

Mu'askar and Shu'fat

Retracing the Histories of Two Palestinian Refugee Camps in Jerusalem

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Abstract

More than seventy years after 1948, no comprehensive history of Palestinian refugee camps exists. The microhistory of Mu'askar and Shu'fat, involving refugees, UNRWA, and the Jordanian and Israeli governments, is one piece of this wider history. While most Palestinian refugee camps were established as part of emergency operations after the wars in 1948 and 1967, Shu'fat camp in Jerusalem was built between the two wars. The project intended to remove refugees residing in Mu'askar, an unofficial refugee camp in the Old City's Jewish quarter, to this new camp four kilometers north of the city center. Planning started in 1959 but, due to complications, Shu'fat camp was only inhabited from 1966. After 1967, Israel's annexation of East Jerusalem deeply affected both Mu'askar and Shu'fat. Mu'askar exemplifies history and presence erased and Shu'fat illuminates contradictions of planning a long-term refugee camp from scratch. The article traces the evolution of the camp as a site of belonging and ownership and explores history's contributions to this field.

Keywords

Jerusalem; refugee camp; Palestinian refugees; UNRWA; humanitarianism; construction; erasure.

After the war in 1948, a Palestinian refugee camp, Mu'askar,¹ was established in empty buildings in the Old City Jewish quarter in East Jerusalem.

Despite the refusal by refugees to leave the camp, in June 1966 the refugees were moved to Shu‘fat camp, a new camp built four kilometers to the north of the Old City. Only one year later, along with the Israeli annexation of East Jerusalem after the 1967 war, Israel took over the quarter, evicted the Palestinians who still lived there, and re-built an exclusively Jewish neighborhood in its place. Meanwhile, Shu‘fat refugee camp evolved at the margins of occupied East Jerusalem.²

The story of the move from Mu‘askar camp to Shu‘fat camp is, however, not so straightforward. Several strands interweave: the voices and actions of refugees in Mu‘askar and Shu‘fat camps; of UNRWA, the humanitarian agency set up to assist the refugees; and of the Jordanian and Israeli governments. This article weaves these three strands together to craft a microhistory of the move from Mu‘askar to Shu‘fat that addresses a number of key questions: How and why was this scheme undertaken and why did refugees in Mu‘askar refuse to move? How did UNRWA plan the new camp at Shu‘fat and how did the camp develop after 1967?

Based on the reconstruction of the move from Mu‘askar to Shu‘fat, I also discuss questions related to ownership and refugees as a propertyless population: who owns the camp or to whom does the camp belong? And in a wider sense, how can encampment and a propertyless population help us reconsider the broader question of belonging and ownership in Palestine? To do so, the article sketches out the formal ownership of land and property, the evolution over time of humanitarian management of camps, and refugees’ appropriation of the camp. The article traces the gradual emergence of a novel form of ownership that centers on the everyday, on struggles to belong and overcome crises, and on connections and claims to Palestine. Throughout, I approach refugee camps as sites producing history, aiming to historicize the camps and their development.

The story of Mu‘askar and Shu‘fat engages various dimensions of Palestinian history, including the history of erasure. Israeli erasure of Palestinian history is one example: the planting of forests over Palestinian villages, the taking over of Palestinian homes, and removing and repressing proof of Palestinian existence prior to 1948.³ This was not a one-time act in 1948 but continues with the colonization of land. This erasure is, in a wider sense, part of the long denial of existence, prompting Palestinians to focus on proving the existence of Palestinian society and identity prior to 1948.⁴ Today Mu‘askar camp is gone, and its history remains unwritten. Is this because Mu‘askar was not a village in Palestine, but a Palestinian refugee camp? More than seventy years after the war, fifty-nine official camps and a number of unofficial camps and gatherings still exist, but no comprehensive history of Palestinian refugee camps, and only fragments of the histories of individual camps, have been written.

Anthropologists, geographers, and architects have done important and in-depth ethnographic work among refugees in camps, particularly those in Lebanon, and Rosemary Sayigh, Julie Peteet, Nell Gabiam, and Ilana Feldman, among others, have produced rich descriptions and analysis of the local experiences of Palestinian refugees.⁵ But historians have largely stayed out of the camps. While located in the heart of Jerusalem, neither Mu‘askar nor Shu‘fat figure in the history of Jerusalem.

The refugee camp is a blind spot of historians – invisible to or invisibilized by them! Beshara Doumani and Alex Winder write that Palestinian history more generally has focused on the “trials and tribulations of political elites,” not the everyday lives of ordinary Palestinians, whose histories have remained in the shadows cast by the rupture of 1948, and to other historic ruptures such as 1917 and 1967.⁶ Refugees have sometimes been reduced to pawns of politics or indistinguishable masses of poor camp dwellers; other times the history of refugee camps figure merely as a background to current events. Often, camps are seen as temporary sites, rich in symbolism, representing the right of return, suffering, and injustice, but not *also* as historical places, whether in the sense of historicizing their development or analyzing them as sites that produce history (and are not only acted upon by it). The story of Mu‘askar and Shu‘fat, then, is one small piece of a wider history of Palestinian refugees and the refugee camps.

Mu‘askar is not the only refugee camp that is gone. After 1967, other refugee camps were destroyed by the violence of host states, for example, in the Jordan Valley and in Lebanon, and many camps cannot be traced today. Soon after 1948, more than seventy camps existed, in addition to numerous unofficial gatherings scattered around, and new camps were also built in the 1950s. Host countries attacked and removed some camps as sites of (actual or potential) militarization. Other camps disappeared more quietly as part of the humanitarian operation. Almost all camps located close to borders were removed due to their sensitive location, and often reestablished closer to towns and cities, which eased humanitarian operations and access, and offered employment to refugees. Other times refugee “squatters” were removed to bring order and improve hygiene. Refugees have also moved on their own in and out of and between camps.⁷

The establishment, evolution, and disappearance of the camps over time is inextricably linked to the humanitarian management of the Palestine refugee question. Soon after the 1948 war, UN Resolution 194 confirmed the refugees’ “Right of Return” and established the UN Conciliation Commission for Palestine (UNCCP), which was to search for political solutions. UNRWA was established in late 1949 to provide temporary relief and works until a just political solution could be found. UNCCP soon fell into abeyance, and the refugees were in practice left with a humanitarian response from the international community.⁸ UNRWA has provided essential assistance and services over the decades, and its practices, and relationship to the camps have varied over time. While scholarly work on UNRWA has focused on the agency’s establishment and its legal and humanitarian role, the history is often limited to UNRWA’s institutional evolution. As an international organization, it is more rarely historicized or seen as a part of local Palestinian or regional history.⁹ In tracing the history of Mu‘askar and Shu‘fat camps, this article seeks to historicize the role of UNRWA as a humanitarian organization within a field of refugee studies that is highly oriented toward the present tense.

Further, this article rethinks what is possible to say about local histories of Palestinian refugees after 1948. What can history offer? In search of the history

of Palestinian refugee camps, aiming to texture erased histories, the question of access to archival sources is key, but archives also reflect the history of Palestinian statelessness and dispossession. It is not clear what files are stored in countries hosting refugees, and access to archives is highly restricted. Israeli state archives have seized documents from both Palestinians and Arab states, and documents remain classified in what historian Mezna Qato refers to as “archival captivity.”¹⁰ Israeli historian Avi Plascov is one of few researchers who has written about Mu‘askar with access to such Jordanian government files about Palestinian refugees in Jordan between 1948 and 1957.¹¹ Lacking such access, this article is instead based on interviews with Palestinian refugees in Shu‘fat and retired Palestinian UNRWA staff, as well as archival files gathered in the waqf archive in Abu Dis and UNRWA’s Central Registry archive in Amman, to which I was generously granted access.¹²

A Refugee Camp in the Old City

In a letter from May 1948, only a few days after the establishment of Israel and the outbreak of regional war, the Supreme Muslim Council described the dramatic situation in Jerusalem: “The need in al-Quds has reached high levels. The city is full of families and children of martyrs, refugees which make us feel pity and have mercy on them and their sacrifice in those tough times that hit the nation, man, and property.”¹³

Less than a year later, the war concluded, Arab Palestine was lost to the new state of Israel, and nearly two-thirds of the Palestinian population had become refugees. Jerusalem was divided, and Palestinians had fled their homes in west Jerusalem and surrounding villages – now under Israeli rule – to the east. East Jerusalem, along with the West Bank, was annexed by Jordan. By this time, an unknown number of Palestinian refugees lived inside the Haram al-Sharif compound in the Old City. Adjacent to the compound, Palestinian refugees took up residence in empty houses in the Jewish Quarter in the Old City. During war, Jordanian troops had evicted three hundred and fifty Haganah soldiers from this same quarter, and nearly two thousand Jewish women, children, and elderly people there had surrendered; the first group left as prisoners of war to Jordan, and the latter were handed over to the Red Cross.¹⁴ This area, or parts of it, became defined as a refugee camp called Mu‘askar. More than eight thousand refugees picked up their rations at a makeshift ration distribution center set up by the Red Cross inside the Haram al-Sharif.

