The Meaning of Motherhood during the First *Intifada*: 1987-1993

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Golda Meir, a former Prime Minister of Israel, once said: "We will have peace with the Arabs when they love their children more than they hate us." Her statement suggests that "Arabs" (i.e. the Palestinians, whom she famously refused to name in an effort to deny their existence and hence their claims to Palestine) do not love their children, and are therefore sub-human.

The tendency of the western world to dehumanize the Palestinians in ways strikingly similar to Meir's statement has remained constant throughout the two *Intifada*s. Queen Silvia of Sweden, speaking in a meeting of the World Childhood Foundation at the U.N., strongly criticized Palestinian parents as abusing and exploiting their children, saying: "As a mother I'm very worried about this. I'd like to tell them to quit. This is very dangerous. The children should not take part" (Steinberg, par. 7-8). Her statement, intentionally or not, insinuates that Palestinian mothers are not "real" mothers like herself.[1]

The western media is inclined to suggest that Palestinian mothers deliberately consent to sending their children to the battlefront, exploiting them intentionally, and stoically accepting violent deaths for the Palestinian cause as Allah's will. For example, an article entitled "'Pride' of Suicide Attacker's Mother," by a BBC Middle East

[1] Farida Aref Amad, President of the Society of *Ina'sh El-Usra*, a West Bank Women's Organization, declared not to believe when mothers say to the media that the death of their children is the will of Allah, saying no Palestinian mother would willingly send her child to die. "We are mothers like any others," she said, a claim repeatedly made by Palestinian mothers. In an open letter to the Queen of Sweden, *Sawt An-Nissa* (The Voice of Women) declared: "[…] we would like to assure you that we are not any different from you or the Israeli mothers in our maternal or human feelings. Those who try to accuse us of being different only try to contribute to the killing of us denying us the right to live as human being."

correspondent, Orla Guerin, quotes a mother, seen smiling with a gun in her arm alongside her 23-year-old son, also smiling with a gun, who is on his way to carry out a suicide attack: “God willing you will succeed. […] may God give you martyrdom. This is the best day of my life.” Later in the article, Guerin states: “[The mother] had no sympathy for the dead Israelis (two soldiers), no regrets over the loss of her own son.” She asks the mother “if it mattered whether her son killed women and children.” The mother is quoted as saying: “The women and children are also Jews. They’re all the same for me.” Such articles are misleading. At a minimum, one must take into account the fact that the mother is fully aware that she is talking to a representative of the western media. Unlike the claim made in Guerin’s report that the mother “has spoken of her *feelings* about her son’s action (emphasis added),” it is not her feelings that are expressed here. Rather, she is sending a political message to the world about her and other Palestinians’ determination to resist the Israeli occupation. Some media coverage of suicide bombers even suggests economic motivation behind the parents’ “celebration” (Koret, par. 5) of the death of their children. As for the supposed “Palestinian hatred,” suicide bombings are reported as being simply the result of “Palestinian youths [being] long indoctrinated with hatred for Israelis,” (International Christian Embassy Jerusalem, par. 4) rather than as an outcome of the Israeli occupation.

The tactic of suicide bombing so prevalent in the current *Intifada* has raised the profile of the censorious western discourse on the failure of Palestinian parenting, and specifically of the role of mothers. As one might suspect from Golda Meir’s statement quoted above, the notion that Palestinians exploit children to pursue violent goals has some historical depth. Indeed, it was prevalent during the First *Intifada*, as can be seen

in the following letter published in Los Angeles Times in 1989: "What is unconscionable about the *Intifada* is that children and women have been sent by those that inspired the rebellion to go and do all the fighting and perpetrate the violence, and incur the tragic consequences of that, while the men are all off doing something else. […] you don't send children and women to right your revolution for you because that looks compelling on camera" (Maibaum, par. 2). Not surprisingly, this type of conspiracy theory or "first-rate propaganda to use against Israel" (Steinberg, par. 2) theory has repeatedly appeared in the Israeli as well as western media since the First *Intifada*. Hanan Mikhail-Ashrawi was well aware of this, when, in an interview in the summer of 1989, she replied to the question of why Palestinian parents did not protect their own children during the *Intifada,* citing a common Israeli charge that the Palestinians use their own children as tools, saying:

> There is a racism implicit in this statement which I reject entirely. People cannot assume that one nation, or people or race does not have the same emotional feelings for their children as another nation. We love our children, we value our children, we value their childhood. Nothing affects us more deeply. We are trying to guarantee them a life of dignity and freedom […]. ("It is Possible")

As Mikhail-Ashrawi rightly pointed out, this sort of discourse in the western media is far from satisfactory. The two *Intifada*s, and suicide bombings in particular, cannot be understood in terms of "(lack of) love for children" or some sort of primordial "hatred for Israelis." In a very basic sense of course the two *Intifada*s have to be understood for what they are: resistance to the Israeli occupation. The horror of suicide bombings must not blind us to the real issues of the conflict.

By attributing to Palestinians a primordial hatred deeply seated in the family, the media is confusing political statements for cultural evidence. However, the

"declared meaning of a spoken sentence," as Peter Carey writes in Oscar and Lucinda, "is only its overcoat, and the real meaning lies underneath its scarves and buttons." What the media reports are the political statements of Palestinians. When a mother speaks out in favor of martyrdom, for example, these are not the words of a mother who lost her son, but rather the public rhetoric of the mother of a Palestinian martyr. The necessity for making such distinction is precisely the reason behind the title of this dissertation, "The Meaning of Motherhood during the First *Intifada*: 1987-1993." The dissertation will first examine the symbolism of gender in the language of nationalism. Subsequently it will examine the speech and action of mothers and of Palestinian society as a whole. In examining "the meaning of motherhood," the dissertation places language, speech and action of the *Intifada* in a socio-political context: namely how Palestinian resistance to the Israeli occupation is socially structured. By fixating on the alleged failure of Palestinian parents rather than on the tragic consequences of the occupation on Palestinian families, the media is getting the story backward. The *Intifada* must be understood as a response to the challenge of occupation, which was carried out in a form that was more appropriate for action in the context of oppressive Israeli rule (Barghouti 125). The essential element absent in the media discourse is any real understanding of how Palestinian family relations and social construction of women have changed as a result of the necessity of resisting occupation. The dissertation aims to:

- Explore how changes in family structure and intra-familial power relations enabled new forms of socio-political practice that involved women in unprecedented ways.
- Illustrate how the culture of resistance, exemplified in language and rituals, has

influenced the social construction of women, in particular mothers, and how women in turn have come to define and establish their positions within that culture.

To achieve its objectives, the paper will focus on the First *Intifada* for two reasons: firstly, the phenomena of changing social construction of women and family structure can be examined more clearly when one does not need to consider the highly polemical issue of suicide bombings; secondly, the existence of a greater volume of resources, both primary and secondary on the First *Intifada*. The resources used to write this dissertation include: social anthropological literatures on nationalism, gender, rituals, and society and culture of the Middle East; social science literature on the First *Intifada*, Palestinian Nationalism, and Palestinian women; poems, songs and short stories written by Palestinian writers, before and during the First *Intifada*; political literature issued by the Palestinian political parties before and during the First *Intifada*; Palestinian and international newspapers and journals from the period; documentary and feature films by Palestinian and non-Palestinian directors made both during the *Intifada* as well as in the periods before and after it, in addition to films on the Algerian struggle for independence for comparative purposes; and interviews conducted with Palestinians in various locations, although unfortunately never in Palestine due to the current political situation.[2]

[2] Locating Palestinians currently in the U.K., who were in Palestine during the First *Intifada*, proved to be quite frustrating. Most Palestinians in the U.K. arrived before the First *Intifada*, and the most recent arrivals have come via another Arab country, in particular Lebanon. The author was fortunate to find, through a former student of my supervisor, Khalid, whom I interviewed in 4 February 2003 in London, U.K. Khalid is originally from Beit Sahour and he was in his late teens during the First *Intifada*. He has been a leading political activist since before the First *Intifada*, and was in and out of prison throughout the period in question. My second interview was conducted in 19 February 2003 with Dr. Hala Salem Abuateya, who was a single woman in her late 20s (slightly older than the so-called

This paper will argue that, while the authority of the father declined during the First *Intifada*, the mother took on the role of embodying/co-embodying the heroism of her son the *shab* (youth), as well as becoming the mother to all Palestinians youth. Mothers thus embodied the moral superiority of the Palestinian community in the context of the Palestinian resistance culture. Furthermore, the following chapters aim to provide an important background for the understanding of the social context of the present situation.

Intifada generation) during the *Intifada*. That she lived on her own in Ramallah is an indication of the liberal nature of her family. My third interview was with Umm Khalil and her daughter Danya in 22 March 2003 in Chicago, U.S.A. Umm Khalil, whose husband was doing his Ph.D. in America, returned to Tulkarem when the *Intifada* started, so that she and her children could be in Palestine. They stayed for six months, before deciding to leave for America to join the husband/father again. Umm Khalil's children were still young at the time, the oldest being 11. Her only son, Khalil, was only one-year old, and the experience, Umm Khalil claims, has left a psychological scar on him: as a child, he became very agitated and would not stop crying whenever he heard big sounds that reminded him of gun-shots and bombs, and to this day he is afraid of thunder. In addition to the three interviews, I was able to talk to two Palestinian families in Cairo, Egypt, in 19 August 2002, both of whom came to Cairo before the First *Intifada*, as well as to be in an e-mail correspondence with Nedaa, a 24-year old female medical student in Palestine, who grew up in a refugee camp near Hebron.

Chapter 2: Gender and Nationalism

Modern nations have often been explicitly imagined as a brotherhood or fraternity. In Anderson's words, "The nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship. Ultimately, it is this fraternity that makes it possible, over the past centuries, for so many millions of people, not so much to kill, as willingly to die for such limited imaginings" (Anderson 16). Fraternity of course implies that the nation is comprised of brothers, in other words sons of the same mother, the mother being the nation itself. Such sentiment is effective indeed in strengthening the bonds of political solidarity, provoking the desire and necessity to care for as well as defend the nation, in particular her bodily integrity, namely land and borders. It is interesting in this context to consider how universal it is that the worst insult to any man is that directed against his mother.

Nation, however, is not only portrayed as a mother, but also as a young female, most probably a virgin. This image is intended to generate a romantic attachment to the nation and encourage a fusion with it, what can be called "an eroticized nationalism" (Parker *et al.* 1). By depicting the nation as a woman, it was hoped that the love for the nation would be stimulated, drawing male youth to the cause. The images thus drew on emotions associated with gender and sexual relations. The man was the actor, the speaker, the lover; the woman was the acted upon, the listener, the beloved (Baron 120-21).

Yet love was not the only sentiment at stake. In a study of nationalist iconography of Egypt, Baron illustrates how the citizens were depicted as the man and the nation as the woman. Such depictions were produced by male artists who also

imagined a male audience. Representing the nation as a woman was meant to tap notions of honor and instill in male viewers the sense that they had the duty to support, protect and defend it. What constitutes honor, of course, is culturally specific. It could be argued that the "success" of the portrayal of the nation as a woman in the Arab world is attributable to the Arab concept of honor and shame. In the Arab cultural context, men and women conceive of themselves in a relationship of complementarity. The honor of men (*sharaf* and *'ird*)[3] and their kin groups is not contingent on personal achievements but depends on a man's ability to control the behavior of his womenfolk and is inherently linked to the sexual shame of women. Men are responsible for the actions of women (Manasra 8), occupying a public realm in which honor is "projected," while women are part of a familial "sacred realm" that must be protected. By imagining nation as a woman, it becomes shameful for the male population to have the nation under foreign control. As their honor is at stake, it invokes a stronger sentiment than a simple love for the woman. Najmabadi talks of the Iranian experience in which honor (*namus*), rooted in Islamic thought, was unlinked from its religious affiliation (*namus-i Islam*) and reclaimed as a national concern (*namus-i Iran*) as millat itself changed from a religious to a national community. Slipping between the idea of purity of woman and integrity of Iran, honor constituted purity of woman and Iran as subjects both of male possession and protection: sexual and national honor intimately constructed each other (442-467). In this way, nationalism, originally a western concept, is incorporated into Arab (and, in the Iranian case, Persian) culture, transforming it to an Arab (or Persian) concept.

[3] *'Ird* is a particular and more specific kind of honor that is affected only by the conduct of the woman. While *sharaf* can be acquired and augmented through right behavior and great achievements, *'ird* can only be lost by the misconduct of the woman and cannot be regained once lost (Zeid 256).

"Palestine": A Virgin Mother

Turning to the Palestinian context, we see that Palestine is described as follows in a nursery rhyme called "My Homeland":

> My country, my country
> How pretty it is
> My family and my home
> Under its sky
> My country, my country,
> We are its protectors
> The land of plenty,
> We are it liberators.
> The flowers of the valley,
> Their fragrance disseminates throughout the land. (Nazzal 27)

The image of "Palestine" here is that of flowers and their fragrance, portrayed as a "pretty" young woman, who must be protected by the collective "we," her protectors and liberators, whose image is masculine. Here, one can clearly witness male bonding occurring in the production of Palestinian nationalist sentiment. In the poem, "To Jerusalem" by Yusuf Hamdan, on the other hand, the poet is a male lover. He is an arrogant lover, setting his terms that he will meet the beloved only when she is free, only when he has liberated her, in short only when he proved himself worthy of her love. He has to earn her love, yet the terms of winning it are set by himself, not by her. It is thus a self-centered, self-satisfying love. The last line of the poem again portrays Palestine, or rather Jerusalem, as a flower and its fragrance: "I love you, jasmine in the open air" (Elmessiri 89). The flower and its fragrance are to be loved when combined with the freedom of open air. In other words, in order for its loveliness and lovability to be maximized, it is essential for it to be liberated by him, the man. His love, in that sense, is conditional. Her love, on the other hand, is never mentioned. That her love

might be conditional on his ability to free her is an unspoken aspect of nationalism. She is passive and is imagined to be a grateful recipient of such love.

The Palestinian quest for independence and statehood is referred to as the Palestinian wedding in a poem by Mahmoud Darwish, "Blessed Be That Which Has Not Come":

> This is the wedding without an end,
> In a boundless courtyard,
> On an endless night,
> This is the Palestinian wedding:
> Never will lover reach lover
> Except as martyr or fugitive. (Azar 93)

Palestine is the bride the Palestinian men wish to wed. It is an endless and boundless quest. The man only gets to consummate the marriage as a martyr, when he is literally buried into her. There is a parallel between burial and penetration into the land of Palestine, the bride. For Palestinian martyrs, the reward is not the 72 virgins who await him after he dies, it is Palestine. The "that which has not come" in the title of the poem can be interpreted as referring either to Palestinian independence and statehood, or to the "lover" of Palestine who has not yet "come" in the sense of sexual satisfaction of being in the bosom of his bride-to-be. In other words, portrayed here is the sexual frustration of Palestinian men who have not yet succeeded in conquering the heart of Palestine_a clear analogy with unfulfilled national aspiration.

Palestine is also a Mother, and as the Mother, Palestine has a greater claim over her sons the Palestinians. Najmabadi's analysis of the Iranian experience is relevant for comparative purposes: "[…] Iran as a beloved is always the voiceless object of male adoration and love. Without claim on her lover, she is invariably mute. As a mother, Iran becomes endowed both with maternal rights and a voice to express her claims over

her sons" (462). According to the definition of a Palestinian, however, as stated in Article 5 of the Palestinian National Charter (*Al-Mithaq al-Watani al-Filastini*),[4] Palestinians are her children only until 1947: "Palestinians are those Arab citizens who used to reside […] in Palestine until 1947, and every one who is born of an Arab Palestinian father after this date_whether inside Palestine or outside it_is a Palestinian." Although such legal definition of citizenship in patrilineal terms is generic to the Middle East, it is important to observe its symbolic meaning in this context. Until the "rape," as it is often referred to, in 1947, Palestinians were defined as those who lived in Palestine, in other words the motherland, and in that sense reproduced by the Mother Palestine. In the post-1947 period, Palestinians, whether still in historic Palestine or living outside its borders, no longer fit the earlier definition. It is being born to a Palestinian father that now functions as the prerequisite for Palestinianness, a father whose Palestinianness is established through his residence in the motherland before the "rape." It is the sons of these fathers who will continue the reproduction of the Palestinian people. While the land as mother was responsible for the reproduction of Palestinians until 1947, the rape disqualified her from this role, and it is now fathers who reproduce the nation (Massad 472).

I would argue that it was a cultural compromise to present the land of Palestine as a Mother in the context of referring to the Zionist conquest of Palestine as a "rape." In the Arab culture, rape is an offence considered more humiliating than homicide (Zeid 256). Rape of a woman is an attack on the honor of men who are the woman's kin. Vengeance is mandatory, and increases the merit of the offended party. It is the honor of the agnatic family (those related through males) that compels one to avenge the offence

[4] It was adopted by the Fourth Palestine National Assembly in 1968.

done to the weaker party_women_through whom the group is vulnerable (Bourdieu 220). It is for this reason that the woman in question becomes the victim of honor killing. Though she is the victim, her status becomes that of a prostitute whose morals have been degraded. Palestine, however, for obvious reasons cannot be described as a prostitute and be subjected to honor killing due to having been raped. In addition, honor killing is associated with young woman such as daughters and sisters (how often does one hear of a mother being subject to honor killing by her sons?). For these reasons, it is perhaps less culturally controversial to refer to Mother Palestine (as opposed to Palestine as the symbolic virgin) as a victim of "rape."

