



Desperately Nationalist, Yusif Sayigh, 1944 to 1948

Excerpts from his
recollections

As told to and edited
by Rosemary Sayigh

Portrait dated sometime between February 1949
and October 1950, in Beirut.

Source: R. Sayigh

Yusif Sayigh was born in Kharaba, Syria, in 1916. His father was Syrian, his mother was from al-Bassa in Palestine. The family was forced to leave Kharaba during the Druze uprising of 1925, going first to al-Bassa and then Tiberias, where they lived until 1948. Yusif went to the Gerard Institute (Sidon), where he received a scholarship to the American University of Beirut in 1934. He studied business administration. With six younger siblings—his father was a Presbyterian pastor—Yusif began working as soon as he got his Bachelors' degree: first as an accountant in Beirut, and then as a school teacher in Iraq. In 1940, he returned to Palestine, finding a job in Tiberias until 1946, when he moved to work in Jerusalem.

As he recounts here, Yusif became aware of the Palestinian issue as a young boy hearing of land sales in al-Bassa. At AUB, he followed the swirling debates of the time and joined the PPS (Partie Populaire Syrien), eventually becoming the 'amid [head] of the Palestinian branch. What drew him to the PPS was not merely Antoun Sa'adeh's nationalism and charisma, but also the leader's emphasis on modernization and discipline. It was here that Yusif Sayigh developed the conviction that the Arabs must learn to plan and systematize their activities. He approached Palestinian politics in the decade before the Nakba fully aware of the Zionist challenge, critical of the limitations of the traditional Palestinian leadership, but also eager to act and contribute what he could. Invited in 1947 to head the Arab Fund, he threw himself into planning and executing national fundraising. It was work that demanded all his talents, and he was always proud and happy in its memory. He stayed in Katamon until a few days after the establishment of Israel, when he was taken prisoner by the Zionist forces.

The bulk of these recollections were recorded by his wife Rosemary Sayigh, beginning in 1989, when an operation forced Yusif to remain in bed at home for several weeks. There were a few later sessions, however, including a long one on Palestinian politics, after the signing of the Oslo Accords. Yusif resisted the idea of recording his memoirs for a long time, and only agreed in the end as a gesture to his children and grandchildren. The accounts also developed as a record of his own family—parents and siblings—to whom he was deeply attached. This perhaps accounts for the extremely personal and informal style of his thoughts, which were in no sense intended to express ‘history’ in the grand sense. Yusif fully intended to listen to the tapes and edit them one day, but sadly, this aim was never achieved.

This version was prepared for the Jerusalem Quarterly by Charmaine Seitz.

The Jerusalem Quarterly will publish two sections of Yusif Sayigh’s recollections, beginning with the following account of his work in Jerusalem.

Becoming Aware of the Palestinian Problem

The two things that were a main source of anxiety for me, and for many other young men, were the loss of land and the heavy immigration of Jews—legal and illegal. It was these two things that attracted my attention when I was 13 years old, just before leaving Palestine to go to school in Sidon, in Lebanon. In al-Bassa, one could not but hear, all the time, of Jewish incursions into Arab areas—buying land, renting land—buying directly or through ‘*samasra*’ [brokers]. The thing that personally touched me was the story I heard about somebody of Lebanese origin from Tyre, whose family had moved to al-Bassa because of poverty, and who were tenants in my grandfather Batroun’s house, where we also lived when we left Syria and went to Palestine—it was a big house you see. They did well and their father had bought a huge tract of land and his son wanted to sell it.

This man took a fancy to me, and my family did not like that because he was spoilt, he drank. Every time he had his hand on a pound, he’d go and [have] fun in Haifa or Acre. I remember talking to him. I must have been 12 then, and I tried to persuade him. I said, Look, I understand you are going to sell your land. How can you? This will go to the Jews. It was a reflection of my concern about land sales to Jews, and loss of land.

He said, No, it’s all talk now. If anything happens I will not sell to a Jew, I’ll sell to an Arab. He reassured me. But the same people from whom I heard the story that circulated in our quarter, said, Yes, of course, most sales are made through Arab brokers.



Yusif Sayigh as a teacher in Tikrit, Iraq, 1939-1940. Teachers had to wear military uniforms. *Source: R. Sayigh*

So I tried to talk to him again, and he said, No, no. The man assures me that he will not sell it to Jews. He's a rich man, so it's all right.

Anyway, he sold the land in the end. We didn't know about the sale until the signs of opulence began to appear. They went on living in our house, but he bought a car—in *those* days! They didn't stay long in Bassa after having sold the land. Besides, much of the money went to the young man—he was so spoilt by the whole family that the mother and sisters got only a fraction of the money, he got the bulk of it. Then they moved to Acre.

The second thing that made me politically aware, other than land sales, was illegal immigration. Of course there were legal immigrants coming through the Palestinian Ras Naqura post, which was a police passport office and customs office.

But also there were Jews coming through the mountain passes through the north of al-Bassa, which connected with the village 'Alma, and from there with Tyre in Lebanon. And the story was that there were many who were coming that way, and the possibility was great that some al-Bassa young men, for the sake of good money, would help them find their way in these mountain roads, and take them over till they got to safety; to Acre or Haifa. Now these two things alerted me to the danger that we were facing—losing our land and also losing our majority, our numerical superiority.

The incident that affected me most was the hanging of three militants, Fuad Hijazi, Jamjoum and a third person.¹ Of course the Jewish press tried to discredit these three, by saying they were hanged because they were found to have raped Jewish women in Safad. But we knew that they were fighters and militants, and they were sentenced to death, because it was easy to sentence someone to death, all one had to have on one was a knife, one didn't have to have a gun.

Fuad Hijazi touched us more because he sang sad nationalistic songs the night before he was hanged, saying goodbye to Palestine, "*Ya dhalam al-qabr khayyem, innana nahwa al-dhalama*" ["Oh darkness of the grave enclose us; we love your darkness"]. It was very saddening.

When I came to school in Lebanon—it was my first year in school, in the Gerard Institute, Sidon—I was surprised to find how moved these young students were, my age group, by the hanging of these three young men. I remember how Rushdi Ma'alouf, whom I had become friends with in the first few weeks of school, began talking politics for the first time, and he immediately talked about these three, how heroic they were, and that established an added bond between us as friends. Of course the Sidon boys were all very nationalistic, very pro-Palestine.

