

Resisting the Wall: An Interview with Nazeeh Shalabi in the Village of Mas'ha, West Bank, Palestine

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Introduction

Territorial struggles are equally struggles of “ideas, representations, rhetoric, and images” (Said 1988, 1). Oppression involves dehumanization, reducing people to “things” (Freire 2000, 57–58). Interviewing people who are suffering from oppression provides an opportunity for discussion, for communication of what otherwise may not be communicated (Bourdieu 1999a, 614). What is communicated is not only the experience of the oppressed but also the individual’s explanation of the “real economic and social determinants” of oppression, the benefits that others reap from oppression (Bourdieu 1999b, 629). The attention thus drawn to oppression is important in a context in which attention is usually elsewhere: the stereotypes of “the mad Islamic zealot, the gratuitously violent killer of innocents, the desperately irrational and savage primitive” (Said 1988, 3). The colonial experience is one of “being present and yet not visible, being visible and yet not present” (Macedo 2000, 11).

Whereas oppression is dehumanizing, resistance against the fragmentation of individuals and collectives, and against inequality, restores humanity (Freire 2000, 56). While inequality is also present between interviewee and interviewer, the interview can represent “submission to the singularity of a particular life history” and an under-

standing that anyone in the same position would likely respond in the same ways (Bourdieu 1999a, 609). Similarly, for the interviewee, the “fear of being turned into an object” would be universally felt by anyone being interviewed (Bourdieu 1999a, 612). Yet at all times, structures of oppression can affect both interviewer and interviewee, through the “micropractices that enforce ... apartheid” (Bourgeois 2003, 346). It remains the task of the interviewer, however, to present “the experience of social marginalization” in “struggles for dignity and survival” and to hope that some response to this presentation will be evoked in its witnesses (Bourgeois 2003, 318). The aim is not only to understand and explain but also, during the interview, to mentally put oneself in the interviewee’s place (Bourdieu 1999a, 612–613). After the interview, however, only the interviewee’s words can best communicate that place.

The interviewee carries out a “task of clarification—simultaneously gratifying and painful ... to give vent, at times with an extraordinary expressive intensity” (Bourdieu 1999a, 615). The text that follows is intended to retain this intensity. Whereas a typical article might interject only occasionally a quote from an interview, this article is meant to do the reverse; the afterthoughts of the interviewer are included only occasionally.

Edward Said wrote that “most of all the Palestinian has suffered because he or she

has been unknown, an unacknowledged victim, and worse, a victim blamed not only for his or her disasters, but for those of others as well" (1988, 6). He encouraged the development of "people's narratives ... rich series of interviews, autobiographical reflections, [and] oral testimonies" (17). What needs to be challenged, he said, are the "prevailing research norms that require Western witnesses as the only dependable or credible evidence" (17). This article is part of that challenge.

Broadcasting people's narratives does not make life less painful (Bourdieu 1999b, 629). But, according to Pierre Bourdieu, this is "not cause for despair: what the social world has done, it can, armed with this knowledge, undo ... what is certain is that nothing is less innocent than non-interference." If this is true of Philippe Bourgois's inner cities, Bourdieu's "contemporary society," and Paulo Freire's "oppressed," it is equally true of the Palestinian village of Mas'ha.

The Protest Camp

On 24 March 2003, bulldozers begin uprooting trees and destroying fields in the village of Mas'ha. The community organizes a demonstration on 29 March, together with "different Palestinian political parties and other institutions in the region," as well as international and Israeli peace groups (Shalabi 2003). In a meeting afterward, they decide to initiate the Mas'ha Camp Against the Wall. On 5 April, they organize a demonstration of about 500 people and end by pitching a tent that becomes the centre of Mas'ha Camp. The camp remains, and a second demonstration is held on 17 April, then a third on 15 May, commemorating the 1948 Nakba (Catastrophe). Ongoing coordination, and joint activities take place with the campaign's emergency centres in Qalqilya and Tulkarem: photo exhibits, speeches, and written reports. They also visit Palestinian communities, raising awareness

"of the threat of the Wall" (Shalabi 2003).

Not all people understand what is happening. But, slowly, they are [becoming aware]. But when will they understand? When it is too late. It means that a man will understand what the Wall plan is only when his land is taken. He will know what this Wall's goals are when they refuse to give him a permit to go to his land.

He will know the meaning of the Wall when he cannot find tomatoes to feed his children. He will know the meaning of the Wall when the price of a bag of wheat reaches 200 shekels and he will not be able to plant a bit of wheat. He will know the meaning of the Wall when [olive] oil—which since the start of the events—has reached 8 or 10 shekels. This year a litre of oil has reached 15. What will it be next year? Then he will know the meaning of the Wall ... (Shalabi 2005).

The camp and the Anti-Apartheid Wall Campaign bring "the issue of the Wall to the front page of the newspapers and to national and international TV and radio stations" (Shalabi 2005).

Educating others

Figuratively and literally, Mas'ha is not alone. It is joined in its resistance by people from around the world, and by Israelis who have either served or resisted their military service—an entire spectrum of political beliefs among those camped out on a hilltop, seeking to expose and prevent the injustice of resource expropriation. Nevertheless, the villagers of Mas'ha are among the first to understand what is happening, and so must spend the majority of their time educating others who are next in line.

I believe that the point of initiation for the resistance against the Wall started in Mas'ha. Before the tent in Mas'ha, there were demonstrations against the Wall. It didn't gain enough publicity, but after the tent that was in Mas'ha, there was

greater knowledge and enlightenment (of the countries involved and the Israeli government) among the Palestinians in the areas of the Wall (Shalabi 2005).

Nazeeh explains that Palestinians themselves did not know what was taking place. Although Zionist colonization of Palestine has always been incremental—as described above, “rolled out gradually”—it has also been remarkably rapid, taking place in scarcely 60 years. The Wall itself emerges quickly, with pylons towering in a matter of months.

To counter the shock of its speed, violence, and bulk, Wall construction commences in the midst of siege and incursions.

