

POLITICAL DISOBEDINCE IN ISRAEL: A STRATEGY OF RESISTANCE AMONG PALESTINIANS IN ISRAEL

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After the *Nakba*, the Palestinian catastrophe in 1948, and the establishment of Israel on 78 percent of Mandatory Palestine, 160,000 Palestinians remained in their homeland which Western powers created as the State of Israel. There remained a clear presence of those with whom the founders of Israel had fought, and who had been captured in their consciousness as “the enemy.” The “1948 Palestinians” or “Arab Israelis” who remained were mostly peasants and were described by the Israeli sociologist Baruch Kimberling (2003) as “*a body with no head*”, pointing to the loose organization and structure of the political leadership and the Palestinian elite as a result of the 1948 war. The first years of living under the Israeli sovereignty and the trauma of the great defeat in 1948, crystalized the primary battle of “surviving” and steadfastness known in Arabic as the battle of *Bqaa* and *Sumud* among the Palestinians in Israel. This battle aimed to prevent another wave of refugees and emphasized the importance of the physical existence of the Palestinians in their homeland, despite the new circumstances of becoming “*strangers at their homes*” as was described by Sabri Jiries (1969), a Palestinian scholar. Meanwhile, the newly established State of Israel aimed to portray itself as a liberal democratic state which granted equal rights for all its citizens. In 1952 Israel granted Israeli citizenship to its “Arab” inhabitants. However, holding Israeli citizenship and Palestinian citizens’ participation in the election did not prevent Israel from imposing a harsh military rule on the Arab citizens between the years of 1948 and 1966. Under these conditions, 1948 Palestinians utilized nonviolent resistance, particularly parliamentary activism was the safest and most appropriate way to lead the battle for the Palestinians in Israel to remain in their homeland. This was largely accomplished through a civic struggle for equal citizenship. They believed that by reaching the parliament podium, they would be able to demand equal civil rights and to impact broad Israeli policies. In January 2017, the Israeli government demolished 11 houses belonging to Palestinian citizens of Israel, accusing them of “building with no permission” in *Qalansuwa*, an Arab village in Israel. Two weeks later, Israel demolished the Bedouin village of *Umm al- Hiran*, in southern Israel. These actions expose the continual internal debate among Palestinians in Israel, regarding the effective tools that should be adopted to tackle Israeli policies. The policies and discriminatory laws are perceived to be part of the continuing *Nakba* of 1948 that aims to erase the Palestinian existence in Israel. After nearly 70 years of taking part in the Israeli political system through participation in elections, the Palestinians in Israel feel that they are at a critical juncture, questioning their choices of tools for protest and the efficacy of being an integral part of a political system that oppresses them, hoping to bring change from “inside”. The question of effective resistance methods seems to be more acute in the shadow of political, economic and social changes, both among the Israelis and the Palestinians in Israel. These dynamic contexts invite us to investigate the strengths and the weaknesses of the Palestinians in Israel in their ability to affect social change and participate as equal citizens. After years of employing certain tools within the citizenship approach and the tension between the “appropriate” and the “effective” methods of protest, it is timely to evaluate their effectiveness. It also opens the door for examining the hidden potential of the Palestinians in Israel in reshaping the political power structures in Israel. This paper explores the buried potential of the

Palestinians in Israel based on interviews that were conducted with Palestinian activists in Israel as part of my Ph.D. research. The doctoral dissertation explores the potential of 1948 Palestinians to reconstruct the power relations in Israel and to reshape the Palestinian resistance in general.

1. Research Considerations and Methodology

The current paper is part of wider research that takes a sector of a particular group in a single setting - Palestinian activists in Israel is the case under study. In addition to my personal motivation in documenting the Palestinian in struggles in Israel, a single site study offers a significant insight into understand how multiple activists who share the same political context of oppression act differently. Simultaneously and not less importantly, it offers the opportunity to discover the common ground in their lives, and how their behaviour "transforms" their overall understanding of the concept of resistance in the reality of ongoing conflict.