The contrast is interesting when one considers that, according to some historical sources, in 1947/48 Israeli army used the threat of raping Palestinian girls if their families did not quit the land of Palestine (Shaaban 170). It has been reported that in 1948 some Palestinians raised the motto "*Akhsar al Ard Wala Al 'Ird* (Lose your land rather than you honor, i.e. your daughter's virginity)" (Shaaban 170). This is underlined by a narrative of a Palestinian refugee woman in Damascus:

> […] How would I feel if the enemy took my daughter and raped her in front of me? I would be far happier if her three brothers were killed and no enemy were able to reach her. If my daughter were raped and my honor defiled I would be disgraced, and my sons' lives would be pointless. It was to save our honor from the Israeli rapists that we left our homes and lands in Palestine. The Israelis understood this and exploited this fact to the full. They told us, speaking through loudspeakers, that either we left our homes or they would kill the men and rape the women. Palestinian men's nightmare was to defend their wives and daughters from the Israeli rapists […] Men, including those in responsible positions, were obsessed with protecting their honor (women) from the Israelis. Even when they fought they fought to protect their women rather than their land; land didn't matter to them at all. (Shaaban 152)

The above account illustrates how, before *Al Naqba*, honor was based in the family, not the Palestinian land and nation. Even after *Al Naqba*, some would say that up to the

outbreak of the *Intifada*, honor continued to be understood in terms of family rather than in any nationalistic context.

As the Palestinians sacrificed their land for their honor, honor understandably became more important after *Al Naqba*, as illustrated in the words of a refugee woman who had been an activist in the 1936-39 revolt:

> The Palestinians used to be much more advanced in his own country and women were more independent and freer […] but after 1948 this changed: in the camps the Palestinians became ultrastrict, even fanatic about the "honor" of his women. Perhaps this was because he had lost everything that gave his life meaning and "honor" was the only possession remaining to him. (Gluck 7)

It is interesting in this context how women in the Occupied Territories and women in the diaspora each felt that the others were "better off" than themselves in terms of gender equality. Those under Israeli occupation felt that, in words of Mariam, a Palestinian woman from the West Bank, spoken in 1987 before outbreak of the *Intifada*:

> [Palestinians in the Occupied Territories have] retained all the very old-fashioned bad habits which belittle women. In an attempt to keep our Arab identity the men seem to have frozen our habits, traditions, morals and values. So Arab societies under Israeli occupation preserve both the bad and the good for fear of losing their identity. The result is that they live in limbo, while Palestinian communities in Syria and other Arab countries are much more relaxed and can afford to be more open to change. They develop naturally and are not so terrified to accept new habits, new traditions and new ideas about life. Hence, women outside the occupied territories are much better off than women on the West Bank, who are still subjected to outmoded and outdated ideas. (Shaaban 140)

On the other hand, those in the Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon considered themselves to have:

> […] attempted to preserve pre-1948 relations of kinship and locality, [forming] cultural contexts that expressly stood against changes in gender relations. Indeed, as a general reaction to exile, gender became articulated and politicized as it had not been in Palestine, transformed into a central element in popular resistance to culture loss and alienation. When people of the camps expressed pride in having preserved 'our customs and tradition,' it was precisely rules about gender relations that they meant. Women, just like men or village and

> family notables, shared in this pride which most saw as necessary protection for themselves and the community, surrounded by an alien dominant society […] Palestinian women were viewed by men and women as harder working, stricter about honor, and better mothers than Lebanese women; as such perceptions formed a central element in Palestinian self-differentiation from the Lebanese. (Sayigh 148)

Palestinians in the diaspora might consider themselves to be "better" than the Arab or non-Arab population in their countries of exile. Nevertheless, they, like Mona, a Palestinian woman in Damascus, feel that "the position of women in the Occupied Territories is much better than the position of Palestinian women in exile. The struggle both for liberation and equality of the sexes is more genuine and more effective there than what you find in exile" (Shaaban 172). Aside from "grass is greener" arguments, the important thing to note is that both in the Occupied Territories and in the diaspora, the traditional Palestinian family structure was indeed one of the few institutions that survived the dislocation caused by Israeli occupation. In the absence of a state and in the presence of an implacably hostile authority, the family's role as protector, arbiter and social authority has undoubtedly been important, and this has made it more resistant to other social forces undermining its authority. Consequently, women were increasingly confined to the house and their honor had to be guarded carefully.

Equating the Israeli occupation of Palestinian land to rape indicates a widening of the definition of honor after 1947/48 to include the land of Palestine. Palestinian nationalism is understood in terms of the honor of Palestinian men, perhaps with a sense of repentance and self-reflection for having abandoned the land in order to save family honor. Understanding Palestinian nationalism in such terms also signifies that in circumstances in which Palestinian nationalism is to take precedence over every other aspect of life, such as in times of war, family honor would give way to national honor,

allowing for the re-definition, albeit temporary, of the former (family life) accompanied with changes in social behaviors and attitudes. The national liberation movement became a platform for, and thus institutionalized, Palestinian women's participation and involvement in social and political life. As early as the mid-1970s and with the political mobilization of many women, street demonstrators began to raise the slogan *al-Ard Qabl al-'Ird* (land before honor). While men's honor was placed in the political nationalist context of protecting the ultimate female member of the Family/nation, namely Palestine, protection of Palestinian women was downgraded as a result. National issues, not social issues, came to determine what was shameful and what was not. An ideological change took place in the popular understanding of "family" from kin to political collectives. For example, the *Intifada* accelerated changes in social attitudes towards women prisoners. Women who underwent sexual harassment in prisons or elsewhere were no longer held responsible for it, provided the assailant was an enemy soldier, interrogator or collaborator.

A parallel can be made with the Algerian War of Independence. An Egyptian film, *Jamila Bou Harayd* (1961) by director Youssef Chahine, is based on a young female resistance fighter of that name who became an international cause celebre. In the film, the heroin is gruesomely tortured. In one scene, when a French soldier electrifies her breasts with two rods, the camera shows their silhouette on the wall. The image evokes penetration, leading the audience to suspect that the heroine is raped during interrogation. The rape scene is, of course, not shown nor are there any verbal indications that she was raped, which may be why she is allowed to remain a symbol of Algerian national resistance to the end of the film, and indeed to this day in Algeria. Similarly during the *Intifada,* the definition of what was "not" dishonorable expanded,

while the nationalist discourse remained curiously silent on types of women's action that were considered honorable. Women themselves thus placed their honor in the political nationalist context as well.

Only Honorary Men and Mothers Need Apply

If nationalism speaks to men, women are excluded from this social contract of joining the "Imagined Community." In the Palestinian context, it can perhaps be said that there are two types of invitation cards handed to women wishing to join this Community, rather than the door of nationalism opening to freely and unconditionally allow women in. These are first, by becoming an honorary man and second, by being a mother. In the first case, Palestinians, regardless of their sex, are portrayed as being masculine commandos, as in the following nursery rhyme:

> Prepare my people,
> The revolutionaries have emerged
> Enough dispersion, enough exile
> You will return
> The sons of the nation are lined up to protect the land
> Young men and women, teenagers and all. (Nazzal 35-36)

Here, "sons of the nation" refer to "young men and women, teenagers and all." In other words, everybody is the "son" of Palestine, a masculinization of the Palestinian people. A similar process can be detected in the following quote found in <u>The Intifada: A Message from Three Generations of Palestinians</u>:

> Our journalists are being thrown in jails and concentration camps for months without charges and no trials. But then soldiers expect no less from their enemies, and our journalists are our soldiers. So are our scientists, our plumbers, our teachers, our students, our elders, our children, our mothers and our sisters. We are our own army and, weaponless, we will fight until we regain our land or are buried in it.

Omission of fathers and brothers from the list of those constituting the Palestinian

"army" leads one to believe that men, who are neither students, the elderly nor children, are categorized by their professions, which of course means that men are expected to have professions. The specific allusion to mothers and sisters indicates in turn that women are not expected to have professions other than being mothers and/or sisters. Yet, women are to become "soldiers" and join the "army" now. Women are to relate to nationalism by effectively becoming men. This is a clear indication that the shift in acceptability of women's roles and political participation during the *Intifada* was not a transformation in gender roles but rather a national emergency that required all Palestinians in the occupied territories to become temporary men. Indeed, transformation of gender roles was not the language in which women's participation in the resistance was presented. It was treated by men and women alike as "national work (*al-amal al-watani*)" (Sharoni 48). The same could be said of the Algerian experience as portrayed in *Battle of Algiers* (1967) and in aforementioned *Jamila Bou Harayd* (1961), both films about the Algerian underground movement for independence from the French, in which women played vital roles alongside the men. The female activists are shown taking off their *hijab*s, cutting their hair short and coloring it to a lighter shade, wearing make-up to make them not only more attractive to the eyes of the French soldiers but also to make them whiter, wearing tight-fitting clothes and short skirts and flirting with the French men in order not to arouse suspicion in their missions to plant bombs in cafes and dance halls frequented by the French. There is even one girl in *Jamila Bou Harayd*, who becomes a cabaret dancer (i.e. a prostitute) in a French soldiers' cafeteria, taking on a socially unacceptable role in order to further the nationalist cause. Not only did the women participate in the struggle for independence, but they did so by discarding their values, as well as the values of the Algerian men, that

had defined their respectability and honor. Algerian women could thus temporarily become the Enemy, i.e. like the French in terms of looks, dress and manners, in the interests of furthering the cause. After independence in 1962, however, social norms were re-established. Algerian women were forced back to their homes without acknowledgement of their former contribution, as portrayed in *Omar Gatlato* (1976) by director Merzak Allouache. It is a cautionary tale for many Palestinian female activists, who repeatedly remind each other of what happened to Algerian women following independence (Hiltermann 47). Treatment of the national struggle as outside normal circumstances was precisely why women's participation was not perceived as a challenge to social stability but rather as a necessary and valuable contribution (Sharoni 72).

The second way in which women can participate in nationalist experience is by consciously being or even becoming a mother. This is, on the one hand, how the male political center has tried to recruit women_by concentrating on their reproductive function. The demand placed upon women to become a reproductive machine or "baby factories"[5] is an example of how women as well as their (male) children could be temporarily dehumanized, their values attached to their industrious productivity of babies who were regarded as "ammunition." By focusing on the reproductive capacity of women, both marriage and childbearing became politicized as national work or duty. It is important to note, however, that it wasn't necessarily political commitment that resulted in the rise in both marriage and birth rates during the *Intifada*. Women did not make matrimonial and reproductive decisions on the basis of a perceived national need.

[5] A Hamas document, "The Roles of Muslim Women," states: "In the resistance, the role of the Muslim woman is equal to the man's. She is a factory of men, and she has a great role in raising and educating the generation" (Jad 139).

Rather, they cultivated a sense of contribution and commitment to the national struggle by conceptualizing and categorizing fertility and reproduction in the same terms as in nationalist discourse, examples of which will be seen in Chapter 5.

What this indicates is that nationalism is not an up-down or center-periphery ideology forced upon the masses/people by the political center. The *Intifada* was a triumph of mass organization based on the practical and specific historical experience that the Palestinian people have accumulated as a result of the particular condition through which they have lived (Barghouti 125). Unlike institutionalized forms of nationalism, national culture produced in the course of struggle has the potential to be emancipatory and progressive. Indeed, for those sectors of society that were the most oppressed and disadvantaged, whom the traditional organizational frameworks failed to absorb and who were looking for a more active and effective role in society, the *Intifada* served as an entry point into society as actors. Khalid recalled:

> You know, when we started our cause, it was us students each contributing a little bit of money to carry out our political activities. Later, political parties started to take over, and they paid some, not all, students (i.e. activists) for their activities. But that was not how it was at first. [Money] was not what it was about.

Khalid went on to talk of how political parties "came and took over the *Intifada*. And, by the way, they completely ruined it."

In examining the *Intifada*, not only was there mass-based nationalism among the politically aware and active *shabab*, but moreover there was a clear case of what Jean-Klein calls "self-nationalization" (Jean-Klein, "Nationalism" 83), or a process of infusion by ordinary persons of "nationalizing effects" in their pursuit of daily exercises, interests and relations. This process of "self-nationalization" can be concurrent with, and even complement, a formally organized liberational and nation-

state-building movement. This will be one aspect of the next chapter, which will examine how Palestinian nationalism was expressed in the language of the *Intifada*, and what meanings were attached to "motherhood" in that language.

Chapter 3: Portrayal of "Mother" and "Motherhood" in the Language of the *Intifada*

With the *Intifada*, self-reliance, independence and defiance, as well as *sumud* or steadfastness and determination, characterized the image of the "New Palestinians" (Nazzal 30). Ironically perhaps, these traits of the "New Palestinians," with their macho character, are remarkably similar to the newly created self-image of the "new Jew," [6] or *sabra*. The latter is a cactus that is tough on the outside and tender on the inside, and it refers to the Israel-born Jewish Israelis. Significantly both the Palestinians and the Jewish-Israelis see themselves as both victims and fighters. It is rather ironic to consider that cactus plants for the post-1948 Palestinians are indicators of where Palestinian villages were before 1948: cacti were commonly planted as fencing by Palestinian villagers, which later allowed the post-1948 Palestinians to spot and reclaim the relics of a Palestinian past located in Israeli settlements. As Swedenburg explains:

> […] the cactus is transformed from something that evokes pathos into the bearer of hope, from the site of an erasure into an indelible trace. For the cactus […] springs back to life even after Israeli settlers attempt to eliminate it by burning it to the ground […] The cactus signifies Arab survival […]. (22)

The image of the "New Palestinians" is expressed in the following nursery rhyme:

> My brothers and I are commandos.
> I hear the cannon balls in the port,
> Like music of the *'ude* and the *kamanja*.
> Revolution was created for the brave
> And my ancestors were commandos. (Nazzal 32)

[6] For Zionists, the land of Palestine was both a Mother and a Virgin. As a Virgin, the Zionists needed to fertilize and fecundate her. The result of this pregnancy was to be the birth of the "New Jews," the Israeli Jews of the post-Holocaust, post-Independence era, in contrast to the feminine Diaspora Jews who walked into the gas chambers without a fight.

The “New Palestinians” are brave “commandos.” A national myth is created by stretching the line of bravery to their ancestors, insisting that they were “commandos” and that to be a Palestinian is to be such a commando. The “New Palestinians” were given birth by the *Intifada*, as captured in a painting by Sliman Mansour, “The *Intifada*… the Mother” [see Fig.1]. In the painting, the *Intifada* is portrayed as a fertile pregnant woman, who is giving birth to masses of “New Palestinians.” If one looks carefully at their faces, they are all wearing the same expression as the Mother *Intifada*, that of *sumud* and patience. This chapter will explore how “mother” and “motherhood” were portrayed in the languages of this new culture.

[Image]

Fig.1

Language from Below

Prior to the *Intifada*, in the mid-60s, the leading poets of the day, including Mahmud Darwish, Samih al-Qasim and Tawfiq Zayyad, were rebelling against the linguistic structures and artistic conventions of traditional Arabic poetry. Traditional Arabic poetry privileges autonomy and stability over the depiction of social reality and thus tends to persist over a very long period of time, surviving a number of socio-economic formations (Elmessiri 82). These revolutionary poets deemed it necessary to break away from traditional forms of poetry, the essence of which they found alien both to themselves and their present situation. As “New Palestinians,” they advocated changing their current situation and breaking away from the past that had given rise to the present state of affairs. They considered both new vocabulary and new forms, such as free-verse, to be better suited to the present predicament (Jacobson 34-35). The new language and forms were to be dynamic and future-oriented, and often drew upon a

concept of nature that has no distinct boundaries (Elmessiri 83). Take, for example, the poem, "She," by Hilmi Al-Tuni:

> She is as proud as the mountain.
> She is as deep as the ocean.
> She is as vigilant as the moon.
> She is as warm as the sun.
> She is as generous as the clouds.
> She is as fertile as the land.
> She loves all that grows.
> And I am a tender plant.
> She is my mother.
> She is my Homeland.
> Palestine. (Alqudsi-Ghabra 459)

Not only is the poem abundant with vocabulary related to nature, but, more importantly, the "she"s mentioned in the poem are all analogies of Palestine. It is interesting that the absence of a nation-state should lead the poets to imagine a border-less state, borders being one of the defining aspects of a nation-state. Such poetry can, on the one hand, be considered representative of the greatness of the Palestinian dream and determination. On the other hand, it could be argued that the use of such language is an indicator that statehood seemed an illusion to the poets, hence it could only be imagined using such boundary-less metaphors. By identifying "she" as the "mother" in the last lines of the poem, Palestine is finally given a more specific definition, as "mother" is arguably a word that implies a distinct boundary, i.e. the mother's body. Indeed, in Palestinian literature and poetry, Palestine has always been portrayed as a woman, generally as a mother, giving and loving towards her children. Palestine, as portrayed in the poem, is a loving and caring mother. The poet, a child of the Mother Palestine, is "a tender plant," her roots firmly grounded in the fertile land of Palestine.