Sharon utilized the hot time to build the Wall. Why? One wants to hit the other—if it's peaceful, it's difficult. But if there's a dancing party—no one would know who it was, nobody would notice who kicks whom. Sharon took advantage of the hot phase of the intifada to build the Wall very quickly—within two years he did that (Alfuqaha 2004).

The consequence of this strategy is that not only the international community but even the Palestinians who are about to be affected remain oblivious. Even as late as June 2003, most villagers have not yet heard of the Wall and, if they have, have never seen a map and are not familiar with the route (Bakewell 2007). The burden of education and resistance is borne on the shoulders of individuals like Nazeeh, who eventually join to form the Grassroots Palestinian Anti-Apartheid Wall Campaign.

Closing the Camp

On 5 August 2003, occupation forces close the protest camp in Mas'ha. The camp has been running for four months, with the tent shifting “depending on where the bulldozers

were working” (Shalabi 2003). By August, it is at the home of Hani Amer, whose family will be completely enclosed between the Wall and the colony of Elkana. Occupation forces declare the area a closed military zone, confiscate the tent, and threaten Hani Amer that any further protest will result in the demolition of his home. The punishments are targeted at mobility: internationals and Israelis are barred from entering the West Bank, and 46 Palestinians and 26 Israelis are arrested (Shalabi 2003). The initiator of the camp is held longer than the others, released only upon payment of NIS1 500 (US\$300), and is then ordered to attend a hearing scheduled two months later. He writes in retrospect,

We, the Mas'ha farmers and our supporters, knew from the beginning that we could not stop the Wall in Mas'ha or remove it. But we wanted to show that the Israeli people are not our enemies; to provide an opportunity for Israelis to cooperate with us as good neighbors and support our struggle; to show that the Wall is condemned by the international community; to expose that the Wall is not for security, but is about confiscating land; and to focus the mass media's attention on this issue.

We all condemn the occupation. Through our efforts together, we proved that the ultimate goal of the Wall is to block the creation of a Palestinian state and to imprison the Palestinians in ghettos, denying them a chance to live a normal life. Through our cooperation at the camp as Palestinians, Israelis, and internationals, we proved that the Occupation is the enemy ... (Shalabi 2003).

Discourse and “Administrative” Measures

In March 2005, I sit in the garden beside the house of Nazeeh, the man who began the protest camp in Mas'ha. The Palestinian village of Mas'ha was divided in the war of 1948, and in 2003 it lost the majority of its land to the Wall.

In the first part of the interview, Nazeeh

describes the maps on which the Wall has been planned and the changes to the land after the building of the Wall. He relates how he is labelled as a result of the protest camp and how this labelling has enabled the gradual annexation of his land to build Israeli colonies. "They build walls around the land and don't let people enter it ... and then they take it," he explains.

Nazeeh's portrayal of the gates in the Wall is an indictment of the Israeli High Court, which accepted the building of the Wall in Mas'ha when told it would have gates (Rappaport 2003). More importantly, it is an exposé of the collusion between colonists, army, government, and court when he reveals that the gate is sealed at the behest of the colonists.

The power of Nazeeh's testimony is in his knowledge of detail. While most outsiders interpret the army's prohibition on automobiles as a deliberate attempt to throw Palestinians back to an earlier era of using donkeys and carts, Nazeeh explains a further consequence of the prohibition: the added burden, both of travel and of load-bearing, triples the time required to complete ordinary agricultural tasks, which means that farmers fall behind the normal agricultural cycle and thereby damage their crops and land. The end result is that farmers "will not be able to work."

The sections below are the direct words of Nazeeh, except for sections in italics or block quotes.

Neither Bread Nor Olive Oil

Three decades ago Winston Churchill's grandson asked Ariel Sharon how Israel should deal with the Palestinians. "We'll make a pastrami sandwich out of them," he replied. "We'll insert a strip of Jewish settlements in between the Palestinians, and then another strip of Jewish settlements right across the West Bank, so that in twenty-five years' time, neither the United Nations nor the United States, nobody, will be able to tear it apart." ... On April 14 [2004] in

Washington, Sharon unwrapped his pastrami sandwich and received George W. Bush's seal of approval (Carey and Shatz 2004; see also NAD-PLO 2003; Hishmeh 2002; FMEP 2002).

A falafel sandwich is thick; a pastrami sandwich is thin, because two to three slices of pastrami are thin. So this is the plan—to make the Palestinians thin sandwiches. And maybe without salad. Simply isolating the villages. Now I, a resident of the village, have lost my land. I have seven children. I have been home for the last four years. My children are growing older and want to study, want to eat, to dress—from where can I get the money? I have lost my land, no work—I am not allowed to go to work—so what solutions do I have? Emigration.

... Why don't we view the Wall properly? This Wall aims to make the Palestinian people leave. This is the Wall to make the Palestinian people stateless. When my son gets ill and I do not treat him, or when he gets up in the morning and asks for breakfast and there is none at home—neither bread nor [olive] oil to feed him—what can I do? Before I reach this state, I think of leaving to search for a source of income to feed my kids. Either I kill or steal or leave somewhere and work killing. I do not have the willingness to kill, stealing. I did not get used to it when I was young, how can I steal when I am old? And I cannot feed my children from a false source of income. So the only option left is to emigrate ...

The Wall should be called "The Wall to Make the Palestinian People Stateless."

Because I asked for peace and removing the Wall, I became "terrorist"

My land and my families are on the other side of the Wall, behind Azzoun Atme. To get to the land, we have to go through Mas'ha, the way we came from, to enter here from this gate. They search us, and we have to have permission to go in. Now I am not allowed to enter to my land. I can't go

because of the tent. Because I asked for peace and removing the Wall, I became “terrorist.” So I am not allowed to go into my land. They punished me and this was my punishment: “entrance to my land is forbidden.” And now I don’t know what’s in it and what happened to it.

And even if someone has permission and wants to enter the land, when he comes here, he has to wait one hour, or one hour and a half, to go into his land. And [the gate determines] when to start his work and when to finish, so that he can go home. And today this gate is good: they let people pass. And sometimes they open it at 10:00 and people sit here one hour, two hours, three or four hours waiting for a soldier who is standing at the gate, who wants to smoke, and he doesn’t allow anyone to enter because he wants to smoke. And this is part of Palestinians’ suffering and part of Palestinians’ problems.

