

1-1-2012

# Palestinian Refugee Identity: Marginalization And Resistance In Refugee Camps In Lebanon

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PALESTINIAN REFUGEE IDENTITY: MARGINALIZATION AND RESISTANCE IN  
REFUGEE CAMPS IN LEBANON

by

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A Major Research Paper  
presented to Ryerson University

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Masters of Arts  
in the Program of  
Immigration and Settlement Studies

Toronto, Ontario, Canada, 2012

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PALESTINIAN REFUGEE IDENTITY: MARGINALIZATION AND RESISTANCE IN  
REFUGEE CAMPS IN LEBANON

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Master of Arts 2012  
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ABSTRACT

Through a review of theoretical literature on the topics of space, power, and identity as well as literature on the Palestinian refugee situation in Lebanon, this research paper uses a critical approach to space in order to examine how Palestinian identity is formed within the specific context of refugee camps in Lebanon. The refugee camp has been used by the Lebanese state as a disciplinary tool to contain identities, but it has also served as a site for the displaced Palestinians to construct meaningful lives and create new places and identities. This paper will specifically examine the way in which a marginalized collective identity as well as an identity of resistance has been formed and renegotiated using culture, memory, and militancy by displaced Palestinian refugees living within the boundaries of camps in Lebanon.

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## INTRODUCTION

If we reject the view that spaces simply are natural and neutral, that they exist either prior to or separate from the subjects who imagine and use them, then theoretically we can consider the materiality of space, as well as the symbolic meanings of space (Razack, 2007). According to Henri Lefebvre,

“space is not a scientific object removed from ideology and politics; it has always been political and strategic. If space has an air of neutrality and indifference with regard to its contents and thus seems to be ‘purely’ formal...it is precisely because it has been occupied and used, and has already been the focus of past processes whose traces are not always evident on the landscape. Space has been shaped and moulded from historical and natural elements, but this has been a political process. Space is political and ideological. It is a product literally filled with ideologies” (cited in Soja, 1989, p. 80).

The notion that space is not natural, and is rather a social phenomenon, points to the importance of understanding space in relation to social identities (Razack, 2007). In recent critical race literature, theories have emerged that emphasize the role of space in the racialization and marginalization of particular groups. These theories contend that power and disciplinary forces are anchored spatially; deconstructing how power operates in and through space – otherwise referred to as ‘unmapping’ – is one way of tracing the hierarchical arrangements of particular societies (Razack, 2007). This approach helps us to understand the relationship between people’s behaviour in a city or a place, as well as their attitudes as they interpret and make sense of their everyday experience, and spatial transformations (Yousef, 2011).

This paper uses a spatial approach specifically to explore how Palestinian refugees in Lebanon have created a sense of identity and meaning in new spaces using culture, memory, and militancy. For sixty-four years, Palestinians living in refugee camps in Lebanon – that is, in the space of the state but not of it – have negotiated their identities within the complexity of both

local and regional contexts (Peteet, 2005). In the spatial framework of the refugee camp, Palestinian identity has been linked to both Lebanon, as well as Palestine/Israel, connecting the here and there in intimate ways. It is in this space that the construction of the Palestinian refugee has been both imposed and actively transformed over time.

### **Research Problem**

The primary objective of this research paper is to use a critical approach to space in order to examine how Palestinian identity is formed within the specific context of refugee camps in Lebanon. The refugee camp has been used by the Lebanese state as a disciplinary tool to contain identities, but it has also served as a site for the displaced Palestinians to construct meaningful lives and create new places and identities (Peteet, 2005). This paper will specifically examine the way in which a marginalized collective identity as well as an identity of resistance has been formed and renegotiated by displaced Palestinian refugees living within the boundaries of camps in Lebanon. Toward this objective, my primary research question is: How do Palestinian refugees simultaneously negotiate identities of racialization/marginalization and resistance within the spatio-temporal and political context of refugee camps in Lebanon?

In relation to the refugee situation worldwide, the Palestinian refugee situation is unique in a number of different ways. In terms of international refugee law, Palestinians, unlike any other group of refugees in the world, do not fall under the protection of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Instead, most Palestinian refugees come under the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) (United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East [UNRWA], 2012). This is due to the distinct definition of Palestinian refugees in the relevant treaties,

resolutions, and agency mandates. Palestinians are left outside of the 1951 Geneva Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (Refugee Convention) and its 1967 Protocol (Refugee Protocol). As long as UNRWA continues to provide them with assistance, Palestinian refugees are ineligible for the most basic protection rights guaranteed under international law to every other refugee in the world (Akram, 2000). When such assistance has ceased for any reason, these persons shall then be entitled to the benefits of the Refugee Convention (Akram, 2000; LeVine, 2011). Despite United Nations Resolution 194 and other similar resolutions, which require the durable solution of return and maintains refugee status until that solution is accomplished, there is no clear right of return for Palestinians as Israel refuses to implement these resolutions (LeVine, 2011).

Further, the Palestinian refugee situation is unique as the camps in Lebanon are among the world's longest existing refugee camps. Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon have now been in existence for over sixty years and are inhabited by four generations of refugees of whom all but the first arrivals know Palestine only from textbooks, the memories of elders and more recently, the globalized media (Roberts, 2010). Refugee situations that remain unsolved for an extended period of time create 'protracted' refugee groups for whom the initial experience of becoming a refugee develops into a way of life. As part of the oldest refugee group, Palestinians in Lebanon provide significant insight into how refugees cope in protracted situations (Roberts, 2010).

The Palestinian situation in Lebanon is also an exception in the Middle East; Palestinian refugees there have had a worse position than those in any other Arab states. In Jordan the majority of Palestinians are entitled to full citizenship and only about eighteen percent of the two million Palestinian refugees in Jordan live in camps (UNRWA, 2012). The Syrian state has also

maintained reasonable relations with the Palestinians living there; the Palestinians have the same rights as Syrian citizens, however they are unable to vote in state elections (Roberts, 2010).

Unlike other host governments, the Lebanese government does not provide any services to the camps such as sewage disposal, drinking water or electricity, whereas the Jordanian government provides education, rent, subsidies, healthcare and other social services (Roberts, 2010). Further, the sectarian politics and structure of Lebanese society differs from other Arab states in the Middle East. This complicates the Palestinian situation further, and makes Palestinians in Lebanon more vulnerable than in other states in the region. It is the uniqueness of the Palestinian refugee condition in Lebanon that makes it both interesting and relevant to understand the way in which Palestinian identity has been forged and (re)constructed within the boundaries of refugee camps. What we find in Lebanon is a case of a permanent refugee situation that exists within *the space of the state, but not of it*.

This research paper will be divided into four main sections. The first section will identify the theoretical lens in which the research will be evaluated. This framework of analysis will provide a complex perspective on the constitution of place, the camp, and the way in which these spatial foundations produce particular identities. In particular, this framework will provide conceptual insights as to how refugee camps can be both technologies of control, as well as sites of resistance. The second section will review the legal status of Palestinian refugees under international law in relation to other refugees worldwide. In the third section, this paper will contextualize the Palestinian refugee situation in Lebanon by providing a brief overview of Palestinian displacement in the camps in Lebanon; Palestinian refugees' role in sectarian politics; and the legal restrictions imposed upon Palestinians living in camps. The final section of this paper will offer a discussion and analysis of the refugee experience in Lebanon from 1948 to the

present by examining identity processes of marginalization and resistance experienced by refugees living in the camps.

## CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter of the paper will examine theories on race and space through the lens of a critical race approach. It will first examine how the organization and construction of space is related to issues of racial hierarchies and power. This section will then explore the relationship between spatial practice, mental representations of space, and representational spaces, as well as the way that bodies become marked by the production of particular spaces. Further, this section will provide insights into the temporality and extra territoriality of camps in general, and will conclude by examining how camps can simultaneously exist as a site of control, as well as a site of resistance.

### **Race and Space**

Edward Soja suggests the significance of spatiality by stating that:

“space is simultaneously objective and subjective, material and metaphorical, a medium and outcome of social life; actively both an immediate milieu and an originating presupposition, empirical and theorizable, instrumental, strategic, essential” (cited in Teelucksingh, 2006, p. 8).

The structure of organized space represents a dialectically defined component of the general relations of production – relations which are simultaneously social and spatial. Physical space has been a misleading foundation upon which to analyse the concrete and subjective meaning of human spatiality; space in itself may be primordially given, but the organization and meaning of space is a product of social translation, transformation and experience (Soja, 1989, p. 80). Space is given meaning and definition by the regular, patterned activities and social relationships that unfold in it and the cultural rules governing those spaces (Peteet, 2005).

In particular, there is an important relationship between identity and space in terms of what is being imagined or projected on to specific spaces and bodies, and what is being enacted. Spatial theory is useful for examining questions of identity and domination/subordination. This framework suggests that there is something about processes of marginalization that are directly experienced as spatial. The constitution of spaces reproduces social/racial hierarchies, while legal practices are required in the marking and maintaining of those hierarchies (Razack, 2007). Spatial analysis is important in terms of how groups relate to each other as social relations of dominance and otherness are projected into space (Teelucksingh, 2006).

A critical race approach can be used to uncover some of the hierarchies that are often created within particular spaces. Deconstructing the attitudes that lie behind spatial arrangements can lead to many insights into the nature of beliefs about race. This framework uses a colonial model to analyze race and the law, arguing that racialized groups are not protected by the law because they have no power to enforce the law. The power to define what constitutes laws is in the hands of the dominant members of society, and this power is a mechanism of racial subordination (Henry and Tator, 2010). The central argument of a critical race perspective is the importance of ideological control for the maintenance of inequality in a society. The legal system produces and reproduces the essential character of law as a means of rationalizing, and legitimizing social control on behalf of those who hold power and the interests they represent (Henry and Tator, 2010).

This research paper will employ critical race theory as a lens through which to illustrate the ways in which the Palestinian situation in Lebanon can be treated as a 'race' issue. As it will be explained later, the sectarian nature of Lebanese society since colonization, the precarious balance of sectarian power in Lebanon, and the subsequent negative attitudes of many Lebanese

toward the Palestinians are factors that have caused Palestinian refugees to be treated as a 'race' in Lebanon in an attempt by Lebanese groups to maintain power and control.

### **Space as a Social Product**

Lefebvre proposes the concept of social space as indistinguishable from mental and physical space; space must not be treated on a purely descriptive level, but instead must be used to show how the symbolic and the material work through each other to constitute a space. A dialectic relationship between spaces and bodies exists within the triad of the perceived (material spaces), conceived (mental spaces) and the lived spaces which reflect both the concrete and the abstract (Lefebvre, 1991; Soja 1989; Teelucksingh, 2006).

Perceived space – or spatial practice – emerges out of the everyday routines and experiences that install specific social spaces. This includes how people know themselves in that space, as well as how they are known in it and what the space accomplishes in relation to other spaces. Through daily life routines, the space performs something in the social order, permitting certain actions, prohibiting others, and organizing social life in specific ways. The specific competence and performance of every society member can only be evaluated empirically; for example, spatial practice can be defined by the daily life of a tenant in a government-subsidized high-rise housing project (Razack, 2007). In the context of the refugee camp, these localities are also produced by and productive of everyday social relations and practices (Peteet, 2005).

Conceived space – mental representations of space – entails how space is conceptualized by planners, architects, engineers and so on – all of whom identify and construct what is lived and perceived with what is conceived, or in other words, who is positioned where and why (Lefebvre, 1991).

