Life Lived in Relief

HUMANITARIAN PREDICAMENTS AND
PALESTINIAN REFUGEE POLITICS

Ilana Feldman

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ILLUSTRATIONS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

NOTE ON TRANSLITERATION

For ease of reading, I have used a modified version of the International Journal of Middle East Studies transliteration system, excluding diacritical marks except for the *'ayn* (') and the *hamza* ('). When quoting from spoken Arabic or referring to terms used in spoken Arabic, I have transliterated them according to local pronunciation. For names and terms that have a common transliteration in English (such as *fedayeen*), I have used that spelling.

Ein el Tal

ALEPPO

Neirab

Northern Camps

SYRIA

LATAKIA

Latakia

Nahr el Bared
Beddawi

TRIPOLI

LEBANON

HAMA

Hama

Wavel

HOMS

Homs

BEIRUT

Dbayeh

Mar Elias
Tel al Zaatar

Sabra
Jisr el Basha

TRIPOLI

Shatila

Burj al Barajneh

Yarmouk

Palestinian Refugee Camps

May, 1967

▲ Active

△ Unofficial

✕ Closed / Destroyed

■ City

SIDON

Mieh Mieh

Ein el Hilweh

DAMASCUS

Jaramana
Qabr Essit

Khan Eshieh

Sbeineh

Khan Dunoun

TYRE

El Buss
Nabatiyeh

Burj Shemali

Rashidiyeh

*GOLAN
HEIGHTS*

SYRIA

HAIFA

ISRAEL

DERA'A

Dera'a

IRBID

*Mediterranean
Sea*

Tulkarm

Jenin

Nur Shams

Far'a

Souf

Camp No. 1

Askar

Balata

Sukhneh

TEL AVIV

WEST BANK

Jabal el Hussein

Zarqa

Deir 'Ammar

Jalazone

Karameh

AMMAN

Am'ari

Ein el Sultan

Kalandia

Shu'fat

Shuneh

Amman New Camp / Wihdat

Camps of Jericho

JERUSALEM

Muascar

Aqbat Jabr

Ma'daba

Aida

Beit Jibrin

Dheisheh

JORDAN

Arroub

Beach

HEBRON

GAZA CITY

Jabalia

Fawwar

Nuseirat

Bureij

Deir al Balah

Maghazi

Rafah

Khan Younis

GAZA STRIP

EGYPT

0   40 km

0   40 Miles

0   80 Kilometers

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Cartographer: Grace Doherty
Sources: UNRWA, 2017; PASSIA, 2014

M A P 1 .   Palestinian refugee camps, May 1967.

Legend (from inset):

Palestinian Refugee Camps
May, 2017

▲ Active
△ Unofficial
✕ Closed / Destroyed
▪ City

Nahhr el Bared camp in Lebanon is not yet fully reconstructed after its destruction in 2007. Most camps in Syria were damaged and at least partially depopulated in the war that began in 2011.

Map labels — Syria inset: Ein el Tal, ALEPPO, Neirab, LATAKIA, Latakia, SYRIA, HAMA, Hama, HOMS, Homs, TRIPOLI

Main map labels: Northern Camps, Nahr el Bared, Beddawi, TRIPOLI, LEBANON, Wavel, BEIRUT, Dbayeh, Mar Elias, Tel al Zaatar, Sabra, Jisr el Basha, Shatila, Burj al Barajneh, Yarmouk, DAMASCUS, SIDON, Mieh Mieh, Jaramana, Qabr Essit, Ein el Hilweh, Sbeineh, Khan Eshieh, Nabatiyeh, Khan Dunoun, TYRE, El Buss, Burj Shemali, Rashidiyeh, GOLAN HEIGHTS, SYRIA, HAIFA, DERA'A, ISRAEL, IRBID, Irbid, Dera'a, Husn, Tulkarm, Jenin, Souf, Nur Shams, Far'a, Jerash, Jabal el Hussein, Camp No. 1, Askar, Balata, Hay Al Amir Hassan, Sukhneh, WEST BANK, Baqa'a, Zarqa, TEL AVIV, Deir 'Ammar, Jalazone, Karameh, Marka, Am'ari, Ein el Sultan, Kalandia, AMMAN, Shu'fat, Camps of Jericho, Amman New Camp / Wihdat, JERUSALEM, Aqbat Jabr, Ma'daba, Aida, Beit Jibrin, Talbieh, JORDAN, Dheisheh, Arroub, Beach, Jabalia, HEBRON, GAZA CITY, Fawwar, Nuseirat, Bureij, Deir al Balah, Maghazi, Rafah, Khan Younis, GAZA STRIP, EGYPT, *Mediterranean Sea*

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Cartographer: Grace Doherty
Sources: UNRWA, 2017; PASSIA, 2014

M A P 2 .   Palestinian refugee camps, May 2017.

Punctuated Humanitarianism and Discordant Politics

THE ENTRANCE TO THE BURJ AL BARAJNEH refugee camp in Beirut announces itself with a splash of color. Banners hanging overhead and graffiti on the walls proclaim support for a variety of Palestinian political factions. Deeper into the camp, past the mosque sitting at the entrance, the numerous businesses lining the roads, and the Palestine Red Crescent Society's Haifa hospital farther along the way, the streets are still festooned with declarations of political allegiance. But the passages—alleyways, really—become increasingly narrow. A motorbike can squeeze through, and many do, but larger vehicles cannot. Within the warrens are numerous humanitarian organizations, including local institutions like the Women's Humanitarian Organization and international ones such as Médecins Sans Frontières. A close agglomeration of multistory dwellings and street-level shops, topped with tangles of electrical wire, Burj al Barajneh does not look like a refugee camp as commonly imagined—a sprawl of tents regulated by host-country officials and outside relief workers. The camp did begin its life as a maze of canvas shelters, but as the mass displacement of Palestinians in 1948 dragged on, first over years and then over decades, it had to evolve. Such change in the built environment is inevitable in any human settlement in existence for seventy years. And yet it often comes as a surprise that refugee camps, like other spaces where people make their lives, have histories.

All of the fifty-eight Palestinian camps officially recognized by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA), along with ten unofficial camps that it also acknowledges, have undergone tremendous changes in shape and form in their decades of existence. But the camps are not identical. Overcrowding and precarious construction are characteristic of many, but some are more densely populated than others. Some camps, including Neirab in Syria and Wavell in Lebanon, were founded on the sites of military bases and housed

refugees in the old barracks. Others, such as Shati in Gaza and Jerash in Jordan, began as tent encampments. Camp dwellings were once surrounded by open spaces where Palestinians often planted gardens, but nearly every square inch is now built up to accommodate the growing populations. The camps mostly grow upward, as the host-country governments do not allow horizontal expansion of the boundaries. Construction in the camps has been largely ad hoc, responding to the unexpected duration of Palestinian displacement and to the initiatives of camp residents, who are not entirely within UNRWA or host-country control.

The political placards and slogans that emblazon the landscape of camps in Lebanon are nearly absent from camps in Jordan, where the government does not permit such freewheeling expression. UNRWA installations, painted in their distinctive blue and white to match the UN flag flying above, make the clearest visual statement in the approach to the Jerash camp, located fifteen minutes outside of the town of Jerash, Jordan. With most shelters rising one story above the ground, the camp is nowhere near as dense as Burj al Barajneh, but it long suffered from a severely inadequate sewage system. Open sewers were running through the streets when I conducted field research in the camp during 2008–11. [1]

In addition to their iconography, infrastructure, and density, Palestinian camps are distinguished by their degree of observable and formal separation from their environs. When they were first established, many camps were in isolated spots, but no longer. The Shati (Beach) camp in Gaza was placed at a remove from Gaza City, along the seashore, as the name indicates. Today it is in the middle of the vastly expanded city. Wihdat camp, in East Amman, the poorer part of the Jordanian capital, is nearly indistinguishable from its surroundings. Swatches of UN blue appear here and there, but the color does not mark the camp entrance or otherwise dominate in the landscape. Many other urban camps, such as Yarmouk in Damascus, have similarly blended in to the neighborhood. By contrast, many refugee camps in Lebanon, such as Rashadiyyah and Ein el Hilweh, in the south of the country, have army checkpoints at the gates. Soldiers check the papers of all who seek entry, and non-Palestinians require a permit. During the years of direct Israeli occupation of the West Bank, the thickly settled Dheisheh camp in Bethlehem was walled off with fencing and barrels, with entrance possible only through a turnstile. When the Palestinian Authority took control of Bethlehem under the terms of the 1993 Oslo accords, the physical barriers were removed, but Dheisheh is still considerably denser than the adjoining town.

As sites of aid provision and spaces for living, refugee camps reveal unanticipated transformations in humanitarian practice and procedure over the long period of Palestinian displacement. Whenever humanitarian activity stretches out over time, planners and fieldworkers confront challenges that emerge from humanitarianism's general orientation to the present. Given its definition as crisis response, with the goal of saving lives and moving on, humanitarian

practice is usually focused on needs that are both urgent now and capable of being addressed now, rather than on planning for change. [2] And humanitarian interventions frequently have short mandates and temporary funding streams that limit their planning horizon. Humanitarian emergencies rarely end on schedule, however. The UN High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) has estimated that two-thirds of the global refugee population experience protracted displacement. [3] Scholars, practitioners, and publics have to confront the fact that long-term humanitarian presence is not exceptional.

Humanitarianism has never been a single thing, but its interventions are broadly united by the conviction that people have a mutual responsibility to react to conditions of human suffering and that such reactions can alter at least some of these conditions. It is structured by intersecting and sometimes competing demands of compassion, obligation, and governance. The call for compassion links people across a vast humanitarian circuit, as aid agencies send appeals that frequently include the images, and less often the words, of victims to mailboxes and inboxes around the world. Humanitarian obligations are most clearly encapsulated in international legal regulations meant to protect civilians and refugees. The absence of a robust enforcement mechanism in international law means, though, that humanitarian obligations are regularly diregarded. [4] Humanitarian governance pursues the double goal of addressing need and containing threat. [5] It is a practice of care that entails significant coercion and control. Understanding the shifting interplay of these humanitarian facets in the many circumstances of protracted displacement across the globe demands consideration of the long Palestinian refugee experience. [6]

The material and regulatory histories of refugee camps reveal changing dynamics of living in what I will call the "humanitarian condition"—the long-term need that may be less acute than the trauma of initial displacement, but is no less fundamental to life and work as the displacement perdures. Furthermore, these camps—and the humanitarian apparatus that administers them—are sites of politics. From Burj al Barajneh to Jerash to Dheisheh, there is a clearly evident humanitarian "politics of life"—the governance of bodies and populations in the management of aid delivery. This politics of life entails not just generic attention to the welfare of populations, but also a politics of distinction that involves "deciding the sort of life people may or may not live." [7] Humanitarian actors, whether employed by host-country governments, the UN, or independent relief agencies, may not claim the prerogative of this decision—in fact, they generally disavow it—but humanitarian work enacts such decisions at every turn. These include the delineation of the refugee category, the procedures that govern access to it, the food people receive, the shelters they are provided, and also the withdrawal of these services. In protracted displacement these decisions reverberate across generations.

Also evident in the camps is a "politics of living," by which I mean the ways that people

survive and strive within humanitarian spaces. Like the politics of life, the politics of living has transgenerational effects. Such politics is pursued despite humanitarian restrictions, which include an insistence on political neutrality as well as the effort to create and maintain a "humanitarian space" [8] governed by "concern for humanity" [9] or the "humanitarian imperative." [10] The politics of living is also advanced in and through humanitarianism, which in fact offers mechanisms through which refugees act politically and a language in which they press claims. Attuned to the dramatically uneven distribution of capacity, opportunity, and influence across the humanitarian field, I seek to understand both the contours and conditions of "life lived in relief" and the form that politics takes when it is pursued under the writ of an avowedly nonpolitical, neutral actor: the humanitarian apparatus.

This book explores refugee lives and politics across the length and much of the breadth of Palestinian exile. It describes the intersecting, but not identical, experiences of both providers and recipients. It also elucidates the degree to which these categories are not separate, in that the vast majority of on-the-ground aid practitioners are themselves refugees. And it tracks both the politics *of* humanitarianism—how it shapes subjects, alters societies, and enforces or disrupts geopolitical inequities—and politics *in* humanitarianism—how people living inside this system seek to change their circumstances, make claims of various kinds, and lead their lives in ways that are valued by themselves and their community. The different aspects of humanitarian effect are not wholly separable: what people do with humanitarianism is inextricably intertwined with what it does to them. If the politics of life is aimed in part at the fixing of value, attention to the politics of living highlights the enduring contestation over such calculations within recipient communities. Such a politics insists on the existence and persistence of persons, communities, and claims beyond the limits of the regulatory framework in which they are ensconced. It also involves making a sometimes coercive argument about the forms of life that these persons, communities, and claims should inhabit. My aim is to explore this "grip of encounter" [11] without either painting a picture of utter abjection or describing a scene of unending resistance. Neither account would capture the conditions of humanitarian life. [12]

Displaced Palestinians live across the globe, but this book will focus on the geography of near displacement—Lebanon, Jordan, Syria, the West Bank, and the Gaza Strip, the five fields of UNRWA operations in the Middle East—and on those who fall within the jurisdiction of the humanitarian apparatus established soon after the *nakba* (catastrophe, the Palestinian term for the losses of 1948). In 1948, when around 750,000 Palestinians left their homes in the course of the struggle over the end of the British Mandate in Palestine and the establishment of the State of Israel, they anticipated that they would return home in relatively short order. Instead, by 2018 there were over five million refugees registered with UNRWA. Israel has never permitted refugees to return home, and the "international community" has put no significant pressure on

Israel to change course. Seventy years after their initial displacement, multiple generations of Palestinians have remained refugees and have lived their lives in various relations to a changing humanitarian assistance apparatus. The problem of politics—refugee politics, humanitarian politics—has been at the center of their efforts not only to live, but, at least sometimes, to live well.

AID TO PALESTINIAN REFUGEES AT THE DAWN OF A NEW HUMANITARIAN ERA

The Palestinian nakba occurred at a time of massive global population displacement. [13] Europe was still confronting the demands of the displaced persons of World War II. Independence for India and Pakistan in 1947 was accompanied by tremendous violence and one of the largest population movements in history. [14] Fighting between nationalist and communist forces in China sent refugees streaming into Hong Kong. [15] Although European refugees received the most international attention, the "problem of people" [16] was a global phenomenon, and potentially a global crisis. Responding to population instability—in Palestine, in Europe, and elsewhere—entailed the elaboration of frameworks to make sense of need. A key part of the response to population movement was the counting, categorizing, and defining of people on the move. The refugee flows also required the deployment of personnel and resources to provide assistance. This displacement moment was not the birth of a humanitarian politics of life. Humanitarian practice has deep roots in both colonialism and abolitionism [17] and was already manifest in both the laws of war and traditions of charity. [18] And an international refugee regime was elaborated in the interwar period. [19] But the institutions that structure today's refugee regime, including the 1951 International Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and UNHCR, were fashioned after World War II. In the ensuing decades, a full-blown humanitarian industry has developed, along with increasing professionalization, standardization, and evaluation metrics. Despite these changes, today's global debates about good humanitarian practice are not that different from those that preoccupied aid workers in the 1950s.

As hundreds of thousands of Palestinians left their homes, whether pushed out by fighting, frightened by news of massacres such as the one at Deir Yassin, or expelled by advancing Zionist (later Israeli) forces, their needs were acute. Assistance was first provided by receiving governments and communities, and by local aid organizations such as national Red Cross societies. Recognizing that the need exceeded existing capacity, and that the international community bore significant responsibility for the fate of Palestine and Palestinians, the UN established the United Nations Relief for Palestine Refugees (UNRPR) to coordinate relief in the

various places where Palestinians had sought refuge. The UNRPR was not an operational agency, but rather recruited other organizations to distribute UN-provided supplies. In addition to its Geneva Convention–mandated responsibility for prisoners of war, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) agreed to provide relief to refugees in conflict zones where "a neutral intermediary is indispensable" [20] —the areas that are now the West Bank and Israel. The League of Red Cross Societies (LRCS) took on distribution responsibility for Lebanon, Syria, and Jordan, and the American Friends Service Committee for the Gaza Strip. [21] By the spring of 1949, Stanton Griffis, the UNRPR director, could report a partial success for the mission: "We have of course failed to give the great mass of refugees complete shelter, warmth or clothing during the winter, but we have kept them from hunger and so far have saved them reasonably health *[sic]* and fortunately without serious epidemics." [22]

In their negotiations over aid arrangements, the ICRC and LRCS wrote to the UN that "the creation, management and guarding of camps in Palestine represent problems of such great and complex importance that they must be studied closely as such and should be the object of eventual distinct arrangements." [23] The UN responded that "establishment of these camps when absolutely necessary is part and parcel of the essential relief programme and cannot be divorced from it." [24] A further concern, in the wake of the Holocaust, was about "any tendency to set up concentration camps." The parties agreed that in the memorandum of agreement the terms *shelters* and *refugee centres* should be used instead of *camps* . [25] Even as they recognized the necessity of camps for population management and shelter provision, the agencies did not want responsibility for these spaces. Policing of the camps should be carried out by local authorities, they stipulated. [26] And so the terms of the agreement indicated that the ICRC "would promote and encourage to the extent deemed necessary the establishment of reception centres where Palestine refugees can obtain shelter and assistance. To this end local authorities will be requested to assist in the establishment of these reception centres and particularly to assume responsibility for the maintenance of order in such centres." [27] As the UN set up its relief liaison office, its instructions were to insist that local governments provide as much as possible for these centers, that refugees be asked to contribute labor in building them, and that they be large (housing up to ten thousand persons), so as to simplify relief delivery. [28]

The establishment of camps was formally the responsibility of host countries, and the improvement of camps was the domain of the operating agencies. The camp director in Lebanon described how, when the LRCS began its work, "the refugees in the camp were living without any organization. I started to organize from the beginning the Camps in Beqa'a District on the plan of a village or town running by the refugees themselves." [29] The ICRC also reported the benefits of this organization: "A social structure is being evolved in the camps, where the people are grouped together, first by families and then by villages. . . . In many cases the original

mayors or mukhtars are still in charge of their villages." [30] The LRCS director further highlighted the administrative structure he had established in the camps, with departments for food distribution, education, administration, and sanitation. This organization had the additional benefit of providing refugees with "some kind of occupation even if it was not paid and they were working voluntary [sic]." Engaging refugees in volunteer work was viewed as a way to mitigate the problem of idleness and to train future paid personnel for the camps, and it succeeded on both counts. As this early concern about idleness confirms, many of the problems that people worry about today were present from the outset of camp establishment.

FIGURE 1. Palestinian refugee camp, 1948. ICRC audiovisual archives.

The UNRPR was created with the presumption that the conflict over Palestine, and the concomitant refugee crisis, would be resolved relatively quickly. The fallacy of this belief soon became clear, as all efforts to negotiate either a refugee return or an end to the state of suspended war that existed in the region failed. Given the magnitude of the need and the lack of action toward political resolution, almost as soon as the relief operation got under way the necessity of its extension beyond the initially agreed-upon end date of August 31, 1949, became evident. Anticipating relief beyond the UNRPR, the General Assembly created UNRWA. This new

agency was also intended to be temporary. The UN resolution that established it indicated that "constructive measures should be undertaken at an early date with a view to the termination of international assistance for relief." [31] The brief mandates granted to UNRWA—first one year, with later authorizations extending to five years—reflect the continued assumption that the conflict and refugee crisis would be over sooner rather than later.

UNRWA was formally established at the end of 1949, but getting it operational took additional time, requiring the extension of the operating agencies' work. The agencies accepted this necessity but were unwilling to agree to an "indefinite period." [32] The ICRC insisted that its intervention, "which must, we are convinced, confine itself strictly to relief in emergency circumstances, should come to an end at the earliest convenient date." [33] The LRCS echoed this sentiment, and the director affirmed that the League "intervenes only in case of emergency." [34] The program was "an emergency operation and therefore [the LRCS] cannot commit itself beyond the 31st December 1949. After this date the action would lose its character of emergency." [35] The American Friends Service Committee was especially anxious about the narrowness of its mission, seeing simple relief as inadequate. The agencies all sought some assurance that "the utmost pressure was being exerted by the UN on all parties to arrive at a permanent solution of the problem." [36] In the end, they agreed to extend their services until April 1950, but not beyond.

The UNRPR, under whose auspices all the agencies worked, was resolute in its view of mission boundaries. At an April 1949 advisory committee meeting, representatives from Arab countries tried to push precisely on this point. The Egyptian envoy pointed to UN Resolution 194 on the right of refugee return: "We all know that relief work is provisional in character and that a final solution of the refugee problem can only be found in repatriation. . . . Relief, if it does not tend towards the repatriation of the refugees, will be useless, except insofar as it represents a temporary palliative by the relief of suffering and the provision of aid." [37] Stanton Griffis replied that, while he agreed on the necessity of a resolution to the conflict, "my job is solely to keep these people alive and healthy until the solution of their problem is reached through the Conciliation Commission or otherwise." Pressed by the Lebanese representative to describe the social and emotional effects of displacement on Palestinians, Griffis again insisted that "my job is a perfectly defined job and that is to keep those refugees alive and to let someone else solve their political future." This tension over the relationship of aid provision to a political solution for the refugee problem has been a persistent feature of the Palestinian humanitarian condition, as it has been of many humanitarian situations.

With this tension baked in, the agencies pursued their work of delivering relief. But the fact that they could not take action toward resolution did not mean that they ever forgot its importance. As the associate director put it in an LRCS newsletter distributed to refugees, "We . .

. are perfectly aware that the only remedy for [refugees'] moral and physical misery is to return to their homes. At the same time, we cannot but realise the political difficulties which will arise from such an eventual return. . . . Refugees will have to keep, for an undetermined time, the uncertain position which is so difficult to support." [38] By October 1949, the LRCS reported that they had moved from "a period of transition during which the operation passed from a stage of improvisation to one of consolidation and expansion." [39] It had, therefore, been able to pursue the somewhat expanded activities "which are inherent in every relief operation once the crisis has passed." These activities included more extensive medical care, social welfare, and educational programs, "all of which are contrived to raise the morale of the refugees who were by now beginning to realise that they were not being neglected and left to their fate."

Reports for the following months indicated the continuing "uphill struggle" [40] of both providing the necessary assistance and beginning to prepare the refugees for a post-UNRPR era. Now that the Red Cross had gained the trust of the refugees, these aid officials worried about what would follow: "The fear and suspicion which they now express centre around the work program of the new United Nations agency, which foreshadows final resettlement in the countries which now give them refuge and the doom of their hopes of returning home." [41] Presciently, the LRCS warned that any resettlement scheme that could not secure the cooperation of the refugees themselves was destined to fail.

The operating agencies all expressed concern about the refugees' future, but they were also all resolute that their missions must come to an end. Responding to questions from a Beirut newspaper, an LRCS official said that "it is a great disappointment to the League and to the representatives of 18 different countries working out here with me that our departure does not coincide with the return of the refugees to their homes, as we had all been hoping from the day of our arrival." [42] Responding to a question about the possible unintended political effects of the Red Cross presence—that it had enabled the development of resettlement projects which refugees opposed—he was emphatic that "the refugees have accepted the Red Cross as the neutral, impartial humanitarian intermediary it has been in the field of pure relief work; that they understand that the Red Cross workers have been more than technical operators and regard them as men and women who, one and all, approached and assisted the refugees in their everyday lives with the love and in the spirit of the Red Cross and Red Crescent." The LRCS report on its final month of work underscored that its relief "contributed to convince refugees that they were not being neglected, and that international humanitarian organizations were aware of their plight and were doing their best to alleviate suffering. All these efforts contrived to give hope to the refugees and to stimulate their morale. Nevertheless, these efforts could never avail to provide a solution to the problem." [43]

These were the conditions in which humanitarian assistance began, and with which aid

agencies have grappled since. [44] Assistance is deemed necessary both for the survival of the refugees and to assure them of international concern for their plight. This aid is also necessarily insufficient to meet the needs, both material and political, of the displaced population. Political questions—resettlement and/or return key among them—always lurk at the edges of humanitarian activity. These questions will not go away until they are resolved, and they cannot be resolved within the humanitarian sphere.

FRACTURED SOVEREIGNTIES IN THE AID LANDSCAPE

Palestinians were displaced into an unsettled geopolitical landscape. Lebanon, Jordan, and Syria had all achieved the status of fully independent states only recently, during or soon after World War II. Each confronted challenges endemic to postcolonial transitions, and the influx of large numbers of Palestinian refugees further complicated this newly asserted sovereignty. The West Bank and Gaza Strip were slices of historical Palestine that were then absorbed into the governing order of other states. The West Bank was annexed to Jordan, while the Gaza Strip was administered as a Palestinian space by Egypt. As refugees came in, each host government contributed food, shelter, and medical aid, and allocated plots of land for refugee camps. [45] All of the host countries worried about the material burden this population could impose, as well as the security and the stability of their own regimes. Even as they provided services and support to refugees, host countries (along with the refugees themselves) viewed the United Nations as a responsible party in the situation, with obligations stemming from that responsibility. But what precisely did this responsibility entail? There has been no single or simple answer to that question. Any answers that have emerged have come largely through on-the-ground negotiations over UNRWA operations. And these answers highlight the fractured sovereignty that has been a central feature of the Palestinian experience in exile and with humanitarianism.

Sovereignty is fractured in several ways. The Palestinian population is dispersed across several states and subject to different sovereign authorities. The ruling orders in these territories have shifted dramatically over the decades, with significant consequences for refugee lives. Attributes of sovereignty are also split among multiple actors, even within a single locale. Control over security, territory, and population is differently distributed in different refugee spaces. Not all of the actors who govern the camps claim sovereignty, but even without the claim they exercise some of its features. In any response to displacement, a humanitarian politics of life proceeds in the interstices of state power and international intervention. Promoting the survival and managing the welfare of displaced populations requires financial support from government and private donors, permission for access from whatever parties exercise power in an area (be

they states or militias), and logistical and security arrangements from a similar array of parties. The Palestinian case is an especially complex instance of a general humanitarian dynamic. [46]

The most significant attempt to create some similarity of rights for Palestinian refugees as residents of host countries was the 1965 Arab League collective rights regime for Palestinians—the Casablanca Protocol—that "called on Arab nations hosting refugees to grant them rights of work, travel and residency." All of the primary host countries signed, though Lebanon appended reservations. [47] Implementation of the protocol has been inconsistent. Whatever the actual conditions, all of the Arab host governments have lent rhetorical support to the Palestinian cause, even as that rhetoric is sometimes marshaled in support of policies that harm Palestinians. In the West Bank and Gaza Strip, under Israeli occupation since 1967, Palestinians—both refugees and natives—are "the enemy." They have been subjected to continued dispossession and displacement and, when they have organized against occupation, they have also been subjected to mobility restrictions and bureaucratic and physical violence.

Palestinians were granted citizenship in Jordan in 1954, a status that was formally maintained by residents of the West Bank until 1988, amid the first *intifada* (uprising), when Jordan renounced its claims to the territory. Distinctions between the original Transjordanian, largely tribal, population and the now-majority Palestinians remained, and remain, but their formal status was rendered the same. [48] In Lebanon, Palestinians have gone from being vulnerable to being powerful, and back again. Before 1969, when Palestinian national forces acquired control of the refugee camps, the Deuxième Bureau (the Lebanese army's intelligence bureau) policed the camps with a heavy hand, imposing significant strictures on economic and political life. Under the dominance of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), Palestinians in Lebanon experienced a period of political freedom and economic flourishing. When the PLO was forced to leave the country in 1982, the refugee population that remained behind had little protection or support. They lost the "citizenship" rights of "residency, work and free movement" [49] the PLO had ensured.

In Syria, the 2011 uprising-turned-war has been devastating for the entire population and has introduced dramatic new vulnerabilities into Palestinian lives. Until then, Palestinians had the status of what Nell Gambian calls, "informal citizens," [50] people afforded the same privileges and subject to the same restrictions as Syrians. The Palestinians in Syria benefited from the fact that, until recently, "unlike the communities in Jordan and Lebanon, [they] have never been exposed to massive military assaults from either the government or the Israelis." [51] These events include conflict between Palestinian forces and the Jordanian government in 1970–71, events known as Black September in reference to the time of the most sustained violence; the long Lebanese civil war of 1975–90, along with repeated Israeli invasions of the country; and the Lebanese

government's 2007 destruction of Nahr el Bared camp in confrontation with an outside militant group. Palestinians in Syria now share in such experiences.

The creation and continued existence of UNRWA was authorized by the United Nations, but the agency can operate in a given territory only with the consent of that territory's government. And it is only willing to operate with that government's (at least nominal) cooperation. Such cooperation is structured by the agreements signed between UNRWA and the host countries, but there is considerable variation among those agreements. The agency's operations in Syria, for instance, are guided by the agreement made between the government and the UN Mediator for Palestine (Folke Bernadotte, a Swedish diplomat assassinated by Zionist paramilitaries in 1948). [52] Efforts to negotiate a successor agreement, undertaken in 1953, were never successfully concluded. [53] Egypt entered into an agreement for operations in the Gaza Strip but did not accept the status of host government. [54] UNRWA reached an operating agreement with Jordan in 1951, but from the agency's perspective this accord did not adequately block government interference with its operations. [55] In every host country, UNRWA has encountered difficulties in exercising its "privileges and immunities," which include tax exemptions, employee immunity, and legal protection. [56] It has also encountered difficulties in obtaining cooperation with policy enforcement, especially with regard to the policing of eligibility for assistance.

UNRWA, along with other humanitarian organizations, has been largely responsible for services to refugees, including education and primary health care, even as host governments exercise considerable control over their form (especially the curricula in schools). [57] Significantly, it "does not administer the camps [and] is not responsible for security or law and order in the camps and has no police force or intelligence service. This responsibility has always remained with the relevant host and other authorities." [58] As the agency describes its unusual status: "In carrying out its quasi-governmental tasks, UNRWA, of course, possesses no *territorial authority,* no *legislative power,* and no *jurisdiction* over the refugees in its care, but even so UNRWA performs many tasks which would normally fall to a territorial authority." [59] In recognition of this complexity, Sari Hanafi calls UNRWA a "phantom authority" in the camps. [60]

State security concerns and refugee demands for rights and representation coexist, sometimes uneasily, in camp governance. Since UNRWA claims no administrative authority over the camps, it is formally a bystander to governing arrangements. But because accomplishing its work necessitates regular engagement with camp authorities, the agency is in fact deeply enmeshed in them. The host countries all established government departments to coordinate with UNRWA and oversee the camps. In different countries, and at different moments within a single country, camp residents have had varying degrees of autonomy. Broadly, in Syria and Jordan the government has exercised a high degree of control over the camps, including appointing local committees as camp representatives; these are not independent bodies. [61] In Lebanon since 1969

and in the West Bank and Gaza since the Palestinian Authority was established in 1994, camps have had powerful "popular committees" made up of representatives of the dominant political factions. UNRWA activities in the camps require coordination with—and at least the tacit support of—both these committees and host governments.

Further complicating the landscape of sovereignty, even as UNRWA has never sought territorial authority, Palestinian political movements have. Conflicts between Palestinian organizations and host countries—such as those in Jordan and Lebanon noted above—have impeded UNRWA's performance of the tasks in its jurisdiction.[62] To the extent that sovereignty also entails a responsibility of representation, since 1974 the PLO has been recognized by the UN as the "sole and legitimate representative of the Palestinian people." Despite this formal recognition, Palestinian refugees have also regularly looked to UNRWA to take on some role in representing their claims to international and national audiences. The differential distribution of aspects of sovereignty is neither neat nor entirely stable. Refugees contend with overlapping, often contested, authorities. And these fractured sovereignties ensure that humanitarians will struggle with such uncertainties as a persistent part of their practice.

PUNCTUATED HUMANITARIANISM

Over the course of many decades of displacement, Palestinians and aid providers have been caught in the movement between the "humanitarian situation"—the emergency that presents itself as pressing and mobilizes a humanitarian machinery; and the "humanitarian condition"—the less acute, but no less fundamental, experience of living and working in circumstances of long-term displacement and need. In referring to the humanitarian situation, I mean both the elements that provoke intervention and the forms that such intervention takes.[63] To explore the humanitarian situation is to ask what people and institutions do when faced with human suffering, and also how such suffering comes to be recognizable as a crisis. It is to explore the concrete ways in which naming something, defining it as a certain sort of problem, structures a response. The category of the refugee, techniques of ration delivery and management, and debates about humanitarian ethics are all fundamental to this definition.[64]

In thinking about the humanitarian condition—an obvious nod to Hannah Arendt's "the human condition"—I reference the longevity of displacement and need, the settling in to aid relationships and circumstances, and the conditions of possibility and impossibility that emerge in these circumstances. Even though situations of long-term displacement are common, they strain the limits of the humanitarian imaginary, and also of humanitarian resources. These conditions require organizations that are oriented toward emergency to respond to circumstances

that are "protracted." They pose operational and existential difficulties for what Peter Redfield terms humanitarianism's "minimalist biopolitics," the use of biopolitical techniques in an effort primarily to keep people alive rather than to help them thrive. [65] The concept of the humanitarian condition also helps elucidate how people live their lives within a humanitarian context, but not always in direct relation to humanitarian operations. Over the long term, humanitarian activity can fade into the background of people's consciousness. And for some people, it comes to touch on only a narrow part of their lives. But even when people do not have access to, or do not avail themselves of, many humanitarian services, the conditions in which they live are shaped to a significant degree by the humanitarian apparatus.

The repeating shift between stasis and crisis, between chronic need and emergency conditions, that are part of this extended humanitarian time produce the further challenge for humanitarian actors of being buffeted between the catastrophic and what Elizabeth A. Povinelli calls "cruddy" conditions, and trying to respond alternately to both. [66] And refugees make their lives amid these shifts in both condition and response. Long periods of chronic poverty, marginalization, and political stasis are repeatedly punctuated by times of acute crisis. These include events such as the June 1967 war, which produced a second major wave of refugees; the frequent wars in Lebanon; the two Palestinian uprisings against Israeli occupation in the West Bank and Gaza Strip and the repression of that resistance; and, beginning in 2011, the war in Syria. The emergency circumstances produced by each crisis are soon thereafter transformed again into chronic conditions of need and restriction. Poverty, precarity, the regular rhythms of immobility, of confinement in place—these are all elements of the Palestinians' chronic condition. I term these layers of oscillating experience "punctuated humanitarianism," a concept that is intended to capture the shifting rhythms of change (from slow and nearly imperceptible to sudden and dramatic), the variety of efforts to respond, and the disruptions they produce. Even though one can describe trajectories of change over time, as I do in this book, punctuated, long-term humanitarianism does not follow a linear or smooth progression. Humanitarianism is not actually out of time, as it sometimes seems, but its time is not straightforward. [67] Like waves crashing on a beach, crises and relief practices recur with regularity, but they are also different in each appearance. Responsive to this punctuated temporality, the book is not organized around a strict chronological progression.

Violence, and the response it demands, is one repeating feature of the Palestinian humanitarian landscape. When the simmering conflict over the future of Palestine comes to a boil, camps are frequent targets of state and militia violence. Israeli forces attacked the Bureij camp in Gaza in 1953, invaded the Jenin camp in the West Bank in 2002, and destroyed the Nabatiyeh camp in Lebanon in 1974. Jordanian forces engaged Palestinian guerrillas in fighting in the Wihdat and Jerash camps in 1970–71. Syrian-supported forces destroyed Tel al Zaatar

camp in Beirut in 1976. Israeli-supported Phalangists massacred thousands of refugees in the Sabra and Shatila camps in Beirut in 1982. Attacks on camps produce further displacements of refugees. In a place like Lebanon, which has experienced so much violence, some camps are populated with refugees of a variety of displacements. In the Beddawi camp near Tripoli, I met exiles from multiple camp destructions. Recent arrivals were people from the 2007 destruction of Nahr el Bared camp, who anticipated a temporary residence in Beddawi while Nahr el Bared was being reconstructed. An older group of exiles came from Tel al Zaatar camp, which was destroyed in the early years of the Lebanese civil war, after a Syrian-supported Christian Phalangist massacre of around two thousand people. Many residents of the camp were resettled in Dammour, a Christian village the PLO had captured and many of whose inhabitants it had killed. [68]
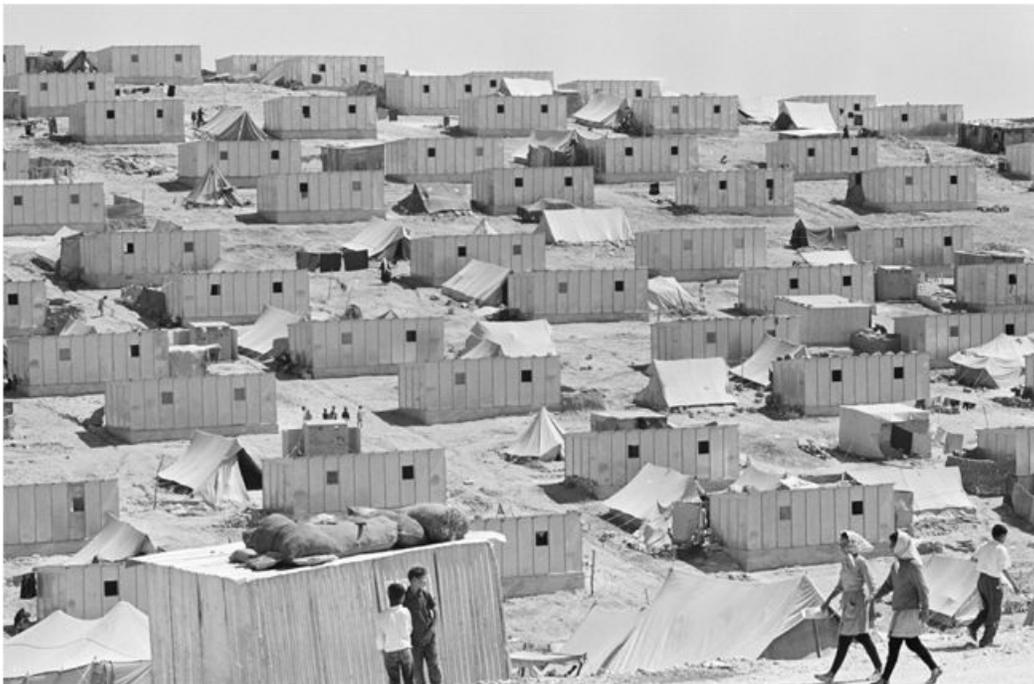
FIGURE 2. Marka emergency camp, Jordan, 1968. UNRWA photo archives. Photo by Kay Brennan.

When I talked to her in Beddawi, Samah—who was around twelve at the time of the massacre—told me she stayed for around two years in Dammour before being forced to move again. In the course of the civil war, "we ran away and we came here to the north. We stayed in UNRWA schools. But there was no aid to meet our needs." Noha, Samah's friend, described how "some

people stayed in schools and they put up tents for some." She described the ad hoc arrangements that people made to improve their conditions, gathering bricks and *zinco* (corrugated roofing) to protect themselves from the rain, using barrels to collect water and jerry-rigging showers. Samah continued, "We did not stay a year in the schools. UNRWA had us leave because they needed to open them . . . like Noha said, they put up tents. And we stayed there so the kids could get an education. They spent years like that until they started to build bit by bit. A brick on a brick. Bit by bit. Then zinco."

Many years later, the two women compare their experience to that of the recently displaced from Nahr el Bared. Reflecting on the care that Beddawi residents offered to the people of Nahr el Bared, Samah said that "I was not received like this. There was only one family that was good to me. . . . I did not find what the [Nahr el Bared] people did. They were treated very well." And Noha expressed frustration that the needs of victims of immediate crisis crowd out attention to the chronically underserved: "In our camp now, there are many medical cases that need help, surgeries and things. UNRWA does not help them. It gives preference to the people of Nahr el Bared over them . . . and the Bared people have money." Yes, Samah, concurred, "this causes sensitivities, you know? It causes hatred. Why? Are we not human? Are we not in need? Didn't we go through difficult experiences? Why is the treatment different for them?" The resentment that the refugee arrival can provoke in a host community is also apparent when that host community is comprised of other refugees, and in this case all Palestinian refugees.

Violence directed at Palestinians is also violence directed at humanitarian operations. Aid providers express frustration with having to cover the same ground over and over, and anger with the apparent incapacity (or unwillingness) of political actors to resolve the underlying conditions that make emergencies repeat and chronic need persist. When the smoke clears from the latest round of catastrophic violence, humanitarians make the rounds to see what remains—of the lives that people were living, and of the projects that their agencies were supporting. When the president of Anera went to Gaza in the summer of 2014, immediately after a ceasefire ended an Israeli assault on the territory, he reported: "Our preschools are a mess. We renovated approximately 50 over the past three years. . . . Initial assessments reveal that about 60 percent of the schools have sustained damage. . . . Without cement and other building materials our hands are tied." Humanitarian actors may be mobilized by emergency—and may understand better how to act when faced with a crisis to which they can respond directly—but they, too, suffer the losses of these cycles of destruction. This is the double humanitarian condition produced by the returned, and ever returning, crisis: a renewed clarity of purpose along with a growing sense of being trapped in a vortex of futility.

Even as crises generate renewed humanitarian responses, sometimes they limit humanitarian access. During the War of the Camps (1985–88) in Lebanon, a siege imposed on Palestinian

refugee camps near Beirut meant that UNRWA could not provide its usual services. Remembering those days, people describe near-starvation conditions. Images from Yarmouk camp in Syria during the recent conflict (2011–) paint a similar picture. Even when humanitarians can get access to people in crisis, as in Gaza during the Israeli assaults of 2009, 2012, and 2014, they are often limited in the help they can offer. In Gaza they have been able to provide food, but not safety. During the 2014 assaults, a number of UNRWA schools that were serving as shelters during the attacks were targeted by Israel, killing dozens of civilians. [69] Faced with this inability to protect the vulnerable population, UNRWA employees voiced their frustration and anguish. Perhaps the most widely seen instance of this consternation was the television interview of the UNRWA spokesperson in Gaza, who broke down in tears when describing these attacks. [70] These problems of access are why claims for the importance of the "humanitarian space" have been so central to humanitarian discourse.

For recipients, punctuated humanitarianism further means that people move in and out of different relationships to the humanitarian apparatus. Sometimes humanitarians cannot reach these people. Sometimes aid workers cannot do much for them. In the chronic conditions in Wihdat camp, for instance, many people I spoke with professed no real connection to humanitarian services, even as they lived in a camp, sent their children to UNRWA schools, and, sometimes at least, received health care from UNRWA clinics. But what they felt to be their most acute problems—poverty and lack of opportunity—they managed on their own. As one camp resident put it to me, contrasting current conditions with a past when UNRWA provided rations: "Today we are men and fathers. We run after the loaf of bread. And the loaf of bread here in Jordan is round . . . so it can drive away. So it will keep on going away and you will keep chasing after it. And this is it. If you work, you eat and live. If you sit down, you'll be hungry. And this is our life here in Jordan."

The oscillations of punctuated humanitarianism are also felt in the relations between humanitarian actors and refugees. The terms in which they understand each other slide between suspicion and affinity. The judgments they make of each other move across a spectrum: from refugees as conniving and lazy to refugees as industrious, resilient, and capable; and from humanitarians as duplicitous and treacherous to humanitarians as caring and as allies and advocates. These judgments may coexist; oscillation occurs in both small and extended time spans. They also shift in relation to, even if not always in tandem with, changing circumstances. For both recipients and providers, the challenges of long-term, punctuated humanitarianism produce tremendous frustration, to the degree that people can feel defeated. But defeat is not the only response. Humanitarian actors and recipients have also met these circumstances with creativity and experimentation, seeking ways around the impasses of the Palestinian present— impasses that have been different in different presents. The humanitarian space that is intended to

create a zone for survival can also produce opportunities for action. No shift is ever permanent; the pendulum always swings back the other way.

PUNCTUATED LIVING IN HUMANITARIANISM

The humanitarian experience often involves living with time out of joint, in multiple temporalities at once. [71] Coming to understand what has happened—that home is gone, that communities are sundered—takes time. And the daily rhythms of humanitarian assistance are so dramatically different from those of what had been ordinary life that it can be difficult for people to orient themselves temporally. Even as the first crisis passes, temporal confusion can continue. First comes the boredom that people encounter as soon as the most acute experience of crisis recedes—and entering a camp is meant precisely to put some distance between people and the source of their vulnerability, whether violence, natural disaster, or some other destabilizing force. [72] Then come the existential questions: Does the experience of a day, or days, define the present for the displaced? Or are their former lives still present to them? Can a refugee's future have any continuity with the past or will it only be rupture?

Amid this temporal confusion, and in different ways along the arc of shifting aid practice, humanitarian things and activities punctuate the temporal and social field. [73] Rations provision is a paradigmatic instance of such punctuation. Occurring at regular intervals—in Palestinian camps it was a biweekly event for many years—distributions generate a burst of activity as provisions are unloaded, measured, and distributed, along with new forms of waiting, as people anticipate distribution and stand in line for their shares. Distribution also generates other activities—baking bread from the flour that was provided, selling a portion to acquire other food and goods, repurposing things like clothes and blankets to better suit one's needs. Aid distribution is a meeting point of the politics of life and the politics of living. As rations delivery and other emergency services peter out, the punctuation of time and space shifts. Distribution rooms that used to bustle with fortnightly activity are now put to that purpose only on a quarterly basis, if at all. In Jerash camp, for instance, the supply room has been repurposed during the downtime as a space to hold workshops.

Aid helps produce forms of sociality. And the withdrawal of that aid disrupts—and sometimes devastates—those forms. As humanitarian crisis ebbs into the chronic humanitarian condition, programming and resources are reconfigured and reallocated. And these transformations then have effects on how people's experiences are punctuated by humanitarian presence and absence. Working in Mozambique, Ramah McKay describes a "humanitarian nostalgia" for what assistance was like in the past that resonates with what I heard among Palestinians. [74] What is

then lost in the loss of aid is not only the material sustenance it provides, but also sociability and collectivity produced by now-gone forms of humanitarian assistance. In Dheisheh camp in Bethlehem, for instance, I heard about the disappearance of the UNRWA feeding center, referred to in Arabic as the *mat'am* (restaurant), which used to provide one or two meals a day to refugee children. [75] The mat'am was an experience of both time and space. It is remembered not just as a service, but also as a collective experience. People sometimes took the food home, but they frequently ate together. This shared sociality may have been as important as the food provided.

Features of humanitarian time are further revealed in the regular lamentation of the mat'am's loss by people too young to have experienced it themselves. Not only is humanitarian change oscillating rather than linear, but humanitarian practice shapes experience and sensibilities across temporal divides. That is, people live with and through the experiences of times not their own. For Maha, a twenty-six-year-old resident of Dheisheh camp, this loss was a metonym for the degradation of services: "UNRWA used to offer a lot of assistance. A lot. Whatever you can think of. To the extent that at the school, they used to bring the kids and give them lunch—at the restaurant. . . . Now all the services are limited." The transgenerational attachment to the mat'am gives some indication of how much it mattered to people. The food itself mattered, as did the confidence that basic needs would be met. In addition to the sociability of shared eating, the mat'am supported a feeling of equality linked to everyone having the same needs and receiving the same services. The mat'am highlights how forms of living can be produced in a humanitarian space.

The aftereffects of now-gone services are not just memories of a better-serviced past and nostalgia for a lost feeling of life-in-common, but an acute sense among Palestinians that abandonment is a central feature of their humanitarian experience. They do not feel simply neglected, but targeted. Humanitarian assistance and its withdrawal have both been perceived as weapons deployed against Palestinian aspirations. Notably, one central way in which the changing rhythms of humanitarian aid appear to punctuate life for Palestinian refugees is by returning them repeatedly to the experience of loss that is a core feature of displacement. As services are withdrawn and reconfigured, people's lives are again disrupted and destabilized.

HUMANITARIANISM AND THE PREDICAMENTS OF POLITICS

Palestinians have not only mourned such repeated losses, but have also made them grounds for political claims, insisting, for one, on the obligation of the international community to address refugees' suffering. But refugee politics is not pursued in a single register. It is multivocal and frequently discordant. Palestinians have not only named the refugee as the suffering subject. [76]

They have identified the refugee as a rights-bearing category. They have claimed service delivery to be a matter of justice. They have used humanitarian tools as part of tentative and often partial means of moving to non-humanitarian futures, and have also confronted the limits of humanitarian possibility. Palestinian refugee politics engages different temporalities (near and distant futures), different geographies (close and far places), and goals of different grandeurs (liberation vs. improvement), often at the same time. Beyond the politics of suffering, it has also been expressed as a politics of aspiration, of existence, and of refusal. These multiplicities are often discordant, but they also persist together.

In identifying Palestinian refugee politics as discordant, I point precisely to these tensions and also to the possibility that pursuing politics along these sometimes contradictory paths may be part of what enables politics to continue in the face of so many obstacles. To the extent that refugee politics of aspiration has the goals of liberation, return, and restoration, it is closely aligned with the Palestinian nationalist movement. But to the extent that it also has goals of improved living conditions and greater rights in countries of residence, it can be in tension with the official voices of Palestine. Demands made in the register of existence and persistence are directed outward—for international recognition of the existence of a Palestinian national community with rights. These demands are also directed inward—insisting that Palestinians live as proper political subjects. This politics is often encapsulated in the language of *sumud* (steadfastness). Sumud has been a central Palestinian political value, and its adequacy for the task of liberation has also been the subject of recurrent debate. The politics of refusal, which can be another form of persistence, is similarly vexed. Running through all Palestinian politics is the fundamental imperative to, as Audra Simpson puts in the native North American context, refuse to be eliminated. [77] Refusal has also been a situational tactic—as when refugees have tried to refuse a move from one camp to another, rejected proposals for resettlement, and even occasionally refused participation in the humanitarian system entirely. Refugees perceive all these efforts, however disjunctive, as essential to addressing their needs and claims.

Within the humanitarian context, Palestinian refugees have insisted, not only on political rights, but also on a right to politics. Getting a hearing for one's claims and, even more, achieving one's goals is a clear aim of political struggles. But the displaced and dispossessed must first win recognition that they are subjects with standing to speak, that their concerns are matters for politics, and that the actions they undertake are political. The challenges to expanding the boundaries of the political are acute in a humanitarian context, which is designed to be nonpolitical. [78] And refugees have engaged those challenges in many contexts. [79] In thinking about refugee politics, I am especially concerned with how people, actions, and spaces that are not presumed to be political acquire that status and effect. I look at how refugees make demands and seek change from the spaces, categories, and relationships of their daily existence. These

efforts intersect in important ways with organized Palestinian politics, in which refugees have been central players and refugee camps dynamic sites, but they are not identical to them. These other, more classical, domains of political action appear in this account, but they are not at its center.

Humanitarian settings have been venues for political contests over the relationship between ruler and ruled, contention around public space, conflicts about political expression, struggles over resource allocation, and the articulation of rights claims. Humanitarianism has been a field of "action," in Hannah Arendt's sense. [80] Palestinians have made demands for political recognition, for restitution, and for justice using humanitarian idioms and materials. They have made the humanitarian space and the humanitarian apparatus a field for "staging scenes of dissensus," as Jacques Rancière calls the effort to disrupt a stable order and give voice to those deemed unqualified for politics. [81] And yet, to say that there is politics in humanitarian worlds is not to suppose that this politics is always effective in producing the dramatic reconfiguration that Rancière's view of politics seems to require. Rather, it is to acknowledge that people are persistently engaged in efforts to alter their world and that even as humanitarianism poses barriers to such efforts, it also creates political opportunities.

Palestinian refugee politics is experienced and expressed in oscillating intensities. As humanitarianism is punctuated, so is politics. Political intensities shift in response to changing conditions on the ground—violent attacks on refugee communities, regional conflicts that hurt Palestinians, possibilities engendered by wider mobilizations, changes in host government control of such expression, and donor concerns about refugee action. Whether such a shift will activate or deflate political action is not always predictable. Acute threats to life do not necessarily narrow people's concerns to survival, as might be expected, but can also occasion political organization. And sometimes intensification happens without a clear proximate cause, along the lines of what Kathleen Stewart terms "rogue intensities" that, she says, "roam the streets of the ordinary." [82] The continued pursuit of politics amid the obstacles of opposition by powerful state actors, legislated restrictions on opportunity, ongoing impoverishment, and repeated violence indicates the tensile strength of intertwined, discordant politics. Periods of political immobilization confirm the limits of its flexibility. As regards their ultimate goals of restoration, return, and liberation, Palestinians can hardly be said to have been successful. But they have achieved widespread recognition of their political existence and acknowledgment that they have political claims. Given the forces arrayed against these propositions, this recognition is no small achievement. And it is a struggle that is never concluded.

EXPLORING THE HUMANITARIAN FIELD OVER THE LONG TERM

This book is a work of historical anthropology and explores humanitarian life over a nearly seventy-year period. But this seven-decade time frame does not mark either the beginning or the end of Palestinian dispossession and displacement. That process began before 1948, as Zionist settlers in Palestine colonized territory and removed the previous inhabitants from their land. [83] And displacements have continued beyond this book's temporal horizon. The devastation caused to Palestinian communities, and obviously not only to Palestinians, by the conflict in Syria is the most acute expression of this ongoing displacement. Policies of Israeli occupation in the West Bank, as well as governance of Palestinian citizens of Israel, advance processes of dispossession, as homes and entire communities continue to be demolished. [84] And, unfortunately, there is every reason to expect that more is to come. Humanitarianism is a persisting condition, despite hopes it would be otherwise, and it is also a political formation, despite efforts to render it neutral or anodyne.

Investigating humanitarian practice and life over the long term entails exploring a system that undergoes many changes, analyzing dilemmas that are accentuated by longevity, and considering several generations of refugees and the tensions inherent in different generational experiences. Humanitarianism never describes the totality of people's experiences. Settler colonialism has been a central fact of Palestinian life over the past century. And Palestinian refugees are connected to capitalism and its transformations over the past seventy years. Refugees labor, invest, acquire debt, and seek to be entrepreneurial. They are also engaged in forms of action that extend beyond the refugee condition. They participate in national political movements and organize and protest in those terms. Their lives are shaped by forms of sociality and religiosity that were not born with their displacement and that are not limited to Palestinians, let alone refugees.

Over the long term, the conditions of refugee lives look similar to the lives of other precarious populations around the globe. They remain distinguished, not because they are wholly apart from global political and economic trends that have brought precarity into relief, but because they occupy a particular place and play a particular role in this history. That particularity is partly due to the presumed temporariness of their situation, partly due to statelessness (though not all Palestinian refugees are stateless), and partly due to the recognition of international responsibility for their care and protection. The presumption that refugee status and circumstance are temporary contributes to the many inadequacies of planning in these conditions. Statelessness (for the many refugees who are stateless) makes their presence in any given host country perpetually challenging, and always potentially threatening. The vast humanitarian system means that refugees are not superfluous populations in the way that many urban poor now seem to be. [85] Rather, refugees are objects of concern and attention for this system and also material that keeps the humanitarian industry going. [86]

FIGURE 3. Jerash camp, Jordan, 2011. Photo by Ilana Feldman.

When Palestinian refugees reflect on their experiences with humanitarian assistance, when they evaluate the effectiveness of the aid system and interpret its impact on their lives, their families, and their community, they are not talking about a single thing. The humanitarian assistance regime is multiple and diverse, made up of a range of institutional actors with different obligations, interests, and capacities. UNRWA may be at the center of this regime, but it is by no means the only actor. And this book is not about UNRWA alone, but about the humanitarian situation and condition of which its work is a part. Many organizations recognize each other as part of the "humanitarian club," [87] even with the differences among them. But as much as humanitarian organizations may seek to cooperate and to agree on a set of basic principles, there is not a singular humanitarian world.

Exploring this spatially and temporally extended experience in humanitarian living required a multiplicity of sources and methods, both archival and ethnographic. Cognizant of the different windows into humanitarianism offered by this range of source materials, the account presented

here reflects the fact that they all provide both affective and empirical detail. [88] To explore the length of the humanitarian experience, and transformations over time, I gathered a documentary record that extends over the decades (roughly until the 1990s) and across the full field of UNRWA operations. I bring to bear research in the archives of the American Friends Service Committee, CARE, the International Committee of the Red Cross, the International Federation of Red Cross Societies (as the League of Red Cross Societies is now known), UNRWA, the UN, and the Institute of Palestine Studies. This multiplicity of archives gives some indication of the diversity of the humanitarian field. Resisting a straightforward chronology, my account of the results of this research is structured by the dynamics of humanitarian time. Punctuated humanitarianism is buffeted by waves of repeating change, and the narrative reflects these punctuations.

To capture some of the breadth of this experience, I conducted ethnographic fieldwork over a six-year period (2008–14) in Lebanon, Jordan, and the West Bank, primarily in four refugee camps: Jerash and Wihdat in Jordan, Burj al Barajneh in Lebanon, and Dheisheh in the West Bank. [89] This extended fieldwork was complemented by shorter visits to many other camps in these countries. When I began this project I intended to do fieldwork in Syria, but the outbreak of the uprising and war made that impossible. Syria is present in this book through the archival record and thanks to the work of other scholars. It was also not feasible to do fieldwork in the Gaza Strip, under siege and with access severely limited by Israel. I spent two years in Gaza in the late 1990s for earlier books, and that research informs this analysis.

My fieldwork involved observations of humanitarian programs in action, visits to homes and workplaces, and interviews, generally conducted in Arabic, with several generations of refugees and aid providers. The nature of my conversations with people varied. Many had the style and content of oral histories, but (following anthropological convention) I usually refer to people by pseudonyms (I make exceptions to this practice when I discuss someone's public affiliation with an institution or text). Some people appear both with their real names and with the privacy afforded by a pseudonym when I describe conversations that were not immediately linked to their public persona.

The places I consider here have different humanitarian landscapes. Lebanon and the West Bank have the greatest number and variety of humanitarian organizations, from international groups to local non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Jordan, partly as a result of government regulations, has a considerably less dense humanitarian landscape. In recent years, Gaza and now Syria have been the spaces of greatest crisis. During the long years of the civil war, Lebanon held that distinction. Even as UNRWA maintains a focus on refugees alone, in the West Bank and Gaza there is an aid machinery that provides support to native and refugee Palestinians alike, as all suffer the effects of Israeli occupation. The Palestinian population in Jordan includes

refugees who arrived in 1948, those who came from the West Bank after its occupation in 1967, and those who came from Gaza at the same time. These ex-Gazans, as they are called, have not been granted citizenship. Even as I describe these differences, and the related effects of different state policies, my analysis aims to capture features of life, aid, and politics that cut across them. In working across this long time and these diverse spaces, I seek to write against the analytic and political cul-de-sacs of both exceptionalism, in which Palestine appears sui generis and utterly incomparable to any place else; and localism, whereby "different Palestinian populations have come to be represented as isolated, analytically separate, pieces of an impossible puzzle."[90] The narrative moves deliberately across these times and spaces, sometimes sacrificing the specificity of locale to the larger aim of highlighting shared experience.

Long-term displacement, with its attendant material, practical, and social effects on humanitarian practice and refugee communities, including the blurring of lines between relief and development, is not part of an exceptional Palestinian condition, but is a common feature of global humanitarianism.[91] The high degree of suspicion in humanitarian relations in the Palestinian instance might seem attributable to the fraught politics of Palestinian displacement, but distrust is part of nearly every humanitarian endeavor.[92] However, there are genuinely distinctive features of the Palestinian experience. Even as postwar refugee law has moved toward developing a universal or generic category of "refugee" (an always incomplete process), Palestinians have been addressed as a specific refugee population—served by UNRWA and not the UNHCR, and excluded from the international conventions that govern refugee status.[93] UNRWA is alone among UN agencies in its focus on a single refugee population. It stands out in the broader field of humanitarian work not in its attention to development, which is a common concern of humanitarian organizations, but in the expansiveness of its administrative apparatus, notably its maintenance of a school system that educates around half a million refugee children each year. Without claims to sovereignty or control over security, UNRWA fulfills more of the administrative functions of a state than almost any other humanitarian organization. I explore these distinctions without attributing outsized explanatory power to them.

All accounts are partial accounts, and this book is no different. Not all Palestinians are refugees. Palestinians comprise twenty percent of Israel's citizenry. One-quarter of Gaza's population and two-thirds of the West Bank's are native Palestinians who live alongside their refugee co-nationals. In focusing on refugee camps, I give less attention to non-displaced Palestinians and to the many refugees who live outside the camps. The focus on camps is deliberate. They are the densest space of humanitarian experience, so they are a good place to investigate how people live with humanitarianism. But looking here can also impart a false impression that camp life, in all its varieties, is what all Palestinians experience. So let me be clear: this book does not offer an analysis of *the* Palestinian experience, but it does describe a *key*

Palestinian experience. It is both demographically significant and politically and symbolically important. Camps and refugees loom large in Palestinian understandings of their community and politics. Camps are also spaces that have been repeatedly targeted for literal and discursive attack by many parties, creating yet a further imperative to give an account of their conditions.

The four camps in which I conducted extended fieldwork reflect different features of the Palestinian camp experience. Wihdat, Burj al Barajneh, and Dheisheh were established after the 1948 nakba, as were the majority of camps. Jerash, along with nine other camps, was created after the 1967 *naksa* (setback). The first three camps were established near urban centers—Amman, Beirut, and Bethlehem, respectively—and are now part of these cities. Jerash is in a more rural area of Jordan, which limits the work available to its inhabitants. These four camps are in three different fields of UNRWA operations—Jordan, Lebanon, and the West Bank—and are governed by the different rules of these host governments. Each of these camps has been subject to state repression, political conflict, and popular resistance. And, unlike some other Palestinian camps, each of these camps has survived these moments of crisis, though not always intact. My analysis is not confined to these camps alone, as the archival record provides material on many more, but they are prominent.

Most of the many organizations that have worked with Palestinian refugees have done so for a limited time and sometimes in a single camp. My research involved engagement with organizations that represent different parts of the humanitarian world. These organizations can be broadly classified as (1) major international organizations that are clear members of the humanitarian club, "an organized and hierarchical network of states, donors, international organizations, and [NGOs] that centers on the UN system"; [94] (2) faith-based organizations; (3) development-oriented organizations; (4) national organizations, in this case represented by the PLO; and (5) local organizations. These classifications are not exclusive. Many faith-based and development organizations are key players in the humanitarian club. Local groups often receive funding from larger organizations and donors, ensuring that their work is entangled in funders' agendas.

These humanitarian organizations have different sources of funding, different structures, and different missions. Organizations like the UN-affiliated UNRWA and the Geneva Convention–mandated ICRC have missions and commitments that are defined by their mandates. These missions determine whom they assist (e.g., refugees and not other needy persons) and how they operate (e.g., according to principles of neutrality and confidentiality). Private organizations such as Médecins Sans Frontières and CARE have obligations to donors to use their money as they say they will. And all these organizations share an often ill-defined sense that they have obligations to the people who receive their services. The nature of this obligation is a continual subject of debate. When Palestinians say that UNRWA's services are not humanitarian, what

they mean is that they are not a product of compassion or charity, but rather are an obligation the international community owes Palestinians. They do not judge other organizations in the same terms, which is not to say that they do not criticize them.

Tracking the arcs of punctuated humanitarianism, the book is organized in two parts. *The Humanitarian Situation* explores the humanitarian response to Palestinian displacement and its repeated crises, tracking developments in humanitarian categories, practices, and subjects. Attention in these chapters is somewhat weighted to humanitarian actors and systems, with refugee action and experience present but not always the focus. *The Humanitarian Condition* considers the long-term experience of living with chronic need and assistance provision, investigating how people act politically in this field, confront the limits of humanitarian possibility, and envisage futures that might escape this frame. In these chapters, what refugees do within the humanitarian condition looms the largest, but they always do these things in relation with humanitarian actors.

The trajectories of humanitarian efforts and conditions over the course of seventy years of displacement and assistance suggest some of the ways that humanitarian action structures refugees' lives. The assistance apparatus—the mechanisms of an aid regime that influences life possibilities, the bureaucratic categories that delimit access to services, the material artifacts of assistance that shape daily life—is a key way that people define themselves, their community, and their relationship with other Palestinians. As people live their lives, they necessarily respond to changes in humanitarian practice—sometimes through complaint or opposition, sometimes through an adjustment in lifestyle. Humanitarianism is a space of living, made up of different places and people. It is an experience defined in large part by dilemmas and compromises, as people keep going even when doing "well" seems impossible.

The Humanitarian Situation

No Exit

POLITICS AND REFUGEE STATUS

ON AN OCTOBER AFTERNOON IN 2011 , I sat with Fatima, thirty-six, to record an interview in the offices of the Women's Humanitarian Organization (WHO) in Burj al Barajneh. We had become acquainted in the course of my research on WHO's work in the camp (which chapter 6 covers in greater depth). Born in Burj al Barajneh, Fatima had been associated with WHO since its founding in 1993. Her mother worked with the kindergarten that was a precursor to the organization, so she grew up involved in those activities. When I interviewed her, she was supervisor of several WHO programs, work in which she found great satisfaction. Fatima and I talked about many subjects, including what the word *refugee* meant to her. When Palestinians talk about being refugees, they often recount what they are denied by virtue of inhabiting this category. And they also name their status as refugees as grounds for membership in national and local communities and for making claims to multiple audiences.

Fatima spoke about rights, opportunities, futures—and the absence of all these things. She also talked about hope, possibility, and an end to suffering, even as she saw no easy path to these goals. The multiple expressions of Palestinian refugee politics ran through her comments—the near and distant future, the right to liberation and to a dignified life, the opportunity to dream of return and of a better tomorrow. She began with the subject of rights:

> A refugee—there are no rights. A human with no rights. An oppressed person. Looked down upon. The Lebanese, for example, look down upon us. You are—we are nothing. . . . We do not know our destiny. . . . Refugee is a difficult word. I wish I had not been born a refugee. I would have been able to do many things. But because I am a refugee, I cannot do them. . . . A refugee equals loss. A refugee has no life. A refugee has no rights. A refugee is treated by people as if he is not a human. . . . A refugee has no dreams.

In Fatima's comments, and in her life, the experiential and the legal were tied together. The condition of displacement and the opportunities formally denied Palestinians who fled their homes in 1948 or 1967 join in keeping loss fundamental to the category of refugee. The impediments to refugee dreams are both societal and regulatory. For some people, these obstacles loomed so large that they could see nothing else. But Fatima, and many others, retained a conviction that a condition of loss was not the end of the Palestinian story.

