

# The Transnationalization of Palestine

## Jerusalem's Defense of Palestinian Migrants in the Interwar Period

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### Abstract

Following the promulgation of the 1925 Palestinian Citizenship Order-in-Council, British Mandate authorities regularly denied Palestinian citizenship to thousands of Palestinian migrants across the diaspora (*mahjar*) – mainly the Latin American *mahjar*, where the largest Palestinian communities resided. In response, Palestinians in Palestine formed the Committee for the Defense of the Rights of Palestinians in Foreign Countries in 1927. A group of nationalists, including Musa Kazim al-Husayni, submitted petitions to the Government of Palestine and the League of Nations demanding justice for migrants barred from their rights to Palestinian citizenship – and thus, to their right to return to Palestine as Palestinians. Importantly, the editors of *Filastin* newspaper called on Palestinian leaders to reform and unite, doing away with divisive rivalries, in order to defend the rights of Palestinian migrants. In entry after entry, *Filastin* decried the state of the current Palestinian leadership, stressing the interconnectedness of Palestinian migrants' struggle to secure their rights to Palestinian citizenship and the struggle to reform the faltering Palestinian nationalist movement.

These efforts of Palestinians in Palestine to protest British citizenship policy and to reform the Palestinian nationalist movement through solidarity with Palestinian migrants demonstrate that Palestinian political consciousness in the interwar period formed and developed transnationally. Through their activism, Palestinians in Palestine brought Palestinian migrants' voices home, and contributed to the emergence and consolidation of a Palestinian diaspora, and to the amplification of Palestinian voices transnationally. The Palestinian struggle for a right of return began well before 1948.

### Keywords

Diaspora; *mahjar*; watan; Jerusalem; Committee for the Defense of the Rights of Palestinians in Foreign Countries; *Filastin*; citizenship; right of return; Palestinian Citizenship Order-in-Council; transnational solidarity.

This article explores the efforts of Palestinians in Jerusalem to protest the denial of Palestinian citizenship to Palestinian migrants throughout the diaspora (*mahjar*) during the British Mandate. Thousands of Palestinians who had emigrated since the late nineteenth century in pursuit of economic opportunity submitted applications for Palestinian citizenship following the promulgation by British Mandate authorities of the 1925 Palestinian Citizenship Order-in-Council. Most had their applications refused on the claim, among others, that they had been out of Palestine since before the establishment of the Mandate in 1920 and therefore could not prove connection to Palestine or intention to return permanently to it.<sup>1</sup> As a result, tens of thousands of Palestinian migrants were rendered stateless during the first decade of British rule in Palestine.

Throughout their *mahjar*, Palestinians responded immediately to the denial of their applications for Palestinian citizenship starting in late 1926. For the duration of Britain's three-decade rule in Palestine, Palestinian migrants protested what they perceived as a grave injustice, and Palestinians in Palestine joined them. Hundreds of letters and petitions were delivered to British consular offices throughout Latin America, government channels in London, and Mandate authorities in Jerusalem. Several were sent directly to the League of Nations' Permanent Mandates Commission (PMC) in Geneva. In petitions to the High Commissioner in Jerusalem and through condemnations of British policy in local periodicals such as *Sawt al-Sha'b* and *Filastin*, Palestinians within Palestine pressed British authorities in Palestine to address these transnational grievances and recognize their authors as Palestinians.

This article examines the efforts of the Committee for the Defense of the Rights of Palestinians in Foreign Countries, founded in Bayt Jala in 1927, and the editors of *Filastin* newspaper to bring the crisis of Palestinian citizenship in the *mahjar* to the British administration and the Palestinian public in Palestine. In petitions delivered to British authorities in Jerusalem and in hundreds of articles printed in local newspapers, they helped build transnational networks of communication, financial remittance, and solidarity among Palestinians and their allies; they bolstered local and *mahjar* claims to national self-determination as Palestinians; and they challenged the equitability of Mandate rule in Jerusalem, London, and Geneva. Palestinians in the diaspora had been forming pro-Palestine collectives since 1918, members of which would visit British consulates throughout Latin America and submit petitions to be delivered to London, Jerusalem, and Geneva. However, applying pressure from within Palestine on the government of Palestine, on the League of Nations, and on Palestinian leadership was critical to efforts to resolve the crisis of *mahjar* Palestinians' international legal standing.

In the long run, Palestinians in Palestine were unable to change British policy toward Palestinian migrants, and the exile of their fellow Palestinians persisted for the duration of British rule in Palestine – and beyond. Yet the Committee for the Defense of the Rights of Palestinians in Foreign Countries and the editors of *Filastin* succeeded in bringing *mahjar* Palestinians' voices home. By merging the *mahjar* with the *watan* (homeland) in a struggle to protect Palestinians' citizenship rights – all

within the context of national self-determination – they effectively made mahjar Palestinians’ crisis a crisis for Palestine, which they also mobilized against their own failing nationalist leadership.

## **Injustice Is Served**

The arrival of British forces in Jerusalem on 11 December 1917 brought transformative legal and political changes throughout Palestine. Weeks earlier, on 2 November, British foreign secretary Arthur James Balfour had expressed Britain’s commitment to “facilitate” the “establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people.” This commitment was incorporated into the text of the British Mandate for Palestine, article 7, which also promised to “facilitate the acquisition of Palestinian citizenship by Jews who take up permanent residence in Palestine.”<sup>2</sup> Tens of thousands of Jews subsequently immigrated to Palestine. In 1925 alone, over 95 percent of the nearly thirty-five thousand total immigrants to Palestine were Jewish.<sup>3</sup> In July of that year, following years of deliberation and legal craftsmanship, notably by Norman Bentwich, attorney general of Mandate Palestine, the government of Palestine promulgated the Palestinian Citizenship Order-in-Council.<sup>4</sup> Most Jewish immigrants to Palestine received Palestinian citizenship and all it entailed, including rights to residence, property ownership, employment, and legal recourse in Palestine.<sup>5</sup>

But Jewish immigrants to Palestine were not the only would-be subjects of the British Crown who sought legal representation and protection from Britain in the interwar period. Since the late nineteenth century, thousands of Palestinians had been migrating to the Americas in pursuit of economic opportunity and political stability. By the start of World War I, migrants from the Ottoman provinces of Palestine – including the sanjaks of ‘Akka and Nablus, and the mutasarrifate of Jerusalem – to the Americas numbered roughly ten thousand, a figure that increased to approximately forty thousand by 1936.<sup>6</sup> While they left their homes as Ottoman subjects, the dissolution of the empire in 1918 left them with obsolete documents and precarious legal status. In the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne, in exchange for the Allies’ recognition of its sovereignty, the new Republic of Turkey relinquished its claims to former Ottoman territories, including the Arab provinces now under European mandates. Former Ottoman subjects of these territories ceased to be Ottomans and, unless they opted for Turkish nationality, were to seek protection and representation through British or French mandate authorities.<sup>7</sup>

The extent to which British authorities denied citizenship to Palestinians was unique. While French authorities also burdened Lebanese and Syrian migrants with cumbersome and impractical requirements for acquiring Lebanese and Syrian citizenship during the French Mandate, their general policy was to award it. Indeed, the Beirut-based high commissioner for the Levant included Lebanese migrants in the country’s 1921 census; consequently, they could claim Lebanese citizenship four years later when a citizenship law was enacted in Lebanon.<sup>8</sup> French authorities saw Syrians as rabble-rousers whose nationalist aspirations would inconvenience the

Mandate and thus subjected applicants for Syrian citizenship to harsh vetting to ensure their compliance with French rule. Still, French authorities encouraged migrants from what would become the French mandates of Lebanon and Syria after 1923 to apply for Lebanese and Syrian citizenship at French consulates abroad. French authorities were interested in increasing their mandates' population of wealthier, mostly Christian citizens. Meanwhile, extending citizenship to Lebanese and Syrian migrants would indicate their acceptance of (if not enthusiasm for) French rule, dealing a blow to anti-colonial nationalists.