Finally, lived space – or representational spaces – is space as directly lived through its associated images and symbols. This is the space of ‘inhabitants’ and ‘users’ but also of some artists and perhaps of those, such as a few writers and philosophers, who describe and aspire to do more than describe. It overlays physical space, making symbolic use of its objects; thus representational spaces may be said, though with certain exceptions, to tend towards more or less coherent systems of non-verbal symbols and signs (Lefebvre, 1991). For example, lived space involves a place experienced as racialized space in which communities experience their marginal condition and resist it, defying containment and instead imagining it as a symbol of community. The users of the representational space interpret perceived space (spatial practices) and conceived space (representations of space) and the relations between the three moments of the perceived, the conceived and the lived are never either simple or stable (Lefebvre, 1991; Razack, 2007).

Examining how space becomes reproduced involves a consideration of both structural, political and economic processes and the ways in which various stakeholders act as agents in the reproduction of space, reflecting their particular interests. The notion of racialized space considers the hegemonic social relations between marginalized people and dominant groups and institutions that impact on the uneven development of marginalized people and their communities (Teelucksingh, 2006). Indeed each new form of power introduces its own particular way of partitioning space, its own particular administrative classification of discourses about space, and about things and people in space (Peteet, 2005). It is important to recognize that cultural politics and struggles between groups as reflected in cultural events and discourse are integral to spatial thinking; marginalized spaces are fundamental to how individuals, the state and institutional practices make sense of and manage social relations (Teelucksingh, 2006).

## **Bodies in Space**

The production of space is also the production of excluded and included bodies. Symbolic and material processes work together to produce subjects in space: bodies marked as degenerate, or the opposite (Foucault, 1984; Razack, 2007). Frantz Fanon, similar to Lefebvre, describes forms of everyday separation as immobilizing for those who are socially or spatially isolated from the larger group. Fanon uses a metaphor of being ‘sealed in’ (Kipfer, 2007, p. 708), alluding to spatial relationships that, through body language, gestures, looks and physical distance, separate the oppressor and the oppressed (Kipfer, 2007).

Michel Foucault identifies space as fundamental in any exercise of power. He suggests that discipline ‘makes individuals’, but this making requires a ‘mechanism that coerces by means of observation’ (Foucault, 1984). Spaces are produced in a way to render visible people’s movement and conduct, so that one is always seen and known. This concern with surveillance is expressed in the architecture through petty mechanisms such as policing (Razack, 2007). In a discussion of spatial segregation in colonial cities, demarcated through colonial administration, Fanon explains that in the colonies, it is the policeman and the soldier who are the official instituted go-between, “the spokesmen of the settler and his rule of oppression” (Kipfer, 2007, p. 709).

By means of surveillance, two kinds of bodies are produced: the normal and the abnormal body. The normal body belongs to the homogenous social body, while the abnormal body is exiled and spatially separated. The subject who maps his space and thereby knows and controls it, is also the imperial man or the sovereign. The sovereign achieves his sense of self through keeping at bay and in place any who would threaten him (Razack, 2007). A sense of self is derived from controlling rigid boundaries: where the ability to move results in the unmarking of

the body, on the other hand, the 'abnormal body' is signified through a marking, and is always static and immobilizing (Foucault, 1984, p. 181; Razack, 2007, p. 11).

### **Spatiality of the Refugee Camp**

The establishment and development of refugee camps today is very diverse (Agier, 2008), however there are two problems that arise in all studies of the camps: the first relates to the temporality of the camps. It is only the emergency situation and its exceptional character that justifies these spaces. These factors are reproduced, spread and establish themselves over the long term into a state of permanent precariousness (Agier, 2011). The second problem that arises is related to the status of the space and its extra territoriality. A camp does not belong to the national space on which it is established; hence the rites of passage – of gateways, identity checks, and so on – upon entry symbolize the transition not into a prison, but rather into a different regime of government and rights (Agier, 2011).

In terms of their temporality, all refugee camps are models of uncertainty. They are spaces and populations administered in the mode of emergency and exception, where time seems to have stopped for an undetermined period. The refugees in the camps are awaiting return, although paradoxically everything happens in the camp and in the present – that is, the present is fully lived, even though it is perceived as a state of waiting. Further, the wait for humanitarian assistance confirms that the whole of life in the camps is in fact organized as a function of waiting at every level (Agier, 2011).

In terms of their extra territoriality, many refugee camps are zones of exceptional rights and power, where everything seems possible for those in control (Agier, 2011). Refugee camps often constitute a unique setting for the arbitrary exercise of power by a particular state, or

humanitarian organization. Its intervention seems justified by a sudden, exceptional situation of emergency and humanitarianism establishes its own space within the camp (Agier, 2011).

Parallels can be drawn between the strategies employed by colonial administrators to police and control their subject population and the ways in which the spatial layout of refugee camps and humanitarian efforts facilitate the surveillance and control of refugees. The refugee camp in particular, functions as a technology of control and power entailing the management of space and movement, for peoples who are constructed as out of place in the nation-state (Latif, 2008). By observing the relationship between humanitarian efforts to care for and manage refugee populations and strategies by colonial and modern states to care for, manage, control and police their citizens, this paper extends the concept of surveillance, discipline, and control into the sphere of the refugee camp.

The hierarchy of power relations is often mapped onto the spatial organization of the camp in the form of distinct and segregated spaces for the refugees within the camps, while the boundaries for humanitarian organizations' personnel is conspicuously marked by security fences and guards. While none of the Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon correspond to this neatly ordered spatial organization, this is not to say that the camps are not disciplinary spaces or that power does not mark their spatial and social organization. In fact, the shifts in the boundaries of Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon and the difference in their permeability over time demonstrate the ways in which power relations are spatially embedded (Latif, 2008).

### ***Refugee Camp as a State of Exception and Technology of Control***

While referring to the concentration camps dating back to 1896 that were created by the Spaniards in Cuba in order to repress the insurrection of that colony's population, Giorgio Agamben looks at the idea of the camp not as a historical fact, but rather as a political space of

the present in which the extension to an entire population of a state of exception is linked to a colonial war. He argues that the extra-legal circumstances that the camp makes possible, have been gradually extended to entire civil populations (De Caroli, 2007). For Agamben, camps were not born out of ordinary law, rather they were born out of the 'state of exception' (Agamben, 2000, p. 37.8). He contends that the camp is the space that 'opens up when the state of exception begins to become the rule' (De Caroli, 2007, p. 52). In this space, the power of sovereign rulers is not primarily defined by their capability to create, but also to suspend law and order. Agamben explains that the sovereign is simultaneously outside and inside the juridical order of this space. The sovereign is therefore simultaneously within the law, and outside of the law (Ek, 2006). The notion of exception reveals itself as a kind of exclusion that is maintained in relation to the rule of the sovereign in the form of the sovereign's suspension of law (Ek, 2006; Mbembe, 2003). As a consequence, the relation of the sovereign and the state of exception is the relation of the ban rather than application of order (Ek, 2006).

Agamben emphasizes the importance of this constitutive connection between the state of exception and the camp for a correct understanding of the nature of the camp. The relation of the suspension of law is constituted by the camp, opened up by sovereign violence where concepts of inside and outside become blurred rather than exclude each other. In the space of the camp, the state of exception acquires a permanent spatial arrangement that remains constantly outside the normal state of law (Agamben, 2000; Ek, 2006; Mbembe, 2003).

The person living in the camp – who Agamben would call the *homo sacer* – is simultaneously included and excluded from the law. To ban someone from the law is to say that anybody may harm him; that is why this figure, the *homo sacer*, is defined by a double exclusion, as it is possible to kill the *homo sacer*, but is forbidden to be sacrificed since the

sacrifice is still a figure representable within the legal order of the city (Ek, 2006; Laclau, 2007). In other words, the camp inhabitants are disposable, but not worth killing, as the state or the sovereign still has power over them. The *homo sacer* is abandoned, and simply left outside any communitarian order. That is why this figure can be killed but not sacrificed (Laclau, 2007). The inhabitants are stripped of their legal rights and political status and thus reduced completely to what Agamben calls 'bare life'; the 'camp becomes a space in which power confronts nothing other than pure biological life without any mediation' (Agamben, 2000, p. 40.1) and where the occupants are included only by virtue of their political exclusion (Agamben, 2000). Different from political belonging and status, ordinarily expressed in the form of rights, those reduced to 'bare life' encounter juridico-political power from a condition of comprehensive political abandonment. In the camp, power is exercised not against juridical subjects, but against biological bodies – that is, a space in which sovereignty exists but the law does not (De Caroli, 2007).

In the camp, individuals are so completely deprived of their rights, committing any act toward them would no longer appear as a crime (Agamben, 2000). Instead, as Achille Mbembe explains, the camp becomes the zone where the violence of the state of exception is deemed to operate in the service of 'civilization'. The marginalized group is perceived as a threat to the imagined 'society', which means that 'society' must be defended against them. Accordingly, the camp is a management of technology used in order to defend 'society' (Ek, 2006). In the case of the refugee camps in Lebanon, although they exist outside the juridical reach of the Lebanese government and law enforcement, they are still consistently controlled and disciplined by various state actors and humanitarian organizations through the threat of violence and surveillance (Jamal and Sandor, 2010).

### *Refugee Camp as a Place of Resistance*

Both Fanon and Lefebvre conceptualize space not just in terms of relations of domination but also in terms of practices of resistance that involve reappropriating and transforming space. They consider social space as involving a strategic mediation of radical politics, as it links the ‘phenomenology of everyday life to the macrological dimensions of the social order (Kipfer, 2007, p.718). While camps – conceptualized as spatialized forms of power and governance – are used to contain and control inhabitants, they also serve as sites for launching resistance (Peteet, 2005). Foucault contends that every source of power allows for the possibility of a point of resistance and suggests interconnectedness and mutuality in the application of power and resistance (Jamal and Sandor, 2010). The spaces of refugee camps are not only an indication of sovereign power, but simultaneously exhibit and produce sites of resistance to that power in its inception (Jamal and Sandor, 2010).

Human societies and individuals are products of structural and disciplinary forces, yet exercise remarkable creativity in improvising and carving out meaningful lives which then effect a transformation in these forces (Peteet, 2005). Indeed, the marginality of the camp is much more than a site of deprivation; it is also the site of radical possibility of perspectives from which to see and create, and to imagine alternatives (hooks, 1990). Marginality is often a central location for the production of a counter hegemonic discourse that is, according to Foucault, not just found in words, but in habits of being and the way one lives (hooks, 1990; Jamal and Sandor, 2010). Although they are spatially bounded units of governance, refugee camps are not necessarily spaces of passivity in which refugees wait hopelessly; they can also be sites of opposition. Foucault insists that the main objective of resistance is not simply an attack on a particular “institution of power, or group, or elite, or class but rather a technique, a form of power” (cited in

Jamal and Sandor, 2010, p. 5). Refugees stamp their own imprint on camps, rendering them often contradictory places (Peteet, 2005). It is critical to not only understand modes of containment in the camps, but also the creative ‘placemaking’ capacity of refugees, in which spatial and administrative regimes are appropriated by refugees for their own purposes (Peteet, 2005, p. 31).

In Lebanon, Palestinian refugee camps do not function only as a force that defines the refugee as helpless, and devoid of all rights – ‘bare life’ – but they also function as sites of resistance for the Palestinian population. It is significant not to romanticize the exile and experience of the Palestinian refugees when seeking possibilities of agency, therefore this paper recognizes the dual struggle of the Palestinians attempting to maintain their identity with regard to the loss of the Palestinian homeland, and the lived experience of constraints inherent to living as refugees (Jamal and Sandor, 2010).

In the next section I will examine how a unique set of factors related to the Palestinian refugee situation in Lebanon are closely linked to the above theory on space, identity, and the refugee camp. The Palestinian case in Lebanon will exemplify some aspects of the critical race approach as it applies to the camp. In some ways however, some dimensions of this case will differ from the theory. Although the camp may function as a technology of domination and control over the Palestinians, during specific historical periods Palestinians have demonstrated powerful bursts of agency from within the camp.