On the other hand, concentrating on the Palestinians in Israel who are marginalized in resistance research contributes to the re-examination of the concept of resistance in the Palestinian case apart from the dualism of armed and unarmed resistance. Palestinian activists in Israel were chosen as the focus of this research for reasons of applicability and feasibility. In terms of applicability, research on Palestinians in Israel is still under development due to the political power structures, and most of the research is carried out under the supervision of the Israeli academy. Most of this research has been "traditionally addressed from the point of view of the Israeli political order" (Samoocha, 1990; Lustick, 1980). Recently some developments have taken another direction, particularly as Palestinian researchers are researching their politics and society. However, this research is still confined to one dimension which concentrates on the experience of living in Israel. In fact, some feminist researchers have emerged in the last five years (Shalhoub- Kevorkian, 2003), yet I could not find any academic research about the Palestinian activists in Israel. One criticism that should be directed at current research is that Palestinians in Israel were approached through their political leadership and heads of NGO's. In this way, Palestinian groups including women and youth pay the price by pushing to the margins their political and social potential role in transforming power structures not only from reality but also from research. Thus, this research attempts to bring marginal gropes to the fore in order to enrich the existing body of research by exploring the politics from "below", through the words of the Palestinian activists themselves. Feasibility is also recognized as a significant element in the research design (Marshall & Rossman, 2014). Thus, situating the study in the researcher's home country enabled a significant amount of time to be spent in the field due to free accommodation and familiarity with the location, especially in unstable contexts. It also allowed the researcher to use his personal networks to identify and contact research participants, as he speaks the languages of Israel, both Arabic and Hebrew. In addition, familiarity with the cultural context and modes of thought delivered a sense of trust and a high level of mutual understanding between the researcher and the participants, and all these elements motivated the participants to take part in the research. This trust is particularly important for activists who live under the authority of Israeli law. Grassroots knowledge helped the researcher to ask deep, complex and sensitive questions, and contributed to the developing of further questions. According to Razavi and Iverson (2006,p.461), in grounded theory methodology, "*informants chosen for interviewing must be expert participants, with rich, extensive prior experience with the phenomenon, in order to be able to provide the researcher with a valid account of their experience.*" For this reason research participants in the current research consist of Palestinian activists, both female and male, who use their activism to challenge the existing power structures, whether Palestinian or Israeli. Participants in the research are Palestinian activists who are citizens of Israel and live in Israel, not in the West Bank, Gaza Strip or outside the country. Moreover, activists from Jerusalem, which was occupied in 1967 and annexed to Israel in 1988, are not part of the research group. This is because although Jerusalem was officially declared the capital of Israel, Palestinians in Jerusalem are not citizens of Israel. Participants can be independent activists or members of political parties or movements, excluding members of the Zionist parties and politicians who occupy

official positions such as the Palestinian Knesset members. Additionally, they come from different political backgrounds and represent the three religious groups that form the Palestinian society in Israel: Muslims, Christians, and Druze. Participants in this research are at least 18 years old and Arabic speakers (not activists with original Arab roots who grew up abroad and came to work with Palestinians in Israel). I interviewed twenty-five Palestinian activists in Israel between August and November 2016, using semi-structured interviews, as they enable the interviewees to articulate their ideas, express their views and opinions in detail and at the same time assist the interviewer to systematically cover all relevant issues (Polit & Beck, C 2008). The interviews took between 90 and 120 minutes to complete. They were based on open-ended questions, but the interviewees' responses determined the length of the interview. The constructivist approach in grounded theory was selected as the most appropriate methodology to explore the power of the Palestinians in Israel in transforming and challenging power structures in Israel. This paper aims to uncover the hidden potential of the Palestinians in Israel in challenging the Israeli power structure as it understood by Palestinian activists and their contribution in reshaping the Palestinian resistance in general.

2. Theoretical Considerations: Nonviolent Resistance, Pragmatic Resistance, Ethical Resistance

To understand the nature of resistance among the Palestinians in Israel and its hidden potential, it is necessary to clarify the theoretical foundations of resistance, minority resistance and the idea of *Sumud*. This paper briefly presents an overview of resistance and minority resistance as it appears in the literature.

Whereas in the past direct physical attacks, violent rebellion, revolutions or war seemed to be the only appropriate responses to oppression, nonviolent political action, civil resistance or "people power" became important mechanisms for achieving political and social change, especially in places where armed force and political violence failed or due to a power imbalance, as some Palestinian activists stress. Recent examples can be found quite recent actions in the Arab Spring, particularly in Egypt and Tunisia. On the surface, the difference between violent and nonviolent action seems to be clear. However, while violent and nonviolent action are both direct action, they work through different mechanisms. Violent action works through physical and coercive force, and the fear of detention, bodily harm, or death. Nonviolent action works by eliminating the opponent, through social powers and the human mind by using manipulation. In this way it is used to change relationships rather than destroy opponents. Moreover, Todd May (2015) in his book *Nonviolent Resistance: A Philosophical Introduction*, suggests equality and dignity as another sharp differentiation between violent and nonviolent action.

