The Politics of Sumud: Former Palestinian Women prisoners'
Experience of Incarceration under Israeli Occupation

Samah Saleh

Goldsmiths College, University of London

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I affirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own.

Samah Saleh

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Abstract

This thesis examines former Palestinian women prisoners' experiences of imprisonment in Israeli colonial prisons. It traces their life experiences before, during and after prison, examining the boundaries imposed around them by Palestinian culture, which treats women's bodies and sexuality as the representation of family honour and reputation. Another important layer of restriction is imposed by the Israeli occupation, which targets Palestinian women in their everyday lives, using various tactics to expose Palestinian private space to the public as a means of exercising power. As part of these practices, the occupation uses women's bodies as an object of threat to control the Palestinian community, which in turn becomes more conservative in issues relating to women.

I argue through the thesis that different boundaries are multilayered and far from fixed. Furthermore, the politics of social relations and interaction that take place within them are varied and affect women in different ways. It is in this context that I suggest that women create a space of negotiation according to their awareness of the nature of a space, and their boundaries within it, to exercise their political subjecthood and agency. I discuss how former Palestinian women prisoners' political subjecthood and their political performance shift between visibility – as community workers, mothers of political prisoners, participants in funerals, marches, or protests, and even as housewives – to invisibility when they take roles in the military resistance groups and employ different tactics to hide their activities from their families and communities. Hence, women are in a continuous process of spatial negotiation, demanding constant understanding and awareness of their boundaries and limitations. Sumud (steadfastness) is an important element for Palestinian women in their encounter with the Israeli occupation, and also in constructing their space of negotiation. Their practices of sumud are shaped and reshaped according to the politics of the space of negotiation these women create. Before their imprisonment, Palestinian women perform their sumud by bearing the Israeli occupation's efforts to control Palestinian homes. After imprisonment, this sumud is reconstructed as resistance against collaboration with the Israeli prison authority, and determination to challenge the limitations of prison by centering their daily lives on politics and preparation for life after their release. In this thesis, drawing on feminist

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standpoint theories, I facilitate voicing the former Palestinian women prisoners' silenced experiences and shed light on their often-unrecognized roles in resisting the Israeli occupation.

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Chapter One: Introduction

The Multiple Layers of Absence

> '*And yet, I recognize in all this a fundamental problem- the crucial absence of women. With few exceptions, women seem to have played little more than the role of hyphen, connective, transition, mere incident. Unless we are able to perceive at the interior of our life the statements women make - concrete, watchful, compassionate, immensely poignant, strangely invulnerable - we will never fully understand our experience of dispossession. I can see the women everywhere in Palestinian life, and I see how they exist between the syrupy sentimentalism of roles we ascribe to them (mother, virgins, martyrs) and the annoyance, even dislike, that their unassimilated strength provokes in our warily politicized automatic manhood.*' (Said 1985: 77)

Today, Said's quote remains as relevant as it was thirty years ago. Palestinian women are still denied visibility and acknowledgment for their active roles in the political and military resistance against the Israeli occupation. As a Palestinian woman who has been a social activist, and who has grown up in the West Bank, I have always noticed the presence of women at public political events and have always heard about the importance of women's participation in the political domain. I have seen that Palestinian women play crucial roles in resisting the Israeli occupation, as Said's comment confirms; they have also been directly targeted by the occupation. Palestinian women are not just witnesses and victims on the home front; they have also played important roles in military groups. Some of these roles are accepted within the community and acknowledged. However, when it comes to Palestinian women's roles in the armed resistant movements, there is a distinct silence. People avoid speaking about this aspect of women's activity, though they may show public appreciation for female fighters - if those women are not part of their own family.

Palestinian women's roles in military resistance movements have been under-documented, and little is known about them in the community. Their experiences in this regard are discussed in a transient way, and these discussions focus on a small number of women. Palestinian women are present, as Said argues, but also absent in history, memory, literature, and community narratives in patriarchal gender arrangements that consider resistance to be men's responsibility. Looking into the experience of Palestinian nationhood, we find an overwhelming absence of women as actors in accounts of the military resistance movements, and little documentation of their contributions to the national liberation movements. Hammami (2004) for example argues that Palestinian women are active in the national movements, yet they have not been included in the symbolic production and reproduction of Palestinian nationalism (27). A number of Palestinian scholars have highlighted that the documentation of Palestinian women in frontline activities has been neglected. Hammami adds that there is an absence of women from the narratives of war: 'Women are always the absent/presence in war narratives as they are located in the space of non-war - the home, and the peaceful spaces that need defending' (31). This is illustrated in work examining the narratives of the local battles in 1948 Palestine, which feature heroic men attempting to defend the land, women and children. There is a large body of literature that exists on Palestinian women as activists in the national movement, but the more symbolic 'roles of women in the production and reproduction of Palestinian nationalism have rarely been touched' (Hammami 2004: 31).

Women's political presence and contributions to armed resistance are erased by male dominated political movements, particularly within religious groups, and also by many scholars who focus on women's typical roles as mothers, daughters, or wives. When I started researching former Palestinian women political prisoners', I found much of the literature that discussed Palestinian women's contributions focused on their participation in nonviolent political activities, their roles on the home front, or their experiences as victims. Palestinian women's activism began in the early 1920s, when the Palestinian Women's Union led demonstrations against the Balfour Declaration (Shalhoub-Kevorkian, 2010: 7). Shalhoub-Kevorkian shows that women became part of the frontline in their many locations- in their homes, schools, as young pupils, as mothers, as pregnant women, and as workers. Similarly, in their work on the two Intifadas,

Johnson and Kuttab (2001) found that Palestinian women participated in a range of informal activities, from directly assisting the *shabab* (young men) in demonstrations to taking part in funeral marches and to supporting families of the injured. This led them to argue that in both Intifadas, women's informal activism took a form that extended women's traditional roles. They became, for example, 'mothers of activism' (37). Both of these works reflect the long and important history of Palestinian women's participation, illustrating that women are not just witnesses, but are also politically active in different ways.

Kassem (2011) explains why women are constantly excluded from sites of memory and commemoration: 'Masculine hegemonies efface women as a category of analysis from the area of public memory, transforming them into dispossessed and non-historical beings, and failing to acknowledge their active social participation and contribution in the process' (3). Drawing on Foucault, she argues that 'history as a scientific discipline acts as a formulator of memory because historical "facts" represent no more than the domination of the stories of the holders of power over those of others' (*Ibid.*). Shalhoub- Kevorkian (2010) also discusses women's exclusion, arguing that 'the history of the powerless and the process of knowledge production should not be based solely on what has been written but also on those who have been denied voice and space in history books to date' (13). Consistent with what these other scholars have noted, throughout my research, I found that in the Palestinian context women political prisoners are absent from national narratives, and we don't hear about their historical contributions to the Palestinian resistance movements. As such, in this thesis I am using a feminist standpoint to bring the experiences of former Palestinian women political prisoners' to light.

Through the process of the research and meeting women former political prisoners, I have learned about the important and varied roles that women play in the national movements - roles that, like others in the community, I had never learned about before. When I tried to talk to leaders in political movements, I noticed that they generalized women and men's experiences. For many Palestinians, women are part of the men's narratives, but they are not acknowledged as people. As Hesse- Biber (2006) argues, there is often an assumption that 'when we speak of the generic term *men*, we

also mean women, as though what is true for dominant groups must also be true for women and other oppressed groups' (3). For example, when political prisoners are discussed, it is presumed that the discussion applies to both women and men, without considering the gendered dimension of imprisonment or the important ways that Palestinian conservative culture shapes women's experience. When I decided to research Palestinian women political prisoners in Israeli colonial prisons, it was hard for me to find previous research that focused specifically on women political prisoners. When I approached organizations related to political prisoners or representatives of political movements about my research plan, some insisted that I didn't need to research women former prisoners and that there had already been a lot of work around them. But when I asked to see the work, they faced the question with hesitation. And whenever they guided me to look at a specific work, it was always about male political prisoners. This experience gave me an insight into how women's narratives and contribution are made absent. As I was carrying out my research, Nahla Abdo (2014) became the first scholar to publish work about Palestinian women political prisoners in colonial Israeli prisons.

In this work, she argues that Palestinian women activists, especially those who have taken part in militant struggle against the Israeli occupation, are perceived negatively by most 'Orientalist feminists', who depict them as submissive, powerless subjects, lacking agency, or simply as 'terrorists' (57). Abdo insists that women's involvement in the struggle, and their agency, deserve memorialization. She argues that women's presence in Israeli prison and, in particular, armed resistance movements is rarely analysed or accounted for (16). For Abdo, the poor recognition of women in political struggle and as political prisoners in the community is mirrored in academic writing, as few academics show interest in these women's struggles (15). She insists that excluding women from recorded history in general - and from the epistemology of nationalism and resistance movements more specifically - exacerbates these silences and renders women further invisible (*Ibid.*). The invisibility of female detainees' lives and experiences in the male dominated writing of history is also replicated in the almost total absence of recognition among female writers, such as the Orientalist feminists or those who study Palestinian national movements. Often, such writers give only simple descriptions of women's contributions, if they do not ignore them completely. In his

research on Palestinian prisoners, Ismail Nashif (2008) argues that when it comes to Palestinian experiences of prison, few studies discuss women's stories and, furthermore, in most of those which do so, women are presented through the eyes of imprisoned men (17-18). In my own review of the literature, I have similarly found scarce mention of women's roles and that most discourse on Palestinian political struggles more generally ignores underlying gender relations.

Palestinian Women Between the Hammer and the Anvil: Negotiating Visibility

Life under occupation creates cultural ambiguity. The structure of Palestinian society has changed as a result of the Israeli occupation policies. It is in a perpetual 'state of emergency', as Walter Benjamin defines it, in which desperate conditions are not the exception but the rule of people's lives. 'And the state of emergency,' Bhabha (2004) reminds us, 'is also always a state of emergence' (59). Ariella Azoulay and Adi Ophir (2009) argue that the unpredictability of Israel's closure policy makes internalization of the rules meaningless, and so uncertainty and chaos become the norm (cited in Ozgue, 2010: 5). Bhabha (1994) describes Fanon's understanding of the construction of identities and its relation with social sovereignty in the colonial context, stating:

> Fanon radically questions the formation of both individual and social authority as they come to be developed in the discourse of social sovereignty. The social virtues of historical rationality, cultural cohesion, the autonomy of individual consciousness assume an immediate Utopian identity with the subject on whom they confer a civil status. (61)

To connect this to the context of the colonized Palestinian, quotidian tasks are suspended, but at the same time individuals mobilize movements to resist the surrounding conditions. Palestinians need the approval of Israeli officials to move between cities. As a Palestinian, I have to know how to follow specific orders and behave according to specific expectations in order to secure a permit. This is the only way that I can reach where I want to go; it becomes part of my life. According to Amnesty International, there are approximately 5,000 Israeli military orders regulating Palestinian life in the Occupied

Territories (Makdisi 2010: 6). Palestinians encounter Israelis on a daily basis in their everyday places, where Israeli policy becomes Palestinian reality. Makdisi observes that a Palestinian cannot work, travel, study, tend crops, transport goods, dig for water, or even visit relatives in the next town without obtaining appropriate permission from the Israeli authorities - and so Palestinian life is subject to an 'ever-changing' and 'unpredictable' web of curfews, checkpoints, roadblocks, ditches, and closures, which keep it 'off balance' (*Ibid*.). Reinhart (2006) writes that Palestinians are being pushed by the Israeli occupation into locked and 'sealed enclaves', fully controlled from the outside. This practice, she argues, is imprisoning the whole of Palestine in an unprecedented model of occupation (8).

When moving through the different cities and villages under a system of total surveillance and control, in order to travel from one space to another and feel secure, Palestinians conform to a specific discipline without being conscious of it. The segregation and the flying checkpoints that pop up unexpectedly make one feel watched, conscious and suspicious of any move or reaction. I only understood how limited and restricted I was when I left Palestine. It took time for me to understand that I could move any time I wanted or that I could walk in the street without carrying my passport in case someone stopped me. It took time for me to understand that there was no one observing me so I could say what I wanted. At times, when I would see a security guard or police officer, I would start to feel tense - not because I did something wrong, but because my own experience of police and guards was tense. Having grown up in the totally militarized surroundings of the West Bank, I had to go through a constant stream of security whenever I had to leave my city. I was always worried and waiting to be checked or stopped. When I began to come and go frequently from Palestine, I came to fully understand the meaning of being watched, confined, and limited. I started to feel that most Palestinians are living the experience of imprisonment without being aware or conscious of it. The intensive surveillance is an isolating experience, introducing distrust and insecurity into social relations. At the same time, it is an experience shared by all, although in different ways (Feldman, 2010: 183). Feldman argues that in both Syria and Gaza the experience of public space is shaped by these isolating effects of perpetual surveillance (182). While the relationships of public life are under constant scrutiny,

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people become engaged in a variety of social networks, some more explicitly political than others.

From my own experience and observation, living in the West Bank, Palestinians learn how to adapt to this fully militarized space. They realize that to ensure survival in this constricted space, they must rely on social relations to maintain their lives, ensure mobility and continue work. Lefebvre has argued that space is pervaded by social relations; it is not only supported by them but is also produced by and itself producing them (cited in Hayden, 1995: 19). In the Palestinian context, the social relations that are produced and reproduced are also based on the mechanism of survival, to live and resist the Israeli occupation's strategy of controlling and restricting space. Grosz (1995) takes up this issue of how space influences subjects' interaction. She argues that the 'subject's relation to space and time is not passive', so the ways in which space is perceived and represented depend on the kinds of objects positioned within it and, more particularly, the type of relations within it (92).

This is precisely the case in the Palestinian situation. For example, if a Palestinian wants to move from one city to another, they create a network including taxi drivers and regular passengers with whom they share the same experience of challenging the closure of a city. So if I want to go from Nablus to Ramallah, I first have to ask if the checkpoint is open or not. Usually I ask in the bus station, as the drivers there make the journey all the time and are always aware of the current status of this checkpoint. If the checkpoint is closed, the taxi driver calls other people who made the journey before him that day to ask about the alternative routes. This network between the different taxi drivers and also the residents on the road is very important in surviving the closure and keeping connections open between cities. As David Harvey (1993) observes, the politics of place construction ranges across 'material, representational and symbolic activities' through which 'individuals invest in places and empower themselves collectively by virtue of their investment' (23). Through these relations, Palestinians normalize their lives under the restrictions of occupation, which forms part of their resistance to the practices of the Israeli occupation.

For Palestinians, these kinds of relations represent their *sumud,* which can be translated as 'steadfastness', a basis from which to resist the occupation and maintain

mobility and ties between Palestinians. According to Meari (2014), sumud 'is not definable' as a specific practice, but it can be approximated as 'a Palestinian mode of becoming and orienting oneself in colonial reality' (556). It involves the destabilization of the real and the metamorphosis of the body, the act of 'both materially-based survival strategies and various coping strategies at the ideational level' (Rechter-Devroe, 2009: 206). Sumud is a 'constant revolution in becoming and its significance lies in its non-conceptualized features' (Meari, 2014: 549). Schiocchet (2011) defines sumud as the 'existence = resistance' paradigm, meaning passive resistance as opposed to *muqawama* (resistance), which includes more active forms of armed resistance (89-90). Sumud, therefore, can be described as everyday (nonviolent) resistance. The Palestinian Liberation Organization's (PLO) usage of the term emphasizes refugees' insistence on being Palestinian, for example, through celebrating Palestinian food or dance. The PLO's framing of the 'Palestinian cause' popularized general usage of the term sumud in Palestinian cultural and political discourse. Linda Pitcher (1998) argues:

> Presence [in Palestinian domestic space] is…stridently articulated in the expression of *Sumud*, 'or steadfastness.' *Sumud* permeates the ethic consciousness of every Palestinian…*Sumud* illustrates a deeply held conviction of the Palestinians…to bear the daily hardships they face under occupation in the hope of one day outliving the alienation, oppression, and marginalization they have withstood for generations. (cited in Channa, 2010: 30)

Palestinians learn to exercise sumud as an important aspect of resistance to the Israeli occupation. It is the only weapon they own to counter the occupation, and to win the battle, and so every Palestinian learns how to exercise it. Rechter-Devroe (2009) argues that Palestinian women from different backgrounds wage an everyday struggle to maintain normalcy and, to whatever extent possible, enjoyable lives for themselves, their children and families despite the destruction, frustration and death around them (233). Palestinian women frame their acts of crossing Israeli physical barriers as acts of resistance against the occupation and as examples of sumud in their daily lives (*Ibid*.).

This kind of nonviolent resistance can be obligatory for Palestinian women. They often exercise it without even being aware of doing so.

Palestinian women have been displaced and oppressed largely as a result of the Israeli occupation (Korteweg, 1999). They face restrictions on their movement between different spaces and have to deal with military checkpoints operated primarily by male soldiers. This violence must be recognized as a key element in broader social, political and economic procedures (Alexandra et Al., 2012). Bodies are marked by gender, race, class and other axes of difference, and are used to operate in everyday spaces. Some women can face harassment at checkpoints. Having listened to stories about women's experiences at checkpoints and from my own experience, it is clear that checkpoints limit women's movement from their family homes because of concerns about them being attacked by the soldiers. Families also fear that women could be sexually harassed when they are stopped and made to wait with a huge of crowd of men at the checkpoint, which might consequently affect the family reputation. Sometimes women themselves avoid going to checkpoints so they do not face humiliating treatment. This constitutes a complex form of what Shepherd (2015) refers to as geopolitical segregation, 'a substantive set of imperial strategies that produce distinct divisions and locales of world politics', in which the geopolitical 'suggests political geographies that can be mapped onto certain spaces and bodies of the world' (40). Palestinians, as vulnerable geopolitical bodies are actively involved in negotiating and transforming the conditions in which they lead their lives, and in which they care for themselves and others. At the same time, their everyday practices and struggles shape the landscape of nationhood, state, borders, and boundaries in which they live. This landscape also influences their subjectivity and the ways in which they follow specific disciplines in daily life under occupation (*Ibid.*).

Drawing on the arguments of Kandiyoti (1987), Peteet (1991) writes:

> In the Middle East, women's experiences are embedded in the culturally defined systems of control over women's sexuality that crosscut class and sect and are expressed in an honour/shame complex that constrains women's public and sexual behaviours and the norms and structures of segregation that govern male-female interaction. (21)

In Palestine's gender arrangements, women's bodies and sexuality are always under the protection of the men in the family or the community. Women's sexuality is understood to be a reflection of the family honour, and so women are pressured to always perform according to what is expected from them. This performance should conform to social norms, which are often characterized in consideration of male norms. Grosz (1994) argues that men are perceived to provide the ideal by which women are judged. She argues further that transformations are required 'in social practices and exchanged relations – sexual or otherwise – between men and women, so that women's bodies are no longer treated as inert, passive, incapable and dependent, but in terms relevant to women's specificity' (14). The Palestinian community has expectations of women's subjecthood, which are produced from the traditional gender arrangements. This exemplifies Arendt's (1968) argument that 'society expects from each of its members a certain kind of behaviour, imposing innumerable and various rules, all of which tend to "normalize" its members to make them behave to exclude spontaneous action or outstanding achievement' (in Feldman, 2010: 185).

Palestinians live an unstable and unpredictable political life, and this influences the conservative aspects of Palestinian culture, which in turn shape practices when it comes to women's contribution to the national struggle. When it is crucial for the encounter with the Israeli occupation, it is acceptable for women to take part in resistance through activities that provide social services for the community, or through domestic tasks. However, the traditional account of war defines it as the work of men. Women are imagined as victims, with the predominant images of women and children during war being those of refugees or of widows and orphans fleeing combat zones (Naaman, 2007). Yet Palestinian women become political subjects without a choice; they are involved in all aspects of political life even just by being in domestic places. Daily life in Palestine is centred on politics, from the music and media to everyday discussions. In a documentary about the architecture of violence, Wiezman (2014) argues that as a result of the constant invasion of Palestinian homes and cities and the ubiquitous checkpoints, private space is forced open, dissolving the boundary between public and private. Through the Israeli strategy of exposing private space, Palestinian women become visible, forcing the

community and media to acknowledge their presence. But this exposure makes women feel they are always watched, not just by the Israeli occupation but also by their own community, which is anxious about their honour. Palestinian women are thus subject to what Foucault (1977) terms the 'panoptic gaze', a constant social surveillance. This restricts women's mobility and their ability to freely take part in political activity. Palestinian women, therefore, learn how to negotiate this visibility, becoming silent political subjects and creating space in which to take part in the resistance movements. Shalhoub-Kervorkian (2010) argues that women develop various methods to participate in the political struggle as invisible actors, an invisibility necessitated by the gender arrangements' highly charged symbolization of womanhood as an object of protection. And though Palestinian women might be physically visible on the frontlines, they are most often unnoticed and unrecognized in the community. Nevertheless, they exhibit a great deal of power and resilience. Women become involved in resistance movements and take roles in military groups secretly, as the male dominant culture deems women's participation in such action inappropriate.