"There is hope," she went on to say. "The refugee will get his just due *[ya'khudh haqquh]* . A day will come—it is true that he is not getting his due now but one day he will. Despite all the sufferings and everything. One day we will take what is rightfully ours. . . . Not necessarily through war. . . . I am one of those people who think that you cannot take everything through war. Through your brain, being smart. You can get back what belongs to you." The just due of which Fatima spoke was, in part, the right to Palestine itself. But she was concerned with more than this distant aim. The ultimate right accruing to Palestinians was the right not to be a refugee, but she was insistent as well that Palestinians have rights *as* refugees that must be honored in the meantime. At another point in our conversation, as she complained about the inadequacy of UNRWA services, she said: "It is not fulfilling its role. I have a question. Are we not refugees anymore? Did we return to Palestine?" With the fundamental right of return thus far denied, Fatima and other refugees also demand that an intermediary set of rights be respected. Beyond its function as a category of humanitarian governance, being a refugee is an existential setting for the discordant politics of the Palestinian humanitarian condition. [1]

Whenever people are displaced, leaving their homes and homelands under duress, they quickly encounter a system that seeks to determine what sort of displaced person they are: internally displaced person or border-crossing refugee? "Genuine refugee" or "economic migrant"? Innocent victim or potential terrorist? The answers to these and other questions shape how and whether a given person can receive the assistance and protection that the international refugee regime offers. Displaced people live their lives in part through the categories into which they are determined to fall. And as those categories shift, so too do the possibilities in their lives. With need always greater than the resources available to respond, the "refugee" category has become a primary global mechanism for determining which persons are eligible for assistance and protection—and also the compassion that normally attends the refugee designation. But this category was in flux in the aftermath of World War II, when Palestinian displacement began. Today's refugees are defined as such by the terms of the International Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, adopted in 1951 and updated in 1967. The convention was a response to the massive population displacement occasioned by World War II, and it outlines the general characteristics of a "bona fide" refugee in the postwar world.

Displaced persons follow multiple trajectories. Some portion of the uprooted enter the

resettlement and asylum systems, in which they have to prove their rightful place in the category of the protected. [2] A larger portion, indeed the overwhelming majority, remain in a limbo of extended displacement in host countries. [3] The refugee standing before an asylum judge and the refugee living in a camp are products of the same system, and from the viewpoint of that system are part of the same category, but they highlight different categorical effects. To somewhat overstate the distinction for the purpose of analytic clarity: In the asylum and resettlement process, the refugee is a threshold category, a means of changing one's position, an exit strategy. [4] In extended displacement, whether in a camp, an informal settlement, or a city, it is a life category, by which people are constrained and from within which people act. This "in transit" phase, as Kwok Chan and David Loveridge termed it when they called for more research on people living in suspense between flight and resettlement, has been an essentially permanent condition for Palestinian refugees. [5] And Palestinians are not outliers in experiencing such enduring displacement.

Later chapters consider the range of things that refugees do, acting from the category: the demands they make, the protests they mount, the relationships they build. This chapter pays attention to how Palestinians respond to the category itself: how they evaluate its political significance, the ways in which they invest it with meaning, and the occasions on which they reject it. Even as Palestinians' ultimate goal is indeed to stop being refugees—through liberation, restoration, or return—Palestinian refugee politics has mostly not entailed an exit from the refugee category, but rather has happened within it.

POLITICAL LIFE WITHOUT POLITICAL STATUS

There is an apparent contradiction in the fact that the humanitarian category "refugee" is a starting point for political life in the humanitarian condition and yet is meant not to confer political status. It is, rather, intended to suspend politics in order to privilege basic human life and humanitarian rights. [6] This absence of political status is one of the lines along which the refugee is formally distinguished from her putative other, the citizen. [7] Even when the loss of citizenship rights is temporary, as some refugees are able to return to their home countries and gain those protections again and others acquire new citizenship through resettlement, being a refugee entails being "unable" or, because of a well-founded fear, "unwilling" to inhabit this status. We know that the refugee category is always tremendously political in a range of ways. Decisions about who qualifies for entrance into the category, determinations about the benefits that derive from this status, and the distinctions that are made between these persons and other, related categories (migrants, internally displaced persons, undocumented immigrants) all reflect

political judgments. Recognizing the category's saturation with political effects, it still matters that those who live within, or live excluded from, the refugee category and who pursue their politics *as* refugees do so without an *ascribed* political status. [8]

Hannah Arendt and Giorgio Agamben might suggest that this lack of status creates a fundamental block to possibility, ensuring that refugees can be apprehended only as "bare life" [9] or "scum of the earth." [10] Arendt argues that when they lose citizenship, refugees' greatest loss is not the specific rights associated with that status, but rather the capacity for full humanity—"the right to have rights." As she says: "They are deprived, not of the right to freedom, but of the right to action; not of the right to think whatever they please, but of the right to opinion. Privileges in some cases, injustices in most, blessings and doom are meted out to them according to accident and without any relation whatsoever to what they do, did, or may do." [11] In a reflection on her own experiences as a refugee, Arendt points to some of the human costs of these conditions: "Very few individuals have the strength to conserve their own integrity if their social, political, and legal status is completely confused. Lacking the courage to fight for a change in our social and legal status, we have decided, so many of us, to try a change of identity. And this curious behavior makes matters much worse." [12] Developments in international humanitarian law in the years since Arendt wrote, specifically the elaboration of the postwar refugee regime, were intended to mitigate the consequences of the loss of citizenship and to ensure that there are basic protections for humanity. But these protections are distinguished from political rights.

Because of the suspension of politics, and the insistence that refugee status confers only humanitarian rights and protections, expressions of refugee politics create problems for their recognition as refugees. The "bargain" of humanitarian categories and assistance seems to require that refugees keep that part of themselves in abeyance. Of course, the humanitarian relation is not in fact a contract, and those who become refugees have not necessarily signed on to this limit. And they often do not act accordingly. In declared contrast to Arendt and Agamben, Jacques Rancière proposes that ascribed categories may matter less than the actions people take: the efforts "by subaltern groups to be seen and heard as speaking subjects within a social order that denies that they are qualified to participate in politics." [13] As he puts it: "Political dissensus is not a discussion between speaking people who would confront their interests and values. It is a conflict about who speaks and who does not speak, about what has to be heard as the voice of pain and what has to be heard as an argument on justice." [14] Refugee politics challenges existing frameworks for political contestation. Specifically, this politics expands the grounds on which people make claims within a political space and opens up the categories of people who can claim to have standing for making such claims. Where the classic category for standing in the nation-state was "the citizen," refugee politics invites others in.

Still, the category matters. And accounting for how it matters does not involve choosing

between Rancière and Arendt. The refugee category does not perform a simple or complete exclusion from politics. But it does shape *how* refugees stage scenes of dissensus. Political capacity is not generic, but specific. It also matters because much of the politics that refugees engage in is around the elaboration and alteration of the category. The aim of refugee politics is not only that refugees be recognized as political actors, but also that the category be understood as "world-forming" in itself. [15] Arendt depicts the refugee condition as "world poor," describing a rejection of one's present position ("we don't like to be called refugees") and a (sometimes deluded) faith that the future might be lived in a different category ("since everybody plans and wishes, so do we"). [17] But, it is important to underscore, refugee articulations of possibility do not always and only express themselves as an exit strategy. Displaced persons in various circumstances dwell with, and within, this category as they enact community, press claims, and experience futurity. Even if they often cannot effect a radical change in the world in which they live, the insistence that the refugee is a political subject *as* a refugee can make a significant change in how the political field is understood.

This general problem has a distinct inflection in the Palestinian instance, where people are distinguished from citizens as refugees, and are also distinguished from most other refugees by the particularities of their refugee definition. This Palestinian exception has seemed to many to be a problem. Palestinians and their supporters note the absence of protection and other humanitarian rights in this definitional structure. Opponents of Palestinian political claims seize on definition as a way to undercut those claims, trying to limit the refugee category to individuals who were themselves displaced in 1948, and to exclude both their descendants and any recognition of communal loss. [18] This attention to the refugee category by Palestinians' opponents is one indication of how politically generative it has been. In Palestinian experiences and discourse, there is a conflicted claim not just that Palestinians are political beings who are also for the moment refugees, but that part of what it is to be a Palestinian political subject in the aftermath of the nakba is to be a refugee.

FIGURE 4. Evacuating Al-Falouja village, 1949. UNRWA photo archives.

Palestinians have not had a stable or singular relation to the refugee category. The contest over the political significance of the category, and over the very possibility that it can be a political category, is partly internal to the Palestinian community. Palestinians have sometimes viewed the early years after the nakba—the "years of hunger" [19] —as a period in between politics. Fawaz Turki argues that it was the transformation of the refugee from an "'oppressed wanderer'—who wander[s] around the refugee camps, the Arab capitals and around the world, disinherited of homeland and an ability to share their humanity with others" [20] —to a fighter (fedayee) that enabled the exile to be a political figure. In this view, politics does demand a category exit, at least in terms of subjectivity. It is for this reason that Palestinian political materials often referred to displaced Palestinians as "returnees" *('ayidin)* rather than refugees. The formation of units of fedayeen (guerrillas) was a turning point in Palestinian politics, but it did not, in fact, constitute its reemergence. Palestinians saw themselves as political subjects and made claims on the international community within the refugee category from the early years after displacement. In recent years, in the wake of many political defeats, humanitarian claims

for the refugee category—as the suffering subject in need of protection—have seemed to dominate Palestinian arguments about Palestinian people. [21] But even amid this humanitarian turn in Palestinian discourse, Palestinians have continued to declare the political capacities of the refugee position.

CATEGORICAL BOUNDARIES

A "Palestine refugee," defined at the same moment as the "convention refugee," remained a category apart. In negotiations over the terms of the 1951 convention, concerns about financial obligations, worries that Palestinian refugees might be "relegated to a position of minor importance" within a larger refugee definition, and insistence on the unique fact that Palestinians had became refugees as a "direct result of a decision taken by the United Nations" led to the "temporary" exclusion of Palestinian refugees from the convention. [22] Given the many restrictions built into the convention, Palestinian exclusion was not exceptional; it was an experience they shared with other non-European refugee populations. [23] The Palestinians did not come under the authority or protection of the UNHCR, but rather continued to receive aid from UNRWA. [24] To the extent that they received legal protection, and it was a limited extent, this protection was derived from UN Resolution 194 [25] and its provisions for their right of return. [26]

At the same time as UNRWA was established to provide refugee assistance, the United Nations Conciliation Commission for Palestine (UNCCP) was created with the charge to work toward a final settlement of the problem of 1948 and, in relation to the refugees, with facilitating "the repatriation, resettlement and economic and social rehabilitation of the refugees and the payment of compensation." [27] As early as 1951, the UNCCP indicated that it was unable to fulfill its mandate, since the relevant parties were unwilling to implement Resolution 194. [28] The UNCCP still technically exists and submits annual affirmations of this inability. [29] In practice, UNRWA has been the only operational body with specific responsibility for Palestinian refugees.

The definition of a Palestinian refugee is a "working definition" intended to determine eligibility for relief, rather than a codified category with legal import. According to UNRWA: "A Palestine refugee is a person whose normal residence was Palestine for a minimum of two years preceding the outbreak of the conflict in 1948 and who, as a result of this conflict, has lost both his home and his means of livelihood." [30] The UN General Assembly never formally adopted this definition, but "it is evident that the Agency's working definition has had the sanction of the General Assembly and its major contributors, both tacitly and 'de facto.'" [31] The category was not intended to cover all who were displaced from their homes and who might qualify for return

or compensation. It was an instrumental definition, intended to assist UNRWA in its mandate to respond to the enormous humanitarian crisis among displaced Palestinians. But it was not entirely adequate even for this purpose. As UNRWA's first annual report noted, "it is almost impossible to define closely the word 'refugee,' as applied to the work of the Agency, without leaving certain groups of deserving people outside those accepted, or conversely, including groups who probably should not be in receipt of relief." [32] In this observation, UNRWA echoed what the volunteer agencies had already determined. The category of a Palestinian refugee has always been an incomplete one, but in the absence of anything else, this working definition has been the primary statement on Palestinian refugee status. The extension over decades of temporary stopgap measures is a central feature of the Palestinian experience, and the refugee category was no different.

For people who fit the refugee definition, the question of need became central to the operational distinction between a "Palestine refugee" and a "Palestine refugee eligible for assistance." And since the category of Palestine refugee was intended to govern access to aid, "only those refugees who were in need were registered. This meant that a large number of persons who could establish their status as 'Palestine refugees' within the definition were refused registration because they were not, at the time of their application, in need." [33] One of the first questions for UNRWA was "Needy or not?" And this question was fairly quickly transformed to "How needy?" Registered refugees were not removed from the rolls when their level of need fell, but "once the Agency had established that their need for assistance had been reduced or had ceased, their eligibility for assistance was adjusted accordingly and categories of registration were introduced for this purpose." [34] These categories made eligibility an internally distinguished category, with some people qualifying for the entirety of UNRWA's assistance basket and some for none of it. Such distinctions were a source of conflict. As one UNRWA official emphasized: "Rations are not a right. It should be up to the refugee to prove that he is in need and therefore request UNRWA's assistance. The normal consequence of reviewing the definition of an eligible refugee should be the automatic elimination of ineligible persons from the ration rolls." [35] Refugees, in fact, have precisely viewed rations as a right—connected to international responsibility for their plight—so this claim ensured conflict among the parties.

UNRWA's category planning also presumed that people's circumstances would improve over time, enabling people to move from greater eligibility to less, but things did not always happen that way. According to UNRWA's "three-year rule," first introduced in 1955, people who were self-supporting for three or more consecutive years were prohibited from reinstatement to a higher category. The logic behind this rule was that "anyone who has been self-supporting for 3 years or more and who subsequently becomes in need, is not suffering such need as a direct result of the conflict of Palestine but as a result of normal life hazards." [36] In circumstances of

chronic displacement, it is actually extremely difficult to parse the specific causes of an individual's distress. All Palestinians suffer the losses of 1948 and are profoundly shaped by it. And the archival record describes numerous instances of return to need that were difficult to bracket as "normal life hazards." A 1961 proposal to do away with the three-year rule recognized this difficulty, but it was rejected in favor of a policy that "country directors should be authorized to use their discretionary power to reinstate in cases of extreme hardship more leniently than heretofore." [37] This directive is an instance of the insertion of humanitarian exceptions into the system of humanitarian decision making. [38]

The challenges of the refugee category involved humanitarian actors in a difficult balance between need and kind, as privation did not always correspond to categorical status. Even as the Palestinian instance has particularities, confrontations with distinctions within displaced populations are a regular feature of humanitarian definition. [39] A persisting challenge in this case was the problem of "other claimants for relief"—groups such as Gazan natives, Jerusalem poor, residents of frontier villages in Jordan, certain bedouin groups, and refugees in Egypt—whose need was widely recognized, but who did not fit the Palestine refugee category. Some, such as Gazans, were dispossessed but not displaced, and others, such as refugees in Egypt, were outside the area of UNRWA operations. A 1955 special report detailed the considerable need among these groups as a direct result of the events of 1948. [40] Despite this need, given severe financial limits, the General Assembly "limited itself to appealing to private organizations to give them increased assistance." [41] In 1959, Ahmed Yafi, the director of Syria's refugee office (PARI), [42] sent a long memorandum to UNRWA's advisory committee about this ongoing problem, arguing that registration decisions should be considered "from a purely humanitarian angle" and not "with the calculating eyes of an accountant." [43] Limits of funds should not enter into eligibility discussions, the memo averred. Rather, and per the General Assembly, these deliberations should be guided by "*need,* and need alone." A briefing note prepared for the advisory committee meeting indicated that it was impossible to leave funding entirely aside and suggested that Yafi "should address his remarks to another audience," [44] meaning the donors.

Funding problems played a role in the persistence of another category limit: women who married outside the category. [45] This limit reminds us that the refugee is always a gendered category. Gender plays a role in bureaucratic determinations about inclusion and exclusion. It affects the interventions directed at refugee populations. And it also shapes what people do from and within the category. From the outset of relief, registration was done through the male head of household. Families were on a single rations card. When sons married they opened a new card. When daughters married they were transferred to their husband's card. Women's income could count against a family's ration allotment, but a woman's refugee status did not accrue to the rest of her family. Following the belief that "responsibility for support of the family [should be] on

the husband as head of family," [46] women who married non-refugees (MNRs in UNRWA parlance) lost eligibility for services. In 1960, Ahmed Yafi took up the cause of these women as well, writing to the UNRWA representative in Damascus to complain about the removal of MNRs from the ration rolls, saying "it is not acceptable for humanitarian and logical considerations" to deprive a needy refugee of rations simply because of her marriage. [47]

Although the inequities resulting from the MNR policy were evident for a long time, the patriarchal underpinnings of UNRWA registration rules made the problem hard to resolve. UNRWA's 2004 Annual Report indicated the agency was aware that this problem needed solving: "These rules are a throwback to an era when various elements of personal law tended to favour male lineage. Since then, however, these norms have shifted considerably." [48] The report described this policy as inconsistent with UNRWA's commitment to nondiscrimination in its programming. Perhaps as important, believing that, of the possibly 340,000 people who would become eligible, a much smaller number would actually register and an even smaller number would use any services, UNRWA viewed the financial burden as manageable and it committed itself to policy change. The 2006 update to the Consolidated Eligibility and Registration Instructions finally removed this limitation. [49]

The dynamics of punctuated humanitarianism are evident in this realm of regulatory definition. Protracted displacement, with its chronic conditions, necessitated unanticipated temporal extensions. The return of crises created new pressures for category expansion and highlighted the limits in UNRWA's capacity to respond to the breadth of the Palestinian experience. For instance, many refugees were displaced a second time in 1967. [50] Those for whom the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip occasioned their first displacement are characterized as *nazihin* (displaced), but not as *laji'in* (refugees). [51] In contrast to the UNHCR refugee system, which distinguishes border-crossing refugees from internally displaced persons, in the Palestinian case it is the time of displacement that makes the category difference. The UN General Assembly has repeatedly affirmed that UNRWA should "provide humanitarian assistance, as far as practicable, on an emergency basis, and as a temporary measure, to persons in the area who are currently displaced and in serious need of continued assistance as a result of the June 1967 and subsequent hostilities." [52] Services to nazihin constitute another humanitarian exception within the humanitarian apparatus. Like many other "temporary measures," it has persisted for decades. And the category difference continues to have material consequences for people, as "practicable" limits have ensured that nazihin are not eligible for all UNRWA services.

The passage of time introduced a further problem for refugee categorization: how to respond to new generations of refugees. UNRWA had to confront the question of whether succeeding generations would be included in the refugee category, registered in UNRWA records, and

eligible for UNRWA services. The agency's initial operational instructions were clear that "children born during or after the war, in Palestine or elsewhere, but whose parents are refugees" [53] qualified for registration. But by the mid-1960s, when the third generation of displaced Palestinians was beginning to be born, a question arose. Children of refugees were eligible for registration, but what about the children of those children? When asked for their thoughts on the matter in the fall of 1963, the directors of the different field offices offered starkly different opinions. As with many debates within UNRWA, the key questions people grappled with concerned what the agency was *already* obligated to do, what it *should* be obligated to do, and whether there was a gap between its practice and these existing and potential obligations.

All agreed that the Palestine refugee definition was "ad hoc" and a "working" rather than final definition, so modification was possible if deemed necessary. [54] They disagreed on whether modification was necessary to include these children. The director of relief argued that since the eligibility instructions stated that children of registered persons "may be registered in the category and class of their parents," [55] the third generation was already eligible. The directors of the Lebanon and Jordan fields disagreed with this view. The latter argued strenuously that the General Assembly should make the determination as, in his view, "the Agency is a temporary body which was surely never created to give relief to Palestine refugees *and all their descendants* (if you admit third generation you must admit the rest)." [56] The director of the Syria office averred that this expanded relief could be precisely UNRWA's responsibility: "It might be argued that while the General Assembly resolutions on repatriation and/or resettlement of the refugees remain unenforced, and while the Palestine refugee problem remains an active unresolved issue in United Nations General Assembly, all progeny of original eligible refugees should receive assistance from the United Nations Agency established for that very purpose." [57]

In concluding debate, the commissioner-general accepted the proposition that UNRWA had an already existing obligation to these children. In his reasoning, he relied on the language of humanitarian compassion and also of natality. In the 1965 Annual Report, he stated: "So long as international assistance is given to the Arab refugee community, third generation children cannot humanely be denied health services at the time of birth . . . nor use of UNRWA shelters. As these children grow up, it would be harsh and uneconomic to deny them access to nearby UNRWA health services." [58] The statement went on to make a similar argument about schools and access to rations. By virtue of being born into displacement as Palestinians, that is, these children should also be born already recognized as Palestinian refugees.

In the end, the commissioner-general indicated his intention, "subject to any directions the General Assembly may give him," to "amend the definition of eligibility . . . so as to remove the doubt about the eligibility of the third generation [of] children." According to a 1969 UNRWA memo on developments in definition, "the General Assembly Resolution for that year did not

include any directions from the General Assembly on this point and registration of third-generation children has continued." [59] When, in 1979, the question of fourth-generation registration was raised, the situation was much clearer. According to a report from an UNRWA cabinet meeting: "UNRWA will assist the fourth generation of refugees because it is already stated under the eligibility rules that UNRWA will assist the descendants of refugees that were in Palestine in 1948. Thus, it is unnecessary to revise the eligibility rules." [60] By that point, it was an essentially settled matter that refugee status was indefinitely hereditary.

Generation is a source of tension among Palestinians also, but for them the question has been not about eligibility but culpability. Was the Palestine generation negligent in having fled in the first place? Are succeeding generations failing to maintain their commitment to Palestine? Institutional and communal questions are experienced very differently, but both highlight a key internal distinction among refugees in extended displacement: the difference between those who became refugees and those who, by virtue of being born into this status, have always been refugees. Administrative action muted and ultimately erased institutional distinctions around birth, but these distinctions continue to matter in people's life experiences, both in how they understand and experience the refugee category itself and in how they evaluate its import and judge each other. I heard about these matters in my conversations with multiple generations of refugees.

People with memories of the 1948 displacement attached the word *refugee* first to the communal experience of flight. Manal was nine years old in 1948 when her family left their village after hearing reports of the massacre at Deir Yassin. After making their way through many villages, Manal's family ended up in Bethlehem, where they sheltered in caves until the Dheisheh camp was established. What did the word *refugee* mean to her? "We are refugees from our villages. We left." Pressed again about the term's meaning, she said: "It means we left our villages." Khaled, a few years older than Manal, similarly said that "we left *[hajarna]* from our villages in 1947, 1948, and 1949. We left and no one dared to return to his village to see what happened to it." For the oldest generation it was the fact of leaving, the process of being displaced, that defined the refugee. They have now lived life as refugees for seventy years. Those who left Palestine share this protracted experience with the generations that followed, but for them, unlike the next generations, the refugee was a threshold category—marking entrance, not exit.

The political effect of flight was a source of intergenerational tension. Younger people pointed out that it was their parents and grandparents who had made the mistake of leaving. As Ismail, born in 1957 in Wihdat camp in Jordan, said: "We did not leave. Our families did." And Khawla, born around the same time in the same camp, underscored bitterly: "It is their fault. They should not have run away." The nakba generation is made up of people who know

Palestine—not just as an idea and a value, but its villages, lands, and life—*and* who abandoned Palestine. With seventy years of displacement, and increasingly gloomy prospects for return and resolution, it seems to many that refugee flight in 1948 was a crucial error. People sometimes comment on this subject in sorrow—that the older generation did not understand, was not sophisticated enough to see the consequences of flight—but also sometimes in anger. These judgments were themselves a source of contention among younger people. As Nama, a woman in her early twenties, commented on a conversation she had with an eighty-four-year-old man who was originally from Al Falouja and now resided in Fawwar camp in the West Bank: "Some of the facts that the old man told me were really hurtful to me—especially knowing that they escaped because they were scared. I blamed him for such action, telling him that he had to defend his land using whatever is possible. I left his house with tears in my eyes and a distraction in my heart. I wanted to hear that we protected our lands until the last breath." Her friend Emad responded, arguing that her judgment was too harsh. Most remaining members of the Palestine generation were children when they fled in 1948. How could they be blamed?

When younger generations reflected on the refugee category, they generally emphasized the condition of living *as* a refugee—an experience that is marked for many by suffering and oppression. A common response to the question "What does the word *refugee* mean to you?" was "Humiliation." Why humiliation? In part because refugee status connotes weakness: "A refugee means I am a burden on people. But it is not my fault." It means a loss of value: "A Palestinian is less valuable than a fig," Abu Sami told me. Muhammad, a resident of Jerash camp in Jordan, said: "My presence as a refugee in a camp is like being a body without a soul. Whatever services I get, it is in the end a humanitarian service that could be offered to any animal that needs care." The loss of value is often connected to a loss of the future. Echoing Fatima's comments with which this chapter opened, Adel, a young man from Burj al Barajneh camp, insisted: "We have no stability at all. . . . We do not know where we are going to end up and we do not know what will happen. I cannot plan for the future properly." As Abu Qutaybah put it, the word *refugee* meant "the gray hair on my head," a reference both to the fact of enduring displacement and to the anxieties of life in this condition.

Expressions of humiliation, instability, and "stuckedness" [61] are not the whole of how people talk about and experience the refugee as a life category. And such feelings are also not necessarily apart from or opposite to its inhabitation as a political category. For some people, at some times, the loss of value is experienced as an impediment to political engagement. For other people, at other times, the feeling of humiliation is the starting point for efforts to make a change. For the generations born as refugees, both natality and the passage of time, along with the weight of that time passing, help form "the world that comes into being between them." [62] As Um Akram, born and raised in Dheisheh, put it: "The word *refugee* is a big word that lives in us and

is deeply rooted inside us. I am forty-six now. I think the word *refugee* has become part of me. Because it is the camp, it is the village *[balad]*, it is the nation *[watan]*, it is the son—it is everything. . . . I am a refugee. For us the word *refugee* comes before any word we learn or have in our life."

POLICING ELIGIBILITY

With all the difficulties of refugee status, most displaced Palestinians wanted access to the assistance and recognition that came with registration as refugees. UNRWA was confronted with the challenges of defining eligibility and then policing its boundaries. Maintaining category boundaries was made urgent by the fact that limited financial resources imposed strict ceilings on the number of people who could receive rations in each country—ceilings that inevitably meant that some eligible people, notably children, were not allowed on to the rolls. These limits, as much as matters of principle, made the rectification of the rolls—purging the lists of fraudulent registrations and keeping up with changes in income or other status that affected eligibility for rations—an issue of great importance. Refugee registration began with the UN-commissioned volunteer agencies. When UNRWA was established, it acquired these rolls.

Refugee registration was pursued with multiple goals in mind: to determine eligibility for relief, to facilitate its provision, and also to reduce the numbers on the rolls. As a November 1949 League of Red Cross Societies report about its registration procedures put it: "It is felt that the detailed information on the structure of the refugee population furnished by the present registration will be as valuable to the future UN agency as it has been to the League in its efforts to reduce numbers." [63] Registration could lead to a numbers reduction in two ways: (1) by weeding out fraudulent registrations and (2) by providing humanitarians with granular demographic information that would assist in the development of resettlement programs. The Economic Survey Mission—known as the Clapp Mission, after its chair, Gordon Clapp—was established by the UN to make recommendations about improving economic conditions for refugees in host countries. It urged a quick reduction in rations allotment from 940,000 to 625,000, with the idea that works projects and economic development would fill the gap. The agencies expressed concern that "too rapid a reduction in the number of persons receiving relief might lead to grave difficulty." [64]

Although an end to need was the *better* way to reduce ration roll numbers, responding to fraud seemed the *quicker* way. And the operating agencies expressed concern about fraudulent presence on the rolls from the beginning. Quaker workers in Gaza, for instance, reported that the village leaders *(mukhtars)* who were charged with verifying identities "will sell their signatures

on virtually every occasion, shaking the refugees down . . . if the mukhtar is to confirm the membership of a certain family in his village, confirming a certain number of children, etc., etc. What is sold for truth can equally be sold for falsehood, and that is frequently the practice it appears." [65] More common than fraudulent entry to the rolls, though, was a reluctance to lose eligibility (if income exceeded the limits established) or to diminish the family allotment (by reporting the deaths of family members). As UNRWA's annual report from 1952 described: "To increase or to prevent decreases in their ration issue, they eagerly report births, sometimes by passing a new-born baby from family to family, and reluctantly report deaths, resorting often to surreptitious burial to avoid giving up a ration card." [66]

Internal UNRWA reports from the same time indicated that as few as 10 percent of deaths were being reported in some fields. [67] Various methods were attempted to increase reporting, including providing death-related services—giving out shrouds or contributing to the cost of burial. [68] These efforts met with only modest success. In its statements about the need for rectification of the rolls, UNRWA sought, rhetorically at least, to make refugees responsible for sorting the truly needy from fraudulent cases: "If refugees assisted the Agency in cancelling the ration cards of persons who are in-eligible, the rations thus saved would be made available to a genuine refugee in the same district." [69] Given the importance of access to both rations and recognition, UNRWA's assertion of the community benefit of rectifying the rolls did not produce the desired response.

FIGURE 5. UNRWA ration card, 1972. UNRWA photo archives. Photo by George Nehmeh.

Being unable to rely on self-correction, UNRWA engaged in investigations of refugee status when and where possible. These investigations exposed refugees to a range of regulatory techniques—enacted by both UNRWA and the governments of the host countries where they lived. These techniques were punitive (such as the withholding of rations as part of investigations), intrusive (as investigators went to workplaces to verify information), and conducive to new kinds of vulnerability (investigations were often started because information was provided to UNRWA about the refugees in question, generating mutual suspicion within the community). In 1962, the director of Syria's refugee bureau complained to UNRWA that "refugee individuals have lately resorted to the habit of intriguing against other fellow refugees

by sending information to UNRWA about the income of such refugees, with the bad intention to persuading the Agency to stop the issue of their rations. They resort to such means . . . because of personal and family disputes and dissensions." [70]

A 1953 report from UNRWA's representative in Syria (Pierre Depage) described "effective" investigation procedures in that country:

> When an information *[sic]* about a refugee is received at the Field Office, the rations of the family are suspended until the refugee presents himself in our office when he is interrogated by one of our investigators. If the refugee denies the information it is to him to prove that the information is incorrect. If the refugee admits that the given information is correct, his ration card is immediately modified consequently. If we have doubts concerning the proofs presented by the refugee (for instant *[sic],* certificate from employer giving a salary not corresponding to the given information) one of our investigators with an Officer of the Syrian Security go *[sic]* on the spot to verify the given proofs (control of accounting of the employee). [71]

A key goal of the system was to reach a conclusion quickly. As Depage went on to note: "The final decision is taken by the Field Registration Officer in presence of the refugee who has the possibility of defending himself. This procedure has the advantage of suppressing completely all appeals, the refugee only leaving the office when he is convinced that there is nothing else to do." The memo further indicated that most investigations were concluded within twenty-four hours and that, when cases could not be settled immediately, the refugee received rations until the final decision was reached. Depage concluded by stating that the procedure worked very well. [72]

This report on a "very satisfactory" system is preserved in a file about the state of investigations in Jordan, a situation deemed much less satisfactory. Indeed, this less satisfactory state of things confirmed that refugees were not passively absorbed into new systems of governance. In Jordan they clearly resisted that governance, and the Jordanian government's frequent lack of cooperation with UNRWA was a response to their refusal. Investigations were emotionally fraught for the individuals involved, and in Jordan they were a matter of political and security concern. [73] Investigations were repeatedly halted at the request of the government. UNRWA expressed concern about these cessations but also recognized the prevailing conditions. In one such instance, in September 1953, UNRWA officials restarted investigations in the Bethlehem area after a ten-month suspension. UNRWA's Jordan representative reported that despite "considerable opposition" in this area, as well as in Hebron and Jericho, the agency had been able to carry them out—until the Jordanian government intervened and requested a halt. [74] He described a conversation with the minister of foreign affairs in which the reasons for the halt were spelled out:

> His Government was faced with a public security problem of grave proportions and it was almost miraculous that no serious trouble from the refugees had occurred up to now. He felt that to continue to conduct our investigations on the present lines

might precipitate an explosion which must be dealt with by the Jordan government at which UNRWA would be a mere spectator! He contented [sic] that even if there were a number of ineligibles on the rations lists, that number was not large, and that any "witchhunt" to eliminate them would precipitate a crisis out of all proportion to the benefits accruing. [75]

Investigations were suspended, and an effort by UNRWA the following year to restart a process of ration-rolls rectification produced a strong negative reaction from the government, again citing public security concerns and challenging the agency's right to move ahead without government agreement. After considerable back-and-forth, including much mutual recrimination, agreement was reached on the need to set up an "effective system to establish the bona fides of ration recipients." [76]

  That things were not so easily settled is made clear in later correspondence on the same subject. In 1964, for example, UNRWA's Jordan director commented in a letter to the Jordanian minister of development and reconstruction that

the Agency believes that it should be possible to issue rations to the children in question within the existing ration ceiling if the Jordan Government will extend to the Agency its full and effective cooperation in eliminating unreported deaths and absences, false and duplicate registrations, and families (including employees of the Jordan Government) who are in receipt of sufficient income to support themselves. [77]

Insisting on the "hardship and suffering which the continuing existence of these inaccuracies must cause to many eligible refugees who are genuinely in need of assistance," UNRWA officials asserted that they were "unable to accept the suggestion that the Agency's investigations should be restricted." The letter went on to say that UNRWA hoped it could "count on the cooperation of the Government in explaining the true situation to the refugees and in convincing them that these investigations, far from causing harm and injury, are in fact of positive benefit to the genuinely deserving members of the refugee community in Jordan." Just as the elaboration of definition and eligibility instructions created new distinctions within the Palestinian community, so, too, the work of rectification sought to distinguish between deserving and undeserving refugees. The terms of this distinction were often rejected by refugees, whose politics frequently entailed insisting on the most expansive understanding of eligibility and the broadest array of services.

  Although UNRWA's letter was polite, the long-running tensions around the questions of both rations ceilings and investigations of registered refugees come through. And, in fact, the Jordanian reply took a somewhat more pointed tone, saying, "I would like to be emphatic regarding a very sensitive point which you always keep raising as if it were an agreed matter– namely the rectification of the relief rolls again as if such rectification would in itself constitute a solution for all the financial problems you are facing." [78] The minister argued that UNRWA had

been engaged in continual rectification without "any registration benefit for the new born children since 1951" or for an array of other people who were in need. A decade later, the argument continued. In 1973, UNRWA made a plea to the Jordanian government in the name of excluded children: "The already large number of CRS (children registered for services, but not receiving them) recorded with the Agency in Jordan increases annually. It is therefore the more unfortunate that rations cannot be made available to the many needy amongst them, because of the Agency's inability to obtain information which would make possible the redistribution to them of rations from dead, absent, and non-needy refugees." [79] These conflicts over the rolls— and the procedures for rectifying them—were never wholly resolved as long as the comprehensive rations regime remained in place. Even as UNRWA's definitional categories and the subsequent need to manage people's relations to those categories produced new instruments for governing refugees, and new intrusions into people's lives, they were also a source of, and a site for, contestations over the same procedures.

REFUSING REFUGEE STATUS

The bulk of the archival and ethnographic record about registration, definition, and category boundaries reflects the desire of a majority of Palestinians to gain or maintain their status inside the refugee category. A small minority of displaced Palestinians refused registration entirely. I have encountered only a few archival references to such refusal. [80] I have heard about exceptional instances in the course of my ethnographic work, and I have heard expressions of frustration that it was not a more widespread choice. Instances of rejection provide a window into the significance of these choices and illuminate the conflicts that could emerge among refugees—and especially within refugee families—about these decisions. Registration refusals generally occur at threshold moments in the refugee, and therefore the aid, experience.

Why might people refuse to register for aid? And why might people wish for more refusals? One reason is the existential crisis that sudden need produces. The experience of finding oneself suddenly dependent, in need when one had always been self-sufficient, is humiliating. My research with Palestinian refugees makes this clear, as does research on crisis responses around the world. [81] When humanitarian actors respond to these crises, they are aware of these feelings —an awareness that further contributes to the imperative to keep intervention short term, even as conditions may make a quick end to aid impossible. Providing food to someone in need, even if receiving that food feels humiliating, seems like one of the clearest cases of the humanitarian imperative at work. The stakes for refugees in refusing, or trying to refuse, the help they so evidently need are both biographical and historical. Refusals constitute an effort on the part of

individuals to reject a life-trajectory of displacement. Refusals in the immediacy of crisis are also an attempt to change history—to resist the implementation and extension of a humanitarian apparatus and to forestall the emergence of a humanitarian condition.

In the course of my research in the Jerash refugee camp in Jordan, a camp populated largely by people who were refugees to Gaza in 1948 and displaced a second time to Jordan in 1967, I heard several stories of refusing registration. The circumstance of double displacement means that the camp's residents experienced at least two threshold moments. Jamal, whose family was from the Beersheba region in southern Palestine, described an instance of post-1948 refusal. When the family was displaced to Gaza, his grandfather, as head of the household, refused to register them with UNRWA because "he did not want to be a refugee." Because refugee status is passed down to children through the male line, this initial decision to refuse has reverberated for generations. Following UNRWA criteria described above, Jamal's family are considered *nazihin* in Jordan, rather than *laji'in* . This distinction has real consequences for the family's eligibility for humanitarian services.

In registration refusals such as that of Jamal's grandfather, several things seem to have been at play. These refusals seek to make a change in existential and political conditions. They speak to the hierarchies of lives that make humanitarianism necessary and that its practice can further deepen. They can also make a claim about the politics of aid in the Palestinian instance, especially its relation to the larger questions of resolution, restitution, and return. In addition to what they try to effect, registration refusals also reveal the multiplicity of hierarchies that are present in Palestinian life, in which humanitarianism is complicit.

As Jamal noted about his grandfather's choice, it was a refusal to accept his condition: to decline to be a refugee. This refusal entailed accepting, maybe even insisting upon, a certain degree of suffering in order not to acknowledge or be trapped by the categorical condition of loss. It was to refuse the transfer of agency over life that humanitarian intervention entails. Humanitarianism seeks to remove people from threat, to save them from exposure. Refusing to enter the system, to accept assistance, to register as a refugee, is in part an effort, not simply to be exposed as displaced persons already are, but to choose exposure for a larger purpose. Such capacity is often denied refugees, both by their circumstances and by the structure of humanitarian practice.

In the Palestinian case, refugee registration was a family matter. So refusal was not only addressed to humanitarianism, but resonated within families. UNRWA's choice to have the head of household do the registering and to have status descend through the male line rendered the humanitarian system patriarchal; in this aspect, the UNRWA policy resonates with gendered and generational hierarchies that are part of Palestinian society. Registration refusal did not disrupt these hierarchies, but rather revealed their effects. Another refusal story I heard in Jerash, this

one about the second displacement, to Jordan in 1967, shows how refusal could be a source of contention within families.

Im Taha, originally from 'Iraq Suwaydan in Palestine, described how Jordanian officials registered people coming across the Allenby bridge into Jordan—in the process switching their place of UNRWA registration from the Gaza Strip to Jordan. Her husband, Abu Taha, did not want to register because he was afraid that registering in Jordan would mean his family would not be able to go back to Gaza. His concern was not about being registered as a refugee per se, but about maintaining his status as a refugee registered in the Gaza field. As he sat at a distance from the registration table, Im Taha, concerned first and foremost about getting help for herself and her children, registered herself as being the wife of another man, who she said had been missing for six months. In this way she got a tent and food supplies despite her husband's refusal. If part of what was at stake in Jamal's grandfather's refusal was an insistence on the capacity to remain exposed, Im Taha appears to have refused precisely such exposure. This case was a secondary refusal in several senses: Abu Taha refused a second registration, one that would confirm his second displacement. Im Taha refused Abu Taha's refusal, choosing the immediate welfare of her family over a claim about principle. Abu Taha's refusal may have tried to disrupt paternalism, but it underscored patriarchy. Im Taha's refusal of his refusal intervened in this second sort of hierarchy.

These individual refusals of humanitarian categories and aid baskets illuminate principles and politics of refugee action, but they were rarely articulated in precisely those terms. These minority actions have tended to fade into the background of the much larger story of refugee registration and the widespread and initially comprehensive aid system. Even as the effects lingered for individuals, they are not really part of the collective story of displacement. If anything, the role that registration refusal plays in this collective story is precisely its absence. In my conversations with Palestinian refugees over the years, I have heard many people lament that more Palestinians did not refuse entering into the humanitarian system after 1948. This lamentation must be understood as part of the extremely conflicted feelings Palestinians have about humanitarian aid in general and UNRWA in particular. On the one hand, UNRWA's presence is viewed as an acknowledgment of the international community's responsibility for Palestinian suffering and its obligations to restore their rights. On the other hand, people identify the persistence of humanitarianism as an impediment to a political resolution, and some see it as part of a concerted plan to thwart Palestinian aspirations for independence and restoration.

Thus, when some Palestinians express an interest in a collective refusal to participate in the humanitarian apparatus, this interest is directed at the hierarchies that are baked into the structure of humanitarian intervention (the saver and the saved) and at the geopolitical imbalances that render Palestinian claims unattainable. One person told me a story from the early days of

UNRWA that underscored the point that accepting UNRWA services was detrimental to Palestinian political aspirations. He told me about a friend of his who had met an American working with UNRWA who tried to give him some political advice: "The American told my friend: 'This food you eat from UNRWA—I want to tell you something, but do not say that I told you. If you reject the provisions and do not eat, and twenty people die because of hunger, then they will take you back soon to your homes.' But we did not have that awareness. If we told people to do so they would have refused." The story highlights the imbalance of power and capacity that he thought refusal might have worked against: it was an American who offered the political insight; it was the Palestinians who lacked "awareness" and who would have refused the advice. In this case, both aid and the possibility of refusing aid were part of paternalist conditions.

Registration refusals, and their rarity, illuminate the perceived stakes of entering the refugee category and underscore how difficult it is to remain apart from the humanitarian system. Each instance, with radiating effects on other family members, down generations, and across communities, also provides a window into ways in which Palestinians judge themselves. As they experience and evaluate the humanitarian apparatus and its consequences for the possibilities of their lives, refugees are concerned with what is being done to them, and also with their sometimes necessary complicity in the process. Refusal at the very edge of possibility—which refusing aid in circumstances of acute need certainly is—can rarely change much, precisely because it is inevitably so rare. But the registration refusals reveal a flip side to the "no exit" tactics that make the refugee category a condition of politics. Refusals try to reject entry as a way of maintaining a prior status and condition. Both occasional refusals and the more common talk about refusal communicate the existential tensions in discordant refugee politics.

REFUGEE RECOGNITION AS A POLITICAL CLAIM

One of the eligibility categories introduced in 1956 into UNRWA's refugee definition was the non-assistance-receiving refugee. This "N" category, a recognition by UNRWA of the importance refugees attributed to this status, was meant to ensure that a refugee would retain a place in UNRWA's records whatever their need, "which in itself will protect their rights to repatriation and/or compensation." [82] Debates within UNRWA about eligibility for this new status revealed fundamental contradictions in UNRWA's refugee definition. The initial eligibility proposal was that the N category could include both refugees who lost their relief entitlement due to income and "bona fide refugees having never benefitted from Relief." [83] This proposal was responsive to refugee requests for "a card establishing them as refugees and which they

could thus use as a basis for claiming repatriation or compensation." [84] An UNRWA official noted that "requests for them are constant and come from all segments of the registered and un-registered population." [85] Some UNRWA officials felt, separately, that such a card would be helpful in population management and "found it very encouraging that the suggestion should come from the refugees themselves." [86]

If N status was meant to attest to refugee rights rather than access to relief, it should logically be extended to unregistered refugees. But because it would be nearly impossible to ensure that people so registered in the N category might not later become relief-eligible if their economic circumstances worsened, it was "impossible [to register them] without contravening the General Assembly's dictum against taking on any other claimants for relief." [87] As long as being recognized as a refugee meant that someone *might* be eligible for services, it was impossible to fully respond to the Palestinian view that such recognition was directly connected to their national rights. But given the persistence of the Palestinian claim, UNRWA had to repeatedly confront the questions about its responsibilities. Was UNRWA responsible only for aid and for the portion of the refugee population that required such assistance? Or did it have a broader obligation to count the entire community of loss?

When the matter arose in 1959, an UNRWA official in Jordan made a strong case for broad responsibility. He argued that the agency should have registered all refugees from the beginning, and certainly should do so now: "UNRWA is the only body having authoritative records of Palestine refugees, and if implementation of UN General Assembly's resolutions for repatriation or compensation is in future contemplated, UNRWA will undoubtedly be asked to identify *all* Palestine Refugees." [88] In a somewhat charged comment, he went on to say that the "UN's sincerity in adopting the repatriation or compensation resolution might even be questioned by some who could point out that despite the resolution, no UN Agency has undertaken to register *all* Palestine Refugees." Disagreeing with UNRWA's standard interpretation of its mandate as limited to needy refugees, the officer returned to UN General Assembly Resolution 194 (on the rights of refugees) and 302 (which established UNRWA) for evidence that all Palestine refugees were UNRWA's concern, even if not all were eligible to receive assistance from the agency.

One argument against issuing such a card was that it would require an investigation of individual status in order to be legitimate. UNRWA officials doubted that refugees would be willing to participate in that process unless they believed a resolution was really on the horizon, and they worried about raising false hopes among refugees that a resolution was imminent. Apart from these questions, some UNRWA officials argued the agency was not the appropriate body to issue a non-relief-related card—suggesting that the matter fell more properly within the jurisdiction of the UN Conciliation Commission for Palestine (UNCCP). As UNRWA's general counsel put it in his opinion on the subject:

On the basis of the tasks assigned to the two bodies, it would seem that each has competence to define a refugee on the basis of its own terms of reference. [UN]CCP appears to have competence to define a refugee in relation to a settlement of the refugee problem. UNRWA appears to have competence to define a refugee for the purpose of the administration of its relief and other programmes. [89]

The political importance of refugee status was thereby acknowledged, even as the general counsel sought to deflect responsibility for accounting for this importance. Because the debate about UNRWA responsibility could not be concluded (too many parties, with too many conflicting positions), the question of the refugee card could never be resolved. [90]

Changes in eligibility criteria provided a partial solution to this problem. One of the most significant changes was the 1993 elimination of the need requirement. This change eliminated the gap between qualification and eligibility that had been central to UNRWA's operations for so long. If people could prove that they fit the core definition of a Palestine refugee, they could now register with UNRWA. [91] According to a 2004 report, around one thousand people had registered as a result of this change. [92] A 2010 report indicated that an average of 230 families apply for new registration each year. [93] This expansion of registration eligibility was enabled by significant changes in the assistance regime, notably the end of the Basic Rations Program [94] (see chapter 3) and by an increasing acceptance of the responsibility of UNRWA, in the absence of another available international body, to provide some accounting of the broad swath of Palestinian displacement (see chapter 4). To a certain extent, then, the demographic problem has been solved through updates in eligibility criteria, but the political question remains: What does Palestine refugee status mean? Even as UNRWA has never been entirely able to take on the role of representing Palestinian political claims, there is no doubt that refugee status has been seen by Palestinians as having political import.

LIVING WITH HUMANITARIAN CATEGORIES

Refugee categories are invariably contradictory in effect. For Palestinians the refugee category created new exposure to punitive governing techniques and provided new mechanisms for resisting control. It introduced new vulnerabilities and offered new sources of stability. It produced new forms of loss and enabled new ways of making claims. The changing definitions of Palestine refugee status and eligibility helped govern people's life courses in very concrete ways—determining whether they would get access to rations and the broad basket of UNRWA services, which included things like advanced education and employment opportunities. But the significance of these categories was not limited to material opportunity. The definition of a

Palestinian refugee—and one's location inside that category—has also provided a mechanism for staking a claim on an international stage, for insisting that UN General Assembly Resolution 194 applied to one and one's property.

The discordances in the politics of refugee status are heightened along the boundaries of entry and exit. The humanitarian system produces, and requires, numerous barriers to entry. In the context of undocumented persons in France, Miriam Ticktin argues that people are sometimes compelled to trade their biological integrity for humanitarian recognition, a process she terms "biological involution" to point to its often lethal effects. [95] Palestinians have many concerns about entry, expressed both in the accusations of succeeding generations and the occasional refusals of the displaced. Despite these concerns, the refugee category describes a condition from which displaced Palestinians have not found an exit, and it also helps make possible a politics that does not depend on such an exit. This category that confers no political status—which is meant to suspend political judgment—can serve as a mechanism precisely for political life. Achieving the ultimate goals of Palestinian politics—liberation, return, restoration—would mean an exit from refugee status. The nearer goals of better service, representation, and opportunity are pursued, and sometimes realized, *within* the category and life of a refugee. Political recognition of refugee persons does not always entail a change of status. It can, instead, demand its redefinition.

FIGURE 6. Some Palestinians became refugees. Many have been born into the status. Shati/Beach

camp, Gaza Strip, 1991. UNRWA photo archives. Photo by Munir Naser.

The range of ways in which refugees live with the category underscores the tension within the Palestinian experience about the extent to which the refugee condition deprives Palestinians of "a place in the world which makes opinions significant and actions effective" or whether it can serve as a starting point for the "potentiality in being together," [96] which Arendt argues is a condition for politics. Doing politics from within the refugee category means both claiming and disavowing it. When refugees analyze their own conditions, many gesture to the necessity of this double move and to the ways in which they live with this double experience all the time. As Omar, a resident of Dheisheh, a camp known for its political and social activism, reflected on the contradictions of living in the refugee category: "*Refugee* means you are a person who lacks a lot of things regarding your identity, or connected to your original identity. But practically in daily life, the Palestinian refugee . . . currently, the Palestinian refugee is one of the most active people in the society." Abu Akram emphasized the importance of activating the political potential of the refugee condition when he said, "Some refugees were upset by the word *refugee* . . . . Some people who did not realize the meaning of the word *refugee* . . . . In fact I am proud of being a refugee. And the reason is: I am a refugee, but I am waiting for return and I work for return. . . . I became a refugee by force and not by choice. Becoming a refugee to protect yourself and get ready for returning—this is not a flaw. So I am a refugee in this sense. I am a refugee with a great hope about returning." [97] Part of the political potential of the refugee category lies precisely in continuing to assert that status.

According to Maisa, a woman of twenty-two from Fawwar camp in the West Bank, the word *refugee* contained both possibility and constraint. Being a refugee was a springboard for politics. And being a refugee was a condition of exclusion. As she said:

> The word *refugee* means something positive and negative. First I want to talk about the positive side. We as refugees are also proud that we are until now remaining steadfast, steadfast in the place where we took refuge. This place embraced us and has become part of our life even though there are many problems we face with the label *refugee.* . . . Because as soon as you mention that you are a refugee, many procedures get frozen—things that you should get just like the others or the other nationality. The negative thing is of course we should not accept to remain refugees in this place. We should return to our original homeland and we should fight for it with all means even if it is difficult. With cooperation, optimism, and love, we must return.

Many people mention the importance of return—of ending their status as refugees through restoration, rather than further defeat—when they talk about the meaning of the word *refugee* . This reference to return does not necessarily mean that people think it likely or plausible that an actual return to lost lands will happen, but that the notion of restoration and redress is central to

both refugee politics and refugee identity. Along with these monumental goals, the refugee category also provides grounding for more immediate claims to a better life.

The condition of being a refugee appears both destabilizing and enabling. It is produced through dispossession and is a source of suffering. Maysoon, a thirty-five-year-old mother of two who was born in Burj al Barajneh, spent her childhood in Saudi Arabia, and returned to the camp to get married when she was twenty, put it succinctly: a refugee "does not live life." At the same time, the refugee condition provides grounds—legally, socially, and politically—from which people can seek a different future and reclamation of rights. As Rania, a fifty-one-year-old denizen of Burj al Barajneh who was very active in its local organizations, put it: "Palestinians should get their full rights and all their needs should be met. Not because they are poor, but because this is their right. . . . It is our full right. . . . We are refugees. You put us in the situation, you take the responsibility." With all its difficulties, refugee status makes a place in the world for those who live within the category. This category, whose central defining characteristic is the loss of home, the loss of a secure place in the world, also can, perhaps paradoxically, provide an anchor and a framework for world making.

Oscillating Needs and the Aid Apparatus

IN 1960, UNRWA REJECTED A SYRIAN GOVERNMENT request to recognize Yarmouk, a refugee settlement in Damascus then three years old, as an "official" camp. In justifying the decision, agency officials argued, among other things, that "the camp atmosphere was good neither for the spirit of the refugees nor for their social and human development." [1] Camps, said the director of UNRWA's Syria office, kept refugees separate from the population at large and dependent on the agency's aid: "In an official camp the refugees are treated as a separate entity within the country. The 'responsibility' of UNRWA makes it that they never have the feeling of being on their own. In agglomerations where the refugees are living next to Syrians, and where UNRWA is not constantly present, the amalgamation, even temporary, is much easier." This official's belief that the camp, the primary setting for UNRWA's activities, posed a problem for the agency's double mandate of "relief and works" speaks to dilemmas at the heart of the humanitarian assistance project.

Saving lives is a fundamental aim of humanitarian intervention, as evidenced by the prominence of such efforts as the provision of rations to people without food and of medical care to people who are ill. But once not just "life," but also "lives" [2] become a central object of concern—something that happens as soon as a given humanitarian intervention commences—the goal of *saving lives* takes on additional valences. The humanitarian aim is also to *value lives* —to claim a fundamental equality among all human beings—and, in a world that manifestly does not grant equal value to everyone, to say loudly that "we should" and "we must" remedy the deficiency. Once valuing lives becomes something that one hopes to do—humanitarian actors, after all, are not philosophers, but practitioners—then the question of *improving lives* also becomes difficult to avoid. In the distinctions practitioners often make between forms of

intervention, "saving" appears to be the domain of the humanitarian and "improvement" the purview of development. In practice these distinctions are difficult, if not impossible, to maintain. Certainly, the humanitarian apparatus attending to the protracted displacement of Palestinians has not really attempted to keep these goals separate.

How does a humanitarian apparatus respond differentially to the goals of saving, valuing, and improving lives, each of which can appear urgent? And how does it do so in a landscape in which needs are many and also shifting? What are the consequences for humanitarian operations of the frequent interruptions of relative stability by crises? And what are the effects of the return to chronic need that invariably accompanies the ebbing away of such crises? With these questions in mind, and cognizant of the array of services directed at Palestinians over the years, this chapter focuses on interventions that occupy what look like the far ends of the assistance spectrum: rations delivery and development projects. Like every part of the assistance apparatus, each of these interventions has been transformed dramatically over the years, amid continual contestation over the best ways to protect vulnerable human life and mitigate the vulnerabilities.

Given the punctuations in the humanitarian landscape, changes have not been linear. Some services diminish in periods of chronic stasis, only to reappear when crisis returns. But when the services reappear they are different, reshaped by global changes in the humanitarian industry within which the apparatus dedicated to Palestinians operates. Large-scale infrastructure development projects, for instance, have largely been replaced by efforts to develop entrepreneurial subjects. Programs that once determined eligibility for relief by income have yielded to others that identify the eligible "abject poor" by tracking consumption. Services have also been reshaped from the bottom up—by Palestinian protests. Large-scale projects aimed at resettling refugees have been replaced by efforts to improve refugees' lives. Agency efforts to streamline ration delivery systems, in accordance with humanitarian "best practice," have frequently been reworked, though not abandoned, in the face of refugee opposition. And humanitarian practice has also been reshaped by conditions on the ground. With no political resolution on the horizon, development intervention tends to shade into something that looks more like relief, focused on near-term incremental improvement rather than the systemic change that the development industry normally preaches. With Palestinian refugees subject to repeated violence and displacement, the humanitarian capacity to wean people from reliance on humanitarian goods has regularly been disrupted.

WHAT IS THIS APPARATUS?

An apparatus, Michel Foucault emphasizes, is a formation that "has as its major function at a given historical moment that of responding to an *urgent* need." [3] The historical urgency that humanitarianism always confronts is human suffering. When displacement is the cause of this suffering, the urgency is equally the threat posed to nation-states by the incompletely regulated movement of populations.

As Palestinians settled uncomfortably into extended displacement in the first decades after 1948, they lived with an expansive humanitarian assistance apparatus. With the cooperation of private agencies, UNRWA provided rations, clothing, shelter, education, health care, and some job training to registered Palestinian refugees. Today, education and health care constitute the bulk of UNRWA services, along with limited social services and sanitation in the camps. Assistance from NGOs most often takes the form of social support: psychosocial therapy, art programs for children, human rights and women's rights education, and job training workshops for youth.

Even during the period of expansive services, practices varied from place to place, sometimes due to different approaches by UNRWA personnel and sometimes due to host government policies. As governments began to permit the construction of more permanent shelters, for instance, UNRWA's Syria field provided refugees with building materials and required them to construct their own shelters. The country director complained that in other fields UNRWA was doing the actual building, thereby missing an opportunity to save money for the agency and to benefit the refugees, who in Syria "have developed their sense of responsibility and also have, in living in their own houses built by themselves, regained the sense of dignity which they definitely lose when they are herded in big army-type camps." [4] In every field, UNRWA schools followed the curriculum of the host country, with little or no Palestine-specific content. In every field, however, UNRWA teachers are themselves refugees, who have an interest in providing a civic nationalist education to their students. According to Jalal al-Husseini, teachers' commitment to what they called a "hidden curriculum—informal references to Palestinian history and geography" [5] —eventually led UNRWA to make such invocations of Palestine part of an enrichment program "to provide, within the framework of the curricula prescribed by the host countries, general education and vocational and technical education for Palestinian refugees in accordance with their educational needs, identity and cultural heritage." [6]

The insistence of these teachers on pursuing their own vision of best educational practice, and their ability to affect UNRWA policy, is one strand of the tapestry of refugee influence on the aid apparatus. Refugee protest has been a feature of the aid apparatus since its inception. For example, in 1949, refugees in Ein el Hilweh and Mieh-Mieh camps in Lebanon refused delivery of rations that they deemed "unfit for cattle and not even enough to nourish a chicken. According to a report by a journalist who attended a League of Red Cross Societies (LRCS) meeting with

mukhtars, refugees were prepared to "refuse to take the rations until they are improved. And if you don't improve them, we shall be forced to rob and disturb the peace in order to get into prison, where we shall at least have better food than in your camps." [7] In this case, extended discussion persuaded the mukhtars to end the two-week strike.

Refugees persisted with such politics of refusal in the UNRWA era. In May 1950, refugees in Ein el Hilweh went on a rations strike again. According to an UNRWA report on an accompanying demonstration of thousands of refugees, signs decried "the deplorable conditions in which they had been left and the fact that their problem had not been settled. They reaffirmed their determination to remain on strike until death or the settlement of their problem and their return to their homes." [8] The internal tensions that have been part of refugee politics over the decades were already evident as community leaders objected to the protest tactic. UNRWA's director met in Lebanon with a refugee delegation who told him that "they had been very much disturbed by these strikes [in refugee camps] and did not in any way approve of them." [9] This committee preferred a politics of engagement, continuing to meet with UNRWA officials to press their demands for better-quality rations, tents, and medical care. [10] In this case, the strikers were ultimately persuaded by the mufti of Lebanon to halt the strike on the grounds that "refugee interests as a whole were being attended to by responsible parties."

Demands for more and better aid were connected to refugee efforts to redefine not just humanitarian procedures, but also UNRWA's very mission. Protests about provisions made an argument about what constituted adequate "relief." The "works" part of UNRWA's mandate was even more vexed. Based on the recommendations of an Economic Survey Mission sent to the region by the United Nations Conciliation Commission for Palestine (UNCCP), the agency attempted to provide opportunities for economic integration into host countries by developing public works projects, with the aim of removing the now employed refugees from the relief rolls. But such resettlement was not the resolution refugees wanted. They wanted to return to their homes. And UN Resolution 194 put return on the international agenda, even if the aim was never seriously pursued. As UNRWA noted in 1951, "the desire to go back to their homes is general among all classes; it is proclaimed orally at all meetings and organized demonstrations, and, in writing, in all letters addressed to the Agency and all complaints handed in to the area officers." [11]

The works program encountered immediate difficulties. The high costs of relief meant that funds were scarce, and refugee opposition made it difficult to recruit workers: "This hostility to all works undertaken by the Agency was based upon their conviction that to accept employment within the host countries would be tantamount to renouncing the right to return home, and perhaps even the right to compensation." [12] Even as refugees began, quickly, to doubt that they would return, they objected to any humanitarian project that seemed to further impede the

possibility. The first works program was discontinued in mid-1951. It was followed by the establishment of a "reintegration fund" to support the development of larger-scale projects to help refugees become self-supporting. Projects such as one in Jordan modeled on the Tennessee Valley Authority foundered in the face of refugee opposition, along with limited capacity and difficulties in negotiating with host governments. The ensuing move away from resettlement projects was an important instance of refugees redirecting the humanitarian mission.

BASIC SUSTENANCE AND REFUGEE LIFE

It might seem self-evident that rations are a transparently humanitarian good—they ward off starvation by supplying the hungry with needed calories. As a focused response to a fundamental urgent need, rations might not appear as closely connected to political questions as resettlement projects or school curricula. But, as the protests I have already described indicate, and as researchers have found in many refugee settings, rations provision is a highly contested political field. One source of contestation is the fact that rations are offered as "just calories," as Elizabeth Dunn reports that displaced Georgians described UN-supplied macaroni, rather than as "food." [13] Micah Trapp documents how Liberian refugees add flavor to bland ration allotments and argues that maintaining "taste" helps them resist being fully captured by their humanitarian condition. [14] And Rahul Chandrashekhar Oka argues that when refugees are able to consume favored foods it helps them "feel a sense of normalcy" while they wait out displacement. [15] Rations may be provided with basic survival in mind, but they are not received as so limited in effect or intent. Palestinian refugees have pointed out problems in the quantity, quality, and variety of the rations provided them as evidence of humanitarian malfeasance. And it is not only refugees who make such judgments. Humanitarian providers regularly criticize how refugees get access to and use rations. This basic humanitarian good often becomes a stage on which people judge each other's character, capacity, and morality.

As debates and contests around rations highlight, humanitarian mechanisms for saving lives are immediately entangled in questions of value(s). No one ever viewed the rations that UNRWA, or the UNRPR before it, was able to provide as either sufficient, or sufficiently varied, to meet refugee needs. UNRWA's 1951 annual report detailed the monthly allotment, including 10,000 grams of flour, 600 grams of sugar, 500 grams of rice, 600 grams of pulses, and 375 grams of oil and fat. This ration "provides a daily average of 1,600 calories per head." The report noted that "the diet provided by the standard ration is not by any means a balanced one, the most important lack being fresh fruits, vegetables, and meat." [16] To get greater variety into their diets, refugees had to grow vegetables themselves or sell some of the rations and use the proceeds to

purchase other foodstuffs. This basic configuration changed little over the years and, as the 1959 annual report noted, "it is generally agreed to be inadequate as a diet." [17]

In addition to being insufficient, rations were often also of low quality. When the LRCS began its work in Lebanon in 1949, the aid workers found it hard to get enough flour, and the flour they did get was "extremely bad." [18] The particular mix of wheat always produced a "dark, heavy, unappetising loaf," a result that LRCS staff confirmed by trying to bake with it themselves. Distribution of this flour met with protest, and the LRCS expressed concern that "continued supply of this bad flour will cause, not mere discontent, but even serious disturbance." The LRCS further expressed frustration over the fact that, since it was required to distribute supplies provided by the UNRPR, it was put in the position of being "faced with severe criticism and even antagonism, due to no fault, neglect, or action of its own." Even in the midst of crisis, refugees did not simply passively receive whatever was offered. The "reduced, monotonous, and unsuitable rations" led to growing unrest, and "whatever the theoretical calculations may be in terms of calories and vitamins, the refugees, who have little or nothing else to think about, are acutely conscious of the small quantities and the fact that even those small quantities are bad in quality and foreign to their preferences." [19] Refugees wanted food, not just calories. Quality control problems returned in the UNRWA era.

FIGURE 7. Refugees received flour as rations, which they then baked into bread. Jalazone refugee camp near Ramallah, 1949. ICRC audiovisual archives.

In May 1952, refugees complained to UNRWA about that month's flour ration, noting its bitter taste and dark hue. [20] And they attributed the drop in quality to malice: "The Agency was accused of purposely distributing this bad quality of flour for the sacred month of Ramadan to hurt the feelings of Moslems and insult them. They said that they had proof of this in the fact that UNRWA has never distributed anything good or extra during the months of Ramadan for the last two years, and the total disregard of their feelings in making this year a specially bad one." [21] Reacting to these protests, the UNRWA representative to Lebanon, Raymond Courvoisier, dismissed the refugees' capacity to judge the flour's quality, saying, "We do not believe that among the refugees, the members of the Arab Committees or the members of Committees representing the refugees there are any who are sufficiently expert to aspire to the post of Flour Inspector." [22] The supply chief underscored his conviction that the flour "was good, fresh flour, properly milled and containing no foreign matter." [23] It did contain a higher proportion of bran— as endorsed by the UN's World Health Organization and Food and Agriculture Organization— which could account for the bitter taste. And the change in composition, he suggested, pointed to the "real nature" of the complaints: "Many refugees sold the whole or part of the white flour issued to them, using the proceeds to buy other commodities more to their taste. The 88% extraction flour has not got such a good resale value and is therefore not so popular." [24] If there was impropriety, Courvoisier suggested, it lay in the refugees' use of rations, not in the flour's quality.

UNRWA launched an investigation nevertheless. Laboratory tests conducted at the American University of Beirut showed the flour from one of the two supplying mills to be "unfit for human consumption." This result led Courvoisier to revise his judgment of refugee taste: "The very strong reactions met with in the UNRWA Areas in Lebanon were therefore justified." [25] A full report published on the investigation in July clarified that flour from both mills had an acid content above that permitted by Lebanese law and that "the consumption of either flour will not cause any real harm, although flour with a very high acidity will occasionally cause minor and temporary distress, such as dizziness." [26] The report provided considerable detail on how these mills had been chosen, what sorts of grain were incorporated into the flour, and possible actions going forward. A conflict between refugees and UNRWA then became an argument within the agency.

The deputy director asked the supply chief to take the flour back because it was "technically unfit for human consumption." [27] He received a response that he deemed "a bit high and mighty." [28] The supply chief first rejected the terms of the judgment: "I do not know what is meant by the phrase 'technically unfit for human consumption.' It is either injurious to health if consumed, or it is not. The fact that bread made from this flour has been eaten by all of us . . . and that no ill effects have been produced, is ample evidence, to my mind, that the flour is fit for human

consumption." [29] His refusal to take the flour back was tied in part to his reluctance to pay the costs of replacement. It also seems to have been connected to internal administrative antagonisms; he disparaged the Lebanon country representative and the system of administrative decentralization. In his response, the deputy director chose to ignore the supply chief's tone, which he complained about elsewhere, and instead to focus on "the practical aspects": "Would you please take back the 142 tons of flour which is at present frozen in the Lebanon district warehouse, re-sift it and mix it with other quality flour which will render it entirely fit for issue to the refugees." [30] What happened to the flour is not recorded in the file—though there is a note from many months later indicating that the issue had not been entirely resolved. [31]

As time went on, contests over ration quality were to a certain extent superseded by restrictions on quantity. The eligibility distinctions and income scales that were introduced in the 1950s began to affect more people. But this process of restriction was often disrupted by crisis. In July 1958, Lebanon faced a political crisis and the threat of civil war. In response to this emergency, which interrupted a trend of improving conditions for Palestinian refugees, UNRWA decided to "issue rations to registered refugees without reference to the category of the refugee." This restoration of rations to those who had lost them due to employment was to be "on a temporary basis for the duration of the current emergency." [32] In this case, unlike so much of the Palestinian experience, the emergency was in fact of limited duration and, therefore, so too was the intensification of humanitarian aid.