Iain Atack (2012, p.8), defines non-violent action as a "*collective action outside the formal institution or procedures of the state that avoids the systematic or deliberate use of violence or armed force to achieve its political or social objectives*". Michael Randle (1994) use the term "civil resistance" to refer to nonviolent political action. In their terms, they are emphasizing the character of collective action, bringing the public's attention to ordinary citizens, who are located outside conventional political structures such as political parties. Furthermore, nonviolent resistance not only avoids using violence, it is also a collective political action that motivates ordinary citizens to organize themselves through civil society groups or social movements to achieve their political and social goals. Mahatma Ghandi and Martin Luther King are two famous examples from the twentieth century, who pioneered in adopting and promoting nonviolent political action as a method for political change

Scholars distinguish between two types of nonviolence resistance: pragmatic and principled nonviolence. Pragmatic is also referred to as strategic, tactical, selective, or qualified nonviolence. This approach is associated with the scholar Gene Sharp (1973), who introduced the pragmatic approach in his book *The Politics of Nonviolent Action*. Pragmatic nonviolence is an approach to conflict in which participants choose adopting nonviolence because they think that this is "the best and the most viable method for achieving their goals" (Nepstad 2015:216). According to this view, nonviolent resistance is seen as a set of techniques and not a way of life or moral commitment. The principled nonviolence approach also refers to ethical, comprehensive or unqualified nonviolence (Atack, 2012, pp.6-34) is linked to a lifestyle in which

violence is viewed as immoral or unethical. A principled approach to nonviolence is associated with Mohandas Gandhi, the ideology of pacifism, and some religions' traditions. Those who support principled approach view nonviolence not only as an effective political strategy but also as a transformative one. Thus, they aim to change "*the opponents' hearts and minds as well as their behaviours*" (Nepstad, 2015, p. 217). In this sense, Gandhi referred to "*nonviolence for the weak*", referring to the pragmatic use of nonviolent techniques, and "*nonviolence for the strong*" as principled nonviolent lifestyle and struggles. In other words, the pragmatic approach views the nonviolence method of struggle as the most effective strategy in contexts of conflict, while the principal approach considers nonviolence method as the best ethical strategy for normal living.

The assumption of nonviolent resistance is that the subordinate can effectively undermine power by breaking away from their subordination and withholding their participation in the political system by adopting methods such as civil disobedience and boycotting. Therefore, the power of people's obedience is turned back on itself, but this time in a disobedient form which delegitimizes the existing power structures (Vinthagen, 2007). This understanding of power opens the door for considering the power of the powerless and the weak as significant sectors for social change.

To summarize, resistance as an action and as a behaviour takes many forms, targets, and goals. It might be "*violent or nonviolent, confrontational or circumventing, deconstructing or reconstructing, refusing or hindering, individual or collective, accommodating or enforcing, materialistic or idealistic*" (Vinthagen, 2007, p. 6).

2.1 Minority Resistance

Minority protest is defined as the "*combination of all anti-government and anti-majority acts of demonstration and violence. Non-violent protest in the open regime is one of the popular tools used by a minority for political change, its range from rhetoric to illegal action*" (Yiftachel 2000, p.147).

The leading explanations for ethnic protest fall either within the "relative deprivation" or the "ethnic nationalism-identity" schools of thought. A third school links public protest and political mobilization to the "mobilization of group resources", Yiftachel, sees this approach less relevant to the case of "homeland" ethnic minority, referring to the Palestinian minority in Israel.

According to the deprivation school, the gaps between minority and majority increase tension between the groups, and so ethnic conflicts often revolve around sharing national resources, while ethnicity, in this case, is an instrument for mobilizing support for civil struggle (Galzer, 1983; Gurr, 1993; Horowitz, 1985). In other words, the protest will target issues of socio-economic deprivation, and will not challenge the structure and character of the state.

