWA and the Lebanese government. The concern for teaching our children is one of our priorities."

Lubyans living inside Israel also spoke about tough economic conditions. Approximately 750 Lubyans continue to live in Israel. They were totally isolated from their families in the diaspora for the first eighteen years after the *Nakba*, i.e. from 1948 until the end of military and emergency rule in 1966 just one year before the 1967 war. Very few persons, not exceeding ten in total, were granted visas to visit their families in Israel. Referred to as "present absentees", they are deprived of the right to return to their lands even though they are Israeli citizens. The majority of them work in construction and still hold on to traditional family connections as the basic unit at the heart of their social network. Marriages still take place among Lubyans families, with very few exceptions to the rule.

Ahmad Hajjo¹⁸⁴ lives in Dayr Hanna and who works in a bakery. He has six children. “My salary is four thousand shekels. Every child costs me about 4,000 shekels per year. The four children who attend school together cost me a whole year’s worth of work just to complete their primary education. My first priority is the education of my children. It is a very hard life. To be able to work you have to have completed your military service, but I will never accept to be part of the Israeli army. In 1973 a law was passed allowing Arabs to volunteer for the Israeli army if they wish, but I refuse categorically to pay a single shekel towards their military effort. It is impossible to support an army that kills our brothers and sisters in neighbouring Arab countries.”

Rifa’at was born in 1970 and worked as a construction worker at the new settlement of Giv’at Avni, which was built on part of Lubya's land. He is the youngest child of Subhiyya Mouhsen Goudi. Although he was clever at school, the economic situation of his family obliged him to leave school to help his father at work. Subhiyya also has twin daughters, Fatima and ‘Aysha, who were born in 1972. Due to the bad financial situation of the family they were also unable to attend university in Haifa.

“In spite of our good marks, we were prevented from continuing our studies at the university,” they told me. “Our mother refused to send us to Haifa and instead insisted on our continuing in another academic branch near Dayr Hanna, and that is what we are doing now.” Their mother Subhiyya confirmed that she did not want to send them to Haifa University for two reasons, first, because of the bad financial situation of the family, and second, because Haifa was very far from Dayr Hanna.

Limited employment opportunities in Arab host countries, especially in Lebanon, has forced many refugees, including those from Lubya, to seek employment elsewhere. “Of the 250 people from Lubya in my own neighbourhood [in Burj al-Shamali camp], we are now only thirty,” said Adnan Kasim. “Seventy percent emigrated.” Those who were able have sought employment in Europe. Today, approximately 6,500 Lubyans reside in Europe and other countries outside the Middle East. Many of the Lubyans in Europe came from the camps in Lebanon.

There are around 266 Lubyans living in Germany today. The majority of them live in Berlin. All of them came to Germany either as a result of the civil war in Lebanon, or earlier seeking a better life. Most of them have political refugee status and some have established themselves in the business and restaurant sectors. Out of 1,200 pizzerias in Berlin, for example, Palestinians own about 1,000. About 7,000 Palestinians have already been naturalized as Germans, but their sense of nationalism and patriotism is still very strong, nourished by their frequent get-togethers in different clubs and organizations.

Ahmad Hassan Ibrahim, from Burj al-Shamali camp, for example, left for Germany in 1974. “I first worked as a cleaner, then as a barber for three years. I went back to Lebanon in 1981 but returned to Germany where I was twice imprisoned because I did

¹⁸⁴ Ahmad Hajjo was born in 1953. The interview with Ahmad Hajjo was conducted in Dayr Hanna, Israel on 11 September 1995.

not have a residence permit. When I found work, they gave me one. I was elected to represent eighty workers in a cleaning company and the bosses treated me badly, but I stayed on until the Berlin Wall fell and the Germans no longer needed our labour. They gave me 35,000 marks to avoid my taking them to court, and I remained unemployed from 1992 until recently. I now work as a guard in a hotel from 10 p.m. until 4 a.m.”

Other Lubyans spoke about the problem of translating education into suitable employment opportunities. This was the case for many of the young Lubyans I spoke with in Denmark. Today there are some 2,000 Lubyans residing in the country. **Saleh**¹⁸⁵, who is a businessman in his forties, was born in Baalbek camp and studied sociology in Beirut, but like the rest of his friends could not find a job in his field of study. “I came to Denmark in January in 1991 under a reunification scheme, because my wife lives here. I studied sociology for four years at the Lebanese University and I taught in different private schools in Lebanon for five years.”

“In general, life here is good because of the social system,” said Saleh, “but there are a lot of problems such as integration and learning the language. I think they are mainly a result of unemployment. You can’t learn the language without being in touch with society. Without ever mastering the language, we will stay marginal and will never obtain any worthwhile jobs. It is not a comfortable situation to be in. Unemployment creates a state of restlessness. I am becoming increasingly worried about my life. As a Palestinian refugee, I feel my future is uncertain. Right now it is difficult to think of returning to Palestine, therefore, I ask myself whether I want to stay here all my life or return to Lebanon eventually. These questions make me even more uncertain about my future.”

Like Saleh, Khalil Issa¹⁸⁶ was also born in Baalbek refugee camp in Lebanon and came to Denmark in 1989. For Khalil, who graduated with a degree in engineering from the University of Voldgra, life in Denmark is both good and bad. “[Here] there is a kind of security, especially in economic terms. At the same time, I feel that life here destroys our future, because it is almost impossible for us to find work. There is also a psychological element that is fundamental in shaping my negative view of life here. I feel that all the years I spent studying are without value now. I have gone back to zero. Those who have no education at all have a better chance than I of finding work. I always feel like a stranger. I attempted several times to find a job, but I was told that I didn't speak Danish well enough. Since I did not come here as a boy, it is difficult for me to master the language now.”

Sakir¹⁸⁷ was also born in Lebanon where he taught school for fifteen years. He continued teaching for another five years in Kuwait before arriving in Denmark in 1989. Sakir tried to return to Lebanon with his family after two years in Denmark, but was not successful. “It is difficult to find a job that fits my qualifications as a mathematics teacher. I am therefore thinking of going into private business. Personally, I think that unemployment,

¹⁸⁵ Saleh was born in 1964. The interview with Saleh was conducted on 4 June 1995.

¹⁸⁶ Khalil was born in 1962. The interview with Khalil was conducted in Helsingor, Denmark on 3 June 1995.

¹⁸⁷ Sakir was born in 1951 in Lebanon. The interview with Sakir was conducted in Berlin on 8 March 1996.

which is a major feature of Danish society, has a direct influence on our community. Boring emptiness kills one's initiative and abilities. Only work will help the people learn and develop. First of all, one has to learn the language and then get training in various skills, technical or otherwise. But one also has to realise that even if a foreigner succeeds in doing this, he will still face a lot of difficulties in finding employment. This country prohibits people from being active in social life.”

Lubyans in Arab host countries also spoke about employment problems. In Syria, for example, there are around 16,000 Lubyans. According to Nasir ‘Atwani, this includes some 1,000 in Nairab and Handarat refugee camps in Aleppo and about 100 persons in al-Aidiin camp in Homs.¹⁸⁸ The majority of Lubyans in the country reside in Yarmouk refugee camp in Damascus. In Syria, Palestinian refugees are treated as Syrian nationals in most areas, but are not permitted to acquire Syria citizenship.

Muhammad Khair Shihabi¹⁸⁹ was born in 1968, and studied engineering for two years before changing to English literature at the University of Halab (Aleppo) in Syria. Financial considerations, however, forced him to seek employment before completing his studies, so he decided to go back to Damascus, especially after the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982. “I tried to open a private business, opened an engineering office for a year and two months in ‘Athra. I collected a small amount of capital, then I worked in real estate but unsuccessfully. This work is highly competitive, mostly greedy people with little human touch in their work. Then I worked in my father’s shop selling jewellery. It is a good business, although it also has many problems.”

Stories of discrimination also emerged from many of the interviews with Lubyans in almost all areas of exile. This included concerns expressed by internally displaced Lubyans inside Israel. “Normally, I vote for *al-Jabha al-Takadumiyya* (the Progressive Front) because they work hard for our rights as minorities,” said Ahmad Hajjo from Dayr Hanna. “Without the pressure they exert on the Israeli authorities we would never have equality between our children and theirs. The Jewish child used to receive in benefits three times what the Arab child did, but now, and only in the last two years, Jewish and Arab children receive equal social benefits.”

Lubyans residing in Europe also spoke about discrimination. Jawad¹⁹⁰, who lives in the town of Helsingor, studied for two years in Minsk in the former USSR but could not continue his studies. Unable to return to Lebanon, he came to Denmark in 1987. “If a job is open, they prefer to hire a Dane. If a problem arises, they are quick to say that the foreigners are responsible,” said Jawad. “I heard on the radio that seventy percent of thieves are foreigners and *Ekstra Bladet* newspaper is searching for mistakes by foreigners and refugees. I think racism exists in the streets, in the discos and in the job market.”

¹⁸⁸ The main families are: Kilani, Younis, Karzoun, Shahabi, Yasin, Nadmi Khalil, Sheil Saleh’s sons.

¹⁸⁹ The interview with Muhammad Khair Shihabi was conducted in Yarmouk refugee camp in Syria on 21 October 1998.

¹⁹⁰ Jawad was born in 1962. The interview with Jawad was conducted in Helsingor, Denmark on 3 June 1995.

Jawad blamed discrimination on “some of the politicians who use the refugee question to their personal advantage.” “One of the things that scares me,” said Kahil, “is that everytime there are municipal or parliamentary elections, we are presented as scapegoats and we start hearing the usual warnings about reducing social assistance and the like. I also heard about the Pakistani woman Lubna Elahi, who in spite of having won the municipal elections, was not allowed to hold the post she had won.”

Saleh felt that discrimination was the result “of a few weak persons.” Saleh, however, said that he had never met any of those people face to face. “Sometimes I think that the economic situation is responsible for this kind of racism that appears from time to time in debates,” he said. “It happened once in a bus when a man attacked us without any reason, but the bus driver intervened and stopped him. I sometimes hear from my friends about such incidents happening to others.”

At the same time, other young Lubyans felt that complaints of racism were exaggerated. “Racism can be found only within small circles who feel no shame about being racist,” observed Khalil. Najah¹⁹¹ is the mother of five children and lives in Copenhagen. “Denmark is a good place for us. I have no problems here. I heard about racism, but I never came face-to-face with it.” Jalal¹⁹², who came to Denmark one year earlier in 1986 after having spent some time in Germany added that in Denmark at least “you can complain if you face such discrimination.”

Others Lubyans spoke about restrictions on freedom of movement and its impact on their families. It was and still is extremely difficult for Palestinians to see one another because of the restrictions on movement in the Arab world, Israel, and in Europe. These restrictions are a result of political policies that target Palestinian refugees and due to the unique status of Palestinian refugees under international refugee law, which has left most refugees without adequate protection, including proper travel documents, afforded to other refugees.¹⁹³

In Denmark, for example, Sakir spoke about the problem of Palestinian refugees who came to the country from the camps in Lebanon. “Palestinian families are obliged to travel with their children to Sweden and stay for two days in order to sign papers at the Lebanese embassy there, not to mention all the money they have to pay.” A number of young Palestinians from Lubya related similar experiences. Akram¹⁹⁴, who was fourteen at the time of the interview, came to Denmark with his mother and two young sisters in 1991 from al-Jalil refugee camp in Lebanon.

¹⁹¹ Najah was born in 1954. The interview with Najah and her husband Adnan was conducted in Copenhagen, Denmark on 18 May 1995.

¹⁹² Jalal was born in 1968. The interview with Jalal was conducted in Helsingor, Denmark on 3 June 1995.

¹⁹³ For a comprehensive overview of the status of Palestinian refugees *see*, Lex Takkenberg, *The Status of Palestinian Refugees in International Law*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998.

¹⁹⁴ Akram was born in 1981. The interview was conducted in Copenhagen on 10 May 1995.

“Let me tell you another story about how we are treated because we are refugees,” he told me. “In March of this year, I wanted to go on skiing trip to the Czech Republic with my club. Since we had to cross the German borders, I went to the German embassy to get a visa, but was not allowed to go in. I have a Lebanese travel document and the embassy refused to accept it. My teacher came with me when I went a second time to the embassy, but they told her the same thing, so she decided to travel with me by plane to avoid having to cross the German border.”

Akram's older sister, Luma¹⁹⁵, experienced similar problems trying to arrange travel plans for a school trip. “Last April my class was also planning to go to the Czech Republic and I went to the German embassy with my teacher to try and get a visa. I went there over three times without success. They returned the refugee documents back to me and asked me sarcastically if Palestine existed on the map. The class went on the trip without me. My sister Yusra, on the other hand, succeeded in getting a visa to go to London with her class in April.”

“People who have lived here for twenty years are still stopped at the airport every time they enter the country because they look different and whenever you find work you are given minimum wages,” said Jawad. “When I protested against this they told me that I could stay at home. They neither encourage us to work nor to continue our studies, which makes me psychologically tired. I think that the best solution for us is to return to where we came from, and because it is difficult to return to Lebanon it would be ideal for us to have our homeland in Palestine back.”

Travel restrictions have made it difficult for many families, who are spread across several countries and continents, to live together and to see each other. Qassem¹⁹⁶ came to Denmark in 1990 from Syria. He worked as a cleaner for two years as he was unable to find employment in his field of computer science. Qassem's wife arrived illegally in Denmark, had a child with him, and is now awaiting deportation after her request to stay in the country was rejected.

“I was born, like my twelve sisters and brothers, in a refugee camp in Syria, without identity papers. Now I feel that Denmark is my homeland after Palestine. I am trying very hard right now to be reunited with my wife who is from the Ukraine, but it is very difficult to do this according to the new Danish laws. You must have a salary of at least 13,000 Kroner to have the right to be reunified with your wife. Even when I was working I was not able to earn that much money. I do not know what more to do. I bought an apartment in Copenhagen and I am ready to be economically responsible for my wife.”

Nayif Hassan lived alone in Jordan, separated from his parents, sisters and brothers for most of his life after 1948. There are about 3,500 Lubyans living in Jordan today. Many still bear well-known Lubyans family names, such as Samadi, Lubani and Hamzat. The

¹⁹⁵ Luma was born in 1979. The interview with Luma was conducted in Copenhagen on 10 May 1995.

¹⁹⁶ Qassem was born in 1965. The interview with Qassem was conducted in Copenhagen on 14 May 1995.

majority of Palestinian refugees in Jordan hold Jordanian citizenship.¹⁹⁷ I used to see Nayif often when I was living in Jordan. We always disagreed about the armed struggle and its usefulness as a means of liberation. He passed away in 2002 in Amman away from the rest of his family, which is spread between Lebanon, Syria and Palestine. Shortly before his death I helped him arrange a telephone call to his brother, Yousef Issa, who he had not seen for more than thirty years. He died two weeks later. Unfortunately, Yousef could not get a visa to Jordan to see him before his death because the two brothers had different names in their passports.

Before his death, the only place where Abu Muhammad Kilani, an Israeli citizen, could meet other members of his family in exile was Europe. Family members were not permitted entry to Israel. "I visited Berlin on 25 June 1989 with my wife and son. I wanted to see part of my family, which I hadn't seen since 1948. When we arrived there, more than fifty people awaited us. They had also invited Palestinians from different areas, Safad, Tiberias, and *al-Muthallath* ['The Triangle']. They first read special religious texts (*molad*), and afterwards we were all introduced. I met your cousin Abu Tariq and his parents. We stayed over there for forty days."

Integration

Another issue of concern expressed by Lubyans in exile was that of integration. In Denmark, as I suspect is the case in other western European countries, integration of refugees has become a major topic not only for social workers, but also for politicians and the media. Palestinian refugees stand out as one of the groups who find it most difficult to integrate into Danish society. In Berlin, although Palestinians are successful economically, they share the same phenomenon as Palestinians in Denmark.

For many Lubyans in exile, the question of integration carries with it feelings of both fear of and openness to the societies in which they now reside. To me, this situation is a product of the rupture of Palestinian society and its prolonged existence in exile, combined with the almost routine social and political explosions that occur in different areas where the majority of Palestinian refugees live in exile. Human rights violations, atrocities, expulsions, and the trauma felt by the whole family has a direct and indirect effect on the second and third generations.

On the one hand, many Lubyans were apprehensive about their future in exile, reflecting the difficulty many households have in coping with the new societies in which they now live. "Socially speaking, Denmark is a good place," said Jawad, "but in the long run, it is not the right place for us. Democracy here is good for the Danes, but we are not part of it.

¹⁹⁷ This unique relationship had its origins in the Jericho Conference of 1950 that resulted in the annexation of the West Bank to Jordan during the reign of King Abdullah. This relationship, however, was severely shaken during the years (1968-1971) when the Palestinian resistance was operating from Jordan. In 1971 the Jordanian army attacked and defeated the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) forces and ended the troublesome situation when there were almost two authorities in the country. This caused deep tensions in the relationship between the "one people", the Palestinians and the Jordanians, which culminated in July 1988 in a political decision by King Hussein to break all legal and administrative ties with the West Bank.

In spite of all what we achieved in terms of education, and in spite of our Danish citizenship, they continue to deal with us as foreigners. We were accepted in this country as part of a political process, not only as a humanitarian gesture. They deal with us like pieces in a game of chess.”

“There are a few Danes who know our problems, but generally speaking they refuse to understand other cultures. I work with the Red Cross and I made a lot of Danish friends, but the moment we leave work, the relationship comes to an end. I think it is very difficult to integrate into Danish society. As long as you have a different skin colour, you are excluded. For example, if you own a car, they ask you where did you get it from? The media bears a major responsibility for the problems that the foreigners face in Denmark.”

Muhammad Khair expressed similar reservations about life in Syria. “We as a people have no roots in this land. We try to build a future, but our life is full of fear because of the political developments. Our generation was influenced by various ideologies and their failure frustrated us immensely. A lot of my friends share my opinions. As a result of this frustration, we totally immersed ourselves in work so as to escape the vacuum in which we live. A few of my friends emigrated in the hope of starting a new life and most of us remain unmarried because of the instability in our lives, our personality and our mindset. We tried to compensate for our loss by joining clubs and developing new hobbies, but what we lost is more than what we can ever have.”

Apprehension over the difficult process of integration has meant that many Lubyans have chosen to remain living together, not unlike the situation in the various refugee camps where Lubyans reside in the Arab world. “It is totally normal for refugees and immigrants to live close together because they are afraid,” observed Jawad. “In 1988, I lived first in Tikb Center in Helsingor. Then suddenly we had to leave for Hornaek, then to Gilleleje, and then to Graested. People were afraid of us, especially after they read negative news about us in the newspapers.”

“I think that refugees choose to live close to each other for two reasons,” explained Khalil. “First because Danes don't like to mix with them; and, second because the majority of them are unemployed. Therefore, they seek solace and support from proximity to each other.” “As far as I am concerned, it is all right for families to live together,” said Sakir. “I don't believe that this necessarily creates a ghetto. To believe otherwise would be tantamount to racism. Families enjoy their time together, and the Danes are very difficult to communicate with.”

Many Lubyans, especially those residing in Europe, spoke about the difficulties in preserving their own culture and yet being open to the society in which they now live. “I think that the Danes live very differently than we do,” said Basma¹⁹⁸, who is married to Sakir. “They don't have family relationships like we do, and the extended family as a unit does not exist. They are also very open, while our society is somewhat closed. I really hope that we will be able to find permanent solutions to the problems between the Danes

¹⁹⁸ Basma was born in Lebanon in 1965. The interview with her was conducted in Arhus, Denmark in 1995.

and us, so that we can no more feel like refugees and strangers. We should work at finding common ground between us.”