## PALESTINIANS AS REFUGEES

As the single largest refugee population group in the world, Palestinian refugees have a status that is unique under international refugee law (Gassner, 2001). Unlike any other group of refugees in the world, Palestinians are singled out for exceptional treatment under the major international legal instruments which govern the rights and obligations of states towards refugees such as the 1951 Refugee Convention, and the 1967 Refugee Protocol (Akram, 2000). Consequently, Palestinian refugees are ineligible for the most basic protection rights guaranteed under international law to refugees in general, further eroding the precarious international legal guarantees that international human rights and humanitarian law currently extends to this population (Akram, 2000).

The primary international instrument governing the rights of refugees and the obligations of states towards them is the 1951 Refugee Convention, which provides the most widely accepted definition of refugee and establishes minimum guarantees of protection towards such refugees by state parties (Akram, 2000; Gassner, 2001). The Convention however, has a separate provision that applies solely to Palestinian refugees in Article 1D:

“The Convention shall not apply to persons who are at present receiving from organs or agencies of the United Nations other than the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees protection or assistance” (Akram, 2000).

Although Palestinian refugees are not specifically mentioned, Palestinians are the only group to which the Article applies, in which the other agencies of the United Nations refers to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) (Akram, 2000).

Further, the refugee definition applicable to Palestinians is different and far narrower under UNRWA Regulations than the Refugee Convention definition. According to UNRWA – established as a subsidiary organ of the United Nations General Assembly in 1949 – the operational definition of Palestine refugees is: “people whose normal place of residence was Palestine between June 1946 to May 1948 who lost both their homes and means of livelihood as a result of the 1948 Arab-Israeli conflict” (UNRWA, 2012). UNRWA provides services to Palestine refugees in the Gaza Strip, the West Bank, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria who fulfil the above criteria, or are the direct descendents of such a Palestinian, however UNRWA services are only available to those who meet the definition of a Palestine refugee, and are registered with UNRWA (UNRWA, 2012). Specifically in Lebanon, there are three types of Palestinian refugees: ‘registered’ refugees who are registered with both UNRWA and the Lebanese authorities; ‘non registered’ refugees who are only registered by the Lebanese government – UNRWA began to serve the non-registered in 2004, however they are still considered unregistered by UNRWA; and ‘non-identified’ refugees who are not registered with any agency in Lebanon or internationally and possess no valid documents. This category of ‘non-identified’ refugees have limited access to UNRWA services and lack stable income, access to healthcare or education (Hanafi, Chaaban and Seyfert, 2012).

Among its services, UNRWA provides education, health, relief and social services, microfinance and emergency assistance to refugees, as well as infrastructure and camp improvement within refugee camps (UNRWA, 2012). UNRWA’s mandate however, has been solely one of providing assistance to refugees’ basic daily needs, whereas the UNHCR’s mandate establishes a far more comprehensive scheme of protection for refugees including freedom of movement, access to courts, administrative assistance, freedom of religion and housing rights

among many others (Akram, 2000; Hanafi, 2010). What further differentiates the UNRWA mandate from that of UNHCR is the exclusion of the reference to the right of return. While the UNHCR's ultimate goal is to help find durable solutions through voluntary repatriation, voluntary local integration, or voluntary third-country resettlement, UNRWA does not make any reference to permanent solutions available to refugees despite numerous UN Resolutions such as UN Resolution 194, to be implemented in any final resolution of the Palestinian refugee problem (Akram, 2000).

In 2004, UNRWA began linking service provision to advocacy and recently a rights-based approach to its humanitarian mandate is emerging (Hanafi, 2010). UNRWA also established a protection programme in Lebanon at the end of 2009, as the failure to find a just and durable solution to the plight of the Palestinians has determined their need for protection as individuals, communities and a nation still without a State. The protection needs of Palestine refugees in Lebanon are related to concerns of internal political tensions, lawlessness and conflict (UNRWA, 2011). The protection approach includes: ensuring protection needs are addressed in all aspects of programming, project design, policies and procedures; delivering services in a manner that promotes the rights of refugees and ensures their security and dignity; promoting the respect and fulfillment of refugees' rights through monitoring, reporting and intervention and highlighting the need for a just and durable solution to the plight of Palestine refugees to the international community (UNRWA, 2011). Despite UNRWA's new protection programme in Lebanon, the Lebanese government still places harsh restrictions on Palestinian refugees in areas such as employment and property rights. Failure to achieve a durable solution for the Palestinian refugees however, remains one of the most flammable and destabilizing political issues in the Middle East (Gassner, 2001; Hanafi, 2010).

## REFUGEE CONTEXT IN LEBANON

The following section of this paper will contextualize the Palestinian refugee situation in Lebanon by providing a brief historical overview of Palestinian displacement in the camps in Lebanon. This section will also explain opposition to Palestinian settlement in Lebanon by examining the relationship of Lebanon's sectarian politics to the Palestinian refugee presence; and will conclude by outlining some of the legal restrictions imposed upon Palestinians living in camps.

In 1948, around 100,000 Palestinians fled over the border into Lebanon. During the first months, the Palestinians were assisted by the International League of Red Cross Societies (LRCS) which provided tents, clothes and food. The Lebanese Government also offered assistance by offering the LRCS free depots, warehouses, security, labour and transport; the Lebanese authorities later allocated certain areas for the refugees to settle in (Shafie, 2007). In 1949 the United Nations set up UNRWA as a special agency to provide for the welfare of Palestinian refugees in Arab host countries (Chatty, Suleiman, Mansour, & Yassin, 2010). UNRWA began its operations in 1950 and originally established 16 camps in Lebanon, of which three were destroyed and one was evacuated (Roberts, 2010).

According to UNRWA statistics, there are now 12 official refugee camps in Lebanon, and 466, 000 registered refugees of whom sixty percent are living in the camps (UNRWA, 2012). There are also approximately 15 Palestinian unofficial settlements which were established by refugees settling on plots of land that are not managed by the UNRWA (Shafie, 2007). There are estimated to be between 10, 000 and 40, 000 non-registered Palestinian refugees – that is, those registered with the Lebanese authorities, but not with UNRWA (Forced Migration Online

(FMO), 2011). Half of these refugees were registered by the Red Cross and later by the Lebanese Government, and are considered 1948 refugees, while the rest were registered in the period of 1969-1978 and are considered to be displaced persons from 1967 (FMO, 2011). The number of non-identified Palestinian refugees is estimated to be between 3000 and 10,000 (Sharar, 2009). Palestinians in Lebanon can be considered the largest stateless group of Palestinians received by a host state (El-Ali, 2010), numbering in total between approximately 479, 000 and 516, 000.

### **Opposition to Palestinian Settlement in Lebanon**

The principle of the right to return was applied to the Palestinian refugees who left their homes in 1948 and 1967 in numerous United Nations resolutions, most significantly Article 11 of Resolution 194, of December 1948 which states that the General Assembly:

“Resolves that the refugees wishing to return to their homes and live at peace with their neighbours should be permitted to do so at the earliest practicable date, and that compensation should be paid for the property of those choosing not to return and for loss of damage to property which, under principles of international law of equity, should be made good by the Governments or authorities responsible...” (Salam, 1994, p. 20).

This Resolution has been reaffirmed over 100 times (Akram, 2000), however the continued commitment to Resolution 194 in the General Assembly has changed with time from a declaration of principle to a ritual act of voting, with even that being dropped by the United States in 1993. Today, if any real attention is paid to Resolution 194, it is insofar as one of its elements – compensation – is seen as a means of facilitating resettlement (Salam, 1994). It is likely however, that for the 1948 refugees residing in Lebanon, if there were any ‘return’, it would be confined to the territory of the West Bank and Gaza. It is therefore questionable as to how many Palestinian residents of Lebanon, the vast majority of whom are from northern Palestine, would want to settle in Gaza or the West Bank (Salam, 1994). Further, many of the

refugees' houses, villages and neighbourhoods have been destroyed since 1948 and as a result of these factors, and the fact that the state of Israel has so far categorically rejected any solutions to the Palestinian issue that includes a right to return, Palestinians in Lebanon will not be able to return. More recently, recognizing the extreme difficulty of any collective refugee return, the United Nations has considered resettlement in the Arab world as the more realistic and practical solution to the Palestinian refugee situation in Lebanon (Salam, 1994).

As Palestinian national sentiment grew in the aftermath of the 1967 Six Day War, the initial welcoming and tolerant attitude of the Lebanese changed toward the refugees with the further realization that Israel was refusing to allow Palestinians to return to their homes (Chatty et al., 2010). Most Lebanese explicitly reject the permanent settlement of Palestinians in Lebanon, believing that it would create demographic, economic, social and sectarian disorders (Haddad, 2000; Haddad, 2004). The opposition to permanent settlement rests on three major contentions including first, the negation of the right to return. Many Lebanese justify their opposition to permanent settlement on the grounds that it would simply contradict the Palestinian's right to return home. Further, with an already high population density, concern is expressed that the settling of Palestinian refugees would increase Lebanon's population. It is thought that this demographic change cannot be absorbed in a country with little resources and an unemployment rate of twenty-five percent (Haddad, 2000; Haddad, 2004). Finally, and perhaps most significant, is the idea that resettlement would likely create greater problems in Lebanon than it would in the other host countries in terms of its impact on the delicate and precarious sectarian balance in Lebanon (Haddad, 2004; Makdisi, 1996; Salam, 1994). The Palestinians are often blamed for dragging the country into the civil war from 1975-1990 and inviting Israeli invasions and wars against Lebanon. As a result, the Lebanese see themselves as

having paid a much higher price for the Palestinian cause than any other country (Haddad 2000; Haddad, 2004).

### ***Palestinians in Lebanon's Sectarian Politics***

Lebanese society is divided into Muslim Sunnis, Shi'is and Druze, Christian Maronites, Greek Orthodox, and Greek Catholics. Since the 1940's, the 'National Pact' guaranteed the Maronite elites the presidency in Lebanon while the Sunnis were granted the prime ministership and the Shi'i the speaker of parliament (Haddad, 2004; Makdisi, 1996). This created a sectarian nationalism; electoral and personal status laws were regulated by religious affiliation such that to be Lebanese meant to be defined according to religious affiliation – there could be no Lebanese citizen who was not at the same time a member of a particular religious community (Makdisi, 1996). As a result of the creation of an elite-dominated sectarian Lebanon, popular unrest soon came to the fore, organized along sectarian lines. Palestinian politics and presence further complicated this problem (Makdisi, 1996).

In the aftermath of the 1967 Six Day War, Palestinians began to play a fundamental role in the politics of Lebanon. The Palestinian population in Lebanon began to increase as a result of the war and as many Palestinian resistance fighters based in Jordan also began to move to Lebanon after the Black September massacres in 1970 (Haddad, 2004; Shadie, 2007). When the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) was evicted from Jordan, they relocated their base to Lebanon where the influx of several hundred Palestinians complicated Lebanon's delicate confessional balance and led to a polarization in the country on the Palestinian issue (Chatty et al., 2010; Haddad, 2004; Salam, 1994).

The right wing Christians resented the Palestinians who they saw as a new community of Muslims that could potentially threaten to overthrow the Maronite-dominated political system and reacted by establishing and training their own militias to counter the Palestinians (Haddad, 2004). The growth of the Palestinian political and military presence in Lebanon, and the support provided to them by Islamic religious sects, ignited the Lebanese civil war in 1975 (El-Ali, 2010). While the PLO began controlling some areas of Lebanon, the right-wing militias, supported later on by the Israelis, controlled other parts of the country (El-Ali, 2010). During the civil war 1975-1990, Christian Phalangist militias in Lebanon overran and destroyed three refugee camps in East Beirut including Tel El-Zaatar, where at least 4000 Palestinian camp residents were killed, Jisr El-Basha, and Dbayeh (Khalili, 2005; Shafie, 2007).

