Stolen Memories: Israeli State Repression and Appropriation of Palestinian Cultural Resources

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ABSTRACT: After the events of "the Nakbah" (or the Catastrophe) in 1948, Jewish military and paramilitary forces dispossessed over 800,000 Palestinians, forcing them to live as refugees. In the process of leaving, not only were their homes and land confiscated but also their cultural resources. In the intervening years, Israel has banned and censored Palestinian books and publications, and has imprisoned, deported, and assassinated Palestinian journalists, writers, and artists. These actions have spurred organizations such as the American Library Association to introduce resolutions sanctioning Israeli measures, only to see these resolutions watered-down or rescinded due to the intervention and agitation of pro-Israeli pressure groups. This paper describes and itemizes the actual Israeli destruction, looting and censorship of Palestinian libraries, archives, and cultural institutions both within 1948 and 1967 Palestine, as well those established by the Palestinian refugee diaspora. The paper also portrays how Israel classifies and restricts or denies access to archival materials to secure control of the historical narrative. It then delineates the deliberate Israeli harassment, imprisonment, torture and assassination of Palestinian writers, journalists, intellectuals, and other cultural workers that have occurred since 1948. All these actions belie Israel's self-serving propaganda image as a beacon of democracy.

Keywords: Palestine; Israel; cultural destruction; censorship; library resolutions; archival restriction

Correction: article updated on 18 August 2021 to fix two typos on p.19 – 'censuring' for 'censoring', and 'US' for 'Israel' in the final paragraph.

Introduction

The 1948 events known to Palestinians as "the Nakbah" (or Catastrophe) set off one of the longest and most intractable struggles in post-Second World War world history. From 1948 to 1949, Zionist militias stormed throughout the land that would later become Israel—although in fact to this day the country has never since defined its borders—ethnically cleansing 800,000 Palestinian Arabs from their homes and emptying 531 villages and 11 urban neighbourhoods (Pappe, 2006, p. xiii). Like other refugees undergoing situations of military conflict, the Palestinian refugees fled because they were forced out or because they wished to escape the fighting. Most fled to neighbouring countries, although eventually many made their way to other countries, thereby forming the Palestinian diaspora which has now spread throughout the world. Although United Nations recognition of Israel as a country in 1948 was predicated on the right of Palestinian refugees to return to their homes, Israel has never allowed the return of any Palestinian refugee. In contrast, any Jewish person from anywhere in the world retains the "right of return" to Israel. Meanwhile, the descendants of the approximately 170,000 Palestinians who remained are subject to discrimination through a variety of laws favouring Jewish Israelis (Adalah, 2014). Nonetheless, the right of Palestinian refugees to return is a right guaranteed by United Nations Resolution 194 which was adopted December 11, 1948.

The 1967 occupation of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip was another tragic event in the history of Palestinians which has come to be known as "al-Naksah" (or "the setback"). Following Arab defeat in the 1967 war, Israel occupied the West Bank and Gaza and placed both under martial law in which every aspect of their residents' life was controlled by the occupying Israeli army (Francis, 2014, p. 40). United Nations Security Council Resolution 242 called for Israel's immediate withdrawal from the Territories. However, since 1967, Israel has blithely continued to ignore the resolution and, in fact, has gone on to further defy international law by establishing colonies and stealing more Palestinian land in the West Bank.

The 1993 Oslo Accords aimed to formally bring about a two-state solution to the conflict. However, these accords have only entrenched Israel's colonial occupation of the West Bank (Khalidi 2013). While Israel claims to have withdrawn from the Gaza Strip, it maintains a blockade of Gaza by sea and continues to hold the area under siege. Two brutal military attacks on Gaza in 2008–09 and 2014 have left Gaza in desperate economic and humanitarian straits. In any case, Israel's contempt for a two-state solution displayed itself

fully following the 2015 election when Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu announced that if he were elected, there would be no Palestinian state (Ravid, 2015).

Palestinian history since 1948 has been marked by theft of land and resources (Kimmerling 2004; Webb 2018). It has also been marked by a repression of Palestinian cultural memory. In a remark demonstrating her total disregard and contempt for Palestinian culture, former Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir stated: "There is no such thing as a Palestinian people" (Averny 2018). Meir's declaration, one which Israeli apologists have often used since, is an apt summary of the disdain Israel has demonstrated for Palestinian cultural remembrance. Indeed, attempting to hide evidence of Palestinian existence was a prime reason for razing many of the approximately 400 depopulated or destroyed Palestinian villages and covering them with pine trees native to Europe.

Article 247 of the Treaty of Versailles (1919) stipulates that works of art, books, and manuscripts should be returned to the states from which they were taken (Kost, 2014). The Hague Convention of 1954 forbids the confiscation or plundering of private property in occupied territory and states that the absence of owners does not justify plunder or damage to property. It also decrees that all moveable property taken must be returned after the war (UNESCO, 1954-1999).

As this paper will demonstrate, to maintain Israel's sanitized promotional picture of itself as a beacon of democracy which only wants peace and security but is surrounded by a sea of hostile, intransigent neighbors and is forced to deal with recalcitrant, rejectionist Palestinian terrorists, it is necessary to maintain control of the historical record and argue, for example, that Palestinian refugees left willingly in 1948, thereby abrogating Israel's responsibility for them. Israel since its inception has deliberately targeted cultural property and destroyed and looted Palestinian libraries, archives, and cultural institutions to prevent an alternative Palestinian national narrative which details that Palestinians were expelled from their ancestral lands and have a right enshrined in international law to return (Amnesty International, 2019); that it is the heavily and illegally nuclear-armed, militarized Israeli nation-state that has consistently attacked and stolen land from its neighbors and pursued hegemonic goals in the region (Watzal, 1999, p. 22); and that Israel has maintained an apartheid regime which advances Jewish rights and supremacy over Palestinians (Tutu, 2002; Carter, 2006; B'Tselem, 2021). It has also implemented policies of censorship, restriction, classification, and re-classification of materials in both Israel itself and the Occupied Territories it acquired after 1967. Moreover, it has deliberately harassed, imprisoned,

tortured, and assassinated Palestinian writers, journalists, and other cultural workers. These polices have been practiced against Palestinians within Israel itself, in the Occupied Territories, and in the diaspora. Furthermore, controlling the narrative abroad requires intervening and applying intimidation tactics when, for example, library, archival, and academic associations attempt to pass motions condemning repressive Israeli policies and actions. As renowned Palestinian-American Professor of Comparative Literature Edward Said observed: "The Palestinian narrative has never been officially admitted to Israeli history, except as that of 'non-Jews,' whose inert presence in Palestine was a nuisance to be ignored or expelled" (Said, 1984, p. 33).

As Israeli historian, Ilan Pappe, states in the 2012 documentary *The Great Book Robbery*, the appropriation of cultural resources is no different than the looting and theft of land and resources (Al Jazeera, 2012). As Pappe continues, agreeing with Edward Said, the theft and appropriation of cultural resources was done to defeat the Palestinian narrative and to write Palestinians out of history.

Library Resolutions and Delegations Concerning Israeli Repression of Palestinian Culture

Given the evidence, one might think that various library associations would come to the Palestinians' aid. However, for the most part, this has not come to pass. Despite the efforts of brave individuals within organizations such as the American Library Association (ALA), Palestinians have seen resolutions censuring Israel rescinded or edited to exclude reference to Israel. An International Federation of Libraries and Archives (IFLA) preliminary report, meanwhile, clings to a "both sides" argument in which both Palestinians are held equally to blame for Israeli repression.

Over the years, Israel has been subject to three American Library Association resolutions condemning its practices against Palestinian libraries and archives.

In 1992, for example, a resolution passed at the American Library Association (ALA) Convention in San Francisco cited Israel's banning of publications and books, the imprisonment and deportation of journalists, and the closure of universities, libraries, and research centers. It also paid attention to the United States' close military and economic ties, noting that Israel was the largest recipient of American aid, a policy which made the US complicit in Israel's policy of censorship and human rights violations (Lorenz, 1993). The resolution had been several years in the making and was a response to Israeli repression of

the popular Palestinian uprising in the West Bank and Gaza from 1987 to 1993 which has come to be known as the First Intifada. The most contentious part of the resolution was the call to end censorship and human rights violations in the Occupied Territories and Israel. The ALA had directed similar calls against countries such as the United Kingdom, China, the Soviet Union, and South Africa, and these resolutions had never been considered controversial. The resolution had been formulated by the ALA's Social Responsibility Round Table (SRRT), but it had been discussed in open forums throughout the Organization including ALA Membership, ALA Council, the African / Asia Section, the Intellectual Freedom Round Table, and the Jewish Librarians Caucus of the Ethnic Materials and Information Exchange Round Table (EMIERT) (SRRT, 1993, p. 6). A second resolution in support of Birzeit University librarian, Omar Safi, who was being threatened with deportation from Israel, was also on the table (Kagan, 2015, p. 248).