However, it is important to stress that socio-economic deprivation is a result of public policy, thus protest against ethnic deprivation will target government policies and the distribution of public resources. Gurr (1993), finds a direct link between state policies, ethnic deprivation and stages of an ethnic conflict, pointing out that "*in most democratic regimes, who adopt reforms in ethnic relations, ethnic protest and violence was limited*" (Gurr, 1993, p. 193). It was also noticed that this relative link between deprivation of ethnic protest and conflicts applicable to immigrant societies, where ethnic minorities categorized as "ethnic classes" (Connor 1987; Gurr 1993; Lichbach 1989).

On the other hand, the ethnic-national approach claims that ethnic differences are an integral part of human behavior. This means that ethnic protest and political mobilization are first expressions of ethnic selfdetermination, and this approach considers ethnicity as "bio-social" (Berghe 1981), that sees ethnic protest as part of the worldwide process of ethnic revival, thus ethnic protest focuses on national, cultural and territorial issues and less on socio-economic subjects (Connor, 1987; Smith, 1981; Smith, 1992). However, a protest may begin around local and general deprivation issues and later move to territorial and selfdetermination demands. National issues are likely to guarantee the most intense level of protests,

such as those in Quebec, Northern Ireland, and Sri Lanka, that continued over long periods (Yiftachel, 2000). The ethnonational approach has been experienced by homeland ethnic minorities (Mikesell & Murphy, 1991; Yiftachel, 1994). These two approaches of minority protest apply to the Palestinian minority in Israel.

Based on Gurr's definition, the Palestinians in Israel are categorized as an ethnopolitical group. Gurr (2000, p.5) defines ethnic group as "people who share a distinctive and enduring collective identity based on a belief in common descent and on shared experiences and cultural traits", while ethnopolitical groups are "groups whose ethnicity has political consequences, resulting either in differential treatment of group members or in political action on behalf of group interests". On his minority categorization, he divides the Palestinians in Israel into two ethnopolitical groups. First, he identifies the Arabs in Israel as an ethnoclass group, while the Palestinians in Israel are identified as an ethnonational group.

Gurr (2000) distinguishes between Arabs and Palestinians in his significant book *Peoples versus States: Minorities at risk in the new century*, where he studied the behavior of 275 politically active ethnic groups. This is a great example of showing the inability of applying the liberal-democratic research of the Western state to explain what Rabinowitz (2010, p.64) call "trapped minority", which he defines as "a segment of larger group spread across at least two states. Citizens of a state hegemonies by others, its members are alienated from political power. Unable to influence the definition of public goods or enjoy them, its members are at the same time marginal within their mother nation abroad". Rabinowitz (2010, p.64) points out to the fall of the "traditional concepts of states and nations" to acknowledge and theorize such minorities. He suggests adopting the discourse of transnationalism that "helps to dislodge the study of minorities from the analytical straight-jacket of the state". The definition of the Palestinians in Israel is crucial in understanding their protest methods. However, even Rabinowitz' description of being "trapped" between two political structures is insufficient to categorize the Palestinians in Israel, mainly because it ignores two important elements, in my opinion: first, the Palestinians in Israel identify themselves as the indigenous people of the area. Secondly, they are part of the reality of on-going conflict. The questions "Who are we? And "How should we define ourselves? Were highlighted during the interviews as the main obstacle to building a clear strategy of resistance. It was clear that these many definitions, positions and approaches led to the development of various methods of resistance in the individual but not as part of a whole project of resistance.

2.2 Sumud

The concept of *Sumud* as steadfastness finds its roots originally in Islam (Schicocchel, 2012). However, *Sumud* emerged as a political term within the Palestinian context during the 1970s and 1980s, presented by the PLO to emphasize the significant role of maintaining a physical presence on the land, despite Israeli policies of emptying and reconstructing the geographical space, thus imposing different means to control Palestinians' daily life and making it hard to survive (Vinthagen & Johansson 2013). Thus, *Sumud* referred to the right to remain in the land, the need to resist forced expulsions and the commitment to have many children who would continue the struggle for liberation and independence (Van Teeffelen, 2006). This understanding of *Sumud* was criticized as a form of "passive non-resistance focusing on survival only" (Vinthagen & Johansson, 2013). Conceptualizations of *Sumud* vary. It can be understood as an attitude, a cultural trait or an "inward-directed" life stance (Johansson & Vinthagen, 2015; Van Teeffelen, 2006.; Schicocchel, 2012). *Sumud*, in other words is the ability to live in the shadow of loss and calamity. Richter-Devroe (2011) conceptualises *Sumud* as a social practice and a form of everyday and non-violent resistance. Raja Shehadeh, a Palestinian lawyer and activist, adds the dimension of political strategy for understanding *Sumud* by describing it as "the third way", that is neither armed struggle nor passive acceptance (Bahbah, 1985).