In Palestine, however, British Mandate policies were largely crafted to fulfill Balfour's promise, and so Jewish immigrants were naturalized at the expense of their Palestinian counterparts. Between 1925 and 1929, over three-quarters of the twenty thousand-odd applications for Palestinian citizenship were approved, of which only one percent were for non-Jewish applicants.<sup>9</sup> In 1937, Harold Morris of the Palestine Royal Commission estimated that about nine thousand applications for citizenship had been submitted by Palestinians residing in Latin America over the course of the decade, "and of these not more than 100 were accepted."<sup>10</sup> In the new postwar order, Palestinians who had migrated across the globe thus found themselves excluded from the privileges associated with Palestinian citizenship. They were effectively stateless, losing claims to property and inheritance in Palestine, and lacking protection and legal representation in their host countries and abroad.

The 1925 Citizenship Order-in-Council fulfilled Britain's promise to Zionists by naturalizing Jewish immigrants, and complicated the legal status of Palestinians residing abroad. The ordinance was divided into four parts with twenty-seven articles. The first article granted Palestinian citizenship to Ottoman subjects "habitually resident in the territory of Palestine" on 1 August 1925.<sup>11</sup> The second article, which dealt with Ottoman subjects born in Palestine, but "habitually resident abroad," presented Jerusalem and London with more complications. This article imposed a two-year limit for Palestinians living abroad to apply for citizenship and gave the government of Palestine "absolute discretion" in dealing with such cases. Article 4 imposed further conditions on such applicants: they could not have acquired any other citizenship and they must "have been resident within Palestine for not less than six months immediately prior" to their application for citizenship.

The six-month residence in Palestine as a prerequisite for citizenship presented many Palestinian migrants with difficulties. How could those with profitable businesses abroad leave them? Wasn't the fact of their birth in Palestine, a stipulation in the Treaty of Lausanne, and the fact that they had not acquired any other nationality sufficient? Moreover, as the ordinance made clear, Palestinian citizenship was ultimately granted at the discretion of the high commissioner – even to applicants who qualified under articles two and four.

Further frustrating Palestinian migrants who desired Palestinian citizenship was High Commissioner Herbert Plumer's November 1925 decision to bring the order-in-council into conformity with Article 34 of the Treaty of Lausanne, which gave former Ottomans until August 1926 to adopt a post-Ottoman nationality.<sup>12</sup> This decision

shortened the timeframe given to Palestinians residing abroad to opt for Palestinian citizenship to less than a year. With the six-month residency requirement, it effectively gave them three months to return to Palestine by February 1926. This was an onerous and largely unrealizable requirement for migrants with lives and livelihoods abroad. What is more, Plumer's amendment was not widely publicized. By the time thousands of migrants began applying for Palestinian citizenship in 1926, they were already unable to fulfill its requirements.

In addition to impractical application requirements, British officials prioritized applicants' motivations and intention to remain permanently in Palestine in granting citizenship. In December 1923, the Palestine government suggested amending the ordinance further to "check the application for Palestinian citizenship by immigrants who have not established any permanent home in Palestine but who may be birds of passage and desire to obtain that citizenship in order to enjoy British protection."<sup>13</sup> The urgency of the amendment was underscored by the number of applicants: "over 20,000 persons" had declared themselves to qualify for Palestinian citizenship in 1922. British consuls were told to use their discretion, and failure to provide sufficient proof of intention for permanent residence in Palestine became a frequently cited pretext – sufficiently proscriptive and strategically vague – for rejecting non-Jewish applicants.

The requirement of proof of intention to return permanently, British officials argued, was based on Britain's reluctance to create a "large class of persons who, though permanently resident in foreign countries, are entitled to British protection."<sup>14</sup> This reason acquired an irrefutable logic of its own among British policymakers in Jerusalem and London, who used it to dismiss Palestinian complaints. While most Palestinian migrants declared their intentions to return permanently to Palestine after amassing sufficient wealth abroad, officials in London and Jerusalem considered this insufficient and saw no reason to reconsider their applications. Britain was selective in offering the privileges associated with citizenship, and Palestinian migrants did not fit the bill. While Palestinian migrants in the Americas were denied return to their homeland, despite the terms of the Treaty of Lausanne, British authorities encouraged the immigration of Jews to Palestine and naturalized them "virtually without check of any kind."<sup>15</sup> But this crooked governance played a fundamental role in forging transnational Palestinian political consciousness. As Palestinian nationalism emerged in the early twentieth century, therefore, the defense of Palestine and Palestinians was never limited to geographic Palestine. It was global and included communities of Palestinians as far as the Peruvian and Chilean Andes.

The obstacles to naturalization written into the 1925 ordinance began to come into focus as Palestinian migrants petitioned the government of Palestine and the League of Nations, and appealed the rejection of their citizenship applications at British consulates throughout the Americas starting in late 1926. In the interwar period, "more than 3,000 appeals, charges, or communications of some kind *reached* the [PMC] Secretariat in Geneva."<sup>16</sup> About 84 percent of these concerned Syria and Lebanon or Palestine and Transjordan, with the latter making up the largest single group.

Most of these questioned the Mandate system writ large, and the British Mandate for Palestine specifically, and most were dismissed. Yet in petitions and periodicals, letters and fundraising campaigns, Palestinians and their allies worldwide spoke out against what they perceived to be a grave injustice. As a result, Palestinians began speaking about themselves more deliberately and exclusively as Palestinians, and calling for Palestinian national self-determination. The 1925 citizenship ordinance, in other words, contributed to the formation of a Palestinian diaspora and to the development of Palestinian national consciousness transnationally.<sup>17</sup> But the denial of Palestinian citizenship to Palestinian migrants also affected Palestinians in Palestine. The denial of citizenship to relatives, neighbors, friends, and business partners had dramatic consequences for property ownership, inheritance, and social cohesion. It meant dissolving family and community structures, including permanently keeping families apart. Palestinians in Palestine thus responded to the denial of citizenship to thousands of their compatriots in the diaspora, strategizing to confront British authorities in Palestine and contributing to the broader Palestinian national movement within Palestine.

## **The Committee for the Defense of the Rights of Palestinians in Foreign Countries**

In 1926, 'Isa Bandak, a prominent nationalist from Bethlehem, spearheaded a campaign to protest the 1925 Palestinian Citizenship Order-in-Council through his newspaper, *Sawt al-Sha'b*.<sup>18</sup> In piece after piece, he argued that the ordinance “constituted a ploy to increase Jewish immigration at the expense of citizenship of Arabs born in Palestine.”<sup>19</sup> Bandak called on migrants to register themselves as Palestinian nationals at local consulates across the diaspora, in defiance of the ordinance. Other leaders in Bethlehem, Jerusalem, and Ramallah, including “newspaper editors, municipal council leaders, lawyers and members of prominent families,” joined Bandak in publicizing the citizenship crisis through manifestos and open letters.<sup>20</sup> The Arab Executive in Jerusalem supported these efforts, and Musa Kazim al-Husayni, its president, lobbied colonial officials in Jerusalem throughout 1926. Late in that year, Bandak, Musa Kazim, and other Palestinian leaders met with Mandate officials and Colonial Secretary Leopold Amery in Jerusalem to request changes to the citizenship ordinance. Amery “refused to discuss changes to the order or increase assistance for the emigrants,” and in response Musa Kazim wrote an open letter to the government asking it to extend the citizenship application deadline, explaining that the law “was difficult to understand for even competent legal authorities.”<sup>21</sup> By early 1927, Palestinians transnationally had become so prolific in demanding justice for migrants that Palestinians in Palestine began to speak of migrants’ “right to return” to their homeland in periodicals like *al-Jami'a al-'Arabiyya* and *Filastin*.<sup>22</sup> Musa Kazim called on Palestinians in Palestine to “stand up in order to defend [the migrants’] rights, which are our rights,” effectively merging the Palestinian nationalist movement with migrants’ right to nationality and to return to Palestine.<sup>23</sup>