Life in Jerusalem before the Arab Fund

In '44, I had a job for a few months with a semi-public organization involved in saving companies and cooperatives to help fight inflation. There was a Jewish section and an Arab section. It was a government thing that had work with chambers of commerce. The head of the whole organization was the retired governor of Sudan, Keith Roach Pasha. He used to love to be called 'Pasha'—he got that Pasha-hood from the Egyptians.

I was the head of the Palestinian section, and there was a Jew in the same office (almost opposite the King David hotel), a Jew who was a writer and didn't give two hoots about savings, for the Jewish section. He didn't sound like a Zionist. We talked about things; we were about the same age. I think he was a creative writer, and political things like Zionism didn't seem to be a priority for him. Anyway, we didn't get deep into politics. The amusing bit—this is just apropos—is that my secretary turned out to be Jewish. So I passed her on to the Jew. I said, I want to have my own [Arab] secretary. Because I felt it was rather incongruous.

I stayed in that job only a few months. Then Fuad Saba² contacted me, and he said, What are you doing there! Savings! We don't have lots of income to save from anyway! Come and work with me. He appointed me right away as manager of the Jerusalem branch of Saba and Co. It was much better, in every way. I was also assistant general manager, assistant to Saba for the whole Arab world. He had branches from Egypt to Syria, but not in Lebanon. I came and started the office in Lebanon for him, and found somebody to run it.

I stayed with Saba for about 10 months, until 'Izzat Tannous³ sent for me to work for the Arab National Treasury. This period, until I was with the Arab National Treasury, was the most active period for me as representative—I was called commissioner—for the PPS [*al-Hizb al-Suri al-Qawmi al-Ijtima'i* or the Syrian Socialist National Party⁴] in Palestine. But most of our work then was recruitment, getting people to become members, young people, and spreading the ideas of the PPS, which were not very well known in Palestine. There was not a great deal of readiness to accept the ideas of the PPS because it emphasized the Syrianness of Palestine; that Palestine was Southern Syria. The Palestinians always call themselves 'Arabs', and they thought of the Palestine problem as an Arab problem rather than a Syrian problem.

There were individuals who took part in the congress in 1919 or 1921—there were two, one in Damascus and one in France—who spoke of Palestine as Southern Syria, which had to be freed. Palestinians like Awni Abdul Hadi⁵ was one of these people. But by this time nobody thought that 'Greater Syria' could save Palestine, because it consisted of Lebanon which had the French, and was divided denominationally; Syria, which was not strong although its heart was in the right place; and TransJordan, which was totally British. What we needed were countries like Iraq, which was outside

the concerns of the PPS, and Egypt and the *Maghreb*, and the 'Land of Islam' (Saudi Arabia). So it was an uphill fight.

Then there was also the issue that the PPS had its own leader (he was a Christian), other than Hajj Amin Husseini. There were attempts by some people of an older generation to draw us into some kind of fusion with the Mufti. Somebody said, Look, the Mufti has no organization behind him, why doesn't the PPS become his organization? We only have to make a few changes in the dogma.

But Antoun Saadeh was such a fanatic about dogma. He considered his decisions inspired; nobody could change his mind about things. Besides, that would have meant that the Mufti was the leader—the '*za'im*'—rather than Saadeh. It wouldn't work. So we worked on a few well-known figures who were not very political.

The man we cultivated most was a lawyer from Haifa called Fuad Atallah. He was very dynamic but right from the start I knew that he wanted this for his own ambitions. He wanted to become a political figure [and] we would have been his base. But we wanted somebody who was pure, who was indoctrinated, who believed in everything the party said. That relationship lasted for some time but it never produced anything.

We also contacted Sami Taha to join.⁶ And Khalil Tabari used to be a regular visitor at our meetings, especially the social meetings like the commemoration of the founding of the party. We had one in Haifa at which Khalil Tabari spoke for about six hours. Then he said, This is the introduction; we have now reached 1918. I said, How about leaving that till next year? Six hours! I went on teasing him about that.

There was a cell in Jaffa, a cell in Haifa, a cell in Jerusalem. These are the ones I'm sure of. Ah, we also had a very, very small cell, not enough to be officially a cell, in Jenin.

The PPS restricted itself to proselytizing, to preaching. Usually the members were young. Not peasants. They had to have some education because the things we talked about were intellectual. I mean, there was a great deal about the definition of a nation. This doesn't mean much to a farmer, you know, he wants something real, tangible, concrete. [We talked about] the nation – the difference between the nation and the state and that kind of thing. Our gospel was the book written by Saadeh when he was in prison called *The Emergence of Nations [Nashu al-Umam]*. The question of the separation of state and church, for instance, people had to have some education [to understand]. I don't think most were students but they were politicised, and had read something—political readings. We had some fine members, very tough.

Towards the end of '47, we got to a point where we decided to have military training. But by then it was becoming quite difficult to do it. We didn't have grounds that were open, easy to reach to train, to shoot, firing ranges, and so on.



Yusif as prisoner of war. This must have been sometime between 15 May, 1948 and February 1949. He was held in three different camps. Source: R. Sayigh

My activity with the PPS was strongest before I joined the Arab National Treasury. I remained active. But joining the Arab National Treasury was a form of compensation. In the PPS, our activity was mainly cerebral—meetings and indoctrination and political education. I didn't feel that we were *doing* something, you know? Here [ie. in Palestine] there were village groups that got together every now and then, especially in '47 when there were clashes with the Zionists. We were out of these things. So to me, having the opportunity to be director general of the Arab National Treasury was a [higher service]. I could do something there, you see, and serve the cause—although I was not a military man. I could serve the cause in something that I knew something about; organization and economics—collecting money for the cause.

When the Arab League was being founded [in 1945], each Arab country had representatives go to Alexandria, and then to Cairo for the preparation of the protocol that established the Arab League on behalf of Palestine. Meetings were held and Musa Alami was picked to go as sole representative of the Palestinians to these preparatory meetings. He contacted the various political groups, and me to represent the PPS. Immediately I sent a message. I think I sent somebody all the way to Lebanon, because I didn't trust cables or mail, to carry the message to the leadership of the party. If I'm not mistaken, Fayez⁷ was then the *amid* of [the party's] Culture and Dissemination committee [*Thaqafa wa al-Idha'a*]. He came to Jerusalem, and we sat for a few days together drafting the memorandum to send to the Arab League. It was

such an interesting job that a year or two later, when we looked at the memorandum, we couldn't remember who wrote which part. Our thoughts moved in the same direction.