UNRWA took over from the Red Cross in Mu‘askar, running basic camp services, including schools, and distributing rations inside the Haram al-Sharif compound.¹⁵ According to an UNRWA map of the geographical distribution of refugees, in 1954, 4,923 registered Palestine refugees lived there.¹⁶ Eleven years later, according to an agency headcount, the total number of families in the area was 1,250, of which 550 were refugee families.¹⁷ The exact number of refugees residing in Mu‘askar camp is not known and it not clear exactly what area UNRWA considered to be the camp. In letters between agency directors, it was referred to variously as a camp, quarter,

site, and area. The borders between camp and non-camp districts were probably blurred, since UNRWA sometimes also counted non-refugees as living in the same area. Refugees interviewed often referred to it as Hayy al-Sharaf, or as located in the Sharaf quarter.

Suspicion and Fear of Mu‘askar

In 1959, the Jordanian government informed UNRWA that a site had been found for a new camp for the refugees in Mu‘askar, located at Shu‘fat, four kilometers north of the city.¹⁸ But UNRWA directors were hesitant to start building, predicting problems with closing down Mu‘askar. They feared that refugees would abuse the scheme, reoccupying the “hovels” of Mu‘askar and renting out their new shelters in Shu‘fat, and that it was doomed to fail.¹⁹ There were other obstacles, too, as Mu‘askar residents refused the family investigation necessary to determine the size and quantity of future units in Shu‘fat.²⁰

The paper trail shows UNRWA trying in different ways to make the Jordanian government prevent the refugees from returning to Mu‘askar. Initially, UNRWA wanted the Jordanian government to issue a defense order to prevent “infiltration” back to the Old City, and threatened to cancel the whole project without it. The government agreed that, after UNRWA conducted a headcount, it would physically move the refugees and ensure that Mu‘askar would not be “re-occupied.”²¹ It also issued a defense order as an assurance of its commitment to the scheme.²² UNRWA remained unconvinced, however, that refugees would not return to Mu‘askar. As UNRWA’s Field Relief Service Officer argued, it was impossible to keep the old quarters empty without resorting to complete demolition. Refugees would use “every device to stay there, even to the extent of ‘paying lip service’ to the proposal of removing or only moving part of their family, and this way obtaining two quarters to live in instead of one.”²³ This reasoning drew on agency experiences with “slum-clearance projects” and the removal of refugee “squatters” in Amman, to which the Shu‘fat scheme was often compared. UNRWA also feared that refugees’ opposition to the move would be so strong that local authorities would ultimately refuse to act.²⁴

As a next step, UNRWA officials suggested cutting rations as a “penalty” for “those recalcitrant refugees” who defied the scheme and refused to move to Shu‘fat.²⁵ The government initially refused, but, when UNRWA again threatened to call the scheme off, accepted ration cuts.²⁶ The plan was obviously sensitive, as the minister of development and reconstruction requested that the matter be given no publicity and that the policy only be announced when “need” was demonstrated.²⁷ In return, UNRWA would have to pay for the transfer of the refugees to the new camp in government vehicles.²⁸ The government also assured UNRWA that the houses would be sealed with wax, fenced off with barbed wire, or demolished immediately “so that no refugee will be able to stay there or return to these places.”²⁹ In March 1965, despite fears that the government might waiver in its “firmness” against refugees’ opposition to the move that “well may break out at the last minute” in Mu‘askar, UNRWA directors

accepted the fresh governmental assurances. They made completion of the new camp at Shu‘fat a priority, hoping to complete the project by autumn 1965.³⁰

Negotiations between UNRWA and the Jordanian government about the refugees recall Orientalist suspicion of “the native.” The files often depict refugees in camps as one homogenous, uncontrollable group, expanding, crowding, and a problem of poverty to be managed. Some directors in UNRWA had previously worked under the British colonial administration, and as military personnel under the Second World War. Moreover, the history of humanitarianism is closely linked to ideas of civilization and modernization and to military interventions.³¹ Here, the negotiations exemplify the power of humanitarian governance at the time, and the pragmatic measures justified to avoid the failure of a well-intended scheme. Clearly, UNRWA’s power was ambiguous, and it feared being misused and being unable to intervene and control refugees who sought to return. At this point, in the early 1960s, UNRWA officials did not link their situation to politics, rights, losses, or the struggle for identity and belonging.

Belonging, Togetherness, and Losses in Mu‘askar

Refugees’ voices rarely enter these piles of documents, but UNRWA officers do describe in detail how refugees refused the scheme. In 1963, for example, Officer D. T. Holland visited the Mu‘askar quarter with a commandant of the security police. They inspected shelters and met with the camp director and one of the mukhtars. Holland reported to UNRWA directors that a “number of refugees” had stated clearly that they had “no wish whatsoever” to move from this area. This was also the position taken by “one refugee living in very bad circumstances. She said she was unwilling to go away from her friends and relatives and that she would move only if they also moved.”



Figure 1. Mu‘askar camp in the Old City of Jerusalem, 1953. UNRWA photo archive, republished with permission.

Summarizing the inspection, he

reported that those who wanted to move were the refugees living below “the sun level who had little or no light and bad drainage facilities.”³²

‘Aziza is an elderly woman living in Shu‘fat camp. She was young when she and her family were displaced from their original home in a Jerusalem area village and lived almost twenty years in Mu‘askar. In an interview in 2009 she explained why she did not want to move: “In Hayy al-Sharaf we had a house with many rooms. A bathroom.

The whole area was like one family. We experienced joy together. Now we are separated. In Shu‘fat you would have only one room. And we owned a big house before.”³³ The move to Shu‘fat led to different types of losses, and ‘Aziza traced these back to her original home in Palestine before 1948 as she made the comparison to how her family lived in Mu‘askar. This points to a feeling in Mu‘askar of proximity to an earlier time, a past that had not yet passed. The move to Shu‘fat, after many years of living in Mu‘askar, was experienced as a rupture of collectivity. Shu‘fat implied a loss of space and way



Figure 2. Women, and laundry drying, in a Mu‘askar courtyard, date unknown. UNRWA photo archive, republished with permission.

of living, of the closeness and togetherness of Mu‘askar, but also a feeling of loss of direct connection to life in Jerusalem and to their original homes. In his book, Plascov argues that most refugees refused to move as they “feared losing both their source of income,” the market and the tourists, and the opportunity to pray in the “second most holy place for Muslim believers.”³⁴ Yet the refusal to move was more than pragmatic, it was tied to the closeness of exile in the Old City, and in particular the familiarity of the quarter. In 1948, many had fled nearby villages and west Jerusalem, and had a close connection to this quarter long before 1948. Mu‘askar held a proximity to everyday and a way of life before 1948, evoking feelings of belonging, familiarity of livelihood and prayer, and comfort produced by the view over Jerusalem. The way the camp was talked about, with a sense of nostalgia, is reminiscent of how villages and places in Palestine before 1948 are remembered.³⁵



Figure 3. Schoolchildren in Mu‘askar camp. UNRWA photo archive, republished with permission.

Mu‘askar was not a typical camp built by a humanitarian agency for assistance and control, but a more informal urban setting. It was often referred to as an area of the quarter rather than a camp. Its buildings were similar to those in which some had previously lived. It did share commonalities with camps, like the

UNRWA school, health and distribution centers, and a Palestinian refugee camp director, but the traditional roles played by mukhtars and village elders were still relevant. ‘Aziza emphasized in particular the different forms of authority in Shu‘fat as compared to Mu‘askar, the different levels of autonomy granted the refugees, and the different configurations of private and public space: “In Hayy al-Sharaf we paid eleven dinar for one year to the waqf. In Shu‘fat we could not choose the house. We were given a card with the number of the shelter. Same number [today].”³⁶ ‘Aziza also highlighted that in Shu‘fat there were public *hamams*.³⁷ The move from Mu‘askar to Shu‘fat, from urban informal life to a basic camp life under the humanitarian aegis, signaled a major change. With public bathrooms, the move also implied the loss of privacy.

Why Move the Refugees and Build a New Camp?

