In the Presence of Absence: A History of the Future of Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon 1993-2000

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Abstract

When Yasser Arafat and Yitzhak Rabin met in Washington D.C to sign the Oslo Accords on September 13th 1993, it was a monumental occasion. While the international community applauded the agreement, many within the Palestinian camp felt betrayed. The parameters set by the Declaration of Principles gave preference to the Palestinians in the Occupied Territories over the millions of Palestinians living in the diaspora. Thus the Palestinian refugees outside the Occupied Territories felt marginalized. This sense of marginalization was intensified by the fact that the final status arrangements, that included the issue of the refugees, had been put aside for discussion following the five-year interim period. Of all the Palestinian refugees living outside the Occupied Territories those in Lebanon felt the most vulnerable. The Palestinian refugees in Lebanon as well as many segments of the Lebanese population feared that the Oslo process would lead to the resettlement of the refugees in the country. While the official process, however, put the question of the refugees and their Right of Return on the shelf, there was a significant conversation happening on the so-called 'third-track.' This dissertation examines this track, which was comprised of three major conferences that took place during the Oslo interim period. Drawing on the papers and reports that were generated by these conferences, in addition to interviews with some of the participants, the dissertation tells the story of how third-track participants thought about the future of the Palestinian refugees during the Oslo process.

Résumé

Lorsque Yasser Arafat et Yitzhak Rabin se sont rencontrés à Washington DC afin de signer les Accords d'Oslo le 13 septembre 1993, c'était un évènement monumental. Pour la première fois depuis le début du conflit, les Israëliens et les Palestiniens se rencontraient face à face, et se sont mis d'accord de franchir les premiers pas vers la résolution du conflit. Pendant que la communauté internationale saluait ce geste, plusieurs du camps Palestiniens se sentaient trahis. Il semblait que les critères décidés par la Déclaration des principes favorisaient les Palestiniens des Territoires Occupés Palestiniens, plutôt que les millions des Palestiniens vivant dans la diaspora. En particulier, les réfugiés Palestiniens hors des Territoires Occupés Palestiniens se sentaient mis à l'écart. Ce sens de la marginalisation a été intensifié par le fait que les arrangements du statut final, qui incluaient le point sur les réfugiés, ont été repoussés en discussion après une période d'intérim de cinq ans. De tous les réfugiés Palestiniens vivant hors des Territoires Occupés Palestiniens, ceux du Liban se sentaient les plus vulnerables. Les réfugiés Palestiniens du Liban ainsi que plusieurs parties de la population Libanaise craignaient que le processus d'Oslo provoqueraient la relocalisation des réfugiés du pays. Pendant que la procedure officielle sur les réfugiés et leur droit au retour était mis de côté, il y avait un dialogue important en parallèle, dans ce qui est prénommé le « third-track ». Cette dissertation examine ce canal d'échange en parallèle, qui consiste en trios conférences majeures qui ont eu lieu pendant la période intérim d'Oslo. En utilisant les essais et rapports qui ont été faits suite à ces conférences, en plus d'entretiens avec certains des participants, la dissertation raconte comment les participants en parallèle (« third-track participants ») pensaient l'avenir des réfugiés Palestiniens pendant le processus d'Oslo.

Acknowledgments

The importance of the question of the Palestinian refugees, in Lebanon and elsewhere, is one that goes beyond any geographic constraint. It is ultimately a question that forms the basis of how we view, treat and understand our fellow human beings in the context of citizenship, the nation and the state. While the situation and experience of the Palestinian refugees is greatly unique, it also significantly shares much in common with the situations and experiences of so many others forcibly displaced. I hope that this dissertation is able to add another layer of nuance to our approach and discussions on refugees. Often, those of us in academia, policy-making, diplomacy and governance find it easier to make decisions, form opinions and construct policies on statistics and abstracts. It is harder to move forward, in any direction, when we see the human faces and lives that will be affected by our choices. This dissertation is thus first and foremost dedicated to those caught between homelands and nations; those who despite being present, have been kept absent.

I would further like to acknowledge my supervisor, Dr. Laila Parsons, whose help and academic mentorship has proven to be incomparable. I am truly grateful to her for her academic discipline and rigor as well as her boundless kindness. I like to think I am leaving her supervision a little better at constructing short and precise sentences. I would also like to acknowledge the McGill Islamic Studies Library, which proved to be an amazing resource in finding unanticipated hidden historical materials. And I would like to thank Dr. Rex Brynen and Mr. Nadim Shehadi for their assistance in giving invaluable insight. Additionally, special acknowledgements go to the following organizations: The Jerusalem Fund, The Institute for Palestine Studies, BADIL, ICAMES, PRRN and Forced Migration.

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Introduction

"Exile, which is a misunderstanding between existence and the borders." – Mahmoud Darwish

In 1917, towards the end of the First World War, British Foreign Secretary Arthur James Balfour sent a letter to a leading British Zionist by the name of Baron Walter Rothschild. The Baron had worked on a declaration of establishing a Jewish homeland in what was then known as Palestine. The letter from Balfour, later known as the Balfour Declaration of 1917, read that the government viewed "with favor the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavors to facilitate the achievement of the object."[1] Balfour added that it should also be "clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious' rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine." The declaration would later become a part of the Treaty of Sèvres, which in effect dismantled the Ottoman Empire and designated its territories as mandates for European powers. Of these mandates, Palestine fell under British control. According to Article 95 of the treaty:

> The Mandatory [Government of United Kingdom and Ireland] will be responsible for putting into effect the declaration originally made on November 2, 1917, by the British Government, and adopted by the other Allied Powers, in favor of the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, 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 country.[2]

It would, however, only be after the Second World War that the plans for a Jewish homeland would gain great momentum and come into fruition. The interwar period consisted of mass Jewish migration to Palestine.[3] By the late twenties and thirties, the Palestinian population, numbering around 1,320,000, began to see the increasing Jewish minority population of 640,000 as a threat. The prospect of losing their homeland became

[1] Balfour Declaration, November 2nd 1917.
[2] Treaty of Treaty of Sèvres, August 10th 1920.
[3] Two major migrations occurred prior to this era. The first one began in 1881 and the second began in 1904. The third major wave of Jewish migration to Palestine was immediately following the Holocaust, however was not enough to ensure a majority Jewish population in the country. During this period, Jewish settlers would acquire 20% of Palestinian land, giving them political and economic leverage for establishing a new state.

more ostensible.[4] On November 29th 1947 the United Nations General Assembly would pass Resolution 181, which partitioned Palestine into two homelands: one for the Palestinians and one for the Jews. Done in a similar way as the partition of India, also in 1947, the plan based the creation of the two homelands on population concentration. In other words, lands that had more Jewish concentration were designated for the Jewish homeland whereas lands with more Palestinians were designated to the Arab state.[5] The city of Jerusalem, sacred to Muslims, Christians and Jews, was put under the supervision of the United Nations. Zionist groups accepted the plan, but Arab countries and organizations were quick to condemn the resolution and what it proposed.

The day following Israel's declaration of independence, four major Arab armies attacked in hopes of reclaiming the entirety of the land for the Arabs. The war resulted in what the Palestinians would come to call the *Nakba*, or the Great Catastrophe.[6] The invading Arab armies consisting of Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq, Egypt and Syria, would not only suffer a great defeat by the hands of Israel but would see the regional landscape significantly change. Additionally, Palestine as a state was destroyed as Jewish forces took more land as a result of the war, refashioning the barely new boundaries assigned by the United Nations. 77% of the land was captured by Israel, whereas Egypt took control of the Gaza Strip and Jordan of the West Bank and East Jerusalem. Perhaps, however, the most devastating blow to Palestine was not the loss of land but the loss of its inhabitants. Hundreds of thousands of Palestinians were expelled from their homes and villages by Jewish militia groups and the *Haganah*.[7] Several others fled believing that the violence that had erupted would only last momentarily and they would soon return to their homes.

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[4] Sibylla Gratiana Thicknesse, *Arab Refugees a Survey of Resettlement Possibilities* (London: Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1949), 1.

[5] Section II of the resolution thoroughly outlines the boundaries for the new states.

[6] *War for Palestine: Rewriting the History of 1948* (2007), edited Eugene L. Rogan and Avi Shlaim, revisits traditionally accepted narratives on the war. The book consists of essays and articles by Israeli new historians as well as Arab and Western scholars who focus on the period and/or on the Arab-Israeli conflicts. Notable chapters include Rashid Khalidi's "The Palestinians and 1948," Benny Morris' "Revisiting the Palestinian Exodus of 1948," Laila Parsons' "The Druze and the Birth of Israel," Avi Shlaim's "Israel and the Arab Coalition in 1948" and Fawaz A. Gerges' "Egypt and the 1948 War: Internal Conflict and Regional Ambition." In addition to this, see *Nakba: Palestine, 1948 and the Claims of Memory* (2007), edited by Ahmad H. Sa'di and Lila Abu-Lughod. It explores the meaning of major events of the Nakba and following for Palestinians as individuals and as a collective and how these events are transmitted throughout generations.

[7] The *Haganah* would later become the Israeli Defense Force.

Over 700,000 were forcibly displaced during the year-long period of violence.[8] The Palestinian refugee crisis would be worsened again in 1967 because of the Six Day War. As a result of the war, Israel would emerge not only victorious in defeating the armies of Egypt, Jordan and Syria, but would also capture the West Bank, which included East Jerusalem, the Gaza Strip and the Golan Heights. Over 300,000 Palestinians would flee during the war to neighboring Arab countries.[9] The vast majority of these Palestinians would be from the West Bank.

Palestinian refugees who were exiled in both 1948 and 1967, fled to neighboring Arab countries. The vast majority fled to Lebanon (1948) and to Jordan (1967), whereas others sought refuge in Egypt, Syria and some even in Saudi Arabia. While many Palestinians and Arab governments considered the 1948 exodus as a temporary displacement, within a matter of time it would become clear that return was not imminent. Thus a quick response to the mounting refugee crisis was needed from both the international and regional communities.

On November 19th 1948, the United Nations General Assembly would adopt Resolution 212, requesting assistance for the refugees. In less than a month, it would adopt one of the most influential and integral resolutions to the question of Palestinian refugees: Resolution 194. While the resolution would deal with the internationalization of the Holy Places, its most important stipulation was the call for the return of Palestinian refugees to their homes. It resolved that:

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[8] In his original work, *Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem* (1988), and the 2004 edition, *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem Revisited,* Morris offers a detailed account of the Palestinian exodus. In both works, however, he is clear that he does not believe that there was an Israeli policy of expulsion. In the earlier mentioned book, *The War For Palestine*, editors Shlaim and Rogan criticize Morris for this position. They write that critics argued that the "archival material Morris uncovered was more damning of Israeli actions than Morris' conclusions that 'the Palestinian refugee problem was born of war, not by design.'" (pg. 9) As they additionally note, Laila Parsons in the same book, in her essay about the Druze, refutes the assertions made by Morris. Parsons' essay looks at the relationship fostered between the Israelis and the Druze and how the latter were incorporated into the new state, as part of a political strategy. Thus, the Druze were "allowed to stay by strategy" which in turn implied that there was a policy of exclusion of Muslims, at the very least.

[9] Nur Masalha, "The Historical Roots of the Palestinian Refugee Problem," in *Palestinian Refugees: The Right of Return*, ed. Naseer Hasan Aruri (Sterling, VA: Pluto, 2001), 61. Masalha, amongst others, maintains that the exodus of 1967 was not completely voluntary, but in effect forced through violent non-pressures.

> …the refugees wishing to return to their homes and live at peace with their neighbors should be permitted to do so at the earliest practicable date, and that compensation should be paid for the property of those choosing not to return and for 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.
> Instructs the Conciliation Commission to facilitate the repatriation, resettlement and economic and social rehabilitation of the refugees and the payment of compensation, and to maintain close relations with the Director of the United Nations Relief for Palestine Refugees and, through him, with the appropriate organs and agencies of the United Nations.[10]

Much debate and dispute would exist over the interpretation of Article 11 of the resolution. Its most popular interpretation has been that it is the legal foundation of the Right of Return for Palestinians. In response to resolutions 212 and 194, on December 8th 1949 the United Nations General Assembly would adopt Resolution 302. This resolution would establish the Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA).[11] The organization, meant to be temporary, would come to also form a strong component of the Palestinian refugee experience. Finally, in November 1967, responding the further occupation of Palestinian land and worsened refugee crisis, the United Nations Security Council would pass Resolution 242. This resolution would be another defining legal decision for the Palestinians.[12] It resolved the "withdrawal of Israeli armed forces from territories occupied in the…conflict."[13]

The Government of Israel, from the onslaught of the refugee crisis, maintained that the problem was "the direct outcome of the war of aggression launched in 1948 by the Arab League against Israel" and that were it not for the war "there would not be a single Arab refugee today."[14] On this position, as it will be discussed later, Israel would remain unflinching. Despite, however, its claims to the contrary, Israel's culpability in the plight of Palestinian refugees during the *Nakba* cannot be ignored. Several historical documents as well as scholars such as Benny Morris, Ilan Pappe and Nur Masalha have

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[10] UNGARES 194, Article 11.
[11] UNGARES 302, Article 7.
[12] See John Quigley, "Security Council Resolution 242 and the Right of Repatriation," *The Journal of Palestine Studies* 37.1 (2007): 49-61.
[13] It is important to note that UNSCRES 242 was meant, in principle, to form the basis of any and all diplomatic efforts that would take place in the ensuing decades for a 'just' settlement to the conflict. The resolution also forms the basis of the two-state solution, to which Israel would refuse to agree until 2007 at the Annapolis Conference. It would be the first time that the Israelis and Palestinians would approach the negotiations table agreeing upon the two-state solution.
[14] *Arab Refugees* (Jerusalem: Government of Israel, November 1953), 7.

highlighted the extent to which violence was used against Palestinians to send them into exile as well as the design strategy put in place to 'transfer' populations. As Ilan Pappe, notes in his essay "Israeli Perceptions of the Refugee Question" in the book Palestinian Refugees: The Right of Return, that there was an inevitability of a designed strategy of expulsion by Israel:

> If the Jewish state was to remain bi-national and democratic, the Arab Palestinians could have had a decisive effect on the new state's identity and future. The Zionist labor movement rejected such a possibility out of hand. This gap between a desire to be ethnically pure and preserve the principle of democracy could be bridged only by giving up the dream of a Zionist state or by cleansing the territory of the Jewish state of any substantial Palestinian presence. Nur Masalha and Benny Morris have both accumulated enough evidence to show how, from the beginning of the Zionist case, and at a much more intensive pace after 1936, the plan to transfer the Palestinians out of 'Jewish Palestine' became a major plank of Zionist thought and eventually a basic principle guiding the *Yishuv*'s policy in the 1948 war. In the months leading to the war Israel prepared its ethnic-cleansing program –a plan that included mass expulsions, sporadic massacres, campaign of terror and intimidation, and finally confiscation of land and assets.[15]

In the decades following 1948, Palestinian refugees would continue to endure greater hardship and uncertainty. While in Jordan refugees from 1948 were granted Jordanian nationality in 1954, one of the darkest periods of Palestinian history would be in September of 1970. In the period following the 1967 war, there had been an increase in Palestinian *fedayeen*, resistance fighters, in Jordan. Israel attacked a Jordanian village in 1968, claiming that it had been harboring several fighters. Israel, however, would fail to succeed in its aims, incurring several losses against the *fedayeen*. In 1969, Yasser 'Arafat would come in as the Chairman of the Palestinian Liberation Organization and the resistance movement would grow. The King of Jordan, King Hussein, saw the growth of the resistance movement in Jordan as a threat to the stability and authority of the state and his own rule.[16] Thus in September 1970, King Hussein declared martial law in an attempt to expel Palestinian resistance fighters. In battles between the *fedayeen* and the Jordanian military, thousands of Jordanians and Palestinians would lose their lives. The period

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[15] Ilan Pappe, "Israeli Perceptions of the Refugee Question," in *Palestinian Refugees: The Right of Return*, ed. Naseer Hasan Aruri (Sterling, VA: Pluto, 2001), 71.
[16] "Research Guide: Palestinian Refugees in Jordan," *Forced Migration Online*, <http://www.forcedmigration.org/guides/fmo025/>.

came to be known as Black September, one of several bloody instances in the history of Palestinian refugees. According to UNRWA, there are over 1.9 million Palestinian refugees living in Jordan today. Almost 400,000 live in refugee camps and have access to healthcare, education and other basic civic and political rights.

It would be in Lebanon, however, where the experience and history of the Palestinian refugees would be not only emblematic of the experience of all Palestinian refugees but also the darkest. As it will be discussed at length in the third chapter, the Palestinian refugees of Lebanon – today numbering over 400,000 – were caught within the most precarious position. Unlike other Arab countries, Lebanon did not have nor did it pass any law to deal with refugees in general. The majority, if not all, of the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon are from the 1948 war. The consociational system of governance, based on a highly questionable census conducted in 1932, sustained a very delicate and controversial power structure.[17] This power structure, created on faulty religious demographics, would trap the Palestinians within it while keeping them at the fringes. The refugees, spread across 12 official camps administered entirely by UNRWA, are unable to return to their homes however are denied any basic civic and political liberties in Lebanon. Unlike in Syria, Jordan and Egypt, Palestinians in Lebanon do not have government access to education and healthcare. In addition to this, Palestinians are not allowed to own property and, perhaps one of the most damaging of the laws, they are barred from most professions.

Today, the worldwide population of Palestinian refugees is over five million, of who almost one million live in refugee camps. Of these one million, generations have been born and raised in the camps of Lebanon since the first mass exodus of 1948. When the first major peace process began at Madrid and continued into Oslo, the time was seemingly ripe for substantial discussion on the future of not only the borders in question but also the millions of refugees. Yet despite the centrality of the question of the Right of Return to the Palestinian identity and nationalist cause, their representatives would sell this essential right short during the Oslo process. Final status arrangements, which included the question of Palestinian refugees, would be put aside to be discussed

[17] Rania Maktabi, "The Lebanese Census of 1932 Revisited. Who Are the Lebanese?" *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 26.2 (1999): 219-41.

following the initial Oslo Accords. The period between the end of the Oslo Accords and the negotiations on final status arrangements would come to be known as the Oslo interim period. It would be during this time, in particular, that several 'third track' initiatives would be undertaken by diverse but interrelated groups and organizations to discuss the future of Palestinian refugees. It was recognized that there was little substantive work done and information put together on the refugees. If any solution or settlement were to come out of the talks, it would need to be based on realities on the ground, of the past, the relationship between Israel and the Palestinians and the realities of repatriation, resettlement and compensation.

This dissertation examines the critical period between 1993 and 2000, with a specific focus on some of the discussions being had and the discourses being created in the Oslo interim period. I am specifically interested in three major conferences that took place in consecutive years: The 1995 Palestinians in Lebanon conference, the 1997 Ottawa Stocktaking Conference on Palestinian Refugee Research and the 1998 Warwick Conference on the Role of the International Community. All three of these conferences were starkly different from one another in both content and intent. Nevertheless, these conferences underscore an important moment in history: a lively discussion being had on the fate of the Palestinian refugees. Thus, in this dissertation I will explore the context in which these conferences emerged as well as what emerged from them. In addition to this, I am interested in the position designated to the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon at these conferences in the context of their treatment by their representatives, the international community and their host country, Lebanon.

The dissertation is divided into three major sections. The first chapter, "Forgotten at Oslo," contextualizes the situation of the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon by looking at the Oslo process. In this chapter, I provide a brief history of the peace process. I start at Madrid, then delve into the multilateral group on the refugees and end with a discussion on how the Oslo process weakened the Palestinians and collapsed at Camp David in 2000. For this chapter, I use several and diverse parts of the vast literature that exists on the Oslo period. While my sources are mostly secondary, there are some primary sources as well as reports that have not been used previously by other scholars. The following chapter, "Discussing Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon," looks at the three major

conferences mentioned earlier. In this chapter, I explore the attendees, the programs and the discussions being had at each conference. Sources for this chapter are largely primary, as I used conference programs, summaries, reports and presented papers. I also had the opportunity to interview individuals directly involved with these efforts, particularly Nadim Shehadi, Dr. Laila Parsons and Dr. Rex Brynen. The final chapter, "Lebanon During the Oslo Interim Years," examines the atmosphere in Lebanon during this critical time in history. There has not been a sufficient history written on the relationship between the Lebanese and the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon following the end of the civil war. Thus I attempt to fill in the gap by analyzing newspaper articles, in particular, that capture sentiments of the Palestinian leaders in Lebanon, the different factions of the Lebanese citizenry and the Lebanese government.

Chapter One: Forgotten at Oslo

"The Palestinian people's losses, suffering and future were handed over to Israel to dispose of as it wished." – Edward Said[18]

On May 19th 2011, U.S President Barack H. Obama declared in his second address to the Arab world that "while the core issues of the [Israeli-Palestinian] conflict must be negotiated, the basis of those negotiations is clear: a viable Palestine, and a secure Israel."[19] The speech lacked the luster of his previous address, in Cairo, to the entirety of the Muslim world, but nevertheless caused a stir amongst many Israelis and many Americans. The President presented an American position for resolution of the conflict. In particular, President Obama had vocally pledged commitment to the internationally recognized 1967 borders. United Nations Security Council Resolution 242 resolved the "withdrawal of Israel armed forces from territories occupied in the recent conflict."[20] Israeli Prime Minister Benyamin Netanyahu responded to Obama's speech by echoing the sentiment of many Israelis. According to the Israeli leader, the 1967 borders are "indefensible." Pundits and diplomats alike lashed out with their words at the inflexibility of the Israeli leader. And if these pundits and diplomats stood elsewhere on the political spectrum, they lashed out against the audacity of President Obama to make such a stance so blunt and public. Yet the declaration was nothing new. When President Obama entered office in 2008, he had then held the same position albeit framed in stricter language targeted at Israel's belligerence.[21] It was the first time that an American President was making the 1967 borders the foundation for negotiations and resolution to the conflict.[22]

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[18] Edward Said, "Who is Worse?" *London Review of Books* 16.20,1994.
[19] "Barack Obama's Speech on Middle East – Full Transcript," *The Guardian*, 19 May 2011.
[20] United Nations Security Council Resolution 242.
[21] Uzi Mahnaimi and Sarah Baxter, "Barack Obama Links Israel Peace Plan to 1967 Borders Deal," *The Sunday Times* 16 Nov. 2008. In the second issue of volume 38 of the journal, from Winter 2009, the *Journal of Palestine Studies* published a Special Document File, entitled "Barack Obama and the Arab Israeli Conflict," exploring the President's positions on the Arab-Israeli conflict beginning in 2007, during his campaign period. The journal argued that President Obama's position as recently as 2000 was rather pro-Palestinian; however, a failed congressional bid ostensibly evolved his perspective into one far more sympathetic towards Israel. This perspective became particularly noticeable in the campaign lead-up to the 2008 U.S Presidential election.
[22] For further discussions on and explorations of the history of U.S policy towards the Arab-Israeli conflict and, in particular, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, some notable works include: Vaughn P. Shannon's *Balancing Act: Us Foreign Policy and the Arab-Israeli Conflict* (2003), which looks at the historical relationship and decision-making process from an international relations perspective, focusing on the three-levels of analysis and how each have contributed to the American position towards the conflict; William B.

The Clinton Parameters of 2000 shied away from the mention of the 1967 borders, focusing on annexed lands, minimization of settlements and land swaps.[23] Ultimately, culminating at the Camp David Summit in 2000, the Oslo peace process crumbled as it failed to bring the two sides to any agreement on Final Status arrangements. In 2007, the George W. Bush administration attempted to revive the peace process, at Annapolis, that had been dormant since 2001. It was at this conference that the Palestinian and Israeli representatives for the first time approached the negotiations table in agreement of a two-state settlement. According to the Special Document on the conference by the Journal of Palestine Studies, Annapolis "illustrated the extent of the transformation of the terms of reference for Israeli-Palestinian peace talks."[24] It was thus in this context that President Obama emerged in 2008 with his commitment to not only two states but also to those states built upon the borders before the occupation resulting from the Six Day War.[25]

Yet in many ways what has happened in recent months is not necessarily anything new. Instead, it has been the result of the power relations entrenched into the peace process since the 1991 Madrid Peace Conference. These power relations have, in turn, ensured that Israeli preferences and conditions dictate the terms of both the peace and the process. At Madrid, Israeli pre-conditions to participating in the bilateral and multilateral talks included who would suffice to be the appropriate representative for the Palestinians. These conditions, supported by the sponsors of the conference, would go on to affect the talks, particularly the multilaterals. The multilateral committee on refugees was especially affected by Israel's strategy to exclude any and all Palestinians outside of the

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Quandt's *Peace Process: American Diplomacy and the Arab-Israeli Conflict* since 1967 (2001) will be used in this chapter and is considered one of the leading works on the subject; Kathleen Christison's *Perceptions of Palestine: Their Influence on U.S. Middle East Policy* (2001) looks at the impact of narrative and perspectives have effected American president after president in dealing with, either through policy or through oration, the Palestinians; The Foundation for Middle East Peace as well.

[23] "The Clinton Parameters," in Robert Danin, "Middle East: Peace Plans Background," *Council on Foreign Relations*, 7 Feb. 2007; Web. 20 July 2011. <http://www.cfr.org/israel/middle-east-peace-plans-background/p7736#p4>.

[24] "Special Document: Annapolis Conference," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 37.3 (2008): 75.

[25] It is important to note that within months of the election of Barack Obama in November 2008, Israel would launch a two-week assault against Gaza referred to as Operation Castlead. Over 1500 Palestinians, overwhelming civilian, were killed. While President Obama tried to revive the peace process, the situation in the region failed to allow it. The re-election of Binyamin Netanyahu, the growth of settlements and the divide of governance between Gaza and the West Bank were amongst some of the most challenging obstacles that stood and continue to stand in Obama's way for resuscitating peace negotiations.

Occupied Palestinian Territories and any from East Jerusalem. Such a move was not only to exclude the Tunis-based leadership of the PLO, which was also explicitly excluded, but also to ensure that the question of the refugees and of East Jerusalem would not be brought in. Instead these 'major' issues would form a contingent of separate 'Final Status' issues to be discussed at a later date after the interim period had come to a close.

Despite the May 19th recognition of the importance of the refugees as an "wrenching and emotional" issue by President Obama, the question of the Palestinian refugees has become the most marginalized of the Final Status issues.[26] Before the initiatives had even begun at Madrid and Oslo, the question of the Palestinian refugees was pushed aside. At Madrid the question was designated to be discussed through multilateral committee. At Oslo the question was thrown under the pile of 'Final Status.' The Oslo Accords, in particular, were meant to be a 'confidence building' process that would conclude, ideally, with a resolution. Thus to many who were involved in the process putting the most crucial and controversial of the issues to be discussed at a later date made sense, especially given Israel's reluctances towards the entire process. Nevertheless, this course of action struck as a knife of betrayal in the backs of many in the Palestinian Diaspora, particularly refugees. Rosemary Sayigh writes in her 1995 article "Palestinian Refugees: Harsh Present, Uncertain Future" that the "marginalization of the refugee issue [began] at Madrid and [was] given the Palestinian Liberation Organization's (PLO) stamp of approval at Oslo."[27] The sense of betrayal was strengthened by the signing the self-rule agreement and increased as the international community showed a growing interest in dealing primarily with the Palestinians in the Occupied Territories rather than with those dispersed throughout neighboring countries.[28]

As Sayigh also notes, the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon formed a "special case" in this marginalization. Faced with great uncertainty about their future, Palestinian refugees in Lebanon were, and still are, unable to go back to the homes from which they were expelled or fled. This, of course, is common to all Palestinian refugees. Those in Lebanon, however, have also been denied any degree of comfort outside decaying and

[26] From intermediaries and Palestinian representatives.
[27] Rosemary Sayigh, "Palestinians in Lebanon: Harsh Present, Uncertain Future," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 25.1 (1995): 37.
[28] Ibid., 38.

under-funded camps. Palestinian refugees in Lebanon have been denied many, if not most, basic civic and political rights, including access to most professions and governmental access to healthcare and education.[29] They are wholly dependant on the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), which faced major budgetary problems throughout the Oslo process.[30] This disenfranchisement has been bolstered by Lebanon's lack of a governing code on refugees, allowing them to take particular liberties with a population comprising of, at the time, around 350,000. Unlike their refugee counterparts, most notably in Syria and Jordan, Palestinian refugees in Lebanon have remained isolated from the society at large. This isolation has been the result of a two-tier historical legacy: the first being the country's constitutionally enshrined confessional character and the second being the role of the Palestinian presence in the 15 year long Lebanese Civil War and subsequent Israeli occupation. The perceived alien and threatening presence of the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon has bolstered the popularly held belief amongst many Lebanese that any change in the temporary status of the refugees would resemble or eventually lead to their resettlement, or *tawtin*.[31] In other words, giving any rights or even rebuilding of destroyed refugee camps seemed to present the frightening prospect for permanent resettlement. These particular sentiments and the relationship between the Palestinian refugees, the Lebanese government and the Lebanese population at large will be discussed in depth in the third chapter of this dissertation.

The Oslo peace process was the first of its kind in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, thus the diminution of the Palestinian refugee question to a multilateral side committee necessitates particular attention. In this first chapter, I will explore the status of Palestinian refugees during the Oslo peace process, beginning with the parameters set forth in the Madrid Peace Conference of 1991. The first part of this chapter will provide a detailed background to the Madrid Peace Conference and the Oslo Accords as well as the establishment of the Refugee Working Group. The discussion on the RWG will highlight

[29] As of August 2010, some reforms to the labor laws have been made. Given the specific period focus of this dissertation, I will be referencing laws, policies and numbers from the period between the signing of Ta'if in 1989 and the Camp David Summit of 2000, unless otherwise indicated.
[30] Sayigh, 39.
[31] This can also be translated, more accurately, as 'implantation' as noted by Rosemary Sayigh on page 37 of the above cited article.

how the Right of Return was undermined. In addition to this, I will discuss how we begin to see the specific marginalization of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon in the peace process. From there the discussion will briefly delve into the specifics of the Accords, such as the signing of the Declaration of Principles, limited self-rule and responses and critiques elicited from the Diaspora. I will be drawing primarily from secondary sources as well as relevant newspaper and magazine articles. Specific documents from the process will also be referenced. I will also use information obtained through an interview with Dr. Rex Brynen. A professor of political science at McGill University, Dr. Brynen is an expert on the Palestinian refugees. He was involved with the process throughout the nineties particularly with the RWG and some of the conferences that will be discussed in chapter two.