Women and Political Movements

Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, the spiritual leader of Hamas made a clear statement about Palestinian women's involvement in armed resistance, declaring:

A man who recruits a woman is breaking Islamic law. He is taking the girl or a woman without the permission of her father, brother, or husband, and therefore the family of the girl confronts greater problems since the man has ultimate power over her, choosing the day that she will give her life back to Allah. (cited in Victor, 2004: 30)

This statement reflects the strength of male dominance over women in Palestinian culture, as Shiekh Yassin tries to validate the objection to women's involvement in military action. Yassin employs a discourse which uses religion as a means of influencing people, asserting that women who become involved in national military resistance are not following Islamic rules and that they are also acting without the

permission of their male relatives. The statement also professes blame and disapproval for the men who accept women's involvement in military activity. His claims illustrate how problematic women martyrs are for Muslim society. Shalhoub-Kervorkian (2010) argues that Hamas and other Islamic groups utilized religious and local community modes for expanding their politico-economic power. As their leadership became increasingly traditional and religious in both formal politics and informal social practices, women's roles and voices were marginalized, their legitimacy as activists was questioned, and additional restrictions on their lives, activism and mobility were created.

Hamas states in Article 17 of its 1988 Charter: 'Women's roles in the battle of liberating Palestine is just focused on educating children and supporting men if they are needed.' Women in Hamas concentrate primarily on community work, and also on the recruitment of new members. This article limits women's involvement in military action, and insists that women should take part in such action only if they are asked or if there is an emergency requiring everyone to take part in resistance. However, in 2006 in Gaza, the first woman from Hamas participated in a military action, after which they established a special unit to train women for military action if needed (Al-Shahed, 2014). As will become evident in later chapters of this thesis, some of the research participants I interviewed were from Hamas and were involved in actions with other - secular - movements in the West Bank. Hamas has never made any comment about this, and it is very rare to be able to access any information about their women's unit or the women's roles within it.

Most of the political movements in Palestine do not encourage women to participate in military action, instead directing them to community and social work. These political movements believe that it is men's responsibility to liberate Palestine and to protect the land and weak members of society. Some secular movements, such as Fatah, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), and the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP) have had women participants in some military actions, especially when particular circumstances required women to facilitate a successful attack, or when a woman insisted on taking part. Women are aware of the dangers of joining military groups, including the physical threat to their own and others' lives, as well as the deep cultural resistance to their involvement. As such, they work

within the shadows of their organizations, using different tactics to carefully negotiate these restrictions and hide their activism. Many Palestinian women put pressure on the leaders of these political movements to be given roles, and many have led military groups in specific operations. Dalal Al-Moghrbai and Lilah Khalid, for example, are well known as national figures that fought for Palestine. Such Palestinian women put themselves at risk of being killed, arrested or exiled by Israeli forces. For Palestinian families and communities, fear around women's involvement in military operations arises in part from the fear that being arrested puts their sexual purity – and thus their family's honour and reputation – at risk.

While some women break gender norms to participate in armed activity, their involvement must be kept secret from their families and the community. Thus for some female Palestinian political subjects, the moment of arrest or of death in armed struggle is also the moment of their exposure, as their previously invisible roles in military actions are revealed to their family and community. In my interviews, the women, most of whom were arrested from home, described their families' shock and denial around their involvement in a military group. This experience is full of contradictions. Alongside the shock and fear for the woman's future, the family feels they must also show the woman support for her to remain steadfast and to keep strong. Despite their denial of the women's acts, from the moment of arrest, families perform strength, and give total support to the arrested women in front of the Israelis as a demonstration of steadfastness, or sumud, which is emphasized as the duty of all Palestinians. As noted, families worry about the sanctity of women's bodies and the possibility of sexual abuse in prison, especially when Israeli soldiers threaten the women in front of their families. Abdo (2014) argues that women's bodies and sexuality become the colonial state's prime means of controlling women and intimidating their families (22). Women try to resist this threat and to show how strong they are as part of their sumud. As Abdo points out, 'women's bodies are also used by the women themselves as sites of resistance, defiance and struggle' (*Ibid*.). Women become vocal political subjects after their once-secret involvement in the resistance becomes known to both their families and the Israeli occupation. This exposure of the political subject requires women to demolish their

agency and to become fully part of the political group and, as such, to act politically at all times.

Space of Negotiation

The lives of Palestinian women who have been involved in political or military movements inside Israeli colonial prisons, and their lives after prison, are largely undocumented. This thesis aims to enrich the literature on the incarceration of Palestinians by shedding light on gendered experiences that have rarely been explored by scholars. To do this, I will critically examine Palestinian women's experiences before, during and after incarceration in Israeli colonial prisons. In so doing, I suggest that former Palestinian women prisoners' create their own imagined political community, forging a space of negotiation through which to survive the expectations and limitations of the gender arrangement elements in the community when they decide to become political activists. In addition, I will argue that the community recognizes the necessity of women's roles in resistance, and their political subjectivity, but this recognition is restrained and limited, denying them important roles. I will focus on this simultaneous recognition and disavowal of Palestinian women's political subjectivity within their families and local communities. Paradoxically, I will discuss how Palestinian society may accept and even encourage women's involvement in some forms of resistance, but for individual families, the involvement of their own women is met with shock, silence and denial.

In this thesis I am going to facilitate voicing the silenced experiences of former Palestinian women prisoners', to shed light on their often-unrecognized roles in resistance, and to show how women exercise sumud. By looking closely at women who have been in Israeli colonial prison, this work traces their life experiences in order to understand the different ways that women negotiate their political, social, and individual positions to challenge the Israeli occupation. I am going to focus on how Palestinian women's political subjecthood, which can be defined as their roles in the Palestinian national struggle, and their political performance shift from visibility- as community workers, mothers of political prisoners, or participants in funerals marches or protests - to invisibility when they take on roles that potentially subvert male domination. This

presents women with a continuous process of spatial negotiation, demanding a constant understanding and awareness of their boundaries and limitations, reflected in the visibility and invisibility. Palestinian women are aware of their boundaries, but they learn how to negotiate them. I argue that women's awareness of their boundaries influences the way they negotiate the space of incarceration and the tactics of survival that they forge.

Palestinian women succeed in negotiating and challenging the many patriarchal gender arrangements' restrictions and limitations imposed on them. The boundaries that Palestinian women must perpetually negotiate are multi-layered, drawn in the socio-politics of the Palestinian gender arrangements, which is constructed on protecting women's bodies and sexuality, and also by the carceral system of the Israeli occupation. In this thesis, I argue that women create room for negotiation through their understanding of the politics of the multifaceted space of their incarceration and of their own invisibility. These boundaries are not fixed but constantly changing, shaping and reshaping the politics of social relations and interaction that take place within them. The individual and collective experiences of the women themselves give shape to the political and social boundaries that constrict them. Their understanding of the surrounding culture and politics enables them to create an 'imagined political community,' to borrow Anderson's phrase. Such communities, as he puts it, are 'imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign' (1984: 5-6). Describing nations in these terms, Anderson writes that they are imagined because 'the members of even smallest nation will never meet most of their fellow-members, or even hear of them: yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion.' As such, imagined communities 'are to be distinguished, not by their falsity…but by the style in which they are imagined' (6). Though in discussing nations Anderson's focus is different from mine, his concept is useful here as it captures the way that many of my participants describe themselves and the community they have created for themselves. The imagined community of former Palestinian women prisoners' is built through the different stories they have heard about political prisoners, as well as through the media's presentation of them. Even if these women don't know each other, or have never met with other former prisoners, they are aware of how they should perform as political subjects.

Though women in incarcerated space share the same conditions, the ways in which women understand and thus navigate the boundaries vary. However, all of the former inmates I spoke to drew upon their imagined community to negotiate their boundaries. In her memoir, *Dreams of Trespass: Tales of a Harem Childhood*, Fatema Mernissi (1994) focuses on women's boundaries (*hudud*), which she describes as invisible imaginary lines in the minds of warriors, meaning that these 'frontiers' are drawn, and guarded, by people in power. As such these boundaries differ according to culture and traditions. She reflects that though trespass led only to 'sorrow and unhappiness…women dreamed of trespassing all the time, the world beyond the gate was their obsession, they fantasized all day long about parading in unfamiliar streets' (1-2). Similarly, the women whose experiences are considered in this thesis used their invisibility as a tactic of trespassing and participating in political or military groups.

The awareness through which women structure their own space of negotiation derives from their experiences of negotiation and the relations that underlie their social interactions. To understand this space, I borrow Bhabha's (1988) concept of third space, which 'represents both the general condition of language and the specific implication of the utterance in a performative and institutional strategy of which it cannot in itself be conscious. What this unconscious relation introduces is ambivalence in the act of interpretation' (20). This conceptual framework is useful making sense of the ways that Palestinian women negotiate the boundaries imposed upon them by the patriarchal gender arrangements and by the different technologies the Israeli occupation uses to control Palestinian territory. Edward Soja develops Bhabha's concept of third space, arguing that

> space may be primordially given, but its organization, use and meaning is a product of social translation, transformation and experience. Therefore, third space is not simply a physical space; it is constructed socially. Furthermore, it does not embody a single identity, but multiple ones. Third space is not a complete space nor could it be completed, it is always in a process of becoming, it is not completely real or imagined, it is a fluid and dynamic space. (cited in Ozguc, 2010: 8-9)

Soja's observation helps to illuminate the space of negotiation that my participants have created. This space is 'fluid and dynamic', responding to its surroundings. As such, the space of negotiation is in a continuous process of becoming, reflecting the individual woman's understanding of the politics of the different spaces in which she finds herself. Sumud is an important element of the space of negotiation; it can take many shapes, and is thus transformative, according to the particular situation the women are in. In this thesis, I am going to discuss the multiple ways Palestinian women perform sumud before their arrest, considering the different means they use to nonviolently resist inside their homes, to normalize their lives under occupation and to maintain steadfastness, even when their private space is attacked by the occupation. I will then examine how the women's sumud takes another shape during arrest and interrogation, as they try to resist confessing to or collaborating with the interrogators. The power not to confess, to remain steadfast, is one of the most important aspects of the interrogation process for women, enabling them to demonstrate their strong political beliefs. In some cases, Israeli interrogators use different tactics and strategies to sexually humiliate, subjugate and victimize prisoners. This is done not only through direct acts of sexual torture, but also through psychological sexual torture as well (Abdo, 2014: 24). Palestinian women's refusal to cooperate with the Israeli interrogators, their refusal to confess, and their denial of accusation are resistance.

As I show in this thesis, life inside Israeli colonial prisons for Palestinian women political prisoners is grounded wholly in politics. I will show how women keep their sumud by creating a political space within the restrictions of prison through collective schedules and activities and through their relations with each other. They strive to perform their political beliefs at all times to show Israeli authorities that even in prison, where they are constantly watched through a 'panoptic gaze' that is both physical and psychological, they are able to maintain their politics and sumud. Shalhoub-Kervorkian (2009) discusses the ways women challenge all the restrictions imposed on them in the Palestinian community. She argues that Palestinian women not only struggle to challenge their marginalization but also to create 'safe spaces within their marginalized status - new locations and new languages to act against different forms of oppression' (22). Inside prison, Palestinian women similarly challenge restrictions and forge spaces of

development and creation to prepare them for life after prison. They also find a space for their agency, which this work will discuss.

My participants come from very different social, political, and geographical backgrounds. These differences make important variations in the women's experiences of life after prison, but all of the women become visible for their roles in the military actions and resistance. The experience of imprisonment marks the women as former political prisoners, a label that requires them to continually perform in accordance with the community's expectations of political prisoners. They are expected to be part of public events and to always speak about politics. Women often feel the community is watching them, observing their speech and their relationships with others, as well as their involvement in politics. In addition to these pressures within the community, former prisoners are also watched by the Israeli occupation when they travel between cities or even in their daily lives. In this thesis, I discuss the tactics women use to create their own space of negotiation and to challenge the gendered boundaries which have been built by the traditional gender arrangements as well as the restrictions of the Israeli occupation, both of which interlock to create a system of social and geographical incarceration. Palestinian women negotiate these boundaries through their creation of a third space, structured through the women's own understanding of the restrictions around their mobility and the fears around their sexuality.

Some of my participants feel that their families restrict them and watch them more closely than other women in the family, and also more closely than before they were imprisoned. This increased family surveillance and restriction arises from the family's fear that the women might become involved in another military action and end up having to go through the ordeal of imprisonment again. While these families often have feelings of shock and guilt about their daughter's activism, they remain silent. Though families give support to the women during arrest and incarceration, after release some of them try to avoid talking about the women's secret roles in the resistance. This silence is conspicuous. Though they try to ignore it, the women are aware of it. While some of my participants are proud of their experiences and like to present their political subjecthood at every opportunity, many others attempt to manage tensions after release by not talking about their experiences of imprisonment with their family or community,

and also by remaining silent about their roles in the resistance movements. Former prisoners often feel estranged and alienated when they encounter the changes that took place when they were imprisoned; they start to comprehend the time they spent distant and isolated and feel a gulf between themselves and the people around them. As a result, they often find meeting with other former prisoners to be a source of comfort and understanding. The process of re-entry to the community, and to their former lives, is difficult for most women prisoners.

Research Questions

This thesis asks how the experience of the Israeli colonial prison shapes Palestinian women's political subjectivity. From 1967 until the present, more than 15,000 Palestinian women have been in Israeli prisons. At the beginning of 2011, the number of imprisoned women was 110, which fell to 36 in the wake of a prisoner exchange negotiated by Hamas. Today, there are, on average, 24 women in prison (Al-Dameer, 2014), but the number fluctuates according to the political situation and the success of prisoner exchanges; when clashes and conflicts with Israel intensify, the number of women in prison increases. Women are imprisoned for their involvement in political or military activity against the Israeli occupation. Abdo (2014) has defined political prisoners as women (and men) who are incarcerated for different reasons than 'regular prisoners' and who are treated differently under specific military or security regulations. She describes political detainees as those individuals who are politically conscious of different modes of oppression and who continue to engage in struggle during their detention (19).

This thesis seeks to understand how the experience of colonial imprisonment impacts on Palestinian women at the social, political, and individual level. In her novel *The Wild Thorns,* Sahar Khalifeh (1985) illustrates how the community perceives a man who was in Israeli prison when one of the characters comments: '*Inside they told me that prison was for me, and that those who don't go to prison, even for a day, will never become real men, even if they grow two moustaches rather than one*' (149). This statement reflects the strong association between prison and masculinity in the patriarchal gender arrangements in the Palestinian context. As this masculinity is sharply delineated from femininity, when a woman is imprisoned, she is challenging the community by

entering a space that - like the armed and political resistance with which prison is associated - is deemed to be a masculine domain. This research will thus ask how Palestinian women were/are involved in political/ military resistance movements and how they negotiate the limitations and complications of participation in armed groups. Furthermore, it will ask how Palestinian women come to understand themselves under the surveillance and restrictions of the occupation, as well as how they challenge their normal roles and invisibility within resistance movements. Palestinians are living in a fully politicized space as a result of Israeli practices. The constant invasion of the cities and homes makes surveillance a part of Palestinian everyday life. This new model of occupation raises important questions: how do people come to know themselves under occupation and recognize the surveillance and restrictions imposed by Israel? In order to investigate these questions, I trace the ways that women construct their space of negotiation, as well as the politics of interaction and relations within it.   I ask, furthermore, how malleable this space is.

This research examines how arrest and imprisonment shape the manner in which both Palestinian women political prisoners and their families perform as political subjects. It also seeks to understand how prison, a place of repression and silencing, can also become a space enabling women to articulate a political identity. How does this political identity function and how is it performed? How are resistance and sumud central to Palestinian women's performance? What is the shape of this resistance, and the women's political performance? It is also important to understand how the lives of political prisoners inside Israeli colonial prisons are connected to politics on the outside. I will thus ask how outside politics influence prisoners' decisions, social relations, and daily life. This examination will illuminate how the community still watches women inside prison, creating what I call a silent censorship over women's decisions, identities and social practices. Furthermore, I will examine how agency can be performed inside prison, how women negotiate the restrictions of carceral space, and the tactics they use to survive.

Finally, in order to understand how incarceration impacts Palestinian women's social, political, and individual experiences, it is important to pay attention to what happens to women after prison. In this regard, the process of re-entry to the community is

critical. What kinds of experiences do women have after being in Israeli colonial prison, which is, as noted, perceived to be a very masculine space? How do women define themselves, and deal with the labels, stigma and suspicions of the community? What tactics do women use to negotiate their re-entry and to situate themselves as political prisoners?

Methodology: Finding Women's Voices

This research is based on interviews carried out with Palestinian women who served time in Israeli prisons; it provides a close examination of their narratives and experiences before, during, and after prison. Furthermore, the interviews explore how these experiences have influenced their lives, social positioning and performance. I employ feminist standpoint theory by following the tradition of bringing the voices of the silenced and/or oppressed into mainstream dialogue (Hess-Biber & Leavy 2007: 60). As Palestinian women's experiences in the resistance movements have rarely been documented, I have used a methodology that allows me to facilitate raising voices that have been silenced and to highlight experiences, which have never been deeply discussed. In my interaction with participants, I gave them the opportunity to reflect on their personal experiences and share them in their own way. Inspired by the oral history method, I also asked participants to reflect on historical events they have experienced and their feelings about these events. This altered a way to approach life stories and experiences, which gave me insight into how the political subjecthood of former Palestinian women prisoners' has been constructed. It also helped me to understand the ways that women create their own spaces of negotiation. The oral history method helped me to break the ice between me and the participant and allowed us to start talking about her personal experience, feelings and emotions. The tactic beginning with a general event and then moving to the participant's experience of it eased the interview environment and helped me to draw out women's experiences of becoming political subjects.

I have interviewed 27 women from all over the West Bank. I couldn't interview women from the Gaza strip because of the siege. Additionally, as a Palestinian, I have to apply for a special permit to enter the area, which is very difficult to obtain without

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having an official purpose for visiting. The participants in this research belong to different political movements, offering insight into how the different Palestinian political parties deal with the imprisonment of women.   Participants were in prison during different periods between the 1970s and the present. Though this study focuses more on personal experiences than historical sequences, it nevertheless provides a background for how the Israeli colonial women's prisons have changed over time and how these changes have impacted on Palestinian inmates. I have used anonymous names for some participants, in respect of their wishes and to protect them from the occupation, especially when they were discussing the details of their arrest or sensitive issues connected to their political activities. But in other cases, women have asked me to use their real names, and I have respected their wishes when I felt that doing so would not put them or me at risk.

I divided my fieldwork into two stages. In the first stage, I met with the women to talk about general issues, and to explain my research. During this time, some of them started sharing their experiences and personal stories with me. After a year of listening to the interviews, working with the data and reading the relevant literature, I carried out a second round of interviews, which were more intensive. In these interviews, women could share their personal feelings and experiences in greater depth.   Some of them expressed that they felt a sense of release after the interview, especially those who became emotional speaking about their feelings, loss and pain. In order to give a full understanding of the experiences of these women, I use photos that have been taken by Palestinian photographers and published on social media or in the Palestinian media to help to illustrate the meaning of Palestinian women's visibility and invisibility, political activity, and day-to-day lives under occupation. In my analysis, I have also made use of several documentary films that feature Palestinian women prisoners – including some of my participants. The media coverage, films, biographies, and images are resources which help to piece together the broader context of the stories of former Palestinian women prisoners', giving an insight into how those stories are produced and perceived.

Thesis Outline

Chapter Two: Literature review

I review the key literature and theoretical approaches to the politics of incarceration, focusing on both the open-air prison and the closed prison, describing how one reflects the other in the Palestinian context. I show how incarcerated space is highly gendered, how women's experience in conflict zones and militarized space is constructed, and how everyday life is politicized for Palestinian women. I also present the gender arrangements for former Palestinian women prisoners' roles within the military groups and the political movements. In this chapter, drawing upon Bhabha's concept of third space, I discuss my theoretical approach to the examination of women's spatial and political negotiations.

Chapter Three: Methodology

This chapter discusses the methodological approach and the methods that have been used in collecting data for this research. Using feminist standpoint theory as a basis for the development and implementation of the research, my approach does not rely on a single method. Instead, I use a combination of oral history and life story, in order to understand how women create their spaces of negotiation.

