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Introduction

A Historical Context of Palestinian Arab Education

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This introduction reviews the historical and political context that provides an essential background for exploring key contemporary issues in Palestinian Arab education in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories. Formal public education in Palestine, from its very beginnings, was never under the control of the Palestinian people but instead, has been controlled by successive colonial/external administrations. This introduction examines how major historical periods have affected the development of Palestinian Arab education from the Ottoman period (1516 to 1917) to the British Mandate period (1917 to 1948) to the post-1948 period after the establishment of Israel, which includes the post-1967 Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, the Oslo agreement period from 1993 to 2000, and the first and second Palestinian Intifadas.

Keywords: *Palestinian Arab education; Ottoman Empire; British Mandate; Israel; Occupied Palestinian Territories*

In this issue, we explore contemporary concerns about Palestinian Arab education. Education is one of the most ordinary aspects of modern life and one that is crucial to shaping the culture, individual and communal development, social stratification, economy, and politics of any society. However, it cannot be effectively studied or developed in isolation from the background of the people it is intended to serve, particularly in a case as controversial as that of the Palestinians. Therefore, we introduce this issue by reviewing the historical and political context that provides an essential background for exploring key contemporary issues in Palestinian Arab education.

Palestinian Educational Development

The historical background of Palestine is an important frame of reference for understanding contemporary educational issues because the roots of many current educational dilemmas/issues can be traced through successive layers or strata of colo-

nial experiences going back to the Ottoman period in the 19th century and have existed since then on different levels of magnitude and significance (Al-Haj, 1995; Mar'i, 1978, 1989; Tibawi, 1956).

Formal public education in Palestine, from its very beginnings, was never under the control of the Palestinian people; beginning with the Ottoman (Turkish) Empire, then the British Mandate, and then the state of Israel, the Palestinian education system has been under the control of successive colonial/external administrations. Thus, we examine how these major periods have affected the development of Palestinian Arab education, beginning with the Ottoman period (1516 to 1917), to the British Mandate period (1917 to 1948), and then the post-1948 period after the establishment of Israel, which includes the post-1967 Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, the Oslo agreement period from 1993 to 2000, and the first and second Palestinian Intifadas.

The Ottoman Period

Under the Turkish Ottoman Empire, which ruled Palestine from 1516 to 1917, public education was introduced only during the latter part of the 19th century and in most cases, was limited to the elementary level (Al-Haj, 1995; Bowman, 1942; Mar'i, 1978). Although the Ottoman Empire formally assumed responsibility for providing educational services in the region in 1846, it was not until 1869 that it succeeded in establishing a system of elementary and secondary public schools modeled on the French system. Having no curriculum of their own, the Ottomans simply followed the French curriculum, which meant that French textbooks were translated into Turkish and that French standards were adopted (Szyliowicz, 1973; Yousuf, 1956). Because the level and relevance of education offered by the Ottoman public schools was relatively low, and because Turkish was the language of instruction, the schools were not very successful in attracting the Palestinian Arab population (Al-Haj, 1995; Bowman, 1942; Mar'i, 1978).

In addition to Ottoman public schools, there were a number of private traditional Muslim schools (*kuttabs*) in Palestinian towns and villages, and their numbers increased toward the end of the Ottoman period. These schools usually consisted of a single room, part of private houses or mosques, in which a male teacher, with no teaching qualifications other than moderate literacy and orthodox piety, taught boys between the ages of 5 and 12 how to read the Quran and to write. Some arithmetic was later added; however, the curriculum remained primarily religious and moral in content (Abu-Saad, 2006; Tibawi, 1956). By the end of the Ottoman Empire period, only 22.2% of the Muslim population in Palestine attended schools, of whom 50% studied in private schools. The main advantage of these schools was the use of Arabic as the language of instruction, which also meant that they received no state assistance and that they did not fall under state supervision (Tibawi, 1956, p. 20).

During this period, non-Muslim religious-based schools also functioned independently.¹ Schools run by missions of various European Christian churches taught primarily in Arabic, although the missionary schools also emphasized the sponsoring

European church's language. Both Muslim and Christian Arab children attended the missionary schools. The Jewish community in Palestine at this time also had its own private schools, and beginning in the late-19th century, European Jewish immigrants affiliated with the Zionist movement established various networks of Jewish communal schools, many with Hebrew as the language of instruction.

Abcarius (1946) reported that although in 1911 there was a school-age population of 38,053 boys and 35,584 girls, only 6,104 boys and 1,504 girls attended government schools, and another 6,974 boys and 2,673 girls attended private or foreign schools. Taking government and private school attendance together, only 34% of the school-age boys and 12% of the school-age girls were actually attending schools. The private schools were more successful than the government schools in attracting students, particularly among girls, in part because they were much more developed than public schools, with better teachers and better overall conditions.