Soon thereafter, UNRWA's office in Lebanon returned to complaining about refugees' failure to heed humanitarian rules, prompting an argument for punitive restrictions. In October the head of the country office wrote to UNRWA's director about the difficulties they were facing in maintaining "order in the camps." The problem was that refugees were not obeying regulations. They were "selling their huts to outsiders, taking water to their private houses from the main point, etc." He requested permission "to cut progressively the rations of adults if they refuse to obey our instructions." [33] The head of the registration department weighed in with support, suggesting that selling a hut should lead to full removal from the rolls, but that lesser offenses should result in a temporary suspension: "The ration rolls would not need to be altered, the rations would merely not be physically distributed. Then if insubordination is repeated, the family could be removed from the rolls." [34] Permission to impose sanctions was granted, though in the long run it was impossible to stop refugees from using their limited resources as they saw fit. At least somewhat, the refugees lived in the camps on their own terms.

As the crisis of the nakba began to recede, the overall trend in the 1960s (with the naksa of 1967 still in the future) was toward greater reductions in rations. One couple in Lebanon, faced with the prospect of losing almost half of their family's ration allotment after an investigation into their income, objected vociferously. The wife berated the investigators: "You unjust one,

you who does not fear our Lord, how dare you cancel the rations of the children without any right." Both husband and wife threatened to tell higher-ranking UNRWA officials that the offending personnel "took LL. 400 as a bribe for cancelling our rations" and insisted they would be fired. [35] No one was sacked, and the family's rations were not restored. Such individual protests were accompanied by petitions from across the fields of UNRWA operations. In one petition, a group of refugees in Nablus demanded "reconsideration of the income-scale long ago imposed by the Agency which is exploiting it in a most ugly way as a weapon against the refugees." [36] In another petition, from 1964, a refugee complained about what he called the "arbitrary and reckless" cancellation of rations cards in Lebanon. He described the possible consequences of this practice: "The cancellation of rations is like taking the crust out of the mouth of the hungry. A hungry person is liable to commit frightful crimes. This action has caused resentment in the refugees' ranks, so now they harbour a deep grudge against the Agency. This rancour is about to explode. No matter how strong the repression, the explosion is inevitable." [37] An appeal for compassion is here paired with a threat of significant social disruption. UNRWA officials were cognizant of the personal suffering embedded in the withdrawal of rations and acknowledged "how harsh the removal of rations must seem to refugees who have struggled to get back on their feet again after the terrible experience of the last fifteen years." [38] But the removal was necessary, in order not to "deprive some other, still more deserving, family on the waiting list for rations."

The process of continued rations withdrawal was eventually unsettled, not by refugee protest, but by another return of crisis. The Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip in June 1967 led to a second wave of Palestinian displacement, as approximately three hundred thousand refugees and newly displaced persons crossed the Jordan River to the East Bank. This displacement plunged many people back into a state of acute need for rations. UNRWA established six "emergency camps" to house these people in Jordan. Four such camps were established in Syria. [39] The LRCS returned to the field, joining the effort to set up camps and distribute relief, with particular attention to providing aid to first-time displaced persons who did not qualify for UNRWA refugee status. [40] But the expanded relief in the face of crisis was a changed relief. Humanitarian mechanisms of internal distinction were maintained, and refugees had also developed their own systems for making use of rations, including ways of monetizing them. The naksa disrupted, and then reorganized, networks that had emerged over the years to move rations into the marketplace.

FIGURE 8. Monthly rations distribution, Baqa'a camp, Jordan, 1969. UNRWA photo archives. Photo by George Nehmeh.

Many West Bank rations recipients moved to Jordan, and so too did a number of merchants who sold those rations. The new procedures UNRWA put in place to manage aid distribution to newly displaced refugees, notably its initially temporary imposition of a requirement that they show identification to receive their rations, exposed the extent of the commerce. UNRWA officials came to realize that some of the rations they had been providing in Jericho had been collected by merchants who were in possession of refugees' rations cards, and that a number of those refugees had already moved to Amman before 1967. With the new identification requirement in place, an UNRWA official reported in July 1967 that "merchants are returning the cards to their rightful owners in order to receive this month's issue," [41] with the plan to then retrieve the cards for future commercial use. In order to put a stop to this commercial activity, he proposed making the identification system permanent and expanding it to all ration distribution —including for East Bank refugees—noting the necessity of government cooperation, especially in the form of policing.

UNRWA headquarters accepted this proposal, and at the end of August the agency notified the Jordanian government of the decision. The policy was implemented throughout the country, initially with few problems. But in February 1968, refugees in the Karameh camp in the Jordan Valley refused to collect their rations, leading, according to the Jordanian government, to a

"tense situation and mass meeting." [42] The identification requirement was the cause of the strike. This circumstance alarmed the Jordanian government, which requested that UNRWA respond to this "ominous situation" by continuing rations distribution "in the manner hitherto adopted." The initial reaction of UNRWA officials on the ground was to "let matters ride in the hope that the opposition would peter out (as had happened on previous occasions when the refugees have gone on strike against receiving rations)." [43]

As UNRWA and the Jordanian government squared off over how to proceed—the correspondence indicates a fair amount of umbrage, especially on the part of government ministers—both spoke as if in the name of the refugees. The government referred to "the hardships and miseries that were brought about as a result of the recent Israeli armed invasion against Jordan" and argued that it was "inadvisable to carry out such an operation among the masses of desperate refugees, many of whom have been evicted twice within less than two decades, a time when the only international help left to them amounts to little more than a loaf of bread." [44] UNRWA, for its part, indicated that the system put "the distribution of rations on a much more equitable and defensible basis than before and this is undoubtedly in the interest of the refugees themselves." [45] Embedded in these competing claims to speak on behalf of refugees were competing arguments about the ethics guiding humanitarian practices. In the end, UNRWA agreed to a temporary halt to the identification requirement in Karameh, with assurances (that it did not wholly trust) from the government that it would indeed be temporary and would not be allowed to undermine the larger control process. The particular question of Karameh shortly became moot. After the battle of Karameh in March 1968, when Israeli forces targeted PLO fighters in the town and camp, the refugee camps in the Jordan Valley were closed and refugees moved elsewhere. [46]

On the larger matter of curtailing merchant access to rations, the Jordanian government did step up its assistance. In April it issued an order that police should "prohibit merchants to draw near the distribution centers in towns or camps to purchase cards or rations." [47] And the following month the director of UNRWA operations in Jordan reported that the government was indeed providing strong support and that, nonetheless, merchant efforts to acquire these goods persisted: "The merchants continue to try to 'rear their ugly heads' and in order to suppress them constant vigilance is required." [48] He went on to describe the efforts to circumvent policing:

That merchants are alive to our action is clear and to illustrate their pertinacity, I would relate the obviously careful preparation they set up in Jerash [camp]. Refugees apparently loaded flour in a normal way on to donkeys at the distribution centre. These donkeys then departed and deposited their loads in a tent. From the tent the flour was loaded onto carts which proceeded out of the camp and went round the corner out of sight where the flour on the carts was reloaded onto trucks. This was discovered by one of our personnel who happened to be visiting the camp at the time which illustrates also the importance of continuous camp inspection at all levels.

Even as some exchange was recognized as a necessary part of rations use, the commodification of rations was viewed as a corruption of the humanitarian apparatus. From the provider perspective, the selling of rations underscored the limits of refugee capacity to act as independent ethical agents. The archival record does not include the statements of refugees on the meaning they attributed to rations selling, but the practice seems to constitute a non-sanctioned project for improving their lives: perhaps not an absence of ethical capacity, but a practical response to complex needs. As Oka argues in the case of Kenya, engaging in such commerce can be a source of "dignity." [49]

These complex needs were about not only material conditions, but political recognition as well. The question of recognition played a role in discussions in the late 1970s about ending the basic rations program altogether. When financial exigencies mandated a reduction in the goods provided to rations recipients, UNRWA officials determined that this reduction "neither affects adversely the nutritional state of most ration recipients nor strikes alarm in the refugee community, despite occasional outcries by mukhtars." [50] Noting that the rations allotment was, by that point, 836 calories per person per day and that, due to the income scales, which reduced allotments based on family earnings, an average family of six was likely getting only two or three portions, it seemed that rations were making a small contribution to the family diet. Recognizing that some people did have extraordinary need, UNRWA introduced a new category, "special hardship cases," who were targeted for additional rations: 1,600 calories per day, with a goal to increase that allotment to 1,879 calories. When the program began in January 1980, it was successfully implemented in Jordan, the West Bank, and the Gaza Strip. The Syrian government refused the program, and the Lebanon field office recommended against implementation there because of anticipated opposition from the PLO.

Alongside this limited expansion, the broader trend of reduction continued. The chief of the relief division argued that the basic rations program "must be eliminated" in order to enable relief to go to "the really needy sectors of the population." He identified two groups "which are particularly disadvantaged, the disabled and the special hardship cases, and for whom the Agency does very little." [51] Describing both the financial savings that such a change would produce and the lack of real need for the program, the deputy commissioner-general noted a number of obstacles. Many donors to UNRWA made in-kind food contributions, using the rations program as a means of dispensing with their own surplus food, and were resistant to donating cash instead. [52] There would be opposition from Jordan, Syria, and the PLO, "not on grounds of humanitarian sympathy for suffering refugees, but on political grounds and the desire to maintain the image of UNRWA much as it was in the '50s." [53] As the UNRWA cabinet prepared to deliberate on the matter, a memo from the relief services department averred: "The sole justification for continuing to subsidize a majority of refugee families by means of the basic

ration programme is political: the programme makes no economic sense for people whose most urgent unsatisfied need is communal." [54] Palestinians were likely to agree that their most urgent need was for national restoration, but they disagreed with the argument that maintaining the rations program was irrelevant to that demand.

Given the breadth of opposition from refugees and host governments in response to this proposal, it took another return of crisis to make the change possible. In June 1982 the Israeli army invaded Lebanon. In August the PLO leadership departed the country. And in September the five-field basic rations program was suspended in order to devote resources to the refugees left behind in the camps in Lebanon. This change was met with objections: "Complaints and protests are continually being made by individual refugees, their representatives and the host Governments regarding the non-resumption of the basic ration." [55] Despite the UN General Assembly's requests to restart the program, "sufficient contributions have not been forthcoming" [56] and the suspension became permanent.

RATIONS IN THE ERA OF DISTINCTION

With no general rations program remaining, the "special hardship case" category was deployed across UNRWA's fields. As with previous categorical elaborations, the special hardship case required the development of new criteria for eligibility and new mechanisms for determining if people met those criteria. The benefits of this status have, in recent years, been relatively meager —a quarterly distribution of commodities worth about ten dollars and a cash supplement of the same amount—but the requirements for gaining this recognition were onerous. Eligibility was based on both categorical status (the elderly, the disabled, and female-headed households) and condition (those in economic distress). [57] There was a limit to the number of persons/families recognized as special hardship cases—in Lebanon the cap was set at 12 percent of the registered refugee population. Eligibility for this status was based not just on people's absolute condition, but on their condition compared to other refugees.

The special hardship category has now been replaced by a "social safety net" program, which uses the categories of absolute and abject poverty. When I conducted fieldwork for this book, the program had been devised but only partially implemented. The most significant change with the new system was the move to a "poverty-based" eligibility determination. According to UNRWA, "Under the new system, age, gender and employment status no longer affect a Palestine refugee's eligibility for assistance, eliminating a systemic bias against the working poor. Now, field- and family-specific poverty lines based on the local socioeconomic context are used to identify an individual's poverty level, helping UNRWA focus its assistance on those who need it

most." [58] Determination of poverty status—abject and absolute poverty being the two key categories—is to be done through a "proxy means testing formula" that uses forty-six variables to measure consumption and expenditure. [59]

Officials in the West Bank relief and social services office explained the data-driven system to me. Food insecurity is given the greatest weight in the formula. Data collection from families involves multiple visits by social workers, who (1) conduct a visual inspection of the house, the quality of furnishings being a factor in the formula; (2) interview (most often) the wife, who manages the household; and (3) fill out a long verification questionnaire. Ensuring the accuracy of the data is challenging—the UNRWA officials told me that social workers sometimes verify food consumption claims through visits to the neighborhood grocery store. But, they also said, relief social workers are experts in identifying assets in relation to expenditures. Anyone who applies for assistance is subject to this procedure. And as with every humanitarian procedure, needs verification has been contentious: it opens up another venue in which the variety of actors within the humanitarian world view each other with suspicion.

Humanitarian workers sometimes view refugees as (at best) failing to appreciate the principles of humanitarian action or (at worst) being selfish and even duplicitous in their efforts to secure access to resources at the expense of their more needy neighbors. A chief area officer for UNRWA whom I interviewed in Lebanon expressed tremendous frustration with how the refugee population dealt with the agency and its procedures. Like most UNRWA employees, he was himself a refugee, but his position gave him a different perspective on aid. He explained that the community feels that the agency is obligated to cover all of its needs, yet it does not recognize the constraints on the agency's budget. How could UNRWA convince people both that the financial limits were real and that, therefore, genuine need was insufficient to establish eligibility for relief? From his perspective, the priority was to help the most vulnerable; others, even those with legitimate needs, should recognize the validity of these distinctions.

Refugees certainly recognize that there are different needs in the community, but they interpret the problems differently. They often view humanitarian workers and policy makers either as personally corrupt—allowing *wasta* (connections) to play a central role in decisions—or as systemically demeaning—using investigation procedures that require people to trade their dignity for assistance. A resident of the Burj al Barajneh refugee camp commented to me that "we, all the Palestinians, as soon as you hear the word 'UNRWA' it means *fasad* [corruption]. . . . It means a corrupt employee, a more corrupt supervisor, and higher supervisor is even more and more corrupt. . . . That is its definition and meaning for us." This remark reflects widespread views among refugees. As to dignity, people repeatedly described their frustrations with the home inspections. They complained that any material object in the house—a television, a satellite dish, a refrigerator—could keep them out of the category of the truly needy. But

refugees argue that eligibility for relief should not be measured in this way. They believe quite strongly that even the most abject, to use UNRWA's new vocabulary, deserve something more than bare survival. They, too, deserve some creature comforts—something that amounts to a "lifestyle." In other words, not only are the goals of saving and valuing lives closely connected, but lifestyle is part of both. Refugees deserve food and not just calories. And they should be permitted pleasure, even when they are in need.

DEVELOPMENT AND THE PROBLEM OF THE PRESENT

Valuing refugee lives may also require improving those lives. [60] And humanitarians often worry that the provision of extended relief may actually hinder the achievement of that goal. Development offers the clearest mechanism for improvement, even as it may be in conflict with some humanitarian sensibilities. Some humanitarian organizations seek to sharply distinguish their work from that of development agencies, but in practice these distinctions are difficult to maintain. [61] This is especially true in the case of long-term refugees, such as the Palestinians, for whom crises of survival are superseded over time by the general problem of living with and in displacement for extended periods. As any review of the literature on development makes clear, this "anti-politics machine" [62] is almost always a site of political struggle among the different actors and communities targeted, or neglected, by these projects. [63] In the Palestinian case, much of the question, and the contest, over development has been about the consequences for the Palestinian political future of efforts to improve the material conditions of the present. And because the future, whether liberated or improved, is necessarily notional, the immediate focus of these struggles is action in the present.

Palestinian refugees' primary demand for the future has always been a return to their homes and resumption of their lives. But repatriation has never been a viable policy option for UNRWA, given Israel's utter intransigence, even as some Palestinians have taken action in this direction. With repatriation effectively off the table, UNRWA's first improvement efforts were focused on "reintegration" projects that would enable refugees to leave that status behind while remaining in exile. In the Gaza Strip, planning for settlement was complicated by the fact that it was virtually impossible to develop this constricted space without moving a portion of the population. With around two hundred thousand refugees and eighty thousand mostly dispossessed native Gazans, all observers agreed that this twenty-five-mile-long strip could not support this new population. Reintegration would therefore require further displacement. UNRWA began discussions with the Egyptian government about this possibility in the early 1950s, outlining plans to develop a portion of the Sinai desert to resettle some of Gaza's

refugees. The technical challenges to this project were formidable, water being the biggest concern, but all parties were also aware of the political sensitivities around any proposed resettlement.

At an early stage in negotiations, the Egyptian government communicated to UNRWA that it was opposed in principle to "reintegration," supporting only "finding work for the Palestine Arab refugees, in both Gaza and Sinai territories." [64] But in order to show good will toward UNRWA, the government was willing to permit settlement of up to fifty thousand refugees, provided it did not affect the "natural rights of those refugees . . . to return to their original homes and the compensation of those who do not want to return. . . . Reintegration, if accepted, will be purely looked at from a humanitarian angle to rescue those unfortunate refugees." For this reason, the draft agreement signed between UNRWA and the Egyptian government stated that the project was "without prejudice to resolution 194" to "result in the achievement of self-support and removal from ration rolls of refugees residing in the Gaza District." [65] The effort to distinguish immediate humanitarian need from political rights, and to keep the one from adversely affecting the other, has been an ongoing feature of the humanitarian landscape, even as later interventions have occurred on a much smaller scale than the proposed Sinai project.

A feasibility study concluded that with proper irrigation, it should be possible to settle 12,500 refugee families—approximately 62,500 people—in northwestern Sinai. With that goal determined in principle, questions arose among UNRWA officials about which persons should be targeted for resettlement. Since the project was to be agricultural, it was necessary to identify people with the appropriate skill set. Responding to one report on the subject, UNRWA's acting director, Leslie J. Carver, argued that "a farmer (landowner) with four dependents whose knowledge of agricultural methods is probably restricted to those employed in the Beersheba plain, is not necessarily the right man to undertake the adventure of resettling himself and his family (he will be middle-aged) on land which requires entirely different methods of exploitation." [66] Rather than already complete families, Carver suggested, the target population should be young couples, who would then have their children in the Sinai.

A goal of the project was to produce a major transformation in the Palestinian refugee community—precisely to make it no longer a refugee community. Children born in the Sinai would be "removed from the debilitating and frustrating environment and the bitterness they will imbibe from the older generation who remember the old life in Palestine. . . . This will at least mean that 75,000 children (average family) will not become refugees, who might otherwise have done so." Carver suggested as well that the young adults who would move would have little memory of Palestine and would be able to compare life in the Sinai only with life in Gaza—further easing the settlement process. That this plan envisioned a non-refugee future for those who moved was underscored in agency discussions about the end of UNRWA's responsibility

for the resettled population. UNRWA's deputy director argued that responsibility "ends on the day on which a refugee enters into possession of a house and plot of land, equipped with the tools necessary for him to carry on. If necessary a small cash grant might be made in lieu of rations. Any other alternative implies that our liability is interminable." [67]

This planned future made Gazan refugees skeptical of the project. An UNRWA report on opinion about the project in Gaza described a meeting with two refugee leaders who argued that the proposed resettlement would both remove already displaced people from Palestinian territory (as people in Gaza were "still in their own country") and relieve needed pressure on the UN: "The refugees cannot be settled, they cannot be disposed of and they will not be settled outside the strip and this will force the UN to solve their problems in a way they accept." [68] The Egyptian government was supportive of the project, and planned to keep any opposition in check. The governor general met with refugee notables and told them that although no individual would be forced to move, "he would not tolerate instigated or group resistance to the project. . . . The project was going to be built and that was that." [69] A local press account about this meeting reported that the governor general insisted that the project "was planned by the Egyptian Government for the benefit of Palestine and its inhabitants but evil tongues were spreading rumours to the effect that this project would be nothing but a prison or a graveyard." [70] Instead, the project was intended "to awaken activity among the refugees and implant in them the spirit of work, for idleness is death both to body and soul." Despite the efforts to discredit "evil tongues," opposition to the Sinai project sparked the biggest demonstrations in the strip during the period of Egyptian rule. [71] Although it did not directly attribute its change of heart to the threat of political instability caused by refugee protest, Egypt withdrew its support for the project, stating that it could not divert resources to assist refugees when its own citizens needed water.

Reflecting on the fate of the Sinai project and also on similar failures in Jordan, UNRWA's representative to Egypt commented: "A conclusion of futility can hardly be avoided from the balance sheet of our rehabilitation program. In our efforts in this we have been led up blind alleys and have earned for us no tangible results in resettlement, but rather suspicion, antagonism and resistance from refugees and governments, including the charge (made to me here) that the UNRWA was party to a plot to solve the Palestine question by this means." In the face of such failures—of resources and political will—UNRWA largely abandoned large-scale development projects. But it could not relieve itself of the question of the future. What responsibility did this agency charged with the care of Palestinian refugees have for the Palestinian future? And, more generally, to what extent could humanitarianism—present-focused as it so often is—imagine, engage, or direct the future?

IMPROVEMENT WITHOUT RESETTLEMENT?

The conditions of refugee camps pose this future problem acutely. In any place where camps persist over decades, they generate questions about the impact of living in permanently temporary spaces over the long term and present challenges to the security and sovereignty of host countries. In 2017, the Kenyan government sought to close Dadaab, one of the world's largest refugee camps, precisely because it viewed an agglomeration of more than 250,000 Somali refugees, who had been living there more than twenty-five years, as a security threat. [72] But it does not take decades for camps to be viewed as threats. As Syrian refugees have moved into Jordan since 2011, the question of security has been paramount in camp design. [73]

In the Palestinian case, struggles over the status of camps have often taken place under the rubric of "improvement" and on the material ground of shelters. The passage of time permits these efforts to coalesce under a name and to be formalized as an intervention, but from the outset they have posed the persistence of the camp as a problem. Evidence from the early years confirms that camp improvement has always been happening, whether through repair of tents damaged by storms or through moving people into more stable structures. Meanwhile, individuals have been endeavoring to enhance the conditions of their shelters. People's efforts to build on their own accord are an instance of seizing some control over their lives, and hence of claiming value. Opposition by host populations and governments is a reminder of the severe limits on the capacity of refugees to control their own destiny.

Tents look and feel temporary. Flaps of canvas held up with slender poles, vulnerable to the wind, rain, and mud, they signal the presumed short-term, emergency character of displacement and aid. Precisely because of this temporary quality, tents are inadequate for the kind of multiyear displacements that Palestinians have experienced. More substantial shelters were soon required after the initial flight in 1948. This transformation was initiated sometimes by UNRWA and sometimes by refugees themselves. As it sought government approval for construction, UNRWA emphasized impermanence. In 1954, it requested permission for "replacement of the tents of Nahr el Bared camp by constructed shelters of temporary nature with a view to ameliorate the living condition of the refugees." [74] And the Lebanese government, granting this permission, insisted that these buildings "will have no characteristic other than that of temporary nature which does in no way diminish the rights of the refugees to their anticipated return to their original country." [75] The orientation of humanitarian activity toward the present helped in navigating this terrain of competing kinds of need. Even as this orientation can impede humanitarian capacity in other arenas, such as long-term planning and long-term care, the resolute focus on meeting immediate needs for adequate shelter kept the longer-term

consequences of building these sturdier shelters in abeyance. Hence, the emergency of the present made it possible to act for the near future. [76]

But there were consequences. For one, as landowners realized that the camps might remain in place, they took action to reclaim their property. In Burj al Barajneh, near Beirut, landowners brought lawsuits against refugees, treating them as squatters. [77] Refugees had begun building on their own initiative: "In 1952, when the refugees started to convert their torn-out tents into mud or stone huts, charges were submitted against them in the Courts of Law either by the owners of the parcels affected or by the Attorney General himself." [78] When some of these suits were successful, UNRWA became concerned about the possible removal of people from the camp. It interceded with the government, on multiple occasions, to press for non-implementation of the judgments. In 1953, the government granted permission for in-camp refugees to "ameliorate their sheltering condition by new or additional construction" in the camp. But some refugees were uncertain about whether their shelters were inside the camp limits. UNRWA's view was that it was the responsibility of the Lebanese government to determine these boundaries, so any dispute about them was a matter between the government and the landowners, "and the Agency and the refugees involved are a third party only." Providing its own overview of the history, the Lebanese government noted that of the 5,574 persons in the camp area, it deemed 1,885 to be illegally present (either within or beyond the camp boundaries). It described the very difficult conditions facing refugees in the camps and the hardships imposed on landowners who remained unable to make use of their property: "They thought in the beginning that this refugee problem would not last more than a few months. . . . Their stay during these long years keeping their lands frozen . . . has deprived them of tolerance." [79] Despite a government proposal to respond to this intolerable situation by closing Burj al Barajneh and Shatila, with the refugees to be moved to a new, not-yet-built camp, neither camp was ever closed. [80]

Over time, and often contrary to everyone's stated aims, camps necessarily acquired a degree of permanence. UNRWA acknowledged as much, at least for the occupied territories, when, in 1982, its relief division suggested shifting resources from rations to investments in "the infrastructure of refugee camps in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, most of which can be expected to be a permanent aspect of whatever autonomous Palestinian entity is eventually allowed to emerge, let alone in the other three fields." [81] Yet the politics of transformation remain fraught. UNRWA does not provide much ongoing support to refugees in the maintenance or improvement of their homes, but over the years a number of projects have been launched to address particularly egregious conditions. The camps that were constituted out of former army barracks were especially decrepit, and many of those have been refurbished. As Nell Gabiam has explored, in the Neirab refugee camp in Syria, such a project was first discussed in 1979 and finally got under way in 2000. [82] In 2007, UNRWA established an Infrastructure and Camp

Improvement Program (ICIP) to respond to deteriorating material conditions. The program was launched in Gaza, the West Bank, and Jordan, followed by the other fields.

In most fields, the camp improvement program has focused on rehabilitating dilapidated shelters and UNRWA facilities, as well as making improvements to sewage infrastructure. According to Phillip Misselwitz and Sari Hanafi, the creation of the ICIP was part of a broader shift from "relief to sustainable development" and was intended to rely on "participatory planning processes, where refugee communities are expected to lead rather than receive." [83] With funding from the German government, the ICIP launched several pilot programs to see how the competition between refugees' demands for better quality of living and the right of return could get worked out on the ground. There is real anxiety among refugees about the political consequences of changes in camp conditions. Those who live in camps are nonetheless able to navigate this terrain and ask for many things at once.

In the West Bank, under the guidance of Sandi Hilal, an architect who headed the program, the ICIP embarked on an ambitious endeavor to put architecture in the service of refugee lives. In Fawwar, a refugee camp near Hebron that is located in Area C (i.e., the 65 percent of the West Bank that remains under full Israeli military and administrative control under the terms of the 1993 Oslo accords), the ICIP worked with the community to create a plaza in the camp. Rather than focusing camp improvement on individual and technical projects, the project in Fawwar tried to work at the level of the commons. As Hilal notes in a reflection on the project, the idea of making such a public space was challenging for many reasons. Apart from the question of *tawtin* (resettlement), some people did not want an open space in their neighborhood. They worried about strangers, and especially young men, hanging around their vicinity. They worried about loss of control of their space. And yet, "what is claimed as 'private' in the camp is not really private, because the homes are not registered as private property, and what is claimed as 'public' is not really public because neither the host governments nor the residents themselves recognize it as such." [84] With many conflicts along the way, and many objections overcome, the plaza was eventually built—and it has been well used.

The success of the project was such that delegations came from camps in Jordan to see what might be learned from this instance of participatory improvement. In Talbieh, another camp that was a pilot setting for the ICIP, program officials also used the community participation method, but the playground built there became a source of great contention in the camp, leading them eventually to close it off and make it available for use only under strict controls. Why these different outcomes? A member of the West Bank ICIP team suggested that one difference was the speed of implementation—very rapid in Talbieh, quite slow in Fawwar: "Giving people the time to imagine and reflect is a very important thing. We spent more than one year building the basic form of the plaza—work that could have been done in three months. . . . This gave people

the time to shape the vision of what we were doing." [85] Process, and not just product, was identified as key to the success or failure of these projects. The funding for the West Bank ICIP ended in 2013, but camp improvement programs continue in other fields. As a program and project, camp improvement is directly engaged with the permanent-temporary character of the Palestinian camps. It acknowledges a refugee claim to a better life now, even as they want a liberated life in the future. But it is also caught, as are so many aspects of humanitarian practice, in the question of whether its good works may be impediments to that future.

SELF-IMPROVEMENT AND THE QUESTION OF CHARACTER

"I don't like to waste all my time," Suha exclaimed as she tried to convince a resident of the Burj al Barajneh camp to start coming to the women's center sponsored by the Women's Humanitarian Organization (WHO). Visiting women at home was important for WHO's outreach program, and I went along with Suha on a number of these visits. The negative effects of wasting time were a key part of her overall pitch. Many women in the camp, she said, would sleep until 10 A.M. and then sit around drinking coffee until noon. The center provided a chance for the women to make better use of their time, and to do something that they enjoy, so that they would be more interested in themselves. The benefits, Suha argued, would accrue not only to the women, but also to their children, who would be better raised by a more engaged mother. Suha's effort responded to a key challenge in many humanitarian circumstances: people often feel reduced to biding their time, waiting for conditions to improve. In the long-term displacement of Palestinians, structural impediments to work and life mean that merely passing the time is a key part of people's day. [86]

Helping people make better use of their time and, when that is not possible, find ways to keep idleness from becoming personally corrosive, has become a key focus of intervention. Rather than infrastructure, the target here is individual character and capacity. Such projects align with new directions in international development, which often focus on capacity building. [87] This focus is also a product of specific Palestinian conditions, in which chronic precarity has no clear development solution.

Humanitarians have long worried about the effects of idleness on refugee populations. As early as 1951, UNRWA officials worried about "the typical refugee mentality, and its passive expectation of continued benefits," [88] the "social and economic blight of incalculable dimensions" of "able-bodied individuals who for four years have looked to the United Nations for the provision of all their basic needs," [89] and the "psychologically debilitating effect of giving relief over long periods of time, with the consequent development of a professional refugee

mentality." [90] Despite concerns about dependency that seem always to accompany aid, Paul Harvey and Jeremy Lind argue that "all the evidence about how people survive during crises points to the fact that [dependency] is an unhelpful myth: relief does not undermine initiative or make people lazy." [91] And as James Ferguson notes, the idea of a dependency problem makes little sense in contexts where there are few economic opportunities anyway. [92]

I heard worries about dependency from many people—providers and recipients, internationals and local employees. For Marwa, a resident of the Jerash camp in Jordan who worked in its Community Development Office (CDO; more about her and the CDO in chapter 4), dependency was a prism through which to evaluate the effects of aid programs. She, like many others, was concerned not only about what people *got,* but about who they *were* and *could be* . Marwa complained, for instance, about UNRWA's use of European Union money donated to Jerash. More than sixty houses were rehabilitated, but she thought the money would have been better spent on personal development projects: "The house, does it educate a young man? It won't. . . . If we built apartments and from the rent we educated the kids, we would have benefited the people." Employees and volunteers in the CDO tried to work in a different manner. As one volunteer put it: "Another thing that helped the development office to succeed is it refuses to give fish to the people. Teach them fishing. Always. Teach them fishing. Some institutions, they offer relief. They distribute rice, sugar, et cetera. We refused this." In this frequently expressed view, simple relief came with the risk of negative subject-formation, reducing rather than improving people's capacities.

FIGURE 9. Refugee women in a sewing center, Jericho, 1948. ICRC audiovisual archives.

The Islamic Center Charity Society, a Muslim Brotherhood affiliate, structures its work in Jerash with similar concerns in mind. Analyzing the landscape of Islamic charity in Egypt, Mona Atia distinguishes organizations in part according to whether they pursue what she calls *khayr wa-khalas* (good deeds and that's it) or what she labels *samaka wa-sannara* (fish and fishing hook). [93] The largest nonroyal NGO in Jordan, the Islamic Center, does both. It provides direct aid to the poorest camp residents, using investigative procedures similar to UNRWA's to determine eligibility. [94] And people complained to me about the invasiveness of these procedures just as they did about UNRWA's. Camp residents also believed that the Islamic Center did not dispense aid impartially but favored those who followed the organization's brand of Islam. Islamic Center employees vociferously rejected this charge. The director told me: "We do not discriminate in offering assistance. Neither by religious commitment nor nationality or language. We offer assistance to Christians." The Islamic Center's criteria for distributing limited resources, however, are grounded in Islamic doctrine. Absolute preference goes to orphans, whose care is a religious imperative, which also makes fundraising for that population easier.

FIGURE 10. Plumbers course, Damascus vocational training center, Syria, 1974. UNRWA photo archives. Photo By Sue Herrick Cranmer.

According to the Islamic Center's director, in the first years after the nakba, people were embarrassed by their circumstances and accepted aid only reluctantly, but now many had become "professional at begging." To make sure that aid applicants were genuinely in need, staff checked with a range of government offices (social security, land registration) to determine their income and wealth: "Sometimes when we suspect people have cars we take them to the department of motor vehicles to prove there are no cars registered in their name. Sometimes we take them to the banks to make sure there are no accounts under their names." The Islamic Center's "samaka wa-sannara" programming tries to counter the culture of aid dependency. Sheikh Kamal, a Jerash resident who works with the Islamic Center in the camp, described the challenges in designing programs:

> We noticed that people do not need food and nutrition as much as they need education and to develop a living. We noticed the poor person starts with hesitation, and in embarrassment extends his hand. This has become a profession. Even the real message of Islam doesn't reach them. . . . In the past, [youths] used to look for work. They were willing to work in distant areas. But now, [they rely] on charitable aid. . . . It is all about how the human eats and drinks. And this is not a message. Food and drink are not a message to deliver to the camp. This is the old times. UNRWA is the past. The message is to raise the people, to give this person the fishing hook so he can catch fish and to give him an axe to have him get wood. This is the real message.

In his view, relief had "brought nothing but bad things and deterioration," and it was now necessary to "change this type" of dependent person. Describing his frustration with young men's attitudes toward work, Abdullah, another Islamic Center employee, commented that "they are raised on wrong foundations. This is from their fathers. When he has money, even if it is just 50 JD, he will spend it and will look for a job only when he is out of money. This is a strange type of thinking." With much of the older generation viewed as beyond changing, the youth are a key target of programming.

I saw this kind of effort to help people develop a vision of the future by changing themselves in a training course to prepare unemployed university graduates for success in the job market. Held in Jerash under CDO auspices, the course was implemented through a contract with Save the Children. It met in the camp's rations distribution room, which these days is used only on a quarterly basis, for social-safety-net distributions. Residents of Jerash are "ex-Gazans," people who came to Jordan after 1967 from Egyptian-controlled territory, rather than from the Jordanian-annexed West Bank. Unlike the majority of Palestinians living in the country, the ex-Gazans do not have Jordanian citizenship. [95] Most have permanent residency and two-year passports, but not the crucially important national identity number *(raqam watani)* . That number gives access to health insurance, local tuition at public universities, government jobs, and property rights. Ex-Gazans are denied all these things. It was in these conditions of even greater precarity than that of most camp residents in Jordan, and with legally restricted opportunity, that the training program tried to help these young adults gain a better understanding of themselves, so as to be better able to market themselves.

Across a camp landscape of multiple constraints, part of humanitarian work over the long term has involved the creation of things to do, to occupy people's time if they cannot work, and to get them socially engaged. Occupying time is sometimes a default outcome, as is the case with job-training programs in circumstances where people are both legally and socially discriminated against. They may not do much to change employment outcomes, but they provide an outlet for people to learn to express themselves differently and to engage with others in the same situation. The many lectures and workshops that are held in every refugee camp where I have worked seem to serve this social purpose. Each such event has another stated goal—imparting information that is meant to improve people's lives in some way—but the real impact seems to lie more in coping than in changing.

To the extent that these time-spending activities seek to effect a change, it is often in improving people's lifestyles. Lifestyle transformation is central to a form of improvement that is directed more immediately to character than to material outcome. When neither repatriation nor rehabilitation is likely or even plausible, personal reorientation emerges as a possible humanitarian goal. Even in the absence of large-scale structural change that would create new

possibilities for people, lifestyle change (the thinking goes) can improve the quality of people's daily lives and their personal futures—through better health, more stable relationships, and better care for children. Within the assistance apparatus, lifestyle becomes a forum for diagnosing the negative effects of years of relief on refugee character and articulating opportunities for improvement. It also provides a language for refugees to make alternative claims about how they should live and to make demands of humanitarian actors about what they should provide.

In the Jerash training program, activities that focused directly on employment included discussions of the meaning and message of different clothing, acting-out of office problems and their solutions, and debates about the meaning and value of work. Students in the course talked about the value of work for both themselves and their families, they reflected on societal expectations about gender roles, and they connected their sense of a good work environment to its suitability for their social environment. One trainer explained to me that many youths had trouble presenting themselves effectively in interviews. And many activities I witnessed focused on self expression, in the workplace and more generally. In one exercise the students covered their faces with masks and stood in a circle for a conversation about good and bad qualities of workplaces. At the end of this exercise the trainer pointed out that everyone looked alike because of the masks, but that each person had his or her own individual ideas. He made the point that everyone should have opportunities based on their individual capacities, not their social characteristics. But the opportunities available to these ex-Gazans were directly constrained by such characteristics.

Unlike ex-Gazans, most residents of the Wihdat camp in East Amman are citizens of Jordan, with the national number and the services that come along with it. As important as this citizenship status is, the position of all Palestinians in Jordan remains unsettled in significant ways. Some of these tensions are connected to the legacies of the conflict in 1970–71 between the PLO and the Jordanian government, a conflict that came to a head in the events known as Black September, when the government defeated and exiled the PLO. Both Wihdat and Jerash camps were sites of fighting. [96] The ongoing tensions of national identity are felt in the "Jordan First" campaign launched by the government in 2002, a campaign that, at least implicitly, pits East Bank Jordanian identification against Palestinian national identity. [97] The continuing insecurity of even those Palestinians who are citizens of the country was made evident when the Jordanian government began revoking the nationality of some Palestinian-Jordanians, with the claim that it was supporting the durability of their connection to Palestine. [98] Many Palestinians in Jordan have had great economic success, another source of resentment by East Bankers. Those who remain in camps are the poorer segments of the refugee community.

East Amman, where Wihdat is located, is the poorer part of the capital city, a world away from the malls and villas of West Amman. In living with chronic poverty, camp residents share

circumstances with their non-camp neighbors. And they are targeted by similar self-improvement projects, many of which focus on lifestyle. "Healthy Lives" was the name of a course taught in Wihdat by a group of Christian volunteers, most of whom are Korean. Undertaken in cooperation with the Beit Nabala Society, the course had two concrete aims: to teach people about what a healthy life could be—eating patterns, sanitation practices, interpersonal relations—and to encourage them to take initiatives to transform their environment along these lines. As one of the volunteers explained: "The goal is community development because in this part of the world people are living without a strong foundation. . . . We need to change their values, their worldview, their lifestyle." In the volunteers' view, some problems were a result of circumstances—the conditions of aid dependency that many providers worried about. Others were a product of culture. An osteopath named Jinseok told me that a lot of disease is caused by culture. Refugees in Wihdat do not have a regular lifestyle. They sleep late and eat late. They are hot tempered, always yelling. In his view, these behaviors contribute to the problems people face. The Healthy Lives course was intended to address a broad array of lifestyle issues.

The volunteers, who were already living and working in Jordan, found their way to the Beit Nabala Society when they were looking for an opportunity to make a contribution in the country. Before they were able to launch the course, the volunteers told me, they had to overcome people's suspicions about their intentions. Precisely because the volunteers were Christians— brought together around their shared faith and driven to do this work in part because of it—they were initially received with some distrust in the heavily Muslim camp. Refugees worried that the volunteers might be aiming at a different sort of lifestyle transformation, namely conversion. But, even as the volunteers did intend for their work to change people, they did not seek to convert them. [99] And by the time I was doing my research, everyone told me the relationship was excellent. As with many programs I encountered in my research, all the participants in the course were women. Women are more likely to have the time to attend, and international donors are more interested in funding interventions that serve women. Male refugees, especially, complained about this inequity in donor interest.

The volunteers presented lifestyle as a path to a better life—not materially better, perhaps, but lived better. The theme of one unit was "the road to a good life." After discussing the general requirements to get to a good life, the participants were asked to divide into groups to identify the biggest obstacles to a good life in Wihdat. Each group had to pick one problem as the most important to solve. The first discussion yielded seven candidates for biggest problem in the camp: big cars traversing narrow streets, garbage in the streets, lack of concern for each other, water distribution, health care, children's access to the Internet, and the cost of cooking gas. A second round of discussion led to the identification of three as most significant: garbage, mutual concern, and the Internet. They divided into groups again, with the assignment to discuss both

the biggest problems associated with these issues and ways to change the situation. Several sessions of working through these issues ultimately led the group to choose garbage as a problem they wanted to intervene in, both to do some neighborhood cleanup themselves and to educate people about proper disposal. I asked one of the volunteers whether she thought it would take off. She was not sure whether people would follow through on all the plans, but she did feel confident that their own behavior had changed: "One who used to tie up the trash bag and throw it out the window stopped doing so. She started to go down to the street and put it in the container. So we can see the change in this regard." Even if the environment did not change, that is, the women were already improved.

The Beit Nabala Society, which hosted the volunteers, is part of a long tradition of village-based societies *(jam'iyyat;* sing. *jam'iyya)* that offer both community and material support for people, including providing a hall for life-cycle celebrations. Beit Nabala was a village in Palestine that was destroyed in 1948 and many of whose denizens reside in Jordan. I heard from people in Lebanon that there, the persistence of jam'iyyat is threatened by the difficult economic conditions that make it hard for people to make the required monthly membership payments. The Beit Nabala Society, in contrast, was thriving. In addition to the usual jam'iyyat services, it had a "development center" that offered a range of programs. These included a nursery school; training courses for women in embroidery, hairstyling, and makeup; support for orphans; and medical care. A key aim of the center was to support the development of the local community of Wihdat camp and its environs. Locating such activities within the framework of a jam'iyya—and in this case the society of a village that was destroyed in 1948—made a claim about the persistence of community in the face of displacement. Projects such as the Healthy Lives course indicate concern about the quality of that community.

Persistent worries about idleness and the turn to lifestyle-improvement as intervention underscore that both the elements of the assistance apparatus and the "urgent need" to which it responds change over time. The registers of saving, valuing, and improving lives all define need and structure response. Keeping people alive and helping them lead a healthier life has each felt urgent at different moments. Such transformations in aid occur in often tense relation with its recipients. Palestinian refugees have argued that political restoration is a need as urgent as those addressed by humanitarian efforts to "save" and "improve." This political need cannot be met by the operations of the assistance apparatus, but Palestinian insistence on its importance has fundamentally transformed those operations.

Conflicted Positions

COMPROMISED ACTION AND SUSPICIOUS RELATIONS

IN 1949, THE JORDANIAN GOVERNMENT ordered the transfer of a refugee population twice in the space of six months. Managed by the League of Red Cross Societies (LRCS), the moves were conducted in the name of improved living conditions. Refugees were suspicious of the motives and concerned about the effects. When refugees were moved from Shuneh in the Jordan Valley to the Sukhneh camp established near al-Zarqa, they worried about the economic isolation of the new location and "feared that the movement was being used as a check on ration cards." [1] Already in Shuneh, refugees had experienced LRCS efforts to control fraud. "The objection of refugees was so strong" against the first system attempted—a check of tents at night to count family members—"that they started stoning and shooting at the car." [2] Other means of gathering information were then used, including surveys and the establishment of registries. Given the ambient trepidation, "it was with difficulty that [refugees] were persuaded to strike their tents and embark on the vehicles provided." [3] The troops sent by the government to police the relocation assisted in the persuasion. Still, the LRCS reported that there was "discontent upon arrival," [4] that "many refused to leave the lorries," [5] and that some Palestinians "formed a dangerous crowd and insisted on returning to Shuneh at once." [6] A truck driver was injured in the disturbance. After some time, "the refugees not only returned to the normal state which one finds in such camps, but generally admitted that they were better off in Sukhneh than before."

As the Palestinians began to adjust to their new conditions, the Jordanian government decided that they should be moved back to the Jordan Valley, to a new camp called Karameh. Why the quick reversal? LRCS personnel concluded that, even as the government offered several reasons (including that the road to Sukhneh was impassable in wintertime), the real motive was that "the

Jordan Government required a pool of labor in the Jordan Valley on which they could draw for the making of roads and the construction of a dam across the River Zerka and subsequent irrigation schemes." [7] The refugees shared this interest in employment. Equally significant to the Palestinians was that moving back to the Jordan Valley meant moving closer to home. When the government broached the possibility of the move, "the answer was spontaneous and almost unanimous: any move which would take them nearer to Palestine would be welcomed." [8] Refugees viewed this move as responsive to their multiple aims: a better life now and a restored life in the future. Hence, the second transfer did not provoke resistance as the first one had. Since population movement required and enabled a check of refugee documents, it did reveal existing refugee fraud. The LRCS reported on "people who had been bribed to travel down with certain families who . . . were unable to produce as many people as were mentioned on their ration cards." Such misrepresentation was endemic and, one LRCS employee indicated, "short of branding each person with a number, there seems to be no adequate answer to it." [9] All the actors in this story viewed each other with suspicion, even as they had little choice but to persevere side by side in the humanitarian enterprise.

As indicated by this episode at the beginning of the long Palestinian displacement, humanitarian action produces and struggles with a range of dilemmas that have no solution. Scholars have explored, and providers have debated, the use of humanitarian claims as cover for imperial adventures, [10] the denial of full personhood to recipients of aid, [11] and the ethical challenges that confront humanitarian providers. [12] As discomfiting as they are, such conundrums are generally tolerated by humanitarian actors, recipients, and observers in the service of accomplishing the fundamental purpose of humanitarian work: to diminish human suffering. Humanitarianism is a tradition of "compromised action," [13] in which humanitarian organizations are distinguished not by whether they make compromises but rather by which ones they make. Providers and recipients all have to operate in a gap between their values and the constraints of the mission. Questions about whether these compromises are justified—whether doing something is always better than doing nothing—haunt humanitarian practice.

These enduring dilemmas contribute to keeping suspicion a prevalent feature of humanitarian relations. In May 2016, Ban Ki-moon, then UN secretary-general, convened an unprecedented World Humanitarian Summit in Istanbul. [14] In preparation for the gathering, UN and independent relief-agency officials consulted with recipients of humanitarian aid around the world. The results of the consultations with assorted refugee communities in the Middle East were dramatic: refugees feel poorly served by the humanitarian system. [15] They expressed concerns about corruption and favoritism in aid delivery, indicated that aid agencies were not meeting their highest-priority needs, and complained that these agencies did not treat them with respect and dignity. [16] Notably, Palestinians gave humanitarian actors higher marks than did other refugees in

some key areas: considering refugees' opinions and treating them with respect and dignity. Overall, however, the interviews revealed significant problems in the relationship between humanitarians and the populations they are meant to serve. [17]

The discontent and suspicion that course through this field of compassion and care shed further light on the discordances of Palestinian refugee politics. These discordances are partly based in the multiple and often conflicting needs and demands of refugee lives. They also derive from the constrained and unstable circumstances in which such politics can be pursued (more on both of these topics in chapter 5). This chapter dwells on sources of discordance that are built into the humanitarian enterprise itself—tensions in humanitarian subject positions, conflicts over humanitarian obligations, and dilemmas of humanitarian purpose.

HUMANITARIAN SUBJECTS

The classic image of the humanitarian provider is a Western (often white) do-gooder, sacrificing the comforts of home to help those "less fortunate" than herself abroad. Peter Redfield describes the stereotype of the Médecins Sans Frontières doctor as "a cowboy doctor; tireless when fueled by alcohol, coffee, and tobacco; fiercely independent; and loudly arrogant." [18] Liisa Malkki notes the presumed distinction between "the needy, sick, dirty recipient and the strong, healthy, clean giver" [19] at the outset of her exploration of very different experiences of being a humanitarian worker among Finnish Red Cross workers. In fact, humanitarian subject positions are much less distinct. The boundaries between the categories of provider and recipient are fuzzy, and both categories contain multitudes. The bulk of humanitarian staff in the field are often members of recipient communities. [20] In the Palestinian case, refugees constitute the overwhelming majority of UNRWA staff and also make up a significant percentage of the staff of other humanitarian organizations. [21] And internationals have intensely complicated relations of intimacy with and distance from the populations they serve.

Humanitarian fieldworkers interact with refugees face-to-face. They experience the "dishonesty" of refugees directly. And they also confront the need of refugees up close and personal. Malkki argues that the "management of affect" [22] is a central problem for internationals in the field. Regularly faced with "impossible situations," where their intervention cannot possibly be adequate, humanitarians struggle to maintain an affective neutrality—an emotional equilibrium understood as the only way to ensure that some good will be done. Redfield describes a social tension around the question of "proximity" [23] —how to understand, show solidarity, and build a connection across a vast gulf of cultural difference and life possibilities. As the staff of the UNRPR operational agencies deployed to the field in the immediate aftermath

of the nakba, they confronted cultural distance from Palestinian refugees, and also among the several nationalities within their teams. The gaps were not equally large. LRCS staff expressed pride that, working with an unparalleled "welding together of so many nationalities in a joint effort for a humanitarian purpose," [24] the team "has shown the ability of people from all parts to work closely together and demonstrates that even different cultures and civilizations cannot change man's inherent interest in his fellow man." [25] The distance from refugees was harder to overcome.

A Danish medical officer in the LRCS reflected that her lack of knowledge of Arabic was "the first and biggest hindrance in a direct contact with the patient, but not alone the language; the whole Arabic mentality, the way of thinking deeply anchored in strange traditions, Mohammedanism, vicissitudinous history and overshadowed by war." [26] Such commentaries provide a reminder that humanitarian relations of care are not apart from Orientalist attitudes and imperial structures. [27] But international humanitarian workers were not at ease with their positions. Quaker volunteers working with the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) team in Gaza also grappled with the tension between their religious commitment to deep interpersonal relations—which they felt should guide their relief work—and the quotidian demands of the work, most especially the requirement to reduce the refugee ration rolls.

This requirement brought into sharp relief what was one of the biggest dilemmas for Quaker relief workers: how to live with the fact that their bonds of care had to be, also and equally, bonds of suspicion. The Gaza team "came to the conclusion that there is no way in which we could do it with methods in accordance with AFSC policies and standards which we practice elsewhere." [28] As one volunteer commented: "I think that it is inescapable that if we are to do a conscientious job through the United Nations, we must do some things in which our conscience will be troubled." [29] These things included the use of informants, supporting the jailing of uncooperative mukhtars, and the withholding of food to entire villages whose lists were felt to be too full, a practice Quakers referred to as "using food as a weapon." Guards were placed in cemeteries to report on deaths, shrouds were issued for burials for the same purpose, and newborns "received rations when the head of the family could report two false or duplicate registrations on the lists." [30]

FIGURE 11. American Friends Service Committee staff, Gaza Strip, 1948/49. AFSC archives.

The discomfort associated with these methods created tremendous tension among the team. An AFSC member expressed his concerns about such views: "While I have every respect for the right of every individual conscience on the problem of 'using food as a weapon,' I could not help but think that those who consider this problem a strong moral issue are the same ones who are unable to tackle the job of list reduction in what I would call a brave and honest way." [31] A balance was needed between empathy and toughness, between building trust and relying on force. Running through the debates among Quakers about how to be in the field was a concern that they lacked a proper "partner" for their interpersonal ethics. When AFSC volunteers argued that it was impossible to proceed in a Quaker manner because they could not trust the Palestinians, they were charging the refugee population with failure to participate in a shared ethical practice. Many Quakers had sympathy for why this participation might be withheld: given the inadequacy of rations (described in chapter 3), there were reasons having nothing to do with moral failure that might lead refugees to "play the game." [32] But this compassion did not lessen the problem posed by the absence of a partner. Quakers struggled with the problem of refugee dishonesty throughout their time in Gaza. As the team leader put it: "There is an entirely different concept of honesty here which no one can expect to harmonize with Western concepts

of honesty within a year or probably a century. It is not thought to be dishonest to try to get a double ration or to list false names in your family." [33]

Some internationals did get further in bridging the gap separating them from refugees. An LRCS administrative officer in Lebanon described his own transformation: "Being a refugee myself, well aware of their tragic fate, with certain philanthropico-moral predisposition, I thought I was sufficiently qualified for the relief operation. But I was not." [34] Supervising refugee clerks and typists in the office, he sometimes forgot the circumstances that had led them to these often very new jobs, and expected a perfection that he came to view as unreasonable. Over time he learned their individual stories and began "to understand them and with this understanding affection and friendship joined us." No longer did he only see them at work, but he began to visit their homes and to go out with them in the city. From this sociability grew a mutual understanding that he came to view as vital to relief work. Saying his goodbye to his Palestinian friends at the conclusion of the LRCS's work, he said: "Relief is nothing but an abject pity with no humane comprehension! Your high-hearted qualities have driven me towards you and opened my eyes towards the real principle which should guide all those who give themselves to the rough task of relief."

After the LRCS concluded its operational responsibilities for Palestine refugee relief, it remained involved in assistance by encouraging and coordinating donations from national Red Cross societies. Donors are at a distance from the field of humanitarian distribution but form a linchpin in the "humanitarian circuit." [35] Without donations there is no humanitarianism. State donors are central in the world of humanitarian policy making, shaping humanitarian focus through funding initiatives. Many individuals and local organizations also participate, and they, too, shape humanitarian practice, but on a smaller scale than states. The activities of individual donors, and their exchanges with aid providers, form another site of international humanitarian engagement. Humanitarian organizations provide a channel through which to show compassion at a distance, as well as tokens of recognition for gifts—not just receipts and thank-you letters but also signs, stickers, and wall calendars with which the individual donors can advertise both the cause and their own generosity. The attention given to these forms of acknowledgment in correspondence with donors indicates their importance in the circuit of care. Questions about organizational accountability to donors indicate the place of suspicion in these relations as well.

FIGURE 12. International Committee of the Red Cross nurses, Jericho, 1949. ICRC audiovisual archives. Photo by B. E. Lindroos.

After making a donation of sewing and health kits to UNRWA schools in Jordan and Lebanon in 1955, the director of the German Red Cross groused that UNRWA had provided only a scanty report, devoid of photographs, on how the goods had been distributed. Such meager information "can hardly be used by us to encourage our Juniors to make further gifts." [36] UNRWA should be informed of his complaint, he said, because "our Juniors could definitely be encouraged to make further donations if they were given details of how the gifts were used." Donor attention to the proper use of contributions was central to how CARE (an American agency founded in the aftermath of World War II to facilitate the delivery of food packages to Europeans and later transformed into a permanent body with the mandate to offer development assistance as well as emergency relief) structured its donation system. At its core was the receipt, which "meant that Americans who sent CARE packages were getting documents to demonstrate that their gifts were being delivered." [37] This signed receipt was, in CARE's view, "the very thing which made CARE different from all other agencies" [38] and a clear "selling point" in soliciting donations.

CARE regularly sent letters to donors thanking them for their donations and describing in considerable detail the projects their contributions supported. When donors gave with a project in

mind, CARE often involved them along the way. In 1961, for instance, a donor gave $100 with the expressed desire that it be used "to help provide Self-Help packages to Arab Refugee Camps in Gaza." [39] After some discussion with UNRWA, it was decided there was no easy way to help the camps per se, but that the money could be effectively used to purchase several shoemaking kits for donation to UNRWA: "This kind of help is one of the best ways that CARE, through UNRWA, can improve the refugees' situation." [40] Correspondence in reference to another donation shows just how closely donors were kept abreast of the disbursement of their funds. A donor gave $250 to support a citrus-growing project—choosing this project from a list provided in a CARE appeal. When the vagaries of seed availability caused a delay in the project, CARE asked the donor whether she minded waiting to have her gift applied, or if they should redirect the money to another purpose. She stuck with citrus. When the seeds were purchased more cheaply than anticipated, CARE sent her a receipt for the $180 purchase and noted, "We are holding the additional $70.00 for use in something that might complement the project as it develops. Should we find that additional money is not necessary, I would like to suggest another project to you at that time." [41] As accountability mechanisms have developed within the humanitarian field they have generally become less personalized, but organizational audits and websites such as Charity Navigator (whose tagline is "your guide to intelligent giving") confirm the ongoing presence of suspicion in the donor-humanitarian relation. [42]

As a conduit between UNRWA needs and national Red Cross society interests, the LRCS also had to navigate sometimes difficult terrain between donor interest and UNRWA—and refugee— needs and requirements. The LRCS frequently asked for donations of clothing for refugees, as this need was pressing and not covered by UNRWA's budget. After a specific appeal for school aprons—a typical school uniform across the Middle East—the British Red Cross Society replied with some indignation: "It seems quite wrong to us that these overalls should be made a condition of the children's acceptance at school." [43] UNRWA should be asked to protest "to the Palestinian Government against their unreasonable and uncharitable decree." The Society would much prefer, the letter went on, to support "practical garments for the children to wear all the time." The LRCS responded that the governments in question—host countries, not a "Palestinian government"—required a standard uniform for all schoolchildren and that refugee parents were unwilling to send their children to school "if they were not in a position to provide them with the customary aprons." [44] But, the LRCS indicated, they had asked for further information about the matter. In the meantime, the LRCS suggested that the British Red Cross Society consider sending sewing kits, which, along with cloth, would enable schoolchildren to fashion their own aprons in UNRWA workrooms. In this instance, donor suspicions were partly a result of their lack of understanding of the situation on the ground, but the solicitous response of the LRCS highlights the importance of perception management in humanitarian relations.

In some contrast to international donors and aid workers, refugees who work as humanitarian providers are part of the community being served and are distinguished within it precisely on the basis of their employment. This work creates both opportunities and constraints, and can put refugee employees in a privileged position that is also fraught with social peril. In the years following the 1948 displacement, UNRWA employment was a path toward economic security for those able to get the jobs. [45] And the cross-generational benefits of this opportunity are evident in the many relatively well-off Palestinian refugees whose mothers or fathers were UNRWA employees. Among refugee communities whose work opportunities remain severely constrained—notably, Palestinians in Lebanon and ex-Gazans in Jordan—humanitarian employment remains one of the few ways to get ahead.

For someone like Marwa, an ex-Gazan resident of the Jerash refugee camp in Jordan, working at the Community Development Office (CDO) brought her close to the problems facing her community and to the inequities of humanitarian response. In that she received a regular (if small) salary, Marwa was luckier than many ex-Gazans. She was less privileged, however, than the few who had permanent UNRWA employment, which offers a pension in addition to a salary. A young woman with a strong personality, Marwa was a high-spirited presence at the CDO. The fact that she needed the job did not dissuade her from criticizing CDO operations when she felt it was warranted—unlike many UNRWA employees who are extremely cautious about speaking about the agency. Over the course of the several years during which I spent time in Jerash, there was a lot of turnover in the office—some a product of volunteers being let go for not having university degrees when that became a requirement, some a result of people getting frustrated with the project—but Marwa remained, and by and large she remained enthusiastic.

I had many conversations with Marwa over these years, most often while she was at work at the CDO. When she took a day off to rest, we took advantage of the opportunity to record an interview at her house. She was not shy about speaking her mind in the office, but this space apart, and without the normal distractions of a working day, gave her a chance to reflect more deeply and at greater length. She described to me how she felt when she began her work:

> When I mixed with the people in the camp more and more, I started feeling that the refugees are not helping themselves. . . . I started feeling that somehow the refugees in the camps do really have the camp culture *[thaqafat al-mukhayam]:* the culture of submissiveness, the culture of aid. There are people who—they could have better chances, but despite that you find them stopped. But also depression is a character. I feel it is inherited one generation after another. Even when the development office provided a certain kind of opportunity, like we said, a window, they start killing this window. The refugees themselves in certain respects are not helping themselves.

She told me about how she learned to reach people in this troubled state, to persuade them to participate in training courses and other opportunities. Her first approach had been to challenge

people directly, a tactic that she said made people hostile. A better approach, she learned, was to befriend the mostly young men she was trying to convince, and also to befriend their families. By developing a personal connection, and providing an outlet for them to discuss their problems, she was able to get people on board.

A consequence of this strategy of intimate connection was that she began to carry her interlocutors' burdens. Marwa did not raise this issue herself; rather, her sister-in-law, who sat in on part of our conversation, brought it up: "She comes home sad and depressed. You live the thing; you live the problem. This is nice about her. The other day, I was arguing with her, saying you should stop treating the people this way. Stop living their problems. But, on the other hand, I also told her that this is something good." International aid workers can also live people's problems through their intimate work. Someone like Marwa lives them in several ways: as a provider who learns of their experiences and as a refugee who shares them. Her job distinguishes her from an idle young man whose "horizons are so limited that he wants to spend his time sleeping at home," but this distinction is internal to the refugee community.

Marwa also identified other distinctions, which she saw as leaving her relatively disadvantaged. A regular UNRWA job was the goal for many in the camp, but the requirements for such jobs erected steep barriers. Almost any position required a command of English that is beyond the proficiency of most people in the camp. As she noted: "I have all this experience but my English is not good. This limits my chances." She expressed a broader frustration that good jobs at UNRWA go to "the men of Amman and the women of Amman. What about the kids of the camp? Were they made for volunteering? Give them a chance." The people of Amman to whom she referred are refugees, but not poor, at least not as poor as people in the camp: "You feel the opportunities are designed not for the refugees who suffer, but rather for the pampered refugees—those who have a car and a house and can find an opportunity better than UNRWA."

These "pampered refugees" experience their own challenges in their work. They belong to a class of refugees who are far removed from camp life. Many well-to-do or even middle-class refugees would never avail themselves of UNRWA services, nor would they enter a refugee camp. Much of UNRWA's professional staff comes from this class, but they spend their work lives interacting, albeit sometimes at a distance, with recipient refugees. [46] The relative proximity does not always bring about closeness. A high-level refugee staff member in Lebanon, talking about the hostile environment for UNRWA work there, told me that "people in general are simple" and that they tended to believe the conspiracy theories that circulated regularly. He also expressed frustration with camp-level staff, whom he saw as more concerned with themselves than their community: "Staff are members of their community, but their main concern in meetings [with administration] is how to increase their salary." Many Palestinian administrators, like internationals, are sympathetic to the pressures that lead needy refugees to be suspicious of

the agency and to protest changes in service provision, but they generally do not accept the protests as justified.

Marwa might reject these sorts of evaluations, but her frustration with international employees—with their big salaries and no Arabic—was even greater than her pique at well-off Palestinians: "They come take our work, the work of the refugees, and when they write the report, who signs on the bottom? Ilana, for example, signs, but it is not her work." [47] This personal frustration went along with a political suspicion that UNRWA is part of a colonial project intended as an obstacle to Palestinian demands. Nonetheless, she said: "I do not deny that if I get a job, I will take it. To be honest I cannot boycott them. I wish I was able to boycott but I cannot. . . . I am attacking UNRWA, but in brackets, I am telling you, if I get the chance to work, I will work." This impossible wish to boycott is part of the particular double bind that faces Palestinian humanitarian workers. [48] It is itself embedded in the larger bind of the Palestinian refugee condition: the political interest in refusal—refusing to achieve recognition only in humanitarian terms, refusing to live life in humanitarian systems—is paired with its frequent impossibility.

Marwa received a salary, but many of the refugee-humanitarian workers I talked with were volunteers, a designation that for them was a source of both pride and aggravation. Refugee volunteers were the primary labor force for a broad range of projects, including a number that operate under UNRWA auspices, such as disability rehabilitation centers, women's program centers, and the CDO in Jerash camp. The Islamic Center and its affiliated programs in Jerash also rely on volunteers, at least partly. Foreign volunteers run the Healthy Lives course in Wihdat, and they are also a frequent presence in Burj al Barajneh. The politics of international "volunteer humanitarianism" have been much noted. [49] I focus here on the position of the refugee volunteer. Volunteer work was part of the Palestinian aid apparatus from the outset, though some international employees expressed frustration with what they viewed as the insufficient willingness of refugees to "help themselves." [50] Looking at an AIDS treatment program in Ethiopia, Kenneth Maes asks whether the unpaid labor that sustains the program should be considered "volunteerism or labor exploitation." [51] Palestinian refugees pose the same question about their efforts.

Marwa tended to view refugee labor as exploitation, comparing UNRWA's willingness to pay outsiders with what she saw as their insistence that refugees work for free: "The trainer they brought is from Ajloun, I might give him 60 dinars a day. This one, he gets paid. But bring someone from the camp—they will tell you, 'No, let him volunteer. We can have him volunteer.' These are the main problems." Depending on volunteers can also create continuity problems for projects. As Hossam, himself a volunteer, described: "Since it is voluntary work, they can work with the office for a while. . . . He gets a job in any area, and he quits his work here or his performance decreases. The stable employees are those at UNRWA. They have stable work." [52]

Still, given the barriers to employment faced by many refugees, many programs sustain themselves for years on volunteer labor. An administrator at the Jerash rehabilitation center told me that the twenty-two-person rehabilitation staff was composed entirely of volunteers, each of whom received a "symbolic" monthly stipend of less than 100 JD (about $140). At the time we spoke, they had not received even this stipend for three months, the result of a shortfall in fundraising. And yet they all continued to work.

Volunteering is a regular part of the self-improvement interventions that are widespread in the camps, and many people I knew viewed their activities in these terms. Nuha, a volunteer at the CDO, explained that the volunteer "belongs to a community which he would like to serve and so he comes. The CDO gave a lot to us as volunteers. We thought—they think—that as a volunteer you give your effort. But when you come to the development office, you discover that you take many things." She described the feeling of accomplishment she got from hearing about how her efforts helped others. And beyond such achievements, the benefits she derived included the vistas that were opened up for her by participating. She met many people through her work, she said, and learned a great deal through her conversations with them. The CDO was unusual in Jerash in being a gender-mixed working environment. The mixing was one reason it took some time for the center to gain acceptance by the camps' sheikhs and mukhtars, and by the families of the young volunteers. Everyone I met in the office valued this aspect of the CDO. As with most areas of refugee activity, the reasons for continuing in unpaid labor are multiple, including sacrifice for the community and personal satisfaction. For young women, such work also provided a way to get out of the house that was acceptable to their families. And for many people even a nominal, irregular stipend could make an important contribution to the household budget. To be a humanitarian subject is to be several things at once. Palestinian refugee politics is a discordant politics not only because refugees can have conflicting needs, desires, and demands, but because they inhabit multiple subject positions.