“I would like my children to learn our customs and traditions,” said Khalil, “but I would also like them to become integrated in Danish society, albeit while preserving their own religion and traditions. This is an equally difficult process for both Palestinians and Danes, because it is difficult to co-ordinate between the two cultures. I heard several times through the media that Danes move their children out of certain schools when a lot of refugee and immigrant children are admitted. The Danes claim that when this happens, their children learn less and the level of the school deteriorates, and that is not true. I believe that our children must go to Danish schools and not to Arab or Muslim ones. At the same time, I believe that it is a good idea to put aside special hours for Arabic and religion lessons.”

Fida, who is in her thirties and came to Denmark in 1989, expressed similar concerns. “I am now studying pharmacy at the university. It was difficult for me in the beginning, because I had to work twice as hard as the Danes to arrive to where I am now. I got good grades in the high school exam. I don't have any social contact with Danes at university and I sometimes feel that they are prejudiced against us and think that we are very different from them. When I don't drink alcohol with them at a party they look at me strangely, and some do not even have the courage to speak to me because they do not know how I will react. Some think that Arab women do not speak to men. There are Danes who are more open and understanding and there are others who do not like to hear anything about refugees or foreigners.”

The failure of the national movement, namely the PLO, and the new wave of emigration after the massacres of Tel al-Za'tar¹⁹⁹, and Sabra and Shatila²⁰⁰, for example, drove the

¹⁹⁹ Tel-el-Zaatar (the Hill of Thyme) was a Palestinian refugee camp established in 1948 in the northern part of what became Christian East Beirut during the Lebanese civil war of 1975-1990. As part of the internal political power games at the beginning of the war, Tel-el-Zaatar was besieged and a substantial part of its population massacred.

²⁰⁰ On 6 June 1982, the Israeli army invaded Lebanon in what it described as 'retaliation' for the attempted assassination of Israeli Ambassador Argov in London on 4 June. The invasion, soon dubbed "Operation Peace for Galilee," progressed rapidly. By 18 June 1982, Israel had surrounded the Palestine Liberation Organisation's (PLO) armed forces in the western part of the Lebanese capital. A cease-fire, mediated by United States Envoy Philip Habib, resulted in the PLO evacuation of Beirut on 1 September 1982. On 11 September 1982, Israeli Defence Minister Ariel Sharon, the architect of the invasion, announced that "2,000 terrorists" had remained inside the Palestinian refugee camps around Beirut. On Wednesday 15 September, the day after the assassination of Israeli-allied Phalangist militia leader and Lebanese President-elect Bashir Gemayel, the Israeli army occupied West Beirut, "encircling and sealing" the camps of Sabra and Shatila, which were inhabited by Lebanese and Palestinian civilians. By mid-day on 15 September 1982, the refugee camps were entirely surrounded by Israeli tanks and soldiers, who installed checkpoints at strategic locations and crossroads around the camps in order to monitor the entry or exit of any person. During the late afternoon and evening of that day, the camps were shelled. Around mid-day on Thursday 16 September 1982, a unit of approximately 150 Israeli-allied Phalangists entered the first camp. For the next 40 hours members of the Phalangist militia raped, killed, and injured a large number of unarmed civilians, mostly

majority of young people to seek refuge, not only physically through migration, but also culturally in religion. Islam, they claimed, gave the young generation new hope and the ability to counter frustration and fear. Religion prevented despair and nourished their collective identity, especially in countries such as Denmark, Sweden and Germany where common cultural bonds are almost totally absent.

“I think Denmark is a beautiful place to live,” said Adnan²⁰¹. The Danes are generous and they treat us in a very respectful way. But of course, they have different traditions and customs, especially concerning the young boys and girls and the way they live. We would like to bring up our children according to the Islamic tradition.” Najah, who is married to Adnan echoed these feelings. “We prefer, of course, the Islamic way of behaving. We come from a Muslim cultural background, and we want our children to follow in the same tradition. Here, people are free and no one forces us to change our way of life. We also lead a better life than they do in Lebanon or in the other Arab countries.”

According to Saleh, “the Islamist current is gaining among the people because all the other ideologies have failed. Religion for most of the people is a safety mechanism that does not require power and intelligence to analyse. Religion is the nearest and easiest means of attaining comfort. It also gives the person a sense of relief from all the doubt. The people in general find other ideas and ideologies difficult to accept, while religion is easily shared among members of the same household and by society as a whole. Religion also gave us the answer to our struggle against our adversaries. That is why Hizbullah’s operations find support and acceptance among the people.”

“The Islamist movement is becoming stronger under the guise of religious revival (*al-sahwa al-deeniyya*),” said Sakir. “In reality, it is contradictory, and in direct contrast with our reality. There are three or four tendencies that struggle against one another, and each wants to impose its influence on the Palestinian community. We need non-religious movements that would help us find solutions for our real life dilemmas according to Danish laws. The percentage [of people leaning towards religion] is gradually increasing. I can say that more than half the community is becoming religiously active, and I believe that the contradictions within Danish society itself are among the main reasons that make our people gravitate towards a more religious life. They do it mainly to protect their Palestinian identity and character. This religious phenomenon is connected to social conditions.”

Other Lubyans, however, expressed more openness to those around them. “We should not be afraid of integration,” said Sakir, “despite the differences between the Danes and us. I

children, women and elderly people inside the encircled and sealed camps. The estimate of victims varies between 700 (the official Israeli figure) to 3,500. The victims and survivors of the massacres have never been deemed entitled to a formal investigation of the tragedy, since Israel's Kahan Commission did *not* have a judicial mandate and was not backed up by legal force. For a more in-depth account, *see* [Circumstances of the Massacres](http://www.indictsharon.net/massacres-frame.html) at <http://www.indictsharon.net/massacres-frame.html>.

²⁰¹ Adnan was born in 1941. The interview with Adnan and his wife Najah was conducted in Copenhagen, Denmark on 18 May 1995.

think that religion does play a role in making integration difficult, but children are the main building block of the future and the best hope for a successful integration process.” According to Saleh “Total integration is impossible, but peaceful coexistence is the best solution to avoid marginalisation. If integration means that I have to become a Dane, then this would be the wrong thing to do. We have to find the common qualities we share with the Danes and make contact with our neighbours, for starters. We have an opportunity nowadays in *‘Eid al-Adha*. I myself find it is a good time to meet with my Danish neighbours, distribute sweet cakes among them, and talk to them about what this day means for us. We have to show our children that we are not living in a hostile atmosphere. Here, the Israeli enemy does not exist.”

During my research in Europe in 1996, I conducted an interview with three Lubyans from Denmark who were on a visit to their friends in Berlin. The conversation mainly focused on the issues of family relations, religion and integration. They are all in their forties. All three were involved in the modern revolution, left in frustration and defeat, and started a new life, but still linger between the experiences of their past and hopes for the future.²⁰² Two of them, Tariq and Saleh, are businessmen, while the third, Sakir, is a teacher.

The following interview was chosen among other hundreds of interviews, because of its representativeness and the lively debate that touched upon the themes that were raised by a large number of middle-aged Palestinians.

(Interview with young Lubyans in Denmark – Appendix X)

Sakir: We should learn to know Danish society and traditions well. We should know their culture as well as ours, but as someone responsible for a family, I don’t favour total integration in Danish society. I will not agree to my daughter behaving like Danish girls. If she is with me, then it would be OK, but not on her own. I believe in freedom, but not in lawlessness and disorder.

Saleh: I think that integration in Danish society is a necessity, whether we want it or not. But in the meantime, we should not forget our traditions. We should teach our children that we have our own traditions and customs.

Tarik (interrupting): There are three main elements that are necessary for each and every one of us: national identity, stability and money. Concerning the issue of family, I think that my daughter and yours will one day go for a swim, whether we accept it or not. Sometimes you have to accept things that you don’t like, because you are part of the milieu you live in.

Lawlessness is a variable. What you think of as disorder is probably different from what I think. What is morality? Morality in Syria is different than what it is in Lebanon. For example, in Syria we had differences even from one village to the other. My father would never agree to a girl joining a man in a *dabka* dance, unlike you in Lebanon.

²⁰² The interview with Sakir, Saleh and Tariq was conducted in Berlin, Germany on 8 March 1996.

I want my children to know their traditions well and at the same time integrate in the society in which they live, in order to draw maximum benefits. I regard the meeting between our culture and theirs as a sign of enrichment, not of contradiction. This is eventually unavoidable, therefore, it is better to accept an irritating situation now rather than come face to face with it when it is already too late. If your daughter wanted to marry a Dane, what would you do?

Sakir: Well, I will give you an example. When a man came to ask for my sister's hand in marriage, I refused to give my consent because he was Syrian. However, I accepted that my sister marry someone from the West Bank in Palestine.

Tarik: I asked you about your own daughter. What will happen if she has a Danish boyfriend? Will it be possible or not? The maximum she would do, out of respect for you, is to tell you that she wishes to marry a Dane. You are trying to avoid answering my question.

Sakir: Of course it is possible, but I will not be happy if she marries a Dane.

Tarik: Morality in our society is double-faced and blurred. We should ask ourselves if those moral values are fixed or do they gradually change in the course of society's development? My sister was taught when she was young not to stand on the balcony of our house. We were born with such values. Our life is abnormal. We appear one way to others, while inside we are something else, and we took that with us into our exile.

Here we are unknown, no one knows us well. We forget our national defeat and our cultural background, therefore the religious movement plays the role of the existential core that differentiates you from the others. There are more than 200 Palestinian women who live outside their homes in Germany and a few of them deal with drugs. We are, therefore, facing a critical situation and the only way out is for us to be able to deal with the two contradictory and parallel cultures, ours and theirs.

The main thing for me is to maintain good relations with my children, but we can't prevent them from choosing their own way. Children watch a wide variety of programs on television every day and it is impossible and impractical for you to choose what they should or shouldn't watch.

Sakir: I agree with you. If your child matures rapidly, then you have to follow him closely. That will affect positively the family as a whole. My father, for example, would be happier if I prayed.

Tarik: We must not live in ghettos like the Jews. We have to take part in society in an active way. We should also not constantly speak about morality. Our children will adapt more easily to western society than we could, and it will be even easier for their children. My daughter travelled to Austria alone, and last time we met she told me all about her period and the different ways, psychological and physical, it affected her. In our society

no child of 13 would dare tell her father about such things. We were afraid to speak about those issues in our society. We were ashamed of them.

Now we have to use our mind and not our feelings. We are living in a new atmosphere and a new system, therefore, we have to think differently and in new ways. My daughter is twelve years old and her mother is German. They came to me and asked me to go with them to Syria in order for them to get to know my family and their roots better. My daughter is 90 percent German, and I say that with a mixture of disappointment and unhappiness. But her name actually is Falastine (*Palestine*).

The maximum I could hope to get from her is her understanding and support for the Palestinian cause and not to forget her Palestinian half. I am happy that she likes to read as I much as I do and that she does not do drugs, but she will also not be involved in the Iz al-Din al-Qassem brigades. We have to work in the different fields that are available to us and that exist around us, and why not in the local municipality or even in parliament?

Saleh: Well, I realise that in the last two years I have changed a lot. Even the relationship with my wife has changed. Our relationship with our wives was like that of a boss with a slave, but now it is different.

Sakir: We have to differentiate between ‘spring in the air’ and a natural, step-by-step development. I will not, for example, accept that my daughter go to the disco or swim naked.

Tarik: We were brought up differently. My friend’s son asked his father why we observe Ramadan every year? The father answered, ‘to feel with the poor.’ The child asked again, ‘Last year I understood Ramadan and observed it, isn’t that enough? And if we keep giving money to the poor, they will become rich and maybe then we will stop observing Ramadan?’ So the father explained to him that it was one of the duties of a Muslim to observe Ramadan. Now my daughter is twelve years old and she discusses different religions with me, Islam, Christianity and Judaism.

Sakir: Well I refused to send my son to Christian religious lessons in the Danish school. We are surrounded 90 percent by Palestinians, and I don’t want my son to learn the Christian religion.

Saleh: Why not? My children asked me the same question, and I said they could go to Christian lessons if they wanted to.

Sakir: The difference between us is that you send your children to a Danish school while I send mine to an Arabic school. The situation in our area is different, and the system they follow at school is different. They hold a week-long stretch of religious education each semester, but no Palestinians attend these classes.

Saleh: I think that being afraid of the influence of the surrounding community prevents us from enjoying the freedom that each of us wants and needs. I heard that a father asked his son who he thought his enemy was, and the child answered 'Christianity'.

Sakir: This is embarrassing, but when I am on a social visit and all the guests start to pray, I feel confused. At first one accepts the situation as is, but later on one starts to think, let me try to pray like them.

Tarik: This is the logic of the weak versus the strong. Why don't we emphasise our cultural values instead. We shouldn't distinguish ourselves from the Europeans by using religion. What we can and should do, for example, is to highlight our own musical and cultural heritage. We also have to strengthen our own understanding of history, instead of always revolving around the issues of morality and religion. We have to start thinking and acting in a positive way. It is no longer acceptable to do nothing and simply repeat over and over again that the Europeans have no morality and we have a lot of it. Besides, it is totally untrue.

Sakir: In the community where I live, some people believe that it is wrong to enter a church, but it is not forbidden for a Christian to enter a mosque. I want to teach my son Arabic, but if I send him to a Danish school the situation will be embarrassing for him, especially when, as a Muslim, he will have to learn about Christianity. I will not accept that my son learns Christian religion, in spite of all my progressive and revolutionary ideas. I suggested to him that during the week of religious studies, he should get involved in studying a new and enriching subject, such as the history of Islam, for example, instead of just keeping that week free. There is an Arab school but I don't think that it is a good one. A lot of religious people began to avoid it, and they have no extra-curricular activities such as swimming or music lessons.

Saleh: All my children learned Christian religion at school and I don't find that a problem at all. I think their future could be better than ours. We were refugees in Lebanon and we are refugees in Denmark, but being refugees in Denmark is better. Here our children are far away from the secret police and the security forces that make one's life seem worthless. Here one feels secure, far from the turbulent political situation of our area. As long as one respects the law, he or she will be respected and live in peace.

Despite the difficulties facing Lubyans in exile, and the absence of permanent solutions to their expulsion and dispossession, many are taking steps to integrate within the communities in which they live in exile, and, at the same time, remain part of a nation that still seeks to take its equal place within the community of nations. Social network communities are flourishing in Denmark, Berlin, Norway, Britain and Sweden while at the same time more and more right of return committees are also being established.

Saleh tried to put his hands on the challenges that face Lubyans in Denmark and what are the urgent steps that should be taken by the refugees. "First we have to discuss the problem among ourselves before we discuss it with the Danes. For example, we should organise in unions and other types of social organisations and find a common means of

communication. Second, all of us refugees should learn the Danish language in order to improve our chances of finding work. Third, we should continue to hold meetings with the Danes to keep them informed about our situation and our problems, and to support those among them who have sympathy for us. We have to take the initiative and not wait passively for others to act on our behalf. We have to learn from the experience of those who came to Denmark before us.”

Chapter Ten

The Future

*I would allow all the winds to blow in my house,
but I would never allow the winds to uproot me from my roots.*

Mahatma Gandhi

Despite more than five decades in exile, refugees from Lubya, whether young or old still express a profound attachment to their village. “Lubya can give us back our dignity. My mother and grandmother told me about the village and that intensified my passion and love for it,” said Khalil. “To me Lubya is the symbol of our nationhood and our identity. Even if we took this country’s citizenship, we cannot forget our connection to Lubya and to Palestine.”

Lubyans I interviewed varied in identifying and formulating their own wishes and thoughts about the future. At the same time, one line transversed the entire landscape of the interviews: the emptiness left in their daily life because of the loss of the homeland. Whether rich or poor, whether Danish, German, or stateless refugees, the desire and wish to return, still prevails among Lubyans in exile. All rejected the idea of compensation as a substitute for return.

Approaching his seventies, his hair gray, Ibrahim Shihabi, is full of energy. “When I started my work in Feek in the Golan, in 1959,” he told me, “I used to sit and look at Lubya, which was visible from this high area. This is when I was inspired to start writing my novel *‘Ala al-Darb (On the Road)*.” He told me that his only goal in life is “to live until I can see Lubya again and walk among its stones, valleys and trees before I die.” Those refugees who are able, because they have acquired citizenship of countries in Europe and North America, now visit the ruins of the village.

At the same time, Israelis are still a long way from hearing the Palestinian narrative. When I raised the idea of refugees returning to Lubya, many told me I was not realistic. Some even said that such ideas would only destroy the life of the Palestinian people. Only a few have the courage to face the facts and consequences of the refugees fate. At the same time, the interviews with Israeli Jews also suggested that more reasonable debates on this fundamental issue are possible.

Lubyans expressed mixed feelings about the peace process between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) that began in Madrid in 1991 and continued in Oslo in 1993. Some felt that the process should be given a chance, Many, however, expressed doubts that the process would enable them to return to Lubya and recover their homes and properties.

Belonging to Lubya

Modern Palestinian identity has become a mosaic, a multiple foci of identities. Elements of this identity include overlapping familial, tribal, village, religious, national, Arab, and regional loyalties. Whether one believes that identity is a “natural, God given way of classifying men” to use Gellner’s words, or an invented concept that coincides with the creation of the modern state as Hobsbawm and Ranger argue, Palestinian identity and the ongoing identification of refugees with their villages of origin, is far more rooted among the *fellaheen* than what scholars and other commentators have suggested.²⁰³

The relationship of the *fellaheen* with their land and their community, and the readiness to defend it, has proven to be as strong today, as it was under the banner of the modern revolution, and during earlier periods before the *Nakba*. After more than fifty years of exile, Palestinian refugees from Lubya still identify themselves as Lubyans. To the elderly, this belonging is both physical - e.g., land, house, fields, graveyards, etc., - and spiritual - e.g., honour, tradition, culture, etc.. To the young, the physical and spiritual aspects of belonging are fully integrated components of their identity as Lubyans.

During the many hours that I spent interviewing Lubyans, young and old, from Dayr Hanna to Ramallah, in the camps of Lebanon, Syria and Jordan and in the communities in Copenhagen and Berlin, they frequently used words such as honour, dignity, roots and origin to describe their attachment to Lubya. Many of those who were not born in the village and who had never visited Lubya attributed this sense of belonging and identification to the stories told to them by their parents. All spoke about the importance of memory and the passing on of stories about the village to their own children and grandchildren.

“Lubya means my roots,” said Khalil. “We have suffered a lot because we lost our village. Our honour is at the core of our existence. Lubya can give us back our dignity. My mother and grandmother told me about the village and that intensified my passion and love for it. To me Lubya is the symbol of our nationhood and our identity. Even if we took this country’s citizenship, we cannot forget our connection to Lubya and to Palestine.”

Jalal spoke about Lubya with nearly the sentiments. “For me Lubya is my nation,” he said. “I am totally influenced by what my parents have told me about Lubya.” “Personally, I don't know Lubya,” admitted Qassem. “I have never been there, but according to what I heard from my parents it was paradise on earth. I love Lubya because of my parents’ love for it. Over there they had everything they needed to live a good life.”

²⁰³ Palestinian identity is still poorly understood. Khalidi identifies four main reasons. Palestinians never had the opportunity to live in an independent state of their own on their own land. The Zionist narrative, which is more than a century old, is a fierce competitor to claims over the same land. Over the 19th and 20th centuries Palestinians have been exposed to multiple foci of identity including Ottomanism, religion, Arabism, affiliation with the family or clan and regional and later national loyalty. Finally, Pan-Arabism. Rashid Khalidi, *Palestinian Identity, the Construction of Modern National Consciousness*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1997.

Jawad used the words “honour, origin and dignity” to describe his attachment to the village. “I don’t know how life was in Lubya, but I recount its history to my children as if it’s a film, with all the details I learned from my parents,” said Jawad. Adnan, who born in 1941 and his wife Najah, who was born in 1954 had similar views. “I was only six years old when we left Lubya. Nevertheless, it means everything to me and always did. It was our fathers’ and grandfathers’ land.”