Mincing Words: The Road to Oslo through the 1991 Madrid Peace Conference

In January 1989, Spanish Foreign Minister, Francisco Fernandez Ordonez announced that the European Community was interested in organizing a peace conference that would bring representatives from the Arab world and Israel to discuss the then 40 year old conflict.[32] A 'troika' consisting of Greece, Spain and France, alongside PLO Chairman Yasser 'Arafat, led the initiative to bring the PLO and Israeli face-to-face for the first time. This occurred shortly following PLO's recognition of the State of Israel, signaling the necessity of a 'new era' in diplomatic relations. It would, however, be the United States and the Soviet Union, until its collapse, which would take on the leadership and organization of the conference.[33] While 'Arafat recognized the importance of European powers, he was particularly interested in American involvement given the country's close ties with the Jewish state. Additionally, the United States had lifted the ban on correspondence with the Palestinian group, making it a prime opportunity in the shadow of the First Gulf War for restructuring the rut in which the Arab world, particularly the Levant, found itself. [34] Thus, 'Arafat called upon the George H.W. Bush administration, in a January 27th news conference in Spain, "to turn a new political page

[32] "EC to Push for Middle East Peace Conference," *The Independent*, 3 Jan. 1989.
[33] "Yasir 'Arafat Holds News Conference in Spain, Calls on Bush to 'Turn a New Page,'" *BBC Summary of World Broadcasts*, 30 Jan. 1989.
[34] "First official discussions held by three EC ministers, 'Arafat," *The Globe and Mail*, 28 Jan. 1989.

in the Middle East."[35] As a BBC summary of the news conference discusses, the call "came in a context in which he accused [Bush's] predecessor, Ronald Reagan, of partiality and of lending all his weight to Israel's side."[36] 'Arafat, making use of Bush Sr.'s calls for a 'new world order' and his new self-brand as a 'peacemaker,' met with the foreign ministers of the troika. He pushed for support from the EC, the international community and regional key players in the Arab World for a conference. The end of the first Gulf War had left the region with much to consider regarding its future. William Quandt notes in his important work Peace Process: American Diplomacy and the Arab-Israel Peace Conflict Since 1967, that the victory in the Gulf and Soviet cooperation gave the United States' "the key diplomatic position."[37] The task was then handed to then Secretary of State James Baker, who had been working on diplomatic relations between the Arab states and Israel since the late eighties. Baker and his Middle East team at the State Department sought to find mutually agreeable terms between the parties in order to get them all to agree to the process. Baker's shuttling was met, initially, with much reluctance from all the key parties. In The Politics of Dispossession: The Struggle for Palestinian Self-Determination 1969-1994, Edward Said notes that Arab states initially showed reluctance to agree to 'bilateral peace with Israel without movement on the question of Palestine.'[38] Yet, as Said also notes, this line of refusal proved futile in the steps taken by the United States to begin the process, leaving the Arab leaders with perhaps little choice. Additionally, Israel under the leadership of the right-wing Likud government was itself quick to "snub" the prospect, despite support from some individual members of the government.[39] The Jewish state was unwilling to meet with the PLO, which it still branded as an organization far from a legitimate partner for peace despite its recognition of the state. The recognition was seen as a significant step towards the establishment of dialogue, despite the criticism it elicited from within the Palestinian Diaspora. The question of whether or not to agree to the process began to tear apart the

[35] "First official discussions held by three EC ministers, 'Arafat," *The Globe and Mail*, 28 Jan. 1989.
[36] Ibid.
[37] William B. Quandt, *Peace Process: American Diplomacy and the Arab-Israeli Conflict since 1967*, Third ed. (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 2001), 302.
[38] Edward W. Said, *The Politics of Dispossession: the Struggle for Palestinian Self-determination, 1969-1994* (New York: Pantheon, 1994), 159.
[39] "EC to Back 'Arafat Peace Plan," *Sydney Morning Herald*, 30 Jan.1989; "'Arafat Meets Formally with European Community," *The New York Times*, 28 Jan. 1989.

national unity government in Israel. The Israeli right and left both threatened to drop out pending on Shamir's ultimate decision regarding Israel's presence in the process.[40] It would take much compromise and pressure from the United States to get Israel to agree to its attendance. Ultimately, as Prime Minister Shamir noted on Israeli radio prior to Secretary of State Baker's October 18th announcement of the conference, there seemed to be no "alternative."[41]

The objective of the Madrid Peace Conference was, according to the invitation, to achieve:

> …a just, lasting and comprehensive peace settlement, through direct negotiations along two tracks, between Israel and the Arab states, and between Israel and the Palestinians, based on United Nations Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338.[42]

In addition to this, Resolution 425 for Lebanon and the "land for peace" deal were also used in the foundation of the process.[43] While an ambitious format for the conference was laid out, leading to equally ambitious goals, the invitation made it clear that the conference and those involved had, ultimately, no authority to impose anything:

> The conference will have no power to impose solutions on the parties or veto agreements reached by them. It will have no authority to make decisions for the parties and no ability to vote on issues of results. The conference can reconvene only with the consent of all the parties. [44]

The main parties invited to the conference, to directly participate in the negotiations, were Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria. The Palestinian delegation was brought under the guise of the Jordanian delegation and was comprised of seven Palestinians, none of whom, under Israel's pre-conditions, were affiliated to the PLO and

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[40] Quandt, 298.
[41] Bob Hepburn, "U.S, Soviets Invite Nations to Mideast Peace Talks," *The Toronto Star*, 18 Oct. 1991.
[42] Letter of Invitation to the Madrid Peace Conference, October 30th 1991; UN Security Council Resolution 338 called for the ceasefire of the 1973 Yom Kippur war and also, arguably, made Resolution 242 binding in its third clause. The text of the resolution, taken from UN Security Council resolution archives, is as follows: 1. Calls upon all parties to present fighting to cease all firing and terminate all military activity immediately, no later than 12 hours after the moment of the adoption of this decision, in the positions after the moment of the adoption of this decision, in the positions they now occupy; 2. Calls upon all parties concerned to start immediately after the cease-fire the implementation of Security Council Resolution 242 (1967) in all of its parts; 3. Decides that, immediately and concurrently with the cease-fire, negotiations start between the parties concerned under appropriate auspices aimed at establishing a just and durable peace in the Middle East.
[43] "Lebanon," *U.S. Department of State*, Web. 01 June 2011. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/35833.htm>.; UN Security Council Resolution 425, adopted on March 19th 1978, called for Israeli withdrawal from South Lebanon.
[44] Letter of Invitation to the Madrid Peace Conference, October 30th 1991.

did not live in East Jerusalem.[45] This situation was part of the initial compromises made by the PLO and the United States to accommodate and secure Israel's presence at the conference and throughout the process. This would ultimately also force the 'dead end' for the conference. Other participants included the host, Spain and the co-sponsors - United States and the Soviet Union. The European Community and Egypt also participated. The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) was invited to send its secretary general as an observer and representatives of the member states "to participate in organizing the negotiations on multilateral issues."[46] Lastly, an observer from the United Nations was also invited.

The format of the conference reflected the road of obstacles faced by organizers and sponsors to bring all the necessary parties to the table. In an interview, Rex Brynen discusses the "tug of war" that informed the structure of the Madrid conference. The Israelis, he says, "wanted everything to be bilateral because that maximized their negotiating power [while] the Arabs, wanted things to be multilateral because it [backed] their negotiating power."[47] Thus in an attempt to appease all parties what emerged was what Brynen describes as "a multilateral opening to a series of bilateral negotiations…on top of which there was a multilateral overlay of the various working groups…to provide an additional multilateral dimension."[48] This two-track structuring of the Madrid process aimed to achieve, at the bilateral level, rapprochement between Israel and her Arab neighbors. At the multilateral level, it aimed to address regional matters ranging from Palestinian refugees to water and arms control while simultaneously promoting confidence between neighbors through better economic and political relations.[49] Joel Peters notes in his 1997 article "The Multilateral Arab-Israel Peace Talks and the Refugee Working Group" that the bilateral talks were meant to address the past, whereas the multilaterals focused on the future.[50] In addition to this, he notes that the multilaterals

[45] Salim Tamari, *Palestinian Refugee Negotiations: from Madrid to Oslo II* (Washington, D.C: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1996).
[46] Letter of Invitation to the Madrid Peace Conference, October 30th 1991.
[47] Interview by author with Dr. Rex Brynen on May 31st 2011.
[48] Ibid.
[49]Munther J. Haddadin's 2002 article in the Geographical Journal, "Water in the Middle East Peace Process," (168.4) explores the issue of water, in particular, throughout the various negotiations.
[50] Joel Peters, "The Multilateral Arab-Israel Peace Talks and the Refugee Working Group," *Journal of Refugee Studies* 10.3 (1997): 320.

were meant to bring in the international community, which would be more attracted to the prospect of involvement given the scope of regional development. In addition to attracting the international community's involvement in the peace process, the multilateral track was also meant to complement the bilateral track through establishing talks on "non-political issues of mutual concern" which would go beyond Israel and its immediate neighbors.[51] Despite this, the multilateral track received a cynical response from many, seen as a naïve and far too ambitious attempt. Nevertheless, the organizers and parties remained committed to the inclusion of the second track

Thus it came with little surprise that the Madrid Peace Conference failed to substantively establish a 'new regional order.' The negotiations between Syria and Israel would be on going throughout the decade, as were the negotiations between Israel and Lebanon. The latter negotiations were highly dependent on the former. This was expected given the Syrian occupation of North Lebanon and its hand-in-hand control over Lebanese politics, which would affect the two countries' role, or the lack thereof, in Moscow a few months later.[52] Whereas Syria and Israel would pursue peace talks later in the decade, Lebanon would refuse any negotiations until and unless the refugee issue, in particular was resolved.[53] While the Lebanese anxiously waited Israel's long overdue withdrawal from South Lebanon, they were against a unilateral withdrawal as such an action would compromise the future for the future Palestinian refugees in Lebanon. This particular issue will be discussed later in the dissertation in greater detail. In addition to the postponement of peace talks by Lebanon, Israel had a vested interested in prolonging its occupation of South Lebanon, despite the end of the civil war in Lebanon and the costs that Israel's occupation continued to incur throughout the decade. The only significant outcome of the Madrid process, aside from the Oslo Accords was the talks that eventually led to the Jordanian-Israeli peace treaty. Talks between Israel and Jordan would continue in Washington D.C, leading to the 1993 signing of the Israel-Jordanian Common Agenda, between Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and King Hussein Bin

[51] Ibid., 321.
[52] Ibid., 322.
[53] "Lebanon," *U.S. Department of State*, Web. 01 June 2011. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/35833.htm>.; Helena Cobban surveys Syrian-Israeli negotiations throughout the nineties in *The Israeli-Syrian Peace Talks: 1991-96 and Beyond* (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace, 1999).

Talal. This agenda served as the foundation of the peace treaty that would be ratified in 1994, in which Jordan also recognized the State of Israel, following Egypt as the second Arab country to do so.[54]

The Palestinians at Madrid

The failure of the Madrid conference and the ensuing multilateral talks can be traced to the unequal playing field that existed from the onset of Secretary of State James Baker's shuttle diplomacy. Of the parties involved in the Madrid process, Israel remained the most unrelenting in its demands and pre-conditions. Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir who belonged to the right-wing Likud party led the Israeli government at the time. The change in leadership, with the election of Yitzhak Rabin in 1992, would, albeit relatively, alter Israel's approach to the peace process. Nevertheless, Israel's inflexible demeanor would force concessions on behalf of the Palestinian representatives, which would ultimately render the entire process, unsuccessful. This failure would pave the road for the Oslo Accords, which despite dealing with an Israel under new leadership, would also see significant Palestinian concessions leading to the process' ultimate failure.

The Madrid Peace Conference was not only an opportunity for the Arab world and Israel to change the direction of the region as driven by past hostilities, but was also the critical moment for Palestinians to represent themselves. It was their chance to represent their own desires in discussions pertaining to their future. Having followed the First Intifada, the Madrid process gave PLO Chairman Yasser 'Arafat also the opportunity to re-brand his leadership. The PLO was long regarded as a 'terrorist' organization by Israel and the United States, as well as other countries and international organizations. In the aftermath of the 1967 war, the PLO sought to claim independence from its political dependency on Arab states and in the process had adopted various forms of resistance, which included violent methods. The worsening of the situation in the Occupied Territories, in particular, forced the PLO to take action to respond to the people it represented as well as secure its own leadership. Members of the Palestinian Diaspora, in particular, perceived the latter to be of greater importance on the PLO's agenda. The steps the Tunis-based Palestinian leadership took to ensure the establishment of

[54] A deeper discussion of this process and treaty can be found in 'Abd Al-Salam Majali, Jawad Ahmed Anani, and Munther J. Haddadin, *Peacemaking: the inside Story of the 1994 Jordanian-Israeli Treaty* (Norman: University of Oklahoma, 2006).

diplomatic relations with Israel and the subsequent negotiations at Oslo following the failure at Madrid seemed to be at the great expense of the Palestinian cause as I will discuss later in this chapter. Despite the strong-will it presented, it quickly became abundantly clear that the Palestinian leadership was weak positioned to be in negotiations. Its weak position arguably forced the PLO to recognize the right of Israel to exist and to evade the question of the Palestinian refugees throughout the decade.[55] Despite this, the re-branding would take place outside the official framework of the peace process. Israel would reject meeting with any Palestinians outside of the Occupied Territories.

In its letter of assurance to the Palestinians, the United States made very clear its intention to assure the Palestinians of their independence as both a political body and as a negotiations delegation.[56] The United States also emphasized that it would not allow Israel to annex East Jerusalem and that Palestinians from there, excluded from the joint-delegation, would be included in any Final Status negotiations. The letter also made clear the purpose of the negotiations between the Palestinians and the Israelis, hoping to "effect the peaceful transfer of authority from Israel to the Palestinians."[57] Yet the pre-conditions set out by Israel regarding Palestinian representation at Madrid afforded the delegation anything but 'real' independence. Israel was aware of the PLO's situational and institutional disadvantages, making the footing of the peace process unequal from the initial steps. It demanded, as previously mentioned, that none of the delegates in the Palestinian group – which was forced to join the Jordanians in a joint delegation – be associated with the PLO, live in East Jerusalem or outside the OPT. These conditions were backed by both Russia and the United States, the latter which left an ambiguous opening for Palestinians outside the OPT to be involved in the multilaterals.[58] The

[55] Recently, an exploration of the PLO from 1964 to the signing of the Declaration of Principles in 1993 was published, written by one of the founders of the organization Shafiq Al-Hout, entitled, "My Life in the PLO: The Inside Story of the Palestinian Struggle" (Pluto, 2011). The book explores the different periods of the PLO, effects of both internal and external leadership on the dynamics of the group over the course of three decades. Al-Hout would later resign from his senior position in lieu of the DOP, which he saw as a stab in the back of the Palestinian people and struggle. His critiques and relationship with the PLO at that critical moment will be discussed in the final chapter.
[56] "Special Document: The Madrid Peace Conference," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 21.2 (1992): 118.
[57] Ibid., 119.
[58] David Makovsky, "Tuesday US, Russia Back Israeli Stand on Palestinian Delegation Multilateral Talks Opening in Moscow Today," *Jerusalem Post*, 28 Jan. 1992.

Palestinian delegation, however, remained in contact with the PLO, which played an advisory role.[59] Thus, while the other Arab countries were able to get the multilateral dimension they had hoped for, strengthening their ability in the negotiations, the Palestinian delegation knew that it was going into the conference already strongly marginalized because the PLO was not allowed to be at the table.

Ali Jabrawi, in a symposium at the Center for Policy Analysis on Palestine in 1999, discusses the fear of the PLO at Madrid.[60] While their desire for multilateral groups was fulfilled, as it will be discussed later in this chapter, they knew that ultimately they were "outside of the negotiation network" as a subsidiary of the Jordanian delegation.[61] Going into the negotiations the PLO had demanded that the Palestinian negotiation delegation's independence and the inclusion of Tunis-based leadership. Jabrawi notes that while the Palestinian negotiating delegation was able to retain its independence, the possibility of the inclusion of the 'Arafat led contingent received 'stiff Israeli opposition' and was thus excluded from the conference. This in turn led to the fear amongst the PLO that there would be "a creation of an alternative Palestinian leadership…that would gain prominence among Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza."[62] As it will be discussed later and as Jabrawi mentions:

> In order to force Israel to open direct negotiations with it, the Tunis leadership steered the Washington negotiations to a dead end. The end result of this process was the 13 September 1993 Oslo agreement (the "Declaration of Principles"), an agreement rife with major Palestinian concessions.[63]

The Refugee Working Group and Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon

In "The Multilateral Arab-Israel Peace Talks and the Refugee Working Group," Joel Peters notes that during the peace process, the bilateral track overshadowed the multilaterals.[64] Despite being 'integral to the entire process,' very little was known about exactly what was discussed in the committees and what purpose they ultimately served.

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[59] Michael R. Fishbach, "The Madrid Peace Conference," *The Jerusalem Fund*, Web. 01 June 2011. <http://www.thejerusalemfund.org/ht/d/ContentDetails/i/2973>.
[60] The Center for Policy Analysis, part of The Jerusalem Fund and located in Washington D.C., is now known as The Palestine Center.
[61] Ali Jabrawi, "Palestinian Perspectives on the Peace Process since Madrid," in *From Madrid to Final Status: Four Perspectives on U.S.-Palestinian Relations Symposium at the Center for Policy Analysis on Palestine*, Feb. 2000: 4.
[62] Ibid.
[63] Ibid.
[64] Peters, 320.

This in turn led to much suspicion and speculation, as Rex Brynen noted in my interview with him. It became almost comical for those involved in the various working groups the extent to which conspiratorial rumors and beliefs about the ability and actions of the committees had spread.[65] This was particularly true for the Refugee Working Group, which was, Peters notes, the most misunderstood. The committee was not ultimately meant to serve as a forum of negotiations or as a source of a significant overture of the situation of the refugees, despite the wishes of the Palestinian delegation. The very organization of the committee, Brynen notes, kept the RWG from achieving much.

As part of the multilateral track of the Madrid conference, several committees were established to deal with regional issues such as water, arms control, environment and economic development. Five multilateral committees, or 'Working Groups,' were launched at the Moscow conference in 1992.[66] The Palestinian delegation had been adamant on including a committee on the refugees. According to Peters, the inclusion of the refugees was an important political move by the Palestinians. The question of the Palestinian refugees, as discussed in the introduction of this dissertation, has been a core issue since 1948. In the year remembered by Palestinians today as the *Nakba* almost 1 million Palestinians were believed to have become refugees, with 80% "forcibly displaced."[67] By the late eighties and early nineties, the number of refugees worldwide was believed to be over 3 million. Thus exclusion of Palestinian refugees by the very leadership that claimed to represent them would have been seen as a great betrayal.[68] The Palestinian delegation, Peter notes, also intended to introduce "an element of Final Status negotiations" to the multilateral talks.[69] Israel, steadfast in its refusal of the Right of Return of Palestinian refugees, boycotted the first meeting in Ottawa in protest of the direction the RWG seemed to be taking as well as for the inclusion of Palestinians outside the OPT.[70] For Israel, the purpose of the RWG was not political but humanitarian.

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[65] Interview by author with Dr. Rex Brynen on May 31st 2011

[66] "Middle East Peace Process," *Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada (DFAIT)*, Web. 12 May 2011. <http://www.international.gc.ca/name-anmo/peace_process-processus_paix/refugees-refugies/index.aspx?lang=eng>.

[67] "Palestinian Refugees: An Overview," *Palestinian Refugee ResearchNet*, Web. 15 May 2011. <http://prrn.mcgill.ca/background/index.htm>.

[68] Peters, 323.

[69] Ibid.

[70] Bob Hepburn, "Israel to Boycott Ottawa Round of Mideast Talks," *The Toronto Star*, 31 Mar. 1992.

It did not want to discuss any small question that would relate to the greater Palestinian refugee issue. Israel felt that the goals of the Palestinian delegation for the RWG were beyond what was acceptable to it, namely the stress on the adherence to U.N General Assembly Resolution 194 and family reunification.[71] This made apparent the Palestinian leadership's desire for the RWG to serve as a "forum for addressing the substantive concerns and political rights of the refugees."[72] For the Palestinians the political feature of the state of refugees could not be divorced from the RWG. According to Andrew Robinson, the Canadian gavel-holder of the group, the purpose seemed simple enough:

> Early in the process, it was agreed that the RWG could most usefully complement the bilateral negotiating parties' own efforts to address the refugee issue by:
> - [Improving] the current living conditions of refugees and displaced persons without prejudice to their rights and future status;
> - [Easing] and extending access to family reunification; and
> - [Supporting] the process of achieving a viable and comprehensive solution to the refugee issue.[73]

Before delving into the scope, successes and shortcomings of the RWG it is important to note that, as Peters writes, even before the first plenary session, the organization of the RWG was "fraught with difficulties."[74] Aside from disputes over the purpose of the working group, there was debate over nature of the Palestinian delegation. In respect to its previous demands, Israel protested the inclusion of Palestinians outside the Occupied Palestinian Territories. Under the efforts of Foreign Minister Amr Moussa Egypt, Peters discusses, brokered a compromise agreement in which Israel accepted the presence of Diaspora Palestinians providing they were not affiliated with the PLO or Palestine National Council (PNC). This agreement was disrupted when PNC member Muhammad Hallaj headed the delegation in the second round of talks, causing the second boycott of talks by the Israelis.[75] It was then discovered that Hallaj's membership with the PNC had come to an end in 1991 and talks continued without much consequence.[76] The signing of the Declaration of Principles in 1993, as it will be discussed in the second part

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[71] Peters, 324.
[72] Ibid.
[73] A. Robinson, "The Refugee Working Group, the Middle East Peace Process, and Lebanon," *Journal of Refugee Studies*. 10.3 (1997): 317.
[74] Peters, 323.
[75] Ibid., 324.
[76] Peters, 325.

of this chapter, eased relations between the PLO and Israel. The agreement ensured mutual recognition – the Israelis of the PLO as a legitimate partner for peace and the PLO of Israel's right to exist.

Another initial obstacle for the Refugee Working Group was the question of its leadership. Given the sensitivity of the refugee issue, a trusted gavel-holder had to be chosen. Although it had been pushing to lead the working group on water, Canada was instead given the responsibility to lead the RWG by Secretary of State Baker. The United States, the European Union and Japan were appointed as co-organizers. According to Brynen, who was one of two Canadian academics specializing on Palestinian refugees asked to advise on the issues:

> Canada became interested in the refugee issue solely because it [was] given the Refugee Working Group. Canada actually wanted water, but…got refugees because everyone thought we were trustworthy on the file. That is to say that both the Israelis and the various Arab parties felt that Canada was reasonably safe hands on what was a sensitive issue. I think the Americans thought that too and [did not] entirely trust the Europeans to have it.[77]

A total of eight plenary sessions were held between 1992 and 1995 in Ottawa, Tunis, Cairo, Oslo, Geneva and Antalya.[78] The group divided its focus into seven main themes, each led a particular country referred to as a 'shepherd':

> Databases (the shepherd for which is Norway), Family Reunification (France), Human Resources Development (US), Job Creation and Vocational Training (US), Public Health (Italy), Child Welfare (Sweden) and Economic and Social Infrastructure (the European Union).[79]

While the plans of the RWG were ambitious and well-organized, those involved had few illusions of grandeur pertaining to what was achievable. A multilateral committee required unanimous agreement on any and all decisions. The plenary sessions included a total of 45 delegations.[80] This, predictably, led to a great deal of inaction and 'substantive' decisions were left unmade.[81] Brynen notes that the only point upon which

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[77] Interview by author with Dr. Rex Brynen.
[78] Robinson, 316.
[79] "Refugees in the Middle East Process," *Palestinian Refugee ResearchNet*, Web. 15 May 2011. <http://prrn.mcgill.ca/background/background_refugees.htm>.
[80] "Middle East Peace Process," *Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada (DFAIT)*, Web. 12 May 2011. <http://www.international.gc.ca/name-anmo/peace_process-processus_paix/refugees-refugies/index.aspx?lang=eng>.
[81] Interview by author with Dr. Rex Brynen on May 31st 2011.

all participants could agree was that it "would be nice to make refugees' lives better in the mean time." In addition to this, Brynen discusses the futility of the RWG despite the importance and ambitious agenda it was given. Many of the projects undertaken by the RWG, Brynen says, in its initial session were projects that would have been undertaken anyway, without the umbrella of the multilateral group.

> Indeed…there was some hilarity amongst members of the group when you read some of the more conspiratorial reports about what the RWG was doing, when it really [was not] doing very much of anything - by design and by intention. That is to say that none of the parties particularly wanted the RWG to be a forum where anything was done. – Rex Brynen[82]

Aside from the actual ability of the RWG, there was also a clear difference in perspective amongst the organizers of what exactly 'progress' entailed. In a 1992 January article from the Globe and Mail, journalists John Gray and Patrick Martin note:

> After a day of trying to mediate what may be the world's nastiest political problem, a senior Canadian diplomat emerged yesterday from a series of private meetings sounding reasonably optimistic. The diplomat recalled that U.S. Secretary of State James Baker had warned that the Mideast peace process was a matter of crawling before walking, then walking before running. The best Mr. Baker had suggested was that "we are moving," but the Canadian diplomat said last night: "I think we are close to walking."[83]

The RWG would continue to face diplomatic and procedural disruptions throughout the decade, some of which worked in its favor. When the Oslo talks hit a standstill after the election of the Binyamin Netanyahu government, another Likud hard-liner, the RWG was given more flexibility in its scope of action. As Brynen noted in my interview with him, Canada as the gavel-holder began taking on projects outside the working group using it as an excuse. Many of these projects and ideas were laid out in the 1995 Vision Paper. 'The lack of an official peace process made it easier to take unofficial action.' Eventually Canadian efforts that stretched beyond the RWG would culminate in a series of meetings and workshops by the International Development Research Center (IDRC). These would come to be known as the Ottawa process, which will be discussed in the proceeding chapter.

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[82] Ibid.
[83] John Gray and Patrick Martin, "Canada Taking on Tough Task in Mideast First Pitfall before Refugee Discussions: Who Speaks for Palestinians?" *The Globe and Mail*, 30 Jan. 1992.

Despite the 'hilarity' of the RWG's ability, it nevertheless held great symbolic importance – yet not necessarily of only a positive persuasion. In "Palestinian Refugees: Harsh Present, Uncertain Future," Rosemary Sayigh discusses the marginalization of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon that began at Madrid. While the Palestinian leadership was eager to ensure the Palestinian Diaspora that it was their representative, it had begun a slow process of distancing itself from the refugees in Lebanon. The context of Lebanon and the Palestinian refugees will be discussed in greater detail in the third chapter. For now, however, it is important to note that many domestic and regional factors contributed to the PLO's growing aversion from the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon. A fifteen year long sectarian and class-based civil war; expulsion of the PLO leadership from Lebanon to Tunis by Israeli forces and the general ambiguity of the future of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, in particular, were just a few reasons as to why 'Arafat began to distance the PLO in Tunis from them. While it was strengthened at and after Oslo, Sayigh notes that the marginalization of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon began at Madrid. The multilateral track, according to Sayigh, rendered U.N resolutions on Palestinian refugees feeble. Rather than including them in the bilateral talks they were "hived off" into the second track, which weakened what Sayigh calls "the historic legacy of the U.N resolutions."[84] This undermining had happened as a result of what Salim Tamari in 1996 working paper, "Palestinian Refugees in Negotiations: From Madrid to Oslo II," describes as putting the refugees at "the mercy of the balance of power and confined refugee rights to what Israel was willing to concede."[85] It made the refugee issue, as Peters notes, into an Arab issue as opposed to one which was specifically Palestinian. This was reiterated by Israel's peace treaty with Jordan, which stipulated a bilateral negotiation track to resolve the situation of the refugees.[86]

Sayigh notes that there was a decline in "United Nation Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) and PLO aid to refugees in Lebanon" following the signing of the Israeli-Jordanian peace treaty.[87] The inconsistencies in aid distribution were notable, but for the purposes of our discussion, the focus of the symbolic RWG was equally notable if

[84] Sayigh, 38.
[85] Tamari, 1996.
[86] "Jordan's Position on Palestinian Refugees," *Jordan Embassy - U.S.A.*, Web. 05 June 2011. <http://www.jordanembassyus.org/new/aboutjordan/fp3.shtml>.
[87] Sayigh, 38.

not more. As a committee of the first major peace effort between the Israelis and Palestinians, where the group chose to focus its efforts was important. Sayigh notes that the RWG made the distancing of the involved parties from the refugees in Lebanon clear. Within two years of its launch, the RWG had committed itself to over 100 projects, which were either completed or to be undertaken.[88]

> Although financial allocation cannot be read from the distribution of projects, it is revealing that aside from thirty-six non-region specific projects that may benefit all refugees equally, twenty three projects were approved for Gaza and the West Bank, seventeen for Jordan, nine for Syria, and eight for Lebanon, of which the most important (emergency housing) were suspended.[89]

In addition to this, Sayigh notes that of the funds that were raised for the projects, $80 million were designated for projects in Gaza and the West bank and only $10 million for projects in Jordan, Syria and Lebanon.[90]

The reasoning for the increasing 'negligence' of Palestinian refugees outside of the Occupied Territories can be inferred by looking at the political considerations of the RWG as well as practical considerations. Regarding practical concerns, as discussed in the introduction, the refugees in Syria and Jordan received considerable support from their respective host governments. The vast majority of Jordanian citizens were naturalized Palestinian refugees from the 1948 forced exodus. Those who remained in the few refugee camps had full access to government services such as education and healthcare. They also have several other civic and political rights, particularly relating to labor, albeit with some limitations. Syria also grants Palestinian refugees full access to government services. Thus while the situation of Palestinian refugees, particularly those in camps, in Jordan and Syria is not ideal it is not debilitating to the extent found in Lebanon.