They claim that they made gates in the Wall to let people enter their lands, but this is what they do with the people before they go in. They want to torture people before they enter, to make the people themselves feel fed-up from their land, to make them stay at home and not to come to their land, that would be better.

Their excuse is that we are “terrorist”

Their excuse is that we are “terrorist,” wanted by the intelligence service. Furthermore maybe there is no *tabo* [Ottoman registration] in the land, or maybe someone was in prison, or they simply call him a terrorist ... it can be anything. But the main reason is that first they give the people a little, and the next day they take a little, and during the five years (as they said the Wall will last for five years) they won’t allow anyone to enter behind the Wall to see his land and in this way, according to the Turkish rule ... they can take the land.

Gradually they don’t let us enter the land because they will take it at the end. According to the Turkish rule, if I don’t work

in the land for three years, it will become property of the country. So they don’t let me enter, but in the court they don’t say that they don’t allow me. And the court says that “no one worked in the land, so we have the right to take it and to work and to build houses for Jews, for the colonists”; so they take it and make a colony like Shaarei Tikva and Elkana.

They work in the same way. They make walls around the land and don’t let people enter it. And then they take it and build colonies after three to four years. And this is the way they always follow. That’s why they refuse to give us permits—and not only me; a lot of people can’t come to enter their lands because they don’t have permits to enter.

To Work and Get Tired, to Gain Nothing

[To get to the land], by car, takes half an hour approximately, but before the Wall, it took five minutes. Five minutes from Mas’ha to here. Now, I don’t know how long they will wait, maybe half an hour, 10 minutes, maybe one hour, or two hours. They wait here, or maybe come back because the entrance for today is not allowed!

And because of this thing, this year ... lots of people didn’t come to collect [the olives from] their olive trees. For example, a person wants to come here. And to enter from here to the land takes time ... he comes alone. When he wants to come from Mas’ha to here and enter the land alone ... how much can he collect the olives? And then come back again to Mas’ha, and even when he sells the oil, he won’t recuperate the [value of the] petrol or the money he paid for coming to the land. Then he would say, “I go all the way there to work and get tired to gain nothing at the end! No, I don’t want the olives!” And lots of people didn’t come to collect their olives this year. They weren’t allowed.

Because they don’t have permits, that’s why they can’t (see Figure 1). And others



FIGURE 1

“Permits are required to enter their lands”; photograph taken in the village of Anin

Photo Credit: Neta Efroni (October 30, 2006)

don't have money to pay for transportation to come collect the olives.

By the Request of the Colonists

What is happening now is that the west gate, the main gate of Mas'ha's land, has been closed completely. They completely closed it. A military order came from Sharon and Mofaz that this gate be closed, and banned from being opened. This—naturally—came by the request of the colonists.

The colonists are annoyed by the sound of the Palestinians. They are annoyed by the sound of their cars when they pass through here. This thing annoys them. So [the army] answered their request and sealed the gate.

Of course, this is just the face of things. The real objective is more than that.

What remained now is the second gate. The second gate serves five to 10 % of the Mas'ha farmers. This gate is opened sometimes twice a day and on other times three

times a day. Naturally, they ordained the hours of 6:30 to 7:00 in the morning to open, but it is customary for the soldier who comes to open the gate to show up at 10:00.

It is announced that the departure time is 13:30 but a person working on his field may finish at 12:00 and would sit by the gate waiting for it to open. The jeep would pass (whether he wants to enter or leave or wants to enter his land) ... at 12:00 or 12:30. He would stop it and ask to open the gate, but they refuse to open the gate.

They say: “there is a specified time”! As if to say they are going by the timings! If a Palestinian wants to enter or leave, the soldier would refuse and demand that they go by the timings. However, to let him in, they do it at their whims. They do not apply the timings. They may keep him waiting for two, three, or four hours, so that he may get bored and leave. This happens ...

He is not allowed to take a car ... he is allowed to take a donkey



FIGURE 2

“It is forbidden for a person to take a car in.” Photo credit: Gustaf Hansson (July 4, 2004)

He is not allowed to take a car in. At the Mas’ha gate, it is forbidden for a person to take a car in. This, naturally, makes it difficult for people who wish to work their land. If a person’s land is far, for example, or needs a tractor to plough the earth—that is forbidden. If he needs a car at the olive harvest time to transport his olives—prohibited. If he had planted beans, wheat, barley, lentils, or anything, and needs a car to move things from there to the house—of course, forbidden (see Figure 2).

He is allowed to take a donkey, carriage—or beast of burden, that is. These things mean—make people, are designed to make people—leave the land. It makes it hard to work the olive groves. He needs to sit for one or two hours every day. And on going home, another hour or two. But at the gate’s closure time, he has to go home.

So, instead of working his olives in a week, he could spend 20 days. The time to work—the olives have a time for ploughing—a specific time for each process. If ...

if the period passes, then it becomes wrong to work with the olives; it will not benefit the olives or the land. It becomes harmful for the land. So they try—in this period in which we have to work—to stop us from regular work, so we will not be able to work.

Identity Documentation and Resistance

The occupation of land is concrete while the control of computer databases and their documents appear to be virtual (Hass 2005).

The second part of Nazeeh’s narrative expands on the use of IDs to expropriate land. Nazeeh begins by distinguishing the previous discussion—centred on those who have permits but are restricted in terms of timing and capacity—from the subsequent discussion, centred on those who are denied permits. His words speak more strongly than any external analysis, describing all the alternatives remaining to those without permits: paying someone (who has a permit)

to work the land or hoping "someone may have pity on me" and offer to help without payment. Neither option, he explains, is viable. He then returns to the restrictions on those who have permits—trying to care for young children, cook meals, rest, or seek emergency assistance if an accident happens in the fields—all activities hampered by the peculiar timings of the gates.