The 1967 War however, had mobilized the large Palestinian refugee camp populations and its militias by igniting both Palestinian and Arab nationalist sentiments. In 1969, the Cairo Accords – an agreement between the Lebanese authorities and the PLO – gave Palestinians the right to employment, to form local committees in the camps, and the possibility of engaging in armed struggle against Israel. This transformed Lebanon for Palestinians from a refuge into a site of revolt against displacement (Chatty et al., 2010; Peteet, 1996; Haddad, 2004). An ascendant activism emerged among the Palestinians and the PLO began launching attacks against Israel from their base in Lebanon. This quickly led to retaliations against the Palestinians and Lebanese from Israel which further diminished support for the Palestinians and their cause (Chatty et al., 2010; Haddad, 2004). Israel attacked Lebanon and the Palestinian civilian and military positions from 1969 to 1978 using artillery and air raids, the most violent air raid targeting and destroying the Nabatieyh refugee camp in South Lebanon (El-Ali, 2010; Shafie, 2007). In 1978, the Israeli invasion of Lebanon resulted in the military occupation of South Lebanon and finally in 1982,

Israel launched a massive military invasion to destroy the PLO's military and political power base in Lebanon (El-Ali, 2010; Haddad, 2004). Israeli air strikes killed around 2,400 Palestinians from Sabra and Shatila and Burj el-Barajneh refugee camps, 1,100 in the refugee camps of Sidon, and 1,200 in the camps of Tyre (Haddad, 2004; Shafie, 2007). The Israeli invasion subsequently led to the PLO's evacuation from Beirut, however left without protection, the refugee camps became an easy target for Christian right-wing militias who killed several thousand civilians in the Sabra and Shatila massacres in 1982 (Haddad, 2004; Petet, 1996).

While Israel withdrew from Lebanon later, the Syrians were to now maintain order and ensure that the PLO's military presence was eliminated (El-Ali, 2010). In hopes of seizing power, Syria armed Shi'i militias of the Amal Movement in what is known as the War of the Camps during the period of 1985-1987 (Khalili, 2007). Amal applied strict measures on the movement of Palestinian refugees, placing military checkpoints at camp entrances as military clashes between Palestinian factions ensued. The abduction, torture and disappearance of Palestinian refugees during this period still constitutes an important part of the collective trauma of this community today (El-Ali, 2010). Amal besieged and indiscriminately attacked several refugee camps and claimed the lives of 9,094 Palestinians, while wounding 1,722. Almost 50,000 Palestinians were displaced in the violence that destroyed ninety-six percent of Shatila camp, sixty-five percent of Burj el-Barajneh camp, and twenty-five percent of Rashidiyeh camp (El-Ali, 2010).

### ***Legal Restrictions on Palestinian Refugees***

Following the withdrawal of the PLO in 1982, the Lebanese Government actively began issuing discriminatory laws and placing harsh restrictions on the Palestinian refugees (Chatty et

al., 2010; El-Ali, 2010). Palestinians are banned from seventy-three job categories including medicine, law and engineering (Khalili, 2005; Shahine, 2004). Palestinians are required to obtain a work permit which would allow them to work in areas including construction, sanitation, agriculture, tanning and leather works, textile and carpet works, smelting, domestic labour, nursing, automotive repair, and cleaning (Haddad, 2004; Peteet, 1996). Obtaining a work permit is a complex and lengthy process, and yet it does not offer social security or insurance benefits, nor a regular wage increase (Haddad, 2004; Wood, 2011). While in 2010, the Lebanese government passed legislation granting the Palestinian population the right to work, any practical changes remain to be seen. Until 2011, only a handful of work permits have been given to Lebanon's Palestinian refugee population and even with the new reform, Palestinians will continue to be barred from working in at least twenty-five syndicated professions such as medicine and law (Human Rights Watch, 2012; Wood, 2011).

When the Lebanese civil war came to an end in 1990, a process of rebuilding the Lebanese state, its political system, its bureaucracy and the divided cities, towns and villages resumed, while the Palestinians living in refugee camps were left out of the effort and were socially and politically isolated (Chatty et al., 2010). The Lebanese government forbids the reconstruction of totally destroyed camps, and in other camps, any reconstruction of building requires a special permit which is often not issued. In some camps, Lebanese soldiers monitor to make sure that the residents are not smuggling in building materials; building without a permit is punishable by arrest and detention (Chatty et al., 2010; Shafie, 2007). Further, in 2001 the Lebanese Government passed a law prohibiting Palestinians from owning or registering property (Human Rights Watch 2010; Human Rights Watch, 2012; Shahine, 2004).

Travel restrictions further hinder Palestinian daily life and livelihood; those travelling abroad on Palestinian travel documents have not always been guaranteed re-entry. In 1995, the Lebanese Government issued a decree requiring entry visas for those holding Palestinian documents, while those Palestinians who were travelling abroad holding Lebanese travel documents were refused entry visas (Peteet, 1996).

The Lebanese government claims that granting Palestinians with broader rights such as work permits, social security benefits, and the right to own land will encourage them not to leave, complicating the country's sectarian balance of political power, currently in favour of Lebanon's Shii's (Shahine, 2004; Wood, 2011). Contrary to the Lebanese fear that Palestinians will permanently resettle, Palestinian refugees themselves do not in fact want to give up their legal status of 'refugee', which despite its many shortcomings, leaves open the possibility of their right of return to Palestine (Khalili, 2005; Peteet, 1996). On the other hand, Palestinians are simply seeking the same basic rights afforded to refugees in Syria and Jordan, where Palestinians live, work and enjoy medical and educational security (Haddad, 2000; Khalili, 2005; Shahine, 2004). Although in Lebanon UNRWA provides many of these opportunities within the camps, rising populations in the camp and decreases in funding are major obstacles against providing more services (Shahine, 2004; UNRWA, 2011). By seeking additional civil rights in Lebanon, Palestinians are attempting to both accommodate their isolation from the larger Palestinian context, as well as protest their powerlessness and restricted daily lives in the local Lebanese context (Peteet, 1996). It is important to understand the context in Lebanon that has shaped the attitudes and policies toward the Palestinian population, and subsequently the way in which this context has shaped Palestinian identity inside the spatiality of the Palestinian refugee camps.

## PALESTINIAN REFUGEE CAMPS IN LEBANON

This section of the paper will provide a discussion and analysis of the refugee experience in Lebanon by examining identity processes of marginalization and resistance experienced by refugees living in the camps beginning in the pre-civil war period, 1948-1975; during the civil war from 1974-1990, with a particular look at the war of the camps 1985-1987; as well as the post-civil war period. This section will conclude by examining the effects of Syrian withdrawal from Lebanon in 2004; the subsequent 2007 Nahr el-Bared conflict; and the effects of post-conflict reconstruction in Nahr el-Bared on the Palestinian refugee in Lebanon.

### **Pre-Civil War Period: 1948-1975**

In the early 1950's, UNRWA set up camps for displaced Palestinians by renting public or privately owned grounds within strictly demarcated areas allocated by the Lebanese Government. Camps were erected next to cities and along roads to ensure access to goods and building material (El-Ali, 2010; Rueff and Viaro, 2010). Many Palestinian camps were originally made of tents and shared sanitary facilities while in some cases, military barracks or former refugee camps were also used (Latif, 2008; Rueff and Viaro, 2010). The first generation of refugees who lived through this era recall the difficulty of daily life in the camps during this time when, for example, sand would get into everything from food, water, bedding and even clothing, and many Palestinians had to throw away their food rations as a result (Latif, 2008). A refugee from Bourj el-Barajneh camp describes daily life of the camps in an interview stating:

“before it was deserted...there were pine groves and thieves use to hide in them. That where they put us. It was very difficult to live here...we used to go to the tile factory to bring tiles to put on the sand so we could walk [because the sand was so hot]” (Latif, 2008).

The language in this statement illustrates the great material hardships of life in the tents, at a time when Palestinians suffered from complete dependence on others for the fulfillment of basic needs such as food, water and shelter. Daily survival in the camps was dependent on the ‘charity’ of the Lebanese as well as humanitarian organizations, as this began to define how Palestinians understood themselves within the social order in Lebanon (Latif, 2008). UNRWA interventions such as rations, health care and education, constituted techniques to inscribe on the refugee body their new status. Rations aimed at the subjective transformation of the displaced from angry, volatile refugees to docile recipients of food aid. This kind of dependency reminded the Palestinians of the abnormality of refugee life and made the rupture on modes of subsistence and autonomy extremely tangible (Peteet, 2005). During these early years when Palestinians were still politically unorganized and highly dependent on the United Nations refugee apparatus, the term ‘refugee’ bore the weight of an insult and humiliation. Often camp residents insisted on calling themselves ‘returners’ rather than refugees (Peteet, 1996, p. 28). Despite the importance of UNRWA assistance, the very concept of refugees as an artifact of the victimization discourse obstructs the possibility of advocacy that seeks to advance their return and statehood (Hanafi, 2010).

Tents and communal bathrooms also predominate in memories of refugees from the early years in the camps; in addition to material impoverishment, they embody the lack of privacy and forced intimacy between strangers – particularly in relation to maintaining gender boundaries – that heightened the refugees’ sense of helplessness in the face of social upheaval (Latif, 2008; Peteet, 2005). The difficulty of maintaining privacy made daily routines highly visible to others, as families lived in barracks where only a blanket separated each family’s cubicle. The privacy and sanctity of the home are highly loaded cultural complexes; the sudden absence of homes

with solid walls, and the shrinking of space between domestic units attested to the loss of the ability to maintain privacy for Palestinian refugees (Peteet, 2005). The limited space inside the camps shaped the reality of everyday life in which Palestinians had witnessed their own communities being denied the bodily integrity of full citizens.

Within a few years of Palestinians' arrival in Lebanon, the Maronite nationalist party began to perceive the Palestinian presence as a threat to the country's stability, and the initial 'charitable' attitude of the Lebanese changed. Subsequently, between 1958-1969, the Lebanese government exercised strict control over the Palestinian camps (FMO, 2011; Roberts, 2010). In the camps, control was undertaken by a branch of army intelligence known as the Deuxieme Bureau which installed soldiers in the camps and recruited Palestinian informers and spies (Roberts, 2010, p. 81). Repressive spatial tactics and practices were enacted by the Lebanese state and embedded in everyday routines for Palestinians living in the camps (Latif, 2008). The Deuxieme Bureau introduced regulations that allowed it to maintain close surveillance inside the camps and in private houses belonging to camp inhabitants (Roberts, 2010). Refugee movements – particularly those of the politically active – were controlled, and organizations were prevented from operating in the camps. In order to obstruct political mobilization among the camp refugees, Lebanese authorities closely monitored movement in and out of the camp between dusk and dawn (Latif, 2008; Peteet, 2005; Roberts, 2010). Visiting another camp required a permit and gatherings of more than a certain number were forbidden (Latif, 2008; Peteet, 2005). In the 1950's the Shatila camp, for example, had two points of entrance and exit controlled by the Lebanese. Residents had to put their names on a list when they exited as well as note the expected time of their return. Confinement was a recurring theme in memories and narratives of this period, as these institutional constraints on mobility permeated the collective sense of self

(Peteet, 2005). These tactics were used with the aim of rendering the camp's population docile – the camp became a disciplinary space (Latif, 2008).

At the same time as the Palestinian community experienced a marginal position in the camps, however, Palestinians also redefined this space and forged new identities for themselves in Lebanon. For example during this time in the 1950s, prohibitions on throwing water into the street drains between sunrise and sunset were common, which made everyday household chores such as cooking, cleaning and washing increasingly difficult. In such circumstances, performing everyday household chores acquired an added meaning for the camp refugee women. In addition to demonstrating their competence as wives and mothers within the community, housework provided an opportunity to resist the dehumanizing efforts of the Lebanese governments' prohibitions and controls that were imposed on the Palestinians in the camps (Hanafi, 2008; Latif, 2008).