This rooted-ness is an important image for the Palestinians, as they view that Israeli Jews currently claiming Mother Palestine as theirs are in reality denied the inner

security that true love and attachment to land, the mother, brings. The *Eretz Yisrael* that Zionists talk of is a biblical concept, but in Palestinian discourse they cannot claim their "rootedness" in the land of Palestine (Elmessiri 92-93). This is partly the reason why Palestinian poets and politicians have ceaselessly praised and idealized Palestinian peasants, or *fellahin*, since 1948. Although the use of peasants as a pivotal figure in nationalist discourse is a practice commonly witnessed,[7] Swedenburg argues that the *fellahin* carry an unusually heavy symbolic weight for Palestinian nationalism:

> […] the overwhelming cultural presence of the *fallah* flows from the endangered status of the Palestinian nation. It is a nation imagined but unrealized, a people whose relation to their territory has been severed again and again, whose identity is tenuous and constantly under threat. (19)

Not only are *fellahin* idealized in Palestinian culture as representatives of a way of life that most Palestinians have lost,[8] but as Swedenburg discusses, they are a symbolically fit vehicle of resistance to three Israeli settler-colonial activities, namely:_1) the conquest of Palestinian land; 2) the "preservation-dissolution" of Palestinian villages; and 3) the denial of the legitimacy of Palestinian nationalism (19). In their stubborn and patient defiance of the oppressor, *fellahin* exemplified the virtue of *sumud*, a term repeatedly used in communiqués from the *Intifada* underground. Through *sumud*, the Palestinians would survive, simply by staying put and refusing to leave, whatever hardships the enemy might impose (Fox 127). The Palestinians as *fellahin* are at one with the earth, the land of Palestine. They know that Palestine is their mother, while the Israelis as a newcomer to the land can gain no such conviction.

The revolutionary concepts of the mid-60s onwards were invariably reflected

[7] Ana Maria Alonso points to examples of Romanian, Singhalese, French and Brazilian nationalisms, as well as early Zionism.

[8] Such idealization of the peasant inspired Birzeit University to declare an annual olive-picking holiday, for example, and to construct a model Palestinian village out of Styrofoam on the campus one year (Fox 127).

in the poetry of the *Intifada*, which may be characterized as an attempt to use "the language from below." Instead of writing for an elite intellectual audience, well-educated in the aesthetics of classical poetry, the poets were now writing for the masses and using a vocabulary that touched the very core of their lives. This concept was summarized by the poet Ali Al-Khalili: "My writing […] is directed at a new audience trying to formulate a new progressive culture" (Touma 11). Through depicting popular heroes struggling against the Israeli occupation, Al-Khalili tried to go further than the romanticism of poetic prose, stressing Palestinian optimism despite the present difficulties. In his attempt to form a "new progressive culture," he reinvented tradition by dealing with local heritage and concentrating on its progressive aspects. In so doing he aimed to offer continuity between the past, the present and the future. He considered this to be a particularly important aspect of the *Intifada*, to struggle against Israeli attempts to obliterate, distort and uproot the Palestinian people and their culture (Touma 11).

The aim of *Intifada* poets was to not only get their own ideas across to the public, but also to serve as a record to the people's daily experiences, which they managed to do by using a clear and direct approach (Jacobson 35). They also offered meanings to the otherwise incomprehensible reality of violence and death, in which people were living daily. In her poem, "Hamza," Fadwa Tuqan writes:

> "This land, my sister, has a fertile heart
> it throbs, doesn't wither, endures
> for the secret of hills and wombs
> is one
> this earth that sprouts with spikes and palms
> is the same that gives birth to a warrior.
> This land, my sister, is a woman,"
> he said.

Days passed I did not see
Hamza
however, I could feel
that the belly of the land was heaving
in travail. (Azar 123)

Here, the land of Palestine is a fertile pregnant woman "that gives birth to a warrior," and she is "in travail." The poem thus portrays the *shabab* (youths) as warriors, who are the children of Palestine. In a song of the *Intifada*, the Mother Palestine is calling to the *shabab*:

A voice was heard, boys, calling
[It was] the voice of my country and it said "my children
I am your mother, I am Palestine
And I've been calling to you for years."

To your land, the darling of the martyrs
Homeland of flowers, oh my dear mother
We offer the rebels. (Hudson 126)

Here again, the *shabab* are the sons of Mother Palestine. The first of the verses hints at the generational shift of authority in Palestinian society, as will be discussed in further detail in the next chapter: while Mother Palestine has for years been calling to her sons, the Palestinians, the older generations were still too politically immature to respond to their Mother's call. It is the *shabab* who are finally mature enough, or have completed a rite of passage, to stand up to redeem her honor. By extending the traditional concept of honor outside the kin group to the Palestinian nation, the Palestinian nation is now to be regarded as a family. In the second of the verses, perhaps "we," the older generation of Palestinians, redeem their place by defining their role as actively "offer"ing the *shabab* to Mother Palestine.

However revolutionary the language of the *Intifada* poetry may be, it must be noted that it generally still continues to refer to Palestine as the Mother without giving

voice to real mothers of Palestine as the subject of their art. In cases where mothers were portrayed in songs and poems, it was often not them doing the talking but the male poets, as can be seen below:

> The martyr gives us stones from his blood
> From his blood the rose becomes red
> His mother trills for him in joy
> He has given his blood to the nation. (Hudson 126-27)

Here in this song, the martyred *shab* and the Palestinian nation are linked in a cycle of reincarnation.[9] The mother of the martyr is celebrating the births of "stones," the means of achieving liberation, and "the rose," what makes Palestinian land beautiful, perhaps even referring to Palestinian infrastructure. What is represented by "stones" and "the rose" can be summed up in the word, "the nation," which is what the martyr gave birth to through his death. This is why the mother of the martyr is not in mourning. Similarly:

> My mother trilled in joy
> She said "go arm yourself,
> For we do not shirk our duties.
> You want my children? help yourselves
> You want my blood? here's a portion." (Hudson 127)

In the above song, the mother is quoted as offering her support, children and blood, but not direct personal action. This is indicative of how such direct personal action was not expected nor required by the society. Her duty was defined in her relationship with her (male) children. That she would sacrifice her children became the indicator of her commitment to the cause. Through such imagery, the songs and poems of the *Intifada* illustrate how the emergent norms of resistance draw strength from older, more securely

[9] The same idea is expressed in UNLU's Communiqué No.30: "[UNLU] salutes with honor and appreciation the martyrs of the uprising- and their families- whose pure blood has watered the dust of the homeland and enabled the growth of the green plant and the Palestinian olive branch, symbol of peace and justice."

entrenched discourses of male and female duties toward family and society. In addition, it should be noted that the singers and narrators of all the *Intifada* songs quoted above are male, and that the act of performing them is marked as a masculine act of self-assertion (Hudson 127-28). This is in accordance with the tradition of Arabic poetry and spoken words, which considers such words as being a source of power, authority and legitimacy, and which views the skilled poet as a hero.

Poems and songs, in which a real mother is the central character talking of her love, contribution to the cause or her loss in a first-person narrative, are few and far between. It is not surprising that it was the female poets who wrote of real Palestinian mothers and even gave them a voice. Below, an extract of a poem entitled "Her Heart is a Rose Petal and Her Skin is Granite" by Lorene Zaron-Zouzounis is a case in point:

> […]
> She endures torture while pregnant in prison
> for carrying on where her incarcerated
> freedom-fighter husband left off
> giving birth to a child that survives this hell
> because inside this woman, all along, is a white light
> and an eternal flame that exists in the child
> who carries on where mother left off
>
> She stands up against steel bullets coated in rubber
> faces her occupier head on to defend herself,
> her family, her people and homeland
> then turns her back to resume
> a daily life in the fields,
> fetch water from a well that has run dry
> tend to children sickened by open contaminated sewers
> running along their front door or curtain
>
> A Palestinian woman has her heart that bleeds rose petals
> in a bloodstream of tainted water
> and sweats the colors black, green, white and red
> through a granite skin that stretches
> but never breaks (319-20)

In the poem, a mother's activism in the *Intifada* is portrayed, in addition to reminding

the readers that these mothers did not neglect their traditional duties as a result of their participation in the Palestinian resistance movement. There is even an allusion to the mother's imprisonment, a subject traditionally associated with shame and dishonor not only for the woman in question but also of the male members of her family. Her "granite skin" is a reference to *Intifada* stones, and that it "stretches" refers to pregnancy and her giving birth to children of the stones. That this "granite skin" "never breaks" is a reference to the determination of the Palestinian people, embodied in the body and biological functions of mothers such as her.

Another poem, "The Last Bullet" by Nidaa Khoury, gives a voice to an *Intifada* mother:

> In my chest a cave
> a gun and a man of storm
> I am safe
>
> In my chest an orphan
> naked child
> in my chest, hope
>
> If I burst and fall slain
> I'll gather my body anew
> I'll fire my last shot (158)

In this poem, the mother's "last shot" is her baby. The imagery is of a mother's body as a gun barrel, firing babies that would kill the enemies. It is indicative of the masculinization of pregnancy and motherhood in the women's language of the *Intifada*.

While all the songs and poems above that refer to real mothers are essentially about the mothers' willingness to offer their sons/children to the *Intifada*, the last two poems by the female poets make clear reference to active participation of the mothers in addition to offering their children. Child-bearing is portrayed as one, albeit perhaps the ultimate form of, active contribution on the part of the mothers, but by no means the

only one.

Language from Above

Imagery similar to that used in the poem "Hamza," analogizing the *Intifada* to pregnancy was employed by the Unified National Leadership of the Uprising (UNLU)[10] in their communiqués.[11] While the *Intifada* is referred to as entering its eighth, ninth, or twelfth month, the enemy's attempt to repress it is constantly referred to as his attempt to "abort" it. Palestinian independence is clearly seen as the ultimate birth of the *Intifada*'s pregnancy, as can bee seen in Fig.2, a cartoon published in a Palestinian newspaper following the Palestinian Declaration of Independence on 15 November 1988.

[Image]

Fig.2: (*Source*: Al Fajr 21 November 1988, pg.1.)

In the cartoon, a *mukhtar*-like man representing the Palestine National Council (PNC) is holding a baby boy wrapped in a *kaffiyah*, welcomed by joyous Palestinian children.[12] That the baby is held by an elderly man rather than a mother could be, aside from the obvious representation of the sex and age of PNC members, a reference to continuing patriarchy in the Palestinian nation, or an acknowledgement of the role of the otherwise absent generation of older men in the *Intifada*. This issue would be further discussed in

[10] UNLU was a coalition of supporters of Fatah, the Democratic Front, the Popular Front and the Communist Party, with a close interrelationship with the PLO.
[11] Communiqués or leaflets became a substitute leadership during the *Intifada*, in the absence of an official and prominent local leadership. While in the pre-*Intifada* period, the leadership was identified with dominant political personalities, who held official positions or wielded influence, the communiqués leadership was not comprised of professional politicians nor were its members a permanent body.
[12] Interestingly, there is an obvious Christian imagery here, which echoes the star that guided the wise men to Bethlehem.

the next chapter.

The Palestinian Declaration of Independence is also referred to as the Palestinian wedding, the pinnacle of heterosexual love, and the Palestinians are told to "Rejoice in your happiness, for it is your happiness and you are the bridegrooms" (Mishal *et al.* 146). In Communiqué 2 issued by the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas), the blood of martyrs is described as dowry to Palestine the Bride:

> Every day the earth absorbs the blood of the righteous. Kneels in front of the graves and bows before the martyrs of grace. This is part of the price of pride and honor, liberation and salvation. This is the dowry of those with "lovely eyes," a substitute for paradise. (Mishal *et al.* 206)

Martyr's blood is again mentioned in Communiqué 28 of Hamas: "[…] no Palestinian generation has the right to concede the land, steeped in martyr's blood" (Mishal *et al.* 239). The image invoked is that the land of Palestine consists of the blood of martyrs, and thus the land is the child of martyrs over whom the Palestinians can claim custody. The *Intifada* had thus given Palestinians an additional claim over Palestine: that it is their child. By comparing the *Intifada* to marriage and pregnancy, both events of life and of the society that are considered to bring forth great joy, it is implied that the *Intifada* is a joyous process.

While the land of Palestine is described as the Mother, the real mothers are being compared to land. UNLU's Communiqué 5 describes Palestinian mothers, sisters and daughters as *manabit* or the soil on which "manhood, respect and dignity" grow. The communiqué calls on women to "work together side by side with their husbands, sons and brothers […]." While mothers, sisters and daughters are described as the soil producing manhood, respect and dignity, a later communiqué describes the Palestine people, conceived in the masculine, as the "makers of glory, respect and dignity."

While men actively create glory, respect and dignity, women are merely the soil upon which these attributes, along with manhood, grow. It is as soil that they are the "guardians" of Palestinian lives and survival (Massad 474). Women and mothers are not given the same respect or glorification given to Mother Palestine. Instead, as can be seen in UNLU's Communiqué 68, which recognizes the World Woman's Day on 8 March 1991, women are ordered to "hold marches, organize sit-down strikes, and brandish posters with slogans" (Mashal *et al.* 191) to mark the occasion, instead of UNLU celebrating womanhood and respecting women as people who have the initiatives and abilities to set their own agendas for the Day.

In communiqués, women are often referred to in the context of the weak and suffering members of society, included in the category of "the children, the women and the elderly," as in UNLU's Communiqué 24 and Hamas' Communiqué 74. Otherwise, women are referred to in biologically- and socially-relational terms to men. In one interview, Yasser Arafat is quoted as explaining how the Palestinian Declaration of Independence esteems women as the "guardians of our existence and of your eternal fires," a phrase which "derived from ancient Arab tribes, for whom the fire was the symbol of warmth, of wealth, and of hospitality" (Young 48). Women, in other words, are valued for their biological role of being "guardians of […] existence" i.e. giving birth and for their social role of providing men with "warmth" "wealth" and "hospitality." The same stance can also be seen in Communiqué 12 when UNLU declares that the *Intifada* consists of "the children and youth of the stones and the Molotov cocktails. It is the thousands of women who have miscarried due to the noxious gas bombs and those whose husbands and sons are incarcerated in the Nazi prisons" (Mashal *et al.* 78). Palestinian women's sufferings are exemplified in their

reproductive capacities i.e. when they miscarry and thus have failed to produce more nationalist agents, or in their social roles as mothers i.e. when their sons are imprisoned or even injured or dead, as in the Special Leaflet of Hamas: "[…] in the name of the suckling babe into whose eye the Jew was quick to fire a bullet while he was in his mother's arms?! […] in the name of the mother whose son was robbed from her arms and thrown into the black pits of prison?!" (Mashal *et al.* 270).

Mothers are also mentioned in the social context of caring for their sons and Palestinian people as a whole: "The woman's place is in the home of the fighter and in the fighting family. Her important role is taking care of the home, raising the children, educating them in the values of Islam and in the fulfillment of its commandments, in anticipation of their role in the coming *jihad*" (Young 50). The same thing can be seen in UNLU's Communiqué 10, "great glory and esteem to the [Palestinian] woman for her devotion and generosity to her people" (Mashal *et al.* 71), and Hamas' Communiqué 33, "[…] tears of the patient mothers who are concerned for their children [who behave like] men" (Mashal *et al.* 254). In addition, mothers are credited for letting go of their children and loved ones for the *Intifada*, as well as for raising the *Intifada* Children: "Praise to the suffering wives and to the sisters who took leave of their loved ones heroically and steadfastly, and who uphold the pledge to raise a generation imbued with faith and with the spirit of *jihad*, in order to continue the mission" (Mashal *et al.* 285). In UNLU's Communiqué 29, mothers are told to rejoice: "[…] she has lifted her voice twice: first on the day of her son's death, and again on the day of the declaration of the state" (Mashal *et al.* 146). A mother's giving up her son for the cause of the *Intifada* is equated to the Declaration of Independence. The mother of a martyr declares her unquestioned commitment to nationalism through martyrdom of her son. In 1988, 21

March was declared “Mother’s Day.” This was a national holiday, not in recognition of motherhood as such, but as a celebration of mothering martyrs, when women’s committees and youth clubs called on the families of jailed, injured or killed *shabab*. In short, the sole recognition mothers got in political language was through their reproductive capacity as well as through their social relationship with men, especially as mothers of their sons. Referral of mothers as Umm XXX (name of the first son) is thoroughly traditional, as is referral of fathers as Abu XXX (name of the first son). It must be emphasized, however, that mothers were being confined exclusively to such traditional categories even in the context of a self-consciously radical movement, which was liberal when it came to other societal traditions such as seniority and to a certain extent activism of unmarried young women.

It is true that political language of the *Intifada* depersonalized the Palestinian population as a whole, regardless of their sex and age group. Men were acknowledged solely for their ability to fight the Israelis, not for their personal characters and achievements. Men were as much prisoners of their social roles as portrayed in the nationalist discourse as women were. The importance of the above analysis, then, is as a clarification of what this prison sentence consisted. In other words, these are the types of languages that the women kept hearing during the *Intifada*, languages that illustrate how most people’s perceptions of women’s roles did not alter in spite of the reality in the streets and even in the home. The question is how they understood and digested it, which is where one can observe a clear gender divide. This is particularly important in that while the women were making other contributions outside the bounds of those recognized and encouraged in the nationalist discourse, it was left to the women themselves to accommodate the discourse while negotiating other roles, especially

active participation and contribution to the cause. The following chapters will examine the social side of the *Intifada*, in order to contextualize where the women, especially mothers, stood and how they sought to negotiate their place in the new resistance culture through "self-nationalization."