UNRWA directors discussed among themselves the Jordanian government’s desire to see the refugees moved from Mu‘askar to Shu‘fat, but they did not know or record a definitive reason. Speculation has long persisted that the Jordanian government had made a secret deal with Israel before 1967 to give this quarter to Israel. Alex, a Palestinian who worked with UNRWA since 1953, first as a teacher in a West Bank camp, then in administration of UNRWA education, described Mu‘askar’s relatively short history:

Jews evacuated, and refugees came and took over. Some buildings were destroyed by the Jordanian bombs. They [the refugees] occupied the old buildings. Then Jews took over Mu‘askar [in 1967]. I have a house in the Armenian quarter close to the Jewish quarter. People were given money to go out. King Abdullah knew Israel would take it and agreed with UNRWA to move the refugees. Any building Jews live in belongs to us.³⁸

One UNRWA director wrote that it was the Jordanian government who wanted the move, and that it was hoping to “clean up the whole site.”³⁹ Others reportedly heard of Jordanian interest in excavating there, and in building “modern popular dwellings” or a housing scheme on the site.⁴⁰

Files in the waqf archive suggest slightly different Jordanian interests in the scheme. In the early 1950s, the Jordanian government, at the direction of the king, pressured UNRWA to move its distribution center from inside the Haram al-Sharif to just outside it.⁴¹ By the early 1960s, the location of the distribution center *outside* the Haram al-Sharif was “bothering” the king when he brought visitors to al-Aqsa.⁴² UNRWA documents refer, for example, to the king bringing Ethiopia’s emperor Haile Selassie and Pakistani president Ayub Khan to the mosque.⁴³ At this time, King Husayn of Jordan sought to link the Hashemite family to the holy places of Jerusalem, and particularly to the Haram al-Sharif.⁴⁴

In negotiations with UNRWA about closing down Mu‘askar, the Jordanian governor

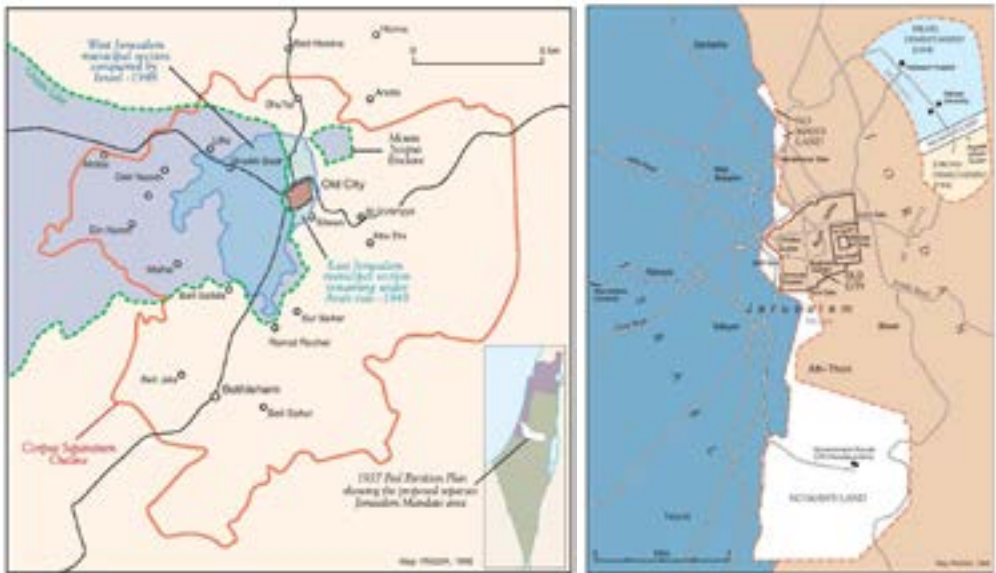
(*muhafiz*) hoped that, as a “quid pro quo” for his cooperation, UNRWA would move the distribution center to another place, emphasizing that he was “extremely concerned” about this matter.⁴⁵ This request was repeated over the years, including when the agency officer visited the governor in October 1966.⁴⁶ The refugees in Mu‘askar might have bothered the king for the same reasons the distribution center did. This exchange of letters shows that the Jordanians were more concerned with removing the distribution center than with establishing the new camp.⁴⁷ Moreover, Jordan’s security concerns shaped its relations to the West Bank and most likely underlined its interests here. The regime tried to balance its relationship with the refugees, repressing expressions of Palestinian nationalism and undermining protests while seeking to appear as their patron.⁴⁸ As the Jordanian government’s reasons for wanting to remove the refugees from Mu‘askar are ambiguous, UNRWA’s motivations become even more central.

It was UNRWA who kept insisting on pulling the scheme through and keeping Mu‘askar closed. Relocating camps and “slum clearance” were sensitive operations at the time.⁴⁹ According to UNRWA’s deputy director, “governments and refugees” saw these schemes as confirmation that UNRWA was “resettling the refugees” in its rehabilitation program. For UNRWA, the overall aim of the project was to “clear out” all the refugees in Mu‘askar.⁵⁰ It aimed to improve the living conditions for these refugees and to avoid the emergence of a slum with substandard shelters. Mu‘askar’s “shacks” or “hovels” were seen as dark, miserable, unhealthy, and unhygienic. Shu‘fat was to offer these refugees a sanitary and “decent” standard of living. The full range of agency services offered at Shu‘fat were in themselves reasons for closing down Mu‘askar.⁵¹ But the fact that the living standard in Mu‘askar actually varied, posed a problem for closing it. A “considerable” number of the shelters in Mu‘askar camp were seen as quite reasonable.⁵² However, to allow some dwellings to remain accessible would make it impossible, in UNRWA’s view, to prevent newcomers from, in the words of an agency director, “settling into the really terrible rat-holes in the present camp, and then we shall have the same situation all over again.”⁵³ Efforts to raise the standard would fail if refugees reinhabited these dwellings. The director suggested removing only the UNRWA facilities, arguing that this would remove agency responsibilities from the camp.⁵⁴ However, others feared that the refugees would complain over the lack of services and installations, and that there would be pressure from the government and refugees to reinstall services in Mu‘askar.⁵⁵

Shu‘fat: A Camp Built as an Exception

While the Jordanian government and UNRWA discussed the danger of refugees returning to Mu‘askar, a parallel discussion was ongoing in UNRWA about what kind of camp should be built at Shu‘fat.⁵⁶ According to the late Palestinian historian Albert Aghazarian, in the 1950s and 1960s, quite a few Palestinians moved out of the Old City to the north of the city.⁵⁷ This trend appears to be in line with the Arab Jerusalem master plan of 1964, produced by the Briton Henry Kendall. One aim

of this plan was to improve living conditions and the standard of public services in Jordanian Jerusalem, with new residential areas planned in the north of Jerusalem and an industrial zone in ‘Anata.⁵⁸ After the Jordanian government gave the Shu‘fat site to UNRWA, it did not involve itself in the camp’s design. UNRWA informed the government about major decisions concerning the camp, and agreements were signed about access to municipal services, collection of refuse, and so on.⁵⁹



Figures 4 and 5. On the left, Jerusalem according to UN Resolution 181, partitioned Jerusalem 1948–1967; on the right, Corpus Separatum, 1947. Maps from PASSIA, online at www.passia.org (accessed 1 November 2021).

Although the actual construction of the camp was heavily delayed, planning started in early 1960. Shu‘fat camp’s design was supervised by engineer John Tanner, chief of the technical division at UNRWA’s Beirut headquarters since the 1950s.⁶⁰ According to the blueprint, the camp leader’s house would be located beside the water reservoir to allow privacy. Main installations were envisaged at the entrance of the camp, including a girls’ school, a boys’ school, and a playground. Opposite the boys’ school, space was reserved for a future handicraft center. The camp leader’s office and sanitation store were sited at the entrance of the camp facing east. The police post was envisaged at the entrance, with the distribution center near the main road to ‘Anata, and east of the main entrance a waiting shed and a combined supplementary feeding and infant health center. A clinic and a youth center with basketball and volleyball courts, along with a sewing center, were to line the main entrance road. The mosque and marketplace were situated in the middle of the camp, with space reserved to accommodate potential refugee shops. The plan also included a bathhouse, five water points and pipelines, and septic and private latrines. Moreover, there would

be concrete platforms for the collection of garbage, asphalt roads, culverts (because of the site's uneven topography), a telephone, and space for a public garden. The boundary walls of the camp were drawn at 1,256 meters and fences of 420 meters.⁶¹ The infrastructure of the whole camp was initially planned to include eight hundred families on 203 dunums.⁶²