In 1927, Bandak, along with Khalil Murqus of Bethlehem and ‘Atallah al-Najjar of Bayt Jala, announced the formation of the Committee for the Defense of the Rights of Palestinians in Foreign Countries.<sup>24</sup> The committee was formed in response to British citizenship policy, but the larger context included multiple concerns. In his memoirs, Bandak described the unsafe conditions many Palestinian migrants reported from the diaspora. Throughout the 1920s, Latin American republics faced coups and uprisings that put migrant communities at risk. For example, Bandak wrote, Honduras “revolutionaries looted the shops and homes of many Palestinian expatriates.”<sup>25</sup> Without British consular support, Palestinians were particularly vulnerable. ‘Adnan Musallam explains that “Palestinian migrants deprived of their citizenship faced extremely difficult circumstances,” including loss of protection during times of war, inability to travel, and, in some cases, extortion under threat of deportation.<sup>26</sup> In the absence of official support, the committee “billed itself as the voice of the emigrants.”<sup>27</sup> Bandak, Murqus, and al-Najjar came from Bethlehem and Bayt Jala, the two towns from which most Palestinian migrants in Latin America originated. The committee leaders appealed to residents of these towns, many of whom had relatives in the diaspora who were impacted by the citizenship ordinance. As the committee’s membership grew, its leaders went to the Arab Executive, which extended its support to the committee. On 2 June 1927, Musa Kazim joined the committee’s leaders in visiting the office of the high commissioner in Jerusalem to request that the government of Palestine reconsider the rejections doled out to Palestinian migrants applying for citizenship. Their petition covered nine areas that explained the extent of the crisis for Palestinians, as well as the benefits for Britain if it were to reverse its policy.

The petition began by expressing a people’s reasonable expectation of their government, “that it should safeguard the well-being and happiness of the people.”<sup>28</sup> The objections of so many Palestinians to the “oppression” caused by the citizenship ordinance was in itself evidence that it was “harmful and contrary to the rights of the people, and thus to be condemned.” The petition described Palestinian migrants’ rights to Palestinian citizenship as “a natural acquired right,” of which Britain could only deprive them unintentionally, and asked Plumer to reflect on Britain’s reputation were it to “persist to turn a deaf ear to the pleadings of a people, based on a rightful and logical claim.” That is, “the committee envisioned an international right to nationality that mandated that individuals had diplomatic protection from their nation’s government.”<sup>29</sup> Palestinian migrants had made their citizenship applications in good faith, the petitioners went on:

Applications were duly submitted, and the Palestinian residents abroad in the belief of having complied with the law, awaited the issue of the proper nationality certificates. They were greatly surprised to learn from their Consuls that the Palestine Government had refused its approval, on the plea that the applicants did not reside in Palestine for the required period. If we consider the Consuls’ reply to be in conformity with the stipulations of the nationality law, on the other hand, we find that the

law contains harm and oppression to a degree not applicable on the most uncivilized people.<sup>30</sup>

In other words, assuming that British officials were faithfully applying the law, the law itself was not only unjust but unjustifiable.

The petitioners quoted article 34 of the Treaty of Lausanne and stressed that the “logical conclusion to be deduced from the stipulations of the article is that the emigrants of this land who belong to the majority, enjoy the right to the Palestinian nationality.”<sup>31</sup> The narrow window given to Palestinian migrants to meet the conditions set out in the citizenship ordinance, the petitioners noted, was a problem of British making – after all, the citizenship ordinance was published after the Treaty of Lausanne – and noted that the Colonial Office had “in its reply to a petition in this connection, acknowledged that the time and circumstances under which the nationality law were published were inadequate.” Adherence to the treaty thus required revising the law to allow Palestinian migrants, by right, to claim their nationality.

The petitioners went on to describe Palestinian migration as a benefit not only to Palestinian society but to British rule in Palestine and globally. In doing so, they included Palestinians transnationally within British suzerainty and British Palestine within the ranks of the world’s greatest nations. For the petitioners, it behooved Britain to encourage Palestinian migration and to protect Palestinian migrants because “all Arab emigrants possess real estate and immovable property in Palestine, upon which they pay taxes and rates.”<sup>32</sup> The petitioners explained that migrants did their part in supporting the government of Palestine in its “administration of the land,” but they added that the government “seems to refuse to do its part, by depriving them, through the iniquitous nationality law, of the protection they require in their abodes abroad.” They alerted the high commissioner to the riches of Palestinian migrants in the mahjar, who “have attained a large success in business and industry, many of whom own progressive factories reaping large profits.” These riches, they went on, “will eventually be added to the wealth of the land upon their repatriation”; in the meantime, “it is impossible for busy people to abandon their affairs for several months to come to Palestine to reside in compliance with the law.” The continued denial of Palestinian citizenship to these migrants would harm Palestinians inside Palestine, “notably [through] the stoppage of all money remittances that have heretofore been the backbone of the wealth of the country.” This loss, they continued, “will be felt through the renunciation of the rich emigrants to repatriate themselves, bringing their wealth and establishing in the homeland commerce, industry and agriculture. The losses to the Government in taxes and revenues are great.” Palestinians’ economic success, the petitioners implied, should give them the privileges normally associated with metropolitan citizenship: “The nationals of the greatest nations in the world are scattered all over the world, and instead of being hampered for reasons of nationality, are afforded the greatest help in the pursuit of their business.” If Britons could pursue their interests globally, why shouldn’t Palestinians enjoy the same opportunity?

The petitioners also strategically pointed out the new Turkish republic’s interest



in Palestinian migrants. Even as British authorities denied Palestinian migrants their citizenship rights, the Republic of Turkey “has informed her Consuls abroad to recognise as Turkish subjects all emigrants, formerly Turkish subjects, but who did not acquire or were not admitted to the nationality of the new political division their country has acquired.” Thus, Turkey stood to profit from the riches of twenty-five thousand successful Palestinian migrants – as the petitioners emphasized, “The benefit to be derived of their activity is not negligible.” Assuming that Britain would not wish to cede any victories to Turkey, they asked: “Would the British Government tolerate that the active section of the Palestinian population be accredited to Turkey? Would that be suitable to British policy?” Still, the petitioners continued to emphasize the preference for Palestinian citizenship by these migrants, “who would rather die than relinquish their land associations, family ties and Palestinian nationality.”<sup>33</sup>

Before making their demands of the government of Palestine, the petitioners described specific difficulties migrants were experiencing without citizenship. They pointed out that Palestinian migrants were unable to travel “between Europe and the different parts of America on business, as they cannot obtain a Passport from the British Consul”; their lives and businesses were at risk without British consular protection, especially in Latin American countries experiencing political unrest; and they faced imminent deportation from “some of the American republics, notably Chile and Mexico” that “have promulgated laws to expatriate all foreigners not provided with a certificate of some nationality, which laws will shortly be enforced.” Regarding the last difficulty, the petitioners explained that Palestinians would “be forcibly ejected, as tramps and outlaws.” They concluded this section with the following statement: “Your Excellency will not ignore the dangers and losses to which they will be subjected, and the dishonour and disrepute that will befall them.”

The petitioners demanded that Britain amend the ordinance “to enable all Palestinian emigrants abroad to maintain their nationality while residing abroad” and to notify British consular offices “all over the world to afford the protection to the Arab emigrants until the amendment of the law in a suitable manner.” The high commissioner, the petitioners concluded, should “consider this solicitation as the expression of Arab public opinion in this land and abroad.” Indeed, the Committee for the Defense of the Rights of Palestinians in Foreign Countries did not merely represent a unified position of Palestinians at home and abroad, but helped forge this unity within Palestine and among Palestinians transnationally.