The 1992 resolution exhorted the government of Israel "to end all censorship and human rights violations in the Occupied West Bank and Gaza, and in Israel itself." The remainder of the resolution was a rather generic and rhetorical call to encourage both Israeli and Palestinian representatives "in the quest for a peaceful and just solution of their conflict" and encouraged ALA members to "develop ways to support librarians, journalists and educators, and others working for peace, human rights and freedom of information and expression in the Middle East." The final call asked the International Relations Committee (IRC) of the ALA to "develop strategies" towards these ends (Resolution on Israeli Censorship, 1993).

The call was deemed controversial because of the now familiar intervention of pro-Israeli groups such as B'nai Brith and the Anti-Defamation League (ADL), both of which were present at the meeting. According to the SRRT resolution during the 1993 Midwinter Conference in Denver, the ALA Council amended the original resolution and referred it to the International Relations for further study, even though the resolution had already been passed at the 1992 conference. As Steven J. Stillwell of the SRRT noted at the time:

> It is difficult to see what might be accomplished by further study of an issue that had been studied exhaustively already. I hope that the IRC will begin to develop strategies 'to support those working for peace, human rights and freedom of information and expression in the Middle East' as directed by the original resolution, at the same time it proceeds with further study (Stillwell, 1993, p. 2)

It should be noted that the ADL campaign against the resolution followed revelations that the ADL had spied on and compiled files on people attending the meetings whom the ADL

considered anti-Israel. These revelations were revealed through a San Francisco police investigation (Chandler, 1994).

In a now familiar refrain, the ADL accused those initiating, sponsoring, and supporting the resolution of fomenting anti-Semitism. Now, as then, the ADL was not beyond resorting to intimidation tactics. Stephen J. Stillwell documented ADL bullying, writing that during a visit with members of the SRRT's Gay and Lesbian, Feminist, Environmental, and International Human Rights Task Forces during the 1993 Midwinter Conference, he and fellow SRRT member Mark Rozenweig were approached by a man who identified himself as a member of the ADL and took hold of his convention badge so that he could copy down the name and affiliation correctly. As Stillwell remarked, he found this action "rather threatening" (Stillwell, 1993, p. 2).

In turn, the ADL began urging members, particularly pro-Israeli Jewish librarians, to attend meetings to revoke the resolution, although pressure from outside the organization was also applied. Demonstrating contempt for notions such as freedom of expression, Israeli supporters employed tactics designed to shut down open debate. During the 1992 conference, for example, one SRRT session was almost cancelled because of prolonged Zionist heckling of Israeli journalist and peace activist Michal Schwarz who described her own experience of Israeli censorship and her arrest by Israeli authorities. At the same conference, fire alarms were mysteriously set off, presumably to stop panel members from presenting the issue to the ALA membership (Chandler, 1994).

In the end, Zionist opponents quashed the resolution by supporting a smear campaign directed against David Williams, a Chicago librarian who was the catalyst in forcing the ALA to examine Palestinian intellectual freedom. In fact, Williams had been attacked earlier by the ADL and other Chicago groups because he had compiled a bibliography on the Palestinian–Israeli issue which displeased these groups. Williams had also been taken to task by activist librarian Sanford Berman from Minnesota because he contested a phrase in the preamble to the resolution which stated: "Whereas Israel considers itself a democracy established with the express purpose of creating a safe haven for the Jewish people…" Williams contested the definite article in the phrase "the Jewish people" as it seemed to him to justify Zionism by describing all Jews in the world as one nation (Chandler, 1994), a concept that justified the displacement of indigenous Palestinians from their land while allowing a person identifying as Jewish an automatic right of return and citizenship. In fact, the term "the Jewish people" has since been interrogated by Israeli historian Shlomo Sand

who, in his book *The Invention of the Jewish People*, posited that a forced Jewish exile in the first century at the hands of the Romans was a myth. Instead, Sand argued against Jewish essentialism, contending that most modern Jews descend from converts scattered across the Middle East and Eastern Europe, rendering the term "the Jewish people," as the title of his book demonstrates, an invention. As Sand further notes, strengthening David Williams' argument: "Israel cannot be described as a democratic state while it sees itself as the state of the 'Jewish people,' rather than as a body representing all the citizens within its recognized boundaries (not including the occupied territories)" (Sand, 2009, p. ix).

The ADL also threatened to mobilize a national campaign against the ALA as well as target its funding. Then, at the ALA's Midwinter Conference held in 1993, ADL members mysteriously were given ALA membership badges instead of guest badges (Chandler, 1994). Finally, at the 1993 conference held in New Orleans, which was also attended by the Hadassah Jewish Women's Organization, the right-wing Zionist media monitor CAMERA, and the Jewish Federation, the resolution was revoked. At the New Orleans meeting, the *Village Voice* newspaper reported that a Jewish librarian declared upon seeing David Williams at the convention: "I'd like to kill the little [bastard] (Warren, 1993)."

Soon after the resolution was revoked, the ALA centralized all positions taken by the ALA Council and the Israeli Censorship and Palestinian Libraries Task Force was disbanded after one interrogation of Williams and Stillwell. The Task Force's disbandment was officially executed at the 1994 ALA Meeting in Miami. Williams was accused of making anti-Semitic comments and was banned from holding a position on the SRRT for three years. Meanwhile Sanford Berman, perhaps alarmed by the fact that the ALA council had almost abolished the SRRT, argued that the 1993 Oslo Accords negated the need for further discussion of the issue (Chandler 1994).

However, in the years since as the Oslo Accords have proven to be an agreement that has witnessed the ongoing theft of Palestinian land; the establishment of more Israeli colonies; the building of the "Separation Wall" deemed illegal by the International Court of Justice in 2004; the creation of a further apparatus of repression which sees the Palestinian Authority enforcing its role as Israel's colonial policemen; and Israeli moves towards annexing parts of the West Bank, it is apparent that the Oslo Accords did not negate the need for further discussion (Khalidi, 2013). In retrospect, it appears as if Williams' argument that the ALA had allowed the ADL to set the parameters of debate and intellectual freedom in an organization predicated on intellectual freedom (Chandler, 1994) was prescient.

In any case, the ALA would discuss the issue further. On June 19, 2002, for example, the ALA adopted a Resolution on the Destruction of Palestinian Libraries, Archives, and Other Cultural Institutions. The resolution followed closely upon the cultural destruction of Palestinian libraries, archives and cultural centers wrought by Israel's "Operation Defensive Shield" in March and April of 2002. By the end of the operation, over thirty Palestinian public, nongovernmental, academic libraries, government archives, and private institutions had been affected (Twiss, 2002: 49–67). In response to the ALA resolution, the ADL once again stepped into the breach and termed the resolution "one sided" and "troubling and wrong." Mark Regev, who became the chief spokesman for the government of Israel, and later the Israeli ambassador to the United Kingdom, declared, despite massive evidence to the contrary: "We don't target libraries; we don't burn books" (JTA, 2002). In contrast, Yasser Abed Rabbo, then Palestinian Minister of Culture and Information concluded that the devastation was "cultural cleansing" which was designed to "make us a society without a history or memory" (Kagan, 2002).