Under Ottoman rule, there were no high schools located in Palestine. Those who wanted a high school education had to travel to Damascus, but because of the great distance, very few pursued this option (Mar'i, 1978). Furthermore, during this period, there were no universities except for those in the capital of the Ottoman Empire, Istanbul, and the fields of study were all military oriented (Szyliowicz, 1973). The distance and limitations on admission placed higher education beyond the reach of the few Palestinians who had an interest in pursuing it. Admission was particularly difficult for Arabs because of the military nature of the institution, especially at the time when Arabs started demanding independence from the Ottoman Empire (Mar'i, 1978).

The Zionist movement to establish a Jewish state in Palestine. During the Ottoman period, there were developments in Europe that were to have a great impact on the future of Palestine. In the late 1800s, a nationalist movement called *Zionism* was developed by a group of the Jewish intelligentsia in Europe, the goal of which was to establish a Jewish state in Palestine. Zionism was based on the premise that Palestine was the homeland of the Jewish people because of their presence in the land during biblical times. The Jewish settlement of Palestine was, thus, presented as an ideological and moral project that also provided a solution to the dilemma of anti-Semitism that had plagued the Jews in their European diaspora communities (Yiftachel, 2003). The Zionist movement portrayed Palestine as a "land without a people, for a people without a land" (Masalha, 1997) and portrayed the Zionist immigrants to Palestine as pioneers coming to conquer an inhospitable environment and make the barren desert bloom. Leading Zionists promoted the notion of an empty territory—empty, as Masalha (1997) explained, not necessarily in the actual absence of inhabitants but rather, in the sense of a "civilizational barrenness," which was then used to justify Zionist colonization, with its dehumanizing orientation toward the native population, leading to their delegitimization as a people belonging to that particular place (Prior, 1999). From its inception, the Zionist movement sought out and gained the support of the era's major European colonial powers and most notably, Great Britain, which with the Balfour Declaration of 1917, committed itself to establishing a Jewish state in Palestine and facilitated Jewish immigration from Europe.

The British Mandate Period

During the British Mandatory administration over Palestine (from 1917 to 1948), the educational system for Palestinian Arabs in Palestine continued to be based both on government-run schools and on private institutions. The British Mandatory government took control of many *kuttabs* (private Muslim schools) and expanded the Ottoman school system; however, almost all public schools were primary level only. The British Mandatory government administered the public school system directly; Palestinian Arabs had little input or control. Officially, elementary school lasted 7 years and high school another 4 years. In practice, elementary school usually lasted only 5 or 6 years. Elementary education was common for Arab boys, at least for a few years. Education for girls, especially in the villages and Bedouin tribes, was less common. By 1948, there were only 10 Arab high schools (2 of which were for girls). There were 3 teacher-training seminaries, but not a single Palestinian Arab institution of higher education (Al-Haj, 1995; Mar'i, 1978; Tibawi, 1956).

In addition to government schools, private Muslim schools (although decreased in number from the Ottoman period) and missionary schools together educated about one third of Palestinian Arab students. Jewish schools—both religious and secular, and most under the Zionist school network—continued to operate independently (Swirski, 1999).²

Although more widespread than during Ottoman Empire rule, education remained the privilege of the few. As late as 1946, only 22% of the school-age population was enrolled in public schools, as compared to 12% in 1914 during Ottoman rule. Despite the growth in the number of teachers and schools, the Mandate administration still turned away students and never achieved its goal of universal education.

The British began to establish public high schools in Palestine that despite their limited numbers, represented a major step. As the number of high school graduates increased, high school education came to be associated with the attainment of white-collar jobs, usually as civil servants who enjoyed not only economic mobility and security but also a higher status because of their association with the British administration (Mar'i, 1978). However, these educated youth soon became nationally aware and politically active. In many cases, they expressed their disappointment and frustration at the lack of Palestinian autonomy over their educational system, which was administered and controlled by British officials (Mar'i, 1978).

Although Palestinian Arab students were taught by Palestinian teachers and schools were administered by Palestinian headmasters, those in charge of the curriculum, decision making, and policy formation were British (Tibawi, 1956). Numerous authors have commented on the very alien curriculum imposed by the British on Palestinian students, in which “direct teaching of contemporary history was excluded from the official syllabus” (Tibawi, 1956, p. 196). As Khalidi (1981) stated,

Government censorship was accused of banishing Arab history from the curriculum and some of the very earliest history textbooks seem to reflect the heavy hand of the censor. In one such textbook (1926) which deals with Europe from the end of the Roman Empire to

World War I, only three paragraphs are devoted to the Arabs, and these stick out of the rest of the book like Stendhal's "pistol shot in the middle of a concert." (p. 68)

Palestinian educators had to function in an environment in which they lacked any autonomy over their own education, while at the same time they perceived the advancements being made by the Zionist movement toward the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine as a real threat to Palestinian Arab national aspirations, identity, and unity. According to Tibawi (1956), Dr. Khalil Totah, a Palestinian educator during the British Mandatory period, stated,