Chapter Four: Palestinian Women's Life Under Occupation

In this first empirical chapter, I discuss how political subjecthood is constructed through the presence of the Israeli occupation in everyday Palestinian life, even inside the family home. I reflect on how the Palestinian home becomes the home front through the occupation's tactic of targeting private space. In this process, women lose their safety, privacy, and mobility, and the meaning of individual life is distorted. Thus, Palestinian daily lives must be constructed around politics. Inside their homes, or on the street, they need to face the Israeli occupation and find different tactics to survive by creating a space of negotiation through the demonstration of their sumud. In addition to the continuous attacks and restrictions imposed by the Israeli occupation, Palestinian women live in an environment anxious about women's bodies and places further social restrictions on them in order to protect them from the threats of the occupation. This chapter discusses how women develop political subjecthood, taking roles in the resistance movement and

challenging conservative cultural norms. It also reflects on how sumud shapes the everyday lives of Palestinian women.

Chapter Five: Sumud is the Only Weapon: The Experience of Arrest and Interrogation

In this chapter, I discuss the experience of arrest and interrogation for Palestinian women in Israeli colonial prisons - places that constitute a space of direct encounter with Israeli soldiers. I examine how women adapt to the exposure of their secret political and military activities, and the subsequent transformation of their space of negotiation. After their arrest, they must enact agency and steadfastness by refusing to cooperate with the Israeli interrogators. To cope with their exposure, they maintain an active political subjectivity. This chapter also shows how sumud transforms, becoming more explicit and overt in the process of arrest and interrogation.

Chapter Six: The Politicization of Everyday Life Inside Israeli Colonial Prisons

This chapter discusses the politicization of everyday life for Palestinian women political prisoners. It shows how sumud must be performed all the time, as politics becomes the most important component of prisoners' lives. I argue that political ideology is central to Palestinian women's performance inside prison, and that it regulates prisoners' relationships with each other and also with the Israeli prison authorities. Politics is infused in the Palestinian women prisoners' activities, such as reading, handcrafts, discussions and other activities. Here I show how Palestinian women use their space of negotiation to create a space of freedom, in which they share their emotions, feelings and secrets and build up secure social networks with other women through interactions in their cells, common spaces and group activities. In such spaces, at some times, women can act and speak in ways that would be impossible in the world outside.

Chapter Seven: The Experience of Palestinian Women Upon Re-entry to the Community

This chapter discusses the experiences of Palestinian women after they are released from Israeli prison. I focus on the struggle women face as they reintegrate into the community, and the community's concerns about the women having been detained in

Israeli prisons – concerns which often focus on women's bodies and sexuality. Women come under constant surveillance from conservative elements in the community and also from the Israeli occupation. They are under pressure to perform as former political prisoners, continually reflecting political subjecthood. Here I discuss how my participants create space in which they can find comfort and also spend time with other people who have shared their experience.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Introduction

In this chapter I will review the key literature and theoretical approaches to the themes that I investigate in this thesis. Beginning with the politics of incarceration and using key literature on the prison, it draws connections between the open-air prison and the closed prison, and considers how one reflects the other in the context of the Palestinian territory. It focuses on the politics, power relations, and surveillance that construct and control the space of incarceration. This chapter also focuses on how spaces of conflict and incarceration are gendered. As such, I will consider literature examining women's experiences in conflict zones and militarized spaces in order to understand how colonial power employs different strategies to expose private space to the public. These strategies are critical as they politicize everyday life for Palestinian women, transforming them into political subjects. Furthermore, I discuss literature focused on the challenges Palestinian women face living under occupation, as well as within a conservative, restrictive culture that instills fear around women's sexuality. This leads to a discussion of how these spatial politics bring women to the public sphere. While some women take roles acceptable to arranged gender setting in the community, including community services, charity work and participating in nonviolence resistance, other women decide to join military groups. These women must then negotiate the restrictions around their involvement, which challenges social norms and puts them in danger of imprisonment and death. Through reviewing these different bodies of literature, I will introduce the gap that my research is trying to fulfill by discussing the ways that women exercise their political subjecthood. I will also theoretically frame my examination of the tactics women use to spatially negotiate their boundaries, challenge restrictions and take roles in politics and armed resistance.

The Politics of Incarceration

'*The wall, the concrete and razor wire everywhere conveyed the impression that we were in prison. We were already in prison, and of course as far as*

Palestinians were concerned, one misstep and that person could be arrested and hauled off to prison. From an open-air prison to a closed prison.' (Davis, 2014)

In her talk at SOAS in 2014, in which she recounted her own experience of being in Palestine, Angela Davis described Palestinian territory as an open-air prison. In Palestine, the so-called 'separation fence' and innumerable checkpoints and barriers cut the territory into small spaces, making mobility for Palestinians incredibly difficult. The Israeli colonial power employs these strategies to control Palestinian life, and to make Palestinians feel watched all the time. This situation echoes the similar construction of an 'open-air prison' in the South African context, which included the colonial/apartheid experience of detention, house arrest, bans, and even Bantustans, territories set aside for black Africans. As Mandela noted in 1959, 'The Bantustans are not intended to voice the aspirations of the Africa people; they are instruments of their subjection' (Nagel, 2008: 69). This distribution is very close to that in Palestine, in which the border zones are liminal spaces that reflect a stage of separation and reintegration between communities and that are also sites of punishment or death. The distribution of the different checkpoints represents the marginal and transitional nature of the territories of the Palestinian Authority. The following section reviews theoretical approaches to the use of strategies of incarceration for controlling subjects. I use this literature to examine how incarcerated space is structured and how subjects experience it. This understanding will be drawn on later in this thesis to analyse how subjects deal with boundaries and surveillance systems, both within the incarcerated space of Israeli prisons and within the open-air prison of occupied Palestine.

The political division of Palestinian territories separates its urban worlds into many enclaves that are experienced from many different perspectives, creating a politics of place construction. Huber Mills argues that 'the new military urbanism rests on a central idea that militarized techniques of tracking and targeting must permanently colonize the city landscape and the space of everyday life' (cited in Graham, 2010: xiv). Graham notes that military sociologists categorize such processes as 'militarization' (*Ibid*.). Michael Geyer defines this as 'the contradictory and tense social process' in which civil society organizes itself for the production of violence. He argues:

Militarization involves the normalization of military paradigms of thought, action and policy, efforts at the aggressive disciplining of bodies, places and identities deemed not to befit masculinized notions of nation, citizenship or body, and the deployment of a wide range of propaganda. (Cited in Graham, 2010: 60)

Militarized borders in Palestine have become scenes of everyday life. In 2002, Israel constructed what they refer to as the 'separation fence' or 'security barrier' in the West Bank in order to achieve a system of control over the daily lives of Palestinians (Reinhart, 2006). This concrete wall is a barrier constructed through the entire West Bank to separate Jewish settlements and Israeli cities from Palestinians. Eyal Weizman (2007) notes that the wall is 'referred to by the Israeli government as the "the seam-line obstacle", by the general Israeli public as the "separation fence", and by those Israeli and Palestinians opposing it as the Wall or sometimes as the "Apartheid Wall"' (145-146). The Israelis utilize different methods of surveillance in order to control Palestinian life. Weizman argues that Israeli 'domination' in the West Bank and Gaza has always 'shifted between selective physical presence and absence' (146). By September 2006, there were 528 physical obstacles in place to control Palestinian movement (UN Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs cited in Weizman, 2007: 146). The checkpoint system has become 'so omnipresent and intrusive,' Weizman writes, 'that it has grown to govern the entire spectrum of Palestinian life under occupation' (147). As such, the Israelis don't need to have an actual presence to control Palestinian life, as through these occupation technologies they achieve sovereignty. Foucault (1976) writes that 'modern sovereignty does not so much exercise the ancient right to take life or to let live, but has the identical power to foster life or disallow it to the point of death' (136). In this context, I am going to use Foucault's argument to reflect on Israeli tactics of controlling Palestinian territory. Making use of surveillance and checkpoints, Israel doesn't need to have an armed confrontation with Palestinians to control them or to exercise occupational power.

Graham (2010) argues that after 2006, when Hamas was elected and the Israelis initiated the siege of Gaza, urban areas were transformed, particularly in the Gaza Strip, in which '1.5 million people [were] squeezed into…a vast prison camp. Within these confines, the deaths of the weak, old, young and sick are invisible to the outside world' (xxiv). Israeli authorities have forced Palestinians to live what Agamben (1998) describes as 'a biological existence that can be sacrificed at any time by colonial power that maintains the right to kill with impunity but has withdrawn all moral, political or human responsibilities from the population' (cited in Graham, 2010: xxiv-xxv). Agamben's (1998) concept of '*Homo Sacer'* is here relevant, referring to the 'body… abandoned to the law without fear of or aversion to the power of generalization' (90). Thus, using Agamben, we can see the military occupation and compartmentalization of Palestine as an extension of the concentration camp. Agamben defines the concentration camp as 'the space opened up when the exception begins to become the rule' (19). This compartmentalization of people into small enclaves in which hegemonic power holders restrict or prevent the execution of necessary everyday tasks, such as accessing education, healthcare, and protection, creates a 'space beyond the power of juridical parameters…to remove any potential threats from the social realm' (Shalhoub-Kevorkian, 2009: 117). Ghanem (2003) explains how this concept can be used in the case of Palestine, arguing that the borders that have been drawn by Israel start to become 'the scene of life in the shadow of death, where the Palestinian body was made by the Israeli authorities to undergo a transformation and become bare life, exposed and devoid of meaning, *homo sacer'* (cited in Shalhoub-Kevorkian, 2009: 118).

Shalhoub-Kevorkian (2009) argues that the Israeli police have 'arbitrarily and capriciously (considering, for example, the fling checkpoints)…turned the space of Palestinian body politic into a naked body, continuously vulnerable and open to attack' (118). This framework then legitimizes policies directed toward that body, and also operates as a means of control and a practice of power over a people. When we look at occupied areas replete with surveillance machines and a policy aimed at controlling people, individuals' behaviour and responses demonstrate how they begin to follow specific patterns of discipline. Under the composing forces applied by Israeli security in order to obtain an efficient machine, individuals become disciplined. This sort of

discipline is economic and subtle in its functioning. Its power is in the enhancement of the utility of individuals, turning them into 'obedient subjects' (Foucault, 1977: 129).

In his famous analysis of the modern prison, Foucault argues:

> The enclosed, segmented space, observed at every point in which individuals are inserted in a fixed places, in which people's movements are supervised, in which power is exercised without division, according to a continuous hierarchical figure, in which each individual is constantly located and examined and distributed among the living beings the sick the dead - all this constitutes a compact model of the disciplinary mechanism. (197)

This description of the prison reflects the nature of incarcerated space in Palestine. For Foucault (1978), prison functions as a political-moral technique of individual isolation and insertion into a hierarchy. The modern prison's first principle is the isolation of the inmates from the external world and everything that motivated the crime (242). To be imprisoned is to be enclosed in a mechanism of power that relies on continuous surveillance and classification of individuals. As Sykes (1958) notes, 'Prison is not an autonomous system of power; rather, it is an instrument of the State, shaped by its social environment, and …reacts to and is acted upon by the free community' (cited in Colvin, 2011: 10). Detention centres and colonial prisons are a representation of the power relations between soldiers and prisoners (Hassan, 2008: 15). This kind of power turns subjects into objects of knowledge, so that power is not the property of a given group of individuals but infused into a large array of devices (Smart, 2002: 43). Through the different practices the Israelis apply to Palestinians, an incarcerated space is created that reflects prison in many ways, in which the Israeli state can exercise its power over and control of Palestinian life.

Palestinians are under constant surveillance and control in the incarcerated space of the Palestinian territories. Foucault (1978) sees the individual as constructed of discursive modes and critical interactions of knowledge and power. He describes the effects of the

'panoptic gaze', 'whereby an individual is under constant social surveillance, created and articulated by observation' (cited in Shalhoub-Kevorkian, 2009: 46). Foucault discusses incarceration within an institution, but not as a structure of everyday life. However, I find his analysis applicable to the incarcerated space of Palestine, and also useful in drawing connections between the open-air prison and the closed prison in my analysis of the experience of Palestinian women political prisoners. Ozguc (2010) argues that

> [t]he panopticon is not simply seen as architecture of confinement, but as a material expression of how different modalities of power co-exist… so it provides a powerful tool in understanding how security works as specializing practice. (1)

In order to control bodies and to exercise power over them, it is important to create closed spaces with closely monitored borders, so that movement is limited. In creating checkpoints, building the separation wall, and by creating security pressures, Israel is asserting power and control over Palestinian territory and the bodies of Palestinians. Palestinians lose autonomy as long as they are confined in cities controlled by Israeli authorities, but they nonetheless find ways to maneuver within and resist this power. There is relatively little literature that focuses on how Palestinian subjects resist domination through navigating boundaries and surveillance in incarcerated space, or that examines how the technologies of incarceration become normalized in everyday life. My thesis will seek to address these gaps, and in particular, to contribute to our understanding of the ways in which Palestinian women resist and navigate their boundaries.

The impact of the occupation on Palestinian society is all encompassing. Within this, however, it is important to understand how women's experience can be different from men's, and how they negotiate and survive the practices of the occupation. Palestinian women live in a divided and restricted space, controlled both by the Israeli army and by society's gender arrangements that strictly regulate women's bodies and sexuality. The Israeli occupation does not exclude women from its continuous attacks on Palestinian rights to life. Palestinian women have often been the victims of Israeli assault. Women have died under the wreckage of homes that were demolished by the Israeli army

and girls have been killed when Israeli forces entered their schools. Women participating in resistance have also been targeted for arrest and imprisonment. As noted in the Introduction, the data available at the census department in the Palestinian Ministry of Detainees indicate that Israeli forces have arrested more than 15,000 Palestinian women between 1967 and the present. These women have been held under very bad conditions without consideration for their basic rights or special needs as women (Ibhis et al., 2010). The following sections will discuss women's experiences in incarcerated militarized space.

The Conflict of Traditions: Women's Bodies in Colonial Settings

During times of crisis, Palestinian women are always targeted. In addition to violence and harassment, they also face displacement or becoming refugees as a result of housing demolitions (UNIFIM, 2005). War in general, and especially occupation by foreign powers, has been accompanied by a crisis of masculinity that restricts women's mobility and increases violence against them (Enloe, 1990). To explain this, Shalhoub-Kevorkian (2009) asserts that the colonialist military power imposes its strength and boundaries on most realms of women's lives, including their bodies, families, sexuality, homes, space, and gender relations. She argues that social life under occupation thus contributes to a crisis of masculinity, as men start to feel weak. Thus they intensify their effort to defend and protect 'their' women and homes, using violence to bolster their strength and power over them (14). In one such example of this process, Moghadam (2005) suggests that 'veiling…resulted from social pressure within the family and fear of harassment in the street, and shows that patriarchy and violence are played out on women's bodies' (65). Thus, Palestinian men's fear of the Israeli occupation targeting their women and its invasion of private space work against Palestinian women. We see the mark of Israel's occupation in the escalation of restrictions and limitations on Palestinian women's mobility, as more women wear veils and become more conservative, whether as a result of religious and social pressure, politics or personal choice.

In gender arrangements, traditions regulate women lives from birth to death, controlling female sexuality to justify domination (Katrak, 2006: 208). This control

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restricts women's mobility and limits their experiences. Katrack argues that women's sexuality is the key control in the arena of 'cultural tradition' (10), and that during pre-colonial times, as well as during nationalist struggles, 'women are required to carry the additional burden of being the guardians of tradition, particularly against the colonizer' (165). She further points out that 'tradition is gendered so that the same elements of tradition, such as religious belief, education, dress codes, freedom of movement are enforced very differently on males versus females' (157). As Haj (1992) puts it, Palestinian women are taught at an early age that 'their sexuality doesn't belong to them, is not theirs to give or withhold, but it is the inalienable and permanent property of the extended family, the *hamula*. As a result, sexuality purity and lineage are seen as inseparable from women's sexuality' (764). In gender arrangements, it is the responsibility of men in the family or the community to protect women from any danger - especially danger deemed to threaten their bodies - that may diminish the family reputation. As such, women's performance should conform to social norms, which are often characterized in consideration of male norms (Shalhoub-Kevorkian, 2009). Much of the literature around women in conflict asserts that women's performance and social roles are regulated by culture, shaped by 'the nature of social organization rather than biological determinants and thus capable of change' (Grosz, 1995: 14).

As women's sexuality is the most important domain for traditions to regulate, this creates a battle over the 'female body - how to control and keep it familiar within recognizable and legitimized patriarchal codes' (Katrake, 2006: 257). Butler (1999) outlines the importance of cultural meanings of the body, arguing:

> 'The body' appears as a passive medium on which cultural meanings are inscribed or as the instrument through which an appropriative and interpretive will determines a cultural meaning for itself. In either case, the body is figured as a mere instrument or medium for which a set of cultural meaning are only externally related. But 'the body' is itself a construction, as are the myriad 'bodies' that constitute the domain of gendered subjects. (12)

In this thesis, I am trying to show that women's bodies are not passive, but that women use different tactics to challenge the boundaries and expectations of gender arrangements. I hope to show that these boundaries are not fixed, and can be negotiable. As such, I argue that though, from the perspective of gender arrangements, women's bodies appear to be a passive medium, they are active and that through a continuous process of negotiation, women find their own ways to navigate and transcend the restrictions placed upon them. As some of the scholars on Palestinian resistance also treat women's bodies as passive, either implicitly or explicitly, by showing how Palestinian women negotiate and resist the restrictions around them, my arguments will make an important critical intervention.

There is a prominent tendency in political conflict literature to exclude women and gender issues (Sharoni, 2001: 85). Men's contributions to the nation's victory are always salient. Shalhoub-Kevorkian (2009) argues that while the contributions of Palestinian women on the frontlines of resistance usually go unnoticed, they nevertheless exhibit a great deal of power and resilience (1). Though women's actual roles in resistance movements and fighting are often politically invisible, gender is essential in the production of nation. 'It is not surprising,' Hadjipavloy (2010) points out, 'that women are frequently invoked to symbolize "the nation"'(37). Though the state is imagined as male, she observes, the 'iconography of the "motherland", "nation", is almost invariably female (Mother Ireland, Mother Russia…[etc.])' (*Ibid*.). Hadjipavloy argues that in Cyprus, where her study is focused, while men are represented as fighters and heroes, with statues and war monuments erected in public places to honour them, women are always shown as mothers, 'weeping and holding terrified babies or photographs of missing loved ones.' These images of women, she argues, embody the collective pain and suffering. She cites examples of similar images from different contexts, including women in Chile during the Pinochet regime whose sons and husbands disappeared and Palestinian posters of the proud mothers of male martyrs who give their blessing to young male suicide bombers (*Ibid*).

Is There a Private Space?

Palestinian women's roles as mothers and nurturers in private space have been viewed by the traditional community as a form of political activism symbolized by patiently protecting the home front; this view reflects the changes to the demarcation of private and public that accompany occupation and war. Interpretations of women's contribution to resistance and war in Algeria and Palestine have often seen them as second-hand participants, and in general more attention is given to men's contributions whose perceived role is to fight and to protect the land (Channa, 2010: 7). Palestinian women do not only occupy private space, but discourses both in the scholarly literature and in the community that exclude women from public life remain prominent. This exclusion indicates the contrast of public and private spaces, in which public space is understood as being the sphere where politics takes place (dominated by masculinity). Hamdan-Saliba and Fenster (2012) argue that the 'dichotomy and separation between private and public space are factors that reflect special control over Arab women and their identities and reduce the accessibility to public space. In other words, they create "gendered space"'(205). Women are thus relegated to private space and the responsibilities of the home and family, a sphere 'which lacks power or political agency' (Sharoni, 2001: 85).

Women's bodies and sexuality, homes and lands became battlefields for both internal masculine power and the external militarized political opponents. Shalhoub Kevorkian (2009) argues that 'Women face military occupation in schools, homes, hospitals, and in their marriages' (115). She adds that Palestinian religion, traditions of attire and cultural rules governing 'everyday spaces that become sites of resistance and militarization complicate the ways women resist coercion and patriarchal Palestinian powers' (*Ibid*). Israeli forces continually target Palestinian homes, changing the structure of private space and eroding people's enjoyment of it. Nevertheless, people have learned to deal with the exposure this regime of invasion precipitates. In the opening of private space through both the occupation and the response of resistance movements, women find different ways to challenge the various system of domination. The repeated attacks by the Israeli occupation on private and public space in the name of security in many cases have empowered women to act against injustice. Shalhoub-Kevorkian (2009)

illustrates how the 'militarization' of society affected women's space, their time, and their assets, 'allowing them to be viewed through the frame of military values' (99). Since the beginning of the different waves of colonization of Palestinian land, Palestinian women have become involved in all aspects of political life, even within domestic space. As women sometimes face less intensive scrutiny from Israeli soldiers, they can sometimes manoeuvre the occupation and even aid freedom fighters. The home was used to hide wanted resisters and gender specificities were used to cross-checkpoints and otherwise leveraged as a means of living through invasion and curfew (99-100).