Musa Alami was very happy with that memorandum. It was well-organized, it was logical and clear, it was rooted in principles of patriotism and nationhood, and we did not dream a lot in it. We tried to be as realistic as possible. I was known by then because I wrote things in Jerusalem, and also in a magazine in Jaffa. However most of my writings, I must admit, were polemics against the Communist Party, which took a line that was very close—almost identical—with the Soviet line. That was before the partition resolution, but you could tell that [the party] took its cue from Russia, not from its own history. It was very Zionist.

Only a few minutes passed between the Soviet and American recognition of Israel. That was because the Communist Party in Russia, the Soviet Communist Party, acknowledged the right of the Jews to a home in Palestine, to a state in Palestine. Their theme was that the Palestinian proletariat should cooperate with the Jewish proletariat to fight the landlords of both—the bourgeoisie of both. My theme was: find me ten Jews who are willing to fight against their nation-class in cooperation with us, and I will change my opinion. Fayez and I were both heavily indoctrinated by Sa'adeh and the PPS in that respect. The PPS had a newsletter, which appeared on and off. It was mostly written by hand, and then stencilled.

My political activity outside PPS was with young people whom I met at the [Young Men's Christian Association], because I used to eat most of my meals there, even before joining the Arab National Treasury. The new YMCA building, right opposite the King David [Hotel], was a hundred meters from Saba's offices, so I would come from there and have my meals. And many of these young men were students of law at the law school in Jerusalem. That was my group. We always talked politics.

The Arab Land Hunger Report

My concern was essentially that we [Palestinians] were slipping on two grounds: land was going over to the Jews, and immigrants were coming in much larger numbers than officially admitted by the British. I followed the statistics and, thanks to Sami Hadawi, I was kept *au courant* about land transfers, because he was the most senior official on land taxation and land ownership.

Anything that I wanted was available to me through him. That's how I got all the information I needed for my paper on Arab land hunger,⁸ which I wrote for the Arab Office. The Arab Office asked me to write this paper, at the suggestion of Albert Hourani,⁹ because the Arab Office was asked by the Arab Higher Committee to prepare the Arab case for the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry into the Palestine problem. Now the Arab Higher Committee realized it didn't have the intellectual skills

[required] among its members. Indeed it had no structure at all. When Jamal Husseini left the office in the afternoon, he locked the door and put the key in his pocket. There was no secretariat, *absolutely* no secretariat. One or two people to make coffee. Not even a secretary who would take notes or type. It was that empty, the whole thing. Luckily they admitted and recognized their shortcomings, so they asked the Arab Office, Musa Alami, of course, assisted by his lieutenants Ahmad Shukairi and Darwish al-Mikdadi, to do this.

The whole burden fell on Albert Hourani: to design an outline, and what to include in this case. I was not the only one asked to write a paper, there were, I'm sure, seven or eight other people. First of all, I got the information from Sami Hadawi—not just verbally, he gave me sources. Also he put at my disposal all the reports of the commissions of inquiry that had come to Palestine, from the '20s all the way down to that time. The Peel report, the King Crosbie report, the Shaw report—all these things.

Sami was in charge of taxation and records, statistics and so on. He used to be in charge of preparing the village statistics, which contain breakdowns of ownership—Jewish, Arab, government and so on—not only town by town, and village by village, but also hamlet by hamlet. And what is equally important was not simply how much area each group had, but also the breakdown into categories of land. Palestine land was divided into 16 categories, according to its fertility. Taxation was based on fertility.

What had been done until then was to say, The Arabs have so many million dunums and the Jews have *only* so many million dunums, therefore the Arabs are much better off. What I did was to say, let's look at the quality of the land. The first seven or eight categories, if I remember correctly, were taxable because they were assumed to have a net return per dunum. The highest rate was for citrus, the next was for banana plantations, and then other fruit trees and so on.

It came out that the discrepancy was *much* greater than that shown in raw figures. The Jews had taken the Plain of Esdraelon, Haifa-area lands, which received the most rainfall. Of course, they bought land for strategic purposes also. But, by and large, economics was a great consideration.

Having thanked Sami Hadawi for the information, I must also tell you that the man who edited my paper, because I only had a BA then and my English wasn't all that good, was John Cook. He took away all the things that showed anger or emotionalism. As I worked, I discovered awful things about the injustice, the eviction of hundreds of families from the Esdraelon plain. Twenty-three villages were evicted. John said, Calm down, calm down, you're writing for Brits and Americans. If they see this, you'll lose the strength of your point. He went on talking to me until he persuaded me to tone things down here and there. He spent several days working on it.

I wrote a few reports on political economy, although I wasn't familiar with the concept then, which I passed on to Jamal Husseini,¹⁰ relating to the struggle, the financing of the struggle, and so on. These were by-products products of the organizational work I was doing for the Arab National Treasury.

I also wrote a study of foreign trade with Palestine, to show how much of it was with England and with western countries. As I was preparing it, the father of Riad Khouri, who was publishing a monthly in Jaffa or an economic directory for Palestine, heard of it and said, When you finish it, give it to me and I'll publish it in the directory. There was a lot of talk of boycott, so I wanted to know what would be involved? How much trade did we have in Palestine? How much of it came from England and how much came from America? So I wrote the study; nobody commissioned it.

I also wrote two or three stories when I was in Palestine. It must have been in '45 or '46. I can't remember now whether I had any of them published in Palestine, but I do remember that Jabra Jabra¹¹ was very active culturally. I met him through the YMCA in Jerusalem, which was a gathering place for many people. One day he heard that I had written a short story and asked me if it was true. I said yes and I showed him the last one I had written. We met again and he insisted that I should read it at the next meeting. He liked it very much and the group did, too. But I can't remember anything about it; I can't even remember its title. I think the short stories I wrote were very sentimental. There wasn't much action in them, but lots of thinking and feeling.

In Jerusalem, I also built quite a library. I had begun reading in high school and continued in Beirut. I read many novels. I used to go to the Said's bookshop, the Standard Stationary, owned by Edward and George Said's fathers. Ultimately I had to leave this library behind. It included, among other things, the Encyclopedia Britannica of 1934.

Before I was taken prisoner of war, I managed to store my collection with the YMCA. Years later, when I was working with UNRWA, I got in touch with Labib Nasser, then head of the YMCA. He wrote back, Leave the novels, as they are old by now. We'll use them in our library, but we'll send you the encyclopedia.