As it will be discussed in chapter three, Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, given the historical legacy of their presence and the country's entrenched sectarianism, face the greatest resistance from their host country. They are denied the most basic civic and political rights, from employment to education to mobility. They are also wholly dependant on an already underfunded UNRWA that receives no additional funding from

[88] Ibid., 39.
[89] Ibid.
[90] Ibid.

the Lebanese government. The Lebanese refugee camps were also where some of the civil wars bloodiest battles took place. As a consequence, a negative perspective from many Lebanese emerged towards the Palestinian presence. The Palestinian refugees have been kept at institutional arms length to remind them and the international community of their temporary welcome. The vast majority of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon are from the 1948 war and unable to go back to the homes from which they fled. Israel has categorically refused to recognize their right to return to their homes, their plight and the issue of compensation has also proven to be as difficult, if not more so, than return. Thus, the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon live in a constant state of limbo, captured in the title of the previously discussed Sayigh article as a 'harsh present, uncertain future.' It seemed to make sense, then, to focus on refugees where their situation could be improved significantly and with greater ease, which was the ultimate goal and ability of the RWG. This is also where political considerations were at great play. Israel's preconditions for not including any Palestinians outside the Occupied Palestinian Territories were strategic. Inclusion of members of the Diaspora, especially refugees, would inevitably lead to the question of the Right of Return that Israel has categorically rejected. Israel's stance on non-OPT representatives at the Madrid process seemingly and unsurprisingly permeated through to what was agreed upon for action in the RWG. As discussed earlier, there had to be unanimous agreement in a multilateral committee thus making it nearly impossible to get much done. Given Israel's inclusion in the RWG and its influence over the process, it is evident that PLO, RWG and international community's distancing from the refugees outside the OPT was determined by Israel's agenda. Furthermore, and as it will be discussed later, the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon had become sort of liability for 'Arafat threatening his leadership and, presumably, the establishment of diplomatic relations with Israel.

The Refugee Working Group was part of a multilateral track meant to complement the bilateral talks. It was supposed to complete the scope of the first major peace conference and process bringing key players in the Arab-Israeli conflict. Yet other than a handful of arguably notable achievements, the RWG failed to produce anything significant. Rather it ultimately marginalized the majority of Palestinian refugees, undermined U.N resolutions on the refugees and allowed for the occupying power

responsible for the problem to dictate much of the parameters of debate and action. At the same time, such a perceived failure could have also been seen within the light of overly unrealistic expectations. As noted earlier, the RWG – as with any working group –was not necessarily meant to resolve decades of conflict, despite the ambitious goals of the sponsors. Those involved in the RWG, especially, knew the confine in which they were being asked to change the status quo of the situation of the refugees. Joel Peters notes that much of the criticism targeting the RWG, five years after its establishment, claimed that it "failed to address the substantive concerns of the Palestinians" as well as the "highly charged political questions" that are central to the question of the refugees.[91] Yet from the onset, in order to get a peace process at all, Israel's demands, sensitivities and preferences created the parameters of both bilateral and multilateral talks. This is significant because while the Madrid peace process did not produce anything substantial it did lay out the foundation for the Oslo peace process. While the Declaration of Principles, signed between Israel and the PLO, granted mutual recognition it did not grant an equal footing in the talks, allowing Israel to continue dictating the terms of peace. This in turn led to the complete marginalization of Palestinian refugees, with those in Lebanon feeling the greatest brunt of the burden. As symbolic as it was political the work of the RWG would come to a halt with the emergence of the Second Intifada in 2000, a populist response to the failure of the Camp David Summit.

The PLO's Betrayal at Oslo: Palestinian Refugees and Arafat's Deal with Israel

In 1992 the right-wing Likud government in Israel lost leadership to the centrist Labor party, led at the time by Yitzhak Rabin. This change in government was important for the direction the peace process would take from that year onwards. It is important to note that while generally Israel has created and sustained many obstacles in its talks and negotiations with Palestinian representatives over the past twenty years, there has not been a stagnant policy towards the peace process. In other words, the politics of the governing party have played a huge role in the composition, and even existence, of the peace process. For instance, Labor "threatened to withdraw from the national unity government" if Shamir did not accept the plan for the Madrid process after much

[91] Peters, 331.

American insistence.[92] When Likud would win elections once again in 1996, after the assassination of Rabin, the new Netanyahu government would suspend the peace talks.

The 1992 election of the Labor party led by Rabin served as a "stunning defeat" to Likud, which "had ruled, almost without interruption, since 1977."[93] It also served as a major change in the direction of the peace process. William Quandt writes of the immediate initial changes:

> Within days of Rabin's investiture Baker arrived in Israel to push for a resumption of peace negotiations and to prepare the way for a Rabin visit to the United States. Shortly thereafter, in a trip that symbolized a new era, Rabin traveled to Egypt for a cordial meeting with President Mubarak. Two days later Rabin announced that 6,000 housing units planned for the West Bank would be canceled, and subsidies on the remainder would be reduced…Rabin also injected into his rhetoric a sense of urgency about finding a negotiated settlement, especially with the Palestinians…Meanwhile Shamir confirmed the worst suspicions of many when he allegedly said that if he had been reelected, he could have strung out of the negotiating process for at least another ten years.[94]

Talks between the Palestinians and the Israelis continued in Washington D.C, however quickly led to what Ali Jabrawi had called a "dead end." The PLO's desire for direct negotiations with Israel were aided by the increase in violence between the Israelis and Palestinians towards the end of 1992 and the beginning of Bill Clinton's presidency. The violence led to increased domestic pressures on Rabin who would then order the deportation of "more than 400 suspected Islamic activists to Lebanon."[95] Lebanon how ever quick to reject the incoming Palestinians, leaving them in "a sort of no man's land" in the south. The end of the eighth round of talks between the Palestinians and Israelis would prove to be the end of the process begun at Madrid:

> Palestinian spokesmen asserted that talks would not be resumed until the deportees were returned to their homes. Rabin refused to budge. Bush could do nothing, thus ensuring that the Clinton administration would inherit a stalled pace process in need of resuscitation...[96]

The 'death' of the Madrid process would, ironically, give life to a new peace process and, in particular, to the Oslo Accords. The Oslo peace process, as discussed in

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[92] Quandt, 298.
[93] Ibid., 313.
[94] Ibid., 314.
[95] Ibid., 316.
[96] Peters, 317.

the introduction, has been important for many reasons. Three in particular stand out for the purposes of our discussion. First, the Oslo Accords, which will be discussed in this section, granted mutual recognition between Israel and the Palestinians, or more accurately, Yasser 'Arafat's PLO. This was, unarguably, a significant step in establishing any semblance of relationship between the two foes beyond the realm of violence and occupation. Secondly, despite this significance the Oslo process was not only a failure in producing a resolution to the conflict but also, in effect, rescinded the Right of Return of Palestinian refugees. And lastly, the framework of Oslo has served as the political framework of any attempts at reviving the peace process since the Camp David Summit of 2000. This section of the paper will thus look specifically at the content of the Declaration of Principles (DOP) and the Gaza-Jericho agreements. I will explore the implications of these agreements as well as the resounding criticisms they received. This final section of the chapter will conclude with a brief survey of the Camp David Summit between Bill Clinton, Yasser 'Arafat and Ehud Barack that effectively ended the Oslo peace process.

After the dormancy of the negotiations between the Israelis and Palestinians that characterized the end of 1992 and the first half of 1993, an agreement was reached between the Israelis and Palestinians, the latter under rigid control of 'Arafat, to meet in Oslo. The agreement came as a shock. In January 1993, Norwegian researcher Terje Rød-Larsen met with then Israeli Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs, Yossi Beilin, and arranged a private meeting with Israeli historian Yair Hirschfeld and PLO representative and finance expert, Ahmed Qurei. The Norwegians would continue to act as intermediaries in the secret talks, providing cover for the meetings under the guise of the Norwegian Institute for Applied Social Science, FAFO.[97] The meetings were illegal under Israeli law

[97] Norway's leadership in the peace process surprised many but, as Hilde Henriksen Waage discusses in his 2002 article published in the Middle East Journal, "Explaining the Oslo Backchannel: Norway's Political Past in the Middle East," (56.4), it was ultimately anything but surprising. According to Waage, the historical relationship between Israel and Norway poised the latter in the perfect position to initiate a significant process. The process that began in December 1992 was not Norway's first attempt at a resolution to the conflict, Waage notes. Norway, since the end of WWII, had remained close if not "best" friends with the Jewish state and, given its small status and power influence, it did not intimidate Israel. It also appealed to 'Arafat, who was the first to mention Norway as a possible mediator. It was important that the mediator have close ties with both the United States and Israel. In addition to this, it seemed unlikely that the Norwegian government would allow national interests to push the agenda of peace. Waage explores Norway's role in Oslo further in his 2005 article, from the *Journal of Palestine Studies*, "Norway's

and would not receive support from the United Nations when made public. Despite this, the meetings continued. They had, for the first time, literally brought the Israelis and Palestinians face to face. As Uri Savir, Chief Israeli Negotiator for the Oslo process (1993-1996), notes throughout his 1998 book The Process: 1,100 Days that Changed the Middle East, the Israeli and Palestinian representatives spent a considerable amount of time getting to know one another on a personal basis.[98] Unlike the distance kept between the two at the Madrid process, the Israelis and Palestinians resided in the same hotel, often met over meals as well as at "official" meetings during the Oslo backchannel. The United States, albeit kept out of the talks, remained informed of the informed throughout.[99] The backchannel was, after all, meant to lead to the Washington process. Quandt notes that what "began as a semi-official channel soon acquired official standing as aides to [Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres] and Rabin joined the discussions in the spring."[100] Further engagement by the Norwegians led to the Israelis and Palestinians to agree to mutual recognition. The formal agreement in the form of the Declaration of Principles, which was the first Israeli-Palestinian agreement, was signed on September 13th 1993. The event was hosted by the United States at the White House. The signing of the Oslo Accords marked the beginning of a five-year interim period that would work as a 'confidence building' term after which Final Status issues would be brought into negotiations.[101]

The Declaration of Principles and Implications for Palestinian Refugees

The Declaration of Principles' primary aim was to shift authority of certain parts of the Occupied Territories over to the PLO. This was outlined in Article One:

Role in the Middle East Peace Talks: Between a Strong State and a Weak Belligerent," (34.4). This article explores how the weakness of Norway's power as a state led to severe limitations in the framework of the Oslo process.

[98] Uri Savir, *The Process: 1,100 Days That Changed the Middle East* (New York: Random House, 1998).

[99] Quandt, 327.

[100] Ibid.

[101] An exploration of the different positions in and approaches to the Oslo process can be found in Tamara Cofman Wittes, *How Israelis and Palestinians Negotiate: a Cross-cultural Analysis of the Oslo Peace Process* (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace, 2005). The chapters discuss different historical, political, institutional and regional considerations that went into informing the positions of both the Israelis and Palestinians.

> The aim of the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations within the current Middle East peace process is, among other things, to establish a Palestinian Interim Self-Government Authority, the elected Council (the "Council"), for the Palestinian people in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, for a transitional period not exceeding five years, leading to a permanent settlement based on Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338.[102]

The declaration restricted the jurisdiction of the Council in lands beyond the OPT. It cited that "Jerusalem, refugees, settlements, security arrangements, borders, relations and cooperation with other neighbors, and other issues of common interest" would be discussed at the final status talks following the interim period.[103] Yet, the declaration ultimately only provided "extremely limited self-rule" and kept the Palestinian population restricted to those in the OPT.[104] The territories that were brought under direct PLO control were Gaza and Jericho.[105] This was considerably less than the Palestinian had wanted. It was also certainly a morsel of what was afforded to the Palestinians under international law and the very resolutions cited as the foundations of the agreement. The Palestinian leadership had recognized Israel within the 1967 borders. The Palestinians considered this, Quandt writes, a "huge concession."[106] As Ali Jabrawi said at the previously cited symposium at the Center for Analysis on Palestine, Oslo should be "seen as the end, rather than the beginning, of the quest for legitimate Palestinian national rights."[107] As he notes and as it has been discussed throughout this chapter, the agreement did not reflect the establishment of diplomatic relations but rather a "lack of internal balance" and the "inequality of power" that the Palestinians could not escape.[108] Israel used the opportunity at Oslo not to progress peace but rather, Jabrawi discusses, but to ascertain its control over the 'Palestinian position' as well as on the ground by "fragmenting autonomous and semi-autonomous areas."[109] Most notably, for Jabrawi, Oslo turned occupied territories into those that were disputed by making them a negotiation discussion in bilateral talks. [110]In other words, an occupation's lines that were

[102] Article I of the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements, September 1993.
[103] Ibid.
[104] Said, "Who is Worse?" 1994.
[105] Article VI of the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements, September 1993.
[106] Quandt, 365.
[107] Jabrawi, 3.
[108] Jabrawi, 3.
[109] Ibid, 4.
[110] Ibid, 3.

recognized under international law and by the international community became 'disputed' at Oslo because they were put up for debate.

The acceptance of self-rule, completely on terms acceptable to Israel, worried most of the Palestinian Diaspora, refugees in particular. By submitting to a limited self-rule agreement that benefited Israel, ultimately, more than the PLO and the Palestinians, the Palestinian leadership had made it apparent it was willing to do whatever it took to ensure its own position of power. The splits that would occur within the Palestinian leadership will be explored further in the third chapter. The greatest worry, however, struck Palestinian refugees in Lebanon.[111] They worried that such a deal would trap them in Lebanon forever, cognizant of the fact that the 1948 group of refugees, in particular, did not "have a share in the plan."[112] And indeed, as it has been shown in this chapter the marginalization of the Palestinian refugees outside the OPT, particularly in Lebanon, became stronger throughout the decade through various ways. Despite its actions that showed other, throughout the decade the PLO maintained that it remained committed to the Right of Return. 'Arafat, himself, made constant reference to the right of the Palestinians to return to their homes and the need for Israel to recognize, at minimum, the plight suffered by the refugees. Following the signing of the accord, 'Arafat actually said that 800,000 refugees would be allowed to return to their homes. But as pointed out by Peter Ford in a *Christian Science Monitor* article from September 13th 1993:

> […The] declaration of principles says only that a committee of representatives from Israel, the Palestinians, Egypt, and Jordan will decide by consensus on the return of refugees who fled the West Bank and Gaza Strip in 1967, during the Six-Day War.[113]

Additionally and perhaps most poignantly, whereas the question of the Palestinian refugees' Right to Return had been central to Palestinian consciousness, the Oslo process de-emphasized its centrality in official terms. In his 2008 article, "Trading Refugees for Land and Symbols: The Palestinian Negotiation Strategy in the Oslo Process," Are

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[111] This includes both the lay refugees and their representatives in Lebanon as well. Many Lebanese, both citizens and leaders, also felt that the DOP and the Oslo process in general was de-emphasizing the weight and importance of the question of the refugees' future. This will be discussed in further detail in the third chapter.

[112] "Refugees Fear Deal Traps Them in Camps Forever," *The Globe and Mail*, 6 Dec. 1993.

[113] Peter Ford, "Palestinian Self-Rule Pact: What it Will and Won't Do," *Christian Science Monitor*, 13 Sept. 1993.

Hovdenak argues that the Right of Return lost its characteristic as a "core component of Palestinian political mythology" when the PLO "opted for a two-state solution in the course of the Madrid and Oslo process."[114] The acceptance of this framework, in an agreement between Yossi Beilin and Yasser 'Arafat, prioritized land (borders, Jerusalem) over the refugees, an issue which saw the "least amount of concessions from the Israelis."[115] According to Hovdenak, the decentralization of the refugees in the negotiations came as a result of three major dilemmas faced by the PLO, the first of which was the immense power imbalance that existed between the two partners for peace. The second dilemma:

> …was that the logic of the two-state solution in itself had implications for the principle of repatriation of refugees. If most of the more than four million exiled Palestinians were to return to Israel, the Jewish demographic majority could soon be replaced by an Arab Palestinian majority, thus threatening the existence of Israel as a 'Jewish state'. The outcome could then apparently be two Palestinian states. Thus, the Palestinian leadership's recognition of a territorial compromise within the two-state model conflicted logically with the claim of return of all the refugees and implied some sort of modification of that claim.[116]

The third major dilemma was the loss of legitimacy PLO leaders would face following any further compromise on the Right of Return for Palestinian refugees. Nevertheless, the marginalization of the refugees in the peace process was officially entrenched in the 1995 agreement between Beilin and PLO Chief Negotiator Mahmoud Abbas. The Beilin-Abu Mazen agreement stipulated, in effect, that the Oslo framework would be used for resolving final status issues. The agreement affirmed the establishment of a Palestinian state that would have parts of an undivided Jerusalem as its capital.[117] This had been a long way from when, in 1993, 'Arafat's declaration of the fast-approaching Palestinian statehood was rendered an incomprehensible delusion by Prime Minister Rabin's response that statehood "was out of the question."[118] Regarding the refugees the agreement, Hovdenak writes:

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[114] A. Hovdenak, "Trading Refugees for Land and Symbols: The Palestinian Negotiation Strategy in the Oslo Process," *Journal of Refugee Studies* 22.1 (2008): 30.
[115] Ibid. Hovdenak mentions that the difficulty of the land negotiations and the general 'impracticality' of the question of the refugees, from which the Israelis showed no hint of re-considering their long-held position, made such a prioritization under the umbrella of the Oslo process inevitable.
[116] Ibid., 33.
[117] Hovdenak, 36.
[118] Ford, "Palestinian Self-Rule Pact: What it Will and Won't Do," 1993.

> The Palestinian side maintained that the Right of Return is enshrined in international law, although it 'it recognizes that the prerequisites of the new era of peace and co-existence as well as the realities that have been created on the ground since 1948 have rendered the implementation of this right impractible.'[119]

The Israelis recognized the 'plight' of the Palestinian refugees cause by the 1948 war. The vague terms of Israeli recognition pointed to Israel's disbelief in its own culpability of the suffering faced by the refugees. As discussed in the introduction, the Israeli narrative maintained that the exodus of Palestinian refugees had been a result not of Israeli aggression or Jewish terrorism, but rather a result of the violent onslaught of Arab armies. What remains unrecognized, till this day, is Israel's recognition of the primary role that it, itself, played in the mass forced migration of hundreds of thousands of Palestinian refugees from what was then Palestine. Additionally, while the Palestinian leadership seemed to assure the Israelis that it would find a solution to the problem, it simultaneously publicly declared its commitment to the Right of Return.[120]

What the Oslo agreement, alongside the entire process and subsequent agreements, did was successfully put the PLO in the pocket of Israel and, in effect, sell off the question of the refugees. This elicited much public scrutiny and condemnation, as it seemed that the Palestinian leadership – or its head, 'Arafat – was more concerned with its own power than fighting for the rights of millions of Palestinians. Amongst the fiercest critics of the Palestinian leadership (in Tunis) was scholar Edward Said. In a 1994 scathing article for the London Review of Books, entitled *Who's Worse?*, Said characterizes 'Arafat, in particular, as having a "psychological need for recognition from 'the Zionist movement' [that] was so great as to override almost all other considerations – especially those that concerned the Palestinians' real, long-term interests."

Said's critique is perhaps one of the most poignant to emerge from the era regarding the events that unfolded in Oslo and in Washington D.C. He notes that the recognition enshrined in the Oslo agreement was anything but a mutual recognition. Instead, the PLO gave full Palestinian recognition of the State of Israel in exchange for recognition of its own legitimacy as a good enough partner for 'peace' for Israel. There was no recognition of the legitimate rights of Palestinians secured by international law

[119] Hovdenak, 37.
[120] Ibid., 28.

and several U.N resolutions. In addition to this, the then twenty-seven years of occupation were also completely ignored in the agreement. In addition to this, the 1995 Oslo II agreement caused another great stir, as it seemed that 'Arafat had given away more territory and control to the Israelis. The agreement entailed the following:

> The territories of the West Bank and Gaza were divided into three zones. About 3 percent, including all major towns, would be under full Palestinian control. Another 24 percent, mostly surrounding the towns and including many villages, would be under Palestinian civilian control, but Israel would still have the upper hand on security matters; and finally, the majority of the territories, including all Israeli settlements would remain under exclusive Israeli control. Israel would withdraw within three months except from Hebron…three further withdrawals of unspecified extent would take place during the next several years before the final-status agreement. [121]

Following Oslo II, a Likud government led by Binyamin Netanyahu was elected in 1996. Israelis, having become disillusioned with the peace process and the concessions many believed had been made by Israel, voted for Netanyahu who ran on a platform of suspending the negotiations. As Ron Pundak writes in his 2001 article, "From Oslo to Taba: What Went Wrong?," there failed to be any peace process during Netanyahu's presidency, leading to an impasse:

> Nevertheless, political circumstances forced Netanyahu to continue, albeit reluctantly and in a limited fashion, the implementation of the process. In particular, the Americans imposed the Wye agreement of October 1998 on him, which eventually brought about the implementation of the second redeployment according to the interim agreement. Yet Netanyahu sabotaged the peace process relentlessly, and made every effort to de-legitmise [*sic*] his Palestinian partners. The main weapon in his campaign against the Palestinians was the mantra that the Palestinian side was not fulfilling its part of the agreement; and there for Israel should not implement its part.[122]

The earlier discussed sentiments expressed by Edward Said were echoed, albeit less polemically, in a special report by the Center for Policy Analysis on Palestine by Dr. Mustafa Barghouti in the summer of 1998, entitled *The Post-Oslo Impasse*. In his short report, Barghouti explores the dead-end reached by the end of the nineties in the Oslo process by looking at the process, negotiations and framework themselves as well as what had happened since the signing of the accords. He outlines four consequences of the

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[121] Quandt, 336.
[122] Ron Pundak, "From Oslo to Taba: What Went Wrong?" *Survival* 43.3 (2001): 33.

signing of the Oslo agreement. First, is the "loss of the common political denominator on which they unity of the Palestinian people was built."[123] This was a result of the restricted and direct governance given to the PLO. In addition to this, the PLO was merged with the Palestinian National Authority. What this did, in effect, was restructure "the framework of the Palestinian National Movement," a strategy, according to Barghouti, that Israel knowingly and cunningly undertook.[124] Secondly, "for the first time, there was a separation between two basic components of the National Movement- between the PLO…and the public."[125] In other words, the PLO was taken out of civil society, where it was needed, and made into a governing force. Third, perhaps the most apparent and logical outcome of the signing of the Oslo Accords, was the divisions which emerged between the Palestinians within the OPT and the Palestinians in the diaspora. This was also a result of the decline in interest and attention, as discussed earlier, in the Palestinian community outside the OPT. Lastly, according to Barghouti, the Oslo agreement "was used in accusing the Palestinians of departing from the Arab consensus" during a time when the process was meant to "open the door to normalization between Israel and the Arab states."[126] In addition to this, Barghouti points to the Cairo-Oslo agreement which was meant to turn the Oslo agreement into practice. The Palestinians, he discusses, were unprepared for what the Israelis had planned. The Israelis' strategy ultimately weakened the Palestinians. It made them increasingly dependant on Israel for security, economy and general financial needs, which was exacerbated by the lack of arbitration by an international mediator.[127] The Oslo agreement was further violated under the Netanyahu government and several more steps to weaken the Palestinians. These, according to Barghouti, ranged from "total separation of the West Bank" to the "expansion of settlements" to "bantustanization of the Palestinian Territories."[128]

The final chapter of the Oslo process came with the Camp David II in July 2000, hosted by the soon to be out-going President Clinton. This was, as Quandt notes, a last

[123] Mustafa Barghouti, "Special Report: The Post-Oslo Impasse" (The Center for Analysis on Palestine, 1998), 2.
[124] Ibid.
[125] Ibid.
[126] Barghouti, 3.
[127] Ibid.
[128] Ibid., 4-6.

resort for the already broken peace process. It was a "new round of diplomacy" that would bear "many resemblances to the original" 1978 Camp David Summit held by Jimmy Carter to create peace Egypt and Israel, following the war of 1973. While the Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak had "pushed hard for the summit […he] was not interested in meeting with 'Arafat or in putting forward positions of his own.[129] According to Quandt, it seemed to the Israeli leader that the summit was asking for more concessions from Israel, something the state and its citizens were no longer willing to give.[130] In the introduction for the first edition of his book, The End of the Peace Process: Oslo and After, Edward Said writes of Ehud Barak:

> Ehud Barak has been greeted as the peace candidate, but given his background and what he has said and done so far I am certain that his ideas are not different enough from Netanyahu's to warrant great optimism. For Barak, Jerusalem remains basically un-negotiable (except for giving Palestinians authority over a few sacred places in the old city and allowing Abu Dis to become their new Jerusalem); the settlements for the most part will stay, as will the bypass roads that now crisscross the territories; sovereignty, borders, overall security, water and air rights will be Israel's; millions of refugees will have to look elsewhere for help and remain where they are. Other than that, there can be a small Palestinian state and the Authority can continue its, at best, flawed rule. These things are implied in the agreement concluded in September 1999. [131]

This opinion was corroborated by Hussein Agha and Robert Malley's take on the failure of Camp David in an August 9th 2001 New York Review of Books article entitled "Camp David: The Tragedy of Errors:"

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[129] Quandt, 367.

[130] In his 2003 book, *Shattered Dreams: the Failure of the Peace Process in the Middle East, 1995-2002*, 2003, Charles Enderlin challenges prominent Israeli and American narratives that claim the failure of the Camp David meeting was 'Arafat's doing. He argues that the process failed as a result, albeit not primarily, of Israeli actions. Growth of settlements, marginalization of the Palestinians in the peace negotiations with Syria in the late nineties by Ehud Barak and the zeal of the Israeli right were some of the leading factors in the breakdown of the process.

[131] Edward W. Said, *The End of the Peace Process: Oslo and after* (New York: Pantheon, 2000).

> In Gaza and the West Bank, Barak's election was greeted with mixed emotions. Benjamin Netanyahu, his immediate predecessor, had failed to implement several of Israel's signed obligations and, for that reason alone, his defeat was welcome. But during his campaign, Barak had given no indication that he was prepared for major compromises with the Palestinians. Labor back in power also meant Tel Aviv back in Washington's good graces; Netanyahu's tenure, by contrast, had seen a gradual cooling of America's relations with Israel and a concomitant warming of its relations with the Palestinian Authority.[132]

Furthermore, Yasser 'Arafat himself had made it clear to the Americans that given the recent impasse and the lack of implementation of previous agreements, a meeting to discuss final status issue would be both premature and futile.[133] It would take several back and forth conversations between Clinton, Barak and 'Arafat before the summit was called to be begin on July 11th 2000. Despite the disinterest presumably shown by Barak and 'Arafat's cautionary reservations, the negotiations went underway and continued for over two weeks. Similar to the secret talks in Oslo, informalities were promoted to foster a second arena for negotiations. Meals were had together, suits and ties were discouraged from being worn and gym time consisted of negotiating partners bench-pressing side by side.[134] These informalities were coupled with a rigorous regiment of meetings set up in strict formats. The summit's organization had been orchestrated in every way possible to ensure an atmosphere conducive to success. According to Akram Hanieh:

> The Americans were confident that the atmosphere generated by the site and the rules, combined with the decisive fact that the administration was bringing all its prestige and standing to bear, would create strong pressures on the negotiators to succeed in reaching an agreement. They did not seem to realize that the reality of conflict was strong than the unreal world they had created at Camp David.[135]

In fact, the Camp David Summit became more of a pressure cooking pot for the Palestinian delegations, who faced an upheaval of the initial terms set out at Madrid in 1991, Hanieh notes. Both UN Resolution 242 and 338, which the United States had

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[132] Robert Malley and Hussein Agha, "Camp David: The Tragedy of Errors," *The New York Review of Books*, 2001. This particular article can also be found in a 2001 publication of the *Journal of Palestine Studies* (31.1): 62-75. It was also the first of a series in *The New York Review of Books* that consisted of a back and forth over the causes of the failure of Camp David, see Dennis Ross, Gridi Gristein, Hussein Agha and Robert Malley, "Camp David: An Exchange," *The New York Review of Books*, 2001; Benny Morris, "Camp David and After – An Interview with Ehud Barak," *The New York Review of Books*, 2002; Benny Morris, Ehud Barak, Hussein Agha and Robery Malley, "Camp David and After Continued," *The New York Review of Books*, 2002.

[133] Akram Hanieh, "The Camp David Papers," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 30.2 (2001): 76.

[134] Hanieh, 77.

[135] Ibid., 78.

committed the process to were discarded at the 2000 meeting. In addition to this, Hanieh notes, the American bias towards Israel became painfully abundant as "no proposal was presented to the Palestinian delegation by the American side that had not been cleared with Israel first."[136]

When it came to the discussion on the final status issues, movement was anything but paced. Neither side was willing to concede more than it already had and the Americans increased the pressure not on the Israelis but the Palestinians. Despite agreement on the two-state solution, Israel asserted that it would maintain strict control over border security and any future Palestinian military. Israel also declared that it would annex 10-13.5% of the West Bank.[137] As Hanieh notes, this percentage of land represented not only three major Jewish settlements but also a way through which Israel could maintain control over water resources. Thus, 'Arafat and his team were offered almost 90% of the West Bank but the delegation refused to continue negotiations on these terms. While 90% of the West Bank was offered, there seemed to be little to no state sovereignty available to the Palestinians. Yet while many deemed 'Arafat's refusal of the so-called "generous" Israeli offer of 90% of the West Bank, as the greatest failure of the summit Hanieh argues otherwise. According to him, the greatest failure of the summit was, in fact, the committee on refugees. The committee, he describes, was wholly focused on the past and historical narratives. The Israelis were unwilling to move from their account of what had happened in 1948. They tried to convince the Palestinians present that the mass exodus of Palestinians was a result of the Arab armies who both brought with them violence and declarations of leaving the land.[138] The complete lack of recognition, as previously discussed, of Israeli responsibility in the displacement of the Palestinians signaled the pending collapse of any semblance of reconciliation between the two parties.

Ultimately, however, it would be the Holy City that proved to be the last nail in the coffin of the process; "the impasse over Jerusalem was simply insurmountable" according to Quandt.[139] The carefully worded and orchestrated proposal on Jerusalem

[136] Ibid., 80.
[137] Ibid., 82.
[138] Ibid.
[139] Quandt, 369.

indicted, according to Hanieh, that the Israeli delegation had "assumed the garb of the most extreme fundamentalist Jews."[140] In particular, the Israelis demanded that Jews be allowed to pray in the Dome of the Rock, a proposal that would get no modicum of support from the Palestinians, notwithstanding American agreement. It would be with the Jerusalem that the summit would come to a frustrating close. Much had gone into the summit, which had been years in the making. The failure at Camp David in 2000 was not merely a failure of a discussion on final status issues. Rather, it was the failure of the first peace process between Israelis and Palestinians that had begun at Madrid in 1991. Yet despite the failure of Camp David and the Oslo process, it would be the Israelis who would emerge victorious. While Barak received much criticism from Israelis, for "selling Israeli security short," Clinton repeatedly defended him.[141] In the Israeli and American narratives that would be formed following the failure, it would be 'Arafat, and by extension the Palestinians, who were given the burden of blame for the collapse of the process.[142] The failure of Camp David would in part lead to a crippling moment of violence: the Second Intifada, which claimed the lives of thousands of Palestinians and over a thousand Israelis.