3. Contextual Considerations: Palestinian Citizens in Israel

By the end of the war in 1949, my grandfather Hassan, originally from the village of *Mia'ar* in north Palestine which was destroyed along with 523 Palestinian villages, witnessed the collapse of his society and the construction of a new society on the ashes of the old system that he was familiar and engaged

with, along with 167,000 Palestinians who remained in their homeland that was the day before called Palestine. They were traumatized from the outcomes of the war, the break-up of families and the loss of their houses. In the shadow of their great defeat and fear, they faced the threat of becoming refugees outside of their homeland, which turned to be "officially" Israel.

For the remaining Palestinians it was the collapse of their world. They woke up to a new geopolitical reality. The place and people they knew were replaced with new faces of immigrants, mostly from Europe, a new language and new "bosses". They were like a branch cut from a tree, when they were forced to cut all their cultural, familial and financial relationships with the entire Arab world and the Middle East, which turned to be the "enemy" of the state of which they were citizens. This state of separation of the remaining Palestinians from their natural environment dismantled bridges with the Arab world, and positioned them in a questionable situation regarding their identity and loyalty to the Palestinian cause. Thus, it is not surprising that the Palestinian identity continues to be a sensitive struggle for the Palestinians in Israel, not only in the face of Israel but also to the rest of the Arab world. As a result, these sudden changes weakened the status of the Palestinians, who turned to be a minority, weak and strangers in their homeland.

On the other hand, the newly established state found itself burdened with Palestinian who were until 1948 *"an integral part of the fabric of Palestinian society and the big Middle East, which resist the colonial project of the Zionist movement..."* (Rouhana & Sabbagh-Khoury, 2011,p.6) inside its boundaries that were known as the green line. Israel ruled with an oppressive hand over the Palestinian minority in every possible way, imposing a harsh military rule in the areas where the Palestinians lived, in forcing limitations on their freedom of movement and expression (Kimmerling & Migdal, 2003). In other words, from 1948 until 1966, military rule was the central Israeli institutional body operating among the Palestinians in Israel. Military rule was imposed on 21 October

1948 by David Ben-Gurion and was based on the Defence (Emergency) Regulations established by the British Mandate in 1945. The military governor had unlimited control over every aspect of the Palestinians as individuals and collectively. He had the right to arrest people without a warrant and detain them without trial for long periods, the authority to ban them or expel them from their homes, and to put them under house arrest, in addition to the authority to close schools, businesses, newspapers, and banning demonstrations and protests. This military rule is an open wound in the memory of the Palestinians in Israel whereby their political behaviour was shaped in the shadow of fear. It was also a formative chapter in the relationship between them and the state. But this does not describe the total situation. Palestinians in Israel comprise 20 percent of the population of Israel. Some Palestinian citizens have reached real levels of success in the Jewish state as judges, medical professionals, writers, academics, broadcasters, and even in the area of sport. The number of Palestinian students and lecturers is growing, as is the number of Palestinians in the civil service. These individual successes have made the Palestinians a more self-confident society, but which represents an even greater threat in the eyes of the Jewish community, which is *"still motivated by an ideological stance that negates the right of the Palestinians to live alongside them"* (Pappe, 2011, p.6).

3.1 Political Contextualization: In and Out Reality

Any serious investigation of a political player, individual or collective, particularly in conflictual realities, must start by defining the settings in which it operate and the roots of its patterns of behaviour (Jamal, 2014). Writing about the Palestinians in Israel means writing about Israel. Israel is declared to be a Jewish and democratic state. This definition reflects the legal rights of all its citizens by articulating the Jewish nature of Israel through laws, regulations, and politics. Scholars from different areas have accumulated a body of research which *"focuses on or takes considerable account of the Palestinian citizens of Israel"*(Rabinowitz, 2010, p.68), for creating a typology the Israeli regime. As student who obtained her Bachelor's and Master's degrees in Political Science from Israeli universities, the most popular definition for Israel was the "ethnic democracy" model that was introduced by Sammy Smoocha

(1990). Smootha argued that Israel represents a new type of democracy; ethnic democracy, which "combines the extension of political and civil rights to individuals and certain collective rights to minorities with institutional dominance over the state by one of the ethnic group"(Samootha, 1990, p.391). This model of ethnic democracy caused a heated debate in Israel and has gained considerable attention.