Working with the Arab Fund

I was manager of the Jerusalem branch of Saba and Co. when 'Izzat Tannous contacted me. I respected him as someone who had given up his medical practice and his partnership in a very lucrative business with his brother Kamal Tannous, a big car agent in Palestine, to devote his time to the national cause.

He contacted me and said, Look—he used on me the formula that I heard from him about a hundred times in the next year and a half—when you came to see me, did you come by car? I said, No, I came by bus. He said, Well, the bus that brought you had to

have petrol. So what is our petrol? We need money for the struggle. That's why I've called you to come and see me. A group of notables, [...] about 10 or 15 people, has decided that we need to collect money from the Palestinians—even though Palestine was not a rich country. This is to be done through an autonomous body, not an organ directly under the Arab Higher Committee.

The Arab Higher Committee was not at all known for efficiency, and nobody would have had faith that the money collected would be used in the right way. He was asking me to be the director-general of the Arab National Fund, which I thought was excellent. I immediately accepted, before we even talked about terms. All of them knew I was the commissioner general for Palestine of the PPS.

I accepted the job, but I insisted that it should not be run on the basis of *faza'a*. *Faza'a* is when a village rushes to the rescue of another village, or suddenly five people feel generous and pay a hundred pounds each. It had to be done scientifically. I asked for a few days to prepare a brief memorandum setting out my ideas on the subject. And I immediately went back and resigned from Saba and Co. because I was very excited and enthusiastic about this new job. Tannous and the president of the board assured me that I'd have a free hand in the administration, within the broad lines of the articles of association of this national fund.

At no time did the head office in Jerusalem include more than 12 people for all of Palestine. But we had people in each of the towns in Palestine, whether districts like Nablus, subdistricts like Jenin and Tulkarem, or Nazareth as the seat of a district. There was a budget, but they gave us just enough to start with because I said the preparations would take six months[,] at least.

They were very small salaries. I remember my salary ended up being sixty Palestine pounds. At Saba's it was much the same, but at Saba I had many benefits. Within a year or two, I could become a partner and would have a share in profits.

The period of preparation involved two things. First, we were preparing ideas about what kind of legitimacy we should give our collections. For that purpose, I thought of two things: one tax that every Palestinian would pay, whether rich or poor, male or female, young or old, that was one shilling a year. The second type of tax would reflect the ability to pay some sort of income tax. But as we were not a government and had no access to people's actual income, we divided people into categories by occupation—physicians, lawyers, engineers, carpenters, electricians, cobblers, and barbers. Within each occupation, we had a lower and upper limit relating that occupation to other occupations.

That took a lot of work, and some research. I had to make use of government statistics on income distribution. It was quite a thorough job, which I'm [still] very proud of. The only paper [from our work] that remains today is the memorandum that Dr. Sa'id Hammoud wrote with me. We had a paper on the financial plan of the Revolution, and

he interviewed me at great length, took notes, and wrote a 30- or 40-page study of the Arab National Fund experience.

The other thing that had to be prepared was [our] structure. I decided that it was best to involve as many people as possible in the various big villages and towns. That could only come about if we had committees in every single town and large village. So we had dozens of these committees, and I travelled. At the beginning, I was away from Jerusalem about 20 days a month, if not more, just going from one sub-district to another. Alone.

Of course, letters were sent from the board of trustees of the Arab National Fund to the leaders in each of these towns [announcing] the Arab National Fund, and that soon the director general or some of his assistants would be visiting to form a committee [to] determine who is taxable, and to get these people together.

Every time I went to a place, they already knew I was coming. Invariably, there was a big meeting arranged. None of these meetings was less than 50 people in a town of 6,000 or 7,000. That would be the National Council [Lajneh Wataniya]. But then I would stay on for a few days more, and meet with the barbers, the carpenters, the teachers, and say to each group: Teachers are paying between two and six pounds. You know each other, you know each others' salaries, who should be paying two pounds? We'd make lists, and the lists would be signed by two or three of them. I'd bring a copy of these things with me.

But in the districts themselves—Nazareth in Galilee, Nablus for the Nablus district, and Gaza for the southern district—we had managers who were salaried and followed up on these occupational committees. They also went to the groceries, which were collecting the shilling tax for us. The shilling tax was done separately through grocery stores officially charged with the distribution of rationed food commodities. There were tickets of a shilling each, in three parts. [The grocer] would tear one part off and give it to the head of the family when he went to collect his flour and sugar at the beginning of the month, saying, Your family is so many people, [you should] pay us this much. I don't ever remember anybody saying, No, I can't pay. And then he would attach a second part of the perforated paper to a string (because they amounted to quite a bundle), and go to the bank and remit the money [to the Arab National Fund]. [...]

Preparations took more than six months, because although Palestine did not have many large towns, it had many many small towns and large villages. Sami Alami¹² was our manager in Gaza. The father of Nabil Shaath,¹³ 'Ali Shaath, a very nice man, was our manager in Jaffa. The manager in Nazareth was Khaled Fahoum.¹⁴ And there I was, director general of the Arab National Treasury. I was not yet 30. Well—at 30 Napoleon was already an emperor!

We began collecting money seriously in '47. Unfortunately we didn't have much time because by then tension had risen, and some areas were very risky. Going to Galilee,

crossing through the plain of Esdraelon, was frightening because there were many [Jewish] settlements there. I [was always trying] to think of somewhere to hide the papers in the car. The settlers would stop people. Going to Haifa was the same thing.

I adopted a trick, which I think was very useful. Whenever I saw two or three people wanting a lift near a settlement—they were Jews generally, usually young men and women—I would stop and say, Hello! Come in, come in, where are you going? I'll take you. Usually [the settlers] would wave me through [the checkpoints].

The only time I was really frightened was when suddenly, between Jenin and Nazareth, I remembered that I had my revolver on me. Where could I put a revolver? In case they searched me bodily, I wanted to be prepared. They didn't have the right to do it—it was like checkpoints in Beirut during the civil war. If the British were not around, physically standing by, the [settlers] did what they wanted.

I stopped after Jenin [that day] and suddenly it dawned on me that my new Studebaker had a mechanism whereby you pressed a button from inside, and the [petrol] cap opens. It didn't have a key from outside—it was very elaborate—so I found that the revolver could go in there, and the cap would close. If somebody tried to open it by hand, it wouldn't open. I said, Just let me hope for the best. I thought that the worst they would do—because things had not got very hot then in '47—would be to take the revolver, not hurt me. But they [just] looked under the seats, and signalled me through.