The resolution of ALA's Social Responsibilities Round Table (SRRT) is not recorded but coverage can be found on the SRRT's Newsletter (Litwin, 2002, p. 1). According to a pro-Israeli news service, the SRRT resolution condemned the wording describing the destruction of "Palestinian cultural resources" by "Israeli forces" and which called upon the "Israeli government to refrain from further actions of this type" (JTA, 2002). If this was the original wording, this version is not found in the actual ALA resolution which states that "in the course of recent events in the Middle East, Palestinian computers, photocopiers, books, audio recordings, video recordings, data, institutional archives and records and objects of historical, cultural, and artistic importance were destroyed," leaving the reader to wonder who destroyed these artefacts. It then declares that "Palestinian libraries and cultural institutions are urgently in need of restoration and assistance," although the question of why these libraries and cultural institutions need restoration and assistance is not addressed. The resolution goes on to deplore "the destruction of libraries and cultural resources anywhere in the world; and, therefore, the destruction of these library cultural resources," but again it remains silent about who committed the actual destruction. The resolution further resolves to call "upon the government of the United States, as well as other governments, intergovernmental organizations and non-governmental resources to prevent further destruction of libraries [again, one is left to ask, by whom?] and to provide material assistance to Palestinian libraries and cultural institutions." The resolution ends by committing to ask the International Federation of Libraries (IFLA) to establish a study

group on Palestinian libraries and cultural institutions" and provide a mechanism for aiding them (International Relations Office, 2002).

The third American Library Association resolution critical of Israel was passed on January 29, 2009 after Israel's assault on Gaza from December 2008–January 2009. The Resolution was entitled Resolution on the Connection Between the Recent Gaza Conflict and Libraries which called "for the protection of libraries in Gaza and Israel" and urged "the US government to support the United States Committee of the Blue Shield in upholding the 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict" (Resolution on the Connection Between the Recent Gaza Conflict and Libraries, 2009). Again, the resolution stops short of naming Israel for causing cultural destruction in Gaza. Instead, the resolution describes an equal balance of power between the two forces and calls for the protection of libraries in both Gaza and Israel. Left unsaid was Israel's employment of a sophisticated and lethal military arsenal against an almost defenseless civilian population or that the primitive rockets used to respond to Israeli attacks were not capable of deliberately targeting specific buildings. Also left unspoken was Israel's ongoing economic blockade of Gaza and the fact that an investigation of ceasefire violations by either side revealed that "Palestinian launches have been rare and sporadic and occurred almost always after successive instances of Israeli cease-fire violations" (Glazer, 2014).

The 2002 American Library Association Resolution on the Destruction of Palestinian Libraries, Archives, and Other Cultural Institutions resolved to ask, "the International Federation of Libraries (IFLA/FAIFE) to establish a study group on Palestinian libraries and cultural institutions and provide a mechanism for aiding them." In 2007, IFLA did issue a "Preliminary report and recommendations from an IFLA/FAIFE-mission to Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories" which was conducted from April 13–27, 2007 by Stuart Hamilton and Frode Bakken (Hamilton, 2007). In the end, however, the preliminary report remains inadequate as an instrument to protect Palestinian cultural heritage. Extolling the "both sides" theory in which both parties are seemingly at fault, the preliminary report remains silent over Israel's illegal occupation of the West Bank, its illegal settlements, its "Separation Wall," and it only indirectly criticizes Israeli policy. For example, the report recommends that "there should be a special edition of IFLA Journal to raise awareness of the effects of the occupation and effects of the second Intifada on *both* [my emphasis] Palestinian libraries and Israeli libraries," prompting the reader to ask exactly how Israeli libraries could have been affected by the Occupation or the Second Intifada. Indeed, Israel's ongoing violations of Palestinian human rights are rationalized "because of [Israel's] ongoing

security worries in the wake of the second Intifada" as if Israel does not possess the fourth largest army in the world, is not armed with nuclear weapons, and is not the recipient of billions of dollars in American aid and military assistance. Meanwhile, nothing is said about the ongoing Palestinian security worries in the face of a brutal Israeli occupation or that Palestinians have a right under international law to resist occupation. Palestinians, the report declares, must deal with "severe restrictions of movement within the Palestinian territories [again, by whom?]," but the threat of arbitrary arrest and imprisonment, the confiscation of their land, or the threat of extrajudicial assassination is not mentioned. Hamilton and Bakken remark gravely that for "both sides" the conflict means that "any discussion of how to move forward is clouded by past events and present difficulties," thereby sidestepping Israel's role as an occupying power. Then, remarkably given that the delegation takes place only five years after the Israeli assault on Palestinian libraries and archives in 2002, an occurrence that the preliminary report does not address directly except in the footnotes, they lament that they could not visit Gaza but do find the resolve to criticize Palestinians directly, stating that they were alarmed by the "recent increase in allegedly deliberate Palestinian attacks on Palestinian institutions which are directly connected to access to information and freedom of expression for the Palestinian population in Gaza" (Hamilton, 2007).

Nonetheless, some of the practical recommendations of the preliminary report concerning training, sending Palestinian library students abroad to study up-to-date library techniques, initiatives on digitization, offering advice on drafting a Palestinian copyright law, documenting incidences inhibiting the work of Palestinian libraries, and others, were useful. One of the recommendations, that "FAIFE in partnership with the Ramallah Centre for Human Rights, should hold a conference on the subject of libraries and human rights in the Occupied Palestinian Territories," did come to fruition and, from March 31–April 3, 2008, the International Conference on Libraries from a Human Rights Perspective (which was also sponsored by the Swedish Library Association) was held in Ramallah. Palestinian librarians were instrumental in organizing the conference, peer-reviewing the papers submitted by international scholars, and presenting papers about librarianship and archives in Palestine. Moreover, the international delegates were able to meet with Palestinian librarians and archivists and they witnessed first-hand the apartheid aspects of Israeli occupation. For instance, the illegal "Separation Wall;" the inferior roads for Palestinians which transform a trip from Ramallah to Bethlehem, which takes only twenty minutes on the Israeli-only roads, to a much longer journey through a meandering route; the illegal Israeli settlements staring down from the hills; the humiliating checkpoints; the fragmentation of the Palestinians into

"Bantustans;" and the night-time incursions of the IDF into Palestinian towns and cities. English-language papers from the conference were later published in the conference proceedings (Alawi, 2008).

Given the difficulties involved with holding Israel to full account within larger professional library organizations, it has fallen to grassroots groups like Librarians and Archivists with Palestine (LAP), a group of information workers that has organized two delegations (in 2013 and 2015) to Israel/Palestine and works within North America and Europe as well as within Israel/Palestine, to provide a wider picture of the situation of libraries and archives in both 1948 and 1967 Palestine. The group also offers unequivocal support against "Israel's theft and appropriation of Palestinian cultural property." As the group's website states, LAP "is a network of self-defined librarians, archivists, and information workers in solidarity with the Palestinian struggle for self-determination (Libraries and Archivists with Palestine, 2013)." The group abides by the 2005 Palestinian civil society call for Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) against Israel until it complies with international law and Palestinian rights. As well as conducting delegations and meeting with information workers on the ground in Israel/Palestine, the group has produced zines, conducted a New York subway action during Israel's attack on Gaza in 2014, and hosts an annual "one book" campaign in which one book on Palestine is chosen and then discussed in various reading groups throughout the world.

Another initiative is the establishment of the Edward Said Public library in Gaza which is sponsored and partnered in the United States by the Middle East Children's Alliance. There are now two libraries opened in Gaza, one in Beit Lahia and one in Gaza City. Despite the many difficulties experienced in receiving books in Gaza, the two libraries contain donated titles in Arabic and English. In addition, the libraries hold workshops for writers and teachers, conduct English language classes and reading clubs, and host initiatives for children, including psychological counseling (Middle East Children's Alliance, 2019). The project was started by Mosab Abu Toha who was inspired to build public libraries following Israel's attack on Gaza in 2014 when he found books under the rubble of his English language department at the Islamic University of Gaza.

Israeli Destruction, Looting, Theft and Censorship of Palestinian Libraries, Archives and Cultural Institutions

Despite the ALA rescindment of the resolution condemning Israeli censorship in 1994, despite the failure of the ALA to actually name Israel in the resolution on the destruction of

Palestinian libraries, archives and other cultural institutions, and despite IFLA's preliminary report implying that Israel and Palestine are two equal partners who should conduct more negotiations to improve matters, there is a long history of Israeli destruction and theft of Palestinian libraries, archives and cultural institutions.

Indeed, such practices began with the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948. Despite Golda Meir's assertion that "there is no such thing as a Palestinian people," the vibrant cultural life that existed in Palestine prior to 1948 contradicts the Zionist myth that Jewish immigrants were coming to a land without people for a people without land. Indeed, Palestine was a place with many published journals, newspapers and manuscripts, and its many libraries and archives contained priceless manuscripts and rare books. Literary clubs and societies existed in Jaffa, Haifa, Jerusalem and other smaller cities (Ayalon, 2004) while the coastal city of Jaffa assumed the status as an important international cultural hub, even competing culturally with Beirut and Cairo with its theatres, cinemas, bookstores, and publishing companies (Abu Shehadeh, 2009).