Chapter 4: Changes in Family and Social Structures during the *Intifada*

The birth of a "New Palestinian" and the *Intifada* Children was closely related to a contest over male hierarchy in occupied Palestinian society. In his autobiography, Raja Shehadeh, a lawyer and a founder of a Palestinian human rights organization, Al Haq, and the son of a famous Palestinian lawyer, Aziz Shehadeh, describes the *Intifada* as follows:

> With the *Intifada*, my generation found its own way to struggle and deal with the past. The *Intifada* liberated me. Until then, I had never believed that I had the right to question the legacy of my father. (232)

A similar theme is portrayed in the film, *Wedding in Galilee* (1986), by a Palestinian-Belgian director Michel Khleifi, who grew up in Nazareth. The film revolves around a *mukhtar* of a Palestinian village in Galilee who wants to hold a traditional, full-scale wedding for his son and is given permission on the condition that the Israeli military governor and his officers be guests of honor at the ceremony. Although made prior to the First *Intifada*, there is a clear sense of what is to come in this film portraying three generations of a Palestinian family. One of its themes is the generational struggle between father and son. While for the father, dishonor lies in his son's impotence on his wedding night, for the son, dishonor comes in the form of his father having invited the Israeli military governor and other Israeli soldiers as guests of honor to his wedding. The son's impotence is portrayed as being the result of his father's authority over him, and only after the son defies his father's authority is he able to have an intimate relationship with the bride.[13]

[13] In the end, however, it is the bride who takes away her own virginity in order to give the groom his dignity: this is indeed interesting, as the Israeli "guests" only leave the party after the consummation of marriage i.e. when the blood-stained sheet is shown as a proof to the

Of the many changes in family structure during the *Intifada*, the most significant was the decline of the authority of the father. The father and older men, who were unable to provide for the family due to unemployment or restrictions on travels to Israel to work, or who were absent as a result of imprisonment, kidnap or death, came to be perceived of as weak and passive in front of Israeli soldiers. According to a Gaza Community Mental Health Programme (GCMHP) survey, 85% of Palestinian children's houses were raided by Israeli soldiers, mostly at night, and 56% had witnessed the beating and humiliation of their fathers (El-Sarraj 3). Dr. Eyad El-Sarraj, a Palestinian psychiatrist of GCMHP, describes the case of a six-year old boy who refused to leave his house. One day, when the boy had been with his father the soldiers stopped them and beat the father up until he collapsed on the ground. The boy realized then that his father, who had been the center of his life and security, could no longer protect himself, let alone his children (Moorehead, par. 9). The inevitable reaction is a mixture of fear, frustration, helplessness, anger and perhaps most tragically rejection of the father. Another example of such rejection can be seen in a testimony of a mother: "Once I wanted to put some money in the bank, and my son said to me, 'Don't put it in my father's name because he is always imprisoned and the money will disappear'" (Khamis, Political 61).

A similar feeling again is portrayed in the film, *Tale of the Three Jewels* (1995), also by director Michel Khleifi. The film is about Yussef, a twelve-year old Palestinian boy in Gaza, who falls in love with Aida, a gypsy girl. When Yussef proposes marriage,

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wedding guests. Israeli occupiers leaving after the consummation of marriage between a Palestinian man and his beloved Virgin Palestine is an obvious analogy with the proposed trajectory of Palestinian liberation from Israel. It is interesting to note that in the pre-*Intifada* period, it was Palestine who was taking away her own dignity (by submitting to rape by Israeli occupiers) in order to give her men illusory dignity. By contrast, here is a clear image of Palestinian men being impotent, unable to give Palestine her dignity.

Aida replies that he must first find the three jewels missing from her grandmother's necklace, which was brought from South America by her grandfather. The main theme of the film aside, its portrayal of family relationships is worth close examination for the purpose of this paper. At the beginning of the film, Yussef's father is in jail. Yussef is reluctant to visit his father there, exclaiming to himself: "I don't like seeing my father in prison." The absence of the father in the first half of the film is contrasted with the presence and activism of Yussef's older brother, Samir, who is on the run from the Israeli soldiers, and who is a member of a Palestinian underground organization. Samir and his fellow *shabab* are depicted in a very masculine fashion, wearing *kaffiyah*s that cover their faces, and carrying machine guns. Later in the film, when told of his father's release from prison the following day and asked if he was happy, Yussef replies: "I don't know my father but I'm not scared of him." The audience thus learns not only of the absence of the father during Yussef's early childhood, but also of the deterioration of the father's authority, or for that matter any sort of influence, over the son as a result of that absence. In addition, when the father finally makes an appearance on screen, he is depicted as being physically weak and mentally unstable.

According to another Palestinian psychologist, Dr. Yousif al Nashif, the *Intifada* forced Palestinian children to question their upbringing. As a result of children having witnessed IDF soldiers humiliate and arrest members of their family, and the army destroy their property, close their schools and demolish their homes: "[The] father's authority is being weakened. Palestinian children feel alone. They must do everything by themselves. They must face the Israeli soldiers by themselves. Neither the home, nor the school provides them with any security. There are no more safe places" ("Intifada" 18).

Such decline of the authority of the older generation is very well portrayed in a nursery rhyme called “I Envy You, O Bird”:

> […]
> They took away my father in the middle of the night
> And imprisoned him.
> They humiliated him and beat him,
> From his home they deported him…
>
> My grandfather’s house they destroyed,
> And bulldozed it with its furniture
> And my people, they scattered
> From their lands, they exiled…
>
> My brother stoned them and lighted a fire
> To drive them away from the house,
> To protect his younger brothers…
>
> My sister is among the walls
> Protecting the Aqsa with fire
> To return the oppression of the cunning
> With her brothers, the revolutionaries. (Nazzal 28-29)

In the nursery rhyme, the father and grandfather are portrayed as being passive, even submissive, allowing themselves to be humiliated and beaten up and letting themselves be deported and exiled. The brother and sister, on the other hand, are portrayed as being active and standing up against the oppressors and protecting the young, taking up the role traditionally reserved for the father. It is interesting, however, that the sister is still in the periphery compared to the brother: she is “among the walls.” Nor is she acknowledged as a revolutionary but as only being alongside “her brothers, the revolutionaries.” Nevertheless, it is important that the sister is indeed credited with protection of an active nature, of protecting the Aqsa i.e. the Palestinian cause, outside the confines of the house. The nursery rhyme is a clear indication of how, during the *Intifada*, a generation gap was more prominent than that of normative Palestinian society.

Rites de Passage *of the "Occupation Generation"*

Hanan Mikhail-Ashrawi has noted publicly that "the *Intifada* has eroded parents' authority and their ability to influence their children. The traditional notion of parental control over children is a mistaken notion. Children today have a leading role in the family" (Fisherman 11). Meeson Sabri, a principal of a girls' high school in Kalkilya, agreed: "The authority of the father and mother in the family has been damaged. The youth set the tone today" (Fisherman 11). Indeed, the *Intifada* coincided with the coming of age of a generation of Palestinians born into occupation in, around, and after 1967, when the West Bank and Gaza Strip were captured by Israel in the Six Day War. As Director Mai Masri explains in her film, *Children of Fire* (1990):

> To my parents' generation, the taking of the West Bank and Gaza in the '67 War was a terrible defeat and shame. But a new generation has grown up with Israeli occupation, a generation which has outgrown shame and found a sense of freedom. The *Intifada* is about a new pride, a new identity, a new way of life.

About 50% of Palestinians in the Occupied Territories at the time of the *Intifada* were under the age of 15, and almost 70% had not reached the age of 30. These demographic facts impart a youthful image of the uprising not simply because the youth had taken over, but because this picture was an accurate reflection of age distribution in Palestinian society itself (Giacaman, "Palestinian Women" 139).

For *shabab* who were the so-called "occupation generation" the *Intifada* became *rites de passage*. Arnold van Gennep has shown that all rites of passage are marked by three phases: separation, margin or *limen*, and aggregation. The first stage, separation, comprises symbolic behavior signifying the detachment of the individual or group either from an earlier fixed point in the social structure, from a set of cultural

conditions, or from both. The second stage, margin or *limen,* is a cultural realm that has few or none of the attributes of the past or coming state. The third stage, aggregation, is when the passage is consummated, and ritual subjects are expected to behave in accordance with certain customary norms and ethical standards binding on incumbents of social position in a system of such positions (Van Gennep 10-11). In the context of the *Intifada,* the first stage of rite of passage, separation, was summed up in the willingness of the *shabab* to suffer and sacrifice because that was what they believed distinguished them from the failures of the past as well as from the older generation (Aburish 169-70, 177). A conscious or semi-conscious decision was made by the *shabab* to willingly and actively seek sacrificial actions, and by so doing they changed the definition of suffering. They, unlike the older generation, were deliberately and consciously unafraid: they were not afraid of Israelis, because having been brought up with Israeli soldiers constantly around they feel that they know them. "As opposed to our parents," said one of them, "we who are born under the occupation have learned to know the enemy. We are not afraid of the Israelis anymore; we know them up close; we know their weaknesses, their fears, and their selfishness, too. They are not the invincible monsters that made our parents tremble" (Warschavsky).

Such comments, of course, should not be taken at full face value. Indeed one must consider such influencing factors as to whom they were told (to a western journalist) as well as the socio-political climate of the time. The important point here is that the *shabab* distinguished themselves as a generation from that of their parents. Because they saw their parents as being "afraid," they consciously came to be unafraid, although this does not necessarily mean that they were indeed not scared. As Dr. El-Sarraj reminds us, the "children of the stone" are not made of stones (El-Sarraj 5): they

do suffer pain and fear. In non-fictional comics by Joe Sacco,[14] two *shabab* told the comic journalist:

> *Shab* 1: "Before the *Intifada* we had the idea that Israel had all the power, that there was no way we could push them out…"
> *Shab* 2: "We were afraid of the soldiers, we felt they were like superman… But then we saw they were afraid of stones." (195)

Here the *shabab* are crediting the *Intifada* for making them less afraid of the IDF soldiers by realizing that the soldiers too could be afraid of them. The mechanism of fear here is indeed interesting. The knowledge of the fear of the Other has an empowering effect, perhaps by humanizing the Enemy and in so doing facilitating the understanding of them. For the *shabab*, it was both the fear held by the older generation as well as the fear held by the Israeli soldiers that empowered them not to fear.

Moreover, the *shabab* are not afraid to die, because they feel cornered, as expressed by one youth, Abdullah: "We have nothing to lose; our lives hang on a thread so we might as well fight and die as martyrs" (Warschavsky). Another 14 year-old in Jabalya Camp in Gaza exclaimed, "I'm not afraid. All they can do is kill me" (Hofmann). Having said that, it is worth noting that it is not just despair towards the present situation that drives these youths. As Ali Ahmeti, the political leader of the Macedonian National Liberation Army exclaimed in 2001, if one wasn't an optimist one wouldn't have joined the war of national liberation ("Unlikely"). The same sentiment

[14] Although an unconventional source for an academic paper, Joe Sacco's work is worthy of such attention, perhaps summarized by the fact that Edward Said wrote the introduction to his book. The comics are drawn on his first-hand experiences, extensive research and more than 100 interviews with Palestinians and Jews in Palestine during 1991 and 1992. His work has been championed in The Economist, not known for its interest in comics, and the original comic series won the 1996 American Book Award. David Thompson of The Observer writes: "While the comic-book form typically deals with fantasy of a lurid and questionable kind, Sacco's cartoons address the extremes of an altogether different world-our own […] Sacco has gained access to unusually intimate testimony, giving space of details and perspectives normally excluded by mainstream media coverage."

was expressed during one of the interviews conducted for this paper: while suicide bombings were a result of there being no other choices but to use one's body as a weapon, suicides are not motivated by a feeling of despair or of standing against a cliff, because one cannot fight or sacrifice if one does not see hope. It is optimism for the future, and for the role their martyrdom would play that leads these youths to make their choice.

From a psychological point of view, Dr. El-Sarraj expressed his belief that children's concern with dignity had been greatly lessened by channeling it into open defiance through the *Intifada* (Moorehead, par. 12). Levels of anxiety of the children decreased significantly over time as measured before and just after the onset of the *Intifada*. In addition, there were no significant differences between the camp children and the more advantaged children in the urban areas, supporting the conclusion that the stress was due to occupation rather than social conditions of poverty and overcrowding (Robertson 9). Throwing stones became a way of rejecting the definition of self imposed by the Occupier, as well as being a form of recognizing and identifying the problem. It became a form of therapy, as the collective sense of injured pride and humiliation was transformed into a state of self-respect (El-Sarraj 3-4). Indeed, humiliation was the word repeatedly used by Khalid during our interview:

> If you grow up being constantly humiliated, soldiers constantly coming into your house, seeing your brothers taken away to prison- I was eight when I first saw my brother arrested in the 70s-, seeing your house demolished, having to ask Israelis permits for every breath you take… You just explode by humiliation. We were really fighting for freedom. Independent Palestinian state, okay, but it was really the freedom to do what you want in your land.

Israelis' pursuit and engagement of Palestinian youths can be called "colonial mirroring," where "the terror and tortures they devised mirrored the horror of the savagery they both feared and fictionalized" (qtd. in Peteet, "Male" 37). For

Palestinians, the cultural interpretation available is to consider the Israelis as lacking in the emotional and moral qualities of manhood. Only men of little honor and thus dubious masculinity would beat unarmed youths while they themselves were armed with and trained in the use of modern implements of warfare. Such mere aggression deprived its practitioners of claims to honor and morality (Peteet, "Male" 41). Thus the issue of dignity was dealt with due to the constitution of self vis-à-vis their occupiers, that is to say, clear and defining distinctions were drawn between their behavior and that of the occupiers'.

Participation in the *Intifada* came to be a rite of passage on several levels: representing the transition from childhood to manhood on an individual level, as well as from humiliation to dignity of the Palestinian collective entity. On an individual level, Khalid talked of how he had become involved in political activities, even before the *Intifada*: "We were a very politically active family. I started out copying what my older brothers were doing." The trials and responsibilities that were always a part of becoming or being a man or a woman were now dedicated to the Palestinian cause. Participation became one of the few ways to mark the passage from childhood to adulthood. To throw a stone was to be "one of the guys"; to hit an Israeli car was to become a hero; and to be arrested and not confess to having done anything was to be a man (Kuttab 15). The act of writing graffiti also constituted a sort of rite of passage as well, both into adulthood and into the underground resistance movement (Peteet, "Writing" 144). One 15-year old *shab*, Firas, who worked for the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) talked of how writing graffiti and distributing underground leaflets were a task for 13- to 15-year olds, who were not old enough to be members. (In the case of PFLP, one had to be 16 to become a registered member)

(Sacco 196-97).

One did not have to be a teenager to understand what the rite of passage consisted of. Khass describes a scene at a kindergarten during the *Intifada*:

> When [four to six-year olds] heard the army jeeps, they would all gather in a very small corner, when the jeep would go, they became heroes. Everybody wanted to tell you how active they were. They threw a stone, the other one will tell you, I did this to the soldiers, but the fear is there. (147)

Even for kindergarten children, to be active in the face of Israeli soldiers was understood to be the way to become heroes. Indeed, Finkelstein, who was teaching English to Palestinian children in Beit Sahour, working with Samira Mikhail, a Palestinian English teacher, recounts the followings:

> When I urged the students in my English class to sing the "Ode to Joy" "like angels," Samira interjected: "like soldiers." When I proposed to Samira that I also teach the students the pacifist lyrics of "Down by the Riverside," she demurred: it was "not relevant to us now." Asked to select a passage from the Bible for the morning benediction at school, Samira immediately ruled out "the one about turning the other cheek." (38)

It is not surprising then, that the role model changed from a traditional patriarchal figure to the *shabab*. *Intifada* children no longer viewed parents or teachers as a source of authority. The only source of authority they were willing to listen to were slightly older children controlling the streets, the heroes and role models of the younger generation. Referring to the current Second or Al-Aqsa *Intifada*, Dr. El-Sarraj says: "[the *Intifada* Children] have left their fathers for the martyrs" (Rees 33). The same could already be said during the First *Intifada*: their role model had shifted from the father to the *shabab*, who were more likely than other age and gender groups to become martyrs.

Returning to van Gennep's three stages of rite of passage, the *Intifada* did put the Palestinians and in particular the *shabab* in liminal state, that of being neither here nor there, betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom,

convention, and ceremonial. Victor Turner discusses how liminal entities (in this case the *shabab*) may be represented as possessing nothing that may distinguish them from their fellow liminal entities: "[Liminal entities] may be disguised as monsters, wear only a strip of clothing, or even go naked, to demonstrate that as liminal beings they have no status, property, insignia, secular clothing indicating rank or role, position in a kinship system" (95). This brings to mind the *shabab* wearing *kaffiyah*s over their faces. *Kaffiyah*s were worn to cover the faces of *shabab* so that their faces would not be recognized by the Israeli soldiers. Along with protection, however, a *kaffiyah*'s function can be said to be that of demonstrating equality and uniformity as well as anonymity of the *shabab* as liminal entities. In addition, the equal treatment the *shabab* received as martyrs, regardless of such factors as their age, contribution to the struggle and circumstances of death can also be said to be a result of "an intense comradeship and egalitarianism" developed by liminal entities, where "secular distinctions of rank and status disappear or are homogenized" (95). Such egalitarianism was even reflected in children's drawings of the *shabab*, who were portrayed expressionless and sometimes faceless (Usher 11).

Participation in organized resistance against Israeli occupation opened new arenas in which masculinity and honor could be demonstrated independently, out of the bounds of kin groups, which is traditionally where concerns and honor are shared. Abu-Lughod illustrates how an insult to one person is interpreted as an insult to the whole kin group, just as an insult to a kinsperson is interpreted as an affront to the self. Likewise, one family member's shameful acts bring dishonor on the rest of the family, just as everyone benefits from the glories of a prominent agnate or patrilineal ancestor (Abu-Lughod 65-66). As rites of passage, beatings and imprisonment related to the

Intifada were procedures that are not controlled or overseen by the family or kin group, but rather it was an individual experience within a collectivity of young men. Thus a critical rite of passage into adulthood, with its corresponding privileges of power, authority and respect, was now accomplished earlier and more importantly, was out of the bounds of the kin group. Indeed, it underscored the powerlessness of the kin group to protect its youth (Peteet, "Male" 41). During the *Intifada*, *shabab* promoted themselves independent of their male elders, in other words men over their 20s, and at the latter's expense. The youths seemed to eclipse elders as the champions of manliness and political morality (Jean-Klein, "Mothercraft" 102).