Like Adnan, Ahmad Hassan Ibrahim also stated that for him, Lubya “means everything” even though he never knew the village. “We want the land back.” said Ahmad. “The Russian and German immigrants have no right to it. Our grandfathers were born there. My father owned 150 *dunums*. They demolished the houses, but they could not demolish the land. My German citizenship facilitates my movement, nothing more.”

When you ask Palestinian refugees where they are from, most will name their village of origin, and not the refugee camp, town or city where they are currently living. “When someone asks me where am I from, I answer from Dayr Hanna, but originally from Lubya. I don’t like to use the word ‘refugee’ in Dayr Hanna because we have excellent relations with the people in the village,” said Ahmad Hajjo. “When people ask me, ‘Where do you come from?’ I always say ‘from Palestine’,” said Ahmad. “I taught my sons to do the same.”

This sense of belonging to Lubya and Palestine, however, also runs parallel to a sense of estrangement that has grown out of a life of forced exile far away from a place that they still identify as home. “The longer one lives in Arab or European countries,” related Jawad, “the more one comes to see himself as a refugee. One starts to accumulate hate and anger towards the world as a result of psychological oppression, which is more potent than physical oppression.”

“I have to add a question mark concerning my feelings towards Lubya,” said Saleh after seeing pictures of the village. “I feel uneasy concerning the issue. When I saw the documentary film about Lubya on Danish television, I was divided between two feelings: happiness and shock. Our homeland indeed exists, and yet we are obliged to live as refugees. It is tantamount to physical as well as spiritual oppression.”

Some Lubyans also expressed anxiety about the loss of identity after such a long period in exile. Mahir Hamada has been the mayor of Yarmouk refugee camp in Syria since 1987. Lubya street (*Shari’ Lubya*) is in the middle of the camp, and is one of the camp’s wealthiest streets. “Until recently, people were still holding on to the traditions and customs of their grandfathers, but they are now facing a problem with regard to the education of the new generation. We should look for alternative methods to strengthen the new generation’s identity.”

“The Zionists believe that the new generation will forget and the question of Palestine will be resolved with time. I am now preparing a program on the computer that will enable me to record the history of every village in Palestine and of its people. In the beginning, the streets of the camp had no name and there were only two main ones,

Yarmouk and Falastin, but in 1987 we started naming the streets after villages and towns in Palestine. We should keep the new generation in touch with the history of their parents and grandparents in order to strengthen their right of return, which will happen no matter how long it takes.”

For those living in exile in Europe, the challenges are different. They are living in a place that is both culturally and socially distinct from the camps spread across the Middle East, let alone Lubya itself. For many of the young generation, who grew up hearing stories about the village from their parents and grandparents, it was a shock to learn that Palestine does not exist in the geography and history books at school. This has compelled many of them to be more insistent in their attachment to the history, as told to them by their parents at home or their teachers in the refugee camps.

“I am a Palestinian from Lubya,” said Yusra. “It is necessary to have a place you call your own. It shows your origin. When others speak about their homeland, I also feel like speaking about mine, especially about Lubya, but I was born a refugee and live as a refugee. It is true that I don't remember Lubya like I do Lebanon, even if my parents told me so much about it. All the same, I would like to know Lubya one day, but for me Lebanon is my other homeland after Palestine. When the teacher spoke about Palestine he called it Israel. It irritated me that he said Israel instead of Palestine.”

Akram, Yusra's younger brother, is interested in biology and natural science. He had a slightly different sense of belonging to the village. “Lubya does not mean anything special to me,” he said. “It is just another Palestinian village, but it is better for one to return to his own homeland, and we, ourselves should also do that. When the others speak of returning home, I feel bad because I have no homeland of my own. The history they teach us is as if Palestine had always been Jewish.”

Return Visits

Today, Lubyans who never saw their village now return to visit. This is possible, as it was for me, only because they are naturalized Danes, Canadians, Americans, Swedes, Germans, etc. While I was conducting my research in Israel in 1995 I met with three Lubyans. None were born in the village. All three held different passports – German, Swedish and Danish. Yet, it was amazing to see these Palestinians from three far away countries returning to search for the debris of their parent's homes and strengthen relations with remaining relatives.

In less than two hours, more than fifty people from Lubya, many of whom were living as internally displaced citizens of Israel in nearby towns and villages, had gathered at the village site. Some of the men who were standing at the center of the ruins of the village started the traditional Palestinian dance known as the *dabka*. The old, women, and the young all joined in. It was a sign of both optimism and defiance against those who have denied them the right to return to and restore the relationship with the land that nourished their ancestor's for generations.

Yousef Issa spent the first thirty years of life in the village before escaping the ravages of the 1948 war with his young family. He was able to return to visit his village only after having obtained an Israeli tourist visa valid for one month. To obtain another, he would have to leave Israel and apply again. Visiting his birthplace for the first time in 46 years Yousef said that he would “never exchange the chance to pitch a tent on the ruins of my house here with all the palaces of the Queen of Denmark. If there is one wish I would want fulfilled, it would be to die here right now, where I am standing, rather than to leave this place again.”

During his second visit in 1995, Yousef picked leaves from the trees and ate them, wrote his name on the tree trunk, and spoke about the personalities and places of his beloved and well-remembered village. He knew the owners and names of all the fields, the wells, the demolished houses, the mosque, the lake, the school, and the exact place where his house stood, recognizing even its cornerstone that is still there. “Nothing can replace one’s home. There one is a king. Abroad one is a refugee. I will teach my sons and daughters about their history and property. If it is difficult for us now to obtain our rights, the next generation will continue to shoulder the responsibility.”

Khalid Sa’id visited Lubya for the first time in 1990. He was my teacher when I was child attending one of the UNRWA schools in the camp in Lebanon. Khalid later left to Kuwait where he taught for twenty-five years before his retirement. I met him again after all these long years of exile. His description of his approach to Lubya, his first arrival by boat at the port in Haifa, his first impressions of rediscovering the remains of his childhood play area unfolded like a dream. Standing amid the ruins of his family’s house, only his father’s comments, and his mother’s weeping diverted his attention.

“You may ask how I found my family’s home when I arrived in Lubya on the morning of the 5 August 1990. I left Lubya when I was eight years old. I asked my companions to take me to *Bir Joudi* (Joudi’s well) and the flat big rock beside the well where I used to play marbles with my childhood friends. I asked them to leave me alone to discover my grandfather’s house, which I found easily. If you ask me how I could remember, I would say that there was something in me through all my life that persisted and insisted that I’ll come back one day. It was a great dream. It became a reality.”

Sa’diyya Ali, Yousef Issa's wife, refused to be photographed during her first trip to Lubya. She did not want to reveal her inner thoughts and emotions to the others, especially amid the ruins of Lubya and her childhood. During most of the visit Sa’diyya wept. Sometimes she attacked us for convincing her to come back to see Lubya. “Why did you bring me here, to torture me by seeing the ruins of my house? To hell with all the Arab leaders who didn’t move a finger to help us.” Only after she had seen the documentary about Lubya on television Sa’diyya expressed her wish to be interviewed.

The sisters Um Ali and Um Majid²⁰⁴, who both reside in Yarmouk refugee camp in Syria, visited Lubya for the first time in 1994. Um Ali proceeded to recount step by step her emotions at the first encounter she had with her native land after forty-six years of absence. At first view she lost consciousness, and her sister who was with her was not able to help her. When I met the two sisters I showed them a copy of a photo I had found of the house of Um Ali, Saada Ali Shihabi, and Husayn Ali Yasin Shihabi in Lubya. Um Ali took the photo and kissed it and immediately began to describe in detail the rooms of the house, the furniture, and the decore inside. Memories of her home before its destruction were as lively as her description of her house in the refugee camp. Um Ali passed on the photo to all her children as if to remind them again of their real home in Lubya.

For some, however, the pain of visiting the village and yet not being able to return permenantly is still very painful. Abu Khalid, who visited Lubya in 1989 with his son Khalid, mentioned how once he saw woman from the village, Zinat Tawfeek (Um Abdel-Halim), holding a *kharroubi* tree and weeping as if it was her own daughter. When I asked Um Hassan, who was living in Dayr Hanna, if she visited Lubya frequently like the rest of her family she said, “Only once. When I saw how Lubya became, I wept, and I said that I will never visit Lubya again.”

When asked about her feelings when she saw Lubya again after the long years of exile Zahra Ibrahim Khalil, Abu Tal’at’s wife, told me that she “visited Lubya in 1970 and again in 1989. On each visit I wept until I lost touch with my surroundings. Our cousin Abed had called us from Dayr Hanna to inform us that his father was terminally ill with cancer and he wanted to see us. So we made the trip over, and immediately upon our arrival, our uncle drove us to Lubya, although we eventually stayed in Dayr Hanna for twenty days. I was not able to recognise the main outline of village. I looked at the oven, sat beside Joudi’s terrace, and went to see the Azzam’s *kharroubi* tree.”

“It seemed to me that this tree, which was once very big, had been cut by someone but had come to life again. The place where they piled the rubbish (*mazbala*) was totally different, but the wells of my uncle Khalil, Issa, Raja, Husayn al-Ali, and the Bakrawi family, were still there. Before that, we saw the wells of the Ammouris, and the Hamadis, as well as that of Husayn Issa in the narrow lane. Then we walked up to the graveyard, Karem Issa, in which were buried *malahmi* (immediate relatives), my father, and my uncles Dyab and Khalil, before going up to al-Kaf where my uncle owned the biggest olive tree in the village. People disappear, but the land remains.”

It took Abu Sameeh twenty-six years to summon the courage to visit Lubya for the first time even though the village is only a 15-minute drive from Dayr Hanna where he now lives. Now that he is retired he has more time to wander through the fields and ruins of Lubya. “I didn’t go back to the village since 1948,” he said. “I was afraid, but once there, I went directly to the fields. The next time I visited, I was also afraid, but in 1990 I

²⁰⁴ The interview with Um Ali and Um Majid was conducted in Yarmouk refugee camp in Syria on 25 January 1999. Um Ali was born in 1930. Um Majid was born in 1938.

bought a tractor and every week visited the fields of Lubya, *Sarjouni*, which is now called *Zir'eem*, of *al-Hima* plain and other places.” Abu Sameeh swears that no one in the world visited his deserted village more often than he has, almost 400 times, if not more.

Return

The majority of Lubyans I spoke with also indicated their desire to return to their village. Out of the almost 700 interviews I conducted among three generations of Lubyans, only three young people answered that they did not believe in return. When I asked Abu Hassan if he like to return to Lubya some day the answer was swift: “One hundred percent. If you could help us we will walk behind you.” Abu Muhammad Kilani replied with similar conviction: “*Allaho akbar* (God is Great).”

Many of the elderly generation, like Abu Muhammad told me they would be happy living in a tent or a cave if only they could return. “We may build palaces in al-Makr, but if we ever have the chance to return, I would be content to live in a cave. It would be better than the palaces in al-Makr. I was born here.” “Of course I would like to return. Today would be better than tomorrow,” said Subhiyya Muhsin Gouda. “A tent there is better than the house we are living in now.”

When asked if he would go back to Lubya if that became possible, Abu Majid told me that as a Lubyans he “would like to return to Lubya, but not alone. I would not like to visit Lubya as a tourist, definitely not, though I want to show my children everything there. I totally refuse to be compensated for my land. Even if it takes another one hundred years, we will never accept any solution other than to return to our homes. I am a Palestinian, and my children are Palestinians. This is our identity.”

Jamal Shihabi²⁰⁵ is a teacher and the *imam* of Homs refugee camp. He has nine children residing in the camp. In 1981 a new position of camp *mukhtar* was created and Jamal became the first camp *mukhtar*. “The return to Lubya is inevitable no matter how long it will take,” said Jamal, whose father was a teacher in Lubya. “If it is not me who returns,” he told me, “then my children or their children will.”

Fadiya Abbas²⁰⁶, who is seventy-five years old and lives with her husband and eldest son in Denmark, also said that she would like to return. Her answer, however, also revealed the kind of multiple identity that so many Palestinian refugees have acquired after so many years in forced exile, often forced to move from one country to another, in search of employment, because of family connections, or because of ongoing conflict. “I married Fayad Abbas in 1937. We already had four children when we left Lubya.”

“In Lebanon, I gave birth to eight more, but unfortunately lost five of them,” she told me. “That is why I would like to stay for the rest of my life in Lebanon and be buried near my

²⁰⁵ Jamal Shihabi was born in 1943. The interview with Jamal Shihabi was conducted in Homs, Syria on 19 January 1999.

²⁰⁶ Fadiya Abbas was born in 1920. The interview with Fadiya Abbas was conducted in Denmark in 1995.

sons. Denmark is beautiful, but only for its people. As far as we're concerned, we left every thing behind in Lubya. If one day we would be able to return, no one would get there faster than I. I saw the film about Lubya on Danish television, and I wept all through. It reminded me of my beautiful life there."

Younger Palestinians from Lubya also spoke about the desire to return to their village one day. "Returning to Lubya is a dream that I will always do my best to realize," said Husam²⁰⁷. "I was born in Homs, Syria, in 1968, and have been living in Berlin for the last five years and working with my brother in his company. The Palestinian community here is very close to one another. I enthusiastically look forward to establishing a Palestinian center to look after our community's interests. I am seriously thinking of going to Palestine to live, in spite of the difficulties I may face."

Many of the young generation have never seen Lubya. Most have heard countless stories about the village and about life before 1948 from their parents and grandparents. Some have seen pictures or videos of Lubya, yet most indicated a desire to return. "If I had the chance to go back I would do so without hesitation," said Khalil, "even though I have never seen the village." Jalal had the same response when I asked him if he thought about returning to Lubya. "If there is any possibility of returning, I will definitely do so," he said.

During the 1990s refugees in many places of exile renewed efforts to build a popular lobby to pressure the Palestinian leadership, Israel and the international community to respect and facilitate implementation of their rights, including return and housing and property restitution. This included internally displaced Palestinians inside Israel. **Nayif**, Abu Hassan's son, is active in the Association for the Defense of the Rights of the Internally Displaced (ADRID) in Israel. He accompanied me on several occasions to Lubya, and to visit Lubyans families spread in different places in Israel. He knows in detail the history of almost every family in Lubya and the village history.

"The first meeting [of the association] took place in 'Ibillin, in Qasr al-Salam on 11 March 1995. About 300 members from all the displaced (*muhajariin*) from different Arab villages participated. The majority were from the Galilee. I was astonished to meet so many representatives whom I had never known before as displaced. The initiative was taken after the signing of the 1993 Declaration of Principles in Oslo, when the Palestinians in Israel began to realize that their fate was left without any solution. We elected three committees to work for our goal: to solve the problem of our confiscated land."

"Israel responded negatively to our requests. They accused us of wanting to throw them into the sea, simply because we asked the government to implement our individual rights to our land. We are citizens of Israel, and it is our right to ask for our property back. The official Israeli television asked to interview us. We accepted on the condition that they give us fair time in the program, and that two government ministers participate in the

²⁰⁷ The interview with Husam was conducted in Berlin, Germany on 10 March 1996.

discussions. There are about 250,000 Palestinians in Israel who are concerned about this issue. We need support to make a general survey of all the plots of land in question.”

I also asked Lubyans if they would like to resettle in the West Bank or Gaza if a Palestinian state was established in these areas. Almost all indicated that they would rather return to Lubya. “I prefer to return to Lebanon or Syria,” said Husam, “but if I have the choice to return to Lubya, then I am ready. The right of return to our lands and homes is a natural right for us. I will not be staying in Denmark for sure. I will try my best to return in the coming few years. I will try to open a small workshop that will allow me to live decently with my children. I take decisions democratically with my sons, who share my views regarding the future.”

“Yes of course, I would return to Lubya if I had the possibility,” said Adnan, “but not to the West Bank or Gaza.” His wife was categorical in refusing to come back to the West Bank and Gaza. “I would like to go back to Lubya, but I would not go back to the West Bank,” she said. “Palestine is still occupied, and I prefer to stay here and wait.” “Without a doubt, I don’t have any hesitation about coming back if I have the chance,” said Saleh. “All the cities and villages of Palestine are fine, but I want to return to my own roots and the roots of my fathers and grandfathers, but in the end I would say that part of the land is better than nothing.”

When I asked Khalil about the idea of returning to the West Bank, he thought the idea was not very practical. “As to going back to the West Bank and Gaza, I do not think that it is a feasible project. The economic situation there cannot absorb us all. They have enough problems there to deal with as is.” Jalal shared the same view. “Of course I would like to go back to my homeland,” he said, “but I would not like to go to the West Bank and Gaza. There is hardly any space for those already living there.”

Others expressed grave doubts about the establishment of a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. “Of course I would return immediately if I had the chance,” said Kassim. “I would not return to other places. Besides it would not be a real Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza. I only want to return to Lubya, if there is any real possibility.” “The West Bank is hardly large enough for its own people and it will probably become another Somalia,” said Jawad. “If I am given the choice of returning to Palestine, I will choose to stay outside, but will lend my support to the Palestinian state.”

“One must consider seriously what kind of life he or she would have in Gaza or elsewhere without the proper means of financial support, otherwise it would be difficult to realize one’s projects no matter what they are,” said Akram. “Therefore, we must return to our homeland only when we have the ability and the means to do that. I would like to return to any part of my homeland. Gaza and Jericho are as much part of Palestine as the other cities. The important thing is that Palestine exists on the map of the world.”

For Yusra, Akram’s older sister, who grew up hearing about Lubya from her grandparents, “Gaza and Jericho do not constitute an entire Palestinian state. Palestine must be returned whole. Frankly speaking, I don’t remember Lubya more than I do

Lebanon, because I was not born in Lubya. When they show us a map and ask me where I come from, I feel irritated because I cannot find my village on it. It makes me feel bad. We have to continue to believe in our homeland, and we must educate ourselves about it, but of course I want to return to Lubya.”

Even those Lubyans who were able to settle in the West Bank and Gaza in the 1990s under the Oslo process felt that there was something missing, that they had not yet exercised their right of return. Jamal Hajjo²⁰⁸ who was born in 1944, spoke about the difficulties he faced during his years exile before his return to Gaza, and about his position on recent political developments. “I consider myself now as living in Palestine, in my own homeland, but I will not give up my right to return to Lubya. We still have the documents that prove our right to our property. I am ready for a compromise, but not for giving up all my lands. I will never accept to sell my land for any amount of money. Besides all international laws guarantee our right to our property.”

Samar Naji²⁰⁹, came to Ramallah in 1990s after the establishment of the Palestinian Authority, along with her mother who came to work as a judge. Samar’s reflections on what it meant to come to Palestine, yet not return to Lubya, encapsulates both the mosaic of Palestinian identity and the existential dilemma of protracted exile. Samar’s mother is originally from Lubya, while her father is from the coastal city of Yafa (Jaffa) near Tel Aviv.

“When I came here in 1994, I felt the same as I felt when I went to Lebanon where they looked at me as a stranger. So I said to myself, ‘Now I am in Palestine, no one will look at me differently.’ Unfortunately, this was not the case. I feel that the people here also treat me like a stranger. In the classroom they said to me, ‘You are Syrian.’ I told them, ‘No, I am Palestinian.’ We are forty-eight girls in my class, and there are also girls from the United States to whom they refer as ‘the Americans.’”

“I don’t like this treatment, but I got used to it. In Cyprus they referred to me as the Arab girl, here as the Syrian, and in Lebanon as the Palestinian. Here in Palestine, they also think of me as part of the Palestinian Authority and I still don’t have many social contacts. I think that the people here are still influenced by the first *intifada*. The occupation made the people more cautious in their social relationship. I met very friendly people, but the tendency towards being very cautious makes me feel as if I am from the secret police (*mukhabarat*).”