HUMANITARIAN OBLIGATIONS IN CONFLICT

In 1959, UNRWA decided to make an exception to its standing policy not to support the establishment of new refugee camps. The dilapidated and dangerous conditions of many of the shelters in the Muascar camp in the Jewish quarter of Jerusalem's Old City led the agency to advocate for the establishment of a new camp. This camp, Shufa'at, was also in Jerusalem, then part of Jordan, but outside the walls of the Old City, which had been a site of considerable fighting during the 1948 war. Unlike most other camps, which began as tent encampments or disused military barracks, Muascar was made out of "the rubble of the 1948 war." [53] A reporter

who visited the camp in 1959 described the scene: "Women and children peer out from openings in dark, cavelike basements of demolished buildings." These conditions meant "it would not be possible to improve the living conditions . . . without removing [the refugees] and creating a complete new camp." [54] Unlike circumstances where humanitarian obligations were in conflict— as in the clash between verification and compassion that so troubled Quakers in Gaza—the imperative to build Shufa'at was, for UNRWA, a moment of sparkling clarity. Muascar's inhabitants were not so sure. When the Jordan field director visited the camp in 1963, he reported: "A number of refugees stated very clearly that they had no wish whatsoever to move from this area. This was also the position taken by one refugee living in very bad circumstances. She said she was unwilling to stay away from her friends and relatives and that she would move only if they also moved." [55] Even a bad camp was a community, and relocation threatened these relations.

Refugee insistence on staying in bad conditions, which was also an insistence on a more expansive view of humanitarian obligations, sharpened tensions in the negotiations between UNRWA and the Jordanian government over the building of Shufa'at. Refugees' reluctance to move, and their related unwillingness to submit themselves to investigations of family size to determine new shelter assignments, led the Jordanian government—always anxious to ward off political unrest—to be less than cooperative about insisting on the head count and ensuring that no one returned to Muascar after the move. [56] The problems that swirled around the project, which included the belief of some UNRWA officials that those refugees who did want to "move" actually wanted to get a second shelter that they could rent or sell, [57] led to many postponements. Only when the agency got what it deemed strong assurances of government security cooperation did construction proceed. [58] There were other delays along the way—a question about who would pay for the move, the realization that some of the shelters required steps to enter, which then had to be built—but by the fall of 1966 refugees began to move in. In October, though, UNRWA officials noted with alarm that Muascar, "which a month ago had been almost clear of refugees, was now being re-occupied. . . . If this process was allowed to continue the whole area would probably be re-occupied within two or three weeks." [59] Still committed to its understanding of the obligations at stake in the move, the agency got Jordanian agreement to start demolishing Muascar's buildings, to stop refugees from moving back to their old dwellings. The archival record does not indicate how far that process got before June 1967, when Israel occupied the Old City (along with the rest of the West Bank) and erased every remnant of Muascar. [60]

As made clear by the tensions among the humanitarian aims of saving, valuing, and improving lives explored in chapter 3, humanitarian obligations are not fixed. Multiple parties— governments, donors, and aid recipients among them—can credibly claim to be "owed"

something by humanitarian agencies and practitioners. Precisely because humanitarian obligations are not wholly settled, when recipients of aid call on different parties—agencies, governments, the international community—to fulfill these obligations, they often seek to expand their limits. Humanitarian practitioners explicitly define the politics of life as nonpolitical: both neutral and impartial, concerned with fostering well-being rather than promoting particular agendas. [61] For Palestinians, who view the fruits of UN humanitarianism as a right, the well-being of the community depends on pursuing a politics of restoration whereby their national rights and demands are protected and promoted. Across the spectrum of humanitarian activities, Palestinians have insisted on this expansive view of humanitarian responsibility. Providers have generally responded that this sort of politics is beyond their mandate and authority.

Conflicts over obligation have contributed to the frequently tense relations across the refugee-provider spectrum. And here, too, the differences are often of position, not demographics. Anis Nasr, a Palestinian refugee employee of the LRCS in Lebanon, acknowledged that many of the refugee demands upon aid providers as the assistance apparatus was being established were reasonable, even the "minimum of their normal requirements," [62] but also stressed that employees could only carry out the mission they were given. Refugee-humanitarian workers thus found themselves criticized "through no fault of their own." In Nasr's view, these accusations were a result of idleness and dismay. As the Palestinians' displacement stretched on, with no return to their homes in sight, "thoughts of idle people are directed more towards evil than good" and so refugees launched "attacks on the local staff . . . accusing [fellow refugees] of mal-administration, irregularities, and misconduct." Nasr reported that higher-level personnel had confidence in the local staff, and so these accusations were largely disregarded. And even the accused staffers were understanding: "This action did not create any ill-feeling amongst the local staff, for those who did it were not in a normal state of mind."

Even if these accusations in the early days of aid were dismissed, corruption charges have been a persistent part of the humanitarian dynamic. And they are also a way in which the terms of humanitarian obligations get worked out. In naming certain actions, policies, and procedures as unacceptable, these accusations are a form of definition in the negative. Humanitarianism is not and must not be fraudulent, duplicitous, or unfair. Accusations also convey an argument about what humanitarianism is and must be—adequate and responsive to people's needs, and not deleterious to their rights. Although few humanitarian actors would disagree with the designation of certain attributes as non-humanitarian, the boundaries of positive obligations are highly contested.

Accusations not only flow from refugees but have been directed at them. In a biweekly newsletter the LRCS published for aid recipients, for instance, the associate director of

operations in Syria, Dr. Pierre Depage, penned an admonitory letter to refugees. He urged them to appreciate the efforts of the LRCS and underscored the importance of their cooperation in making the relief operation a success. He acknowledged that even as the Red Cross tried to "exercise its activity with the maximum efficiency possible," it could never be perfect. And, he said, refugees had a role to play in improving the agency's work: "The refugees can help the Red Cross to achieve perfection by making helpful comments and suggestions provided they are well-considered and constructive. Systematic criticism and permanent discontentment are in general destructive and cannot contribute, either morally or materially, to ameliorate a situation." [63] Dr. Depage also chastised refugees for subterfuge: "True declarations will also greatly help our organisation. We have lost a considerable time, encountered many difficulties, simply because some refugees were not honest and did not give the right number of the members of their family and failed to notify us of deaths and births occurring, to the detriment of their interests and our efforts." This insistence that refugee interests and humanitarian efforts are identical—that humanitarians and refugees share a public responsibility, even if refugees do not realize it—is a thread that runs through much humanitarian communication with Palestinians. A central object of humanitarian governance has been to convince refugees of this alignment of interests and prevail upon them to act accordingly.

It is clear in the historical record that refugees did not accept humanitarian providers' definitions of humanitarian obligations easily or without rejoinder. In announcing plans to launch a protest fast ahead of the 1955 UN General Assembly meeting, a group of refugee students in Lebanon declared about UNRWA: "You have given the world the impressions that you have come here for the relief of the refugees, in order to atone for the sins of the United Nations who passed the Partition resolution . . . when what you have actually come for is to complete the conspiracy, liquidate our problem, and deprive us of the chance to return to our usurped paradise." [64] The students listed a number of demands, chief among them that UNRWA halt resettlement projects and reallocate the funds to improve education, health-care, and rations services. In another strike in Lebanon, in 1958, one demand was for the removal of certain officials because "the refugees accuse [them] of defying their feelings and resisting their wishes." [65] Strikers also asked for the appointment of "a number of educated Palestine young men who are well-known to the refugees" to work with UNRWA because "these alone can transmit the proper and just refugee wishes to those responsible in UNRWA, and cooperate with it in its humanitarian mission, provided that the mission does not exceed the limits of humanitarian affairs and does not at all interfere in politics." Here refugees deployed the language of the humanitarian obligation to remain nonpolitical in an effort to gain recognition of additional requirements: to be responsive to recipient demands, to involve the community in

decision making, and, this last item always contested, to respect and support their right to return. [66]

Conflict over humanitarian obligations has never concluded, but over the years there have been some new areas of consensus. "Protection" is a relatively recent, but key, addition to the basket of obligations. Unlike the UNHCR, which was created with an explicit mandate to protect refugee rights, UNRWA was established with only a service mandate. [67] The body that was intended to respond to rights questions—the United Nations Conciliation Commission for Palestine—has never been able to operate, leading to what many observers have called a "protection gap." [68] Palestinian refugees have remained vulnerable to a range of threats. They have been targeted for attack by Israeli forces (both across borders and in territories occupied by Israel), by multiple parties in the Lebanese civil war, and most recently by opposing parties in the Syrian conflict. They have been denied the right to work by the Lebanese government and the right to mobility by Israel. Palestinian demands for protection have responded to these specific violations and also to what they see as the underlying source of their vulnerability: the lack of implementation of their right to return to their homes. [69] Although it is easier for UNRWA to respond to the former violations than to the latter, it has now formally adopted protection as part of its mission, a mandate supported by the UN General Assembly. [70]

As the agency worked to develop a clear understanding of what protection "means for UNRWA in concept and practice," [71] it settled on a four-part definition. These components are defined as internal: (1) protection in programming and (2) protection in and through service delivery; or as external: (3) international protection and (4) promoting a just and durable solution. [72] In this vision, internal protection includes things like mainstreaming persons with disabilities and responding to gender-based violence. Reporting on Israeli human rights violations and working to promote Palestinian legal rights in Lebanon are part of international protection. [73] And any time UNRWA officials point to the deep inadequacy of humanitarian responses to the circumstances in which Palestinians live, as they increasingly do, they highlight the importance of a political solution to the problem. [74]

PALESTINIAN DEBATES ABOUT HUMANITARIAN REPRESENTATION

Contests over humanitarian obligations not only take place between providers and recipients, but also occur within these subject communities. UNRWA officials engaged in these debates when they confronted the meaning of refugee status (see chapter 2). Palestinians also argue among themselves about the nature of UNRWA's responsibilities. In the eyes of Palestinians, UNRWA has neither only one meaning nor only one responsibility. Just as the institutional understanding

of humanitarian obligations has changed over time, so, too, have refugee views. These differences often reflect generational distinctions in life experience, political engagement, and humanitarian encounter. Over the years, as services have receded and as the need for things like food assistance has become less acute, refugees have given increased scrutiny to UNRWA's representative responsibilities. For some, this responsibility was paramount. Emad, a young resident of Aida camp in Bethlehem, averred: "The sack of flour which we take from UNRWA —or we used to take from UNRWA—was something political to me. It was not humanitarian."

My attention was directed to arguments among Palestinians about these responsibilities by a group of young refugees in the West Bank, participants in the Campus in Camps project (see chapter 7). As part of a collaborative project with me in 2012, they interviewed other refugees about their experiences with humanitarian aid. They also interviewed each other. These conversations occurred during a time of political quiet and frustration. The second *intifada* (uprising) against Israeli occupation had receded into the past, and the increased UNRWA services that had come along with the uprising and its repression were also winding down. The Palestinian Authority (PA), which was created by the 1993 Oslo accords and which governs around 40 percent of the West Bank—areas A (PA civil and security control) and B (PA civil control, Israeli security control)—had long since lost much of its legitimacy in the eyes of many Palestinians. Unable to advance toward Palestinian statehood, which everyone had understood as the purpose of the Oslo accords, unable to resist continuing Israeli colonization of Palestinian territory and repression of the population, and seen as both corrupt and repressive itself, the PA was not viewed by anyone I spoke with as an adequate representative of the Palestinian cause. This failure is one reason that people gave so much attention to UNRWA's obligations in this regard.

As the interview project proceeded, we gathered regularly at Campus in Camps, housed in the Feniq Center in the Dheisheh refugee camp, to listen to the recordings together. The interviewers often expressed frustration with what they heard, especially from older people. They felt that these people were demanding too little from UNRWA. Older generations, it seemed, focused more on the agency's service obligations than on its political responsibilities. As we continued to listen closely to the interviews and talked about their tone and content, the humanitarian and the political became increasingly difficult to disentangle. Interviewees often connected claims about services to claims about representative responsibility. So the interviewers had to reconsider, or at least complicate, their initial judgments.

Abu Uthman, a forty-nine-year-old resident of Dheisheh and a member of its popular committee, identified UNRWA as a "witness *[shahid]* " to "the refugee condition *[halat al-laju']* " and to "the crime that was done to us as refugees and as the Palestinian people." He insisted on

the agency's obligation to act as witness and linked this role directly to its service responsibilities:

> UNRWA is—it is the best witness for us—for the issue *[qadiyya]*. The presence of UNRWA is important as long as I am in the camp and do not get my rights as a Palestinian refugee. It is responsible for housing. It is responsible for the environment. It is responsible for my time and place *[zamani wa-makani]* as a Palestinian refugee. It is important. And I should guard its presence, not so I can keep begging from UNRWA, but to solve my issue.

Guarding UNRWA's presence meant insisting on the continuity of services. Like everyone I met during my research, Abu Uthman commented on the diminution of service: "In the beginning UNRWA covered me completely. It used to give me all of my flour. It gave me water. It gave me fuel for lighting. It gave me everything. These things began to stop. Everything." Born in 1963, Abu Uthman was not there at the beginning of the aid operations, but he grew up in an era when services were still expansive. And his childhood, in the early years of the Israeli occupation of the West Bank, was a time when the humanitarian apparatus was in acute response mode. Even as service retrenchment is connected to changing times, changing finances, and changing industry practice, Abu Uthman insisted that it was also linked to political responsibility.

People were irritated, often angered, by service reductions. They saw cutbacks as an abdication of UNRWA responsibility to refugees. This critique is not new. A distinctive feature of the recent moment is that arguments about the meaning of service retrenchment are accompanied by the strong sense that Palestinians are grappling with a general crisis of representation. Even as many refugees insisted upon some new form of representation, they were not yet able to define what this might be. Abu Tamer, a man in his mid-fifties from Fawwar camp, distinguished between witnessing and political representation: "As a refugee, I would like, in the first degree, from the political sense—I consider UNRWA a witness to refugeedom. It is the best thing—not to represent us *[mish itmathilna]*, but to be a witness for us *[shahid aleina]*, that we are refugees. But it is best, even us in the camps, we consider the popular committees to be the committees that represent us in the political sense. The PA—we consider it a host government *[dawla mudeef]*."

The Palestinian Authority also views itself as a host government. As other host governments did decades before, it created a Palestinian agency with responsibility for refugees and set up "popular committees" in the camps. The Department of Refugee Affairs has a PLO mandate to respond to the needs of refugees wherever they live, but in practice it can function only in Palestinian-controlled areas. [75] Palestinian refugees in the West Bank are sensitive to efforts to collapse this host-government status, which they see as tantamount to liquidating their political claims as refugees. Abu Abbas, a thirty-nine-year-old who was born in Dheisheh but now lives across the road in the Doha municipality, focused on this problem: "UNRWA is currently

controlled by the moods of the donors. And the general tendency of the donors is to minimize its services in the camps, to transfer the responsibility to the host government, which is the Palestinian Authority." He no longer lives in the camp, but Abu Abbas insisted that "the PA—I do not like it to have responsibility for me." The responsible body, he felt, should be UNRWA.

In addition to a diversity of views about UNRWA's role and obligations, the interviews revealed discordances within individuals. These apparently self-contradictory positions are in part products of the situation itself, where the responsibilities of the different bodies who play a role in Palestinian social and political life are not formally or clearly delineated, where circumstances, and therefore needs, change regularly and dramatically, and where all the actors on the Palestinian scene appear increasingly inadequate to the task of serving or representing refugees. A sense is clearly emerging, especially among younger people, that something dramatically new is required if Palestinian politics are to further the cause of liberation and restoration. This feeling was acute among the Campus in Camps interviewers.

Omar, [76] a resident of Dheisheh in his mid-twenties, emphasized that the continued existence of UNRWA means that "the refugee question continues." He further insisted, as did many other interviewees, that "UNRWA should approach the refugee problem within a political framework." Khaled, an interviewer from the same age cohort, agreed that UNRWA's importance was political in the first instance: "The importance of UNRWA is political and far from aid, in my perspective—whatever kind of aid. UNRWA . . . is an international witness and it is a witness that proves a crime. UNRWA is what gives the camp its political importance." He also argued that a new form of politics, and of representation, is needed:

> I would like to be represented in a new way that I build, I participate in, and I contribute to its structure. We tried representation politically and socially through all these parties [UNRWA, PA, popular committees]. I think sixty-four years is enough to discover their effectiveness. As a result, I think that the people in the camps, or the refugees in general, need a new form of representation. I cannot define it but I feel it and I feel its necessity.

However people talked about representation and responsibility, they generally also insisted on the need for something to change. No one has an easy answer as to what this change should be, but the interviews suggest that new actors, new organizations, new configurations within existing organizations, and new ideas are all imperative.

For the Campus in Camps interviewers, these conversations about the nature of UNRWA's responsibility reveal more than the failures of UNRWA or of national political parties. They reveal a failure of Palestinian imagination. As Khaled put it: "What provoked me while doing the interviews was that all of the interviewees said that we should search for new forms of representation, but unfortunately, almost nobody is doing anything to have these new forms." Omar linked the inability to make the right demands—or even to know precisely what to demand

—to problems in refugee self-representation and narration: "This is connected to the narration of the refugee's history and life. We surely need a different form of representation and it is going to be shaped according to the update we do in our self-narration." For these young refugees, and not only for them, the Palestinian future depends in part on developing new ways of talking about both the Palestinian past and the refugee condition. This effort exposes tensions across generations about how to understand the past and how to prepare for a different future.

PROBLEMS OF HUMANITARIAN PURPOSE

The long displacement of refugees and the current impasse of politics have left Palestinians without clear strategies for action. Work over the long term poses equally acute, if distinct, challenges for humanitarian practitioners. The problem of purpose is a primary discordance of punctuated humanitarianism. As displacement extends over time, humanitarian actors are compelled to ask what they can do when they cannot save lives but also cannot declare an intervention over and the people who needed their intervention secure. Oscillations back to acute crisis have the seemingly ironic effect of affording greater clarity. When I remarked to an UNRWA employee on what seemed to be a fundamental uncertainty of purpose in humanitarian work over the long term, she nodded vigorously in agreement. Yes, she said, it was in emergencies—such as after the Lebanese army destruction of the Nahr el Bared refugee camp in Lebanon or Israeli attacks on Gaza—when UNRWA staff are energized and mobilized. She did not mean, of course, that the staffers are happy about these circumstances, but rather that crisis gives them a purpose. Humanitarian actors cannot alleviate the causes of people's suffering, but in crises they can effect a change in the circumstances in which they are living. In the chronic conditions usually facing Palestinians, it often seems that humanitarian actors cannot do even that. What can you do when nothing you can do seems likely to have much effect?

An UNRWA official in the West Bank field office commented to me that, while UNRWA employees try to help, "it is hard for anything to change without the situation changing." All UNRWA can do, he suggested, is provide the best services it can until there is a resolution. A West Bank recipient of UNRWA services expressed a similar view of the limits of UNRWA's capacity: "Basic services like water and electricity help you be able to continue living, not to develop. They don't give you anything to develop. They give you something ordinary, so you can continue living the life you are living. Sometimes you think, 'Why should I think of the future?' We live day by day." In slightly different tones, both comments signal the challenge that chronic conditions pose to humanitarian capacities.

Displacement does not have to stretch over decades for these discordances to appear. As soon as a crisis of survival eases, humanitarians begin to ask about the effects of their efforts. When the UNRPR's operational agencies turned their work over to UNRWA in 1950, they already expressed concern about the fact that their "efforts could never avail to provide a solution to the problem [of morale]. Two years of idleness and an uncertain future have undermined the initiative and vitality for which the average Palestinian stood out above the other peoples of the Middle East." [77] Challenges of purpose bring practitioners into confrontation with recipients as they work out what they can and should do over the long term. Equally, they highlight contests among humanitarian actors about what they are doing. Lack of clarity of purpose is not the cause of the suspicions that swirl through humanitarian relations, but it can sharpen their expression.

As humanitarian actors have confronted the reality that the chances of making a real change in people's lives may be remote, they have sometimes responded by proffering coping skills as a humanitarian aim and outcome. The location of humanitarian purpose in helping people bear or endure *(tahammul)* their conditions is one of the many compromises that define humanitarian action. It provides a way for humanitarian action to continue in the face of seemingly insurmountable obstacles to transformation. Like other humanitarian compromises, the turn to coping becomes a site of tension and suspicion in humanitarian relations. Refugees worry that in helping people live better with bad conditions such interventions may distract all concerned from fully confronting—and therefore changing—these circumstances. They express frustration, not necessarily with humanitarian intentions, but with humanitarian willingness to settle for such limited goals.

Through their encounter with the limits of humanitarian capacity to save lives, coping projects constitute a reengagement with a key principle that underlies the humanitarian imperative. This principle is the demand to value lives, and to value them equally. Coping projects seek to enable people to find different ways of imagining their existence—not changing their conditions, but living differently with them. They make the claim that there is value to these lives even if they can never be improved. Making this value claim in the terms of bearing up is fraught with ethical problems. And for some, both practitioners and recipients, it seems utterly inadequate to the needs of the situation. Much of the contention around bearing up as a claim for the value of lives is precisely due to the character of this claim: it is one that ascribes value but does not challenge the deep inequality of lives.

Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) confronted these issues when it launched a mental health program in Burj al Barajneh camp. [78] It is not remarkable that mental health care would focus on coping or would identify learning to endure as a humanitarian good. Precisely because helping people bear up under bad conditions is a formal goal of this therapeutic project, the terms in which the program's value to refugees was described and the debates that emerged around this

practice reveal a great deal about the broader humanitarian landscape. But the route by which MSF came to work with Palestinians—it also operates in Palestine—speaks to its distinctiveness within the broader humanitarian landscape. [79] Even as it has come to symbolize the "new" humanitarianism (in presumed contrast to the older humanitarianism associated with the International Committee of the Red Cross), MSF is relatively unrepresentative in many ways. It is well financed, largely by private donations, giving it an independence that few other organizations can achieve. It is an exceptionally self-reflectiveorganization and has its own research foundation. MSF has specifically taken on "witnessing" as part of its mandate, even as that goal can sometimes create tension with its primary life-saving aim. [80] Another consequence of this witnessing role is that the organization sometimes has to look for reasons to establish and maintain a presence in places that do not seem self-evidently to need what it does. [81] It is this impetus that leads it to work in places, like Palestine and Lebanon, that have functioning health-care systems.

MSF first worked in Lebanon during the civil war and more recently provided medical care during the July 2006 war, when Israel bombed large portions of the south and of the southern suburbs of Beirut. The organization then decided to establish a more regular presence in the country and, after a year-long assessment process, determined that mental health was an area with a significant gap in services, and therefore one where it could intervene. [82] MSF ran a mental health project in Burj al Barajneh (this was a project of MSF-Switzerland) from the end of 2008 until December 2012, when the project was turned over to UNRWA. I conducted research with and on this project in 2011 and 2012. [83]

Despite the barriers to success—social stigma around mental health problems and seeking treatment, an additional burden (for men) of ideals of masculinity that equate the need for help with weakness, and a general weariness with and wariness of seemingly endless humanitarian interventions that have little positive effect—by the time I conducted my research, staff judged the program a success. They were serving large numbers of patients. Around two thousand people had received therapy, and MSF personnel had done ten thousand consultations and led numerous lectures and group sessions. [84] Staff told me that they saw a clear change in the community's acceptance of the idea of treatment. Starting in 2011, MSF began a similar project in Ein el Hilweh camp near Sidon.

The project focused not on the crisis of trauma, but rather on the chronic conditions that emerge from the everyday stress of life in the camp. This focus was affirmed by MSF research in the camp, which showed high rates of depression, but not of PTSD. As the study put it, this setting is "characterized by lower exposure to adversity but [is] high in daily life stressors related to poverty and marginalisation." [85] Given the emphasis on trauma in most humanitarian mental health care, the Burj al Barajneh project represents a change, indicative of the kind of

adjustments that long-term displacement requires of humanitarianism more generally. Long-term conditions cause distress, and the intervention being offered (therapy) is likewise an extended process. But this change also brings humanitarian mental health care back to what Didier Fassin and Richard Rechtman identify as its initial concern with "suffering" and "consolation." [86]

Fassin and Rechtman describe the challenge that the relational distance between expatriate aid workers and local people poses for developing therapeutic rapport in humanitarian psychiatry. [87] In the MSF project in Burj al Barajneh, all the fieldworkers—psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers—were local, though many were Lebanese, not Palestinian. International staff told me that when they hired for the project they made a concerted effort to mirror the demographic makeup of the country. The language of engagement was, and needed to be, Arabic. The fraught history, and present, of Lebanon means that being of the place does not obviate the question of distance, but the dynamic is certainly different than it would be if foreign mental health workers were on the ground there.

Looking at psychosocial programs in Kashmir, Saiba Varma argues that local staff act as gatekeepers, mediating between psychosocial discourse and Kashmiri patients. [88] This kind of educational labor was a big part of the MSF project in Burj al Barajneh, and it was the aspect of their work to which I had the most access. I often accompanied MSF outreach workers as they sought to educate camp residents both about mental health issues and about the services that MSF provides. These outreach activities took several forms: lectures at associations in the camp, visits to the UNRWA health clinic for discussions with patients waiting for appointments, and house visits to people who had been identified as in need. Because of obvious privacy concerns, I did not sit in on any individual treatment appointments. I did, though, attend group dialogue sessions that were meant to provide therapeutic opportunity for the attendees to talk through the problems they face in their lives and homes.

In all of these settings, MSF staff worked to destigmatize mental health care, highlighting how the conditions in which everyone in the camp lives are detrimental to health. The process involved identifying people as part of a collective, with shared experience and suffering. In this way, the individual choice to seek help could be seen as further confirmation of community and of solidarity, rather than as evidence of personal weakness or isolation. In one lecture, an MSF staffer named Mona suggested that "we all live in the same circumstances and all find that we reach our limit sometimes." She listed the broad range of problems in the camp, problems people talk about all the time: electricity, water, lack of playgrounds for children, big families, economic problems, the difficult legal status of Palestinians in Lebanon, lack of privacy. Everybody recognized the negative impact of these problems and, as Mona further emphasized, "all of us live in these circumstances but not all of us have same ability to endure it."

As this last comment underscored, people have different experiences of these collective

difficulties. Some of these differences are about individual personalities and some are about category differences (notably gender). In another lecture, Mona emphasized the stressors on women. She asked the women gathered how many had time for themselves; none said they did. She then talked about the pressures that this situation causes and the impact that it has on women and on their relations with others. She described the physical manifestations of mental health issues and urged women to seek mental health treatment when their doctors tell them nothing is physically wrong.

Another staffer, Lama, when she approached people at the UNRWA health clinic, always began by asking if they had heard of MSF. In explaining the program, she emphasized both that it was free and that it was entirely confidential. She went on to ask people about their own situations and whether they might want an appointment. Perhaps it was because they were already in a medical setting, but nobody seemed to react negatively to being approached. Not everyone took her up on her appointment offer, but a number did—in full view of everyone in the waiting room. There is certainly some stigma around seeking mental health treatment, which some potential patients raised as a concern. Everyone in the *hara* [quarter] will talk," one woman said. Lama responded, "Half the hara comes to us." MSF people told me, though, that they found the stigma to be less than they had expected. I got that same sense from the way people responded to Lama's pitch.

The dialogue sessions were meant to be therapeutic, but they did not require, or entail, a commitment to entering therapy. They served the dual purpose of educating people about mental health treatment and MSF's program and of offering an outlet for working through problems. Many issues women brought up in these sessions involved child-rearing questions—how to deal with misbehavior, how to talk with UNRWA teachers, how to encourage good study habits. In her response, Dominique, a social worker, tried to offer concrete advice and to elicit more such advice from other attendees, but her emphasis was on suggestions for ways that the women might be better able to handle the stress of these concerns. Her focus here was on relaxation techniques. "Go to a room by yourself," she began one such lesson, at which point a woman interjected to say, "I don't have a room to myself." Dominique was not deterred: "Go to the balcony, or onto the roof." She then suggested some breathing techniques to help calm oneself down. She was not naive about the extent of the therapeutic value that could be derived from such exercises—she regularly told people they needed formal treatment—but they were part of a broad arsenal of interventions that could help people manage better.

MSF workers emphasized that getting by was not just a humanitarian effect, but also a humanitarian good. The project was an effort to claim value for Palestinian lives, even when those lives cannot change. A recurring question for both providers and recipients was whether this purpose was sufficient. As they worked to articulate and enact their value claims on the

ground, MSF efforts intersected with refugees' own coping efforts, and MSF personnel were confronted with the same questions Palestinians pose about the limits of their own activities. Partly in response to this encounter and these questions, mental health practitioners worked to distinguish their efforts within this wider field—emphasizing the need for expert interventions. Even as camp residents, by and large, accepted this claim to expertise, it did not displace their questions about humanitarian purpose.

When I interviewed Nasmah, one of the psychologists on staff, she emphasized how widespread mental health problems were in the camp: "We notice a high percentage of depression, a high percentage of anxiety. It is explained by the fact that the person's psychological structure is very weak or he grew up in very difficult conditions. He does not have a lot of capabilities to bear things." She saw humanitarian mental health projects as having therapeutic value and as an expert service. The goal of therapy is to make a change, not in the conditions of existence but in people's abilities to withstand them. The insistence on the importance of professional intervention asserts the importance of both humanitarian presence (aid workers are providing a service that is not otherwise available) and humanitarian expertise (more than good will is required to transmit these skills).

Nasmah described her interactions with patients: "With the patients I have, they are starting to understand more—what can we offer them. We cannot change their life 180 degrees. . . . There are circumstances that you cannot get beyond, but you can learn how to see things in a different way." Nasmah described this as a long-term process, but she clearly felt that the project was having an impact, both in raising awareness about mental health issues and in providing direct benefit to patients. Later in our conversation, I commented, "Of course the life situation won't change." No, she said, "it won't change. Those who you help—of course, you won't come and give him wild dreams. . . . What happens is you cannot change his life conditions but you can change the way he thinks. How he sees things." In all these comments, Nasmah describes the humanitarian imperative of ascribing value to all lives. In repeating the fact that these lives will not change—"we cannot change their life conditions . . . there are circumstances that you cannot get beyond"—she confirms the humanitarian acquiescence to the fact that these lives are not valued equally. Let me emphasize that I do not mean that these workers, or the project, agree with that acquiescence as a matter of principle, but they do work with it as a fact. In some humanitarian projects, inequality seems to sneak in through the back door, but in projects like this mental health effort, inequality is a structuring condition of the intervention and not the target.

Nasmah went on to distinguish what MSF had to offer from the other coping work in the camp: "Probably you help him search out other horizons in his life that he did not think of before. To take new decisions that he did not think of before. This is how you help him, because

the family cannot help him with this issue because the family lives the same circumstances with him." Many MSF employees I spoke with reinforced this last point, that people's families and communities could not really be an effective source of help in developing mental health capacity, both because they suffered from the same material conditions, and possibly the same mental health problems, and because they were sometimes themselves a source of stress. Dominique highlighted mothers-in-law as a significant stressor. For this reason, among others, it was deemed important that people seek professional help in their efforts to better handle their lives.

Many Palestinians accepted the argument that their own resources were insufficient to their circumstances. But they also questioned whether any project focused on bearing up was an adequate response to the situation. [89] In a session at the General Union of Palestinian Students, many of the attendees wondered whether "mental health can really help us." In her opening talk, Dominique described the usual litany of problems facing Palestinians and the negative effects of those problems on mental health. She suggested that someone in good mental health would be better able to deal with these problems. The example she gave was of finding work—a key issue for these young people finishing university—and argued that someone in good mental health would be better able to overcome the barriers to employment that Palestinians face.

Many people in the audience objected to this statement, saying that widespread discrimination made it nearly impossible to find work and that mental health could not help. You go to a job interview, people said, and they ask your name and where you live, and that is the end of the interview. "Our problems are caused by economic problems," one student said. "Can a psychologist change this? No—so they can't solve our problems." In contrast to this insistence that learning to endure was insufficient, another participant in the session reflected on his own experience. Faced with few economic opportunities in Lebanon, he had gone abroad to work, precisely seeking to change the conditions of his life. He found that he could not live without his friends and family. So he returned to Lebanon, and now he wants "to be here and to bear it." The debate represented by these two positions was in part over the meeting of people's continuing desire to have their lives not only accorded value, but also accorded equal value—when circumstances seem to ensure that it will never be so. This debate was not resolved during the meeting, and it cannot be resolved.

A story about the limits of MSF's capacity, not just to change people's lives, but even to provide them the mental health services on offer, underscores the depths of this challenge. Even as the aim of the project's interventions was to help people better manage their conditions, to find value in their lives even if they could not improve them, the facts of these lives were sometimes a severe impediment to accomplishing this aim. In October 2011, I accompanied Mona on a home visit that was part of MSF's targeted outreach to persons who had been identified, generally by relatives or sometimes neighbors, as in need of psychological care.

Samia, the woman we visited, was widowed, lived alone, and had no children in the camp. One of her daughters had been killed in the "war of the camps" during the Lebanese civil war, and others had left the country in pursuit of better lives. Being without much family was an impediment, one compounded by the fact that profound knee problems left her basically unable to walk. She used to go regularly to a women's center in the camp, but immobility had stopped that about five years ago. When we saw her, it had been more than a year since she had left her house, which was at the top of a fairly steep set of stairs off one of the camp's many narrow alleyways.

Mona approached the conversation in the usual way, explaining the importance of paying as much attention to mental as to physical health. The woman responded by saying, "I have a problem. Who will solve my problem?" Mona answered, "The therapist—who is trained—won't solve your problems, but will help you deal with them. He won't get you a new house, but will help you endure it." The woman responded by returning to the subject of her disability and immobility—it took four young men to carry her down the stairs to go to the doctor, she said, a procedure that was rarely worth it. And it was not always easy to rustle up folks to help. Even inside the house, she needed someone to help her move around, to bathe, to do anything. In this case, the unsolvable problems at the heart of the woman's difficulties—physical incapacity, compounded by personal poverty and the material conditions of the camp—were also an impediment to her access to the services that MSF could offer. When we left the house, Mona told me there was not really anything that MSF could do for her. Since she could not get out to go to therapy, she could not benefit from the program. Samia's circumstance, with its layers of difficulties, is not unusual in the camp, but it is toward one end of the spectrum of precarious life. That these circumstances can create an insurmountable barrier to access to a project that seeks to re-value life within such conditions confirms the limits of the project. Sometimes it is not practically possible to value lives without demanding more for them.

To say that humanitarianism is fundamentally a field of compromised action is not to suggest that people live comfortably with these compromises. On the contrary, these zones of compromise are also zones of confrontation: among humanitarian subjects, between competing ethical principles, between a desire to do good and a structural incapacity to effect change. Struggles over humanitarian purpose and values are one site for the contests and conflicts that are built into humanitarian relations. Suspicion and confrontation are pathways through which differently located participants in the humanitarian system understand each other. Dilemmas of humanitarian purpose, contests over humanitarian obligations, and the intersecting, and sometimes conflicting, experiences of humanitarian subjects are all part of the struggle over how to be, and how to live, in humanitarian conditions.

The Humanitarian Condition

The Politics of Living as a Refugee

IN JULY 2008, I ATTENDED A MEETING at the Community Development Office in Jerash refugee camp in Jordan. The occasion was a discussion between the Camp Committee, made up of prominent residents (such as mukhtars, and school principals), and a politician from the area. As noted in chapter 1, Jerash camp is populated by refugees from the Gaza Strip who fled to Jordan during the 1967 war, too late for the kingdom's naturalization of Palestinians in 1954. As noncitizens, camp residents do not have the right to vote in Jordanian elections, but the meeting proceeded much like a constituent services meeting. The politician prefaced his comments by noting that King Abdullah saw the right of return as the most important issue for these refugees, but that he was also concerned about the improvement of living conditions. Camp residents did not challenge the stated importance of the right of return, nor did they couch their demands as a request for political rights. As one mukhtar put it: "Gazans need a solution from the human perspective." Claiming "civil rights as refugees," as another participant put it, was a way to demand that host countries such as Jordan acknowledge their obligations to Palestinians, without making a direct claim on the national imagination and grammar of those countries. Repeatedly, the ex-Gazans said that they needed full civil rights and a "national number" *(raqam watani)* .

As Abu Hassan, a school principal, said: "Living without a national number is living on the margins." He then went on to describe some of the consequences of this marginality. The ex-Gazans are generally not allowed to own property, for instance, so they often enter into agreements with Jordanians to purchase land on their behalf. The Palestinians exercise ownership of the land, so are able to build and reside there, but the Jordanians retain the deeds— and the claims to inheritance. Just the day before the meeting, Abu Hassan told the politician, a Jordanian man had died holding title to the property of around a hundred people in the camp.

What will happen, Abu Hassan asked? Out of compassion, the man's heirs might honor the ex-Gazans' claims to the property, but they were under no legal obligation to do so. [1] Refugees pressed such demands for greater rights in Jordan, even if unsuccessfully, with recourse to humanitarian logics and by couching these demands as humanitarian rights. Despite their legal vulnerability and social marginality, camp residents who participated in this meeting stated their positions strongly and often sharply: they acted like aggrieved citizens. At the same time, throughout the meeting, the Palestinians insisted that they were not making *political* claims, but rather *civil rights* or *humanitarian rights* claims. This tactical effort to distinguish humanitarian rights from political rights was a means of minimizing the apparent threat in their claims. [2]

This instance of refugees with few rights and under many restrictions using the language of humanitarian rights to make a claim to better conditions in exile points to several aspects of what I have been calling discordant politics. The multiplicities of this politics are sometimes contradictory, sometimes complementary, and often uneasily related. Ex-Gazans in Jordan think about their political horizons in terms of the near and present geography of Jordan and the more distant, past (and future?) space of Palestine. They make demands for a better life now, even as they insist on their right to anticipate a fundamentally different future. This strained multiplicity is a product of the range of political concerns that confront refugees, and also of the unstable and repressive conditions in which they live.

Jordan is a highly securitized state. [3] Refugee camps in general—and, because of the stateless status of its population, the Jerash camp in particular—are subject to heavy surveillance. Although I have no doubt that my research presence was noted by the *mukhabarat* (intelligence agencies) in other locales where I worked, it was only in Jerash that I had direct encounters with these personnel. At the start of my research, mukhabarat agents stopped me on the streets to ascertain that I had received permission to be there. I had. They endeavored to be present for my conversations with people, a demand that my local research assistant helped deflect. And, as the research got underway, they called in my male research assistant for interviews, though not a woman I was also working with. Even as I had no personal vulnerability in these encounters, the vulnerability of the camp's residents was clear. The shadow of the mukhabarat certainly hung over my discussions with people, as I was acutely aware of the limits of safe conversation. These are the circumstances in which Jerash residents like Abu Hassan press their claims. Disavowal of politics is a useful political strategy in a context of vulnerability and heavy surveillance.

Under such conditions, humanitarian language, materials, and practice can offer a space for politics to hide, a sort of redoubt where people can act without fully exposing themselves. In addition to providing cover for politics, humanitarianism also offers distinct tools for pressing claims and asserting presence. The most obvious tool it might seem to offer is the language of suffering and the demand for compassionate action to relieve that suffering. Much of the

scholarship on humanitarianism has focused on this framing and its limits. [4] Political expression over the protracted Palestinian humanitarian condition makes clear, though, that the politics of suffering is only one shade in a diverse palette of political forms present in the humanitarian space. As other chapters have already begun to explore, humanitarianism also opens pathways for politics expressed as aspiration, persistence, and refusal. Although it cannot offer an adequate framework for political action, humanitarianism is a world in which many Palestinians live, and therefore it has been one place from which politics emerges.

This is not to say that humanitarianism is a wholly comfortable site for political activity. Palestinian refugee relations with humanitarian actors, host countries, and Palestinian political movements all reflect unease with how political claims emanate from humanitarian domains. To the extent that humanitarian actors can readily recognize refugee rights, these claims are understood as rights to protection, assistance, and succor. To the extent that humanitarian actors acknowledge refugee politics, they tend to view that politics as an obstacle to smooth humanitarian operations. Host countries have similarly rejected political or civil rights claims by Palestinians, often in the name of concern for their national rights. Palestinian refugees have thus confronted a variety of forces and circumstances that have impeded their political capacity. They also have concerns that cannot always be easily assimilated to "the political," certainly not if that phrase is understood as synonymous with "the national."

The connection between Palestinian refugee politics and Palestinian national politics is complex. From one perspective, they can appear nearly identical: over the years, the figure of the refugee has become central to the articulation of a Palestinian national subject. But they are also in tension, because refugees are also embodiments of Palestinian national defeat. To the extent that being recognized as a refugee is what granted international acknowledgment of dispossession, it follows that refugee identification—however complicated—is politically important. Palestinian political actors have insisted that the right way to live as a refugee is to persist in struggle toward the goal of national liberation—and sometimes to struggle by existing. [5] The obligation of refugees to live in waiting for the moment of liberation and return renders changes in living conditions or subjectivities politically dangerous. This perspective has often dominated, but does not exhaust, Palestinian political thinking.

In part because of the significance of refugee life, humanitarian materials have become symbols of Palestinian national claims. The refugee camp is a sign of dispossession, a crucial reminder of the right of return, and of refugee refusal of resettlement *(tawtin)* . The ration card is a claim for restitution. The United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) is an acknowledgment of international responsibility. In dominant national narratives, these features are sometimes frozen as rote symbols—reduced to a single form and meaning. But such statements do not capture their full effects. Looking at politics from the perspective of

humanitarian life makes it easier to see the full range of complicated and dynamic uses and meanings of humanitarian materials. To understand this diversity, my primary concern in this chapter is to excavate the "terms of the political"[6] for Palestinian refugees.

LOOKING FOR PALESTINIAN POLITICS

An emerging conversation in the scholarship on Palestinian refugees has questioned the centrality of politics in scholarly investigations of Palestinian lives. Diana Allan has argued, based on research in the Shatila camp in Beirut, that we need to recognize that Palestinians do not live always and only "within a political realm"[7] and that they sometimes push back against the "impositions of nationalist discourse." Her ethnography, while not ignoring nationalism, explores the range of forces and factors that shape Palestinians' lives, desires, and hopes. With research focused on Wihdat, Luigi Achilli contends that camp residents view politics broadly along the lines that Carl Schmitt proposes—the friend/enemy distinction—and that they often disengage from politics in "an attempt to limit, control, and hold back the upsetting dynamics"[8] of this distinction in a context where the cleavage might be experienced as separating Palestinians and Jordanians. Achilli explores people's efforts to live "an ordinary and nonpolitical life"[9] in the camp, with attention to fun and football.[10] In a related argument and through an investigation of beach-going by young women from Burj al Barajneh in Beirut, Laleh Khalili cautions against "adjudicating the lives of others, measuring them against impossible heroic indices of struggle, exhorting them towards grand utopias, demanding an austerity in commitment we ourselves do not observe."[11] These scholars are all responding to conditions of Palestinian life in the early twenty-first century, a moment marked by political defeat and exhaustion.

My research was conducted in this same period, and my analysis responds to these same concerns, though I enter this discussion in a slightly different manner. I concur with the argument against imposing political commitment upon Palestinians, but I also seek to recognize and respond to a conversation among Palestinians, as I encountered it during my research, that indicates a deep concern with the political. For many refugees, a dignified life is a politically engaged one. This moment in which Palestinians are putting politics in question is also one in which they worry about the potential loss of political insight, energy, and action among refugees. Some people, especially older folks, express a fear about a decline across generations—that their children and grandchildren will lack their political commitments or their capacity to suffer for them. Many worry about people's absorption with other concerns, whether because of poverty that leaves little space for politics or because of wealth that gives precedence to creature

comforts. And, across the Palestinian landscape, people are distressed by political staleness and stasis, a concern expressed most strongly with regard to the organized factions and the political leadership, but experienced within the community as well. Each of these barriers to political life contributes to an anxiety about what politics and political subjectivity will be in the Palestinian future.

Palestinians have long been a highly mobilized population, engaged in organized politics in a range of forms. They have been active in regional and international organizations such as the Muslim Brotherhood and the Communist Party. From the late 1950s onward, they have had a proliferating number of national political movements, including Fatah, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine, and, more recently, Hamas. The Palestine Liberation Organization was established in 1964 as an umbrella organization for Palestinian national aspirations, and in 1968 it became a truly Palestinian body. These movements have engaged in armed action, state building, and popular resistance. [12] Over the decades of displacement, Palestinian politics has waxed and waned. The years of the *thawra* (revolution) in Lebanon, and of the *intifadas* (uprisings) in the West Bank and Gaza Strip (especially the first intifada), were periods of significant popular political activity. Even if liberation was not on the immediate horizon, people had energy, commitment, and a strong sense of shared purpose. In addition to moments of national and nationalist mobilization, Palestinians have also engaged politically with changes in humanitarian conditions—almost every significant change in UNRWA practice and policy produces a response. And refugees also react to actions taken by Arab countries and global powers.

Recognizing the present exhaustion, and also looking back across seven decades of displacement, I explore a form of politics that is not entirely captured by Schmitt's friend/enemy distinction. Conditions are often far too murky for things to coalesce in that manner. This murkiness is reflected in people's complicated and contradictory evaluations of UNRWA, and of humanitarianism more generally. It is also reflected in shifting views of and relations with host countries, both governments and populations, and with Palestinian organizations. Politics in the humanitarian condition is more compatible with Hannah Arendt's idea of action—acting with other people to change the conditions of one's existence. Especially pertinent to this case is Arendt's observation that "because the actor always moves among and in relation to other acting beings, he is never merely a 'doer' but always and at the same time a sufferer." [13] For Palestinian refugees this double condition is an empirical fact, and also grounds for connection and political claims. Palestinian political experience does not, though, fit with Arendt's seemingly stark division of spheres of life—public and private, political and domestic. On the contrary, the fields where Palestinians come together to make claims are often precisely those that she would seem to exclude from politics. Understanding Palestinian politics demands consideration of the

multiple forms and domains in which it may be found. It calls attention precisely to the politics of living.

To understand the terms of the political in the Palestinian refugee instance, this chapter explores several expressions of politics. Politics in humanitarianism is only occasionally expressed, as Judith Butler puts it, as a "politics of assembly."[14] Although it is often difficult for people to appear together, this difficulty does not mean that they do not act together. Refugee politics in humanitarianism is frequently expressed as a politics of rights. Rights claims provide a language for people to come together in ways that bypass the imposed incapacity to assemble. People living in precarious conditions face multiple barriers to assembly. The distinct unfreedom of regulated displacement imposes additional constraints on refugees. The realm of rights and claim making may be recognizably political to a broad audience, but even here political action does not conform to the boundaries that Arendt proposes. Palestinians claim both a general right *to* humanitarianism and particular humanitarian rights. They identify humanitarian actors as targets for political complaint and also mobilize them as conduits to help their claims reach other actors.

Over the years, and in every field of UNRWA operations, refugees have protested about a wide range of matters, from early rejections of replacing tents with more permanent structures to recent demonstrations in the West Bank and Gaza about cutbacks in the UNRWA emergency job creation program. Refugees have also made the humanitarian field a terrain for protests directed at other parties, as when refugee students in Syria went on strike in 1955 to protest the Johnston Plan, a U.S.-developed proposal for regional development of the Jordan River basin.[15] Humanitarian workers respond to protests in a range of ways, including sympathy, agreement, frustration, and outright condemnation. In most fields of UNRWA operation, employees operate with an acute awareness that anything the agency does to change policy or procedure will be scrutinized by recipients and could easily generate protest. UNRWA personnel see in many such protests a manipulation of refugees by local political actors, especially by the popular committees that mediate between the agency and the population. But the relief workers know they must be prepared to deal with protests regardless of their provenance.

As important as rights claims have been, they do not exhaust the language of the political, or the uses of humanitarianism. Humanitarianism also shapes life experience over time and across space. With all its constraints, it provides tools for living—not just surviving, but also *living* in that word's variety of senses. Politics in humanitarianism often involves people taking action to change their conditions even without achieving recognition of their claims, and often without directly seeking such recognition.[16] One example of this sort of action is Palestinian refugees' transformation of shelters and camps outside the regulatory order. But this politics of living does not always entail, or require, a change in conditions. It can be found in enactments of different

affective experiences and in ascriptions of different value for refugees. In the Palestinian refugee case, this form of politics frequently travels along the line between survival and endurance. It can mean making survival an expression of dignity. And like the humanitarian projects that also insist on recognizing value, refugee politics confronts limits.

Refugee politics often mirrors humanitarian activity, not as an instance of mimicry, but because the two face the same conditions. And important distinctions remain. Politics in humanitarianism involves not just a general claim to value, but also the struggle over and for specific values. The core values *of* humanitarianism may lie in the sanctity of all human life. But the values articulated by those living *in* humanitarianism are also aimed at promoting specific outcomes and ways of living. For Palestinians these value claims have often centered around the national struggle and the aims of liberation, return, and independence. [17] Political values are expressed both as an array of practices (such as *sumud* or steadfastness) and as a mode of life (a fundamental expression of Palestinian-ness) that are all contested across the community. Palestinians are acutely attentive to the reality that their lives are a political fact. The challenges that this awareness imposes on people, and the opportunities it also presents, are manifest in concerns around generation. People worry both about the passage of time and about the different circumstances and subjectivities that this passage produces. They confront an unequal distribution of both precarity and opportunity within their community. At play in the language of political value, which can be coercive, is an effort to redistribute vulnerability and sacrifice—to produce horizontal relations of political commitment in conditions that work against it.

RIGHTS AND THEIR LIMITS

A recurring feature in Palestinian refugee rights claims has been the conjoining of apparently separate and distinct concerns, and the insistence that they must be addressed together. A case in point is a petition from refugees on the occasion of a 1961 visit by UNRWA's commissioner-general to Jordan. The petitioners highlighted two of their requests as the most urgent. The first was water: "This is a basic necessity. For the last few years we have been enduring much suffering for the lack of water at the camp, particularly in the summer. . . . We therefore ask you to comply with this request of ours as soon as possible." The second urgent request was "that you should inform the United Nations that we will never be able to forget our dear homeland, no matter how long we shall have to endure this miserable condition. We shall not accept any substitute for our homeland, nor relinquish it for any bribe." [18] Need and right, personal survival and national liberation, were identified here as equally vital demands. Palestinians have insisted

that meeting their needs is both a political obligation of the international community and an acknowledgment of Palestinian national claims.

This intertwined politics is not an easy politics. Even as they insist that their claims are multiple, Palestinians worry that attention to one might undermine another. The nonpolitical stance of humanitarian endeavors also limits the capacity of humanitarian actors to engage with refugees as political subjects and to engage with their demands in political terms. An additional problem emerges from the gap between those responsible for the Palestinian plight and those who are charged with alleviating their suffering. This gap contributes to tensions between providers and recipients. UNRWA officials are often exasperated when refugees complain about service problems and name political venality as the cause. And refugees know that, even as UNRWA budgets are a direct result of political decisions by other actors, and therefore the link to venality is not specious, focusing their criticism on UNRWA may not target the sources of threat to Palestinian life and liberation. Furthermore, even as political work with and within humanitarianism is both tactical—working with the tools readily at hand—and a strategic response to the condition in which Palestinians have found themselves, it also entails risks of a narrowing of political thinking. That is, just as humanitarianism can be a vector for extending political claims into hard-to-reach arenas, it can also be a force whose terms restrict political thinking.

This last challenge highlights the broader problem in locating politics in rights claims. The limits of rights discourse as grounds for transformative political action have often been noted.[19] Even as it provides a means of pressing claims for access and opportunity, the language of rights can leave intact perhaps more fundamental structures of inequality. Marx showed how a rights framework can relegate such matters to the realm of the private, rendering them irrelevant to political debate and therefore uncontested.[20] Rights discourse is also unevenly available to differently located persons. In the terms that Partha Chatterjee develops to explore conditions in postcolonial India, rights-oriented politics is the purview of the relatively small number of people who live as "citizens" and have access to "civil society," rather than the majority who live as "population" and act through "political society."[21] So there are many reasons to be skeptical about rights-based politics. Despite these limitations, making rights claims of various kinds has been a key feature of Palestinian political and social practice. And this claim making has had an effect not only, and sometimes not primarily, in the achievement of those rights, but in the fundamental recognition of Palestinian existence.

To be sure, a rights framework has not been the totality of the Palestinian political imaginary. The language and practice of revolution and grassroots resistance have also been crucially important at different moments. But demands for recognition of national and human rights have been a fundamental part of political discourse. The audiences for these claims are many—Israel,

the international community, and host countries being key among them. Perhaps paradoxically, given the distance that is often proposed between humanitarianism and human rights, the humanitarian field has been an especially important site for the articulation and pressing of Palestinian rights claims. Humanitarianism has provided a space in which people who are governed as a population can mobilize tools that would seem to be the prerogative of citizens.

HUMANITARIANISM AS A RIGHT

In 1949, when the League of Red Cross Societies (LRCS) took over rations delivery in Lebanon, it encountered a population that was already prepared to protest for their rights. Refugees sometimes refused to accept rations they viewed as inadequate. [22] Responding to one protest, when inhabitants of Anjar were circulating a petition to ask the Lebanese government to take over rations delivery, the director of LRCS relief told them: "Your voice is very weak, but the voice of the Red Cross reaches Paris, New York, and other places." Both threat and promise seem embedded in this statement, which was apparently effective at halting the protest. The threat was that the refugees would never win a confrontation with the LRCS. The promise was that standing with the organization would enable their voices to travel farther. Residents of Ein el Hilweh also refused to accept the rations they were offered. In this instance, the camp's mukhtars met with the LRCS, first to present their complaints and then to propose solutions. [23] Their proposals were to increase the flour rations, provide rice instead of beans, distribute soap, provide enough tents, and permit some of the mukhtars to travel to Tyre to get in touch with other refugees. In other words, the mukhtars wanted food, shelter, sanitation, and mobility. When the LRCS could not grant these demands, the mukhtars responded angrily. But, according to the reporter who witnessed the encounter, after the LRCS official "gave reassurance and cheering guarantees for the future . . . the Mouktars agreed to put themselves in the hands of the League." Even as many reports about such protests betray frustration with refugee demands, some LRCS personnel expressed their sympathy with refugee actions. As a field superintendent reflected on refugee demonstrations for more shelters, clothes, and blankets in the wake of a storm that blew down many tents: "Outwardly they were a noisy rabble expressing their discontent with life as they found it. But we had seen what their living conditions could be and knew that they had every right to give vent to their feelings of near desperation." [24]

FIGURE 13. "Dealing with a Riot." Refugees make demands in Gaza, 1949. AFSC archives.

As their protests in the decades after 1948 indicate, Palestinians confront a fundamental conflict in how to interpret and evaluate the humanitarian assistance provided them. Collected in UNRWA's archive are numerous petitions and complaints from individuals and groups of refugees, press accounts of protests in the camps, and pamphlets by Palestinian political organizations exhorting camp residents to action. These exhortations frequently identify the agency as part of a plot to "liquidate" Palestinian claims. Responding to the firing, in 1960, of some UNRWA teachers for engaging in political activity, "The Committee for Defending the Returnees" issued a declaration that identified services as a means by which the agency threatened refugees. [25] It threatened them "in their salaries, in their clothes and shelter to deprive them from the simplest human right"—freedom of thought, opinion, and action. Addressing camp residents, the declaration asked: "Has the Agency supplied the needs of the returnees, from food, education and medical care? Has she allowed them at least to live cooperating and helping each other or has she intrigued against them to disunite them and to weaken them?"

The writers of the declaration may have been most concerned about the firing of the teachers, but they seem to have recognized that in order to generate protest in the camps, they needed to address the breadth of humanitarian failings. Even when refugees call UNRWA a political enemy of the Palestinians, their demands almost always include specific requests for improvements in humanitarian services. A group called "Arab Palestinian Youth in Lebanon"

declared that "the UN who is in the origin a cause in the disaster cannot be considered the suitable organization to solve the Palestine problem" and that "the Relief Agency is a danger threatening their case." [26] The youth group went on to list more than fifty specific demands for improvements in humanitarian services, including (1) increasing access to health care, (2) limiting class sizes, (3) upping the calories in rations allotments, (4) replacing international staff with Palestinians, and (5) abolishing the income scale that governed rations provision. No matter how thoroughgoing the critique of UNRWA, most protests were for more and better services, not a humanitarian withdrawal.

In evaluating UNRWA, Palestinians express a range of opinions, reflecting the contention around this institution. Some people say that the very existence of UNRWA is part of an effort to undermine a political solution to the Palestinian problem. As one person told me, "UNRWA has a strategy that it follows. In the beginning—this is my opinion—UNRWA . . . used to give to the people too generously . . . to encourage people to leave their homeland. And unfortunately people ran after these things—some of them." Other people insist that UNRWA's existence is an acknowledgment of Palestinian political claims and of the responsibility of the international community to address them. As a refugee who is also an UNRWA employee put it: "UNRWA does not represent a humanitarian service given to refugees. The services given to us are our right. Our problem is created by the international community and they are responsible for solving it. UNRWA has a political dimension, rather than a humanitarian one." These debates about UNRWA and humanitarianism have been ongoing since the first years after the 1948 mass displacement. Putting humanitarianism in question is a key part of Palestinian politics—part of the staging of "scenes of dissensus" through which Palestinians have addressed the international community, host countries, and each other. [27]

It is not only in their overall assessment of UNRWA that people use the language of rights; such language is also central to how people express specific personal frustrations. To offer one example, Maisa—a woman who, like many in Jerash camp, has been disappointed in her attempts to find employment—described her anger with the agency:

> It is supposed to give us our rights. We are demanding our rights. It was established as a humanitarian institution to help the refugees. But it does not help the refugees with anything. . . . If they are not giving us the right to work and the right to the opportunities that are supposed to be ours . . . Really, I get really upset when I think that those who have a national number and those who have Jordanian citizenship have all the opportunities and I do not have any. The only opportunity was UNRWA and it was taken away from me.

Maisa's central complaint was that UNRWA does not designate work opportunities specifically for ex-Gazans who, unlike other Palestinian refugees in Jordan, cannot compete for government or many private-sector jobs. Although one could view the request for such a designation as a

demand for an exceptional accommodation, camp residents argue instead that it should be seen as part of their rights. In making claims of UNRWA, then, ex-Gazans claim the denial-in-practice of rights they see as accorded to them.

I heard many complaints about the quality of services during my fieldwork, as any visitor to the camps would. Infrastructure, education, and health care were all endless sources of frustration, and the language of rights was central to how people talked about these problems. In Jordan and the West Bank the shortcomings of the camps have often impelled people to move outside; in Lebanon that option, while not totally foreclosed, is less available. As Amal, a lifelong resident of Burj al Barajneh, told me: "I was born here and I grew up here. I got married here. I had kids here. And I will die here." In her youth Amal was active in the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, and during the war of the camps she worked as a wireless operator for the faction. She was, therefore, someone with considerable political experience and she, like others I knew, insisted on the right to humanitarian services. She credited UNRWA with managing education well, but as for the rest:

> Health service is no good. They give but something simple. They do not complete the treatment. . . . Our houses are not good. Our houses need new construction. It is all old. Some things go bad and you cannot fix it. UNRWA should to fix it for you. . . . Only a few people get hired by UNRWA. There are many people who are educated and have certificates. They do not hire them. Why? We do not know. They should secure jobs. . . . The streets in the camp, they are responsible for them. They should fix them. The electricity, the water, they are responsible for it. They should fix it. Their services are lacking a lot.

In Amal's refrain about what UNRWA "should" do, the general Palestinian insistence that humanitarianism is a right finds specific expression in concrete demands for services. "How many have died because of the electricity?" she asked. "Once it turns out to be there is a danger, they should have fixed it. Whether it is water or electricity or roads. It should all be done by UNRWA." In calling out the agency for its failure to live up to these responsibilities and give Palestinians their rightful services, refugees hope, often against hope, to compel a change in UNRWA's practice. The double address that runs through many of the claims of rights to humanitarianism indicates both the possibilities of politics through humanitarianism—its capacity to show the political import of the avowedly nonpolitical—and its potential limitations —an inability to escape humanitarian terms even when challenging humanitarian practice.

HUMANITARIAN RIGHTS

In addition to claiming a right to humanitarianism, Palestinians also claim a right to have humanitarian rights. This claim is not straightforward, to be sure. What precisely are humanitarian rights? Some people might view the pairing of "humanitarianism" and "rights" as

contradictory—understanding the former to be a domain of care and the latter to entail obligations. But both refugee law and international humanitarian law (IHL) accord rights, including rights of protection, non-discrimination, and, in the case of refugee law, *non-refoulement* (the right not to be returned to dangerous conditions). [28] Considering armed conflicts, Dan Kuwali argues that the language of humanitarian rights conjoins the obligations of protection under both "fundamental human rights and humanitarian norms." [29] Like many features of international law, the exact nature of humanitarian rights remains a globally unsettled question. In the Palestinian instance, refugees press a claim for humanitarian rights at several scales and in multiple legal contexts.

One framework is precisely the international arena. IHL is a central focus here, but that set of norms and aspirations does not entirely delimit the claims that Palestinians make to international humanitarian rights. Palestinians regularly insist that these rights are broader than the corpus of IHL might provide for or humanitarian actors acknowledge. Even as they do not fall under the specific protection regime afforded by the 1951 refugee convention, Palestinians have demanded access to protection. And UNRWA's mandate has expanded to include it. They claim a right to life where IHL might acknowledge only a right to a proportional death. [30] They claim a right to political life where humanitarian discourse might acknowledge only a right to bare life. And they work to link international affirmations of Palestinian rights—such as the right of refugee return —to the obligations of international humanitarian actors.

Humanitarian rights are (obviously) closely related to human rights, and Palestinians make regular reference to human rights in pressing their claims. [31] Recognizing the distinctions in these rights formulations permits a better understanding of humanitarianism. Specifically, it focuses attention on the fact that humanitarianism is not a domain defined solely by voluntary compassion, but also one that entails obligations. As matters of law, the International Committee of the Red Cross points out, "international humanitarian law and international human rights law are two distinct but complementary bodies of law." [32] Even though both are "concerned with the protection of the life, health, and dignity of individuals," it is permissible for some human rights to be suspended in an emergency. Not so with IHL. As fields of intervention, human rights and humanitarian rights rely on slightly different tools. [33] As arenas for political action, the distinctions sometimes blur. In public performances of both sorts of right, the willingness and capacity of people to put their bodies on the line has been important. [34]

Like human rights, humanitarian rights are, as Samuel Moyn puts it, "not enough." [35] Rancière describes humanitarian rights as a degraded version of the Rights of Man. Given as charity to the poor, they are "the rights of those who have no riots" and "the rights of those who cannot enact them," in Ranciere's words." [36] But in fact, humanitarian rights are not just donated like "old clothes." Yes, their importance in refugee claim making is a product of the constraints

under which these communities live, but they are demanded, not simply given. They are enacted, not only provided. Both the constraints facing refugees and the insufficiencies of the humanitarian rights framework are evident in the efforts to demand them. When they demonstrate in the name of humanitarian rights, Palestinian refugees show that the local and international scales of operation are never separate in their claim making. Refugee responses to Israeli occupation policy in the Gaza Strip offer a case in point.

The occupation of Gaza was met, from the outset, with resistance. Organized armed struggle peaked in the years between 1969 and 1971 and then was largely crushed by the Israeli military under the command of Ariel Sharon. [37] As part of its security measures, and its territorial expansionist policy, Israel both encouraged emigration from the strip and forcibly moved refugees out of camps. In 1971, usually in the name of fighting terrorism, the Israeli military began demolishing shelters in Jabalia, Shati, Rafah, and Deir al Belah camps. Some demolition was done to widen roads in the camps, in order to enable easier patrolling. A 1972 demolition project in Rafah camp was described as a matter of town planning, rather than security. UNRWA vociferously objected to the forced movement of refugees and repeatedly sought Israeli agreement to provide adequate alternative housing for refugees who were evicted. Many refugees, and Israel itself, reported that the only alternative housing that was made available was either in El Arish in the Sinai or in the West Bank. That is, the project of "thinning out" the refugee camps was also a project of depopulating Gaza. Even when people could not be moved from the strip, Israel sought to move them out of camps, claiming to transform them, as an editorial in the *Jerusalem Post* put it, from "refugees into people." [38]

As refugees protested against forced removals, they used the language of humanitarian rights to press their claims. Demonstrations targeted UNRWA in an effort to enlist the agency's help. On July 24, 1971, a group of demonstrators, mainly women and children, gathered at the gates of UNRWA headquarters early in the morning. According to a report by the responsible official on site, they came "from the direction of Jabalia camp, crying, shouting, and demonstrating." [39] The gendered character of this protest was surely not accidental. In part, it may have reflected a division of political labor, with men more likely to be engaged in militant action. In part, it also reflected different vulnerabilities in public assembly. Women and children are not wholly insulated from the threat of violent response, but they are slightly more sheltered from it.

The protesters pushed their way into the compound and could not be persuaded to quiet down. A small group of protesters was brought in to meet with the director and, in the meantime, those outside obstructed staff members from entering their offices. When the meeting concluded, the representatives told the rest of the protesters that "they were sure and confident that the director of UNRWA operations, Gaza is taking the matter seriously and he has promised to make all his efforts to help them." At this point the demonstrators agreed to return to the camp.

Other petitions accompanied this assembly in defense of the right not to be further displaced. The president of the UNRWA staff association wrote to the commissioner-general in the latter's "capacity as the representative of the Secretary General and the United Nations, the guardian of human rights, to put an end to their pains and suffering." [40] He cited legal and political bases for objection to the Israeli demolition plan: "Compulsory movement individually and collectively of the inhabitants of the occupied territories is prohibited in accordance with Article 49 of the Geneva Convention IV. . . . It is prohibited for the occupying State to destroy movable or immovable belongings of individuals or groups of persons as stated in Article 53 of the above mentioned convention." [41] The letter also argued that these compulsory movements were political in nature, and that UNRWA should work to stop them so that it "will not be involved in these political currents which are in conflict with its humanitarian mission." The language of humanitarian rights was paired with the presence of Palestinian bodies as an assertion of their demand to stay in place.