Shalhoub-Kevorkian investigates 'the 'weaponization' of women's bodies, which she describes as the ways in which 'the use of women's bodies to either "fight", "cope", "revolt", "protect", "secure", or "defend", fosters and further secures the boundaries that separate men from women, men from men, and women from women in a context of war and national and political struggles'(114). She also describes the militarization of women as the 'use of women's spaces, their time, and their assets for any form of militarized activity or action that has military value' (115). She asserts that historically women's 'bodies and lives have been used as commodities and also as the frontline defences "marking" the boundary between self and others' (114). She asserts that Palestinian women entered the arena of war under military occupation as warriors and resisters on the frontlines, which means that they are always targeted in their everyday lives. However, despite this recognition, Shalhoub-Kevorkian's arguments tend to treat women's bodies as passive and lacking agency, even when she discusses their 'weaponization'. In her work she never explains how women become resisters, how women perform their political subjectivity or what resistance is.

Most research on women in colonial setting represents them as victims; little has been done to examine the lives of women who fight alongside men. Through this thesis, I am thus going to contribute to our knowledge of gender and colonial power by examining women's specific strategies of resisting and negotiating culture and traditions. In this regard, it is important to give an overview of the literature on the politics of women's bodies in society's gender arrangements. Most narratives present images of women in war that fall into normative gender categories: men are fighters and women are victims or survivors. Moreover, politics have been seen as masculine and are male dominated, so

women are largely excluded from political decision-making. As Kumar (2004) notes, 'women are perceived as being incapable of protecting themselves, and support men in exerting their masculinity and defeating the enemy' (297). The image of women as victims of war is often complemented by their perceived role as instigators, since in many cultures women are seen to inspire men to fight and shame them when they don't. De Pauw delineates three roles for women in war narratives: 'camp followers [women follow an army providing support such as food, clothing and nursing], virago roles, and the androgynous warrior' (cited in Kumar, 2004: 298).

It is important to understand women's own contribution to the ways in which their roles have changed along with the barriers between public and private. In many international conflicts, women have played nonviolent roles. However, there has been a recent interest in the literature on women in resistance who take on the roles of men. Here I will consider the case of Algeria because its cultural context is close to that of Palestine in that they are both Arab and conservative cultures and primarily Islamic rules dominate their communities. Furthermore, as there is very little work around Palestinian women, considering the experiences of Algerian women in resistance is useful in drawing out relevant themes and issues. With regard to public and private space in the Algerian context, Channa (2010) notes that 'the domestic space traditionally occupied by women was often more of a frontline than the mountains where largely male resistance forces took refuge, far from the reach of French troops' (20). It is also important to note that during war, women in patriarchal countries often take the role of guardians of traditions, while previously their roles revolved around marriage and they were largely excluded from public life (Amrane cited in Connolly, 2012: 25). Muslim women in Algeria played fundamental roles in obtaining independence; they found themselves cast into the role of 'keepers of traditional Algerian identity' (Connolly, 2012: 22).

In areas affected by war, where conflict is increasingly waged on the bodies of civilians, especially women, it is critical to recognize gender as the reproduction of violence that is also perpetrated in peacetime. Within this reproduction, the images of women become fixed (Falcione, 2011: 12). Aware of Palestinian culture's concern with the protection of women's sexual purity, the Israeli occupation began to use women's bodies as means of threatening Palestinian men and limiting the contributions of

Palestinian women. As Abdo (2014) notes, the colonial state makes sure to exploit these concerns as 'a prime tactic or rather strategy of control…against women's political activism. Women's bodies and sexuality are rendered a prime site of humiliation, subjugation and victimization' (21). Women's committees and human rights activists have recorded cases of sexual harassment and attempted rape by Israeli soldiers, as well as cases of interrogators who attempt to pressure and 'neutralize' male Palestinian activists by making threats against the bodies of their wives or female relatives (Haj, 1992: 771). In my interviews with women activists, a number of them reported facing threats of sexual abuse during interrogation to put pressure on them to confess to specific acts.

Colonial power transforms women's bodies into sexualized and radicalized objects, stripped by the colonial state; women's bodies are thus turned into tools of oppression (Abdo, 2014: 21). Shalhoub-Kevorkian (2009) argues that the Israeli occupation during the First Intifada began to exploit the concept of honour in order to recruit Palestinians as collaborators by creating the fear of sexual abuse against 'their' women (14). Palestinians refer to this abuse as *isqat*, literally meaning 'downfall' (15). These threats are made in an attempt to solicit information (87). Through interrogation, for example, Abdo (2014) asserts that the Israeli occupation uses not only direct acts of sexual torture to force women prisoners into submission, but also sexual threats, such as the publication of pictures among their family members and the wider community (21).

Moving Out of Private Space

The different strategies that have been employed by the Israeli occupation to militarize Palestinian space have exposed private space to the public, in effect politicizing everyday life and transforming those who experience such exposure into political subjects. Palestinian women have participated in all the crises through domestic tasks, ensuring that the Palestinian home is presented as a site of 'commemoration that is based on political meaning' (Kassem, 2011: 190). As Kassem observes, as the primary place where history and memory are transmitted, the home is a space for the continuity of cultural and national identity (*Ibid*.). The continuous attack on Palestinian space makes women political subjects and encourages their participation in resistance movements, as it

becomes expected for women to be active in community work and to provide support to people in need from their homes. The situation of conflict and war brought women into neighbourhood committees as individuals who could support people whose houses had been demolished or who did not have food. In civil war, the distinction between the home front and frontline space, where men were in the public as political leaders and women were in private and domestic space, breaks down (Schneider, 2003).

Greater political involvement for women was no doubt related, at least in part, to the changes in men's roles as political crises escalated. As Sharoni (1992) writes of the First Intifada, 'With men absent from the household, women felt they had a legitimate excuse to get involved in political struggle. Women's participation was viewed as a sign of loyalty both to men, families, and the collective' (90). The Palestinian community accepted and appreciated women's roles in their houses or in nonviolent activities. Such daily indirect acts of resistance have been termed sumud, critical to the survival of everyday life under occupation, and also manifesting resistance against the limitations of the occupation.

Historical Background of Palestinian Women's Roles in Resistance Movements

Much of the literature examining Palestinian women's roles in the resistance movements focuses on describing the different roles women play that involve non-aggressive or quotidian tasks. I want to know how women have challenged conservative culture and broken boundaries to resist on the streets or within resistance movements. As discussed in the previous chapter, there is a striking lack of documentation of Palestinian women's roles in guerrilla and military groups. In this section, I am going to give a historical overview of Palestinian women's participation in resistance movements, as well as an overview of the wider Arab and international context of women's roles in war. This discussion will thus provide reflection on how the literature tackles women's contributions within contexts of conflict. However, as I will discuss, it often describes their roles without seeking to understand how women negotiate participation in political movements, challenging society's gender arrangements.

Palestinian women have always played important roles in Palestine's history of colonial occupation. Fleishmann (2003) examines the Palestinian women's movement

during the 1920s, showing that women tried to create new spaces for themselves to engage in the struggle for national liberation (cited in Shalboub-Kevorkian, 2009: 94). Women were able to create both a space and discourse in the national movements by creating union-led demonstrations against the Balfour Declaration and organizing the first General Palestinian Congress in Jerusalem in 1929. Palestinian women also took to the street, engaged in direct confrontations with Israeli or British soldiers, transported ammunition, carried important messages and got involved in the armed struggle. Women played active roles in the revolt against the British Mandate between 1936-1939, taking care of the injured, participating in demonstrations, hiding and otherwise helping rebels, signing petitions and taking up arms themselves to defend their land (Sharoni, 2001: 87; Shalhoub-Kevorkian, 2009: 8).

The women who participated in this resistance were from different social backgrounds. Their involvement in the resistance also varied according to their social class. Women mobilized not only as women, but also as mothers, workers, peasants, and citizens (Korteweg, 1999: 51). A few scholars have discussed women's roles and contributions in the armed resistance. However, as Abdo (2014) notes, it is hard to find literature analysing the experience of women in armed resistance historically (1). I will bring together and summarise that scholarly work here. Palestinian women organized different protests and demonstrations during the Mandate period; most of these women were from elite urban families. However, during the period of 1936-1939, poorer, less educated rural women became involved in the national movement. Peteet (1991) argues that, particularly in the armed rebellion in the countryside, peasant women were openly involved in political acts on a more active and dangerous scale than just appearing at demonstrations. There is, however, she notes, little mention in the literature of the specific roles women played, even though peasant women played an important role in supporting the rebellion to protect their villages and stay on the land (19-21).

Palestinian women's activities through the different political crises were mainly directed at social work to serve the community and help people in need. This social work was also often a cover for political work. Women organized medical care for the wounded and taught first aid, and sold their personal jewellery to collect money to purchase arms and ammunition. A few occasionally undertook dangerous missions,

smuggling weapons past checkpoints, hiding fighters and wanted men, or carrying messages. In the cities, women persisted in the political work of attending demonstrations, distributing leaflets and sending telegrams of protest to the mandatory authorities and agitating to sustain support for the boycott (Shalhoub Kevorkian, 2009; Peteet, 1991; Sharoni, 2001; Haj, 1992).

Palestinian women have been involved in resisting the Israeli occupation since it started in 1948; women's participation in the struggle was central in the Palestinian Intifadas and the continued struggle to end the Israeli occupation. Women from different classes were involved, joining street demonstrations, hurling stones and shouting at the Israeli soldiers, or using their bodies as barricades to block the beating or arrest of their children. Women played essential roles in popular and neighbourhood support committees to effectively replace the institution of the Israeli Civil Administration in towns, villages, and camps (Shalhoub Kevorkian, 2009; Peteet, 1991 Sharoni, 2001; Haj, 1992). These activities were a type of grassroots organizing. Committees formed in the First Intifada to mobilize women around issues of family and work, creating day-care centers, after school activities, clinics, health and education programs, literacy classes, and vocational training. They pioneered the unionizing of women workers, and established women's industrial collectives. As a result, these committees reached women from all backgrounds (Haj, 1992: 773).

This extended to the Second Intifada, in which women enacted 'maternal' protection, took part in marches and supported families of the injured (Johnson and Kuttab, 2001: 21). This situation provided a context for women not only to learn more about themselves but also to come into contact with other women activists in various women's committees. This allowed them to gain confidence and legitimacy and encouraged them to speak up, network, interact, and become part of the public and political scene, challenging existing social discriminatory hierarchies (Shalhoub-Kevorkian, 2009: 14). While this situation enabled Palestinian women to call for the resumption of the peace process, it also put them in the physical line of fire. Indeed, many were killed, targeted for arrest, detained and harassed for being related to men who were suspected of being linked to armed groups, or for participating in militant action themselves (García-Moreno and Riecher-Rössler, 2013: 18)

It is also important to look at women's roles in armed conflict and war in the international context. Blanton notes that during the American Civil War, the normative images of women were those of 'self-sacrificing nurses, romantic spies, or brave ladies maintaining the home front in the absence of their men.' On the other hand, 'the men…marched to war, lived in germ-ridden camps, engaged in heinous battles, languished in appalling prisons, and died horribly, yet heroically' (Blanton, 1993[1]). In war, women contribute to resistance in settings in which they are regarded as second-hand participants in the war experience. Lazreg writes that women's duties in revolution can be seen as providers of moral support to fighters, 'taking care of liaison, food supplies and sanctuary and helping families and children left behind by those at the front, in prisons, or detention camps' (cited in Channa, 2010: 31).

In Algeria, for example, women were active participants, helping hide guns and providing shelter for militants, as well as typing pamphlets (Connolly, 2012). Amrane and Connolly (2012) state that of

> the female combatants in Algeria, 82% were civilian militants who carried out vital actions in everyday life… Women could contribute by organizing and attending protests or funerals, facing the risk of being arrested and tortured. They also made public displays against the French occupation by hanging out red, white and blue laundry. (26)

Women attending funerals and memorial services would donate food and warn young men painting slogans that they were about to be caught. In addition, 'women travelled with militants in the *Maquis[2]*, as nurses, cooks, secretaries and dressmakers. Other women transported arms, planted bombs. This illustrates how women risked their lives by protecting combatants, working as connecters, or as propaganda agents' (26). The Algerian National Liberation Army (FLN) defined women's contribution to the resistance according to a 'conventional understanding of sexual division of labor'

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[1] http://www.archives.gov/publications/prologue/1993/spring/women-in-the-civil-war-1.html
[2] A place where militants organized themselves.

(Lazreg, 1994 cited in Channaa, 2010: 31). Schneider (2003) comments that war narratives of the Algerian revolution show women crossing previously rigid boundaries of male space and taking on 'male' responsibilities during the war, noting that a 'very small number of women actually left their families to join the military' (3).

The community never recognized or encouraged women's participation in the military arm, and many women were involved in support positions. However, because they were not part of the military structure, their contributions went largely unnoticed and were forgotten after the war. Algerian women's lives changed in significant ways during the war, which allowed for radical changes in gender roles. Men were absent from most households, and women felt they had a legitimate excuse to get involved in political struggle. In another context, during the civil war in Lebanon (1975-90) and the subsequent political crisis, women, both Muslim and Christian, moved into public space to participate in combat and to support various initiatives of engagement in employment outside the house. Once the war was finished, women reverted to their traditional roles and returned to private space (Hadjipavoly, 2010: 39).

In South Africa, the role of women in the struggle for liberation included running night schools during colonialism, demanding freedom for their imprisoned sons, and calling for an accountable government (Nagel 2008: 75). In men's prison narratives in the same context, there is an indication of women's roles; they 'are usually considered patient, heroic mothers and wives who silently endured and supported their sons and husbands' attempts to advance the cause of the people's liberation' (75). Women also engaged in their own revolutionary struggles, however, and were often imprisoned or banned for their subversive activities against the regime. While a few women had leadership positions in resistance organizations, many others participated in terms of extending their roles as mothers, wives and significant others rather than in their capacity as individual citizens (*Ibid*.)

Because of the continued conflict and the total militarization of space, the Palestinian community began to accept the participation of women in mixed gender settings at demonstrations and neighbourhood committees. The different Intifadas created a context that eased family restriction on women's movement and broadened the range of legitimate roles they could assume. Sabbagh (1998) argues that 'women's participation

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indicates a transformation of consciousness' (3). Women began to participate spontaneously without belonging to any organization in confrontations with the Israeli occupation; in this way they challenged traditional roles, which require their exclusion from the public space. With this change, women's interests shifted from 'protecting their homes and traditional values to risking everything in order to loosen the grip of occupation' (3). Indeed, as Giacaman and Johnson (1989) note, most families were proud of their daughters' new political activism (cited in Sharoni, 2001: 88). Kim (1996) highlights these new identities as shaping their interests and in turn informing mobilization (cited in Ray and Korteweg, 1999). The Palestinian community played a major role in changing people's views of women's political activism, and women became 'indispensable in their communities "when conditions created new pressing needs"' (Giacaman and Johnson, 1989 cited in Sharoni, 2001: 88).

Women Break Gender Norms in Armed Resistance

> '*Our women aren't women any more, they have become men. Now I know they have to be this way because of our society, but even when they go home they are no longer women.*' (Abu Samir, cited in Peteet 1991: 152)

This statement from Abu Samir, one of the participants in Peteet's *Gender in Crisis,* reflects how the conservative community perceives women in military and resistance movements. When women become part of a military group and start helping in resisting the occupation, they occupy the space of men. As it is usually men's responsibility to protect women and fight against the occupation, the community becomes suspicious of women breaking these gender norms. In most cultures, women soldiers do not fit traditional images and are stigmatized as prostitutes, mentally ill, homosexual, or are described as having developed masculine characteristics, for example a manly gait or smoking habit (Blanton, 1993: 4).

Though traditional accounts define war as masculine and the work of men, women introduce new norms of female potential to gender relations (Peteet, 1991). The transformation of relations between men and women is architectural in relation to the

space and the context. In her article on Palestinian women suicide bombers, Dorit Naaman (2007) argues:

> When women opt to fight alongside men, they challenge the dichotomy of women as victim/man as defender. Women fighters are physically strong, they are active (and therefore agents), and most importantly they are willing to kill (hence they are violent). Women challenge not only the imagined women as victims of war, but also the traditional patriarchal binary where women are physically and emotionally weak and incapable of determining and defending their own lives. (935)

Blyth (2001) has noted a historical inconsistency around this very issue and looks to antiquity to explore what Plato and Socrates thought about women in the military. She writes that they believed that women should receive the same military training as men and take equal responsibility in defending the country (1).

In her article 'Women Soldiers of the Civil War', Blanton (1993) argues that conventional gender roles were challenged when women bore arms during the American Civil War. Blanton describes women living in camps, suffering in prisons, and dying for their causes. Communities in some historical contexts have accepted women participating in the army and made it obligatory, while others believed it was a man's responsibility to protect the land. The American Civil War is an example of the latter. The US Army tried to deny that women played a military role. Despite instances of women having served as soldiers for a short time without their sex being detected, no record of such cases is known to exist in the official files (Blanton, 1993: 3). As a result of such occlusion, women fighters have often been represented, especially in the mass media, as deviating from prescribed forms of femininity that emphasize women's delicacy and fragility.

Women's activism has not always been accompanied by a concomitant positive transformation of status. In some instances, women may have acquired a new negative status. Often called 'loose' and 'immoral', individual women in the military only seem to gain status if they go beyond what is expected, are killed, wounded, or carry out incredibly heroic acts. In the Palestinian context, Peteet (1991) has shown that militancy

can have differential impacts on women's status. Some gain unparalleled status through heroism and exemption from the imposition of family control. Those who have neither 'the opportunity [nor] inclination for heroism may be labeled "loose women"' (152). But on the other hand, some women militants exceed family belonging and come to be considered daughters of the community, becoming a public concern and responsibility. In this case, their political group becomes their guardians. As Peteet argues, this creates a 'gender-neutral construction of space for women in the military (not for men), where women assume a de-sexed position of "honorary men"' (155). It forms, she writes, a new means of control, which 'create[s] asymmetrical power structures and relations that serve to barricade women who voice their concerns and interests (157).

Gender within Armed Groups

> *'If a man carried food to the armed fighters at great personal risk, he was called a "fighter"; a woman doing the same was called a "helper". If a man risked his life to hide armed fighters or wanted political leaders, he was called a "fighter". A woman doing the same was simply performing the female task of "nurturing."'*
> *(*Marie-Aimé Helie- Lucaus cited in Baker, 1998: 166*)*

In the above statement, Marie-Aimée Helie-Lucas reflects on the minimizing of women's roles in the Algerian liberation struggle. Because of the similarities of the conservative culture in Palestine, this statement also captures the ignorance and simplification with which women's roles in resistance movements are interpreted there. Connolly similarly argues that the role of women in the Algerian war was subsequently denied or largely ignored. Women's participation, Schneider (2003) notes, was limited to traditional activities; their 'presence was tolerated when the tasks were "feminine", such as providing shelter, food and medicine or working as nurses, tasks they might have had in peacetime circumstances' (3).

For Palestinian women, according to Abdulhadi (1998), there were two fronts for women's resistance in the 1960s and 1970s: the political movement (including membership in guerrilla groups) and the not-so-visible domestic front. Sharoni (2001) argues that Palestinian national liberation movements used women in the course of the

struggle, but tended to overlook their contributions to the revolution, embracing conventional conceptions of femininity, masculinity and gender relations once the struggle was over (92). Women engaged in the process of reconstituting the meaning and role of 'women' as they fought for national liberation between 1968-1982 and during the two Intifadas. This period saw the transformation of the material roles that Palestinian women had historically played. Palestinian women's political roles and their activism during the two Intifadas constructed a new space for women's political authentication. This translated in new calls for basic equality and feminist demands (Shalhoub-Kevorkian 2009: 95).

Some secular movements, like Fatah, the PLFP and DFLP, allow women to participate in some military actions, especially when there is a strategic need for women to facilitate a successful attack. Many of the participants in my research emphasise the pressure they had to put on the leaders of their political movements to allow them to take roles and become part of military groups. Because of such insistence, Palestinian women started to be able to lead military groups in specific operations. Shalom Harrari suggests that the communist and Marxist factions of the PLO encouraged women to commit what is known as *'Jihad Fardi'*, which translates into English as 'personal initiative attacks'. These are attacks undertaken by individuals who make the decision to attack the occupation independently, without a formal organization behind them (cited in Victor 2003: 12). Palestinian national movements produced iconic guerrilla fighters, like Leila Khaled, a PLFP militant in the 1970s, Dalal Moghrabi, who led a Fatah guerrilla group in the late 70s, Aisha Odeh, a PLFP militant who planted a bomb in the early 70s and was imprisoned, and a number of other women, who were held up to encourage women to participate in the national struggle.