Nazeeh touches on important points regarding generational change. First, he explains, children are prevented from receiving permits because the land is registered in one name only, and only the named person—dead or alive—is eligible for a permit. This means that the next generation will not recognize their land, especially if landmarks are removed, altered, or added over time. Furthermore, Nazeeh worries, land ownership may become so confused as to cause dissent among the next generation: "No, this was not your father's but my father's."

Finally, Nazeeh summarizes the essence of how IDs and mobility restrictions enable expropriation. He tells how the villagers of Mas'ha stood in front of the Israeli bulldozers to prevent the loss of their land (and their mobility) to a colonist-only road. They succeeded, he explains, until the Wall was built, blocking them from continuing their resistance. "After the Wall," quite simply, "they built the road"—and bulldozed people's orchards to expand a colony. Reflecting on the previous two years, Nazeeh sees the chronology: first impose the permit system and build the Wall to block resistance, then bulldoze the land and build colonies and colonist-only infrastructure.

First make life difficult for those with permits, and then ...

On "Intelligence" Reasons

... If this is the case for those who have permits, then what of those who do not? Take me for example; I have no permit. In the beginning they gave me a permit for six

months in which I was able to enter my land. But, after the six months, I went to renew it, but they told me that I was refused based on "Intelligence" reasons, that I had a file with Intelligence. They denied me, denied me entry to my land. They refused to give me a permit. In this case I cannot reach my land. I need someone—must search for someone—who has a permit to go work in my land. I would have to pay him. But does the land make the money that I have to pay? It doesn't, so I have to pay out of my pocket. And—thank God [for what I have, but]—there is none there and I have nothing to lose. So I prefer not to work the land. Someone may have pity on me—for instance, maybe my brother has some spare time and says: "I will harvest your olives for you." But if he does this once, or twice ... how many times would he be able to? A year may pass before he can find the time.

It is because when they give a permit, it is made for a specific person: the head of the family. But olives need teamwork; I need to go with my wife and children. My brother has a permit, but his wife and children are not allowed to enter. Even if they did, at noon—his kids are in school—at noon they will go home. Even if he and his wife had permits, and both entered, they have young children at home and in school; they go home from school and need someone to look after them, because they do not feel it safe to leave the young children unattended at home. So, one of them would have to go and stay at home for the children. This adds more strain on them.

To Rob Us of Our Land

So, this is the plan to rob us of our land. This means that I know my land, and my older children know it too, but my young son—two years of age—the young one does not know it all because he has never been there. The older one was six when the Wall encircled it. Today, he may still remember a bit; in five or six years he will not remember any



FIGURE 3

“In 10 or 15 years [the new generation] would not know where their land is.”

Photo credit: Gustaf Hansson (July 4, 2004)

more where his land is. Even if they allowed him, he wouldn't know where it is.

So, they try to forbid the generation that knows the land, that works in the land, to enter it. The new generation is still young (see Figure 3). In 10 or 15 years they would not know where their land is, because the area besieged by the Wall will be surrounded by colonies. This land, where there are no colonies now, and where people are not allowed to go to—if the child still remembers a bit, with the continuation of building carried out by the colonists—they may build on his land and he wouldn't even know. They may build next to it, and when he manages to go, he would not know where his land is situated. Because before, there were no buildings here, [whereas later] the trenches would have gone. He would be confused.

In 20 or 30 years—if the land remained (without colonies of course) and remained outside the colonies, and there was a chance for people to go to their land—they will

fight over the land. The children: “this is my land,” “this land was my father's,” “No, this was not your father's but my father's.” Because there would be no boundaries. They would have changed its features.

They wouldn't open the gate

This is what is happening now. It means that most people are not harvesting their land. This year, with our relationship with peace movements and the media because Mas'ha's case was publicized a bit, most people went to the [Israeli army] Liaison, and the Liaison allowed that the gate will be opened one hour in the morning and half an hour at sunset—the second gate, that is. And international supporters, and the international and Israeli movements came. They helped people harvest their olives quickly. But they faced the problem of Ramadan. They postponed the olives to after Ramadan, but they refused to open the gate after Ramadan.

Those who want to go in Ramadan had to return at noon because they were tired. But it wasn't possible. The gate was closed. When would it be opened? At 4:00 ... 4:30. But when is the call for sunset prayer? It is at 5:00. So the woman who wants to go home to cook in the daytime as she is fasting all day.

If I was at the olives and fell from the ladder and broke my arm or leg and went to the gate to allow me out, they wouldn't open the gate. These things mean—they make people gradually forget their land ... gradually forget their land. This is what is happening.

We did not allow them to build it ... but after the Wall, they built the road

We can see what is happening to Mas'ha now. In our land we were against the building of a road. Several times we went and stood in front of the Israeli bulldozers when they were making the road. We did not allow them to build it. But after the Wall, they built the road.

In other places, we can see them from Mas'ha, they took land and erased all that's on it. They have not started to build on it yet. In the area where they started to work on the Wall, they began building directly while erecting the Wall. We were able to see them as they built the houses. But recently in one of our areas, and as soon as the Wall was built, they confiscated it, and started to work in it. They bulldozed it for the houses.

Two months ago, they informed other people—other people informed us—that they have started to cut their trees. They are cutting their trees and bulldozing the land for the colony—an expansion of the colony. This is what will happen over time.

Every two or three months, they take a small piece. Every two or three months they expand into a second and a third piece, until the whole land is encircled by the colonies. This colony chops from its side, and another one from the other side. This means we have felt this and seen it ... this year. The Wall has been there for two years.

This year we have seen what is happening more clearly. It illustrated the danger of the Wall on the Palestinian people today.

The march of colonists on it and—at the same time—depriving the Palestinians from going to their land to farm it, led to another thing: a rise in the price of vegetables in Palestine.

Expulsion through Impoverishment

In 1948, the Palestinians also lost a lot of land, and in 1967 too. And today they'll lose again. What can you do, those who lose in war, lose (Moshe Immanuel, former head of Salit colony, qtd. in Rappaport 2003).

In the most graphic of terms, Nazeeh describes how families will gradually adjust their consumption patterns to accommodate the rising prices of food. First the tomatoes, then the cauliflower, the wheat, lemons, and oranges, and, most important of all, the water.