“I went for a visit to Jaffa but I didn’t feel that I have a special relationship to it. I haven’t visited Lubya yet. I feel though that I belong to Lubya, and I am looking forward to visiting it soon. I remember my grandmother telling me all the time about Lubya and about her brothers who died while defending the village. She always wept when she told

²⁰⁸ Jamal Hajjo was born in 1944. The interview with Jamal Hajjo was conducted in Gaza on 14 October 1995.

²⁰⁹ The interview with Samar Naji was conducted in Ramallah on 29 September 1995.

me about the martyr's cave [where they buried the dead in 1948]. I am proud of those who died defending our homes.”

“I lived in Cyprus for eight years and in Syria for three, but I felt more comfortable in Syria because of the culture and traditions we share with them. When I arrived in Palestine, I wept, not only because I love Palestine, but also because I left good friends behind. Now I have only my parents and only one friend. I didn't understand my father's friends when they said that they wept when they arrived in Palestine. There was harmony in the life of Palestinians in the camps in Syria, but here I face a lot of problems.”

“Someone tells me that we must not listen to music, and another tries to convince me to wear the veil. In Cyprus they refused to let me hold the Cypriot flag. While in Syria I felt myself a Palestinian, but after one whole year in Ramallah I still have no real social life. When I saw Tel Aviv I was shocked. There is a great difference between Tel Aviv and Ramallah, however, I felt that the big buildings in Tel-Aviv were false. Yafa felt closer to my heart. Everything in it is normal.”

Samar's mother, Um Wisam, who was born 1950, shared her daughter's views. “I still feel that we are strangers in Ramallah. The people here asked us, ‘How do you find our land?’ as if we have nothing at all to do with Palestine. Until now we only have formal relations with the people around us, but I meet frequently with my neighbours who also came back from exile. The relation with Israelis needs a generation or two to be normalized. The Israelis are people like us, and their children are not to blame for what the older generation did to our homeland. I still hope to return to Lubya.”

What was also strikingly clear from all of the interviews, was that Lubyans refuse to accept compensation as a substitute for the opportunity to exercise their right of return. This view transcended all generations. When asked about compensation versus the right of return, Mahir Hamada was clear. “We are against compensation, we should go back to where we came from. Perhaps there are some obstacles now, but as long as I am alive, I will not give up my dream of returning to rebuild my family home. That is where our dignity lies and our history resumes. We should pay more attention to the new generation, especially those who were born in Europe, for they have an identity crisis.”

For many compensation was akin to forgetting or selling the homeland. “Never, I am against compensation,” said Ali Abu Azzam. “The moment we accept compensation, our land will be forgotten.” “I will not accept compensation,” said Kassem. “Absolutely not. It would be clearly selling our homeland.” Khalil agreed that “compensation is a kind of selling out. My choice would be to return to Palestine,” he said, “even under the worst of conditions.”

“Our homeland is not for sale,” said Saleh. “It is a symbol of our honor. Compensation with return to our homeland is a reasonable solution, but compensation without return does not mean anything. A man without a homeland is a man without honor. We will not sell our homeland. I will never accept the situation as it is right now because it is wrong.”

“I refuse to be compensated,” said Najah. “I want to go back to my origin, where I can feel really free and regain my identity.”

“I categorically reject the option of compensation,” said Kilani. “I’d rather get another citizenship and wait until I get the chance to return to my original home. Anyway, the entire Palestinian leadership is from Gaza. We have no place in this revolution. We are marginal to it.” For Jawad “compensation does not give me back my identity or my self respect. Even if they give me millions of dollars I will always stay a refugee.”

The question of the right of return is frequently discussed among Palestinians, but not among Israelis. There are those in Israel who totally refuse to even talk about the subject, and there are those who would take a positive view of the issue if the right of return was implemented only in the West Bank and Gaza. The majority, however, is against the refugees’ return to their own lands and villages occupied in 1948, because of what they think would bring an end to the Jewish state. This subject is one of the most controversial issues in the conflict. Only in the last few years have some Israeli Jews initiated efforts to educate the Israeli public about the refugee issue and the right of return.

When I asked Izra Lavi about the return of Palestinian refugees, including those from Lubya, Izra responded with a question. “Well, I want to ask you, would you like to return if it was possible?” I told Izra that in fact I would like to return and that my father who is seventy-two years old would definitely like to return. This is his dearest wish.” Izra responded with a laugh. “What will you do here? What would your wife say about living here? I am not sure after all that you will come to live here,” said Izra’s wife. “I knew a Palestinian who came from Jordan, but could not tell where his house was. He said that he is now a millionaire in Jordan.”

“His father sincerely wanted to come here,” said Abu Wajdi, one of my friends who knew Izra and had accompanied me on the visit. “For him it is better than to stay in a foreign country, living among strangers.” But for Ester, Izra’s wife, the idea of return seemed like a dream. “Return after 46 years? There were Jews who came from Morocco and they left everything behind. There is no room left here. If one hundred thousand return, where will they settle?” I tried to explain to Ester that Lubya’s lands were still largely uninhabited despite the fact that more than half a million Jews from all around the world immigrated to Israel during the 1990s.

“There are more Palestinian refugees than the number I have mentioned,” she answered. “But would you accept that only the elderly people return?”, she asked. “Your father wants to return to Lubya, what about Haifa and Jaffa?” asked Ester. “There were Jews who came from Syria, Lebanon, and Morocco. Look, I tell you, my son lives in Australia. He has a lot of Palestinian and Iraqi friends there and he says that he likes them better than the Australians. The Australians are strangers, while the Arabs are his brothers and friends.” I said that we could sit and discuss in detail where the refugees could return.

Izra tried to explain to me that it was a different situation between Jews who had been living in Europe and came to Israel after 1948 and Palestinian refugees now living in

exile in Arab states in the region. “The Jews in Europe were not living well. Russia didn’t want them, neither did all the Eastern countries. I don’t speak about the Jews in the United States, but at least you have the Arab states in which you can live easily, in Iraq, Lebanon, Tunisia, Egypt,” said Ezra.

When asked about the massacre of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, expulsion from Kuwait and Libya, and ill-treatment in general in most Arab countries, Izra said: “It is Arafat’s fault for siding with Saddam. It is between you Arabs to solve these problems. The Jews of Russia were not expelled by Jews, the Russians didn’t want them, while the Arabs are your brothers.” This is one of the common justifications for denying Palestinian refugees the right to return, that they would be better off living with other Arabs.

When I asked Nahom Abbo about the right of return, his answer was different: “If we want to have a comprehensive peace and continue to have peaceful relations with our neighbours, the situation should remain as it is now. Any changes in the status quo will bring the riots back again. If you want to make peace you must give up some part of your rights. Look at the Jews who left their property in Germany, Iraq, Morocco, and Tunisia. Everything is gone without compensation.” I pressed Nahom, saying that in fact the Germans continue to pay compensation to Israel.

“Not for property, but as compensation for the people they killed, but we should sit and talk about all these issues, including this one.” In fact, allied powers in Germany did impose laws allowing people to recover their property. “Under Peres’ government there were talks about those issues. Peace and life are more important than land. Let us talk frankly, 90 or 95 percent of those Palestinians are no longer with us, but their sons are. I think that it is better to solve the problem by compensation, but if you say to me I am from Lubya and I want to return there, then this will create new problems.”

The issue of the right of return also came up during discussions I had at the Institute of Peace Research in Givat Haviva in Haifa. “We are not talking about 1948. It is over,” said Sara Ozacky Lazar²¹⁰, “No one in the PLO is realistic, even the most radical among us is afraid. Israelis are afraid. We are looking to the future and I am for a Palestinian state since a long time ago, but it is time to stop dreaming about the right of return. My father returned to Lithuania and he could not even find his house.”

When she invited another Palestinian, Walid 'Asliyya, an advocate from Um al-Fahm, a Palestinian town in Israel, to take part in the discussion, he said: “Ask the refugees themselves, not me. They have the right to raise their own issues.” Sara responded, telling Walid that he “should explain to them and tell them to stop dreaming about the past. We will help them in Gaza, but not over here, and don’t say you are not part of the game. The Oslo agreement is the best solution for the Palestinians. They should stop dreaming about their return to Jaffa. You intellectuals are destroying the life of your people.”

²¹⁰ The interview with Sara Ozacky-Lazar was conducted at the Institute for Peace Research in Givat Haviva on 31 September 1995.

When I informed her that the house her father is living in now in Haifa belonged to a Palestinian family who left under conditions of war, she became more agitated, and accused me of being unrealistic. Yohanan Ishkar, Director of the Institute who was present at the interview intervened: “I understand the tragedy of Palestinians, but we must make historical compromises.” Two other Palestinians present, Salem Jubran and Riad Kabha, both members of the Institute’s leadership, did not participate in the discussion or make any comments. When I asked them how an institute devoted to the research of peace does not discuss such issues, one of them answered: “Actually it is the first time that we discussed the right of return of the Palestinian refugees.”

During my time in Israel, I also sat down to discuss the refugee issue with Dr. Uri Davis²¹¹, who has written many books and articles about the conflict and the nature of the state of Israel. I asked him how he conceived of a solution to the refugee issue and the right of return. “In my opinion there is only one real and effective solution: dual citizenship. That means that the holder of dual citizenship has the right to live in Nablus or in Natanya according to his choice. Just as I have the right as a dual citizen of Israel and the United Kingdom. But it also will meet enormous resistance from the Israeli government. In my view that is the only effective program of action. It can be achieved through a very strong political fight against Israeli opposition. There is in my opinion only one alternative strategy to the strategy of dual citizenship, and that is naturalisation (Arabic, *Tawtiin*).”

“What I fear is actually not naturalisation. What I fear is that the international community, under Israeli and American pressure, will use naturalisation, use the fact that Palestinians are no longer stateless in order to abolish their status as refugees. It is not true that if you have a passport you are not a refugee. You can be a refugee, have asylum in Denmark and have a passport. There is no legal connection between citizenship and refugee status. So again if you talk about a Palestinian state and naturalisation, you must negotiate very carefully to make sure that the international community and the United Nation does not abolish the resolutions relevant to the Palestinian refugees.”

“One resolution is already abolished and that is a bad defeat for our cause, and we must make absolutely sure that this defeat is not repeated for the Palestinian refugees, because they have rights to properties, to compensation, to residence in Israel. So I see two strategies: the strategy of dual citizenship or, if you want, multiple citizenship. If you can have Palestinian-Israeli dual citizenship, you can also be a Jordanian-Palestinian-Israeli citizen. Look to Europe and see how the process of unification is developing. The European story is a good story to follow. If you go for naturalisation you really have to be very careful not to compromise the rights of the refugees.”

The peace process

²¹¹ The interview with Uri Davis was conducted in Um al-Fahm on 20 October 1995.

I also asked Lubyans and the several Israeli Jews that I interviewed about their thoughts about the Oslo peace process. Lubyans, old and young, expressed both optimism and a sense of pessimism toward the peace process that began in Madrid, Spain, after the first Gulf war in 1991 and continued with the signing of Declaration of Principles in 1993 in Oslo, Norway, followed by subsequent interim agreements.

Looking back at his long eighty years of life, with more than half a century in exile, Abu Tal'at, expressed mixed feelings. "Personally I am totally for [the peace process]. Twenty-three Arab countries together could do nothing against Israel. The number of Palestinians killed in the Arab countries is higher than the number of those killed by the Israelis. Our people in Burj al-Shamali camp are starving. We collect money and other necessities to send to them. We don't have a strong resistance base like Hanoi to help us in our struggle. The Lebanese even refuse to allow Palestinians to work in their country."

"The prophet concluded the Hudaibiya agreement with his enemies (*al-kuffar*), and two years later he succeeded in entering Mecca. We are a people with rights and the whole world should support us. I am sure that there will be a solution for the Palestinians of 1948 sometime in the future. I don't believe that there will be a solution in the near future though. The American solution is now on the table, therefore, there is only the possibility that the West Bank will be returned to the Jordanian government. Besides, I don't believe that the Palestinian Authority has the ability to survive independently. Most families want to stay where they are living right now. (He laughed loudly.) Lubya is gone. They will never see it again. Maybe they will even kill Arafat."

Nayif Hassan shared similar views about the US role in the peace process. "As long as the US dollar is strong and influential, we will not regain our rights," he said. "This is exactly like what happened with the *shuyukh* of Lubya. The educated people had no say and the *makhateer* decided everything. A Palestinian is oppressed wherever he lives. Whoever accepts compensation is a traitor, and it is not me who said this, these are Allah's words. Wherever we go, we are faced with the question, 'Where are you from? What is your country of origin?' The Kuwaitis tell the Palestinians that they succeeded in freeing their land from Iraq in a very short span of time, while we have been occupied for fifty years and so far have failed to get back our homeland."

"I don't believe at all in this solution," said Abu Ali. "They took seventy percent of our land, and now they are negotiating over the remaining thirty percent. They said that Palestinians have received self-determination. Where is it? They settled immigrants in Saffuriyya, and when the original owners of the land tried to collect cactus from the fields, the new settlers turned them out saying: 'It was once your land but now it is no more yours. Get out of here.' They were prevented from harvesting anything from their fields. Is this the peace they spoke about? Last year I saw a demonstration in the streets of Nazareth. The children were holding the flags of Israel and the Communist party. I asked the children: 'Where is your Palestinian flag?' They threw down the flags and quit the demonstration."

The younger generation of Lubyans residing in exile also expressed mixed feelings towards the current peace process. Husam, for example, was optimistic, but also realistic. “I totally support it. We have tried different ways to achieve our national goals, and I don’t mind giving this peace process a chance. The Palestinian people will go on with their lives, even if this process fails. We can always revert to other methods if this process does not help us get what we want. It is enough to hear the sentence ‘President of Palestine’, which in itself is a moral triumph, but I will never forget the suffering of my people.”

Others, however, were more pessimistic that the peace process would enable them to exercise their rights. Both Adnan and Najah shared the same feeling about the deficiencies and shortcomings of the peace process: “This is not a solution. They gave the Palestinians nothing.” Najah added, “I don’t think this is a solution either. The Israelis continue to confiscate Palestinian land, and there is still no solution to the Palestinian refugee problem. The United States, which is trying to mediate between us and the Israelis, betrayed us by vetoing a resolution condemning Israel for confiscating land in Jerusalem.”

“The Oslo agreement falls short of fulfilling our ambitions,” said Kilani from Homs refugee camp in Syria. “I want to go back to Lubya with my eight family members. I don’t want to return to Gaza or to the West Bank, because I will live there the same way as I was living in Syria. In Syria we Palestinians have the same rights as the Syrians; only the first-rank jobs are not open to us, otherwise we have the same rights and duties. In Lebanon, on the other hand, a Palestinian must have a Lebanese partner in whose name he should register 51 percent of his business; that is not the case in Syria. I pray that God will help me one day return to my village.”

“I want to answer our question with another,” answered Khalil. “What is the value of this peace process to us as long as we remain far away from our homeland?” No one discusses our problem here in Denmark. Besides, this peace process is neither fair nor just. The main problem that needs to be solved is the refugee problem and the right of return. This process is good only for Israel, and the Arabs are the losers.” “This peace process is both good and bad,” said Jawad. “Good because it put the name of Palestine on the international map and this is a political advantage, and not good when considering all the martyrs who died for Palestine. We ought to have obtained much more than we did out of it. Personally, I feel that I got nothing. I am still a refugee, and I cannot go back to my homeland. The negotiations were conducted based on an unequal balance of power.”

“Concerning the solution of our problem, and as a man who has worked for about twenty years to resolve my own problems,” said Sakir, “I believe in finding a peaceful solution that is balanced and durable. The dispersal of the Palestinians that we see now only exacerbates the problems, and I do not see any future either for the Palestinians of Syria and Lebanon. What we see right now is, at best, a temporary solution. Even some Israelis believe that.” “I always believe that our homeland is the only place where we can ever feel safe,” said Muhammad Shihabi. “The peace process is frustrating because it did not mention in definite terms the right of return. As a Palestinian I was brought up with this

idea in mind. Our future will be like that of South Africa today, a secular state with no difference at all between Jews and Palestinians.”

Conclusion

Nearly a decade has passed since I first ‘landed’ in Lubya and began the long journey of trying to uncover and reassemble the buried history of my village. This journey took me to the various corners of exile where Lubyans reside today, whether a few kilometres from Lubya in the Galilee, just over one hundred kilometres away in the camps of Lebanon, Jordan, Gaza and Syria, or thousands of kilometres away in Europe and Scandinavia.

Reassembling this history of Lubya so many decades after its destruction and depopulation has not been easy. In many ways, the process was like piecing together the scattered stones of a broken mosaic. More than fifty-five years later, there are things which cannot be recovered or fully mended. Nevertheless, I have tried to preserve the scattered and sometimes fragile memories of those who once lived in this village.

Memory is one of the richest sources of documentation about Lubya. Shared memories cover almost all aspects of village life, from its history, its physical landscape, its inhabitants, and its lively social and cultural life. The experiences of expulsion, loss of homes and homeland, and exile are also deeply seered into the collective memory of Lubyans. A decade after I started poking around at the still tender memories of Lubya, many of the elderly that I interviewed have passed away, taking with them an irretrievable historical treasure.

For Lubyans, memory is an integral part of their identity. It protects them against the ravages and injustices of a life characterized by forced separation from the land, from families, and from the village community. It is the only capital Lubyans have with them on the long road between exile and home. Memory is the spiritual reservoir and the vertebral column for Lubyans in exile. It is, therefore, not an exaggeration to say that memory is a battlefield, or more precise, the primary remaining battlefield. Although some have argued that memory belongs to the past and, by nature, is a reactionary force and an obstacle to looking to the future, I would argue the opposite.

Dashing away the memories and roots of one’s existence is an immoral and inhuman demand from those who look at history as a dead body which should be discarded. The self image of braveness of Lubyans fight until the D days of expulsion, the strong memories of the past historical events rooted for centuries in the land, such as the defeat of Crusaders on Lubya’s land, and the famous reputation of Lubyans’ son: scholar and Mufti of the 15th century Abu Bakr al-Lubyani; all these memories showed how false and immoral all the attempts to suppress the voices of the uprooted and accusing their accounts as nostalgia.

The relevance of the past is not only to a healthy present, but a necessary step in formulating the future with all its hopes and yearnings. The forest is the total sum of all its trees, and the history of the people, whether past or present is mainly based on its actors, on the people who form the driving force of the advance of life towards a better future.

The other fundamental role of memory is the future perspective and horizon for Lubyans apart from strengthening of self-image, proud ness , cultural enrichment, secure feelings of belonging to roots ,fundament, and corner stone of their existence. Lubyans were allowed for the first time in more than a half century to speak for themselves about their past, present and future identity, yearnings, hopes and dreams, as well as their own version of the events that took place in their beloved village. Lubyans struggle to defend itself and its existence is yet more contradictory evidence to the official Israeli story that the Palestinians left their homes following orders from Arab leaders.

On the other hand, memory and Oral history accounts would mean an efficient tool to people's involvement in their own destinies. Involvement of the people would really mean including the people's voice into the history. There is little appreciation among politicians nowadays to hear the voices of the people, even though it becomes a phenomenon of our age, but unfortunately it is not part of our modern political culture, especially among Palestinian elites. The interviews conducted was telling how true people's comments were about Oslo and how the last years have unfolded and the lessons that need to be learned from that. It is interesting to look back now at the opinions expressed by Lubyans living in exile about the Oslo peace process. This was well before the second Palestinian intifada that began in September 2000. More than three-quarters of the interviewees expressed dissatisfaction with the agreements signed between the PLO and Israel. The pessimistic outlook was more prevalent among the older generation than the young one.