As demolitions and evictions continued, UNRWA registered its dissent, but largely in vain: "The Agency requests an assurance that the Israeli authorities will proceed urgently with the provision of housing within the Gaza Strip for the refugees moved to El Arish and that they will be free to return to the Strip as soon as the accommodation is ready." [42] The agency viewed the entire operation as a violation of both the Geneva Conventions and General Assembly resolutions. And it expressed concern about its employees. A special report to the General Assembly in September 1971 noted that "despite assurances given by the Israeli military authorities . . . about 70 Agency staff members had had their shelters demolished." [43] Challenging an Israeli claim that refugees moved to El Arish "of their own free will," the commissioner-general wrote to Israeli General Shlomo Gazit that it seemed "inconceivable" that UNRWA employees would willingly move so far from their place of employment, "and if UNRWA employees were treated in this way, there must be considerable doubt about the consent of many others to their movement to El Arish." [44]

UNRWA files include numerous letters from local UNRWA employees describing the process by which they were forcibly removed, often to El Arish. One teacher described how soldiers took all of his family's identification cards and told him that they were being moved: "I then addressed the following question to them: 'Where to will we be emigrated?' They said: 'We do not know.' I then said to them: 'I work with UNRWA as a teacher.' They said: 'You will find schools there in which you will work.'" [45] Other employees reported similar treatment. Israeli officials continued to insist that the home demolitions were necessary for security, that it sought to "avoid undue hardship," and that no one was sent to the West Bank or El Arish "against his will." [46] And UNRWA and refugees continued to protest, but to little effect. [47] This failure is a reminder of the limit of politics in the humanitarian space, a limit that is not simply attributable

to the relative weakness of refugees. Rights to humanitarianism and humanitarian rights came together in UNRWA's later acknowledgment of its obligation to provide shelter assistance for persons whose homes were destroyed, making "no distinction between destruction by military action, by punitive demolition and for such reasons as the security 'road widening' operation in the Gaza Strip in 1971." [48]

Just as Arendt noted that the "right to have rights" is more fundamental than any of the specific rights of citizens, so, too, do Palestinians claim a general right to humanitarian rights that underlies any of the specific rights they demand as refugees. This right to humanitarian rights entails recognition, however limited, of Palestinian inclusion in an international community. To have humanitarian rights does not mean that Palestinians are not refugees; it does not entail a change in status in that sense. But the claim to these rights does constitute an argument that *as* refugees they should not live in the condition of arbitrariness that Arendt views as the lot of the stateless. [49] "What they do, did, or may do" should matter, Palestinians argue. And in so claiming they try to redefine the condition of being a refugee.

MANAGING THE DAILY GRIND

Peter Redfield describes humanitarian practices as entailing "the temporary administration of survival within wider circumstances that do not favor it." [50] Palestinian refugees—who live their lives (and, in many cases, live out their lives) in circumstances that are arrayed against them—often pursue a related, but not identical, practice. In situations that do not permit a more full-throated political engagement, refugees strive both to persevere and to make their perseverance an expression of collectivity. In getting by, they strive for something beyond survival, or at least to make something out of the fact of survival. These efforts to get by bear some similarity to the humanitarian coping projects described in chapter 4. Like those humanitarian projects, the efforts of Palestinians to bear up make a claim about the value of their lives. And, like those expert projects, people's efforts are limited in their capacity to challenge inequality.

To say that people persist is not to suggest that they are necessarily hopeful. Their circumstances have sometimes contributed to widespread demoralization—a different expression of collectivity. [51] Many people do succumb to "exhaustion," which Elizabeth Povinelli describes as the "social antonym" of endurance. [52] In this, Palestinians in refugee camps share an experience with Palestinians in other places and with others around the world who live in conditions of precarity. In many conversations I had in refugee camps, residents described feeling utterly without hope or energy. As Nadim, a resident of Jerash, put it, "I wait every day. The same day, the same day, the same day. There is nothing new in the camp. There is nothing

that develops into something new. . . . Everything is impossible here in the camp. It is completely impossible. . . . Because of this, the people have all the diseases. Physical diseases and mental diseases, depression, psychological issues. There is nothing." [53] A frequently articulated idea is that life in the camps is lived in a state of waiting—one person told me that the camp was like a bus station. [54] Ghassan Hage refers to such "existential immobility" as "stuckedness." He suggests that there is a kind of heroism in the capacity to "endure" and "wait out" stuckedness. [55]

Palestinians have taken up this effort to endure in several ways. Some refugee efforts are so small-scale, so ephemeral, as to be barely perceptible. That the efforts may not be evident to observers does not mean that they are not doing something for people. A case in point is Hassan's commentary on his habit of smoking two packs a day: "I say thank God I did not go crazy. I did not take drugs, and I did not get drunk, because of what takes place here. I smoke two packs . . . for me this is it. I am forty-seven. I think of the next generations. They need to build a future for them. There is no future here, until now. We say the UN is still not doing its job. . . . It should secure work for people." There is a lot going on in this statement. Hassan has accommodated himself to his condition ("for me this is it") but has not wholly succumbed to it: he smokes, but he is not a drug addict. Smoking does not change the circumstances of Burj al Barajneh, where he lives, but it helps him endure them. Hassan also makes demands on behalf of other Palestinians, and he may be able to do that precisely because of the success of his limited endurance project. This insistence on insisting is a claim to the value of those other lives, but one that is structured by conditions in the camps.

Palestinian refugees have also viewed waiting as a political virtue and a form of refusal. To wait until one has returned home to really live is to refuse to accept displacement. Not surprisingly, the extent to which living-as-waiting might be a political virtue is contested across generations. In the first years after 1948, Palestinians were hesitant to fully live in the camps, lest they be less ready to return. Thus, some put many things on hold as they hoped in vain for the opportunity to return home. People have told me, for instance, about how some people from the first generation of refugees did not go on the hajj (the Muslim pilgrimage to Mecca) because they wanted to begin that journey from their homes, not from exile. Those people died without reaching this goal. A similar dynamic surfaced in 1967. One resident of the Jerash camp in Jordan told me that his father objected when he wanted to buy a car at that time, or anything substantial, because the family should live their lives in readiness to return. The son did not share this view. Over the long term, it is simply not possible—even if it were desirable—for people to remain in a state of suspended animation. The pragmatic requirements of long-term displacement have necessarily produced a different way of living and, along with it, a different collection of feelings about that life, about the camps, and about humanitarianism. And it has produced a different politics of living.

Refugees living in Wihdat camp in East Amman indicate both deep attachment to and alienation from the camp. [56] Such complicated feelings about life in the camp are bound up in transformations of time, as generations multiply and life in Palestine becomes more remote; and of space, as overcrowding and increasing wealth disparities change the landscape in divergent ways. Alia, a high school principal with a master's degree in education, told me that she never wanted to move from the camp, despite having the financial means to do so: "I lived all the conditions of the camp. I love the camp, to be honest. I have the ability to leave it . . . but the nature of the camp, my connection with my cause, my connection with the national suffering are what is connecting me to the camp." It is both political commitment and social attachment that tie people like Alia to the camps.

Many people I talked with in Wihdat were neither engaged in explicit political reflection nor saw themselves as recipients of significant humanitarian assistance. Their view of themselves as refugees was expressed through a slightly different frame—that of the daily grind, the struggle to get by, the conditions of precarity that structure so many people's lives across the globe. [57] Abu Firas, a forty-two-year-old father of four, was both frustrated and often funny as he talked about his feelings about Wihdat:

> Is this life? It is not life. There are no trees around you, there is no freedom, there is no space. The people are stacked on top of each other like canned sardines. It does not work. . . . Population pressure. There is no infrastructure. There are no public services. . . . If you have a visitor, you will be embarrassed. . . . There is no space. The streets are narrow and there are many people. There is no comfort. There is no freedom. There is nothing.

FIGURE 14. House for sale, Jerash camp, Jordan, 2011. Photo by Ilana Feldman.

When I asked Abu Firas if he would like to leave the camp, he told me that if he could afford it he would get a trailer home—like the Americans, he said—and just drive: "I would keep on driving until the tires get worn out. Yeah, I would leave the camp. . . . I would go far. Because a human being likes freedom, likes space." Like many refugees, Abu Firas thought about his life in the camp now in comparison to a range of pasts and, sometimes, futures. The past in Palestine matters, but it is the past in the camp that looms largest for him, and for many others of his generation. Abu Firas never directly experienced life in Palestine. Like many of his generation, his encounter with the homeland comes through the stories his parents tell and the photographs his father displays in his salon. But he did experience the camp's past, and it is this connection that seems to evoke the strongest feelings.

Even though Abu Firas claimed a desire to leave the camp behind, his comments also reflect how attached he is to it, and how much of his sense of self and community is bound up with this place. Both Abu Firas and Alia, as well as many others, told me that the camp was better in the past, despite the greater poverty. As Abu Firas said: "People in the past were simpler and better at heart. . . . Today people are different. They are totally different." Where people used to share

what they had with each other, now "everything is '*ayb* [shame/disgrace]. In the past it was not 'ayb. It was 'ayb if you eat without feeding your neighbor. Now if you just say I want to give my neighbor a plate, it might be 'ayb." These comments reflect frustration at the loss of familiar forms of sociality and connection.

When I asked Abu Firas about the causes of this difference, he started by saying it was because of "the pressure—the population pressure and the difficult life conditions." He also attributed the loss to changes in the camp population. His own experience is a case in point. He grew up in a neighborhood in the center of the camp but now lives in another on the outskirts. Like many of his generation, he found that there was no space for his family in the area where he grew up, so he had to rent a home elsewhere:

> The people changed. Some people left the camp. New people came. You see? Our neighbor Im Naba [the author's research assistant] is from this neighborhood—one of the founders of the hara (neighborhood). I have been here for two years. She does not know me. I did not grow up with her. We did not eat from the same plate. How am I going to talk to her and her daughter? But I can take you now to my father's neighborhood. The women in the neighborhood there, I have nicknames for them. And I can talk to her while her brother and husband are standing and they would laugh happily. He knows her and knows me. Now these people, many of them left the camp. And many from outside the camp came to the camp. The people are different. How are they going to live with each other?

These comments highlight two lost features of past sociality: (1) deep familiarity among neighbors, a condition whereby the neighborhood was socially similar to the villages from which refugees came; and (2) the possibility of easy sociability among unrelated men and women. The shift in gender relations that Abu Firas noted has many causes, including the increasing emphasis on piety and orthodox Islamic practice that can be found across the Middle East. He emphasized more local reasons for the change.

Feelings of frustration and alienation were not the entirety of Abu Firas's experience of the camp. One of his favorite activities was gardening. Since he had no land to plant, not even a courtyard, he used the roof of his home to grow vegetables and other plants. His pride in the garden was evident, as was the personal satisfaction he derived from the activity. When I first visited him, he insisted that I take two large heads of lettuce from his garden as a gift. His reflections on this practice in the present indicate the importance of time in people's emotional experiences. When he talked about gardening, Abu Firas invoked a range of temporalities, including a past or future in Palestine: "I wish I could live in a house—with space. If I had a piece of land or if I lived in my country—here I am living in a little alley and can you see the plants? I plant, and water. I like nature because this is how I grew up. This is how I was created. If there is space, even just two rooms, but when you open your door to go out and you smell the fresh air—it is the best thing in the world."

Even as Palestine was present for him, Wihdat's past loomed larger. In our conversations I was struck by, not a tension exactly, but a divergence between the attitudes expressed by Abu Firas and my research assistant. Even as Im Naba sometimes tried to turn the conversation toward Palestine, he would bring it back to Wihdat. Im Naba commented on our visit to his father's house that we had seen the photos of their land in Palestine on the living-room wall. Abu Firas responded with a reflection not about that land, but about the house in Wihdat: "And our house that you went to, it was not like it is now. It was three rooms . . . next to each other. And the yard in front of it—until you entered the house it was all a yard. There were trees. We had a pond for the ducks and we had rabbits and chickens. We ate from our house. Not anymore." It is no surprise that Abu Firas might feel a closer connection to the camp where he was raised than to long-lost lands in Palestine. And I think it is this same connection that contributed to his feeling of alienation from the now overcrowded camp.

The temporal comparisons that structure so much of people's commentary on camp life are products of this long-term living. It is the passage of time and the settling-in to a space that happens over that time (even when, as a political matter, people reject the idea that they are resettled) that makes temporality so central to people's experience of that space. Just as people live in such spaces differently over the long term—perhaps embarking on new building, engaging in new forms of commerce, or grappling with the limits of infrastructure—so, too, does the long duration shape how people feel about, and in, those spaces. Feeling these complex emotions, and living these multifaceted lives, is an enacted claim about the legitimacy of leading as full a life as possible now, even as Palestinians continue to hope for, and sometime despair of, a better future with political resolution and restitution.
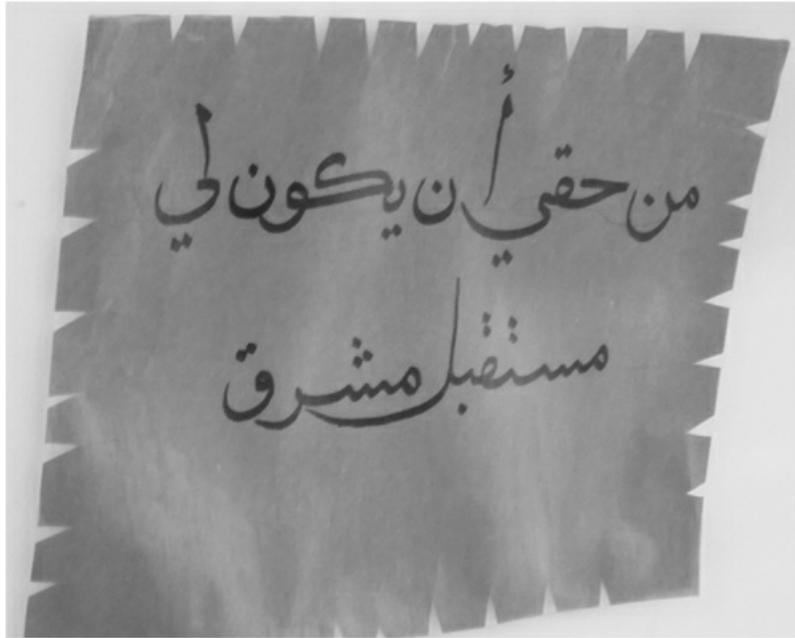
FIGURE 15. "It is my right to have a bright future." Signs on the walls of a disability rehabilitation center proclaim the variety of rights of the patients: rights to a nation, to integrate into society, to express one's opinion, and to live in freedom like others. Wihdat camp, Jordan, 2011. Photo by Ilana Feldman.

POLITICAL VALUES AND THE HUMANITARIAN CONDITION

Palestinians certainly recognize that a better political future requires extensive labor on their part. And it demands good political judgment and political values. Over the years, Palestinian political vocabulary has included a variety of key terms—terms that have, in turn, ascribed prominence at the forefront of the struggle to different segments of the Palestinian population. With much of the population in exile, geographic location has been of considerable importance in this dynamic. The distinction between inside and outside has mattered a great deal, although the territory that is called "inside" has changed over time. Before 1967, the term *inside* referred to the part of Palestine that had become Israel in 1948; afterward, even as people in the West Bank continue to use *inside* to describe the 1948 lands, for Palestinians in exile the designation expanded to include the West Bank and Gaza. To be inside has also been differently valued: first, as Edward Said noted, the insider is "someone you might easily be suspicious of [for living with Israel]," yet later the same person is viewed as "privileged [in being] 'already there.'" [58] At times there have been political contestations across this divide—such as when Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza who led the first intifada resented the takeover of political leadership by PLO

"returnees" after the Oslo accords, or when refugees living outside objected to the Palestinian Authority seeming to ignore their demand to return home.

Since 1948, Palestinian national politics has often revolved around the two poles of loss and restoration. A key part of the politics of loss has been to achieve recognition that, in fact, a loss has occurred: that Palestinians have been displaced and dispossessed both as individuals and as a national community. From the beginning, humanitarian assistance was viewed by Palestinians as potentially undermining that aim: recognizing *need,* but no particular crime. The early formulation of UNRWA as an agency with the dual mandate of "relief" and "works"—the latter aimed toward resettlement—was rejected by refugees largely because of this failure of recognition. [59] But the politics of loss has not only been directed outward, as *recognition* implies. It has also entailed efforts within the Palestinian community to determine how to live in the aftermath of loss in a way that neither succumbs to defeat nor leaves the experience behind. Working out how to live with the loss of Palestine over decades and across generations has been a source of contention among Palestinians as well as a central feature of community building.

Recognition of loss is a necessary, but not sufficient, response to the Palestinian condition. The second demand is for restoration, again of both individual and national losses. The "right of return" *(haqq al-'awda)* is the most widely repeated claim in this area. But a literal return does not exhaust the ways in which Palestinians think about restoration. An independent Palestinian state (on whatever portion of Palestine is possible), compensation, and other mechanisms for establishing a sovereign community are all part of this terrain. The politics of restoration frequently generates conflict between Palestinians and UNRWA, as Palestinians claim that protecting and promoting national rights and demands should be part of the basket of humanitarian responsibilities, while UNRWA officials generally insist that this sort of politics is beyond their mandate and authority.

Political values like sumud; armed struggle, as exemplified by the fedayeen; nonviolent resistance, a significant tactic of the first intifada; and martyrdom (a term applied both to suicide bombers and to civilians killed by Israel) have each played an important role in Palestinian politics. Other key values are expressed as refusal, including refusal of resettlement *(tawtin),* refusal of normalization *(tatbi'),* and refusal of collaboration (and, to an important extent, sumud is also a refusal to give in). In the absence of a state to define the terms of Palestinian citizenship, to be a Palestinian has meant to be a member in the national community—a community defined as existing in struggle. Not surprisingly, what constitutes proper participation in this struggle has been contested. The politics of living in humanitarianism intersects—sometimes uneasily—with these contests and these values.

Sumud and Refugee Lives

Sumud has been a key Palestinian political value for a long time. [60] One immediate referent is the various acts of enduring the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza. The broader claim behind the language of sumud is that simply continuing to exist, continuing to be Palestinian, has profound political significance. [61] In the face of many defeats, this continued existence is a signal achievement of Palestinian politics over the past seventy years. Raja Shehadeh describes sumud as "enduring without giving up anything." [62] At the same time, sumud has been challenged by some Palestinians as privileging passivity over action, as an ultimately insufficient mechanism for achieving goals of liberation, return, and an end to occupation. [63] These tensions around the politics of sumud are connected to the kinds of value that are claimed in this practice. Salim Tamari argues that sumud has tended to ascribe to Palestinians a "natural" tendency toward flight and to privilege a conservative "traditionalism" in the name of persistence. [64] So the value claimed for Palestinian life in sumud may also perpetuate hierarchies, especially of gender and age, among Palestinians. Whatever complications are attached to this concept, it has been a core part of a Palestinian politics of living.

Some scholars have argued that refugees occupy an especially central position in relation to sumud, suggesting that "refugees living in camps were identified as *samidin* (those who are steadfast) almost by definition." [65] But since refugees are people who left Palestine, or their descendants, this relationship has also been fraught in certain ways. In Gaza after 1948, for instance, inchoate ideas about sumud were in part a means through which natives sought to differentiate themselves from, and claim superiority to, refugees. At the same time—also foreshadowing later developments in the politics of sumud, when it came to be criticized as an excuse for bourgeois inaction—refugees challenged these claims. Refugees I knew in Gaza described how natives sometimes accused them of being traitors for having left their land and used the term *refugee* as an insult, "saying 'you refugee, you left your village.'" Refugees responded with their own accusations. As Abu Khalil, a refugee living in Rafah camp, told me:

> They used to say that we sold our land and came to ruin theirs. They accused us of being spies. But they are the ones who sold the land. . . . They used to say to the donkey, "Your face is like the refugee's." The relation was good in the first weeks. We were guests. They thought that we would stay for a limited, short period, but when they realized the situation, tension increased and they started differentiating between a citizen/native *(muwatin)* and a refugee *(muhajir)* . [66]

If natives sometimes argued that refugees had been "bad" Palestinians by leaving their homes, the counterclaim in Abu Khalil's remark was that staying put had no value if it was not accompanied by "good" politics. [67] These accusations and counteraccusations constitute competing claims about who counted as a good Palestinian and also about what the values of that

subject position should be. In contrast to later discussions among the Palestinian leadership about these ideas, these early contestations in Gaza were embedded more in struggles for survival than in political ideologies. Even today, with the exile from Palestine seventy years in the past, refugees often underscore the fact that "we were forced to become refugees," in part, I think, to forestall any such judgment.

Notwithstanding this tension in the idea of sumud, the practice has been a crucial feature of refugees' lives. The efforts at getting by described above are all instances of sumud in practice. When articulated as a value, the idea of sumud ascribes meaning to the suffering that refugees endure. Abu 'Ali, a resident of Burj al Barajneh, recalled: "I remember how my father suffered when we were young. Even the zinco, just like this house, a leaky house. I am telling you a difficult life. . . . And despite this, we were patient." His father's priority was to educate his children, and he worked tirelessly toward that end. [68] And as Abu Kamal said: "We have a just cause and this suffering, we bore it. And you used to find the camp as one family." These references to how "we" were and how the camp used to be are reflections of the widespread conviction that the social and political solidarity of the past has been replaced by a focus on personal, rather than collective, needs. So even as sumud gives meaning to suffering, too much suffering (or over too long a period) can erode people's capacity to endure. There is a lot of concern that in the face of today's struggles, people will no longer be able to be samidin. As Abu 'Ali noted: "People want to immigrate now. They do not have [visas]. They are paying—they are selling their houses to immigrate. They cannot. This is the life suffered by us."

When people worry about whether they, their families, and their neighbors are living "right," the idea of sumud is a key part of their thinking. While the more frequent concern is that suffering will become too much to bear, some people worry that they do not suffer enough. Nisreen, a thirty-two-year-old woman living in Jerash camp, emphasized that she had not suffered as much as other people in the camp. She told me that her parents had hidden the sacrifices they had made to give her a decent life. It was only when she became a parent herself that she understood what they had done. But even as she valued what they had given her, she felt that this lack of suffering made her, in some sense, less fully Palestinian than those—especially those "inside"—who truly suffered. She described watching a television program about life in the territories, concluding: "I did not live as a Palestinian. I saw how the suffering is. *Wallahi* [I swear], I spat on myself. I said we are sitting, having tea and eating and living—wallahi, we do not deserve this homeland. . . . [Those inside] are the ones who live the suffering for real and they are the ones who [will get] the homeland back, not us." When my research assistant, a fellow refugee, responded that "we suffer outside the homeland," Nisreen offered the rejoinder, "We deserve to suffer outside the homeland. They are inside the homeland and do not have what

we have. We are sitting on chairs and talking. . . . What do they have? They are waiting for a rocket to land on them. . . . How can you demand rights when others suffer more than you do?"

Nisreen's virulent self-judgment was unusual and may have been partly a product of watching, from afar, the 2009 Israeli assault on Gaza six months prior to our conversation, but it reflects some of the persistent anxieties around sumud. The concept is a dynamic one, given different expression in different places and moments. And it is also a concept that compels people to call into question the significance of every aspect of their lives. Is living in suffering an example of sumud or its possible limit? And is living well proof of Palestinian persistence—thriving and not just surviving—or an indication they are forgetting the political significance of their lives? There is no single answer to these questions, but they trouble the field of sumud as lived by Palestinians across the Middle East.

Against Normalization

One concern Palestinians express about sumud as a political value is whether it sometimes asks too little of people—privileging passivity over action. A related worry about anti-normalization as a political value is that it may be asking too much. The political importance attributed to refugee camps as symbols of national identity and of the right of return has made them sometimes fraught spaces for living. [69] A discourse of refusal—refusal to transform or "improve" the camps [70] —has persisted alongside a much more complex refugee relationship to changes in camp structures and improvements in their lives. Camp residents are regularly forced to confront, and sometimes to contest, a set of demands about what camps should be and how they should live in them that may not conform either to their life experiences or to their politics. Camp residents do not perceive the camps only as symbols of national claims, but also as active sites of political invention and imagination. The problem of normalization, along with that of resettlement, encapsulates concerns about changes in refugee lives.

"How will I be represented as a refugee after moving to live in the suburb? . . . As a refugee, does the place where I live have anything to do with my political representation? . . . What is my relationship to the camp going to be after I move to the suburb?" These are questions posed by Ahmad, a young resident of the Dheisheh refugee camp in Bethlehem, as his family prepared to move from their home inside the camp to a new, larger house in an area just beyond the camp's boundaries—the suburb. [71] The occasion of this move prompted reflection on both the political significance of the camp as a refugee space and the emotional connection that refugees have to these long-term spaces of displacement. In worrying about his relationship to the camp, Ahmad confronted a question that has troubled Palestinian refugees since the earliest years after their

displacement from their homes in 1948: To what extent is the camp a necessary space for the expression of refugees' political values?

The building of the new suburb provided an occasion both for personal reflection on the meaning of this move and for consideration of the politics of space and place in the Palestinian experience. Ahmad's questions were posed as part of a project undertaken in 2013 by refugees from Dheisheh to explore the meaning of the establishment of and move to the suburb. This project was itself one part of a larger experimental program called Campus in Camps, which engaged young people from camps in the southern West Bank in a process of reimagining, rethinking, and ultimately reengaging the camps where they live (see chapter 7). [72] The investigation into the history of the land on which the suburb is being built, the process of movement into this space, and people's feelings about the move were structured by questions that are both personal and political, the central one being "Am I normalizing my refugee status by building a new house in the suburb?" [73] In taking on key precepts of Palestinian politics, the suburb project directly confronted the question of what constitutes both legitimate politics and legitimate refugee life in the eyes of the Palestinian community.

Reflecting on the political possibilities inherent in the camp, these Dheisheh residents suggested that humanitarian discourse and nationalist discourse share a view of the camps as spaces (only?) of suffering and deprivation. And based on their own experiences, they rejected this perspective. Dheisheh, in particular, is a site of power in the Bethlehem area. [74] As one resident wrote in the booklet they produced from the suburbs research: "If you want an active political movement, it has to be in the camp. . . . The idea that Dheisheh is weak and the city is strong—this is wrong. . . . The real movement is in Dheisheh." [75] The importance of the camp as a site of generative activity is evident in a request by residents of the new suburb to be represented by Dheisheh's popular committee. Although the official responsibilities of the committee are primarily administrative, camp residents see it as having a politically representative function. This attribution is especially the case for the Dheisheh committee: "The popular committee of Dheisheh does not only have influence inside the camp. Rather, this committee has transgressed the boundaries of the camp to act as an effective body in the surrounding municipalities, such as Doha city." It would be nearly impossible, in fact, for popular committee jurisdiction to be extended beyond the camp's boundaries, but the request shows the extent to which the committee is viewed by people in the area as a site of power and possibility.

The suburb project, and Campus in Camps more generally, recognizes this political potential and experiments with new ways of thinking about it. One of the propositions of the suburb project is that the political potential of the camp is not limited to its formal boundaries and that the camp is, in part, a deterritorialized political space. By rethinking spatial relations

—"transgressing boundaries," as the booklet is subtitled—the suburb project challenges the view that political possibility rests primarily in a stance of refusal, a condition that can lead to stasis when it becomes codified and commanded. [76] This view leads the participants to question the discourse of normalization as it is usually articulated. They do not accept the proposition that they must accept resettlement; rather, they see political opportunity in camp transformations.

Despite the risks involved in taking on the question of normalization so directly, the project participants felt it imperative to do so:

> Normalization has been always a very problematic term when it comes to talking about the camp and its political exceptionality. This word has been used in refugee discourse to try to keep refugees restricted within the camp boundaries and within narrow concepts and ideas. For me personally, it is very hard to write about the normalization issue because of its sensitivity. . . . But I think that we have to think about everything regarding our lives, status, and situation and not be stopped by any taboos. [77]

This statement describes a dominant discourse about the right way to be a refugee. It also raises the question of whether there can and should be legitimacy in having a different relation to the camp. The claim made here is considerably more than the pragmatic one that it is impossible to expect people to live their lives only in waiting for return. Rather, the argument is one about politics: that a transformed view about what the camps are and can be—materially, geographically, socially, and politically—can produce a more effective politics for the pursuit of Palestinian rights. As the project participants write in the booklet:

> The Palestinian official discourse in general and the refugees' discourse in particular have usually highlighted and brought to the surface only the weaknesses of refugees. . . . This discourse is, in fact, an unfair representation of the refugee achievements and transformations and ignores the many strengths of refugees and the positive changes they have achieved over these 65 years. . . . In proving that refugees have the right to return we can show everything that we have achieved in exile, rather than only showing ourselves as weak, poor, and victims. [78]

Asking about the meaning of the move to the suburb is not just a matter of understanding social transformation or personal emotions. It is also a way of intervening in Palestinian refugee politics, and specifically in Palestinian political values. The research itself seeks to open a space for new ways of framing refugee practice and the bases of refugee claims. In so doing, the initiative is not primarily about imposing a new politics, but rather about recognizing and legitimizing a politics that, while already taking place on the ground, is not yet fully acknowledged in dominant nationalist discourse.

The multiple forms of refugee politics do not comprise a single practice, agenda, or ideology. They are different, and differently evaluated, across geography and across generations. They are discordant in their address, aims, and frames of reference. Just as humanitarianism is many

things at once, so too is the politics of living in the humanitarian condition. Even as sovereignty—the exercise of political control over the community—is a key aim of Palestinian refugee politics, so too are other forms of autonomy: the ability to fashion lives even as Palestinian national goals are not (yet) achieved. Humanitarian categories provide people with grounds from which to act and to make claims—and sometimes create an opportunity for refusal. Humanitarian language can shape these claims, producing a confluence of discourses of obligation and compassion, of need and right. Together, and in conflict, these practices and judgments constitute the terms of the political in the politics of living.

The politics of living does not simply create an opportunity for multiple perspectives, demands, and values to coexist. Rather, it illuminates and structures a range of contestations over precisely these questions. Each claim for a right is also a determination about which rights are the most essential. Each decision about how to live is an articulation of the value of certain ways of living, and often the devaluation of others. Such contestations clearly occur not simply as considered judgments about strategy or identity, but also as responses to institutional, material, and discursive opportunities and constraints. In the Palestinian case, and not only in the Palestinian case, humanitarianism has been an important source of both impediment and opportunity.

Living and Dying at Humanitarianism's Limits

PALESTINIAN REFUGEES FREQUENTLY DESCRIBE the aid apparatus with which they live as a source of degradation and debasement and sometimes even as a cause of death. Even those who don't go quite so far are resolute in their conviction that the available aid does not meet the needs of the community. Refugees live, that is, in a condition that I think of as "undercare." I intend this term to evoke a dual aspect. To describe someone as being "under care" means that the person *is* being cared for, usually in the sense of being treated by a physician, certainly located within a system of concern. Refugees are under care in a general sense, but the care they receive is systemically inadequate, a fact that is also acknowledged by providers. Undercare has a double referent in another sense as well. It is built into humanitarian missions and is also a result of capacity limits. Humanitarian practice is designed to be ameliorative rather than transformative. It does not pretend to offer a solution to the problems it addresses, but serves as an interim measure. These mandate limits mean that providers do not intend to be responsive to all the needs and demands of recipients. The variety of ways in which humanitarian capacity is limited —due to financial constraints, access problems, and the challenges of chronic deprivation—also means that providers cannot address all the needs and demands that they do acknowledge to be their responsibility.

The threat of violent death fits more comfortably in the humanitarian imagination than death from old age. Lives at risk of a violent end are lives that, in theory, can be saved through a humanitarian intervention. But this fit does not always mean that humanitarians are able to respond adequately when such threats materialize. Attacks on refugee camps can obstruct humanitarian access to the vulnerable populations. The problem of access underscores how dependent humanitarians are on other actors—sovereign states, warring parties—to enable the

accomplishment of their missions. Even as humanitarian agencies seek independence, and insist on political neutrality and service impartiality to bolster their demands for access, their operations are always entangled in complex political relations.

FIGURE 16. Ruins in Wihdat camp, Jordan, after Black September, 1970. UNRWA photo archive. Photo by George Nehmeh.

The passage of time renders aging and dying into new sorts of problems for humanitarian practice and for the humanitarian condition. A key challenge of the humanitarian condition is that it goes on and on. Available services can never be adequate to meet people's needs. And no matter how much effort goes into reforming service delivery, humanitarian systems are always partly defined by failure, the causes of which often lie outside the humanitarian domain. In the Palestinian case, the necessity of humanitarian services over a person's full life cycle confirms the failure of political actors to address the core problems facing the refugees. As people who live their lives in the humanitarian condition, within limits that are insurmountable, the refugees struggle with how to go on, and with how and when they might push back against those constraints. In other words, what is it to practice and to live at humanitarianism's edge?

When Palestinians talk about their experience as an ongoing nakba, as they increasingly do, they argue that they are not just being left to suffer, but also are subject to continuing attack. The

humanitarian inability to provide adequate care is received by Palestinians as part of a constellation of threats to the population. They understand the continued existence of Palestinians as a people to be their strongest weapon in the national struggle, and they see undercare as part of a concerted effort to undermine that existence. They see it as part of the production of inequalities that Didier Fassin identifies as central to the politics of life. [1] And some see undercare as a necropolitical tactic, a direct attack on the life of their community. [2] Insufficient care contributes to needless or early deaths, and the persistent experience of inadequacy also contributes to the degradation of expectations and of hope for the future.

BORDERS, BOUNDARIES, AND HUMANITARIAN REACH

Barriers to access to populations in need are an enduring challenge in humanitarian action. [3] UN-mandated humanitarian interventions are required to respect state sovereignty, even as they are also directed to insist on access. Independent humanitarian organizations such as Médecins Sans Frontières do not have the same institutionally mandated subordination to state sovereignty, but they are nonetheless practically constrained by the necessities of negotiating access with the actors who control the territories they need to enter. [4] When states prohibit the entry of humanitarian providers into disaster or conflict zones, or when warring parties target humanitarian personnel and installations, they are often in violation of principles of international law. Such violations are all too common. [5] The geographical constraints on the Palestinian humanitarian experience include shifting political borders and impediments to access within states. And in neither respect is geography a stable limit. The restrictions that sovereignty imposes on humanitarian practice are acutely felt in the Palestinian case, where refugees live in several states, confront a diversity of borders that have undergone multiple changes since 1948, and have themselves often moved more than once. The work of aid delivery has been regularly disturbed by a redrawing of borders or a change in sovereign authority. To be able to continue their mission, humanitarian providers have frequently had to operate at the edges, or in the cracks, of sovereign control.

The impact of border volatility on humanitarian provisioning was evident in the complicated geography resulting from negotiations between Israel and Syria over armistice conditions after the 1948 war. Syria agreed to withdraw its troops from three areas in the Huleh Valley along the border, permitting Israel to take control of these territories, with the proviso that they remain demilitarized zones. [6] These areas—referred to as the northern, central, and southern sectors of the DMZ—had been home to a number of Palestinian villages, whose inhabitants had fled in the course of the fighting. As Dan Rabinowitz and Sliman Khawalde detail, the armistice agreement

indicated that refugees from some of these villages would be permitted to return. And return was permitted (for what proved to be a short time) to five villages. In March 1951, while draining the area around the Huleh lake to control mosquitoes, Israel expelled most of the returnees—moving some to Syria and others to Palestinian villages inside Israel. The small numbers of people who remained were finally expelled to Syria in 1956. In the brief time that these villages were reinhabited, UNRWA tried to aid the inhabitants, who were considered refugees, having been displaced and dispossessed in 1948 and now residing in territories that were cut off from normal livelihoods and commerce.

But the aid delivery was no easy task. It entangled UNRWA in complex negotiations with Syria and Israel. It also engaged UNRWA's briefly existing Israel field office. Until it was closed in 1952 at the Israeli government's request, this field office was distinctive in several respects. The refugee population initially under UNRWA's care included both Jews (around seventeen thousand, mostly from Jerusalem and its surroundings) and Arabs (thirty-one thousand). The Arabs were displaced "at home," generally with no border separating them from their villages, but denied permission to return to them. The Jewish population was quickly absorbed into the new state. UNRWA's first report indicated that in the summer of 1950, only three thousand Jews remained displaced. [7] Palestinian Arab absorption was slower, but ending relief quickly was a high priority for Israel. As UNRWA reported: "The idea of relief distribution is repugnant to [Israel], and the Agency was informed that already many of the 24,000 remaining refugees were employed and that all able-bodied refugees desiring employment could be absorbed on works projects if they would register at the government registry offices for that purpose." [8]

In fairly short order, UNRWA and Israel agreed on the transfer of responsibility to the Israeli government. Initially, Israel hoped that UNRWA would continue to pay for the costs of whatever relief was necessary. Told that this arrangement would not be possible, the Israeli government indicated that "there will then cease to exist in Israel a distinct category of 'Palestinian refugees,' with a status which differs from that of other inhabitants of the country." [9] And, as UNRWA closed its office, it made the policy determination that "since the refugees involved are no longer Agency relief beneficiaries, their registration cards are to be removed from the active HQ files and the total number of refugees registered by the Agency is to be reduced correspondingly." [10] Given the importance of refugee status as grounds for making claims to liberation and return, the political causes and consequences of all these decisions are evident.

In the case of the DMZ villages, there was a contest over which UNRWA field office should manage the process. Even as both the Israeli and Syrian governments tried to assert claims to this territory, the refugees vacillated between refusal and insistence in their stance on the aid process. They first declared that they would receive rations only via Syria (presumably to bolster Syria's territorial claim). [11] UNRWA officials attributed this refusal to outside pressure, but it

nonetheless meant that many refugees went without rations for an extended period. Eventually, dire conditions led many to change their position: "The refugees of Baqqara as well as the mukhtar have declared that they were hungry and have begged me to take necessary steps to bring them rations as soon as possible." [12] Even as they reluctantly accepted rations that came through Israel, refugees expressed that "they are afraid of being attached to the Israeli Government, as they are now under the control and protection of the United Nations." [13] UNRWA officials suggested that the refugees might also be afraid of their own leaders. One report described the mukhtar of Baqqara intervening in a distribution and "beating the refugees. Apparently very much afraid of him, they immediately dispersed. So that out of 218 beneficiaries only 150 could take their rations." [14]

Israel, meanwhile, refused UNRWA overtures to reorganize the delivery system, insisting that "the beneficiaries in the Central Zone should receive their rations in exactly the same way as all refugees living in Israel." [15] Trying to operate in this irregular space, with active contestations over sovereignty, magnified the influence that state power always has in shaping humanitarian operations. Asserting control over humanitarian activity and personnel was a mechanism by which both Israel and Syria sought to declare sovereign authority over the field of operations. UNRWA's district inspector in the Haifa office reported that Israel prohibited the movement of international personnel into the DMZ from Syria, allowing entry only by way of Israel. He further noted that "as for any medical help, if it comes from Syria, the Israeli *[sic]* will not allow it to cross the Bridge. If it comes from Israel, the refugees themselves will not accept it." [16] In its negotiations with UNRWA, Israel was insistent that "it would anyhow only be a very short time that the refugees would receive rations." [17] Indeed, soon thereafter, Israeli forces began to expel or pressure the bulk of the population to leave the area. In early April 1951, the Syrian government requested that a water motor be supplied to residents still in the Central Zone, to enable them to become self-supporting and to "prevent the Jews from chasing these refugees away." [18]

The director of UNRWA's Haifa office, Max-Henri Huber, reported that some of the population had fled to Syria and that Israeli forces had removed most of the remaining people to Shaab, a village inside Israel. And UNRWA was denied access to these people: "I have been unable to meet the evacuated refugees in Shaab. I was told, when I inquired, that an epidemy *[sic]* has suddenly appeared amongst them and that we should wait until the medical situation is under control. Now I am told that the Military Authorities object to my going to Shaab." [19] After a meeting with the Israeli liaison office, Huber further reported that there was no epidemic—that claim had been a mere pretext for the denial of access. The liaison officer also told him that the refugees had petitioned the Israeli government to be repatriated to Syria but that "the Israeli Army has declared that they are in good condition and must stay where they are." [20] Responding

to an Israeli military inquiry as to why he wanted to see them, he "answered that it is my duty to see for myself what is the situation of the evacuated people and I insisted to be allowed to visit them." [21] Huber was eventually given access to the village and reported that conditions there appeared to be satisfactory. Although the refugees complained that they were forced to buy their own food, Israeli authorities told him that they received a basic ration free of charge, with further commodities available for purchase. Hearing this information, Huber wondered "whether we must still supply these refugees with relief rations, at least as long as they are in Sh'ab where Authorities provide them with the necessary commodities?" [22]

Even as Israel appeared to be working toward settling these refugees with the rest of the remaining Palestinian population under military rule, around 350 people returned to the sites of now destroyed villages in the DMZ. This move produced a new problem, and a new ad hoc camp. [23] When an UNRWA camps officer was able to visit the site in August 1951, he reported that the tents and sanitation were "very unsatisfactory." He recommended that UNRWA move quickly to issue new tents, build latrines, install water taps, and treat the refugees with DDT. All of this activity required coordination across several borders. [24] The potential difficulties in coordination were overcome, and the camp was established, but its location in the DMZ created other problems.

Huber reported from a visit in late October that the camp "is left to arbitrary *[sic],* as no police force exists on the spot." [25] That is, while the host country was responsible for security in most camps, no security was provided in this zone. As a consequence, "some of the refugees have already moved away from the camp and pitched their new tents at random. They defy our opposition and refuse to come back, even under threat of suppressing their rations." Without assistance from UN observers, Huber argued that it would become "impossible for me to be responsible for this camp." It is, after all, not only humanitarian actors who have to find ways to operate in the cracks of sovereign control. Refugees, too, take advantage of the zones of diminished authority to act outside the constraints of the humanitarian system.

A report the following month by a field health officer suggested that those refugees who had moved their tents had not been made to put them back, but that overall conditions were not terrible. The water points that had been installed were gone—inhabitants claimed they were taken by Israel; UNRWA suspected they had been sold. Latrines were clean, and sanitation was deemed comparable to that in a Lebanese village. Nutrition was "not good, but not glaringly bad." There was some vitamin deficiency—on par with the camps in Baalbek, Lebanon. [26] This double comparison—to other camps and to native conditions—is notable, but comparative evaluation is central to humanitarian practice generally. Providers try to avoid situations where aid recipients have a better standard of living than host-country populations. [27]

Alongside these efforts to create camps and provide relief, UNRWA was also engaged in a

project to distribute seeds to people in the DMZ—in an effort to make them self-supporting. After various delays, agency officials were able to report, by February 1952, success in planting most of the seeds and an expectation that the residents would have sufficient wheat to supply their needs and have a surplus to sell. An UNRWA official reflected that

> I would not like to appear too enthusiastic about the whole scheme, but now, after three years of experience with the Arab refugees here and in Jordan, I must confess that it is the first time I see these wretched people changed and coming back to normal life. It is amazing to see how Baqqarah peasants, now busy with all the hard problems of agricultural life, are different from the refugees in camps, waiting for relief. [28]

During this time, settlement projects were part of UNRWA's mission, and it seemed that the seed project might be a successful one. As the harvest approached, it became clear that it would be difficult to sell the extra wheat because "neither the Israeli nor the Syrian Authorities would permit sale to [the] other side. There is, furthermore, the difficulty of exporting the surplus out of the Demilitarized Zone." [29] This project was thus an early instance of the foundering of development efforts because of political restrictions. Nonetheless, with UNRWA operations in Israel set to wind down (effective July 1, 1952) and with an agreement having been reached with the mukhtars to end flour rations after a successful harvest, UNRWA headquarters instructed the Israel field office to exchange surplus crops for a year's supply of other commodities (such as sugar and cooking oil) and, in any event, to make it clear to the inhabitants that they should not expect "any further assistance from the Agency." [30]

These Palestinians were displaced again just a few years later, when, during the 1956 Suez war, Israel pushed them across the border into Syria. [31] The refugees were thereby removed from a problem of geography (whether UNRWA had access to and responsibility for the territory where they resided) and placed into a problem of category (did they meet UNRWA's criteria for refugee status?). As a category matter, their later displacement superseded their earlier one. In response to a Syrian government request that the DMZ displaced population be registered, the director of relief programs in Syria indicated in 1962 that they "are not under the Agency's mandate" because they were "expelled from Israel in October/November 1956" [32] and not in 1948. They would remain the responsibility of the Syrian government and unrecognized as refugees.

WHEN BORDERS MOVE

The 1967 Israeli occupation of the Gaza Strip and the Sinai Peninsula produced multiple kinds of new geographic conditions. Israeli efforts to move refugees out of camps entailed both

reorganizing space within Gaza, by demolishing shelters and building new housing developments, and reconfiguring the border between Gaza and the Sinai. Israel established a housing complex, known as the Canada Project after the UN peacekeeping contingent formerly stationed there, just south of the Gaza border. By 1981, when Israeli withdrawal from the Sinai as part of the Camp David agreement was imminent, around four thousand refugees (526 families) were living in this project. Another four thousand or so refugees were living in the Sinai town of El Arish or in ad hoc communities alongside the border. Because the occupation had effectively erased the border between Gaza and the Sinai, these refugees had been receiving UNRWA services like any other non-camp refugees in Gaza. They went to schools and used medical clinics inside Gaza. They included sixty-five UNRWA employees who worked in the strip. [33]

The impending Israeli withdrawal raised both jurisdictional and practical questions. The transfer of sovereign control to Egypt would technically remove people who fit both the population and the territorial requirements for UNRWA eligibility from the latter category. Once the Sinai was returned to Egypt, it would no longer be within the area of UNRWA operations. As a matter of principle, this change would mean that these refugees would no longer be eligible for UNRWA services and that children born thereafter would not be eligible for registration as refugees. Recognizing the unique circumstance—refugees were not leaving the UNRWA field, but the boundaries of that field were moving around them—the agency wanted to continue to provide services. But here there were practical challenges: would the border remain open? Would refugees, staff, and goods be able to cross unimpeded?

Faced with these questions, one UNRWA official saw no cause for concern: "We must assume that the normalisation process to which both the Egyptian and Israeli governments are committed under the Camp David agreements will mean that the border will remain open and movement by both refugees south of the border and UNRWA staff north of the border will be unimpeded." [34] As the handover loomed, it became clear that this assumption was false and that "there will be no movement permitted for refugees . . . into Gaza Strip." [35] Even as the border was closed, discussions were under way with Israel about allowing these refugees to return to Gaza. So UNRWA faced the question of what to do in the interim. One proposal was to relocate UNRWA services to the Canada Project—utilizing those UNRWA employees who were now unable to reach their jobs. But this proposal raised the concern that "if we undertake to do so, for an interim period until the refugee families move back across the border, we may find that this period is prolonged indefinitely." [36] Despite this worry about an unintended extension of operations, a worry pertinent to virtually all UNRWA operations, the agency's understanding of its obligation to this population led it to pursue the proposal.

Putting a mechanism in place for service provision required negotiation with both Israel and

Egypt. Egypt rejected UNRWA medical services, indicating that Egyptian doctors could do the job. Both countries agreed to an initial rations distribution, but Israel indicated that such agreement "had no reference to the recipients being refugees but was decided upon to mark the Eid El Fitr feast and was done only on humanitarian grounds." [37] UNRWA insisted that its reason for undertaking the distribution was precisely because these people "remained registered refugees." [38] Despite this definitional dispute, UNRWA did reach agreement with both governments to permit delivery and worked out detailed procedures. It then encountered a challenge from refugees. Residents of the Canada Project demonstrated against the plan because they "interpreted the ration distribution within Egypt as meaning their permanent settlement within Egypt." [39] UNRWA officials sought to reassure the refugees that there were no status implications to the distribution and, after an initial boycott, many refugees picked up their rations. After this successful (if challenging) distribution, others followed. And in October, UNRWA began offering classes (taught by stranded UNRWA teachers) in the project. [40]

Initial hopes were that the refugees would be returned to Gaza within six months. But the situation dragged on. By January 1984, UNRWA officials noted that "the chances of these refugees returning to Gaza appeared to be diminishing," but also that UNRWA's obligations to them continued. [41] By this point a medical clinic and a preschool had been established. [42] Residents of the quarter petitioned the commissioner-general to demand that Israel fulfill its commitment to permit their return to Gaza. [43] An agreement was reached in June 1985 to begin the return, and negotiations about the mechanisms commenced. [44] It was noted that Israeli settlers in Gaza objected, but that "nevertheless it would appear that the Israeli government has now committed itself irrevocably to the return." [45] In actuality, it was not until December 1989 that any refugees returned. [46] And it was not until December 2000 that the whole of the population was returned. [47] In some ways this case represents a microcosm of the challenges that confront UNRWA in every aspect of its work: the gaps between its formal mandate and circumstances on the ground; the necessity of extending over a long, even indefinite period aid that was intended as short-term and exceptional; and the uneasy relation between territory and population in defining the boundaries of its reach.

LIMITS IMPOSED BY VIOLENCE

It is a cruel limit to humanitarian capacity that the moments of greatest vulnerability are oftentimes when access is severely curtailed. The situation during the war of the camps in Lebanon, and especially during blockades imposed by the Amal militia, was so severe that UNRWA was unable to provide relief. Palestinians in Lebanon lacked food and medical care.

People described surgeries without anesthetic, an absence of medicines, and a dearth of doctors. Notably, both in Burj al Barajneh and in Sabra and Shatila, site of the infamous massacre of Palestinians by Israeli-supported Phalangists, there were a few foreign medical personnel who remained through the worst times. In Burj al Barajneh, people remembered, "if you went to the hospital, they were like slaughtered sheep. You could not find suitable medication or doctors. There was only a female and a male doctor. The male doctor was from the camp. And the female doctor was English. . . . She suffered with the people here." In an interview with the Palestine Red Crescent Society journal after the siege ended, this physician, Dr. Pauline Cutting, reflected on how people coped with these circumstances: "Sometimes they laughed at the tragedy they lived, as they made a list of the people they wanted to eat if they had to." [48] And another foreign volunteer added, "It was a matter of dignity and existence. No one can imagine the bad situation in the camp without water, food, or electricity. The shelling did not stop. Many died or were injured. However, there was an insistence on remaining steadfast and cooperating."

In February 1987, Dr. Cutting and other medical personnel from Medical Aid for Palestinians who were working in Burj al Barajneh issued a press release describing the terrible conditions there and urging that the siege be lifted. [49] In March 1987, the UN Security Council issued the following statement:

> The members of the Security Council, mindful of the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Lebanon, note with profound concern that, in spite of their previous statements, the Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon have not been receiving the necessary humanitarian assistance and that the situation in those camps remains critical. Alarmed by the suffering of the civilian population in the camps, the members of the Security Council therefore again urge all parties concerned urgently to facilitate the efforts of various United Nations agencies, particularly the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, as well as any other humanitarian assistance aimed at distributing food and medical supplies in the Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon and, thus, at fulfilling a critically needed mission. [50]

Despite these pleas, it was not possible for humanitarian agencies to enter the camps until April, when Syria arranged a truce. [51] Residents of Burj al Barajneh recount their tremendous suffering during this time and the inability of aid agencies to provide any help. As Abu 'Ali told me: "No institution came here. They could not. A relief vehicle came once. They burnt it with the people inside. . . . How could they come?" Chris Giannou, a Greek-Canadian doctor who worked in Shatila during this period, recounts in his memoir that a convoy to Burj al Barajneh from the Iranian embassy of ambulances and UN food trucks was shot at and an embassy guard killed. [52]

Along with degraded medical care, hunger was a dominant theme in my conversations about this period, with a focus on what people were willing to do, and eat, in order to survive. I heard about people eating donkeys, horses, cats, and dogs. Fatima said: "Out of hunger we ate cats and dogs. I was one of the people who looked for cats to eat them. I was hungry. The cats started fleeing us. They knew they were targeted." Many others described the same thing: "The people

lived in hell," and ate whatever they could to stay alive. Amal, the former wireless operator with the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine whom I introduced in chapter 5, told me that during the war, "we couldn't think of anything but death. I will be wounded now. Now I will die. . . . All our life was waiting." In this "difficult and harsh period," she said, "the most difficult time was at the end when there was no food at all. Some people lost the ability to walk because of lack of food."

Medical Aid for Palestinians reported at the time that "the situation is critical and inhuman. . . . There is no flour, no fresh food, and so pregnant women and children are becoming undernourished. People are eating stale food and suffering vomiting and diarrhoea. Water has to be collected from taps in the street at great personal risk. Several women have been shot by snipers while collecting water for their families." [53] Going out of the camp to get food was risky. I heard many accounts of women killed by snipers as they tried to bring food home to their families: "One of them was named Khadeeja. She was tall. She brought yogurt and bread. Before she got to the camp, a sniper was faster than her. Her blood was on the white yogurt. It was a scene. And on the bread. It was a shocking scene. There was no feeling for humanity—the humanity of the human being." Eventually, Amal told me, "they started sending flour and distributed it to people. But it wasn't a lot that arrived—just a small amount. You'd eat a piece of bread one day and that's it—until they came the next time. But we spent a while with nothing. We had nothing at all. We only drank water."

Even under these circumstances, as made clear by the presence of foreign medical personnel and the dedication of local health workers, the denial of humanitarian access did not mean the total absence of humanitarian activity. And people in the camp remember both the limits and the refusals to stay away. As one person recalled: "It was a misery. . . . People lived in hell. If it had lasted longer, the people would have died of hunger. They ate the donkeys. . . . And rats and cats. There was a doctor, Pauline. She was there and she is witness to this. A doctor from Britain. She was witness to this." This double value in humanitarian presence—aiding and witnessing—is viewed by many humanitarian actors, most famously Médecins Sans Frontières, as a crucial part of the humanitarian mission. [54] Palestinians have by and large agreed. They have insisted, however, that such witnessing should be applied not just to humanitarian need, but to political injustice as well.

FIGURE 17. Bread is distributed to the refugees in Wihdat camp, Jordan, after the fighting in September 1970. UNRWA photo archives.

THE PASSAGE OF TIME AND A RECEDING HUMANITARIAN PRESENCE

Facing starvation in a camp under siege is a dramatic instance of surviving through a humanitarian crisis. Living with chronic poverty in a camp that is an integrated part of a city showcases a humanitarian experience on the other edge of the oscillation of punctuated humanitarianism. In both circumstances, humanitarian presence is a problem, though in different ways. The limiting factor during the war of the camps was the overt violence of war and the denial of humanitarian access. In a place like Wihdat in the twenty-first century, the limits arise from the challenges of the *longue durée* and the transformations in need and capacity over this protracted displacement with no end in sight.

Humanitarianism has always had a troubled relationship to time. With a self-conception as a short-time crisis response, this practice has often been resolutely focused on the present. So the question of the future—how to envision it, plan for it, manage it—has proved to be a challenge. The passage of time, especially of a lot of time, makes this futurity problem acute. And the passage of time also introduces new problems into the humanitarian present. [55] Or, to put it perhaps more precisely, it introduces new problems into the present as lived in and against humanitarianism. Long-term need and humanitarianism produces an extended present, but not an

unchanging one. Even as people regularly describe their life in humanitarianism as one of waiting and suspension, suggesting that they confront a frustratingly unchanging landscape, in fact the present is considerably altered over time. The passage of time changes how people experience displacement and evaluate humanitarian practice. One of the most significant of these changes, though it is rarely dramatic, is that the humanitarian presence is less keenly felt over the long term. Refugee camps are the densest sites of humanitarian activity, but even here not everything is humanitarian. In fact, by now many camp residents would say little is humanitarian: that they get few services, minimal protection, and limited compassion or care.

Wihdat offers a case in point. The official name of the camp is Amman New Camp. It is called Wihdat in reference to the hundred-square-meter shelters (each known as a unit, or *wihda*) that UNRWA built to house the refugees. Even after most inhabitants have enlarged or demolished the original shelters, the memory of these units continues to loom large. Like all Palestinian refugee camps, Wihdat has changed enormously over the decades. Even residents who complain, sometimes bitterly, about conditions note the material improvements. Im Ahmed is a widow who lives with two of her sons in a space purchased by her deceased husband. This space, not even as big as a wihda—she told me it was seventy square meters—is divided into two living areas, one for her married son and his family and one for her and her single son. She recalled:

> In the beginning, the camp did not have water, did not have electricity, did not have a sewage network. Now for these things, it got better. There is electricity; there is water. In the past, you used to go stand in line for three or four hours until you filled up your water. You carried it on your head for a long distance. . . . Now the electricity is available, the water is available, there is a sewage network. In the past, we used to carry the dirty water on our heads and poured it somewhere else. Today everything is available when it comes to these things. Right or wrong. There are improvements. Washing machines, fridges—a person used to work all day on his hands.

Now fully integrated into the larger city of Amman, Wihdat is an important commercial hub for surrounding areas. Ala Hamarneh notes, "The development of commerce and services fuelled the construction boom and the real estate market in the camp. Despite the fact that the selling, buying and renting of units in the camp is officially prohibited by the UNRWA, it has become a common phenomenon, which is indirectly supported by the Jordanian authorities." [56] Luigi Achilli describes the pride that camp residents take in being a shopping destination for people from other parts of Amman. [57] UNRWA installations continue to be visually and materially important in the camp, but they no longer dominate the landscape.

Along with the lessening of humanitarian control over camp life, refugees receive a diminishing basket of services over the long term. Therefore, they often describe a feeling of humanitarianism in retreat. A striking feature of life in Wihdat, in contrast to many camps in

Lebanon and the West Bank, which have a high level of humanitarian activity conducted by dozens of humanitarian organizations, is the relative lack of involvement with the humanitarian apparatus that many residents describe. But even in places with a more visible humanitarian presence, humanitarian services have decreased significantly over the years. Thus, comments I heard in Wihdat, like "We have a rations card, but they stopped the rations now" and "UNRWA has deteriorated," are made by refugees everywhere. The fact that almost all Palestinians in Jordan are citizens of the country, with access to government services as well as those UNRWA provides, amplifies the degree of disengagement from humanitarianism that is experienced by camp residents.

There is a government health clinic not far from Wihdat, and some people receive their health care there, rather than in the UNRWA clinic in the camp. Unlike in Lebanon, where legal barriers to employment have kept UNRWA jobs highly coveted, some Wihdat residents told me that teachers, for instance, would now prefer government to UNRWA employment. Said, a lifelong camp resident, put it strongly, but not so strongly as to be out of step with what I heard from many people, when he said: "As for services for me, I do not see anything. In the past we felt it at school. We took some. But now, I do not know what the effect of UNRWA is on my life. Probably I am individualistic, but I do not feel that UNRWA has an effect on me." As a child he went to UNRWA schools, but his children attend government schools outside the camp. Said was born in 1966 and grew up during a period when the humanitarian pendulum had swung toward crisis. Israel occupied the West Bank in 1967, severing its connection to Jordan and producing a further wave of Palestinian displacement. The Jordanian government and the PLO engaged in a conflict that resulted, in 1970, in a defeat of PLO forces known as Black September. Wihdat, as a center of national and military activity, felt the effects of these events acutely. [58] Today Wihdat is an exemplar of the chronic conditions of long-term displacement. Even though he lives in a camp, for Said a connection with humanitarianism is a thing of the past.

The physical space of the camp has also been shaped by these chronic dynamics. Population pressures have led the camp to spill outside its official boundaries. There are areas that look like the camp in all respects—with the same narrow pathways, the same haphazard construction, the same style of homes, and, crucially, the same population—but that are not actually inside Wihdat. When I started research in Wihdat, I found it difficult to identify when I was inside the camp and when I was technically outside, and people who live there told me they don't always know for sure themselves. Responsibility for garbage collection—UNRWA or the municipality —is a primary distinguishing feature. People also told me that folks who live along a boundary experience a different kind of limit effect. They sometimes end up in a service gap when it comes to trash collection, as neither the municipality nor UNRWA accepts responsibility for the

street. [59] For many camp residents, sanitation workers in UNRWA uniforms were the agency's most visible presence. As Ismail, another lifelong camp resident about a decade older than Said, told me: "There are no services. . . . It is only the sanitation workers. This is what we see. This is it for UNRWA services." He remembered the days when services were greater, and also the time when they were cut off. He recalled receiving rations as a child, but not enough for his family of sixteen. And even this limited amount was reduced "bit by bit. Then they stopped. Now there is nothing."

While Said and Ismail agreed that Palestinians deserved more and better services, both experienced the absence of services more as background noise than as a daily problem. Each man had a home and a job and could get by on his own. Not only had humanitarian services receded, but their humanitarian need had also abated. There are many others who feel this lack of services as an acute deprivation. For such people, humanitarianism was present in their lives precisely through its limits and absences. I heard many accounts of people seeking assistance but being denied: often because they had an unmarried adult son who was deemed responsible for them, sometimes because they owned their home and those assets were considered in the qualification determination. As one person, outraged by this outcome, put it, "The computer rejected her." 'Adil, who came to Wihdat from the West Bank after 1967, insisted that "there is no UNRWA. It does not give us anything. . . . I am sixty-six and I do not know something called UNRWA." And when I asked him about what might improve his condition, he rejected the premise of the question. Improvement, or development, was impossible in the camp, he said: "I live in one hundred meters. Twenty-two individuals. Twenty-two individuals in one hundred meters. Can you make the one hundred meters six hundred meters, surrounded with some plants and some flowers so I wake up in the morning and plow this and water that and get a little enjoyment?" He would not get these things. No one could give him these things. Why ask about things that were impossible?

The desire for breathing room could not be realized in the camp, but only outside it. And, in fact, the constraints on space in the camp meant that the children of many residents had to move away when they established their own households. As Im Ahmed said in her cramped home, "Here in Wihdat there is no future." When I talked to people about their families, most described split geographies: two children in Wihdat and two outside; my interlocutor living in the camp, but her brothers having moved away; a daughter who moved away, but who does her shopping in the camp. And some people had, themselves, lived outside—either outside the country or elsewhere in Amman—for a period before returning. For many of these camp residents, the strongest relation to the humanitarian apparatus was the camp itself—and this relation became still more tenuous for those who moved away. Personal geographies were not, for the most part, fixed. But some did refuse any idea of leaving.

Im 'Ali told me that her daughter was urging her to move out of Wihdat to live with her family, but she refused: "I cannot leave. I told them that I will leave here only on my back." [60] Her own displacement trajectory had involved a lot of moving: from her home village of Beit Dajan (near Jaffa), with short stops in several other towns, to the West Bank refugee camp of Aqbat Jaber in Jericho, and eventually, after the Israeli occupation of the West Bank, to Wihdat. She and her husband first rented a shelter and eventually purchased their own wihda. And she has remained there ever since. Her husband passed away many years ago, and she lives today with one of her four sons. Two sons and her only daughter have moved outside the camp, and her daughter is married to a Jordanian who is not of Palestinian origin. Im 'Ali's refusal to move, yet again, contained an insistence on maintaining a connection to this place that her children did not, and because of their circumstances probably could not, manage.

This recurring question of how to live in relation to the camp today—what is desirable, what is possible?—underscores the multiple expressions of vulnerability and refusal across humanitarian space and time. Some people leave the camp because they cannot change their condition in it. Other people refuse to leave the camp because they see it as the bedrock upon which such change might be possible. And some people have both experiences. This undecidability is one part of the problem of the present in a long-term camp.

LONGEVITY, LIFE CYCLES, AND THE LIMITS OF HUMANITARIAN CARE

The dilemmas about how to live with a camp over the long term are replicated across the humanitarian field, as recipients and providers have to confront the question of what it means to live as a refugee for years on end. One thing that it can mean—and, in the Palestinian case of decades of displacement, necessarily has meant for many people—is to die as a refugee. How do humanitarian actors respond to the inevitability of death? Ordinary deaths are not easily incorporated into this field of intervention, one of whose primary purposes is to save lives—to stop people from dying from "stupid things." [61] This aim helps delimit the activities that are within the scope of humanitarian concern. Humanitarianism is a "regime of life," in the sense that Lisa Stevenson describes, a system "in which keeping people alive has become the primary goal." [62] Practitioners do not imagine immortality for aid recipients, but their orientation toward saving lives has limited their attention to servicing dying. In the Palestinian case, and in many other instances around the globe, the intention to be short-term could not be realized. Instead, humanitarian work has been compelled to confront the needs of people over their entire life

cycle. Over the long term, not just "life," but also "the end of life," has to become a humanitarian concern.

This work exposes an array of limits to humanitarian capacity. Humanitarian practitioners are concerned about the lives of the elderly, but many see the services they need as belonging to a different care regime. In addition to limits of humanitarian definition, there are stark constraints on humanitarian resources. Providing the full spectrum of medical care that many people need in old age is often beyond the financial ability of humanitarian organizations. These service limits generate confrontations with Palestinian communities, as people demand more services and raise questions about the rights and values that are embedded in these choices.

Humanitarian attention to the end of life, just like humanitarian attention to other moments of life, takes place within a broad landscape of insufficiency of care, services, and opportunity. These problems are acute in Burj al Barajneh. Chronic and widespread undercare is part of the conditions of both living and dying in the camp. Catastrophic illnesses often produce the sharpest confrontations with these conditions of undercare, as they do in many circumstances. The UNRWA health-care system—which is focused on primary care—takes a "life-cycle approach" that seeks to address the needs of the population as they move through these stages. The care available is limited but has the explicit aim of promoting "a long and healthy life." [63] The local NGO, the Women's Humanitarian Organization (WHO), works to expand access to these limited services by sending nurses on home visits to elderly patients who are unable, or unlikely, to make it to the UNRWA clinics on their own. The Social Support Society (SSS), another local organization, has established a day center for the elderly, the only one in the camp.

The elderly who are reaching the end of their lives in Palestinian refugee camps are also the last of the "Palestine generation": those who were exiled in 1948, who have memories of life in Palestine, and who have lived with acute longing for these places. So their deaths, and the inadequacy of the care they receive in their old age, bring the limits of humanitarian capacity into especially stark relief. No intervention could halt the passage of time, but this generational loss forces a confrontation with the impossibilities baked into long-term humanitarianism. The longer such a situation goes on, the harder it becomes for humanitarian practice to effect a meaningful change in the conditions of people's existence. And the work that is needed to change the underlying situation lies beyond the jurisdiction and power of humanitarian organizations. Palestinians experience this loss of the Palestine generation as yet another defeat, as a loss of Palestine yet again. This disappearance of the past is experienced as also a foreclosure of the future.

But defeat is not the only Palestinian response to this condition. The effort of local NGOs to intervene in the landscape of insufficiency, to provide additional care, indicates an intersection between humanitarian practice and Palestinian experience. In offering supplemental care, these

organizations make a humanitarian intervention into a humanitarian system. They also confront failures of Palestinian society to provide the sorts of care for the elderly that were common in the past. And these efforts highlight a recursive problem. Humanitarian presence is a sign of failure of states to protect populations, of the international community to push for political resolution, and in this case of a Palestinian state to be realized. Humanitarian practice always works with and up against the limits of its capacity to save, improve, and transform lives. A humanitarian response to humanitarian incapacities responds to, and reproduces, both these problems. These local organizations cannot "solve" the problems of humanitarianism—and, by working on its terms, they cannot escape its limits.

Conditions of health care in the camp offer a stark instance of the ways in which Palestinians feel, and are, inadequately cared for. [64] UNRWA provides primary health care—generally through clinics located in the camps—to all registered refugees who want these services. Both refugees and humanitarian actors identify this care as insufficient in many ways. [65] The protraction of the Palestinian question has required UNRWA to develop an expansive health-care model, but the services provided are necessarily limited. Refugees complain that medicines are frequently unavailable, while those that are in stock are often expired. Both refugees and doctors bemoan the overcrowding that means that patients get only a minute or two with a doctor, not enough time for a thorough evaluation. Those refugees who have the resources to get their primary care elsewhere often do so. Beyond primary care, the situation is even more difficult.