"The major grievance of the Arabs as regards education is that they have no control over it." He explained that because of this lack of control education was not national enough in policy, personnel, curricula and general tone. "It would seem that Arab [Palestinian] education," he said, "is either designed to reconcile the Arabs to this policy (of establishing a Jewish national home) or to make that education so colourless as to make it harmless and not endanger the carrying out of that policy." (p. 205)

Palestinian Arabs began to demand control of their educational system, particularly since the British Mandate Department of Education granted the Jewish community complete charge of its public schools (Tibawi, 1956; Yousuf, 1956). As Mar'i (1978) stated,

Palestinian educators in Palestine had a precedent to follow: The Jewish Zionist education system, although serving minority of less than 10 percent, was an autonomous one. All citizens were under the same rule, yet they were treated differently. This created and magnified antagonistic feelings toward the British administration in Palestine. Moreover, Arab [Palestinian] educators were aware of the Balfour Declaration. On November 2, 1917, while addressing the Zionist Federation of England, Arthur J. Balfour, then the British Foreign Minister, declared that: "Her Majesty's government views with favor the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavors to facilitate the achievement of this objective." (p. 16)

Some Palestinian educators began to challenge the colonial educational apparatus of the British authorities, which was largely unwilling to broker any challenges from the "natives." It, thus, responded by removing these educators from the system. For example, Palestinian educator Darwish Miqdadi had to resign from the Arab Teachers' College in Jerusalem because of a clash with the British administration concerning a scout troop he had established and named after Khalid ibn al-Walid, the early Arab Muslim military leader who headed the Muslim armies in their conquests of Iraq and Syria. Miqdadi was asked by the British to do one of the following: terminate the scout troop's existence, make it part of the Baden-Powell Scouts, or resign from his work. Miqdadi's response to the British director of the Department of Education was, "Will the Scout troop of Khalid ibn al-Walid, the great hero who was never defeated in his life, be canceled? No, no, it will not be rescinded, and it will not join the British Baden-Powell Association. Here is my resignation" (as quoted in Davis, 2003, p. 195). The

content of Miqdadi's resignation letter to the British director of education in Palestine explores the complexity of the Palestinians' dilemma within the colonial educational system of the British Mandate, which suppressed Palestinian Arab nationalism and development while allowing the autonomous Jewish and Zionist national development that was working to transform Palestine into a Jewish state despite the Palestinian Arabs' national aspirations, long-standing historical presence, and clear demographic majority in Palestine. Miqdadi wrote,

I believe that we are an Arab country, and we want to have an Arab slogan and Arab flag. We also want to have an Arab scout [organization] outside of the English scouts, which we do not agree with on some issues because there is no doubt that it is foreign to us, colonialist in spirit (*isti'mariyah fi ruhina*), and English in its slogan and flag.

I believe that we should have an independent Arab Scouts, as is the situation in the Jewish schools where the scouts are independent of Baden-Powell Scouts and carry a Zionist slogan and a Zionist flag.

Our Arab Scouts are valuable to the students after the failure of the English Scouts at the Teacher's College. For these reasons, I stand by the Arab Scouts because I fully believe that its presence is greatly beneficial to the students and the teachers. (as quoted in Davis, 2003, p. 195)

Because of these criticisms and repeated demands for educational autonomy, the British Mandatory administration established successive Palestinian Arab advisory councils to participate in policy making in Palestinian education in Palestine. The councils did not have any power, however, and they often collapsed shortly after their establishment (Mar'i, 1978).

In summary, Palestinian public education during the British Mandate was characterized by the increased availability of schooling and the establishment of the first high schools. Nevertheless, the expanded system was still unable to accommodate large numbers of students and suffered from budget cuts; a lack of facilities, personnel, and local autonomy; and administrative limitations imposed by the colonial governing apparatus and its Department of Education. Perhaps most critical to future developments in the region, as the era of European colonialism was coming to an end, was that the education the British provided to Palestinian Arabs repressed their independent development. At the same time, the British administration supported the development of Zionism as a new, hybrid form of neocolonialism—as far as its actual consequences for Palestinian Arabs. On one hand, the Zionist movement rooted itself locally as the Jews' return to their homeland; on the other hand, it aspired, according to the hopes of Theodor Herzl, to establish a permanent “enclave of European culture in the midst of the barbarous East” (as quoted in Morris, 1998, p. 43).

During the British Mandate period, the Zionist movement gained broad international support, and in 1947, the United Nations voted to partition Palestine into two states, one Jewish (54% of the territory) and one Arab (46% of the territory). The indigenous Palestinian Arabs, along with the other Arab countries in the region, rejected the partition plan. As soon as the British withdrew, turning the unresolved conflict over to the United Nations in 1948, the Zionist leadership unilaterally de-

clared Israel's independence as a "Jewish" and "democratic" state. They imposed this reality by military force and began to make incursions into territory designated as the Palestinian state under the UN Partition Plan. The Arab states then declared war on the Jewish state. But despite their superior numbers, their armies were technologically far inferior to the Israeli military, so that by the time of the ceasefire it had taken control of 78% of the land of Palestine (Abu-Lughod, 1971; Lustick, 1980).