Memorial accounts of good relations with neighboring Jews demonstrate also the way for future coexistence again built on past peaceful coexistence. The past peaceful coexistence between the Palestinians and the original Jews of Palestine prior to 1948 and its implications for the future, were clearly demonstrated through interviews with Jews and Palestinians. But the documents also show that the central administration of the Jewish Agency had worked hard to implement the conquest of Palestine through the policy of buying as much land from the Palestinians as possible. In 1917, the Balfour Declaration was issued as a result of this, in direct contradiction to the Mandate's declared policy of establishing a national home for the Jews in Palestine without affecting the rights of the indigenous people.

Memories of the battles around in and around Lubya and their annual commemoration by both Palestinians and Israelis, has acted as a historical register of events, and also as an education for both people. The steps on the road to a permanent and peaceful solution, and the cornerstone of future reconciliation between the parties, must be built on the recognition of the facts and the events as they happened, and not on the slanted narrative of politicians and their self-interested interpretation of them.

The nine chapters this research project * memory, landscape, daily life, relations with others, land purchase and subsequent revolts, nakba days, exile and future perspectives, presents a lively memorial landscape with all its vivid and lively colours drawn by uprooted Lubyans as a master piece of drama, where stones, persons, trees, caves, shops, jobs, harvest, weddings, historical persons, enmity and friendship come to form an unforgettable symphony with all its ups and downs.

As long as the injustices continued and the cause is unaddressed, frustration and dissatisfaction would widen for those uprooted exiles. Only true reconciliation based on addressing the real demands of those exiled would peace their turmoil. Jews in Europe do have the right to address their demands in Europe during and after the horrors of the second world war Holocaust; Armenians are entitled to reopen their tragedies after the first world war to readdress the inhumanities committed against them; South Africans did have the right to address their suppression and dispossession of their lands during the past three centuries before they succeeded a decade ago to get rid of the monstrous apartheid regime- registered memories and family trees are already in use to solve land restitution; Bosnians did have the same rights of return and compensation according to Dayton agreements; Cyprus is on its way to resolve the almost four decades of separation; while Palestinian refugees in more than five decades, including Oslo, Camp David, Taba and Geneva- are offered only denial of their catastrophe-alnakba- and more dispersion in more exiled countries in the world- all solution proposals are only intended to divert addressing the core of the refugee problem and recognition of the 48 Nakba.

Finally, I hope that this study fulfils a regional, national and international need for additional historical, social, legal, political and cultural data on the status of the Palestinian refugees. There is still room for more research on the same subject and it is sorely needed, especially since some central topics, such as cultural identity and integration, need more time to research and investigate. The issue of the Palestinian refugees was, and still is, one of the main sources of unrest in the Middle East, and without serious attempts at addressing it the circle of violence will continue unabated, not only in the Middle East, but eventually also in Europe. Out of 22 million refugees in the world today (according to UNHCR), five million are Palestinians.

I would add a final note of optimism and future perspective by reiterating what Nelson Mandela said: ‘To be free is not merely to cast off one’s chains, But to live in a way that respects and enhances the freedom of others’.

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Appendix I

Families as Remembered by Lubyans

The following is an overview of the different families of the village as recounted by the Lubyans themselves:

'Ajayni

Mukhtar: Mahmoud Husayn. They came originally from 'Ajloun in Jordan. They were four brothers: Milhem, Othman, Rihayyil and Subuh. Their name now is Samadi and they are descendants of Husayn Bin Ali the fourth Caliph of Islam. Their grandfather was Nasir Bin Salem, from Anjara:

- al-Lababidi;
- al-Malahima: Hassan and Husayn Issa, Khalil Joodi;
- al-'Athamni: Younis Ali, Karroob Alzein, Suliman Ali, Raja;
- Ammouri: Fawaz Muharib, Awad Yasin, Ali Ammouri;
- al-Hamzat: Ismael Hamza, Hamada Husayn, Khalil and Yasin Ismael;
- Ruhayyil: Husayn Ali, Ahmad Amin Ali, Salim Muhammad;

al-Shanashri

Mukhtar: Khalil al-Abid

-Rashdan, Ali Bash, Ahmad and Hassan Younis, Suleiman Atiya, Saleh Muhammad Taha (Gaith), Ahmad Kalid;

al-Samallot

mukhtar was Ibrahim al-Thiab:

- Dirawi, Ali al-Khalil (nickname Korkashi), Awad Shabkon, Mufaddi Mahmoud, Rashrash Alshiri, Abdullah Abu Alsheik (their grandfather is Azzam);

al-'Atwat

mukhtar: Muhammad Mustafa Yasin; sons: Kwatin, Kuftan, Ukla, Hijris and Hadrus:

- al-'Asafri; Almanasra: Ata Mansour, Abdel-Rahman, Aldabiat, al-Za'atri;

al-Hajajwi

- al-Kafarni: 'Oda, Ali Alyasin, Abdirazak Dabbas, Ibrahim Taha, Ibrahim Asi, Kayid, Karzon, Hadrous;

al-Shihabi

who came originally from Lebanon²¹²:

²¹² There is more detailed information about al-Shihabi in the books of *Biladuna Falastin*. Mustafa Aldabbag, published by Dar Altali'a, Beirut, 1974. Also in *Karyat Lubya*, mentioned above.

- Kasim Sihabi and his sons were: Ali, Salih and Haidar, Said Yahya, Ali Odwan, Fawaz Ali, Ali Husayn Mahmoud;

al-Fokar, Rifaiya and Kilaniya

their grandfather was Zeid al-Rifa'i, Ali Raja, Suliman Musleh, Ali Muhammad, Muhammad Mahmoud, Ahmad Darwish, Mahmoud HamOdeh, Mar'i HamOdeh, Muhammad Abdilgani;

al-'Awaidi

mukhtar was Abdu Alaidi:

Kasim Alaidi, Ali Warda, Mohamad Abu Alhumum, Abu al-Sa'id;

al-Talalzi

they were originally from Nablus in the West Bank:

- Zaid and Muhamad al Badir;

al-Lababidi

they came originally from Kufr Soom in the Hauran;

al-Galil

they came originally from Nablus;

al-Jamal

they also came originally from Nablus.

Appendix II

Selected Family Trees of Lubya

Appendix III

Place Names in Lubya

Geographical Places: Fields, lands, valleys, hills, caves, graveyards, lakes, historical and ancient places. In *The Survey of Western Palestine*, Vol. One, Galilee, Lieut. C.R. Conder, R.E, and Lieut. H.H. Kitchener, London, 1881: Lubieh is mentioned as a place of: Caves, tombs, and sarcophagi; several rock-cut wine-presses and cisterns were observed at this village, which probably represents an ancient site.

Wadi = Valley

Bustan = Field

Karm (plural: kroom) = Fields for olive, fig and grape trees

Maghara = Cave

1. Al-Shakayir: piece of land, in the north of the village.
2. Al-Tal: near Kufur Sabt.
3. Um Subeh: near *Maskana*.
4. Um Abi: between Nimrin and Lubya.
5. Al-Arid: for sheep and cows.
6. Al-Tabaka: near Al-Ariid.
7. Minijbi: “
8. Al-Owaini:
9. Um Huraizi
10. Wadi Ibrik
11. Aard Al-Safiyi
12. Al-Rjoun
13. Kroum Abd-al-Aziz (these lands were confiscated nowadays by Lavy kibotz).
14. Wa'rat al-Tal
15. Abu Uwaisalan
16. Al-Karroubi
17. Al-Mi'bar
18. Abu Kait
19. Al-Hajar
20. Al-Jamra
21. Al-Karaj
22. Al-N'Akkar, west to Odaisi
23. Kallit Kandil
24. Albiskandiyyi:
25. Um Inik
26. Dra'a Talib. (N.B²¹³)
27. Abu Swaid

²¹³ All the above named places were named in an interview with both Younis and Youssef. Those names were not mentioned in the booklet of Lubya, by Shihabi. Shihabi mentioned the down written names, with few corrections or additions through interviews by Youssef Muhammad. About the people who owned the land in Lubya: all the families had a piece of land except two families: Abu Sara'an house and Abdulla Nusairi (from Saudi Arabien, came as a lost boy to Lubya and was adopted by the Hajajwi.

38. Abu Osalan
39. Um Sidri
40. Um Laban
41. Birkit(Birki=lake) al-Rik,- written wrongly in as al-Sirik- Between Wadi al-Shomer and Hittin hill. Corrected by Yousef Muhammad.
42. Birkit al-Ajaini
43. Birkit al-Fayik
44. Bayyarit al-Sabha: it is the edge between Lubya's land and Turaan Land.
45. Al-Buwaik: piece of land
46. Tallit(talli=hill) Al-Kaima: One of the crusaders, Arnot, built his tent over the hill, before he was defeated by Salah Al-Din.
47. Alhijar Alzuruk (The blue stones)
48. Hajar al-Nosrani(the christian stone): Said that Jesus sat on this stone with his disciples on their way to Talhoom. Europeans still visited that place.
49. Hadikat Abu Dhais:experimental garden built by the British government. Nowadays there is a road passing through it directly²¹⁴.
50. Hakl al-Oshr, piece of land.
51. Halhool (Um Humayid): piece of land
52. Al-Hima: known as the best and largest plain in Tiberias for planting fruits and vegetables.
53. Al-Khirbi: known for its old findings under it, said to be built on Roman and Greek monuments and other old findings. It was the place where the battle between the villagers and Jews happened.
54. Kirbit Damiy: remaining of old historical Roman and Greek city, and the field of the battle between the crusaders and Salah al-Din.
55. Alkilal
56. Dabbat al-Kharrobi
57. Al-Damia
58. Dra'a Juhaiish
59. Dra'a Shimdin
60. Dra'a al-Wawi
61. Raas Alzaytun
62. Alrojoun
63. Alza'afaraniyya
64. Alsidir
65. Sarjoni
66. Alshamshiyi
67. Alsahen
68. Altabaka
69. Tarik Alhawarni
70. Alariid
71. Al-kaba
72. Ain Bassom
73. Ain Damia
74. Bustan Mahmoud Husayn
75. Bustan Mufaddi Shahaybi
76. Bustan Yihya Shhabi

²¹⁴ Because Abu Dhais from Alatwat family, the other bigger family Alshahaibi protested and demanded from the British to establish their own garden. They build another garden for Fawwaz al-Ali.

77. Bustan Said Yihya (a man from Jenin, Said Aljinini worked all his life there.
78. Alkhadran
79. Alkaraj
80. Kitaat Shaik Ahmad
81. Alkala'a Alsoda
82. Alkarasi
83. Karm Abu Shabaki
84. Karm Abu Libdi
85. Karm Hassan Alabid, the above areas where places of battles with Jews.
86. Karim Z'atir
87. Karm Alzain
- 88.* Karim Alzankanoni, mentioned Zankoni
89. Kroom Alhaj Husayn
90. Kroom Hassan Aldib
91. Kroom Dami
92. Kroom Alawaidi
93. Kroom Munji
94. Alkasayir
95. Almaooni
96. Almakhba
97. Almaddan
98. Almassayat
99. Almaabar
100. Magharat (English, Cave) al-khanazir
101. Magharat al-Sufla
102. Magharat al-Aris
103. Magharat al-Ammori
104. Magharat al-Maasara
105. Magharat al-May
106. Al-mughraka
107. Al-n'Akkar
108. Wadi Ibrik
109. Wadi Abu Alhassan
110. Wadi Alshababa
111. Wadi Alsharar
112. Wadi Alakaba
113. Wadi Aia'ain
114. Wadi Almuaallaka
- 115*.Wadi Alnisa: mentioned as part of Lubya, but it is not.
116. Plot of Saydeh²¹⁵
117. Irba el-Gibli
118. Abouab
119. Naimyis
120. Um Hmaid
121. Khawakir Akabeh
122. Karassi Sitrajia
123. Saadi and Ramyat el-Bsas
124. Tloul

²¹⁵ The following names are found in Land Department, P.O.B 356, Jerusalem.

- 125. Juret el-Werk
- 126. Juret Mendassi

Makamat: Religious and Sacred Places

1. Makam Abu Ghazi: near it was built the only school in the village in the Ottoman period.
2. Makam Alshake Abu Kuffa, it was named also as Alshake Muhammad.
3. Makam Bassom: the farmers put their instruments there, because no one dared to enter the makam".
4. M'Akkam Bnayyat Alkodor
5. Makam Rajmit Batta
6. Makam Alzawiya
7. Makam Alajami
8. Makam Alshake Muhammad Altori: A place where Arab saving army had their headquarters in the year 1948.
9. Makam *al-Nabi* (prophet) Shwamin. It was built in the middle of the village. (Still existing: see photo appendix)

*Caves in Lubya*²¹⁶:

Ammouri cave	in Alajayni district
Um Alkhanaziir cave	In the norht of the village
Dar Hamza cave	near the fields, <i>Albayadir</i>
Abdil Halim cave	
Zawiyat Alfukara cave	
Alariis cave	

²¹⁶ From An interview with Abu Tal'at in Amman 18.4.96

Appendix IV

Names of 240 'Absentees' from Lubya

This official document (found in the Nazareth land department) is mentioning the names of 240 Lubyans who were declared as Absentees, and by consequence confiscating their land, under the responsibility of the administrator, (Hebrew, *Abotrops*); in the following case he is M. Shitnar.

“Israel State

Administrator of the Absentees properties

The Absentees' Property Law 1950

“I declare the following persons as Absentees according to article 30/a of the law”;

1	Ahmad Younis Ahmad Younis	24	Muhammad Samir M.Ma. Karzon
2	Amina Kasim Hassan	25	Husein Ali Yasin Shihab
3	Ibrahim Musa Ibrahim Shihab	26	Ahmad = = =
4	Hafid Mousa Ibrahim Shihab	27	Muhammad = = =
5	Ali Musa Kayid Karzon	28	Ahmad Salah Shihab Ali
6	Muhammad Musa Kayid Karzon	29	Muhammad Said Abidruhman M.
7	Mahmoud Musa Kayid Karzon	30	Lutfi = = =
8	Ahmad Musa Kayid Karzon	31	Hanifa Shuraitih Mahmoud
9	Muhammad M. Khalil Karzon	32	Afifa = =
10	Hamda M. Khalil Karzon	33	Fatima M. Husayn Bakir
11	Husayn Abidrahman I.Rashdan	34	Zahra = = =
12	Husni Abidrahman I. Rashdan	35	Khazna Abbad Mustafa
13	Hassan = = =	36	Fatima = =
14	Muhamad Kayid A'yid Muwasi	37	Hanna Ahmad Amin Rhayyil
15	Nayif Younis = =	38	Fraiji = = =
16	Muhammad Hassan Younis Aydi	39	Fouziyya = = =
17	Muhammad Younis M. Hamdan	40	Arif Fouzi Kuharib al-Ammouri
18	Ahmad Younis = =	41	Fayiz = = =
19	Muhammad Youssef = =	42	Ramzi = = =
20	Abdulla = = =	43	Muhammad Ma. Saleh Muhammad
21	Ahmad Abidkadir M. Zamil	44	Husayn = = =
22	Awad = = =	45	Ali Mahmoud Saleh Muhammad
23	Ibrahim Samir Muhammad Karzon	46	Said Hassan Said Isawi
47	Musa Hassan Said Isawi	72	Mustafa Yasin Shihab Ali
48	Ali Awad = = =	73	Hassan = = =
49	Rashid Abidrahim Shabkoni	74	Mahmoud = = =
50	Said = = =	75	Ali = = =
51	Ibrahim Taha Ibrahim Taha	76	Kasim Muhamad Yunis Shihab
52	Amina Issa = =	77	Saleh = = =
53	Husein Issa Hassan Issa	78	Faleh Swailih Shihab Ali
54	Mahmoud = = =	79	Miflih = = =

55	Issa Saod Masod Abdulla	80	Ali Yunis = =
56	Hamad = = =	81	Kasim Muhamad Yunis Shihab
57	Ahmad = = =	82	Saleh Muhamad Yunis Shihab
58	Abdu = = =	83	Muhamad Ali Kasim Muhamad
59	Ali = = =	84	Ismael = = =
60	Zahiyi Yasin Ali Ramadan	85	Ni'mi = = =
61	Mu. Abdilgani Abdiaziz Kalid	86	Fatmi = = =
62	Thahir = = =	87	Mahmoud Abu Ali Mu. Mustafa
63	Ahmad = = =	88	Rakad = = = =
64	Thib Ibrahim Thiab Hamdan	89	Mustafa = = = =
65	Ibrahim Hassan Ibrahim Shiri	90	Mahmoud Qwatin = =
66	Hassan Mu. Youssef Hamdan	91	Muhamad = = =
67	Shobash Mu. Youssef Hamdan	92	Abid Ra'of Saud Masud Abdulla
68	Muhammad Youssef Mu. Youssef	93	Rashid Fayad Hadrus Fayad
69	Mahmoud = = =	94	Rashad = = =
70	Ahmad = = =	95	Mustafa = = =
71	Abdulla = = =	98	Mahmoud Abdilgani Abdilaziz Kalid
99	Mijli Thiab Thib Hamad	124	Youssef Muhamad Hassan Issa
100	Thib = = =	125	Mahmoud Musa Kayid Ahmad
101	Said Mijli Thiab Thib	126	Hassan Ismael Hamza Yasin
102	Amina Ahmad Abdilhalim Ali	127	Hamda Ahmad Muhamad Hamza
103	Nasra Ahmad Ashur	128	Amina Tawfik Ahmad Muhamad
104	Mahmoud Khalid Khalil Aidi	129	Asma' Yasin Hanza Yasin
105	Thib = = =	130	Sa'da Ahmad Muhamad Hamza
106	Ali Husayn Mahmud Shihabi	131	Fatima Kasm Muhamad Lubani
107	Mar'i Mu. Hassan Mahmud	132	Subheya Tawfik Ahmad Muhamad
108	Mar'i = =	133	Mariam = = =
109	Hassan Muhamad Hassan Ma.	134	Ahmad 'Odah Ali Abdilkarim
110	Mahmoud Muhamad = =	135	Sandid = = =
111	Muhamad Yunis Uthman Yunis	136	Ali = = =
112	Ahmad = = =	137	Suleman Abdilgani Ali Abdilkarim
113	Hassan Abu Duhais Mu. Abdulla	138	Marzuk 'Odah = =
114	Fathil = = = =	139	Abdilrahim Abdilgani Ali Abdilkarim
115	Nayif = = = =	140	Ali Daifalla Mahmud Zamil
116	Muhamad Suleman Musleh Yasin	141	Husein Mahmud Husayn Karzon
117	Muhamad Ali Husayn Mu. 'adwan	142	Mahmoud = = =
118	Salim Saleh Alkarmawi	143	Lafi Kayid Ahmad =
119	Abdilruhman Hassan Issa Abdulla	144	Abdilmajid = = =
120	'Ayid = = =	145	Muhamad Azam Ali Azam
121	Salha Abdilgani Ali Abdilkarim	146	Ahmad = = =
122	Amuna Abdilrahim Hassan Issa	147	Diab = = =
123	Nayif Muhamad = =	148	Hassan Youssef Taha Ghaith
149	Ali Youssef Taha Ghaith	174	Yihya Said Yihya Shihab
150	Taha = = =	175	Amina Ali Kasim Muhamad
151	Saleh Muhamad = =	176	Abdulla 'Ayish Husein Ali
152	Husayn = = =	177	Ahmad = = =
153	Ahmad = = =	178	Abdu Sadir Humayid Ibrahim