One last major attempt was made at the Taba Summit. It took place between January 21st and the 27th in Egypt. The summit consisted of talks between Israeli Foreign Minister Shlomo Ben-Ami and PLO Chief Negotiator Saeb Erekat. President Clinton attempted to salvage what he could from the Camp David failure. He thus created proposals for both sides that would require compromises based on the cleavages that emerged during the July 2000 summit.[143] According to Pundak, the Taba summit was the closest the Israelis and Palestinians had come to an agreement on final status issues. On refugees and the Right of Return, in particular, they were able to draft "the parameters and procedures for a solutions, along with a clear emphasis that its implementations would not threaten the Jewish character" of Israel.[144] Given, however, time limitations

[140] Hanieh, 83.
[141] Quandt, 371.
[142] The debate over the burden of blame for the failure of Camp David continues till this day and has sustained the Israeli and American narratives of the entire peace process.
[143] Katie Rooney, "Taba Summit - Sixteen Years of Israeli-Palestinian Summits," *TIME*, Web. 25 July 2011. <http://www.time.com/time/specials/2007/article/0,28804,1644149_1644147_1644141,00.html>.
[144] Pundak, 44.

and the fast approaching Israeli elections, the two sides decided to put off signing any final agreement until after. This delay would prove to be fatal. Barak would lose the elections to the hawkish and anti-Oslo Ariel Sharon.

Chapter Two: Discussing Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon

"…Of all the countries hosting refugees, Lebanon remains the least documented. Information is scattered and inaccessible and discussions are often subject to distortion and political rhetoric." – Report from the Core-Group Meeting[145]

The Oslo peace process was, as discussed in the previous chapter, a failure. The process failed to not only achieve any semblance of a settlement between the Israelis and the Palestinians but, in fact, worsened the political relationship between the two. The signing of the Declaration of Principles (DOP) and later the Cairo-Oslo Agreement ultimately trapped the Palestinians in an Israeli chokehold. The Palestinian Authority became wholly reliant on the Israelis for many things ranging from economic needs to security. The process weakened the Palestinians internally, forcing greater factionalism. In addition Palestinian nationalist aspirations were weakened because the Palestinian Authority had agreed to limited self-rule and had ignored the right of millions of refugees to return to the homes from which they were expelled. Yet despite the many failures of the Oslo process, it signified a very important moment in the history of the conflict. Following the confidence building measures an interim period followed after which, in accordance with the DOP, talks on final status issues would begin. These talks would include some of the most 'controversial' of the issues pertaining to the decades long conflict: security, borders, Jerusalem and refugees. In preparation for these talks, a third diplomatic track was opened to discuss the issue of Palestinian refugees in particular. The first track negotiations were directly dealt with between involved parties and their representative delegations. The second track discussions formed the basis of the previously discussed Refugee Working Group. The so-called 'third-track,' however, was outside the official framework, unlike the main two tracks, despite the involvement of international parties and government officials. This 'third-track' was initiated and propelled by a diverse group of institute directors, policymakers, researchers, academics, lawyers, government representatives and former negotiators. The focus of this track was primarily, but not limited to, the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon.

[145] Barbara Harrell-Bond and Nadim Shehadi, *Report on the Core-Group Meeting of Palestinians in Lebanon Project* (Rep. Oxford: Centre for Lebanese Studies, 1995), 1.

Different actors, all of whom were involved in various track three projects, organized three major efforts throughout the interim period. In 1995, the Centre for Lebanese Studies collaborated with the Refugee Studies Program at the University of Oxford to initiate the Palestinians in Lebanon project. The project was meant to be an information-gathering process that also promoted dialogue between the Palestinians and the Lebanese. The project brought together, for the first time, major actors on both sides to discuss the situation in Lebanon for Palestinian refugees. The project led to a 1996 "Palestinians in Lebanon" conference and ultimately culminated in the Minster Lovell Process to be discussed later in this chapter.[146]

As discussed in the previous chapter, the Canadian government found itself heavily constricted in its ability to forge consensus and implement plans through the RWG during the time of the official process. When the process came to a halt, during the interim period and then later with the election of the right-wing anti-Oslo Likud party led by Binyamin Netanyahu, the RWG was able to initiate many projects. One of the major and perhaps most influential of these projects was what resulted in the Ottawa Process, led by Canadian academic and specialist on Palestinian refugees, Dr. Rex Brynen. The Montreal-based Palestinian Refugee ResearchNet and the International Development Research Centre organized a conference in December of 1997.[147] The "Stocktaking Conference on Palestinian Refugee Research" brought together researchers and academics to identify "gaps and needs in research" pertaining to the refugees.[148] The conference picked up where the 1996 conference on Palestinians in Lebanon left off and picked up on the work of the RWG. The Ottawa conference led not only to a series of workshops and meetings but also to another major conference held in March of 1998, organized by the University of Warwick in conjunction with the British Foreign Office. The conference was entitled "Resolving the Palestinian Refugee Problem: What Role for the International Community?" and emerged during the British presidency of the European Union. It signaled increased European interest in resolving the persisting question of Palestinian refugees.

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[146] The Minster Lovell Process is now known as the 'Regional Dimension of the Palestinian Refugee Issue' on the Chatham House website.
[147] PRRN is part of the Inter-University Consortium on Middle East Studies [ICAMES] based in Montreal.
[148] Forward in *Report on the Stocktaking Conference on Palestinian Refugee Research Held in Ottawa on December 8-9,1997* (Rep. Palestinian Refugee ResearchNet, 1998).

Initially, the projects were meant to supplement the discussions that were set to begin in the third year of the interim period in May of 1996. The postponement of the final status talks, however, created a rupture in diplomatic efforts. This in turn made the 'third-track' vital for the continuation of discussions. The question of the Palestinian refugees, particularly those in Lebanon, lacked a cohesive discourse. As stated in the 1995 "Palestinians in Lebanon" core-group meeting report:

> Casting light on the prevailing situation of the Palestinians in Lebanon is both timely and urgent considering the growing visibility of this community as the peace negotiations progress and in view of their rapidly worsening living conditions. The increasing hostility their presence has provoked is also due to the feeling that they have been neglected by the peace process and the fact that the refugee issue is being resolved at Lebanon's expense…The issues, when debated, [are] more often used to reflect already established positions and were rarely directly address.[149]

Thus while the Oslo process collapsed with the election of the Netanyahu government, the initiative begun at Oxford in 1995 paved the way for the creation of an organized discourse. There was a need, official peace process or not, for a collection of information and documentation of the political and socio-economic situations of refugees. There was also a dire need for the establishment of a dialogue between involved parties that looked at problems of the past, realities of the present and possibilities for the future. This was inarguably most true and dire for the situation of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon who, as it will be discussed in depth in the third chapter, were the most vulnerable of the Palestinian refugee populations. And, lastly, there was a need for the international community to carve out what role it would play, if any, in the search for a solution for the future of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon.

This chapter surveys a critical historical moment in the Oslo peace process years that has been overlooked in the literature that deals with the more high profile aspects of the peace process in the period between 1993 and 2000. While the Oslo peace process failed to produce substantive progress, the period did see a number of efforts focused on the future of the refugees. This chapter will look at three of these major efforts: the 1996 "Palestinians in Lebanon" conference in Oxford, the Ottawa Process and the 1998 conference at Warwick. The bulk of the chapter will focus on the conference at Oxford

[149] Harrell-Bond and Shehadi, 1995, 1.

given the lack of attention it has received. The Ottawa Process and the Warwick meeting will be discussed in the context of what had been started in Oxford in 1995. For my sources I will be drawing primarily on interviews conducted with the former director of the Centre of Lebanese Studies Nadim Shehadi and Dr. Rex Brynen, who led the Ottawa Process initiative. I will also be drawing from published conference and workshop reports as well as papers presented and newspaper articles. It is imperative to note that the conferences and meetings chosen for exploration in this dissertation were not the only ones happening during this period. Several projects were underway during the nineties pertaining to Palestinian refugees, particularly those in Lebanon. The Institute for Palestine Studies conducted "applied, policy-oriented research on final status issues from a macro perspective."[150] The Ford Foundation was heavily involved looking at issues pertaining to Palestinian business communities. In addition to this, it was also funding the Lebanese Centre for Policy Studies' effort to put together "a series of opinion surveys of how Palestinians and Lebanese view each other" and generational differences in both communities.[151] The European Union, influenced greatly by the proactive British presidency, "financed a study on assistance to Palestinians in host states."[152] The DC-based Center for Policy Analysis on Palestine also held a series of conferences and symposiums on final status issues and, in particular, Right of Return and compensation for refugees.

Starting the Conversation: The 1996 "Palestinians in Lebanon" Conference

The first major effort that kick-started the effort to create a cohesive discourse on the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, in particular, was the "Palestinians in Lebanon" project initiated in 1995. Given the pivotal role this project played and has continued to play in the creation of a unified and comprehensive discourse on the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, I will focus primarily on it. The first part of this section of the chapter will discuss the specifics of the 1995 core-group meeting that led to the initiation of the project. I will then move onto discuss the 1996 conference itself, covering political considerations, the content of papers presented and the backgrounds of the attendees. This section will end with a brief survey of the outcomes of the conference. The aim of

[150] Ibid., 43.
[151] Ibid., 44.
[152] Ibid., 45.

this discussion is to highlight the apparently 'revolutionary' characteristic of this initial project that undoubtedly generated a conversation that has persisted beyond the failure at the Camp David Summit of the Oslo peace process.[153]

The 1995 Core-Group Meeting

Over the course of three days in March of 1995, a group of twenty individuals gathered at a two-day meeting to take on a major information-gathering and consolidating project. The March 1995 meeting took place at the Middle East Centre of St. Anthony's College, Oxford and was organized by the Centre for Lebanese Studies (CLS) and the Refugee Studies Programme (RSP) at Oxford. The CLS is "an independent research institution…founded in 1994" and is affiliated with the Middle East Centre.[154] The RSP was "part of [the] Queen Elizabeth House International Developmental Centre, University of Oxford and was established in 1982 for a multidisciplinary study" on refugees and forced migration.[155] In an interview, Nadim Shehadi who was the director of the CLS at the time, stated that the driving force behind the project was the impending final status discussions following the three-year interim period, that would come to a close in May of 1996:

> Final status discussions were going to start and…involved many issues, including refugees. [We thus] felt that we should contribute something to [its] preparation…So, we did this core-group meeting and…had a meeting with…the RSP just so that [it was] not purely [a] Lebanese or Palestinian perspective [that informed the discussions]. I thought it would be useful to have their input in order to look at the issue from a much broader refugee perspective.[156]

Thus, there was an "urgency of ensuring that facts concerning the Palestinians in Lebanon [were] readily available."[157] For such an effort to commence, a core-group needed to be formed. It would lead organization and initiative of the project. Importantly, however, it had to consist of a diverse range of individuals offering differing perspectives. In other words, a balance of perspective was necessary for an issue that was

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[153] The term 'revolutionary' came up a few times in discussions pertaining to these meetings and in my conversations with Mr. Shehadi, as well as in some of the meeting notes from the conferences themselves, as it will be noted in the latter part of this chapter.
[154] Harrell-Bond and Shehadi, 1995, 49.
[155] Ibid.
[156] Interview by author with Nadim Shehadi on June 23rd 2011
[157] Harrell-Bond and Shehadi, 1995, 50.

as multifaceted as the conflict within which it was framed. The attendees for the core-group meeting were as follows:[158]

1. **Dr. As'ad abu Khalil**: Assistant Professor of Political Science at California State University. He had written extensively about Palestinian-Lebanese relations as well as the War of the Camps.[159]

2. **Ms. Belinda Allan**: Development officer of the RSP.

3. **Mr. George Assaf**: Human rights lawyer and president of the Legal Aid Commission of the Beirut Bar Association, active in issues pertaining to humanitarian international law and internally displaced persons.

4. **Dr. Yves Besson**: Special Advisor to the Commissioner-General of UNRWA. Was the Director of UNRWA Operations from 1990 to 1992.

5. **Professor Rex Brynen**: Associate Processor of Political Science at McGill, specializing on Palestinian refugees in Lebanon and a Research Coordinator for what later became Inter-University Consortium for Middle East Studies (ICAMES). He also was one of two Canadian specialists on Palestinian refugees recruited to assist with the RWG.

6. **Dr. Mahmoud Chreih**: Journalist for the Lebanese paper *Al-Nahar* and former chief translator at the UNRWA headquarters in Geneva.

7. **Ms. Deirdre Collings**: MacArthur PhD scholar in the global security program at Cambridge University and former Research Fellow with the Canadian Institute for International Peace and Security.

8. **Ms. Blandine D'Estremau:** Sociologist specializing in development and social policy issues in the Arab world.

9. **Professor Michael Gilsenan**: Chairman of the Research Committee of the Centre for Lebanese Studies

10. **Mrs. Ana Gonzalo Castellanos**: Administrator responsible for Lebanon at the Directorate General of External Economic Relations of the Commission of the European Communities.

11. **Mr. Youssef Hajjar**: Consultant with the Communications Division of the British Refugee Council. Also was involved with the Arab Resource Collective and focused on issues of healthcare.

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[158] Ibid., 71-88.

[159] Ibid. Descriptions of attendees are taken from the appendix of the report and characterize the backgrounds of those involved as per the period and not as per where their role may stand today. Descriptions have been either paraphrased or taken directly.

12. **Dr. B.E Harrell-Bond**: Director of the Refugee Studies Programme at Oxford.

13. **Ms. Jehan Helou**: Palestinian journalist and researcher.

14. **Professor Michael Hudson**: Professor of International Relations and Government and Seif Ghobash Professor of Arab Studies in the School of Freign Service at Georgetown University.

15. **Mr. Paul Jeremy:** Administrator of the Lebanon Information Processing Service and the British Refugee Council from 1984-1993.

16. **Dr. David McDowall**: Middle East specialist and writer who had worked with UNRWA and with voluntary agencies in Lebanon.

17. **Dr. Salim Nasr**: Head of the Cairo field office of the Ford Foundation.

18. **Dr. Fida Nasrallah**: Deputy Director of the Centre for Lebanese Studies. She was a member of the second track diplomatic dialogue on water issues in the Middle East.

19. **Ms. Naïla Nauphal**: Research Fellow at the Refugee Studies Programme, conducting research on internally displace Lebanese and Palestinian refugees

20. **Professor Augustus Richard Norton**: Professor at the department of International Relations at Boston University.

21. **Dr. Joel Peters**: Lecturer in International Relations at the University of Reading and Associate Research Fellow, Middle East Programme, at the Royal Institute of International Affairs.

22. **Professor Elizabeth Picard**: Professor of Comparative Sociology at the Institut d'Études Politicques in Paris and the department of Political Science at the University of Paris 1, the Sorbonne.

23. **Dr. Nawaf Salam**: Attorney at Law and Lecturer on International Affairs at the American University of Beirut.

24. **Dr. Elias Sanbar**: Editor of the Revue d'Études Palestiniennes. He was the head of the Palestinian delegation to the multilateral peace talks on refugees.

25. **Rosemary Sayigh**: Anthropologist at the American University of Beirut.

26. **Dr. Kasturi Sen**: Lecturer in Public Health at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine.

27. **Dr. Kamal Shehadi**: Acting Director and Research Director at the Lebanese Centre for Policy Studies in Beirut.

28. **Mr. Nadim Shehadi**: Director of the Centre for Lebanese Studies

29. **Dr. Abbas Shiblak**: Director of the Centre of Refugee Studies and Palestinian Diaspora (CRSPD) in Ramallah and a Research Fellow at the MacArthur Foundation. Formerly a Research Fellow at the RSP and was also a member of the Palestinian delegation to the RWG.

30. **Dr. Raghed El-Solh**: Independent writer and consultant on Arab and regional political affairs. Co-founded and was the co-director of the Project for Democracy Studies in the Arab Countries at Oxford.

31. **Mr. Tim Summers**: Desk Officer for the Near East and North Africa Department responsible for Palestinian affairs at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in London.

32. **Ms. Marie-Louise Weighill**: Research Assistant at the RSP and worked on the European Commission's Report 'Assistance to Palestinian Refugees in the Middle East.'

33. **Dr. Antoine B. Zahlan**: Member of the Board of Governors of the Palestine Economic Council for Development and Reconstruction (PECDAR) and Director of its Planning Unit.

These were the people who formed the group that laid the foundations for the project. The purpose of the meeting was not to research and present new papers, but rather bring together existing research in an organized fashion that would make the information easily and readily accessible. This collection and documentation of existing information and the commissioning of new papers for the 1996 conference would allow for informed discussions to frame multilateral and bilateral negotiations. It would also, ideally, improve overall understanding of the situation of the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon. The members of the core-group not only represented their own personal expertise but also worked as needed connections to various governments and commissions. For instance, the presence of Canadians involved with the RWG linked the project with the Canadian government that was the gavel-holder for the refugee multilateral working group. There were also participants who were involved in projects with the European Commission and also other participants involved with the United

Nations in varying capacities. Thus, individual roles and interests as well as organizational and governmental connections informed the differing perspectives.

The program for the two-day meeting was packed with much discussion, organization and coffee. General introductions on the aim of the project and "assessment of key issues identified in the project proposal" made up the first day of the weekend.[160] The following day was divided into four sessions that corresponded with the tentative program for the conference set to be held later in the year. The first three sessions surveyed the presence of Palestinians in Lebanon, with the fourth focusing on "the wider Palestinian perspective" as reflected in other host countries, by migrant workers in the Gulf and the broader diaspora community.[161] According to the report of the meeting, "the aim [of these day-two sessions was] to structure the discussions in a way that [would] be useful in planning the research, documentation and commissioning of papers for the final conference."[162] The final day consisted only of two sessions that were devoted to roundtable discussions. The discussions allowed "participants to address other wider and more general issues and their effect on the question of Palestinians in Lebanon" and move beyond just the project proposal.[163]

The meeting was co-chaired by Nadim Shehadi and Dr. Barbara Harrell-Bond, representing the CLS and RSP respectively. The purpose of the project was, as previously mentioned, to analyze the "situation of Palestinians in Lebanon and [provide] accessible and reliable information" on their circumstances.[164] Lebanon, unlike other host countries, had the least amount of information on it available. Thus, as the report from the core-group iterates, "a major contribution of [the] research programme will be the dissemination of data on the situation in Lebanon as it affects both the refugee and host population."[165] From the core-group meeting a four-phase action plan emerged.

The first stage consisted of the core-group meeting, or "conference." The core-group's objective in this first phase was to "identify key themes" and "set priorities and identify

[160] Ibid., 62.
[161] Ibid., 63.
[162] Ibid., 61.
[163] Ibid., 64.
[164] Ibid., 50.
[165] Ibid.

existing gaps in the literature" and agree to "major considerations and strategies for research."[166] For the research framework, six broad topics were selected:

1. Demographic data
2. Political and legal situation,
3. Socio-economic infrastructure
4. Structural and organizational aspects
5. The effect of Lebanese domestic politics on the Palestinians in Lebanon
6. The impact of the Palestinian entity.

The core-group would explore existing literature on these topics, find issues that needed to be addressed and would then commission twenty papers for the major international conference.[167] The actual meeting itself consisted of much debate over issues of representation and the audience that would be targeted, as well as the direction of the project. It was clear, as the organizers themselves reiterated, that the "agenda was on writing and not on research" and that the "only research envisaged would be to focus on gathering existing documents and archives."[168] Participants also discussed the target audience of their project: should it be "foreign policy elites," the big international players or the Palestinians and Lebanese themselves? This debate offered two options for an action plan. The first necessitated working directly with the negotiation delegations and providing them with information. While many agreed with this approach others believed that collaborating with the delegations could lead to many problems and obstacles.[169] The second option was to focus on the interim-period. This particular option was ultimately adopted for the approach given that the group saw that they could achieve more by focusing on how to, at the very least, improve the condition of the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon. In addition to discussing who should be the target audience, the core-group explored possible paper topics and also looked at the option of creating possible political scenarios, an exercise which would take on great significance at the later Minster Lovell Process. These proposed scenarios ranged from extreme to best-case from the impact of

[166] Ibid., 52.
[167] Ibid., 54.
[168] Ibid., 6.
[169] Ibid., 8. These problems consisted of; first of all, being part of what many believed was an effort to 'empty the final status issues in the negotiations' during the interim period. Secondly, the core-group would not have been able to 'pre-judge the issues of the negotiations' particularly when Israel was pursuing bilateral talks with Lebanon and other host countries, presumably to deal with the refugee question without the involvement of a Palestinian entity. To force a theme at the multilaterals would go against the Palestinian approach to negotiations and representation.

tawtin to the shared or separate common or distinct futures of the Palestinians and Lebanese. They also considered what would happen were the status quo to be sustained.[170]

After discussing the objectives and audience of the project and conference, the participants discussed the structure of the project and the proposed conference. Some believed that the conference should be as academic as possible whereas others believed that it would be useful to invite politicians and policy-makers also so that different perspectives could be brought forward. Critics of this latter proposal argued that such an inclusion would be "premature" and would pressure some people "into taking a position."[171] It was suggested that no politicians or decision-makers would be present but that relevant and important information would be given to them if and when necessary. Despite this suggestion, particular members of international governing bodies were invited to participate in the conference as will be discussed in the second part of this section.

The final day of discussions consisted of perspectives on the impact of the peace talks on Palestinian refugees in Arab host countries. The Israeli pursuit of secret bilateral talks with host countries and the Palestinian leadership's neglect of diaspora refugees signaled trouble. It appeared that the involved parties in the higher-level multilateral discussions would not consider the refugees of the diaspora. Aid to Palestinian refugees outside the West Bank and Gaza had decreased significantly and even the efforts of the RWG were primarily directed towards bettering the situation in the OPT. UNRWA was one major example of the increasing disregard the international community was having for non-OPT refugees. As it will be discussed in the second part of this section, UNRWA became a focal point in the discussions that were held at the 1996 conference. In addition to decreasing international assistance and support, it was clear that the Lebanese government itself was also not budging from its position:

[170] Core-group meeting report [1995], pg. 18
[171] Ibid, pg. 28

> …as far as the Palestinians are concerned, the Lebanese government will reject any suggestion that they be resettled. In this respect, an important issue for the Palestinians in Lebanon are the results of the negotiations between Syria and Israel. In either scenario, whether or not there is a deal with Israel, it was felt that the situation of the Palestinians in the host countries will not improve in the short term.[172]

Thus, in the final day meetings, the core-group decided that it was important that the project focus on international and local structures of health and social services as well as political and civic rights. It was necessary to highlight the historical context in which the problem of the Palestinian presence in Lebanon had emerged. It was, however, even more important to highlight the significant socio-economic problems that had resulted from dispossession; problems that could be exacerbated with the increasing lack of assistance.

The following phase, stage two, would consist of a follow up to the core-group meeting and the beginning of the documentation project by a researcher who would be employed by the two institutions heading the project (the Centre for Lebanese Studies and the Oxford Refugee Studies Programme). The researcher's responsibilities were several. S/he would have to collect documentation on the Palestinian presence in Lebanon, ranging from host-government laws to U.N resolutions. S/he would also need to undertake "a critical review of the literature from the early 1970s" in order to historically contextualize; to assess the literature on the relationship between Palestinians and NGOs, UNRWA and the PLO. And last, s/he was expected to provide up-to-date research on the experiences of Palestinians in the Lebanese camps and the impact of their presence on Lebanese society.[173] Dr. Laila Parsons, a consultant, was hired for the collection of documentation. Her position and efforts were funded by a grant from the European Commission, Directorate of External Relations.[174] Dr. Parsons was, as Nadim Shehadi points out, instrumental in the organization of the conference and the overall direction of the project.[175] The actual responsibilities that she carried out consisted of:

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[172] Ibid., 29-30.
[173] Ibid., 56.
[174] Barbara Harrell-Bond and Nadim Shehadi, *Report on the Palestinians in Lebanon Conference Held at Oxford from 27-30 September 1996* (Oxford,. Rep. Oxford: Centre for Lebanese Studies, 1996), 6.
[175] Interview by author with Nadim Shehadi on June 23rd 2011.

> …to design and implement a documentation collection programme and to assist in identification of potential paper writers and the commissioning of papers. The collection of documentation involved extensive consultation with and contribution from the Core Group and required several research trips to Lebanon and France.[176]

Securing documentation was made possible through assistance from a variety of organizations such as NGO Forum, the Institute of Palestine Studies in Beirut, Save the Children, UNICEF and several other organizations and committees. An appointed Academic Advisory Committee (AAC) took on the oversight and direction of the conference itself, which was the third major phase. This stage would entail a platform where the results of the research would be presented to "a gathering of international academics in order to establish a body of knowledge on which policy issues may be discussed."[177]

The Palestinians in Lebanon Conference: Attendance, Reception and Obstacles

The Palestinians in Lebanon Conference took place in the town of Minster Lovell, of Oxford, from September 27th to the 30th in 1996. Funding for the conference was provided by an array of groups, such as the U.K Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the Government of Canada, the Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ford Foundation of Cairo. Andrew Robinson, the gavel-holder for the RWG, gave the keynote address at the conference, focusing on challenges of the situation of the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon. Robinson underlined the importance of the project, claiming that "such 'third track' conferences are particularly vital in exploring where the other tracks, the bilateral and the multilateral, [were] unable to tread."[178] Robinson additionally reiterated what the ultimate purpose of their combined efforts, from the RWG to the 1996 conference, was:

> For my part I believe it would be desirable to find ways to make an immediate and substantial improvement in the humanitarian situation of the Palestinian refugees, including a much more extensive access to the labor market. But this should not be done in a way which prejudices their rights or which favors some particular outcomes over others.

[176] Harrell-Bond and Shehadi, 1996, 6.
[177] Harrell-Bond and Shehadi, 1995, 56.
[178] "The RWG: Constraints and Challenges of the Situation in Lebanon," *Palestinian Refugee ResearchNet*, Web. 05 June 2011. <http://prrn.mcgill.ca/research/documents/gavoxf.htm>.

It was maintained that the efforts of this project, as well as of the official multilateral working group on the refugees, would culminate not necessarily in a solution to the problem of the Palestinian refugees. Rather, it would result, ideally, in significant improvements to their otherwise poor conditions.

Attendees of the conference spanned various organizations, governments and academic institutions. Many of the participants were either Palestinian or Lebanese, but a significant portion was representative of the various international actors who were involved in the discussion in the other two tracks. Conference attendees consisted of the aforementioned members of the core-group as well as the following:

1. **Mahmoud Abbas**: Coordinator of the Palestinian popular committees in Lebanon and had conducted a series of studies looking at the socio-economic situation of the refugees there.

2. **Nahy Abdunner**: Programme Officer at UNICEF, head of the Palestine division.

3. **Ghassan Abu-Sittah**: Worked on various health and medical related projects and studies. He served as the Middle East Coordinator for Economic and Social Rights with projects in Iraq, Lebanon and Gaza.

4. **Rima Awad**: Operations Coordinator at the Geneva-based privately funded non-profit, the Welfare Association.

5. **John Bulloch**: Middle East Editor for The Independent and Middle East Correspondent for the Daily Telegraph as well as the author of several books on the region.

6. **Khalil Chatawi**: Director of the General Directorate of the Affairs of Palestinian Refugees, a division of the Lebanese Ministry of Interior.

7. **Dawn Chatty**: Senior Research Officer and Academic Head of the Education Unit at the RSP.

8. **Youssef Choueiri**: Fellow at the Middle East Centre and a Visiting Fellow at the Centre for Lebanese Studies.

9. **Sir James Craig**: President of the Middle East Association.

10. **Selma Dabbagh**: Worked with the Centre for Economic and Social Rights on a project on the situation of Palestinians in Lebanon.

11. **Vincent De Paigne**: Administrator responsible for Lebanon and Jordan at the Directorate General of the External Economic Relations of the Commission of the European Communities.

12. **Catherine Essoyan**: Regional Desk Officer for the Middle East for a Dutch development cooperation agency in the Hague called NOVIB.

13. **Ben Fender**: Assistant Desk Officer for Palestinians and the Middle East Peace Process at the Near East and North Africa Department of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

14. **Aziz Halime**: Palestinian refugee living in Oxford.

15. **Tomas Hammerberg**: Ambassador and Special Advisor to the Swedish Government on Humanitarian Issues; Special Representative of the U.N Secretary General for Human Rights in Cambodia and the Swedish representative at the RWG.

16. **Ali Hassan**: General surgeon in Beirut hospitals and the Chairman of the executive committee of the NGO Forum and a Professor at the Lebanese University.

17. **Khalil Hindi**: Professor of Engineering Systems at Brunel University and a member of the Palestinian Delegation to the Steering Committee of the Multilateral Peace Negotiations.

18. **Shafiq al-Hout**: Former Representative of the Palestinian Liberation Organization in Lebanon. He served from 1964 until his resignation in 1993.

19. **Hana Jaber**: Researcher at the Centre d'Études et de Recherches sur le Moyen Orient Contemporain in Amman, focusing on Palestinien issues.

20. **Carla Jazzar**: Consul at the Lebanese Embassy in London.

21. **Ghada El-Karmi**: A medical doctor and Senior Research Fellow at the Center for Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies at the University of Durham. Also Chairman of the International Campaign for Jerusalem.

22. **Ahmad Khalife**: Editor-in-Chief of the Beirut-based Majallat al-Dirasat al-Falastiniyya and Senior Researcher at the Institute for Palestine Studies.

23. **Farid El-Khazen**: Associate Professor at the Department of Political Studies and Public Administration at the American University of Beirut.

24. **Basma Kodami Darwish**: Head of Middle East Studies at the Institut Francais Des Relations Internationales in Paris.

25. **Romani Leathard**: Communications officer for the Middle East and West Asia Team at Christian Aid covering Israel, Palestine and Lebanon.

26. **Nur Masalha**: Honorary Fellow in the Centre for Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies at the University of Durham.

27. **Frances Moore**: Regional Advisor-Middle East with the Save the Children Fund, working with Palestinians in South Lebanon.

28. **Bassam Naamani**: First councilor at the Embassy of Lebanon in London.

29. **Fadle N. Naqib**: Focus on economics and has written various articles and books related to the economies of the West and Gaza and the Israeli economy.

30. **Souhail Al-Natour**: Lawyer and representative of the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine, in Lebanon.

31. **Jean-Pierre Raymond**: In charge of policy for the Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs at the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs in Switzerland. He was responsible for the Human Dimension within the framework of the multilaterals.

32. **Jenny Reeves**: Volunteer English teacher with UNIPAL working in Lebanon.

33. **Andrew Robinson**: Special Coordinator-Middle East Peace Process for the Canadian Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade. Additionally, the gavel-holder of the RWG.

34. **Gerald Russell**: Assistant Desk Officer for Palestinians and the Middle East Peace Process at the Near East and North Africa Department, Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

35. **Ghassan Saour**: Director of the Palestine Return Centre in London.