During the 1948 Nakbah, however, as Zionist militias ethnically cleansed the area, and as the indigenous Palestinians fled the violence, Palestinian possessions—including their books, personal papers, and photographs—were subject to looting. This looting occurred first by partisan Zionist fighters and then, a few hours later, by the "official" looters, as Ilan Pappe calls them, i.e., those hired to "collect" what became known as "abandoned property" (Al Jazeera, 2012). Between April 1948 and February 1949, librarians from the Hebrew University, in a joint operation with the Israeli Army, amassed 30,000 books and manuscripts from abandoned houses in West Jerusalem alone (Al Jazeera, 2012). Thousands of books and manuscripts which were the property of churches and educational institutions were also appropriated (Amit, 2011: 9). Six thousand books were eventually marked with the designation AP (for "abandoned property"), while the remaining books are assumed to have been incorporated into the general collection. Although the designation AP may seem to indicate that the books were intended to be returned to their original owners, thus far none have been repatriated. Since 1948, the Custodian of Absentee Property has been responsible for the property of Palestinians who were expelled or fled after 1948, and this includes books (Al Jazeera, 2012).

In the process, not only were books stolen. In fact, many other cultural artefacts belonging to Palestinians, especially photographs, ended up housed in Israeli archives. Many such items, however, were also destroyed in the fighting and have simply disappeared. Since their

"collection," many of these items have been hidden away in Israeli archives. For instance, as Israeli curator Rona Sela was preparing a book of Palestinian photographs, she uncovered photographs in the Israeli Military Archives that had been stolen from the studio of Palestinian photographer Khalil Khissas (Al Jazeera, 2012). It is also important to remember that the looting of cultural items in 1948 was part of a larger process of looting of Palestinian property including wheat, animals, animals, gold in safes, sewing machines, record players, and clothing, prompting David Ben-Gurion, the first prime minister of Israel, to remark in July 1948: "It turned out most of the Jews are thieves" (Bisharat, 2020).

This appropriation of Palestinian cultural property reverberates on several levels. For instance, in Israel proper there are no state-run autonomous cultural institutions such as an archive or university for Arab citizens. Therefore, these citizens have no control over their own cultural resources. Meanwhile, Palestinians living in the Occupied Territories must ask for permits to research these archives (Berda, 2017) and Palestinians visiting from Western countries may be denied access to Israel based on their Arabic surname. The United States government international travel advisory warns, for example, that "some U.S. citizens of Arab or Muslim heritage (including Palestinian-Americans) have experienced significant difficulties and unequal or occasionally hostile treatment at Israel's borders and checkpoints" and describes how American citizens who have traveled to Muslim countries or who are of Arab, Middle Eastern, or Muslim origin may face additional questioning by Israeli immigration and border authorities (U.S. Department of State 2020). Israel can deny, therefore, a large percentage of Palestinians access to their own cultural heritage, and those who do gain access may be asked to pay the Israeli state to research their own history.

Additionally, Israel bans or denies entry to visitors, including academics and researchers, it deems problematic. For instance, the government of Israel has denied entry to academics including Professor Salim Vally of the University of Johannesburg in 2013, Professor Kuwel Hawwash from the University of Birmingham in 2017, Professors Katherine M. Franke from Columbia University and Vincent Warren from the Center for Constitutional Rights based in New York in 2018, and U.S. Congresswomen Rashida Tlaib (who has Palestinian ancestry) and Ilhan Omar in 2019. In addition, although Israel claims to be the home of the Jewish people everywhere, Jewish critics of Israel have also been denied entry to or banned from entering Israel. These critics include Professor Norman Finkelstein (banned entry for ten years in 2008), UN Special Rapporteur Richard Falk (denied entry in 2008), Professor Noam Chomsky and his daughter (denied entry in 2010), and activist Ariel Gold from the activist group Code Pink (denied entry in 2018). At the same time, Israel refuses to allow

dissident Mordechai Vanunu, who exposed Israel's nuclear program, to leave the country (for exposing Israel's nuclear program, the Israeli intelligence agency Mossad abducted him from Italy in 1986, forced his return to Israel, after which he spent 18 years in prison, 11 in solitary confinement) (Amnesty International 2010).

The importance of the archive in such highly contested historical terrain cannot be overestimated. Indeed, it is the declassification of many archival documents that has allowed the "New Israeli Historians" such as Ilan Pappe, director of the University Exeter's European Centre for Palestine Studies; Avi Shlaim, Emeritus Professor of International Relations at the University of Oxford; Benny Morris, former Professor of History at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev; Tom Segev, Israeli historian and journalist; and the sociologist Baruch Kimmerling, former Professor of Sociology at Hebrew University, to challenge early Zionist myths. These historians did so by demonstrating, contrary to Zionist assertions, that Great Britain did not attempt to stop the establishment of a Jewish state (Pappe, 1988; Shlaim, 1988); that Palestinians did not freely abandon their homes, but rather were forced out as the result of a systematic and planned campaign of expulsion (Pappe, 2006; Kimmerling, 2004); that the Zionist militias were not a David confronting a Goliath, but rather were vastly superior in both manpower and materiel compared to their divided Arab neighbours (Shlaim, 1995); and, finally, that it is Israel, not Palestinians, which has prevented peace through its intransigence (Shlaim, 1988). These archives have also been used by Palestinian historians such as Nur Maslaha, a professor at SOAS University of London's Centre for Palestine Studies, who studied documents in original Hebrew to produce his seminal work, *The Expulsion of the Palestinians: The Concept of "Transfer" in Zionist Political Thought, 1882–1948*. Masalha's book (1992) demonstrated that ethnic cleansing of Palestinians from their land was a foundational principle of Zionist thinking from the beginning (with some Zionists even fantasizing that the Palestinians would willingly acquiesce to their uprooting).

Indeed, the various books, photographs, films, and manuscripts which Israel has looted are a compelling refutation of the Israeli colonial narrative. However, if the de-classification of certain documents in the Israeli archives leads to research which refutes this narrative, these documents can be quickly supressed once again. As relayed to me by Rona Sela at the offices of the organization Zochrot in Tel Aviv during the Libraries and Archives with Palestine delegation in June 2013, this redefinition of the Zionist narrative has resulted in documents being re-classified and restricted. Sometimes this restriction can even happen in the middle of research once the archivist understands the parameters of the investigation. Israeli archive

law restricts access to materials to fifty years from the date of creation but, even then, material deemed harmful to Israeli national security or foreign relations can be restricted indefinitely while archivists can choose which researchers have access to the materials (Sela, 2018, p. 206). Israeli archival classification and cataloging also consolidates the Zionist narrative. For instance, Israeli subject access catalogues material delineating the history of Palestinian resistance fighters employs the heading "Arab gangs" (Sela, 2018, p. 213).

This re-classification and restriction of documents has ironically been used to reclassify documents employed by Israeli new historians such as Benny Morris to document Israeli ethnic cleansing of Palestinians in 1948. For instance, in his book *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem, 1947–1979*, Morris indicates that a document was found in the Yad Yaari Archive. However, when another historian, Tamar Novick, went to find the document, she found that it had been re-classified by order of the Israeli Ministry of Defense security department Malmab (Shezaf 2019). This re-classification and suppression of historical materials have little to do with security but rather is an attempt to protect the official Israeli historical narrative. Therefore, non-security related records documenting, for example, the number of Palestinians who left because of Jewish military operations; land-ownership battles between the Israeli government and Arab citizens; expulsion of Bedouin citizens; efforts to prevent the reestablishment of destroyed Palestinian villages; and interviews with former members of Jewish paramilitary groups from 1948–1949, have all been subject to re-classification or suppression. Furthermore, both the Israeli Defense Forces and the Shin Bet police archives are essentially closed to researchers (Shezaf, 2019). This attempt to establish an official Israeli historical narrative is also extended to archaeology wherein Israeli government initiatives to Judaize Palestinian antiquities and archaeology endeavor to establish proof of 3,000 years of unbroken Jewish existence. These efforts to Judaize archaeological sites within the 1948 borders have been made in major Palestinian cities such as Acre, Jerusalem, Jaffa, and Tiberias. Meanwhile, in the Occupied Territories it has occurred in Jerusalem, Nablus, Hebron, and Bethlehem, among other cities, towns, and villages. In addition, valuable antiquities have been stolen and sold (Sahli, p. 2019).