For Women It Is All About Negotiation

> *'Even if there is a war on you must negotiate, negotiation is what politics is all about. And we so negotiate even when we don't know we are negotiating: we are always negotiating in any situation of political oppression or antagonism. Subversion is negotiation, transgression is negotiation… negotiation is not just*

some kind of compromise or "selling out" which people too easily understand it to be.' (Nelson Mandela, cited in Rutherford, 1990: 216)

Mandela's observation indicates the importance of negotiation for oppressed people in understanding, and surviving, a specific situation and space. It is also applicable when it comes to women who must continually negotiate oppression and control. Palestinian women's involvement in politics and resistance movements requires them to negotiate all the time; they must negotiate the boundaries that are imposed upon them by patriarchal gender arrangements and colonial power. In this thesis, I shed light on women who were involved in military resistance groups, and who took part in military action. Some of them were planning to become freedom fighters (suicide bombers). Others planted bombs, helped smuggle weapons, or were part of snipers' groups. By following their lives before, during and after imprisonment, we can begin to understand how Palestinian women negotiate the restrictions of gender arrangements as well as the Israeli occupation's tactics to control Palestinian territory. This examination also illuminates how Palestinian women become part of the masculine spaces of military groups and Israeli colonial prisons and how they navigate the transformative experience from visibility, performing their expected roles, to invisibility, when they move outside the boundaries of expectations. In this section I am going to discuss the theoretical themes that I will be using throughout this thesis. I will use for example, Bhabha's concept of the third space to develop a framework through which to examine the space of negotiation in which my participants navigate the multiple boundaries imposed on them and the shift between visibility and invisibility. It is also important to indicate how women produce this space of negotiation.

In anti-colonial struggles women resist bodily oppressions by using 'strategies and tactics that are often part of women's knowing and acting' (Katrak, 2006: 8). Hamdan-Saliba and Fenster (2012) argue that Palestinian women 'perform with the strategies of power that affect their lives' (206). Arab/Palestinian 'moral codes, or strategies of gendered and cultural power' determine this performance. Women use various means of maneuvering their boundaries. They add that these tactics include their spatial behaviours and clothing, like wearing the hijab to cover their head. Such clothing

gives women space for freer mobility; 'wearing the veil, it is argued, women feel more comfortable and do not fear the gaze of men on their bodies'. So this usage of clothing expands 'their daily spatial practices and increases the flexibility of their special behaviours' (205-08). It is important for women to be aware of their space and their boundaries, which influences their experience of producing a space where they can liberate themselves, and exercise their agency, responding to their desires. Commenting on the previous example, many of my participants started wearing the veil or dressing in a more conservative style after their release from prison. This change made them less watched and conspicuous, allowing more mobility and freedom from judgment, which is a tactic women use to negotiate their boundaries, and so to shape their own space.

As this example illustrates, and as Katrak (2006) argues, women need to negotiate rather than to 'reject regressive interpretations of tradition outright' within patriarchal structure (157). Women have to negotiate tradition and work within the boundaries that have been set by patriarchal culture, instead of confronting and clashing (208). Palestinian women have to deal with multiple layers of restrictions. Moghadam (2005) argues that in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Palestine, 'women are caught between weak states, occupying powers, armed opposition movements, and patriarchal gender arrangements' (1). Rutherford (1990) argues that the political negotiation connected to hybridity is 'precisely about the fact that when a new situation, a new alliance formulates itself, it may demand that you should translate your principles, rethink them, extend them' (216). I argue that the Palestinian community is a hybrid society; it produces and reproduces itself according to the political situation and the different tactics that the occupation employs against it. As such, the themes of the patriarchal gender arrangements transform in response to the constant state of attack and exposure in which Palestinians live under the occupation, allowing this system to maintain its power. So in negotiating boundaries, subjects should not just take new ideas and experiences without linking them to previous knowledge. Hybridity emerges, as Rutherford defines it, when a person links new knowledge and experience about a specific situation with existing knowledge. For women negotiating their space, they should always interweave their own knowledge about their culture and boundaries with their current situation and space under the occupational power.

When Palestinian women join militant groups, they are challenging the cultural norms around women's roles. De Certeau (1984) argues that 'female tasks are a product of cultural order', but notes that women are differentiated by social class and internal hierarchy, so that it is impossible to generalize women's experience of a space (156). This insight is reflected among the participants in my research. The manner in which women dealt with and negotiated their involvement in military groups varied. Some of them were recruited through friends, others were aware of the political situation and sought out military groups to become involved in. Despite the pressure of cultural expectations, women still found ways to take roles, get training, and become part of militant groups. Women created acceptable excuses to give their families in order to leave the house, for example, saying that they were starting life skills training courses at the women's community centre or visiting friends. These kinds of lies reflect the skills of negotiation that women used to be involved in resistance groups; this negotiation is based on their understanding of how to maneuver the multilayered boundaries around them.

When women join military groups, and start to take roles typically reserved for men, for example, helping the freedom fighters, handling weapons, or planting bombs, their presence is like an 'invasion' of men's space. Puwar (2004) discusses women's experience of invading male space in the halls of the British parliament. She argues that 'the arrival of women in space from which they have been historically or conceptually excluded is a revealing and intriguing paradox'. It is revealing because it sheds lights on how space has been formed through what has been constructed out (3). She writes: 'Bodies do not simply move through space but constitute and are constituted by them. Thus it is possible to see how both space and the normative bodies of a specific place become distributed' (32). This argument is also applicable to the context of Palestinian militant groups. When a woman decides to join, the structure of these groups change, as they try to form themselves in a way that maintains traditions and protects women both from being exposed to other members of the group and from the suspicions of the community.

Puwar's argument is based on Lefebvre's (2002) insight that 'each living body is space and has its space, it produces itself in space and it also produces that space (cited in Puwar, 2004: 32). Lefebvre's and Puwar's arguments help to illuminate the experiences

of my participants, as well as the ways the militant groups responded when women joined. Women's understanding of the ways these groups work allowed them to negotiate and navigate their way within them. Women know how to produce a subjecthood that suits the politics of the militant group setting. For example, when they are with the groups they sometimes cover their head and face, as Ahlam and other participants did when going to their training or preparing for a military operation so that no one could tell who they were and they thus avoided exposure and suspicion.

I couldn't find any literature in the Palestinian context that discusses women's involvement in military groups. Through the research process, meeting the participants, learning about their roles and the ways in which they were trained, I learned that the setting within these group changes when they need to train a woman. There is a separation between women and men and women must maintain their invisibility as political subjects, even within the same group, as a tactic of survival. If it is necessary for men and women to meet, especially when they will participate in an attack together, the political leader makes sure it is in a manner that respects the cultural norms dealing with women by maintaining their invisibility and also protecting their bodies. Lefebvre argues that 'space is produced by people's experience living in it, people's representation of it and by the symbols associated with it' (cited in Pappe, 2014: 397). The previous example illustrated how the space within military groups is structured, and how it starts to change to meet the need of protecting women who become members. Pappe (2014) explains that individual subjects are continually 'preoccupied with producing and defining their space' (397). Lefebvre defines space as 'fundamentally bounded up with social reality' (cited in Pappe, 2014: 379). In the context of my participants' experience, I argue that their understanding of their boundaries help them to construct their space of negotiation within the political and military groups, minding the cultural norms. When a woman is within military groups, the space is reconstructed and the leaders of these groups insist on keeping the woman's identity hidden from the others, as well as seeking to uphold the structure of the patriarchal gender arrangements. Women are thus insulated from exposure and treated as 'sisters of fighters', thereby diminishing any thoughts of their sexuality.

The women's space of negotiation, as I have suggested, can be understood through Bhabha's concept of third space, which is 'not in itself representable, it is not an actual space, but it is caused by the openness of signs, symbols, and culture that can be appropriated, translated, rehistoricised and read anew' (cited in Pisters, 2009: 301). Bahbha's concept is useful in order to understand and to discuss the ways in which women become part of a space and adjust to this space. In military groups, women create a space of negotiation, in which they have to hide their political subjecthood from those around them; as such they need to exercise their invisibility to be activists. Women's understanding of their own conservative culture, and the social relations within it, enables them to create their own space of negotiation through which they can transcend their boundaries. This space is not fixed and changes according to the expectations placed upon them, but women still use their awareness of the systems of control and surveillance around them to manoeuvre the boundaries drawn over them. As Bahaba writes: 'It is a space of hybridity in and between cultural differences' (cited in Pisters 2009: 301). Women use survival tactics to create this space. For example, when women are in Israeli prisons they have to perform their political subjectivity all the time, but they still use their free time to drink coffee, make handcrafts or socialize with other women. In this time, women create a space to perform their agency, while at the same time performing and producing political subjectivity. Subjectivities are constituted through material relations that emphasize, in this case, bodies and embodiment. Women's understanding and tactics of negotiation enable them to start taking roles that challenge the traditional norms, including in armed resistance groups, in which they even occupy positions of leadership.

Conclusion

This chapter examined literature focused on the politics of incarcerated space as well as that examining the complex structure of colonial power and women's experience within it. I have also reviewed literature concerned with patriarchal gender arrangements constructions of women's sexuality within Palestinian and Arab cultures. In particular, this chapter has examined how, in the context of occupied Palestine, the space outside prison may reflect that on the inside, especially for women who live amidst the layers of restrictions and control administered by the Israeli occupation and patriarchal gender

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arrangements of the Palestinian society. It also looked at how life under occupation transformed social space for women, opening the private sphere to the public. This chapter has outlined the theoretical basis for my analysis of the space of negotiation that women create to become involved in resistance movements and the tactics that they use to take on roles deemed to be exclusively for men. I have furthermore identified gaps in the literature when it comes to discussing the experience of Palestinian women in military groups, specifically how they get involved in these groups, how they negotiate their boundaries and limitations, and how their participation shapes their political subjectivities and everyday lives. A further question remains: how does gender shape the Palestinian experience of incarceration? As well as reflections on my own experience of shifting between different spaces, my thesis thus utilizes a conceptual framework that will combine some of the key theoretical and empirical insights from the literature through which to analyse and contextualise interviews with participant subjects. It proposes to examine the complex emotions and feelings that accompany the spaces of control that my participants move through, and how women's different experiences and backgrounds influence the construction of their political subjectivity and self-presentation, areas that the literature has not focused on.

Chapter Three: Methodology

Introduction

     This chapter discusses the methodological approach that I have used to collect and analyse the data of this research. My aim has been to foreground former Palestinian women prisoners' life experiences before, during, and after incarceration in Israeli colonial prisons. I am going to develop a methodological approach through a series of different contributions primarily from standpoint theory, meaning I am going to position gender as the categorical centre of the research process and use it as a lens to focus on social issues. The epistemology of this approach focuses on how the individual's material and lived experience structures their understanding of the social and political environment (Hess-Biber, 2006: 3). As a Palestinian woman researcher who grew up in Palestine and continues to live there, my standpoint position in this research is shaped by my life experience of the Israeli occupation, which also influenced the way I approached the participants. My position furthermore influenced the manner in which participants interacted with me during the interview process and guided me to choose the methods I used. Devault (1997) argues that 'feminist methodologies do not use or prescribe any single research method', rather they are united through various efforts to include women's lives and concerns in their account of society, to minimize the harm of research, and to support changes that will improve women's status (cited in Skinner, Edwards and Corbett, n.d. 2014: 178). The aim of feminist research, in both human and scientific terms, is to give the witnesses an opportunity to tell their own whole life experience (Bravo, 1985). Linda Bell argues that one of the goals of feminist research is to reveal the subjugated voices of women with an emphasis on tending to the range of difference among them with regards to race, class, and sexual orientation, adding that it is designed to include a greater emphasis on 'inclusivity' (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2007: 78). In this thesis, I am going to raise the voice of former Palestinian women political prisoners' by looking closely into their life experiences. Few studies have focused on Palestinian women on the frontlines. Most of the focus has been around men's narratives, or even men's perspectives on women's experiences in Israeli colonial prisons, reflecting Oakley, Smart, and Friedan's argument that 'not only are women's experiences ignored, but also

that, when they are brought into focus, they are distorted' (cited in Hesse-Biber, 2006: 15).

In this research I aim to use a feminist methodology to shift the focus from men's concerns in order to document the locations and perspectives of women whose experiences have been ignored (Devault, 1997: 30). Devault argues that 'The aim of much feminist research has been to bring women in, that is to find what has been ignored, censored, and suppressed, and to reveal both the diversity of actual women's lives and the ideological mechanisms that have made so many of those lives invisible' (*Ibid*.). May (2001) argues that when the roles of women are considered in social life they are characterized as passive and emotional. This study aims to create space for the visibility and voices of Palestinian women who have been involved in politics and the resistance movements against the Israeli occupation.

With these insights in mind, I divided my fieldwork into two parts. In the first part, which was in the first year in my PhD, my interviews were largely aimed at breaking the ice and starting to get to know the women. I was inspired by oral history with some of the participants as a method to start our conversation, and also to understand women's experience within specific historical events. I found that when talking about their stories, women made important connections between their own experiences and political events affecting Palestine generally. I found oral history very effective in encouraging women to talk about themselves, their feelings, and memories. In the following year, I carried out follow up visits to continue our conversation. During this stage, as the participants were now comfortable talking to me, I used narrative and life story methods to draw out their personal experiences after, during, and before prison. In this chapter I am going to explain how I used a combination of these two methods during my interviews with the different participants.

Them and Me

I undertook my research in a place that I belong to and where I have lived my entire life. I have experienced many incidents of Israeli attacks, violence and turmoil while living in Palestine and so I am part of the story. Jaggar (1997) argues that 'our emotions are part of why we choose a given topic or set of research processes', so it is impossible

to assume that emotion and value will not be present in the research (cited in Bibrer, 2007: 10). From a feminist perspective, as researchers we have to use strategies to find a '"voices" for ourselves, or for women who share experiences that have been meaningful for them' (Stanley &Wise 1979 cited in Devault, 1997: 30). The experience of living under occupation has been a fundamental part of my social interaction with the participants. This was true, for example, when, in our interviews, women spoke about events that all Palestinians have lived through, such as the First Intifada, the constant invasions of the cities, the death of innocents, and the Second Intifada. Others spoke about the heroic stories of people who have had unusual roles in the resistance movements, such as Dalal Moghrabi, or Laila Khalid. Roberts (2002) argues that the interaction in the interview will help the participants to reflect on and share events from their lives, and will help also the researcher to begin to draw on their own experiences (cited in Hesse-Biber, 2006). Thus my interviews also became a space for me to think about my own experience under occupation. I felt I was part of the collective Palestinian community, and I thought about the meaning of being 'we Palestinians'. However, at times when participants spoke about their personal experiences, which are completely different from mine, I was positioned as an outsider who had never been in such situations. This brings to mind the introduction of Said's (1985) work *After the Last Sky*, in which he discusses his position when interpreting Jean Mohr's images of Palestine and talking about Palestine as a Palestinian. He argues that it is like a double vision, a way of being both outsider and insider as Palestinian:

> As I wrote, I found myself switching pronouns, from 'we' to 'you' to 'they' to designate Palestinians. As abrupt as these shifts are, I feel they reproduce the way we experience ourselves, the way 'you' sense that others look at you, the way in your solitude, you feel the distance between where 'you' are and where 'they' are. (6)

It can be tricky to be part of the area we are researching. In his book *The Art of Listening,* Les Back (2007) discusses the misuses of compulsory reflexivity. He argues that self-reflection can shorten the dialogue with the participants and the researcher's

experience can close doors on the interview (159). During my interviews with participants, when we were talking about some events, I found myself interrupting the participants to ask them more questions. I wanted to know the things I didn't know; I was interested in the women's personal experiences and their everyday life during the event or after, more than the event itself. This was especially true when the participant was from my city, or when I had also experienced the event, which sometimes did not give the participants the opportunity to talk about themselves. In these cases, they would sometimes start using political discourse that distanced them from their personal experience. Back argues that the researcher's knowledge of a specific event, or their knowledge of the culture from the inside, can paradoxically make the account of the people being listened to become mute (159); this can make the researcher feel the talk is irrelevant and miss part of the story. When I began to realise what I was missing, I gave the participants more space to reflect on their own narratives without interrupting them. Gunaratnam and Oliviere (2009) argue that the narrative draws upon embodied assumptions about language and subjectivity, explaining that these assumptions are a definitive feature of reflexivity in social science. They write: 'Reflexivity involves a critical stance to existing concepts and research methods, recognizing that these are not objective and value free, but are influenced by social context, that they both affect and produce what we come to know' (57).

Hesse-Biber (2006) argues that when feminists conduct research, they centralize the relationship between the researchers and participants to balance different levels of power and authority. Researchers practice reflexivity, which she defines below:

> A process by which they recognize, examine, and understand how their
> social background, location, and assumption can influence research,
> reflexivity is a way for researchers to account for their personal biases
> and examine the effects that these biases may have on the data
> produced. (3)

In this research, I have interviewed women who have played unusual roles for Palestinian women. Some of them are considered to be leaders within their communities.

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Some occupy very high-level jobs in the Palestinian Authority or important roles in NGOs. Others did not have the opportunity to become leaders in a recognized or professional capacity, but they still consider themselves different from women who have never experienced Israeli prisons. All the women I have interviewed have strong political subjectivities, by which I mean that they have to continuously perform their political identity and present their understanding of the Palestinian national struggle. Given these pressures, it took me a while to break the ice and make them feel comfortable and at ease, especially when I used oral history as a tactic to start our conversation, to move from general to personal experience. In many cases, the women chose the way they wanted to tell their own stories. They tried to control the interview and the information they shared. They would ignore some of my questions. I felt sometimes they just wanted to tell me whatever suited them, and that they talked to me the same way they would talk to journalists, which was a challenge especially with the women who were used to talking to media.

My research relies on the stories of others, which I will work to interpret and analyse, drawing on sociological and postcolonial work on gender, incarceration and the politics of occupation. The power relation between the participants and researcher is unequal and this cannot be completely overcome; however, it can be modified through the research process (Roberts, 2002 cited in Hess-Biberer, 2006: 14). Oakley (1990) suggests the importance of a 'reciprocal relationship' with the participant, which she defines as 'similar to friendship between feminist researchers and the women they research'. She asserts that this kind of relationship can make the participants' responses much fuller (cited in Hynes, 2006: 12). Hynes (2006) describes the power relationships inherent in research in terms of research reciprocity and ownership of data. In feminist methodologies, there is stress on the importance of reciprocity and empathy, which facilitates the understanding of others through the use of narrative (Hynes, 1993: 11). Postmodern research emphasises the construction of the interview and how it influences the reality of the interaction, affecting the development of the relationship between researcher and respondent (Batty, 2009: 112). Feminist standpoint epistemologies try to understand the relation between privileged knowledge and power (Ellis and Fopp, 2001). Oakley (1981) insists on the importance of breaking down the hierarchical power relation

between the researchers and the participants, with the researcher viewing the women participants as agents of social change.

The role of researcher is interpretive, for this subjectivity becomes a means to try to move across the boundaries between the researcher, the participants and the people we are writing for. During the research, I started to realize the importance of the participants' accounts and of giving them the opportunity to discuss events from their own perspectives. So the researcher should be aware that the research should allow for contrast not be self-centered. Haraway (1997) explains that subjectivity 'is multidimensional; so, therefore, is a vision. The knowing self is partial in all its guises, never finished, whole, simply there and original' (586). She adds that subjectivity 'is always constructed and stitched together imperfectly, and therefore able to join with another, to see together without claiming to be another' (*Ibid*.). Haraway uses 'situated knowledge' to describe feminist objectivity, in which concepts such as knowledge and truth are always partial and inseparable from the lived experience of the participants. Feminist objectivity is 'subjective, power-imbued and relational' (Hess-Biber, 2006: 5). She writes:

> Here is the promise of objectivity: scientific knower seeks the
> subject position not of identity, but of objectivity; that is, partial
> connection. There is no way to 'be' simultaneously in all, or wholly
> in any, of the privileged (subjugated) positions structured by
> gender, race, nation and class. (Haraway, 1997: 586)

Haraway calls this situated knowledge, which is not only about communities but also isolated individuals. She argues that the only way to find a larger vision is to be somewhere in particular: 'Feminist objectivity is about limited location and situated knowledge not about transcendence and splitting of subject and object, it allows us to become answerable for what we learn how to see' (590). For Hartsock (1983) and Collins (1990), 'standpoints are achieved in community, through collective conversations and dialogue among women in marginal social positions' (Hess-Biber & Leavy, 2007: 33). As Haraway (1997) explains, 'situated knowledge requires the object of knowledge be

pictured as an actor and agent, not as a screen or a ground or a resource, never finally as slave to the master that closes off the dialectic in his unique agency and his authorship of "objective knowledge"' (392). This claim means that we have to look at people's lives and take a view from a particular body rather than 'a view from above, from nowhere, from simplicity' (*Ibid*.).