The committee’s petition, and the deluge of petitions from Palestinians across the Americas during the first half of 1927, seems to have prompted a flurry of discussion among British officials in Jerusalem and London. In June, George Symes, chief secretary of the government of Palestine, told Amery of his meeting with members of the committee and Musa Kazim, shared a copy of the petition, and explained the extent of Palestinians’ complaints: “Arab sentiment in Palestine has been stirred to protest against what is represented to be an arbitrary deprivation of the rights of persons born in Palestine and resident abroad to become nationals of the country of their birth.”<sup>34</sup> Symes described to Amery the nature of the petition and its authors, and elaborated their position:

The members of this deputation . . . did not deny that many emigrant families had been absent from Palestine for more than a generation, but they maintained that they had never completely severed their connection with this country, had paid visits to it whenever they could afford them, sent considerable sums of money to their relatives, and in some cases, retained ownership of immovable property in Palestine.<sup>35</sup>

After explaining the petitioners' complaints, Symes intimated that he agreed with them and was open to reconsidering the migrants' applications:

I feel that there is a certain force in these contentions and am satisfied that fairly regular connection is maintained between individuals and "colonies" of these persons in America and their country of origin. On political and other grounds I should not be disinclined to reconsider sympathetically applications for Palestinian citizenship made by persons who by birth, race, and sentiment are genuinely attached to Palestine, although they are resident abroad and are likely to remain abroad for an indefinite time.<sup>36</sup>

The work of the committee members had seemingly paid off, convincing Symes that Palestinian migrants deserved British sympathy and assistance in securing Palestinian citizenship, even if they chose to remain abroad.

Symes did, however, express concerns about the migrants' intentions. He agreed with Amery that "it is not intended to accept options from persons who desire to obtain Palestinian citizenship merely as a means of obtaining British protection," and acknowledged that:

My deputation did not conceal the fact that, apart from individuals who found it inconvenient to return immediately to Palestine, the desire of a majority of persons affected was to obtain a national status which would regularise their position in the American States where they were resident and also secure for them the good offices and protection of British Consuls.<sup>37</sup>

Ultimately, however, Symes argued, "It is not in the interests of the British Government to estrange numbers of Arab natives of Palestine who are resident abroad and arouse the resentment of their relatives in this country on account of what, they contended, was a repudiation of the Mandatory's proper responsibility." He suggested that the Foreign Office be involved, and asked Amery to determine how many Palestinians were actually residing in the Americas – especially in Chile and Mexico – and "whether protection of their interests would involve trouble and expense so considerable as to make it inexpedient to afford them special facilities to obtain Palestinian nationality."

According to Albert Montefiore Hyamson, Palestine's chief immigration officer and a leading British Zionist, Jerusalem had received 3,603 applications that fell under

article 2 of the 1925 citizenship ordinance. The government had rejected more than half of these already and seemed poised to reject more than 60 percent in total under the existing guidelines. If Symes's approach were made policy, Hyamson wrote, "it is possible that about 1,700 of these rejected applications on reconsideration will be accepted."<sup>38</sup> Hyamson suggested that Symes convey these numbers to Amery, which he did not. In the meantime, however, Symes wrote Amery:

I propose to maintain the present practice of refusing all applications for certificates of Palestinian citizenship from persons who left this country prior to 1920 and have not resided here for more than a period of six months since that date, or from persons who, having left the country more recently, are not able to satisfy me of their intention to return and permanently to reside here in the near future.<sup>39</sup>

At the end of July 1927, Mitchell Banks at the Home Office in London sent a letter to William Ormsby-Gore at the Colonial Office in which he expressed sympathy for the case of Palestinian migrants whose citizenship requests had been denied. Calling it a "very important" issue, he concluded that granting them nationality would, first, "be an act of justice and fairness to them, because otherwise they may lose any nationality"; and, second, "it will also be of considerable advantage to British interests to have these people satisfied and therefore friendly to us in the different countries in which they live."<sup>40</sup>

Replying in September, Ormsby-Gore referred to article 34 of the Treaty of Lausanne and stressed that granting nationality to former Ottoman subjects now residing abroad was "subject to the consent of the Government exercising authority in the detached territory" (that is, the mandate governments). Ormsby-Gore found the existing law sufficient in addressing "all the possible cases" of Palestinian migrants, and declared that migrants who left Palestine before 1920, when Palestine was "part of the Turkish Empire," had no intention of returning and settling there irrespective of their "material interests in Palestine." Therefore, he continued, "they are scarcely entitled to British protection while abroad." Since many Palestinian migrants had "no connection with Palestine and had no intention of returning there except perhaps for occasional short visits," Ormsby-Gore deemed it "undesirable to create a class of persons permanently resident abroad who are entitled to British protection."<sup>41</sup> With this in mind, he found the "adoption of 1920 as the year since which applicants for citizenship must have resided in Palestine" to be "quite fair and equitable," since it ensured that only those migrants truly intending to remain in Palestine were naturalized. Those who had their citizenship certificates rejected "are not and never have been Palestinians."<sup>42</sup> As far as Ormsby-Gore and the Colonial Office were concerned, Palestinian nationality began with the establishment of the British Mandate and not, as many migrants protested, with birth in Palestine or, as the Treaty of Lausanne put it, "belong[ing] by race to the majority of the population of that territory."

But not everyone in Europe agreed with Ormsby-Gore. In September 1927, the Committee for the Defense of the Rights of Palestinians in Foreign Countries also

sent a petition to the League of Nations requesting amendments to the citizenship ordinance. Murqus followed the petition with a telegram in which he adjured the League to revise the law, since “it is unreasonable that [an emigrant] should be prevented from his nationality because he has emigrated from his country to work in commerce.”<sup>43</sup> Mary Adelaide Broadhurst, founder of the National Political Reform League in England and advisor to the Arab Executive in Palestine, forwarded Murqus’s telegram to the colonial secretary and explained that there is “great anxiety amongst the Arab leaders on the matter, which they rightly consider to embody a real grievance.”<sup>44</sup> Amery rebuffed her, however, stating that British officials had already considered the issue, found the law sufficiently thorough, and decided that it did not need to be amended. As for migrants who had left Palestine before 1920 and could not fulfill the two-year residency requirement in Palestine, Amery reassured her that “the High Commissioner for Palestine would exercise a proper discretion” in addressing their citizenship applications.<sup>45</sup> London gave Jerusalem the freedom to determine the fates of thousands of Palestinian migrants.

Several weeks later, Ormsby-Gore sent a confidential dispatch to Plumer. After explaining the previous months’ correspondence and developments on the issue of Palestinian migrants requesting Palestinian citizenship, Ormsby-Gore reiterated that, despite Symes’s, Banks’s, and Broadhurst’s recommendations for clemency, he was “reluctant to agree to any relaxation of the rule” surrounding residence in Palestine in or after 1920. He declared that “there can have been little emigration from Palestine between 1914 and 1919” due to the war, so

the adoption of 1920 as the year since which applicants for citizenship must have resided in Palestine means in effect that most natives of Palestine who have been in that country for a period of six months or more during the past thirteen years can obtain Palestinian citizenship provided that they intend to return there within a reasonable period and to settle there permanently.<sup>46</sup>

He then reiterated the undesirability of creating a class of British protected persons abroad. As for those who had been out of the country for longer than “thirteen years,” they “cannot be held to have had direct connection with that country except under the Ottoman regime or to have any legitimate claim to be considered Palestinians or to British protection.” Ormsby-Gore added that this position was supported by the foreign secretary and would be conveyed to the secretary-general of the League of Nations.

The issue persisted until the end of October 1927, during which time Plumer wrote to John Shuckburgh at the Colonial Office’s Middle East Department stating that he “entirely agree[d]” with the decision to not amend the law.<sup>47</sup> Plumer also submitted a communiqué to Amery summarizing the cumbersome second article of the 1925 Palestinian Citizenship Order-in-Council and the difficulties it imposed on applicants for Palestinian citizenship in Latin America, whose applications were denied because they missed the deadline, because they had not maintained connection with Palestine,

or because they could not prove an intention to return to reside permanently in Palestine. Plumer rejected the possibility of extending the deadline for applications, but added that “the Palestine Government are anxious to accord every facility for the acquisition of Palestinian citizenship by persons who by birth, race and sentiment are genuinely attached to Palestine.”<sup>48</sup> Yet, even as Palestinian migrants repeatedly sought to prove their “genuine attachment to Palestine” in their petitions, it was never enough. British officials in London and Jerusalem continued to ignore claims to Palestinian nationality and citizenship based on migrants’ historic, familial, and economic connections to Palestine; the benefits of migrant remittances to Palestine and to the government of Palestine; and the legality of extending citizenship to migrants, as well as the concerns over having no nationality at all pending further rejections. Britain simply did not find it necessary or worthwhile to amend the citizenship ordinance on account of Palestinian migrants’ grievances.