Meanwhile, evidence that the Israeli National Library was not eager to return the books labeled "abandoned property" can be found in an archival document in a memorandum from the National Library in 1949 which states:

> Although the salvaging of the books was done for its own sake and its immediate aim was saving intellectual property from loss and destruction, we did not conceal from

the authorities our hope that a way would be found to transfer some, perhaps the majority, of those books to the possession of the University—when the time comes (Amit 2011, p. 18).

Indeed, Eliyahu Strauss, the director of the National Library's Oriental Sciences, acknowledged that the stolen books would vastly increase the National Library's research capability, adding that "if a substantial number of books [which we did not have] are bestowed on the National Library, we will be able to extend our research opportunities considerably" (Amit, 2011, p. 11).

Perhaps the most infamous theft of Palestinian cultural materials was the confiscation of items from the Palestinian Archaeological Museum Library in Jerusalem which housed rare books and memorandums including the Dead Sea Manuscripts. After East Jerusalem was occupied in 1967, the Israeli authorities declared that the museum was under their control, and they stole and transferred rare manuscripts including the Dead Sea manuscripts (Balawi, 2003, p. 15). Zionist attacks against Palestinian information and cultural centers were not limited to those located inside Palestine. For example, on October 4, 1972, Librairie Palestine in Paris was damaged by a bomb. Responsibility for the attack was claimed by the Zionist student organization Masada Movement for Action and Defense (Free Palestine, 2009).

The disdain the Israeli Army demonstrated for Palestinian cultural memory during the state of Israel's establishment from 1948 to 1949 was repeated in 1982 when Israeli troops looted the research center of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) in Beirut which had been established in 1965. According to Sabri Jiryis, the director of the Research Center, Israeli troops confiscated 25,000 volumes of books, a printing press, microfilms, manuscripts, and archives. In addition, the Israelis smashed filing cabinets, desks, and other furniture as well as stole telephones, heating equipment, and electric fans. The troops also used explosives to open a safe. Many of the papers lost were possibly irreplaceable (Hijazi, 1982). In a telling comment after the looting of the research center, one Palestinian asserted that the attack was "intended to obliterate all memory of Palestine, the country we left behind." Indeed, before leaving, the Israeli troops symbolically removed the word "Palestine" from a sign hung outside the office (Hijazi, 1982). The night before the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982, Jiryis had in fact removed the most important manuscripts, recollections, political reports, and evaluations and placed them in two suitcases. A year after the raid, and after duplicating the material, Israel returned the stolen material to the PLO

Research Center as part of a prisoner exchange. In a deal brokered with France, the materials were repatriated via Air France in 120 wooden crates to the PLO Army Camp in Algeria (Sela, 2017).

After the signing of the Oslo Accords in 1994, the archives were moved to a new center in East Jerusalem. Nevertheless, in 2000 Israel confiscated these archives and removed a significant part of the archive of the Orient House, the headquarters of the PLO after the Oslo Accords. For the second time, a substantial portion of the archives, including photographs, official documents, and historical newspapers were seized. The Orient House library remains closed to this day as the Israelis employ an Ottoman era law which is renewed every six months to ensure its closure. Meanwhile, the condition of materials remaining inside deteriorates (Weiss, 2014).

During the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982, the Israeli Army also removed the archives of the Palestinian Cinema Institution, a division of the Palestinian Cultural Arts Section which was established in the early 1970s by filmmaker Ismail Shammout. The archives consisted of raw footage of Palestinian-produced films, films concerning the Palestinian cause produced by UNWRA, foreign films and television, and films produced by liberation movements throughout the world. All these materials were left behind, but we now know that these films, many of which were considered lost, were taken as booty and are housed in the Israeli Military Archives where they were declassified only after a long struggle. Even after declassification, access is restricted (Sela, 2017).

The same loutish behaviour displayed in the 1982 attack on the PLO Research Center was reproduced in the Israeli Army rampage of libraries, archives, and cultural materials in the West Bank in 2002 (the destruction which sparked the 2002 ALA resolution). Among the many egregious acts were the destruction of administrative records and oral history archives of Palestinian cinema, the destruction of scientific equipment and microcomputers, and the pillaging of computers at the Ministry of Education. Palestinian Radio and TV buildings in Ramallah were also attacked and the Israeli government conducted bombing raids on educational and cultural centers such as the National Musical Institute and the Cultural Centre of Sakakin (Gdoura 2003, p. 36). According to Israeli journalist Amira Haas, in addition to the physical damage inflicted to computers, photocopiers, cameras, and editing equipment at the Palestinian Ministry of Culture in Ramallah, Israeli soldiers also left every room soiled with urine and excrement with one soldier even defecating into a photocopier (Haas, 2002). Clearly, since the worst fighting had already ended by the time of the raids,

the destruction of property and resources was a calculated attempt to intimidate Palestinians.

In the 2008–2009 Israeli attack on Gaza named "Operation Cast Lead," two municipal libraries as well as the libraries of the Islamic University and the Tal-al-Hawa branch of the Al-Aqsa were severely damaged, and the Jawaharlal Nehru Library of al-Azhar University, which had been donated by the Indian government, was destroyed (Kagan, 2016, p. 78). Then, in 2014, the ongoing Israeli attempt to erase Palestinian cultural memory came full circle when on August 2, 2014, the Israeli Army bombed for a second time the Islamic University in Gaza which houses the Palestinian Oral History Centre. Launched as part of the university's faculty of arts, the centre works to conduct oral history interviews and maintain Palestinian identity, heritage, and customs and traditions (Catron, 2013). Although the collection was not harmed, Israel's targeting of an institution of higher learning housing an institute dedicated to preserving Palestinian cultural memory is highly symbolic.

Israel has also maintained its matrix of control over Palestinians through censorship and restrictions on the importation of books from Arab countries. After the 1967 occupation of East Jerusalem and the West Bank, for example, Palestinians were subject to the same restrictions which applied to the Arab citizens who remained in Israel proper. These measures included restricting access to books, newspapers, and journals allowed entry into the newly occupied areas. They also involved strict censorship on printing and publishing. Before any book was published, it was forwarded to the Israeli military censor who decided whether it could be published or not. As a result, the number of books published in the Occupied Territories remained low, and there were also long delays in publication and printing. In addition, there was strict press censorship and a ban on the importation of magazines and newspapers deemed subversive (Badiri, 2003, pp. 31–32). After the 1967 occupation, universities and schools were raided by the Israeli Army which proceeded to confiscate books and other materials deemed subversive. Books and journals that appeared on an official blacklist, which numbered in the thousands, were declared "illegal." Indeed, the possession of such banned books was used as an excuse in 1984–85 to close Al-Najah University in Nablus and Birzeit University near Ramallah for two months. Moreover, libraries were charged an import license for each title plus a seventeen percent tax. Unsurprisingly, all these measures had the effect of cutting off Palestinians in the West Bank from intellectual trends in the Arab world (Sayej-Naser, 1999, pp. 120–121).

The 1992 ALA Resolution on Israeli Censorship was based on the heavy Israeli censorship imposed during the first Palestinian Intifada of 1987–1991. During this period, Hebrew-

language journalists sympathetic to the Palestinian cause were also subject to censorship and Israeli Hebrew-language journalists were arrested, imprisoned, and dismissed from their employment (Kagan, 2016, p. 70). Censorship in the Occupied Territories was harsher and included the closing of Palestinian press offices and refusal to grant licenses to publish, while Palestinian journalists found their materials subject to heavy press censorship.

Today in the West Bank, libraries suffer under similar conditions. The Israeli government maintains a list of banned words for books resulting in, for example, works by Agatha Christie placed under suspicion for being subversive. Books and journals coming from so-called "enemy" countries are sequestered at the border with Jordan, very often for a period of six months, before they are allowed entry. The libraries are then made to pay for the sequestering. In May 2018, this harassment advanced further as Israel barred Jordanian and Arab publishers from displaying their books at the 11th annual Palestinian Book Fair held in the West Bank city of Ramallah, even though their books had already been shipped across the border crossings. The Jordanian Publishers Association (JPA) complained that the measure was "part of an Israeli policy to destroy all attempts to build bridges with the Palestinian people" (Palestinian Information Center, 2018).