Samootha proposes a formal level of democracy, which may guarantee full citizenship rights in terms of voting, for example, but in practice, this ethnic group will suffer from continuing marginalization. According to Sa'adi (2000), the ethnic democracy model is problematic because the control by the state of one national group harms the principle of equality. Moreover, in order to maintain one group's superiority, it is necessary to maintain the other group's inferiority. On this point, Samootha does not provide any explanation of why ethnic democracy is different from a dictatorship of the majority. In addition, Samootha, telling us that the denial of equal rights to a group of citizens can go hand in hand with democracy, does not answer the question of active citizenship among minorities - which is the essential basis of any democratic regime (Bashir, 2015).

Regarding the minorities, his model suggests that they will be "*disadvantaged, but they can avail themselves of democratic means to negotiate better terms of coexistence*" (Bashir, 2015, p.410). In other words, this means that the majority controls the state and sets up the priorities; the duty of the minority group is to try very hard to fit into the system, in order to obtain better conditions in their daily life, such as in housing, education and the health system, but they will not have any say or influence on the state's goals (Sa'di, 2000). For Samootha, the basic liberal idea of individual freedoms is enough to describe Israel as a democratic state. In contrast, Will Kymlicka, who emphasizes the difference between an ethnic nation and a civic one, as a way of understanding types of minorities and state - minority relations, points out that "ethnic nationalism is exclusive, civic nationalism is inclusive" (Kymlicka, 2000). Sammotha ignores many defects inherent in the system, such as exploitation of emergency regulations which allows the authorities to withhold basic rights; the lack of a legal framework that protects the rights of minorities or ensures equality for individuals from these minorities; the existence of non-democratic political culture among its citizens and the problematical definition of Israel as a "Jewish state" and its consequent structure. Others define Israel as a settler-colonial state, such as Elia Zureik (1979), whose work investigate the marginal status of the Palestinians in Israel for his typology of Israel as a colonial-settler state. Gershon Shafir (1989) present an important study of land and labor in Zionism, emphasizing the "specific circumstances of the Jewish national movement", by locating it in the colonial paradigm. Strengthening the link between labor, economy and nationality can be found in Michael Shalev's (1992) work on the Israeli split economy and Lev Greenberg's (1991) analysis of the Labor movement. Ian Lustick (1980) investigates the structural and institutional characteristics that were developed by the Jewish hegemony to control the Palestinian citizens. Yoav Peled (1992) investigate the restrictions on Palestinians candidates and parties in comparison to the free access of Jewish Israelis in political life. His conclusion was that Israel offers the Palestinian citizens a "*nominal and weakened form of citizenship*" (Rabinowitz, 2010, p.69). However, viewing Israel as a settler-colonial state is not new, though it is gaining popularity in the recent times. In sum, it is important to notice that the civic status of the Palestinians in Israel is shaped by the political reality of being "In" and "out", which is crucial for understanding the motivation behind patterns of protest among this group.

4. Three Battles of Resistance

Presenting the theoretical and contextual aspects allows me to locate the main battles of the Palestinians in Israel as they emerged from the field research and interviews with Palestinian activists. The data yields information about three battles which reflect the hidden potential of the Palestinians in Israel in transforming and challenging the Israeli power structure.

4.1 The Battle of "Equal Citizenship"

The first battle of the Palestinian citizens in Israel, especially after the *Nakba* and during the military rule, was not directed against land confiscation and the overall situation, but focused on the matter of citizenship. Ironically, Israeli citizenship served as a shield for the Palestinians in validating their presence. The term *Sumud*, meaning 'steadfastness' was employed during that period to describe the struggle to remain in the land, despite the difficult circumstances. The Palestinian activists demanded full citizenship of Israel on the basis of their natural rights as the indigenous people of the land. However, it should be noted that the motivation that underlies this demand lay in the instrumental power of Israeli citizenship which allows its holders to stay and live in Israel permanently. For the Palestinians in Israel, this was the only guarantee for them not to become refugees. In this sense, Palestinians were successful in ensuring their physical presence. Yet this struggle that began in 1949 did not end when "equal" citizenship is spoken about. Given the inner logic of Zionism and the idea of a Jewish state, non-Jewish citizens could be tolerated as long as they did not endanger the Jewish supremacy of the state. Therefore, from its foundation the state distinguished between Jewish and non-Jewish citizens (Pappe, 2011). Thus, the stubborn demand of equal citizenship challenges the essential nature of Israel as a Zionist and Jewish state.

