

Refugee Interviews

The fate of those Palestinians who were rendered refugees in 1948 is often discussed in macro terms, with little attention paid to the details surrounding their dispossession. Below, four Palestinians of modest or village origins describe in their own words the period leading up to and the circumstances of their expulsion or departure from Palestine. The interviews were conducted in spring 1988 by JPS correspondents in Beirut and Amman.

Muhammad Sa'id was born in 1934 in the Galilee village of Farradiyyah. He spent the first six months of exile in Bint Jubayl, in southern Lebanon. The road of the exile took him and his family successively to Tyre, Tal al-Za'tar (until the fall of the camp to Lebanese Forces and the Palestinian massacres in 1976), Damur (until the Israeli invasion of 1982), and then to Sabra (until the camp fell to Amal in 1985). Today he lives in Wardaniyyah near Sidon in south Lebanon.

JPS: Describe what your village, Farradiyyah, was like.

Sa'id: Ours was an agricultural village. In the summer, wheat, lentils, and other grains were planted. Fruit trees, grapes, and cherry trees were all plentiful. In the winter, the village was known for its radishes. My brother had land. He was a farmer. There were also two springs: Nab' Farradiyyah, the permanent one that irrigated the orchards, and Nab' Rumaylah, a seasonal one that dried up in the summer. At the east of our village, near the village of Dahriyyah in the Wadi al-Laymun, there was an important spring that emptied into the Hulah Lake.

JPS: Describe how it happened that you had to leave your village in 1948.

Sa'id: One night, the Arab Liberation Army (*Jaysh al-Inqadh*) (ALA)* evacuated their base near our village. The village notables, including Salim al-Qamhu, Abu 'Umar Karum, and Nayif 'Ali, formed a delegation to see the officer in charge of the ALA unit on the outskirts of the village to ask why they were withdrawing. The leader of the unit was a Lebanese named Hanna al-Hilu. He said that a regular army was going to take over for the ALA. The notables from Farradiyyah asked if they should adopt any security measures, such as putting the young men of the village on the alert—there were about 120 of them. He answered that this wouldn't be necessary. That reassured us. But at five in the morning, our village was invaded by Jewish tanks and armored vehicles. The Jews went to the mukhtar of the village and told him that all the villages of the Galilee had fallen.** They used diplomacy, saying before leaving the village that day that they hoped to coexist with us.

They came back the next day and ordered the mukhtar, whose name was Hajju al-Qamhu, to turn over all the weapons in the village. "We don't have any weapons," the mukhtar said. The Jews then produced a list of names of those who they claimed had weapons and set a 24-hour deadline to collect them. The third day they came and picked up seven or eight German and British guns. Finally, the fourth day, 75 or 100 Jews from the Haganah came, backed by trucks and armored vehicles. They rounded up all the inhabitants of the village—about a thousand people—on the square. There was no more talk about peaceful coexistence, like there was on the first day.

They set fire to three houses, including Sa'id al-Ahmad's and Nayif 'Ali's. They also destroyed the mukhtar's house. Then they took about fifty men, including me, and lined us up against the wall. I was about fifteen at the time. For the next two or three hours, they used psychological pressure, several times pretending they were going to execute us in order to terrorize the villagers. Then they loaded us, the fifty men, on trucks and drove us to the village of al-Ramah, five kilometers away.

In the meantime, while we men were being held at al-Ramah, the other inhabitants of our village, including my mother, sisters, two brothers, and my uncle's wife, were forced to leave the village on foot. The Israelis said

*The Arab Liberation Army comprised Arab irregulars organized by the Arab League to stiffen Palestinian resistance.

**This was as a result of Plan Daler's Operation Yiftach. See, "Plan Daler," by Walid Khalidi, pp. 4–20, this issue.

to them: "Go to Lebanon, to Qawuqji[†], who will give you spaghetti to eat." To force them to leave, the Jews fired on them, killing one villager, Mahmud 'Utur, and wounding the mukhtar's wife (who belonged to the Mi'ari family) in the back with a bullet. They threatened to fire on anyone attempting to return.

They escorted the villagers for about three kilometers, firing over their heads to intimidate them. Once they got to al-Samu'i, to the north of our village, the Jews left, again threatening to kill whoever tried to come back. Even so, four families returned to Farradiyyah, hiding out in the woods.

My mother, brothers and sisters, as well as all the others, stayed under the olive trees for two days without eating or drinking. At the end of two days, they were put in trucks by the Jews and deported to Rumaysh in south Lebanon.