Once I was going to Nablus, which I always thought was safe. But there was a Jewish settlement there on the way that later on was destroyed by our people. I had music on [and] suddenly there was a Bang! and a hole in the glass above my head. I stopped, and looked round, and saw a young man. It was not quite a hilltop, it was a rise. I thought it could be only he who had shot [at me].

I took my revolver and fired two shots in his direction. I had no training at all. When I [first] got the revolver that the Fund gave me to carry around in my travels, I went to Jericho for one week with Ahmad. We both had revolvers and aimed at telephone posts. But I fired two shots in the direction of that young man. They were the only shots I aimed at a human being in my life. But he ducked and disappeared, and that was it. He knew I was an Arab. No Jew would have been travelling in such a fancy car at that time.

We were only a collecting agency, not a spending agency. I insisted that the money should go to the highest authority possible. At the same time, the mufti decided the same thing—that he wanted to get the cheques. Every two or three months I went to see him, once in Aley, [Lebanon] and once or twice in Cairo, in Helwiyat al-Zaytoon on the road to the airport.

In Jerusalem, there was inefficiency, not dishonesty. People always thought that money went 'around' [ie. into people's pockets], but there was no money. They

thought that the Arab Higher Committee must have masses of money from the Arab League. Nonsense! And the mufti—I became a favourite of the mufti, he appreciated my work very much. In the few months that we worked, we succeeded in collecting 176,000 sterling! From a poor country like Palestine! And we had just begun.

Then ‘Izzat Tannous, against my advice, was carried away by the success of our work. He began to make endless statements to the press. I kept saying to him, For God’s sake, keep it discrete, the British will begin to bother us, the Zionists will begin to bother us!

And in fact, twice they tried to attack our head office, which was in a Tannous building in Jerusalem, very near the Old City, near the wadi there. We had guards, and I made sure that they were well-trained, and that they came after dark so that if six or seven Zionists crept up the hilltop to get to our office to dynamite it, they wouldn’t realize that there were guards until a line of fire faced them. Twice they [actually] tried that. The guards just shot; we don’t know whether we hit anybody or not.

But we began to get translations from the Jewish press saying, Palestinians are collecting money for buying arms. Which we were. I mean, we gave it to the mufti to use for buying arms. But it couldn’t go very far. I remember in one of the statements [to the press] at the very end (probably towards the last week of our operations), ‘Izzat Tannous gave the figure of 176,000 pounds—you know, bragging about it. And a day later, an old Jewish widow from South Africa, already living in Palestine, donated a million sterling [to the Zionist cause]. And I felt the futility of all our work.

This went on until it became absolutely impossible to travel without very serious risk to one’s life. At which point, the Arab Higher Committee said to me, Look, you can’t work collecting money at this moment, when anybody who has a few extra pounds wants to keep them to buy bread for his family. So we want you to do something else, to be a liaison officer between the Arab Higher Committee and the British army, which was beginning to vacate camps.

I met with the officer commanding in Jerusalem, and he said, Look, our policy is that where a camp falls in a definitely, or at least predominantly Jewish area, we give it to the Haganah without question. Where it falls geographically in an Arab area or a predominantly Arab area, we give it to you without question. But where it is 50-50, a mixed area, we leave it and you run for it.

It was a camp in this category, one that we got to ahead of the Jews, that caused me become a prisoner of war. That’s the camp east of Baqa’a where the Jaysh Inqadh al-Arabi¹⁵ said it had sent 150 [men]. They arrived but then they withdrew. And I waited and waited and waited for reinforcements, but they never came. Then the road was closed to the Old City, and we were trapped. For the last two or three days, it was obvious that if we left to walk down Wadi Sultan road and climbed up through one of the gates of the Old City, it would only be safe at night. In the daytime, it was just a killing proposition.

Reflections on Palestinian Politicians

I only began to meet members of the actual political leadership after I became associated with the Arab National Fund. We had several joint meetings between the board of trustees of the Arab National Fund and the Arab Higher Committee. This put me in touch with Jamal Husseini, vice chairman of the Arab Higher Committee—because the chairman was Hajj Amin Husseini in absentia—and Emil Ghoury, who was secretary general of the Arab Higher Committee. The other members I knew, but saw them very rarely.

Musa Alami had been asked by all the leaders in Palestine—because he did not belong to any one group—to represent the Palestinians in the founding of the Arab League. He was a magnet for younger people—people like me, Walid Khalidi,¹⁶ Burhan Dajani¹⁷—for two reasons. First, he was absolutely honest and committed. He was anxious for Palestinians to organize, although I think he was a bit too aloof to start an organization himself. He had hopes for my generation and Walid's, but he didn't tell us how. He didn't want to dirty his hands with politics. He was one of those people who believed that politics was essential but also dirty.

The second thing that attracted our generation to him, the others more than me, was his founding of the Arab Office, which had offices in Jerusalem, London, and Washington, to which he drew older generation people like Darwish Mikdadi,¹⁸ and Ahmad Shukeiri,¹⁹ and then the generation of Albert Hourani, Cecil Hourani,²⁰ and younger people like Burhan Dajani. The other thing that he established was a fund. His goal was to establish a fund with a capital of one million Palestine pounds to save lands that were threatened with being bought by the [Zionist movement]. He was highly respected in the Arab countries; Iraq supported him. But I don't think he succeeded in getting all the money he needed for these things.

I wasn't tempted to join any of the so-called 'parties' [in Palestine], because they were not parties. They had no structure, no organization. They were a few notables who met every now and then, and spoke in generalities, who had influence in the countryside, more because the countryside was dynamic and active and ready to do something than because it was inspired by these people. Also, I was not impressed by most of these politicians. For instance, Jamal Husseini was a bit conceited, and didn't do much; he was a bit lazy. He was related to the Mufti.

The natural leader [in Palestine] would have been the descendent of Musa Kazim Pasha al-Husseini.²¹ But Musa Kazim died in the '30s, and his son, Abdul Qader, was young then. There were leaders like Ruhi al-Khalidi,²² the father of Leila Husseini al-Khalidi, that I liked. He seemed to be intelligent but he was a mayor, and not directly active in politics. There was Awni Abdul Hadi,²³ whom we didn't see much because he was in Nablus, but I met him several times. He had his own party. He was one of those who went to the Syrian congresses representing Palestine.

There were the Nashashibis, whom I didn't like at all because of their connection with King Abdullah and with the British. Emil Ghoury,²⁴ a Christian, could never have become the leader of a big party. Besides, he was very loyal to the mufti. He wouldn't have dreamt of forming something of his own.