The planning of the distribution center offers a glimpse into how UNRWA officials imagined disciplining the rations line. A secure distribution center would afford “more opportunity for control of the line and the exclusion of crowds and rowdy elements.”⁶³ It was suggested that the building contain the entire length of the distribution line, removing it from public sight and making it easier to monitor.⁶⁴ At the time, UNRWA sought to stop refugees from trading in rations, and a well laid-out center would “enable better control” of the distribution operation, and make it more efficient. These ideas are consistent with the disciplinary architecture of refugee camps elsewhere; one can also find traces of this in some camps that UNRWA planned from scratch.⁶⁵

Yet Shu‘fat was initially envisioned as much more elaborate than camps built in the 1950s.⁶⁶ On the belief that the camp would develop as a suburb of Jerusalem, no “relief or welfare shelters” should be built there.⁶⁷ Instead, Shu‘fat was referred to as an upgraded “permanent” urban housing project,⁶⁸ with “permanent or semi-permanent dwellings rather than temporary shelter.”⁶⁹ This upgrade would more than double the price of each shelter, but one aim was to avoid the mistakes of the 1950s where because of low standards, lack of planning, and extensive refugee construction, camps had quickly deteriorated into slums.⁷⁰ After lengthy discussions, UNRWA officials reduced the number of shelter units planned for Shu‘fat, and determined that shelters would be simple one-room standard units on plots of 120 square meters each.⁷¹ Of the seventeen different types of UNRWA shelters used at the time, in terms of price, size and quality, those built in Shu‘fat were among the cheapest, smallest, and lowest quality.⁷² The agency planned to distribute materials to the refugees so that they themselves could build boundary walls surrounding their shelter. If the refugees “chose to,” they could build private latrines. Plans to construct a slaughterhouse and incinerators, along with the various centers, were all dropped.⁷³

The camp was built to low standards not because refugees or governments pressured UNRWA to maintain its “temporariness,” but because UNRWA prioritized “cleaning up” squatter conditions in Amman. Roy Lucas in the Jordan field office argued that Amman, as a center of economic activity, would continue to attract refugees, adding that it was “infinitely more constructive and important to allot funds for squatter housing in Amman rather than over the hill at Shu‘fat.”⁷⁴ His reasoning conforms with Jordanian policies before 1967, which prioritized development of Amman and the East Bank and largely neglected Jerusalem and the West Bank.⁷⁵ According to Tanner, the decision to build public latrines – where private latrines had originally been planned – changed the basic conception of Shu‘fat camp.⁷⁶ He argued that the standard UNRWA shelters, when in or adjacent to an urban environment, “almost inevitably deteriorate into slums within short time,” due to the standard of construction and simply because the accommodation was inadequate.⁷⁷ Moreover, he

pointed out that there would “inevitably” be refugee construction since the shelters were so small. “Shu‘fat camp,” he argued, “will look like Amman New Camp within a short period of time.”⁷⁸ Thus, while refugees were moved out of Mu‘askar with the justification of improving their living conditions, the new camp at Shu‘fat was built to low standards and, as a result, UNRWA officials predicted that it, too, would soon deteriorate into an urban slum.

During the planning of Shu‘fat, UNRWA changed its overall policy on shelters and camps, deciding to not build any more refugee camps and to wind down the longstanding shelter program. While “large problems were unresolved” – for example, the need for upgrades and maintenance, and the lack of available land in camps – camp shelters should now be “the concern of the tenants themselves.”⁷⁹ Indeed, agency expenses on shelters would decrease drastically throughout the 1960s.⁸⁰ The aim was to close down the shelter program by way of increasing “self-help refugee construction.” UNRWA officials felt that such construction was also key to self-support.⁸¹ Here another contradiction appears: not long before, refugee construction had been identified as one reason for camps’ quick deterioration.

As support to camps and shelters declined, UNRWA’s main priority became education. This change can be traced to the 1959 annual report, which initiated a turning point for UNRWA, from relief to welfare through education.⁸² In it, director John Davis pointed out that education was more important than relief assistance. The provision of basic education to refugee children held out hope that, conditions permitting, they would be able to lead “reasonably useful and productive lives.”⁸³ Relief (including the shelter program) was indispensable, but merely “palliative.” In this view, the “lack of opportunity, disappointments, frustrations, and blighted hopes” were even more tragic in terms of “human waste” than the need for improved food, shelter, and clothing. The director argued that the psychological, political, and social repercussions of the Palestine refugee problem were no less significant than the economic and humanitarian aspects.⁸⁴

Eventually, Shu‘fat was built as an exception to existing shelter policy, as it was not seen as possible to improve the living conditions of the refugees in the Mu‘askar quarter “without removing them and creating a completely new camp.”⁸⁵ The process of planning Shu‘fat signaled a tendency that would become more explicit in the 1970s, that of UNRWA limiting its role toward the refugee camps.



Figure 6. Shu‘fat camp “as executed.” Layout plan of Shu‘fat, FECSO archive, UNRWA West Bank Field Office, republished with permission.

June 1966: The Move

In the week beginning 6 July 1966, 450 families were moved to Shu‘fat.⁸⁶ ‘Aziza explained that “some moved to Shu‘fat themselves, others were forced in trucks.”⁸⁷ UNRWA assigned one-room shelters to the families.⁸⁸ According to UNRWA files, 505 shelters had been built, and 465 families in Mu‘askar camp – as well as six families who were not in Mu‘askar but who would join them – had been head-counted and designated as “ready to move” to Shu‘fat. Thirteen families refused to leave, according to the records, and the names of these families were given to the governor of Jerusalem, who had made it “very clear” that they would be forced to move.⁸⁹

Upon Shu‘fat camp’s opening, the acting commissioner general John Reddaway and Tanner agreed that the camp had an “unfinished air.”⁹⁰ The shelters lacked stairs and installations were not ready. On 9 August 1966, *al-Manar* newspaper published a critical report concerning the camp. “No one knows whether UNRWA is attempting to relieve the refugees or something quite different,” the journalist reported.⁹¹ He criticized the low standard of the camp, with its public latrines. Small one-room shelters of approximately ten square meters were “considered enough to accommodate a whole family of eight persons.” Windows were of wood, walls were thin, and there were no enclosure walls between neighbors. With only four water taps on site, fights had broken out over water. The camp itself was placed far away from the city, unconnected by transportation. The article described women forced to take their dough to the city, as there was no bakery in the camp. The report closed by insisting on better camps. The refugees “usually have only one alternative. They resort to the government to intervene and force UNRWA to build comfortable camps.”

UNRWA’s public information officer replied to the critique, arguing that the report did not give a “true and precise” picture of the camp.⁹² He specified that five water points were installed in different parts of the camp, and that each of the water points contained four taps. Furthermore, UNRWA was prepared to provide building materials for “any head of a family” ready to construct a private latrine and an enclosure wall. The camp facilities, he argued, included two modern schools and a “first-class clinic.” According to the public information officer, the location of the camp was “excellent and healthy.” Furthermore, it was well built – a “well planned housing area provided by UNRWA for the refugees on replacement of their miserable sub-standard unhealthy and unhygienic accommodation in Mu‘askar camp in the Old City.” In conclusion, he argued that the conditions in the new camp at Shu‘fat were “incomparably” better than those in Mu‘askar.

Three months after the move to Shu‘fat, it was unclear how many refugees were still living in Mu‘askar. The UNRWA area officer was sent to Mu‘askar to see what was being done. He was to visit the governor of Jerusalem and remind him of his promise to demolish the houses there: it was important to “keep up the pressure.”⁹³ In October 1966, Reddaway himself visited Mu‘askar. He reported being “somewhat disturbed” to see that the area, which a month ago had been “almost clear” of refugees, was now being reoccupied.⁹⁴ Some refugees (and non-refugees) were “infiltrating”

back into the area and living in some of the “shacks” that had been vacated. Reddaway reasoned that the whole area would probably be reoccupied within two or three weeks, if immediate action were not taken by the authorities.⁹⁵ In a meeting on 15 October, UNRWA’s director in Jordan reminded the governor of Jerusalem that under Defense Order no. 35-1963, the authorities were required to prevent reoccupancy and to demolish buildings on “enemy property” (referring to West Bank land owned before 1948 by residents of Israel, either Jews or Palestinians).⁹⁶

To prevent the reoccupation of Mu‘askar, the UNRWA chief asked the governor to demolish all the shacks on enemy property and to close up the vacated buildings on Arab properties. After “considerable urging” on UNRWA’s part, the governor agreed: commencing 17 October, laborers would be sent to the area to demolish the houses on enemy property. The governor did not commit to closing buildings on Arab property, a more sensitive issue, but said that he would deal with the problems “one at a time” and do his “utmost” to solve them all.⁹⁷ It is not clear if the government actually demolished or closed any of the buildings.