While all this was going on, all the men who had been taken by the Jews to al-Ramah, except me and two others, were imprisoned in Atlit. The three of us were spared because of our young age: a Jewish officer told us to flee toward Lebanon. We replied that we wanted to return to the village. "Your village is deserted, from now on," he told us, and gave us a *laissez-passez* to get through the Jewish check points.

Farradiyyah was emptied of its inhabitants and left to stray dogs and cats. Not knowing what to do and wanting to find our families, we walked north toward Lebanon over the mountains. I remember passing through the Druze village Bayt Jan, where we were told that groups of villagers had passed through on their way to exile. We kept on walking until nightfall, and slept under the stars in the woods of Bayt Jan.

There were a few incidents along the road. I was with my cousin, Ahmad Sa'id Ahmad, and a relative, 'Ali Mar'i 'Ali. At Hurfiyyah, a Druze village about three kilometers from the Lebanese border, some looters tried to rob us. In the mountains where we had hidden from the looters, a Jewish patrol fired on us. Finally, after twenty-four hours of wandering, we came back to the village of Hurfiyyah, where I found my father and some others. It was there that I learned that my family and the other inhabitants of the village were at Bint Jubayl in Lebanon.

Forty-eight hours later, after a night at Rumaysh, we reached Bint Jubayl just inside the Lebanese border, where the refugees' situation was

[†]Fawzi al-Qawuqji was the field commander of the ALA forces. Lebanese by birth, he fought the French invasion of Syria in 1920 and served as a military adviser to Saudi Arabia before going to Iraq. He subsequently organized the Palestinian guerrillas of central Palestine and led them in several fierce engagements with British forces in early 1936.

shocking. The prices the merchants were asking for all sorts of things were exorbitant. Even drinking water was being sold for five Palestinian piasters!

At Bint Jubayl we found refugees coming from the villages of al-Samu'i, Mayrun, 'Ayn al-Zaytun, al-Ja'unah, Safsaf, and Ras al-Ahmar. So at least there was solidarity among the Palestinian families, and we helped each other.

What seems extraordinary to me today, looking back, is that for the two months after our exodus I crossed the Lebanese-Palestinian border perhaps fifteen times with my father and others to return to Farradiyyah. We walked six or seven hours to get to our house. It was in November 1948, if I remember correctly. We brought back with us flour, mattresses, blankets, grain, horses, donkeys, and livestock.

In Farradiyyah, we found the four families who had gone back, including the mukhtar and his nephew, Jabir Ahmad and his brother Sa'id Ahmad. These incursions were not without incident: during the third trip, an Israeli patrol took our money and gold. We had made the mistake of starting out toward Lebanon at about noon instead of waiting for night to fall.

Eventually, the four families I mentioned were transferred to Rumaysh.

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Selim Hindi, born in 1933 in Acre, lived between Acre and Haifa until the 1948 exodus. He now resides in Beirut, Lebanon, where he has a high-level position with a European airline.

JPS: What images do you still have of Palestine?

Hindi: Acre's city walls, the sandy beach—the most beautiful in the world to my eyes. We lived in a modest house of three rooms plus a kitchen and bathroom. We didn't even have electricity, and the water had to be drawn from a well. And yet this house for me is worth all the palaces of the world.

I went to primary school in Acre, in a government school. But I didn't stay in school long. When you didn't do well in school, your parents were told: "Have him learn a trade so he can earn a living." When I left, at about age twelve, I was trained to be a car mechanic in Haifa by some Jews of the Arditi family. I went back and forth every day, an hour by train to travel the twenty-two kilometers between Acre and Haifa.

We left Palestine in 1948, before 15 May. There had been a lot of incidents. I was coming back from Haifa on the bus the day the Jews attacked the Acre prison. At the Na'manah crossroads, we couldn't continue to Acre because of the troubles. Our house was two kilometers

from the city. It wasn't until almost midnight that the British allowed us into Acre, which had two entrances, one in the west and the other in the east. I came through the Cemetery Gate that night alone, in a region surrounded by the British.

When I got home, after having gone through a number of searches and questions by the British, my mother was very worried.

The next day, I didn't go to Haifa. I stayed away for a long time, until the war between the Jews and Arabs became generalized. This incident—the attack on the prison by the Jews—took place at the beginning of 1948 or perhaps the end of 1947.