Interestingly, physical abuse from Israelis conveyed opposite meanings to the older generation and to the *shabab*. For the older men, such abuse had a diminishing effect on gender identity and moral status as it was publicly seen as passive reception and loss of face and honor; for the *shabab*, it had an enhancing effect as it was recognized as being sacrificial and heroic. Beatings and detention were, for *shabab*, construed as rites of passage into manhood. Those who were beaten attained status and responsibilities, and were often initiated into underground political leadership. As for incarceration, prison was like a university for the *shabab* in more than one way, as one father of an imprisoned *shab* exclaimed: "prison is a school, a university. Prison is for men" (Peteet, "Male" 39). Sacco describes a scene where a *shab* proudly presented his green ID card to the comic-journalist, its color signifying his time in prison. He then ordered a friend to produce his ID, which was orange, a regular color for residents of the West Bank. "Green card: *Intifada*! Orange card: No *Intifada*!" he proudly exclaimed, causing his friend to blush with embarrassment (Sacco 42-43). One father even named his daughter Ansar, the name of the prison where he had been detained

(Sacco 82). According to Slyomovics, the practice of naming the first daughter after the name of the village where the family was originally from was one of the naming practices, along with using the village name as the family name, which emerged as a form of Palestinian resistance (200). Slymovics further notes:

> When a father calls out to a daughter, pronouncing the name of the town or village he can no longer inhabit or visit, he conjoins a lost place and a vivid present in her person. She is a surrogate, a means of linking a place in time and in space, allowing an older, dispossessed generation to address simultaneously the biological daughter and the historical motherland. (202)

Thus Palestine is embodied, along with the notion of continuity, in yet another female form, the daughter of a Palestinian father. When a father calls out to a daughter, pronouncing the name of the prison, then, he is reminding himself, his family, Palestinian society and the Israeli occupiers, of his heroism and announcing his commitment to the Palestinian cause. The daughter embodies the heroism of her father and her people. The episode is an indicator of imprisonment being an experience that is included in the definition of being a Palestinian, and of the sense of pride attached to imprisonment, especially a sense of it being a necessary sacrifice for the coming generation.

In Israeli detention camps, prisoners were highly organized: the education committee, for example, conducted classes daily, selected speakers to lecture on a wide range of topics including math, science, ecology, history, philosophy, Einstein, the break-up of the Soviet Union and the Israeli peace movement. There were also courses in English and Hebrew, where, for example, in three months 14 people were taught how to read (Sacco 87). There is even a legend of a Bir Zeit professor, who was sent to Ansar III. In finding himself in the same tent as some of his students, he continued his course and even administered an exam (Sacco 88). Besides lectures and studies,

prisoners put on skits that demonstrated Israeli interrogation methods and on one occasion a play that dramatized the death of a Palestinian in custody (Sacco 88). The logistics were such that *shabab* circulated between prison and leadership positions once they were outside.

In the new resistance culture, victimization became a partial signifier of virtues associated with manliness (*rujula*) and honor (Jean-Klein, "Mothercraft 102). By contrast, the older generation understood beatings as the Israelis intended,[15] as a method of control, humiliation and punishment. The *shabab* therefore transformed the experience to one of empowerment. Yet one point is worth mentioning here, which is the issue of disability. While *Intifada* did redefine physical injuries and disabilities resulting from the resistance activities as proof of heroism, when the *shabab* start living with their disabilities, they might not necessarily feel the support of others. The story of Alam, a 15-year-old boy, who became a quadriplegic when an Israeli bullet shattered his neck and spinal cord, is a case in point. Eighteen months after the incident, his father says to him, "You have ruined my life, your mother's, and all your brothers' and sisters' lives." Then a Palestinian soldier enters the house, walks over to Alam's bed, holds the chamber of his Kalashnikov close to the boy's head and fires it in the air in a nationalistic salute. Alam smiles and poses for a photo with the soldier in a twisted tableau that strives to put the face of victory on a terrible defeat (Semeniuk 39-40). While the public rhetoric was to treat those injured during the *Intifada* with respect, for

[15] Beatings became an explicit policy of the occupation authorities soon after the launching of the *Intifada* in December 1987. On 19 January 1988, then-Defense Minister Yitzhak Rabin announced a new policy of "might, power and beatings" to quell the Uprising, in order to "once again put the fear of death" into the Palestinians and "wipe the smile" off their faces. It is ironic how this policy had, in turn, gave Palestinians the impression that armed struggle is the only way as the Israelis only understand force, the same argument used by Israelis to justify their use of force.

the families who had to live with the injured without an established social security system, the reality soon took over, not long after the "end" of the *Intifada*. Social treatment of people with disabilities and the overall social security system are issues that need to be researched further in the field of Modern Middle Eastern Studies.

The *Intifada* became a process of redefining traditional categories such as codes of purity and honor, the meaning of martyrdom, and the construction of a heroic life. By reversing an Israeli polity created with the intent of humiliating into a cultural complex of honor, manhood and moral superiority, one can witness how the Palestinians tried to culturally make sense of it by converting the prison experience into cultural, symbolic and social capital. Such conversion is about freedom and control: Palestinians might not be able to control their physical abuse or imprisonment, and they might be unable to earn material or economic capital, which is immediately and directly convertible into money, as a result of being in prison. What they do have, however, is the freedom to attach any meaning to the experience that they wish, a process through which they can construct their fate as being honorable and earn cultural, symbolic and social capital.[16] There was now an open competition for masculinity (although it was closed to traditional authority). A place in male hierarchy was based on the politics of nationalist activism rather than in a conventional hierarchy based on age and family ties.

There was another patriarchal symbol in which the *shabab* lost faith, namely the Arab states and the "official Arab impotence" (Mashal *et al.* 131). During the 50s and 60s, Palestinians, like many other Arabs, believed in Arab Nationalism. Khalid's father had huge portrait of Nasser up on the wall, with which Khalid grew up. In the wake of the *Intifada*, Palestinians evinced a strong skepticism of all political authority,

[16] For further discussions on different forms of capital, see Calhoun.

no longer wishing to be represented by anyone but themselves. The *Intifada* Children came to have an unfailing faith in the capacity of the power of the Palestinian people, led by the PLO, to win their independence (Warschavsky). When a young Palestinian boy was told by a journalist that he might meet Arafat when he got to Tunis, his next destination, and asked if the boy had a message for the Palestinian leader, the boy's eyes filled with tears and he replied, "Tell him that we love him and want him to come home" (Lewis 8-9). Clearly, Arafat and the PLO had come to be the representative of the "New Palestinians." It is telling that Arafat and other high-ranking officials in the Palestinian resistance, as well as distinguished *shabab*, were referred to as Abu XXX.[17] These *noms de guerre* plus political titles gave the Children of the *Intifada* an alternative father at the expense of their own fathers. Israeli soldiers quickly caught on to this change as well, when they insulted a *shab*, saying: "George Habash is a dog! Your mother is a whore!" (Sacco 199). Instead of calling the father of the *shab* a "dog," they chose to insult the leader of PFLP as a way of insulting him. The Israelis must have realized that, for the *shabab*, their fathers had been replaced by political activists.

Parents' View

How did the parents of *shabab* view the changes in intra-familial and intra-societal power structures? After all, the *Intifada* Children are the generation that knew only two types of Israelis, namely the IDF soldiers and the settlers, there being no distinctions between the two for the children. Having borne witness to much more suffering, this new generation was much more embittered and hardened than the one that preceded it. Older Palestinians admitted that their approach to the occupation had

[17] Arafat was Abu 'Ammar.

not produced results. Shehadeh remarks in his autobiography: "We didn't allow the new generation to make a new life for themselves because we continued to impress them with the glory of what was, a magic that could never be replicated" (64). They recognized that expecting a solution from the outside world or from the Arab world had been futile. Shehadeh again: "We had put our misplaced faith in the armies of our perceived deliverers. How distracted we had been from doing what was positive and real […] Instead of developing a vital life in whatever was left for us, we wandered throughout the world complaining […]" (65).

The content of the *Intifada* was nothing new or revolutionary. It was open defiance that was remarkable and distinguished the *shabab* from older generations. The *Intifada* was an "open statement of a hidden transcript, a declaration that breaches the etiquette of power relations" (Scott 8). The *Intifada* was spontaneous, but the spontaneity lay in the timing and vehemence of the delivery, not in the content. The content had, in fact, been rehearsed again and again. One can even say that the *Intifada* was a result of the *shabab*'s social interchange with the older generation, that the *Intifada* was the rendition of the *shabab* of the hidden transcript of the subordinate group, i.e. the Palestinians in the Occupied Territories. That is why the parents and the older generation could not and did not object to their children's commitment to the *Intifada* and the Palestinian cause. Parents realized that their sons and daughters were demonstrating for a better future. They were, in fact, proud of their children and their accomplishments. Such sentiment is captured in a cartoon published in a Palestinian newspaper [see Fig.3]. The cartoon shows *shabab* and *Intifada* children of both sexes laying bricks, with a caption that reads: "Building the new Palestinian state." This is a public acknowledgment of the contribution made by the younger generation towards

statehood.

[Image]

Fig.3: (*Source*: Al Fajr 14 August 1988, pg.6.)

Naturally the parents were worried about the possibility that they may be wounded or killed in the demonstrations, but they knew that their approval or lack of it made little difference to the children, who were determined to go their own way, and that they could not stop them from going out (Kuttab 18). "They listen to us on small things, but we never tell them anything on the national issues and they wouldn't listen," said one mother. Indeed, many children did not tell their parents and older members of the family about their participation. Nedaa, who was only eight when the *Intifada* started, said in our correspondence:

> I remember, I took part in demonstrations, when they were starting from my school […] I wouldn't get back to home as my grandmother would prevent me from going, as my parents would be in their work at that time […] [When] the demonstration would pass my home, I was hiding so that my grandma don't see me, as she would be afraid on me and take me home if she saw me.[18]

Even when they were injured, the information was kept away from their parents, perhaps for the fear of prevention from further participation: "I didn't bother to tell my parents I was shot, because it was only a plastic bullet" (Semeniuk 46).

Khalid talked of how he never told anything to his parents regarding his political activities and how they never told him anything either:

> They knew what I was up to, because I'd go out at night and come home in the morning. The only time my father said anything was in 1984 when my father said to me "I have three sons in jail and I don't want to lose another one."

Khalid ascribed this to the fact that three years previously his father had lost his house for the second time when it was demolished. (The first time was when he fled West

[18] E-mail correspondence, 4 March 2003.

Jerusalem in 1948.) A similar account is recorded by a Japanese photo-journalist, Mizue Furui:

> An elderly man began to shout vehemently at a *shab*, about 15-year of age, who held four or five stones in his hand […] After a while, the father of Leila (a friend of the journalist) joined in on the shouting, siding with the elderly man […] Then Leila, running out of the house, started to criticize her father, and the two began a heated argument. Leila's father started hitting Leila's head with one of his flip-flops […] It was explained to me a little later that the elderly man was the *shab*'s grandfather, scolding his grandson not to throw stone any more, saying he had enough with his grandson being imprisoned. Leila's father agreed with the grandfather, but Leila took the *shab*'s side, arguing that there is nothing wrong with throwing stones, that they should not prevent him from throwing stones […] That night, Leila explained that the older generation is afraid of their sons and grandsons getting arrested. Before, the words of the father were absolute and final. If she had spoken back before the *Intifada*, she would have been subjected to greater punishment than flip-flop strikes on her head. But now, Leila continued, those who fight are the stronger ones. (127-130)

Leila's support for the activism of the *shab* can be, on the one hand, accounted for as a product of a generational gap, in which the younger generation (Leila was twenty-five at the time of the incident) was empowered by their activism against Israelis, and subsequently extended their activism against the patriarchal system of the Palestinian society. On the other hand, it can also be accounted for as a gender gap, in which the female population saw an opening for their liberation from the traditional patriarchal system by siding with the *shabab*, who were partly fighting that system. If Leila understood that fighting an external enemy elevated her status internally, i.e. in the Palestinian society, she must have linked the two struggles_those against the external and internal "enemies"_in her mind. The women, then, regardless of their age, had a greater incentive to support the *shabab*. In other words, the social ascent of the *shabab* and the self-interests of women, including mothers, were essentially synonymous.

Perhaps this helps to explain why Khalid's mother, in contrast to his father,

never said anything but was simply supportive of her children:

> You know, she spent 15 years visiting jails. During the *Intifada*, she'd visit six jails, because my brothers and I were all in separate jails, and she wanted to be fair to all of us by visiting all six jails. She thought she didn't understand politics, so she was just being supportive of us and our cause.

I asked him how he felt about his mother's unconditional support at that time:

> Back then, I was focusing just on our cause. I didn't do anything for myself and I didn't see anything going on around me, just determination. But now I look back and I can see how supportive she was.

Not all viewed the empowerment of the youth in such a positive light. Part of the reason had to do with the insecurities mothers felt in the face of physically dangerous situations, with the added stress of changing power relations within the family and society as a whole. Indeed, mothers were concerned that their children, through the *Intifada*, have learnt to reject not only Israeli authority but all authority. To begin with, they had no daily routine as schools were closed. One mother talked of her experience: "It is exhausting to have children at home all day. I tried quite unsuccessfully to teach them, but because nobody else was having regular lessons they later refused even to open their school bags" (Mukarker 105). Even when the schools were open, teachers failed to contain their students in class: "The moment anyone sees [the soldiers] enter the camp, new spreads. All it takes is four words_'The soldiers are coming'_and the boys run out of the classroom. We cannot stop them." More than one teacher had physically interposed herself between the boys and the door and had literally been run over (Morgan, "Women" 158). As their parents were arrested or working, and as there were no institutional recreational facilities for them, they were left on their own on the streets with nothing to do. Many became wild, aggressive, uncontrollable, irritable and nervous, especially during curfews that sometimes lasted

for several days. Children's behavior was exacerbated by the fact that, during the *Intifada*, the mothers tended to indulge their children however they could, allowing, for example, excessive noise and lavishing attention. They felt, in the words of one woman, that: "The kids suffer so much everyday from the *Intifada* that many mothers are reluctant to deny them anything" (Bennis 34).

According to a UN report entitled "The Situation of Palestinian Women in Occupied Territories" issued in March 1990 by the Commission on the Status of Women, the younger children would often engage in role-playing the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, acting out the stress during curfews by fighting, screaming and throwing stones at each other. Otherwise, they would frequently sit in front of the television ironically watching the same violence that affected them outside their homes (Sabbagh, "Behind"). Their mothers had to explain to them that the enemy was external (Sabbagh, "Behind"), by doing so, perhaps unintentionally encouraging the children to go out and fight Israeli soldiers at a later date. Such behaviors hint that perhaps children have, as Dr. El-Sarraj claimed, come to admire the power and authority of the Israeli soldiers (Semeniuk 46). According to one account, in a very realistic game, "Arabs and Jews," many children wanted to play the Israeli soldiers. While the children might not have seen the Israeli soldiers as role models *per se*, there was a childish admiration there to a certain extent for all the power, state-of-the-art arms and other weapons the Israelis had. During our interview, Danya, who was eight at the time of the *Intifada*, talked of another kind of feeling for the Israeli soldiers:

> One day, my sisters and I were on the roof of the house, watching Israeli soldiers pass by our house below us. One of the soldiers looked up and did this (and she gestures her arm moving up and down with tight fist). I didn't know what it meant then, and at the moment I remember feeling so happy. It's strange, and I can't say if I'd still felt happy if I knew that the gesture had a

> rude sexual meaning, but I was happy because the soldier paid me attention. I suppose it's because I'd been so used to always being dealt with collectively, in a dehumanizing fashion, that to be picked out [by the Israeli soldier] was like being humanized. It made me feel special. It's almost as though I wanted to be liked by the soldiers. Also, for the Israeli soldier to do that gesture made *him* human.

Her mother added that she had observed the same inclination in her son as well. She ascribed this to the fact that children were scared of the soldiers and thus concluded that they would not be hurt if they were liked by the IDF soldiers.

Many Palestinians became concerned about what would become of their society if the children were to continue to be out of control (Levine). This concern was voiced by Helen El-A'arj, wife of the mayor of Beit Jallah and an activist in a charitable organization: "Children do not honor their parents as in the past. Today it's difficult to control youth, who do as they please. The young are more violent today" (Fisherman 11). Before, it had been important to be a respectful and obedient child, qualities that had been considered superior by the parents and the older generation. During the *Intifada*, children wanted to be strong, muscular and aggressive, a prototype of the "New Palestinian," who became more popular in the new resistance culture.

Perhaps more serious than the violent and uncontrollable nature of children was the emotional gap that the mothers felt between them and their children. In a discussion amongst other mothers, one mother even said that she did not think the *Intifada* children liked them, or at least they did not seem to approve of them. "First, they don't trust us. They don't share anything with us; in fact they don't share anything with anyone who is older than twenty." "They don't like what we did to them… just look at what we did to them. We left them without a country and with a lot of trouble. And there's no opportunity here. What do they have to look forward to?" "People leave children a

country, education and money, but we are not leaving them with anything. Nothing." They all agreed that the feeling of disapproval of older people was stronger against fathers because it is the men who are most active in the public sphere and in politics and it is the fathers who left young people with nothing (Aburish 169-70, 177). As shall be discussed in the next chapter, the vacuum created by the *shabab*'s drift away from their fathers was filled by the mothers in more than one way.