36. **Conrad Sheck**: Political Councilor at the Canadian Embassy in Damascus with concurrent accreditation in Lebanon.

37. **Bassem Sirhan**: Associate Professor of Sociology at the American University of Beirut. His research is related mainly to the Palestinians in Lebanon during the 1970s.

38. **Jaber Suleiman**: Palestinian anthropologist and social researcher working among Palestinian refugee communities.

39. **Nicholas Van Hear**: Researcher at the RSP and has written widely on refugee and migration issues.

40. **David Wolton**: Former Chairman of Medical Aid for Palestinians (MAP) and publisher for Ithaca Press, London.

41. **Leila Zachariah**: Member of the Board of Association Najdeh, an NGO based in Lebanon dealing with Palestinian refugee issues focusing specifically on women and low-income groups.

42. **Majed Al-Zeer**: Chairman of the Palestine Return Centre in London.

43. **Jihad El-Zein**: Executive Director of the *Assafir* newspaper in Beirut.

While the majority of conference participants were either Lebanese or Palestinians, according to Nadim Shehadi there was not an emphasis on a balance of representation. The conference's goal was to gather information in order to improve the situation on the ground in the temporary period until a solution or settlement to the plight of the refugees could be found. The other goal was to, again, supplement the other two tracks in their discussions following the interim period. While the establishment of a dialogue between the Lebanese and Palestinians was also a goal, it was not the impetus for the conference. When asked about representation of Palestinian refugees who were living in camps, Shehadi responded:

> Several of the Palestinians were from camps, yes, but that was not the criteria. The criteria that we chose for representation was more for information: people who knew stuff, people who had been active - we did not do politically correct representation. I do not even think about balancing representation, [it is] completely out of the question. If there is a Lebanese who knows a lot about the Palestinians, then I [will] bring that Lebanese. [One does not] have to be a Palestinian from a camp in order to speak of Palestinians in camps. We had a balance of researchers, people in politics, people who are activists, in NGOs and academics. It was a sprinkling of different perspectives because it is interesting to have. Of course the most important was the international perspective: the Swedish perspective, Swiss, British, French, and the European Commission. The only people we didn't have were [the] Israelis.[179]

Laila Parsons, however, whose job it was to travel to Lebanon in 1995 and commission some of the research papers, felt that it was important for morale in the camps in Lebanon

[179] Interview by author with Nadim Shehadi on June 23rd 2011.

that some Palestinian refugees be included in the conference proceedings. When interviewed about this question she said:

> When I arrived in the camps in Lebanon and started to talk to some of the refugees about the Oxford conference I encountered a great deal of frustration. Many of the refugees felt that there were international discussions and conferences taking place that were focused on their future but that no one had thought to include them in the discussions. There was a great deal of anxiety that decisions would be taken that would directly affect their lives without their having played any role in the formulation of these decisions. To be absolutely honest, I had little confidence that the conference would lead to any tangible outcomes for the refugees because of the fact the broader political process on the refugees was so fraught with difficulty. But the one thing I felt I could do was try to ensure that at least a few refugees who had both scholarly and 'hands-on' expertise on various aspects of life in the camps (education, health and so on) were invited to the conference, even if this meant (in some cases) their having to give their papers in Arabic. I made this case strongly to the conference organizers.[180]

The Israelis, as discussed in the previous chapter, had already shown their opposition to talking about the question of the Palestinian refugees in bilateral talks with the PLO. Israel's attempt at bilateral talks with Arab host countries also signaled the Jewish state's interest in resolving the problem on a state by state basis. This was contrary to the Palestinian approach to the question of refugees, which was to treat all refugees as a collective single entity, not one that was divided. Beyond this, however, reaching out to any Israeli presence – even if unofficial and academic – would have jeopardized the Lebanese and Palestinian presence at the conference. According to Shehadi, there was already enough trouble getting Palestinians together. The report from the CG meeting suggested that the organizers were well aware of the sensitivities they would be touching upon with their project. The language of the report assumed that to bring the Lebanese and Palestinians together to discuss the history of their relations in Lebanon would cause tension. However, Shehadi describes how there was very little tension between the Lebanese and the Palestinians. Instead, the greatest amount of tension existed within the Palestinian camp.

As I will discuss in the following chapter, the factionalism within the Palestinian leadership in Lebanon, exacerbated by way of the civil war, strengthened in the nineties. Additionally, it created greater rifts between the Palestinian leadership in the OPT and

[180] Interview by author with Dr. Laila Parsons on June 13th 2011.

Lebanon. Many if not most of the Palestinian groups in Lebanon rebuked 'Arafat's singing of the DOP, which seemed to pit OPT Palestinians against so-called 'Returnees.' Thus two major camps emerged: one that supported the signing of the DOP and another that vehemently opposed both.[181] These post-DOP tensions coupled with existing ideological tensions created difficulties for the organizers to bring in Palestinian representatives to sit together at the conference. In my interview with him, Shehadi recalls a particular anecdote to illustrate the apprehension that enveloped Palestinian representation following and at the conference:

> To tell you the truth, at the time it was impossible to bring Palestinians together. We had…the Foreign Office once brought someone from the negotiations department in Gaza, Walid Zaqout. He came in early 1995, and the C.O. called me and said if we bring him to Oxford, would you be able to meet him and bring some people to talk to him. I said of course, no problem. They then said [that…] he [didn't] speak English so it [had] to be Palestinians or Arabs. So I said, sure I'll call the Palestinians.
> We set a date. Every single Palestinians I called refused to come to Oxford. They said we would never meet with someone from the [Palestinian Authority]. [They would say that they] don't recognize it [and that] they believe[d] that the Oslo process had sold them down the river. So in the end I had to ask for personal favors from people. One guy said [he would] come only because Walid Zaqout [the P.A representative] studied in Bulgaria and [he] knew him [at] the university. [He said he'd] come as a colleague and not as such and such. In the end, I managed to get 8 or 9 people together. But it was difficult. I had to negotiate with people. That's how heated it was. Very difficult to bring Palestinians together.[182]

It is also important to note that all of the Palestinians who were present were from Lebanon. The situation of the refugees in Lebanon was starkly different than in other Arab host countries and necessitated specific, not divided, attention. Shehadi also pointed out in our conversation that had he and the organizers considered a balance of representation it would have created many problems. While some attention was paid to the fact that the Palestinian representatives did reflect different perspectives, the conference was not a platform for negotiation. It was not, after all, "a meeting that was going to result in any treaty or pact or reconciliation, it was an academic conference."[183] Had they taken a balance of representation into strict consideration, they would have had

[181] Riccardo Bocco, "UNRWA and the Palestinians: A History within History," *Refugee Survey Quarterly* 28.2 (2010): 240-241.
[182] Interview by author with Nadim Shehadi on June 23rd 2011.
[183] Ibid.

to ensure representations across the board of all the seventeen major and minor Palestinian factions operating in Lebanon.

The program consisted of back-to-back presentations, covering some of the most pressing and relevant issues and considerations of that moment in time of the peace process.[184] Panels on the first day discussed the historical context of the Palestinians in Lebanon, their legal status, health issues and the politics of assistance. During the second day, discussions moved towards looking at possible political ramifications of overarching peace process on the refugees and Lebanon. The first panel looked at the issue of permanent settlement and was followed by an exploration of the possible impact of the peace process on Lebanon. The third panel discussed the role of the United Nations and UNRWA. The presentations looked specifically at the relationship between the Palestinian refugees and the respective organizations. The fourth and final panel for the second day surveyed the Israeli and PLO positions on the refugees. The last day of the conference consisted of two panels and two roundtable discussions. The first panel discussion looked at possible final status negotiation scenarios and the obstacles that stood in the way of resolving the situation of the refugees in Lebanon and beyond. At the second and last panel for the conference, the discussion moved onto looking at the future of the Palestinian economy and how it would be affected by the possible absorption of refugees.

The timing of the conference was significant. Not only for reasons pertaining to the Oslo interim period, but also because it was only in 1993 that the PLO had completely closed down its offices and sold its properties in Lebanon. It had also been only a few years since the end of the Lebanese Civil War and three years since the first peace process between the Israelis and Palestinians had been launched. While the time was critical for a comprehensive discussion on Palestinian refugees in Lebanon as was the gathering of information, it was perhaps also premature.[185] Shehadi points to the prematurity of the discussion also by recalling some of the international perspectives that were brought forward and the reactions they received. For instance, David MacDowell was believed to be the first to bring up U.N Resolution 194 – some thing about which the

[184] For the sake of brevity, I am only summarizing the program, the entirety of which is available at the end of this chapter.
[185] Interview by author with Nadim Shehadi on June 23rd 2011.

Palestinians found themselves confused. Swedish representative Tomas Hammurburg passionately spoke of the responsibility of the Lebanese to resettle the Palestinians in Lebanon. He had erroneously believed that the Palestinian participants would wholly support his perspective and proclamation. Needless to say, they did not.

UNRWA was another major focus of the international community at the conference. Decreasing international interest in assisting the Palestinian refugees outside the OPT had had a dire effect on the future of UNRWA. The U.N agency's existence was not only threatened but was already in the process of being dismantled, despite the organization's denial of such a course of action. Shehadi points out that the phasing out of the agency had begun through the Peace Implementation Projects (PIPs), which focused on strengthening infrastructure instead of providing services. In addition to this the Lebanese government had also placed several obstacles in the way of the UN agency in building schools as well as rebuilding destroyed camps, seemingly to lessen the influence of UNRWA. The Lebanese Minister of Interior present at the conference reiterated this by stating that it just did not make "sense for UNRWA to be spending money building five more schools [when it did not] have the money to run the existing schools."

Finally, there was the clash between the Palestinians and the approach of the RSP. The program was built within and sustained the framework of the United Nations High Commission on Refugees (UNHCR). In other words, the UNHCR had a three-prong approach to the resolution of any and all refugee problems: to settle in the host country, repatriate or send the refugees to a third country. This was the approach adopted, naturally, by the program at Oxford. The Palestinians, however, unequivocally rejected two of the proposed routes of resolution for their situation: resettlement and third party relocation. The only option for the Palestinians was to return to from where they were expelled and this, in turn, "shocked" the members of the RSP present at the conference.[186]

Results from the Conference and the Fourth Phase

The final fourth stage of the project would consist of publishing the research and papers presented at the conference in an edited volume, handled by an appointed editorial board. To supplement this, however, was the actual conference report that was published

[186] Interview by author with Nadim Shehadi on June 23rd 2011.

shortly after the conference itself. The conference report itself is as much of an important resource on understanding this project and the situation of the Palestinians in Lebanon as was any paper that was presented at the conference itself and/or later published. The report offers a structured and comprehensive glimpse into the discussion had at Minster Lovell in 1996. Four major themes were used in the report to summarize the discussions and the direction of project:

1. The current situation confronting the Palestinians in Lebanon
2. The nature and impact of the multilateral peace process and the pressures that influence the positions of the Lebanese government and the Palestinians in the peace process.
3. Appropriate policies within Lebanon
4. The overriding importance of the fundamentals of the Palestinian case and the necessity of understanding the situation not only as a domestic issue but also as a regional and international responsibility.[187]

Early on it was agreed that the so-called numbers game, pertaining to the number of Palestinian refugees physically present in Lebanon, would not be played. As discussed in the introduction and as it will be discussed in the proceeding chapter, the question of the number of Palestinians in Lebanon was affected by politics. Higher numbers benefit parties who would like the removal of the Palestinians from Lebanon (such as the Lebanese and the Palestinians). Lower numbers, on the other hand, project the situation to be less dire than it is otherwise represented. It was thus decided to adhere to the numbers offered by UNRWA, which around the time estimated about 350,000 Palestinian refugees living in Lebanon.[188]

The lack of a consensus on numbers, however, made accurate insight into many of the realities on the ground difficult.[189] Nevertheless, from what could be gathered the socio-economic situation of the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, according to the report, was far from ideal. On many fronts, they had become wholly dependant on UNRWA for assistance. Limited access to health and education services and limitations on employment were sustained by Lebanese policies towards the Palestinians. These in turn had been exacerbated by the destruction of the country's economy during the civil war, affecting all Lebanese and further crippling the already impoverished Palestinians.

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[187] *Report on the Stocktaking Conference on Palestinian Refugee Research Held in Ottawa*, 1998, 9.
[188] Ibid., 10.
[189] Ibid., 21.

The visceral Lebanese reaction to any discussion of any civil rights, defined in the report as non-political, was inextricably tied to the historical legacy of the Palestinian presence in Lebanon.[190] The PLO's 'state within a state' had threatened not only the legitimacy and authority of the government but, in the eyes of some Lebanese, had been the cause of the war that had destroyed their country and national unity. But the nature of the multilateral and bilateral negotiations necessitated quick and reformative action on behalf of the host country. Suspicions regarding the role of the refugees in negotiations were reiterated through the conference. The lack of clarity, coupled with suspicions of *tawtin*, thus signified that Palestinian refugees would remain in Lebanon for a minimum of ten to fifteen years.[191] It was then necessary to have "some legal framework for their residence…based on the United States 'Green Card' and the French *permis de sejour*."[192] Such a framework would allow "the Palestinians to operate on an individual level, as legal entities within Lebanon and stop short of naturalization."[193]

Despite the urgency required for the situation of the Palestinians in Lebanon, the report also acknowledged the difficulties posed in achieving even short-term goals for even slight alleviation of the situations of the Palestinians in Lebanon. The Lebanese position was unwavering and "it was highlighted that the issue of the plight of the Palestinians in Lebanon was not high on Lebanon's priorities. This was, of course, linked to the fact that the nineties were a time of state, nation and structural building in Lebanon. As I will discuss in the final chapter, many if not most Lebanese had emerged from the civil war and the Ta'if agreement with a resolve to unite and to focus on rebuilding every part of the country. Regarding the Palestinians, most Lebanese politicians were only concerned about the further longevity of their stay. The Palestinians in Lebanon, on the other hands, expected nothing less than to return to their homes – in agreement with the Lebanese- however demanded that they be given the basic civil rights while they were forced to remain in Lebanon.

The report also emphasized the role of the overarching peace process framework in worsening the situation of the refugees. Aside from the financial losses that had been

[190] Ibid., 27-28.
[191] Ibid., 31.
[192] Ibid., 29.
[193] Ibid.

incurred by UNRWA and the loss of PLO assistance to international and local organizations, the ideological impact was profound. For instance women, in particular, faced some of the greatest burdens of the socio-economic limitations, specifically in the spheres of employment and education. Women's organizations had also suffered a great decline in recent years. They had also suffered from a rupture in solidarity from their Lebanese counterparts, which was presumably having and would continue to have dire affect on their abilities and functions. According to the report:

> The isolation of women within the labor markets is reflected also in the growing isolation of women's organizations. Since the signing of the Oslo agreements, the concomitant decline of Palestinian institutions, and the increasing marginalization of the Palestinian community in Lebanon, there has been a perceptible decline in cooperation between the Palestinian and Lebanese women's movement. If responses to the current situation are to formulated, this gap will have to be addressed since 'self-reliance without skills…education…[and] self confidence is very hard to acquire.'[194]

As discussed previously, the signing of the DOP which gave the PLO limited self-ruling authority in parts of the OPT felt like a betrayal to many Palestinians in the diaspora. It also heightened the sense of suspicion amongst many Lebanese that the PLO had no intention of fighting for the right of return of hundreds of thousands of refugees in their country. This thus created rifts within the Palestinian community itself, dividing the leadership. It further marginalized the Palestinians from their Lebanese counterparts and it caused great mistrust between the people and those they had felt were their representatives, who seemed increasingly inclined on dividing the Palestinian entity:

> The decline in PLO activity was linked by some to a potentially damaging changed in perception of the Palestinian case. While the PLO had been instrumental in transforming the terms of the debate over the Palestinians from a question of refugee rights to one of national rights, the negotiations were currently framed around the Palestinians as refugees. It was considered important to retain a conception of the totality of the Palestinian experience of dispossession and loss of country.[195]

The international community was also targeted for refusing to take on its share of the burden in helping resolve the crisis of the refugees. It was accused of "restricting its role to the provision of limited and conditional assistance and calls for the Lebanese to

[194] Ibid., 21.
[195] Ibid., 45.

reverse their policies towards the Palestinians in the name of human rights."[196] The United States and the European Union, in particular, exercised much pressure on the Lebanese government in this regard. Many saw such a practice as a double standard. The same sort of pressure was not applied to Israel "with regard to its consistent human rights and international law violations."[197] In addition to this, it was not up for debate the role that Israel had played in the creation of the refugee crisis starting in 1948.

It was apparent, as the report recognized, that resettlement was far from an unacceptable option for both the Lebanese and the Palestinian refugees. And given geo-political realities, repatriation of refugees would suffer a similar fate. The only feasible option it seemed was compensation, a topic that remained grossly understudied.[198] Yet not only was compensation understudied, it was also perhaps far more complicated than repatriation. There was, after all, no agreement regarding numbers once again. Records of destroyed Palestinian homes and villages had been themselves destroyed and it was no easy task to agree upon "how much" would be enough for compensation.

The report outlined many of the recommendations made for improving the overall situation of the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon. Many of the suggestions and recommendations made in many of the papers that were presented, implored the international community to recognize the responsibility it held. As discussed throughout, since the start of the peace process at Madrid there had been increasing diversion of attention and assistance from refugee communities outside the OPT. This was having an impact on the already low-funded projects and services in Lebanon, in particular.

In regards to their socio-economic situation, it demanded that it was urgent for donor countries to "prioritize the needs of Palestinians in Lebanon in funding initiatives."[199] This was necessary in order to alleviate the worsening situation. Furthermore, it was emphasized that one problem area could not be improved without improving other areas. In other words, aspects of socio-economic improvement were inextricably linked to one another. Dr. Bassem Sirhan in his paper "Education and the Palestinians in Lebanon," noted that the increasingly low-levels of education and climbing drop-out rates amongst

[196] Ibid., 47.
[197] Ibid.
[198] Ibid., 35.
[199] Ibid., 21.

Palestinian refugees required a boost in the concurrently decreasing morale. Bettering the economic situation of the refugees, he argued, could solve this dire dip in morale. It was thus imperative that they be allowed back into the job market, particularly in Arab labor importing countries.[200] In addition to this, he believed that they should be given work permits by the Lebanese government and be allowed "into public secondary schools and technical institutes."[201] Sirhan also pointed out that it was also the responsibility of Palestinians with businesses around the world to give priority to Palestinians in Lebanon in terms of employment. In terms of employment and the responsibility of other actors, Leila Zakharia and Samia Tabari looked at the particular situation of women in their paper "Palestinian Women in Lebanon: Health, Work Opportunities and Attitudes." The authors conclude:

> The low working rates in this study confirm that Palestinian women's economic productivity through remunerated work is very limited, even within the context of work restrictions imposed on Palestinians as a whole. Yet, working women's economic contribution to their households appears as both indispensible and essential for family survival…Their low education background and their humble wages indicate they are both compelled to work and are ill-prepared for it…Urgent efforts are needed to minimize, if not prevent, their exploitation and to support them in resisting abject poverty. This necessitates a fundamental change in attitudes within the community and a re-assessment of UNRWA's educational policies towards women.[202]

At the same time, however, there was recognition that some improvements could only really happen if and when the Palestinians would take on such endeavors entirely on their own. Dr. Ali Hassan surveyed health, medical and environmental conditions in the refugee camps of Lebanon in his paper "Health Amongst the Palestinians in Lebanon." He concluded that while international groups and the PLO could do much, the responsibility ultimately was on the Palestinians. He argued that a historically hostile atmosphere and the PLO's devotion to 'strengthening its own authority over the regained area of Palestine' compelled the Palestinians:

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[200] Bassem Sirhan, "Education and the Palestinians in Lebanon," in *Palestinians in Lebanon Conference Held at Oxford from 27th-30th September 1996* (Oxford, UK: Centre for Lebanese Studies and the Refugee Studies Programme, 1996), 27.
[201] Ibid., 27.
[202] Leila Zakharia and Samia Tabari, "Palestinian Women in Lebanon: Health, Work Opportunities and Attitudes," in *Palestinians in Lebanon Conference Held at Oxford from 27th-30th September 1996* (Oxford, UK: Centre for Lebanese Studies and the Refugee Studies Programme, 1996), 31.

> …to seek a self-organizing system, on the social level, away from any political [and] dogmatic struggle, and realize that they are all under the crushing wheel of the "Peace March."[203]

To supplement some of the observations and recommendations made by Dr. Hassan, Marie-Louise Weighill discussed the negative influence of aid and assistance in her paper presentation entitled "Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon: The Politics of Assistance." In this paper, Weighill argued that the "existing assistance crisis [was] directly related to the…political situation as has the form and scope of assistance to Palestinian refugees since their arrival in Lebanon in 1948."[204] She was primarily interested in looking at the "extent to which political considerations have affected and continue to effect both the planning and delivery of assistance."[205] She argued that humanitarian assistance from the international community had also become a means through which Palestinians had become disempowered:

> Assistance, especially that directed from outside, had been used to marginalize and manipulate vulnerable groups and communities, demoting them from actors in a political context to recipients of aid, whose role is to sit quietly and be grateful.[206]

In addition to this, external assistance also had the ability, and often did, worsen tensions between refugees and the host population and government. As Weighill notes, external assistance has the propensity to weaken a government's own legitimacy and authority in the eyes of its people. This is especially true in a situation where refugees begin receiving programs and services that the host government itself is unable to provide to its citizens. And this is highlighted in the case of Lebanon in the post-Ta'if era, where many Lebanese expressed such exasperations. Weighill also highlighted UNRWA's limitations and ambiguity as well as the discourse on *tawtin*. The latter had made "any assistance initiative which might seem to promote 'integration'" into a suspicious and

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[203] Ali A.R. Hassan, "Health Amongst the Palestinians in Lebanon," in *Palestinians in Lebanon Conference Held at Oxford from 27th-30th September 1996* (Oxford, UK: Centre for Lebanese Studies and the Refugee Studies Programme, 1996), 40.
[204] Marie-Louise Weighill, "Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon: The Politics of Assistance," in *Palestinians in Lebanon Conference Held at Oxford from 27th-30th September 1996* (Oxford, UK: Centre for Lebanese Studies and the Refugee Studies Programme, 1996), 1.
[205] Ibid.
[206] Ibid., 2.

almost inevitable step towards resettlement of the refugees.[207] UNRWA's limitations and ambiguity, she argued, had made it only a force for assistance and not legal and civil protection.[208] Dr. Yves Besson agreed with Weighill's sentiments regarding the U.N agency's limitations in his paper "UNRWA's role in Lebanon." He, however, emphasized that these limitations were a result of the narrow window of flexibility allowed by the Lebanese government.[209] Besson thus argued that there needed to be a "deepening and re-adjusting" of the relationship between the Lebanese government and UNRWA which would "correspond to…more diversified, tailor-made policies."[210]

Finally, the issue of final status arrangements was given some critical and, inevitably, controversial engagement. Dr. Rex Brynen presented a paper entitled "Imagining a Solution: Critical Perspectives on Final Status Arrangements." Brynen explored the "possible Palestinian-Israeli final status arrangements on the issue of…refugees, and assess[ed] the ramifications of such a settlement for Lebanon and the…refugee population resident there."[211] What seemed likely, for an ideal situation, was that only a small portion would be allowed to return to the OPT with several remaining in the host country. The ideal situation then, for the Palestinians in Lebanon Brynen noted, was that they be granted civil and economic rights through which they could be integrated into Lebanese society. They would receive Palestinian nationality and Lebanese permanent residency as well as "the provision of post-UNRWA services."[212] Despite this perspective, Brynen maintained that a "darker future" was just as likely for the Palestinians in Lebanon. The marginalization of the refugee population in the peace process only guaranteed the dire uncertainty of their future.[213] This would remain to be the case if the process were to culminate in an agreement regarding final status. Brynen thus concluded that it was the responsibility of scholars and policy-makers "to consider

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[207] Ibid.,11.
[208] Ibid., 8.
[209] Weighill approached the problem of UNRWA by looking at the limitations inherent to its creation.
[210] Yves Besson, "UNRWA and its Role in Lebanon," in *Palestinians in Lebanon Conference Held at Oxford from 27th-30th September 1996* (Oxford, England: Centre for Lebanese Studies and the Refugee Studies Programme, 1996), 16.
[211] Rex Brynen, "Imagining a Solution: Critical Perspectives on Final Status Arrangements," in *Palestinians in Lebanon Conference Held at Oxford from 27th-30th September 1996* (Oxford, UK: Centre for Lebanese Studies and the Refugee Studies Programme, 1996),1.
[212] Ibid., 19.
[213] Ibid.

how that uncertainty could be minimized, and how the best possible future for Palestinians in Lebanon might be realistically pursued."[214]

The conference report concluded that whatever solution would emerge for the situation of the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon had to be based on rights afforded to them by the United Nations. The participants all recognized the centrality of Palestinian national rights and, in particular, of Resolution 194 to both the Palestinians and Lebanese:

> What potential there is for cooperation between Palestinians and Lebanese lies not in the imposition of one unwilling community on another but in the focus of mutual interest-opposition to [*tawtin*.] For the Palestinians such opposition is based on a determination to secure their national rights; for the Lebanese it is based on concern for the future and security and prosperity of their country. For both parties…the key remains meaningful negotiations, without prior assumptions as to the outcome, based on the implementation of United Nations resolutions on Palestinian national rights. In this mutual recognition of the abiding importance of the historically based legal rights of Palestinian refugees, Lebanese and Palestinians may yet prove that revolutionaries are the greatest realists.[215]

The findings of the conference were published in a special issue of the Oxford Journal for Refugee Studies, edited by Nadim Shehadi and Marie-Louise Weighill.[216] The project would lead to a series of meetings in the early 2000s, forming what would then become the Minster Lovell Process at the Chatham House.[217] According to Shehadi, he felt that 1996 conversation was, as previously mentioned, premature:

> I think the real good discussion we had on Palestinian Lebanese relations was not until 2005, really. In 2005, we had a three-day meeting in Cyprus [that] was in collaboration with the Lebanese government. Many of the people who were participants in the '96 meeting were there. But there were about 15-17 people. And we went in depth. It was basically approaching the problem of all the issues: what are the solutions, making recommendations to both the Lebanese government and the Palestinian Authority. It resulted in the creation of the [Lebanese-Palestinian Dialogue Committee] LPDC, after the new policy on Palestinian refugees.[218]

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[214] Brynen, 19.
[215] *Palestinians in Lebanon Conference Report*, 48-49.
[216] Access to the papers presented at the conference and published in the journal are available in an online archive on the website of the *Journal of Refugee Studies*.
[217] For archives of all available reports from those meetings, please visit: http://chathamhouse.org.uk/research/middle_east/current_projects/palestinian_refugees/minster_lovell/
[218] Interview by author with Nadim Shehadi on June 23rd 2011.

The 1997 Stocktaking Conference on Palestinian Refugee Research

The Palestinians in Lebanon conference at Oxford set a precedent for discussion on the topic of the situation in Lebanon. It highlighted the need for a more nuanced and comprehensive consideration of the situation of the refugees in Lebanon. At the time, while bringing into light the particularity of those in Lebanon it also pushed the overall question into the limelight. It had become increasingly apparent that 'Arafat's PLO was primarily concerned with consolidating its newly attained authority over a fraction of Palestinian land. This meant that the Palestinians in diaspora were, at best, a troublesome itch on the backs of their representatives. Canada, as gavel-holder of the Refugee Working Group, had faced many obstacles. As discussed in the previous chapter, it was clear to those involved that the RWG had little power; there were few delusions of grandeur regarding the extent to which they could affect the situation of the refugees. As Dr. Rex Brynen pointed out in an interview, the RWG felt constrained by the limitations of unanimous consensus. It would only be when the official framework collapsed, after the Netanyahu election, that the Canadian government and the members of the RWG began working outside the parameters of the multilateral group.

Conference Structure and Key Findings

In early December 1997, the Palestinian Refugee ResearchNet and the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) hosted a stocktaking conference in Ottawa. The conference was undoubtedly building off of the project that had begun at Oxford, but focusing on all refugees as opposed to just those in Lebanon. The foreword to the conference report reads:

> In order to provide an opportunity for researchers from all over the world to take a critical and comprehensive examination of major current research and dialogue initiatives on this issue, the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) and Palestinian Refugee ResearchNet (PRRN) hosted an international conference on refugee research in Ottawa on 8-9 December 1997. Participants included some forty-four project leaders, academics and others from across the Middle East, North America and Europe, as well some three dozen observers. The agenda of the conference reviewed work, identified gaps and needs in research, encouraged networking and identified future activities.

> The PRRN/IDRC Stocktaking Conference was funded by the Canadian International Development Agency through the Expert and Advisory Services Fund, an IDRC-managed project whose goal is to provide a constructive Canadian contribution to the multilateral negotiations of the Middle East Peace Process.[219]

Given that the focus of my dissertation is the discussion on Palestinian refugees in Lebanon during this particular period I will focus only briefly on the Ottawa conference, as I will on the proceeding conference at Warwick in 1998. I wish to take the Ottawa conference and the conference at Warwick and situate them in this particular time period in relation to the Oxford conference. All three conferences dealt with different approaches to the question of the refugees. It is vital to note that the Ottawa conference and the entire process that ensued were not part of the 'third-track.' Unlike its predecessor at Oxford, this meeting was very much so a part of the multilateral framework. It was thus an official initiative and thus constrained by the realities of the overarching peace process.

The 1997 Stocktaking conference would later become the first workshop of the informal initiative taken by the Canadian government, referred to as the Ottawa Process. The conference was divided into six major sessions, looking at key issues. The first day, December 8th, consisted primarily of project reports, open discussions on the gaps in research that required immediate attention and connecting research with policy-making.[220] The second day's program was packed with six intensive workshops, each covering a comprehensive array of questions.[221]

The first panel dealt with legal and moral dimensions of the conflict. It delved into the source of the conflict going back to 1948. It addressed questions of moral responsibility of the refugees as well as contemporary meanings of the Right of Return.[222] Education and reconciliation as well as recognition of the plights of dispossession felt by all were stressed as key to stepping towards resolving the issue from this perspective:

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[219] "Forward" in *Report on the Stocktaking Conference on Palestinian Refugee Research Held in Ottawa*, 1998.
[220] *Report on the Stocktaking Conference on Palestinian Refugee Research Held in Ottawa*, 1998, 45.
[221] Ibid., 41-43.
[222] Ibid., 23.