Post-1948 Period of Israeli Rule

During the course and aftermath of the 1948 War, more than 700,000 Palestinian Arabs fled and/or were expelled from the newly established state of Israel and only 160,000 remained within its boundaries (Abu-Lughod, 1971; Jiryis, 1976; Lustick, 1980; Piterberg, 2001). As a result of the dispersion of the Palestinian people, Palestinian education came under the administration of a number of different states and agencies. The education system for the Palestinians who stayed in Israel was run by the Jewish majority, whereas the schools in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip were administered by Jordan and Egypt, respectively. Furthermore, the UN Relief and Works Agency established schools in Palestinian refugee camps throughout the West Bank and Gaza Strip as well as in Lebanon, Syria, and Jordan.⁴ The fragmented reality was further complicated after the 1967 Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, when the education system in these areas came under the control of the Israeli military administration.⁵

Palestinian Arabs in Israel: "present absentees." The Palestinians who stayed in Israel had to cope with the multifaceted challenges imposed by their new reality. First, many were suddenly cut off from their own families, relatives, and community members who were dispersed as refugees in the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, and the surrounding Arab countries. Second, they had to cope with the abrupt change in their status from a majority with national aspirations to one of a dominated minority. Third, they had to deal with an Israeli policy of domination and control of all aspects of life such as education, planning, economic development, health, and so forth. Finally, the Nakbah (i.e., the dispossession and dispersion of Palestinian people) left them without a leadership or social and cultural institutions.

From 1948 until 1966, the Palestinians in Israel were placed under a strict military administration and were treated like a fifth column. Palestinian areas were subject to closure and individuals faced restrictions on freedom of movement, unlimited detention without charge, and expulsion from the country. An individual who broke these and other laws was subject to trial by a military court (Jiryis, 1976; Lustick, 1980; Masalha, 2004).

During the course and aftermath of the 1948 War, many of the Palestinians remaining in Israel became internal refugees who left their homes and property temporarily—sometimes because of the direct orders or actions of the Israeli military—and were never allowed to return. *Present absentees* was the bureaucratic oxymoron applied to these Palestinian citizens of Israel who were "present" because rather than leave the

country, they had remained through the 1948 War and the years following. However, according to laws passed to gain land for the state, they were considered “absentees” because they left their original villages, regardless of the reason. As present absentees, they were prevented from regaining their property, homes, and land (Jiryis, 1976; Lustick, 1980; Masalha, 2004). The enactment of these and similar measures vis-à-vis the Palestinian Arab citizens of Israel had far-reaching and eminently practical consequences. For example, through the use of this and other laws enacted, 93% of the land in Israel came under state control and most of it is allocated for exclusive Jewish use. Piterberg (2001) explained that

what the term “present absentees” designates is the history of the dispossession and displacement of those Palestinians—their number is estimated at 160,000—who found themselves within the state of Israel between 1948 and 1952. It tells of the tacit axis of apartheid that defines the state of Israel to this day: the interplay between the formal inclusion of Palestinians as citizens and their structural exclusion from equal rights within the state. This is the particular dialectic of oppression—of a population formally present but in so many crucial ways absent—that makes the legal-administrative definition of these Palestinians so coldly accurate. (pp. 42-43)

The term *present absentee* is native to Israel. Legislators there designed it specifically to contend with the existence and rights of the Palestinian people. It implies that they are present insofar as they are obliged to contribute to the national coffers by paying taxes and national insurance. But in terms of their rights to a representative share in the country’s policy making and planning circles, and its assets and resources (e.g., land, water, education, infrastructure, employment), they are absent. Although the original conditions to which this term was applied have since become a moot point, the term itself continues to define the status of the Palestinian Arab citizens of Israel.

Currently, there are 1.3 million Palestinian Arab citizens of Israel who constitute 19.4% of the country’s total population. Researchers from a variety of fields have documented the subjection of this community to political, economic, and social discrimination and its subordination to the Jewish majority in almost every aspect of stratification, including income, educational level, occupational distribution, employment participation, property ownership, and community-level infrastructure and development (Kraus & Hodge, 1990; Lewin-Epstein & Semyonov, 1992, 1993; Rabinowitz, Ghanem, & Yiftachel, 2000; Semyonov, 1988). As a result, the socioeconomic level of the Palestinian Arab citizens of Israel is significantly lower than that of the Jewish citizens of Israel.