The posters of the Children's Documentation Center (*Markaz al-Tauthiq lil-Atfal*) in Jerusalem are indicators of the issues mothers faced during the *Intifada*. The first set of posters [see Fig.4], a child is by the window watching and cheering on to the conflict outside. A mother angrily says, "Come away from the window. They would see us and attack us!" Instead of scolding and frightening the child, the mother is supposed to close the window and say "Don't be frightened, my dear. I am here with you." In the second set of posters [see Fig.5], a child comes running home, getting away from the conflict outside. The mother is not supposed to shout "I told you to stay in the house and not go outside!" Instead, she is to say receptively, "You look distressed. What did you see?" Both set of posters are advising mothers not to scold their children but to stay calm and comfort and listen to them. The advice is probably in response to the mothers' increased stress-level during the *Intifada* and their inability to handle the situation leading to the widening of emotional gap between them and their children.

[Image]
Fig.4: (*Source*: Mansur 164-65)

[Image]
Fig.5: (*Source*: Mansur 166-67)

"Red Intifada"

Such concerns were proved well founded. The social consequences of such changes in family and indeed social structures can be summed up in the phrase "Red *Intifada*," which included intra-societal and domestic violence, in other words violence directed against the Self. By the end of 1988 there was a move away from activism focused solely on confronting the external enemy of the occupation to activism simultaneously focused on cleansing Palestinian society of elements deemed to make it vulnerable to that enemy. The inclusion of both external and internal "enemies" to the struggle was already intuitively practiced by the *shabab* and the women. Yet, perhaps alarmed by the effect of the *Intifada* on domestic Palestinian society, political parties such as Hamas developed agendas that touched a cord in those Palestinians who felt threatened by such internal changes. Even before Hamas' rise, the nationalist culture of the *Intifada* contained moralistic edicts such as the closing of restaurants and cinemas, banning wedding parties and other "frivolous" and joyous types of behavior. These sentiments reflected the assessment that Israel had succeeded in dominating the population not only by force but also by promoting materialism and pursuit of the good life, while in a utopian former state men and women coexisted in harmony, each occupying a clearly defined and quite separate space. By the "end" of the First *Intifada*, Hamas was the largest political movement after Fatah, and was perceived as the only

movement powerful enough to represent an alternative to Fatah's nationalist hegemony, something few nationalists would have believed possible at the outbreak of the *Intifada*. Equally important was Hamas' effect on the discourses of Palestinian nationalism. It popularized the notion that its version of social morality was fundamental to Palestinian nationalism and national identity. Hamas' definition of collaborators included not only those who cooperated with Israeli intelligence but also drug addicts, alcoholics, users of pornography, and those engaging in illicit sexual relations or even mere social gender mixing.[19] [20] People came to be accused variously of "ideological," "political," "economic," and "moral" collaboration (Hammani, "From" 203-04). Women were portrayed as trespassers in the public space. A reversion to Islam was to provide dignity and empowerment for women by returning them to their conventional "protected status." The failure of secular movements was tied to the perpetuation of alien control, leading to a conclusion that a more "authentic" mode of struggle was necessary for national liberation. A hand-written poster in the Islamic University Women's Student Council read: "Your Islamic dress is the dress of your roots. Rid yourself of all evil clothes."[21] Islam, with its cultural familiarity and historical respectability, was to provide this authenticity.

Some Palestinian women did welcome the imposition of a more "Islamic" lifestyle. Such women believed that the struggle for women's rights was compatible with a strict understanding of the Qur'an. Some Muslim women yearned to be able to

[19] For example, in Hamas' Communiqué No.1, "the dissemination of filth and pornography, the corruption and bribery" are included among "the occupation methods" of the Israelis.
[20] At the same time, it came out during my interview with Khalid that Hamas strategically tried to recruit collaborators for counter-intelligence. In addition, families of collaborators were looked after following the killings of the collaborators, recipient of Hamas' social security services.
[21] In: *We are Allah's Soldiers*, directed by Hanna Musleh, Al Quds Television Production for Channel Four, U.K., 1993.

reach what they characterized as a level of belief that would enable them to wear the *hijab*: "I *want* to believe strongly enough to wear the *hijab always*. Not just in the streets… I want to *really* believe in wearing it…" exclaimed one young woman who only wears the *hijab* in the streets. These women saw the wearing of the *hijab* as a reward that came with devoutness and true piety (Sacco 139-40). Many others claimed that the adoption of "Islamic dress" allowed them to move around with greater ease outside their homes and made them safer from the abuse of Israeli soldiers (Holt 187). Some talked of how the most important reason for wearing "Islamic dress" was so that cameras would not catch them, enabling Israeli soldiers to identify them (Khass 148). Yet others wore the *hijab* as a form of protest against the internal "enemy," namely the male members of the family. Samira was forced to marry her orthodox Muslim cousin, despite the fact that her family had earlier agreed to her marriage to a partner of her own choice. During the *Intifada*, she wore the whole *sharia* dress, covering herself with a scarf, a long skirt and long sleeves, yet she would leave the house at seven in the morning, not to return until early evening, in order to be involved in the women's committee, going from village to village organizing other women on their own behalf as well as for the nationalist struggle (Gluck, "Advocacy" 210). Samira thus used the Islamic dress to negotiate her participation in the struggle, while simultaneously protesting patriarchy and religious orthodoxy of her husband and her family.

Many others, however, came to fear the situation. Young boys, between eight and twelve, who were empowered by the *Intifada*, joined the *hijab* campaign. If there were no soldiers to throw stones at, women without headscarves made good targets. There were even cases of Christian women being attacked by *shabab*, leading some Christians in Gaza to wear the *hijab* just to be on the safe side (Sacco 140). The fact

that the matter is mentioned in Hamas' Communiqué 22 ("[Hamas] disclaims responsibility for threats made against the girls and the women teachers in a number of schools. [Hamas] regards this action as incommensurate with its method [of drawing people closer] to Allah by wise means and preaching the pleasant path" (Mashal *et al.* 235), published as early as 2 June 1988, points to the wide-spread nature of such violence. Politically unaffiliated *shabab* who felt left out found harassing these women a safe way to express nationalist sentiment. The "purity" of real women came to overlap with "purity" of the nation as a woman. Hamas and the *shabab* influenced by its ideology saw the wearing of *hijab* as liberating women i.e. Palestine from foreign occupation. The *hijab* was promoted, and to some extent became understood, as a sign of women's political commitment to the *Intifada*. The most prominent redefinition made wearing a headscarf a sign of respect for the martyrs.[22] Another nationalist argument was that the headscarf was a form of cultural struggle, an assertion of national heritage. Because these nationalist redefinitions were not completely successful, arguments based on immediate fears were resorted to. In other words, the *hijab* was meant to protect women from soldiers (Hammami, "Women" 26). This was successful as soldiers were raiding houses and attacking women, causing families to become worried about their daughters and husbands about their wives.

In the context of the family, there was an increase in domestic violence during the *Intifada*. The men, under tight discipline that forbids the use of weapons other than stones, were frustrated. The shortened workday, limited to pre-strike hours, meant that they were home more often rather than working and then meeting male friends in coffee

[22] There is an account of a girl being harshly criticized by a *shab* for wearing bright red lipstick to the funeral of a martyr: "The color of the lipstick is the same as the color of the blood Israeli soldiers crave for," the implication being wearing make-up is an act of collaboration and even a murderous act to the cause as well as and martyrdom of the *shab*.

houses. The closure of schools resulted in children also being home all day. Streets, which provided additional space for crowded families, were denied to them by the soldiers, reminding adults and children alike of the loss of Palestinian land. In addition, military curfews forced the entire family to stay inside for days at a time, often in very cramped quarters (Strum 160). Curfews, in a way, symbolized the total denial of control, causing a great deal of stress on the family behind closed doors. They also made men acutely aware of their inability to provide for their families and to control the financial destiny of the family and, by extension, the country. Men found an outlet for the anger and humiliation that they felt as a result of this within the home, and women and children became the prime victims of their wrath. To vent their anger at the source of oppression would of course mean that the men would lose their job or go to jail. While the occupation was the source of frustration, the traditional culture provided a channel for venting this anger within the home. Domestic violence became one of the last fortresses of masculinity that had been shattered as a result of the occupation. The most extreme cases of domestic violence took the form of honor killing, which became more prevalent in both the West Bank and Gaza, where brothers killed sisters whom they suspected were having an affair or dating without family knowledge. There was also an increase in polygamy, previously a rarity among Palestinians. Fathers sold their daughters to be second wives due to shortage of eligible husbands as a result of the *Intifada* (Morgan, "Women" 169). Along with impregnating women, the above acts were reminders or even proofs of adult masculinity. As a result, *Intifada* Mothers had to protect children, as well as themselves, against two violent figures, namely the IDF and the father. Dr. Hala Salem Abuateya points out, however, that in spite of the increase in intra-familial and intra-societal violence, the important thing to note was that the issues

of domestic violence and school violence did come out in the public realm for open discussion, which conformed to a sprit of *Intifada*-inspired liberalism and questioning of tradition.

The change in family and social structures meant that the authority of the mother declined, along with that of the father's, during the *Intifada*, although her relative authority in relation to that of her husband has increased. Parents lost control over their children, even over their daughters, as, in Khalid's words, "traditional people [i.e. older generation] couldn't do anything." "Of course," Khalid continued, "traditional people went back being traditional after the *Intifada*, and [a form of liberalism inspired by the *Intifada*] is something that people missed after the *Intifada*." A Palestinian woman, Moussa Abu Hashhash, an English teacher from Fawwar camp, also recalled nostalgically how, in the first months of the *Intifada*, mothers joined their children at makeshift barricades, singing patriotic songs and stoning soldiers at huge demonstrations. By the summer of 1989, confrontations mainly took the form of ambushes as the *shabab* stoned soldiers and settlers a dozen or so times each day from rooftops. This is partly because, in its original form, the *Intifada* could not have long endured. To survive, it had to find a shape that permitted daily life to go on, and uninterrupted mass demonstrations did not allow for this. For similar reasons, mothers no longer ran to find out what had happened every time they heard gunfire. The interest and concern were still there, but without the frenetic pace. Professor Hanna of Bir Zeit optimistically reasoned that *Intifada* was not passing through a crisis but rather it had been routinized. It was perhaps less spectacular, more prosaic, yet it had now assumed a shape that would enable it to endure for years, which was necessary for it to succeed (Finkelstein 21-22).

After its "end," though by no means "success," the children missed the *Intifada*, because they had nothing else to do afterwards: "I want the Israeli soldiers to come back so we can show them the real *Intifada*." *Shabab* wore bullets plucked from their own wounds as badges of honor (Semeniuk 38). After the *Intifada*, including participation in a new rite of passage to adulthood, children, especially boys, lost that space to prove their masculinity, heroism and honor. Anger filled the vacuum that was left. Following the end of Israeli occupation, the concern that Palestinians will turn their anger on each other, in forms of increase in domestic violence, school violence and general street violence, was voiced by many, including Dr. El-Sarraj (Semeniuk 49), and are portrayed in films by Elia Suleiman such as *Chronicle of Disappearance* (1996) and *Divine Intervention* (2003). In contesting the father's authority and thus challenging the patriarchal nature of the Palestinian society, the *shabab* had the active support of his mother and implicitly that of the resistance movement. As the next chapter will illustrate, in the face of changing structures of Palestinian family and society, the mothers' preferred participation in the *Intifada* revolved around active support for and protection of the *shabab*, rather than initiating their own confrontation against Israeli soldiers and the patriarchic figures.

Chp. 5: Imagining the Community: Mother's Way

Nationalism is an ideology that becomes most prominent in times of national crisis, when men and women are expected to perform "national work," including reproductive work for women. Notwithstanding the common injunction for both sexes to work for the nation, there must still be gendered differences in perceiving the nation and nationalism. Creative interpretation would be required on women's part in order for them to imagine the community. In examining the Iranian experience, Najmabadi describes how, while *Vatan* [Homeland] came to double as a female beloved and a mother in Iranian men's writing, *Vatan* was usually a mother in women's writings. Whereas the male citizen, as lover and son was to protect and fight for the honor of his beloved and mother, the female citizen as daughter was to take care of, and look after, the well-being of the mother (445-46). In the case of Palestine during the *Intifada*, especially in the beginning, women, or more precisely mothers, were able to imagine the community through, for example, becoming mothers to all Palestinians and through empathizing with other mothers who lost their sons. This was done in an active, independent and spontaneous manner.

Mothers of All Palestinians

Nationalism in the context of the struggle for national liberation can politicize many other social identities besides the national one, including that of motherhood. During the *Intifada*, it was common to witness Palestinian mothers publicly protecting *shabab* as their "sons" from Israeli soldiers. Each mother came to see herself as the mother of all Palestinian children and to consider all Palestinians as her family. Hanan

Mikhail-Ashrawi recounts:

> A Palestinian youth under attack can claim no less than ten to fifteen mothers. A boy was being brutally bludgeoned by several armed Israeli soldiers when suddenly a human shield of a dozen women miraculously materialized, diverting the physical blows and embracing the victim. All women invoked the elemental maternal right of defending one's young. The Palestinian extended family at the political front can still produce at a moment's notice instant cousins, brothers, sisters, aunts, uncles and a medley of other "relatives" on a collective rescue mission within a collective support system. ("Palestinians")

Khalid, during our interview, also talked of the time he was dragged away by Israeli soldiers:

> There were about ten soldiers and only her (a middle-aged woman) around. She couldn't do anything, but she kept following us for about one hour until the soldiers put me into a car.

Such incidents, very commonly witnessed during the *Intifada*, facilitated the construction of community through appealing to maternal instinct present in all mothers. Initially, mothers went out into the streets to prevent *shabab* from throwing stones. They were fulfilling their traditional role as protectors and nurturers when they performed the thoroughly untraditional act of stepping between armed soldiers and their children, pulling the children away (Sabbagh, "Interview" 173). Being visible in the streets in order to defend their children from Israeli soldiers became one of the meanings of motherhood. Indeed, Palestinian women came to spend more time than men in the streets, confronting and sometimes negotiating with soldiers as a way of protecting children (Mayer 78). Being in the frontline had an empowering effect on mothers, who were inspired by their children's resistance. Umm Khalil, during our interview, told a story of an eleven-year old girl:

> She came from the Tulkarem refugee camp to sell thymes in Tulkarem. One day, an Israeli soldier came and shouted at her to go away. But she said "No!" and she didn't move. So the soldier hit her with the butt of his gun to make her move. You know what she did next? She slapped the soldier across his face!

> Like this (and she gestures striking her cheek, making her face turn 90 degrees sideways)! When I saw her do this, I was so proud of her.

As she talked, her face beamed, reliving the moment and the sense of pride she felt at the time. She continued:

> The girl lived in the refugee camp. She walked a long distance every day to sell thymes to support her family. Her father and brothers were jailed. Her mother was ill. That's why she was so angry about the situation.

Umm Khalil herself did not participate in the *Intifada*. She said she frequently participated in demonstrations when she was younger and still single, but as a wife and a mother, there was no place for her and women of her generation and circumstances to take part in the *Intifada*. She said that she was aware that it happened in the urban areas, but not in small conservative places such as Tulkarem. The only form of participation she could remember was when her daughters, oldest of whom was 11 at the time, asked her whether there were any masks to give to the *shabab* in their neighborhood. She found several ski masks in the house and agreed to give them to the *shabab* on the condition that no one knew it was from her household. In the first six months of the *Intifada* before Umm Khalil and her family moved back to the U.S., she said she was only aware of one *Intifada*-related death in her neighborhood, of a man in his sixties who had a heart attack caused by tear-gas. Participation in the *Intifada* by mothers seems to have affected different parts of Palestine in different degrees, proportional perhaps to several factors such as the size of the village/town/city, political and social orientation (conservative/liberal), and the number and frequency of *Intifada*-related injuries, deaths and other casualties.

Having said that, there is no denying that the activism of the younger generation affected and inspired mothers. It was natural for some mothers to

manipulate, but not abandon, their traditional role so as to join their children in the act of resistance by simultaneously controlling public space and attention as women/mothers without "becoming men." Their participation, in other words, was a result of their nurturing role and not the result of their sudden politicization, or of their sudden conversion to a consciously feminist ideology. Mothers were proud to be "mothers to all Palestinians." It is telling that they referred to Israelis as being "without mothers": "[The *shabab*] are all my children, not like you motherless lot!" (Giacaman and Johnson 161) was a cry of one mother. They equated themselves, the "mothers," with the heart and conscience of the society as a whole. Mothers thus came to perceive of themselves as the collective moral embodiment of the community, testifying to the abusive nature of Israeli occupation and asserting the moral superiority of the Palestinians. Intervention of mothers cast shame, at least in the eyes of Palestinians, on soldiers by scrutinizing their moral qualities in a dramatic public narrative. In addition, by claiming every non-kin boy, who was likely to be killed, as their own, mothers could be said to be holding together a society on the verge of fragmentation.