Further, as PLO and other resistance movements were developing, Palestinian militias turned to camps in southern Lebanon for a base from where they would launch regular attacks on Israel. As Lebanon was the target of Israeli reprisals, the government responded by attempting to further tighten its control over the Palestinian camps (Roberts, 2010). The Palestinian battle was therefore not only with the Zionist enemy in Israel, they were also fighting to liberate the camps from the repressive Deuxieme Bureau (Newman, 2010). Violent confrontations between the army and the Palestinians ensued, and the Lebanese army was forced out of the camps with the signing of the 1969 Cairo Accords. A sizeable number of Palestinian institutions including nurseries, vocational training centers, health clinics and various industries were subsequently established and expanded in the camps with the help of the PLO (Hanafi, et al., 2012). As a

result, the Palestinians secured greater freedom of movement for their guerilla activities in Lebanon than in any other Arab country (Khalidi and Riskedahl, 2007; Roberts, 2010).

The Palestinian resistance ushered in the permanency of cement, as people began building with stone, expanding their small homes and adding private bathrooms to replace common latrines. Power exercised from inside the camps swiftly transformed the meaning of the camp – sites of waiting and confinement became sites of mobilization and militancy, zones of autonomy, and communities of self-sufficiency (Newman, 2010; Peteet, 2005). The Palestinian resistance achieved some important victories, one of which came when Nahr el-Bared camp was surrounded by the Lebanese army who brought in tanks in an attempt to enter the camp. This was the first camp where the people were to liberate themselves, as the Palestinians used only eleven guns to stop the army from entering before running out of ammunition. One lady from the camp recalls that the women were hollering, as it was the first time a gun had been seen defending the camp. She explains that the children were between the fighters, collecting the empty cartridges and residents of the camps stood in front of their homes, ready to fight (Newman, 2010).

The start of the Palestinian resistance era would have a significant impact on the lives and collective identity of the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon. The emergence of a distinctly nationalist politics in the mid-1960's allowed the Palestinians to rebuild their socio-political space within the camps. This progress played a key role in promoting a collective political and national identity among the exiled Palestinians who until then, had seen themselves merely as refugees (Hanafi, et al., 2012).

## **Civil War Period: 1974-1990**

Throughout the early 1970's Lebanon experienced serious civil unrest. Radical Palestinian factions sided with left-wing Muslim militias against right-wing groups led by the Phalangists. In 1976, Palestinian camps and communities were deliberately attacked by right wing militias, and camps in East Beirut were besieged. During the siege at Tel El-Zaatar camp, many women were killed while attempting to collect water for their dehydrated children and hundreds were slaughtered when the camp was overrun (Roberts, 2010). Refugees were forced to flee to other places in the country – around 12, 000 survivors of the 17, 000 residents of Tel El-Zaatar were displaced to other areas in Lebanon including Nahr el-Bared camp or Mar Elias camp (El-Ali, 2010). The civil war period was defined by events which resulted in reconfinement, disempowerment, and the infliction of particular forms of violence. Space was remapped and rebounded and a national sectarian sorting out occurred as spatial containment was used as an attempt to produce and sharpen communal distinctions. Refugee camps served as sites of incarceration and new techniques of boundary control and maintenance. During the war, once fairly indistinct borders became strikingly demarcated. The public space open to Palestinians shrank violently as resistance facilities and offices closed, and Palestinians' mobility was highly circumscribed due to fear of arrest, disappearance or assault (Peteet, 1996; Peteet, 2005).

In 1976, Syria entered the war in support of the leftist factions, while in 1979, Hizbollah was formed and began operations against the Israeli occupying forces in southern Lebanon (Roberts, 2010). At the same time, Israel increased its military activity in Lebanon and by 1976 helped establish a breakaway Lebanese army, the South Lebanese Army, to fight against the Palestinians in the south (Roberts, 2010). In 1982, Israel launched a massive military invasion to

install a friendly Maronite government and to destroy the PLO's military and political power base in Lebanon where the PLO had created a state within a state (El-Ali, 2010; Haddad, 2004; Hanafi et al., 2012). Destruction was widespread: three camps in the Tyre area were severely damaged; seventy percent of the homes in Rashidiyeh camp were destroyed; Ein el-Hilweh camp was completely demolished; and the nearby camp of Mieh Mieh suffered regular attacks (Roberts, 2010).

In the midst of increasing tension and violence between Palestinians in the camps, the right-wing Christian militia and Israel, a national consciousness had simultaneously become spatialized in the camps. The PLO had been given territorial status in these small but militant and autonomous islands in the midst of the Lebanese state (Holt, 2011). During this time, Palestinian flags flew defiantly over the camp and at the checkpoints surrounding them (Holt, 2011; Peteet, 2005). One veteran guerilla fighter recalls, "we became one village. Palestine was the name. In the camps, the resistance and one's activities in it mattered more than the village from where one came..." (Peteet, 2005, p. 134). The camp represented and was set up in a framework of spatial resistance, maintained with structures, street names and landmarks of Palestinian territories as a form of denying the appropriation of their land and collective memory and attesting to the remarkable human capacity to create new cultural and social forms of daily life in the face of monumental loss (Jamal and Sandor, 2010; Peteet, 2005). Remapping of the camps stretched the spatial inventory to include geographically distant Palestinian urban centers and villages. A national identity was invoked as new institutions were named after Palestinian cities such as Haifa Hospital in Burj el-Barajneh or Gaza Hospital in Sabra, underscoring national consciousness in the camps, their intimate connectedness with distant places, and the spilling over of Palestinian nationalism and cultural space into Lebanese areas (Peteet, 2005). Organizing and

naming space by city and village names from Palestine crafted both memory and a practical spatial enactment of the lost homeland; Palestinian camps became oppositional spaces appropriated and endowed with alternative meanings. The inscription of the landscape of Palestine in the camp launched the crafting of place out of space, and made apparent the simultaneous continuity and transformation of social life. For example, Bourj el-Barajneh camp was constituted by a spatial array of a number of northern villages of Palestine in six named areas such as Tarshiha, el-Kabri and al-Chaab among others (El-Ali, 2010; Peteet, 2005). In the 1970's it was common and fashionable to name baby girls after Palestinian towns and villages, asserting national affiliations and identity (Holt, 2005). The resistance movement fostered a sense of community among Palestinians in Lebanon and gave it organizational expression, while political activities and duties took people from their camps to other camps where new friendships and marriages were formed (Peteet, 2005).

The resistance period was short lived, however, coming to a violent end in 1982 after the Israeli invasion and the Sabra and Shatila massacres. The PLO agreed to withdraw from Beirut and subsequently almost all of the PLO-created organizations collapsed – the Palestinian refugees in the camps had only UNRWA to cater to their needs (Hanafi et al., 2012). In turn, UNRWA once again transformed Palestinians into bodies to be fed and sheltered with the effect of depoliticizing them; by classifying people as ‘victims’, the basis of humanitarian action was shifted from rights to welfare (Hanafi, 2010). In the space of the camp, the values of generosity and pragmatism obscured any references to the rights and responsibilities of the people concerned which would endow them with their own agency (Hanafi, 2010). It is not only the assistance or the way in which assistance is delivered that can disempower refugees. The way in which assistance is talked about and is perceived and the effect that perception has on the

refugees can undermine their abilities to cope and help themselves. Refugees are often treated as a problem of international charity rather than a political and social group capable of articulating its rights and aspirations (Roberts, 2010, p. 55).

A humanitarian and service-based mandate has allowed UNRWA to avoid any kind of politicization. The urgency to resolve underlying questions of justice and peace for Palestinians has been somehow divorced from this challenge. While many UNRWA donors believe that political advocacy will conflict with an essentially humanitarian mandate, Karen Koning Abu-Zayd, the Commissioner-General from UNRWA has stated that in fact these tensions and contradictions must be avoided in the Palestinian arena where political, security, humanitarian, development and refugee issues are often virtually indistinguishable (Hanafi, 2010).

Without the protection of the PLO and with the strictly humanitarian mandate of the UNRWA, the 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon left refugees in an almost destitute and unprotected status. This created easy targets for Christian right-wing Phalangists to enter the camps of Sabra and Shatila in search of Palestinian 'terrorists'. Close to 3000 Palestinians were killed during the massacre that was enabled and encouraged by Israel (Haddad, 2004; Roberts, 2010).

### ***War of the Camps 1985-1987***

The 1982 Israeli invasion had destroyed the infrastructure of the Palestinian camps and caused severe damage throughout Lebanon, while the aftermath of the invasion had a dramatic impact on the political dynamics of all the various communities in Lebanon. While cross-border fighting between Israel and the Palestinians had strained relations between the Palestinians and the Shi'i population in the south, the Israeli failure to establish Maronite hegemony contributed

to the rise of Shi'i factions as a result of Syrian support for Lebanese Shi'i groups (Roberts, 2010).

For Palestinians, the aftermath of the Israeli invasions marked the beginning of fighting and siege of the camps by the Shi'i group of Amal. To enhance its power, Syria had wanted to be the representative of the Palestinians. After the PLO withdrawal, Syria began to exploit the divisions that had emerged among the remaining Palestinians and the religious groups in Lebanon (Roberts, 2010). Amal besieged Palestinian camps in Beirut and southern Lebanon while Syria was backing both the Palestinian opposition and Amal. The Palestinians in the camps were heavily outnumbered and had only light weaponry in contrast to the well armed Amal militia. Amal and the Lebanese army launched attacks on Sabra, Shatila and Bourj el-Barajneh (Roberts, 2010). A woman from Bourj el-Barajneh camp recalled the six month siege during the 'war of the camps':

"I stayed in the camp and managed to feed my children from the ration I had saved for a period of three months. However, we suffered during the remaining three months. I had to go around begging for food...My son brought home some mule meat. Then he brought a tray of cats' meat. We were unable to eat it. I told him to give it to people who would be willing to eat it. For 12 days we only had water and one rotten loaf..." (Chatty and Hundt, 2005, p. 39).

This speaks loudly to the dehumanization of the Palestinian refugees in camps by the various power structures in Lebanon. The dehumanized treatment has been long internalized by the refugees, many of whom have the perception that the Lebanese 'treat animals better than they treat Palestinian refugees' (Sharar, 2009, p. 20). Others in the community argue that being treated like animals would give them more dignity than the situation in which Palestinians have found themselves in Lebanon over time (Sharar, 2009, p. 20).

Gaza Hospital, which had been built in the 1970's by the PLO, originally housed a hospital run by the Palestine Red Crescent Society (PRCS), a nursery, an office and a military

hospital (Hanley, 2010; United Nations Information System on the Question of Palestine [UNISPAL], 2008; Zabaneh, Watt & O'Donnell, 2008). During that time, Yasser Arafat, leader of the PLO, boasted about the soundproof underground operation room designed to function in spite of the Israeli military attacks (Hanley, 2010). The building was partially destroyed by the Israeli armed forces in 1982 however, and during the 'war of the camps' the ruined Gaza Hospital became the last refuge for those who lost homes and families to the Amal attacks of 1985-87 (UNISPAL, 2008). The families that occupied the Gaza Hospital during the 'war of the camps' turned their hospital – filled with rubble where there were once medical wards and operating rooms – into a 'vertical refugee camp' (Hanley, 2010). Despite the resourcefulness and resilience of the refugees however, residents from Bourj el-Barajneh camp can still recall when Amal arrived at the Gaza Hospital and shut off the generator, killing the patients and families staying in the hospital at that time (Chatty and Hundt, 2005, p. 14).