As further explored in this issue, the educational system in Israel, which is subdivided into Jewish and Arab systems, has been essential to creating and maintaining these gaps. The state educational system was initially shaped by the thoughts and actions of the early Eastern European Zionists who settled in Palestine in the 1880s, including its institutional structure, ideological content, and language of instruction (Swirski, 1999). Although this group and its descendents dominated and continue to dominate the emergent state and its institutions, Israel’s population expanded to

include large new groups of people from Europe and other continents and cultures, as well as the indigenous Palestinian Arab population that remained after the establishment of the state in 1948, all of which were incorporated under differential terms of inclusion. This sociopolitical differentiation led to the emergence of an educational system with separate school systems and separate tracks within the same school system for different groups defined by ethnicity, race, and class. The resulting differentiation is the outcome of the question of “who is in, and who is out” as a legitimate party in the collective project of building the Jewish state and has gone on to determine “who gets what” educationally (Abu-Saad, 2004; Swirski, 1999).

The post-1967 Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. As an outcome of the 1967 War, the Israeli military occupied the remaining portions of historical Palestine, the West Bank, and the Gaza Strip and has since maintained a military administration over these territories. Palestinian education under the Israeli occupation was controlled and directed by the military administration. The Jordanian and Egyptian curriculums used for the provision of education in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, respectively, since 1948 were kept by Israeli authorities, with some modifications, after the occupation began. However, Palestinians felt that the educational system was out of date and increasingly irrelevant, particularly because it failed to reflect their concerns or national aspirations. Many Palestinians considered this to be a deliberate strategy on the part of the Israeli military administration, because it had no interest in encouraging Palestinian nationalism (Holt, 2001). According to Moughrabi (2001), “The word ‘Palestine’ was removed, maps were deleted, and anything Israeli censors deemed nationalist was excised” (p. 6). As in the British Mandate times, Palestinian initiatives to improve and make the educational system more relevant were systematically stifled. Palestinians argued that such repression was designed to force an increased dependency on Israel and maintain Israel’s hegemonic control of Palestinian education (Holt, 2001).

In addition, Palestinian education under the Israeli military administration was characterized by insufficient supplies and facilities, restricted access to the schools themselves, an inadequate educational budget, an inappropriate curriculum, and staffing controlled by security agencies (Graham-Brown, 1984). As Assaf (1997) stated,

Teaching under occupation was tough and restricted, teachers were not allowed to use any supplementary material to enhance the curriculum which was narrowly defined to mean the textbook material regardless of the degree of irrelevance to Palestinian culture. This restriction was an important factor in demoralizing students and partly explains their lowered commitment to education and resulting behavioral problems. (p. 53)

During the course of the military occupation, Palestinian schools became arenas of confrontation between young people and Israeli soldiers. The harassment of school children, and even the use of physical violence against them, became a common feature of the occupation. Although the Israeli authorities were bent on suppressing all signs of Palestinian nationalism, the tactics they employed had the opposite effect. By

sensitizing children from an early age, the Israelis ensured the development of a politically aware population.

Private Palestinian universities began to be established in the mid-1970s, the first of which was Bir Zeit University. Since then a total of 12 universities were established (Nakhleh & Wahbeh, 2005). These universities were perceived by the Palestinians as centers of political struggle and national resistance. Being private rather than public institutions, they enjoyed a greater degree of autonomy than public schools in terms of academic programs and selection of staff. As such, Palestinian universities have played a leading role in resistance to the occupation and nation building. Realizing this role, the Israeli authorities implemented a number of measures against universities, which were documented by Assaf (1997):

- Limiting the expansion of buildings and facilities.
- Limiting students' access to library material (special permits to import new books).
- Obstruction of external financial assistance, particularly that originating in the Arab world. Universities were denied their right not to pay value added tax (VAT) which reached 17%.
- Restriction of academic freedom through the imposition of military orders.
- Continuous disruption of the learning process as a result of student arrests and interrogations, and shooting, not only by the army, but also by [Jewish] settlers.
- Harassment of university graduates, particularly as of 1992, who were denied the right to apply for positions as civil servants on the grounds that they had graduated from universities that were officially closed [by the Israeli military administration]. This was an indirect strategy to limit the effectiveness of off-campus teaching strategies adopted by many Palestinians in response to closures, curfews and disruptions. (pp. 57-58)

After 20 years of treatment aimed at repressing Palestinian identity and national aspirations, in December 1987, the first Palestinian Intifada (uprising, literally "shaking off") against Israeli occupation erupted in the Gaza Strip. It quickly spread, drawing all sectors of the population into various forms of protest activities and resistance. Children were a key component of the first Intifada. Their participation represented a shift from the politics of their parents and grandparents' generation, which has been described as "resigned," to a more active, confrontational approach (Holt, 2001).

Schools became a battleground during the first Intifada. The Israeli authorities adopted a policy of widespread disruptions of the educational system in the hope of stamping out the uprising. Israeli soldiers taunted and provoked students on their way to school; they regularly stormed schools and threw tear gas into classrooms, with the result that buildings and equipment were damaged; and they physically assaulted staff and students both inside and outside schools. This contributed to strong feelings of insecurity, particularly among younger children (Al-Ramahi & Davies, 2002; Holt, 2001).