The Jewish Quarter and Shu‘fat after June 1967

‘Aziza’s family did not leave Mu‘askar in 1966, and her descriptions of conditions there after 1967 illuminate the increased pressure felt by its inhabitants under Israeli rule:

The way I left differs from the majority. The rest came to Shu‘fat after 1967. The Jews took down the houses. There could be three or four families in one house. The Jews came and offered to buy houses from us. We refused. Then they demolished the neighboring house, and the sound would scare us to move. They would bring the policeman or the army. And throw the things outside to scare us and throw us out of the house. The Hayy al-Sharaf was the area and in 1973 very few refugees stayed there. Houses were closed.⁹⁸

Immediately after the Israeli victory in June 1967, Israeli military forces took over the Old City in Jerusalem, evicted the inhabitants of the Moroccan Quarter, the quarter next to the Wailing Wall, and flattened it. The Palestinian families who lived there found refuge in Shu‘fat camp and elsewhere. Nearby, Israel expropriated the surrounding area of Hayy al-Sharaf (including Mu‘askar) for “Jewish Quarter redevelopment” and gradually evicted the Palestinian residents. Anthropologist Thomas Abowd comments that, for Palestinians, these schemes represented a repetition of the policies of removing Palestinians’ presence and history in 1948.⁹⁹

Only a few weeks after the military conquest in 1967, Israel annexed East Jerusalem and adjacent parts of the West Bank. Thus, Shu‘fat camp was incorporated into the Jerusalem municipality and became, technically, the only Palestinian refugee camp in Israel. For Israel, the annexation of Jerusalem created a “demographic problem,” as

it included a large Palestinian population within the municipality, seen to undermine Jerusalem's status as a Jewish and Israeli city.¹⁰⁰ Already in 1969, refugees in Shu'fat camp felt the threat of eviction. They were "warned by Israelis that they were to be moved to the Jericho area," and this was interpreted as an attempt to "scare them away."¹⁰¹ Such threats coincided with Israel's implementation of dramatic schemes in Gaza – road-widening, resettlement housing projects and demolitions – to thin out the existing camps there.¹⁰² Since 1967, urban planning has been only one of a wide range of repressive measures that Israel used to manipulate the city's demography, and, over time, the Jerusalem municipality would effectively marginalize, exclude, and invisibilize Shu'fat camp.

Who Owns the Camp?

The move from Mu'askar to Shu'fat, and the development of Shu'fat camp illuminates changing notions of ownership over time. It contextualizes the question of ownership and gives insights into the evolution of claims to camp space. Different claims to property and space, and different interpretations of ownership have coexisted. The evolution in Shu'fat shows how refugees living and building in the camp gradually blurred – not legally, but in practice – already complex categories of formal ownership and UNRWA's management of the land.

Historically the borders between the quarters of the Old City had been dynamic and fluctuated according to immigration and political circumstances. The land and buildings in the Jewish Quarter form part of different ownership systems across different political regimes over time. Exact estimates of ownership in the Jewish Quarter vary. Meron Benvenisti refers to Jewish ownership of 20 percent of the buildings. Before the war in 1948 the quarter was made up mostly of property rented from public and family *awqaf* and from Palestinian Arab landlords.¹⁰³ After 1948, the property was placed under the control of the Jordanian Guardian of Enemy Property. The guardian rented this to individuals and later to UNRWA. After 1967, Israel expropriated 116 dunums in this area, including 700 stone buildings, only 105 of which had been owned by Jews before 1948. Offers of compensation did not make sense since the properties were largely *waqf* property.¹⁰⁴

In Shu'fat, land ownership was also layered, complex, and disputed. Plascov writes that the site "chosen for resettlement" in Shu'fat was formerly Jewish-owned, enemy land in East Jerusalem.¹⁰⁵ He argues that the location of the site on enemy land meant that the transfer would neither be at the expense of the Arab "natives," nor would it raise problems of confiscated land. He sees this as a way of showing the refugees that they still occupied Jewish land, and that this would perhaps give them "some satisfaction and a kind of tangible security."¹⁰⁶ However, less than 5 percent of land in Shu'fat camp was designated enemy land and UNRWA files refer to private Palestinian ownership of parcels of the land in Shu'fat.¹⁰⁷

At the time, UNRWA defined its role as "administrator" of camp land, and the details of land ownership varied from camp to camp. Formally, host countries allocated

land to UNRWA, and the agency paid annual nominal rent to the original landowners.¹⁰⁸ Governments could lease or expropriate privately owned land.¹⁰⁹ In the 1950s, UNRWA established its camp regulations, which established the rights of refugees in camps, including, for example, access to camp facilities and centers.¹¹⁰ They also defined terms of “law and order,” “cleanliness,” and additional refugee construction in camps. According to these regulations, “[u]nder no circumstances can in-camp refugees” sell, lease, or transfer shelters or plots. All construction on camp land was under the “temporary jurisdiction” of the agency. Upon leaving the camp, refugees lost claims to all “immovable property therein.” If refugees did not adhere to the regulations, this could result in cuts to rations, demolition of unauthorized construction, or expulsion. UNRWA relied on the police of the host country to enforce its regulations.¹¹¹



Figure 7. UNRWA girls’ school in Shu‘fat, undated. UNRWA photo archive, republished with permission.

In 1968, only two years after Shu‘fat camp opened, UNRWA officials reported that camp inhabitants had started to add rooms to their units due to their increasing needs. This raised sensitive questions for UNRWA: would it have to seek permits from Israel, as a host country, for repairs or construction work in the camps? Would its camp regulation be affected by Israeli rule? And to what degree would Israel intervene in refugees’ building activities in camps? In past experience, although Lebanon had placed restrictions on refugee construction, UNRWA had generally been able to implement its own construction inside camps with little interference from or coordination with host governments.¹¹²

Initially, Israel was concerned with limiting refugee construction in camps, but refused to send its police to enforce UNRWA’s camp regulations.¹¹³ Meanwhile, UNRWA sought to continue its regularizing role based on the camp regulations. UNRWA directors came to consider ration cuts inefficient and demolitions sensitive.¹¹⁴ In order to enforce its building regulations, UNRWA initiated a new strategy: taking refugees who built in contravention of UNRWA’s camp regulations to Israeli and West Bank courts.¹¹⁵ Refugees, unsurprisingly, did not take kindly to this approach. Muna, a retired Palestinian UNRWA staff who worked with the agency since 1951, argued that this was necessary to preserve the common spaces of the camp, but explained that the “refugees used to be a bit upset.”¹¹⁶

Despite UNRWA’s attempts to regulate refugee building in the camp, a construction boom took off in many camps in the 1970s, and over time regulation turned out to

be impossible. A new generation was born into camps facing urgent need for more space.¹¹⁷ By 1980, refugees were building shops and adding rooms or second stories to existing structures, often “encroaching” on adjacent vacant spaces, to meet the needs of their growing families.¹¹⁸ UNRWA continued to issue building permits into the 1980s. Israeli pressure increased, and during the first intifada Israel evoked pre-1967 Egyptian and Jordanian laws to intervene in camp regulation.¹¹⁹ Despite this, the 1990s saw an “unparalleled construction boom” and camps became characterized by “high density, chaotic planning, and a lack of enforced planning rules.”¹²⁰ UNRWA formally agreed to the construction of second stories, but refugees built beyond this, too. In recent years, refugees constructing more than two floors merely had to sign a paper absolving UNRWA of responsibility if the building collapsed.¹²¹ Thus, we see UNRWA’s regulatory role in camp construction gradually decline, and refugees increasingly appropriating camp space.

As UNRWA over time lost its governance over camps, land became alienable. While refugees developed their housing, formally they neither owned the plot of land nor the shelter built upon it.¹²² UNRWA outlawed land sales, as neither the refugees nor UNRWA owned the land in the camps.¹²³ This policy was clear-cut, but impracticable. In 1974, the UNRWA area officer and Shu‘fat camp director reported to the UNRWA field office that a refugee had sold camp land. One director referred to “beliefs” among refugees that they would be given the deed to the land, and to refugees’ references to “a Jordanian law” that gave property rights to those who built on the land.¹²⁴ Refugees bought, sold, swapped, and rented shelters, and UNRWA was



Figure 8. UNRWA boys’ school in Shu‘fat, undated. UNRWA photo archive, republished with permission.

powerless to intervene, save from issuing statements that refugee construction did not affect ownership of land.¹²⁵ Around 1970, UNRWA officially limited its role in camps – in part because (some) camps became politicized or militarized, but also because camps were difficult to manage.¹²⁶ Meanwhile, international donors and host states have also sought to shed responsibility for the camps.