Although camps may be conceptualized as institutions where bodies are disciplined and control is an integral component of the structure of the institution and its daily routines, in Lebanon, Palestinian camps were not consistently sites of confinement and discipline; instead they were often controlled and administered by an armed resistance movement (Peteet, 2005). While Amal and the Lebanese army launched attacks on the camps of Sabra, Shatila and Bourj el-Barajneh, the conflict nonetheless helped Palestinians to reconstruct their military strength. By the late 1980's, Palestinian factions were rearmed and working in greater cooperation while Amal was weakened and competing against Hizbollah to lead the Shi'i community (Roberts, 2010). During each siege, camps were homes to be defended and a place from which further displacement was vigorously resisted (Peteet, 2005). People in Shatila camp managed to fight off the attackers from Amal in spite of the camp's small size and its exposure to sniper and army

artillery on high ground (Sayigh, 2011). From the narratives of the siege there emerges a sense of a ‘people’s victory’, based on resourcefulness, community solidarity, and ‘Palestinianism’. A

Shatila refugee remembers:

“All of our fighters were sons of the camp, young men who hadn’t been trained in the time of the Resistance...most of the arms we used we took from the enemy. We didn’t have artillery; instead we used liquid gas containers with home-made detonators...The battle succeeded in unifying our ranks in the camp. There was no son of Fatah, no son of the Popular Front or Democratic Front. Everyone was fighting for himself and his camp...We weren’t expecting this confrontation we lack many of the most necessary things. This forced us to invent new ways of struggle. We used bed spreads and pillow covers to make sandbags. We needed cotton for wounds so we took it from pillow cases. We couldn’t take our martyrs out [of the camps] for burial, we used the mosque as a cemetery...” (cited in Sayigh, 2011, p. 54).

The camp functioned as a cohesive whole. Factions in Shatila, for example, managed to overcome potentially destructive internal political divisions to fight and organize the camp’s defense (Peteet, 2005). The mass grave of the victims of the 1982 Sabra and Shatila massacre and the camp’s mosque – which had been used as a cemetery during the war – became sites of remembrance and commemoration. For those inside the camp, it remains a living and lived memorial that has been critically important in the memory work of the camp (Peteet, 2005; Sayigh, 2011).

The siege was fought on multiple levels, not just militarily. Morale had to be maintained and besieged areas were brought under internal control in order to ration limited supplies of food, fuel and medicine (Peteet, 2005). Civilians played an essential part in the defence of Shatila as well as the other besieged camps; old or young, female or male, there was almost universal participation in digging tunnels, making sandbags, providing food for the fighters and caring for the wounded. During the siege, all the institutions in the camp were collectivized; people collected all the flour from their homes, baked bread in the public bakery, and distributed bread

equally to everyone. Young men, women, housewives and children put whatever resources they had into defence of the community as a whole (Sayigh, 2011).

### **Post-Civil War Period**

In 1989, Lebanese leaders agreed to the Ta'if Accord, a peace agreement which in effect established Syrian hegemony over Lebanon. Further, the Accord redistributed authority within parliament by changing the balance of power between the legislature and the executive, distributing parliamentary seats equally between Christians and Muslims (Roberts, 2010). In 1991, Palestinian armed groups and other militia – with the exception of Hizbollah and the South Lebanese Army – surrendered their heavy weapons, however the camps continued to be policed by Palestinian armed groups (Khalili, 2005).

Since the end of the Lebanese civil war, Lebanese state actors have been determined to bring the camps back under Lebanese sovereignty. On the other hand, Syrian intelligence services reasserted their dominance over the camps and prevented the establishment of any united Palestinian authority by keeping the PLO out of northern Lebanon and sponsoring alternative groups (Hassan and Hanafi, 2010; Khalili, 2005). According to Hanafi et.al, the Syrian position on Palestinians in Lebanon was one of systematically “encouraging inter-Palestinian rifts and blocking any possibility of direct negotiation between the Lebanese Government and the local representatives” (Hanafi, et al., 2012, p. 39). The power vacuum left by waning PLO influence paved the way for the establishment in the camps of some more radical Islamist groups (Hanafi, et al., 2012). The camps have been essentially governed by a web of complex power structures composed of popular committees – either pro-Syrian, or pro-PLO – a security committee, a committee of camp notables, the local committee, political factions,

Islamist non-Palestinian groups, PLO popular unions, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and UNRWA directors. These camp leaders have imposed measures which are as changing as the balance of power between these different groups (Hanafi, 2010).

The identity and political status of camp dwellers are related to the very nature of the camp and to its segregation and isolation as a distinct and closed spatial unit. As refugees are gathered in a centralized and controlled place, they can be under constant surveillance while this system of care and control transforms refugee camps into disciplinary space (Khalidi and Riskedahl, 2007; Hanafi, 2010). While the state of exception generally involves the suspension of law whenever possible by a single sovereign, in the Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon, the use of the state of exception is put into play by multiple actors – including the Lebanese authorities, the PLO, and UNRWA among others – who act as different sovereigns over the camp. These sovereigns do not institute order, but instead exclude the population from the space where law and order is supposed to operate. This means that camp dwellers are excluded from the sphere of the city while at the same time included in it with respect to security (Hanafi, 2010). This flexible use of law and its suspension justifies the use of the space of exception in understanding the relationship between the space of the camps and that of the cities. When the sovereign power suspends the laws in the camp this area becomes quasi-lawless. Other local actors or sovereigns will compete in order to rule the camp, and subsequently this area becomes hardly controllable by the sovereign (Hanafi, 2010).

Owing to the limited mobility in the 1990's there was little overt sense of cohesion among the separated communities of refugees in Lebanon, as each camp lived under a slightly different set of authorities, had a different history of violence and struggle, and had developed a highly localized leadership (Peteet, 2005). At the same time however, in the absence of any

overarching Palestinian authority, factions have become the main means of security and social support for most Palestinians in Lebanon. Where families face difficulties paying for medical bills or resolving conflicts, the factional leadership to which they are aligned is often the first point of contact (Sharar, 2009, p. 25). On the other hand, some Palestinians blame the factions for many of the camp's problems and do not consider the popular committees as representative of them or their needs (Sharar, 2009, p. 25).

In turn, Palestinian camps have been perceived in the past two decades as zones of lawlessness within sovereign Lebanese territory. They are regularly perceived as 'security islands', the implication being that they are regions of insecurity in a 'sea of peace' (Khalidi and Riskedahl, 2007, p. 27). Palestinians serve as a convenient scapegoat on which civil war and Lebanon's ills since that war came to an end (Khalidi and Riskedahl, 2007). The camp is a space which can be "eliminated" without consequences from internal or external mechanisms (Hanafi, 2008). In the quasi-state of post-war Lebanon, it suits the interests of various groups to maintain pockets of the country that can be blamed for outbreaks of instability (Khalidi and Riskedahl, 2007).

It is worth noting however, that in some camps such as the Wavel camp, a wide range of political organizations have been accommodated and stability prevails. This deserves attention, particularly in the context in which the Lebanese attempt to focus on inter-factional fighting inside camps and armed clashes between Palestinian factions and Lebanese soldiers or security forces. This often comes at the expense of recognizing more positive or neutral developments in the camps (Abedin, 2010). While Hizbollah's political-security presence in the area of some camps such as Wavel is generally considered as a source of stability by Palestinians from all factions, it is also a reminder of the failure of the Lebanese government to create conditions

conducive to greater security inside the Palestinian camp in areas where the state exercises undisputed authority (Abedin, 2010).

Nonetheless, living in a space of exception has had serious consequences for the living conditions of the camp dwellers, and specifically for the type of urbanization occurring in the camp and its relation to the surrounding urban or rural environment (Hanafi, 2010). The urbanization process takes on a wild nature due to the absence of planning policies and the non-enforcement of construction laws. Within limited space, everyone builds as s/he sees fit, and the result is hundreds of illegal buildings spread in all directions (Hanafi, 2010). Narrow alleyways where buildings are crammed together, and where there is a lack of natural life are the only places children can play in outdoors; since most of the houses are small, poorly lit and poorly ventilated, the alleys do not provide much relief (Hanafi, 2008; Latif, 2008). Juxtaposed to the space surrounding it, the limited space for children to play in the camps generates meaning for Palestinian children over time, as the relationship between place and identity is one of mutual interaction. The everyday practices of Palestinians are limited by the socio-spatial confinement of the camp which prohibits certain actions in relation to the freedom of spatial practices for non-refugees living outside of the camp. These spaces turn into sites of identification and everyday life becomes an incubator of change in attitudes and behaviours for Palestinians (Yousef, 2011).

This state of exception operates in two ways, however, where power is not only exercised by the sovereign, but also by the actors themselves. The residents of the camp are not merely submissive subjects who follow order and regulation into which the sovereign decision on the exception is disseminated. The Palestinian refugee camps are places of resistance and transgression, where agency does not only express itself by the actions of resistance, but Palestinians also use the state of exception itself as a mode of power (Hanafi, 2010): where

Palestinian refugees are constituted as 'bare life' and subjected to extreme legal conditions, by revolting and resisting through the very mechanisms of urbanization, vertical expansion, and illegal buildings in the camps, they express their agency and transgress the role assigned to them by their oppressors and the many sovereigns which oppression has made possible (Hanafi, 2010).

Camps are complex urban environments where residents have become experts in surviving on minimal means, improvising, making do with what can be found and almost immediately transforming the physical, spatial, social and economic constitution of their initial emergency setting (Dorai, 2011; Misselwitz, 2011). Palestinian refugee camps most clearly exemplify the ambiguous condition between the temporary emergency setting and the city that emerges in refugee camps. While Palestinian camps are indeed extremely congested, impoverished, slum-like settings, they have at the same time also evolved commercial centers, souks, neighbourhood identities and a multitude of social, political and cultural institutions that speak of a collective ambition towards emancipation and civil rights (Dorai, 2011; Misselwitz, 2011). Some families have opened small shops and workshops in an effort to generate an income; there is a large fresh fruit and vegetable market in Bourj el-Barajneh in which individual store holders rent tables and small outlets sell traditional food or offer hairdressing and tailoring services (Dorai, 2011; Roberts, 2010). Some villagers have formed committees that aim to assist members of their village in time of need – the shared experience of being Palestinian refugees in a camp in Lebanon has helped create a sense of community and provides emotional support for the camp dwellers (Roberts, 2010). Inhabitants cooperate to overcome practical difficulties, work together to keep public spaces clean, and are prepared to share resources such as electricity lines and water supplies. Within their camps, the Palestinians have been able to create self-contained

communities where the informal social structure and resilient psychological attitude are the most important coping mechanisms for the Palestinian camp communities (Roberts, 2010).

### **Syrian Withdrawal**

Syrian interference in Lebanese politics was causing increasing resentment in the region and in 2004, the United Nations Security Council called for the withdrawal of Syrian troops and an end to its interference in Lebanese affairs (Roberts, 2010). Later in 2005, former prime minister Rafiq Hariri was assassinated by a bomb explosion and since then Lebanon has experienced increasing instability and widespread damage and suffering (Khalili, 2005). His assassination led to widespread anti-Syrian demonstrations and accusations that Syria was behind the killing. Under significant international pressure Syria withdrew its troops (Roberts, 2010). The day after Hariri was killed, however, an Islamist militant took responsibility for the bombing through a videotaped message. His Palestinian background added to the atmosphere of suspicion against Palestinians, even though most Lebanese had already decided on Syrian culpability for the crime. In the coming weeks and months, Palestinians were blamed for any number of ills by almost all Lebanese political sides (Khalili, 2005). The memorial wall for Hariri in Beirut features anti-Syrian slogans as well as statements against Palestinians interspersed with the more sentimental odes to the late prime minister. The demonstrations highlight the reconciliation between Lebanese Muslims and Christians which occurred through the construction of an 'other' – both Syrians and Palestinians – against whom the previously warring factions could unite. Palestinians have been considered as provocateurs by a substantial percentage of Lebanese, and it is in opposition to them that Lebanese political actors from across the spectrum find common cause (Khalili, 2005).