154	Khadija Ibrahim Hassan Jalia	179	Mustafa Abdulkadir Hamid Shabkoni
155	Ali Hassan Muhamad Shihab	180	Muhamad = = =
156	Khadija Mustafa Hassan =	181	Mahmoud = = =
157	‘Arif Muhamad Ibrahim Abdilkadir	182	Muhamad Ali Ibrahim Abu ‘Aloul
158	Ibrahim = = =	183	Mahmoud = = = =
159	Ahmad Husayn Youssef Hajo	184	Mariam ‘Arsal Khalil Ibrahim
160	Nayif = = =	185	Fadiya Ahmad Ibrahim Yasin
161	Muhamad = = =	186	.(cancelled name)
162	Yussef Fadil = =	187	Zubaida Mahmoud Husein Issa
163	Dib = = =	188	Said Hassan Muhamad Shihab
164	Abdu Husayn Mahmoud Shihabi	189	Muhamad Hassan Muhamad Shihab
165	Hamada Ismael Hamza Yasin	190	Muhamad Husein Mahmoud Shihabi
166	Mustafa Abdilkadir Hamid Dallasha	191	Youssef Husayn = =
167	Muhamad = = =	192	Badir Ali Huseein Odwan
168	Mahmoud = = =	193	Mahmoud Husayn Issa Abdulla
169	Khalil Ali Husein Ammori	194	Haji Husein Issa Abdulla
170	Abdulla = = =	195	Mahmoud Ibrahim A.kadir Abdulla
171	Mahmoud = = =	196	Ali = = = =
172	Saleh Mufadi = =	197	Abdulrahman = = = =
173	Faraj Youssef Taha Ghaith	198	Awad Abu Duhais Muhamad =
199	Kasim Muhamad Kasim Husein	224	Raja Okla Ahmad Diab
200	Husein = = =	225	Musa Dib Musa Diab
201	Ali = = =	226	Hassan Ahmad Darwish Shihab
202	Hafida Abdu Hamid Abdulla	227	Ibrahim = = =
203	Muhamad Hassan Issa Abdulla	228	Samir = = =
204	Tahhir Hamid Muhamad =	229	Abod Fandi Khalil Ibrahim
205	‘Othman = = =	230	Youssef Musa Diab Mustafa
206	Samir Johar = =	231	Muhamad Othman Karoot
207	Muhamad = = =	232	Mahmoud Kayid Ahmad
208	Hafid Hamid Mahmoud =	233	Said Othman Yunis Othman
209	Kamil = = =	234	President of Orphand fund-Tiberias
210	Muhamad Abu Ali Mu. Mustafa	235	‘Akila Bin ‘Akila Alhasi
211	Mustafa Abdilkadir Mustafa Yasin	236	Muhamad = = =
212	Abod Said = =	237	Ali Fayad Suleman Abdilkarim
213	Mahasin Abdilgani Ali Abdilkarim	238	Mahmoud Hamid Musa Shihab
214	Husein Ismael Hamza Yasin	239	Ahmad Hassan Muhamad Ali Shihab
215	Husein Ahmad Atiya	240	Hassan Abdilrahman Ahmad Yasin
216	Suleman Husein Ahmad Atiya		
217	Madi Hamidi Mahmoud Khalil		
218	Mahmoud = = =		
219	Nayif = = =		
220	Ibrahim = = =		
221	Muhamad Ibrahim Musa Saleh		
222	Ibrahim Musa Ibrahim =		
223	Awad Okla Ahmad Diad		

Signature/ M.Shitnar

The administrator

Appendix V

Lubyans Killed during the 1936-39 Revolt

The names of Lubyans who died to defend the village against the British and the Jewish military forces in 1936-1939 revolution:

1. Younis Rashid
2. Mufaddi Hassan
3. Suluman Mustafa
4. Muhammad Abdulla
5. Abd al-Latif
6. Muhammad Muhsen
7. Mahmoud al-Khatib
8. Ali Ahmad
9. Ahmad Muhammad
10. Ahmad Muhammad
11. Abd al-Kadir Shahabi
12. Muhammad al-Gharibi
13. Said Abd al-Ruhman
14. Husayn Muhammad Saleh
15. Fatima Muhammad
16. Fad'ous Muhammad Saleh
17. Mahmoud Suleman Muhammad
18. Hafiz Suleman's son

Appendix VI

Lubyans Killed during the 1948 War

The names of Lubyans who died to defend the village against the attacks in 1948:

1. Mohamad Ibn Mofaddi
2. Said Mofaddi
3. Ahmad Mofaddi
4. Hassan Alabid
5. Shahadi Hassan Nijmi
6. Said Saleh Yihya
7. Muhammad Said Yihya
8. Ibrahim Salami
9. Ismael Aldiib
10. Mohammed Hassan Humayid
11. Said Hassan Humayid
12. Kalid Ahmed Kalid
13. Mohammed Abu Graibi
14. Ahmed Gbaish
15. Abid Allatiif Ibrahim Rashdan, known as "Kokash".
16. Youssef Hassan Hamid²¹⁷
17. Ali Alattab, Abu Fakri, from Albiani, a near by village, came to support the villagers against the attack.
18. Dawas Uthman, the last martyr
19. Ibrahim Mansour
20. Aref Muhammad Abid Alruhman
21. Ahmad Muhammad B'Akkar, killed in Bir Zeit, while he came to join the Palestinian fighters at Alkastal battle, near Jerusalem.
23. Ragda Rashdan, died in Almutirdi while collecting corns from the fields.
24. Nasra Alisa²¹⁸
25. Amina Alrashid
26. Muhanna Alshiri, from the Sammallots.
27. Harbi, handicapped, killed by knives while crawling on the ground.
28. Tamam Albakrawi
29. Knaifis Karzon, blind.
30. Muhammad Mudairis
31. Ahmad Awad

²¹⁷ All the above sixteen names are from the Shahaybi tribe, from the southern part of the village.

²¹⁸ The last six names are from the northern part of the village.

Appendix VII

Lubya's Occupation in the Archives

“We have to remember that the Lubyans have always been brave fighters, and took pride in the name of their village. The loss of other Arab villages didn't enfeeble their morale; on the contrary, it gave rise to a feeling of superiority over the others and that they had no one who resembled them”.

Official Israeli Assessment

The battle of al-Shajara and the Occupation of Lubya, 9-10 June 1948

Excerpts from *The Battles of 1948*, Ministry of Defence, 1955.

To verify the accuracy of certain facts, it is important for both Lubyans and Jews to learn what really happened in 1948, and how each side reacted, both locally and nationally, to the events that took place in Lubya in particular and in Palestine in general. I spliced together different statements from different Hebrew books to give more coherence to the accounts from the interviews with Lubyans and Jewish officers who occupied the village.

“Lubya was located at the east of the crossroads of Nazareth-Tiberias-Afula. We saw it as one of the main strongholds of the enemy in central and lower Galilee, and it was used as a buffer against the Jewish triangle: Afula -Tiberias, Afula-Beit She'an [Bissan], and Kineret-Jordan Valley. Lubya could therefore be a spearhead for the Qawuqji forces stationed in central Galilee in their attempt to separate the upper Galilee and Jordan Valley from the centre of the land. There was a real fear [and in fact it later turned out that this was well founded] that the enemy would try to approach from three different directions. Qawuqji would advance from the north [from Lubya] towards the south, while the second force of the Iraqi army would advance from the south towards the north through Jenin-Afula, and Syrian forces would advance from the east. [Had they used this plan, it might have been possible to cut off the upper Galilee and Jordan Valley from the center of the country]. In addition to its geographic importance, Lubya had a tactical and practical function. Its location, only a few hundred metres from the crossroads, allowed the village to completely control the traffic movement from Kfar Tabur to Tiberias. This control was also made possible due to the location of the enemy [the Arab Salvation Army] in *Khirbat Maskana*. As a result of their situation the Jewish traffic towards the eastern Galilee and Jordan Valley was forced to use the only road, which was the Yavnael [Yama; a Jewish settlement south of Lubya] road. The main reason for our forces to occupy Lubya was a tactical one: to open the road between Kfar Tabur and al-Shajara to Tiberias. At the same time the main traffic vein of the enemies from the north to the central support base in Nazareth would be cut off.”

The account of the leader of the regiment, Yaakov Dror, reveal's the different steps that were taken in preparation for the occupation of Lubya.

“The decision to conquer Lubya was crystallised in the first days of May [1948]. The operation was to be carried on the 6 May, but because of lack of forces we decided temporarily to give up the plan to occupy Lubya. We limited our operation to simply disturbing the enemy so as to trap their forces in one place, and to prevent them entering the zones of al-Shajara and Arab al-Subeih that were being attacked and occupied at the same time.”

“At the beginning of June, it was again found necessary to occupy Lubya. But in the very last moment difficulties were discovered concerning gathering the necessary powers for the attack, therefore, 'we decided to postpone the operation for a week.' This time the practical aim of the attack was to ensure that the Lubya road was opened before implementing the first truce [11 June – 8 July 1948].”

“In Lubya there were several hundred armed Arabs, most of them civilians, though no actual organized army. The Qawuqji army was stationed much further to the north of the village. Precautions were taken to enlist the probable participation from other villages nearby at the moment we began our operation, especially against northern villages such as Nimrin, Hittin, ‘Aylabun, and al-Maghar; and western villages such as Tur’an, Kufr Kanna, Raini, and Nazareth. It could be said that since February-March, these villages were even more ready to prepare quickly and participate in common attacks. They were still faithful to the influence of the [*Mufti*] al-Husayni band.”

“The fortification lines of Lubya were based on the front lines of the village, a few hundred metres south of the main block of houses and *Khirbat Maskana*, which had the role of controlling the cross roads. There was a military platoon located there. An automatic machine gun had been placed there to prevent any movement on the road to al-Shajara. In the northern direction, the defence was depending on support from the internal Arab front. [The Dror regiment, under Jaakov Dror, consisted of different military troops, but many of the troops were not well trained and equipped. Only one company was well trained.]”

“Following my demand, a company from Barak battalion was added to the regiment and two platoons from the local infantry consisting of inhabitants of the area; and in addition to the supporting power there were a few machine guns, four 3-inch rocket launchers, and two 65 mm canons. There was also another power of 4 Sandwich tanks, a bus and one truck. All this force came under the leadership of the regiment. Its aim was to leave Tiberias to participate in the battle. We limited the use of advance intelligence parties so as not to attract attention to our planned attack, and satisfied ourselves with long distance observation, which we did from three different areas: from the east, *Sheikh Kaddoumi hill (al-Mu'tirda)*; from the south, Sharona (near Sirin), and from the west, al-Shajara. For this we depended heavily on people from the area who knew the battlefield well. The leader of the company and other platoon officers also participated in the intelligence gathering.”

“The plan for the attack was simple and relied on previous experience at two other places: first was to control the front lines from the south, and then to attack inside the village from the same direction. At the same time the military armoured vehicles were to enter the village from the east.”

This was the classical model used by the *Haganah* forces to occupy the villages and towns from three sides, leaving one side open to let the population flee so as to minimize the Jewish casualties. The fight would be fierce if they surrounded the village from all sides.

“The attack with the armoured vehicles was meant to scare the village resistance and let them feel that they were isolated. [That wasn’t the case with Lubyans who fortified their lines and fought bravely against the first attack against the Jewish military expectation]. Of course, the armoured vehicles were expected to help in any way they could. Another group, although not well trained, was set aside to defend al-Shajara, since there was reason to expect a counter-attack from the Arab forces. We decided that reinforcements would come to the aid of the village from two directions: from the north, parallel to the Maghar-’Aylabun street; and from the west from the Kufr Kanna - Nazareth direction. In case of expected support of the villagers from the north, we intended to stop it by our canons in al-Shajara. And the expected support from the west would be dealt with by planting anti-tank mines under the tunnel, west of the crossroads junction, as well as with the help of a rocket launcher known as *Shortsalozā*”.

“It was planned that the attack should start in the early hours of the morning to allow time to gain control of the village during the day. The company that was sent to support us arrived in the evening just before the start of the operation. In the final hours we prepared and distributed all the necessary weapons, because the troops who joined our battalion were unarmed. It was not an easy job for us to supply all their needs. The atmosphere was good because we had already had a few triumphs, especially in occupying many enemy villages [see here again the term that all Palestinian villages were classified as “enemy villages”] almost without resistance. This time, we felt that we had enough forces and weapons: canons, rockets, middle-range machine guns, all of this against a few hundred unorganised villagers with their guns.”

“From my leadership headquarters we overlooked the whole battlefield. At first light, we noticed villagers fleeing from Lubyā to the north. Since I did not yet have any information about the tank attack, because of lack of communication, I expected that this escape was a result of the tank attack. After a while we saw Arab horsemen coming from the Nimrin direction accompanying the fleeing people to the village. We were certain that we had won the battle, and that the resistance to the company in the south would soon end. After a while, support from Nazareth began to arrive. One of the buses hit a mine planted in the road, and machine-gun fire was opened on the bus. The support troops gave up the attack from that direction, and split into two groups: one went north towards Tur’an mountain and from there they marched to Lubyā along a stony road; the second advanced through the series of hills in the south and attacked our forces in al-Shajara.”

“The enemy attack between 8 and 9 o’clock in the morning was not serious. It was obvious that the forces were not as organised as they could have been, and that the enemy did not have any clear plan of attack. Their plan was apparently much more humble: it was to disturb our forces and foil our main attack on Lubyā. Our new

company soldiers defended al-Shajara, and our main defending forces took two lines of defence: the first front line against the enemies, and the other, interior line. The Arab forces occupied al-Teriis (*al-abajour*) point. They tried to advance, but we succeeded in turning them back.”

Armoured Jewish vehicles Leaving Tiberias the 8th of June at 2.30

Ifraim Bin Natan, leader of the armoured vehicles force (*mokhorionot moshorionot*) writing his own account of the failure to occupy Lubya:

“I received the leadership of the armoured forces at the last moment on the day before the operation [to occupy Lubya], and I found that the 6 units were ready. In Tiberias I began to acquaint myself with the platoon and its weapons: automatic machine guns and rifles.

“According to the proposed plan, we were to leave Tiberias by road and co-ordinate our attack on the village by wireless. We agreed previously that we would send light signals to the rest of the attacking forces so they could discover our places. According to the timetable we would begin at four o’clock in the morning. At about 2:30 in the morning on 8/6/1948, the armoured vehicles left Tiberias. We expected that we would have to remove some barriers from the road. The darkness was overwhelming, and the tanks moved slowly without headlights. There were men in the front of the tanks to direct the drivers. The first barrier we confronted belonged to our forces, near Mitzpeh settlement (‘Ayn Kathab). The barrier consisted of iron vehicles and stones. We worked for about one hour to remove the barrier and open the way for the convoy.”

“We were obliged to remove 5 or 6 enemy barriers during the next two kilometres. These barriers were simple heaps of stones, and relatively easy to remove. It was clear that the Arabs didn’t expect an attack from the Tiberias direction. Those barriers could only serve one purpose, to delay the advance of a convoy. We didn’t meet anyone on the road. Immediately after we left Tiberias we had contacted the headquarters of the regiment in al-Shajara, but later we lost contact and did not regain it. At about 3 a.m. we were 2 kilometres from Lubya. I stopped the convoy and waited. [Here is the point where a communication problem took place between Izra, the leader who was supposed to occupy Lubya from the South, as he said in the interview, and the armoured vehicles of Ifraim bin Natan, who was supposed to occupy Lubya from the east]. I hoped that when the attack began as agreed upon, we would hear the exchange of fire and then we would open fire as well.”

“The time for the attack passed without hearing any sounds. We waited an extra half-hour. Then we decided to enter the village. I thought that the sound of bullets had not reached us. We had no alternative except to follow the agreed timetable of the attack, since no radio contact was possible. We fired a few flares in the air in hope that the forces in the village would react, but it was in vain. I ordered the front vehicles to switch on their lights and advance. The time was 4:30 a.m. when we arrived one kilometre from the village. We faced no resistance at all, and did not hear even one bullet. Again we stopped and waited while daylight strengthened. I was afraid that our forces had already entered the village and we had lost the opportunity of participating in the battle. We started to advance again.”

“At this time, sniper bullets began to be fired at us from the hill north of the street, N.S.311. And later on, gunfire was directed from the valley, east of the village hill. We fixed all the machine guns and started shooting at the village. We immediately saw people fleeing from the houses near the road to other houses higher up, and villagers fled to the north to Nimrin. Because I had no wireless I did not dare to enter the village for fear of attacking our own troops. I decided to wait to see how the situation would develop.”

“The snipers’ bullets steadily intensified, especially from the north and the north-east. I realised that the enemy had an anti-tank weapon, because the bullets opened holes in the body of the vehicles, and some of our forces were injured. I estimated that the enemy forces did not exceed 20 to 30 men. But their shooting was precise. Our only sniper was among the first wounded. The Arabs hid between the rocks and directed their intense fire at the wheels of the cars, and because of their higher position they succeeded in hitting the roofs and the bodies of the vehicles that were not well-armoured. I gathered the wounded in the armoured bus and returned them to Tiberias, and I asked those in charge to find out the news from headquarters in al-Shajara. The time was 9 a.m. and all the efforts to contact our forces in the village failed. We tried to advance, but this caused increased reaction from the snipers. I realised that something wrong had occurred, and that our plan had failed. I had no one as a reference to receive orders from. I decided unilaterally to withdraw to Tiberias at approximately 9.30 a.m. and I gave orders to all the vehicles to turn back. I noticed that a few of the vehicles were destroyed. Several vehicles’ petrol tanks, motors and wheels were hit by bullets. We drove the wrecked vehicles back and continued on our way to Tiberias. On the hill north of the road the Arab snipers were dispatched to intercept our withdrawal. After half a kilometre we confronted a barrier that had just been placed in the way. We started shooting at the enemy after we jumped from the vehicles. Then we encountered four other barriers, 50 metres apart. We cleared the road and succeeded in moving away from the enemy’s fire. When we were 3 kilometres from the enemy, I realised that I had lost 2 armoured vehicles [those are the two vehicles that were taken by Lubyans and given as a present to the ASA, and exhibited on the military museum in Damascus]. I returned with two squads of soldiers to see what happened. On the way back we met the squad who had fled from the *Sandwich* tank which was totally destroyed. When we approached the tank we saw that it was turned upside down and on fire. Isaac Lavi, [the brother of Izra Lavi who was interviewed earlier] a driver from Tiberias, was killed, burned in the truck.”

“We retreated to Mitzpeh. We arrived there about 1:30 p.m.. We met a car coming from Tiberias with instructions that we should occupy Hittin Horn. Another two squads and a platoon officer joined our forces for the new mission. The main aim of this operation was to draw attention away from the attack on Lubya. From Hittin Horn we could stop the [Arab] aid convoys from the north. The aim of this manuevre was to occupy the highest points to the north, and as a consequence destroy Lubya’s strategic role. When we retreated, the Hittin Horn was not under the control of Arab forces. Anyway, we didn’t face any resistance from there. We used the cars along the road until we reached near the Horn, and from there we marched on foot. When we arrived at about 600 metres from our goal we came under fire. The officers couldn’t move their men forward. Then signs of fatigue began to show themselves among our

forces. In the meantime, enemy airplanes opened fire on us. We aimed all our weapons against the airplanes to prevent them from approaching us. That no casualties occurred to our forces was due either to our fire or to their imprecise aim. I tried to fire our 2-inch artillery, but the shells fell short of the objective. I realised that it was difficult to gain victory over the enemy. I sent a message through the wireless to inform headquarters to give up the mission to occupy Hittin Horn.”

“The regiment leader’s answer was to stay where we were facing the enemy. A new leader arrived from Tiberias with two other groups to surround the area from the east and launched another attack. But the enemy forces opened fire heavily and the operation did not succeed, and I remained alone with my group. At about five in the afternoon I realised suddenly that an Arab group was approaching from the east, and that our situation was desperate. I fired my machine gun and withdrew with my group to the place where the others were waiting. At the last moment someone realised that one of our men was left on the battlefield. He returned running to collect him; then we continued on our way to Tiberias without further problems. During the night another group left Tiberias and occupied the Hittin Horn without any resistance.”