Another way in which it became easier for mothers to imagine Palestine was through the blurring of private and public space. The traditional role of protector now went beyond the boundary or confines of the house, extending to the whole of Palestine. In other words, "Palestine" became the ultimate "Home," not just for mothers but for all Palestinians. The *Intifada* provided a space in Palestinian society where boundaries were blurred, if not challenged, and the *Intifada* activities created a free space for women. For example, small-scale cooperative projects were created by the women's

committees[23] in order to find new methods of productive work for women, which involved women in a process of building an alternative economy. These kinds of cooperatives took two forms. The first concentrated on attracting women to work outside their homes in their free time. This kind of work provided them with income in a context where women were in control of production, marketing and the administration of their cooperatives. The second form encouraged various groups of women to produce foodstuffs inside their homes. These cooperatives sought to change the position of women, but not at the expense of their home duties (Jawwad 72). They engaged in activities ranging from the production of *zaatar* or *taboun* (baked bread) to sewing or knitting garments, and in so doing politicized conventional domestic tasks, transforming their family responsibilities to encompass the entire community.

The other side of the same coin, of course, was that a house was no longer a private, safe and unassailable place that "honor must defend and protect."[24] Domestic space became problematically vulnerable. According to Al-Haq, most human rights violations against women did not take place when women were participating in demonstrations or other forms of direct protest. Rather, women were killed, injured or beaten in their own homes, often while attempting to protect male members of their

[23] The political direction of the Palestinian women's movement was intertwined with the male-dominated national movement. As in most other Arab countries, the national liberation movement became a platform for Palestinian women's participation in social and political life. For example, the Palestinian Federation of Women's Action Committees (FWAC) is ideologically affiliated to the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP), the Union of Palestinian Working Women's Committees (UPWWC) to the Communist Party, the Union of Palestinian Women's Committee (UPWC) to the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) and the Women's Committees for Social Work (WCSW) is supported by Fatah (Augustin 22-23). On 18 August 1988, the all popular and neighborhood committees including the women's committees were declared illegal by the Israeli military, and membership in, assistance to or even contact with them could bring a sentence of up to ten years in prison (Giacaman and Johnson 167).

[24] According to Kabyle wisdom cited by Bourdieu, "one's home, one's wide, one's rifles" are "the sacred things that honor must defend and protect" (219).

families from physical assault and/or arbitrary arrest by the military (Al-Haq 503). The inside of the house increasingly became the setting for confrontation and for collective punishment i.e. house arrests and curfews exacted by the Israeli military. There was no "home" anymore, as the whole of Palestine was public space under Israeli occupation, for soldiers to enter anytime they wished. Domestic boundaries were shattered, revealing the illusory character of domesticity as the realm of private, familial relations distant from the spheres for formal politics. Jardallah describes the experience in the Bureij Camp during the *Intifada*: "[…] we go out very often during curfew. When you are not even safe in your own house, *where* you are beaten up becomes unimportant" (126). This also changed the distribution of work between the sexes. One mother talked of how she would not dare send her sons shopping, even at night, when women would usually stay at home. She preferred to send her daughter, as girls and women were harassed less by the army (Mukarker 106). In short, while, on the one hand, there was an evident loss of space to perform the conventional role of mother, there was, on the other hand, an enlargement of that space to include the whole of Palestine. Domestic functions became mobilized for the service to the larger community and accorded a national context. Domestic duties expanded to include popular political activities, and domesticity came to be associated with struggle and militancy.

Not only did mothers come to perceive of themselves as the mothers of all *shabab* and all Palestinians, but some also became mothers by getting married and having more children than they would have otherwise. As seen in Chapter 3, pregnancy in particular was promoted in the *Intifada* language from above. This is not unique to the Palestinian case. A similar dynamic was observed during the Iran-Iraq War, when Iraqi women were told that they should turn their bodies over to the state and produce at

least five children, preferably boys (Cooke 159-60). As a matter of fact, just as struggle for the nation was portrayed as a struggle to liberate a woman or a female body, the real female body was also a battlefield over which the Israeli occupier and the Palestinians fought for control. In order to liberate the imaginary female body, the bodies of real women of the nation were symbolically raped/controlled, not only by the enemy but also by the cause or the national liberation struggle.

Sexual harassment and rape of Palestinian women by Israeli soldiers were attacks on Palestinian society's honor and act of conquest not just of the woman in question, but of the society she belongs to. The occupation authorities reinforced and exploited Palestinian patriarchal values including the traditional view of the importance of a girl's "honor," which is connected to her virginity and used it against Palestinian women, especially women activists, in order to restrict their activities and free movement. They attempted to smear the reputation of women activists, so that, for example, the existing Palestinian family control over daughters, wives and sisters would be increased. Many women were forced into compromising positions, which meant that they or their husbands, brothers or fathers could be blackmailed and forced into collaborating with the occupation. For example, in the village of Beit Sahour, a woman was drugged, stripped naked and photographed by a collaborator, who then threatened to distribute the pictures if she did not cooperate. The woman courageously told her family what had happened. Her family killed the collaborator, but not before killing the woman out of shame (Finkelstein 25). Even if cases where the woman in question is not killed, "she feels as if she is no longer a human being, that her value is not in her social function and contribution, and that she is transformed into a sexual object" (Kevorkian 175). The motive for sexual violence against women (and men) was less

sexual lust than the urge to demonstrate power. Girls were sometimes raped with a stick, the implication being that they were not worthy of being touched (Mahshi 8). Sexual assaults by the occupation forces can be seen as part of an Israeli policy to control women's and men's activism by exploiting the rules of shame and honor in Palestinian traditional society. The culture of resistance accommodated sexual harassment and rape of Palestinian women by, in Khalid's words, "not talking about such things." There is even a proverb, in which the verb "to dig (*hafara*)" is synonymous with "creating calamity." "Not asking/digging [into matters that could inadvertently compromise honor]" is a practice important for good relations (Sayigh 154).

It was of special interest to the occupiers to deny Palestinian mothers their motherhood, and they did so through two means: indirect birth control and prevention of mothers from carrying out their role. The former was made possible through induced miscarriage through, for example, physical violence, teargas and denial of prenatal medical care. Sexual harassment and rape would fall into this category as well, as such women were often shamed and might not be desirable marriage partners. Control of women was also exercised through prohibition of nursing, and prevention of mothers from having contact with their young children or by making women targets of hostage-taking to pressure a male member of the family. As one witness described it: "Mothers who ventured out to forage for food for their families would be stopped and beaten. If they had food, it would be thrown on the ground and trampled" (The Intifada). Curfews and "military sieges," which were "among the Israelis' favorite *Intifada*-busters," prevented mothers from carrying out their motherly role, ironically through confining her to the house. *Intifada* can be said to be a state of being in which every member of

the society was fighting for the ability to perform one's role. *Intifada* was also when what constituted these roles were rapidly changing, both due to external reasons i.e. the occupying power as well as internal reasons including the Palestinians' struggle to accommodate these situations.

In short, during the *Intifada* as never before, Palestinian men were interested in increasing the Palestinian population, while the Israeli occupiers were interested in limiting it. Women's bodies and reproductive functions symbolically became the site of the battle between two opposing men or nations, and women themselves were left with little control over them.

The actual rise in birthrate during the *Intifada*,[25] however, was due to several factors. According to one survey published in Palestinian newspapers, the marriage rate went up between 20 and 30 percent, due to social and economic reasons. Socially, the *Intifada*'s street demonstrations brought people of marriageable age into contact and siblings of wounded or killed martyrs came to be seen as particularly desirable partners. In addition, especially in the villages and refugee camps, girls unable to continue their education because of the closures of schools and universities were married off by their families, even as young as fifteen years old (Rimawi 89). While marriage at such an early age was not uncommon among uneducated girls in rural Palestinian society, education usually had the effect of delaying marriage for these girls. Furthermore, an article in the Palestinian newspaper, Al-Fajr, recounts that "warmer" neighbor relations and "caring and tenderness" increased due to the need for social cooperation. One form of cooperation was expressed in the form of marriages. The lack of socio-economic

[25] The birth rates in Gaza and the West Bank in 1990 were 5.46% and 4.41% respectively, the latter being the highest record since 1975 (Vitullo 109).

stability due to political instability led to Palestinians trying to protect themselves against an uncertain future by encouraging marriage (Al-Ghazali 11). Economically, there was a drop in wedding expenses, not only dowry but also of wedding celebrations, which became smaller and simpler.

The rise in birthrate since the beginning of the *Intifada* partly reflects the fact that men were home more because of shortened workdays and curfews, and because of their wish to prove their masculinity through fathering children, especially sons. The increase in the rate of procreation, however, cannot be viewed as a strictly coercive practice. Some interviews with women suggested that, quite apart from whatever strategy men were following, consciously or unconsciously, many women were eager to produce "more children for Palestine" during the national liberation struggle. A number of women said that they had heard friends talking about having one more child than they would otherwise because the chances of a child being killed have increased so dramatically (Strum 151-52). Mother of Iman also said: "We are fighting for our own independent state and we want to compensate for all the young men we have lost by having new sons. During the *Intifada* women have had more children than before. We need to make up the losses" (Jardallah 128). This was in line with the political rhetoric of the time: according to Gren, Arafat in his speeches directed to refugee camps in the Occupied Territories repeatedly stated that refugee families should have twelve children, ten for the struggle and two for the family. Most women, however, questioned his statement (Gren 25). Umm Khalil, during our interview, talked of how Palestinian mothers always have many children, preferably boys, so that they would fight for Palestine. When she and her husband gave Khalil his first gun, they presented it to him

saying it was "to kill the Jews."[26] Umm Khalil continued: "We even have a saying that mothers are feeding hatred for the Jews through their breasts."[27] I asked her whether she would be supportive of her son, now aged sixteen and in America, if he expressed a wish to return to Palestine to fight for it. "Of course! That's what he's raised for!" she answered determinedly and defiantly. Her daughter, Danya, gently confronted her, saying that that was not what she had said to her before. To that, Umm Khalil added: "[I would be supportive] if there is an organization that I agreed with. Of course not Hamas or [Islamic] Jihad." When I asked her whether she held a notion that the son is not hers but Palestine's, she agreed adding that having children was her "share of the burden" to liberate Palestine. I had initially posed myself the question: did mothers have a choice of having more children, or were they using the language and rhetoric of national liberation to explain what was actually not within their power of decision-making, in order to make sense of reality and convince themselves, more than others. I later realized that the question was flawed. Occupation itself was not within their power of decision-making. Having more children was the only socially sanctioned reaction available to them in the face of occupation. They were like factories increasing production of ammunition during the war. Sons have without doubt always been valued

[26] Throughout the interview, Umm Khalil referred to Israelis as "Jews," explaining how she would rather use that than "Israelis": "Before [the creation of the State of] Israel, they were Jews and we called them Jews. And they are still Jews, the same people." Perhaps her choice of word is her way of showing resistance, an act signifying that she does not recognize the State of Israel.

[27] Her mother's use of the word "hate" clearly discomforted and offended Danya, who has been raised in America. She confronted her mother that hating the Jews/Israelis is not productive, not the way forward. Her mother fired back saying: "The Jews took our land. They killed my neighbor when I was twelve- I'll never forget it. In 1967 we were sharing a shelter, and we were going into it when I saw the boy shot. His mother just stood there doing nothing and I remember thinking why is the mother not going to help her son. But of course later I realized that she was too shocked to move. How can you tell me not to hate the Jews. Of course I hate them. It's hate for what the Jews did to us." This discussion reminded me that "hatred" is often very personal. People cannot be told to hate or not to hate, because, unlike popular belief, hatred in question is not collective but personal.

in Arab, including Palestinian, culture. For women, sons secure their positions in their marital communities and with their husbands (Abu-Lughod 122-23).[28] During the *Intifada*, the mothers themselves had come to internalize the "baby factory" image of themselves, seeing reproduction as their national duty rather than their social security. The steep rise of birth rate during the *Intifada* was generally a matter of choice and a thing to be proud of, not a matter of coercion. It can be said that individual mothers were giving up their motherhood and giving way to the ultimate Mother, Palestine.

Khalid's mother might have thought that she did not understand politics, but mothers, and women in general, became politicized and nationalized in ways which they themselves were most probably not aware of. Indeed, one of the changes brought about by the *Intifada* was the bridging of the mythical gap between women's abilities and politics, not because women became politically aware but because the definition of politics changed to be "less political" in the eyes of the Palestinian society. In other words, politics became transferred to the everyday rather than strictly a matter of consciousness or ideology. For example, Women's Work Committees attracted women by offering classes in first aid and health education to compensate for poor access to medical centers in times of curfew. They also increased their day-care hours to make it possible for women to participate in the *Intifada* (Sabbagh, "Palestinian" 109). Participation in women's committees legitimized independent non-kinship affiliations outside the house. The significance of the projects promoted by women's committees lay in the free spaces they created for women by extending women's communal society beyond kinship circles. For women, though, it was less "radical" to participate

[28] Abu-Lughod continues to explain that later, once the sons inherit from their father, a mother depends on them for support. Even in the case of divorce, a mother often lives in the household of an adult son (if she has one), gaining a position of some independence and power, his wife/wives performing services for her, and his children living near her.

spontaneously in *Intifada*-related activities than to become part of the formal structure of a women's committee. Thus many participated in some or most of a committee's *Intifada*-related activities without considering themselves members of a "feminist" organization (Strum 91-92). As one organizer put it bluntly, "it is easier to organize women around national issues than around their own cause as women" (Abdo 161). Women's participation in the *Intifada* can be understood as an "active reaction" rather than as political practice. This was caused, not by new ideas, but by an understanding of new realities in traditional terms and the carrying out of traditional roles using a new language. Women thus enlarged or extended their traditional roles rather than adopting completely new ones. It seems as though there is a limit to the degree of elasticity in "traditional" roles when placed in the context of a larger conflict like a struggle for independence or war. Women feel or are made to feel that struggle for gender equality is secondary and should give way to the larger cause.[29] Many of their forms for political participation were based on aspects of tradition, particularly defense of family, nurturing and assisting family members, and mutual aid between kin. These aspects of women's role have become a source of resistance because women have transformed their family responsibilities to encompass the entire community.

Palestinian women have therefore pushed against the boundaries of their traditional social roles, but stopped short of issuing a direct challenge to patriarchal structures. They have preferred instead to expand the boundaries of their involvement within these structures. In their view, the danger to the nation precedes their own priorities, and they feel the need to struggle alongside men against this external threat.

[29] This is a view popularly held by Palestinian women to this day. Nedaa wrote in one of her e-mails: "But before seeking our individual rights as women we need to establish our rights as a population in freedom and independence, so that we can decide freely what we want and get our rights protected" (E-mail correspondence, 1 May 2003).

They said that they wanted to do nothing that could harm their family, that they had too many household responsibilities. In addition, because the *Intifada* made life more difficult anyway, women did not want tension in the house too (Salibi 166). How can women possibly choose this moment to demean their men and add to the denial of their manhood by demanding that they assume what had always been viewed as women's work (Strum 167-68)?

Such politicization of mothers is very clearly represented in a short story, "Our Fate, Our House" by Sahar Khalifeh. In the story, the protagonist Umm Samih orders her husband to go to the kitchen while she confronts the Israeli soldiers who broke into the house at dawn, looking for *shabab*. When her husband expresses his concern that she will get beaten up by the soldiers, Umm Samih replies "I can bear that, not you," thinking inwardly that "Women can take it better than men." Later she expresses "A woman would sacrifice her blood, her soul, rather than give the *shabab* over. Upon my soul, even if they aren't my sons, I will never do that even if they cut my throat" (31). There is a clear case here of solidarity expressed along gender lines. She is giving women collective identity through her action. Her action is underlined by what she considers as her gender's characteristics. Her new identity during the *Intifada* is partly constructed by her/women's ability to withstand pain. What was before a reference to women's reproductive function in the domestic realm is now elevated as a gender characteristic that promotes women to the frontline confrontation with soldiers. Yet, her tolerance to pain plays an important role, not in her becoming the warrior, but in her protecting the *shabab*. It is, in a sense, expansion of her social role as a nurturer and passive protector of children, yet to an *Intifada* mother, tolerance to pain, even after childbirth, becomes an important element. In this story, and in many other narratives

regarding mothers, it is they who are the strongest figures, since they are portrayed as offering defensive support to the *shabab* and all other members of the family without ever needing protection from others.

Narratives of Mothers

In order to examine the rituals of the *Intifada*, it is first important for the purpose of this paper to look at the narratives of mothers. As discussed earlier, while the relationship between a *shab* and his father was that of competition over authority, his relationship with his mother was one of complementarity.[30] A mother was not a "New Palestinian" in her own right, but by being a mother of a *shab* and being supportive of her son, she became a "New Palestinian" herself. In turn, the son's "New Palestinianness" in the extraordinary space (be it in the streets, prison or hospital) was considered to have been affected by the mother's steadfastness in the ordinary space of everyday life. Such is what is behind one of the sets of posters issued by the aforementioned Children's Documentation Center [see Fig.6]. The what-not-to-do picture shows a child crying for his absent/dead brother. The mother is shouting at the child: "Enough crying… You are driving me mad!!" In the what-to-do picture, the mother is comforting her son: "I know you are feeling vexed, darling. You are vexed because of your brother, and we are also very vexed and missing him very much." The mother's steadfastness has positive effects not only on the little boy, but, it is hoped, on

[30] That complementary relationship between the *shabab* and the mothers can be seen in the dress-code of the *Intifada*. As discussed in Chapter 4, the *hijab* was redefined as a sign of women's political commitment to the *Intifada*. The dress-code of the *shabab* in expressing their nationalist commitments, on the other hand, consisted of t-shirt, jeans, white sneakers and *kaffiyah*, a western dress symbolizing new and progressive culture. The *shabab*, however, needed the traditional albeit re-defined dress of the women as a symbolism of the continuation of Palestinian culture, to demonstrate that the "New Palestinian" was at the same time rooted.

the older *shab* (if he is still alive).