In Israel itself, importing books published in Lebanon and Syria, so-called "enemy" countries which publish 80% of the Arabic-language books sold in Israel, requires a special permit. Since 1974, the largest supplier of these books has been Saleh Abbasi's Kull Shay (Kol Bo in Hebrew) Books. After peace treaties were signed with Egypt and Jordan, Abbasi, who had been granted a license, began sending lists of titles he wished to receive to agents in the two countries, and after receiving approval for importation from the titles from Israeli censorship, he would await the arrival of the books, travel to the borders, pay the fees, and receive the books after passing clearance by Israeli censors (Sobelman, 2008). In August 2008, however, Abbasi was sent a letter from the Israeli Ministry of Industry, Trade and Labor informing him that importing books from Lebanon was, in fact, considered trading with the enemy. After Abbasi complained, he was given special permission, to be renewed each year, to import the books. The Legal Center for Arab Minority Rights in Israel (Adalah) petitioned the Israeli Supreme Court arguing that the ban violated Arab cultural rights and academic freedom. However, on October 1, 2009 the Supreme Court ruled that the state's granting of an import license to Kol Bo Books rendered the petition moot (Namneeh, 2009).

Deliberate Harassment, Imprisonment and Assassination of Palestinian Writers, Journalists, Intellectuals, and Other Cultural Workers

Since its inception as a state in 1948, Israel has shown little regard for Palestinian writers, journalists, and other cultural workers, no matter where they resided. After 1948, those Palestinians who remained within the boundaries of what is now Israel (although, as mentioned above, Israel has never officially declared its borders) were subject to military law restricting their freedom of movement, making it impossible to travel from one village to another without the permission of the Israeli military governor. Arrests could be made without charge, and Palestinians were forced to submit to police supervision. Moreover, those who remained were expected to transform themselves into "Israeli Arabs" instead of identifying as Palestinians.

In the years following the Nakbah of 1948, all publications were placed under severe censorship and the importation of Arabic-language books was banned. Leaderless in the early years of the establishment of Israel, the Arab minority turned to Palestinian poets for political inspiration. Humanist, cosmopolitan, and revolutionary, these poets became known as the "poets of the resistance," and they began holding poetry recitals in public squares. Eventually, these poets drew the attention of the Israeli authorities who attempted to prevent them from attending the festivals (Hoffman, 2009, p. 258). One of these poets, Rashid Hussein (1936–1977), became a schoolteacher, a profession which was one of the few government positions open to Arab citizens. When Hussein was arrested at a political rally in 1958, he lost his teaching position. In 1960, he was arrested and imprisoned for possessing Egyptian and Lebanese newspapers and journals (Hoffman, 2009, p. 290). By 1966, Hussein, who was once inspired by a dream of Arab and Jewish co-existence, left Israel for New York where he died in an apartment fire. By the time he died, he had become totally disillusioned by the possibility of co-existence.

A similar trajectory of censorship, harassment, and imprisonment marked the life of Samih al-Qasim (1939–2014), a Palestinian Druze citizen of Israel who refused to be drawn into Israel's colonial game of favouring the Druze as the Arab minority group designated to act as the policemen over other Arabs. Al-Qasim refused to renounce his Palestinian heritage and wrote a letter to Israeli Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion in which he stated his refusal to join the Israeli Army and fight against his own people. Because he did so, he was arrested and forced to teach remedial Arabic and Hebrew without pay (Hoffman, 2006, p. xvii). Like

Hussein, al-Qasim attended the poetry festivals held in Arab villages and, like Hussein, the Israeli military authorities soon noticed his activities and fired him from his teaching post. His book of poetry on the Israeli Army massacre of 43 Israeli Palestinians at the village of Kafr Qasim in 1954 was censored with the second half of the poem totally excised (Hoffman, 2009: 262). Al-Qasim was imprisoned repeatedly, placed under house arrest, and forced to perform compulsory labour.

The life of poet Mahmoud Darwish (1941–2008) followed a similar pattern although it differed in that Darwish's family had fled to Lebanon in 1948. After a year, the family managed to return to their former home but because the family was not included in the first census they were labeled "infiltrators" and were declared illegal in their own homeland. In primary school, the Arab headmaster and his parents hid him whenever police or government officials appeared. Finally, Darwish and his family acquired identity cards because Darwish's family claimed he had been living with a Bedouin family in the northern Galilee during the census (Shaheen, 2009). In primary school, Darwish was called before the military governor for the crime of reciting a poem deemed unsuitable for a ceremony celebrating Israel's establishment. The governor informed Darwish that if he kept reciting such poetry, his father could be fired from his job at a quarry. Like al-Qasim, Darwish endured continual arrest and imprisonment, and throughout 1967 he lived under partial (but permanent) house arrest and was forced to return home each day by sunset. In 1970, exhausted by the continual harassment, he announced from Cairo that he would not be returning to Israel (Shaheen, 2009). Later, from 1977–1978, Darwish became the first administrator of the Palestinian Research Center in Beirut.

Tawfiq Zayyad (1929–1994), another poet of this generation who was also a "poet of the resistance," also endured torture, imprisonment, and harassment at the hands of the Israeli police. Like Rashid Hussein, Zayyad defied the Israeli military regime's prohibition of movement within 1948 Palestine which banned entrance to "closed areas." Zayyad played a leading role in organizing resistance against policies such as the apartheid poll tax applied only against Palestinian citizens of Israel. On April 24, 1954, he was arrested and confined to house arrest from sundown until dawn and barred from leaving Nazareth for months (Kanaaneh, 2020). In 1955, the Israelis tortured him by stringing him up by his arms and legs to the window frame of his cell until he lost consciousness. When he woke, he spit into his torturers face and was beaten unconscious again (Sorek, 2020, p. 58). A committed communist who was educated at the Higher Party School in Moscow, Zayyad's radical credentials startled the Israeli authorities, especially when he was easily elected mayor of the

majority Arab city of Nazareth on December 9, 1975 as the head of the Democratic Front consisting of the Rakah Communist party and independent forces (Journal of Palestine Studies, 1976). Zayyad also served in the Israeli Knesset from 1973–1990 and 1992–1994 as a member of the communist Rakah. He later served in Hadash parties until his death in a car accident in 1994.

Essentially, Israel viewed its Arab writers as dangerous terrorist threats. Indeed, the fear with which Israeli politicians and military figures viewed Palestinian cultural expression and defiance is encapsulated by Israeli general Moshe Dayan's comment concerning Palestinian poet Fadwa Tuqan (1917–2003). Tuquan's poems, he stated, were the equivalent of facing 20 enemy commandoes (Joffe, 2003). This fear of the power of Palestinian cultural representation was extended to Palestinian writers in the diaspora who were targeted for assassination. The writer Ghassan Kanafani (1936–1972), who was a member of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), was killed in Beirut along with his seventeen-year-old niece Lamis in a car bombing for which Israel later claimed responsibility (Kilpatrick, 1976, p. 15). Kanafani's killing in July 1972 was followed in 1973 by the murders of poet Kamal Nasir in Lebanon in an Israeli Mossad operation in which later Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak participated dressed as a woman; translator Wael Zuaiter in Rome; and intellectual Mahmoud Hamshari in Paris. Nasir, Zuaiter, and Hamshari were included in Israel's "Operation Grapes of Wrath" target list for allegedly participating in the assassination of Israeli athletes at the Munich Olympics in 1972 (Bergman 2018). Israel used the familiar excuse of "security" needs to justify the murders. However, under international law such extrajudicial political assassinations are illegal according to the Hague Conventions of 1907 and are a violation of human rights. These killings were later replicated with the assassinations of intellectual and fiction writer Majed Abu Sharar in Rome in 1981 and iconic cartoonist Naji al-Ali in London in 1987. While their murders remain unsolved and no-one has claimed responsibility for their deaths, given Israel's long record of extrajudicial assassination of Palestinian resistors it is possible that their slayings had Israeli Mossad connections.