Another tactic was to close down schools altogether. All 1,194 schools in the West Bank were closed by military order for 9 months in 1988 and for 8 months in 1989, which affected approximately 310,000 students. Although no official reasons were given for the closures, the Israeli authorities defended them on the grounds that

schools were acting as “hot beds of Palestinian nationalism” and “centres of violent protest” (Al-Ramahi & Davies, 2002; Holt, 2001). The Palestinians, however, interpreted the closures as a collective punishment aimed, on one hand, at eroding their will to resist the occupation, and on the other, at reducing an entire generation to illiteracy (Al-Ramahi & Davies, 2002; Holt, 2001).

This period of intense struggle was followed by peace negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians, which culminated in the signing of the Oslo Accords in 1993 and brought the first Intifada to an end. The Oslo plan was based on a phased transfer of the Occupied Territories to administration by the newly formed Palestinian National Authority and a 5-year interim period of Palestinian self-rule in part of these territories, during which Israel retained responsibility for security of all of the international borders and of the Israeli settlers within the Occupied Territories. Permanent status negotiations were to have begun in the 3rd year of the interim period to finalize the most controversial issues, including the status of Jerusalem, the Palestinian refugees, Israeli Jewish settlements established in contravention to international law in the Occupied Territories, security arrangements, borders, and relations and cooperation with other neighbors (*Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements*, 1993).

In 1994, the newly created Palestinian Ministries of Education and Higher Education took over educational responsibility from the Israeli military administration as the largest activity delegated to the Palestinian National Authority. After having been controlled by external forces since its inception, the formal educational system finally came under the control of the Palestinians themselves, and they had the opportunity to institute reforms to improve the quality of the system and direct it to meet their social, economic, and cultural needs. Their first reforms dealt with the unification of the two educational systems in the West Bank and Gaza Strip and the development of a new Palestinian National Curriculum based on national priorities to replace the Egyptian and the Jordanian curriculums (Al-Ramahi & Davies, 2002; Moughrabi, 2001). However, because the Palestinian Authority had nearly no resources of its own, it was heavily dependent on international aid and collaboration to make and implement reforms, complicating the process of developing a coherent, indigenous education policy (Al-Ramahi & Davies, 2002; Moughrabi, 2001).

The first Palestinian curriculum center was established on the basis of a formal agreement between the UN Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization and the Palestinian Authority Ministry of Education and began to work on developing basic principles for governing a unified Palestinian curriculum in 1995 (Moughrabi, 2001). Palestinian educators grappled with a number of difficult issues, particularly when developing principles for subjects such as history. Jarbawi formulated the following questions:

What Palestine do we teach? Is it the historic Palestine with its complete geography or the Palestine that is likely to emerge on the basis of possible agreements with Israel? How do we view Israel? Is it merely an ordinary neighbor, or is it a state that has arisen on the ruins of most of Palestine? This may well be one of the most difficult questions, but the answer

to it need not be the most difficult. The new Palestinian curriculum should be creative, pragmatic, and truthful without having to engage in historical falsifications. (as quoted in Moughrabi, 2001, p. 7)

Thus, in preparing the textbooks, the Ministry tried to incorporate the following five principles: (a) the curriculum should not be based on giving students facts as if they were eternal truths but rather, should encourage them to become critical thinkers; (b) students should be encouraged to make independent judgments and intelligent choices; (c) the curriculum should generate a concept of citizenship that emphasizes individual rights and responsibilities and creates a link between private interests and the public good to encourage responsible and intelligent political participation; (d) the curriculum should foster democratic values (e.g., justice, tolerance, empathy, pluralism, cooperation, respect for opinions of others); and (e) students should be provided with the skills to read primary texts and maps, interpret statistics, link ideas, use the Internet, and verify facts, sources, and data critically and scientifically (Moughrabi, 2001). As Moughrabi (2001) explained,

In the application of these principles, the new textbooks—as can be seen from the two grades that have been issued so far—rely less on facts and more on a student-centered approach. By and large, they avoid dealing with unresolved political issues. They do not provide a map of Israel because the latter has yet to define its borders, and they do not provide a map of Palestine because its borders remain to be negotiated. The texts do, however, reflect the Palestinian narrative, which is basically that of the native in conflict with a settler colonial movement. The narrative presents the establishment of the state of Israel in most of Palestine in 1948 as a disaster (*nakba*) for the Palestinians, a majority of whom became uprooted and were forcibly expelled from their homes. (p. 7)

As of September 2000, new textbooks in the subjects of language, history, science, civic education, national education, and so forth had been developed and the Ministry of Education plan was to introduce the new books for two or more grades every year.⁶