The political leadership of the Palestinian minority use every possible means and available platform for advocating their case: participating in the elections and approaching the Supreme Court and the Hebrew media, in addition to the employment of popular struggle through petitions and demonstrations demanding equal citizenship in the Jewish state. It is very important to stress that none of the means employed succeed in influencing the legal and constitutional realities (Pappe, 2011, p.35). Yet activists point to the importance of the civic struggle for changing the exclusive nature of Israel and its potential for proving and showing the true face of the country.

4.2 The "Electoral" Battle

Israeli citizenship guarantees the right to vote, which seems on the surface to be a powerful card in the hands of the Palestinian citizens in Israel. However, the Israeli political system is built in a way that keeps the Palestinian representatives out of the policy makers' circle. The fact that the Palestinians in Israel have the right to participate in elections does not mean that they influence Israeli decision-making, especially when it comes to security concerns. The Zionist political establishment excludes Arab parties from being part of the government and parliamentary committees' dealings with defence, security and strategic planning. In other words, Palestinians are inside the political game but outside the political process. This reality of being "in" on the surface and "out" in reality creates a lot of frustration among activists, including those who are members of political parties. Thus the heated debate of the effectiveness of participating in Israeli elections is not surprising. Some activists call for re-examining the most appropriate way of using their Israeli citizenship suggesting boycotting the elections as a tactic for dismantling the legitimacy of the Israeli democracy. Palestinian activists stress the political use by Israel of their participation in the election as a tool for proving to the world that Israel is democratic and treats all its citizens equally. They believe that their participation legitimates and reinforces Israeli colonization and occupation. In the shadow of the success of the BDS movement, and after 70 years of participating in the election game, activists emphasise the power of withdrawing their support for the political regime as citizens. Most of the activists pointed to the need of thinking 'out of the box' that was shaped according to the Israeli system. In this way, they challenged the traditional Palestinian political leadership who still use "conventional tools for change" ignoring the political context in Israel and the reality on the ground. The Vote battle targets at first the "institutionalised apartheid" of the Israeli system.

4.3 Identity Battle and Cultural Resistance

When surviving became a daily battle, resistance took different forms and actions. *Sumud* adopted many faces, particularly in hidden spaces where Palestinians felt free to speak. Aside from direct political activism, cultural activity presents the beginning of resurrecting from the ashes of destruction and

providing the society with something no government or regime could easily either prevent or provide (Pappe, 2011, p.75). Poetry was a medium in which national identity survived the *Nakba* of 1948. What political activists and leaders could not or dared not express, poets wrote and sang loudly. Poetry and literature became oral political statements constructing political awareness and consciousness, when love, hate, death, birth and family could be intertwined with political issues of land confiscation and state oppression (Pappe, 2011, p. 76). Poetry festivals became very popular, using language as a weapon. However, the Israeli secret service was unable to decide if this action was a subversive act or a cultural event (Nakhleh & Zureik, 1980). Poets participated in popular meetings side by side with politicians, reading their poems to the masses. Cultural resistance has a significant place in the construction of the *Sumud* of Palestinian Identity. All the interviewees stressed these poems as a source of knowledge, raising their awareness of the Palestinian situation and oppression in different parts of the world and its function as a glow for constructing a common Palestinian identity for all the Palestinians in the world. Activists emphasized the link between the Israeli education system as a control mechanism that aims to create "Good\Obedient Arabs" in the Jewish state, and the role of cultural resistance in preserving their Palestinian identity challenging the Israeli hegemony separately from the institutions controlled by the state such as schools. Culture, in this case, became an underground space for resistance and constructing critical awareness not only among Palestinians in Israel but among Palestinians in general. Something that was emphasized by the Palestinian activists in Israel as a source of pride for this significant contribution to the Palestinian resistance in general was pointing out that when they are asked to explain their situation in Israel, particularly to other Arabs, they use the names of the famous poets as a signpost. Most of the activists stress that the identity battle is the most important battle against Israeli policies of "Israelization" and all the projects that target young Palestinians such as the "civil service project" that is run by the Israeli ministry of defence. These kinds of projects and the destruction of the national content considered as threatening to the concept of collective struggle. However, Palestinian activists in Israel point out the active debate on the issue of culture as a significant step for reshaping and challenging the Palestinian identity, particularly when it comes to the question of the desired nature of the Palestinian society and personal freedoms.