Throughout 1928, the Committee for the Defense of the Rights of Palestinians in Foreign Countries continued to appeal to authorities in Jerusalem, London, and Geneva. They also appealed to the British public in a forty-page open letter, published in multiple Palestinian periodicals, which reiterated many of the arguments made in the petitions submitted to the government. This was not the only instance in which the press contributed to the efforts of the Committee for the Defense of Palestinians Residing in Foreign Countries. The editors of *Filastin*, a Jaffa-based Palestinian nationalist periodical, were committed to defending Palestinian migrants’ rights and to exposing Britain’s unjust policies.<sup>49</sup> Further, they leveraged the crisis of mahjar Palestinians’ citizenship against Palestinian leadership in Palestine and its failure to achieve national self-determination. The editors’ strategic linkage of the defense of Palestinian migrants’ citizenship rights to the need for Palestinian political reform indicates the extent to which Palestinians in Palestine considered mahjar Palestinians’ citizenship to be a transnational political issue that impacted Palestinian political freedom.

## ***Filastin*, Citizenship, and the Reform of Palestinian Leadership**

Throughout 1927, the editors of *Filastin* newspaper – ‘Isa al-‘Isa, a prominent nationalist, and his cousin Yusuf al-‘Isa – gave the issue of Palestinian migrants’ citizenship considerable attention. The ‘Isas considered it a thoroughly national issue and, unlike the Committee for the Defense of the Rights of Palestinians in Foreign Countries, stressed the importance of protesting British policies *and* of calling for the reform of Palestinian national leadership to assist Palestinian migrants. In doing so, they linked the issue of Palestinian migrants and their struggle for Palestinian citizenship to the broader struggle for national self-determination. *Filastin*’s editors printed mahjar Palestinians’ protests against British Mandate policies as well as their appeals to Palestine’s leaders to bolster the newspaper’s agenda of revamping Palestine’s nationalist movement in the face of an increasing Zionist threat. As a result, *Filastin* enhanced communication and solidarity between Palestinians worldwide

who were struggling for the same outcomes and contributed to the development of Palestinian national consciousness transnationally.

The inability of thousands of Palestinians residing abroad to return permanently to Palestine without abandoning economically viable businesses abroad was cause for alarm across Palestine, and *Filastin* alerted its readers to this crisis. In August 1927, for example, *Filastin* printed a petition sent earlier that year to George Symes from Salamon Canavati (Sulayman Qanawati) and Bishara Ya‘qub al-Qawwas, president and secretary, respectively, of the Centro Social Palestino in Monterrey, Mexico.<sup>50</sup> The text of the petition took up the issue’s entire front page and most of the back page. Canavati and Qawwas decried the Government of Palestine’s hypocrisy, recalling Britain’s promise to help Palestinian migrants as part of their “duty as guardians of the rights of Palestinians,” which was undermined with their refusal to amend the 1925 Palestinian Citizenship Order-in-Council to allow the migrants more time to apply for citizenship. They asked: “What sort of assistance do you mean, Your Excellency, when you contradict yourselves?” Canavati and Qawwas dispelled any notion that migrants had severed ties with Palestine as a result of their lengthy stays abroad. “This is an accusation with no godly authority,” they declared, “for every migrant is in constant contact with his dear homeland through writing letters to his family and sending them money to pay taxes on his properties.” Canavati and Qawwas explained further that “the towering palaces and buildings being built in Palestine are from the riches of migrants, and this is the biggest proof of their attachment to Palestine, their dear homeland.”<sup>51</sup> Palestinian migration had historically been part of a larger global tradition of movement in pursuit of economic betterment, they argued, noting that, like migrants from other cultures, Palestinians never wished to remain permanently abroad. The obstacles that British authorities placed in these migrants’ paths were thus “illegitimate.” Specifically, the petition stated: “The government [of Palestine] has no right to forbid [the migrant] from the holy inheritance [of nationality], holding on instead to an unjust law enacted for Zionist ends and founded on miserly ambitions!”<sup>52</sup>

Toward the end of the petition, Canavati and Qawwas emphasized their community’s confidence in their claims to Palestinian nationality and their steadfastness in the face of oppressive British policies:

We do not acknowledge nor accept any nationality but that of our fathers and ancestors, whether the government desires it or not. We were born Palestinians and will live and die as Palestinians; we will make every effort for our Palestine; and we would rather starve, be murdered, or burn to death than embrace another nationality. Know, too, that we demand a right that is legitimately ours, and thus, we will remain steadfast in accomplishing our mission until we receive our rights.<sup>53</sup>

Canavati and Qawwas demanded that British authorities repeal the citizenship ordinance and remove all obstacles placed in migrants’ paths to citizenship. Accordingly, they concluded, “you will have carried out your duty to justice and you will be written into the history books and in gold onto the hearts of every Palestinian.”

By publishing Canavati and Qawwas's petition and others like it, *Filastin* at once broadcast the circumstances of Palestinians worldwide, demanded that British authorities acknowledge Palestinians' national rights, and bolstered the Palestinian nationalist movement.<sup>54</sup> For *Filastin*, migrants in the diaspora were Palestinians in every sense, and their struggle with British authorities was part of a larger Palestinian struggle for national self-determination.

*Filastin*'s editors also collaborated with regional newspapers in the Middle East to publicize the injustice of British policies. Palestinians in Egypt were evidently experiencing difficulties similar to those of their counterparts in the Americas and in August 1927, *Filastin* printed a statement from the British consulate in Alexandria, Egypt, regarding its policies on "Palestinians and passports." The statement appeared in Egypt's *al-Muqattam* newspaper, whose editors added critical commentary. When Palestinians in Egypt had complained to *al-Muqattam* that they had been denied visas to return to Palestine, *al-Muqattam*'s editors wrote:

We sent a representative of *al-Muqattam* to the consulate. . . . The specialist in issuing visas there explained to the representative that the Palestinians who left Palestine before the month of August 1925 are not considered Palestinians even if they were born there and carry Palestinian passports.<sup>55</sup>

*Al-Muqattam* responded:

If the consulate's statement is true, then this is very strange. For how can the British consulate forbid individuals who were born and raised in Palestine, all enjoying the birthright to Palestinian nationality, from return to their country, considering, too, that they haven't replaced their nationality with another . . . ? If they were not present in Palestine before August 1925 even though when they left it before this date, they did so as Palestinians carrying Palestinian passports, it is the British consulate's duty to protect and help them.<sup>56</sup>

Like Palestinians in the Americas, these Palestinians were told to apply for other nationalities: "People such as those," *al-Muqattam*'s editors continued, "may not return home carrying Palestinian passports; instead, they must receive Egyptian passports. It is this reality that many Palestinians do not wish to accept, for they believe that the British consulate is placing obstacles in their way."

*Filastin* printed *al-Muqattam*'s critique of British policy in full and its editors explained that *al-Muqattam* had discovered that the British consulate had apparently been requesting information about certain applicants from the Government of Palestine, and was requiring some applicants to prove their wealth before considering their applications for return visas.<sup>57</sup> These policies, *al-Muqattam* argued, were strange and unprecedented:

Has it been the case that any government in the world can treat its subjects this way? And if the government of Palestine can forbid the sons of the

nation from entry into their home on account of poverty or impoverishment, where should they go? . . . As for the special arrangements put in place to allow consulates to solicit information from the government regarding suspicious individuals, we do not have an objection as it concerns the government's security and safety. Regardless, we want that this not be applied to the sons of Palestine to whom the doors must be opened for return home.<sup>58</sup>

The editors of *Filastin* concluded by calling on the British government “to attend to these severe measures . . . and to facilitate the travel of returning Palestinians of all social classes to their homeland.” The crisis of Palestinian citizenship thus brought Palestinian and Egyptian periodicals together in protesting Mandate authorities' abuse of Palestinian rights transnationally, and in demanding redress.