[Image]

Fig.6: (*Source*: Mansur 162-63)

On examining the narratives of mothers following prison and hospital visits to their sons, it is interesting to note how these accounts were constructed in such a way as to allow listeners to view and assess the political commitment and moral integrity of their sons. Such narratives related details of physical abuses and injuries, intimidation, humiliation, or medical procedures following mistreatment, in a manner that denied or concealed the emotional turmoil the mothers must have been experiencing. These reports were accompanied by stories celebrating the good humor with which the *shabab* defied Israeli attempts to break them. Anecdotes of a son making a joke about enjoying gourmet prison food, or of a son telling his mother that her workload would be alleviated after his release as he was learning housework in prison, demonstrated that the *shab* was finding it in himself to see the humorous and educational side of the experience, and that in so doing he was standing up to the Israelis (Jean-Klein, "Mothercraft" 111). Such refusal to acquiesce was also evident in graffiti such as "Prison is for relaxation, deportation policy is for tourism, throwing stones is exercise" (Peteet, "Writing" 146), signed UNLU, which denied the effectiveness of occupation tactics such as detention and deportation to wear down resistance. Graffiti such as that quoted above displayed the Palestinian capacity to defy punishment creatively and even to take pleasure in defiance. It was also a means of preparing young boys for the likelihood of a prison experience.

Not only did the mother have the important role of narrating the son's heroism on his behalf, but also the recitation style of the mother was part of a representation of

self-control and resistance of the absent *shab*. Thus, for example, crowds of women were witnessed ululating during their prison visits as the prisoners were led away from the fence that separated the inmates from their visitors. Through their ululation, they publicly declared that they were proud to have a family member in prison, and that imprisonment was a productive and honorable deed (Jean-Klein, "Nationalism" 98). The mother was thus co-embodying her son's heroism and political commitment by carrying herself as the proud and defiant mother of a political casualty. It can be said that the pressure exerted on mothers to maintain self-control and commitments to daily routines for their sons was based on an understanding that a mother's composure had the power to cross time and space to make the son conduct himself correctly (Jean-Klein, "Mothercraft" 116). In the case of mothers of martyrs, mothers embody the heroism of their dead sons by being composed and making a nationalist speech without shedding a tear.[31] The mother of a martyr was, in turn, rewarded for her suffering. In other words, her suffering made other people look at her with respect. A mother's suffering is placed in relation to their children. Gren observes how, even when the mothers were talking about their personal suffering, they referred to their children. The children had the leading part in stories concerning the *Intifada*. When women's own suffering was mentioned, it was in passing. This illustrates the point that the struggle and the sufferings of women are connected to motherhood; their own suffering is not as important as the sufferings of their children (Gren 25). In addition, this is also based on an understanding that, since having children who would fight for Palestine was the duty of the mother, a mother's contribution to the national cause is measured according to her

[31] This is an important point to remember in understanding the image of mothers of suicide bombers seen on television during the course of the Second *Intifada*.

sons' contributions, and her suffering is similarly measured according to that of her sons'. This also partly explains Khamis' findings that the political stressors were not only a source of stress, but also was a variable that protected family members from distress. In other words, those women strongly exposed to hardships of military occupation tended to employ more social and political activity and less inactive and accommodative coping modes than did less traumatized women, thus decreasing the likelihood of breakdown into psychological distress. According to Khamis, women from the West Bank and rural areas experienced higher psychological distress than did Gazans and refugee camp residents. The latter tend to participate in more rioting than do the former, suggesting that rioting, an externalizing strategy, may be related to the reduction of the levels of psychological distress (Khamis, "Psychological" 1033, 1039-40). Thus loss is not automatically followed by powerlessness, but may, on the contrary, provide a sense of empowerment.

Small Weddings and Big Funerals: Rituals of Intifada

Wedding festivities occupy a special place in the Palestinian imagination, for after the occupation of 1948, these festivities became one of the principal means by which the Palestinians expressed their nationalist sentiments (Elmessiri 97), as well as being outlets for the expression of popular folk culture and sexuality. During the *Intifada*, all public celebrations were curtailed, if not altogether eliminated, and feasts were limited to religious rites only. Weddings and other festive social occasions became modest, private affairs, accompanied by increased prudery, which, according to Warnock, was formerly the province of the urban bourgeoisie. At village weddings it was rare to see a woman over the age of nine or ten perform the sexually provocative

dancing of tradition, except in the most perfunctory and embarrassed manner. Dancing was "not respectable" (180), and women (and men) began to (self-)deny their sexuality. Music and fancy wedding dinners were discouraged as well. For example, when a family ordered food from a restaurant to serve to wedding guests, *shabab* confiscated the food and left a note saying, "Youths of the Uprising decided to distribute the food to needy families and there is no need to spend money on luxurious feasts at the time of the Uprising" (Al-Ghazali 11). Suppression of sexuality and any form of physical desire became associated with nationalism. Although traditionally joyous and indulgent events, weddings were transformed into somber occasions, when people were expected to express their commitment to nationalism.

The traditional role of weddings as a social occasion was taken over by political occasions, including funerals, devised as more of an outlet for political national sentiments than as popular folk culture. By contrast, the return home of prisoners was marked by a fairly well-defined celebratory etiquette, and in form most closely resembles a wedding with the throwing of flower petals, singing and dancing.[32] Relatives, friends and neighbors visited for several weeks to show respect to the released detainee and his family. Special foods, usually more expensive meat dishes, were prepared both to strengthen the detainee's often poor health as well as to show appreciation and respect for his endurance. New clothes were bought to mark re-entry into the community. The respect shown by deferential gestures to the former prisoner or beaten youth all marked his re-entry into society with a new status of respect and manhood (Peteet, "Male" 40). *Intifada* funerals, moreover, were indeed a place and occasion where the idea of community was reinforced, while also serving as an outlet

[32] Such image is portrayed in the film *Cantique des Pierres* (1990) by director Michel Khleifi.

for political nationalist sentiments.

Whereas Islamic law gives no role to women in funerals, women assumed the function of going in groups to the funerals of martyrs early in the *Intifada*. While "normal" visiting habits were voluntarily suspended during the *Intifada*, visits that served a (political) purpose were allowed. The latter accompanied a change in etiquette, such as no food or drinks during such visits, and consisted of objectives such as a more experienced mother of a prisoner son visiting a mother whose son became a prisoner for the first time, in order to teach the new mother about clothes and toiletry items with which to supply the prisoner (Jean-Klein, "Nationalism" 102). In short, a traditional cultural practice was taken and given a (different) meaning, namely a political objective, accompanied with a change in etiquette. Women went to the bedsides of the wounded to show solidarity, to the homes of the families of those killed, and to villages that had been attacked by the army. These solidarity and condolence visits were at times mobilized by local women's and popular committees, which called upon the neighborhood and even women from other places in the occupied territories (Salibi 167). For the committees, the visits were important actions that strengthened the bonds of solidarity between people, and which allowed women to imagine the community. Indeed, as the *Intifada* reinforced the idea of community, it became customary for strangers to simply drop in at the homes of martyrs' families (Strum 100), who came to show that all Palestinians are one people, that the grief of the mother of martyr is their grief. This act was indeed highly encouraged by UNLU throughout their communiqués.

At a typical *Intifada* funeral, the young women tended to the food, receiving and sometimes collecting it from neighbors, keeping it warm, serving it, and then cleaning up afterwards. While the young men dedicated themselves to maintaining the

official mourning spaces, the young women, like their mothers on a more daily basis, made sure that ordinary life continued as smoothly as possible at the margins of those official spaces. All of it was honorable activity for them and an expression of their love for the martyr. Tears flowed during the day, especially with the arrival of the old women who could still remember earlier mourning rituals that called for wailing and the rending of their clothes. But rituals had changed during the *Intifada*. The mother and other women friends were as likely as not to deliver resolute nationalist speeches about other sons who would have to die for the homeland. "This is our life; this is 'our situation,'" they would assert. The mother would reply to the gathering crowd that she was grateful and that the visit made her feel that her son was the son of everyone present. The mother thus gave up being the one and only mother to her son. The son, once a martyr, becomes communal. *Intifada* mourning was more like a wedding than a wake, and only on the occasion of a martyr's death did a wedding-sized crowd gather (Gunn 86-88). After praying over the martyr's body, men and women would head toward the cemetery, women singing wedding songs to the "bridegroom" as they walked.

The above, of course, was a scene from public (i.e. male) mourning rituals. There were very different scenes in the private mourning spaces. Morgan describes what she witnessed in Dheisheh camp on the West Bank. In a room full of women, different from the outer room where the large photograph of the martyr was up and where the men congregated i.e. the official space, women, including the mother, were crying over the memory of the dead son. In Morgan's account the *mukhtar* angrily burst into the room and berated the women for mourning, reminding them that this was a day for great celebration, that they should be honored to have known a glorious martyr, that

female tears scald the soul of one so elect, that they insult and dishonor his memory by their womanish sorrow. The *mukhtar* finally left the room satisfied after he saw dutiful fixed smiles across the faces of the women. Then, with a look of contempt at the door by which he left, the bereaved mother tore open the front of her dress, snatched the veil from her head, rend it in two, beat at her bare breasts with her fists, and keened in wild grief, "My son, my son! See how I am not even permitted to mourn you […]" (Morgan, "Women" 165).

Khalid also talked of how it was only during the first two weeks that you could see the mother composed, which was largely due to the support she got from the community to cope with her loss. He pointed out that the practice of "congratulating" mothers for the martyrdom of her son was a practice that came to be adopted in communities where they lost many *shabab*.

> In a small community like a village where everybody knows everybody else, a loss of one person really shows in the community. When the community loses many members, it is very traumatic for that community, and the community had to learn how to cope with it.

Thus it was the society's coping strategy to congratulate mothers of martyrs. "But," continued Khalid:

> Visit any mother after two weeks when the support-network is gone, and then you'll see. I knew one mother who lost her son [during the First *Intifada*] and she's still, after almost 20 years, out of it. She's not there when you talk to her.

Dr. Hala Salem Abuateya during our interview suggested that mothers sought different outlets for their grief other than the official mourning space. On occasions such as that described above of Dheisheh camp, women gather around to support the mother of martyr, but when they grieve, they are also crying for their sons who had previously died. The private space of a martyr's funeral was where all mothers of

martyrs could grieve. It was not only at funerals that mothers could grieve. Dr. Abuateya talked of how mothers were seen crying even at happy occasions such as weddings. The mothers' tears were shed in remembrance of sons who didn't live to marry.

> Once (after the *Intifada*) I was walking and saw a woman crying in the middle of the street. There were some people trying to comfort her, and one of them turned around and pointed at me, saying "She was at Birzeit (University), she knows your son." It turns out that she is the mother of a friend of mine, who was very intelligent and we had fought over being number one at school. He was killed during a demonstration, and I was actually there when that happened. The woman came and she started kissing my hand and feet, because I knew her son and I could tell her stories about him. I was able to point out the exact place where he was killed, and in that place she broke down, hitting her head again and again against the ground… I would never be able to forget that scene.

The mothers, deprived of a grieving place in the official mourning space, thus found other spaces in which to let go their grief.

It is indeed one of the stages in the grieving process to try to make sense of the loss. When that sense and reasoning is provided by political rhetoric and societal pressure, in addition to the last words of the child asking the mother to be happy for him/her and not to cry, a mother has no alternative but to place the loss within the context of resistance, the resistance of the larger community. Although this might allow a mother to believe that her child died for a reason,[33] since that reasoning is part of the culture of resistance in which the mother lives and is ritualized as the social norm, the fact remains that a mother's private mourning space is pushed elsewhere, giving way to a political demonstration. A mother's right to grieve has no place in the public culture of resistance.

[33] As in the case of Zahra, who lost her 19-year old son Abdallah to the First *Intifada*, who expressed "My only comfort is that God has repaid my anguish and suffering by giving him the honor of being a martyr to the Palestinian cause" (Hamad 16).

As Gren rightly observes, “the *Intifada* in its totality could be understood as a ritual in which the Palestinians reconstitute a moral superiority, a kind of purity” (Gren 30). This chapter illustrates that in this ritual called the *Intifada*, mothers took on the role of embodiment of the moral superiority of their people, especially of their children the *shabab*, who they rightly understood might not live to tell the tale. In the face of fragmentation of Palestinian society, women by being mothers of all Palestinians made Palestine into a Family, a tight and intimate unit inviolable by the occupier.

Chapter 6: Concluding Remarks

In the Palestinian resistance culture, there is indeed a meaning attached to motherhood. Umm Khalil proudly asserted that:

> You can always tell Palestinian mothers from other Arab mothers. A Palestinian mother has suffered so much more, and she is so much stronger because of it. Suffering is an important part of Palestinian identity. But we are also strong. You can see the strength in the face of a Palestinian mother.

A newspaper article about a mother who lost her 19-year old son, Abdallah, depicts how mothers themselves envisaged their roles in the *Intifada* as being parallel to the role of Mother of Palestine, the land of Palestine:

> Deep in her heart she knows that those [*shabab*] are all her children, just as the land gives to all its fruits in the knowledge that they belong to her. (Hamad 16)

The *Intifada* allowed mothers to imagine the Palestinian community as if they were mothers to all *shabab* and by visiting other mothers and emphasizing with them. While the thesis suggests that the community itself was unable to imagine its mothers fully, concentrating on their reproductive and social functions, it is equally important to note that, at the same time, mothers established a particularly gendered claim to belonging to the nation. They did so by asserting and embodying the moral superiority of the Palestinian community through their actions, and by spontaneously and voluntarily taking up the role of embodying or co-embodying their sons' heroism. The latter was done not only through their narratives but also through their steadfastness in carrying out daily life, and the steadfastness of the sons, whether in the streets, the prison or the hospital. "Steadfastness" became a key local term in the *Intifada*. The social construction of *Intifada* resistance must therefore take into account the role of mothers.

One of the most talked of difference between the First and the Second *Intifada*s

is the tactic of suicide bombings as a form of resistance. At a market in Cairo in the summer of 2002, I found a white t-shirt that had on it a fake Hard Rock Café logo in the front. A badly forged American brand is an everyday sight in the streets of Cairo, but what I saw when I turned the t-shirt over left me unsure whether to laugh or take offence. The back of the t-shirt was covered with photographic images representing the Second *Intifada*. Other t-shirts in the same pile had pictures of singer Amr Diab and other famous pop stars on them. The *Intifada* pictures was clearly treated as a form of popular culture, which is perhaps not surprising considering the number of Egyptian musicians who rushed into studios to record songs inspired by the Palestinian resistance movement (Bahgat, par. 1), as well as the number of films and other forms of art with *Intifada* themes (Radi, par. 5, 15). Among the photos at the back of the t-shirt was that of the twelve-year old Mohammad Al-Durra, screaming in terror amidst the gun battle and clinging on to his father as the latter vainly stretched a protective arm in front of his son. Another photo was of Ayat Akhras, an eighteen-year old high school student who blew herself up in a supermarket in Jerusalem. She was engaged to be married that summer.

While the First *Intifada* failed to produce a nationalist icon like the famous Algerian revolutionary Jamila Bou Harayd,[34] Ayat and other female suicide bombers including Wafa Idris, a 28 year-old divorced paramedic and the first Palestinian female suicide bomber, clearly became the Jamilas of the Second *Intifada*. That Ayat, and not Wafa, was chosen to feature in this particular t-shirt can perhaps be accounted for by the fact that Ayat was a virgin while Wafa, as a divorcee, was not. In addition, while Ayat was a *muhajaba*, Wafa was secular and unveiled. Like Jamila, both Ayat and Wafa

[34] Refer to Chapter 2 for discussions concerning Jamila Bou Harayd.

gained their status by temporarily becoming men (or permanently, as they died while performing what is putatively a man's job). Some even claim that the emergence of female suicide bombers can be interpreted as a demand for equal status and a way of proving that women are not worth less than men in the culture of resistance (Copeland, par. 26). Wafa was forced to divorce her husband of ten years by her then mother-in-law for failing to bear him a child (Gilmore, par. 6). Deprived of motherhood_newly invested with symbolic importance_she perhaps had an additional reason to prove her commitment and ability to contribute to the Palestinian cause. Paradoxically, suicide bombing could have been her way of protesting the importance laid on child-bearing in the Palestinian society. Wafa had also been an activist during the First *Intifada*, joining demonstrations and throwing stones (Gilmore, par. 7). Perhaps her personal experience of a failed non-violent resistance during the First *Intifada* drove her to a more violent means of resistance. The above anecdotes suggest that the analysis done in this dissertation would be useful and applicable in examining the Second *Intifada*.

The paper began by looking at the way the western mass media treats mothers of martyrs. This dissertation has shown that the phenomenon of martyrdom can be better understood through changes in family structure and intra-familial power relations during resistance to occupation. Mass media, including Arabic-language satellite stations, may contribute to the continually changing forms of Palestinian resistance, but they do not fundamentally change its dynamics. What the western media does, however, is promote the implicit assumption that suicide bombing are driven simply by primordial hatred towards Israel. The dissertation argues that "hatred" towards Israelis is not primordial but is socially constructed in a specific historical context; that the requirement to resist occupation contributes to a reorganization of family structure; and

that the nature of this reorganization is to further resistance. The longer the occupation continues, the more the Palestinian society, even at its most intimate level, will be geared to reproducing resistance. As the paper illustrates, it is reproduction of the most fundamental and literal kind.

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