Haraway (1988) argues that '[f]eminist objectivity makes room for surprises at the heart of knowledge production' (594). I argue that approaching research with ready answers and perspectives will limit the researcher's views and opportunities to find new knowledge. Sandra Harding (1993) 'critiques the traditional, or politics, concept of objectivity because it focuses only on the "context of justification" in the research process' (cited in Hess-Biber 2006: 10). She explains this with regard to the researcher who attempts to carry out their research without putting their own values and attitudes into the process. She writes, 'what is left out of consideration is the extent to which values and attitudes of the researcher also enter into the "context of discovery"' (Harding, 1993 cited in Bibrer, 2007: 10). Haraway (1991) argues that 'objectivity is not about dis-engagement but about mutual *and* usually unequal structuring, about taking risks in a world where "we" are permanently mortal, that is not in "final" control' (595-596).

The Story of This Research

As a Palestinian, I grew up in a very politicized environment. I experienced the First Intifada in my childhood, in which we faced the Israeli military forces in our streets, schools, and even homes. So, like most Palestinians, I was constantly aware of the politics of and the conflict with the Israeli occupation. Palestinians grow up hearing praise for freedom fighters and being told their heroic stories. There were a few women who we would hear about, such as Dalal Mughrabi, who was the leader of the Fateh group that attacked Israeli soldiers after sneaking through the borders between Lebanon and Israel. Leila Khalid, a member of the PLFP who participated in hijacking flights in order to demand the release of prisoners, is another famous woman whose story we are told. Aisha Odeh and Rasmia Odeh were two of the first few women arrested for their roles in a military action after they planted a bomb in an Israeli shopping centre in the late 1960s. Though we used to see their pictures in the streets and feel an appreciation for

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them, it was rare to read anything about women in prison, or in military groups; they were just numbers. We didn't know who they were, their stories, or why they were arrested - and this is still the case. My interest in this research began when I learned about prisoners' struggles and resistance inside prison. I had heard about women in prisons, but had never had a conversation with any of them before this research. I wondered who these women were and why they were in prison.

I started my fieldwork by following the hunger strike of Hana Shalabe in 2012. Shalabe was demanding release and calling attention to the injustice of administrative detention. She was later exiled to Gaza. I followed the coverage of her strike in the media and on Facebook groups to understand what people were thinking about her and her actions, and how, as a woman, her experience was different from that of men. I began to attend the support tent for all Palestinian prisoners in my hometown of Nablus, in order to meet former prisoners, and chat with them about their experience. I was struck by their strength and political commitment, as well as how they talked about their experiences inside prison. I found myself asking why we never heard about these women's stories. They were just shadows without names to those of us on the outside. My surprise grew when I found out that many of the women I had worked with before beginning the research to organize social activities for women were themselves former prisoners. Yet they had never shared this with me, or with anyone who worked with them. They just mentioned they were imprisoned in Israel without giving details about their own stories or experiences. This made me question why they didn't talk about their experience; why did they ignore or deny it? Maybe the silence around women prisoners was due to the male dominant culture that praises men as heroes for fulfilling their roles of protecting their land and people, but which positions women as perpetual victims in need of protection and unable to defend themselves. Though we never heard much about Palestinian women in prison, we did hear a lot about Djamila Bouhired, an Algerian nationalist who opposed French colonial rule and who was imprisoned and tortured. Bouhired was the first Arab woman whose narrative of experiencing French colonial prison was publicized; her biography was published and an Egyptian movie was made of her life. Having read her biography and watched her biopic several times as a child, I remember wondering why we didn't have women like her in Palestine. Bouhired was the

ideal for a lot of the women I interviewed, with many of them describing how her experience encouraged them to join military groups defending their country.

In reality, Palestinian women have always played major roles in the resistance movements, but this involvement was in the shadows. During the Second Intifada, I began to hear more about women who became freedom fighters, or were imprisoned by Israel. Media had developed in Palestine, and we started to get more TV channels after the establishment of the Palestinian Authority (PA). Previously our channels were limited and most of them were under the supervision of Israeli authorities. Now news about women fighters, and their participation in politics and resistance, became more accessible. In the First Intifada, many women were imprisoned for their participation in demonstrations, throwing stones, hiding fighters in their homes, or even taking roles in military actions. In the Second Intifada, women's participation was more visible. They became freedom fighters (suicide-boomers) and took part in the actions of military groups. As such, the number of women in prison increased. They were accused of various offenses, but all were imprisoned for actions resisting the occupation.

I had an idealised image of those women in Israeli prisons experiencing the same torture and injustice that Djamila Bouhired had. I perceived them as living a continuous resistance, confronting Israeli soldiers at all times. I constantly wondered what they were doing in prison, how they spent their time, and how they managed to challenge traditional Palestinian culture to join military groups in the first place. Growing up in the same patriarchal gender arrangements, I had been exposed to what the community thinks of these women and the shock with which they perceive them. I realized that not all women activists experience the community's appreciation. Rather they are met with concerns about their honour and suspicion that they may have been subject to sexual abuse. There is a stigma attached to women who were in prisons that they are sexually impure and have lost their femininity. In undertaking this research, I wanted to learn about the women's actual stories and to hear, directly from them, about their personal experiences, feelings, and thoughts. To prepare, I gathered as much data as I could from different resources about the experience of Palestinian women in Israeli prisons. In order to more deeply understand the experience of prison and to engage with the topic, I participated in public events in support for prisoners. I interviewed different organizations that provide

services for former prisoners and their families to learn more about prisoners' experiences, and also to make connections with potential participants. I also read several prisoner diaries, from Palestine and other countries, and I watched relevant films and documentaries.

I started my fieldwork in London, reading the two-volume diary of Aisha Odeh (2005, 2013), one of the first Palestinian women to write about her experience in Israeli detention. She was imprisoned for ten years and then released in a prisoner exchange between Palestine and Israel in 1979. She was exiled outside of Palestine for another fifteen years, returning to live there after the establishment of the Palestinian Authority in 1995. In her diary, she reflects on the contributions of Palestinian women to the resistance movements and also focuses on the obstacles that women face participating in military groups, and during arrest and imprisonment. Looking into Odeh's dairies opened my eyes to the importance of investigating women's experience before and during imprisonment. But in particular it left me with questions about women's experiences after prison and how prison changes their lives after release, as this is something that she never discusses. Reading about her life before prison helped me to understand the role of the family in constructing women's political orientation and in influencing their motivation to take up arms. In addition, learning about her life before prison helped me to understand women's methods of negotiating the boundaries drawn by patriarchal gender arrangements and also how this conservative masculine culture shaped women's roles in the resistance movements.

Through Odeh's writings, I understood the challenges women face during the processes of arrest and investigation. She describes these processes and gives extensive details of the torture she suffered, including sexual abuse. After reading her account, I was, however, left with many questions about how such experiences impact on women returning to gender arrangements preoccupied with women's sexuality. Though she discusses her sexual abuse, she does not discuss how this experience affected her, or her relationship with her family and community. The diary is more descriptive of women's experience in prison, reflecting on her and her fellow prisoners' political subjecthood. Thus it sheds light on the different activities political prisoners organize and the importance of political themes within these activities, as well as the politics that control

the relations between prisoners. Odeh furthermore outlines the regime of discipline and punishment Palestinian women were subject to, such as the deprivation of family visits, the confiscation of televisions and radios, isolation and transfer from one prison to another, often one which was very distant from the location of their original prison. She also describes the Palestinian prisoners' organized resistance against the Israeli prison authorities, such as hunger strikes, the refusal of work and activity, and staying in their rooms during the time in which they were free to leave them. She further describes the ways that Palestinian women tried to empower each other through book discussion groups, literacy classes and other activities.

Reading Odeh's autobiography gave me an orientation from which to plan my interviews and while questioning what to ask. On the other hand, her experience also gave me the impression that all Palestinian women who were in prison faced the same conditions and had similar backgrounds in terms of their membership in political movements or participation in militant actions. When I started my fieldwork, I found that women have different stories and experiences. They negotiate their own space and draw their boundaries in different ways. Furthermore, their involvement in resistance movements varies strikingly. I have interviewed women who were imprisoned in different periods from the early 1970s through the present. However, in this thesis, I don't consider the historical sequence; rather I found that political changes were more important than chronology in influencing women's imprisonment experiences. Hesse-Biber (2006) argues that researchers often look at forms and trends within the population of women as a whole, so the conclusions they draw obscure the varied range of women's unique circumstances (3). In my research, I found that I can't generalize women's experiences and so I have paid to close attention to their diversity.

Mindful of the importance of acknowledging the plurality of women's lived experiences, in my work I have paid close attention to the social, political, and geographical backgrounds of the participants. Whether they are married, divorced or single, if they have children, their economic situation, and whether they come from a city, refugee camp or village can significantly shape women's experiences in politics and military actions. Attending to such issues helps to illuminate the differences among my participants, as well as among Palestinian women resisting the occupation more

generally. It also helps draw out connections between women's socio-economic and religious backgrounds and the ways in which they negotiate and reconcile different spaces, including that of prison. Women who participated in the research were from the West Bank. As noted, for me, as Palestinian researcher living in the West Bank, it is impossible to access the Gaza Strip because of the restrictions the Israeli occupation imposes on our mobility between the two areas. My participants were from different generations, as well as being from different social, economic, political, and religious backgrounds. This diversity provides an insight into the ways in which Israeli techniques of dealing with the Palestinian prisoners have developed over time, and even into the ways in which the development of incarcerated space reflects the development of the prison outside.

Life Experience in Research

The aim of this research is to investigate the experience of Palestinian women who were in Israeli prisons by documenting their lives, experiences and concerns, illuminating gender based stereotypes and biases, and unearthing women's subjugated knowledge. The only way to meet this aim is, as DeVault (1999) puts it, 'not only to know about women, but to provide a fuller and more accurate account of society by including them' (30). This will be achieved through understanding the silenced life experiences, emotions, and feelings of participants through their personal stories and reflections, collected during the field research. Scott (1992) presumes that making 'the experience of different groups visible exposes the existence of repressive mechanisms but not their inner working or logics' (25). Smith's (1987) view is that

> [t]here is a gap between what we are and the means we have to
> express and act. It means that the concerns, interests,
> experiences forming 'our' culture are those of men in positions
> of dominance, whose perspectives are built on the silence of
> women and 'others.' (19-20)

In this research, I aimed to facilitate voicing the silent feelings and experiences of former Palestinian women prisoners' through giving them the opportunity to express their own stories and through drawing links between the individual's experience and their understanding of the conservative and traditional culture.

In this thesis, I will be focusing on women's experiences in negotiating the spaces in which they are confined and restricted, both as prisoners and as women, and the boundaries and borders shaping their everyday lives. Examining the involvement of these women in politics, their engagement in political movements, their participation in actions and the modes of secrecy they employ to undertake these activities, as well as how their performance of sumud shifts through all of these processes, will give insight into how women negotiate the surrounding patriarchal gender arrangements and their strategies for dealing with the spaces of Israeli occupation. To understand my participants' experiences, it is necessary to include, acknowledge and understand their specific experience within the Palestinian national movements. This examination also emphasizes their political subjecthood and identity.

Incarceration in Israeli colonial prison is an experience for women in which they become recognized political subjects, trying to avoid their individualism. Nevertheless, women negotiate a space of freedom in which to enjoy some of their agency. Even though they share the same space in prison, the ways that women deal with it can be different. After being released, women find themselves having to constantly perform as former political prisoners. They are always watched for what they do and what they say. But women create their own spaces in which they can talk about their personal needs and emotions without the pressure of presenting themselves as former political prisoners. Here I will follow women's experiences from one space to another, examining the ways in which they navigate them, and how this shapes their individual and collective subjectivity. This will also help to illustrate women's roles in the resistance movements, and the processes through which they have been imprisoned. My aim here is not just to explore women former prisoners' discovery of an identity, but also to draw attention to the participation of women in political movements more broadly.

Understanding the lived experience and daily activity of individuals helps us to understand the structure of the social world. Dorothy Smith (1987) stresses the

importance of researching women's lives through focusing on their everyday experiences and paying attention to the ways in which they try to understand and adapt to the dominant culture. Doing so will help to fully conceptualize women's positions, which creates knowledge based upon their standpoint and experience (Hess-Bibrer, 2006). With my participants, I structured the interviews to draw out discussion about their daily lives, starting from the present by asking about their jobs, social relations and everyday activities. This gives insight into the influence of the prison experience in the construction of subjects. Scott's (1991) reflections on E.P. Thompson's understanding of experience is interesting to consider here. She writes:

> His notion of experience joined ideas of external influence and subjective feelings, the structural and psychological…For him, experience meant 'social being', the lived realities of social life, especially the affective domain of family and religion and the symbolic dimensions of expressions. (62)

As such, looking into Palestinian women's experience before, during and after prison provides a means of understanding the influence of family background and religion, as well as that of political beliefs in shaping the research participants' political subjectivities.

Research in Action

The Preparation Stage: Using social media – London

During the first year of the PhD, I started a Facebook group called 'Stories of Former Palestinian Women Political Prisoners' in Israeli Prison'. I thought this page would help me reach women and also open dialogue among the participants, as social media can offer many avenues of participant involvement. Water et al. (2009) argue that the interactivity among people on social media plays an important role in developing relationships online. Relationships formed online can eventually result in real world contact, with the process of interaction marked by a series of stages in which trust and comfort are built (Mackenna et al., 2002 cited in Ross et al., 2009: 2). I thought that I could use Facebook to bring individuals together in a community to discuss prisoner

issues and share stories, which would help to build the starting point for my actual fieldwork.

I started my Facebook group by inviting people I knew that were interested in or politically active around the issues of prisoners. I had more than 40 members in the beginning. Many women who have experienced prison joined the group, but they never talked about their personal experience and did not comment on any issues or posts that I shared. When I would try to open a discussion topic, they would not participate in the conversation publicly. They were silent, ignoring my questions, and some just left the group. I think for them it was just a small chat among strangers. Some started to communicate with me through private messages. These conversations were only between the individual and me, and no one could else see the exchanges. They consisted primarily of personal talk, with the women asking who I was, where I was from and what I was doing. When I asked about them, they would answer that they would tell me about themselves when we met in person. This interaction helped me to introduce myself to participants and build contacts with women who had been in Israeli prisons and had Facebook.

Yet in all our conversations, I never got anything substantial. The women were paying attention to every word they said. When I asked for their stories, they kept telling me, 'Not online. It is not a place to talk.' This lack of an actual response to my questions made me feel frustrated. The number of participants began to decrease and I had less responses. Eventually, I stopped using my group or posting anything on it. However, the women who had talked to me in private messages started to use the page to post activities and news around things that were going on in Palestine. Then they used it as a place to post updates on the hunger strike campaign. They still never responded to any of my questions or made any comments, but some of them did continue to communicate with me sometimes on private chat, asking how I was doing and making small talk. They eventually stopped communicating in this way and insisted that we continue when I returned to Palestine and could meet with them in person. Slowly my page became inactive and they invited me to another space they created for publicising their campaigning activities for Palestinian prisoners.

Zhao et al. (2008) argue that 'when face-to-face interactions take place among strangers, some people try to hide their background and to produce a new identity, however this identity claim cannot go beyond the limits set by embodiment' (1817). The participants in the Facebook group were wary of saying or contributing anything. They tried to maintain a distance with me, keeping our relationship quite formal, and were particularly reluctant to talk about their imprisonment experiences with me online. At the time, I didn't understand the reason behind this reticence. Later I became aware that these women feel they are under constant surveillance from the Israeli occupation. As they feel they are watched all the time, they don't like to write or share anything because of the fear of accusation and being imprisoned again.

All in all, my experience in creating dialogue online failed, but it did open up opportunities for me to meet with these women when I started my fieldwork. I followed their personal profiles on Facebook, in which they expressed their feelings on many issues. Though they did not post anything explicitly political, they sometimes posted images to show their support for political prisoners, without mentioning their personal thoughts. In their research on online identity, Zhao et al. found that 'people used different strategies in identity construction on Facebook' and they 'distinguished a continuum of modes of self-presentation on Facebook from implicit to explicit identity claims' (1824). The women in my research tended to use images, statements and profile pictures that were posed and appropriate, and primarily focused on non-political subjects. Many of the women I followed personalized their Facebook pages to exercise their agency, trying to divide their social media profile from their political activism. Others, however, mentioned their experiences as political former prisoners, and some of them put the former prisoner name in their username. This reflects the observation of Ham et al. (2011) that 'the interpersonal domain encompasses the interaction one has with her social network…involves her inner emotions and levels of self-satisfaction, while the behavioural domain involves the individual's participation in civic and political activities' (1829). By the time my Facebook page became inactive, I had still not had a serious discussion or interaction on the topics and questions that I was posting. I conclude from this experience that Palestinian women who have been in Israeli prisons do not trust social media to talk about their personal stories. They were more relaxed and easy to talk

to when I met with them in my fieldwork. They were worried that the Israeli occupation was monitoring their activities on social media and that anything they wrote could lead to being re-imprisoned. The sense of insecurity was high for women interacting through social media, as well as in our first actual meetings. They had a lot of concerns and questions about me and why I was doing this research. After I met them and was able to explain that it was an informal relationship, they started to introduce me to other women.

Beginning the Fieldwork – Starting from Nablus to the Entire West Bank

My fieldwork period was synchronous with the hunger strike for Palestinian prisoners inside Israeli prisons. Approximately 5,000 prisoners participated in this hunger strike. This led to support campaigns in which the families of those prisoners and former prisoners participated. They erected tents in the centres of all Palestinian cities where supporters could go and participate in campaign activities. I started to attend these tents in order to learn more about the workings of prison and also to meet with people who had been inside. I succeeded in meeting women who had been incarcerated and I organized interviews with them. They then started to help me to meet other women who had been imprisoned in different areas. Here I relied on the snowball technique, also known as chain referral sampling, in which participants use their social networks to refer the researcher to other people who can potentially participate in or contribute to the study. As Frost (2011) notes, this technique 'is often used to find and recruit "hidden populations", that is, groups not easily accessible to researchers through other sampling strategies' (54). By using snowball sampling, I was able to reach participants in a way that allowed for trust between us in the interviews, and for participants to be able to talk without any suspicion or fear. At the same time, I made contact with the women who I had reached through my Facebook page. I met with them and then they also introduced me to other women.

I was aware of the importance of communicating with some of the organizations that work with women former prisoners, as these women are often deeply suspicious of any stranger asking them the reasons they were in Israeli prisons or how they got involved in the resistance movement. I had a list of all the organizations involved, but I

decided to start with the General Union of Palestinian Women (GUWP)[3] in Nablus that I was involved in many of their activities and campaigns in Palestine, and through my work at An-Najah National University. This helped me to get statistics and information on women in Israeli prisons, without any organizational complications, that they trusted me and were confident about the use of any information they provided me. I was aware that some of the members were themselves activists and had spent time inside. I thought I could start by interviewing them. I knew that asking them to guide me to women former prisoners would help me to reach women from the different political movements, but not Hamas or the Islamic Jihad. The GUWP gave me a list of all the contact details for women former prisoners in the Nablus area, and told me to tell them when I called that I got their numbers from the GUWP. Their awareness of who I was made it easier for me to contact women, and to meet with them without complications.

The GUWP were my gatekeepers. They facilitated me in reaching women, and opening conversations with them, as they felt more secure speaking to me knowing that I had been vetted by the GUWP. Gatekeepers thus perform a linking role for the research with participants, mediating external communication with them, especially those who feel they are in danger, or are part of vulnerable groups. Using the name of GUWP helped to gain the trust and confidence of the participants. My being introduced to them through the organization enabled them to share their stories feeling protected and without any fear of saying something that could be used against them. This is particularly important, as some of these women have been in administrative detention for security reasons, which means that saying something that might be deemed subversive could send them back to prison. As such, these women are understandably suspicious of Israeli collaborators.

I have been frequently questioned about the reasons behind my research, and why I focus on women. I always answer that it is because women have played great roles, and this needs to be discussed. In my first interview with the participants, I explained to them that I am not a journalist, that our discussion was for my research, and that they could choose if they wanted their names to be used or to remain anonymous. My participants

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[3] The Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) founded the GUWP in 1965, it is considered to be the official representative body for Palestinian women around the world (http://www.gupw.net/index.php/ar/).

were used to speaking about their experiences in an idealized political narrative, emphasizing their unflinching resistance and constant political commitment. In order to gain a fuller understanding of their experiences, I felt, therefore, that it would be important to move away from this kind of discussion and make our interaction more informal. I asked them about their lives in the present before asking about prison and their lives before prison. This technique helped me to make them feel at ease and not feel pressured to tell me about their experiences in a very obviously political way. We talked about different issues, for example their thoughts about the community and changes. My skills as a former social worker helped me to make them feel comfortable, and encourage them to speak openly about their experiences. And so the participants had space to express their experiences and feelings without being judged, with reflexivity and understanding.