Buried in the prediction is a subtle critique of the Palestinian Authority and its inability to even inform Palestinians of what is happening and what will happen. "There are no institutions," he says, without naming names. But the conclusion is obvious: the Palestinian people have been left alone to cope with a fate that PA negotiators knew in advance, although—to date—not explicitly agreeing to it.

"I am from the people and live with the people and I can see ... what they aspire to: feeding their children." And to do that, he says, soon their only choice will be to leave. "This is the plan": first the colonies, then the Wall, then expulsion and a final scooping up of all remaining land. One phrase stands out: "building the Wall, away from the colonies." While the Wall sometimes abuts Palestinian houses, sometimes crashes into them, it is always a distance from colonies. The reason is given by Nazeeh instantly: "Grabbing land."

The Price of a Box of Tomatoes This Year

The price of a box of tomatoes this year reached 150 shekels. Most people have had no tomatoes in their house for two or three months. Cauliflower, the price of a head of cauliflower reached seven or eight shekels. And this only in the first year.

People are also growing in number. Palestinians are coming from abroad. They talk of 15 000 Palestinians returning. They will come with their wives and children. So they will not be 15 000, but they will reach a figure of 100 000 or 200 000. They will need to eat, they will need housing. A piece of land that goes for 10 000 dinars now, will be 50 000 next year as there is no land to start with.

A box of tomatoes, which was 20 shekels, has reached 100 or 150 shekels this year. Next year we may not even find it, as there are some people able to enter now—say 60 % or 70 % of the people are able to reach their land and work in it now. In two or three years, no one will be able to enter, and so there will be no arable land.

Then he will know the meaning of the Wall

I have said this before, and will repeat it: the Wall has confiscated more than 80 % of the arable land that is suitable for growing vegetables, and confiscated 85 % of the groundwater of Palestine. If today we cannot find a tomato, next year we will not find water to drink.

This is what is happening. The problem is that there is no awareness in the Palestinian street. There are no institutions to support, give awareness lectures, or enlightenment lectures for the Palestinian street, so it can take action or know how to act to combat this cancer.

Not all people understand what is happening. But, slowly, they are [becoming aware]. But when will they understand? When it is too late. It means that a man will understand what the Wall plan is, only when

his land is taken. He will know what this Wall's goals are when they refuse to give him a permit to go to his land. He will know the meaning of the Wall when he cannot find tomatoes to feed his children. He will know what the meaning of the Wall is when the price of a bag of wheat reaches 200 shekels and he will not be able to plant a bit of wheat. He will know the meaning of the Wall when [olive] oil—which from the start of the events—has reached eight or 10 shekels; this year a litre of oil has reached 15—what will it be next year? Then he will know the meaning of the Wall.

Feeding his children ... no recourse but emigration

In essence, they have slaughtered, slaughtered agriculture in Palestine. There are few oranges and lemons left in Palestine. The price of a box of lemons or oranges was 10 shekels; now it is 30. All prices have gone up, and at the same time there are no jobs. Everything is rising; there is no employment. If [employment] goes lower, people's income will drop, and consequently the home supplies ...

These are the things that we, I, forecast. That in 10 years—and if things stay as they are, with no resolution of the Wall and its removal—no less than 40 % of the people of Palestine will immigrate. Final immigration, this means leaving Palestine. This is the plan that Israel is adopting.

It was the colonies to start with. The second plan was building the Wall, away from the colonies and grabbing land. The third plan is to evacuate the Palestinians and take over their villages and the remainder of Palestinian land.

These are my forecasts. My vision may be a bit farfetched or strange. I hope that it turns out not to be true and that this thing will not be realized (that the Palestinians will leave their land, and country). But this is what will happen. Because I can see ... I am from the people and live with the people and



FIGURE 4

“If I worked in a land for more than 15 years ... the land becomes mine”; photograph taken in Sheikh Sa’ad village Photo credit: Neta Efroni (June 8, 2006)

I can see what is being said in the Palestinian street, and what they aspire to: feeding their children. But from where, and how? They have no recourse but emigration.

Dispossession

At this point, Nazeeh begins an explanation of how law is manipulated and created to serve the purpose of expropriation. He describes one law in particular, comprising two halves. One half states that land is acquired through 15 years of human labour; the other half states that it is lost if three years pass without such labour. While Israeli courts recognize the second half of this legal equation, they do not acknowledge the first half. They pick and choose, Nazeeh says, among three bodies of legislation—Ottoman, British, and Jordanian—and intermix these with their own military orders.

They will treat us with ... the law that favours their interest

It has not been three years yet ...

In principle, the Israeli government has no law that it enacted to rule the Palestinian people. The Israeli government deals with the laws of the past three regimes, that is, the Ottoman government, the British government, and the Jordanian government. It chose the laws imposed by those three governments that suited its interests, and left out those that are for the good of the people. Each of these laws contradicts the other, so we cannot get a ruling—or if there was a court ruling regarding a piece of land in the Ottoman law, we find that there is a contradictory British law or Jordanian law, so they will treat us with the latter—the law that favours their interest.

Among these laws is the law that states that if I do not work in my land for three

years, or that a certain land was not entered to work it for three years, it becomes the possession of the state. The other half of the law states that if I worked in a land for more than 15 years and no one contested my work, the land becomes mine. This part is never applied by the Israeli government (see Figure 4).

What it applies is that this land was not reached for three years so it became its own. But my working in the land—what's on the land is yours, these olives are yours, but not the land. Because they find another loophole in the law, and no one can stop them. Because if I wanted to complain to a judge, I find the judge to be my adversary. When I go to a court, who would I raise my case to?

The government would come with a decision; the court issues a ruling for its own government. At the same time, there is no law to work with. This means if we appoint a lawyer to follow a law and he can find a recourse in it, there is no one law for the Israeli government.

... Look, concerning this law—the three-year law—in the past years they applied it almost all the time. Now, in this period, the Wall—the Wall when the Israeli government started on it—of course—during the Gulf War ... the world was busy with the war on Iraq ...

The picture will change a little ... why? Because the Wall is not completed yet ...