Refugees living in Shu‘fat transgressed agency regulations for many reasons: to meet their needs, to make the camp their own, and for lack of alternatives. More recently, Israeli impositions on Palestinians with Jerusalem residency have impacted Shu‘fat’s real estate “market.” ‘Aziza comments:

Today, UNRWA only provides school, a health center, and garbage

[collection]. [The camp suffers from] garbage problems and open sewage . . . [there are] no more rations in Shu‘fat, because of the Israeli ID. Now they transfer people from al-Ram and other areas to here, to keep the Israeli ID. They pay two hundred, three hundred dollars a month for an apartment in the camp. [We] earn money from renting, and [we] do not pay for water here.¹²⁷

Refugees who, lacking legal ownership, try to exercise control over space are in some ways similar to those engaged in auto-construction and slum housing elsewhere, from Brazil to South Africa and beyond.¹²⁸ By appropriating the camp, refugees have, over decades, attempted to define ownership by practice. This allows a conceptualization of ownership through the evolution of the camp, presenting an opportunity to think about how ownership is



Figure 9. The physical evolution of Shu‘fat camp, 1974. UNRWA Photo archive, republished with permission.

made by the propertyless, thus creating a new understanding of ownership. This is not ownership by law, but refugees’ own understanding of their surroundings and a right to self-define attachment. This can be understood as the creation of (a new form of) ownership, a novel mode of property regime. Shu‘fat was built as urban slum, but it is also home to human strength and a site of claims.

The form of ownership that has emerged in Shu‘fat camp is insecure and marginal. Refugees have made investments over decades, but what happens if the original landowners claim the land? Will refugees’ assets and investments be recognized? And who is responsible if a building collapses, or for the overall camp over time? Who can protect the refugee when a more powerful neighbor trespasses? Today Shu‘fat camp is often described as extraterritorial, and characterized by poverty, physical deterioration, and lawlessness. While it remains within the bounds of the Jerusalem municipality, the route of the Israeli “separation wall” in Jerusalem was gerrymandered to leave Shu‘fat outside of the city. It is thus outside the jurisdiction of the Palestinian Authority, while Israeli presence is mostly limited to checkpoints controlling entry and exit, border police incursions, and tax collection. UNRWA and local organizations are present in the camp, but with limited resources and capacities. The inhabitants of Shu‘fat camp, among the poorest in Jerusalem, are in a squeeze, as they rely on access to Jerusalem for employment. They have, unlike West Bankers, a legal right to be in the city, but this right – as for other Palestinians in East Jerusalem – is under pressure.

Who Owns Palestine? Belonging of the Propertyless

Mu‘askar camp is part of an erased history, overlooked by historians and invisibilized in Jerusalem. The microhistory of Mu‘askar and Shu‘fat is one small piece of the history of camps. It is maybe unusual: Shu‘fat’s construction was undertaken not as a direct humanitarian response to war, but as a solution to a perceived problem and as an exception to UNRWA policy at the time. Indeed, Shu‘fat was built at a time when no more camps were thought necessary.

Three strands are interwoven in this history. First, refugees’ struggle to belong runs through both camps: their refusals to move from Mu‘askar, to submit to the headcount, their attachment to space, collectivity, and connection to life before 1948. Maybe “squatting” can be seen as a form of ownership born in Mu‘askar and evolving in Shu‘fat, as its inhabitants lived in and built up the camp over time. A second strand is the role of UNRWA. UNRWA’s humanitarian power was initially strong in Mu‘askar, while its early role in Shu‘fat was pragmatically seeking to avoid the failure of the planned scheme, and aiming to improve living conditions. But its power – and both its ability and willingness to intervene – quickly declined in Shu‘fat. This microhistory also gives examples of how UNRWA officials talked about and dealt with ownership, without reference to refugees’ rights, assets, belonging or losses. The third strand is the role of the host governments, first Jordan and then Israel. Each took a different position toward Mu‘askar and Shu‘fat, but both were ambivalent and unreceptive toward the refugees, in effect contributing to Mu‘askar’s destruction, Shu‘fat’s marginalization, and UNRWA’s ineffectiveness.

One-third of the Palestinian refugees forcefully displaced from their original homes and lands in Palestine have lived as a propertyless population in camps, each family with a designated shelter on a plot. By living and building there, over time they made new forms of ownership. This is not an acceptance of their dispossession from their homes in Palestine, permanency, or formal integration into their host societies; rather, it represents a struggle of a propertyless population for improvement, participation, belonging, and control – to live normally despite the constraints. Yet refugees in camps also live on land that represents a link to historic Palestine and thus symbolizes their right of return. They improved their living conditions, then, as part of their struggle to live and have rights, both human rights and the right to Palestine.

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Endnotes

- 1 In Arabic, *mu'askar* refers to a military encampment.
- 2 This article builds on a chapter of my PhD thesis: Kjersti G. Berg, "The Unending Temporary: United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) and the Politics of Humanitarian Assistance to Palestinian Refugee Camps, 1950–2012" (PhD diss., University of Bergen, 2015).
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- 8 Marte Heian-Engdal, *Palestinian Refugees after 1948: The Failure of International Diplomacy* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2020).
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 - 16 Map of geographic distribution of refugees, addendum to Plascov, *Palestinian Refugees*.
 - 17 Inter-Office Memorandum from Field Relief Services Officer, Jordan, to Director of UNRWA Affairs, Jordan, 26 January 1965, in CR, RE 400/4, part I (Camps and Buildings, Shu‘fat Camp, 1960–66).
 - 18 Chief, Technical Division, to Chief, Health Division, 19 June 1959, in CR, RE 400/4, part I. See also Cabinet Memorandum no. 101/62, 19 October 1962, in CR, RE 400/4, part I. In 1947, Shu‘fat had been suggested as the most northern point of the corpus separatum proposed for Jerusalem in the Partition Resolution 181, to be placed under effective UN control. After the war in 1948, Shu‘fat town fell on the Jordanian side of divided Jerusalem. Deputy Director to Minister of Development and Reconstruction, 4 August 1960, in CR, RE 400(4), part I. See also Proposed Layout plan for Shu‘fat attached to letter from Director of UNRWA Affairs, Jordan, to Director of Relief Program, HQ, 26 September 1962, in CR, RE 400(4), part I.
 - 19 A. F. J. Reddaway to Roy Lucas, 2 November 1960, in CR, RE 400/4, part I. See also Cabinet Memorandum no. 101/62.
 - 20 Director of UNRWA Affairs, Jordan (DUA/J), to Director of Relief Programs, 22 January 1962, in CR, RE 400/4, part I.
 - 21 DUA/J to Minister of Development and Reconstruction, 10 July 1962, in CR, RE 400/4, part I.
 - 22 Ministry of Development and Reconstruction to Director of UNRWA Affairs, 23 July 1964, in CR, RE 400/4, part I. See also Note for the Record, 15 October 1966, in CR, RE 400/4, part I; Cabinet Memorandum no. 101/62.
 - 23 Ministry of Development and Reconstruction to Director of UNRWA Affairs, 23 July 1964, in CR, RE 400/4, part I. See also Note for the Record, 15 October 1966, and extract from notes on shelter construction, 18 July 1964, in CR, RE 400/4, part I.
 - 24 DUA/J, Note for the Record, 9 January 1963, in CR, RE 400/4, part I.
 - 25 DUA/J to Director of Relief Programs, 31 July 1964, in CR, RE 400/4, part I; Field Relief Service Officer, Jordan, to DUA/J, 26 January 1965, in CR, RE 400/4, part I. DUA/J to Director of Relief Program HQ, 4 February 1965, in CR, RE 400/4, part I.
 - 26 Ministry of Development and Reconstruction to DUA/J, 28 February 1965, in CR, RE 400/4, part I; Field Relief Service Officer, Jordan, to DUA/J, 26 January 1965, in CR, RE 400/4, part I; Cable or letter received 25 January 1965, in CR, RE 400/4, part I.
 - 27 Cable or letter to Director of Relief, 5 February 1965, in CR, RE 400/4, part I.
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 - 34 Plascov, *Palestinian Refugees*, 68.
 - 35 Davis, *Palestinian Village Histories*.
 - 36 Author interview with ‘Aziza, 7 March 2009, Shu‘fat camp.
 - 37 Author interview with ‘Aziza, 7 March 2009, Shu‘fat camp.
 - 38 Author interview with former UNRWA employee, 3 March 2009.
 - 39 DUA/J, Note for the Record, 9 January 1963, in CR, RE 400/4, part I.
 - 40 A. F. J. Reddaway to Roy Lucas, 2 November