But *Filastin's* editors also linked protecting the rights of Palestinians residing abroad to demanding reform and empowerment at the local level. In several articles from 1927, *Filastin* offered critical reflections on the status of the Palestinian nationalist movement in Palestine and its responsibilities toward its compatriots throughout the diaspora.<sup>59</sup> Referencing the rivalry between the Husaynis and the Nashashibis, two of Jerusalem's most prominent families, *Filastin* printed a message to its readers in the mahjar decrying the state of Palestinian leadership:

We would like to inform our immigrant brothers that there are no political parties in Palestine today; . . . there is nothing but familial discord among our leaders. . . . This discord . . . is what invited and invites us today to form a new and inclusive political party . . . to restore to our national movement its former energy and to build our future on firm grounds, unswayed by the winds of personalities and families. We hope that our migrant brothers will join us in this blessed movement, which is undertaken by every reasonable thinker in the country.<sup>60</sup>

This vision for a reformed nationalist movement would also benefit mahjar Palestinians. The editors reiterated to their readers abroad that *Filastin* belonged to them as well as to Palestinians within Palestine, and sought to build among its transnational readership a united front against antiquated, old-regime politics.

Efforts to cultivate this transnational Palestinian unity can be found in *Filastin's* periodic column “American Mail” (*barid Amrika*). Under this column, the newspaper printed Palestinian migrants' dismay at the state of their nationalist movement. One such piece, titled “The Immigrants Are Crying! O Leaders, What Have You Done For and With the Nation!” included a testimony from an unnamed migrant in San Salvador, El Salvador:

I went one day to the capital, San Salvador, as my national brothers invited me to the Association of Palestinian Brotherhood and I saw the miserable citizens, all of them crying. I began to cry with them without knowing why. Someone asked me what I was crying about, and I said, “I



am crying with you.” He said, “Does your family cry with you as well?” I said, “No.” He said, “So you are not of us because we and our families cry and ache together!”

I asked him why that was, and he said, “We cry because we have become without a nation and without a nationality, and without a common ground to resort to. Our nation was given to others at no cost; our honor was sacrificed for the sake of chairs and desk jobs; and our nationality has gone for the sake of division, discord, and troublemaking.”<sup>61</sup>

That migrants felt the paralysis of Palestine’s nationalist movement, and that this was ostensibly a larger cause for their tears than the loss of their citizenship, enhanced the newspaper’s call to reform a failing nationalist movement.

The testimony continued with a description of the abysmal conditions experienced by Palestinian migrants in El Salvador because their Palestinian citizenship had been denied by British authorities:

Our prestige has fallen in the eyes of people, for we have no consulates to protect us, no passports in our hands. We have become prisoners, insulted, humiliated, dying. And our children after us are dying as vagabonds, for they have no home or nationality, and no nationalist connection.<sup>62</sup>

The account then echoed *Filastin*’s editorial line, blaming Palestinian leadership:

But what makes us cry even more is what we read in the papers about slander in the nation, and hostility between leaders. The small slanders the big, and the big demeans the small, which makes us believe that our connection is dissolved, that our national movement is paralyzed, and that our honor in the homeland and the diaspora is lost . . . Our countrymen have been oppressed, and their home given to Jewish vagrants, denying them their natural nationality. And our leaders are unaware. There is no mercy or strength but in God.<sup>63</sup>

*Filastin*’s editors thus sought to convey to their readers in Palestine that their counterparts in the diaspora were equally frustrated with Palestine’s leadership and that they were equally committed to the newspapers’ agenda: out with the old, in with the new.<sup>64</sup>

As another conflation of the citizenship crisis with Palestinian nationalist reform, *Filastin* published the testimony of ‘Abdullah Abu Shawariyya, residing in the small town of Curanilahue, Chile.<sup>65</sup> Abu Shawariyya was exasperated by the restrictions on naturalizing Palestinian migrants and described the challenges Palestinians faced when submitting applications for citizenship to local British consulates:

British consuls here announced to all Palestinians that whoever wishes to have the right to his citizenship and to acquire Palestinian nationality must register at their consulates. We all did so . . . Three months later, the

British consul wrote explaining that the government of Palestine refused to accept our nationality. They said that if we wished to be considered as Palestinians, we would need to travel there, reside there for six months, and then write to the government requesting acknowledgment of our nationality. Otherwise, we cannot be considered Palestinians. This was how the consuls replied to us. Observe, brothers, the obstacles and difficulties that the occupying state places before us, for who can leave behind their work to travel to Palestine, live there for six months, and then get acknowledgment of nationality?<sup>66</sup>

The sequence of events was familiar to Palestinians throughout Latin America. But *Filastin* was also interested in what Abu Shawariyya had to say about the Palestinian nationalist movement in Palestine. While he explained that the plight of Palestinian migrants was a result of unjust British policies, he emphasized that a somnolent, stagnant Palestinian leadership was also to blame for not protesting the policy:

And is it not shameful that this happens to us while you are asleep? . . . You must not overlook the present condition of our country, which lacks a political party or committee to represent it before the government. This has made us like sheep without a shepherd while the Zionists grow in power through their unity. How long shall we sleep, how long this slumber and stagnation?<sup>67</sup>

Abu Shawariyya called on his compatriots in Palestine to convene and form a unity opposition party to regain the dignity and pride Palestinians once enjoyed, effectively echoing *Filastin*'s mission. This was a solution in which Palestinians both within and outside Palestine could share: "So, let us move forward, gentlemen, and protest to your government, for there are among you those with the financial means to do so. And we Palestinians abroad will endeavor to subscribe to this project on which we hang our hopes for our nation."

The most salient connection between the mahjar and the watan was invariably monetary, and *Filastin*'s most direct way of showing support for Palestinians in the diaspora came in honoring their financial contributions to their watan. In an article titled "To Defend the Rights of Migrants," *Filastin*'s editors published a message from the Committee for the Defense of the Rights of Palestinians in Foreign Countries announcing that migrants in Honduras and the Dominican Republic had sent the committee 165 dollars and 50 dollars respectively, and naming the donors.<sup>68</sup> *Filastin* regularly honored Palestinian migrants who sent money to the committee, indicating the quality of the union the newspaper editors wished for between their local and transnational readers. Reciprocal appreciation could overshadow the newspaper editors' inability to effect policy change or reform the Palestinian nationalist movement, but simultaneously uphold the interconnectedness of the – now transnational – Palestinian nationalist cause.

*Filastin*'s nationalist editors were committed to easing the struggles of their

compatriots in the mahjar. To do so, they honored migrants for their generosity and printed their testimonies; they protested British policies individually and in collaboration with regional presses; and, most importantly, they called on Palestinians in Palestine to unite and reform their leadership. *Filastin's* nationalist mission of political reform and party unity within Palestine thus found transnational fodder in the injustices meted out to the Palestinian diaspora community after the promulgation of the 1925 Palestinian Citizenship Order-in-Council. The causes were aligned, and the rhetoric describing them was made congruous. *Filastin*, as a platform for challenging British and Zionist colonial hegemony in Palestine during the interwar period and for critiquing Palestinian nationalist leadership, was ideal for publicizing the crisis of Palestinian citizenship – a thoroughly political issue – and for building transnational solidarity around it.

## **The Transnationalization of Palestinian Solidarity**

Through their activism and publications, Palestinians in Palestine brought the crisis of mahjar Palestinians' citizenship to the offices of the British Mandate in Palestine and to the attention of Palestinians throughout Palestine. The Committee for the Defense of the Rights of Palestinians in Foreign Countries and the editors of *Filastin* raised awareness about the issue and sought justice for their relatives and compatriots in the diaspora. As a result of their efforts, mahjar Palestinians' voices came home, and their right of return to Palestine acquired new significance as a legal and political matter that concerned the Government of Palestine as well as Palestinian leadership.