It will take time. I mean the Wall alone could take three to four years until it is completed fully. Now, in this period, they are taking land gradually, little by little. They didn't wait the three years until it is completed, and they will not necessarily wait for the three years to be over. There are some areas that they may not be able to annex to colonies in the three years, but in five years, or 10 years the colonies will reach them.

So they allow ... they keep hope, or the straw that the drowning person can hang on to, that "here is their land, here they are entering their land."

From now until seven, eight, or 10 years ... Who knows what will happen ... But I expect that, like the land of Mas'ha, which has been split into two parts, there is a great part of it near the colonies and another part which is a bit far from the colonies.

The part which is near the colonies, this one goes without question that, within the three years just as it showed in the first map of the Wall, that the Wall is a security wall until the end of 2006 or 2007. That is when they sent the notice with the map of the Wall, it said that the Wall is for security for five years. Within five years, this land will be, I mean, within the colonies.

But speaking of the land that is a bit far from the Wall, how long will it take them to grab it? They want to the people to be attached to it, and slowly, slowly take it away, so that they can kill—slowly, slowly—kill the land love and belonging in the people. Because of the Wall.

In the first six months, they gave me a permit. After six months, they forbid me. My brother has permits; probably in six months or after a year, they will prevent my second brother to enter his land. After one or two more years, they will forbid one more of my brothers and eventually none of us will have a permit to enter his land.

Because the land became theirs, and one of us cannot carry the load of the whole land, and that is what will happen. I mean, they will not even need to apply the law in three years, in order to confiscate the land.

If there is no serious stand against this Wall—I mean like the volunteers who are standing against the Wall and who want to see what is happening behind this "door"—within three years they would have confiscated the land.

But now, there are people who talk all the time about the Wall, the objectives of the Wall and what the Wall is doing to us.

Slowly, slowly ... the village has gone

So, they are working slowly, slowly, like a

worsening disease, the slow execution of the Palestinian land. Not all at once.

Because they are going to make a new law, or new laws, that will deprive us of our rights to the land. These lands have no deeds, and tomorrow they can come and say, "You have no deeds to these lands, it is not yours, it belongs to the government, you were just working it. And the government wants to take it away from you."

There is no definite history to show how much I have worked in this land. Mas'ha has been around 800 years, 900 years, maybe a thousand years. That is the age of Mas'ha. Its land extends to Ras Al Ain to the source of the Awja River. Now Mas'ha is two villages: Mas'ha Kafr Qasim—the people of Kafr Qasim are in Israel proper—and this Mas'ha.

They forbid—I mean in '67 they—or in '48—they split Mas'ha and made it into two villages. In '67, I mean, a little after 1967, the two villages started to move towards each other, and with this Wall, they have deprived the sister of seeing her brother because the brother is within the green line—within Israel proper—and the sister is in Mas'ha, or the son is in Mas'ha and his father is in Kafr Qasim. Or the brother is in Mas'ha and his other brother is in Kafr Qasim. So they have cut the ties between the two brothers, they have cut the ties between a son and his father with this Wall.

Slowly slowly, I mean, the village has gone. The land has gone. What can I do? What can I do but sit here?

Repression

*Perhaps ... because of what happened to me
... I would not involve myself*

The problem is that all the issues are entangled. If we come to talk about one subject, we have to talk about many subjects. It would focus and spread the thought. So one does not know on what issue to talk: the issue of the Wall, or the issue of the land, or

the issue of the people, or the issue of the occupation, or the issue of what is to be, or the issue of how to feed one's children. So there is not a single well-defined issue that one may get involved in or struggle for. He would come to struggle and find himself facing a hundred issues. It is very frustrating I tell you. And sometimes I say, maybe we should surrender and join the fate of everyone else.

Some would struggle in one direction and forget the other directions. He then starts to distribute himself in all directions and fails and sits down. There is no way a man can struggle except in little things. He is not even allowed—I mean, the little things—he is not allowed to do them ...

I mean, why was I prevented from having a permit, because I joined the tent sit-in. Just a tent that calls for peace and shows the world, that we as two peoples, the people of Palestine and the people of Israel, can live together. And we show it by living on the mountain without water, without electricity, without food, without anything. Living on a mountain. We want to show that we can live with each other and there is no reason for this war. Because we wanted to show this to the world, I was deprived of the permit.

The internationals who came to join in this thing, those among them who leave the country are never allowed to come back. The Israelis who participate in this effort are considered by the Israeli government as pariahs, or considered traitors.

... I believe that the point of initiation for the resistance against the Wall started in Mas'ha. Before the tent in Mas'ha, there were demonstrations against the Wall. It didn't gain enough publicity, but after the tent that was in Mas'ha, there was greater knowledge and enlightenment of the countries involved and the Israeli government with the Palestinians in the areas of the Wall. I benefited from the Wall more than what I gave back, from the tent. I am sorry, I benefited from the tent more than what I gave back. In the tent I learned a lot of things.

Seventy percent of the information I possess I learned during that time, either from the tent or after the tent. Because I talked more with the people and I started investigating different issues further that are in connection with the Wall.

Perhaps if the tent returns a second time, because of what happened to me, I would not involve myself the way I did, with the same enthusiasm, but I realized that I was reborn after the time of the tent. So I have been alive for two years. Before that I didn't live. I existed sort of ... lived. But I became aware of my existence as a Palestinian, rising against the oppression and the Wall, only after the tent. I realized that a man fights battles and [I realized] what are the difficulties that the Palestinian is faced with, regarding oppression and the fight against the Wall.

The extensions, the extensions of the colonies, meaning they are widening the colonies in the town of Mas'ha. Every day we see them preparing and taking over new land, building larger colonial properties. Their colonies just keep growing. One day you see them enlarging this colonial property. Within this small area it is these three colonies growing everyday, so they can come together and become one very big colony. So what they do is, they always try to get the land that is centrally located. They take a little bit of land from here and a little from there, trying to close in on the centrally located areas. The plan that the leader responsible for the colonies once laid out was (back in 1993): this area from the canal (Ras al 'Ain) must be one town. Of course, there has to be a colony, and these five kilometres have to be one town. The land of Mas'ha, of course, and branched within it is the land of Sanneria, land of Azzun Atme, land of Sawi, everything is interconnected.