In the meantime, on the political front, the permanent status negotiations, which were originally scheduled to begin in the beginning of the 3rd year of the interim period (about September 1996) were in fact never held. As the interim period dragged on, but failed to make any substantive steps toward actually bringing the occupation to an end, the frustrations of the Palestinians in the Occupied Territories continued to build. The economic decline (e.g., increase in unemployment rate from 3% in 1992 to 28% in 1996), the growth of the Jewish settlements (e.g., more than 18,330 new housing units built and thousands of dunums³ of Palestinian land confiscated to expand settlements), the increased restrictions imposed by the Israeli military on movement throughout the territories, and the resultant toll in human suffering are well documented (Carey, 2001; Pacheco, 2001; Roy, 2001). Edward Said (2001) articulated the questions being asked by the Palestinian populace at this juncture:

What of the vaunted peace process? What has it achieved and why, if indeed it was a peace process, has the miserable condition of the Palestinians and the loss of life become

so much worse than before the Oslo Accords were signed in September 1993? . . . And what does it mean to speak of peace if Israeli troops and settlements are still present in such large numbers? . . . According to the Report on Israeli Settlement in the Occupied Territories (RISOT), 110,000 Jews lived in illegal settlements in Gaza and the West Bank before Oslo; the number has since increased to 195,000. . . . Has the world been deluded or has the rhetoric of "peace" been in essence a gigantic fraud? (p. 29)

On September 28, 2000, the Palestinian population in the West Bank and Gaza Strip began a second Intifada in protest of the failure to end the Israeli military occupation. The second Intifada, however, has been very different from its predecessor, in that the Palestinians have used more armed resistance and the Israeli response has been considerably more deadly. Miftah (2005) reported that from September 28, 2000, to December 5, 2005, 4,169 Palestinians, of whom 891 were children, and 1,113 Israelis, of whom 113 were children, have been killed. As before, Palestinian children have been caught up in the cycle of violence and disproportionately victimized by it.

During the second Intifada, the Israelis have reverted to the policy of targeting Palestinian education as a method of collective punishment. Teachers, school children, and university students have been subjected to violence, and schools and universities have been attacked. According to LAW, the Palestinian Society for the Protection of Human Rights & the Environment, Israeli checkpoints "have been placed to impede travel on roads leading to schools, and Palestinian pupils and teachers have been shot at, killed, wounded or arrested on their way to school" (as quoted in Holt, 2001, p. 10). In addition, since the beginning of the second Intifada, hundreds of schools have been shut down for varying periods because of Israeli siege, thus, preventing thousands of Palestinian students from attending school. From the beginning of the second Intifada up until December 5, 2005, 576 Palestinian students (K-12) and 32 teachers have been killed by Israeli security forces, 3,471 students and 54 teachers have been injured, and 669 students and 176 teachers have been detained. In addition, 199 university students have been killed, 1,245 have been injured, and 720 have been detained (Miftah, 2005).

It is ironic that as this violence was taking its toll at the beginning of the second Intifada, in November 2000, a Jewish-American nongovernmental organization, the Center for Monitoring the Impact of Peace, whose research director lives in one of the Jewish settlements in the West Bank, came out with a report from a joint project evaluating the revised Palestinian textbooks with the Truman Institute at Hebrew University. The report accused the new Palestinian Authority textbooks "of 'delegitimization of Israel's existence,' implicit 'seeking of Israel's destruction,' 'defamation of Israel,' and 'encouraging militarism and violence'" (Brown, 2001, p. 3). Others who in fact studied the new Palestinian textbooks, including Ruth Firer, the head of the project research team from the Truman Institute at Hebrew University, expressed a different opinion (Brown, 2001; Moughrabi, 2001). In an article in the leading Israeli daily, *Ha'Aretz*, Firer stated,

We were surprised to find how moderate the anger directed toward Israelis in the Palestinian textbooks is, compared to the Palestinian predicament and suffering. This surprise is doubled when you compare the Palestinian books to the Israeli ones from the 1950s and

1960s, which mentioned gentiles [only] in the context of pogroms and the Holocaust. (as quoted in Moughrabi, 2001, pp. 9-10)

The *Ha'Aretz* article goes on to report that Firer found the new textbooks to be freer of negative stereotypes than the Jordanian and Egyptian books, and added that the Israeli "defense establishment has investigated and confirmed this finding" (Eldar, 2001). Nevertheless, in December 2000, the Italian government discontinued its funding of the development of the new Palestinian school curriculum, based on the Center for Monitoring the Impact of Peace report, and the World Bank informed the Palestinian Authority Ministry of Education that the monies it had allocated for the development of school texts and teacher training would have to be diverted to other projects. These decisions led to similar actions among other donor countries, clearly demonstrating how limited the Palestinian government's "control" of its educational system actually was (Moughrabi, 2001).

Contemporary Issues in Palestinian Education

Based on this historical perspective, we present the articles in this issue that deal with several of the major contemporary issues confronting Palestinian education.