Meanwhile, Kanafani's fiction as well as the poems of West Bank poet Fadwa Tuqan—who died on December 12, 2003 as her ancestral home in Nablus was under Israeli siege—are forbidden from being taught in the curriculum for the Arab school sector because their literature is considered subversive (Marjiya 2012). In fact, Israeli authorities have failed repeatedly to produce a list of poets and writers "acceptable" for study by Arab school children, and it was only in 2012 that the authorities considered including the works of al-

Qasim and Darwish in the official literature textbooks for Arab schoolchildren (Marjiya, 2012). At the same time, Israeli academic Nurit Peled-Elhanen has documented during her studies of hundreds of Israeli embedded textbooks what she terms consistent bias towards Palestinians in which Palestinians, if they are represented at all, are represented as "problems" (Robins. 2011). Israel's erasure of the Palestinian narrative in its education system was expanded on January 18, 2021 when the Israeli Education Minister issued a general order barring schools from hosting organizations that view Israeli soldiers "contemptuously and call Israel an apartheid state" (MEE Staff, 2021). Although the call was a general one, it came after the Israeli human rights group B'Tselem issued a report stating that "the Israeli regime enacts in all the territory it controls (Israeli sovereign territory, East Jerusalem, the West Bank, and the Gaza Strip) an apartheid regime" (B'Tselem, 2021). The Ministry of Education order came after the director of the rights group, Hagai Al-Ad, was scheduled to give a talk at a school in Haifa.

The harassment of Palestinian writers, intellectuals and other cultural figures continued with the targeting of the prominent intellectual Azmi Bishara, a member of the Israeli Knesset and leader of the Balad Party. In 2007, Bishara became the object of a high-profile Israeli probe which planned to bring "security" charges against him. During the probe, Israeli censorship prohibited news media from reporting on the matter. Although Bishara and his party had been the object of Israeli police investigation for years because his party called for a democratic and secular state for all of Israel's citizens, he was interrogated in 2002 by the Israeli police on suspicion of aiding and passing information to the enemy during Israel's attack on Lebanon in 2006. Bishara was also accused of making contacts with a foreign agent and receiving large funds of money transferred from abroad. In September 2006, shortly after the conclusion of the Israeli attack which Bishara had opposed, Bishara visited and made a speech in Syria. The following year, Bishara visited Lebanon, and this was followed by two Israeli police interrogations. Soon after, Bishara, like Mahmoud Darwish, fled Israel saying that he would never receive a fair trial and therefore was forced to choose between prison, exile, or martyrdom. As Palestinian-American commentator Ali Abu Nimah posits: "These indeed are the only choices Israel has ever placed before Palestinians who refuse to submit to the racist rule of Zionism (Abu Nimah, 2007)."

The following year, in 2008, Gazan journalist Mohammed Omer, who had just returned from abroad after accepting the Martha Gelhorn prize for journalism, was strip-searched at gunpoint. Omer was then assaulted as he attempted to return to Gaza from the Allenby Bridge border crossing between Israel and Jordan (Frykberg, 2008). Further Israeli contempt

for the lives of Palestinian journalists is evidenced by Israel's killing of seventeen journalists caught amid airstrikes and shelling during Israel's attack on Gaza in July 2014. Israel justified these killings using the familiar claim that the slaying of these journalists was justified because they were "Hamas" (Countercurrents, 2014). The Israeli harassment and imprisonment of Palestinians has a long history. During the First Intifada, for example, Israel detained or placed under administrative detention 30% of Palestinian journalists while 56 Palestinian journalists were deported (Kagan, 2016, p. 70). Meanwhile, during the Gaza March of Return of early 2018, Israeli snipers deliberately and systematically shot and killed two Gazan journalists, Abu Hassan and Yasser Mourtaja, even though—or perhaps because—they were both wearing vests clearly marked "Press." As a now deleted IDF spokesman's Twitter tweet stated at the time: "We knew where every bullet landed" (Sputnik, 2018). As law professor Noura Erakat states, the killings were "an effort to ensure that the Palestinian story is not told to the world and to tell Palestinians themselves that no one is safe" (Palumbo-Liu, 2018).

Israel's fear of Palestinian cultural workers manifested itself again in April 2013 when the cartoonist Mohammed Sabaaneh was arrested at the Allenby Bridge and for having "contact with a hostile organization." Sabaaneh was held in indefinite detention without being charged but the Israeli state alleged that he had contacted a publisher in Amman, Jordan to publish a book of cartoons. The "hostile organization" was in fact the publishing house which had published a book about Palestinian prisoners. Sabaaneh was ultimately sentenced to five months imprisonment and fined 10.000 shekels for his contact with the publishing house (Countercurrents, 2015).

The arrest and harassment in 2015 of poet and photographer Dareen Tatour, a Palestinian citizen of Israel, continued Israel's long history of harassing Palestinian writers with Israeli citizenship. Tatour's poem, posted on YouTube, contained the words "Resist, my people, resist them / Resist the settlers' robbery / And follow the caravan of martyrs." She had also posted two Facebook statuses and a photograph of Israa Abed, a Palestinian woman whom Israeli police had shot in Afula, Israel, claiming Abed had tried to stab a bus driver. (Video showed that Abed had posed no threat and was shot repeatedly with her hands in the air (Hassan, 2016)). Like Palestinians in the West Bank, Tatour was initially imprisoned without charge or trial, and was eventually placed under house arrest where she was denied Internet access and forced to wear an ankle bracelet. On May 3, 2018, Tatour was found guilty in a Nazareth court of incitement to violence and supporting a terror organization. PEN International, the International Writers Union, condemned Tatour's verdict stating:

"Dareen Tatour has been convicted for doing what writers do every day—we use our words to peacefully challenge injustice" (BBC News, 2018).

Israel's harassment of Palestinians in the West Bank increased in 2019 with the arrest of prominent writer Ahmad Qatamesh. Qatamesh had been arrested twice before, the first in the 1970s when he was arrested and jailed for four years, and the second in 1992, when he was placed in administrative detention for six months (Middle East Eye, 2019). This was followed by the apprehension of the Palestinian journalist Mays Abu Ghosh who was arrested on August 28, 2019 and detained along with five other Palestinian youth. Abu Ghosh's family later alleged she had been tortured during interrogation using several "stress positions" (Sweeney 2019). Meanwhile, graphic artist Hafez Omar has been imprisoned in an Israeli jail since 2012. During his interrogation, he was questioned about "his artworks and publications on social media, especially those in support of the rights of Palestinian prisoners (Winstanley, 2020)."

Further Israeli censorship of Palestinian cultural workers occurred in October 2020 when Israel denied Gazan singer Mohammed Assaf a special permit to enter the West Bank. Assaf had won the televised Arab Idol contest in Beirut in 2013. His winning song was "Raise the Keffiyeh," referencing the iconic black and white traditional Palestinian scarf that has become a symbol of Palestinian resistance. Assaf had moved his family to the United Arab Emirates, but continued to sing unabashedly about Palestinian themes such as the Nakbah, the second Intifada, and life in Gaza where his family lived as refugees. To Palestinian commentator Ramzy Baroud, Assaf's denial of entry was yet another example of Israel's repeated and ongoing effort to erase Palestinian identity which went hand in had with other Israeli efforts such as erasing Palestine from Google Maps and renaming original Arab villages with Hebrew names. As he notes: "None of this was random, of course, as Israeli leaders understood that destroying the tangible, actual Palestine had to be accompanied by the destruction of the Palestinian idea—the set of cultural and political values that give Palestine its cohesiveness and continuity in the mind of all Palestinians, wherever they are" (Baroud, 2020).

Israel's sustained effort to re-write history in its favor was again demonstrated on January 11, 2020 when the Lod District court ruled against Palestinian filmmaker Mohammed Bakri, a Palestinian citizen of Israel who was ordered to pay substantial compensation (US$55,000) as the result of a libel suit launched by an Israeli soldier, Nissim Meghnagi, who had participated in the IDF's "Operation Protective Shield" incursion into the Jenin refugee

camp from April 1–11 2002, the same campaign during which the IDF attacked Palestinian libraries, archives, and cultural centers in the West Bank. The incursion, which was accompanied by Israeli army fighter jets, attack helicopters, special forces, commando units, and special reserve brigades, ended in the deaths of 25 IDF soldiers (Peled, 2021). Meanwhile, dozens of the camp's inhabitants, mostly civilians, were killed and hundreds were wounded. In the end, the camp was leveled to the ground (Palestine Chronicle, 2021). Several hundred Palestinians resisted against the overwhelming Israeli onslaught using guerilla war tactics and armed only with automatic rifles. After the invasion, the Israeli government did not allow the International Red Cross or other international observers to enter the camp until many days had passed, allowing the Israeli forces to erase and cover up evidence of war crimes (Peled, 2021).