The overwhelming majority of Acre's population was Palestinian Arab. There were only a few Jewish families, one of which, the Abu Zakis, were said to have converted to Islam. They were not a problem. But Acre was surrounded on all sides by Jewish colonies . . . I don't remember the names very well. Twice during 1948 they attacked Acre. Our house was in the suburbs, in al-Manshiyyah, between Nahariya and Acre. We lived just off the main route, the Beirut road, as it was called.

JPS: What were conditions like before you left Acre?

Hindi: There had been numerous skirmishes between Jews and Arabs outside Acre. In one incident, for example, the electricity in Acre had been cut. The Jews wanted to make the necessary repairs in Nahariya without making them in Acre, which they had to cross in an armored vehicle under the protection of the Haganah. The men of Acre wanted to prevent them from passing through our city if they didn't repair Acre's electricity as well. A skirmish took place, and four Jews were killed. Afterwards, they organized a punitive expedition against the city. The real reason for their final attack on the city was a logistical one: they wanted to control the road axis leading through Acre to their various colonies.* Their punitive expedition cost the lives of five or six Palestinians, if I remember correctly, not counting the wounded. I remember that those killed were buried in the clothes they were wearing at the time: people explained that the blood of a martyr purified him.

JPS: Was there resistance at Acre?

*The attack on the city was part of Operation Ben-Ami of Plan Dalet, intended to capture the entire western Galilee, an area not apportioned to the Jewish State in the partition plan.

Hindi: We could call on policemen who worked with the British, but we didn't have many means of resisting. We were under British martial law, and anyone caught in possession of ammunition was condemned to death.

My father was a simple man, a taxicab driver. He worked in Acre's agricultural sector as well. He had bought himself a Sawari, a German gun bigger than he was, with 50 cartridges. Our neighbors, meanwhile, had various weapons, French or English guns. When one man's ammunition ran out, he couldn't borrow from his neighbors since the ammunition didn't match, and then his rifle wasn't worth more than a piece of wood.

The night that we left our house, which was very isolated, we took refuge under a bridge. The following day we were attacked again. We were frightened children. I was the oldest. We again spent the whole night hiding under the bridge to protect ourselves from the bullets. Our fears were amplified by Zionist propaganda and by the massacres that were being carried out. Parents were afraid for their children, for their daughters. I had two brothers and six sisters at the time: a seventh girl was born later in exile, in Lebanon. Our parents were with us under the bridge. The following day my father said that the only solution was for us to go to Lebanon. Our parents were convinced that it was temporary, a question of two or three weeks, the time it would take for Arab arms to liberate Palestine. My father believed that our [the family's] presence in Palestine during this period of troubles would make things more difficult for him and curtail his freedom of movement. And he wanted to ensure our safety. So he sent us on a truck belonging to my uncle Khalil. We sat on top of the load (merchandise) he was to drive to Lebanon that day.

JPS: Did you take your personal effects with you?

Hindi: When we wanted to take the mattresses, my father said: "What for? In a week you'll be back." My mother wanted to take her sewing machine, some Nablus cheese, oil. Again he talked her out of it, saying it made no sense for what would be a maximum of two weeks absence.

So we left with nothing except a suitcase of winter clothes. We left everything behind. The main road (from Acre through Nahariya, al-Zeeb, and al-Bassa) was closed to traffic. The Lebanese Army was on the border. We took the road that went through the orchards to the Lebanese village of Bint Jubayl. We saw many Palestinians along the way. My maternal grandmother was on the road for about seven hours. We reached the city of Sidon in south Lebanon, where relatives of my grandmother—may her soul rest in peace—were living. These relatives took us in and we stayed with

them for about a month. We had no news of my father, who had stayed in Acre, and all the roads were cut. We were very worried. Some people told us my father was dead. Another person swore he had buried him with his own hands. Later, after 15 May 1948, Acre was encircled for six days.* My father was wounded in the shoulder. By a miracle, he was able to get from Acre and to Sidon without money. He arrived sick, wounded, and with dysentery. At the beginning we lived off the money from the sale of my mother's jewelry.

My national identity is still exclusively Palestinian. The same holds true for my children, even though they were all born in Lebanon. Generation after generation, our Palestinian identity will be carried on.

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*Sa'id Jad'an was born in 1917 in the village of 'Ayn Ghazal.** He is a schoolteacher and currently lives in Irbid, Jordan.*

JPS: Did you have property in 'Ayn Ghazal?

Jad'an: My father owned about 350 dunums, 50 of which he inherited from his father and the rest of which he purchased as a result of hard work. We had three houses: the large family house on one dunum of land in the center of the village, my house, and another house for my brother on an area of about 10 dunums.