Driven From Each Other, Two Times

The land of Mas'ha was, I mean I am 37 years old, so I don't know how it was exactly,

because I was not around in the old days, but from what I have heard from my late father, my late grandfather or from other people that the land of Mas'ha was toward the west / belong to the west all of Mas'ha. But then before 200 – 300 years ago, God knows... when they wanted to go, the land of agriculture that was good to grow on for vegetables or corn, beans, and other things was located in the west, where there was water present. The water was there, so they used the lands there in the summer, grew their different agricultures and of course this land for olives and almonds and also they grew their corn, because the other land was better for vegetable growth than this land. So they used to move between Mas'ha and Kafr Qasim. At Kafr Qasim there is a small hill and there they built houses on the hill and stayed there. So they kept moving between Mas'ha and Kafr Qasim.

In 1948 when the war broke out, most of the people were living in Kafr Qasim. Some of them fled and returned to Mas'ha and a large portion of them stayed at Kafr Qasim. So they regarded the people who came back from Kafr Qasim as refugees, they had refugees' ID cars. Because you do not have a country/land. Originally he is from Mas'ha, but he lived in Kafr Qasim, then he returned to Mas'ha but all his family is in Kafr Qasim. So he does not know any longer whether he is son of Mas'ha or son of Kafr Qasim. Where is his land? Mas'ha or Kafr Qasim? Where is his land? So he is in Mas'ha, was born in Mas'ha and lives in Mas'ha, all his relatives, his uncles and his land he left in Kafr Qasim. He has some land here and some land in Kafr Qasem. We have many people like this. Where he is living in Mas'ha, while almost off of his family is in Kafr Qasim. Family Sarsor, about 2 000 family members, almost everybody lives in Kafr Qasim except him and his wife and children. Family Amer, maybe more than 2 000 all together, how many are in Mas'ha? Maybe 1 000, the rest is in Kafr Qasim. More than 2 000 in Kafr Qasim and 1 000 in

Mas'ha. Family Taha in Kafr Qasim, except one family in Mas'ha. I remember there are houses in Mas'ha called "House of Taha," originally belonging to the Taha family, but where are the Taha family? And in Kafr Qasim there are houses belonging to the Taha family and there is a person in Mas'ha, a refugee, not belonging to Kafr Qasim. All he has is this ID for refugees, so finally he has a house, but they can come any time and tell him that "you are a refugee and you don't belong here, so go back to Kafr Qasim!" Thereby destroying his whole life and everything he has worked for. All his life he has to live with the uncertainty of being sent back to his land in Kafr Qasim. Maybe he will die and his children and grandchildren will eventually die also, while carrying this refugee ID. So they were separated and became two different areas.

But after 1967 they again became one and again the children of Mas'ha and the children of Kafr Qasim got married and they became one, once again. And now this Wall is separating everybody again. So now it is as if the people of Mas'ha and Kafr Qasim have been driven from each other, two times. My cousin got married [to] a woman from Kafr Qasim and he has an Israeli passport, he built a house here, three times the size of my house. But because he was Israeli citizenship, he would otherwise not have had the chance to get a job, but because he has an Israeli passport. Now, he left his house here and moved to Kafr Qasim. So now he lives in Kafr Qasim and his mother, his siblings and his house are all still here in Mas'ha. He is renting a house in Kafr Qasim, but now lives in Mas'ha and all her relatives are still in Kafr Qasim. Now, she can't see them and they can't see her. And these are people originally from Mas'ha, staying in Kafr Qasim, and now every four to five months he can come and visit once and on this trip he will be treated so bad that he prefers not to take that trip again.

Of course the land that was used for agriculture owned by people from Mas'ha in

Kafr Qasim is now gone. It has gone to the *kibbutz*. Also the production areas at Ras al 'Ain is gone and the land here in Mas'ha has gone to the colonies. Of course Mas'ha and Kafr Qasim are not the only places where there has been strong bounds ... for example we have Qarawa and Kofr Bara, we have "Tel Juli" in Israel and Sanneria Kofr Thulth in the West Bank. In Palestine these two are now divided of course, because in 1948 and 1967. It is a world that is connected, just add them together, not just two villages. Of course every time you go there it is the same. You have the same up north also. Qarawat in the West Bank (from the 1967 borders) and Kofr Bara from 1948. Tel Juli has citizens from Sanneria and Kofr Thulth.

Forced to eat hot chili, maybe half a kilo to a kilo ...

I can't go to Kafr Qasim now, because of the Wall and before that I needed permission to enter Kafr Qasim. Because it is considered Israeli territory. Of course before you were able to get around somehow, if you didn't go on the road, you could pass through the olive fields. Because there were no borders, you could jump over and you were in Kafr Qasim, but now there is a Wall, how am I supposed to get through the Wall to visit my relatives? There are a lot of people getting caught. If you are caught they might beat you up (if you don't have the right papers), maybe imprison you. Maybe they arrest you for two hours and then they would release you. There was a young man, a friend from Mas'ha, they broke his hand.

Many people were caught that would sell vegetables in Kafr Qasim. They were forced to eat hot chili, maybe half a kilo to a kilo of spicy chili. Forced to eat onion, no bread nothing, just plain onion. 1, 2, 3, it didn't matter. They would even feed potatoes to the people. They [Israelis] would take off all their clothes and tell them to leave. [*Why do people cross to Kafr Qasim?*] To live. Some go visit relatives. They go to work in

Kafr Qasim. Let say that I have relatives in Kafr Qasim, I would tell them that I want to work. Instead of asking them to give me money or food to eat, I tell them I want to work. But, while I give thanks to God [for all that I have], I don't have relatives in Kafr Qasim.

A Personal Account

After describing in careful and chronological detail the workings of the permit system, the Wall, the gates, the suppression and repression of resistance, and the gradual wearing down of agricultural abilities in order to declare the land "uncultivated" and—through the selective use of law—expropriate it and build exclusionary colonies, Nazeeh then speaks on a subject he has never spoken about before.