In Lebanon, if one does not have health insurance, or the independent means to pay, one will not be admitted to a hospital. I heard often from people about the crises of medical emergencies, serious illness, and hospitalization. A 2009 UNRWA assessment revealed that access to hospitalization was deeply inadequate. Reforms to the system led to complete secondary coverage and 40 percent coverage for tertiary care. [66] Given the tremendous poverty among refugees, the remaining costs were often prohibitive—something UNRWA recognized, but budget restrictions made further coverage impossible. In January 2016, with UNRWA facing a financial crisis, a further policy reform was introduced. Refugees will now have to pay up to 20 percent of secondary care costs, depending on where they receive this care. Although UNRWA has defended the change as both "in line with international good practice" [67] and intended to enable more funds to go toward tertiary care, it was met with widespread protests in the camps. [68]

There are many aspects to the problems of care—lack of medicine, limited benefits, and poor-quality service among them. My fieldwork in Burj al Barajneh introduced me to others. In UNRWA's life-cycle approach to primary care, the official goal for the elderly is "active and healthy aging"—a goal that is implemented primarily through screening for diabetes and hypertension. Talking with people in the camp, I learned about other features of these policies

toward the elderly, and I was struck by a statement I heard repeatedly: "Refugees don't have the right to live past sixty." As I probed to find out what people meant by this statement, refugees told me that UNRWA cut off access to more than primary health care after age sixty. As one elderly woman told me: "Now, at my age, I go [to UNRWA] and they do not help me. I am old. I should die." At first I wondered if this statement was correct, as people can sometimes speak in hyperbole to make a point about inequity. But I asked around within the humanitarian community and learned that what people in Burj al Barajneh had told me did reflect an UNRWA position.

A 2008 UNRWA report describes this policy: "Rationing of care is the rule, with patients over sixty not reimbursed (and thus often not treated) for end stage renal disease, cardiac surgery (even stunts *[sic]*) or cancer. While the budget constraints are clear, rationing criteria are often inadequate or too stringent." [69] In the last few years, UNRWA's health-care procedures in Lebanon have been reformed—in part in response to an American University of Beirut–UNRWA survey of health conditions in the camps, which provided a quantitative accounting of how bad they are. According to a 2011 report by Medical Aid for Palestinians, "as part of its restructuring in 2010, UNRWA halted the policy of prioritizing those patients aged under sixty years." [70] To what extent this policy change has been enacted on the ground remains unclear. Certainly, my interlocutors were unaware of it. The seepage effect of humanitarian practice means that even when a policy changes, its effects linger on. They linger in the lives of people who had not been treated. And they linger in the ways people continue to experience this judgment of their value.

This marking of age sixty as a kind of threshold in the life cycle harkens back to 1960, when, as part of an ongoing effort to purge the ration rolls of the ineligible and the deceased, UNRWA officials in Jordan suggested creating "a list of all the refugees recorded as of sixty years of age and above in a given camp or area." The government should then check its register of deaths "in order to ascertain which of the refugees in question were still alive." [71] Precisely because reporting deaths would have meant a reduction in rations for remaining family members, people were reluctant to do so. Paying for burials was proposed as one mechanism to increase reporting. Punitive suggestions also included discontinuing registration of babies until reporting increased. [72]

The archival record of information-management efforts around death describes an expectation that those over sixty might be likely to be dying. The more recent instance is a policy decision to offer different life-sustaining services to those over that age. And it is not only around services that sixty is a marker. It is also the age of mandatory retirement from UNRWA employment. So, age sixty stands for the end of both economic productivity and full access to services. This marking suggests that the life cycle is divided in two—the stage of active living and the stage of

preparing for dying—and that as people cross the threshold they need to redirect their energies and attentions. The decision to withhold or restore services to parts of the population on the basis of age is clear evidence of the "differences in values attached to lives." [73]

Palestinians certainly see these decisions as being about much more than access to services. They see the age thresholds as reflecting humanitarian decisions about both the "right to life," a right they see as denied to the elderly; and an assigned role in society—the role of preparing to die. "I am old. I should die." People may not entirely accept this judgment of their value and role, but they cannot wholly escape its impact. The humanitarian politics of life is defined in part by the tension between the goal of valuing all lives equally and the necessity of differentiating among lives. Like emergency medicine, humanitarian action requires triage—decisions about whom to help first and, given resource limits, whom not to help at all. [74] The necessity of triage is an uncomfortable but unavoidable feature of this intervention. In a crisis, the criteria of attention produce hierarchies of need (the more life-threatening conditions receive aid first). But in chronic conditions, where life itself is not the central question, triage produces hierarchies of kind.

Although "active aging" is an explicit part of UNRWA's health-care vision, the limits of humanitarian capacity mean that aging remains largely a non-serviced experience. The elderly are mostly dependent on their families for assistance, and those without family present are particularly vulnerable. When I visited the Rashadiyya camp outside Tyre in southern Lebanon, an employee in a local NGO identified the absence of such assistance as a crucial service gap. In Rashadiyya, Samar told me, most activities were focused on children and no one paid attention to the elderly. The elderly, she said, sit in their houses and no one cares for them. There should be a center for them to gather, spend time, and talk about Palestine. And, Samar argued, the center would benefit the whole community, because the elderly "are our memory." As she talked, she kept returning to the imbalance of attention: "Yes, children have rights, but the elderly have rights too." This general question about the correct allocation of care has additional significance in this instance because the elderly are the last Palestine generation: the last people who could talk about their own memories of Palestine. To fail them, therefore, is to fail the entire community, to disrespect its past and therefore to impede its future.

The limits that Samar described are not the whole of the service experience. WHO and SSS are examples of local organizations that are trying to respond to the gaps in coverage, for the elderly and other vulnerable populations. And there is both humanitarian and political significance to their efforts. To a certain extent their work can be viewed as a humanitarian response to system failures. And here the "system" is itself a humanitarian organization, namely UNRWA. As Palestinian organizations, they view their practices as also political. They insist that all Palestinian life has value, that the elderly have a specific value as members of the

Palestine generation, and that supporting these people will strengthen the capacity of the entire community to persist and resist. [75] This care is different from "anonymous care" through which "life becomes an indifferent value [such that] it no longer matters *who* you are, only that you cooperate in the project of staying alive." [76] The imperative to care for the Palestinian elderly comes not just from their generic status as human beings, but also from their position as a link to Palestine.

The Women's Humanitarian Organization was established in 1993 by Oulfat Mahmoud, a resident of Burj al Barajneh. Oulfat began her career as a nurse, and she worked as one during the war of the camps. During this period, she told me, "the camp was under siege, no ambulance could enter. . . . I thought people died very cheaply. That was a turning point in my life when I decided to quit nursing." She also could not cope with the work of triage: "That was horrible. Who am I to decide who will live or not?" As difficult as this experience was, Oulfat said it "made me stronger toward my cause and my people's rights." And so she started WHO. As the name suggests, the organization's founding purpose was to provide services for women, focused on empowerment and opportunity. This original mission remains a central goal of the organization, but it also has programs—such as those for the elderly—that define the constituencies in different terms. Both men and women receive services from the home visit program, which is a key feature of WHO's elder care.

In the course of my research, I accompanied nurses on a number of these visits. Almost all the patients had diabetes and high blood pressure, the most common chronic medical conditions in the camp. The key intervention in these visits was to check blood pressure and insulin levels. Each patient had a notebook they kept at home in which the nurse recorded the levels. The nurses always asked the patients whether they were taking their medicines (some said they couldn't afford them), whether they were eating right (too much bread and rice in the diet is also a chronic problem), and whether they were getting any exercise. The nurses did not provide medicine, though I was told that WHO will sometimes help with a delivery from the UNRWA pharmacy if patients can't get there. Even in cases where the insulin or blood pressure numbers were very bad, the nurses intervened no more aggressively than to encourage patients to stay on track with medicine and eating. They chatted a bit with the patients and went on to the next house. Visits typically lasted not much more than fifteen minutes, which is much longer than an appointment with a doctor.

Even though the actual services the nurses provide are limited, they seem to amount to something more. In providing another eye on someone's health, they expand the *sense* of care, to let patients know that someone is attentive to their condition and will know, and be concerned, if it worsens. The WHO nurses may not be able to change the actual limits of available health care, but they can mitigate the feeling of abandonment. And this effect is not insignificant. No patient

we visited seemed anything other than pleased to see the nurses. The patients might not all have been compliant with medical recommendations, and they certainly did not feel that they had all the help they needed, but there was no hint of the frustration and even resentment that is often evident in the waiting rooms of the UNRWA health clinics. These small interventions push back against, "unsettle," [77] people's experience of the limits of care.

In addition to this sort of health-care outreach, in Burj al Barajneh there is a center of precisely the sort that Samar called for in Rashadiyya. The Social Support Society, established in 2006, runs the Active Aging House, a day center for elderly men and women. The criteria for participation in the free program are the degrees of social isolation, with priority as follows: the never married; the married and widowed with no children; those with only female children; and those with male children who are out of the country or otherwise absent. On days I visited the center, there were fifteen to twenty people there, usually twice as many women as men. A TV was usually on in the corner, tuned either to dubbed Turkish soap operas (popular across the Arab world) or to a station that played Palestinian nationalist songs over a montage of pictures of the nakba. More avid attention was paid to the former.

The activities are oriented around keeping people physically and mentally active. In general they seek to help people endure old age, to remain connected to community, and to stay healthy. After one day's art activity—coloring in pictures from elementary school alphabet worksheets— the center's director told the participants that the goal of the activity was to have them focus, to identify the object in the picture, and to color it in correctly. This purpose explained to me why she had been chastising the women when they picked the "wrong" colors for objects. Participation in the center gives these elderly a social outlet, a continued presence in society, and an excuse to leave their homes.

The challenges of growing old, and especially of growing old alone, are not unique to Palestinians, or to humanitarian situations, [78] but they are exacerbated by these conditions. Chronic undertreatment leads to frailty; the material conditions of the camp make it exceptionally hard for those who have mobility problems to get around (this problem applies equally to the disabled); and generally inadequate social services keep people more isolated than they would otherwise be. The humanitarian condition thus has a direct effect on the experience of aging, whether or not humanitarian actors provide services for this population. And the impending death of the last Palestine generation—without return or resolution—brings the political failures of both Palestinian political leaders and the "international community" into sharp relief.

The efforts of organizations like WHO and SSS to provide services to the elderly are meant to disrupt the material circumstances and value ascriptions that are part of living in the humanitarian condition. They aim to improve the lives of those who receive services, but they

also seek to make a different claim about the community. To this extent, they speak back not only to perceived humanitarian devaluations of the elderly, but also to failures in the Palestinian community to maintain social traditions of respect for the elderly and political recognition of the particular importance of this generation. Social practices of elder care have been degraded by the material difficulties in people's lives. Political recognition is troubled by the fact that the Palestine generation are not just those who know Palestine, but the ones who left Palestine. The following generations have lived with the consequences and sometimes blame their elders. Activities that bring young people to the Active Aging House to hear stories of Palestine from these elders, emphasizing the importance of their knowledge, are intended to be restorative of traditions of respect.

The efforts of organizations like WHO and SSS to intervene in the conditions of undercare that dominate the refugee service experience are, to be sure, bounded in their effects. They serve a small number of people and can only help these people a little bit. But these efforts are part of a challenge by Palestinians to the circumstances of their life, and a claim to more value and greater rights than they see others ascribing to them. In this way, by pushing at the boundaries of care and value, they are unsettling these limits. Their efforts are also "unsettling" in another sense, along the lines that Michelle Murphy describes when she talks about "unsettling care" as a critical practice that challenges an easy equation of care and "the good." I do not mean that the Palestinian organizations approach their work as a project of critique, but that their practice reveals the recursive problem at the center of humanitarian care. As a former head of UNHCR put it: "There are no humanitarian solutions to humanitarian problems." [79]

LIVING WITH DYING IN MIND

However difficult their circumstances, the deaths of the elderly are at least age appropriate. Because of the conditions of pervasive poverty, restricted opportunity, and inadequate health coverage, many younger Palestinians think about their lives with a shortened horizon, and live with dying in mind. In addition to the belief that old age is a "right" not granted to Palestinians, people who are still relatively young often talk about their lives as being "over." [80] They may have hope for their kids, but they imagine little for themselves anymore. So, while age sixty is a kind of institutional threshold for life-cycle stages, personal thresholds—and the point at which Palestinians tip over into thinking about dying as their "proper" activity—often come at a considerably younger age. This condition of living with dying in mind echoes both Stevenson's discussion of the "psychic life of biopolitics" [81] and Lauren Berlant's account of "slow death." [82] When refugees describe this experience, they often evaluate it in terms that anthropologists

would recognize as necropolitical. They do not view themselves as failing to thrive, or being allowed to fail to thrive, but as being killed.

To consider this condition, I turn to a conversation I had with Faris, at the time a forty-two-year-old father of two. Faris was born and raised in Burj al Barajneh. His childhood memories centered around "the revolution" *(al thawra)* —the period from 1969 to 1982 when the PLO mobilized large numbers of camp residents for the resistance and when it also effectively governed the camps. Born in 1969, Faris remembered the fedayeen as a phantom presence. He had heard of them but had not seen them. The revolution ended with Palestinian defeat and the PLO exiled from Lebanon. When talking about the present, Palestinians often use the term *al thawra* to refer to the PLO's political factions that are active in the camps. And when they do so, there is frequently bitterness in the reference. Along with the withdrawal of the PLO, Faris experienced the increasing hostility of the Lebanese government and population toward Palestinians (expressed through legal discrimination) and the diminution of UNRWA services. Too young to have been an active participant in struggle during the heady days, but old enough to have memories of life during those lost optimistic years, Faris had a dismal view of the world now. His comments underscore that, even as humanitarian care cannot restore people's rights, withholding such care is experienced as an attack on both those rights and their lives.

Reflecting on his life and the life of his community, Faris painted a bleak picture of possibility and was damningly critical of nearly every actor on the Palestinian scene—UNRWA, the PLO, the various factions, the Lebanese government, and others. Like people anywhere and in any condition, camp residents have a range of attitudes, experiences, and emotional states. Life is difficult for almost everybody, but people live with these difficulties in different ways. Faris's gloomy views fall toward one end of the spectrum, but he is by no means exceptional in his evaluation. His material circumstances were not, in fact, among the worst in the camp. He had a small grocery shop that enabled him to provide for his family's basic needs. But that income was not enough to cover the costs of medical (or other) emergencies.

Faris summed up his view of life in the camp by saying, "Every day we die—we are dying slowly. There is no interest in us. No one cares for us." This abandonment of Palestinian life can be understood in biopolitical terms as disallowing life "to the point of death." [83] But Palestinians mostly do not feel generically disregarded, but rather targeted as political subjects. [84] They have demands, for both services and sovereignty, and view the abandonment of Palestinian subjects as a project to undermine their capacity to press those claims. Faris thinks this tactic has had some real success and sees his own views—his own desires for himself and his children—as evidence: "When we were young we used to say, 'We want to return.' There was love for Palestine. We love it; we do not say no. But in the conditions we are experiencing—no. Let them open any European country for us." That so many Palestinians can no longer imagine a future in Palestine

is, for Faris, a sign that they are dying "every day." Where undercare for the elderly seems to mark them as being in the stage of dying, in Faris's view that stage is expanding across the life cycle.

Poor health care was what Faris talked about the most in our conversation, but this threat was not the only one that he, and others, identified. The basic infrastructure of the camp is also a threat to life. Everywhere one goes, there is a jumble of electrical wires and water pipes overhead, a result of the inadequate and ad hoc power and plumbing networks in place. I heard many stories of people being electrocuted by loose wires, especially in rainy weather, when the camp alleys often flood. As Faris said, "We are scared of the electric cables and . . . the water pipes. This is our fear because in winter, the children cannot walk on the street because it is all . . . the street, the ground is electrified. Most of the time when a child, an elderly person, or anyone, dies, it is from electricity." In these conditions, sources of life can become causes of death.

In Faris's view, the inadequacy of available health care rendered something that should be life-sustaining instead both degrading and life-threatening. It is degrading because people need to beg for assistance in order to get access to care. It is life-threatening because such begging is not always successful and many people are denied access. As he put it, once a refugee has begged every organization in the camp for money and come up short (as he argued was inevitable), "what would you do? You would borrow money or sell your house or sell your furniture. There is nothing left—nothing left to sell. Or wait for [your] death." UNRWA and the political factions that govern the camp were the primary targets of Faris's ire: "UNRWA is a liar. The revolution is a liar. All of them are liars." As a consequence: "There is no concern. The popular committee doesn't care for us, nor do the factions. Nor do the Islamic groups. There is no interest—not any. Not in the old nor in the child. They don't see the people's suffering." In his view, the ill and the vulnerable are being directed simply to prepare for death.

FIGURE 18. A wall in the camp, Burj al Barajneh, Lebanon, 2012. Photo by Ilana Feldman.

Like many people, Faris had not just a general commentary on the problems of access to care in the camp, but also a personal story of medical hardship. His account shows both a confrontation with humanitarian limits and the work of claim making. He told me that his son's leg had been crushed in an accident and required an operation, but that the hospital demanded U.S. $3,000 ahead of the surgery: "Where am I going to get the three thousand dollars from? I started to beg from here and from here until I managed to [gather the money]." UNRWA would cover the hospital stay ("the bed"), but not the operation itself: "How much would the bed cost,

two hundred dollars? They don't pay anything. They should cover the whole operation. We are people who are known. We are not rich; we are poor." From Faris's perspective the denial of support was a denial of value, but in insisting that UNRWA *should* pay and that the Palestinians are *known,* he sought to reassert that value and to make a rights claim. So perhaps he is not as utterly defeated as he thinks. [85]

Faris linked the psychological problems that are widespread in the camp to the lack of care and the ever-present possibility of dying, and he identified the young as particularly vulnerable to feelings of defeat. As he told me: "Our psyche is tired. And this new generation will have a more tired psyche. The kid of six years—when he turns sixteen, he stops thinking of something called Palestine. He begins to think about how he can eat, drink, and live." His own generation lived through the suffering of war, he said, but this generation "lives in misery." With little work available for Palestinians, hope is quickly lost. He saw drug abuse as a direct result of these conditions, suggesting that many a young man starts drinking and using drugs "to forget his life and the misery he lives in. All of this is our environment." For Faris, this progressive worsening of the Palestinian psyche, this kind of living, is part of the death of Palestinian community. The Palestine generation is dying without return. And the young may live without political struggle or political imagination.

When Palestinians declare the constricted service landscape a denial of right—not just the right to generic life, but also the right to full life into old age and to a vibrant Palestinian life at any age—they (using other words) name humanitarian services as both biopolitical and necropolitical. The biopolitical "decision" about the lives they may live and the sort of dying they might experience is, in many Palestinians' view, matched with a necropolitical determination that this people, even if not any particular Palestinian person, must die. [86] Humanitarian actors such as UNRWA certainly do not seek to be part of a necropolitical project. Their work must be distinguished from, for instance, the Israeli weaponization of humanitarianism as part of its military strategy. And most Palestinians acknowledge this difference. Even as people offer trenchant critiques of humanitarian operations generally and UNRWA's work in particular, many are also appreciative of much of UNRWA's effort. In identifying the necropolitical features of the work around dying, they call attention to the impossibility of wholly separating the humanitarian politics of life from other sorts of politics: the international geopolitics that ensures that Palestinian needs and demands never get their due; the politics of siege that makes Palestinian lives repeatedly vulnerable; and the degraded politics of the Palestinian political leadership, which makes it harder to challenge these attacks and inequities.

The view of someone like Faris that the difficulties of Palestinian circumstances in Lebanon have transformed the condition of living into one of dying shows how all of these are brought

together in people's experience. Confronting the failures of Palestinian politics and the impotence of international humanitarianism, Faris seems to have moved beyond hoping for a better configuration of life and death: "We have no value," he said. Yet this "anticipation of death" [87] is not the only Palestinian response to their difficult circumstances. The work of WHO and SSS to change the "sort of life [and death] that people may or may not live [and die]" [88] is another. To understand the politics of living with dying in Palestinian refugee camps, both responses must be recognized. Neither response escapes the limits of humanitarian care, but the latter is an attempt to push back against the impoverishment of imagination that has been a consequence of this condition. Because humanitarianism helps define the world in which Palestinians live, they not only judge or evaluate these problems, but also experience their lives, their value, and their community in part through these terms.

As they encounter humanitarianism's limits, providers and recipients are repeatedly forced to confront what they cannot do. These limits illuminate lives that cannot be saved when humanitarian access is denied, people who cannot be recognized and brought in when geopolitical boundaries shift, and communities that are stuck in the inability or unwillingness of a range of actors to address their needs and claims. These moments are occasions of failure—failure to accomplish a humanitarian mission or failure to endure in the face of ongoing difficulty. They can also be occasions for creative action—finding ways to work in the cracks and crevices of systemic limits, finding ways to remake parts of one's world and one's life despite impossibility. The next chapter turns to how, despite these limits, Palestinians have encountered and engaged the future.

Non-humanitarian Futures?

PALESTINIAN REFUGEES SEEK A WAY out of humanitarian life that does not evacuate their political demands. They want not to "settle," either in the sense of *tawtin* (physical resettlement) or in the sense of acceding to a depleted and defeated political imaginary. There is no single vision for this Palestinian future. A range of idioms have been available within which to imagine the future and the pathways to it. These idioms include nationalist, Islamic, capitalist, developmentalist, and revolutionary frameworks. And there have been hopeful moments in a long history of suffering: the years of the "revolution" in Lebanon (1969–82), when the PLO promised to fight for Palestine, and also offered protection and opportunity to refugees in Lebanon; the time of the first intifada (1987–93), when grassroots resistance to the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip mobilized Palestinians in the territories and energized the community in exile; and even the early period after the Oslo accords, the 1993 agreements that created the Palestinian Authority in the occupied territories and that many hoped would lead to an independent Palestinian state.

The implementation of the Oslo accords had immediate consequences for the humanitarian apparatus. The advent of the Palestinian Authority substantially redirected the flow of aid dollars, as resources were concentrated in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, with other areas of Palestinian life and exile increasingly marginalized. The Oslo agreement also occasioned the move of UNRWA's headquarters from Vienna, where it had been since being displaced by the civil war in Lebanon, to Gaza City. And UNRWA began a process of actively planning, for the first time, its own winding down—with the intention that its responsibilities would be handed over to the new Palestinian state. [1] These inchoate plans to dismantle the aid apparatus were halted by the failure of the Oslo process to conclude "permanent status" negotiations by 1999, as

specified in the agreement, by the outbreak of the second intifada in 2000, and by the subsequent degradation of Palestinian life. [2]

Each occasion of hope for the future has ended in disillusionment. Israeli forces pushed the PLO out of Lebanon, leaving a vulnerable refugee population behind. The hopes placed in the Oslo process are dashed. Israel has further entrenched its control over Palestinian life, and the Palestinian Authority has proved both inept and corrupt. Because of these bitter disappointments, young Palestinians sometimes look back at the first intifada—long venerated as the "blessed uprising"—as a waste of energy and a waste of lives. As E. Valentine Daniel argues about the nation in the context of the Sri Lankan civil war, such events have sometimes disrupted the dominant future frameworks, rendering them momentarily or more lastingly "unavailable." [3] Too often, especially in recent years, the future seems to be foreclosed. The current moment is marked by a widespread sense of frustration and even despair.

There are many sources of constraint on Palestinian lives. Responsibility for the foreclosure of the future lies with many actors, among them the host countries, other Arab countries, the Palestinian leadership, the international community, and Israel—and people I spoke with in my research pointed the finger at all of them. Attention to the phalanx of impediments—to the fact that, as Rosemary Sayigh put it, Palestinians have "too many enemies" [4]—does not undermine the centrality of the domain of care in the formation of this constrained world. In the conditions in which refugees live and die, humanitarian limits seep into Palestinian experience and participate in the foreclosure of the future. People experience this foreclosure both as an individual matter, when they cannot imagine that their own lives, or their children's, will get better; and as a collective phenomenon, when they fear that the struggle for Palestinian independence is lost. The multiple impossibilities in humanitarian care have contributed to a circumstance in which political imagination is constrained and the future often appears lost.

But if the twenty-first-century present and future look grim for many Palestinians, it was not ever thus. And even now, frustration and despair are not all there is. This chapter turns from the question of constraint on possibility to look at how, in different moments, facing different challenges, Palestinians have engaged and worked toward non-humanitarian futures. Not all work on envisioning the future proceeds with reference to humanitarianism. But I am concerned in this chapter with ways of thinking and enacting potentially non-humanitarian futures that do so precisely on the terrain of humanitarianism itself. [5] These engagements are another dimension of the politics of living in humanitarianism. And like all such politics, they both make creative use of humanitarian tools and encounter the limits of this framework.

HUMANITARIANISM AND REVOLUTION

UNRWA has been one of the most consistent institutional presences in Palestinian lives across the geography of exile. But the agency is not alone in having this reach. The PLO and its institutions have also operated in every place where Palestinian communities live. Established in 1964, and controlled by Fatah since 1969, the PLO has often been constrained in its capacity to operate, and sometimes blocked almost entirely, by host-country policies. From the 1970s, when the PLO moved its base of operations from Jordan to Lebanon in the wake of Black September, until 1982, when the organization was forced out of the country after Israel's invasion, Lebanon was the center of both Palestinian resistance and Palestinian institutions.[6] During its heyday, the Palestinian revolution comprised a military organization, a framework for political mobilization, and an intersecting array of state-like institutions.[7] Here, I consider the last. Yezid Sayigh describes the wide range of services provided to Palestinians by PLO-affiliated institutions. He argues that the most important effect of Palestinian institution building has been "the political implications of institutionalisation. . . . [The PLO] 'is the organised expression of Palestinian national identity.'"[8] Cognizant of this importance, I consider the role of humanitarian engagement in the PLO's state-building work. The ability to provide aid to one's own population, and to extend that aid to others near and far, is one marker of state capacity.

The Palestinian landscape is littered with material reminders of the (at least temporary) defeat of Palestinian national aspirations. In sharp contrast to the time of the revolution, Palestinians in Lebanon today confront numerous restrictions on economic opportunity and a political leadership that seems to have no capacity to move a national agenda forward. In recognition of this stagnation, Diana Allan describes camp residents as "refugees not only of 'the catastrophe' *(al-Nakba)* —their 1948 expulsion from their homes in Palestine—but of *al-thawra* ."[9] The fate of key institutions demonstrates the devastating effects of the PLO's departure from Lebanon. The workshops of Samed, or the Palestinian Martyrs Society—the PLO's economic wing, which once employed large numbers of camp residents—are gone. When residents of camps like Burj al Barajneh recall the camp's past, they often gesture fleetingly at lots "over there" where the workshops used to be. Today, when employment opportunities are severely constrained, the absence of this PLO-based economy is acutely felt. Other buildings, such as the "Gaza hospital" in the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps, are in a state of ruination.[10] The hospital was the premier installation of another PLO institution, the Palestine Red Crescent Society (PRCS). It provided free health care to Palestinians and Lebanese. During the Sabra and Shatila massacres, as well as during the war of the camps, the hospital was a hub for treating the wounded and thus was targeted by combatants. The building still exists, but, with the medical facility ultimately destroyed, it has become a "gathering," one of the informal, unrecognized shelters for refugee life.[11]

Lebanon was the center of revolutionary activity, but both Samed and the PRCS operated,

unevenly, across the spaces of Palestinian exile and, in the case of Samed, also had a global reach, with workshops and collaborations in other allied states (particularly in Africa). [12] And both Samed and the PRCS still exist, though the latter is more vibrant than the former. The Oslo accords sounded the death knell for an already much-diminished Samed, a process insightfully described by Raja Khalidi. [13] The PRCS runs hospitals and clinics inside and outside Palestine, offering important health services in these locales. Both institutions described their purpose as providing support for the national struggle. In 1978, seeking support from other national Red Cross societies for building a nursing school in Tyre, the PRCS identified its work as part of PLO planning: "The PLO now represents the Palestinians everywhere and plans for them in all fields. Health is one of these plans. The PRCS is responsible for the Health and Social services for the Palestinians. This coincides with the PLO planning." [14] In building state institutions in exile, the PLO, like the Sahrawi independence movement that Alice Wilson studies, enacted "sovereignty in exile." [15] Both the PRCS and Samed saw their efforts to change Palestinian lives as part of the work of liberation—liberating Palestinians even before the liberation of Palestine. In doing so, these organizations operated at the intersection of humanitarianism and revolution, in related but also distinct ways.

Samed and the PRCS illuminate how a national liberation movement takes up humanitarian concerns. They offer instances of both humanitarianism *defied* and humanitarianism *enacted* . In thinking about their humanitarian intersections, I am precisely interested in the question of how a liberation organization that was dedicated to ending displacement and resolving dispossession engaged the humanitarian question in a quest for a different kind of future. Much of the scholarship on humanitarianism, anthropological and otherwise, begins by thinking about humanitarianism as a form of foreign or international intervention in a situation of suffering. [16] And it is very often the case that humanitarian actors do exactly that. But humanitarian action is not just a response to "distant suffering." [17] It also involves local actors in a variety of ways. [18] International organizations hire "local staff" to help provide aid to suffering compatriots. [19] As we have seen, in the Palestinian case, the vast majority of humanitarian workers are themselves Palestinian refugees and so occupy the dual position of aid provider and recipient. Samed and the PRCS are instances of a different, but related, phenomenon: national organizations engaging in their own humanitarian activity. [20]

FIGURE 19. Palestine Red Crescent Society headquarters, Ramallah, 2000. ICRC audiovisual archives. Photo by Ursula Meissner.

These organizations' own publications—*Samed al-Iqtisadi* and *Balsam,* called the Journal of the Palestine Red Crescent Society until 1982—are my primary sources and objects of analysis. In publishing journals that explained their mission and trumpeted their achievements, Samed and the PRCS participated in a wider humanitarian media field. Media is a crucial part of the humanitarian enterprise generally—used to call public attention to suffering and to generate donations. [21] The articles in the Samed and PRCS journals identified the respective organization's place within the broader humanitarian field, at times claiming identity with the larger apparatus and at times claiming distinction from it. Media was also a crucial part of the Palestinian revolution. *Samed al-Iqtisadi* and *Balsam* were part of a broader PLO-supported media landscape that included newspapers, radio, and film production. All this media served to proclaim and propagate the Palestinian revolution and its institutions. The audience for such Arabic-language journals comprised both Palestinians and other sympathetic Arabs. The journals' contents, as is no doubt obvious, are neither "objective" records of this work nor primarily "subjective" accounts of recipient or worker experiences, though both journals do include such accounts. The journals serve a propaganda purpose. They showcase the efforts and successes of the respective institutions and highlight their effects on Palestinian participants. The

journals served the revolution in still another way, publishing research articles on the Palestinian economic, social, and health condition, and thus providing information and analysis for planners and activists. Both journals continue to appear, but I concentrate on the issues from the 1970s and 1980s. I read these periodicals principally for their articulation of the vision and purpose of Samed and the PRCS.

Broadly, Samed pursued an alternative to living with aid indefinitely through what can be called "revolutionary development." It ran workshops in a number of refugee camps, producing furniture, clothing, and other goods, and always described its activities as a key part of the Palestinian revolution. [22] Precisely through providing employment and contributing to a vibrant camp economy, it created opportunities for people to leave the need for humanitarian aid behind. Income generation was revolutionary work—to help create self-sufficiency and economic self-determination. In 1981, Robin Wright reported in the *Christian Science Monitor* that "with 6,500 full-time employees, and another 4,000 part time, the revolutionary group ranks as one of the largest employers in Lebanon." [23] She quotes from a Samed booklet that describes its aims as being "to create the nucleus for a Palestinian revolutionary economy, to develop economic self-sufficiency for the revolutionary and the masses, and to lay the foundation for the economic structure of the future Palestinian soviet." In addition to its industrial activities, Samed had a film production department and, beginning in 1978, published *Samed al-Iqtisadi* monthly. [24]

The PRCS, no less revolutionary in orientation, pursued a humanitarian politics that both operated according to the classic terms of humanitarian relief and enabled the emergence of a revolutionary persona: dignified, steadfast, committed to struggle. Since 2006, the PRCS has been a full member of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies—through a negotiation that also admitted the Israeli Magen David Adom society to full membership. [25] From its establishment, the PCRS described its work in the terms of this international movement. [26] Its 1968 founding charter states that "the society's system is based on the Geneva conventions and the principles of the international Red Crescent and Red Cross." [27] The PRCS engaged a humanitarian politics not by challenging the parameters of the humanitarian mandate, nor by shading into human rights or development work, but precisely by pursuing classic humanitarian labor to support and promote the Palestinian revolutionary character. Both Samed and the PRCS tried to defend and transform Palestinian people and Palestinian society. Their aim was to build the nation's institutions before the nation's territory was restored.

Humanitarianism for the Revolution

The PRCS was founded in Jordan in 1968, and its first clinic was established in the Marka refugee camp. When the PLO departed to Lebanon after Black September, the focus of its institutional work also shifted, though the PRCS operated—and still operates—across the geography of Palestinian displacement. UNRWA provides primary medical care to refugees across its area of operations, with clinics in each of the refugee camps. The PRCS joined this medical landscape, in part as a humanitarian response to inadequacies in the humanitarian system. As Rashid Khalidi noted about the growth of PLO-sponsored services in the mid-1980s, "as UNRWA services declined due to budgetary reasons, and as the social fabric of Lebanon deteriorated (in large measure—but not entirely—due to the conflict over the Palestinian presence there), a larger and larger burden was thrust on the PLO. Its services thus grew in response to needs rather than as a result of any preconceived plan. They also had to grow in great haste." [28] The PRCS journal also noted not so much that the growth of services was ad hoc, but that the organization took on care in areas where UNRWA failed: "UNRWA services are few and are insufficient. The UNRWA clinics are incapable of meeting the demand." [29]

PRCS services filled a gap in the services being offered by the international assistance apparatus, and they did so in the name of the Palestinian nation and its future state. PRCS work included providing health and social services to Palestinians, offering rehabilitation services for those wounded in war (whether civilians or fighters), and training a medical cadre to serve the people. The PRCS did not identify its humanitarian activity as being in any way in tension or at odds with its revolutionary contributions. As the PLO representative put it, addressing a PRCS conference in 1977: "It is a mistake to imagine that the Palestinian people's struggle . . . is limited to the armed struggle. The humanitarian struggle of the Palestinian revolution is conducted alongside the armed struggle. And this humanitarian struggle is best represented by the PRCS." [30] This formulation was not unique to Palestinians. Jennifer Johnson has described a very similar use of "humanitarian language" in the Algerian anticolonial struggle, where the National Liberation Front established an Algerian Red Crescent Society as part of its claim for independence. [31] What did it mean to the PRCS to be pursuing humanitarianism *for* the revolution? As I have already suggested, it meant several things: a commitment to working according to internationally accepted humanitarian principles, serving as a voice for Palestinians to the international humanitarian community, and building up the Palestinian spirit of dignity and steadfastness. The journal advertised all these efforts.

The fate of the Gaza hospital highlights the dual struggles of revolution and assistance. The hospital began as a small clinic and then grew rapidly in both size and repute. A report in *Balsam* from 1984 noted: "The Gaza medical complex was one of the most important centers of steadfastness during the Zionist war. It helped Beirut remain steadfast despite the barbaric shelling. Work did not stop. . . . The medical team and volunteers proved their role in the

struggle. Everyone worked hard despite the power outages, lack of water, and the siege. The complex itself was shelled several times." [32]

The hospital survived the Israeli invasion with its functions intact, but it did not survive the ensuing war of the camps. [33] With the hospital's equipment destroyed and the building heavily damaged, its personnel were seconded to other medical centers. Reflecting on the trajectory of events, the PRCS Lebanon director stated, "The strike that hit the Gaza hospital at the beginning of the camps war was harsh but was not fatal. We had 25 million Liras in losses and the psychological losses are incalculable. But the employees, including the administrators, the doctors, and others, were stronger than the tragedy. This is not new to us. The first principle of the Society is not to look behind, but to learn from our experiences." [34]

One lesson the PRCS took from the destruction of the Gaza hospital was the need for medical self-sufficiency in each camp: "The lessons learned from the camps war and interest in the Palestinian individual are behind the new work plan of the PRCS that aspires for self-sufficiency in the camp by building a complete hospital in every camp. This is to avoid the suffering of the Shatila camp during the camps war. The lives of twenty-one of the murdered in the camp would have been saved if they had good medical services." [35] The attacks on "different Palestinian hospitals, schools, and Samed facilities" were identified by the journal as "policies intended to eliminate Palestinian steadfastness." But, even though the Gaza hospital was never restored, "the society built a hospital in Shatila after the camps war to meet the needs of the residents of Sabra and Shatila after the occupation of the Gaza hospital and the siege. The employees at the hospital are hardworking and experienced. What the hospital offers is heroic."

The value that Palestinians saw in the PRCS institutions is highlighted in interviews with patients who praised the quality of care and identified the revolutionary contribution. Some impoverished patients who were offered free services nonetheless "insisted on paying as a donation to support the hospital." [36] Students training in the PRCS's medical programs described their work as personally valuable and nationally important. In 1977, a student in a PRCS nursing school insisted that people participated in these programs "not only for the certificate *(shihada)*, but because of our belief in our people's right to life and dignity." She said they were being trained "not to discriminate in their work and to continue in humanitarian service for the victims of racist, Zionist aggression among our people." [37] A nurse in the Gaza hospital urged "every young woman who believes in the Palestinian people's right to life and freedom to join the PRCS . . . to have confidence in ourselves." As these quotations suggest, it was not only recipients of PRCS assistance whose dignity was enhanced, but also and at least equally the staff themselves.

Along with these Palestine-specific discussions, in its descriptions of its humanitarian endeavors, the journal highlighted that the PRCS followed the key principles of international humanitarian work—impartiality central among them—and that it had a place in the international

humanitarian system. *Balsam* was keen to emphasize, in other words, that the PCRS was a member of "the humanitarian club." [38] It was, the journal indicated in 1978, committed to "providing services to all those in need, without discrimination or favoritism." [39] Describing the work in one of its hospitals in Damascus, the journal noted in 1975: "The activities of the PRCS are not limited to providing treatment and medicine for the Palestinian people, but instead, its hospitals and clinics are open day and night for the sons of the Arab Umma from various countries. Because it feels that the humanitarian message was abandoned by others, its work is dedicated to every person in need of treatment and medication. It does not refuse any person who knocks on its door. It embraces, sponsors, and rejuvenates with vigor, vitality, and hope." [40] And in April of the same year—after the outbreak of violence that inaugurated the civil war—the journal reprinted an article from the Lebanese daily *An-Nahar* that described this impartiality of assistance: "Medical staff from the Red Crescent mobilized from the first moment to help all the wounded and without discrimination. . . . They did not reject any wounded person regardless of their background. . . . The medical team consisted of Lebanese and Palestinian volunteers who stayed at the hospital for four days." [41] The repeated underscoring of the centrality of internationally accepted humanitarian principles in PRCS practice made a claim about the character of this organization and of the Palestinian people and Palestinian revolution more generally. Reflecting, in 1978, upon ten years of existence, the journal summed up the work of the PRCS by saying that it represented the "humanitarian [or human] face of the revolution *(al-wajh al-insani)* ." [42]

In doing so, the journal engaged with the Palestinian masses *(jamahir)* and "brought the voice of the right of Palestinians *(haqq al-filastini)* to various international forums" such as the World Health Organization, the International Committee of the Red Cross, and international peacekeepers. [43] The journal regularly broadcast its international connections. And it used them to make Palestinian suffering visible. It also underscored the difference between the Palestinian commitment to international community and law and the Israeli disregard of those values. As *Balsam* described in 1979, "The series of Israeli horrors increases daily, episode after episode, increasing its hellish campaign without deterrent or sanction, without following custom, law, or international conventions. . . . As Israel kills, the PRCS heals the wounded and tends to the needy, offering its services in each and every one of its centers." [44]

Reflecting on the PRCS experience during the Israeli occupation of Lebanon, *Balsam* described its diverse efforts:

> The PRCS employed all its capabilities. It treated the wounded and assisted the displaced. Its humanitarian and revolutionary message expanded to include mobilizing international public opinion regarding the events in Lebanon and coordinating effective positions with different international humanitarian institutions to expose the fascist practices of the Zionist entity. . . . The activities of the society at the international level had great returns as seen in the Arab and foreign medical delegations that

came to Lebanon to participate in easing the miseries of the war and in the position of the international and humanitarian organizations condemning the barbarism of the Zionist enemy. [45]

The PRCS served as a conduit for voices pleading the Palestinian case in the international arena. It made Palestinian suffering known to these audiences. And, through the commitment to humanitarian principles I described above, it claimed a place in the international community not just as victims, but also as members committed to "custom, law, [and] international conventions."

To the extent that the PRCS pushed at the limits of the humanitarian imaginary, it was not by challenging the nature of such work, but in how it thought about its effects. The PRCS saw the lifesaving work of medical humanitarianism not just as about "survival," but also as essentially about dignity. Peter Redfield describes survival as the "perpetually temporary outcome" that makes humanitarianism "troubling work" to its practitioners. [46] Redfield notes that humanitarian organizations like Médecins Sans Frontières believe that dignity is a humanitarian virtue and a basic requirement of humanity, but that the demands of supporting human survival mean that dignity has to remain a "secondary consideration" in their work. For the PRCS, on the other hand, the humanitarian labor of its medical practitioners *and* the receipt of medical care by its patients were seen as being fundamentally about promoting Palestinian dignity and unleashing the full potential of the community and its component parts. Rather than being "undignified," the messy and uncomfortable "facts of survival" [47] were presented by the PRCS as essentially revolutionary.

Revolutionary Development

Like the PRCS, Samed identified self-sufficiency as critical to national survival. For Samed, the self-sufficiency at issue in its revolutionary development was economic. Samed's work was part of an effort to break out of the confines of a "life lived in relief." The articles in *Samed al-Iqtisadi* include descriptions of different workshops, interviews with Samed workers, and analyses of the projects. And they also provide a clear statement of how leaders and participants in the organization understood the endeavor. I turn to the pages of the journal to explore how this effort to develop a "revolutionary economy" operated as a refusal of humanitarian dynamics, particularly the hierarchies and paternalism that go along with this practice.

Samed responded to the same conditions that often make long-term humanitarianism shade into development: chronic need, structural impediments to opportunity, and worries about the negative effects of aid dependence. A reflection in the journal about the impact of Samed's presence in the camps in northern Lebanon makes the conditions clear:

And Samed clearly defined its workshops and interventions as responding to these humanitarian needs by providing work opportunities that were otherwise unavailable: "[Samed] has become the main job provider for the Palestinians in Lebanon. Seventy percent of the Palestinian workforce works in Palestinian revolutionary institutions, which confirms the depth of the belonging to the revolution among Palestinians. At the same time, this percentage reflects the difficulties of finding a suitable job." [49] Even as Samed had acknowledged humanitarian effect, it also defied the limits of humanitarian definition, and of humanitarian development in particular. In contrast to, indeed in rejection of, much development practice, where both the problems and the solutions are understood in technical terms, Samed precisely highlighted the centrality of politics to economic transformation. Rather than an "anti-politics machine," [50] it saw itself as a political force. Its goal was to help people move away from relief without "settling" them in exile. In Samed's perspective, economic self-sufficiency was revolutionary, nationalist, *political* activity.

And this brings me to Samed's other defiance. Its work took place on the ground of an intersecting set of hierarchical systems, of humanitarianism and capitalism. An interview with one of the workers in a tailoring workshop in the Burj el Shemali camp in south Lebanon revealed the extent of Samed's vision of liberation. The worker, Fatima Mezyan, contrasted Samed's workshops with ordinary "commercial institutions" that only care about "material gains." Samed was founded as an institution to improve the condition of the Palestinian people: "The work then has humanitarian and nationalist motivations." She went on to talk about the conditions of labor in the workshop: "We do not feel that we are employees. We own the work. The work is not for our sake; it is for the revolution and the revolution is for the people." [51] Samed's aim was to make Palestinians self-sufficient not simply as individuals, but as a collective and as a nation: to refuse hierarchies of humanitarian assistance and capitalist labor by creating alternative possibilities.

The journal includes many personal accounts that seem intended to convey the success of this project, not yet in liberating Palestine, but in transforming Palestinians. An account by a painter (the arts being another area supported by Samed) described her transformation from a life defined by the "struggle for life and a bit of bread" that began in 1948 to one where she struggled for the nation through her art. [52] Her first painting was of a humanitarian scene, children at an

UNRWA school drinking ration milk. She said that she had refused to sell the painting to a foreigner who saw it at her exhibition because she felt he wanted to take pleasure in the pain of Palestinian lives. Rejecting this relationship was one declaration of Palestinian self-sufficiency, and a refusal of the relationships in which refugees were ensconced. She used another artist's words to describe her aims: "I paint my wounds and the wounds of my people. I paint my hopes and the hopes of my people." But her art was not just a form of personal expression. It was also a means of changing how foreigners engaged with Palestinians. The article ends with a description of another exhibition in Germany and a quote from one of the guest-books: "I now understand why there are Palestinian fedayeen." By transforming the subjectivity and activity of Palestinian refugees, the article seems to suggest, it will be possible to change the international political landscape, to move outside observers from an attitude of pity to one of solidarity.

Other articles in the journal describe Samed's structure and method, underscoring that the organization was established for "the achievement of self-sufficiency regarding the needs of the revolution and the masses." [53] Samed's director, Abu Ala' (Ahmad Qurei'a), described in an interview with the journal how this revolutionary institution "sees the human being as the most valuable means of production and the most valuable means of struggling as well." Through this structure and this transformation in the means of production, Samed was preparing for a liberated future: "[Samed] is an economic experience that will define the features of the society in the future. . . . This people has many qualifications and skills. These features are among the most important for production and economic activity. But this Palestinian expertise and individual initiatives inside and outside [of Palestine] were never allowed to integrate within a public communal project." Samed, he suggests, makes such common work possible and therefore can make it possible for Palestinians to create radically new possibilities.

In addition to generating economic opportunity, Samed engaged in a range of social service and educational activities that were meant to support the "full" Palestinian subject. For instance, the journal celebrated the graduation of the second class of students in a Samed literacy program by stating: "Samed's work is not limited to production and covering the needs of the masses. It is not only concerned with hiring the workforce and spreading its workshops in all Palestinian camps. Rather, its role extends to building the human being armed with education and capabilities to fight some of the social problems caused by *hijra* [the 1948 displacement] and exile, especially illiteracy." [54] Just like economic activity, social service work was accorded revolutionary value. The Palestinian subjectivities it helped shape were vital for the struggles of the present and the future. The journal also gave significant attention to its efforts to support Palestinian women as revolutionary subjects: "Revolutionary institutions, especially Samed, gave the Palestinian woman the opportunity to work, produce, and struggle, and take her pioneering role in a progressive human framework." [55]

Just as the PRCS saw itself as bringing the Palestinian message to an international audience, Samed also claimed to have "a great role in forming a new form of Palestinian media that resulted in highlighting the civil face of the Palestinian people. . . . Currently it is representing the PLO in thirty-six commercial exhibits through which it highlights different Palestinian cultural dimensions. The number of exhibits is increasing due to the rise in support for the PLO and Samed's enthusiasm to present the civil face of the Palestinian revolution and people." [56] The journal boasted of the multidimensional success of the exhibits: "These exhibits have had political, economic, and cultural effects in introducing the Palestinian heritage and leading the civil challenge against the Zionist enemy. This highlighted the social and humanitarian dimension of the Palestinian revolution." [57] Where the PRCS addressed what it saw as a global, institutional field—embodied by the UN and the International Committee of the Red Cross— Samed's international focus was primarily third-worldist: [58] "Since its early days, the Palestinian revolution tried to build cooperative relations with third-world countries, especially in Africa and among national liberation movements." [59] Its workshops, exhibitions, and collaborations were located in countries such as Guinea-Bissau, Sudan, Somalia, Uganda, and Congo. It developed agricultural projects, in part as a response to Zionist efforts to "infiltrate some African countries under the cover of technical assistance. . . . Some Arab countries offered assistance through development funds in African countries. . . . The PLO moved in this direction, especially after the support demonstrated by the African countries for the Palestinian cause and the cutting of relations with Israel after 1973 war." [60] Samed, as part of the PLO, also pursued cooperative agreements with Hungary, the German Democratic Republic, and Cuba.

The Samed experience, like so many other Palestinian experiments, did not come to full fruition. When the PLO left Lebanon, its capacity to continue to support these ventures was extremely limited. Many workshops were destroyed in the war, and many workers died or were dispersed. In 1985 the journal reported the results of a self-survey on the state of affairs, noting that some people were staying "away from Samed because of fear, as being a Palestinian and getting close to Palestinian institutions have become a crime." [61] But the article also noted that Samed was working to rebuild, to open new workshops despite the constraints, and to offer employment to as many as possible. In fact, on the ground in Lebanon, Samed was never able to recover fully from the losses of war and the departure of the PLO.

Nonetheless, until the signing of the Oslo accords, the complete PLO refocus upon the occupied territories, and the entrance of the World Bank and its "Washington consensus" into the Palestinian economic landscape, Samed continued to declare a "revolutionary responsibility." [62] In 1990 the journal averred: "Studying Samed means studying the development of the Palestinian people and their struggle. . . . The experience of Samed documents a phase of the Palestinian economy, which is unique for a people outside of their land. It is an experience that

can be a reference for liberation revolutions around the world. Yet Samed remains in the experimental phase until it is moved to the homeland." [63] The establishment of the Palestinian Authority in 1994 might have been the moment when this economic vision came to the "homeland," but it was instead, as Raja Khalidi puts it, the moment when "the PLO went from building a developmental state in exile to accepting a neoliberal economy under colonialism." [64] Apparently encapsulating this transformation, reports surfaced in 2004 that the Qurei'a family cement company was supplying concrete for building Israel's separation wall in the West Bank. Abu Ala' denied the charges. [65]

From today's vantage point, it is difficult to consider the PLO's institutions without being conscious of their ruination. The failures of "the revolution" and the PLO are evident. Palestinians everywhere suffer the effects of these failures. As one person put it to me: "In the past there was Samed, which provided work. They dismantled it. There were many institutions. They dismantled them. A person cannot work anymore. And there is a generation with nothing. There is no care for this generation." And yet the work of liberation of institutions like Samed and the PRCS contributed to an important success: Palestinians continue to exist as a people. And their existence is internationally recognized—considerably more than it was when they were first dispossessed. So what are we to make of institutions that seem to have failed in their revolutionary aims, but that have also contributed to the sustaining of Palestinian existence—itself a revolutionary act? Grappling with the fate of Palestinian revolutionary ideals, politics, and institutions is one of the tasks with which Palestinians are urgently faced now.

As politically positioned humanitarian actors—and, of course, both these institutions were also something other than humanitarian actors—Samed and the PRCS worked to challenge the view that political neutrality vis-à-vis the world is always a requirement for the impartial delivery of humanitarian assistance. The conjoining of a political mission with impartial aid delivery was an especially central part of the declared PRCS mission, and was highlighted in its self-presentation. These organizations suggest that it is possible to address multiple needs: that humanitarian activity perhaps does not always require that providers and recipients hold the political parts of themselves wholly in abeyance. [66] In this way, these organizations' work also addresses the concern that humanitarianism can get in the way of other, equally necessary, forms of action in the world.

In positioning their work as *revolutionary* humanitarianism, Samed and the PRCS offered a practice that tried to break through humanitarian limits. They posited humanitarianism as a means of reaching the international community, not simply to generate sympathy, but also to boost political solidarity. They highlighted the collective character of their interventions and outcomes, as opposed to the sometimes atomizing effects of aid targeted at needy individuals. And they clearly identified their humanitarian activity as having the aim of changing people, not

just saving them. In this, both institutions shaped Palestinian lives and also shifted the humanitarian terrain.

WHAT IS THE FUTURE IN A CAMP? EXPERIMENTS IN REORIENTATION

Even as it engaged humanitarianism, the nationalist activity of the PLO was directed toward a future after displacement. Rather than being called "refugees," the Palestinians the PLO served and who formed its cadres were referred to in its publications as "returnees" *('ayidin)* . Liberation and return were proposed as an exit strategy from the refugee condition. As this book has explored, refugee politics around the refugee category has never entirely matched the claims of national organizations. And the futures they have envisioned have been similarly multiple and vexed. As Palestinian refugees confront the future, they grapple with both the far-off future of a Palestine restored, and the possibly nearer future of a better life where they are. All share a desire for the truly better, liberated future, but in practice the near future—geographically proximate and temporally closer—can have more weight for many. In this respect, Palestinians seem to be experiencing a somewhat different temporal shift from that identified by Jane Guyer, who described the "decline of the near future" [67] in both economic reasoning and evangelical thought. The very fact that a better future in exile could be viewed as potentially near, if still improbable, while a future in Palestine appeared increasingly distant, even impossible, is a result of both the concerted efforts, over seventy years, to deny people that future and the many failures of Palestinian politics to overcome those efforts. Whichever horizon people emphasize, they confront the existential challenges of long-term exile in difficult conditions.

The failure of the Palestinian revolution produced a kind of future exhaustion, especially for refugees in Lebanon who experienced both the failure of the revolution and abandonment by the PLO. [68] The aftermath of the second intifada has had a similar deflating effect in the West Bank. The West Bank is distinguished among other spaces of Palestinian life by the layering of (1) colonial rule, in the form of Israeli occupation; (2) increasingly authoritarian national governance, in the guise of the Palestinian Authority; and (3) neoliberal conditions, in an expanded personal-debt-based economy and an aid-contract-reliant employment landscape, all in a single space. [69] The convoluted geography of post-Oslo occupation, which divides the West Bank into three categories—Area A, Palestinian control; Area B, Palestinian administrative control and Israeli security control; and Area C, full Israeli control—also divides the refugee camps. Two camps are located in Area C, four in Area B, and the remaining thirteen in Area A. Despite the fact that Area A is supposed to be under full Palestinian control, Israeli military

forces mount regular incursions into these districts, including the refugee camps therein. This aggravating, and seemingly hopeless, situation has created a widespread sense of gloom. [70]

In these conditions, some people profess no hope for the future, indicating that the relentless and repeated difficulties of life have made such a sentiment impossible. When you imagine the future, when you define your political hopes, you of course do so from your present condition. This condition delimits what you see as vital, what you view as impossible, and what you think is a plausible reality. It structures both expectation and anticipation, and it also produces refusals. [71] And, beyond what people think of their future, this present shapes how they confront it. The dispersed Palestinian community experiences very different presents, a fact that has significant political consequences. The Palestinian political leadership is ill equipped to take on the responsibility to both represent all and respond to these differences. But no moment has a single political or emotional register, and many people do express hopes, even in an era of hopelessness. And, whatever their evaluation of present conditions and future potentialities, some people insist on trying to live "otherwise." [72]

Here, I consider one effort to change these conditions of life and aid: the Campus in Camps project based in Dheisheh refugee camp near Bethlehem. [73] Campus in Camps is experimental in a number of senses. Like many projects and NGOs, it was initially funded by a European donor, in this case GIZ, a German development fund. It operated in cooperation with the UNRWA camp improvement program and is affiliated with Al-Quds University, as part of its program with Bard College. It is unusual in the aid landscape that saturates—one could say smothers—the West Bank in that, unlike most donor-funded activities, it does not seek to "help" or to "train." Rather, as conceptualized by its founders—Alessandro Petti and Sandi Hilal, Bethlehem-based architects—and emerging from extended conversations with camp residents, it aims to provide opportunities for the participants, all young residents of refugee camps in the southern West Bank, to develop new forms of critical engagement with the categories that structure their lives (e.g., refugee, camp, and education) and then to imagine and embark on new kinds of initiatives in the camps where they live—initiatives that do not conform to the aid paradigm.

These efforts constitute experiments with political futures that are rooted in the multifaceted burdens of the present, but that also seek ways to get through or around those burdens. As one participant, Murad, described it: "Campus in Camps is to look at the present, toward the future both theoretically and practically, with a sense of the ideal but grounded in the real." [74] To the extent that Campus in Camps proposes a different future, it does so through prompting different engagements in the present. It also does so by working through and with the camp as a space of life and politics. Responding to the complex ways that refugees have engaged these spaces, it does not try to leave them behind, but rather tries to support their political reinvigoration. In the visions that emerge through this work, even return—for seventy years the ultimate goal for

refugees—may not require a total abandonment of the camps. Part of the discordant palette of refugee politics, this relation to the camp as neither symbol nor succor does not sit easily with either nationalist or humanitarian interpretations of this space.

Campus in Camps was launched with a call for participants made through camp organizations, mosques, and newspapers. Applicants were interviewed, and as Alessandro describes: "There has not been a real selection, instead a series of meetings allowed us and the applicants to understand if we all shared a mutual interest in embarking on such an experimental project." [75] The format of Campus in Camps was not predetermined; it developed through the collective efforts of the group. The participants created a two-year cycle, with the first year focused on critical engagement, unlearning, and relearning. During this year a number of outside visitors did lectures, seminars, and learning cycles with the participants (and I did this work myself). A number of project activators, mainly architects and artists, worked with the participants to hone their inquiries and activities. The key product that emerged from this process was a series of booklets they called a "Collective Dictionary." Each booklet is organized around a keyword, such as *common, participation, well-being, citizenship,* or *sustainability* . Participants engaged these keywords through readings, discussions, and, most centrally, interactions with the people and places of the camps. Rather than offering dictionary-style definitions, the booklets present images and writings from this process.

The second year of the program focused on developing and implementing what were first called "projects," later termed "initiatives," in the camps. The aim of these initiatives, and part of the impetus for the name change, was to find forms of engagement in and with the camps that break the mold of the usual donor-driven, development-industry-inspired, largely unproductive NGO projects. People all across the West Bank are intimately familiar with the NGO industry that developed in the wake of the Oslo accords. These NGOs are often referred to derisively as *dakakin* (stores), reflecting the widespread belief that many of them exist primarily to chase donor money and to enrich their directors and employees. [76] The explosive growth of this sector over the past twenty years has had a profoundly negative impact on popular politics—as many people who used to be political activists turned instead to the good salaries of the NGO world— and a limited discernible positive impact on the political or economic landscape. [77] Campus in Camps started by rejecting this model and venturing into an uncertain terrain of "something else." It was, said Aysar (another participant), "a new narration, a different view of the past, and a new future." [78]

Experiments are not easy, of course, and Campus in Camps encountered many difficulties. As much as activators and participants sought to rework, and even leave behind, some of the central categories of aid, divestment was not a simple thing. A discussion I had with participants about some of these concepts revealed some of the challenges. When we talked about the dyad "helper

and victim" and the category of refugee itself—all concepts with immediate and specific relevance to the participants' lives—the challenges of moving beyond even the categories that we sought to reject were evident. A striking feature of the conversation was how thoroughly humanitarian vocabulary had entered everyone's consciousness, making it difficult to come up with new terms. Many participants felt uncomfortable being tagged as "victims" but were much more at ease with seeing themselves as "helpers" of other people, including other Palestinian refugees. We did not reach a conclusion to this conversation or answer the question of whether there is another way of describing—and therefore of living—relationships in the humanitarian arena.

The Collective Dictionary process involved a reengagement with the spaces and places of the camps and their environs. The participants conducted interviews with camp residents and spent time walking in the camps, looking at these familiar spaces with new eyes. They took pictures and wrote texts. None of them approached the camp from a standard or expected starting point. They began from the boundaries, from the unused spaces, from the outside, from the unimagined, and even from what might seem like the opposite, and tracked new kinds of pathways through the camp experience. From these journeys—some actual, some conceptual—participants found themselves in a new relationship with places that are the most familiar to them. And it appears to have been from this new vantage point, this new embodied perspective on the camp, that they were able to first produce new kinds of definitions of familiar terms and then embark on initiatives that engaged these spaces in new ways.

A few concrete examples may suffice to explain. When participants walked camp streets with the question of "ownership" in mind, they took note of the fact that some women go uncovered in the camp and wear head scarves when they leave. They concluded: "The women feel the entire camp is home and in some sense they own it." [79] When others talked with activists from an older generation about Dheisheh's Youth Program Center, long ago closed by the Israeli military, the descriptions of political engagement in the past gave today's young people a new sense of how political parties could be a source of value and communal "well-being," rather than cynicism and personal interest. [80] When folks visited one of the few sites in the camp where original UNRWA shelters remained, they asked if they could bring these former dwellings into new life. [81] This was a process of deliberative being-in-the-camp, with the aim of producing new sorts of documentation to capture something about the past and present experience of life in the camp—with the further goal of intervening in that life. The aim was neither "development" nor "improvement," but to reorient perspective. The need for repeated reinvigoration in the face of devastation—both the violence of assaults and the slower degradations of possibility—is a feature of discordant refugee politics. Campus in Camps tries to participate in this reinvigoration by thinking anew about the possibilities inherent in camps.

Return in Common

Most of the Collective Dictionary booklets are results of a kind of fieldwork, of being-in-the-camp in new ways. One is the product of a thought experiment conducted with Campus in Camps participants. In this experiment—meant to engage directly with the question of return—one of the project activators asked the participants to imagine that it was the year 2040, and the right of return (whatever that might mean precisely) has been achieved: In the aftermath of this accomplishment, describe the camp. The "Vision" booklet compiles the texts people wrote in response to this prompt. The imagined future of return was not connected, in this exercise, to a particular plan or party protocol. It was meant to open up an unconstrained imaginative field—hence its experimental quality. In these texts, the distinction between near and far future is partially collapsed. They describe a time (out of time?) when geography has been or will be transformed. And they present a vision of the future rooted in the present relation that people have with the camps where they live. Camps are humanitarian, political, and emotional spaces. The Vision texts express each of these relationships and also ask what other relationship is, or will be, possible.

Some Campus in Camps participants saw this imaginative exercise as too untethered to their reality. As Saleh put it: "At that time, year 2040, do I have the right of return? Even dreaming of that does not make sense for me unless we (Palestinians) make a serious step forward." So he described a vision of the future without the element of return, rooted directly in the experiences of today. Dheisheh is already known as "the camp of institutions." Saleh describes a future camp where every person will have his or her own institution, architecturally reflected in a double house: part for the home and part for the personal institution. Density is already the camp condition. Because vertical growth is the only possibility, Saleh imagines Azzah camp, located in the middle of Bethlehem, having skyscrapers and helicopter landing pads. He asks, reflecting widespread concern about the effects of increased class distinctions among refugees, whether the fact of some refugees, those with resources and access to loans, buying land outside of camps and building large houses will make refugees "the new settlers." He asks: "Who is the refugee? Should we redefine him? These are the questions I think will need answers in that year 2040." For Saleh, the future camp appears to be the present camp intensified: its problems and inequities are magnified by the passage of time and, it seems, by a failure of Palestinians themselves to "make a serious step forward."

Most Campus in Camps participants did not share Saleh's thoroughgoing pessimism, but they largely agreed with his critique of Palestinian politics. Their willingness to engage the thought

experiment was not a product of naive optimism, but an interest precisely in experimenting with political and social thought in ways that might be able to transform the future. What did those who were ready to contemplate the achievement of return imagine would be the state of the camps? There was tremendous diversity of vision. Mohammad wrote that he *expected* the camp to remain as it is but he *hoped* that "there will be no camp in twenty-eight years. I hope that we will be back, back to our destroyed villages." This vision of loss reversed—of what was done being wholly undone—may be what one would expect a refugee to say, but it was a minority view. Most people wrote about a continuing life for the camps even after return. Some people suggested that the camps would be turned into monuments or museums to the nakba experience. Others indicated that they would be transformed into fully integrated neighborhoods of the city. Naba described a different sort of reclamation, in which "the original landowners insisted on the recovery of land . . . and they began to create their own projects."

Even as they described the disorienting joy of return—as Marwa put it, "I feel like I'm a newborn girl who just opened her eyes to discover her world"—a number of people expressed a kind of melancholy about the end of camp life. Marwa again: "I'm happy but I cannot forget my past in Dheisheh camp." She imagined deciding to visit the camp after a year back "home": "As soon as I pass the camp borders, I feel how locked in and limited we used to live. Still, it reminded me of the happy and sad days I spent with my family." Marwa described the camp as a memory that will remain after return.

But others envisioned a more active relationship. Nedaa imagined her first return to Fawwar camp after return: "A flood of different feelings overwhelmed me. I missed the place, the sweet memories, the people, and even the alleyways of the camp. I missed them. . . . It seemed to me that our camp turned to a ghost town." She recounted her future self coming to a new understanding of her relationship with the camp: "I thought I had forgotten everything, that I no longer had a relation with that place, but these were wrong expectations. I felt myself more 'Fawwarian' than any time before." Imagining how she would reconcile these conflicted feelings, Nedaa described a cosmopolitan Palestinian future, one in which people would be attached to multiple places and in which the now fragmented Palestinian society would be brought together. She pictured herself married to a man who had been a resident of Ein el Hilweh camp in Lebanon and whose town of origin was Acre: "We decided, my family and I, that we would live moving between Fawwar, Ein el Hilweh, and our new home in Acre."

The exercise in imagining the camps after return occasions an "intensity" of the hopes, fears, and dreams that people experience ordinarily. The aim of the exercise—and of the Collective Dictionary process and Campus in Camps more generally—is to create possibilities not just for reaction, but also for reorientation. The Vision experiment showed, in the words of the activator, "that simply by stressing concepts, a range of suggestions for further idea-processing is possible .

. . [and] how many different imaginations are pending within the lives of refugees in terms of desires, narratives, and representation." One result of this exercise in thinking the future is that people come to a new understanding of what they already think and want, what their relationship to the camps is now. This reorientation to the present makes possible new sorts of politics and arguments about the future. The possibility of activating "pending imaginations" is central to the work of Campus in Camps.

The imaginative futures described in the Vision texts find a different kind of expression in the two booklets produced under the term *common* . Where the Vision texts contemplate what might happen to the camps in the aftermath of return, the Common booklets take up the question of what people can make of the camps now. By turning to what is immediately at hand, to the environs in which they live, to encounters with the streets and spaces of the camp, the booklets work in and from the present, with the aim of opening new modes of engagement for the future. The two booklets constitute a reconsideration—and therefore a reconfiguration—of the camp in relation to both its exterior (that which is not, or does not appear to be, the camp) and its interior.