JPS: Did you leave 'Ayn Ghazal before the end of the British mandate?

Jad'an: When the British mandate ended on 15 May 1948, I was still in 'Ayn Ghazal. I stayed for a while thereafter; our village resisted fiercely before it fell. The fighters were all from our village, with the exception of one Jordanian, who I think was from the Huwaytat tribe. He was a good man and an active fighter. He was one of the defenders of the village with his old Ottoman rifle, and he trained the youths of the village.

In 'Ayn Ghazal there were eleven Bren machine guns and at least 400 rifles. In the family we had five rifles, one for each of the brothers. The

* Acre actually fell on 17 May 1948.

** 'Ayn Ghazal was one of three villages (the other two were Ijzim and Jaba') on the southern slopes of the Mt. Karmil range which had organized their defenses more competently than most others. These villages were able to hold out until July 1948, when the Israeli army carried out a major offensive to occupy them.

people themselves purchased these weapons in Gaza, Jenin, and Jaffa on the black market.

JPS: Who was your leadership?

Jad'an: There was a National (*qawmiyyah*) Committee, composed of several persons, one from each neighborhood or clan (*hamulah*). The members were appointed by the elders and we had confidence in them. There was no military commander, but the young men of the village used to go to the Iraqi army for training in the use of weaponry and then come back with ammunition.

We also had fortifications around the town. Each neighborhood participated in the fortifications, which were fifty meters apart. The people were divided into two sections for guard duty; one section guarded by night, the other by day. In the period before the final attack there were no less than twenty assaults, all of which were repulsed.

But we had no doctor. There had been a nurse, but one day she was returning from Haifa in a bus, and the Jews attacked and she was killed. Before the last battle we requested a physician from the UN truce observer. He came after some days and said: "I advertised in the Arab world, and no Arab physician is willing to volunteer to come to your region because it is surrounded by the Jews." So he brought us simple medical equipment.

JPS: Do you remember exactly when you left 'Ayn Ghazal?

Jad'an: On 25 July 1948, I think, after the Jews had attacked the village and besieged it and we had no hope of resisting. The Jews launched a continuous assault on the village for five days, using machine guns, artillery, and airplanes. They tried to invade from the east, but failed because the village of Ijzim stood in their way. They also attempted to invade from the south, but could not because they found the terrain too rugged and the resistance intense. When they tried to invade from the west they also failed. They continued the siege and escalated the bombardment.

We were desperate, isolated. There was no hope that help would arrive. I was the liaison officer between the UN officer, Major Hoffman, and the village. Hoffman took me aside and asked me if I thought we could defeat the Jews. I said no. The Jews were a large force, while we were few in number and our weapons were simple. He then asked what the benefit was of continuing the battle. I told him that we that we were in a dilemma, because we wanted to preserve our lives and our homeland. He offered to

arrange a meeting between us and the Jews to discuss the issues. I answered that I could not make such a decision, and asked for two days to consult with others in the village.

I met with the elders of the village and explained the major's proposal. The elders agreed to meet with the Jews, but said that we should first consult the youth. I went to my cousin, one of their leaders, and told him what had taken place and then asked him his opinion. He warned me that the Jews would probably kill the young men if they entered the village. I told him that we could insist on the condition that all the people of the village be spared. "Impossible," he said, "the Jews never respect any agreement. Don't go any further with this idea, don't get involved in it; if the youth hear they will kill you." I went back to the village elders and told them what happened. We consulted and the opinion was that, given the situation, if the Jews defeated us they would probably kill more than half of us. Therefore, we decided the best thing to do was to leave the village. We went to the young men and, after further discussions of the gravity of the situation, the continuing assault by land, air, and sea, they agreed with our assessment and we withdrew the following night. The young men spread out in all directions. We put the women and children in the middle and withdrew toward 'Ar'arah where we arrived in the morning. Around 300 or 400 women, elderly, and children, including my wife and three children, stayed behind in 'Ayn Ghazal in the orchard of Mahmud Madi.

JPS: Who received you in 'Ar'arah?

Jad'an: When I arrived in 'Ar'arah I was tired, so I slept for an hour in a hay field. Then the Iraqi army came and gathered the people together in the school. A high-ranking Iraqi officer apologized because the Iraqi army had done nothing to save us and could do little for us. The Iraqi army then offered food to the people. After lunch they moved us in cars to Jenin, and put us in schools and camps.

JPS: What happened to those who stayed in 'Ayn Ghazal?