Later on, there were movements to establish grass-root organizations. For instance there was the Najjadeh in Nazareth. It was a sort of youth group. But it was thought to be encouraged by the British in order to draw people away from Hajj Amin al-Husseini. They had some sort of uniform; they must have been influenced by Nazi traditions. Another group was encouraged to counteract the Najjadeh, under Kamal Erekat, who subsequently became a member of the House of Notables in Jordan.²⁵ I mean nobody like me would seriously consider joining them because the motivation was suspicious, and they had no ideas.

The Mufti

I must also say that I had great respect for Hajj Amin al-Husseini, whom I came to know in '46, a few months after I took over the directorship of the Palestine National Fund. I had nothing to say to him at that time in connection with the National Fund because we hadn't collected any money, but I had things to tell him on the basis of information given to me by people who were militarily-knowledgeable about what we ought to do, what kind of training we ought to have, what kind of arms we ought to buy. So I collected all this information and organized it into points and went to Cairo where he was living then.

The mufti was in Iraq when the Rashid Ali al-Kilani revolt took place. Then when it collapsed, he went to Iran. And when Iran collapsed, he went to Germany. And then I'm not sure whether he came to Lebanon first or to Egypt, because I visited him in both places. The first time I met him, he had with him Jamal Husseini and Munif Husseini, his son-in-law. I didn't care at all for Munif Husseini. And later on I learned that he was very fanatical, very anti-Christian.

Jamal was a wonderful person, and he made my mission possible. I talked at great length to the mufti. I told him about the PPS, and he indicated that he would welcome any group and he wouldn't [be bothered by] ideological differences, such as the PPS saying 'Syrian nationalism' rather than 'Arab nationalism'. He was a pragmatist. He didn't want to be bothered by these philosophical, theological differences. I didn't find the same readiness in Saadeh later on. [The mufti] saw the point of organization and saw the point, of course, of putting arms in the hands of these young men that were to be organized. But where was the money? I remember him saying, My hope is that you'll be able to find some money through the Arab National Fund that you direct.

He also was very much in favour of the cities organizing guerrilla groups or fighters to defend their own homes, rather than depending on the villagers. I must say that

I liked him very much, and I liked the way he made me feel that he trusted me. Here's an unknown person coming to him—but of course, I was preceded by some information. And judging by the references he made to the Arab Higher Committee in Jerusalem, I don't think he had a high evaluation of them, or their ability to organize and to mobilize people. And he was very sad—you could tell that he felt that he could do a great deal if he was in Palestine, but he wasn't able to be in Palestine. *I* felt that perhaps if he was in Palestine, his presence would have had a mobilizing effect on people, but not an organizational effect.

He was very attentive when I talked, and you could see that his mind was working, preparing questions, seeing the significance of points made. He asked many questions. I think he asked more questions than he made statements. But every now and then I would press some point to see if he was going to do something. I bore ideas related to two kinds of organizations. The first was that a group of young men should be trained as saboteurs in case Palestine fell, because I was convinced by then after talking to some military people that we had no chance of holding on to Palestine. And I was also advised to carry this idea that we needed young men to be civilians, who would stay behind like innocent carpenters and plumbers and so on, but would know how to blow up a bridge or cut a telephone line to disrupt the communications and the operations of the military machine of the Zionists.

They [the Jews] would train in areas within Palestine, but of course, they had protection. They could work with the police and nobody would surprise them and come and catch them at it. So it was *possible* for us, but not as easy as it had been for the Zionists.

When I made such suggestions, he would agree whole-heartedly but say [...], This kind of thing involves much, much more money than we're getting. He would talk then very sadly and bitterly of the Arabs, and how they were not helping—although he was not *very* demanding. I mean, it was not a question of millions but hundreds of thousands of pounds. I also felt, meeting him, that he was compassionate, although people thought of him as ruthless. Whenever he knew of a case of hardship, he would try to help and would ask about people, specific people. How were they doing? Were they able to manage? I think he was a likable person. You couldn't tell from the things he said how capable he was as a leader—he must have had elements of leadership but did not advertise them. They were not reflected in the things he said or did.

I'd say that the basic weakness of the mufti was that he thought that the merit of the cause he was working for, namely the setting up of an independent Palestine, saving Palestine from take-over by the Zionists, was enough in itself. Because it was a just cause, he did not build a fighting force in the modern sense and depended on the spirit of the villagers, and their rush to battle when it was needed. I think part of it was that he *feared* a big organization, he felt that he could not control a big organization. He could control an entourage, people to whom he whispered and who'd whisper to him. A big organization would have to be decentralized to a certain point, and he would lose

touch. And perhaps he would have to depend on them, and they would depend less on him. Perhaps he was afraid that some leading young fighter would emerge who would be charismatic and would take away some of the loyalty and support that was his.

He was very traditional. It is true that he did not stuff his statements with Quranic verses like [today's] politicians. He understood the national movement as a [national] struggle involving Christians and Muslims. But that was the extent of his modernity. You didn't feel that he had any notion of socioeconomic content in the call to arms. He only pointed to the fact that all Palestinians had a stake in protecting Palestine from the Zionists who were trying to take over our country—in *broad* terms. He was not more specific, possibly because he realized what every little *fellah* was aware of—that the danger was [three-fold]: loss of land, loss of our numerical majority, and the predominance of Zionist institutions.

[The mufti] was successful as a magnet for the loyalty and devotion of the vast majority of Palestinian Arabs, partly because of his name, partly because of his function as the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem, and partly because of his persistence. He went on, whether he was forced into flight or banished. He went on. And to the best of my knowledge, nobody ever seriously accused him of deviating from his national stand, or of possibly serving somebody else's interests.

People say, Why didn't he do what the PLO is doing now? Well, he didn't have the money that the PLO has. And the historic moment that he worked in is different from the historic moment that we ourselves are in now.

I think at no point did [the mufti] trust the British, or trust that they would keep their word. But [conceding in order to end the 1936 revolt] was an offer that he could not refuse. [Arab governments] said to him, Look, if you want us to say one word in your favour, you must go along with us in allowing a break in the impasse. Stop the General Strike, and let's see what the British have to say. After a long strike, the country was very much in hardship, and the British had already brought in a huge number of soldiers. To have refused [a settlement] then, on the eve of the war, would have meant that the British would have been *ferocious* in their suppression.