Bandak, al-Najjar, Murqus, and Musa Kazim al-Husayni exposed a rift in British opinion regarding the status of the thousands of mahjar Palestinians who desperately sought protection in a turbulent diaspora and a way to legally remain connected to Palestine. On the one hand, Symes, Banks, and Broadhurst counseled clemency for Palestinian migrants, calling to amend the text or implementation of the 1925 Palestinian Citizenship Order-in-Council. On the other, Ormsby-Gore, Shuckburgh, and Plumer refused to relax the law and even to acknowledge Palestinian migrants' claims to Palestinian nationality. This dissonance ultimately did little to safeguard the rights of Palestinian migrants, and Geneva allowed the Government of Palestine to behave as it pleased, irrespective of international law. However, the Committee for the Defense of the Rights of Palestinians in Foreign Countries challenged a fundamental imbalance in British governance of Palestine and confirmed what Palestinians everywhere had been protesting since the 1917 Balfour Declaration: Britain's crooked administration of Palestine, giving clear priority to the Zionists at the expense of Palestinians worldwide.

In his memoirs, Ayyub Musallam, an intellectual and political activist from Bethlehem who spent a considerable part of his career in Latin America throughout the mid-twentieth century, described the epoch of the Committee for the Defense of the Rights of Palestinians in Foreign Countries as follows, highlighting Britain's duplicitous behavior:

The committee . . . held meetings and carried out protests against the government regarding what it viewed as politics of separation, and it showed through these efforts a flaw in British Mandate policy regarding migration legislation. However, it was unable to convince the government to abandon the law or annul what it had issued in confidential instructions to British ambassadors abroad regarding easing the acquisition by migrants of the nationality of their country. . . .

Such was the rule of the British Mandate over Palestine, operating on a concealed politics of evil toward Arabs. For while it encouraged the emigration of Arabs from the country, it was simultaneously easing the immigration of Jews to it in an alarming and dreadful way.<sup>69</sup>

Beyond exposing inequities in British practice, Palestinians in Palestine decried their own leadership's shortcomings. Palestine's most prolific and anti-colonial nationalist newspaper, *Filastin*, highlighted the crisis of citizenship as a thoroughly nationalist issue, the resolution of which *Filastin* insisted was the responsibility of a reformed Palestinian nationalist movement that would effectively challenge British and Zionist rule, and as a result, defend the national rights of Palestinians wherever they may be. In printing petitions and testimonies from Palestinian migrants protesting British policy and lamenting the state of Palestine's nationalist movement – while also acknowledging the financial commitments of diaspora Palestinians to Palestine – *Filastin's* editors effectively merged the defense of Palestinian migrants' rights to citizenship with its main mission: unity and reform in the face of archaic and ineffective Palestinian nationalist leadership. *Filastin* advised its local and transnational readers that to support its nationalist cause was also to call for the defense of Palestinians residing in foreign countries, and vice versa.

The efforts of Palestinians in Palestine to protest exclusionary British policy and to reform the Palestinian nationalist movement through communication and collaboration with mahjar Palestinians demonstrates that Palestinian nationalist consciousness in the interwar period formed and developed transnationally. In writing a history of the rise of Palestinian national consciousness in the early twentieth century, therefore, we must recognize that what it meant to be Palestinian and, indeed, *where* it meant to be Palestinian were never limited to geographic Palestine. As Sebastian Conrad writes in the case of German national identity, “The search for particularity and for the elements of an unchangeable national identity . . . was . . . an actual effect of processes of cross-border circulation.”<sup>70</sup> Palestinians across the Americas were also defining Palestine and collective Palestinian political consciousness.

Palestinians joined in the age of transnational migration in pursuit of economic stability and political security that impacted much of the world starting in the mid-nineteenth century. And wherever they settled, they adapted and responded to the extensive global shifts in political, economic, legal, and social dynamics that rapidly characterized the new interwar world order. As the world they knew radically transformed, permanently altering the borders of their homeland and their manifold

connections to it, they resisted interwar European imperialism and demanded national rights and justice. In doing so, they contributed to the development of a transnational mode of political identification among Palestinians, to the emergence and consolidation of a Palestinian diaspora, and to amplifying Palestinian voices transnationally.

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#### Endnotes

- 1 On the 1925 Palestinian Citizenship Order-in-Council, see Mutaz Qafisheh, *The International Law Foundations of Palestinian Nationality: A Legal Examination of Nationality in Palestine under Britain's Rule* (Boston: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 2008); and Lauren Banko, *The Invention of Palestinian Citizenship, 1918–1947* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016). On British authorities' use of the citizenship ordinance to deny citizenship to Palestinian migrants, see Nadim Bawalsa, "Legislating Exclusion: Palestinian Migrants and Interwar Citizenship," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 46, no. 2 (2017): 44–59.
- 2 "The Palestine Mandate," online at avalon.law.yale.edu/20th\_century/palmanda.asp (accessed 5 May 2022).
- 3 *A Survey of Palestine* (Jerusalem: Government Printer, 1945–46), 185.
- 4 For the full text of the 1925 Palestinian Citizenship Order-in-Council, see The National Archives (TNA), London, Colonial Office (CO) 733/179/2.
- 5 The Zionist Federation in London regularly contested revocations of Jewish migrants' citizenship, arguing that the British authorities were obliged to respect the Mandate and its commitments to the Jews. See TNA, CO 733/179/2.
- 6 Cecilia Baeza Rodriguez, *Les Palestiniens d'Amérique latine et la cause palestinienne: Chili, Brésil, Honduras, 1920–2010* (PhD diss., Sciences Po, 2010).
- 7 On the legislation of Palestinian nationality following the Ottoman defeat, including comparison to other League of Nations Mandates in the Middle East and elsewhere, see Qafisheh, *International Law*.
- 8 Stacy Fahrenthold, *Between the Ottomans and the Entente: The First World War in the Syrian and Lebanese Diaspora, 1908–1925* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019), 163.
- 9 *Survey of Palestine*, 208.
- 10 TNA, CO 733/347/4.
- 11 TNA, CO 733/179/2.
- 12 Lauren Banko, *The Invention of Palestinian Citizenship, 1918–1947* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016), 85.
- 13 Letter to John Evelyn Shuckburgh, Middle East department, Colonial Office, 2 December 1923, TNA, CO 733/55.
- 14 *Report of the Commission on the Palestine Disturbances of August, 1929* (London: His Majesty's Stationary Office, 1930), 133–34.
- 15 John Shuckburgh, head of the Middle East Department of the Colonial Office, relayed this in a letter to the Zionist Federation on 25 May 1925. TNA, CO 733/110.
- 16 Susan Pedersen, *The Guardians: The League of Nations and the Crisis of Empire* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 87. Emphasis in original. The figure of three