Jad'an: The Jews came and took them to Ijzim. There they searched them and took their money and jewelry before returning them to 'Ayn Ghazal. Then they put them in buses and moved them to al-Lajjun. There they made them get off and told them to head for Transjordan. Arab cars finally brought them to Jenin.

JPS: And after Jenin, what did you do?

Jad'an: From Jenin I went to Jordan. Jenin had no place for so many refugees and I was not willing to live in a camp. I decided not to go to Syria, Iraq, or Lebanon; I chose Jordan because it is closer to my homeland. Others from 'Ayn Ghazal also went to Jordan. Some went to Syria and Lebanon; but most are in Iraq, in Baghdad. But I will never forget 'Ayn Ghazal. I was raised in its land, I drank from its water, I breathed its air, and I swam in its sea.

JPS: How did you manage in Jordan? Did you have any money with you when you left 'Ayn Ghazal?

Jad'an: I had a small amount. I worked as a teacher because this was my occupation in Palestine. I had opened a successful school in Haifa before World War II and it had 300 students, so I founded the Shunah School (in the Jordan Valley) and my wife helped me in teaching. We did not have to spend much to educate our children. Indeed, we educated them all; one is now a physician, another is an engineer, and another is a university professor.

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'Abd al-Wahab Khalifah was born in the village of Umm al-Fahm (Haifa) in 1908. A retired businessman, he currently resides in Amman, Jordan.

JPS: You were born in Umm al-Fahm. Why and when did you leave to go to Haifa?

Khalifah: I went to Haifa in 1927. My situation in the village was difficult. My father and mother died when I was small. My brother and I were under the care of a relative, and we were barely able to get by. We figured that there would be more opportunities in the city. I worked at several difficult jobs and in the end I finally decided on commerce. We were successful and life became easier. Whenever I had money beyond my needs, I would purchase land in Umm al-Fahm and al-Lajjun, which the Israelis now call Megiddo.

Land is the best thing in the world. What is better than land? My hope was to build a house in Umm al-Fahm, in addition to the small house that belonged to my parents, and to purchase land to manage and develop, while continuing my work in commerce. Haifa was close; you could go to Haifa in the day and return to Umm al-Fahm by night. I had five hundred dunums, fertile and good for agriculture. One piece I planted with olives, another with fruit trees, and the rest of the land was cultivated by relatives.

JPS: How was the interaction between Jews and Arabs in Haifa?

Khalifah: In the beginning there was coexistence and interaction, albeit limited. They were busy with their own affairs, and we with ours. When the 1936 revolt erupted and intensified, and they were in danger, the Jews left for HaDar HaKarmil.*

JPS: What were conditions like for your family as the situation in the country deteriorated in early 1948?

Khalifah: I had seven children, the eldest was 11 years old. We were living on the dividing line between the Arab and Jewish neighborhoods. As conditions deteriorated the area became dangerous. We moved from this area to the center of town, and we lived—all of us in one room—in the house of one of my wife's relatives. My eldest and youngest sons attended a school near 'Abbas, above the German colony. It was the only school in the town that remained open. After things deteriorated and people were being killed in the streets, a relative of my wife's advised me not to send the children to school. I told them: "Listen, I did not go to school, and I would like my children to be educated." And if I had to choose between closing my shop and educating my children, I would have preferred closing the shop. I ended up renting a car that took them to school in the morning and brought them home at noon.

Of course I was frightened for them, but I couldn't imagine not sending them to school. Then the situation became more dangerous and the school closed. My brother was in Damascus with his family, and he called me and said: "Since the school has closed, send your children here so that they will not give up their studies." I thought that this was much better than simply letting them roam the streets. So I took a taxi and travelled to Damascus. I left the children there and returned to Haifa the next day.

JPS: Why didn't you stay in Damascus?

Khalifah: I was ashamed of myself the day I spent in Damascus. There were people who had left Haifa with all their merchandise. But I felt that I should stay, although I was not a fighter and weapons were not available. I used to

*HaDar HaKarmil was the Jewish quarter on the upper slopes of Mt. Karmil in Haifa.

say to those who left that they should stay. Not to work: there was no work. But to let the fighters know that we were with them. There was also the possibility that they might need medical aid or other assistance. Staying was important for their morale.

JPS: How was the situation for the fighters?