In the wake of Syrian withdrawal, the Lebanese military began to intensify security and control over the camps, erecting roadblocks at most of the entrances to camps such as Ein el-Hilweh, and taking the names of anyone entering or exiting the camps (Khalili, 2005). The camps have been labelled as ‘security enclaves’ or ‘islands of lawlessness’. Palestinians see these accusations and the intensification of surveillance as signs that the Lebanese might try to disarm the factions who guard the camps (Khalili, 2005, p. 37). The extraterritoriality of the camps and the armed status of Palestinian militias have long been contentious issues in Lebanon. Palestinians interpret any restrictions on their movement or lives as a sign of impending disarmament (Khalili, 2005). Palestinians consider the threat of disarmament as twofold: on the one hand, Palestinians remember the massacres of Sabra and Shatila, when they were left vulnerable after the evacuation of the PLO guerillas and thousands of men and women were slaughtered. On the other hand, disarmament would spell the end of Palestinian refugees’ autonomy over their own affairs. Palestinians would more acutely experience their status as a minority without citizenship rights in a country that does not want them (Khalili, 2005). Subsequent to Syrian withdrawal, and in an instance of self-organization, Shatila camp held its first ever elections in exile in which eleven members of the camp’s popular committee were chosen by some 1,500 voters. The participation of camp members in choosing their representative was considered significant by the refugees because it allowed them a voice in the management of their local affairs with a popular committee that would represent the camp’s residents rather than the resistance groups (Khalili, 2005; Sayigh, 2011).

In 2000, Israel was pushed out of southern Lebanon by Hizbollah in what is considered a significant Hizbollah victory. As a consequence, the party gained widespread popularity among Lebanese and Palestinian communities (Khalili, 2005). Within the context of the assassination of

Hariri and the withdrawal of Syrian troops, Lebanon's attempt to control its territory was still challenged. In 2006, Hizbollah launched a series of rocket attacks into Israel, confirming its significant military power in the region. These attacks ignited the 2006 Hizbollah-Israel war in which Hizbollah claims victory (Roberts, 2010); establishing state sovereignty across Lebanese territory became a major state preoccupation. These factors undermine the strength and legitimacy of the Lebanese government, while Palestinians feel vulnerable as protection from the presence of Syrian troops has gone and they continue to be blamed for ongoing political problems by the government and the Lebanese people. With the political instability of the state, feelings of fear and insecurity were rising – it was against this background that the Lebanese state launched its assault on Nahr el-Bared (Hassan and Hanafi, 2010).

### **Nahr el-Bared Conflict**

An impression persists in Lebanon that the camps are safe havens for criminals and outlaws. Finally, on May 20, 2007, fighting broke out in Nahr el-Bared camp after a group called Fateh al-Islam launched a dramatic nighttime raid against the Lebanese army. When militants allegedly withdrew to locations within the camp, the army unleashed an artillery barrage upon the refugee camp which was mostly destroyed without consequence (Chatty et al., 2010; Khalidi and Riskedahl, 2007). Over ninety-five percent of the camp infrastructure was destroyed or damaged beyond repair (UNRWA, 2011).

The ambiguity of the space of the camp – where the state was effectively absent in certain respects and Palestinians had built on it without formal permits – would prove attractive to the various international and Lebanese Islamic fundamentalist groups that began grouping around the camp. Many camp residents had not known of the Fateh al-Islam group until the

announcement of its creation on television (Hassan and Hanafi, 2010). While most of the community opposed the group's arrival, some Islamist sympathizers facilitated the group's establishment in the camp. Within months, the group had asserted itself as the single strongest military actor in the camp (Hassan and Hanafi, 2010).

There is debate regarding the Fateh al-Islam group, although most accounts agree that it is composed of a few hundred fighters of various Arab and Muslim nationalities. Lebanese opposition claims that they were largely the creation of the loyalist Future Movement led by prime minister Saad al-Hariri while the government accuses them of being a Syrian implant that infiltrated the country through the Syrian border. Some commentators blamed the conflict on the fact that the camps were hotbeds of extremism that defied all efforts by the Lebanese security forces to bring them under control (Khalidi and Riskedahl, 2007). The subsequent fighting was not in the interest of either the government or the opposition, however each side may have some motivation for encouraging Fateh al-Islam in the first place and for allowing it to set up shop in Nahr el-Bared. For pro-government forces such as the Sunni dominated Future Movement, there would have been a point to arming a Sunni militia to serve as a counterweight to Shi'i Hizballah in order to disarm the Sunni militia in return for the disarmament of Hizballah. For the opposition groups and the Syrian patrons, creating unrest may have been desirable in order to topple the government or put pressure upon it not to pursue its anti-Syrian and pro-Western policies. In the end, Fateh al-Islam may have acted independently in attacking the army and engaging it in a protracted firefight in the camp (Khalidi and Riskedahl, 2007; Newman, 2010). Most of the Lebanese media reported the attack on Nahr el-Bared from the Lebanese army's point of view – Palestinian victims were nameless and faceless and the line between them and Fateh al-Islam was purposefully blurred (Newman, 2010).

Civilian casualties were heavy in the first few days of fighting. Since fighting erupted without warning, many camp residents were unable to flee and were caught in the crossfire. The first mass evacuations of the camp took place on May 23, when 2000 civilians were allowed to leave until in subsequent days and weeks all civilians had left the camp, apart from the militants' families and some 'wanted' individuals. Evacuation was spontaneous and took place under shelling (Khalidi and Riskedahl, 2007). Most Palestinians left hastily with only the clothes on their backs, sometimes with small plastic bags of medication, and some without any paper documentation, adding them to the list of non-ID Palestinians who could no longer move freely among the increasing number of checkpoints scattered throughout the country (Newman, 2010). Nurses in the camp personally carried stretchers to houses that had been shelled in order to evacuate the wounded. The alleyway outside their clinic was so narrow that two people could scarcely pass each other. They gathered fuel from parked cars to supply their single generator to keep essential electrical equipment running and to charge mobile phones for communication with outside the camps. Doctors and nurses ate moldy bread and drank non-potable water and performed their medical duties as best they could. When they could no longer do so, they managed to get themselves out (Khalidi and Riskedahl, 2007).

As they fled, most residents went to Beddawi refugee camp, ten kilometers south, which saw its population almost double over night from 15, 000 to 27, 000 (Newman, 2010). With UNRWA assistance, volunteers ferried food, blankets and medicine to the displaced (Sukarieh, 2007), however a Shatila social worker involved in Nahr el-Bared relief explained,

“Most of the people in the camps are jobless. We really do not need a hand in doling out rice and sugar. We have plenty of youth, old people and women sitting around. What is needed is a movement against the conditions of the Palestinians in Lebanon. This we can't work on ourselves, and it would be good if these people [activists] could help with that...” (cited in Sukarieh, 2007, p. 30).

Unaware of the intricacies of work in the camp, and the social codes as well as the politics, aid workers often accentuate existing conflicts without knowing it. Another Nahr el-Bared resident stated,

“It feels a bit condescending to get these outsiders coming in to ask what sorts of things we need. Although it is called humanitarian work, it strips me of my humanity and I feel lesser in their presence, someone who is remembered just as a needy person with whom they like to take photos while handing out relief...” (cited in Sukarieh, 2007, p.30).

Other sentiments from residents such as “we are not pets in need of portions of food everyday” (Sukarieh, 2007, p.31) suggest that Palestinians have lost their image as freedom fighters and leaders of the broader Arab liberation movement and have instead become a group of refugees dependent on assistance. Activism is led by depoliticized NGOs whose tactics and messages are dictated by the neo-liberal language of humanitarian intervention. This brand of activism often functions to reduce the Palestinian cause to counting the rations distributed from the aid warehouse (Sukarieh, 2007, p. 31). Often stripped of their political existence and identity and reduced to their status as individuals in need of shelter and food, this ‘bare life’, as well as the entire refugee question, has been transferred to the hand of the police and military forces on the one hand, and to apolitical service organizations such as UNRWA, on the other hand (Hanafi, 2010). The war on Nahr el-Bared has once again laid bare the Palestinian condition in Lebanon, where twice or three times displaced, isolated and discriminated against, the Palestinians need much more than relief. Instead, Palestinians argue that they need a campaign for civil rights, built on the cornerstone of the right to return (Khalidi and Riskedahl, 2007). This sentiment was at the root of a day-long ‘relief strike’ called by the Nahr el-Bared refugees displaced in Beddawi camp who shouted “we do not want your boxes [of aid], we want our right of return” (Khalidi and Riskedahl, 2007, p. 31)

### *Post-Conflict Reconstruction in Nahr el-Bared*

It took an entire month before Palestinians were allowed to return to their homes, and only 8000 Palestinians were allowed to return to the camp at the time. There were two sections of the Nahr el-Bared camp: the official UNRWA camp – ‘old camp’ – was characterized by a high-density urban fabric, and the adjacent ‘new camp’ which was under the jurisdiction of the surrounding municipality (Hassan and Hanafi, 2010). Those who were allowed to return were only those from the ‘new camp’, while the rubble of the homes in the ‘old camp’ was encircled with barbed wire, and people from the camp were forbidden from entering (Newman, 2010). Until today, much of the community remains uprooted (UNRWA, 2011). Although Fateh al-Islam had virtually no presence in the old camp, it was the old camp that bore the brunt of the Lebanese army’s shelling. A total siege was imposed with relief supplies, medical aid, food, and so on prevented from entering the camp except briefly during ceasefires (Hassan and Hanafi, 2010).

Very soon after the conflict in Nahr el-Bared began, the Lebanese government began to make plans to rebuild the camp and transform it into a ‘model’ for the other Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon. Within a couple of weeks of the beginning of the violence, local television stations showed the prime minister Fuad Siniora poring over maps of the camp with engineers and architects as though the government knew that the army would embark on a systematic destruction of the camp (Khalidi and Riskedahl, 2007; Newman, 2010). Reconstruction plans however, do not seem to have had the welfare of the refugees in mind and there has been no real attempt to involve residents of Nahr el-Bared themselves in rebuilding the camp (Khalidi and Riskedahl, 2007).

Palestinians felt insecurity about the right to return to their camp and rebuild it the way they see fit (Newman, 2010). On the one hand, the neo-liberal discourse of the rebuilding initiative involves converting the camp into a village housing cheap Palestinian labour. If the other camps were to follow suit, it is hoped that they would no longer be an eyesore for the foreign investors and tourists that the Lebanese government is eager to attract. A different reading of the government's plans would require transforming Nahr el-Bared and other camps into ghettos that are constantly under the watchful eye of the intelligence services (Khalidi and Riskedahl, 2007). Many Palestinians understood the idea about a 'model camp' as a code for the government's control, suppression and surveillance of the camps (Chatty et al., 2010; Newman, 2010).

The refugee camp is the most suitable configuration for control and surveillance; the camp setting as a closed space conveniently allows for direct disciplinary power. Palestinian refugee camps exist in a zone of liminality, where they exist outside the juridical reach of the Lebanese government and law enforcement, yet are consistently controlled and disciplined through the threat of violence and surveillance (Jamal and Sandor, 2010). In terms of refugees, post-conflict reconstruction is increasingly and systematically included as part of the security strategy of governments in containing refugees (Chatty, et al., 2010). Those who had been allowed to return to the camp could leave and re-enter the camp space only through checkpoints and upon presentation of a special temporary military permit (Hassan and Hanafi, 2010). This has become a humiliating daily experience as Palestinians have had to wait in line for automobile checks, body searches and identity and permit verification. What remained of Nahr el-Bared camp has become one large prison. The camp went from being 'inaccessible' and 'uncontrollable' to the most controlled site in a country where the state is constantly struggling to

control its national territory (Hassan and Hanafi, 2010). Lebanese officials declared a policy of reconstruction under the mask of 'security' featuring prominently in the discussions, with the idea that the camp would be the prototype for a new kind of camp that would be 'safe and controlled' under the established sovereignty of the state. This enabled the Lebanese government to rearrange the map of the camp in such a way as to physically control residents through intricate control of mobility and access from the centre of the camp to its periphery (Chatty et al., 2010; Hassan and Hanafi, 2010). Plans included the widening of the road and alleys in order to enable military vehicles to enter all quarters of the camp as well as standardized apartments for the refugees within free-standing housing blocks. The council of Lebanese ministers planning the camp's reconstruction approved the establishment of a military base on the abandoned site of a PLO compound, where the refugee youth's soccer field was located. By relocating policing within the residents' social and physical spaces, the new security strategy established full control over Nahr el-Bared (Hassan and Hanafi, 2010).