Halfway through, he asks, "What is a human being made up of?" In all the discussion of territory that frequently dominates discussion of Palestine—or any colonized place—this question rarely surfaces. The effects on the individual and collective are too often dissociated from the structures that enclose and—in the words of the UN report in 2003—asphyxiate. To include them, however, requires an intrusive view into the privacy of the home and the family. That Nazeeh allowed this view, speaking to a video camera, is a sign of how much he has given of his life for the benefit of international understanding of the Palestinian situation. But his question, "What is a human being made of?"—without ever intending to—brings home the message that the international community has hardly reciprocated.

When I Cannot Cure My Wife, the Light of Our Home

I am lying in bed at home seeing my wife screaming in pain, cannot move because of the pain she is in. I am not able to take her to the doctor, to treat her. I have been waiting for

two months to get an x-ray, to give her a proper diagnosis. She has been ill for seven months and for seven months I have been taking her to get an x-ray. Each time I go, they tell me to come back in one to two months. This has been going on for seven months now. This is because I go to the public hospital or doctor. But if I were to go to a specialist or a private clinic, within a month I would get a proper diagnosis and start the proper treatment to heal her disease.

But now we have been sent back and forth for seven months. So now if she has a serious illness and she has had it for seven months, what happens to this disease? It progresses much further, so instead of being cured within a month, it might take maybe 15 years to recover fully. So when we finally find out what she is suffering from, what happens to my inspiration or faith when I cannot cure my wife, the light of our home? I have seven children. So my wife, my lifelong partner and soulmate ... and she is bearing a much heavier burden in the house (our home), much heavier than me. Because she is bearing and holding up our home, me ... I can't even make a cup of coffee even. I am not saying that she is a slave ... no! But she is the soul of the life in this home. So what happens with my motivation or faith when I see her sick by my side and I cannot help her? What happens with my motivation or faith when my son comes to me and tells me that he is sick and faints every now and then? And when I take him to the doctor and he is suffering from anaemia. I can't cure him. He needs something to eat to regain normal blood levels and I don't have that. I can't help him. How can I?

There are a lot more examples, not just him. I have a girl that has glasses and every six months she has to change her glasses in order to improve her sight. But she has been with the same glasses for two ... going on three years now. I am not improving her sight. I am hurting and worsening her eyes. So what happens with my conscience and motivation? The problems are not solved before new ones arise. Oh no. Problems keep piling up. Always

new problems and it takes me years to solve these problems. Years to solve them. So what happens to a human being, what is a human made up of?

They come and talk about birth control

My oldest son is studying in Nablus, and do you know how much money he took with him to cover his expenses for the trip and for food for a week? Fifty shekels! And how much does he pay for his bus-fare? Twenty-five shekels! So if his daily expenses exceed five shekels a day, it means he has to go without food for two days. His younger brother I had to take out of school, because I don't have anything. I can't give him that. So if I want to help out [my eldest son] Dafer the last year, after that he has to quit school. What happens to my motivation when I have to take my children out of school, take away their education? I turned out a worker when I was 22 years old. I have severe back pain, chronic ... this will never go away and I will never be completely healthy. That is fine by me, but why do my children have to turn out like me? Why can't they get an education, so they don't turn into workers like me? Why can't they get a proper education, so they can get an education and get more out of their life? But I can't give them the education that I want them to have.

They come and talk about birth control: "Don't give birth to so many children." Why? ... Even though the Israeli government is killing so many and imprisoning so many young people ... There are many families that had even 10 children, where they do not have any left ... We see our children as our future, our hope. They will live after us and ... get our land back, something that we were not able to accomplish ... I am not expecting the children of, for example, Jordan and Egypt to bring our land back ...

Screaming in Agony

This is the first time that I am talking about my life. I have never talked about my personal

life or experiences. My wife, about one and a half to two years ago, started having pain. We did not know the background. She had pain in her stomach, her hips, her back. We went to the doctors, not private clinics, but state funded because we could not afford specialists. They gave her medications, but she did not improve from the treatment. One night around 22:00 she started screaming in agony. We went to a female doctor and after a brief examination she told us that we needed to get my wife to a hospital right away. She has had something for two years. We thought it was either appendicitis or a very severe inflammation. Because the doctors in our hospitals are not so skilled, they could not give a diagnosis on the basis of their examinations and from the x-rays. So they operated on her and found that she had a tumour in the ovaries ...

After the operation they examined the tumour further. They found that it was benign, so there was no need to worry about metastasis. But I was very surprised when, after five to six months—after my wife recovered and felt better—she again felt the same pain and had the same problems. So we had to go back and get her treated again and to try to find out what her problem was. The doctor who performed the first operation was trying to avoid operating and opening the abdomen again. So he wanted to investigate and do further tests, x-rays and other lab tests. All these things take time in a public hospital. To get an x-ray takes about one month. To get different forms of scans (PET, CT) takes another month or two. So we still don't know what would happen. I talked to a specialist, but of course I could not talk to him directly, so I talked to him on the phone through some people. He told me that in 90 % of the cases like this, the recurrence is due to lack of complete removal of the initial tumour, when they did the operation. That there is still part of the tumour left.

What worries me the most is that this disease is now blooming again, and I have been trying to heal her for seven to eight months without reaching a conclusion. So if

the doctors in this public hospital finally reach a conclusion and find out that, God forbid, this disease has recurred, is there any possibility for them to cure her or not? Is there any chance for them to cure her or not? Now I am not telling her 90 % of this. I cannot tell her this, and I cannot keep hiding these things from her either. I am mentally exhausted, so if I tell her my mental state it will worsen. So what happens in our home, what happen to our children? If I will constantly go around being angry or frustrated, who does this affect the most? It will affect the children most. So I am trying to keep my personality or mental status, so even though my children see me aggressive and angry ...

But at the same time God gave me a wonderful wife. Someone I would not be able to find again in this world. She is looking out for everything, there is someone in this home that is taking care of the children or that there is someone there in this difficult time that can protect the children from this situation.

... Please, if we talk some more ... please let us talk about something else.

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