Unexpected Challenges: Working Around the Gendered Stigma of Imprisonment

I did not have any idea of who the women were on the list I was given by the GUWP, so I chose a random name to start with. I assumed that I would not face any problems and that all of the women would accept my request to participate, especially when I mentioned the GUWP. I started with the first few, and I didn't get any response. After a few attempts, I got a call back from a number I hadn't called. The woman on the other end said that I had been trying to call them. I said yes, and that I had called a lot of numbers but not this number. The woman said that I had called her mobile phone. I told her who I was and what I was doing and asked who she was. She was the mother of one of the girls I wanted to interview. She told me she did not think her daughter would want to participate in my research or be interviewed because she had a lot of commitments. She was studying law at university and, as this is a difficult course, she needed to focus on that. The mother also told me that her daughter did not like to talk about this experience. When I asked if I could speak to her daughter, she gave me an excuse and said perhaps she would call me later. She never did.

This exchange with the mother of this woman who was in prison begins to illustrate the impact of imprisonment on women's lives afterwards. Like this woman, they face restrictions from their families, who try to protect them from being involved

again and to guard the family reputation from people's gossip. Families put limitations on these women's mobility and interactions. They watch the women more, feeling they can't trust them because of the secrets they kept around their involvement in military groups before imprisonment. The shock of women's imprisonment makes a profound impact on their families and they continue to wonder after the women are released if they are doing anything without the family's knowledge. Women are aware that their families and the wider community are suspicious about their sexuality after imprisonment and whether they have experienced sexual abuse in prison. Such concerns are always silent; families are afraid of getting answers that might bring shame, and so they try to manage these suspicions through restricting women after their release, attempting to prevent them from participating in political activities, talking about their experience in public, or socialising with former prisoners. In this sense, the mother's response to me was very predictable; but for me it was still a surprise to hear her anger while she spoke, insisting that her daughter was busy, that she was just focused on her studies, and didn't remember anything about her experience. It made me think more about this woman, and others, and the challenges, restrictions and surveillance they face after being released.

Some women feel that they still live prison and keep the prison experience within their thoughts all the time. In the documentary 'Women in Struggle', which discusses some Palestinian women's experiences inside Israeli jails, Aisha Odeh comments, 'When we go out of the prison, we still kept it inside our soul' (Hwari, 2004). I did not understand this description when I first watched the film, but after talking to some of my participants, I began to get a sense of the challenges women face after being released, and the loud silence that they often feel even if they don't talk about it. At the same time, some women may face doubts about their femininity. In Makboul's 2006 documentary, Leila Khalid explains the way that journalists and the media dealt with her experience as a freedom fighter, placing great emphasis on whether she had romantic or sexual relations with a man to check if she was a 'real' woman. This made me think about how our culture considers women who fight and play important roles in resisting the occupation as 'the sisters of men'. This description indicates how these women, imagined as 'sisters', cannot be women who men can marry or have sexual feelings towards, thus illustrating

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the contradiction of women's participation in the military, in which they are expected to be submissive to men and to listen to and obey orders.

Negotiating Interviews

I kept trying to call women to ask for appointments. Most of them would tell me they were very busy. I had assumed women would be willing to participate in my research and that they would be proud of their experiences in resisting the Israeli occupation. The difficulty of initially contacting them gave me an idea of what I would face while I was organizing the interviews. I found many women preferred not to remember their experiences or felt uncomfortable sharing these shaming experiences, or were forbidden to talk about it by their families or other parties. Finally, I got hold of a woman who was willing to make an appointment, after I introduced myself as a PhD student and told her how I had come to have her phone number.

As I went to that first appointment, I had no idea what I could ask and what I couldn't. I knew my role as interviewer was to listen and to ask questions to start our conversation or to clarify some points from the participants, but it was important for me to give the participants space to talk and reflect (Hynes, 2006). In the first stage of the fieldwork, I had intended to use semi-structured interviews with the former prisoners, which rely on the ability to elicit information from the participant, and which are the introductory stage for more in-depth interviews when women share their own narrative and experience. I had prepared some questions from the literature I had read about the experience of political prisoners, including, as noted, Aisha Odeh's diary. In that first interview, however, the woman started immediately talking about her son who was in an Israeli prison and the manner in which they had arrested him. After this, I asked her about her experience and how many years she spent in prison. She answered briefly, and returned to the story of her son. Then I asked her if she remembered the night she was arrested, so she told me about her motivations and courage and why she was arrested. She told me many things that were not connected, but I got an idea of the system and how life inside prison was organized. I also got a glimpse of the conflict and violence that can break out among prisoners, which was a shock for me, as all the stories we hear in the Palestinian community about prisoners emphasize heroism and solidarity.

However, most of my first interviews were very general, and most women, like the woman I have described here, tried to create an image of their steadfastness inside prison and to justify their political roles and involvement. I started to think about the questions I was asking and the construction of my work. I become more interested in learning about the details of women's personal experience, in order to understand how they deal with their own space. This thesis is grounded in the stories and experiences of the participants, which encompass the familial, social, personal and political elements of their lives. That necessitated thinking about methods to encourage participants to speak about their personal experiences, including their emotions, memories, feelings. I learned the importance of the way in which questions were asked. Les Back (2007) interrogates the ways we listen to people and collect data during interviews, asking whether they give us their stories or we as researchers steal them. He is questioning the heart of social investigation and whether it is appropriation or exchange (97). I felt with some participants that they didn't want to share their personal experiences. They were more interested in reflecting the collective experience, focusing on the way political prisoners resist the occupation through their own sumud. Furthermore, they were worried about the image of political prisoners that they were drawing for me. In such cases, it took time to try to ask the right questions and to build trust. However, others were open to sharing their experiences and talked quite freely. I was even surprised at some of the things they shared with me. The fact that I am a Palestinian woman and I understand the culture and the boundaries that participants face having had many of the same life experiences under the occupation that they have also made it easy for them to talk to me.

Thus I learned that not all women will contribute in the same way, and that there are some questions that I can't ask for security reasons, especially those connected to the reasons behind women's arrest and interrogation. I learned that such questions are sensitive to women and can bring the interview to a halt. In one case, when I asked one of my participants why she had been imprisoned, she changed the subject and started asking about me. Then, when I redirected the conversation to ask questions about her, she answered with, 'Yes', 'No', or 'I don't know'. The interview finished very quickly. After I turned my phone off and collected my belongings, she asked me why I had asked that question. When I said it was out of curiosity, she advised me not to ask such

questions with other participants, because these were questions that would be asked by interrogators and collaborators. I felt I missed this point because I have never experienced prison. While my participants, through their experience in military and resistance groups, had received preparation and training on what is appropriate to ask or to answer and what is not, as a researcher, and even as a Palestinian, I had never been aware of the sensitivity of these questions, and how they can obstruct relations with former prisoners and make them feel uncomfortable.

Thinking about the challenges of building trust in the interviews, I felt it might be more fruitful to open the interview by focusing on the present, asking participants what they are doing now and about their daily activities, and from there to move toward the past to talk about their experiences before and during prison. As part of moving the discussion to the past, and especially as I was getting to know them, I thought of presenting important events in Palestinian history for participants to reflect on and connect to their own experiences. I also asked my participants for their thoughts and feelings about women who have played prominent roles in resisting the occupation. After using this method, and getting to know the women, I began to use other narrative methods to go into more depth about each woman's life experience. I found these methods very effective, as I will describe in more detail below in the sections that follow.

Firstly, I will briefly discuss the importance of creating the right atmosphere. I had to think about my method to prevent them from thinking about me as a journalist and to help them feel comfortable during the interview and open up. At the beginning of each interview, I tried to clarify for the participants that I am not a journalist and would not be using their real name, so they could talk freely about anything. I used my phone to record the interview so that they would not feel as invasive as an audio recorder. A mobile phone is an object they are used to seeing in their everyday life, and so this helped them forget about the recording. I also held the interviews in places they chose, such as restaurants, their houses or workplaces, or walking in the street - any place they felt was secure and familiar. This gave the interview a more comfortable atmosphere. Some of the participants told me at the end of our meeting that they didn't know why, but they felt rested having shared their personal feelings with me, even when they shared sensitive information.

Facilitate giving Women a Voice: Oral Histories- Life Story

As this thesis is based on the experiences of former Palestinian women prisoners', it was important to find a suitable methodology to facilitate a voice, and to shed light on their lives and their contributions to the Palestinian national struggle. It was also important to find a way to give them space to reflect on their own personal experiences and interpretation of events. This research focuses on women who belong to a group marginalized by researchers and within national narratives, which rarely focus on Palestinian women's contributions as subjects, indicating multiple layers of exclusion and silencing. For example, in studies of the Nakba, women were absent, 'except when they are mentioned in relation to issues of honour, fashion and clothing, which in turn demonstrates women's status as objects (and not subjects) of cultural norms' (Hammami, 2004 cited in Kassem, 2011:4). Oral history, as Janesick (2007) writes, validates women's experiences and 'contributes to a social justice project by repairing the historical record through including women's voices' (115). As a Palestinian feminist researcher, it was important for me to focus on women by giving them an opportunity to voice their experiences, in order to reflect the different roles they played in the resistance movements. bell hooks (1989) insists that 'women have the right to define their own reality, establish their own identities and name their history' (cited in Kassem, 2011: 10). Like Janesick, I believe that oral history, especially the unofficial memories, will help address the exclusion of women's stories and experiences and thus help to illustrate their agency in constituting society and history.

Shedding light on women's contributions to the Palestinian national struggle and the different roles they have played can be achieved by facilitating the telling of their own life stories. This also highlights the diversity among women. Bravo (1985) argues that life stories show us

> [t]he different ways in which each individual lives, reflects on and now retells his or her experience: ways that are related to each person's cultural and political background, to the patterns of their previous day

to day life and their emotional experience, to the opportunities they had of adjusting to a 'normal life' again, to how they make sense of it in biographical and psychological terms, how it affects their subsequent political and theoretical positions, and how they remember it, commemorate it or forget it. (21)

Political events deeply influence Palestinian lives, shaping their experiences. 'In the practices of history and of modern autobiographical narration, *there is the assumption that nothing goes away*, that the past has deposited all of its traces somewhere, somehow (through they may be, in particular instances, difficult to retrieve)' (Steedman cited in Crane, 2006: 443). In my project, oral history in combination with life story were methods uniquely suited to providing a clear understanding of the forces that women who experience Israeli's prisons both resist and comply with in their social and political context. Oral history tells the everyday contexts, and allows space, in an informal way, for various stories that can detail the women's daily experiences that are often left out of official documented history. Usually an oral history is the story of someone from an under-represented group.

Using oral history gave my participants the opportunity to articulate their identities and to reflect and present their agency, as well as their personal political views without the pressure to perform their political subjectivity as former political prisoners. Kyriancou (2000) argues that the oral history methodology enables the voices of a marginalized population to be heard by capturing their lived experience, which also offers a deeper understanding of the role and influence of women (cited in Haynes, 2006: 8). It furthermore helps to facilitate the interview, making it an interactive discussion in which feelings can be shared. Using oral history enabled me to understand what kinds of historical events made women want to challenge the conservative patriarchal gender arrangements and change their positions within the resistance movements, and also how women became part of the political movements, and how they negotiated the cultural boundaries around their roles in armed groups. In addition to learning about each participant's individual life, the oral history method also provided the opportunity to document women's roles in the resistance movements. Asking women to reflect on

historical events brings their voices and contributions to the fore; they are not negative actors, but are engaged in shaping and delineating their roles.

Asking the participants to reflect on historical events also gave me insight to their lives and experiences, as I was trying to make them remember and talk about their feelings and thoughts. For example, Majd, who was a child in the First Intifada, remembers when her father was arrested and beaten by the Israeli soldiers. The family were then ordered to evacuate the house, which the soldiers then locked shut. Majd and other women talked about the different strategies used to target the homes of Palestinian activists. Another woman described a room inside her family's house being locked by the army, so that the family could not go inside it. While Majd was reflecting on the First Intifada, she started talking about her personal experiences, her feelings around losing her father and her house at the same time, and having to move to another area. Pattinson (2007) argues that using oral history gives the researcher access to the interviewee's emotions so that they appear within the narrative of the historical events. Majd's narrative made it easy for me to understand how politics had influenced her life from the time of her childhood, shaping her political subjectivity and awareness of the occupation.

As a Palestinian researcher, using oral history was also an opportunity for me to reflect on and remember events and experiences with the participants. Batty (2009) argues that oral history makes the researcher engage in something more intimate than is usual in a formal and restricted interview. She adds that 'oral histories are a window into a person's life that can uncover memories and issues that have been buried or forgotten for many years, which can have negative effects on the participants' (113). In some interviews, especially when the participant's experience was of some kind of loss, the interview environment become emotional. Some of the participants commented when I was leaving that they were starting to feel a headache or that they felt tired, because the interview had opened up some of their wounds. In order to understand their life experience, it was important for me to understand how the participant thought and felt about the past from the present.

In some interviews I did not need to talk about events and ask the participants to reflect on them. Instead I started by talking in general about the current situation, and asking for the participant's thoughts, which brought the conversation to their own

personal stories and experiences. This occurred more frequently in the second stage of my fieldwork, when I went back to follow up with the women. I met with the same women and some new ones, to whom I was introduced through other participants. The participants in the second stage welcomed me with warmth. They were willing to share a lot of their personal feelings with me. They shared their frustrations and dreams. In this stage of interviews, when women started talking about their own experience of imprisonment, they didn't need me to ask questions. I felt they were more open with me and, in some cases, it seemed as if they had been looking forward to the opportunity to talk and share. I thought it was because I had already met them in the interview of the previous year. In some cases, I had kept in touch with them through emails or Facebook, which made them think of me as a familiar face.

Through the research process I chose to use the life story method because it is designed to overcome the silencing of women's contributions to the national struggle, and also to make it more practical to explore women's points of view around specific incidents in history, and also to reflect the diversity of their experience, by focusing on the individuals. I also thought it was important to connect the life stories with historical events, so I aimed to combine it with the oral history technique which works in conjunction with the life story. In general, these methods offer a suitably rich perspective on complex experiences and viewpoints. In particular, 'life story assumes that the voice emerging in the course of interviews is not that of the interviewee alone, but is composed of the diverse forces working on it and with it, including the voice of the researcher' (Kassem, 2011: 16-17). The participants' telling of their life stories was drawn out through our conversation and the relationship we developed over time. In my mind, when the participants were telling me their life stories, I was connecting much of their stories to my own, especially when we both lived through the same events or experienced similar forms of suffering under the occupation. I conclude that the participants' life stories are thus constructed through the surrounding social relationships, culture, politics and also through the researcher, so we cannot extract the subject's story from the surrounding interactions.

Women's life stories are real events, and the way they choose their stories to be perceived and selected can provide insight into the individual's life (Hess-Biberer, 2006:

13). The role of the researcher is to find a way to enable individual accounts of life experiences, which should be understood within the cultural setting of the participants' communities as these settings influence the way women tell their experiences. The researcher must also be mindful of sensitive issues, for example, in the case of my research, those issues connected to women's bodies and sexuality and also political issues such as conflicts and disagreements that can be seen as dishonouring the Palestinian national struggle. Understanding the structure of the culture will help the researcher to understand broader social shifts and perceptions of women's contributions to politics by examining and interpreting individual experiences. Using life story will 'enable the researcher to get close to the experiences of individuals and understand how things are and why' (Batty, 2009: 110). Each woman told her story in a different way, even those who were in prison at the same time and had similar experiences. Scott (1991) argues that experience is an interpretation and something that needs to be interpreted; it is always a way to contest politics (797). As researchers, we have to be aware of everything the participants say and attentive to how the participants understand things around them. In the case of former Palestinian women prisoners', it is important to understand how women tell their experience according to their understanding of culture, politics and space. As researchers, we also have to be aware of cultural concepts and politics in order to fully understand participants' stories.

Political subjects do not only live their own experience as ideas within thoughts but also as feelings. Hesse-Biber (2006) writes: 'Feminists have forged new epistemologies of knowledge by incorporating women's lived experiences, emotions, and feelings into the knowledge- building process' (10). In my research, women's emotions and feelings were very important aspects of the interviews. Some women were emotional, some cried, and some were too overwhelmed to finish their stories. For me, it was also hard in some interviews to distance my emotions. I tried to reflect and show empathy for the participants. My skills as former social worker in a PTSD team during the Second Intifada helped me to deal with the difficult feelings myself and to give the participants comfort and understanding. Many of the participants told me after the interview that they felt released from all of their bad emotions. Others were overwhelmed with their emotions, and felt tired. I found that the participants' emotion was a very important part

of the story because it tells a great deal about how the women deal with their daily lives, how prison affected them, and how they negotiate their boundaries.

The construction of a story, for example, which events participants give accounts of or put emphasis on, can be used to analyse how participants articulate and shape their experience through their narrative (Roberts, 2002 cited in Batty, 2009). My participants constructed their stories in different ways. Some of them focused more on the details of everyday life inside prisons, others on the relationships they built inside prison and the politics that controlled their relations. Others focused on their disappointment of life after release, and the way the community treated them as political prisoners.

Methods in Progress: The Interview Settings

After struggling with the challenges in my first interview as described above, in which the woman avoided talking about her own personal experience and focused instead on her son who was imprisoned, I started encouraging the women to engage and to talk about their own narratives without feeling the pressure of the interview setting. This was one of the reasons I began to combine the oral history method with narratives and life stories. Haynes (2006) argues that using oral history as a method 'allows subjectivity to become a means of understanding both human lived experience and the social, cultural and political contexts of that experience' (26). In this sense, my approach of asking them to reflect on important Palestinian events and how they experienced them as individuals was very useful.

I always started my interviews with women who were hesitant to talk and share by asking them what they were doing in the present, and what their everyday routine was like. In this way, I was trying to release the stress of talking immediately about their imprisonment experience. It was also important for me to start in an unexpected way, as many of the women, having been interviewed previously by the media, seemed to think of me as a journalist. Journalists frequently target these women for interviews about their experiences as political prisoners. The women then tend to think about themselves in these interviews as part of the collective prisoners' body to which they formerly belonged. They try to avoid individualism and talking about personal feelings or fears, instead attempting to perform a political subjecthood that represents resistance against the

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occupation. They want to educate the audience about their experience and to justify it to them. Initially, most women I interviewed tried to tell me stories that sounded as if they had been memorized and repeated, time after time, for different audiences. These were very general, without reflection on their feelings, emotions, or even their individualism. As such, I thought it was better to start the interview from an unexpected point, which made women disengage from the narrative they had prepared for the interview, enabling them to listen to my questions, and to connect with their feelings. This also influenced the environment of the interview, helping the women understand that it was not for the media.

Each woman had a unique narrative, though there were some important commonalities between them. The participant's age, the refugee status of her family, and year of her imprisonment were important elements in choosing which historical events to ask participants to reflect on. For example, if the participant was a refugee I would ask her about the 1948 Nakba[4], and how that influenced her family life. Other times I would ask about the different uprisings and what they remembered and experienced. Pattinson (2007) argues that 'oral history interviews are not reproducing the experience as it happened but rather constructing a representation of it, as such fragility of memory seems less significant' (18). In my work, though collective experience and memories always influenced women's perceptions, I was more interested in the individual's stories and experiences within specific events. They talked about these events from their own personal experience and thoughts, which made their stories different from those of other participants and also my own.

For this reason, I usually began my interviews with a chat about the present. I would decide how to begin the interview according to the way the participant welcomed me. From our initial introduction, I would assess how each particular woman would feel most comfortable sharing her experience. In the beginning of some interviews, I would choose a specific event that happened in Palestine and made an impact on people's lives, or initiated an important moment of change. I asked participants to tell me their life story,

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[4] 'Nakba', meaning the 'catastrophe', refers to the Palestinian exodus that led to the establishment of the state of Israel' (Al-Jazerah, 2013)

through reflection on this historical event: how they or their family experienced it and what they were doing at that time. As a starting point, I resorted to in depth interviews that were inspired by oral history methodology. I asked general questions, for example what they remembered about the Israeli invasion of the Palestinian cities in the second Intifada, to break the ice and get to know each other, and also to avoid the formality they were used to in interviews about their prison experience. In this way, I drew attention to the experiences, so often ignored, of Palestinian women. Many of the women would talk about their roles in the resistance movements, and if they were children at the time in question they would remember their mothers' contributions. Batty (2009) focuses on the importance of oral history giving voice to marginalized groups who are often not heard. As mentioned in the previous section, feminist research also aims to give a voice to participants for emancipation and empowerment.