Jenin Jenin, Bakri's documentary film based on these events, is now officially banned in Israel, and the court ordered all copies of the film to be collected and destroyed although the case is expected to move on to the Israeli Supreme Court (Peled, 2021). The film had been the repeated target of the Israeli judiciary since its release because it challenged the Israeli state's official version of the events which took place at the Jenin camp. Bakri's film, in fact, made no such claims. It did, however, allow Palestinian residents of the camp who had witnessed the attack to speak in their own voices and describe the events as they had experienced them (Baroud, 2021). Moreover, Meghnagi, who initiated the libel suit, appears in the film for only about five seconds.

The harassment and imprisonment of Palestinian citizens of Israel such as Dareen Tatour and the fining of Mohammed Bakri and the banishment of his film comingled with the increasing surveillance of Palestinian citizens of Israel's Facebook and social media posts. Increasingly, Palestinian citizens of Israel have been charged and detained for incitement, some even based on the number of shares, likes and prominence of their Facebook posts (Nashif, 2016). Meanwhile, after the Quds Uprising in October 2015 until 2017, Israeli authorities arrested 280 Palestinians, including children, from the West Bank (many from Arab Jerusalem) for posts and "likes" on social media. Some of the detained were indicted or sentenced to prison terms, others were fined, and others were held under the Kafkaesque Israeli practice of administrative detention during which they are neither charged nor granted a trial. Israeli courts ban those released from detention from using social media for a specified time. In fact, Israel has a specific unit devoted to monitoring Palestinians' use of social media (Middle East Monitor, 2017).

In the meantime, in 2019, Facebook's Chief Operating Officer Sheryl Sandberg pledged $2.5 million to the Anti-Defamation League, the same group which in 1993 worked to scuttle the ALA resolution to "to end all censorship and human rights violations in the Occupied West Bank and Gaza, and in Israel itself." In turn, Facebook has arbitrarily closed pages produced by Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza and has also taken down their content. For instance, on May 4, 2020, more than 50 Palestinian journalists and activists had their profile pages deleted by Facebook, alongside a notification saying their pages had been deactivated for "not following our Community Standards (Al-Waraa, 2020)." In 2016, Israeli Public Security Minister Gilad Erdan revealed plans to censor the Internet's worldwide social media platforms and build an "international coalition" to counter criticism of Israel. Erdan's proposal aimed to make YouTube, Twitter, and Facebook responsible for what they host on their sites (Kampmark, 2016). Additionally, the Israeli government funds projects to place pro-Israeli content throughout the Internet and remove material critical of Israel. Likewise, the pro-Israeli group CAMERA has asked volunteers to secretly edit Wikipedia entries to make them pro-Israel (Electronic Intifada, 2008).

It is also important to remember that Israel is one of the few countries claiming to be democratic states to have a military censor to prevent publication of classified material. Israeli law stipulates that all news articles, including traditional and social media, must be approved by the military censor, which is part of the Israeli Defense Forces' Military Intelligence Directorate, in matters concerning "national security." This is a broad rubric which allows, as we have seen, authoritarian powers to detain and harass and prevent innocuous information from being disseminated except by politicians (Gross, 2020).

Conclusions

In his now iconic book *1984*, British author George Orwell penned the now-famous quote "Who controls the past controls the future. Who controls the present controls the past" (Orwell, 2018, p. 37). Ironically, the book was first published in 1949, one year after the establishment of the state of Israel, which in 1949 was still carrying out its operations of ethnically-cleansing Palestinians from their homeland. This process of ethnic cleansing has now been verified by various historians based on documents found in Israel's own archives (Pappe, 2006). After 1948, Palestinians have indeed lived an Orwellian nightmare in which, as historian Walid Khalidi (whose book *All That Remains* documented the more than 400 villages Israel destroyed and depopulated in 1948) states: "What is probably uniquely distinctive about the Palestinian fate is that they were dispossessed of their country as a

people, and to this day they continue to be maligned for having suffered such dispossession" (Khalidi, 1992, p. xxxiii). Indeed, in truly Orwellian fashion, the aggressors who dispossessed and drove Palestinians from their land proceeded to create an historical narrative in which they became the victims.

To establish control over this historical narrative, it became necessary to control the past. Such control has involved taking measures such as the looting and theft of Palestinian cultural materials, including entire archives and libraries, blacklisting of books and journals, banning films, and destroying libraries, archives, and cultural centers. Controlling the narrative also required restricting, classifying, and re-classifying access to archival records. Likewise, to control the present and the future, there exists an unbroken line of Israeli harassment of Palestinian writers and cultural workers since the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948.

These measures and this egregious history belie the self-serving and carefully crafted propaganda image of Israel as a beacon of democracy trying only to survive as an underdog in a very bad neighborhood. To control the future, there is a remarkable similarity in the tactics employed by pro-Israeli groups such as the Anti-Defamation League. In 1993, for example, as the ADL worked to rescind the ALA motion condemning Israeli censorship, the organization threatened to organize a national campaign against the organization, including targeting its sources of funding. Likewise, in 2014, Abraham Foxman from the ADL threatened that "donors give money and expect certain things" as his organization worked to ensure the rescindment of Palestinian American Steven Salaita's appointment as professor at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champagne (Guttman, 2014).

In the process, the bullying worked to rescind the ALA resolution of Israeli censorship in 1993. Meanwhile, the 2002 resolution condemning the destruction of Palestinian libraries, archives, and other cultural institutions, which removed the word "Israel," clearly allowed pro-Israeli rhetoric to set the parameters of the debate, while the same process no doubt was at work as the IFLA delegation penned its "both sides" preliminary report. For the record, however, it has not been Palestinians who have harassed, censored, assassinated, or imprisoned Israeli writers, intellectuals, and other cultural workers. Nor, for that matter, have Palestinians destroyed or stolen Israeli cultural artefacts.

Rather than being disheartened, however, by the pro-Israeli pressure tactics that worked to scuttle the 1992 ALA resolution and dilute the content of the resolutions of 2002 and 2009, these resolutions should be viewed as initiatives from which librarians and archivists in

solidarity with Palestine can learn. The 1992 initiative, for example, was a bold and forward-looking proposal which can be viewed as being ahead of its time in many ways, especially in its naming of Israeli transgressions. And although the resolutions of 2002 and 2009 stop short of naming Israel as the agent which committed the destruction of Palestinian cultural resources and property; nonetheless, it is obvious even so that the agent is Israel, and the fact that so many librarians were willing to tackle the issue is inspiring. Furthermore, the IFLA preliminary report of 2007 led to the International Conference from a Human Rights Perspective held in 2008 which allowed Palestinian librarians to advance their concerns and experiences as well as propose useful recommendations. Finally, the establishment of the group Librarians and Archivists with Palestine, which stands in unapologetic solidarity with Palestinian librarians and archives sends a message that Israeli destruction and appropriation of Palestinian culture will not go unchallenged, especially as regressive Israeli policies and actions lose the country world support. In the future, therefore, librarians and archivists in solidarity with Palestine should keep working to pass more resolutions, plan more conferences, write more papers, plan more virtual meetings, and call for the return of (or reparations for) stolen Palestinian cultural property (Mermelstein, 2011). They might also work in consultation with librarians and archivists on the ground in Israel/Palestine who can be invited to speak at international library conferences.

In the end, it is perhaps fitting to look to the words of Palestinian poet (and former mayor of Nazareth and member of the Israeli Knesset) Tawfiq Zayyad to confront Israeli and Western colonial hypocrisy. The notebooks he refers to in his poem could well be the investigations Palestinians and other researchers have made into the Palestinian history of dispossession and have helped bring this struggle for justice to light. In his poem "Our Country is a Graveyard," which expresses the necessity of cultural memory as a tool to deploy against colonial oppression, Zayyad wrote: "Gentlemen, you have transformed / my country into a graveyard. / You have planted bullets in our heads / and organized massacres. / Gentlemen, nothing passes like that without account. / Everything you have done to our people / is registered in notebooks" (Abu Khalil, 2014).

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