Shimon Mardiks, Tiberias: reflecting also on the battle to occupy “the big village Lubya”. He lost his sight and Lubya was freed from the “killers” according to his account:

“After the occupation of Tiberias and after its Arab inhabitants had left, there was concern that the Arabs in the area would attack the city. It therefore became necessary to draft a plan to deal with this eventuality, and especially against the big village of Lubya. One night, we gathered ready for action, in the police building which was occupied by our forces, and in the morning a lorry came and took us to the main Nazareth road. When we arrived at a point facing Hittin Horn, we left the lorry and took up positions; another two military groups had arrived and were already positioned there with the intention of attacking the band in Hittin Horn. In the morning the Arabs discovered us and opened intensive fire. We tried to advance but were unsuccessful due to heavy Arab machine gun fire. We asked for the help of the 52-inch artillery, but it unfortunately didn’t arrive. The hot weather and the intensive fire obliged us to dig holes in the earth and hide. We then realised that some of our men were injured, so I tried to advance concealed behind a heap of stones towards my friend Mordechai Vax, who was near me. Suddenly I felt something hit my head and I could not see anything any more except for red colours. I started to shout and to call my friend Mordechai who then gave me first aid and together we withdrew from the intense and ferocious fire.”

“I didn’t lose consciousness despite my wound, and all the casualties were removed from the battle field. After the operation I realised why our artillery had not given us the support we needed so desperately. The reason was simple, the man responsible for the artillery had forgotten to bring the launching pad. He didn’t realise that without the base the artillery would not work. I also discovered that our operation against the Arabs in Hittin was only a tactical one, designed to draw attention away from the main attack on Lubya by the Barak battalion, from the direction of al-Shajara.... The moment I was injured and moved to the hospital was, for me, the end of the war. I lost sight in one of my eyes, and that was the extent of my role in the victory of Israel.”

“The decisive and bloody battle ended with the occupation of Lubya, the village which menaced all the neighbourhood. Its men were “guerrilla fighters”, “killers”, who had participated in killing the Jews in Tiberias in 1938 in Kiryat Shemueil. When the village was occupied and the killers were kicked out, the road was opened again, and Tiberians were able to use the road now that the Lubyan menace had been removed. The situation returned to normal, without fear, and so the circle was closed.”

Another officer from the attacking company: gave his version of the attack on Lubya from the south. At 4.50 minutes in the morning, the shelling should start at the village. Platoon 4 didn't succeed in infiltrating the lines of resistance.

“Although I did not belong to the battalion, I participated with my company because I knew the battlefield. The company was comprised of three platoons: one from the working battalion, one from the people of the area, and the third from my own company. The last two platoons were bigger than the official number, so I split them into two. In practice, I then ended up with five platoons.

“There was no harmony in the attacking force. The officers didn't know one another, and I didn't know the NCOs. I knew neither their personal competence nor their capacity, who was confident and who was hesitant. The men themselves were not trained enough. A few of them had participated in chasing an enemy who didn't resist. The weapons were of different kinds, from the battalion weapons to the guns of villagers...”

“The preparations took a long time, more than expected. Our march began later than at one o'clock on the 9th of the month, which was appointed as the signal for the start of the operation. We did not start from Khadouri School until 2:20 in the morning. We moved slowly and without lights, until we reached the Khan market, which is about 5 kilometres north west of the village. Then we moved on feet. At the front was platoon 4, which formed a spearhead, behind it platoons 2 and 3, and then platoons 1 and 5 in the rear. In addition, we had two middle machine guns, one being *Shortsaloza*, with platoon 1, and the second a *Biza*, with platoon 5. We marched until we arrived at the crossroads of Kufr Kama and al-Shajara. From there we left the road and started ascending towards the heights of Lubya. We approached from a side road that led to the village. From our right was a local *toon* (for burning trees). We arrived at a place a few hundred metres from the enemy location. I informed the other commanders that we had arrived and they should start shelling the area before the planned attack that would start at 4:50 a.m. exactly.”

“The preparatory shelling by two 65 mm canons and two or three inch rocket launchers was not enough, as we had expected, to conquer as big a village as Lubya, which comprises two hills and many local places around it. The enemy houses were built of stone and I suspected that we had not done any harm whatsoever as a result of the shelling. The main result of this shelling was warning the villagers, so 20 minutes after our attack started, we found all of them in place - to defend the village.

“Every one knew his role: platoon 1 in the north-east to control the stony area [*al-Sanasil*], and covered the right wing so as to draw attention to the other direction by

using the *Sholtzloza* machine gun. Platoons 2 and 3 should advance north and clean the field that was used as a forefront for the enemy and the houses nearby. Platoon 4 should move to the north west and control the western side of the village and thereby hold the western zenith. In that way platoons 2 and 3 would cover the main attack on the center of the village. Platoon 5 should remain in the forest in a stand-by state as a supply power to interfere with the company's leadership. The south and west parts were secure and under Jewish control. In addition to that there was a middle machine-gun in al-Shajara to prevent any attack from the western side."

"In the beginning the advancement went as planned. The time was five o'clock and the light of the morning emerging. Platoon 1 arrived at the stony heaps [*al-Sanasil*], and fixed the machine-gun *Shortsalozza* with its role to split the eastern and western part of the village. The two front platoons were faced with snipers' fire from the fields and houses in front of them. But after we opened fire on the enemy two or three from the enemy forces were wounded and the rest fled."

"The two platoons located their forces and waited for platoon 4 to control the western part, before they should enter the village. The western platoon succeeded in controlling one of the main parts, which had been in enemy hands. But when they tried to continue controlling other parts, they were faced with fierce resistance. From that time on, the plan began to fail. After platoon 4 faced resistance and was stopped, I tried to send platoon 3 to help them. The platoon advanced until it was 500 metres from the village. Our plan was to advance in a broad line in an open area. Snipers opened fire and injured a few of our men, including the officer [who was Izra Lavi]. The platoon failed in the operation and withdrew to the field and the few buildings beside it. After I knew what happened I decided to send the reserve platoon."

So was the sergeant's account, platoon 4 and the leaders of Platoon 5 and 1 gave a detailed account of their defeat to occupy the village.

"The platoon I was responsible for comprised two different squads: newly trained soldiers and members of settlements in the area.... On our way to occupy the west zenith and before the dispersion of the platoon, we were faced with fire. I divided the squad, and we advanced from one heap of stones to the next under covering fire from one another.... The area was rocky. In that location was a squad of Arabs. We opened fire on the squad while we advanced. The enemy we did not kill left the spot and retreated to Lubya's hill. We found dead bodies as we ascended (Here was the people who died from Shihabis, and referred to by many interviewees, and buried later in a cave known until now as the martyrs cave). The enemy gathered in a defensive position in the west hill near the big (*butm*) tree. The distance that separated us was 300 m.; we tried to advance but it was in vain, because there were 20 to 30 Arabs facing us with rifles. The daylight made any movement dangerous. I had a few wounded and I saw no possibility of advancing without assistance. A squad of 10 Arabs tried to encircle us from the western side. I had a single 2-inch rocket launcher, but after firing one rocket the launcher broke. I feared that the Arabs would come up on us from behind without our knowledge. I relocated my troops in another position, and while moving we met with more enemy troops. I threw a hand grenade and they fled. I told the headquarters that without the support of more men, ammunitions and

weapons I could not occupy the hill. The answer was: platoon 5 was on the way to support us.

The leader of platoon 5:

“I received orders to move my platoon forward in order to receive orders in the field. From the direction of platoon 4, fire was heard continuously, although the other frontiers were quiet. While moving forward, the sergeant of the platoon discovered that men were running along the frontier from east to west. It was difficult to identify them, and we imagined that they were Arabs trying to encircle us. ‘The Arabs are surrounding our men’, one cried and started firing from his machine gun on the running men. Then we realised that they were from platoon 2. I ordered the firing to stop, but the result was the injury of the sergeant of the platoon.

“The envoy who was sent to me from platoon 2 informed me of my mistake, and he also told me to support platoon 4 from the rear. The machine gun *Biza*, supposed to help in occupying the western zenith, was added to my force. I moved my men back and joined platoon 4. It was then past 7 in the morning. I positioned my platoon and went to reconnoitre before advancing. Amos, the leader of platoon 4, saw me, and while he tried to come towards me he was injured by a bullet and left the battlefield. He asked me to take his platoon to attack the village under covering fire from machine gun *Biza*. While we discussed the situation we saw platoon 4 retreating...

“When I saw the withdrawal I ordered my troops to shoot on the eastern road in front of us. After the withdrawal was completed, I asked if they had left any wounded from the platoon, and then I ordered the rest of the troops including the *Biza* (machine gun) men to open fire on the whole area. The fire of the *Biza* succeeded in stopping the enemy, who controlled the peak after our withdrawal from it. In this way we achieved the retreat of platoon 4.

“We were in a defensive stand-by position, waiting for further instructions. We saw support convoys streaming from the north, through the al-Maghar - “Aylabun road, towards the enemy. They stopped one km north of *Khirbat Maskana*, and from there they advanced on foot towards the village. I saw three cars arriving before noon, and the total may have been more than ten.

“After the retreat of platoon 4, I opened fire with the *Biza* towards the support convoy. The results were not effective, but at least disturbed the enemy and delayed its activities. The leader of platoon 2, who was also the company’s second commander, sent me an envoy with orders to occupy the hill that was left by platoon 4.... I said that I could not carry out the orders. At that moment a wireless man arrived, and I contacted the battalion’s leader. I explained the situation, and he allowed me to act according to my own assessment.

One of the soldiers in platoon 4:

“When we moved west to impede the enemy’s attempt to encircle us, we met fire from *Khirbat Maskana*. We found ourselves caught between two attacks. The Arabs, under cover of their machine guns, tried to encircle us, with many troops

participating. They advanced through the valley under protection from their friends. We opened fire on them, and we succeeded in stopping a wave of attack, but after several more waves, this time with up to 30 men, we could not hold our position. We retreated in a wide area...

“We collected our dead, and we hid one of the heavily injured in a cleft, and with the rest of the wounded we withdrew to the headquarters of the battalion in al-Shajara, under covering fire of our troops...

The leader of platoon 1:

“Immediately after we gained control over the stone walls which formed a strong barrier for the right wing of our forces, I organised our three squads in a defence position and directed the half-range machine gun towards the eastern peak of Lubya, and the valley which divides the two peaks. I heard heavy shooting, but it was not directed particularly towards us. I gave my troops a chance to rest and eat their breakfast. I had no visual contact with battalion headquarters, and the company’s officer didn’t know our exact location. After 7 o’clock I went to the company’s headquarters and delivered a report on our situation.

“It was made known to me that our attack had failed. I received orders to stay where I was until further instructions. The way back to the company’s headquarters was already becoming more difficult because of the Arabs’ accurate shooting; that irritated us a lot. That was the first time I felt that the shooting was directed towards me personally.

“It became clear that an attack on the platoon had taken place while I was absent. There were 20 to 30 men who approached us from the fields, and came up to about 200 m. from us. Their shooting was very accurate; my wireless man was wounded. I transferred the wounded man to company headquarters while the others began to dig themselves. An attack on the village from this position was possible, but was very exposed and would have been senseless at the moment. I asked the company officer to give me permission to move my platoon to a more protected area south-west of the fields, but he refused. His justification was that many more casualties might occur than if we stayed where we were. The enemy launched two attacks between 9.30 and 10. I couldn’t understand how the enemy had arranged covering fire, because the bullets were fired on us from all directions, and yet I couldn’t see any one. The enemy advanced 100 steps, but we succeeded in repelling them. Two middle-range machine guns were out of order, also the 2-inch rocket launcher stopped after firing three rockets. During the attack I relocated the *Shortsalozza* and directed it towards the attackers; two sergeants of two squads were wounded.

“I asked for a second time for permission to withdraw, especially because of the casualties in my platoon. The company officer asked me first to repel the attack and then to retreat. After 11 o’clock the Arabs launched the decisive counterattack. The Arabs encircled us, moving from one field to another in a northerly direction. We saw them passing through the open area between the fields where we tried to stop them, but in vain. When they disappeared into another field I expected that their attack had been driven back; so I decided to retreat.

“We gathered in groups around the wounded, and at that moment we encountered 30 Arabs running towards us, at a distance of only a few steps. They were spread out in a chain wearing *khaki* clothes and white scarves (*hatta*), and shooting from guns fixed at their waists. I tried to open fire, but it didn’t help. The situation was bad, and I realised that there was no hope of victory. So I fled with my troops back to the field and regrouped the platoon. I didn’t know why the Arabs stopped pursuing us. I started the retreat with fifty men, and now there were only 19; I realised later that some troops, independently, had retreated to al-Shajara. The total losses of the platoon were 9 men. On our way back we encountered fire, but we arrived in al-Shajara without any additional losses.

One of the more insightful official notes written about Lubya showed openly that the battle of Lubya was considered as the only time during the independence war that “out attack failed”. I have chosen to present the whole passage of assessment because of its insightful notes and varied evaluation of both Luyans and the events of its occupation and the consequences to the whole regional plan of Upper Galilee:

“It was surprising, considering the situation and that was one of the rare incidents, I could say, the only time during the independence war, that our attack failed since we exceeded them in force. We had almost equal numbers in men: the defenders of the village were no more than 300 to 350 armed men, while our number was 400 (here one can notice the exaggerated numbers reported by Lubyans in relation to the numbers documented officially in this assessment). Part of our troops was not trained, though they had taken part in guard responsibility in other Arab locations. A number of them had a guard mission in al-Shajara.

“In spite of that, the number of the company’s men who participated in the main attack exceeded 200 fighters who should, without any doubt, have been able to cover the length of the front and enter the village. In the end, it is most plausible to assume that the enemy strengthened their numbers by the support they received from others. But we have to remind ourselves that the attack was repulsed a long time before the support and assistance arrived (Actually Lubyans repulsed the first attacks before any help arrived from neighbouring villages). And the men of the village alone accomplished this.

“The weapons of the enemy fighters were no more than rifles. Facing them there were, in addition to armed men, 10 to 15 light middle-range machine guns, 2 middle-range machine guns, numbers of 3-inch rocket-launchers, and two 65mm canons. The sound of these weapons alone should have been enough to scare the enemy away.

“This operation was begun by us. We had chosen the time for the attack, the places to enter, and the detailed plan. Furthermore, we had the highest morale, especially after consecutive victories over different Arab villages, while the Lubyans had heard and seen how this and that village had fallen into our hands.

“It is possible that the main reason for what happened in the battle over Lubya was our carelessness when the enemy gave signs of preparation for counterattack. Another type of attack had been suggested earlier: an encircling plan that was to start from

Tiberias and control the hill in the north of the street, near Hittin Horn, Nimrin location, and 325 locations which overlooked “Aylabun. Such an attack would have faced almost no resistance, because it would have taken place in the enemy’s backyard and not on its bases. That plan could have separated Lubya from the strategic Arab villages surrounding it. That plan could have finished its role as a barrier on the road to Tiberias. In addition, it could have given us total control over the Nazareth-*Khirbat Maskana*-al Maghar road, used by the enemy. The reason for not using the plan was not that we found it to be inoperable, but rather, to be accomplished in a simple way, it required more forces.

“The attack was a classic example of a direct confronting attack against the prepared enemy positions. But it was unsuccessful, either because the plan lost its initiative of surprise (due to the lack of co-ordination with the tank company), or because of unexpected resistance from the enemy. We have to remember that the Lubyans have always been brave fighters, and took pride in the name of their village. The loss of other Arab villages didn’t enfeeble their morale; on the contrary, it gave rise to a feeling of superiority over the others and that they had no one who resembled them.

“Another factor, actually derived from the previous reason, was the absence of coherence between the troops. The whole operation was under the leadership of one regiment, those who made the attack were from a company from another regiment, and the armoured vehicles did not belong to the regiment. The 5 platoons of the attacking company were formed temporarily and the majority of them were formed only for this specific operation, and were not well trained.

“The leaders of the companies hardly knew one another. There is no doubt that their ability to act together and lead such incoherent troops was limited. From this came two additional failings: the available troops were not used properly; and there was difficulty in adapting to the changing conditions. Only a little more than one third of the powers assembled for the operation had participated directly against the enemy. The other third were used to safeguard locations against expected counterattacks on back bases, and the last third arrived late and participated in the attack gradually, without any decisive effect. What was missing here was obviously maximal concentration of troops, ammunition, and weapons at the decisive time and place...

“It was probable that the enemy snipers’ ability played a decisive role in hindering our attack. They were well trained and with high capability in using their private guns. It was almost impossible to move on the battlefield.

“The superiority of the enemy manifested itself not only in accurate shooting, but also in adaptability to the topography of the area. As a result, our troops failed to see the enemy in most cases. Apart from direct attacks, we could not locate the enemy’s weapons. Our troops were almost powerless: there is nothing worse than not seeing a target in front of you.

“Another note on a common phenomenon: the attack was to have taken place at night, but was changed to the daytime because of different delays. This caused the estimation of the plan to change. An interesting example is the snipers’ fire: snipers cannot be very efficient during the night, contrary to their capacity in the daytime

where their superiority made a great difference. Therefore the necessary lessons we should deduct from the attack on Lubya are the following:

“We could have defeated them had we taken more caution. We had expected to defeat them easily. With more careful planning we could have occupied Lubya by the middle of June 48, and spared a lot of extra effort. But this experience became a blessing to our forces.

“After 24 hours in the battlefield, all the time under the enemy’s fire, our forces retreated, tired, broken and depressed. The failure had deeply wounded our troops, yet they now had only one goal: to return and do better. Nevertheless, the operation, interestingly, had achieved something as important as Lubya’s occupation: it had disturbed the enemy’s plans in the upper Galilee. In addition to that, the separation of the upper Galilee was prevented, although the attack on Lubya failed. When Kawukji heard of the attack on Lubya, he changed his plans to separate the upper Galilee, by cancelling an attack near Rosh Pinah, co-ordinated with the Syrian attack from the east, and came with most of his troops to help the village.

Appendix VIII*UNRWA Registered Refugees from Lubya***Age Breakdown and Gender, 20 November 2001**

Age Group	Females	Males	Total
< 6	1119	1119	2338
6-15	2073	2268	4341
16-25	1890	1954	3844
26-35	1551	1642	3193
36-45	1096	1189	2285
46-55	605	646	1251
> 55	935	861	1796
Total	9269	9679	18948

Registered Refugees in Camps as at 30 November 2001

Field	Registered Individuals	In Camps
West Bank	9	
Gaza	3	
Lebanon	7,724	7,475
Syria	10,250	1,394
Jordan	962	141
Total	18,948	9,010

Appendix IX

Total Inhabitants from Lubya in Denmark

During my research I registered 794 persons from Lubya living in Denmark. This number includes all the original inhabitants from Lubya, their sons, daughters and grandchildren. Today the number likely exceeds 1,000.

City	No. of Families	No. of Persons	Percentage
Copenhagen	24	93	12
Nordsjælland	29	106	13
Ringsted	6	19	3
Frederikssund	5	18	2
Ålborg	3	8	1
Århus	89	417	53
Sønderborg	16	82	10
Haderslev	9	51	6
Total	181	794	100

Appendix X

Interview with Young Lubyans in Denmark

I also conducted an interview with three siblings of the younger generation, Yusra (age 18) Luma (16) and Akram (14). They came to Denmark in 1991 with their mother and two younger sisters from al-Jalil Palestinian refugee camp in Lebanon. I followed up the first interview with a second one fifteen months later. A third interview appears as an epilogue. What is interesting in these interviews is the gradual changes that have taken place concerning patterns of judgement, both of themselves and of the communities in which they live.

Yusra: Life here is OK, but sometimes I find it difficult to adapt to the Danish way of life. Our customs and traditions are different and this makes any close relationship with them difficult.

Luma: I find it is difficult to express myself clearly here.

Yusra: There are a lot of good Danes, but there are also a few who don't respect Muslims. When we travel together a lot of problems arise from that. They think that we are not civilized. I have now been in a Danish school for two years, and I am still in the 10th grade. If I was in Lebanon, I would have been in the last year of high school.