When [the mufti] wasn't there, the British managed to freeze everything. The British said sternly that, This is wartime, this is serious business, and we will not allow anything to weaken our global war effort. But also, suddenly, things became much more cheerful economically, because there was employment for everybody. Inflation in the beginning always produces an illusion of prosperity. People think because they're getting more wages, things are good. Many economic institutions were started by Arabs then, because the Arab economy and the Jewish economy were in greater contact in that time.

Final Months in Jerusalem

Between late '46 and the spring of '48 when I was taken prisoner of war, I had the opportunity to talk to many people in the Katamon area. Every now and then you'd hear that five or six young men had spent a night or two with Ibrahim Abu Diyeh's men protecting Katamon. But that was not a line of defence. You have to have continuity. A few days later, you would ask about these five or six young men and find that three had already left. By the end, when I was taken prisoner of war, we were only 23 young men in the whole of that part of west Jerusalem. And [we were] not really fighters. Three of us had revolvers, but the revolvers were ornaments, décor. What training had I had? Nothing.

You could have divided the young men that I talked with into three categories. One category was people who felt that the situation, the utter unpreparedness, should make us even at the last minute, at the 12th hour, *do* something. I think I was in that group, and possibly we were not realistic. Honestly now—there are no dramatics in this at all—I felt that I would rather die than run away with the others. That's why I insisted on staying on until I was taken prisoner of war. Most of my friends thought that I was a donkey or a fool to have done that. But I still justify it to myself, and I still feel I [was better] dead than among those who ran away.

The second category were people who felt we must do something. So they would rush and buy a revolver at a very high price, and put it on their hip, ostentatiously, inside their belt—and then they, too, would run away.

The third group said, *Ya hasirti*. My grief. What can we do? You know—frustration, helplessness, hopelessness, sadness. They could read you Jeremiah, the sad chapters of Jeremiah, but couldn't do anything positive to correct the situation. This was the majority of the people.

The villagers were all right. Anybody who fought—there was a lot of fighting from the time of the partition resolution in November '47 until Palestine fell—in the very, very stiff battles on the roads where huge convoys were destroyed, Jewish convoys, these were village people. They were mainly uncoordinated, [fighting] under the *faza'a* system, with old-fashioned rifles and revolvers. From every 300 [fighters], you might find one light machine gun.

Katamon, the area I was living in, was empty a few months before 1948. Almost everybody I knew had left. One morning I woke up and found a paper stuck to my car in Hebrew and I had it translated. It was from some Jewish organization [...] saying, If you don't leave you have only yourself to blame.

Later, they went beyond, to the Semiramis Hotel, the hotel that was blown up in Katamon. It was a small hotel near a flourmill and an ice factory. [The Zionists] went there at night and blew it up because it was believed to house meetings for

commandoes. I decided that it was no longer safe to be there, so I moved a few hundred yards down, to live in the house of William Hadawi, an architect, the brother of Sami Hadawi.

Then it became 'hot'—Jews were moving in gradually, you see. So I went and took over the house of a dentist in Baqaa, an Armenian dentist married to a German wife. The doctor contacted me and said, Have my key, live in my place. People were begging Ahmad and I. Poor loyal Ahmad, he wouldn't leave me. He said, You're obstinate but I'm going to stay with you, no matter what happens. We were afraid of a take-over, we were afraid they would come and blow up our houses over our heads.

The Katamon battle was very stiff. Defending it were the Jaysh al-Jihad al-Muqadis under Abdul Qader Husseini, but effectively [it was] little groups led by their own tough fighters. In our area in Jerusalem, the man to whom credit ought to go was Ibrahim Abu Diyeh. A little man, very brave, very likable, not at all showing off, but a very tough fighter.

I had been in the habit of helping him before the end of the Mandate by carrying rifles from the Old City in the boot of my car. I had a big Studebaker with a lot of room in the boot. I managed to do that, although there was a wire fence around the area there guarded by British soldiers, because I had managed to get a paper from Ghassan Tueni, a friend of my brother Fayez and I, and the son of the owner of the an-Nahar paper in Beirut, as their correspondent. This enabled me to get a big sign stuck on my car from the official Information Office, with the word 'Press' on it in Arabic and English. They never opened the boot, luckily.

That's how I got to know Ibrahim Abu Diyeh and there was an atmosphere of familiarity and friendliness between us. But he told me the situation was becoming hopeless unless we had [help] from outside, essentially from the Arab Legion. He and Darwish Mikdadi, who was the director of the Arab Office in Jerusalem then, said, Why don't you go and describe the situation to King Abdullah? He might be able to give us some help. [...]

I accepted to do that gladly, but before going down to Amman, I talked to Colonel Abdullah al-Tal who was head of the Transjordan force protecting the Jordanian Consulate and other Arab consulates. He and the small number of soldiers with him were providing very essential help to the Palestinians fighting there. He liked the idea and he told me what the military situation was in detail.

So I went with Darwish al-Mikdadi, who arranged for a meeting for me with King Abdullah. On the way, Darwish said, Look, I'm not going to say anything except introduce you, you're going to do the talking. And it was not that easy, you know, I had never talked to a king. And it was also not easy, to get him to send more men to support us—a few hundred—in defence of Katamon and west Jerusalem. We all knew that he was not going to do that. We all felt that he was going to let west Jerusalem

fall, if only because it was being protected by Hajj Amin al-Husseini's men.

I said, Your majesty, the situation is very tough. We have very good terrain in our hands but we are short of men and arms. It's a matter of days. If we can resist this final assault by the Zionists, we could save Katamon, and this would be a crucial thing in saving west Jerusalem all together. And he said, Why do you say that west Jerusalem is in danger? I don't understand how.

I said, May I draw a rough map, your majesty? So I came and squatted next to him—there was no chair—I just squatted, and took a piece of paper from my pocket and a pencil. And I drew a very, very rough sketch. I'm a bad map designer. I said, This is Jerusalem, and this is a hilltop here, that's Katamon. It commands the areas that are in Jewish hands. If they come towards us, they will be exposed.

The King looked at the map and said, Alright, let me see if our consul in Jerusalem will confirm what you are saying, that help is needed, and that this help must be sent immediately. I couldn't quote Abdullah al-Tal because he asked me not to quote him. I said I had it from 'military sources,' but I didn't say what these sources were. So when he said that he was going to consult with his consul, my heart fell. That consul was, I think, having an affair with the daughter of the Latin American consul general, and we knew that she was in contact with the Jewish Agency.