"Common 1" gives particular attention to the camp in relation to that which lies beyond it—in this case, the municipality of Doha. Doha and Dheisheh are on opposite sides of the main road through the Bethlehem area, and both are populated largely by refugees. Most of Doha's residents moved there from Dheisheh; some came from other camps. The Collective Dictionary puts the camp in relation to the city through a visual comparison, an institutional comparison, and extended reflections on the meaning of these spaces. All of these comparisons are part of the work of thinking about what the commons was, is, and might be in the camp experience.

In doing so, the dictionary reorients space in several ways. First, it refuses a clear boundary between the camp and not-camp. Even as the pictures and text highlight differences between Dheisheh and Doha, they put them together as part of the same spatial world of refugees. Second, by highlighting deficiencies in Doha now—lack of community organization and sociability, in particular—the dictionary reworks an evaluation of the camp as a space of deprivation into the camp as *the* site of political invention. [82] And third, it works to deterritorialize the camp as a political space, suggesting that movement to Doha does not have to be a movement away from the political possibilities that emerge from refugees living together: not just in the same place, but in common.

The Collective Dictionary also reflects an effort to collect and preserve the range of emotions that refugees experience about the camp—its past, present, and future. The texts are filled with statements of and about emotion: "I think that living in Doha is better than living in Dheisheh. . . . You can have private life in the city more than in camps"; "Living in the camp was not easy for your grandfather . . . he wanted a different life for me and my siblings"; "In the camp you can feel this warm condition with the people"; "I can't feel like myself in Doha." This collection of

emotions confirms how complex people's feelings about the camp are and how important this space is to people. In capturing these conditions, participants hoped to create opportunities to transform the frustration that leads many Palestinians (in the West Bank and beyond) to see little political possibility in the present.

By giving attention to camp interiors, "Common 2" works to reorient emotion, in part by changing how people think about the past and in part by contemplating the future in different terms. This booklet describes common features of the camp, many of which no longer exist, thereby presenting a different sense of the space of the camp. In describing these past features— the shared bathroom, the feeding center—along with existing ones, such as the school, the dictionary ascribes a different emotional valence to the days of "sadness and suffering." About the *mat'am* (the feeding center), the dictionary states: "The restaurant was a place where refugees shared eating and drinking . . . [and] a place to meet and talk. Maybe the only thing that they owned at the time was gathering, feelings, emotions, beliefs, and the idea of their return. But from the other side it was more participation and common."

We are all aware, I think, of the perils of nostalgia in recounting the past. And there does seem to be some nostalgia in these accounts of the early days of the camp. It is interesting to me that in this case—and I have encountered this same thing in other camps—it is the camp, not the *balad* (homeland) that is the object of this kind of memory. Still, the recounting of the past commons of the camp that appears in the Collective Dictionary is not just nostalgic. I see in these texts efforts to grapple with the coexistence of extreme difficulty and greater collectivity. A text on the shared bathrooms that were a feature of the camps' early years includes the words *pain, suffering, patience, participation, cruelty, unity,* and *hope* . Portraying the complexity of emotional experience—not just of the people who lived through these days, but of youths looking back on them now—is a key feature of the Collective Dictionary. And one of its possible effects is also to change people's emotional response to this complexity. A key question for young people in the camps, and outside as well, is how to live today with the past experiences and choices of their grandparents and parents. This is a question with great political significance.

Action in the Camp

Nine initiatives emerged out of the collective work of Campus in Camps, with the following titles: the Garden, the Pathways, the Municipality, the Suburb, the Pool, the Stadium, the Square, the Unbuilt, and the Bridge. Some initiatives were more practice-focused and others more research-oriented. All the initiatives involved experiments in and with space—with the space of the camp at the center. They all tried to look anew at what this space is—how it is lived—and to

reimagine creatively what it can be. Like everything else with Campus in Camps, the initiatives were not blueprints for change, but interventions into existing conditions with an eye to disrupting them. I mean *disruption* more in Rancière's sense of creating dissensus than in the Silicon Valley sense of acquiring competitive advantage. This disruption entailed activating multiple temporalities. The initiatives were clearly future-oriented, but to get to this different future many of them sought to reactivate features of the past—whether a pre-displacement past at home or a politicized, energized past in the camps. This approach to the future was part of the project's broader interest in breaking with developmentalist, aid-structured approaches to transformation.

Breaking with the aid paradigm did not entail entirely escaping it, but rather finding new forms of engagement. An initiative based in the Fawwar refugee camp, "The Square: Learning in the Common Space," is a case in point. Unlike Dheisheh, where Campus in Camps is based and where a lot of the initiatives are being enacted, Fawwar, near Hebron in the south of the West Bank, is relatively isolated. While Dheisheh, in the middle of Bethlehem, is known for its high level of activity (both political and NGO-related), its influence over surrounding areas, and its cosmopolitanism, Fawwar is seen as conservative and relatively unengaged. The Square was the initiative of two young women residents of the camp, Nedaa and Ayat. The initiative started by engaging a project undertaken by the UNRWA Camp Improvement Program, which was headed by Sandi Hilal, one of the founders of Campus in Camps. This camp improvement project— initially quite controversial in the camp, and later widely supported—built an open space, a square, in the middle of the camp (see chapter 3).

Public spaces are in short supply in almost every Palestinian refugee camp. Although there was such space when camps were first established, and many shelters even had gardens, population pressures over the years have meant that most of those plots have been built on. Another initiative—the Unbuilt—explored some of the spaces that remain in Dheisheh, the uses to which they are being put, and the ways they might be used. Despite desires for more breathing room, and for a place for children to play, the idea of the square was controversial in Fawwar because of concerns about its effect on propriety—would men and women mingle? would young guys get up to no good?—its impact on houses around its edges, and the effect of "improvement" on Palestinian political claims. Even once the decision was made to go ahead with the project, many women said they would never use the square as a space of leisure.

It was this reluctance that Nedaa and Ayat targeted in their initiative. Their aim was precisely to open up and to remake the possibilities for the use of this new space in the camp—especially for women. They began with the idea of holding English classes in the square—as a way to get women out and using it, but with a purpose that could seem valid. Like other Campus in Camps participants, when they first talked about the project, they used the language of empowerment, of

improvement, and saw themselves in the role of "helpers." But as their engagement deepened, their perspective changed. English classes were still on the agenda, but the first major action in the square was of a very different nature: cooking *maftoul* (Palestinian couscous) with women from Fawwar and other camps. As they wrote in their booklet:

> The maftoul day was the changing point of our gatherings in the square. We were all surprised that the day went so well, everyone was present with no people complaining and no disturbances. It may be that many factors had a role in this. First, it's the first time we had an event in an open space, not in the Women's Center or the public committee; we felt we are at home, we were cooking, eating, and even talking comfortably. Indeed, it's probably because we were just doing some traditional practices that our ancestors used to do a long time ago. Our ancestors' relation with public space was more familiar than ours; our grandmothers were cooking outside together, singing folklore songs while harvesting the crops and doing other things without hearing any comment from anybody.

This idea—not just introducing *new* ways of using spaces, but reactivating practices from the past that have fallen out of favor—is a feature of many initiatives. After the maftoul day, Nedaa and Ayat held other social gatherings in the square, and they continued to plan to offer English lessons.

Every initiative has multiple valences, but if I were to assign a dominant theme to the "The Square," I would call it an experiment in social relations—most specifically gendered social relations and ideas about proper behavior. The engagement began from recognition that current norms dictate that women be modest and useful to their families—this expectation is why the idea of leisure activity in the square seemed especially scandalous. It also began with an awareness of a much less socially restrictive past—when women, and women and men, spent time together in public to engage in all sorts of activities. And it brought the participants' now heightened consciousness of the possibility that things can always be different than they are. Unlike a typical humanitarian or NGO project, there was no specific goal, plan, or measurement of outcome. Rather, by enacting new situations on the ground, the initiative sought to create opportunities for new uses of social space within the camp.

A similar effort was at the heart of the Bridge initiative. In 2002, community leaders in the Dheisheh camp began planning a pedestrian bridge to connect Dheisheh with Doha across the busy thoroughfare. A key aim of the bridge was to give a safer path to refugee schoolchildren who were coming from Doha to UNRWA schools in the camp. Community-funded and planned, the bridge was opposed by both the Israeli army and the Palestinian Authority as a violation of the Oslo accords. The local community persisted in building the bridge, but the top was enclosed to prevent stone throwing, as a concession to Israeli concerns. The bridge opened in 2004 but encountered several difficulties. People found it quicker, even if not safer, to cross the street directly. And teenagers used the now covered bridge as a site for illicit activity. In 2009, after

five years in operation, the bridge was closed. "The Bridge" initiative returned to this space of failed community development and resistance and sought to give it a new life and meaning.

This initiative was a reactivation of the near past, to give it a different valence and create new possibilities in the present. When Campus in Camps participants interviewed refugees in Dheisheh and Doha about the bridge, they heard that "it has a negative reputation as a result of its poor use by the society" and that "the bridge today does not have any meaning and people pass beside it without notice." So a first goal of the initiative was to make people pay attention, and to have that attention be positive. The Campus in Camps participants cleansed the bridge of grafitti and detritus and, in their first public intervention in the space, hung Christmas lights on the outside of the bridge spelling out *ma aladhi nafalu:* "What do we do?" By framing their intervention as a question, the organizers tried to highlight the openness of the initiative. They would start, but they hoped others in the community would take up a new relation to this space. In their next activities, Campus in Camps participants, after coordination with local authorities, took down some of the plastic paneling that covered the bridge. They put up new decorations and then organized a market in the space.

FIGURE 20. From "The Bridge" booklet. Bridge from Dheisheh camp to Doha municipality, Bethlehem, 2011. Photo by Lisa Bergmann.

The Square initiative worked with a new space to reactivate social patterns of the past. The Bridge, and another initiative based around a self-built stadium in Arroub camp, worked with an existing, but not quite old, space to reactivate the potential that was involved in its construction. The uses to which they put the bridge space were novel: it had never been planned as an exhibition space or a market. But the specific uses were never as important as the idea of claiming an active stake in a public space, especially a public space that contravened both Israeli and Palestinian Authority preferences. In so doing, the initiative was an effort to intervene in what Kathleen Stewart calls "ordinary affects." Sometimes transversely, sometimes prior to definition and possibility, these can "catch people up in something that feels like *some* thing." [83] For Stewart their importance rests in part "in what thoughts and feelings they make possible." [84] Attending to ordinary affects helps in this effort to understand not how people plan for the future, but how they experience it from their present. The location of the bridge—connecting key spaces of refugee life, crossing the central road in Bethlehem—makes it vulnerable to fading into the background, whether used or not, but also means that it has the potential to occasion the "intensities of the ordinary" [85] that Stewart suggests can produce a shift in experience.

What kinds of political possibilities are embedded in the work of Campus in Camps? And I should say that it is precisely "possibility," rather than a precise political program, that is evident here. Arjun Appadurai distinguishes the ethics of possibility, or "ways of thinking, feeling, and acting that increase the horizon of hope, that expand the field of imagination," from the ethics of probability, or "regimes of diagnosis, counting, and accounting." [86] That Campus in Camps operates with possibility more than probability is one reason it sits uneasily in an aid landscape that is interested in metrics, but its version of possibility may not be quite the same as Appadurai's. It does not just expand, it also redirects. It entails the rejection of some possibilities and the opening up to not-yet-imagined alternatives. The reorienting that is at the heart of the experiment might offer a way out of the impasse of having to choose between what Lauren Berlant calls "cruel optimism" [87] and unremitting pessimism. Precisely by participating in creating new ways of experiencing the past and the present, it seeks a new engagement with the future.

The engagement of Campus in Camps with the refugee right of return, a concern that resonates across all the activities, highlights how reorientation can be seen as *action* in Arendt's sense. Starting from life in the camps now, Campus in Camps begins to articulate a vision of return that is future-oriented rather than past-oriented, collective rather than individual. This vision is not just about the reclamation of private lands and houses, but is also about the future availability of the collective space of Palestine—the sea, the commons. And it relies not just on the recognition or granting of that right by formal bodies, but on the efforts of people to find

ways, however small, to enact it. In these engagements, the future is not just another time, whether near or far, but also another geography—open rather than closed.

This inchoate expression of new political possibilities echoes what Berlant describes as the "something else that is always being encountered and invented among people inventing life together, when they can." [88] And this perhaps is the most fundamental work of the project: the commitment to creating spaces and possibilities for inventing life together. Campus in Camps is creative in how it works around the multiple limits confronting refugees and Palestinians more generally. But it is also constrained by them. One must remain cognizant of the diagnostic claims contained in refusals by some people to engage these projects. These refusals appear to reject the claims that these future-oriented experiments can be a starting point for making that future possible. Refusal can sometimes be an expression of exhaustion, but it is not only that—it is not just a statement that "I cannot," [89] but also a declaration that "I will not." I will not be taken in; I will not be distracted; I will not succumb to false hopes. Refusal is no more definitive than experimentation, no more right or wrong, and it is also just as much a stance toward the future. It is a form of anticipation, even if not clearly one of aspiration.

Making Livable Lives in Worlds in Crisis

FAYROUZ, A LONG-TIME VOLUNTEER at the Community Development Office in Jerash camp, was born in 1969. When she told me her life story, she narrated it as a life lived in a changing aid apparatus, each milestone described in relation to shifting relief practices. Fayrouz's account reflects the intimate calculus of life entailed in humanitarian practice. It shows how humanitarian effects are often worked out in relations between parents and children, or husband and wife, and with neighbors. It is frequently in these daily spaces that values—the vocabulary of national politics, ideas about community, who fits where, what it is and will be to be Palestinian—get worked out. Fayrouz was born at home in the camp. Her mother, she told me, greatly hoped that the tents that provided shelter in the early years would be replaced by more permanent structures before the birth: "She was pregnant with me when they started building the barracks [simple cement block structures with corrugated roofing]. She was praying to God that she would not give birth in the tent. She was embarrassed to have me in the tent. . . . They finished the barracks and I was born in the barracks." As a young child, Fayrouz went to a nursery school sponsored by the World Council of Churches, where UNRWA distributed milk and food to the children each day. As she remembered, "They taught us songs about Palestine because the expulsion was recent. . . . That was five years after the expulsion [from Gaza]. We were soaked in patriotism and our songs were all patriotic. . . . I remember it was a nice phase for me, the kindergarten phase. I loved it."

The next thing Fayrouz recalled was receiving aid packages *(buggaj)* of "foreign" clothing. She described how excited they were to have leather shoes, in contrast to the plastic shoes they had been wearing before. She also indicated the dissonance that sometimes went along with getting clothes designed for different styles and sensibilities. Her mother, while accepting the

clothes, was a bit wary of them: "She used to say, 'We do not know what sort of diseases these foreigners had.' So she boiled them." She also often felt it necessary to rework the clothes: "My mother has taste. For example, if she found [a dress] revealing or something she would take it to the tailor to fix it. . . . She would add pieces because she would be embarrassed to wear it. Sometimes when the design was too much we would laugh. She would tear it up and make cloth for dusting. But also the colors . . . what would she say: 'Eeeh, those foreigners do not wear anything but this flashy yellow. They are yellow themselves.'" Each of these responses asserts the value of Palestinian life and lifestyle—in this case expressed not as a claim for a specific outcome, but as an existential fact. Neither the condition of need nor the aid relationship dissolved the sense of value attached to being Palestinian.

Making do—with other people's castoffs, with limited resources—is characteristic of the refugee experience and loomed large in Fayrouz's account. She described how there was no piped water in the camp. Everyone had to bring water back home from central faucets. She remembered the system her mother imposed to make sure that the family had enough water: "It was forbidden to eat before filling up two buckets of water first in exchange for the food. This way she would guarantee that she has the water. . . . And if you do not bring water, you will stay without food, until you bring it. This was because of the harshness of life. It is not that Mom was tough—she needed the water because she had kids." These stories highlight the ways in which people take action with humanitarian artifacts, not just to make claims, but also to make a life, a family, and a community. Fayrouz's mother, Im Khaled, also told me stories about negotiating with UNRWA workers to provide particular supplies at the distributions, about collecting stones to build a wall around their barracks house to make a family space, about conflicts between people about access to resources. She saw these struggles as being about survival, but always more than that as well. Claims for resources were community claims.

Reflecting on her adult life, her marriage, and her family, Fayrouz described her connection to the space of the camp. She and her family lived for seven years in Amman because her husband was working there. They moved back to the camp when his father got sick. Fayrouz described the disconnect she sometimes felt with her neighbors in Amman because they had not shared her life experiences. As she put it: "Sometimes I would say something to my neighbors, when I invited them over for coffee. I wanted to say something in particular and I felt that these women are not going to understand me, they're not going to understand what I want to say." It should be noted that these women were also Palestinian, also refugees, but not camp residents with the same intimate relationship to humanitarian work. For Fayrouz, the experience of living the "refugee life"—the rations, the water, the buggaj—shaped her sense of self, and it also shaped where she felt at home in the world. As difficult as her life had been, and as much as she longed

for a political resolution for Palestinian refugees, and a civil rights transformation for ex-Gazans in Jordan, she was most at ease in the social network of the camp.

Fayrouz longed for the camp in the years when she lived away, but her children—who were young in Amman—"reject the camp life." As she told me:

> They reject that they should keep feeling that they live in a camp as if they were third-, fourth-, or fifth-degree human beings. They want to feel different. Many times they would come back and say, "Change this house for us. Enough with the zinco, enough with I don't know what." They are fed up. . . . We were not fed up like that although our situation was more difficult. But we did not complain.

While Fayrouz felt out of place in Amman, for her children it had provided an opportunity to live a less marked life:

> My son says our life in Amman was better. At least no one knows we are Gazans. No one knows that we are from the Gaza camp. They deal with us as though we were like them—people. You do not feel any difference at all. When do you feel discrimination? When you confront government institutions. This is when you feel discriminated against. But the social life, they felt that they lived in a house like the houses where other people live. . . . So they say, no, take us back to Amman. I do not know how much they can bear because I can see until now that they cannot take the life of refugees.

Fayrouz worried about her children—she wanted them to be happy, to feel comfortable, to have opportunity. But at the same time, she worried about them politically—about what sort of Palestinians they would be, what relation they, and others of their generation, would have to Palestine. She saw a difference between her two oldest boys. Of the eldest, she said: "If he gets full rights [in Jordan], I am sure he will forget everything called Palestine. But my second, if he gets all the rights in this country, he will still demand Palestine. I do not know why, although both were raised up the same way, I do not know why this one has this mentality and the other has another mentality." Fayrouz's account of differences in her family—generational and otherwise—reflects patterns and anxieties I heard throughout my research.

There is no doubt that in the Palestinian case the personal is the political. What it is to be a good Palestinian political subject is intimately connected with what sort of person one is. How the politics of particular life choices are understood is both highly contested and often divided along generational lines. Debates about the consequences of changes in conditions in the camps, or of moving out of those camps, are widespread across the Palestinian diaspora. In Jerash camp, those of a generation older than Fayrouz might argue that any life that was settled-in in Jordan was a betrayal of the Palestinian cause. Fayrouz did not reject a connection with Jordan, but she worried that her children's inability to handle the "life of refugees" might mean a loss of connection to Palestine.

Fayrouz thought about her own life in relation to key features of the humanitarian apparatus and to changes in it. She identified most strongly with others who were as fully inside this apparatus as she was. Her children, on the other hand, saw Amman as an opportunity to live apart from the apparatus, to be free in some sense from its categories. It is important to note that what it means to live in relation to humanitarianism is different for Fayrouz's children than it was for her. There are no more buggaj. Everyone has piped water at home. Almost no one receives rations anymore. So the refugee life that Fayrouz's children experience is marked more by distinction than by assistance. Even if they live outside the camp, though, as they grow into adulthood—and have to confront their categorical location more directly—they will likely discover that they, too, are defined by where they fit: in Jordan, in the Palestinian community, in the humanitarian apparatus.

Palestinians share the challenges of life lived in, against, and sometimes without relief with millions of displaced persons across the globe. When they talk about the withdrawal of humanitarian services over the years, Palestinian refugees parallel the complaints of former Mozambican refugees in Malawi.[1] When they reflect on their unsettled relations with long-term host-country neighbors, Palestinians share the feelings of Afghan refugees in Iran that "you live in this society, but you don't belong to this society."[2] When Palestinians demonstrate in defense of their humanitarian rights, they, like Sudanese refugees in Cairo who have protested at UNHCR offices on multiple occasions, participate in what Carolina Moulin and Peter Nyers call "global political society."[3] And when they think about their future in and beyond the refugee category, Palestinians confront challenges similar to those faced by long-term refugees in Tanzania and Kenya, as well as by people denied recognition as refugees in the United Kingdom and Greece.[4]

Despite these connections, the persistent conceptual problem of exceptionalism has led some observers to view the Palestinian story of long-term, multigenerational displacement as incomparable with other refugee settings. The insistence on viewing Palestinian, and related Israeli, experience as sui generis has done a significant disservice to historical and political analysis. Fortunately, this intellectual isolation has increasingly been breached in recent years.[5] With respect to humanitarian conditions, the Palestinian refugee instance is not just comparable, but arguably paradigmatic. To insist, as some people do, that Palestinians are *too* long displaced to really be refugees, that the camps where they live are *too* ensconced to really be camps, and that the services they are provided are *too* multidimensional to be humanitarian is to misapprehend both Palestinians and humanitarianism. The challenges and opportunities that humanitarians and refugees have encountered over the seventy years of assistance to Palestinians resonate with experiences across the humanitarian field, and have also helped to shape it.

Every displacement community has its own distinctions. But the experiences of other refugee

populations who have lived with long-term displacement—such as the Cambodian refugees who spent twenty-eight years in camps along the border in Thailand, Karen refugees who remain along the Thai border with Burma, Somali refugees long in Kenya, and Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh for decades—confirm the broad relevance of the Palestinian case. As has happened in the Palestinian instance, other circumstances of long-term displacement have provided occasions for reflection by humanitarian actors on the procedures, purpose, and consequences of extended intervention. [6] The blurring of the camp into the city—as commerce, infrastructure, and local governance develop—has been documented in many cases. [7] So, too, have the limits of such spaces' incorporation into surrounding communities and polities, along with their corresponding vulnerabilities. [8]

In whatever circumstance refugees find themselves, they have endeavored to work with the tools at hand to transform the conditions of their existence. They have generated new economic activities out of humanitarian goods, such as selling rations or renting shelters. [9] They have maintained and remade community relations across scattered displacement geographies. [10] And they have made the humanitarian apparatus a target of and a mechanism for making political claims of various kinds. [11] Political engagement is a frequent source of pride among Palestinian refugees, and the apparent lessening of this commitment a cause for worry. The Palestinian experience teaches us a great deal about the forms and tensions of refugee politics, but Palestinians are not alone in having such politics.

The way refugees live in and out of camps, along with what they do to change their conditions and activate their political potential, regularly brings them into confrontation with powerful objections. Host countries do not want camps to become permanent settlements or political forces. Increasingly, host countries do not want camps at all—as evidenced by the Lebanese government's refusal to create camps for Syrian refugees. And many do not want to acknowledge refugees as refugees—as evidenced by the Jordanian government's use of the term *guest* to describe displaced Iraqis and Syrians. Humanitarian agencies view camps as needing to be temporary for slightly different reasons. They are an agglomeration necessitated by emergency, and their persistence is a sign of the failure to find a solution to that emergency. In the Palestinian case, the symbolic importance of the camps for nationalist politics renders changes in their presentation and form internally suspect. Naming the camp as a site of politics is one part of the refugee struggle to identify and enact a form of politics proper to the Palestinian condition.

Camp inhabitants cannot escape the contradictory pressures to be quiescent and defiant, to settle into exile while simultaneously preparing to return home, to maintain the camp as it was and to collaborate in its improvement. But they do find a distinct path through this terrain. A young man from the Dheisheh camp in Bethlehem, but now living outside ("I am not living in

Dheisheh, but I am from Dheisheh"), summed it up as "the Dheisheh style—the way things move." He was speaking to the political and social dominance of Dheisheh in the Bethlehem area, contrasting the energy of the camp to surrounding municipalities where both refugees and natives reside. But what is this "Dheisheh style"? In part, this phrase refers precisely to the political and social energy of the camp—the many NGOs, cultural organizations, and political activities that are located in and emerge from this space. But that is not all. It also refers to a way of living: the forms of relations with neighbors, the means of organizing commerce, and the manner of walking in the streets. All these things, this style, are part of why he also said, "When I leave home I come to Dheisheh. . . . My relationship network is in the camp."

Fayrouz's story shows how the tensions produced for refugee politics by the passage of time are often expressed in generational conflict within the intimate setting of the family. The challenges created by dispersal across space are felt in other terms. Geographic distance and barriers of access across the places of Palestinian displacement bring unfamiliarity and strangeness into the domain of community relations. Palestinians have been physically separated since 1948, and the terms of that separation have shifted along with the changing political geography of the region. After 1948, the greatest barrier was between those who remained in the territory that became Israel and those who were outside. [12] The entirety of historical Palestine—now Israel, the West Bank, and Gaza—has been largely inaccessible, since 1967, to Palestinians who live elsewhere.

Even when people are permitted to travel across fields, as has been the case among Lebanon, Syria, and Jordan, the disparate conditions of life in these places have created social and political distinctions. [13] Refugees look across this landscape and evaluate which communities suffer the most. They identify different opportunities and room for maneuvering across host countries. Palestinians in Lebanon often contrast their situation with that of refugees in Jordan—saying that in Lebanon they have freedom of political expression but no economic opportunity, whereas in Jordan it is the opposite. Refugees in the West Bank sometimes view camp residents in Lebanon as suffering brethren in need of their assistance. From the relative safety of Jordan, Palestinian life in Gaza can seem the most exposed. Sustaining and reinvigorating Palestinian political community in the face of this fractured geography has been a primary aim of Palestinian refugee politics. No easy task, the humanitarian apparatus that extends across these divided spaces has been an important venue for pursuing this goal.

Camp geographies have shifted in response to sovereign action and violent destruction, and also because of more personal choices. People sometimes move between camps when they get married, perhaps growing up in Rashadiyya in southern Lebanon and raising children in Burj al Barajneh. They go abroad to seek educational opportunities they cannot find "at home," sometimes coming back with degrees in hand and sometimes becoming part of a remittance

circuit. Like Fayrouz, they move out of camps into urban centers to pursue economic opportunities and to seek better living conditions, going for instance from Baqa'a camp to Amman, and sometimes back again. A few years after I recorded Fayrouz's life history, she moved out of the camp again. Returning to Amman was too far, so she sold the shelter that had originally been assigned to her husband's father and moved the family into the town of Jerash. This move was precipitated by a slightly different worry about her children than the one we discussed in the recorded story. She worried that the cramped and noisy conditions in the camp, and her children's interactions with the many young people she saw as having no ambition, would further limit their life chances. Camp life is filled with contradictions. And these contradictions are part of the political field of refugees.

TENSIONS OF THE HUMANITARIAN POSITION

Humanitarian worlds are filled with discordances. Humanitarian spaces are intended to be nonpolitical, but they are sites of both political intervention and political invention. And humanitarian politics is both a mechanism for governing unstable populations and a means of regenerating communities in exile. Humanitarian time is meant to be the present, and to address the present crisis, but it can stretch out over an undetermined future, eventually reaching back to a humanitarian past. The humanitarian experience always involves contestations between the structure of the aid system and the desires and demands of its participants. When displaced Palestinians engage in politics, they do so, to a considerable extent, *as* refugees. They make a nonpolitical humanitarian bureaucratic categorization a ground for political action and identity. When aid providers confront the limits of humanitarian capacity, they experience these failings as both personal and professional concerns. When any of these people imagine a future beyond or outside of humanitarianism, such an exit is both an object of desire and a potential loss.

The multiple subject positions that refugees inhabit is another source of tension. As is the case with many humanitarian organizations, the entire staff of Anera in the Gaza Strip are Palestinians. [14] When Gaza comes under attack, as it did by Israeli forces in the summer of 2014, Anera employees are targets, potential victims, and also the first responders. From July 10 to August 27 of that year, Rania El Hilou—the Anera communications officer in Gaza—wrote a daily online journal about her experience of the assault. [15] Her blog is a window into the double experience of victim and humanitarian worker in the midst of catastrophe. The writing was part of the work a communication officer undertakes to narrate for the world—and for potential donors—the experiences of Gazans under attack. And therefore it is not an unmediated

expression of experience, but part of the work of producing a humanitarian narrative. The entry for July 25, already well into the war, states:

> Every time I write this journal, I want to start it with, "I'm still alive." We survived another day. Nothing ever gets any better. . . . My aunt called to say that she has allowed displaced people from Shaja'ya to camp out in her backyard. She said they were in need of everything and wondered if we had some clothes we could donate. I put together a bag of things and was able to find a taxi to drive it over to her place. This is a time when we have to come together and take care of each other.

This post describes the contradictory, but frequently simultaneous, contraction and expansion that occur in a crisis. There is the narrowing of focus to survival: "I'm still alive." In another post, El Hilou describes this contracting horizon as a widespread condition: "One thing that struck me today is how people's dreams have shrunken to the basic necessities of life. They want water to drink. They want to bathe. They want food. One elderly man was terribly worried about not being able to get medicines for his diabetes. And all of them just want to go back to their own homes." But along with this contraction, catastrophe also expands networks of mutual care and concern. What she recounts about Gaza in 2014 echoes things I heard from people about the aftermath of 1948, when many refugees to Gaza found initial shelter in the homes and lands of native Gazans. In those stories, I heard about the tensions that emerged fairly quickly as the displaced overwhelmed the existing structures of mutual support. And, as the catastrophic begins to blur back into the cruddy, these tensions will likely recur.

In other postings, El Hilou talks about the challenges of being a humanitarian worker also living under assault. She begins by talking about her husband's work:

> My husband works for UNRWA as an architectural engineer. He was called in today to work on installing indoor and outdoor showers at the UN schools where displaced people are taking shelter. The issue of hygiene is a growing health problem and infections are starting to spread. So, I am glad that my husband can go and make a direct difference to suffering people. But I am very scared, because conditions are extremely dangerous. Yesterday three humanitarian relief workers were killed, two of whom are from the UN. This morning a school was bombed.

International humanitarian workers sometimes choose to expose themselves to danger, in acts of solidarity with those they help. But they can never undo the geopolitical hierarchies that accord greater value to their lives. [16] Unlike internationals, Gazan humanitarian actors did not have the option of leaving the scene of attack in 2014. The entire Gaza Strip was under assault and comprehensive siege. Every door of possible escape was barred by either Israel or Egypt. But Gazan humanitarian actors, too, repeatedly make the choice to put themselves at risk by going out to work rather than sheltering at home. In going out to work, these humanitarian workers distinguish themselves from other Gazans under assault—not in terms of value, but in terms of experience. The imperative to "do something," which motivates so much humanitarian labor, is

in this case a means of having a different experience of the assault: to be not just a victim, but also an actor.

As a communications officer, El Hilou was not required to go into the field in the same way to perform her job. For her the danger was "getting totally cut off from the world." With a generator at home, she was able to get a certain amount of electricity each day, despite the fact that the power plant was damaged. But she wondered: "How long will the fuel hold out? I have started to take handwritten notes, keeping my notepad near me all the time and writing with it held up close to my face so I can see what's on the page. This way I capture my thoughts and have them ready either to type out quickly or to relate to a colleague in Washington." Like the rest of Gaza's population, she worried about isolation. But unlike most of that population, she had access to a venue through which to narrate and amplify her experience.

In the last post in her journal, El Hilou recounts the reopening of the Anera office once the ceasefire began: "After our greetings, hugs, and handshakes in the office this morning, we immediately got to work with calls and coordination of relief deliveries. This is the fuel that keeps us all going. We all consider ourselves survivors. We exist. Why do we exist? Because our existence has a meaning. That meaning is to help the people of Gaza to recover and rebuild their lives and the dignity they deserve." Part of what humanitarian work does is enable El Hilou—and others like her—to struggle against the narrowing of horizons, visions, and expectations that crisis can produce. Even as humanitarianism is a form of intervention with self-consciously limited aim, working as a humanitarian actor, perhaps especially while one is a humanitarian victim, can be part of an effort to pursue a continued expansion of what it means to live, and what it means to give value to Palestinian lives.

Palestinians have lived both in and against humanitarianism for seventy years. As a Palestinian refugee told a journalist already in 1949: "The Palestine affair is no longer a matter of liberating a country. It has degenerated into a humiliating problem—that of feeding and sheltering refugees." [17] Acting against the degradation of their problem, Palestinians have declared refugees to be political subjects, made the humanitarian space and humanitarian activity ("feeding and sheltering refugees") a matter of political concern, and insisted that their protests and refusals are political acts. Contrary to Arendt's diagnosis, the Palestinian instance shows the refugee category and condition to be world forming: a ground for initiating action, a means of enacting plurality, a way of being in common, and a space of relation. The signal importance of the refugee in Palestinian national discourse generates another set of disjunctures. There is a tension in making a category of defeat, which the refugee surely is, a ground for action—which, as this book has documented, it certainly is as well. There is a tension in locating much of the claim to statehood in a category that marks its absence. This discordant politics is central to the

Palestinian condition. And it has helped make Palestinian nationhood internationally visible and locally resonant, even as it imposes burdens on those who live in it.

The various competing forces that shape people's lives are one reason that politics in the humanitarian condition is itself multiple in its expression. Humanitarianism seems to many to offer only the language of suffering as a way to understand refugee needs and claims, and there have been plenty of moments when that language has come to the fore in Palestinian refugee politics. Palestinians have struggled mightily over the years to make themselves appear as "grievable subjects." [18] And they have succeeded to a certain, but never stable, extent. But, as this book has explored, the discourse of pain and the call for compassion have been matched and even exceeded by other political framings. Palestinian refugee politics has never been only a politics of suffering. In addition to many moments and movements of resistance, Palestinian refugee politics has been enacted through the steady facts of persistence. Palestinian refusal of elimination, which began before 1948, has entailed a pushback against the diminution of Palestinian presence on the land, on the international stage, and in the political arena. [19] And as Palestinians have continued to exist, to exert their presence in all these spaces, it has become increasingly difficult to deny this reality, to say that "they do not exist" [20] or to imagine that the refugee "problem" will simply disappear with the passage of time and generations.

A central challenge of Palestinian politics is that this insistence on existence has to be repeated, apparently ad infinitum. Through their claims, their actions, and their presence Palestinians have secured the right to politics, but this right is never assured. I have described humanitarianism as punctuated and politics as discordant. The terms could also be flipped. Palestinian refugee politics has been punctuated by repeated attempts to reduce the Palestinian problem to a humanitarian one, necessitating repeated refugee insistence that the humanitarian is political. As with the oscillations of relief, the movements of politics are not between two fixed poles. When Palestinians insist that their lives and their communities matter, they have used the language, variously, of national liberation, third-worldist revolution, transnational solidarity, and humanitarian obligation.

The pursuit of politics within humanitarianism has been necessary for Palestinian refugees, but it has also been necessarily limited. The mixing of temporalities, geographies, and goals that is the hallmark of refugee politics is a source of persistent tension. Outside parties regularly admonish refugees, claiming to school them in better politics or more appropriate behavior, and refugees themselves feel conflicted—about how to organize, how to resist, and how to live. Palestinians want the value of their lives to be acknowledged. And they want to live in circumstances where that acknowledgment does not have to come primarily in the form of grief. This last aim largely lies beyond the limits of humanitarian activity and humanitarian politics.

REFUGEE FUTURES TODAY

The year 2015 has been described as the beginning of a new "migrant crisis" in Europe. This crisis was preceded by several waves of mass displacement within the Middle East in the first decades of the twenty-first century, as first Iraqis and then Syrians fled violence introduced to their countries. The UNHCR quantified the numbers of people on the move: as of 2017 at seventeen million refugees and sixty-five million displaced, the global refugee population exceeded the massive displacements in the years after World War II. In the face of these upheavals, and the suspicion and rejection with which refugees were frequently met, humanitarian agencies, activists, and media outlets worked hard to put human faces on these dramatic numbers: sometimes through stories of uplift, such as that of Yusra Mardini, a Syrian refugee who swam in the 2016 Olympics, [21] and sometimes through images of tragedy, such as the body of Syrian toddler Alan Kurdi washed up on a Turkish beach in 2015. [22]

Much of the public discussion about this refugee crisis has been about the receiving states' potentially divergent responsibilities. These states' responsibility to humanity, as partially codified in international law, is to accept people fleeing war or persecution. And these states' responsibility to their citizens—a closed circle—is to protect their way of life, their personal safety, their worldview, all of which are perceived as at least partially under threat by the arrival of large numbers of refugees. Much effort to increase support for the acceptance of refugees has entailed arguing that arriving populations do not pose a threat. Hence, there are many news stories about economically productive refugee families, about their integration into small-town communities in the United States and Europe. It should be noted that less than 1 percent of the overall refugee population are ever resettled in a third country, after having found initial refuge in a host country. [23] Despite the imagery, and the hysteria, very few of the world's displaced people ever arrive in Europe, the United States, or Australia.

Scholars have been writing furiously as well. Ghassan Hage argues that, rather than entirely rejecting the idea that refugees pose a threat to "the West," we should acknowledge, and even celebrate, the ways that refugees, and migrants more generally, do pose a kind of threat: a threat to an existing imperial order. [24] That is, refugees may not just presage a world to come, as Agamben suggests in "We Refugees," but also can be active progenitors of that world. [25] According to Hage, refugees pose a challenge not just to the nation-state system, but also to a global apartheid system that divides people along boundaries of nation, class, and opportunity. Today's refugee crisis, in other words, can be seen as another moment in anticolonial struggle.

Each repeated moment of crisis provides an opportunity to think again about what refugees tell us about our political world. But the language of crisis can also obscure some of what they tell us. Crisis suggests exception, both in the sense of being not-the-usual and in the sense of

being outside existing order. [26] The refugee condition, though, is not just returning, but persisting. And refugees are not external to global political orders, but central to them. Further, refugees are not just figures, but actors, who struggle within and against this political order to create livable lives. To make sense of what it is to be a refugee, and of what refugees illuminate about politics, it is vital to attend to this persistence.

What can Palestinians, with seventy years of experience as refugees, teach people who are just embarking on that journey? I am certainly not suggesting that all, or even most, of today's refugees will remain in that category for as long as Palestinian refugees, but all indications are that many will remain displaced and unsettled for a good while to come. One thing that Palestinians have to teach other refugees is that suffering can go on longer than would seem possible, that situations that seem utterly untenable may not only drag on, but also can get worse. But this sobering reminder is not all they have to impart. Palestinians have considerable experience in making the refugee condition "world forming." Their experience sheds light on the forms of political life that are possible, even in precarious conditions. In circumstances that are awash with contradictions and conflicting forces, there is value, and maybe even comfort, in a politics that can bring divergent needs and aims into the same frame and let people feel that to make one claim is not to abandon another. Such extractions from the Palestinian experience mitigate against the total dissolution of politics under the weight of extremely difficult circumstances. The actions and demands of discordant politics are in genuine tension, but they do not stand in opposition. The lessons of the Palestinian experience are not only for refugees, but also for all of us who live in this world.

The Palestinian case underscores that responding to people's suffering is not enough and that recognizing people as refugees who deserve succor is insufficient. As Palestinians have insisted for seventy years, displaced persons—themselves, Syrians, and others—have political claims on us. These claims are both international, directed at the "global apartheid structure"; [27] and national, identifying state responsibilities for the conditions that necessitate flight and insisting on political recognition in these countries. Refugees will pursue these claims whether we recognize them or not. But their agency does not relieve us of our obligations.

The Syrian civil war—its destruction, its displacements, and its globally reverberating effects—exploded after I concluded the bulk of research for this book, and it is not my object of analysis here. But there is no doubt that the dynamics explored in this book are relevant to this circumstance, both for Palestinians displaced once again and for Syrians experiencing displacement for the first time. For Palestinians this event is another in a long line of crises that punctuate the stasis of chronic need. For Syrians it appears to be the beginning of what will likely be their own protracted displacement. The geography of Palestinian refugee camps—especially in Lebanon—is being remade again as Palestinians from Syria have sought refuge

there. I occasionally encountered the start of regulatory fallout of this movement in UNRWA offices, as Palestinians coming from Syria tried to change their UNRWA registration to the Lebanon field. This situation was beginning to make its way into people's lives when I was doing field research in Lebanon, but it was not yet present for everyone.

The emergence of the Syrian crisis put time out of joint again. Many people still talked about how "it is good in Syria. The Palestinians are not lacking anything there. Their situation is good." Comparing Syria to Lebanon, people still said: "They live better than us and they have more rights than we do. We in Lebanon have no rights. . . . There the state is interested in them. The houses are better, and the camps are cleaner than ours. They can work in all fields." All these things that had defined the differences between being a Palestinian in Lebanon and in Syria—which included political repression in Syria—were coming apart at the seams. Many people did not yet know it. Others experienced the present that was in the midst of being lost, and the present that was coming to replace it, at once. Abu Ahmed told me that "a Palestinian in Syria lives better than here" and also that Syrians were beginning to move into Burj al Barajneh because "the situation in Syria is scary now." He worried about the effect of strangers in the camp, especially about men harassing young women. Which sentiment was an account of the present moment? For Abu Ahmed it was not yet clear.

Working with the Women's Humanitarian Organization (WHO) in Burj al Barajneh, Fatima witnessed Syrians beginning to come to the center. And she was starting to think about projects that WHO could take up in response: "There are many refugees coming from Syria. They come to our center and I visit them at their homes. I feel they have needs to be fulfilled. Until now, no institution sponsors them. These people left their homes. . . . Some lost people. Some still have family there. So I feel it is important to discuss this project." In her attention to emerging need and her interest in formulating a programmatic response, Fatima was part of the humanitarian apparatus gearing up to respond to the latest crisis of Palestinian displacement.

UNRWA has introduced a new category into its lexicon of Palestinian refugees: "Palestine Refugees from Syria" (PRS). In appealing for funds to provide assistance to these refugees in Lebanon, the agency noted that "PRS vulnerabilities as a result of protracted displacement and limited access to Lebanon are not anticipated to abate." [28] As an international conference on Syria got under way in Brussels in April 2017, UNRWA's commissioner-general issued a plea not to forget the country's Palestinian refugees:

> The reasons why the world cannot afford to overlook the plight, needs and rights of Palestine refugees [are] once again so clearly apparent. It is a matter of rights, dignity, and humanity. It is also a matter of security, for the refugees themselves and for the region. Leaving unresolved one of the most critical and long-lasting refugee crises in the world, allows anger, frustration and resentment to grow unchecked and casts the worst light possible on the ability of the international community to end conflicts. [29]

The long Palestinian refugee experience suggests that this necessary plea, which is one among many—for Syria in general, for the displaced, and for the Palestinians displaced yet again—is not likely to accomplish its aim. It serves as a reminder of the limits of humanitarian possibility, both on the ground and in the international policy sphere. But humanitarian possibility is not the only thing in play. From the very beginning of their displacement, refugees have also taken action on their own behalf. And they will surely do so now.

HISTORICAL TIMELINE

1917	British government issues Balfour Declaration supporting the establishment of a Jewish national home in Palestine
1936–39	The Arab Revolt: Largest Palestinian uprising against the British Mandate and Zionist colonization of Palestine
1948	Establishment of the State of Israel
	Displacement and dispossession of most of Palestine's native population
1950	United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) begins operations
1951	United Nations approves Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees
1953	Israel attacks Bureij refugee camp in the Gaza Strip
1956	Suez Crisis: Israel occupies the Sinai and the Gaza Strip for four months
	United Nations Emergency Force (peacekeeping forces) deployed after Israeli withdrawal
1958	Lebanon crisis threatens outbreak of civil war
1963	Ba'ath party seizes power in Syria
1964	Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) is founded in Cairo
1965	Arab League approves "Casablanca" Protocol for the Treatment of Palestinians in Arab States
1967	Six-Day War: Israel invades, occupies West Bank, Gaza Strip, Golan Heights, and Sinai Peninsula
1968	Battle of Karameh; closure of Palestinian camps in Jordan valley
1969	Cairo Agreement; PLO takes control of camps in Lebanon, beginning of "the revolution"
1970	Black September: Jordan expels Palestinian fighters
1971	Israeli forces led by Ariel Sharon suppress resistance to occupation in the Gaza Strip
1974	Israeli Air Force destroys Nabatiyah refugee camp in Lebanon
1975	Lebanese civil war begins
1976	Syrian army enters Lebanon
	Tel al Zaatar refugee camp in northeast Beirut destroyed
1978	Israel invades southern Lebanon
	United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon, a peacekeeping force, is established and deployed to southern Lebanon
1982	Israel invades Lebanon and occupies the south, attacking Palestinian refugee camps in the area

	PLO is expelled from Lebanon
	Refugees in Sabra and Shatila camps in Beirut are massacred
1987	First intifada begins in West Bank and Gaza
1988	Jordan renounces claims to West Bank
	PLO declares Palestine an independent state
1990	Gulf War: Palestinians expelled from Kuwait
1993	Israel and PLO sign Oslo accords
1994	Establishment of Palestinian Authority in West Bank and Gaza
2000	Al-Aqsa (second) intifada begins in West Bank and Gaza
2002	Israeli army attacks, partially destroys Jenin refugee camp in West Bank
2005	Assassination of Prime Minister Rafiq al-Hariri: Syrian forces depart Lebanon in wake of protests
2006	Hamas wins parliamentary elections in West Bank and Gaza
	2006 Lebanon War: Israel invades and bombards Lebanon in course of thirty-four-day war with Hizballah
2007	Hamas takes control of Gaza Strip: Israeli/Egyptian blockade begins
	Nahr el Barad refugee camp near Tripoli devastated in fighting between Lebanese army and Fatah al-Islam
2008–09	Operation Cast Lead: Israel attacks the Gaza Strip
2011	Arab uprisings; beginning of Syrian uprising
2012	Operation Pillar of Defense: Israel attacks the Gaza Strip
2014	Operation Protective Edge: Israel invades the Gaza Strip

NOTES

CHAPTER ONE

1. The Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation has since installed an underground sewage network. https://www.eda.admin.ch/content/dam/countries/countries-content/jordan/en/Jerash%20WATSAN-Jordan-Dec.%202014_EN.pdf .

2. Calhoun 2004; Cooper 2015.

3. Zetter and Long 2012. This analysis was written before the full unfolding of the Syrian refugee crisis, but there is no reason to think this displacement will be short.

4. "Reactions to Refugee Crisis May Violate States' International Legal Obligations," International Justice Resource Center, November 25, 2015. http://www.ijrcenter.org/2015/11/25/reactions-to-refugee-crisis-may-violate-states-international-legal-obligations/ . Antonio Donini, "The Crisis of Multilateralism and the Future of Humanitarian Action," *IRIN*, November 30, 2016. https://www.irinnews.org/opinion/2016/11/30/crisis-multilateralism-and-future-humanitarian-action .

5. Barnett and Walker 2015; Barnett 2013; Abu Rish 2011; Agier 2011.

6. Sahrawi refugee camps have existed in Algeria since 1975. The Konik camp was established in Montenegro in 1994 and houses mainly Roma displaced from Kosovo. The Dadaab camps in Kenya originated in 1991. Karen refugees have lived in settlements along the Thai-Burma border since 1984. Millions of Afghan refugees have resided in Pakistan and Iran since 1979. Rohingya refugees have been in camps in Bangladesh since 1991; in 2017 hundreds of thousands more fled Myanmar (Burma) as a result of government attacks.

7. Fassin 2009, 49; Fassin 2007a.

8. Agier and Bouchet-Saulnier 2004; Hilhorst and Jansen 2010; Abild 2009.

9. Von Pilar 1999.

10. Terry 2002; and see Barnett (2005); Bortolotti (2010).

11. Tsing 2005, 5.

12. *Life Lived in Relief* is an account of post–World War II humanitarianism. For histories of earlier incarnations, see Watenpaugh 2015; Tusan 2012; Rodogno 2011; Gatrell 1999; special issue on "Humanitarianism in the Era of the First World War," *First World War Studies* 5(1) (2014).

13. Ballinger 2012.

14. Zamindar 2007; Pandey 2001; Naqvi 2012.

15. Madokoro 2012.

16. This is how British colonial officials described the influx of refugees in Hong Kong (Mark 2007); and see Cohen (2006).

17. Haskell 1992 [1985]; Lester 2002; and see Ahmed (1992); Dirks (1997); Spivak (1988).

18. Reid-Henry 2014; Wilson and Brown 2009; Forsythe 2005; Hutchinson 1996. Thomas Laqueur locates the roots of modern humanitarian sensibilities in eighteenth-century narrative structures that show that all of us have bodies that suffer, and suffer similarly (Laqueur 1989 and 2009).

19. Skran 1995.

20. IFRC, A0403-2 19740, 1948, LRCS, Operation Palestine 1, 23 September 1948.

21. For an extended discussion of AFSC concerns about taking up this project, see Feldman (2007).

22. IFRC, A0403-2 19740, 1948, LRCS, "Relief to Palestine Refugees," n.d.

23. ICRC, G59-I-GC-E Box 850, December 1948–January 1949, Letter from ICRC and LRCS to UN, 10 November 1948.

24. ICRC, G59-I-GC-E Box 850, December 1948–January 1949, Letter from UN to ICRC and LRCS, 15 November 1948.

25. ICRC, G59-I-GC-E Box 850, December 1948–January 1949, Minutes of meeting between ICRC, LRCS, and UN, 26 November 1948.

26. ICRC, G59-I-GC-E Box 850, December 1948–January 1949, Minutes of meeting between ICRC, LRCS, and UN, 25 November 1948.

27. ICRC, G59-I-GC-E Box 850, December 1948–January 1949, Text of agreement.

28. ICRC, G59-I-GC-E Box 850, December 1948–January 1949, Matters for consideration of UN Liaison Office in Beirut, n.d.

29. IFRC, A0403-2 19740, Personal experiences, P. De Dongo, Camp Director, 19 March 1950.

30. ICRC, G59 I-GC-E Box 850, March 1949, Report on present conditions of the Palestine refugees and the WHO Aid, 22 February 1949.

31. UN General Assembly A/RES/302, 8 December 1949.

32. IFRC, 19742, Palestine Refugees 1949, Notes of meeting between LRCS, AFSC, and UNRPR, 4 April 1949.

33. ICRC, G59 I-GC-E Box 851, Letter from ICRC President to UN Secretary-General, 11 January 1950.

34. IFRC, A0403-2 19740, 1949 Press releases, Translation of talk by LRCS Director, stamped 15 March 1950.

35. IFRC, A0403-2 19740, 1948, From LRCS Secretary-General to UNRPR Director, 18 June 1949.

36. IFRC, 19742, Palestine Refugees 1949, Notes of meeting between LRCS, AFSC, and UNRPR, 4 April 1949.

37. IFRC, 19742, Palestine Refugees 1949, Report of meeting of Ad Hoc Advisory Committee to UNRPR held on 20 April 1949, dated 11 May 1949.

38. IFRC, A0403-2 19740, 1949, "Publications, text of fortnightly Al-Aghathat," 15 July 1949.

39. IFRC, A0403-2 19740, 1948–50, "Report to the UNRPR on the Part of the LRCS in the Palestine Refugees Relief Program for the months of August, September, and October 1949."

40. IFRC, A0403-2 19740, 1948–50, "Report to the UNRPR on the Part of the LRCS in the Palestine Refugees Relief Program for the Month of November 1949."

41. IFRC, A0403-2 19740, 1948–50, "Report to the UNRPR on the Part of the LRCS in the Palestine Refugees Relief Program for the Month of January 1950."

42. IFRC, A0403-2 19740, 1949 Press Releases, "Questions answered for the press by the Near East Commissioner of the League," April 1950.

43. IFRC, A0410-1, Donations, "Report to the UNRPR on the Part of the LRCS in the Palestine Refugees Relief Program for the Month of April 1950."

44. Rosenfeld 2009.

45. IFRC, A 0403-2 19740, 1948, LRCS, "Operation Palestine 3," CP 402/3 b, 22 November 1948.

46. Bishara 2015; Barnett 2001.

47. Lebanon "made the right to work conditional on the country's economic situation and restricted entry into and exit from Lebanon" (Knudsen 2009, 55).

48. Massad 2001; Shlaim 1988.

49. Shiblak 1997, 268 and see El-Natour (1997).

50. Gabiam 2016, 24–25.

51. Brand 1988, 636.

52. UNRWA 1982, 28.

53. Buerhig 1971, 68.

54. Ibid., 69; see Feldman (2008b); Raphaeli (1968).

55. Ibid.

56. UNRWA 1982, 26.

57. Shabaneh 2012; al-Husseini 2000.

58. https://www.unrwa.org/who-we-are/frequently-asked-questions .

59. UNRWA 1982, 30.

60. Hanafi 2010, 8.

61. Hanafi 2010.

62. Fruchter-Ronen 2008; Shiblak 1997; Hanafi 2008; Hassan and Hanafi 2010.

63. For more on "the situation" as an object of analysis, see Rabinow (2002).

64. Gatrell 2013; Hyndman 2000; Pattison 2011; Slim 2015; Ticktin 2005; Walker 1997.

65. Redfield 2005, 329; Foucault 1991.

66. Povinelli 2011, 3.

67. Brun 2015 and 2016; Kublitz 2013 and 2016a.

68. Fisk 2001, 99; on camp destruction see Tabar (2012); Monsour (2002).

69. "UNRWA strongly condemns Israeli shelling of its school in Gaza as a serious violation of international law," statement by UNRWA Commissioner-General Pierre Krähenbühl, July 30, 2014. http://www.unrwa.org/newsroom/official-

statements/unrwa-strongly-condemns-israeli-shelling-its-school-gaza-serious . And see Raya Jalabi, Tom McCarthy, and Nadja Popovich, "Gaza Crisis: A Closer Look at Israeli Strikes on UNRWA Schools," *Guardian,* August 8, 2014. http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/aug/08/-sp-gaza-israeli-strikes-unrwa-schools .

70. Harriet Sherwood, "UN Spokesman Cries on Camera over Gaza School Attack," *The Guardian,* July 31, 2014. http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/jul/31/un-spokesman-chris-gunness-cries-gaza .

71. Norum, Mostafanezhad, and Sebro 2016.

72. Chan and Loveridge 1987; Hammond 1993. For discussion of a related experience of boredom among homeless persons in Romania, see O'Neill (2017). Boredom is not only an issue for the displaced. Antonio De Lauri (2014, 24) has also written about "humanitarian boredom" as an affliction of humanitarian workers, caused by "the repetitive nature of their activities and commitments" and their limited engagement in the life of the places where they work.

73. Based on research in Georgian IDP (internally displaced person) camps, Elizabeth Dunn has argued that humanitarian activities—whether rations delivery, cultural diversions, or participatory engagement—do not break through the tedium of displacement, and that even when humanitarian forms are noticeably present they feel to people like "nothing" (Dunn 2014). I have encountered similar critiques of the inadequacy of aid and the hypocrisy of policies, but humanitarianism still punctuates experience.

74. McKay 2012, 288.

75. Some people remember two meals a day. Others describe receiving milk in the morning and lunch after school.

76. On anthropological interest in suffering subjects, see Robbins 2013.

77. Simpson 2014, 22.

78. The non-politics of humanitarianism is not identical to the anti-politics of development that James Ferguson (1990) describes. Rather, for humanitarianism the withholding of politics is a self-consciously ethical stance and a strategic effort to draw a boundary around the humanitarian space to enable life-saving work to take place.

79. Nyers 2013; Malkki 1995; Smith 1994.

80. Arendt 1958.

81. Rancière 2004, 304.

82. Stewart 2007, 44.

83. Some wealthy Palestinian landowners sold land to Zionist settlers, a source of ongoing anger within the Palestinian community, but the numbers were small. By 1948 only about 6 percent of the country's land was under Jewish ownership.

84. Reynolds 2017; Rego 2012; Nasasra 2012.

85. Mike Davis uses the term *surplus humanity* (Davis 2006, 174).

86. Bradel 2004; Pandolfi 2003.

87. Barnett and Walker 2015.

88. On affect and sentiment in archival materials, see Stoler (2010). On the empirical importance of oral accounts for Palestinian history, see Sayigh (2015b).

89. This multi-sited research lets me capture the range of Palestinian refugee experiences, but it inevitably sacrifices some depth in each locale. For rich investigations of Palestinian refugee lives that focus on single locales, see Allan (2013), Achilli (2015b), Al-Hardan (2016), Gabiam (2016), Peteet (2005), Farah (1999), Latif (2010), Perdigon (2011), and Rosenfeld (2004).

90. Salamanca et al. 2012. The challenge of understanding the relations among dispersed palestinian communities extends across the globe (Arar 2006; Baeza 2014)

91. Bowles 1998; Horstmann 2011; Farah 2009; Wilson 2016; Horst 2006; Crisp 2003.

92. Daniel and Knudsen 1996; Ewins et al. 2006; Vestergaard 2014; Martone 2002.

93. Allain 2001; Duffy 2008; Marx 1995; Martin 1983.

94. Barnett and Walker 2015, 131.

1. Researchers working in many settings have found the refugee to be a complex identity category (Zetter 1991 and 2007; Aggarwal 2007).

2. Kobelinsky 2015; Bohmer and Shuman 2007; Fassin and d'Halluin 2005; McKinley 1997.

3. http://www.irinnews.org/analysis/2016/06/16/resettlement-10-percent-refugees-pipe-dream .

4. The asylum process can entail a period of extended "legal limbo" (Cabot 2014). Even if one is granted the opportunity, exit is a difficult process, as the literature on refugee resettlement confirms (Ong 2003; Besteman 2016; Sandvik 2011).

5. Chan and Loveridge 1987.

6. Hathaway and Foster 2014.

7. The "citizen" has many others. As Linda Bosniak has explored, the "alien" is another such category, one that raises similar problems of the right to politics as does the refugee (Bosniak 2002 and 2006). See also Coutin (2000) and Malkki (1992).

8. The refugee condition bears some similarity to how Achille Mbembe describes the slave condition, as a triple loss: "loss of a 'home,' loss of rights over his or her body, and loss of political status" (Mbembe 2003, 21).

9. Agamben argues that "humanitarian organizations—which today are more and more supported by international commissions—can only grasp human life in the figure of bare or sacred life, and therefore, despite themselves, maintain a secret solidarity with the very powers they ought to fight" (Agamben 1998, 133).

10. Arendt 1951, 267.

11. Ibid., 296.

12. Arendt, 1996, 116. In *The Origins of Totalitarianism,* Arendt notes that "the Jewish question" was solved "by means of a colonized and then conquered territory" and "produced a new category of refugees" (Arendt 1951: 290).

13. Schaap 2001, 30.

14. Rancière 2011, 2.

15. Schaap 2001, 24. Here Schaap refers to what he describes as "the opposition Arendt sets up between world-poor refugees and world-forming citizens." The reference is to Heidegger.

16. Arendt 1996, 110.

17. Ibid., 111.

18. The right-wing Middle East Forum, founded by Daniel Pipes, lists this definitional change as one of its key policy aims: "Change the U.S. government's definition of a 'Palestine refugee' in its dealings with UNRWA; Limit the designation 'Palestine refugee' to individuals who actually fled Palestine in 1948–49, who do not have a nationality, and who do not live in the West Bank or Gaza." http://www.meforum.org/employment.php .

19. Abu Naml 1979.

20. Turki 1974, 7.

21. This elision of the suffering subject and the political subject—with uneasy consequences for both categories—is a widespread phenomenon.

22. Takkenberg 1998, 62. According to the terms of the convention, if Palestinians were to stop receiving assistance from another UN body (in this case, UNRWA) they would come under UNHCR authority.

23. In the drafting process, states argued for the importance of limiting the convention's applicability. The United States argued specifically that it should not include "the very numerous Kashmiri and Indian refugees" (Bem 2004, 613). Chinese refugees in Hong Kong and Macao were likewise not included—with very little discussion of this case. The Chinese did not press the issue, and the United States suggested that "it would be unrealistic for the Conference to attempt to legislate for the Far East" (ibid., 621). Whether the primary reason for the limiting clauses was material or ideological, the effect was the same (Walker 2003; Hathaway 1991).

24. It was precisely the existence of this other UN body that provided the grounds for the temporary exclusion of Palestinian refugees. According to Article 1D: "This convention shall not apply to persons who are at present receiving from organs of agencies of the United Nations other than the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees protection or assistance. When such protection or assistance has ceased for any reason, without the position of such persons being definitely settled in accordance with the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly of the United Nations, these persons shall *ipso facto* be entitled

to the benefits of this Convention."

25. Paragraph 11 of Resolution 194 affirms that "the refugees wishing to return to their homes and live at peace with their neighbors should be permitted to do so at the earliest practicable date, and that compensation should be paid for the property of those choosing not to return and for 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." UN General Assembly A/RES/194, 11 December 1948.

26. Takkenberg notes that there was little attention to the non-equivalence of UNRWA and the UNHCR as agencies (Takkenberg 1998, 67). He does not explicitly address the causes of this lack of attention, but it may have derived in part from an assumption that the Palestinian problem would be resolved shortly and that therefore the difference would not have long-term repercussions.

27. UN General Assembly, A/RES/194 (III) Palestine—Progress Report of the United Nations Mediator, 1948.

28. Goddard 2010, 480.

29. See UN General Assembly, A/65/225. Report of the United Nations Conciliation Commission for Palestine, 2010.

30. As Lex Takkenberg notes, "The phrase 'whose normal place of residence was Palestine during the period 1 June 1946 to 15 May 1948' at present refers to former 'mandate citizenship'" (Takkenberg 1998, 78). Prior to UNRWA's establishment, the operational agencies commissioned by the UNRPR also had to develop eligibility criteria. As an LRCS report described: "In order to carry out this work it was necessary to define who was eligible for relief, as no clear definition had even been stated by the United Nations. The following definition was proposed to the UNRPR and anticipating approval was used as a basis for re-registration: 'Any person who had permanent residency in Palestine from which as a result of the Palestine conflict he has been deprived without sufficient resources for basic maintenance shall be considered a refugee eligible for UNRPR relief.'" IFRC, A0403-2 19740, 1948–50, "Report to the UNRPR on the Part of the LRCS in the Palestine Refugees Relief Program for the months of August, September, and October 1949."

31. UNRWA Archives, Box 4 RE 210, part 2, Letter from Director of UNRWA Affairs, Syria, to Director of Relief Programs, 14 November 1963.

32. UN Relief and Works Agency, A/1451/Rev.1, Interim Report of the Director, 6 October 1950.

33. UNRWA, Box RE 2, RE 100, vol. 2, From Chief, Relief Operations Division, to Chief, Public Information Office, "Definition of a Refugee," 23 December 1969. According to this memo, "among those who were refused registration are a large number of UNRWA staff members who were in the employment of the Agency when registration was carried and who were not therefore in need."

34. UNRWA, Box RE 2, RE 100, vol. 1, "Memo: Proposal for issuance of a document attesting Palestine refugee status," 20 April 1961.

35. UA, Inactive Files, Box 29, From AD/OPS, P. Depage, to Deputy Director, 21 May 1959.

36. UA, Box RE 7 RE 210 02, Cabinet memorandum, 10 July 1961.

37. UA, Box RE 7 RE 210 02, Extract from Executive Cabinet Meeting, 12 July 1961.

38. Archival records make clear that the rule continued in effect and continued to be a source of concern. UA, Box RE 6 RE 210 (L), Letters from February 1967.

39. Rosen 2007; Wells 2004, 287.

40. UNRWA, Special Report of the Director Concerning Other Claimants for Relief, A/2978/Add. 1, 1955.

41. UA, Inactive Files, Box 29, 30 October 1958, Assistance to "other claimants for relief." The private agencies determined that "the size of the task was such that they could not undertake the large scale and long-term relief programme which was necessary to provide even a minimal relief service."

42. UA, Inactive Files, Box 29, Memo from PARI to UNRWA Advisory Commission, 22 April 1959.

43. UA, Inactive Files, Box 29, Brief for AD/COM Meeting on 14 May 1959.

44. PARI (the Palestinian Arab Refugee Institution) was established by the Syrian government in 1949 and was renamed GAPAR (General Administration for Palestinian Arab Refugees) in 1974. This body manages relations with UNRWA and is responsible for the camps, including camps not officially recognized by UNRWA. Many officials in GAPAR, up to and including the director, are themselves Palestinian (Gabiam 2016, 23).

45. Cervenak 1994. On the gendered character of humanitarian judgment see Kotef (2016) and Mikdashi (2014).

46. UNRWA, Box RE 4, RE 210, vol. 2, Memo: Marriage to Non-Refugees, From Commissioner-General to Acting Director of UNRWA Affairs, Jordan, 1 September 1962.

47. UA, Box 7, RE 210 (S), part 1, Letter from PARI Director to UNRWA Representative, Syria, 4 December 1960.

48. UNRWA Annual Report, UN General Assembly A/59/13 (SUPP), 19 October 2004.

49. UNRWA Consolidated Eligibility and Registration Instructions, 2006. http://www.unrwa.org/sites/default/files/ceri_24_may_2006_final.pdf . In this way, the problem could be "solved" without challenging the UNRWA policy of having refugee status go through the male line. As the instructions state: "Palestine refugees, and descendants of Palestine refugee males, including legally adopted children, are eligible to register for UNRWA services."

50. Around 350,00–400,00 people were displaced in 1967, about half of them for the first time.

51. Bartholomeusz 2010.

52. UN General Assembly, A/RES/63/92, "Persons Displaced as a Result of the June 1967 and Subsequent Hostilities" (2008).

53. UA, Box RE 2, RE 100, vol. 2, From Chief of Relief Operations Division to Chief of Public Information Office, 23 December 1969.

54. UA, Box RE 4, RE 210, part 2, Letter from UNRWA Representative to United Arab Republic to Acting Commissioner-General, 5 October 1963.

55. UA, Box RE 4, RE 210, part 2, Letter from Director of Relief Programmes to Directors of UNRWA Afffairs, Lebanon, Jordan, Gaza, Syria, 9 October 1963.

56. UA, Box RE 4, RE 210, part 2, Letter from Director of UNRWA Affairs, Jordan to Acting Commissioner-General, 19 October 1963.

57. UA, Box RE 4, RE 210, part 2, Letter from Director of UNRWA Affairs, Syria, to Director of Relief Programs, 14 November 1963.

58. UNRWA Annual Report 1965.

59. UNRWA Archives, Box RE 2, RE 100, vol. 2, From Chief, Relief Operations Division, to Chief, Public Information Office, 23 December 1969.

60. UNRWA Archives, RE 5 RE 210, part 6, Extract from UNRWA Cabinet Meeting, 13/14 September 1979.

61. Hage 2009.

62. Arendt 2005, 176.

63. IFRC, A0403-2 19740, 1948–50, "Report to the UNRPR on the Part of the LRCS in the Palestine Refugees Relief Program for the Month of November 1949."

64. ICRC, G59 I-GC-E Box 850, December 1948–January 1949, Press release, US delegate to UN General Assembly, 30 November 1949.