> Drawing an analogy with the formative role of the Holocaust on Israeli political thinking, one (Israeli) discussant suggested that a main obstacle towards a fruitful resolution of the refugee problem is the inability of the Israeli society to understand the trauma of the Palestinian refugee experience. It was suggested that educational activities should be undertaken to publicize this issue inside Israeli society. This participant also added that Israel, as a state, should take some, but not all, responsibility for what has befallen the Palestinian refugees.[223]

This discussion was followed by a panel exploring the topic of compensation, seen to be a 'solution' to the refugee problem that was more acceptable to the Israelis than any semblance of adherence to Resolution 194. Some worried that discussion of compensation would tie the hands of negotiators and undermine Palestinian national rights. Most, however, argued that the Palestinian position would in no way be weakened through discussing. Rather, they argued, such a discussion would highlight both the negatives and positives of this course of action. The discussion on compensation proved to highlight not only the pros and cons but also the general complexity of the method. As mentioned earlier, the numbers game was inevitably a part of this solution and to a much different extent than in a discussion about the Right of Return. It was agreed that there had not been enough work done on the issue. Additionally, given the sensitivity of time and the peace process, it was high time for further research on the issue.[224]

While compensation was stressed as a talking point for possible solutions for the problem of the refugees, the possibility of repatriation and absorption could not be ignored. The third panel explored the "absorptive capacity" of the West Bank and Gaza. From economic considerations to the "institutional capacity of the P.A," participants discussed the plausibility of those areas to absorb hundreds and thousands of refugees? It was argued that the economy of the OPT were constantly fraught with "closures" and a good remedy to begin to address some of the problems would be the establishment of property rights.[225] Additionally, the needs of Palestinian women in terms of education and health were also stressed as important considerations. Strong institutions would be required not only for the entirety of a new and large population but also to deal with the many issues affecting women. It was also argued that the absorption of hundreds and

[223] Ibid., 23.
[224] Ibid., 25-27.
[225] Ibid., 29.

thousands of Jews from Europe by Israel could serve as an example for constructing a framework for Palestinian absorption. There was also a push for realism in considering the plausibility of repatriation and absorption:

> …Some felt that the issue of "absorptive capacity" was overemphasized: the return of most refugees was likely to be self-regulating, depending on the availability of employment and investment opportunities in the territories . Only refugees facing significant "push" factors (notably refugees from Lebanon) where likely to return to a Palestinian state in the absence of suitable economic conditions.[226]

It is impossible to discuss the Palestinian refugees without discussing UNRWA, as previously noted. Thus the fourth panel focused on the future of UNRWA. The experience of the refugees, especially those in Lebanon, has been inseparable from the experience of role and character of the U.N agency. Yet despite this relationship, the agency remained understudied. Financial sustainability of UNRWA was emphasized: since 1993, the agency had been struggling to meet all budgetary needs, often forced to cut back on programs and hold emergency donor meetings. It was predicted the following year in 1998, would be even worse. UNRWA was projected to fall "$25 million short of budgetary needs and will thus be unable to [fulfill] its core responsibilities during a critical period."[227] It was additionally noted that the refugee population was not going to decrease but rather increase in the coming years. Thus, the budgetary needs of UNRWA would simultaneously increase as its services and programs would be in greater demand. Source of financial sustainability, however, was debated. Some argued that Israel, the United States, the United Kingdom and Germany should "assume the primary burden of UNRWA funding, given their historic moral responsibility for the refugee issue."[228] Others felt that the better route would be increased reliance on "self-generated resources and cost-recovery." Other participants felt that the discussion of financial sustainability was overshadowing more important aspects of the conversation regarding UNRWA. Several questions were offered to lead research on UNRWA, such as reception by refugee and host communities and the influence it has had on Palestinian society. It was also agreed "further decline in the quality of UNRWA services would exacerbate feelings of deprivation and abandonment among refugees, with possibly destabilizing

[226] Ibid., 29.
[227] Ibid., 31.
[228] Ibid.

consequences."[229]

The fifth panel explored the relationship between the question of the future of the Palestinian refugees with the remaining final status questions:

> …the resolution of territorial issues—notably the delineation of borders between Israel and a future Palestinian state, the fate of the settlements (including their possible use as housing for Palestinian returnees), and the future status of Jerusalem—all have direct bearing on the refugee issue.[230]

There was disagreement on the issue of priorities. Discussants proclaimed that Israel's primary two concerns were the end of the conflict and the problem of the refugees. This, they said, conflicted with what seemed to be the top two priorities for Palestinians: self-determination and Jerusalem. Others stressed that the over-emphasis on priorities should not paralyze the discussion on finding a resolution to the final status questions, however difficult it may seem. It was suggested that perhaps Egypt take on a greater role in the peace process or that a "package-like solution [that] includes all the interlinked factors" be created.

The final panel looked what sort of measures could be taken in the interim period to deal with the refugee problem. This period was "characterized by substantial uncertainty and indeterminacy, making program planning even more difficult." The P.A had just gained some, albeit limited, power in the OPT and there had been sort of consensus on final status arrangements. It was also important to look at the situation of both OPT refugees and refugees elsewhere in neighboring countries, particularly Lebanon. There was also discussion on donor competition in the OPT, where other agencies had been established to assist refugees. There was also discussion on the politics of external aid and relations between refugee populations and donor agencies:

[229] Ibid., 32.
[230] Ibid., 33.

> Donor efforts are sometimes cast in a negative light and perceived as a means of normalizing the issue of refugees. This is especially sensitive in the interim period when camp dwellers want improved provisional services yet they are concerned about maintaining the social landscape of the camps lest their "provisional" refugee status be put into question.
> One participant asserted that refugees were thus merely trying to protect themselves in the political negotiations. However, participants underlined that the needs of the refugee and non-refugee populations of the West Bank/Gaza were quite similar. Existing tensions between the two groups could be heightened and present a political risk. The conclusion was that status-centered assistance ought not to be confused with the protection of rights.[231]

The discussion on refugees in the diaspora was focused on those in Lebanon, where the situation was seen to be in "pressing need."[232] One discussant suggested "that the funding of UNRWA ought to be channeled heavily toward the Palestinian refugee population of Lebanon."[233] The panel concluded with a discussion on the "recognition that effective developmental assistance requires the participation of beneficiaries."[234] In other words, donor nations had to play more of an active role. This, of course, was recognized as more of an ideal situation as political limitations and conditions constricted the abilities of said countries.[235]

Reception and Restrictions

The Stocktaking conference was a strong initiative by the Canadians in a process that was otherwise believed to be futile for change. Part of the reason for the strength of the conference's discussions was the diversity of participants, which included Israelis. Additionally, many of the participants overlapped from the "Palestinians in Lebanon" conference. It seemed that for the most part, as it will be discussed later, those present at the conference represented more of the 'policy-making' side of the agenda as opposed to academic.

As the conference report says, there was a consensus amongst participants that the centrality of the question of the Palestinian refugees to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict could not ignored. Despite this importance, it had not received the level of attention it

[231] Ibid., 35.
[232] Ibid., 36.
[233] Ibid.
[234] Ibid.
[235] Ibid.

deserved from decision-makers and academics alike.[236] All participants also agreed that Palestinian statehood was integral to the overall peace process and, especially, to the refugees. Organizers of the conference encouraged academic participants, in particular, to think outside the box and not be afraid to approach "red lines" and "taboos." Their involvement, the organizers noted, was vital to coming to some sort of settlement or solution to the plight of the Palestinian refugees. Researchers and academics had the tools available to them to fill in the gaps that would be identified as obstacles to a final status agreement. Despite this encouragement, Terry Rempel notes in "The Ottawa Process: Workshop on Compensation and Palestinian Refugees" that participants were nevertheless cautioned to keep a healthy dose of 'political realism' in their discussions and conclusions.[237] The realism they spoke of was poignantly highlighted by the refusal of Israeli participants to bring the question of the Right of Return to the discussion table. According to a strongly worded report published by the BADIL Resource Center for Palestinian Residency and Refuge, the Israeli representatives only pushed for a solution that "should occur outside of 1948 Palestine."[238] It was not disclosed that four of the Israeli participants were, in fact, representatives of the Israeli government and thus pushing the official Israeli position since Madrid.

The BADIL report summarizes the conference discussions similarly to the official conference report, but offers a much more detailed picture of the conversations by highlighting who was saying what and how it was being said.[239] It emphasized the clear difference in priorities and approaches between the Palestinian and Arab participants and the Israelis. The Israelis, the report noted, were more interested in focusing on 'development' and the establishment of a fund to resettle the refugees in their respective host countries. It was at this point that an Arab participant had brought up the comparison of following a model similar to Israel's absorption of hundreds of thousands of immigrants. The report also questioned the overall approach of the conference and the

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[236] Ibid., 37.
[237] Terry Rempel, "The Ottawa Process: Workshop on Compensation and Palestinian Refugees," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 29.1 (1999): 37.
[238] "Palestinian Refugee Research," *BADIL*, BADIL Resource Center for Palestinian Residency and Refuge, Mar. 1998, Web. 20 June 2011. <http://badil.org/es/ariiculo-74-/item/1222-palestinian-refugee-research>.
[239] In my interview with Dr. Brynen, who was leading this initiative, he said (referring to the *Palestinians in Lebanon Conference Report*) that 'you write the conference report as it should have happened, not as it actually happened.'

way it had been presented to the participants. According to BADIL, it was never mentioned on the invitation that the "Canadian government was behind the conference, or that the IDRC was connected to the government in one way or another."[240] This further underscored another major issue, for an organization such as BADIL, which was the overriding non-academic nature of the conference:

> While the main idea of the conference was stocktaking, the relatively large number of Canadian officials compared to researchers suggested that it was a more political than academic conference. In addition, the tone of the host center, the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), an "arms length agency" for Canadian foreign policy dedicated to assisting developing countries to building research capacity so that they can address and resolve problems which confront them, in the introductory speeches was geared more towards the political rather than the academic issues.

The report continues:

> The large attendance of Canadian officials, especially from the department of Foreign Affairs, made it clear that the idea behind the conference was more political, not academic. For this reason, an "Arab lobby" was indirectly created on the spot to keep the conference in the academic level, and to refuse any political statement to be issued at the end of the conference.

Despite the criticisms brought up by BADIL, the Ottawa conference initiated a series of workshops that have continued into the 2000s, much like the Minster Lovell Process. Most notable of these meetings was the 1999 workshop on compensation, led by Rex Brynen. The workshop was described as being "surprisingly successful."[241] In 2003 a second stocktaking conference was held, building upon the work done since the 1997 conference.

The 1998 Warwick Conference: What Role for the International Community?

Thus far I have highlighted two of the most notable efforts in the Oslo interim period that looked at the discussion of Palestinian refugees: the 1996 Palestinians in Lebanon Conference and the 1997 Stocktaking Conference on Palestinian Refugee Research. Of the many meetings, conferences and efforts that took place during this critical period, the Oxford and Ottawa conferences stood out. The 1996 conference

[240] BADIL report on the *Palestinians in Lebanon Conference*, 1998.
[241] Isabel Kershner, "The Jerusalem Report Solutions Offered to 1948 Refugees Problem," *The Jerusalem Post*, 16 Aug. 1999.

brought together, for the first time, an entire group of Lebanese and Palestinians who had never spoken to one another on the situation. It helped establish an Arab-Arab dialogue, giving space for refugees and representatives of host countries to discuss their history and future.[242] The 1997 conference represented significant progress on the multilateral front. The longevity of both these projects is testament to both the need they fulfilled and their success.

In this final section, I will be briefly looking at another major conference that took place not long after the Ottawa meeting. In late March of 1998 the University of Warwick hosted a conference entitled "Resolving the Palestinian Refugee Problem: What role for the International Community?" I wish to highlight not only the discussions at this meeting, but also its character as a European initiative. While the conference is considered to be part of the Ottawa Process, its European particularity necessitates a separate discussion.

European Interest in the Question of Palestinian Refugees

Less than a month before taking the European Union presidency, Britain declared European involvement in the Oslo peace process would be at the top of its agenda. According to a 1997 article by Ian Black in The Guardian, "Britain Seeks Lead Role in Middle East,'" the pending EU president was intending on using "its special relations with the United States to convince Washington to look harder at the final shape of an Arab-Israeli peace settlement."[243] While it was the first time Britain had come out so boldly about its intentions for its role in the process, it was a continuation of a long-held role. As discussed previously in this chapter, the Foreign Office was heavily involved in the "Palestinians in Lebanon" project – assisting with funding, representation and content. Europe's overall involvement in the peace process had been marginalized by the United States. According to Mick Dumper in a report written for the IDRC, this marginalization was primarily due to Europe's approach to the conflict, particularly on the issue of refugees:

[242] Interview by author with Dr. Rex Brynen on May 31st 2011.
[243] Ian Black, "Britain Seeks Lead Role in Middle East," *The Guardian*, 4 Dec. 1997.

> The USA broadly concurs with an Israeli position that any return to the West Bank and Gaza Strip has to be subject to Israeli security needs and that any repatriation of refugees to Israel itself will be both nominal and in the context of family re-unification. On the other hand, the EU has sought to reconcile its stronger adherence to UN conventions on the rights of refugees and refugee repatriation with the constraints on those rights due to Israeli security and demographic concerns.[244]

This marginalization, Dumper notes, led the Europeans to focus on economic development and supporting the Palestinian Authority. Thus, when it was announced that France and the European Union would co-sponsor a conference in March 1998 on Palestinian refugees, the focus was predictably economic. The conference "comprised mainly of workshops on donor cooperation, economic needs and constraints and the issue of compensation."[245] Whereas the previous Ottawa conference had focused on information gaps and possible models for interim measures, the meeting at Warwick delved into the financial logistics. As a conference report from BADIL noted "emphasis of the conference on economic aspects of the refugee issue was perhaps reflective of the international community's perception of its role in resolving the issue of Palestinian refugees."[246] This emphasis, according to BADIL, underscored the inability of many of the participants to deal with pressing 'political' questions pertaining to the conflict, particularly the Right of Return. This was not only due to what was the 'polarizing' nature of the question, but also related to what Dumper referred to as a conundrum:

> …How to support a resolution of the refugee issue based upon international law yet find an accommodation with the Israeli veto on this issue, a veto which is broadly backed by the USA.

Conference Program and Discussions

The Warwick conference took place between March 23rd and 24th in 1998, hosted at the University of Warwick in the United Kingdom. The workshops over the course of the

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[244] Mick Dumper, "The Return of Palestinian Refugees and Displaced Persons: The Evolution of a European Union Policy on the Middle East Peace Process," *International Development Research Centre (IDRC)*, Web. 21 June 2011. <http://www.idrc.org/fr/ev-111706-201-1-DO_TOPIC.html>.
[245] Ibid.
[246] "What Role for the Refugees?" *BADIL*, BADIL Resource Center for Palestinian Residency and Refuge, June 1998, Web. 28 June 2011. <http://www.badil.org/fr/article74/item/557-what-role-for-the-refugees/557-what-role-for-the-refugees>.

two days covered the following topics:[247]

1. Economic Needs and Constraints of Potential Solutions to the Refugee Problem
2. Donor Coordination with Host Countries
3. Compensation and the Right of Return

Presentations on the above-mentioned topics were made on the first day, during the plenary session, by Nigel Roberts (World Bank), Rex Brynen, Robert Bowker (UNRWA) and Yves Besson (University of Fribourg). Despite the ambitious task that was taken on, the conference ultimately failed to produce anything substantive. It did, however, generate further ideas for research as well as some possible ideas for resolution of the refugee problem, according to the BADIL report. One suggestion was made that the European Union "finance the completion of an UNRWA database at a cost of $7 million." This database would document "the history of all refugees registered with UNRWA and includes information such as education, family statistics and land ownership." Such a database would help clarify the situation of the refugees, in terms of numbers especially, and work as the ideal starting point for any final status negotiations.

The Role of the Refugees and Understanding the Interim Period Discussions

As I have tried to emphasize in this chapter, despite the lack of movement on the bilateral front on final status questions, there was a rich discussion underway within the non-official and second-track framework. The discussion began in 1995 at Oxford and continued through Ottawa and Warwick. While each conference had a different approach and structure, the overlaps in the generation of ideas and the participants was both apparent and inevitable. Of the three discussed, the most notable were the Oxford and Ottawa conferences. The 1996 conference launched a dialogue between Arabs on the issue of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon. It also helped establish connections between people from different countries and organizations. The 1997 conference sought to lessen the gap between research and policy, remaining within the official framework while simultaneously having one foot outside of it. The 1998 conference, on the other hand, looked specifically at the financial aspects of some of the projects and ideas expressed in the previous meetings. It was also the first major step taken by Europe, aside from the

[247] "Resolving the Palestinian Refugee Problem: What Role for the International Community?" *Palestinian Refugee ResearchNet*, University of Warwick, Web. 25 June 2011. <http://prrn.mcgill.ca/prrn/prwarwick.html>.

hosting of the 1991 Madrid conference, in the peace process Additionally, while the peace process collapsed at Camp David in 2000, the two projects begun at Oxford and Ottawa continued their commitment to the final status question of the refugees.

Despite the relative progress on the scholarly discussion and research understanding on the topic of Palestinian refugees during this time, there remained much to be desired. As the BADIL reports on both the Ottawa and Warwick conference pointed out, the lack of inclusion of the perspectives of refugees on the course of their future was damning. While policy-makers, politicians and researchers sat at large tables discussing research gaps and possible solutions there was little attempt to determine the desires of the refugees themselves. It was assumed, it seemed, that their desires would wholly fall under an adherence to the Right of Return. And while this assumption may have had merit to it, as it certainly was not without foundation, the exclusion of the opinions of refugees makes the entirety of the discussion in the interim period interim. In my interview with Nadim Shehadi, he made a valid point that the organizers' primary concern at the 1996 conference was a balance of information, not representation. This certainly is sensible for any academic conference, particularly outside the official framework. Nevertheless, there seemed to be little interest or attempt to pursue policy or survey work, following the conference. In other words, while several recommendations were made, there was no suggestion to look into what the Palestinians in Lebanon, for instance, actually wanted out of a final status agreement. Or even what the refugees wanted for the interim period. The Ottawa and Warwick conferences produced the same lack of initiative on the inclusion of what it was that the Palestinian refugees, themselves, wanted.

Chapter Three: Lebanon During the Oslo Interim Years

"The only thing that unites the Lebanese is their 'no' to the integration of Palestinians." - Souheil Natour, DFLP[248]

As the international community prepared for the 1991 Madrid Peace Conference, Lebanon had just barely emerged from a bloody 15 year long civil war which had physical demarcated, more than ever before, the sectarian character of the country. While the region and international community prepared the road that would eventually lead to the momentous meeting and peace talks at Oslo between Palestinians and Israelis, Lebanon struggled with the massive task of identity and infrastructure reconstruction while under a double occupation: Syria in the North and Israel in the South. The presence of occupiers, familiar streets rendered unrecognizable as rubble, and new enmities between previous neighbors allowed most of the Lebanese to unite on the only thing upon which they could place agreement: the position of the Palestinian refugees in their transformed and healing society.[249]

In post-civil war Lebanon, Palestinians were further and far more voraciously cast onto the fringes of Lebanese society, a position enshrined into the National Reconciliation Accord of 1989, signed in Ta'if, Saudi Arabia by Lebanese officials under the auspices of Hafez al-Asad's Syria. The treaty granted political reform in an attempt to appease the demands which had emerged in the follow up to and during the civil war; it afforded political representation based on shifted sectarian demographic realities, asserted Syrian withdrawal within a period of two years, disarmament of militia groups and additionally affirmed Lebanese authority in Israeli-occupied Southern Lebanon as well as commitment to Israeli withdrawal from the country. While the agreement was meant to signify a new political era in Lebanon's rough confessional terrain, it in fact affirmed old adages, covered now with refined reformative language, specifically giving more power to the Sunni Muslim Prime Minister and reducing power privileged to the Maronite Christians. Lebanese Shi'ite Muslims and Druze, marginalized since the ratification of the National Pact, remained at the political margins despite the air of reform that

[248] Deborah Sontag, "Painful Glimpse of Home for Palestinians," *The New York Times*, 30 May 2000.
[249] It should be noted that while the majority did not welcome the presence of the Palestinians, there were contingents of the Lebanese population that worked tirelessly to improve the conditions of the refugees as well as on a resolution regarding their future.

accompanied the end of the civil war. The agreement also tried to affirm a cohesive Lebanese identity: non-confessional, equal and Arab. Yet most poignant and reflective of priorities and feelings following the war was the assertion made in Article H under the General Principles that there would "be no fragmenting, no partition, and no repatriation [of Palestinians in Lebanon]."[250] While brief in explanation, the inclusion of an anti-*tawtin* clause was significant: the Ta'if agreement served as an almost founding document for the new Lebanon that had been, ostensibly, transformed by the civil war. The inclusion made clear that most Lebanese – particularly those in the upper crust of governance – were in agreement about the refugees, whose future had become a meeting ground for the establishment of national unity. This inclusion and perception, however, was anything but surprising. As Dorothée Klaus examines in her book, Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon: Where to Belong?, while the local and institutional sources of the conflict could not be ignored, blame for almost two decades of blood was externalized. This allowed for the "Lebanese [to be] made into simple victims" while allocating "the source of the violence to foreign powers"[251] and, most emphatically, to the Palestinians who 'emerged from the war as aggressors'.[252] The cause of the civil war had been, and continued to be, blamed on the Palestinians; a blame which was exacerbated by the 1982 Israeli invasion and subsequent occupation of the South Lebanon, where the Jewish state closely monitored mobility of inhabitants and clashed with a heavily armed Hizbollah and Palestinian militia groups, the latter who had found haven in refugee camps.[253]

From the onset of the 1990s, it was as clear as ever that there was no place, geographic, political and even mythical, for the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon. Thus, out of pure national self-interest – and not concern born out Arab kinship and humanitarianism – many Lebanese turned towards a strictly Right of Return-laced rhetoric, seemingly pledging allegiance to UN Resolution 194. The resolution, as previously discussed, was passed in 1948 and highlighted the situation in the British

[250] The Ta'if Accord, November 4th 1989.
[251] Dorothée Klaus, *Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon - Where to Belong?* (Berlin: Klaus Schwarz Verlag, 2003), 32.
[252] Ibid., 31.
[253] Despite the call for disbandment of all militia groups, which entailed disarmament, in order to facilitate a return to Lebanese sovereignty, Hizbollah, PFLP-GC, Hamas and Fatah were 'allowed' to keep their arms. Hizbollah, in particular, was allowed given its character as a resistant force to Israeli occupation; it was seen as a required armed unit.

Mandate of Palestine, in which Article 11 secured the right of Palestinian refugees to return the homes from which they were forced to flee. For many Lebanese, the presence of the Palestinians was seen as "parasitic" on an already weak state. The militarization of the refugee camps during the war rendering them into war zones. They became the locations of some of the war's bloodiest and most tragic scenes. The use of camps as war grounds angered many Lebanese; they were afraid of the consequences of this unchecked militancy. Scott Peterson observes in a 1998 Christian Science Monitor article, Lebanon had been, after all from the perception of much of the population, transformed into a "dumping ground" for militant and terrorists by Palestinians guerillas.[254] The post-war displacement of thousands of already displaced Palestinians in a broken Beirut, amongst hundreds of thousands of displaced Lebanese, served as another source of a growing collective headache. With much to consider regarding their own future, the only fate most Lebanese envisioned for the Palestinian refugees was one which would, without question, involve their presence elsewhere.

Armed with the resolve to relocate and return the refugees Lebanon entered the 1991 Madrid Conference, characterized as the catalyst for beginning a new phase in the Middle East peace process. Despite deeply vested interests, Lebanon, hand in hand with Syria, boycotted the follow-up Moscow multilaterals, the "negotiations about negotiations" that touched on the future framework for discussions on final status issues, including the refugees.[255] The boycott was meant to display Syria and Lebanon's "displeasure over the lack of progress in the bilateral negotiations in Washington" and accused "Israel of intransigence and…refusing to withdraw from occupied Arab land."[256] This moment in 1991, albeit starkly different from the later Lebanese involvement in multilateral talks and meetings throughout the interim Oslo period, initiated the framework in which the issue of the Palestinian refugees would be structured throughout the nineties. Syria's strong hand in Lebanese politics, its military presence and its support of Hizbollah and Palestinian guerilla groups; post-civil war reconstruction efforts and an

[254] Scott Peterson, "Why Palestinians Get Little Sympathy from Lebanese Hosts," *Christian Science Monitor*, 5 June 1998.
[255] "Delegates Gather for Mideast Peace Talks in Moscow: Diplomacy: Multilateral Conference Is Marred by Palestinian Dispute and Absence of Syria, Lebanon," *The Los Angeles Times*, 28 Jan. 1992.
[256] The first quote is taken from Ibid. The second quote is taken from "Syria, Lebanon Say They'll Boycott Talks," *The Los Angeles Times*, 19 Jan. 1992.

Israeli occupation would come to frame domestic and international Lebanese discourse regarding the presence and future of Palestinian refugees.

In this chapter, I will focus specifically on Lebanon's post-civil war political landscape, Lebanese perceptions of Palestinians refugees and the political elite discourse regarding the refugees, interspersed with a discussion on the varying effects of the presence of two foreign but regional occupiers. This chapter will survey domestic politics in Lebanon from the signing of the Ta'if agreement in 1989 up until Israeli withdrawal from Southern Lebanon and the summit at Camp David, in 2000. In this part of the dissertation, I wish to bring to light the Lebanese context that framed the international discussions being had up until 2000 on the future of all Palestinian refugees, with the particularity of those in Lebanon highlighted as a primary obstacle to the question of the refugees in general, given the Lebanon's 'unequivocal rejection' of anything resembling the resettlement of Palestinians within its borders.

The first part of the discussion in this chapter will focus on the post-civil war reconstruction efforts and specifically two major case studies in the course of reconstruction, which stood as testament to the temporality of presence afforded to the Palestinians by the Lebanese. This discussion will be tied into an exploration of Hilal Khashan's "Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon: Behind the Debate," which looks at the results of a 1994 survey regarding Lebanese perceptions of Palestinians. The second section of this chapter will situate the refugee camps in Lebanon throughout the nineties, focusing on representation, self-rule and attempts at demilitarization. The final section of this chapter will look at the discourse emerging from the political elite as well as representatives of various Lebanese factions and Palestinian groups, within the country, throughout the period in the context of the preceding discussions, buttressed with an overarching survey of the dual occupation of Lebanon and its effects on Lebanese sentiments and actions. For my research in this chapter, given the lack of monographs I have drawn primarily from the works of Dorothée Klaus, Hilal Khashan, Fida Nasrallah and Jabir Suleiman. In addition to this, I have also used conference papers as well as newspaper archives from local, regional and international sources.

Rebuilding on Ruins: Post-Civil War Reconstruction Efforts and the Palestinians

The end of the civil war brought with it extra burdens upon a recovering and divided population. As Dona J. Stewart notes in "Economic Recovery and Reconstruction in Post War Beirut," while mass population displacement and forced confessional homogenization of city quarters by militia groups was not entirely exclusive to the city, Beirut became the central image of the war. The battles that raged across the city, between local militias and foreign powers, came to characterize the war as 'urban warfare.'[257] An image of a city mustered with "buildings reduced to bombed-out shells riddled with bullet holes"[258] and with hundreds of thousands of Lebanese, Palestinian refugees and migrant workers squatting in buildings and shelters without windows, walls and roofs, reverberated as the face of the end of the war. Lebanon's economy was ruined and the materialization of so-called "single community ghettos" transformed Beirut from a thriving cultural and financial center of three million into a virtually flattened warzone. Alongside the $15 billion worth of concrete rubble, however, lay the Lebanese identity in confessional ruins. The sectarian and class sources of the conflict as well as the new tensions that emerged and were exacerbated through the course of the war needed reconciliation beyond the signing of a simple document that only slightly altered the country's constitution without fundamentally addressing the fixed inequalities.[259] In addition to the fledgling relations between Lebanese populations there was also the issue of the Palestinians' presence. As Klaus examines in her 2003 work, the war left the Palestinians as "aggressors," a characterization foundationally bolstered by the fact that their initial introduction to the Lebanese political scene was by virtue of being a group that challenged the sovereignty and authority of the state:

> The leaders of the PLO established themselves in the manner of strongmen and patrons, with their own constituencies…In entering the political scene, the PLO thus changed the Lebanese political structure, radicalizing the policies and customs of the strongman to become a dominant political player, with the gun legitimizing power. And it transformed traditional relations between leader and follower into an activation of broad segments of the population-significantly Lebanese as well as Palestinian.[260]

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[257] Dona J. Stewart, "Economic Recovery and Reconstruction in Post War Beirut," *Geographical Review* 86.4 (1996): 494.
[258] Ibid., 487.
[259] Ibid.
[260] Klaus, 79.

Thus, the reconstruction of Lebanon would not only have to deal with the structural issues of urban planning but also would need to be done in such a way as to, as Stewart notes, "weld the divergent sectors of the multi-religious society and to create, along with economic prosperity, a stronger sense of national unity."[261] At the same time Stewart admits that as much as reconstruction had the prospect of recreating national unity through infrastructural rebuilding, it also had "the potential to aggravate old tensions between groups and to renew internal strife."[262] Unsurprisingly the efforts to rebuild the country *vis a vis* the reconstruction of Beirut, as a result of the preceding years, became a political project, full of strong convictions regarding the physical and discursive place of particular members of society. Or rather, non-members: the Palestinian refugees.

Plans for the reconstruction of Beirut were immediate and grandiose by a government heralding itself as one of "reconciliation".[263] Rafiq Hariri, a wealthy businessman who became the country's Prime Minister in 1992, boasted of returning Beirut to its former glory. Many Lebanese put their faith in an ambitious Hariri to rebuild Lebanon's future. The result of the efforts throughout the early to mid-nineties, however, proved not to be as fruitful as expected. Expensive state projects led to the brief return of Lebanese emigrants, who within a matter of months realized the lack of real economic opportunity that had resulted from the withdrawal of international and regional companies and corporations.[264] Dwindling tourism exacerbated the poor economic situation. The destabilizing effects of the war permeated through all sectors of society: economic, social and political.[265] And while economic recovery was at the top of the government's agenda, as indicated by an extensive reconstruction plan as well as the establishment of internationally supported financial fund, the government's greatest challenge was the resettlement of hundreds of thousands of its own displaced and homeless citizens. Yet even in this regard, the Lebanese political elite faced obstacles: inadequate responses, complaints from citizens regarding accessibility and impact of government services and, most emphatically, the relocation and 'resettlement' of thousands of displaced Palestinian refugees in Beirut. The latter obstacle proved to be the

[261] Stewart, 487.
[262] Ibid.
[263] Richard Norton, "Lebanon after Ta'if: Is the Civil War Over?" *Middle East Journal* 45.3 (1991): 467.
[264] Klaus, 24.
[265] Stewart, 494.

most divisive issue; some Lebanese factions, such as the Druze and some contingents of the Sunni population, supported the rebuilding of destroyed refugee camps for displaced Palestinians. Other groups, primarily Maronite, Shi'a and the majority of Sunnis, supported by the political elite, remained vehemently against such plans, fearing that the Palestinians would be permanently resettled in Lebanon.