The King telephoned [and] asked for the Jerusalem consulate, and talked to the consul. I could hear the consul, because he was loud-spoken, saying, Your Majesty! Who is telling you these stories that Jerusalem is about to fall to the Zionists? Nonsense! No, no, no, you don't have to bother yourself with these stories. And so the King turned to me and said, Surely, I'll believe what my consul says. He knows the situation better than you; he's in the field of diplomacy. And I tried to argue with the King—you know, within limits. But he said, No, no, no, nothing doing, I will not send any men.

I said, Even if they take off their uniform, the uniform of the Arab Legion, and put on just a militia uniform? He said, Not as civilians nor as military men will I let them go. But anyway, what kind of city, what kind of defence is there if you cannot wait for a few days? [he said.] In a matter of days, my victorious army will go and liberate the whole of Jerusalem. And, on that confident note, we had to thank him and walk out.

I went back to Jerusalem and relayed the information to Abdullah al-Tal, of course, and the Lajna al-Qawmiya [Resistance Committee]. Each city had a national committee to run the affairs of defence, to see to it that provisions were found for the population that remained. But this committee was stationed in East Jerusalem, inside the wall, and our telephones were tapped, no doubt. Anyway, I contacted them by telephone.

I spoke first of all to Anwar Nusseiri, who was the secretary of the committee—in later years he became minister of defence of Jordan. And he said, Stay where you are,

we'll see what we can do. And then things got a little more dangerous, so I talked to the head of the Lajna al-Qawmiya, who was Ahmad Hilmi Basha (who subsequently became the prime minister of the government of All Palestine in Gaza) and he gave me the same assurances. They said, Now that you don't have any work to do for the Arab National Fund, why don't you take over any military camps that the British leave in West Jerusalem?

One of these military camps was near where I was, and we [beat] the Jews in taking control of it. The Jaysh al-Inqadh, the Salvation Army, managed to send 150 men there. That was the number given to me by the authorities in East Jerusalem. One day, just two or three days before I was caught, word came that these 150, or whatever the real number was, had disappeared! They were no longer at the camp. So I started again, this time not asking for arms to protect Katamon, but for replacements because this was a crucial position that we had to maintain. I was assured about five times every day, every time I telephoned, that the men were on their way. And they never came.

Endnotes

¹ Fouad Hijazi, Ata al-Zir and Mohammed Jamjoun were hung in Akko on 17 June, 1930. The deported Arab delegation in London sent a letter to the British High Commissioner requesting that their sentences be commuted to prison terms.

² Fuad Saba established the first auditing company in Palestine, perhaps in the Middle East.

³ Izzat Tannous (1896-1969) was born in Nablus. He was a medical doctor, and represented the Palestine Arab Higher Committee at the United Nations General Assembly during the British Mandate and headed the Arab Higher Committee delegation to the UN in the 1950s.

⁴ Founded in Beirut in 1932, the Syrian Socialist National Party or *Parti Populaire Syrien* is today active in Syria and Lebanon and advocates a state in greater Syria. The PPS played a role in attempted coups in Syria in 1949 and 1961 and is allied with Hizballah and Amal in Lebanese coalitions.

⁵ Born in 1889 in Nablus, Awni Abdul Hadi was a lawyer educated in Beirut, Istanbul, and at the Sorbonne. In 1924, he became one of the chief spokespersons of the Palestinian-Arab nationalist movement and later was general secretary and the first elected president of the Palestinian Istiqlal [Independence] Party.

⁶ Haifa-based leader of the Palestine Arab Workers Society (appointed 1946), and a member of the Arab Higher Committee who was assassinated

on 12 September, 1947, ostensibly by another Palestinian.

⁷ Yusif's brother, Fayez Sayigh.

⁸ "Arab land Hunger in Palestine", monograph submitted in 1946 by the Arab Office, Jerusalem, to the Anglo-American Commission on Inquiry into the Palestine Problem as part of *The Arab Case*.

⁹ Albert Habib Hourani (1915 - 1993) was a prominent scholar of Middle Eastern history. He was born in England to immigrants from what is now South Lebanon.

¹⁰ Jamal Husseini was a member of the Arab Higher Committee from 1936 to 1937 and its representative to the United Nations from 1947 to 1948.

¹¹ Jabra Ibrahim Jabra (1920 - 1994) was born in Bethlehem and lived in Iraq. He painted and wrote poetry and the novel, *In Search of Walid Masoud*, among many other works of fiction.

¹² A co-founder of the Institute for Palestine Studies in 1963.

¹³ Nabil Sha'ath was a close advisor to PLO chairman Yasser Arafat, participated in Israeli-Palestinian negotiations and served as the Palestinian Authority's first foreign minister from April 2003 to February 2005, among several other posts.

¹⁴ Khaled Fahoum was chairman of the Palestine

National Council for several years.

¹⁵ The Arab Liberation Army, made up of volunteers from Arab countries and led by Fawzi al-Qawuqji.

¹⁶ Walid Khalidi was born in Jerusalem and educated at Oxford and the University of London. He has been general secretary of the Institute of Palestine Studies since 1963.

¹⁷ With Khalidi and Sami Alami, Burhan Dajani was one of the Palestinian scholars who founded the Institute for Palestine Studies in Beirut.

¹⁸ Darwish Mikdadi taught at the Arab College in Jerusalem.

¹⁹ Ahmad Shukeiri was the first chair of the PLO from 1964 to 1967.

²⁰ Cecil Hourani is a well-known author and the brother of Albert Hourani.

²¹ Musa Kazim Pasha al-Husseini was president of the Palestinian National Congress until his death in 1934.

²² Ruhi al-Khalidi was elected from Jerusalem to the Ottoman Parliament in 1908 and 1912, and vice-president of the Parliament in 1911.

²³ Awni Abd al-Hadi was general secretary of the Arab Higher Committee and founded the Independence Party or Hizb al-Istiqlal along with Fahmi al-Abboushi, Muhammad 'Izzat Darwazah, Mouin al-Madi, Akram Zu'ayter, Rashid al-Hajj Ibrahim, Subhi al-Khadra and Salim Salameh.

The party was an Arab nationalist party established by Palestinians some of whom had been involved previously in the events that had led to the Arab Revolt of 1916 against Turkey.

²⁴ In 1935, Emil Ghoury was elected as general secretary for the Palestinian Arab Party and in 1937, he was delegated by the Arab Higher Committee to establish the Palestinian Arab office for media in London.

²⁵ Kamal Erekat was born in Abu Dis in Jerusalem. He was elected to the Jordanian parliament in the '50s and was speaker during the '70s.