Khalifah: It was bad. There weren't many of them and they were pathetic. I remember an event that took place several months before our departure. I was in the shop and suddenly two men from Syria with rifles entered. They had come to join the struggle. They asked: "Where are the Jews? We want to go to the border [between the Arabs and the Jews]." I told them that I would direct them. I took them to my house that I had left, which was on the border, and I said: "This is the Arab area and that is the Jewish area, and this is my house." And I put them up there. Most of the people had already left. My wife cooked food for them, because they came to defend us and I felt that we should serve them. The situation continued like this for several days. One day a bomb was hurled at the door of the house and the two disappeared. I don't know what happened to them. The leadership was in the center of the town and did not know about them.

JPS: You were in Haifa on the night (22 April 1948) that the Jewish assault against the Arab neighborhoods began. Do you remember what happened?

Khalifah: At the time, I lived in Harat al-Kana'is, away from the lines of Arab-Jewish clashes. I was living in a small room, alone, as my wife and children were in Damascus. Some months earlier we had left our house, which was located at the foot of the hill HaDar HaKarmil, the dividing line between Jewish and Arab neighborhoods. During the night there was usually gunfire. On that particular night (22 April) I could not sleep because of the intensity of the bombardment. The British had deceived us. They had said they would not leave before 15 May, but they withdrew from the port. This meant surrendering the city to the Jews. The Jews put cannons on Mt. Karmil and bombarded the city throughout the night.

In the morning, around seven o'clock, I decided to go out of the house and see what was going on. I discovered that people had begun fleeing around midnight. One man told me that the Jews had advanced as far as Stanton Street, about 500 meters from where we were. I was shocked. I walked amid the scenes of destruction and thought, "What can be done?" First I began thinking about my children in Damascus. The Jews had

reached Stanton Street, so it was inevitable that they would reach where I was. I might be hit by a bullet and die. I continued walking and thinking: the decision was a bitter one—to flee or to remain.

Suddenly a friend saw and cried: "What are you doing here? We should leave." He took me by the hand and we walked until we reached the port street. The British were there, urging people to leave and helping them. We reached the platform of the port, which was filled with people. Motorboats were taking them to Acre by sea, because the land routes were dangerous. There were cries, shouts, and chaos. The Arab media was saying: "Palestinians, your role has ended. The role of the Arab states has come. Stand steadfast until 15 May." This is what we were expecting. Of course we learned otherwise. We boarded the motorboat and went to Acre. On the second day we travelled from Acre by car on the Ra's al-Naqqurah road to Marji'yun; and from there we went to Damascus. I thought I would be returning to Acre within two or three weeks.

JPS: When did you realize that your stay would be long?

Khalifah: Two or three days after my arrival in Damascus I met with a number of people who had left with me from Haifa and we decided to go to the office of the Arab Higher Committee (AHC) in Damascus* to ask about the fate of the people who had stayed behind. We expected the office to be a hub of activity. Instead, I found the head of the office sitting with two or three other people talking as if they were entertaining each other. We told them: "We left Haifa several days ago. We want to know what measures the committee has taken to protect the people who stayed, and the property of those who left." He raised his head and said: "How should I know what we should do?" One of us told them: "There is a battalion of Transjordan's Arab Legion somewhere near al-Karmil. Send a cable to King 'Abdullah asking for the battalion to intervene and protect the people who stayed." He thought about it, but said nothing. We returned to the house like people in mourning. This was the worst day in my life. Haifa, the first large city, had fallen to the Jews and this was the attitude of the AHC. This was our leadership? It was our homeland, not a game, that was at stake. What were they doing?

*The main headquarters of the AHC was outside Palestine, in Cairo, because the British prohibited Hajj Amin al-Husayni from reentering Palestine. The headquarters in Palestine were in Jerusalem. The AHC also had two branch offices, one in Beirut and one in Damascus.

JPS: After Haifa fell, and you left for Damascus, how did you manage? Did you have any money?

Khalifah: I had only 175 Palestinian pounds for two families: my family with seven children and the family of my brother with three children. When the second armistice was concluded, people began registering with the UN to receive assistance. Friends came and said: "You are two families, and you cannot stay as you are [without relief assistance]. You should register." And they brought me a card. I tore it up and said: "Listen, I remained in Haifa until the last day for the sake of Arab Palestine; is the result—to learn how to beg or how to get a card for flour and food? Even if my children starve to death, I won't register any of them."

After a few days, I left my children in Damascus and went to Transjordan. I borrowed money from a friend, and for twelve years I worked shuttling between Jordan, the West Bank, Iraq, and Lebanon. I used to visit my family once every three or four months, until, with God's help, I was able to move my family to Amman. Then my brother died, and I took responsibility for his family. Now they are all grown and they have all received an education. Thank God.