Perceiving Palestinians: Lebanese Fear of Resettlement and Violence

Amongst the estimated 300,000 homeless in Lebanon, approximately 6,000 Palestinian families found themselves without shelter, their already wretched camps having been reduced to further unrecognizable debris.[266] Yet despite the refugees' dire need for housing, the 'campaign' to rehabilitate refugee camps was met much resistance, particularly from Maronites consisting of political leaders, Church leaders and many members of the community at large. Aware of their precarious position, 30 Palestinian families took to even squatting outside the offices of UNRWA as a sign of protest against the lack of attention being given to their situation.[267] The effort to re-establish the refugees was led by the Druze community's leader, son of the slain Kamal Jumblatt, Walid Jumblatt, who had also succeeded his father as the leader of the Progressive Socialist Party. The most prominent of these efforts was the 1994 attempt to house the displaced Palestinian families from the village of Qurai'a. The incident was documented by Dr. Fida Nasrallah in a paper written for the previously discussed Palestinians in Lebanon Conference entitled *Lebanese Perceptions of Palestinians in Lebanon: Case Studies*.[268] The paper also looks at the Lebanese reaction to the 1995 declaration of Colonel Muammar Gaddafi's proposed expulsion of Palestinians living within Libyan borders. Both incidents, according to Nasrallah, indicated the ability of the Lebanese to "freely express themselves […about] an issue which encapsulated all of Lebanon's past, present and future problems" as a result of their collective feeling of having been "stripped of their ability to negotiate over the future of their own country."[269] For the

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[266] Tel al-Zaatar, Nabatiyye, Dbayye and Jisr al-Basha

[267] David Hirst, "Row Erupts on Fate of Palestinians: Maronites Angered by Plan to Resettle Beirut Squatters," *The Guardian*, 26 Aug. 1994.

[268] The paper was later published in the *Journal of Refugee Studies*. Given some differentiation in the texts, for direct references, I will go between the paper meant for presentation at the conference and the one published in *JRS*. This distinction will be made in the footnotes.

[269] Fida Nasrallah, "Lebanese Perceptions of the Palestinians in Lebanon: Case Studies," *Journal of Refugee Studies* 10.3 (1997): 350.

purposes of this chapter, I will focus on the issue of re-housing 6,000 Palestinian families.

With hundreds of thousands squatting illegally in various buildings, Minister of the Affairs of Displaced Persons, Jumblatt, was faced with three choices, which had emerged in 1991, over the question of re-housing 6,000 displaced Palestinian families:

> …to return the Palestinians to the camps from which they originally forced to flee; to reintegrate them into the already existing camps elsewhere; or to build a new camp in which to re-house them.[270]

Of these three choices, the most practical and least "politically sensitive" seemed to be the third option of re-housing the families. As Jumblatt saw, to send the families back to the camps from which they had fled would prove to be controversial as these camps "were built on land belonging to the Maronite Church" and such an action would not be "conducive to harmonious relations"[271] between two populations with a damaged and antagonistic relationship and history. Integrating displaced families into already overcrowded camps was beyond impractical; only 2,000 could be integrated, at most. Additionally, Palestinians were not allowed to own property, thus they were ineligible for compensation for the purposes of buying new houses. Lastly, as Jumblatt himself argued, the then recent talks in Oslo had offered no parcel of support for the issue, so the choice was ultimately limited: the only option that remained was re-housing the refugees in a new camp. [272] After many initial obstacles relating to funding and land, Jumblatt settled on an area near Sidon, by the Chouf Mountains, in the village of Qurai'a in Iqlim al-Kharroub.[273] Nasrallah calls the reaction reminiscent "of the dark days of the civil wars," characterized by great violence.[274] For decades, the presence of the Palestinians had been defined by over-crowded camps, cramped homes, open sewage and unpaved streets, meant to iterate the temporal position in Lebanese society given to the Palestinians; they were purposely "segregated from the host environment."[275] Thus, to build a new camp to

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[270] Ibid., 351.
[271] Ibid.
[272] Hirst, 1994.
[273] Klaus, 62; Nasrallah, 352.
[274] Fida Nasrallah, "Lebanese Perception of the Palestinians in Lebanon: Case Studies," in *Palestinians in Lebanon Conference Held at Oxford from 27th-30th September 1996* (Oxford, UK: Centre for Lebanese Studies and the Refugee Studies Programme, 1996), 6.
[275] Klaus, 25.

house 4,000 families – with 2,000 integrated into other camps – indicated a modicum of permanency, augmenting the prospect of what seemed to be the impending resettlement of the refugees in the country. Nasrallah writes,

> The issue was not perceived as one of housing Palestinians who would otherwise be homeless; nor indeed was it perceived as simply regarding the fate of 4,000 Palestinian families. Rather, it was seen to extend to all the Palestinians in Lebanon, prompting a number of pressing questions: Why was priority given to the Palestinians over the Lebanese? Why was there insistence on the immediate rehousing of the Palestinians in the Iqlim al-Kharroub region, whilst Lebanese originating from that area were still waiting to return to their homes? Why was such a sensitive issue raised in Lebanon prior to the resolution of the overall problem in the multilateral talks? Why was that specific region chosen?[276]

Lebanese newspapers from the period reflected a certain anxiety about Jumblatt's intentions in promoting the rebuilding of refugee camps. This anxiety resulted from what were seen to be questionable actions on behalf on the Druze leader. While he spoke of rebuilding the camps, his plans seemed far more resonant of a gated, permanent community than the previously established temporal character of the camps. And what of the area for the proposed rebuilding? Had he chosen an area where his own confessional support lay, in an attempt to create a 'buffer zone' between the Druze and the limited Shi'ite population that lay to the south of the village? This choice was also interpreted as a rebuffing of the refusal of the Maronite Patriarch to visit the Chouf region.[277] Finally, the inclusion of foreign actors in the funding of the project further fueled the fear of the international community's plan to repatriate the refugees into Lebanese society. [278] Prominent members of the Lebanese government, such as President Elias Hrawi and Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri, and religious leaders across confessional divisions also expressed concern over the project, part of a discourse to be discussed in the latter part of this chapter.

The Lebanese were not the only ones that were afraid, though. Palestinians, themselves, also feared that through the Qurai'a incident and plans to refurbish the image of Beirut, particularly its southern suburbs around which several camps were located,

[276] Nasrallah, 1997, 352.
[277] Nasrallah, 1997, 353.
[278] Klaus, 73; Nasrallah, 1997, 353.

refugee camps in Beirut-proper would slowly disappear.[279] In addition to this, the land proposed for the building of the new 'camp' – consisting of house units and not the usual refugee abode – was exceptionally large for just proposed 4,000 families. It was large enough for 12,000 families. Thus, Palestinians in Beirut would be moved from their camps into a new housing area, of seemingly political importance for Jumblatt, and still would remain rather segregated from the larger Lebanese society. Collision of rumors, Lebanese fears and the political elite's cautiousness led to the deferment of the project and a committee was set up to discuss the matter further. There were still, however, continuing concerns, on the part of the Lebanese government and elements of the general population, of the international community's plans for the refugees' future in Lebanon, perceived to be at the expense of the country's national interest.'[280]

The heightened sensitive sentiments of the Lebanese towards Palestinian refugees in the years following the civil war were surveyed and explored by Hilal Khashan. In "Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon: Behind the Debate," Khashan surveyed 982 random Lebanese adults, during the course of two months in 1992, asking them questions relating to their relationships with Palestinians, their collective future and possible effects, from their perspective, of Palestinian resettlement on Lebanese society. Khashan's findings were telling: while most Lebanese had extremely strong feelings regarding the presence and future of Palestinians in their country. According to Khashan, in spite of the fact the Lebanese he interviewed had very strong opinions about the presence of the refugees, they knew very little about the details of the debates on a resolution to the problem that were on-going during the period under study. Yet despite this, Khashan argues that "the respondents [were] significantly aware of the issue of resettlement, perceive[d] its impact on Lebanese politics negatively, oppose[d] its imposition, and expect[ed] it to have injurious consequences for Lebanon's sectarian groups, including their own."[281]

Relationships

[279] Nasrallah, 1996, 7 [paper presentation]; the plan to rebuild the image of Beirut was proposed under the Elissar project.
[280] Nasrallah, 1997, 355.
[281] Hilal Khashan, "Palestinian Resettlement in Lebanon: Behind the Debate," *Montreal Studies on the Contemporary Arab World*, April. 1994, PRRN, Web. 20 April 2011. <http://prrn.mcgill.ca/research/papers/khashan_9404.htm>

Of the 982 respondents, 52% had never had any sort of personal contact with Palestinians, with 32% claiming some sort of friendship.[282] Of the 52% who had never had any sort of personal contact with Palestinians, 75% were Maronites – the highest percentage followed by Armenians who stood at 74%. Of the 32% who claimed to have friendships with Palestinians, 48% were Sunnis whereas only 17% were Maronites. Shi'ites, Druze and Greek Orthodox Lebanese followed for high numbers in having friendships with Palestinians, with 38%, 38% and 33% respectively.[283] As Khashan notes, religious identity seemed to play a great role in one's relationship with Palestinians, with 11% of Sunni respondents – the highest of the confessional percentages – establishing relationships with Palestinians through marriage. On the whole, groups that would fall under the umbrella of "Islam" had more inclination towards having a relationship –personal, political or professional – with Palestinians than groups that fell under the large umbrella of Christianity, save for Greek Orthodox in, again, terms of friendship.

Views on Naturalization

When asked about Lebanon's naturalization code, 43% of respondents believed any code that allows for a modicum of naturalization to occur, however 'rigid,' should end, eliminating prospect of naturalizing any foreigners. At the same time, however, 43% felt that the code was too rigid and 14% felt it was appropriate as it was.[284] And again the responses from confessional groups reflect respective political histories and politics. Maronite support for the cessation of the naturalization code stood at 66% whereas for Sunnis it stood at 37%, with Shi'ites having the lowest support at 30%. 51% of Sunnis, 54% of Druze, 51% of Greek Orthodox and 48% of Shi'ites and felt the code was too rigid, while the number of Maronites, who felt that the code was too rigid, was at 25%.[285]

Palestinian Resettlement in Lebanon

One of Khashan's most important findings was that related to Lebanese perceptions regarding *tawtin*, or resettlement, of Palestinians in Lebanon. In particular, Khashan was interested in exactly the level of awareness owned by Lebanese in regards to the actual

[282] Khashan, Table 1.
[283] Ibid., Table 2.
[284] Ibid., Table 3.
[285] Ibid., Table 4.

debates and discussions happening at the political institutional and international level, particularly post-Madrid and Moscow.

43% of respondents believed that there were plans for resettlement, while 40% were unsure. 36% believed that it would imposed, despite the wishes of the Lebanese population, while 53% were unsure. An unsurprising but nevertheless overwhelming 75% of those surveyed said that would not accept resettlement, and 14% and 11% saying they were either unsure or would accept it, respectively. [286] Despite slight variations, where one would expect them, Khashan notes that "[o]pposition to resettlement appeared to cut across the religious affiliations of the respondents." 87% of Maronites, 78% of Greek Orthodox and Catholics and 54% of Armenians said they would reject resettlement; 63% of Sunnis, 78% of Shi'ites and 71% of Druze said they would oppose such measures. In terms of striking numbers, only 5% of Maronites said they would accept resettlement whereas the highest percentage, belonging to the Sunnis, stood at a mere but unsurprising 19%. [287]

Domestic Implications of Resettlement and Resistance

While the questions of the implications of resettlement on the situation of Lebanon and how particular confessional groups should react do not conclude list of questions asked by Khashan, they will be the concluding part of this particular section given their relevance to our overarching discussion. 74% of those surveyed believed that repatriation of Palestinians refugees into Lebanese society would have "damaging repercussions." Khashan opted to leave the question 'open-ended' and asked them how they would define damaging repercussions. 46% of respondents said that they believed that there would be a "resumption of civil war" while 34% believed "resettlement [would] aggravate Lebanon's economic crisis." Interestingly enough, only 17% believed that Lebanon's demographic ecology would be disrupted and 7% believed that the Palestinians would "emerge as a new sectarian group." When asked how their religious group should react to resettlement were it to be imposed on them, most notable responses were from the Shi'ites and Maronites, of which 51% and 56%, respectively, said they would want their confessional group to resist militarily. Overall, 40% of respondents said they would resist militarily,

[286] Ibid., Table 5.
[287] Ibid., Table 6.

but the majority sentiments were more accepting, with 32% of overall respondents positively reacting to imposed settlement and 28% acquiescing to the prospect.

Khashan notes that while resettlement lacked popular support because it was seen as the pending source of resurgence in domestic violence, "more respondents were willing to accept it rather than rising against it…because many […felt] they [had] little control over events in their country." These sentiments were exacerbated by the perceived vulnerability and ambiguity of the Ta'if agreement; Syrian influence and the Israeli occupation in the south; international support for certain groups over others and, of course, the civil war which had just come to a close not so long before Khashan's survey. Yet while the Lebanese had their own concerns regarding what they felt was the certain future of the Palestinian refugees in their country, the refugees vacillated between uncertainty and certainty, both characterized in a negative perspective of their fate.

Without Refuge: Betrayal, Representation and Arms in the Refugees Camps

Feelings of group vulnerability, collective powerlessness in the face of regional and international influence and the scars of almost two decades of violence also echoed, to an arguably more penetrative extent, in the refugee camps of Lebanon. With the overwhelming number of Palestinian refugees living in 12 camps spread throughout Lebanon, it was no surprise that the camps themselves became militarized over the course of the war. Palestinian guerillas, refugees themselves, sought haven in camps that would become bloody targets of the alliance fostered between the Maronite Phalangists and Israelis. The infamous 1982 massacres at Sabra and Shatila, carried out by Phalangist militants with the help of Ariel Sharon's Israeli Defense Forces, not only left an upwards of 3,000 Palestinians slaughtered over a period of 36 hours, but etched in the minds of thousands the propensity for violence by both neighbors and occupiers. The nineties for the Palestinian refugees were thus filled with continued marginalization and, most importantly, were characterized heavily by the betrayal felt as a result of Yasser 'Arafat's signing of the Declaration of Principles at Oslo. In addition to this, they began losing strong representation within the country, worsening a leadership vacuum that had plagued the community since the mid to late eighties. As Dorothée Klaus notes, by the end of the decade, the Palestinian 'hope for return and faith in the armed struggled were overtaken

by a sense of resignation and skepticism.'[288]

The first part of this sub-section will bring forth a discussion regarding the Oslo Accords, from previous chapters, and the sentiments felt by Palestinians outside the OPT. It will bring into focus the reactions of representatives of the refugees in Lebanon as well as those of the refugees themselves. I will then juxtapose the failure of leadership at Oslo with Lebanese attempts to demilitarize the camps throughout the nineties, focusing particularly on the 'Ain el-Hilweh camp, which serves as a microcosm of the Palestinian refugee camp experience in Lebanon. This last part of the discussion will highlight the political experience that led to the unstable organizational situation in the camps by the end of the decade, resulting from the events initiating the peace processes.

Betrayal at Oslo

The absence of the question and future of Palestinian refugees in both the Ta'if agreement and at the Oslo Accords were expected. The refugee question, as discussed in previous chapters, proved to be the most challenging of the final status issues. Whereas issues of border, security and even the Holy City of Jerusalem could find a degree of debate and negotiations that entailed realistic and, theoretically and idealistically, applicable solutions and/or settlements, the question of the refugees proved to have more hurdles. For the State of Israel to recognize the Right of Return did not entail an inevitable mass flooding of over 4 million Palestinian refugees into a newly formed Palestinian state and to over 400 destroyed villages, replaced by malls and universities. While this concern has been expressed, the crux of Israel's disdain for recognition for a right enshrined in international law is based on the fact that such a recognition would not be solely a recognition of the right of refugees to return to from where they had been expelled, but also a recognition of atrocities committed in 1948 by Jewish militia groups; recognition of wrongs committed and an acceptance of Israel's responsibility for the Palestinian refugee crisis. The alternatives also proved not to be sufficient in providing settlements to the problem, particularly for those refugees in Lebanon. As discussed in chapter two, the popular second option for the refugees had been compensation, which had proven to be as, if not more, difficult to negotiate than the prospect of return. The Lebanese political elite, and a significant percentage of the Lebanese public, were well

[288] Klaus, 124.

aware of the realities of the question of return of the refugees. Throughout the Madrid process and the ensuing Oslo Accords fear and concern were routinely expressed by leading ministers regarding, what they believed to be, the international 'conspiracy' to resettle the refugees in Lebanon, a belief not far from the truth. UNRWA's mandate was riddled with ambiguities, as noted by Riccardo Bocco in his recent historical survey entitled "UNRWA and the Palestinians: A History within History." These founding ambiguities led many to believe, from an early point, that its creation by European states to help refugees socially and economically integrate into their new societies.[289] Return, from the earliest point, was presumably seen as an issue resolved before the question had even been allowed to leave the mouths of displaced Palestinians.

Despite the silently acknowledged reality of the question of Palestinian refugees, hope persisted amongst refugees, particularly in Lebanon. From the onset of the nineties, however, the realization of their uncertain fate began encroaching upon the minds of refugees. The first sign was at the 1991 Madrid Peace Conference, where Israel refused to meet with Palestinian representatives from anywhere but the West Bank and Gaza, leaving aside 2.8 million Palestinians.[290] The recognition of only a part of the Palestinian population, the Diaspora thrown aside, and the agreement of the PLO to this was a telling precedent of what was to be expected at the major Israeli-Palestinian talks at Oslo just two years later. Only days after the multilateral talks in Moscow, following the three day conference in Madrid, officials were clear that despite the issue of refugees as a topic of discussion and despite "whatever self-governing [was] created for Palestine as a result of the talks…the majority of [the] refugees [would] never be able to go [back]."[291] It was this particular belief that permeated through the atmosphere during the decade. Most Lebanese and most Palestinians, however, avoided any confrontation with the recognition of such a possible fate. Yet when the 'Arafat initially signed the DOP in September of 1993, the issue of the possibility of resettlement became unavoidable. The Lebanese increased their demand for international allegiance to Resolution 194. And the Diaspora, particularly the refugees, felt the sting of betrayal: not only had representation of

[289] Bocco, 231.
[290] Murphy Kim, "Refugees from Israel's Yoke Yearn for Home Few Will See," *The Guardian*, 12 Dec. 1991.
[291] Ibid.

Palestinians outside the Occupied Territories been absent at both Madrid and Oslo, but their absence and blatant marginalization in the Israeli-Palestinian peace process and the prospect for a solution, were also strikingly present in the Oslo agreement.

As discussed in previous chapters and as Helena Lindholm Schulz notes in her 2004 article "The Politics of Fear and the Collapse of the Middle East Peace Process," the DOP "was not a peace agreement, but an agreement that the parties were prepared to reach for a peaceful and processual [*sic*] solution to their long-time conflict and provided a scheme for how to do so."[292] The agreement laid out the course of action for the following years, outlining a plan for a five-year interim period during which autonomy would be granted to the Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank. Yet the very fact that 'self-rule' was praised as a significant step towards a peace settlement, was the source of much discontent amongst Palestinians outside the OPT, exacerbated by the initial and complete postponement of final status issues. The granting of self-rule was seen anything but progression; rather, it was seen as the greatest concession that 'Arafat and his team could have made, aside from generously offering the remaining Palestinian lands to Israeli hands. The DOP aimed to:

> …establish a Palestinian Interim Self-Government Authority, the elected Council, (the "Council") for the Palestinian people in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, for a transitional period not exceeding five years, leading to a permanent settlement based on Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338.[293]

At the forefront of the concern for the implications of the self-rule pact, as previously discussed, was PLO representative Shafiq al-Hout, whose defiant actions would come to symbolize the extent to which frustration governed all those disappointed in 'Arafat's actions. His reaction to the 'betrayal' at Oslo would also in addition, characterize the very wide and deep gaps in the PLO leadership.

Shafiq al-Hout, born and raised in Jaffa until 1948, was one of the founding members of the Palestinian Liberation Organization and soon after became the organization's representative in Lebanon. He remained in Lebanon despite the PLO's expulsion in 1982 and for almost two decades acted as the PLO representative to the

[292] Helena Lindholm Schulz, "The Politics of Fear and the Collapse of the Mideast Peace Process," *International Journal of Peace Studies* 9.1 (2004): 91.
[293] Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements, September 13 1993.

annual United Nations General Assembly meetings.[294] His uncompromising commitment to the Palestinian cause was embodied by his commitment to Palestinian rights and the inclusion of all Palestinians in any and all decisions made pertaining to the nation and its future. In the days leading up to the signing of the Declaration of Principles, al-Hout expressed his concern that the proposed self-rule pact which focused only on an already restricted OPT, would lead the way towards further marginalization of all Palestinians in the Diaspora, particularly the refugees – and, more specifically, those in Lebanon.[295] The PLO representative was additionally quick to reject any possibility of resettlement in Lebanon, saying that "it [was] for the Lebanese government to decide the future of the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon"[296] and went on to say while the international community could impose such a route upon them, forcing them to comply, they would keep "refusing it but without giving up [their] right to decent living conditions until a final solution [was] reached."[297] Thus for al-Hout not only was the Right of Return fundamental but so were the deplorable conditions in which refugees found themselves in Lebanon.

In the days following the statements made above, al-Hout's responses to 'Arafat's actions at Oslo would take a far more aggressive and accusative tone. He charged that the Chairman had "changed the charter of the PLO…given up the right to return of about 3 million Palestinian refugees and [it was] all done in secret."[298] Rather than pushing for full withdrawal, the representatives of the Palestinians had settled for limited Israeli withdrawal from Jericho and the Gaza Strip. By doing so, al-Hout argued, 'Arafat had bounded the prospect for the liberation of all occupied lands, further exacerbated by his recognition of the State of Israel.[299] In addition to this, al-Hout and other PLO representatives and negotiators charged, concessions had been made without their own consent and knowledge from the PLO leadership in Tunis to the Israelis and the Americans; concessions made by 'Arafat just to be able to participate in the Accords on

[294] "Obituary: Shafiq al-Hout: PLO founder member and staunch defender of Palestinian rights," *The Guardian*, 7 Aug. 2009.
[295] "Refugees Fear Deal Traps Them in Camps Forever," *The Globe and Mail*, 6 Dec. 1993.
[296] Ibid.
[297] Ibid.
[298] Robert Fisk, "The Middle East / Beirut Despair: Dismay in Lebanon over 'secret Sell-out' by ''Arafat." *The Independent*, 11 Sept. 1993.
[299] David Hirst, "A Pioneer in the Movement Attacks the PLO," *The Guardian*, 24 Aug. 1993.

conditions set forth by the occupying state.[300] Not wanting to be associated with the leadership responsible for what he saw as a clear betrayal of all Palestinians and of the ultimate goal for Palestinian autonomy, Shafiq al-Hout resigned from his position. And in an equally telling response, 'Arafat did not replace al-Hout's position. This action – or inaction - further signaled to the Palestinian refugees, as well as the Lebanese, precisely how the leadership, as well as the other involved parties, saw the position of the Diaspora in the peace process: non-existent.

Palestinian Representation and 'Security Islands'

By the end of the decade, Palestinian representation in Lebanon was in deep organizational disarray. Decades of inter-factional strife within the Palestinian political camp, exacerbated by major events during the nineties had divided representation. At the center of the fight for power and representation between vying factions were the Palestinian refugee camps. Since the PLO's entry into Lebanon in the late sixties, the camps served as prime locations for recruitment as well as for logistical, political, organizational and military centers. The militarization of refugee camps continued well after the 1982 expulsion of the PLO from Lebanon. Despite demilitarization efforts following Ta'if, refugee camps continued to serve as political centers, particularly as Palestinian militants were forced to redeploy into the camps after agreeing to be moved from other central Lebanese centers. This section of the chapter, summarizing and drawing primarily from Jaber Suleiman's 1999 article "The Current Political, Organizational, and Security Situation in the Palestinian Refugee Camps of Lebanon" as well as the previously cited work by Dorothée Klaus, will delve into the situation of the refugee camps throughout the nineties as exemplified by the utilization of these camps, particularly post-Ta'if, by Palestinian groups vying for power and a monopoly over representation. The ''Ain el-Hilweh camp, in particular, came to symbolize the militarized and aggressive image accorded to refugees by a Lebanese population that saw the camps as amongst the greatest sources of domestic instability.

Since its entry onto Lebanon's political scene, the PLO served as a monumental challenge to the sovereignty and authority of the Lebanese state. Palestinian resistance had found its first base in the south of Lebanon in 1969, from where guerilla raids against

[300] Ibid.

Northern Israel were undertaken and solicited aggressive responses from the Jewish state.[301] The Lebanese government, under the presidency of Camille Chamoun, sought further restrictive measures against the refugees, leading to 'uprisings within the camps' in 1969. The growing military presence and activity of the PLO and the subsequent concerns of the Lebanese state were addressed that same year with the Cairo Accords, which while asserting the authority and security concerns of the Lebanese state, highlighted the extent to which the PLO had begun to form a significant challenge to the state's sovereignty and authority. This image of the PLO would continue throughout the following, serving as a foundational concern for Lebanese sentiments exhibited towards the refugees. The agreement had been made to quell the growing sovereignty of the organization. It was allowed to "maintain…military activities on Lebanese territory, guaranteeing easy movement and delivery of arms," but at the same time it was requested of the armed groups to maintain discipline and allow for the "cessation of anti-Lebanese propaganda, liberation of Lebanese prisoners, and cooperation with the Lebanese army."[302] The breadth of the PLO's strength was furthered by a period of significant institutional and political sovereignty construction. During this time the PLO's presence became deeply entrenched, as it slowly became a 'state within a state' as it "established a paid infrastructure equivalent to a mini state administration."[303] This period, as characterized Suleiman, witnessed a considerable increase in "political, military and organizational activity, in addition to union action, cultural endeavors, and the building of social institutions." The PLO's presence and power grew upon the breakout of the civil war, during which the state was completely weakened; Beirut, in particular, remained under the organization's vast and imposing influence. A 1973 Israeli assassination of three PLO leaders in Beirut produced the "largest funeral procession Lebanon [had] ever seen,"[304] which was an indication of the power of the PLO's presence. The PLO guerillas had become heroes, martyrs; the symbols of resistance and victory.[305] Increased militarization and attacks led to the second Israeli invasion of Lebanon, in 1982, forcing

[301] Jaber Suleiman, "The Current Political, Organizational, and Security Situation in the Palestinian Refugee Camps of Lebanon," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 29.1 (1999): 67.
[302] Klaus, 79.
[303] Ibid., 84.
[304] Suleiman, 69.
[305] Klaus, 84.

the expulsion of the organization from the country. Additionally, though PLO institutions fell defunct, its military forces remained within the country, particularly in the north and Biqa'a Valley.[306]

The eighties proved to be a tough time for the Palestinian refugees and its leadership, characterized with bouts of related fragmentation and violence. As Israelis and Lebanese forces put increasing pressure on the refugee camps, a major split within Fatah took place. The split would have "a profound impact on the political and organizational situation in the camps in Lebanon" and would bring Syrian influence into the Palestinian political scene in Lebanon through the regime's support of the breakaway faction led by PLO deputy chief of operations Sa'id al-Muragha, also known as Abu Musa, after a fallout with 'Arafat.[307] In addition to this, the Shi'ite-Palestinian alliance created in previous years was marred by the outbreak of the breakout of armed hostilities between the Shi'ite 'Amal and Palestinian forces, over the course of four years from 1985 to 1989. According to Jabir Suleiman, through their attacks on the Sabra, Shatila and Burj el Barajneh camps, the Shi'ite militia group attempted to "ostensibly to liquidate all pro-'Arafat Palestinian forces remaining in the country" following the PLO expulsion.[308] A source of the concern was given the lack of trust amongst many Lebanese of 'Arafat, many, including Jumblatt and Muslim leaders, accused him of "sending…fighters back into Beirut to stir up trouble in collaboration with Lebanese President Amin Gemayel and his Christian militia."[309] Hostilities also broke out against opposition Palestinian group, the National Salvation Front (NSF), a group based in Damascus and whose Palestinian counterparts in Lebanon attempted to defend the camps in wake of the Shi'ite "indiscriminate attacks."[310] Both 'Amal and the NSF were Syrian allies and put on opposing sides, thus it took Syrian interference to bring the clashes to an end by January 16th 1988. This only occurred, however, after hundreds of Palestinians had been killed.

The 'war of the camps' was officially over between Shi'ite and Palestinian groups but inter-factional conflict and violence continued within the Palestinian camp. This

[306] Suleiman, 69.
[307] Ibid., 68.
[308] Ibid.
[309] Jim Muir, "Beirut Battles Highlight Shiite Fear of PLO Resurgence," *Christian Science Monitor*, 5 June 1986.
[310] Suleiman, 68.

period, marked by the First Intifada and leading to Ta'if, saw the further divvying of leadership and representation through the camps. Fatah and PLO loyalists came to exert control over the camps of South Lebanon while the NSF controlled the camps in the north. It was also during this time that the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) left its alliance with the NSF, allying with the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP).[311]

It was in this state that the Palestinian leadership found itself by the end of the civil war. At the center of its disarray were the camps. Jabir Suleiman pinpoints five major external events which had significant consequences on the state of refugee camps and Palestinian representation and leadership by the late nineties in Lebanon: the Ta'if agreement of 1989, the 1991 Madrid Conference; the 1993 Oslo Accords; abrogation of the PLO charter in 1998 and the subsequent inter-factional meeting in Damascus.[312]

The Ta'if agreement, as previously discussed, set the tone for the Lebanon of the nineties, providing 'remedies' to the symptoms that had led to a bloody and destructive ailment. The post-Ta'if period was meant to ensure that the country would never undergo the sort of confessional violence and separation experienced from 1975 until 1989. Much of the violence, however, during the civil war period – Israeli assaults aside – resulted from confessionally based militias as well as Palestinian guerilla groups. This in turn severely weakened an already unstable Lebanese state. Thus amongst the most important clauses of the agreement was the disarmament of all the militia groups that had sprung and/or been strengthened through the course of the war. The disarmament clause was meant to assert Lebanon's lost sovereignty, of which whatever was left remained wholly vulnerable, stipulating that all Lebanese and non-Lebanese militias' "weapons [would] be delivered to the State of Lebanon within a period of 6 months."[313] While the clause was meant to disarm all militia groups, ultimately Hizbollah and certain Palestinian factions were allowed to keep arms given their location in the south, where they acted as resistance to the Israeli occupation. Additionally, while the Palestinians had been marginalized at Ta'if, dialogue was established between the Palestinian representatives and the Lebanese, with the first official meeting in decades in 1991 in Cairo, followed by

[311] Suleiman, 68.
[312] Ibid., 69.
[313] The Ta'if Accord, November 4th 1989.

a procedural meeting, in Beirut, between General Nabih Farhat and an official of the Leadership of Palestinian National Action in Lebanon (LPNAL), Salah Salah. The meeting encompassed discussions regarding security in the camps, the political and civil rights of Palestinians in Lebanon and the presence of Palestinian guerillas.[314] Suleiman notes that according to the Palestinian account of events, the meetings ended in an agreement that "Palestinians would hand over their heavy and medium weaponry and redeploy Palestinian military personnel inside the refugee camps" and, in exchange, for civil and political rights for the refugees from the Lebanese state.[315] Excluded from these proposed rights were citizenship and eligibility for governmental positions. Despite the veracity of the Palestinian camp's claims, weapons were turned to the state and within days the Lebanese army surrounded Sidon, a port city located near the largest of the refugee camps and the greatest hub of militant activity and Palestinian inter-factional struggle for influence. They also surrounded ''Ain el-Hilweh, as well as three other camps, outside of which the military established checkpoints.[316] Following this period, there was an indefinite suspension of official talks.