65. AFSC, #41 FS Sect Palestine, Letter from Howard Wriggins to Colin Bell, 18 February 1949.

66. UNRWA Annual Report 1952.

67. UA, Inactive Box 8 J.6, vol. 7, Jordan Rep 1954, Memo from Reports Officer to Director, 3 October 1952.

68. When the Syrian government asked for UNRWA help in covering burial costs in 1953, it made direct reference to cost-recovery. Stating that payment would have a double benefit, the Syrian official argued that "it would on the one hand render a humanitarian service, which is not existing, by providing the family of the deceased with the burial fees which often families are unable to secure. On the other hand this device would ensure a correct *[sic]* of death cases as they occur," UA, Inactive Files, Box 3, S.6, vol. 3, Letter from Director of PARI to UNRWA Representative, Syria, 30 May 1953. UNRWA officials had by then already tried this approach in other fields, with limited success. The Jordan field office reported that, after failing to get the level of reporting they expected, the practice had been discontinued, UA, Inactive Files, Box 3, S.6, vol. 3, Memo from Acting Director to Syria Representative, 15 June 1953. The humanitarian reasons for making the payment proved less compelling than its failure as a management tool.

69. UA, Inactive Files, Box 11, File J.16, Investigations—1954, Leslie Carver (Acting Director). Memo, "Elimination of Ineligible Ration Card Holders," to Acting UNRWA Representative to Jordan, 3 July 1953.

70. UA, Box Re 7 RE 210 (S) part one, Letter from Director of PARI to Director of UNRWA Affairs, Damascus, 19 November 1962.

71. UA, Inactive Files, Box 11, File J.16, Investigations 1954, Dr. P. Depage (UNRWA Representative to Syria), Letter, "Investigations in Syria," to Acting Director, UNRWA HQ, Beirut, 27 December 1953.

72. A suggestion in 1960 by one UNRWA official to another that he not raise the idea of income investigation with the

Syrians at that moment indicates that these successful procedures did not last indefinitely. UNRWA Archives RE Box RE 7 RE 210 (S) part one, From AD/OPS to UNRWA Representative Damascus, 3 January 1961.

73. The LRCS encountered resistance to its registration work. In February 1950 it reported that "the difficulties inherent in this work were no better evidenced than at El Karameh, where the refugees expressed their displeasure [with] registration by stoning the investigation teams working there. The Field Director was forced to take vigorous action by dissolving the Mukhtars Committee and withdrawing rations until the refugees agreed to cooperate with the investigation team." IFRC, A0403-2 19740, 1948–50, "Report to the UNRPR on the Part of the LRCS in the Palestine Refugees Relief Program for the Month of February 1950."

74. UA, Inactive Files, Box 11, File J.16, Investigations—1954, Letter from W.T. Clark (Acting UNRWA Representative, Jordan) to Acting Director, UNRWA HQ, Beirut, 22 September 1953.

75. UA, Inactive Files, Box 11, File J.16, Investigations—1954, Letter from W.T. Clark (Acting UNRWA Representative, Jordan) to Acting Director, UNRWA HQ, Beirut, 14 October 1953.

76. UA, Inactive Files, Box 11, File J.16, Investigations—1954, Leslie Carver (Acting Director), Note For Record, Discussions with Foreign Minister of Jordan on 20 December 1954, dated 21 December 1954.

77. UA, Box RE 66, RE 500, part 3, Letter dated 30 June 1964.

78. UA, Box RE 66, RE 500, part 3, Letter dated 27 July 1964.

79. UA, Box RE 6, RE 210 (J), part 5, Letter from Agency to King of Jordan, n.d. See also UA, Inactive Files, Box 11, File J.16, Investigations—1954, Aide-Memoire from W.T. Clark (Field Refugee Services Officer, Jordan), 4 August 1953.

80. Refusal is mentioned in the context of responding to a much more common petition for inclusion of people who had not initially been on the lists. The petitioners distinguished themselves from "some merchants and rich people who, because of their economic means, could afford not to keep their Palestinian citizenship." The petitioners, on the other hand, "did not, on our own accord, refuse registration for rations." UA, Box RE 6 (L), part 2, Petition from Arab Staff Union, 17 May 1980.

81. Fangen 2006; Zeno 2017.

82. UA, Inactive Files, Box 28, RG 520, vol. 1, Refugee Registration, 1955–58, From General Counsel to Deputy Director, 2 March 1956.

83. UA, Inactive Files, Box 28, RG 520, vol. 1, Refugee Registration, 1955–58, B. de la Sabliere (AD/REF, UNRWA), Memo to Henry R. Labouisse (Director, UNRWA), RE: Issue of registration cards 'N,' 10 February 1956.

84. UA, Box RE 2, RE 100, vol. 1, Annex B, Extract from ADC/SR.4/55, 28 June 1955.

85. UA, Box RE 2, RE 100, vol. 1, Memo from Field Registration and Distribution Officer, Jordan, to Field Operations Officer, Jordan, February 1959.

86. UA, Box RE 2, RE 100, vol. 1, Annex B, Extract from ADC/SR.5/55, 26 July 1955.

87. UA, Inactive Files, Box 28, RG 520, vol. 1, Refugee Registration, 1955–58, Henry R. Labouisse (Director, UNRWA), Memo to B. de la Sabliere (AD/REF, UNRWA), RE: Issue of registration cards 'N', 14 February 1956.

88. UA, Box RE 2, RE 100, vol. 1, Memo from Field Registration and Distribution Officer, Jordan, to Field Operations Officer, Jordan, February 1959.

89. UA, Box RE 2, RE 100, vol. 1, from General Counsel to Deputy Director, 15 June 1961.

90. In the 1980s, an attempt was made to issue such a card—after the UN General Assembly requested it—but it proved impossible to develop a mechanism to accomplish that goal.

91. Cervenak 1994, 313.

92. Geneva Conference, "Meeting the Humanitarian Needs of Palestine Refugees in the Near East: Building Partnerships in Support of UNRWA," Working Group 2, Community Development and Refugees, Discussion Paper, June 7–8, 2004. http://www.unrwa.org/userfiles/wg2_dp16may04.pdf .

93. UNRWA, "Relief and Social Services Eligibility and Registration Programme." http://www.unrwa.org/userfiles/2010011932236.pdf .

94. As UNRWA officials envisioned the end of the Basic Rations Program, they clearly identified that it would have consequences for categories of registration: "With the elimination of the basic ration in the near future, the function of eligibility and minor distinctions between categories of refugees could be abolished also." UNRWA Box 4 RE 200 Part 2—Refugee Affairs Services (2), Cabinet Memorandum No. 7/82, Department of Relief Services.

95. Ticktin 2011, 193.

96. Arendt 1958, 201.

97. Abu Akram's comments about the importance of coming to understand what being a refugee *can* be resonate with Donna Haraway's arguments about the importance of "learning to see" from a particular position. She argues that identity is not, a priori, a ground for politics, but it can provide a position from which to develop a politics (Haraway 1991).

CHAPTER THREE

1. UA, RE 59, RE 400 (1)—Part 1—Camps and Buildings—Yarmouk Camp and Other Unorganized Camps, Inter-office memorandum from Louis Gendron, 26 October 1960. On the problem of the camp see Martin (2015) and Mortland (1987).

2. As Didier Fassin says, "lives concretely" (Fassin 2009, 49).

3. Foucault 1980a, 195. See also Agamben (2009).

4. UA, RE 59, RE 400 (1)—Part 1—Camps and Buildings—Yarmouk Camp and Other Unorganized Camps, Inter-office memorandum from Louis Gendron, 26 October 1960.

5. al-Husseini 2000, 56.

6. UNRWA/UNESCO Department of Education, Biennial Workplan for Curriculum Enrichment and In-service Training, 1980–81; cited in al-Husseini (2000).

7. IFRC, A0410-1, Refugee life, "Visit to South Lebanon Camps," n.d. Hannah Arendt (1951) made the similar point that refugees can often acquire legal protection only by becoming criminals and entering police jurisdiction.

8. UA, Inactive Files, Box 5, L6, vol. 1, Minutes of meeting held at Ein el Hilweh, 17 May 1950.

9. UA, Inactive Files, Box 5, L6, vol. 1, Minutes of meeting between UNRWA Director, Howard Kennedy, and Delegation on behalf of General Executive Committee of the Palestine Refugees in Lebanon, 11 May 1950.

10. UA, Inactive Files, Box 5, L6, vol. 1, Minutes of meeting between UNRWA Deputy Director and Delegation on behalf of General Executive Committee of the Palestine Refugees in Lebanon, 17 June 1950.

11. UNRWA, Report of the Director, UN A/1905, 28 September 1951.

12. UNRWA, Annual Report, A/1905, 29 September 1951.

13. Dunn 2014, 293.

14. Trapp 2016.

15. Oka 2014, 24.

16. Despite its inadequacies, these rations meant that in some places—notably Jordan and Gaza—refugees were "better off from a nutritional point of view than the local inhabitants." UNRWA, A/1905, Report of the Director, 28 September 1951.

17. UNRWA, Annual Report 1959.

18. IFRC, A0410-1, Donations, "Report to the UNRPR on the Part of the LRCS in the Palestine Refugees Relief Program for the Period 1 December 1948 to 31 January 1949." The LRCS also reported quality issues in Syria and Jordan; IFRC, A0403-2 19740, 1948–50, "Report to the UNRPR on the Part of the LRCS in the Palestine Refugees Relief Program for the Month of May 1949."

19. IFRC, A0410-1, Donations, "Supplementary Report to the UNRPR on the Part of the LRCS in the Palestine Refugees Relief Program for the Period 1 December 1948 to 31 January 1949."

20. UA, Inactive Files, Box 5 L.1, vol. 3, Report from UNRWA Representative to Lebanon to Director UNRWA HQ, 20 May 1952.

21. UA, Inactive Files, Box 5 L.1, vol. 3, From Complaints Investigator to UNRWA Representative to Lebanon, 20 May 1952.

22. UA, Inactive Files, Box 5 L.1, vol. 3, From UNRWA Representative to Lebanon to Deputy Director UNRWA HQ, 22 May 1952.

23. UA, Inactive Files, Box 5 L.1, vol. 3, From Chief, Supply Division to UNRWA representative to Lebanon, 22 May 1952.

24. UA, Inactive Files, Box 5 L.1, vol. 3, From Chief, Supply Division HQ to UNRWA Representative to Lebanon, 22 May 1952.

25. UA, Inactive Files, Box 5 L.1, vol. 3, From UNRWA Representative to Lebanon to Deputy Director, UNRWA HQ, 28 May 1952.

26. UA, Inactive Files, Box 5 L.1, vol. 3, From Assistant to Comptroller to UNRWA Director, 11 July 1952.

27. UA, Inactive Files, Box 5 L.1, vol. 3, From Deputy Director to Chief Supply Division, 8 July 1952.

28. UA, Inactive Files, Box 5 L.1, vol. 3, From Deputy Director to Director, 10 July 1952.

29. UA, Inactive Files, Box 5 L.1, vol. 3, From Chief, Supply Division to Deputy Director, 9 July 1952.

30. UA, Inactive Files, Box 5 L.1, vol. 3, Deputy Director to Chief, Supply Division, 11 July 1952,

31. UA, Inactive Files, Box 5 L.1, vol. 3, From Chief Administrative Division to Keen, 14 October 1952.

32. UA, Inactive Files, Box 7, L(530), From UNRWA Acting Director, to Acting UNRWA Representative, Lebanon, 2 July 1958.

33. UA, Inactive Files, Box 7, L(500), From UNRWA Representative to Lebanon, to Acting Director, 23 October 1958.

34. UA, Inactive Files, Box 7, L(500), From Chief, Registration, Distribution, and Statistics Division to Acting Director, 27 October 1958.

35. UA, Box RE 66, file RE 500, part 3.

36. UA, Box RE 66, RE 500, part 3, Letter from refugees in Nablus area to Prime Minister, Jordan, n.d.

37. UA, Box RE 66, RE 500, part 2, Complaints, Claims, and Petitions, Letter from Marwan Abdul Razzaq to Commissioner-General, UNRWA, 10 February 1964.

38. UA, Box RE 66, RE 500, part 2, Complaints, Claims, and Petitions, Letter from Reddaway to Mrs. Cattan, 1 June 1964.

39. Schiff 1995, 68.

40. IFRC, 19742, Assorted Middle East Refugees, LRCS press releases, 7 July and 18 October 1967.

41. UA, RE 8 RE 210/5, part 1, From Field Operations Officer, Jordan, to Director of UNRWA Affairs, Jordan, 28 July 1967.

42. UA, RE 8 RE 210/5, part 1, Text of memo from Jordanian Minister of Foreign Affairs in memo from UNRWA Commissioner-General to UN Under-Secretary-General for Special Political Affairs (Bunche) to UNRWA Commissioner-General (Michelmore), 6 February 1968.

43. UA, RE 8 RE 210/5, part 1, From Commissioner-General (Michelmore) to UN Under-Secretary-General for Special Political Affairs (Bunche), 8 February 1968.

44. UA, RE 8 RE 210/5, part 1, From UNRWA Commissioner-General to UN Under-Secretary-General for Special Political Affairs (Bunche) to UNRWA Commissioner-General (Michelmore), 6 February 1968.

45. UA, RE 8 RE 210/5, part 1, Suggested draft reply to Jordan government memo, n.d.

46. UNRWA reports on identification checks of people from the camp now living elsewhere in following months indicated no problems, suggesting to officials that "the difficulties we encountered at Karameh did not come from the rank and file of the refugee community." UA, RE 8 RE 210/5, part 2, From Commissioner-General (Michelmore) to UN Under-Secretary for Special Political Affairs (Bunche), 24 April 1968. On the battle of Karameh see Terrill (2001).

47. UA, RE 8 RE 210/5, part 2, Order from Jordanian Ministry of Development and Reconstruction to Director of Public Security, 3 April 1968.

48. UA, RE 8 RE 210/5, part 2, From Director of UNRWA Affairs to Deputy Commissioner-General, 18 May 1968.

49. Oka 2014. Rations are never entirely apart from the market (Scott-Smith 2013).

50. UA, Box 4 RE 200, part 2, "The Relief Programme—A Progress Report," Memo prepared by UNRWA Director of Administration and Relief for UNRWA General Cabinet, 6 May 1980.

51. UA, Box 4 RE 200, part 2, From Chief, Relief Services Division to Director of Relief Service, 28 January 1982. He noted that UNRWA expenditures for the disabled amounted to 0.00072 percent of the annual budget, a number that was, he said, "nothing to be proud of."

52. When UNRWA was first established, there were discussions about providing cash to refugees rather than rations, which would have required cash donations. Reports indicated that refugees would have preferred cash. NA, FO 371 82250, memo from Turkish representative to UNRWA Advisory Commission, 25 September 1950.

53. UA, Box 4 RE 200, part 2, From Deputy Commissioner-General to Director of Relief Services, 29 January 1982. He further noted that the Syrian government rejected the special hardship program because they did not accept the need justification offered by UNRWA: "Mr. Abdul Hadi in Syria . . . asked Mr. Galipeau in December whether he had ever seen a starving Palestine refugee."

54. UA, Box 4 RE 200, part 2, "The Future of Relief Services," cabinet memo 7/82.

55. UA, Box 4 RE 200, part 2, Annex A to Letter from Director, Relief Services Division to Acting Commissioner-General, 20 November 1985.

56. Ibid.

57. An UNRWA report on the program in 2006 described the criteria: "They must be in economic distress with no healthy male adult between the ages of nineteen and sixty, and the total family income can not exceed two-thirds of a grade one step one of local UNRWA salary, i.e., lowest paid UNRWA area staff member with the same number of dependents, they also need to fit

within one of the eight categories of eligibility criteria. The majority of SHC families assisted fall within three categories: the elderly (A category), female-headed households (W category) and those unable to work due to chronic illness or disability (M category)" (Hejoj and Badran 2006).

58. http://www.unrwa.org/what-we-do/social-safety-net-programme .

59. Proxy means testing has been widely adopted in the humanitarian and development fields as a way of targeting aid. See Ahmed and Bouis (2002), Narayan and Yoshida (2005), and Kidd and Wylde (2011).

60. Tania Li (2007, 7) describes the "will to improve" as central to development. She argues that this will is operationalized and turned into programs through a twofold process of identifying deficiencies that must be rectified and rendering them amenable to a technical solution.

61. Barnett 2011. Even MSF, generally viewed as the most insistent on maintaining this distinction, has blurred the lines. Jean-Hervé Bradol, former president of MSF-France, notes: "I know for some of you it won't quite fit with the MSF 'legend,' but I remember that one of the first positions that was offered to me by the French section, in 1989, was as a doctor for public administration in Kankan (Guinea). This type of work may seem to contradict the perception of a French section that steers clear of development activities, but historically that's not true." See Abu-Sada (2012), 74.

62. Ferguson 1990.

63. Bavishkar 2005; Escobar 1994; Elyachar 2005; Moore 1999; Mosse 2013; Witsoe 2013.

64. UA, Inactive Files, Box 2, E 16, From Egyptian Ministry of Foreign Affairs to General Kennedy, 7 April 1951.

65. UA, Inactive Files, Box 2, E-810-5, Sinai Project—Construction Agreement.

66. UA, Inactive Files, Box 2, E/810—Part 1, Egypt—Sinai Project General, Memo to Chief, Technical Division from Leslie J. Carver—Acting Director, Subject: Feasibility Report, 31 December 1954.

67. UA, Inactive Files, Box 2, E/810—Part 1, Egypt—Sinai Project General, Memo to Director from, Leslie J. Carver—Deputy Director, UNRWA, Subject: Discussions in Cairo with Messrs Tepton Hill, 8 April 1955.

68. UA, Inactive Files, Box 2 E/810/4, "Attitude and thinking on project in Gaza Strip," n.d. (Report on visit from 19–22 January 1954).

69. UA, Inactive Files, Box 2 E/810/4, From Acting UNRWA Representative to Egypt to UNRWA Director, 12 February 1955.

70. UA, Inactive Files, Box 2 E/810/4, Translation of article in *Gaza* newspaper, 2 February 1955.

71. For discussion of the political opposition to this plan in Gaza, see Feldman (2015).

72. This effort was stopped by the High Court. On Dadaab, see de Montclos and Kagwanja (2000), Abdi (2005), and Agier (2002).

73. Hoffmann 2017.

74. UA, Inactive Files, Box 5 L.1, vol. 5, from UNRWA Representative to Lebanon to Acting Director UNRWA HQ, 8 January 1954.

75. UA, Inactive Files, Box 5 L.1, vol. 5, From Chairman Lebanese Central Committee for the Affairs of Palestinians in Lebanon, to UNRWA Representative in Lebanon, 6 January 1954.

76. Humanitarian work, therefore, shares characteristics with what I have called "tactical government" in the case of British and Egyptian rule in Gaza. See Feldman (2008a).

77. Lest these lawsuits against refugees be read simply as evidence of Lebanese hostility to Palestinians, it is worth noting that similar suits were brought in both the Gaza Strip and the West Bank (then part of Jordan) and in both these cases the landowners were Palestinian. UA, Box RE 4 RE 160 (G) and UA, Box RE 4 RE 160 (J).

78. UA, Box RE 4 RE 160 (L), Notes on the legal cases brought against a number of refugees in Burj al Barajneh Camp, A. Hout, n.d.

79. UA, Box RE 4 RE 160 (L), Report of the General Director for the Affairs of Palestine Refugees in Lebanon on the situation of the refugee camps, 1 July 1959.

80. The government also proposed a partial removal from a third camp, Dekwaneh/Tel al Zaatar. This camp was destroyed in 1976 after a siege and the massacre of two thousand residents.

81. UA, RE Box 4, RE 200, part 2, Memorandum by Department of Relief Services, Cabinet memorandum 7/82.

82. UA, Box 4 RE 200 Part 2, Cabinet Memorandum 2/79. Nell Gabiam (2012 and 2016) has done extensive research on this project.

83. Misselwitz and Hanafi 2010.

84. Hilal 2017.

85. Cited in Hilal 2017.

86. Dunn 2014.

87. Eade 1997; Kaplan 2000; Potter and Brough 2004.

88. UNRWA Annual Report, A/1905, 28 September 1951.

89. UNRWA, Annual Report, A/2171, 30 June 1952.

90. Ibid.

91. Harvey and Lind 2005, 4.

92. Ferguson 2015. As Ferguson explores, a change is afoot in the development world that recognizes that "giving a man a fish" might not be such a bad idea after all. The growth of cash transfers as poverty policy has been notable. See Soares, Ribas, and Osório (2010) and Garcia and Moore (2012).

93. Atia 2013.

94. Janine Clark (2004) argues that across Jordan the primary beneficiaries of Islamic Center activities are middle class. This is not the case in Jerash camp.

95. El-Abed 2009.

96. Fruchter-Ronen 2008.

97. Adely 2012, 62–67.

98. This process was halted in 2012, likely partly in response to the uprisings across the Arab world, but insecurity remains (Human Rights Watch 2010; Ramahi 2015).

99. Missionary activity is also illegal in Jordan, so even if that had been their desire it would be difficult to pursue.

CHAPTER FOUR

[1]. IFRC, A0403-2 19740, 1948–50, "Report to the UNRPR on the Part of the LRCS in the Palestine Refugees Relief Program for the Month of May 1949."

[2]. IFRC, A0403-2 19740, Personal experiences, P. De Dongo, Camp Director, 19 March 1950.

[3]. IFRC, A0410-1, Refugee life, "Moving Seventeen Thousand," n.d.

[4]. IFRC, A0403-2 19740, 1948–50, "Report to the UNRPR on the Part of the LRCS in the Palestine Refugees Relief Program for the Month of May 1949."

[5]. IFRC, A0410-1, Refugee life, "Moving Seventeen Thousand," n.d.

[6]. IFRC, A0403-2 19740, 1948–50, "Report to the UNRPR on the Part of the LRCS in the Palestine Refugees Relief Program for the Month of May 1949."

[7]. The report further noted that these "enterprises . . . apparently resulted directly from the recommendations of the Clapp Commission" IFRC, A0410-1, Refugee life, "Moving Seventeen Thousand," n.d. And see IFRC, A0410-1 Donations, "Report to the UNRPR on the Part of the LRCS in the Palestine Refugees Relief Program for the Month of December 1949."

[8]. Ibid.

[9]. IFRC, A0410-1, Refugee life, "Moving Seventeen Thousand," n.d.

[10]. Holzgrefe and Keohane 2003; Kennedy 2004.

[11]. Agamben 1998; Malkki 1996; Pandolfi 2003.

[12]. Fassin 2012; Feldman 2007.

[13]. Feldman 2007.

[14]. https://www.worldhumanitariansummit.org .

[15]. http://www.irinnews.org/analysis/2015/03/05/what-refugees-really-think-aid-agencies .

[16]. https://consultations.worldhumanitariansummit.org/bitcache/74c1ffca02865353cbd83057f5c11e6deaccfe75?vid = 524112&disposition = inline&op = view .

[17]. MSF has conducted its own perception studies with recipients, state authorities, and staff. The results of these studies were not as dramatic as the World Humanitarian Summit consultations, but they nonetheless indicate a significant gap between the organization's self-perception and its reception (see Abu-Sada 2012).

[18]. Redfield 2012b, 362.

[19]. Malkki 2015, 8.

[20]. In MSF, 90 percent of the twenty-five thousand employees (operating in seventy countries) are nationals of the country where they work, according to Jean-Hervé Bradol, former president of MSF-France (Abu-Sada 2012, 75). This does not mean that they are all from recipient populations, but it underscores that the international aid worker is a demographically small component of the aid system (see Malkin 2015).

[21]. Farah 2010.

[22]. Malkki 2015, 54.

[23]. Redfield 2012b, 369.

[24]. IFRC, A04003-2 19740, Personal experiences, E.P. Driscoll, Assistant Field Superintendent, 18 March 1950.

[25]. IFRC, A04003-2 19740, Personal experiences, Clyde Baird, Field Director, Lebanon, 15 March 1950.

[26]. IFRC, A04003-2 19740, Personal experiences, Dr. Anne Marie Gade, Medical Officer, Tripoli, 10 April 1950.

[27]. Skinner and Lester 2012; Hilton 2015; Curtis 2012.

[28]. AFSC, #24 FS Sect Palestine, Letter from Charles Read to AFSC Headquarters, Philadelphia, 15 October 1949.

[29]. AFSC, #24, Letter from Charles Read to AFSC Headquarters, Philadelphia, 15 October 1949.

[30]. AFSC, #83 FS Sect Palestine, "Measures Employed by the American Friends Service Committee to Reduce the Number of Rations Issued Refugees in the Gaza Strip," December 1949. Women who married native Gazans were also removed from the rolls; this was justified on the grounds that their husbands would be responsible for them. Using these means, the AFSC was able to reduce the ration rolls from around 245,000 to 210,987.

[31]. AFSC, #128 FS Sect Palestine, From Donald Stevenson to Bronson Clark, 24 October 1949.

[32]. AFSC, #55, Letter from one volunteer to another, 12 September 1949.

33. AFSC, #24, Letter from Charles Read to AFSC Headquarters, Philadelphia, 15 October 1949.

34. IFRC, A04003-2 19740, Personal experiences, Mr. Ante Kadic, Administrative Officer, Lebanon office, n.d.

35. Feldman 2011.

36. IFRC, A1024, Box 1, 22-1-2 ecoles, Letter from German Junior Red Cross to LRCS, 11 March 1955

37. Campbell 1990.

38. CARE, Box 6, CARE Reorganization, Sept 1955–June 1956, memo from Bernard Kerbel to Richard Reuter, 2 September 1955.

39. CARE, Box 291, #32–61, Refugee Camps, From Franklin Irving to Louis Hunter, 31 January 1961.

40. CARE, Box 291, #32–61, Refugee Camps, Program Proposal, 27 February 1961.

41. CARE, Box 291 #32–64, Orange Trees Production, From Frank Goffio to Mrs. W.E. Wrather, 13 October 1964.

42. Charity Navigator rates organizations on accountability and transparency (http://www.charitynavigator.org/). The American Red Cross, to give one example, has confronted repeated controversies over its use of donor funds. In the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks in 2001, it used some of the vast sums it collected from donors for other purposes, an action that felt to many of these donors like a betrayal, even as it may have made good operational sense. In 2016 a congressional report revealed that 25 percent of the funds raised after the 2010 earthquake in Haiti were spent on "internal expenses" and that the charity's ambitious housing program had built only six houses http://www.npr.org/2016/06/16/482020436/senators-report-finds-fundamental-concerns-about-red-cross-finances .

43. IFRC, A1024, Box 1, 22-1-2 ecoles, Letter from British Red Cross Society to LRCS, 14 January 1954.

44. IFRC, A1024, Box 1, 22-1-2 ecoles, Letter from LRCS to British Red Cross Society, 4 February 1954.

45. Feldman 2008a.

46. This distance is not the experience of all such employees. I met a number of fairly high-level UNRWA employees who grew up in refugee camps and who had made the choice not to leave them, despite the fact that they were economically able to do so. For these people, remaining connected to their community was more valuable than the improved living conditions of life in the city.

47. Marwa was not accusing me personally by using my name as the example. I was standing in for the broad group of internationals who come and go. Nonetheless, it is important to remember that research with Palestinian refugees is not exempt from the problems of exploitation that Marwa identifies (see Sukarieh and Tannock 2012; Pascucci 2017).

48. Peter Redfield (2012a) describes the double bind of mobility in exploring the dynamics of expatriate and national staff in MSF. For someone like Marwa, humanitarian mobility is not the goal, but better compensation and job security are.

49. On volunteer humanitarianism by outsiders to a community, see Sandri (2018) and Taithe (2016). Erica Bornstein (2011; 2012) highlights the complex intersection of volunteerism, charity, and accountability in India.

50. In a newsletter published by the LRCS for distribution to refugees, N.M. Walker complained that when it came to relief distribution, "it is practically impossible to find anybody amongst the people who are being helped, to help themselves." IFRC, A0403–2 19740, 1949, Publications, text of fortnightly *Al-Aghathat,* No. 1, 20 April 1949.

51. Maes 2012.

52. There is another side to the instability of volunteer labor: volunteers can be let go more easily than regular employees. I saw situations, for example, when a decision to require a college degree for anyone working on a project meant that long-time, and often dedicated, volunteers were let go.

53. Chesly Manly, "Restive and Miserable Arab Refugees Insist on Return to Palestine," *Chicago Tribune,* January 18, 1959.

54. UA, Box RE 59 Re 400(4), part 1, From Director of Relief Programs to Deputy Director, UNRWA, 29 January 1962.

55. UA, Box RE 59 Re 400(4), part 1, Director of UNRWA Affairs, Jordan, report on visit to Muascar, 9 January 1963. He noted: "Generally speaking, it was the refugees living below the sun level who had little or no light and bad drainage facilities who wanted to move."

56. UA, Box RE 59 Re 400(4), part 1, From Director of UNRWA Affairs, to Director of Relief Programs, 22 January 1962.

57. Ibid. And UA, Box RE 59 Re 400(4), part 1, Extract from notes on shelter construction, 18 July 1964.

58. UA, Box RE 59 Re 400(4), part 1, From Director of UNRWA Affairs Jordan to Director of Relief Programs, 29 July 1964.

59. UA, Box RE 59 Re 400(4), part 1, Note for the record, Director of UNRWA Affairs, Jordan, 15 October 1966.

60. Ricca 2007.

61. Redfield 2013; Terry 2002.

62. IFRC, A0403-2 19740, Personal experiences, Mr. Anis Nasr, Assistant Field Director, Lebanon, 29 March 1950.

63. IFRC, A0403-2 19740, Publications, "A Word from Dr. Depage," *Al Aghathat,* 15 July 1949.

64. UA, Inactive Files, Box 7, L/510, Declaration from Palestinian Pupils in Lebanon, n.d.

65. Beirut Al-Masa (byline Fu'ad Nabil), December 18, 1959.

66. A month and a half into the strike, the agency agreed to a number of changes that responded to refugee demands about service improvements. The boycotters suspended the strike to give UNRWA an opportunity to implement the changes. UNRWA, Inactive Files, Box 7, L/500/1, Letter to Assistant Director, Department of Operations, UNRWA, Beirut, sender unnamed, 31 January 1959.

67. Akram 2002; Akram and Goodwin-Gill 2000/2001.

68. Gabiam 2006; Kagan 2009a. Protection is not only a problem for Palestinians (Bellathy and Beeson 2010; Campbell 2006, Chomsky 2012).

69. In 1958, refugees in Nahr el Bared camp in Lebanon petitioned the UN Secretary-General for "protection of refugees' lives who are exposed to the dangers of being shot at [by the Lebanese army] in spite of the neutral attitude they have taken since the beginning of the current incidents," UA, Inactive Files, Box 7, L-510, Letter to UNRWA Representative to Lebanon, from Area Officer, Beqa'a, 23 June 1958.

70. Kagan 2009b; Khouri 2009.

71. "What Protection Means for UNRWA in Concept and Practice," Consultant's report, 31 March 2008.

72. UNRWA, "Outline of Protection Initiatives," 2011.

73. UNRWA, "Protecting Palestine Refugees," 2015; UNRWA, "West Bank Protection Programme Emergency Appeal," 2011; UNRWA, "Lebanon: Protection at UNRWA," 2015.

74. The 2014 Israeli assault on Gaza was a key instance of such speech. UNRWA's spokesperson, Chris Gunness, highlighted the need for a political solution. http://www.middleeasteye.net/news/meet-chris-gunness-man-putting-humanity-back-humanitarianism-2060920456 .

75. Hanafi 2010, 9.

76. In other parts of the book, where I discuss publicly available texts written by Campus in Camps participants, I use their real names. Here I use the same convention as with all other interviews and refer to them by pseudonyms.

77. IFRC, A0410-1, Donations, "Report to the UNRPR on the Part of the LRCS in the Palestine Refugees Relief Program for the Month of April 1950."

78. Although MSF is more resolute than many humanitarian organizations in claiming a strong limit to its interventions, it regularly ventures beyond them. See Fassin (2008) and Wilhelm-Solomon and Pedersen (2017).

79. Redfield 2005 and 2013.

80. Givoni 2011.

81. Fassin 2008.

82. The results of a study MSF conducted in Burj al Barajneh alongside their clinical work indicate a prevalence rate for "current mental disorders" of 19.4 percent, with depression the most common at 8.3 percent, and a treatment gap of 96 percent (Lhosa et al. 2013). The study found a lifetime prevalence rate of 20 percent for depression and 30 percent for all diagnoses. The study relied on both local vocabulary and internationally designed assessments (by WHO-UNHCR) to capture the experience of camp residents.

83. MSF served both Lebanese and Palestinian patients, the former in a clinic in the town of Burj al Barajneh, though my research was confined to the Palestinian portion of the project.

84. Most patients were women. As a news report on the project described: "An MSF psychologist says this is not surprising, as generally 'women come more to psychologists. They speak more about their problems.'" Annie Slemrod, "MSF Offers Mental Health Support in Burj al-Barajneh," *Daily Star,* June 28, 2011. http://group194.net/english/index.php?mode = article&id = 23002 .

85. Lhosa et al. 2013, 5.

86. Fassin and Rechtman 2009, 176–177.

87. Ibid., 185. And see Breslav (2000).

88. Varma 2012.

89. The establishment of a fitness center in Jerash camp met with a similar response, with people questioning the value of a non-employment-focused project.

CHAPTER FIVE

1. The government has made exceptions to this policy at various points. When I was in Jordan in December 2009, people told me that regulations had been changed to permit ex-Gazans to purchase up to a dunam of land. They also told me that similar things had been done in the past, but that the regulations had always been changed back. Indeed, the next time I was there, in the summer of 2010, the policy had been put on hold. See Gabbay (2014).

2. The same tropes were heard in Lebanon when Parliament debated, and ultimately passed, a bill to give Palestinians in Lebanon some expanded rights. The PLO ambassador to Lebanon described them as "purely humanitarian rights relating to daily life, with no relation to politics." Ma'an News Agency, June 21, 2010.

3. Ryan 2015; Schwedler 2012.

4. James 2010; Ticktin 2011; Bornstein and Redfield 2011. And for an argument that a new language is emerging, see Chouliaraki (2010).

5. Bowker 2003; Schulz and Hammer 2003.

6. This is the title of a collection of essays by Roberto Esposito (2013).

7. Allan 2013, 5.

8. Achilli 2014, 252.

9. Ibid., 253.

10. One of the most important football teams in Jordan is based in, and named for, the Wihdat camp.

11. Khalili 2016, 596.

12. These political movements and formal organizations have also had important interactions with humanitarianism. Both the PLO and Hamas—at the moment, the two main institutional actors on the Palestinian political scene—negotiate with humanitarian agencies, discourses, and law, as well as engaging in humanitarian work themselves.

13. Arendt 1958, 190.

14. Butler 2015. See also Holston (2009).

15. "Refugee Protests about the Johnston Plan," *Al-Anba'* (October 10, 1955), 2.

16. Chatterjee 2006; Bayat 2010.

17. National values do not exhaust the Palestinian language of value. Religious values and kinship values are also crucially important in the Palestinian ethical landscape. See Perdigon (2011), Latif (2010), and Lybarger (2007a and 2007b).

18. UNRWA Archives, Box RE 66, file RE 500, part 1, Unsigned petition to Director, 1961.

19. Hull 2001; Mutua 1997; Schneider 1986; Milner 1989.

20. Marx 1978.

21. Chatterjee 2006.

22. IFRC, A0410-1, Refugee life, report from Ba'albek.

23. IFRC, A0410-1, Refugee life, visit to the South Lebanon Camps, n.d.

24. IFRC, A0403-2 19740, Personal experiences, E.P. Driscoll, Assistant Field Superintendent, 18 March 1950.

25. UA, Box RE 3 RE 150, part 1, Translation: Declaration from the Committee for Defending the Returnees, 17 February 1960.

26. UA, Box RE 3 RE 150, part 1, "The Expellees in Lebanon: Their Resolution and Demands," Badge of the Palestine Arab Youth in Lebanon, 1 January 1960. The pamphlet also complained that UNRWA was acting like a government: "It is regrettable that the emigrants see the Relief Agency behave as if it was a Government having a fixed aspect, enacting rules and regulations to apply to the emigrants (as if they were its subjects) [whether] they wanted it or not."

27. Rancière 2004; Barnett and Weiss 2008.

28. In conditions of armed conflict, people have rights to protection as civilians generally as well as specific protections as refugees.

29. Kuwali 2013b, 349. And see Kuwali (2013a).

30. The principle of proportionality provides that "launching an attack which may be expected to cause incidental loss of civilian life, injury to civilians, damage to civilian objects, or a combination thereof, which would be excessive in relation to the concrete and direct military advantage anticipated, is prohibited." ICRC Customary IHL Database, https://ihl-

databases.icrc.org/customary-ihl/eng/docs/v1_cha_chapter4_rule14 . And see Perugini and Gordon (2017).

31. Hajjar 2005; Kelly 2006; Allen 2013.

32. https://www.icrc.org/eng/war-and-law/ihl-other-legal-regmies/ihl-human-rights/overview-ihl-and-human-rights.htm .

33. I think, for example, of the human rights "violation" as captured in the human rights report (see Wilson 1997). I think also of the quantification of human rights "indicators" (see Merry 2016).

34. For human rights performances, see Slyomovics (2005) and Bosco (2004).

35. Moyn 2018.

36. Rancière 2004, 307.

37. Roy 1995, 104–106; Segev 2007.

38. The editorial argued they would then be "persons who have been resettled into something approaching normal circumstances," UA OR 60 OR 215 (IS-1) part 3, 25 December 1972. UNRWA's Gaza director commented on the editorial that "it is strictly propaganda in my opinion." From Director of Operations, Gaza, to Commissioner-General, 26 December 1972.

39. UA, Box OR 60 OR 215, Report from UNRWA General Services Officer, Gaza, to Director of UNRWA Operations, Gaza, 24 July 1971.

40. UA OR 60 OR 215 (IS-1), part 1, Letter from President of UNRWA Staff Association to Commissioner-General, 28 July 1971.

41. UA OR 60 OR 215 (IS-1), part 1, Letter from President of UNRWA Staff Association to Commissioner-General, 28 July 1971.

42. UA OR 60 OR 215 (IS-1), part 1, From UNRWA to Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 8 August 1971.

43. UA OR 60 OR 215 (IS-1), part 1, UNRWA Special Report to General Assembly, 17 September 1971.

44. UA OR 60 OR 215 (IS-1), part 1, From Commissioner-General to General Gazit, 21 August 1971.

45. UA OR 60 OR 215 (IS-1), part 1, From teacher in Jabalia elementary school to Director of UNRWA Operations, Gaza, 29 July 1971.

46. UA OR 60 OR 215 (IS-1), part 2, From Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs to Commissioner-General, 24 April 1972.

47. UA OR 60 OR 215 (IS-1), part 3, Draft memo from UNRWA to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 16 October 1972.

48. UA, RE Box 4, RE 200, part 2, Memorandum by Department of Relief Services, Cabinet memorandum 7/82.

49. As Arendt puts it: "Privileges in some cases, injustices in most, blessings and doom are meted out to them according to accident and without any relation whatsoever to what they do, did, or may do" (Arendt 1951, 296).

50. Redfield 2005, 344.

51. Looking at conditions in the West Bank during the second intifada, Lori Allen (2006) identified a widespread feeling of being fed up *(zahaq)* . I see the same feelings in Lebanon—and across the fields of Palestinian displacement.

52. Povinelli 2011, 32.

53. I explore this exhaustion, and the experience of living with a shortened hope horizon, in more detail elsewhere (Feldman 2016).

54. See also Dunn 2014; Brun 2016.

55. Hage 2009. On waiting as possibility, see also Han (2012).

56. Scholars have described similar sentiments in other camps, which I saw as well (Allan 2013; Peteet 2005; Sayigh 2005).

57. Allison 2013; Molé 2010; Muehlebach 2013.

58. Said 1986, 51.

59. The UNCCP was the body that was supposed to recognize and tabulate loss, but it was never able to operate.

60. Meari 2014; Ryan 2015; Leshem 2015; Joronen 2017.

61. Khalili 2007; Peteet 2000.

62. Cited in Khalili 2007, 99.

63. Shehadeh 1982; Tamari 1991.

64. Tamari 1991, 62.

65. Rijke and Van Teeffelen 2014, 87. See also Schiocchet (2012).

66. In Gaza people use the word *muhajir* —from *hijra* (exodus)—rather than *laji'* for refugee. When I asked why, I was told that it was because they remained in Palestine even as they were exiled from their homes.

67. It should be noted that generally, whether Palestinians stayed in their homes or left was determined by circumstance, not

their commitments. It was after the fact that people were judged for this.

68. "The first thing he would say to you is, 'I want to educate him no matter what'. . . . And *hamdu lillah* he educated them. He used to carry stuff at 4 A.M. and had another job as a porter at a different place. . . . What matters is to work and get paid . . . so before everything he can pay the price of the books. He educated my brother. And my brother came back and educated my other brother."

69. As Randa Farah notes, "in the PLO's heyday, Palestinian camps emerged as national signifiers derived from a pronounced emphasis on armed struggle . . . complementing their reputation as repositories of Palestine's pre-1948 rural memory and ethos" (Farah 2009, 86). But, as Farah continues, and as Diana Allan (2013) also argues, there can be a significant gap between the formal nationalist narrative of camp politics and refugees' own ideas about this politics.

70. Gabiam 2012.

71. Qussay Abu Aker and Ahmad Al Lahham, "The Suburb: Transgressing Boundaries," *Campus in Camps* (2013). http://www.campusincamps.ps/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/The-Suburb_web.pdf .

72. http://www.campusincamps.ps/en .

73. Abu Aker and Al Lahham, "The Suburb: Transgressing Boundaries."

74. Rosenfeld 2004.

75. Abu Aker and Al Lahham, "The Suburb: Transgressing Boundaries."

76. There is a great deal of interest within anthropology in the generative possibilities in refusal. But like any political stance and activity, the creative features of refusal can be stripped away when it becomes a formal principle of commanded political action. On refusal, see Simpson (2014), McGranahan (2016a, 2016b), and Feldman (2016).

77. Abu Aker and Al Lahham, "The Suburb: Transgressing Boundaries."

78. Ibid.

1. Fassin 2009, 49. When it confronts the limits to its capacity, UNRWA often evaluates the problems in technical terms, focusing on the management of resource scarcity and on structural and financial constraints on organizational capacity, but its officials are also aware that Palestinian death in exile is a stark reminder of the utter failure to achieve a political resolution.

2. Scholars have also noted the necropolitical (Mbembe 2003) features of, especially, weaponized humanitarianism. Israel's relationship to Palestinian populations under occupation is often highlighted as a key case in point (Weizman 2011; Bhungalia 2012 and 2010). And see Graham (2002).

3. Chopra and Weiss 1992; Hardcastle and Clava 1998; Schwendimann 2011.

4. Magone, Neuman, and Weissman 2011. And see Henkin (1999).

5. The conflict in Syria is rife with denials of access and threats to humanitarian actors. Decrying the attacks in Syria, UN Secretary-General Ban-ki Moon said in September 2016, "This is a war against Syria's health workers. Deliberate attacks on hospitals are war crimes. Denying people access to essential health care violates international humanitarian law. . . . Even a slaughterhouse is more humane." http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/09/air-strikes-put-aleppo-hospitals-service-160928102656036.html .

6. Rabinowitz and Khawalde 2000.

7. A/1451/Rev.1, Interim Report of the Director of UNRWA, 6 October 1950.

8. A/1451/Rev.1, Interim Report of the Director of UNRWA, 6 October 1950.

9. UA, Inactive Files, Box 17, Is.1, From Israeli Foreign Ministry to Director General of UNRWA, 16 May 1952.

10. UA, Inactive Files, Box 17, Is.1, UNRWA Bulletin No. 104, 29 July 1952.

11. UA, Inactive Files, Box 11, Is.8, Report from UNRWA Chief District Officer, Haifa, n.d. (on August 1950 site visit).

12. UA, Inactive Files, Box 11, Is.8, Report from UNRWA Chief District Officer, Haifa, n.d. (on October 1950 site visit).

13. UA, Inactive Files, Box 11, Is.8, Petition from Baqqara residents, 9 November 1950.

14. UA, Inactive Files, Box 11, Is.8, From UNRWA District Inspector to UNRWA Chief District Officer, 9 November 1950.

15. UA, Inactive Files, Box 11, Is.8, From Israeli Director, Economic Division to UNRWA Deputy Director, 6 November 1950.

16. UA, Inactive Files, Box 11, Is.8, From UNRWA District Inspector, Haifa, to Chief District Officer, Haifa, 16 November 1950. And according to a report from a few months later: "The refugees simply do not want to be treated by a Jewish doctor. When the sick can walk or ride a donkey, they cross the border and go to a Syrian doctor," UA, Inactive Files, Box 11, Is.8, From Chief District Officer, Haifa, to Deputy Director, 27 February 1951.

17. UA, Inactive Files, Box 11, Is.8, From Adam Knuth to UNRWA Deputy Director, 20 November 1950.

18. UA, Inactive Files, Box 11, Is.8, From Chief District Officer, Syria, to Acting Deputy Director, 5 April 1951.

19. UA, Inactive Files, Box 11, Is.8, From Chief District Officer, Haifa, to Deputy Director, 10 April 1951.

20. UA, Inactive Files, Box 11, Is.8, Memo, 11 April 1951. It is not stated why Israel refused this request, but given the fact that inhabitants of villages in the DMZ were seen to be helping the Syrians, it seems a tactical decision to move them away from the border and further under Israeli control.

21. UA, Inactive Files, Box 11, Is.8, Memo, 11 April 1951.

22. UA, Inactive Files, Box 11, Is.8, Memo from Chief District Officer, n.d. (around 17 April 1951).

23. UA, Inactive Files, Box 11, Is.8, Memo from Deputy Director to Director, 16 July 1951.

24. UA, Inactive Files, Box 11, Is.8, Report from Regional Camps and Sanitation Officer, 2 August 1951.

25. UA, Inactive Files, Box 11, Is.8, From UNRWA Representative to Israel to UNRWA Director, 25 October 1951.

26. UA, Inactive Files, Box 11, Is.8, From Field Health Officer, Lebanon to Chief Health Division, 27 November 1951. It is logical that the comparative frame is to Lebanon, as this was his field.

27. It is not always possible to avoid situations where refugees are better off than natives. In the Palestinian case, this was true in Gaza (Feldman 2007).

28. UA, Inactive Files, Box 11, Is.8, Report from Deputy UNRWA Representative, 17 February 1952.

29. UA, Inactive Files, Box 11, Is.8, From UNRWA Deputy Director to Chief of Staff, UNTSO, 12 May 1952.

30. UA, Inactive Files, Box 11, Is.8, From UNRWA Deputy Direct to UNRWA Representative, Israel, 30 June 1952.

31. Rabinowitz and Khawalde 2000, 524.

32. UA, Box RE 7, RE 210(S), part 1, Letter from UNRWA Director of Relief Programs, Syria, to Director of UNRWA Affairs, Syria, 30 November 1962.

33. UA, Box 4, File RE 200/1, part 1, Extract from Note for the record, meeting held at civilian administration, Gaza, 21 April 1982.

34. UA, Box 4, File RE 200/1, part 1, From UNRWA Acting Commissioner-General to various officials, 6 November 1981.

35. UA, Box 4, File RE 200/1, part 1, UNRWA cable, n.d.

36. UA, Box 4, File RE 200/1, part 1, From Deputy Commissioner-General to Commissioner-General, 10 May 1982.

37. UA, Box 4, File RE 200/1, part 1, From Director of UNRWA Operations, Gaza, to Deputy Commissioner-General, 19 July 1982.

38. UA, Box 4, File RE 200/1, part 1, From Director of UNRWA Operations, Gaza, to Deputy Commissioner-General, 19 July 1982.

39. UA, Box 4, File RE 200/1, part 1, From Director of UNRWA Operations, Gaza, to Deputy Commissioner-General, 8 August 1982.

40. UA, Box 4, File RE 200/1, part 1, From Acting Director of UNRWA Operations Gaza to Director of Education, 27 October 1982.

41. UA, Box 4, File RE 200/1, part 1, Note for the record, meeting at UNRWA HQ, 25 January 1984.

42. UA, Box 4, File RE 200/1, part 1, Report on Commissioner-General's visit to Canada Quarter, 27 August 1984.

43. UA, Box 4, File RE 200/1, part 1, Petition from Chair of Canada Quarter Committee, 19 August 1984.

44. UA, Box 4, File RE 200/1, part 1, Extract from note for the record, 3 June 1985.

45. UA, Box 4, File RE 200/1, part 1, Note for the record, 10 June 1985.

46. UA, Box RE 68, RE 200/1, part 3, Report from *Jerusalem Post,* 14 December 1989.

47. Wilkinson 2001.

48. "We Won't Let the World Forget What Happened in the Camps," *Balsam* (1987).

49. Giannou 1990, 154–155.

50. UN S/18756, 19 March 1987.

51. The *New York Times* reported on the first delivery of aid to Shatila: "Relief supplies were allowed into the Palestinian district of Shatila in southern Beirut today, the first big shipment since the siege of the area by Shiite Moslem militiamen began five months ago. Five trucks carrying food, clothing and blankets were permitted into the district, which houses more than 3,000 Palestinians, many of them suffering from disease and malnutrition" Ihsan Hijai, "Palestinian Areas See Siege Lifted," *New York Times,* April 6, 1987.

52. Giannou 1990, 158–159.

53. Quoted in Juan Carlos Gumucio, "Palestinian Refugees Starve Just Yards from Fruit Seller," *Times* (London), February 11, 1987.

54. Givoni 2011.

55. And here I gesture to something slightly different than Eyal Weizman's formulation of the humanitarian present as "the condition of collusion of these technologies of humanitarianism, human right and humanitarian law with military and political powers" (Weizman 2011, 4).

56. Hamarneh 2002.

57. Achilli 2015a, 32.

58. Achilli 2015b. http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/20831/al-wihdat-refugee-camp_between-inclusion-and-exclu .

59. One person said that some sanitation workers would move trash across the boundary to the other jurisdiction to avoid having to collect it.

60. Im Hashim had a similar view: "If they give me a palace outside, I would not accept. . . . Here it is simple. Neighbors come to each other. If I am bored, I sit at the entrance to the house . . . the neighbors come and sit with me. . . . If I say *'akh'* [indicating pain] one hundred thousand women would come running. There you die and no one knows."

61. Redfield 2013, 31.

62. Stevenson 2014, 68.

63. UNRWA, "Programme Budget 2014–15," 2013. http://www.unrwa.org/sites/default/files/2014–

2015_programme_budget_blue_book.pdf , 25.

64. In distinguishing between *are* and *feel* here, I do not intend to introduce a gap between reality and meaning (though such gaps always exist) but to underscore that a key effect of undercare is to shape how people experience their lives.

65. Liisa Malkki notes the pain and frustration that "technical insufficiency" can cause humanitarian workers (Malkki 2015, 59). Such responses are evident in the Palestinian case as well.

66. UNRWA, "UNRWA Lebanon: Invest in Health," 2012. http://www.unrwa.org/userfiles/2011100225718.pdf .

67. UNRWA, "Adjustments to Hospitalization Support in Lebanon," 2016. http://www.unrwa.org/newsroom/official-statements/adjustments-hospitalization-support-lebanon .

68. Mohammed Zaatari, "UNRWA Defends Cuts to Medical Subsidies," *Daily Star,* January 9, 2016. http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2016/Jan-09/330989-unrwa-defends-cuts-to-medical-subsidies.ashx . Protests were also fueled by reports that a refugee with thalassemia from Burj Al Shemali camp, near Tyre, set himself on fire after being faced with increased costs for treatment, Mohammed Zaatari, "Man Sets Himself on Fire due to UNRWA Cuts," *Daily Star,* January 13, 2016. http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2016/Jan-13/331605-man-sets-himself-on-fire-due-to-unrwa-cuts.ashx .

69. UNRWA, "Needs Assessment: Palestine Refugees in Lebanon," Program Support Office, 2008, 31.

70. Medical Aid for Palestinians, "Terminal Decline? Palestinian Refugee Health in Lebanon," Briefing paper, 2011, 11. http://www.map-uk.org/downloads/briefing-papers/943_map_lebanon_report_e-version.pdf .

71. UA, Box RE 6 RE 210(J), part 1, Note for the record, 6 July 1960.

72. UA, Inactive Files, Box 8 J.6, vol. 2, "Relations between the Jordan Government and the UNRWA," n.d.

73. Fassin 2009, 53. Sherine Hamdy (2012) calls the structural conditions of illness political etiologies.

74. Nguyen 2010.

75. The work of the Palestine Red Crescent Society is a significant instance of how Palestinian politics and humanitarian principles can be enacted by single organizations.

76. Stevenson 2014, 82.

77. Murphy 2015.

78. For anthropological accounts of aging in other contexts, see Cohen (1998), Lamb (1997) and 2009, and Lock (1994).

79. Viviane Tan, "Ogata Calls for Stronger Political Will to Solve Refugee Crises," UNHCR news stories, 2005. http://www.unhcr.org/4297406a2.html .

80. I heard similar sentiments from others as well: "I wish for nothing but to go to the graveyard, sit in my grave and close it on me. . . . To me at forty-eight, life is over. I saw a lot of suffering in my life."

81. Stevenson 2014, 96.

82. Berlant 2011, 95–119.

83. Foucault 1980b, 138; Foucault 2003.

84. This is why I suggest that they evaluate this practice as necropolitical. They see themselves as identified as those "who must die" (Mbembe 2003, 11), as persons and as a people.

85. Although Faris's story didn't end with the death of his son, I heard similar accounts that did.

86. Mbembe cites the Palestinian case when he says that "late-modern colonial occupation is a concatenation of multiple powers: disciplinary, biopolitical, and necropolitical" (Mbembe 2003, 29).

87. Stevenson 2014, 96.

88. Fassin 2009, 4.

C H A P T E R S E V E N

1. Zureik 1996.

2. A 2014 volume on UNRWA's work described the contributions as exploring "how UNRWA has been adapting since the turn of the century, when the outbreak of the second Intifada led to the realization that the optimism and subsequent planning for a wind-down of the Agency generated by the Oslo peace process had been premature, and that the Agency's continued existence would be required for the years to come" (Hanafi, Hilal, and Takkenberg 2014, 1–2).

3. Daniel 1996.

4. Sayigh 2015b.

5. Cathrine Brun (2016) offers a helpful, complementary perspective in an investigation of the challenge the future presents to humanitarian workers as displacement becomes protracted.

6. Brynen 1989; Shiblak 1997.

7. As important as armed struggle was to the revolution, it is a different sphere of activity than the engagements with humanitarianism that are my focus here.

8. Sayigh 1987, 58.

9. Allan 2013, 3.

10. In using the term *ruination,* I reference Ann Stoler (2013).

11. "A Peek at Life in Beirut's Defunct Gaza Hospital," *Daily Star,* April 24, 2013. http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Local-News/2013/Apr-24/214829-a-peek-at-life-in-beiruts-defunct-gaza-hospital.ashx .

12. Rubenberg 1983; Brynen 1990. After the PLO was forced out of Jordan, it was impossible for Samed to operate there. The PRCS maintained clinics.

13. Khalidi 2014. https://www.jacobinmag.com/2014/10/the-economics-of-palestinian-liberation/ .

14. IFRC, A-0859-3, Missions Jordan-Palestine, part 2, PRCS Proposal for Nursing School, September 1978.

15. Wilson 2016.

16. Fassin and Pandolfi 2010; Barnett and Weiss 2008; Barnett 2011.

17. Boltanski 1999; Sontag 2003; Wheeler 2000.

18. CARE, for instance, was founded to enable Americans to send parcels (CARE packages) to people they knew in Europe (distant, but not strangers). See Feldman (2011).

19. Redfield 2012b.

20. Benthall 2010; Petersen 2012.

21. Cottle and Nolan 2007; Robinson 2005.

22. Shweiki 2014.

23. Robin Wright, "PLO's Pinstripes, Money behind Fatigues and Guns," *Christian Science Monitor,* October 1, 1981. http://www.csmonitor.com/1981/1001/100134.html .

24. Copies of this journal, *Samed al-Iqtisadi,* are housed in the Institute for Palestine Studies library in Beirut.

25. http://www.upi.com/Business_News/Security-Industry/2006/06/22/Red-Cross-breaks-57-year-Israel-impasse/29941150991485/ .

26. On the tensions around the "crescent" in this movement, see Benthall (1997).

27. "The Palestine Red Crescent Society, Established in 1968: The Basic Law," *Balsam* 111 (September 1984).

28. Khalidi 1984, 257.

29. "The Palestinian Camps," *Balsam* 108 (June 1984), 74.

30. Journal of the Palestine Red Crescent Society 35–36 (September/October 1977), 30.

31. Johnson 2015.

32. "The Gaza Medical Complex: From an Underground Garage to Ten Floors," *Balsam* 106 (April 1984), 83.

33. "The Palestinian Hospitals after the War of the Camps," *Balsam* 124 (October 1985), 81.

34. "The Shatila Hospital: The Myth of Birth from the Siege," *Balsam* 137 (November 1986), 70.

35. "The Health Conditions of the Palestinians in Lebanon," *Balsam* 133 (July 1986), 68.

36. "The Gaza Hospital, a Proud Edifice That Is Open for All," *Balsam* 113–115 (November 1984–January 1985), 25.

37. "The Palestinian Red Crescent Society Journal Meets with Successful Graduates from the Vocational Courses Program," *Journal of the Palestine Red Crescent Society* 38 (September/October 1977), 15.

38. Barnett and Walker 2015.

39. "The Palestinian Red Crescent Society at Ten Years," *Journal of the Palestine Red Crescent Society* 52 (December 1978), 12.

40. "Medical Achievement in the Jaffa Hospital in Damascus," *Journal of the Palestine Red Crescent Society* 5 (January 1975), 12.

41. "The Roles of the Lebanese Red Cross and the PRCS: They Rose above the Conflict and Soothed All Wounds," *Al-Nahar,* 26 April 1975, reprinted in *Journal of the Palestine Red Crescent Society* 8 (April 1975), 16.

42. "The Palestine Red Crescent Society at 10 Years," Journal of the Palestine Red Crescent Society 52 (December 1978), 13.

43. Ibid., 14.

44. "PRCS Activities in the North," Journal of the Palestine Red Crescent Society 61 (September 1979), 14.

45. "The International Response to Back Steadfastness," *Balsam* 94–95 (April/May 1983), 16.

46. Redfield 2013, 17.

47. Ibid.

48. "Samed Workshops in the Camps in the North," *Samed al-Iqtisadi* 4(30) (1981), 168.

49. Ibid., 159.

50. Ferguson 1990.

51. "Inside the Martyr Abu Ali Iyad Tailoring Worskhop," *Samed al-Iqtisadi* 1(7) (1978), 38.

52. "Tamam il Akhal, I Paint the Wounds of My People. I Paint for Their Pain and Hope," *Samed al-Iqtisadi* 1(9) (1978), 48.

53. "With Brother Abu Ala', Head of Samed," *Samed al-Iqtisadi* 1(11–12) (1978), 11.

54. "Celebrating the Graduation of the Second Class in the Eradication of Illiteracy Campaign," *Samed al-Iqtisadi* 4(25) (1981), 197.

55. "Samed Workshops in the Camps in the North," *Samed al-Iqtisadi* 4(30) (1981), 169.

56. "Samed's Cultural Activities," *Samed al-Iqtisasdi* 4(26) (1981), 164.

57. "Samed 1970–82, the Experience and the Ambitions in its 12th Year. Samed's Annual File," *Samed al-Iqtisadi* 5(36) (1982), 196.

58. Today these connections would likely be described as "South-South."

59. "Samed 1970–82, the Experience and the Ambitions in its 12th Year. Samed's Annual File," *Samed al-Iqtisadi* 5(36) (1982), 196.

60. Ibid.

61. "Samed Branch in Lebanon: A Reading of the Work of the Past Two Years, 1983–84," *Samed al-Iqtisadi* 7(53) (1985), 147.

62. Dr. Ibrahim Jundi, "Samed, a Twenty-Year Experience of Palestinian Economic Work," *Samed al-Iqtisadi* 12(79) (1990), 19.

63. Ibid., 38.

64. Khalidi 2014.

65. Toby Harden, "Palestinian PM's Firm 'Helps Build Israeli Wall,'" *The Telegraph,* February 12, 2004.

66. Fassin 2007b; Feldman 2009.

67. Guyer 2007, 411.

68. Allan 2013.

69. Junka-Aikio 2012; Khalidi and Samour 2001; Abourahme 2009.

70. As is always the case, some people and segments of the population have benefited from these conditions. The NGO economy provides opportunity for a professional class, even as it constricts their professional choices. Even in a constrained economy, some people have gotten very rich. Revelations from the "Panama Papers" implicate Abu Mazen's son, who was reported to have $1 million in an account. "Panama Papers: Leaks Reveal Abbas' Son's $1m Holding in Company with Ties to Palestinian Authority," *Haaretz,* April 7, 2016. http://www.haaretz.com/middle-east-news/1.713347 .

71. Rebecca Bryant (2012) distinguishes anticipation from expectation, suggesting that the former is an orientation toward the future that "may require our own action."

72. Povinelli 2011.

73. Dheisheh camp is distinguished among Palestinian refugee camps in general, and within the West Bank, by its degree of organization and activism (Rosenfeld 2004). Located within the Bethlehem municipality, even if administratively distinguished from it, camp residents exert influence over local politics.

74. *Campus in Camps: A University in Exile* . http://www.campusincamps.ps/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/The_CIC_BOOK.pdf .

75. Ibid., Alessandro Petti, "The Program," 22.

76. Allen 2013.

77. Jad 2007; Hanafi and Tabar 2005.

78. *Campus in Camps: A University in Exile* .

79. "Ownership." Campus in Camps Collective Dictionary. http://www.campusincamps.ps/projects/ownership/

80. "Well-being." Campus in Camps Collective Dictionary. http://www.campusincamps.ps/projects/well-being/

81. "The Unbuilt: Regenerating Space." Campus in Camps Initiatives.9. http://www.campusincamps.ps/projects/09-the-unbuilt/

82. Petti 2013.

83. Stewart 2007, 2.

84. Ibid., 3.

85. Ibid., 5.

86. Appadurai 2013, 295.

87. Berlant 2011.

88. Ibid., 263.

89. Povinelli 2012, 463.

1. McKay 2012.

2. Olszewska 2015, 210.

3. Moulin and Nyers 2007. See also Fiddian (2006) and Grabska (2006).

4. Malkki 1995; Horst 2006; Griffiths 2014; Cabot 2014. Being resettled does not necessarily end the challenges of the future (Ramsay 2017).

5. A growing body of scholarship places Zionist settlement, Palestinian displacement, and Israeli occupation in global and regional context (see Collins 2012; K. Feldman 2015; Salaita 2016; Sayigh 2015a).

6. Taithe 2016; Horst 2008; Barnett 2009.

7. Agier 2002; Malkki 2002; Bowles 1998; Ramadan 2013; Sanyal 2011 and 2014.

8. Crisp 2000; Lischer 2006; Ramadan 2009 and 2010; Turner 2005.

9. Oka 2014; Brees 2008; Werker 2007.

10. Lee 2012; Doraï 2003; Horstmann 2014.

11. Newhouse 2015; Hilhorst and Jansen 2010; Ilcan 2014.

12. It took some time for those borders to be firmly established. Despite the significant danger, for a number of years after the nakba, Palestinians crossed the border to return home. And some people succeeded in reestablishing residence. Benny Morris suggests that during 1948–53, somewhere between thirty thousand and ninety thousand refugees (a big range, admittedly) returned and resettled at home (Morris 1993, 39). Shira Robinson indicates that the Palestinian population inside Israel increased by around 30 percent in the early 1950s. She also describes the efforts that people who remained at home made to assist people in returning, including hiding people in attics and forging population registry receipts (Robinson 2013, 77). And see Korn (2003).

13. Refugees have also moved between fields without the permission of state authorities and humanitarian agencies. In 1950 the British Legation in Amman recounted the statements of refugees who had sureptiously crossed from the Gaza to Jordan that rations and work were lacking in Gaza and that Egyptian authorities meted out harsh punishment to those it caught leaving, NA, FO 371 82256, From British Legation, Amman, to Foreign Office, London, 9 May 1950. The effects of geographical separation extend far beyond the Middle East (Foroohar 2011; Kublitz 2016b).

14. Anera was founded in 1968 and provides assistance to Palestinians in the West Bank, Gaza, and Lebanon.

15. Rania El Hilou, "Crisis in Gaza: A Daily Journal," July–August 2014. http://www.anera.org/stories/crisis-in-gaza-2014-a-daily-journal/

16. Didier Fassin (2007b) described MSF workers who wanted to stay in Iraq when the United States began bombing in 2003, but who were compelled to leave when some were kidnapped.

17. IFRC, A0410-1, Refugee Lives, "Visit to the South Lebanon Camps," n.d.

18. Butler 2016.

19. Wolfe 2006.

20. Former Israeli prime minister Golda Meir is famously noted as saying, "It was not as if there was a Palestinian people in Palestine and we came and threw them out and took their country away from them. They did not exist." http://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/.premium-1.654218 .

21. http://www.unhcr.org/en-us/news/latest/2017/1/58760b294/yusra-refugee-im-proud-for%EF%BF%BD-peace.html .

22. http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/aylan-kurdi-s-story-how-a-small-syrian-child-came-to-be-washed-up-on-a-beach-in-turkey-10484588.html .

23. http://www.irinnews.org/analysis/2016/06/16/resettlement-10-percent-refugees-pipe-dream .

24. Hage 2016.

25. Agamben 1995.

26. Agamben 2005; Roitman 2014.

27. Hage 2016, 44.

28. https://www.unrwa.org/prs-lebanon .

29. Pierre Krähenbühl, UNRWA Commissioner-General, "May the Brussels Conference on Syria Fall Silent and Pay Attention to Walid a Child from Aleppo," April 4, 2017. https://www.unrwa.org/newsroom/features/may-brussels-conference-

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INDEX

Acronyms used throughout the index are as follows:

AFSC (American Friends Service Committee)
CDO (Community Development Office)
ICIP (Infrastructure and Camp Improvement Program)
ICRC (International Committee of the Red Cross)
IHL (international humanitarian law)
MAP (Medical Aid for Palestinians)
MSF (Médecins Sans Frontières)
PA (Palestinian Authority)
PARI (Palestinian Arab Refugee Institution)
PLO (Palestine Liberation Organization)
PRCS (Palestine Red Crescent Society)
Samed (Palestinian Martyrs Society)
UNCCP (United Nations Conciliation Commission for Palestine)
UNHCR (UN High Commission for Refugees)
UNRPR (United Nations Relief for Palestine Refugees)
UNRWA (United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees)
WHO (Women's Health Organization)

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