5. Towards the Construction of a Strategy of Resistance for Political Disobedience among Palestinians in Israel

These three battles have been the main struggles the Palestinians in Israel have been involved in since 1948, yet they all took place within the citizenship borders through participation in the elections and approaching official channels, hoping to reach as many people as possible on the other side. However, acting within the frame of citizenship did not challenge Israeli power structure; instead it enhanced the power imbalance and created the illusion of being part of the Israeli political system. Due to the reality of daily and continuing confrontation, activists believe that Palestinians in Israel have gained significant experience in developing methods of resistance and protest in order to maintain an active presence of the Palestinian cause in the field of public discourse in Israel, opposing all the marginalization policies. However, these methods of resistance have not succeeded in creating genuine political change. Activists point to the lack of strategies of resistance as the main reason for not being able to cause change. Throughout the history of the Palestinians in Israel, there have been and still are many examples and models of resistance, yet there has been no significant change. For this reason Palestinians insist on constructing a strategy of resistance that would be able to take into consideration the elements that might be used to challenge the Israeli system. What Palestinian activists suggest is to "flip" the use of their citizenship by calling for breaking their subordination and adopting methods such as political disobedience. Targeting the nature of Israel and its democratic character was adopted as the main mission of the Palestinians in Israel. Israel markets itself as a Western state that promotes civilization and democracy against the "barbaric East", and despite the occupation, Israel continues to be seen in this way by western leaders. It is vital to counteract this image locally and internationally. Locally, by trying to

break the blockage within Israeli society; internationally by speaking to the world. The act of speaking can take many forms: political activism, cultural activism and speaking to influential groups. In other words, *Sumud* moves beyond the traditional understanding of “remaining”, and instead activists stress “active *sumud*”, whereby Palestinians in Israel take responsibility for and initiatives in constructing their resistance. In this way, activists call for political disobedience, supported by adopting a multidimensional strategy of resistance in order to dismantle the Israeli power structure.

Historically, Palestinians in Israel conducted their struggles by adopting non-violent resistance. I believe that the political circumstances, the massive failure of armed struggle and the powerless status of the Palestinians in Israel as a result of the *Nakba* and the military rule limitations have all greatly contributed to the choice of nonviolent resistance out of safety and pragmatic reasons, in order to meet the urgent need of remaining. Speaking with Palestinian activists reveals that this is not only a pragmatic motivation but also an ethical one. The struggle to build a “unity of the oppressed”, between Palestinians and powerless groups such as the Ethiopians and Oriental Jewish (originally from Arab and Muslim countries), to face of the Israeli power structures, and the struggle of not being similar to the “oppressor” were repeated throughout the interviews. During our conversations, activists stressed that Palestinians in Israel today are not the same as they were in 1948. They are more powerful, educated, knowing the language, familiar with the Israeli mentality and its system. They are more confident, know how to articulate themselves and are aware of their rights, particularly as citizens. Therefore, many activists have highlighted the power of their position and the hidden potential they possess in challenging and transforming the Israeli power structure, believing that in the long term it could help in changing the power balance and the whole treatment of the peace process.

The insistence on having a visual presence on the international scene and the refusal to be marginalized from political discourse and activism is very important for *Sumud* in its new understanding by Palestinian activists in Israel. In 1967, Israel occupied the West Bank including Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip, and only then was Palestine again unified, under Israeli occupation. The military administration that was applied to the Palestinians in Israel was not dismantled. Instead it was applied to the Palestinians from the occupied territories, a term that was used to refer to the supposedly only occupied part of Palestine. As a result, the terminology and timeline of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict have changed in a way that considered the 1967 occupation as the starting point of the conflict. Due to this, the 48 Palestinians were pushed out of the political scene, an action that deeply harmed the understanding of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. This deep misunderstanding of the conflict’s complexity, a combined with frustration and disappointment, were enough for Palestinians and Israelis to lose faith in what is called the peace process. Thus, opening the 1948 file is essential for creating a genuine reconciliation, instead of a temporary ceasefire. However, this action is not easily accomplished, mainly because it requires the dismantling of the Zionist power structure in Israel, which is not an easy mission, but at the same time, not impossible.

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