When the Oslo Accords overtook the region, the camps ignited once again, filled with betrayed refugees and groups torn in their support of or detraction from the actions of 'Arafat. As noted earlier, members of the Palestinian Diaspora and many members of the PLO, including high-ranking officials, were deeply distraught over the Declaration of Principles. Palestinians living outside the OPT had been completely pushed beyond recognition and thus 'Arafat was seen to have rescinded the Right of Return, despite the claims made to the contrary by the PLO leadership in Tunis. Suleiman notes that even resistance groups were split geographically: those in areas under the control of the Palestinian Authority supported the efforts at Oslo, while those headquartered in Damascus or Baghdad, staunchly opposing the outcomes. Despite eventual coalitions forming and an increase in demonizing propaganda against other groups, there was no real 'fighting' between the factions. Lack of cooperation in the camps, Suleiman notes, led to the exacerbation of "competition for resources and unnecessary duplication of

[314] Suleiman, 69.
[315] Ibid.
[316] Ibid, 70.

services."[317]

Additionally, another consequence of Oslo was 'Arafat's agreement to abrogate and/or amend certain parts of the PLO charter, ostensibly in an attempt to appease Israeli and American concerns.[318] A meeting was thus scheduled in Gaza for the 14th of December in 1998, where the said changes would be made. Further dismayed by 'Arafat's actions, a two-day conference was held in Damascus, on the 12th and 13th of December and attracted "350 Palestinian opposition figures from Syria, Lebanon and other countries."[319] The result was the re-engagement with the "national project" and revival of the opposition groups who had fallen into a sort of slumber of irrelevance and self-defeat.

Centralization of Palestinian groups and militias into refugee camps, major external political events related to the broader peace process as well as, by extension, the future of the refugees, had important effects on political status of the camps. Palestinian camps, by the mid nineties, had come to be seen as sorts of "security islands" seemingly above the law, according to a discourse in certain Maronite communities, bit also in the broader Lebanese population. Most of them were already seemed convinced that plans were underway for the resettlement of almost 400,000 'aliens' into their fragile country. Suleiman points out that the general brouhaha was aggravated by rumors that the camps had become havens for criminals, particularly following a series of assassinations, exacerbated further by inter-factional conflict. During this period during the mid-nineties, Islamist groups – such as al-Ansar and Islamic Jihad – also make their entry into refugee camps, attracting an array of Palestinians. The mix of anti-Israeli, pro-resistance and Islamic discourse espoused by such groups as well as their willingness to provide social services- otherwise lacking in camps due to a decrease in funds provided by the PLO- made them attractive at a dire time.[320] Confrontations between the secular Fatah and the various Islamist groups often broke out as both fought for control of and influence in the camps, thus rumors continued to spread that the Lebanese state was no longer able to exert control over areas that had become their own little 'states.'

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[317] Suleiman, 70.
[318] Ibid.
[319] Ibid.
[320] Klaus, 117.

Suleiman emphasizes that this perception of camps as "security islands" was far from the truth, as Lebanese authorities would often, in conjunction with camp administrators, go into said 'islands' to arrest suspects.[321] At the center of the suspicion of the camps was 'Ain el-Hilweh, the largest of the refugee camps in Lebanon housing over 40,000 Palestinians, located near the area of Sidon, which had a majority Sunni population but also led into Shi'ite areas in the south. While, as Suleiman notes, all the camps had their distinct character and experience, 'Ain el-Hilweh became the 'microcosm' of the situation of camps, seen as the greatest haven for Palestinian criminals. Additionally, the city of Sidon, in addition to Beirut, served as a "stronghold" for the PLO prior to their expulsion.[322] Thus 'Ain el-Hilweh had much history and presence within it and around it to be granted as symbolic of the general camp experience and situation throughout the nineties. In terms of the structure of leadership within the camps by the end of the decade, power and influence was split across various factions: a coalition of Fatah and contingents of the PLO; Islamists; PFLP/DFLP allied leadership; the Palestinian National Alliance; trade union groups; village committees and population committees.[323] While having diversity in choice for representation had some positives, Suleiman, writing in 1999, observed that such a fragmentation would only ultimately hurt the representation of the refugees:

> The diversity of the organizational landscape creates an atmosphere of competition and partisanship, resulting in the absence of a single "referential authority" (marja'iyya) that can speak for the people of the camp. This has a negative impact on people's lives, since it interferes with the smooth resolution of pressing social problems.[324]

Towards the end of the Oslo interim period – the end of the nineties – representation of the Palestinians was deeply fragmented and lacking substantial support. In 1982, Yasser 'Arafat's PLO had been expelled from Lebanon by Israeli forces, sending most of the members to Tunis where they established the new command center. The leadership had, thus, lost much of its control in the camps of Lebanon. The loss of power was exacerbated throughout the war, in great part a result of Syrian support of

[321] Suleiman, 72.
[322] Ibid., 71.
[323] Ibid., 73-76.
[324] Ibid., 76.

oppositional groups.[325] The PLO lost its presence in the Lebanese political scene and, perhaps most importantly, a great amount of credibility following the signing of the Declaration of Principles. The signing of the DOP was seen as a betrayal of the Palestinian people – the refugees specifically – and as a betrayal of the Palestinian cause. In Lebanon, intra-Palestinian fighting for control over influence and power in the camps led to further fragmentation, bolstered throughout the decade by external events linked directly to the various domestic situations in Lebanon.

Reconstructing Rhetoric: The Lebanese Political Elite's Response

"This problem is a time bomb," declared Lebanese President Emile Lahoud in a statement issued at Camp David on July 14th in 2000, referring to the near 400,000 Palestinian refugees in Lebanon still left in limbo at the end of the Oslo interim period, in Lebanon.[326] While the declaration was simple and only part of a broader statement, it perfectly captured the perception of many Lebanese concerning the presence of the Palestinian refugees in the country. Unlike previous decades, Lebanese officials took on greater initiatives to bring to the world's attention the plight of the refugees – or rather the plight of the Lebanese as caused by the refugees, disguised in semantic adherence to the Right of Return. This final section will briefly explore the response from many Lebanese political leaders to the situation and future of the Palestinians refugees, following the signing of the Ta'if Accord. This discussion will be juxtaposed with the preceding discussions: looking at how the political (and religious leaders as well at times) responded to and helped create the attitude of many Lebanese towards the Palestinians throughout the nineties and how, in particular, they dealt with the Palestinians in the context of Oslo and two occupations – Israeli and Syrian – while trying to stabilize peace and governance within a country that had just experienced a costly and divisive civil war.

A Decade of Allegiance to the Right of Return

Despite the first set of official meetings between the Lebanese and Palestinians following the signing of the Ta'if Accord, such official relations quickly withered away. This drop in conversation seemed to be due to unequal interests and expectations: many Lebanese political representatives were interested solely in the removal of Palestinian

[325] Edward A. Yeranian, "Syria's Grip on Refugee Camps in Lebanon Squeeze 'Arafat," *Christian Science Monitor*, 1 Dec. 1994.
[326] "Lebanon Repeats Call for Return of all Palestinian Refugees," *Deutsche Press-Agentur*, 14 July. 2000.

refugees from the country and their return to their ancestral land or, at the very least, relocation elsewhere. These sentiments were, additionally, shared by many members of the population at large. Palestinians, on the other hand, held onto their right to return to the homes from which they had been forced to flee while demanding their right to be justly treated in the host country. For them this meant, at minimum, being granted the most basic civil and political rights. While the Lebanese were hand in hand with the Palestinians regarding their right to return, they were stringent in their denial of those rights, fearing any sort of improvement in living conditions would lead to inevitable resettlement. Thus in this vein, the decade of Oslo was filled with Lebanese attempts to assert the country's conviction to the denial of resettlement as well as reminding the international community that it would not abide by any imposition of a solution to the refugee problem at the expense of the refugees.

The Oslo Accords' apparent revoking of the Right of Return, central to the lives of over four million Palestinians, reverberated across confessional and political lines in Lebanon. President Elias Hrawi, Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri, various ministers, religious leaders and even media outlet, all came together to denounce the possibility of resettlement of Palestinians in Lebanon.[327] There was also additional concern, with the signing of the DOP, for Lebanon's already weak economy. Fears precipitated that a peace settlement would "fling the door wide open for a tough competition between the two free market economies of Lebanon and Israel…[dwarfing] the [former's] economy and [depriving] it of its economic advantage of business, industry and finance."[328] Despite its boycott of the Moscow multilaterals, resulting from the Madrid conference, and thus its absence at the initial discussions on the question of refugees, Lebanon decided to take on a more quasi-unilateral proactive role in 1994 in dealing with the problem while still boycotting the Oslo multilaterals. The Maronite political leadership was demanding the "restoration of [the] political balance." [329] It was disclosed in June of that a 'comprehensive' plan was underway to resolve the issue of the refugees in Lebanon.[330]

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[327] Mounir Abboud, "Beirut Concerned Over Resettlement of some 350,000 Palestinian Refugees," *Saudi Gazette,* 5 June. 1994.
[328] Ibid.
[329] Mounir Abboud, "Lebanese Christians Demand Restoration of Political Balance," *Saudi Gazette*, 12 June. 1994.
[330] Ibid. The plan was disclosed by then Foreign Minister Farez Bweiz.

The plan consisted of four major points: 20 percent of Palestinian refugees would be returned to the OPT which were pending autonomy as per the Declaration of Principles; there would be organization of the reunion of separated families, allowing Palestinians in Lebanon to relocate to Syria, Egypt, Palestine, the United States and Canada. This solution was seen to absorb 25 percent of those in question; Canada, Australia and other such countries would "give priority" to Palestinians for immigration. Finally Bweiz asserted that the Gulf countries had a "political and moral responsibility" to help with the refugee problem given their "abundance in resources," asking "how could [they] import Asian and other workers while prohibiting Palestinians."[331] In this instance, Bweiz asserted the constitution's stance on resettlement and conceded that the government had worked to ensure that destroyed refugee camps, as a result of the civil war, would not be rebuilt. This position was based on reactions to the Qurai'a case discussed earlier in this chapter.

Fear that the international community was conspiring to resettle the refugees in the country would also lead to a November 1994 warning by Hrawi that negotiators involved in the multilaterals should be wary of the decisions that they might make, as any decision made at the expense of Lebanon would invariably lead to the expulsion of the Palestinians, leaving "the Arab countries [to] bear all of the responsibility."[332] Again it was stressed that Lebanon was in no position to give any sorts of jobs to the Palestinians, because it was unable to provide enough opportunities event for its own citizens. Reconstruction of Lebanon's infrastructure and economy did not include hundreds of thousands of non-citizens. Additionally, Syrian influence in domestic politics and the Israeli occupation in the south greatly influenced Lebanese perceptions and handling of the refugee problem. It was not necessarily in the interest of the Asad regime that the situation in Lebanon be changed – be it with Israeli occupation or with the presence of refugees. In 1996, there were over 35,000 Syrian troops in Lebanon. In addition to this, Syria had heavily lent its support to Hizbollah as well as Palestinian oppositional factions. Thus Syrian support of militia groups seen as amongst the gravest dangers to the strength of a centralized Lebanese authority continued to also be seen as probable cause

[331] Ibid.
[332] "Lebanon Threatens to Expel Palestinian Refugees," *Deutsche Presse-Agentur*, 13 Nov. 1994.

for concern for the Israelis, who were occupying the south of Lebanon. The Lebanese proved to be aware of the benefit the status-quo gave to the Syrian regime, as it expressed its concern that the interests of the state and the future of the refugees would be pushed to the side as Israel and Syria engaged in peace talks.

By the end of the decade, as the approaching Camp David summit signaled the end of the interim period, much remained the same on the Lebanese domestic political scene, as the country seemed unable to get beyond many problems which found roots in the civil war. The Lebanese responses to the international discussions on the Palestinian refugees remained the same as well. In July 1999, Prime Minister Selim Hoss reiterated that the country remained "unequivocally" opposed to resettlement, a position that was "unshakeable" despite what seemed to be part of the silent international plan against Lebanon.[333] In addition to this, Lebanon attempted to use the presence of the Palestinians as a strategic bargaining chip with Israel in order to pursue a peace settlement, worried about the growing inclination of the Jewish state towards unilateral withdrawal from the south. While Lebanon wanted Israel out it also did not want to be left with the burden of the refugees, which it felt was ultimately the burden of the country responsible for creating the crisis. Israel, itself, was beginning to feel the burden of the occupation itself, having lost many soldiers and becoming fed up with negotiations with Syria. Without a comprehensive peace agreement and just a unilateral withdrawal, Lebanon would have been left with an unresolved Palestinian problem and a Syrian occupation in the north. The strategic tactic was, of course, clothed in the language of UN Resolution 194. In March of 2000, President Emile Lahoud issued a statement that "Lebanon [was not] ready to guarantee the comfort of Israel…when there are tens of thousands of armed refugees in Palestinian camps asking for the right of return?"[334] He went to state:

> An Israeli withdrawal will solve only part of the problem- but the other part, which is of high importance in our view, will stay, and which is the issue of the Palestinian refugees and their right to return home which Israel had forced them out in batches in 1948 and 1967…the solving of this problem is an Israeli responsibility in the first place…the refugees are a result of the expulsion.[335]

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[333] "Lebanese Leader Against Resettlement of Palestinians," *Deutsche Presse-Agentur*, 26 July 1999.
[334] "Lahoud: Lebanon is "Not Ready to Guarantee The Comfort of Israel," *Deutsche Presse-Agentur*, 8 Mar. 2000.
[335] Ibid.

Thus the Palestinian problem had now become a negotiating tactic with Israeli regarding a comprehensive peace settlement, which was in the greatest interest of Lebanon but was being ultimately compromised by Syria, with its demand of the return of the Golan Heights upon which Israel was unwilling to sway. Israel justified its presence in Lebanon under the cover of security, fully interested in instituting a fully Maronite government which it saw as one that would be friendly and accommodating to the Jewish state's interests. Aware of Israel's grasp on the rhetoric of security, Beirut's use of the Palestinian presence – regardless of the power of the militias – was meant to strike at Israel's heart. It, however, failed to do so as Israeli forces pulled out of the self-declared security zone, behind the blue line, in 2000, which led to increased frustrations amongst the Lebanese and the Palestinians.[336]

By the end of 2000, it seemed likely that resettlement was the only real, ultimate, resolution to the problem of the Palestinian refugees. There were a total 450,000 refugees registered with UNWRA, of which 253, 229 were actually living in the country, home to four million citizens.[337] Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barack had staunchly resisted any return of refugees, asserting that any 'return' would be limited – in number and to the West Bank. The refugees also served to be a bit of thorn in 'Arafat's side, whose commitment to a two-state solution based on the borders of the time seemed to be more and more cemented and his commitment to the refugees and Diaspora seemed to be waning. It was also reported that Lebanon had been offered $20 billion for the resettlement of the refugees. President Lahoud declared he had turned down the offer, despite the fact that the sum covered Lebanon's public debt accumulated through post-civil war reconstruction efforts, making up 140% of the country's GDP.[338] It was additionally reported that local bankers in Lebanon supported the offer given the unstable situation of the economy that would need much time and effort to recover on its own. There was little concrete evidence to suggest that the international community had planned to resettle the refugees in Lebanon. Yet despite this, in an attempt to pre-empt

[336] "Israeli Withdrawal From Lebanon Opens Palestinian Problem," *Deutsche Presse-Agentur*, 26 May 2000.
[337] "Lebanon Gets Support from 30 Countries on Refugee Issue," *Xinhua*, 21 Dec. 2000. Many Palestinian refugees had migrated over time to the Gulf in search of job opportunities; hence, the number of those living in the country was nearly half of those registered.
[338] "Lebanon Denies Taking International Aid for Resettling Palestinians," *Xinhua*, 6 Aug. 2000.

the imposition of any possible plans of resettlement the Lebanese government in 2000 boasted of having garnered support of over 30 countries, ranging from Arab to European, against resettlement. Any plans, however, that may have been crafted to proactively work against resettlement, never came into fruition.

The year came to a close and the Oslo peace process had come to a disappointing close; the Camp David summit failed to produce the 'viable peace' promised for almost a decade. The final status talks produced only heightened tensions, ultimately, and despite the uncertainty that had plagued the situation for decades, the future of the refugees seemed to be certain: one of limbo until the situation itself forced no other choice upon those involved. As to what that choice would be, it remains to be seen.

Conclusion

When George W. Bush became president of the United States in November 2000, his administration adopted a disastrous relationship between the Palestinians and the Israelis. The failure of Camp David was still fresh, reverberated by the onslaught of the Second Intifada and further highlighted by election of Ariel Sharon. Within months of having elected a new government, the United States was struck with an attack from non-state actors, killing almost 4,000 citizens. The horrific events were used by the Bush administration as a reason to engage with the Middle East aggressively, focusing on the region in its newly founded 'Global War on Terror.' Economic interests and expanding political influence translated into the spread of democracy by any means necessary. As Philip H. Gordon discusses in his 2003 article, "Bush's Middle East Vision," cohesive and strategic efforts were made to keep friends and create new ones where they had not existed before.[339] The wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, in particular enveloped the United States' time and efforts. Despite its very clear biases, it was nevertheless still considered to be the 'best' broker for peace and mediation between the Israelis and Palestinians. The approach of the administration during its first elected term, however, to the Israel-Palestinian conflict was almost non-existent. Or rather, it existed insofar as it allowed Israel, a close ally, to retain an upper hand over the Palestinians. Gordon writes that the administration saw its support for its greatest ally in the region through standing by Israel, regardless of its actions:

> …until the Palestinians [understood] that they [would] get nowhere with violence, but instead can live in a secure and recognized state if they can rein in terror and compromise with Israel's existence.[340]

The major assumption underpinning this approach, Gordon argues, was that:

[339] Philip Gordon, "Bush's Middle East Vision," *Survival* 45.1 (2003): 156.
[340] Ibid. It is important to note that this particular quote underscores a prominent American perspective, which traps Palestinians within the Second Intifada and sees the failure of Oslo as a direct result of 'Arafat's – and thus by extension the Palestinians' – unwillingness to compromise. Israel, on the other hand, is seen as already having compromised a great deal in terms of its own nation and security.

> Bush apparently [believed] that Palestinians [would] eventually [recognize] that their second intifada would be a disaster for not only Israel but for themselves: thousands of Palestinians dead, the Palestinian economy devastated, the Palestinian Authority undermined, 'Arafat marginalized, the Israelis back in the West Bank and the link between suicide bombings and Palestinians embedded in the minds of people around the world.[341]

It would only be during Bush's second presidency that any efforts would be made to revive diplomatic relations and peace talks during the two parties, with the intention of "stabilizing Iraq in time for an interim report to Congress on the troop surge scheduled for September 2007."[342] The Annapolis Conference of 2007, held on November 27th, was hosted by Secretary of State Condoleeza Rice and attended by some forty people representing various countries. Prime Minister Ehud Olmert and Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni represented Israel, while P.A Chairman Mahmoud Abbas and other senior officials represented the Palestinians.[343] It would be at this conference, as mentioned earlier, that Israeli and Palestinian representatives for the first time would approach the negotiations table in agreement of a two-state settlement. The conference was structured on the premise of Bush' Roadmap to Peace and resulted in a signed joint declaration, that had been leaked days prior to Ha'aretz, a leading Israeli paper.[344] The declaration outlined the following plan for action:

- We agree to immediately launch good faith bilateral negotiations in order to conclude a peace treaty resolving all outstanding issues, including all core issues, without exception, as specified in previous agreements.
- We agree to engage in vigorous, ongoing and continuous negotiations, and shall make every effort to conclude an agreement before the end of 2008.
- For this purpose, a steering committee, led jointly by the head of the delegation of each party, will meet continuously, as agreed.
- The steering committee will develop a joint work plan and establish and oversee the work of negotiations teams to address all issues, to be headed by one lead representative from each party.
- The first session of the steering committee will be held on 12 December 2007.

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[341] Ibid., 159.
[342] "Special Document: Annapolis Conference," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 37.3 (2008): 74.
[343] Aluf Benn, "Annapolis Joint Declaration to Focus on Goals of Final Status Talks," *Ha'aretz*, Web. 20 July 2011. <http://www.haaretz.com/news/annapolis-joint-declaration-to-focus-on-goals-of-final-status-talks-1.233192>.
[344] Ibid.

- President Abbas and Prime Minister Olmert will continue to meet on a bi-weekly basis to follow up the negotiations in order to offer all necessary assistance for their advancement.[345]

Despite the achievements in principle of Annapolis, it was revealed in 2011 that the Palestinian Authority had completely relinquished the Right of Return. In 2010, former PLO legal adviser at the Annapolis Conference, Ziyad Clot, leaked over 1600 documents to Al Jazeera English and The Guardian covering ten years of talks between the Israelis and Palestinian Authority. According to Clot:

> The [Annapolis] "peace negotiations" were a deceptive farce, whereby biased terms were unilaterally imposed by Israel and systematically endorsed by the US and EU capitals. Far from enabling a negotiated fair end of the conflict, the pursuit of the Oslo process has deepened Israeli segregationist policies and justified the tightening of the security control imposed on the Palestinian population as well as its geographical fragmentation. Far for preserving the land on which to build a State, it has tolerated the intensification of the colonisation [*sic*] of the Palestinian territory. Far from maintaining a national cohesion, the process I participated in, albeit briefly, proved to be instrumental in creating and aggravating divisions amongst Palestinians.[346]

Another leak confirmed that the Palestinian representatives had the intention to officially renounce the Right of Return. In a 2007 meeting, Saeb Erekat advised then-Belgian Foreign Minister Karel de Gucht that "will not give up refugees before permanent status negotiations."[347] In other words, as Amira Howeidy points out in the 2011 Al Jazeera English article about the leak, "it is willing to give up their rights, but only after negotiations reach the final status stage i.e. Jerusalem, borders, settlements and refugees."[348] Howeidy continues:

> As Erekat indicates in the same meeting, most Palestinian refugees don't count. He tells de Gucht that should the Palestinians hold a referendum on a final status agreement the diaspora will not vote: "It's not going to happen." The referendum "will be for Palestinians in Gaza, the West Bank and East Jerusalem. Can't do it in Lebanon. Can't do it in Jordan." Perhaps Erekat knows that the large Palestinian

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[345] Annapolis Joint Understanding on Negotiations, November 27th 2007.
[346] Ziyad Clot, "Palestine Papers: Why I Blew the Whistle – Opinion," *Al Jazeera English*, 14 May 2011, Web. 1 Aug. 2011. <http://english.aljazeera.net/indepth/opinion/2011/05/201151432144832519.html>.
[347] Amira Howeidy, "The Palestine Papers: PA Relinquished Right of Return," *Al Jazeera English*, 24 Jan. 2011, Web. 5 June 2011.
<http://english.aljazeera.net/palestinepapers/2011/01/2011124121923486877.html>.
[348] Ibid.

> populations in those countries would never accept the concessions he seems willing to make.[349]

In June 2010, Lebanese Prime Minister Saad Hariri, son of assassinated Rafiq Hariri, declared that the time had come to grant Palestinian refugees living in the country more civil and political rights. The initial legislation proposal had been brought forward by Minister of Refugees, Walid Jumblatt, and held much prospect for significant reform. The legislation emphasized ending employment and property ownership restrictions that had had crippling effects on the socio-economic status of the Palestinian refugees. Hariri openly supported the legislation, however maintained that the refugees would and should never obtain citizenship.[350] The initial legislation was supported the March 14 coalition and Amal and Hezbollah. It was, however, met with much resistance particularly from Christian groups within the government such as the Lebanese Forces, Kataeb and Free Patriotic Movement.[351] The discussion was overtaken by the fear of the imminence of resettlement and resulted in a legislation that was refashioned for appeasement as opposed to reform. In his PRRN blog, Dr. Rex Brynen noted the following of the watered-down version of the bill:

> …it does greatly facilitate the granting of employment authorization (which most refugees lacked, or didn't bother to apply for in menial and temporary jobs), and proposes a limited social security fund to cover limited circumstances, [but] it does not address the restrictions that prevent Palestinians from legally working in most professions, [nor] does it redress the highly discriminatory aspects of the real estate law that prevent refugees from owning property.[352]

The Human Development Center (HDC) and the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) released a legal report on December 22nd 2010, noting that the recent labor reform laws were "full of contradictions and will be difficult to implement in the future." While they recognized it as a step in the right direction, the report emphasized that the ultimate shortcoming of the bill was its failure to sufficiently address the

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[349] Ibid.
[350] Simona Sikimic, "Hariri Calls for National Unity on Granting Rights to Palestinians," *The Daily Star*, 30 June 2010, Web. 3 Aug. 2011. <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Politics/Jun/30/Hariri-calls-for-national-unity-on-granting-rights-to-Palestinians.ashx>.
[351] "Lebanese Coalition to Present Bill on Palestinian Rights," *Ma'an News Agency*, 7 Oct. 10, Web. 4 Aug. 2011. <http://www.maannews.net/eng/ViewDetails.aspx?ID=298159>.
[352] Rex Brynen, "First Thoughts on Lebanon's New Refugee Legislation," *PRRN*, 17 Aug. 2010, Web. 05 August 2011. <http://prrnblog.wordpress.com/2010/08/17/first-thoughts-on-lebanons-new-refugee-legislation/.

fundamental issues facing the refugees in Lebanon.

In an information brief I wrote for The Jerusalem Fund during the summer when the labor reform legislation was brought up for discussion in the Lebanese parliament, I wrote:

> Yet, what does this recent discussion, despite its several weaknesses, say about future discussions regarding the status of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon? There is prospect for greater reform, granting stateless Palestinians similar rights as non-Lebanese foreigners, particularly in the realm of employment. There is also potential for a break in tradition with more Lebanese involvement in the regulation of refugee camps, a proposition supported by Christian groups however for not necessarily the same reasons implicitly suggested here. […Real] reform, however, requires first and foremost [the] support of the Lebanese population [that] still views the Palestinians in the country with caution and…reprehension. Thus, with any real attempts at reform at the economic and political level, which are not only inevitable as time wears on but also necessary, must be coupled with the reform of rhetoric by leading political factions in Lebanon. [353]

The Oslo period, between 1993 and 2000, was a critical moment in the history of the Israeli Palestinian conflict. It was the first time that the long-time adversaries - the occupier and the occupied - had come face to face to discuss both the past and the future. This, however, was the extent to which the Oslo process perhaps played any positive significant role. The process tried to treat two unequal partners as equal in power and equal in accountability while simultaneously entrenching the power imbalance in the peace framework. In other words, Israel's might as a state and the legitimacy afforded to it by mediators overpowered the Palestinian representatives. The Palestinian leadership, led by PLO Chairman Yasser 'Arafat, was also, albeit arguably, more concerned with retaining its power than with ensuring a just solution to the occupation and conflict. It was clear from the process that began at Madrid in 1991, that the Palestinians would incur the most losses in any path towards peace.

The greatest loss suffered by the Palestinians was the loss of the Right of Return, which was all but written explicitly on paper. It, nevertheless, seemingly became a policy for the Palestinian Authority in the follow up to the 2007 Annapolis Conference. Given the centrality of the question of Palestinian refugees to Palestinian consciousness, narrative and nationalist aspirations, it is important to thus pay attention to the

[353] Sana Saeed, "I Am There: Reforming the Status of Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon," *The Jerusalem Fund*, August 2010, Web. 05 Aug. 2011.

discussions being had during the Oslo period, on them. As I hope my dissertation has shown, by the mid to late nineties, there was a lively discussion happening amongst scholars, policymakers, diplomats, civil servants and others on the future of Palestinian refugees. For the purpose of this dissertation, I chose to focus on three specific major and interrelated initiatives: The 1996 Palestinians in Lebanon conference, the 1997 Ottawa Stocktaking Conference on Palestinian Refugee Research and the 1998 Warwick Conference. Of the three, the 1996 and 1997 conferences proved to be the most successful. The former focused on and continues to focus on (under the auspices of Chatham House) building the relationship and dialogue between the Lebanese and the Palestinian refugees. The latter was in fact an official third-track diplomatic effort, led by Canadian government agencies and also under the mantle of the Refugee Working Group. The Ottawa conference would produce workshops and papers dealings with issues of compensation, receiving perhaps the most international attention of the three efforts discussed.

Despite the challenges these various initiatives took on – challenges ignored by the official process – they all failed to include the very voices they claimed to support. The exclusion of Palestinian refugees, particularly in representation of their perspectives, makes any such discussion, from the past or present, incomplete. Additionally, while the Lebanese narrative sustains the temporary status of the Palestinians' presence in Lebanon, they have been an inseparable part of the country's social fabric for decades. This is true even while the refugees have been kept at the fringes. Generations of Palestinian refugees have been born and raised in Lebanon for over sixty years. It is apparent that the presence of the Palestinians in the country is not near any absence. Thus, there is a necessity for substantial reform that gets to the root of the problem. The prospect for this, however, seems dim. A historical legacy of violence and out-dated consociational power structures coupled with the lack of support from the Palestinian representatives, outside of Lebanon, make any viable solution or settlement difficult to imagine. For now, the only certainty for the future of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon is the uncertainty of their future.

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