Luma: I am in the same class as Yusra. I find that the Danish teachers treat us the same as the Danish students. There is no discrimination in the classroom.

Yusra: When we talk about war or Islam, we find ourselves on totally different grounds. A student asked me once to give him proof that the *Qur'an* is the book of God, and I couldn't do that. Life is different here than in Lebanon. I would like to return there one day. Over there, one does not need to find answers to such questions.

Luma: In my opinion, the Danes have to respect our customs and traditions, and we must respect theirs. This way, we can reduce the problems that exist between us. They received us in their country and we have to be grateful and respectful for that.

Yusra: The Danes do treat us well. As Palestinian refugees, we are treated better here than we are by Arab governments.

Akram: There is a lot of difference between here and Lebanon. For one, there was war there, while there is peace here, but our society is different from theirs. When we speak about Islam they laugh. We have a girl in our class who wears a head scarf and the students gossip about her and make fun of her. When I meet a Dane and a Muslim, I find that I am closer to the Muslim.

Yusra: I don't mix a lot with [Danes], and I refuse when they invite me to go out with them at night so they call me 'abnormal'. They once told me that I needed to see a psychologist because I behaved this way. In Lebanon I would never hear such words.

Luma: I have a few Danish friends, but our relationship is limited. I believe our friends must realise that no one emigrates from his homeland without good reason.

Akram: Ninety percent of my friends are Danes, the rest are Turks and Arabs. I once went with them to Copenhagen, but it was clear that the way we behave is different. As a Muslim, I chose not to follow their lifestyle, but when I tell them that I don't like to have a girlfriend and I don't eat pork, they call me a 'strange one'. In Lebanon I had more friends than here, which made me feel more comfortable.

Yusra: I feel I am different, and sometimes when the others irritate me, I wish I could go back to Lebanon. Sometimes children tell me 'go back to your land', and I am sure that they learn that from their parents. Other times they do not say what they really mean. My teacher said to me once, 'When you finish your studies, the Danes will prefer to employ a Dane rather than you.' It seems to me that here the name Bettina is preferable to the name Yusra.

Fifteen months later,

Akram: I changed a lot of my ideas about the Danes. A year ago, my friends were Danes but I was not very happy, for their customs are very different from ours. Now all my friends are foreigners, from Pakistan, Morocco, Iraq and Palestine, and my relationship with the Danes is limited to greetings. In the classroom we are 4 foreigners and 14 Danes. The teachers sometimes ask us why we don't talk to each other in the class. We cannot come to terms with the Danes on many levels. For example, if I ask a Dane about his relationship with his father, he would tell me 'It is none of your business.' Also, if a Dane had a problem, he would prefer to keep it secret. We, on the other hand, are used to talking about our problems without any barriers. The Danes are accustomed to drinking, and unlike us, they cannot bear not to drink. Also we foreigners have more vitality in our relationship with each other, and we are not racist. As a Muslim, I fast during *Ramadan* so as to feel with the poor in the world. This is not only a religious duty but also a humane gesture towards others.

Luma: In my class all the students are Danes except for me, but as long as I speak and read as well as they do, I have no problem. Therefore I feel that in the classroom, there isn't really any difference between us. Sometimes they ask me about Islam, the veil and other subjects, but there are no social relations between us. I also think that my teacher is happy with my work, and I think that my teachers at the school are good and I am quite satisfied with that and with my fellow students. Most of my friends, however, are Arabs, and one is a Pakistani.

Yusra: A few months ago, I applied for Danish citizenship and the police started to interrogate me as if I was a criminal. One of them asked me, 'From where do you foreigners get all your money? If you became Danish you have to vote against the foreigners who take the money without doing the work.' I didn't say anything to him, for I did not dare to discuss the subject with him. Then when he knew that my father was unemployed he said, 'Why didn't you tell me from the beginning that your father is unemployed and lives on social security benefits?' Again, I did not dare respond out of fear that he would stop processing my application.

In the classroom we have nothing in common with the Danes, and the two groups are separate. Our school principal always sides with the Danish students and never hears what I, for one, have to say. He called me over to his office once and dismissed me from the class for two days because I didn't go down to the restaurant. We are five foreigners in a class of 23 students and the teachers give the high marks to the Danes. The French language teacher told me once, 'You should never expect to get more than 5 out of 10 on your exam.' The principal once dismissed a student from Afghanistan only because he protested against the grade he got. We also always disagree in class whenever we discuss certain issues. I think that the teachers, and especially the principal, in this school are racist and I am seriously thinking of moving to another school. I fast the entire month of *Ramadan* because it is one of the principal pillars of Islam, and I am happy because this way I also maintain my traditions.

Akram: Every time one of the foreigners makes a mistake and the teacher intervenes, we accuse him or her of racism. I think we should take from the Danes the positive aspects of their culture. For example, they have a better system and methods of information than we do. I once interviewed a police officer about violence among the refugees and he told me: 'On the one hand, the parents are responsible, on the other, it is the system that does not give them the opportunity to find work. The society from which the refugees come is a troubled society.'

Yusra: I think that the aggressive behaviour of some refugees is a normal response to a society that does not respect them. Young people study many years only to end up unemployed. The age between 15 and 20 is a dangerous age, and the young think that they are always right. I don't believe that the Danes are better than us. Danish society is disintegrating. Their children start smoking, drinking and even sometimes taking drugs before they are 15.

Akram: I think that the best period of my life was here in Denmark. Why do you talk about the police here? Is the police where you come from better than it is here?

Yusra: Didn't you hear about how the police attacked a man two years ago and he is still in a coma? Why do you think they publish all the negative details in the newspapers and announce them on television when foreigners are concerned?

Akram: This is not your country.

Yusra: The law must be applied to all the people without discrimination.

Luma: I believe that the Danish education system supports the student and helps him build a strong character. This is better than giving us high marks when we don't deserve them.

In the year 2003 I interviewed again three young people, (Yusra, Luma and Akram) who were interviewed before in 1995. Eight years left its clear traces on the earlier concepts of the interviewees. The total isolation and loneliness was diminished, especially when the young are engaged in "the labour market" and in universities. But the issue of identity and belonging is still wavering forward and backward which

provoked Fida to say: “I feel split in two”. The different displacements from Palestine to Lebanon to Denmark left its marks in both ways: positively in the education and peaceful atmosphere they are living in; negatively, in regarding the troubled relation between the past and the present, the loyalties to the family or to the new space of the western social life. Proudness of “being a Palestinian” doesn’t help in bridging the gap between the elderly and the new generation, born in Denmark. The yearning to visit the original homeland is still a pillar in their new identity; but they looked at it differently, with more implications and complexities than their parents thought. The satellites are always ready to bring back the homeland and its problems in a daily manner. But in schools the tendency is different: here in the official curriculum, Palestine is cancelled from world maps, and every time they need to present themselves, efforts are accompanied by a sense of despair when they want to locate Palestine, or their own original village or town on the map. It was “another universe” for Akram, when he arrived at an early age of 11 years old, but now after another 11 years and being a student in the university, his understanding of integration with the Danes is little different than Yusra’s. He became more aware of his background as a Palestinian, as an Arab and Moslem, although having many Danes as personal friends; and his loyalty and belonging becomes widened to embrace Palestine as a nation and not only his own village Lubya. Denmark replaced Lebanon as “my second homeland”, because of the better social life Denmark offers to them. To Luma, Lubya “represents my identity”, although never have seen it. It is difficult for Luma “to be an Arab at home and a Dane outside”. The pattern of the traditional family structure is still an obstacle to the young, especially when marriages took place according to the old fashion in which family decide most of the issues.

Yusra came to Denmark in 1989.

After 13 years in this country I have a completely different idea about what integration means. I now instinctively feel that I am part of Danish society because I work every day together with Danes and have learned to accept Danish norms and values regarding the labour market. I now know what is needed if you want to become part of Danish society, but that does not necessarily mean that I see myself as a Mrs. Jensen. I still follow my traditions and my religion, and my colleagues have accepted this. I am trained as a pharmacist and work as a drug safety assessor (M.Sc.Pharm) in a medical firm. I have come to know the Danes because at your place of work you can also have a social life where you can talk together. But when they start drinking, I avoid their company.

In some way or other I feel split in two. I don't know precisely where I belong. Is it Denmark where I live or Lebanon where I was born? I have always felt that I belong to Palestine, and I am proud of being a Palestinian. I demonstrate this when I am asked: "Where do you come from?" My answer is that I am a Palestinian from Lebanon. I don't feel like just saying that I come from Lebanon.

I have always wanted to see the place where my family has its roots. If I should ever get the possibility, I will visit my father's village Lubya.

When I discuss the Middle East problems with Danes, I feel that they sympathize with the Jews and have done so since the Second World War. But when they come to

know me as an actual example of a Palestinian refugee, they start to get interested in what I am saying.

If I am asked, I say that I regard myself as as a Palestinian Moslem. But this does not mean that I am a fundamentalist.

A deep gap has been created between the Palestinian children and their parents here in Denmark because the children now experience two widely different cultures and traditions. I suggest that the parents should not tighten the rules for their children. Instead, they ought to learn how to discuss the matters thoroughly and openly with the children and be more flexible in their approach to Danish culture.

I do not believe that there will ever be peace in the Middle East because the present generations on both sides, Palestinian and Jewish, have nothing in common except hatred, revenge and war. I think that if ever there is going to be peace, we must educate two new generations who have the ability to create a new atmosphere between the two societies.

Akram came to Denmark as an 11-12 year old child and have now lived here for eleven years. At the beginning “I felt that I had come to another universe. But I realized that I was going to live here for a very long time, maybe the rest of my life. It was difficult for me to familiarize myself with the Danish way of life. I did not speak or write Danish, and apart from that I felt very lonely and wanted to go back to where I felt more at ease. But as time passed by, I got used to life in Denmark and slowly started communicating with people around me.

I went to the language school for a year or so and then I attended lower secondary school. Here I got to know many Danish friends, and life began to be more fun. I started going out with them, having a pleasant time. I always tried to show that there was nothing different between us, but nevertheless I felt that actually there *was* a difference. I had a completely different background, a totally different colour and my Danish was not good enough to allow me to really communicate with them and understand their humour. But, nevertheless, 90 per cent of my friends were Danish.

I really did my best to make myself familiar with Danish society, but I am sorry to say that I always heard some racist remarks which made me keep away from the circle of my Danish friends. Later on we moved to Broendby Strand, and after a while I got to know many children from immigrant families. I felt at ease with them and was in a much better mental condition than before. All the time I kept my close ties to Lebanon and had sympathy for Palestine.

I finished lower secondary school in 1997 and entered a broader Danish world. I got to know many people from different nationalities, also Danes, and tried to involve myself as part of social life. Moreover, I had a lot of different jobs while attending upper secondary school. But the difference always popped up in the class room when we discussed various aspects of life as for example philosophy, religion. Palestine and the Middle East conflict. We always disagreed, and I thought that it was very unjust. More and more strongly I felt my close ties to my Arab, Moslem, Palestinian world. I

had a very special idea of how to live here and how to become integrated in Danish society without abandoning one's own basic identity.

At home I also had problems with my parents when we talked about Palestine and especially the village, Lubya, from where the family comes. I have always felt sympathy with Palestine and have told my parents that the most important thing is Palestine as a whole and not only Lubya. They disagreed very much with me every time I said that Palestine belongs to all Arabs, in other words to the Moslems and not only the Palestinians, because Palestine is part of the Arab world and plays an important role in Islamic religion.

After finishing high school I started my training as a biochemist at the university.

At present I feel that my personality has developed in specific ways during specific periods. By now, I think that I have formed my distinct opinion about life in Denmark, my own identity and my way of behaving.

After all, we are refugees here in Denmark, and we will never become one hundred percent part of Danish social life. I am a Moslem Arab and my roots are in the holy land which is Palestine. My dream is still my belief in Palestine - not only Palestine but the whole Islamic nation. This does not mean that I am a fundamentalist hating the Western world. On the contrary. I feel very grateful because Denmark has given me a better life. I regard Denmark as my second homeland, and I shall always be ready to serve Denmark. But I am sorry to say that there still are differences, politically as well as ideologically. I plan to leave the country when I have finished my studies and go to an Arab country where you don't feel like a foreigner among your own people. In my view it is very important that I, as an individual, can tell about Denmark and convince the Arabs whom I am going to meet in different places that there is no distinction between us and people from the West. It is a matter of real importance to show my people the positive sides of the Western world and that all of us are human beings belonging to this beautiful planet.

In Denmark you have better possibilities to get a picture of the political conflict between the Middle East and the Western World of which Denmark is a part. Also, you get a better understanding of why people in the West have a very aggressive attitude towards the Middle East and, especially, towards the Moslems. As I see it, this may pave the road for a down-to-earth solution to the question of peace between Moslems and the West.

I have learned never to regard people from the West as enemies. They think in human terms like we do and are very helpful, but the problem is that the media destroy every effort to create a positive atmosphere between Moslems and the Western world. I have discovered that in Denmark the media are the main distributors of information and that they are used for foreign policy purposes. They spread a lot of false information, creating an aggressive attitude to Moslems and giving the government a free access to support the Israeli regime. This leads to still more hatred in the Middle East.

If you fight these media with other sorts of information, bringing Middle East and Western populations in direct contact with each other, you can open a clear path for peace in Palestine, the Middle East and the Moslem world. Fifty years of conflict have shown without doubt that violence leads nowhere. Neither does the ongoing peace process. Many more activities are needed to create peace in a complicated area like the Middle East. The most important thing is that people should be more tolerant in between themselves. There are good things and bad things, and everyone of us wishes that good will defeat bad. This will be possible if all nations work towards it, and it will benefit all coming generations.

There are conditions in different nations which are completely intolerable, like the Zionist movement and Saddam's regime. Now, Saddam's regime is gone, and my hope is that a way can be found to overthrow the Zionist regime. If this happens, I am sure that it would be big step towards a final peace in the Middle East, and Israel/Palestine could become a home for both Jews and Arabs.

I wish to become involved in many activities which can focus attention on the Middle East and human rights. This could be achieved by establishing a mixed Danish/Arab socio-political organization

As regards my family I think that our relations are the same as they were in Lebanon. We often disagree, but the general pattern is still the same. I feel very much attached to the family like anyone living in Lebanon, but of course we have adopted some of the positive aspects of Danish family life in order to become integrated in a way which will not be harmful to the foundations of the family.

Luma's account regarding *the integration process*

I have now lived in Denmark for thirteen years, and it took me a very long time to adapt myself to the Danish way of life. But, fortunately, I have succeeded in finishing my high school education. After that, I started studying English literature. I kept it up for six months, but then I broke off the studies and went on to a training as a dental assistant. I am still in that line of training. Personally, I regard professional training as the most vital part of the intergration process but, of course, there are also many other angles like, for example, the social and cultural aspects. Through education you can meet all the demands of the integration process. At present the Danish society, and even the Danish government, is more preoccupied with integration than ever before. I think that it is a very good step forward that Denmark is now making demands on the foreigners in order to reduce unemployment among the ethnic minorities. This also implies a demand for better knowledge of Danish society - and vice versa.

Although I have never lived in my village, nor seen my own country Palestine, I feel that I have a very close relationship with Lubya. My feeling of attachment to my own village is almost unbelievable. I really feel that Lubya represents my identity, and without that feeling I would not be able to know anything about my own background. I am convinced that if you know nothing about your background then you can't get on with your life in the future. In our home we grew up with the conviction that you must know your roots so that, always, there is something you can return to.

The question is whether, in the education of my own children, I will be able to give them this feeling of attachment to Lubya, their village. Actually, I doubt it. During my childhood my maternal grandfather told us many amusing and exciting stories about Lubya so that we, when falling asleep, dreamed about returning. But I did not have the same strong feelings that I have today. The more you grow up, the more difficult it is to grasp that you are stateless. This feeling gives you an inferiority complex, and you start seeking the roots of your existence in your own country, your village. Feeling that you are a refugee you yearn for your own roots, your own land, to avoid discrimination and racism.

I should like very much to visit my village, but the question is if it is possible. At present I am not planning to visit the village, because of the conflict between the Palestinians and the Israeli government. All the time we have been on the run from war, and we cannot stand it anymore. When peace and quiet returns I should like to visit my village, even if it has been wiped out. It hurts me to know that all the memories of my father, my grandfather and my great-grandfather have been buried together with the village.

Clearly I identify myself as a Moslem Palestinian. Here in Denmark there are many people with a different ethnic background. In most cases you can't recognize their nationality, among other things because they look more or less alike, for example because of their black hair. The Danish people regard us as Moslem foreigners. But among the ethnic groups we have to be able to identify ourselves, and this is actually an advantage, because in that way you come to learn who you really are.

With regard to my future I honestly don't know where it lies. My village, Lubya, has disappeared, and in my opinion the conflicts between Palestinians and Jews will never come to an end. So, I have a feeling that I am going to stay on in Denmark as long as it remains a quiet and peaceful country.

It should be a good thing to have a Palestinian citizenship instead of being stateless. Actually, I would feel very happy to experience the feeling of being in one's own country without being regarded as a foreigner, without the threat of being expelled, without the feeling of being unwanted in the country where you are staying. I should really like to have the same experience that Danes and Lebanese have.

I want to have the right to say: Here I am, standing in my own country, Palestine. I am not a refugee anymore. Nobody can expel me from here. My father, my grandfather and my great-grandfather came from here, so I have a right to this land just as any other man has a right to stay in the country from which he hails. If the state of Palestine comes into existence and Palestinians from all over the world assemble there, the technology of the country will develop very rapidly because a majority of the Palestinians have a higher education. I feel that Palestine will become one of the best countries in the world if we are allowed to reconstruct it in peace and quiet.

Well, I don't know whether I should call them friends or comrades. Actually I don't go out shopping with them or take part in their parties. Even if I have lived here for a long time I have not succeeded in becoming integrated one hundred per cent in Danish society. I learn to know my Danish friends at school, and it is only at school

that we talk and enjoy ourselves together. This is due to our different life styles. I don't go to discotheques, I have no girl friend, and I am not as independent as they are. I am not in a position where I can make my own decisions. My Danish friends always talk about what is going on at the discotheque and about their daily life with their girl friends. I, on the other hand, like to tell about the fun we have together in our family and the guests we have had during the weekend. I don't think that my Danish friends are really interested in hearing about it. In fact, I am not unhappy about my life style, and I am grateful for having a caring family around me. After coming to Denmark I had some difficulties in the beginning. There were a lot of things which my father did not allow me to do because he was afraid that I might become so much integrated in the Danish society that I would forget my family, my tradition and my religion. But step by step he began to understand that there are so many things you have to do in this country in order to become a part of society. So, I was allowed to take part in study tours with my class and participate in other school activities in which I earlier had not been allowed to join.

I can not avoid the social problems which I run into here, neither can I deny that I am a second generation immigrant. Even if I try becoming integrated one hundred per cent, there is something which holds me back, first of all my parents. Inevitably your personality splits up when you have to be an Arab at home and try to be a Dane outside. This really creates a deep confusion in me, and it is going to influence my future life. I can give you an example of the way in which it has already influenced me. I was married six months ago, and I found out that there were so many things about my Arab husband which I could not accept. The result was that our marriage broke down because he was so dependent on his family. He was not allowed to make his own decisions in our marriage. Everything had to be decided by the family. On the other hand, I am not prepared to live together with a Dane because of my religious belief which he will never be able to understand.

On my job I feel the difference between my comrades and myself. My Danish fellow workers have more fun together than when I am together with them. Sometimes I am completely unable to understand their sense of humour, and at times they laugh at things which I don't find funny at all. This means that at my place of work they and I always keep a distance.

Regarding friends, I only have close ties with four girls who, I am sorry to say, are not Danish. We feel close to each other because we have the same background and have had the same experiences here in Denmark. We have a lot of fun together, and we sit for hours talking about our problems. Actually, this is what keeps us going.