The army believed that such provisions would prevent 'terrorists' from breaking through walls to escape and facilitating entry into the camp space for tanks and armoured vehicles would allow for efficient security control. The government's vision for a new, modern and secure camp has left no place for the traditional social fabric and living patterns of the Palestinian community (Hassan and Hanafi, 2010). For example, camp residents formerly lived in villages or neighbourhoods named after where they came from in Palestine. Further, while the state wants to access the camp with cars, the residents prefer the streets to be used for walking, socializing or playing, as the alleyways have always been used by the women and children in the camps. This is appreciated and particularly important for an Islamic society where the women feel secure and used the closed spaces for privacy and meeting with other women. However, the army does not

want these places, as they feel they cannot enter them (Chatty et al., 2010). As a space of exception in Nahr el-Bared, the camp's population is transformed into *homo sacer*, their property destroyed and looted, while the perpetrators are granted immunity as no one is held accountable (Hassan and Hanafi, 2010).

The level of government intrusion in camp life is foreseen as highly problematic. Community demonstrations against plans to place a naval base where the camp's wedding salon had been located were met with military and government statements implying that whatever security measures were introduced were to ensure the safety of the Palestinians (Hassan and Hanafi, 2010). Claims of protecting refugees in post-conflict situations through reconstruction constitute a convoluted regime of security governance aimed at controlling refugees and their spaces. States tend to use protection and reconstruction as a trope for security and as an element in the process of reinforcing control and maintaining order (Chatty et al., 2010).

The different functions which the camps serve have created a Palestinian socio-spatial dynamic based on aspects of territorial permanence – a place of stability and continuity; a communitarian space – a place of ongoing social interactions; and a space for exercising power (Hanafi, 2008). The case of Nahr el-Bared shows that refugee camps, because they are treated by the state as temporary spaces, can always be subject to destruction or unilateral state intervention (Dorai, 2011). Nonetheless, every point of power allows for the possibility of resistance; reaction to this power and control stresses how the camp populations can challenge sovereign power and reassert their subjectivity and political values (Jamal and Sandor, 2010). When fighting initially broke out in Nahr el-Bared, many Palestinians did not flee right away, one woman claiming, “If they came here I wouldn't leave the camp. Even if they destroyed it. If I left I'd lose everything, if I stayed I'd die in my house” (cited in Sukarieh, 2007, p. 30).

The community also had a strong negative reaction to the security measures in Nahr el-Bared camp; their rejection of the approach was expressed in a petition to Siniora, signed by hundreds of camp residents and published in the Lebanese dailies. Refugee community's widespread slogans proclaimed that Nahr el-Bared is the 'road to return to Palestine' and that the community's battle through reconstruction is 'part of our struggle for return'. As Palestinians awaited their return to the camp, many expressed sentiments of political will and determination to remain in control of their fate. One resident explained, "Either back to Nahr el-Bared or back to Palestine. We don't want a third option..." (Newman, 2010, p. 29). Nahr el-Bared camp refugees refused to willingly accept a model of governance that reduces them to a security problem, or at best an apolitical humanitarian community needing only food and shelter. Many Palestinians believe that their land will be liberated and that they can then return; their identity becomes rooted in a heroic struggle. Without a national liberation movement, Palestinian sense of identity and spirit of resistance would be much impoverished and they would have difficulty imagining a future (Holt, 2011).

Further, the Nahr el-Bared crisis and the community response in the form of grassroots initiative community reconstruction clearly demonstrated the Palestinian refugee camp's social dimension and its role in preserving and developing community identity (Hassan and Hanafi, 2010). Despite the poverty and deterioration, and legally imposed lack of opportunity and political splits in the camps, they remain in an important social and political space where moments of resistance – to inappropriate plans to transform their reality – are still possible. The dynamism that had characterized Nahr el-Bared before the conflict has remained and could be mobilized when necessary. Ad hoc committees would spring up according to the needs in Nahr el-Bared when an engineering committee would come together to address electricity problems,

or an open-heart surgery committee to collect donations for heart patients not covered by UNRWA's medical assistance (Dorai, 2011; Hassan and Hanafi, 2010). The Nahr el-Bared Reconstruction Commission for Civil Action and Studies (NRC), a community based committee involving Nahr el-Bared grassroots actors, asked to rebuild Nahr el-Bared as a 'camp' and not under any other title. The NRC insisted on the category of 'refugee' rather than 'citizen' in order to reassert the inhabitants' sovereignty over the camp. The NRC explained that although the term 'camp' conveys some negative connotations, it also holds some advantages: the categories of 'refugee' and 'camp' became a symbol and a condition for maintaining the sovereignty of Palestinian refugees over their living areas. The NRC justified this on the basis of maintaining a space and place that would maintain its relationship with the homeland and shared memories of Palestine (Chatty et al., 2010). The constant destruction of places of residence is transformed into a specific form of resistance every time the Palestinian people rebuild areas such as Nahr el-Bared. As the refugee camps become a place where the Palestinian collective memory is expressed and expanded, the very act of marginalization results in the solidification of the community bonds in the face of exclusion and offense. The Palestinian body becomes insubordinate; however the insubordinate body is not a passive experience, but can in fact be an active or resistive one. Remaining in the situation of the refugee camp, maintaining it and continuing to reside in it, despite the destruction and violence, is where this resistance can be found (Jamal and Sandor, 2010).

## CONCLUSION

The above analysis offers multiple explanations of Palestinian identity in the context of refugee camps in Lebanon. A number of similarities and connections can be found between the theoretical literature on the topics of space, power, and identity and the Palestinian refugee situation in Lebanon. Using a critical race approach to examine the construction of the refugee camp as a technology of domination and control on the one hand, and resistance on the other, this paper offers a clear illustration of the way in which Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon have been used as a disciplinary tool to contain Palestinian identities, while at the same time have served as a site for the refugees in Lebanon to renegotiate a collective identity of resistance. By examining historical patterns of the Palestinian experience in Lebanon, this paper has clearly illustrated how Palestinian refugee identity has gone back and forth between subordination and resistance according to the circumstances in Lebanon over time.

In the pre-civil war period, Palestinians were constructed by UNRWA as passive victims, dependent on charity and aid. Forced to accept the conditions of the camps, techniques of control such as food rationing engraved the status of the dependent refugee onto the Palestinian body (Latif, 2008). As Palestinians began to organize within the space of refugee camps however, they formed new identities within this context. A national consciousness developed in the 1970's during which time Palestinians began to oppose their marginal condition through militancy and self-sufficiency. This same collective Palestinian identity of resistance began to be conceived by the Lebanese state as a dangerous minority group, threatening the already precarious sectarian balance in Lebanon (Roberts, 2010).

By the time the civil war broke out in 1975, the Lebanese state began using the refugee camps as sites of control and spatial containment in an attempt to silence the Palestinian resistance movement. The refugee camps fluctuated between sites of disempowerment, resistance, control, and unity. After the Lebanese civil war, the camps continued to represent spaces of exception in which various power structures – including UNRWA, the Lebanese state, Syria, various Palestinian factions, and so on – competed to gain power over the Palestinian refugee community (Hanafi, 2010). Palestinians were used as a tool for different groups in the region to blame for various conflicts, as was most evident in the Nahr el-Bared conflict. Nonetheless, camp dwellers illustrate their resilience by learning new ways to survive the conditions in which they have found themselves in Lebanon and forging identities in which they maintain both the determination to return to their homeland in Palestine, as well as the assertion to strengthen their position and living conditions in Lebanon.

In the present context of the situation in the Middle East, Palestinian refugees in the camps remain a convenient scapegoat on which Lebanon can blame its instability. Syria's recent conflict has heightened tensions in Lebanon between groups loyal or hostile to the Syrian regime, while the camps are becoming a battlefield between those who are for or against the Syrian regime. The Nahr el-Bared conflict also contributed to a climate of mutual distrust between Lebanese and Palestinians, where instead of encouraging factions to disarm, the destruction of the camp has made faction leaders who have arms want to hold onto them as a way to protect their camp (Wood, 2012). Most recently, at least two people were killed in separate clashes at Palestinian refugee camps starting at Nahr el-Bared when the Lebanese army used tear gas and rubber bullets, firing at people who had attacked a military post. The army also shot dead a Palestinian and wounded several others when a dispute over identity papers at Nahr

el-Bared turned violent. Residents burned tires, threw stones, and opened fire near an army checkpoint at the northern entrance to the camp (Al Jazeera, 2012). Palestinian factions inside the camps want Lebanese security forces to stay out – both to maintain their sovereignty, and to avert another Nahr el-Bared situation (Wood, 2012). A spokesman for Fatah in Beddawi camp explains,

“We are working not to let what happened in Nahr el-Bared happen in another camp...we will fight, strongly, all these parties or members which want to kidnap our...we want to live in peace with our neighbours, with the Lebanese people, and the Lebanese Army until we return to our homeland in Palestine...” (Wood, 2012).

Beyond the suffering implicit in refugee stories, an extraordinary resilience emerges as the image of Palestine and the process of imagining return provide motivation for many refugees. The idealized perception of the society of origin – Palestine – has been passed down through generations and is reproduced by the sons and daughters of those who fled. The camp became a space upon which the inhabitants mapped out a Palestinian identity, woven from memories, songs, stories of elders, pictures, and old stamps from dreams that refuse to come to terms with an unfair reality (Holt, 2011).

Examining the case of Palestinians in Lebanon has implications for immigration/refugee and settlement studies, as it provides a critical analysis of some of the political and spatial aspects of refugee issues from an international perspective. Since Palestinians are one of the largest refugee groups in the world, this paper can offer important insight and knowledge into the field of refugee and settlement studies more broadly, in terms of how refugees form identities in contexts outside of the homeland. Also, as one of the longest cases of displacement in the modern era, research on Palestinian refugees can provide insight into how refugees in protracted and seemingly permanent situations have renegotiated collective identities, despite the temporary or emergency setting in which they find themselves. Both the empirical case of Palestinians in

Lebanon, and the conceptual literature on critical race and space in the context of refugee camps are useful for understanding some of the challenges that refugees face throughout the world.

In terms of its limitations, this paper may be criticized for the generalizability of some of its observations. The paper attempts to discuss the situation of Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon broadly. However, as there are variations among the camps; and as the individuals living in the camps differ in many respects, and cannot be considered an entirely homogenous group in terms of religion, political affiliation, age, and so on, the experiences mentioned may not apply to all camps and refugees. On the other hand, Palestinian refugees in Lebanon do share a specific history, and particular legal restrictions (Jamal and Sandor, 2010) that allow them to be examined more generally for the purpose of this paper. A second critique may consider the elaboration on depictions of resistance in the camps to be a romanticization of the experience of Palestinians in exile or the experience of Palestinians seeking possibilities of agency. This, however, is not the point of this emphasis. This paper has merely attempted to illustrate that the camps are not passive spaces of subordination and control. They are rather spaces inhabited by exiled Palestinians, struggling to maintain and re-define their identity with regard to the loss of the homeland in the context of their lived experience in Lebanon.

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