- thousand represents petitions reaching Geneva between 1919 and 1940. In order from highest to lowest percentage from each mandated territory, the PMC received petitions from: Palestine/Transjordan (43.4 percent), Syria/Lebanon (40.6 percent), South West Africa (4.8 percent), French Togo (2.3 percent), Iraq (2.3 percent), British Tanganyika (2.2 percent), French Cameroon (1.3 percent), and Western Samoa (1.2 percent).
- 17 See Nadim Bawalsa, *Transnational Palestine: Migration and the Right of Return before 1948* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2022).
  - 18 'Isa Basil Bandak (1891–1984) served in several roles throughout his life in Palestine. Most importantly, he produced two publications after World War I, the magazine *Bethlehem* and the newspaper *Sawt al-Sha'b*; the latter was in circulation until 1957. A nationalist, he was also a member of Bethlehem's Muslim-Christian Association, as well as the Arab Executive. In addition, he served as mayor of Bethlehem in the 1930s and, after 1948, as Jordan's ambassador to Spain and commissioner in Chile.
  - 19 Banko, *Invention of Palestinian Citizenship*, 96.
  - 20 Banko, *Invention of Palestinian Citizenship*, 97.
  - 21 Banko, *Invention of Palestinian Citizenship*, 99.
  - 22 Banko, *Invention of Palestinian Citizenship*, 99.
  - 23 Banko, *Invention of Palestinian Citizenship*, 100.
  - 24 Adnan Musallam, "The Formative Stages of Palestinian Arab Immigration to Latin America and Immigrants' Quest for Return and for Palestinian Citizenship in the Early 1920s," in *Latin American with Palestinian Roots*, ed. Viola Raheb (Bethlehem: Diyar Publishers, 2012), 21.
  - 25 'Isa Basil Bandak, *Hayatuhu, a'maluhu, mudhakkaratuhu; 1898–1984* [His life, his work, his memoirs; 1898–1984], ed. Adnan Musallam (Bethlehem: Diyar Publishers, 2013), 58.
  - 26 Musallam, "Formative Stages," 22–23.
  - 27 Banko, *Invention of Palestinian Citizenship*, 103.
  - 28 Petition, Committee for the Defense of the Rights of Palestinians in Foreign Countries to High Commissioner of Palestine (Jerusalem), 2 June 1927 (hereinafter "CDRPFC Petition"), Israel State Archives (ISA), Jerusalem, M-223/38.
  - 29 Banko, *Invention of Palestinian Citizenship*, 105.
  - 30 CDRPFC Petition.
  - 31 CDRPFC Petition.
  - 32 "Arab emigrants" refers to Palestinians residing abroad who were applying for Palestinian citizenship.
  - 33 CDRPFC Petition.
  - 34 Confidential dispatch from George Symes, Chief Secretary, Government of Palestine (Jerusalem), to Leopold Amery, Colonial Secretary (London), 21 June 1927, in ISA, M-233/38.
  - 35 Symes to Amery, 21 June 1927.
  - 36 Symes to Amery, 21 June 1927.
  - 37 Symes to Amery, 21 June 1927.
  - 38 Albert Montefiore Hyamson, Chief Immigration Officer (Jerusalem), to George Symes, Chief Secretary, Government of Palestine (Jerusalem), 16 June 1927, in ISA, M-223/38.
  - 39 Symes to Amery, 21 June 1927.
  - 40 Mitchell Banks, Home Office, to William Ormsby-Gore, Colonial Office (London), 29 July 1927, in TNA, CO 733/142/18.
  - 41 William Ormsby-Gore, Colonial Office, to Mitchell Banks, Home Office (London), 2 September 1927, in TNA, CO 733/142/18.
  - 42 Ormsby-Gore to Banks, 2 September 1927.
  - 43 Khalil Murqus, Committee for the Defense of the Rights of Palestinians in Foreign Countries (Bethlehem), to Permanent Mandates Commission, League of Nations (Geneva), 2 September 1927, in TNA, CO 733/142/18.
  - 44 Mary Adelaide Broadhurst (London) to Leopold Amery, Colonial Secretary (London), 6 September 1927, in TNA, CO 733/142/18.
  - 45 Leopold Amery, Colonial Secretary (London), to Mary Adelaide Broadhurst (London), September 1927, in TNA, CO 733/142/18.
  - 46 William Ormsby-Gore, Colonial Office (London), to Herbert Plumer, High Commissioner of Palestine (Jerusalem), 7 October 1927, in ISA, M-233/38.
  - 47 Herbert Plumer, High Commissioner of Palestine (Jerusalem), to John Shuckburgh, Middle East Department, Colonial Office (London), 21 October 1927, in ISA, M-233/38.
  - 48 Herbert Plumer, High Commissioner of

- Palestine (Jerusalem), to Leopold Amery, Colonial Secretary (London), undated [October 1927], in ISA, M-233/38.
- 49 Founded in 1911, *Filastin* began publication as a weekly, primarily devoted to critiquing Greek clerical power over the Orthodox Church in Jerusalem. The scope of *Filastin*'s coverage expanded in the interwar years, protesting and critiquing hegemonic colonial powers' efforts to quash Palestinian national aspirations, and it became Palestine's most prominent periodical in the first half of the twentieth century. By 1929, the year the newspaper became a daily, it is estimated that *Filastin* had circulated three thousand issues, doubling its nearest competitor. During the 1948 war, the offices of *Filastin* in Jaffa were relocated to East Jerusalem, which was annexed by Jordan. The newspaper continued to be published in Jerusalem until 1967, when it was merged with *al-Manar* to produce *al-Dustur* newspaper in Amman, still operational to this day. For more on *Filastin*, see R. Michael Bracy, *Printing Class: 'Isa al-'Isa, Filastin, and the Textual Construction of National Identity, 1911–1931* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2011); and Rashid Khalidi, *The Iron Cage: The Story of the Palestinian Struggle for Statehood* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2006).
- 50 "Hawla al-jinsiyya al-Filastiniyya" [About Palestinian nationality], *Filastin*, 16 August 1927, 1, 8.
- 51 On the homes built by Palestinian merchant families with overseas ties, see Jacob Norris, "Mobile Homes: The Refashioning of Palestinian Merchant Homes in the Late Ottoman Period," *Jerusalem Quarterly* 83 (Autumn 2020): 9–33.
- 52 "Hawla al-jinsiyya al-Filastiniyya," 1.
- 53 "Hawla al-jinsiyya al-Filastiniyya," 8.
- 54 For example, in another issue, the editors noted a similar request from the Association for Palestinian and Transjordanian Unity in Tampico, Chile, and asked "the government to please make efforts within the Colonial Office to amend the present Citizenship Order-in-Council in a way that safeguards for Palestinians their rights in their homeland and distances ill thought from them." "Al-Jinsiyya al-Filastiniyya fi al-Tshili" [Palestinian nationality in Chile], *Filastin*, 9 August 1927, 6.
- 55 "Al-Filastiniyyun wa jawazat al-safar: bayan min al-qunsuliyya al-Britaniyya fi Misr" [Palestinians and passports: a statement from the British consulate in Egypt], *Filastin*, 5 August 1927, 3.
- 56 "Al-Filastiniyyun wa jawazat al-safar."
- 57 "Al-Filastiniyyun wa jawazat al-safar."
- 58 "Al-Filastiniyyun wa jawazat al-safar."
- 59 On the troubled Palestinian nationalist movement in the interwar period, see Khalidi, *Palestinian Identity*.
- 60 "Al-'Awatif al-sharifa: kalima hawla al-sulh" [Honorable emotions: a word on reconciliation], *Filastin*, 12 August 1927, 1–2, quote at 2.
- 61 "Al-Muhajirun yabkuna! Ayuha al-zu'ama' madha sana'tum li-l-watan wa bihi?" [Refugees are crying! O leaders, what have you done for and with the homeland?], *Filastin*, 9 August 1927, 6.
- 62 "Al-Muhajirun yabkuna!"
- 63 "Al-Muhajirun yabkuna!"
- 64 It is not outside the realm of possibility that the editors edited, or even fabricated, these messages to score political points. See, for example: Samuel Dolbee and Shay Hazkani, "Unlikely Identities: Abu Ibrahim and the Politics of Possibility in Late Ottoman Palestine," *Jerusalem Quarterly* 63–64 (Autumn–Winter 2015): 24–39.
- 65 "Mushkilat al-jinsiyya al-Filastiniyya wa kayfa nasha'at" [The problem of Palestinian citizenship and how it arose], *Filastin*, 30 August 1927, 2.
- 66 "Mushkilat al-jinsiyya."
- 67 "Mushkilat al-jinsiyya."
- 68 "Lil-difa' 'an huquq al-muhajirin" [For defending the rights of the refugees], *Filastin*, 12 August 1927, 7.
- 69 Ayyub Musallam, *Ihya' dhikra faqid al-watan wa-l-mahjar, Ayyub Musallam Ya'qub Musallam, 1905–2001* [The commemoration of the late Ayyub Musallam Ya'qub Musallam, 1905–2001, a loss to the homeland and the diaspora], ed. 'Adnan Musallam (Bethlehem: Diyar Publishers, 2016), 56–57.
- 70 Sebastian Conrad, *Globalization and the Nation in Imperial Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 4.