- 1960, in CR, RE 400/4, part I; Minister of Development and Reconstruction to DUA/J, 2 July 1962, in CR, RE 400/4, part I; extracts from minutes of meeting with Minister of Development and Reconstruction, 3 July 1962, in CR, RE 400/4, part I.
- 41 The distribution center was moved to the Tuma-Tuma by Bab al-Asbat. See “The usage of the al-Haram al-Sharif for the distribution of aid for the refugees by the United Nations,” in IRHR, High Islamic Shari‘a Council, Public Awqaf Administration, 13/50/5, 64/2/60.
 - 42 See, for example, General Director of Waqf, Tax Agency for the Waqf, Jordan, to Supervisor of Waqf in al-Quds, 7 January 1952 in: “The usage of the al-Haram al-Sharif for the distribution of aid for the refugees by the United Nations,” in IRHR, High Islamic Shari‘a Council, Public Awqaf Administration, 13/50/5, 64/2/60.
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 - 44 Take, for example, renovations of the Dome of the Rock undertaken between 1953 and 1964. Kimberly Katz, “Jordanian Jerusalem: Postage Stamps and Identity Construction,” *Jerusalem Quarterly File 5* (1999): 5.
 - 45 Note for the Record, 15 October 1966, attached to letter from Acting DUA/J to Acting Commissioner-General, HQ, 17 October 1966, in CR, RE 400/4, part I.
 - 46 UNRWA, which had obviously been asked to do this many times, replied that they needed funds and a site from the government before such action could be taken. Note for the Record, 15 October 1966, attached to letter from Acting DUA/J to Acting Commissioner-General, HQ, 17 October 1966, in CR, RE 400/4, part I.
 - 47 From Acting DUA/J to Acting Commissioner-General, HQ, 17 October 1966, in CR, RE 400/4, part I. See also Note for the Record, 15 October 1966, attached to this letter.
 - 48 Plascov, *Palestinian Refugees*. See, for example, Rashid Khalidi, *The Hundred Years’ War on Palestine: A History of Settler Colonialism and Resistance, 1917–2017* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2020).
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 - 54 Deputy Director of UNRWA to Director of Relief Programs, 26 January 1962, in CR, RE 400(4), part I.
 - 55 Director of Relief Programs to Deputy Director of UNRWA, 29 January 1962, in CR, RE 400(4), part I.
 - 56 This suggestion implied larger-size plots, better types of housing, and a water source large enough to provide (at a later date) house-to-house supply. This improvement was referred to as reflecting “camp” versus “urban housing” movement, the latter along the lines of the Hneiken scheme in Amman. If this were approved for Shu‘fat, it would imply a cost jump to US\$375 per shelter and double the price of the camp. Director of Relief Programs to Director of UNRWA Affairs, Jordan, 20 October 1962, in CR, RE 400(4), part I.
 - 57 Author interview with Albert Aghazarian, 4 March 2009, Jerusalem.
 - 58 Elisha Efrat and Allen G. Noble, “Planning Jerusalem,” *Geographical Review* 78, no. 4 (1988): 398.
 - 59 See CR, RE 400(4), part I.
 - 60 John Tanner was the chief of the engineering office at Beirut headquarters. Each field office had an engineering division. This division was a part of the field relief department, which also housed the general rations program. Roy E. Skinner, *Jerusalem to Baghdad, 1967–1992: Selected Letters* (London: Radcliffe Press, 1995), 104.
 - 61 John Tanner, technical report on proposal for Shu‘fat camp, 10 October 1962, in CR, RE

- 400(4), part I.
- 62 Proposed layout plan for Shu‘fat, attached to letter from DUA/J to Director of Relief Program, HQ, 26 September 1962, in CR, RE 400/4, part I. See also Cabinet memorandum no. 101/62.
- 63 Field Relief Services Officer, Jordan, to Director of Relief Programs, 22 September 1964, in CR, RE 400/4, part I. On rations, See Schiff, *Refugees*.
- 64 Field Relief Service Officer, Jordan, to Director of Relief Programs, 6 October 1964, in CR, RE 400/4, part I.
- 65 Jenifer Hyndman, *Managing Displacement: Refugees and the Politics of Humanitarianism* (Minneapolis; Minnesota University Press, 2000); Peteet, *Landscape of Hope and Despair*; Berg, “Unending Temporary.”
- 66 Berg, “Unending Temporary.”
- 67 Director of Relief Programs to DUA/J, 20 October 1962, in CR, RE 400(4), part I. See also DUA/J to Acting Commissioner-General, 25 September 1965 in CR, RE 410/2(2), part I (Urban Self-Support Housing, Amman Hneiken Scheme, 1961–68); and Field Relief Service Officer, Jordan, to Director of Relief Programs, 6 October 1964, in CR, RE 400(4), part I.
- 68 Deputy Director, UNRWA Operations in Jordan, Note for Cabinet, 12 July 1960, in CR, RE 410/2, part I (Review of Shelter Policy, 1960–75).
- 69 Cabinet Memorandum no. 14/83, 8 March 1963, in CR, RE 410/3 (1962 Shelter Program).
- 70 Chief, Technical Division, to Director of Relief Programs, 24 November 1961 in CR, RE 410/3.
- 71 Cabinet Memorandum no. 68/64, 13 November 1964, in Field Relief Service Officer, Jordan, to Director of Relief Programs, 6 October 1964, in CR, RE 400(4), part I. See also: Extract from Executive Cabinet Meeting no. 372, 27 October 1962, in CR, RE 400(4), part I.
- 72 Standard Cost Estimates for Types of Concrete Block Shelters Jordan Camps, attachment to John Tanner, Technical Report on Proposal for Shu‘fat Camp, 10 October 1962, in CR, RE 400(4), part I.
- 73 Cabinet Memorandum No. 68/64; Memorandum from Chief, Technical Division, to Director of Administration of Relief, 5 November 1966, in CR, RE 400(4), part I.
- 74 DUA/J to Director of Relief Programs, 23 October 1962, in CR, RE 400(4), part I.
- 75 Plascov, *Palestinian Refugees*, 41–72.
- 76 Chief, Technical Division, to Director of Relief Programs, 7 September 1964, in CR, RE 400(4), part I. See also Chief, Technical Division, to Director of Relief Program, 5 November 1962, in CR, RE 400(4), part I.
- 77 Chief, Technical Division, to DUA/J, 14 April 1962, in CR, RE 410/2(2), part I (Review of Shelter Policy, 1960–75 [II]).
- 78 Chief, Technical Division, to Director of Relief Programs, 7 September 1964; and Director of Relief Programs to DUA/J, 8 September 1964, in CR, RE 400(4), part I.
- 79 William T. Clark to Director, 16 August 1960, in RE 410(J), part I (Camps and Buildings, Construction and Maintenance, 1960–62); Chief, Technical Division, to Director of Relief Program, 28 April 1964, in CR, RE 410/2, part I.
- 80 “Shelter Maintenance Policy,” Cabinet Memorandum no. 67/62, in CR, RE 410(WB), part I. (Camps and Buildings, Construction and Maintenance, 1968–75).
- 81 Extract from Executive Cabinet Meeting no. 399, 1 June 1963, in CR, RE 410/3.
- 82 Rosenfeld, “From Emergency Relief Assistance to Human Development: UNRWA and the Palestinian Refugees, 1950–2009,” *Refugee Survey Quarterly* 28, no. 2–3 (2009): 298; Schiff, *Refugees*, 120–23.
- 83 “Annual Report of the Director of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East: 1 July 1958–30 June 1959,” para. 7, online at unispal.un.org/UNISPAL.NSF/0/7F43E1C5AFF52925052565A10074D7EB (accessed 15 December 2020).
- 84 “Annual Report,” 1958–59, paras. 9–11.
- 85 The other exception was a three-year shelter program in Gaza, where “demand for shelter was likely to continue indefinitely.” Director of Relief Programs to Deputy Director of UNRWA, 29 January 1962, in CR, RE 400(4), part I. See also: “Shelter Policy,” Cabinet Memorandum no. 40/62, 4 May 1962, in CR, RE 410/3; Memorandum from Acting Commissioner-General to Director of Administration and Relief, 14 November 1966, in CR, RE 400(4), part I; UNRWA Representative, Damascus, to AD/OPS, HQ, 20 March 1961, in CR, RE 410/3.
- 86 Extract from DUA/J, “Report for 1966 to Date,” 10 September 1966, in CR, RE 400(4), part I.
- 87 Authors interview with ‘Aziza, 7 March