Yousef Jabareen's article, "Law and Education: The Case of Palestinian Arab Education in Israel," asserts that local Palestinian authority on education issues is purely technical; all substantive matters are determined by the Ministry of Education. No meaningful involvement in the decision-making process was offered to Palestinian educators, either on issues of budget allocation or on issues related to the curriculum for Palestinian schools. Inequalities in both public funding and content of education have historically been the main factors that significantly hindered the development of the educational system for the Palestinian minority in Israel. This has created significant gaps between the qualitative level of Palestinian and Jewish education, to the latter's advantage. Finally, Jabareen examines the Palestinians' recent legal efforts to redress inequality in the educational system through an analysis of the primary Israeli Supreme Court case dealing with equal educational opportunities.

In her article "Separate but Not Equal: Discrimination Against Palestinian Arab Students in Israel," Daphna Golan-Agnon claims that there are various nuances, implications, sources, and, hence, also various questions used to explore inequality from feminist approaches that propose differing ways of analyzing the sources of inequality and ways of effecting social change. She addresses key dilemmas, such as Arab education receiving inferior allocations for training, supervision, and certain curriculum subjects and Arab schools having significantly fewer of the unique support programs in which the Ministry of Education invests, despite the community's low socioeconomic status. Golan-Agnon addresses and analyzes these dilemmas using three generations of critical feminist thought.

Ismael Abu-Saad, in "State-Controlled Education and Identity Formation Among the Palestinian Arab Minority in Israel," recounts the difficulties of maintaining identity and culture within a mainstream school system that emphasizes values and educa-

tion of the national community to the exclusion of the perspectives, worldviews, and identity formation of the indigenous minority community. The exclusion and active suppression of Palestinian Arab history, culture, identity, and contemporary political concerns from the curriculum has incessantly been maintained in Palestinian Arab schools. Furthermore, indigenous Palestinians do not have autonomous control of their school system and do not hold any of the key decision-making and policy-making positions in the national educational infrastructure, which is reflective of their position in Israeli society in general.

In "Negotiating the Present, Historicizing the Future: Palestinian Students Speak About the Israeli Separation Wall," Nadera Shalhoub-Kevorkian discusses the effect of the political legacy of oppression, occupation, and dehumanization on Palestinian youth living under Israeli occupation. The study focuses specifically on the effect of the Israeli "Separation Wall" on the perceptions and attitudes of Palestinian students toward self, present conditions, future hopes/dreams, and educational development.

In her article "Higher Education as Empowerment: The Case of Palestinian Universities," Christa Bruhn claims that Palestinian universities have been a dynamic force across Palestinian communities since their inception under Israeli occupation in the early 1970s. She argues that Palestinian universities have provided Palestinian communities with the physical and conceptual space to sustain the nation of Palestine by enabling Palestinians to articulate their national identity, engage in resistance to Israeli occupation, and build the nation of Palestine in the absence of a Palestinian state. Furthermore, this study considers the case of Palestinian universities as an effort to shed light on what enables the universities to contribute to the human experience over time and across space.

Within the context of the ongoing Israeli/Palestinian conflict, the stereotypical and ahistorical picture of Palestinian Arabs fostered by the state of Israel serves not only to encourage Jewish Israelis to maintain a sense of distance from and superiority over the Palestinian Arabs who are citizens of Israel or under Israeli occupation but also to cripple any efforts to resolve the conflict concerning land, nationality, and the basic rights of Palestinian Arabs (whether those holding Israeli citizenship, living in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, or living as refugees) because they are portrayed as a non-people, without a history. We hope that this issue will serve to highlight key educational issues that must be faced, debated, and grappled with if we are to forge the foundations for genuine peace and coexistence among Israelis and Palestinians.

Notes

1. The Ottoman legal system allowed non-Muslim religious communities (i.e., Christians and Jews) recognized by the sultan to have the right to preserve their religious-ethnic autonomy and to maintain their unique identity under a practice known as the *millet* system.

2. The Zionist school network allowed religious and secular schools to be institutionally separate but to both fall under the Zionist movement's political and financial roof.

3. One dunum is equal to one-quarter acre.

4. Historically, Palestinians have been among the most highly educated populations in the Arab world; though rates of higher education were lowest among those living under Israeli rule, including those in the Occupied Territories. (For further information, see Badran, 1980 and Abu-Lughod, 2000.)

5. Formally, the Israeli government referred to their apparatus for governing the Occupied Palestinian Territories as the 'civil administration.' This nomenclature tends to obscure the reality of its role in administering the daily life of Palestinians living under Israeli military occupation, and as such, we refer to it as the Israeli military administration.

6. For more information on the progressive introduction of new textbooks, see: Palestinian Curriculum Development Center (PCDC) Plan of Work (<http://www.pcdc.edu.ps/workplan.htm>)."

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