- 2009, Shu'fat camp. Plascov writes that all Mu'askar-based refugees refused to move and that the Jordanian army had to transfer them by force to their new camp in 1965. Plascov, *Palestinian Refugees*, 68.
- 88 Author interviews with former refugee residents of Mu'askar and Shu'fat camp, 7 March 2009.
- 89 Director of Administration and Relief to Chief, Technical Division, Inter-office memorandum, 1 June 1966, in CR, RE 400(4), part I.
- 90 Acting Commissioner-General to Director of Administration and Relief, Memorandum, 14 November 1966, in CR, RE 400(4), part I. See also Chief, Technical Division, to Director of Administration of Relief, Memorandum, 5 November 1966, in CR, RE 400(4), part I.
- 91 *Al-Manar* newspaper, quoted in UNRWA Press Review no. 116/66, for 6–9 August 1966, in CR, RE 400/4, part I.
- 92 Attachment to letter from Public Information Officer, Jordan, to Chief, Public Information Office, HQ, 23 August 1966, in CR, RE 400(4), part I.
- 93 Acting DUA/J to Acting Commissioner-General, HQ, 17 October 1966, in CR, RE 400(4), part I.
- 94 Note for the Record, 15 October 1966, attached to letter from Acting DUA/J to Acting Commissioner-General, HQ, 17 October 1966, in CR, RE 400(4), part I.
- 95 Note for the Record, 15 October 1966, attached to letter from Acting DUA/J to Acting Commissioner-General, HQ, 17 October 1966, in CR, RE 400(4), part I.
- 96 In 1948 Jordan established the Guardian of Enemy Property, which was granted legal control, but not legal title, to the land. Officially the policy was to preserve the original owners' legal title to the land, unlike Israeli legislation for the Palestinian refugees' land in Israel after 1948. The guardian could not sell land under its authority, but could rent it out. Michael Fischbach, *Records of Dispossession: Palestinian Refugee Property and the Arab-Israeli Conflict* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 160.
- 97 Note for the Record, 15 October 1966, attached to letter from Acting DUA/J to Acting Commissioner-General, HQ, 17 October 1966, in CR, RE 400(4), part I.
- 98 Author interview with 'Aziza, 7 March 2009, Shu'fat camp.
- 99 Abowd, "Moroccan Quarter." See also: Tom Abowd, "'The Land without the People': Contesting Jerusalem on the Eve of the Millennium," *Middle East Report* 213 (1999): 34–37.
- 100 Michael Dumper, *The politics of sacred space: The old city of Jerusalem in the Middle East conflict* (Boulder, Co.: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2002): 72, 121.
- 101 Notes for the Record, Meeting with the Minister of Development and Reconstruction, 17 June 1969, in CR, OR 210 (J-1) (Discussions with Government Officials, 1968–69). See also: Attachment to UNRWA, Jordan (East) Press no. 163/69, 17 June 1969 in CR, OR 210 (J-1); Nur Masalha, *The Politics of Denial: Israel and the Palestinian Refugee Problem* (London: Pluto Press, 2003), 120.
- 102 Norma Masriyeh Hazboun, "The Resettlement of the Palestinian Refugees of the Gaza Strip" (PhD diss., University of Leeds, 1994), 110. See also Berg, "Unending Temporary."
- 103 Dumper, *Politics of Sacred Space*, 80–81. Meron Benvenisti, *City of Stone: The Hidden History of Jerusalem* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996).
- 104 Dumper, *Islam and Israel*, 119. See also Dumper, *Politics of Sacred Space*, 81.
- 105 Plascov, *Palestinian Refugees*, 68.
- 106 Plascov, *Palestinian Refugees*, 68.
- 107 Adwan Taleb, "Real Estate Sector inside the Refugee Camps in West Bank" (Stuttgart: UNRWA and SIAAL, Institute for Urban Planning, Institute of Stuttgart, 2006–7), 72. According to UNRWA files, not all of camp land in Shu'fat had been expropriated prior to 1967 and the Central Registry files refer to Palestinian private ownership of land parcels in Shu'fat. See CR, RE 400(4), part I.
- 108 Schiff, *Refugees*, 26.
- 109 Legal Officer to General Counsel, intra-office memorandum, Annex A, 7 April 1970, in CR, RE 410(J), part III (Camps and Buildings, Construction and Maintenance, 1976–85).
- 110 Camp Regulations, Appendix to 1 January 1982, in CR, RE 410(WB), part III (Camps and Buildings, Construction and Maintenance, 1982–85). See summary of camp regulation in "Contraventions, Allocation of Plots and Demolitions," attachment to Senior Legal Officer to D/Com-Gen, 17 April 1980, in CR, RE 410(J), part III; Berg, "Unending Temporary."
- 111 Camp Regulations, Appendix to 1 January 1982, in CR, RE 410(WB), part III.

- See summary of camp regulation in “Contraventions, Allocation of Plots and Demolitions,” attachment to Senior Legal Officer to D/Com-Gen, 17 April 1980, in CR, RE 410(J), part III; Berg, “Unending Temporary.”
- 112 Legal Officer to General Counsel, 21 April 1970 in CR, RE 400(4), part II (Camps and Buildings, Shu‘fat Camp, 1967–75). See also Field Relief Services Officer, West Bank, to Director of UNRWA Operations, West Bank, 9 March 1970 in CR, RE 400(4), part II.
 - 113 Extract, Note for the Record, Meeting of DUO with General Shelev and Major Naboth, Senior Liaison Officer, 1 March 1976, in CR, RE 410(WB), part II (Camps and Buildings, Construction and Maintenance, 1976–81).
 - 114 “Extract from Summary Record of Meeting Held in Office of Military Commander for Judea and Samaria,” 7 November 1975, in CR, RE 410(WB), part I (Camps and Buildings, Construction and Maintenance, 1968–1975).
 - 115 Author interview with former UNRWA employee, 1 October 2005, UNRWA West Bank Office. See, for example, Director of UNRWA Operations, West Bank, to Commissioner-General, Vienna, 18 January 1979 in CR, RE 410(WB), part II.
 - 116 Author interview with former UNRWA employee, 1 October 2005, West Bank.
 - 117 In Jordan, the agency director commented that many camp inhabitants were aware of the inability of the agency to ensure “proper implementation” of the camp regulations without the support of the host government. He added that government reactions tended to be “lax” and that demolitions were rare. Refugees would build during weekends and holidays so that the contravention would become a “de-facto affair” when official reports were made. Extract, Note for the Record, Meeting with Minister of Development and Reconstruction, 9 June 1977, in CR, RE 410(J), part III; “Contraventions, Allocation of Plots, and Demolitions,” attachment to Senior Legal Officer to D/Com-Gen, 17 April 1980, in CR, RE 410(J), part III.
 - 118 “Contraventions, Allocation of Plots, and Demolitions.”
 - 119 Extract, Note for the Record, 23 January 1986, in CR, OR 215(IS), part IV (Israeli Government Policy Re Settlement and Rehousing, 1985–90). See Berg, “Unending Temporary.”
 - 120 Jonathan Price, “Shelter Rehabilitation. Comparative study. Design, Specification, and Standards,” Preliminary Report 2 (internal) (Amman: UNRWA, March 2006), 14.
 - 121 Philipp Misselwitz, “UNRWA camp development pilot research project. Main research report 2006–2007,” unpublished report, UNRWA and SIAAL, Institute for Urban Planning, University of Stuttgart, 2006/2007.
 - 122 Legal Officer to General Counsel, intra-office memorandum, 7 April 1970, in CR, RE 410(J), part III.
 - 123 General Counsel to Commissioner-General, “Sale of Land in Shufat Camp,” 4 June 1974 in CR, RE 400(4), part II; Area Officer, Jerusalem, to Director of UNRWA Operations, West Bank, inter-office memorandum, 16 May 1974, in CR, RE 400(4), part II.
 - 124 Director of UNRWA Operations, West Bank, to Chief, Relief Operations Division, 26 January 1976 in CR, RE 410(WB-2), part I (Camps and Buildings, Construction and Maintenance, Special Hardship Cases, 1978–79).
 - 125 Legal Adviser to Director of UNRWA Operations, West Bank, 4 October 1984, in CR, RE 410(WB), part III. See also UNRWA West Bank Jerusalem Press Review, 23 September 1984, in CR, RE 410(WB), part III.
 - 126 Berg, “Unending Temporary.”
 - 127 Author interview with ‘Aziza, 7 March 2009, Shu‘fat camp.
 - 128 See Sylvaine Bulle, “We Only Want to Live: From Israeli Domination towards Palestinian Decency in Shu‘fat and Other Confined Jerusalem Neighborhoods,” *Jerusalem Quarterly* 38 (2009): 24–34; Abourahme and Hilal, “Intervention”; Helen Elizabeth Gyger, “The Informal as a Project: Self-Help Housing in Peru, 1954–1986” (PhD diss., Columbia University, 2013).