Talking to the participants and getting to know how they felt most comfortable were the most important elements in learning about them. The informality of the interview gave me the opportunity to draw out their own stories of how they become political subjects. Listening to the participants' narratives, I started to be interested in the meaning of personal boundaries, how they are constructed, and how we are in a continual process of negotiation to widen those boundaries. It was important for me to understand how each participant experienced and defined space differently. In the first stage of the interviews, I learned a lot about women through talking about their personal experience around specific events. This helped to construct a relationship of trust with the participants, which made it easier for me to meet them in the second stage of my fieldwork. At that point, with some of them, I felt as if I was meeting with friends, and they felt the same. This facilitated their ability to talk to me about their personal life stories, and to talk about feelings and thoughts that they had never shared with anyone.

The second interviews were longer, and sometimes we met more than once to finish the story. Many asked me to keep in touch because they valued having a space to share without being restricted. Gunaratnam and Oliviere (2009) describe the main element of narrative interviews as long stretches of talk from the research participant, unbroken by questions or interjections from the researcher. They focus on the researcher's need to ask narrative-inducing questions, which starts with asking about

events, rather than asking for opinions or rationalizations. They note that questions involving opinion and evaluation should 'ideally be asked after the participant has freely given and completed her initial uninterrupted narrative about her experiencing an event' (55). Giving my participants the space to talk about their own experience without interruption, or asking them questions, allowed them to feel the freedom to say what they wanted, and to share little everyday details, as well as how they were affected by important events. Through the process of the research I was able to give women space to voice their experiences, emotions, and feelings. Listening to their experiences in their own voices is an important element in understanding Palestinian women's contributions as active agents in the political domain.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have discussed the methodological approach and practical challenges that have emerged over the course of doing this thesis. This chapter has sought to outline a methodological framework that takes account of feminist methodology, focusing on standpoint theory, as a foundation for the development and implementation of the research process. My fieldwork was shaped through flexibility and a variety of methods aimed at elucidating the ways in which women create their own space of negotiation to reconcile themselves with the politics and boundaries of Israeli incarceration and the patriarchal gender arrangements in which they live. My methodology therefore seeks to understand how subjects transform. I have learned that we need to talk and listen carefully to the participants, free of any stereotypes, and without expectations about who they are or what they have lived through. I have learned that each participant is a unique individual, with her own experience. The following empirical chapters will draw out the similarities and differences among these women's experiences, in order to shed light on how they survive and manoeuvre within a context of colonial and gender domination.

Chapter Four: Palestinian Women's Lives Under Occupation

Introduction

In this chapter, I am going to discuss how the Israeli occupation is constructed in the everyday lives of Palestinians, even inside their homes. My intention is to explore how the Israeli invasion of Palestinian houses creates a state of loss and how this feeling permeates the lives of Palestinian women. Private homes become the home front, which is continually targeted by the Israeli occupation, through intrusion, confiscation and demolition. When a woman's house is attacked, her loss affects her bodily safety, privacy, mobility, lifestyle, welfare, physical health, psychological wellbeing and systems of social support, all of which underpin her daily life practice. Hence, the attacks on the body, the home and homeland work in a spiraling manner, interfering with all aspects of life and distorting the meaning of an individual life. For Palestinians it is important to resist being subordinated to the Israeli occupation and showing their weakness. Thus they strive to show strength and that they are surviving all the practices of the occupation; this is considered an important aspect of sumud.

In this chapter I argue that, within these conditions, Palestinian women become political subjects without a choice: their daily lives must be constructed around politics. Inside their homes, or on the street, they have to face the Israeli occupation in all aspects of their daily lives. To survive, they need to find different tactics to show their sumud and create a space of negotiation. In addition to the continuous attacks and restrictions imposed by the Israeli occupation, Palestinian women live in patriarchal gender arrangements that are anxious about women's bodies and sexuality and place further social restrictions on them in order to protect them from the threats of the occupation. Palestinian women are thus watched by the community in a manner that reflects what Foucault termed the 'panopticon.' Feminists have developed the concept of the 'panoptic gaze' to 'underline the one-way power of gendered looking, where women have internalized the voyeuristic gaze and are always subjectively "objects of the look"'

(Mirzoeff, 2002: 396). In Palestine there is a constant social surveillance that follows women in every aspect of their lives. This constrains women's mobility and their ability to freely take part in political activity. Palestinian women, therefore, learn how to negotiate restrictions and surveillance and to create their own opportunities to take part in the resistance movements. The invisibility of their political subjectivity is tactically necessary in order for them to deflect attention from their roles in militant groups.

The Production of the Home Front

The Palestinian Home

The Palestinian home is a site of complex interactions between politics, traditions, and social and religious practices. It is furthermore a site in which political subjectivities and social identities are produced and constructed. Germ (2002) argues that home is not only a physical space, but also serves as an important base for the development and maintenance of identities. Anan, the deputy governor of Nablus, was proud to tell me about the environment in which she grew up:

> *My family and the surrounding community was so involved in the national work. They had insight about the political situation in Palestine. I grew up in this family, questioning them about what was going on and trying to understand the story of Palestine. Especially when I started seeing most of my male family members imprisoned…and the Israeli soldiers were inside our home every day.*

Anan grew up in a fully politicized home. Many of her relatives, including her father and most of her brothers, were targeted and imprisoned by the Israeli occupation when she was a child. The Palestinian home is the first space in which a person becomes political. Anan's home, for example, was the space that, during her childhood, developed her political identity and awareness and then encouraged her to start thinking of resisting the occupation. From her statement, we see that women are not separate from the struggle, but are affected by it and also play roles within their homes to resist the Israeli occupation. Embedded in the struggle, women practice sumud even within their homes

and through their everyday practice as they learn how to live through and negotiate the restrictions and attacks of the occupation (Schiocchet, 2011: 7).

It is women's responsibility to teach their children and family members how to keep their strength amidst the hardship of the Israeli occupation. Mothers play an important part in educating their children about the situation in Palestine. Some of them also encourage their children to take part in nonviolent resistance and to educate other children in schools. Anan's mother instilled nationalist sentiments in her daughters by using national songs to encourage their patriotism. Anan said, '*My mother played a major role in bringing us up and teaching us about Palestine and how to be patriotic. She would write slogans for us to take to school and share with our classmates.*' Anan's mother's activities here can be described as sumud; they are an everyday means of surviving under the Israeli occupation. Sumud takes many shapes for women. One of them is educating and raising awareness and teaching children national pride in a context in which the nationalist celebrations are forbidden. Like Anan, many other participants vividly describe the roles their mothers played to build their political awareness, for example by taking them to protests and demonstrations against the occupation, by going to the funerals of political martyrs to take part in the wider sumud of the community, or by giving support to the family of the deceased.

Hayam, who grew up in the Al-Jalazon refugee camp near Ramallah, remembers how her mother took her to political activities during the first Intifada. She said:

> *I learned how to become an activist from my mother. It is not only men in the family who were politically involved. She used to take me with her to all the protests. She never thought about me as a little girl who can't go. They used to bring big buses for us in the refugee camp to take us to Ramallah city. They used to call the residents of our camp in the mosque speaker for protest so everybody would participate.*

Women were part of, and visible within, these collective protests. These roles in nonviolent and collective activities have often been highlighted in the literature. Palestinian women also play important roles inside the home in the construction of

identities. As hooks (1990) reflects: 'In our young minds houses belonged to women, were their special domain, not as property, but as places where all that truly mattered in life took place - the warmth and comfort of shelter, the feeding of our bodies, the nurturing of our souls' (41). In the Palestinian context, women take the responsibility of raising children, educating them about political conditions, encouraging their involvement in nonviolent activities, and providing them with a space of safety even when their homes are under attack. This education is both a means of confirming their own sumud, as well as teaching their children how to activate theirs.

Involvement in the struggle and the constant Israeli attack on private Palestinian space dislocate Palestinian women from their position inside the home. Palestinian homes are not divided from outside politics, but are part of them, influenced directly or indirectly by the numerous political actions or through the political media that Palestinians follow everywhere. The different tactics the Israel occupation uses to invade Palestinian homes and privacy is another critical aspect in the activation and development of Palestinians' political subjecthood. As Rita Felski (2002) writes, '[h]ome often contains many of the objects that have helped to shape a life-history, and the meanings and memories with which these objects are encrypted. Home is, in Mary Douglas's phrase, a "memory machine"' (25). She continues:

> Everyday life is above all a temporal term…it conveys the fact of repetition; it refers not to singular or unique but to that which happens 'day after day'. The activities of sleeping, eating, and working conform to regular diurnal rhythms that are in turn embedded within larger cycles of repetition. (18)

There is a constant rhythm in the repetition of habits inside the home and the everyday routines of family members. For Palestinians, politics is something they experience in the details and practices of everyday life: it is in their conversations and social activities, as well as in their encounters with the Israeli occupation in the streets, at checkpoints, and in their own homes and neighbourhoods. The repetitive, routine activities of everyday life are saturated with national themes. Through this routine Palestinians perform their sumud and it becomes the motivation of their everyday life under the occupation.

National songs and following the news are particularly important in strengthening nationalist sentiment among Palestinians. '*I felt I had to be involved in the resistance movement because of the national and revolutionary songs that were playing on the radio all the time. They used to move the national feelings inside me. I started to feel that we had to take part and fight Israel.*' This is how Itaf, who grew up in Bethlehem, describes the impact of constantly listening to the radio station of the PLO. Listening to the news around the clock is a routine in every Palestinian home. When there is any political action, or an Israeli military attack, radio programs shift to focus on national themes and to keep people updated on the situation and warn them of any danger. Thus, as Palestinians, we always know when there is an attack or an invasion and we feel part of the events. Hearing national songs intensifies nationalist feelings and motivates us to perform sumud, to remain steadfast and to carry on through all the difficulties and restrictions the Israeli occupation imposes on our everyday lives. When I asked her how she became politically aware, Sawsan commented: '*My dad, God rest his soul, was always following the news. He used to wake up early in the morning, turn on the radio and raise the volume to the max. So you woke up listening to news, and went to sleep listening to news…It was really loud.*' Her description illustrates how it was almost obligatory for people to be tuned into the news from early in the morning. Her father's raising the volume was an indirect means of educating his family about the political situation.

When the news is broadcast, it is a time of silence. People interact with the TV or radio; you can hear a lot of swearing and anger when there is bad news, such as reports of the Israelis killing people or attacking somewhere. Sawsan, who lives in the Balata refugee camp in Nablus, was eager to tell me how she became a political activist. Her father owned a coffee shop in the camp in the 70s and he was the first to have a radio. She recalled, '*Men would gather at my dad's coffee shop playing snooker, but when the news came on, it was completely silent. You couldn't make any noise or talk, but after they would talk about the news… I used to sneak there as a child and listen to their conversations.*' It is clear from her narrative that men dominate public discussions of politics, as if it is a matter particularly for men. They gather in public spaces to discuss and listen, while women are inside, fulfilling their expected role of taking care of the

home and raising children. Sawsan assumes that women were not that interested in this intellectual talk. She said, '*Women were uneducated, and I think they never had any interest in politics.*' Sawsan's comment reflects how women think about themselves as political subjects and how they often don't recognise that daily life practice is political, even if they are uneducated. As her story also illustrates, many women seek out ways to learn and understand what is going on, as she did when she would hide in order to try to listen to the men's conversations. Alongside the continual radio and TV programs, the most important element engaging women politically is that they are in a space full of memories of loss. Sawsan grew up in a refugee family, so most of her parents' discussions were about the Palestinian land that had been stolen from them. This made her realize her identity as a refugee forced to leave her family's land and then confined to a refugee camp. Sawsan's example is typical of the participants' narratives as they talked about how they became politically aware of the Israeli occupation.

Khawla grew in the Al-Dhasha refugee camp near Bethlehem. She lived in a family of 11 in a small house. Like Sawsan's family, they also suffered poverty and the loss of their land. Khawla's grandmother told them stories about their village and how they used to own extensive land and a big house. As a child, Khawla always compared these stories of the past with her life in the refugee camp. She said these conditions did not give people many options: '*I think this creates a lot of anger inside us, so people direct their anger toward the occupation… Some people escape it by using drugs or by becoming criminals, but, for us, we directed our anger into becoming part of the resistance movement.*' The nostalgia Palestinians have for the stolen land, which they inherit from older generations, incites anger at their displacement in crowded, poverty-stricken areas. Khawla was very emotional telling me about her original village and her grandmother's stories. She was also very angry about the fact that they lost everything because of the Israeli occupation, becoming refugees in their own land. Her family's experience, and the frequency with which it was recounted, was the basis for her to construct a strong political subjectivity, instilling an eagerness to join the national struggle. To keep living and resisting the Israeli occupation, remembering the stolen lands, and maintaining the belief that Palestinians will get them back are very important elements of Palestinian sumud. In my own experience of working in the camps and

listening to refugees' narratives, the people I spoke to kept insisting that to preserve these memory and beliefs is sumud and that it also confirms the injustice of the occupation.

Politics surrounds Palestinian women in every aspect of their life experience, and so they become politically involved, directly or indirectly, contradicting Sawsan's comments that women don't care. This contradiction was obvious as she discussed her own political commitment, saying: '*What do you think? I couldn't stand doing nothing and watch. I was always trying to help the fighters, giving them shelter, or warning them if the Israeli soldiers were around. You can't sit and watch.*' Sawsan's statement reflects that women are active agents and that the politics, injuries and loss of the conflict are played out within their homes. Palestinians have been living under the Israeli occupation since 1948. Their struggle with the occupation shapes the landscape of nationhood, borders, boundaries and territory in which they live. It also shapes subjects and the ways in which they negotiate the restrictions on the practices of everyday life. Under these conditions, women are not just unaffected witnesses; they are deeply impacted by the national struggle and take roles within it, even if these roles are not acknowledged or recognized by the community. These roles reflect sumud, especially when women bear the hardship political situation and the brunt of Israeli attacks.

During the First Intifada, women were present in most of the protests, as illustrated in the image below. Women are side by side with men in preparation for protest, helping to collect stones, and awaiting the directions of the male organisers. As Hayam noted above, her mother took her to respond to the national calls. Usually these came from the leaders of the political movements who were calling everyone to participate in collective nonviolent actions. Women also responded to this call and tried to take their children with them, to see and learn about the national struggle. In the image below, we can see women from Nablus city in the First Intifada. They are from different generations, including children, teenagers, and older women. Their participation is acceptable in the eyes of the conservative community because it is within the context of collective political activism. Furthermore, their participation was in response to the occupation's tactic of invading Palestinian homes and exposing women to the public. This exposure brought women into public collective political activities. The following

section reflects on the ways in which the Israeli occupation invades private space, as well as how women deal with this exposure and maintain their sumud.
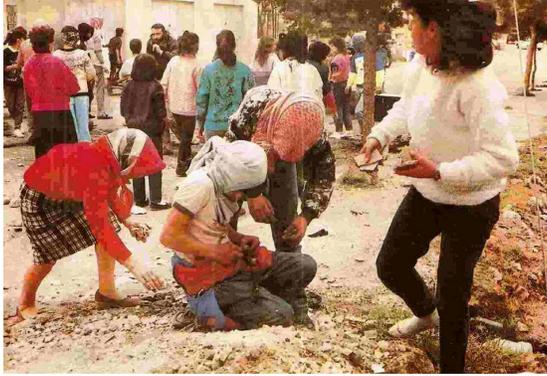
Figure (1): Palestinian women taking part in public resistance during the First Intifada.

Israeli Tactics to Open Private Space to the Public

Is There a Private Space?

> '*What they're actually doing is, they're turning private space and public space upside-down. The private space becomes the space of circulation, and public space, the space of the street, is where the resistance fighters are being killed.*'

This statement from Eli Weizman's documentary *The Architecture of the Occupation* reflects how the occupation aims to destroy the boundaries between what is public and what is private. This forces Palestinians to live a precarious life, under threat of attack and exposure at all times. De Certeu's (1984) analysis of the loss of private space helps to illuminate the oppression which Palestinians experience. He states: 'Oppression makes no mistakes about it, the oppression that tears citizens away from their private happiness in order to stack them up in its prisons or camps by imposing on them the torture of a public life with the most intimate functions' (148). The rhythm of Palestinian homes is profoundly disturbed by the Israeli occupation, attacked through the constant invasions, confiscations and demolitions.

Palestinian homes are under threat of sudden attack at any time of the day or night during the regular Israeli invasion of the Palestinian territory. This makes people feel precarious all the time, but through the continuous and repeated attacks, Palestinians learn how to start to normalize violence and the threat of violence. Sawsan lived in the

Balata refugee camp in Nablus. This camp is always targeted by the Israelis, so invasion becomes part of the residents' daily rhythm. The women in this camp are always ready for a house search, always conscious of the threat of exposure. Sawsan, for example, describes how she would maintain readiness even when going to bed. '*I was always prepared for them, all the time, sleeping with my clothes on and with my shoes next to me*.' Sawsan's preparation for the Israeli intrusion in what would normally be the intimate space of sleep mirrors the preparation she would make to leave her house.

The image below clearly illustrates how private space becomes exposed to the public and the broken boundaries between what is public and what is private; it reflects how hard it becomes to recognize the borders of home, how they can even vanish completely. We can see what was inside this home, all of its objects, from the living room furniture to some pieces from the bedroom and kitchen, are laid bare; these people's privacy is now exposed. Looking closely at the image, we can see how they are dealing with the exposure. The woman in the image is well-dressed and covered. She stands close to her home's contents, accompanied by her child who is sitting in an armchair. This child is part of her responsibility in the home. The woman is watching and waiting for news, but she has ensured her child is relaxing, despite their total exposure. The man of the family is farther outside the home, near the wall trying to communicate and protect what is left. Even with this exposure, women are still protected and prepared to face such situations.

Figure (2): Israeli tanks demolish a Palestinian home.

Felski's (2000) suggestions about the boundaries between the public and private space are interesting to consider in the context of this discussion. She argues that the 'boundaries between home and non-home are leaky. The home is not private enclave cut off from the outside world, but is powerfully shaped by broader social currents, attitudes, and desires' (24). We can see how the woman in this precarious situation is still following the social and religious laws of being covered and holding back with her children. Inversion of the private and public becomes part of the Palestinians' daily lives, and they learn how to adapt to the exposure of the private. De Certeau (1984) discusses the relationship between public and private space, observing:

> The private space must know how to open itself up to the flow of people coming in and out, to be the passageway for a continual circulation, where objects, people, words, and ideas cross paths; for life is also about mobility, impatience for change and relation to a plurality of others. (148)

This statement can be used for reflecting on the ways that Palestinians have learned to manage the exposure caused by the Israeli occupation. Their knowledge and experience of the invasion allow them to create a space of negotiation, which is based on their understanding of the politics of the exposure. Palestinians become ready and prepared for any sudden attacks.

Palestinian women lose their homes, thus losing the feeling of security and the space of safety and privacy. Kassem (2011) argues that the 'Palestinian home has both personal and collective meaning; it is at once a private and public political space; it is a space of safety and danger, a place of life and death' (235). Such contradictions are a fundamental component of Palestinian homes; while people feel socially secure inside their homes, they simultaneously feel the threat of being attacked and invaded. The regular Israeli invasion and demolition of Palestinian houses make the fear of loss a constant feature of Palestinian home life and people live this precarious life waiting for bad things to happen. Shalhoub-Kevorkian (2010) argues that, for women, '[l]osing their home is tantamount to losing the space in which they can safely transform into more independent and stronger individuals amidst the constant uncertainty and violence' (13).

For Palestinian women their private space is the only space in which they can act and behave comfortably, without any restrictions or observation. In their houses, they dress in the way they want. With the threat of the Israeli occupation entering their homes at any time, women lose their area of freedom. Like Sawsan, many other women told me they started to sleep with their clothes on instead of wearing pyjamas, in case the soldiers came into their homes without warning.

Israelis seek to control Palestinians by making them feel threatened inside their homes, the place of safety and security, which creates a feeling of suspense and fear. The Israeli presence in the daily lives of Palestinians is constant, manifesting in the roadblocks, the checkpoints, the invasions and closure of cities and buildings, the apartheid wall, and, of course, the intrusions in private space at night or in the early hours of the morning. 'The exception everywhere tends to be the rule' (Agamben 1998: 8). The Israeli occupation makes sure Palestinians feel they are under a panoptic surveillance that, to borrow De Certeau's (1984) description of utopia, 'extends…to the most private gesture of the individual body (148). In his discussion of utopia, De Certeau argues that this kind of constant surveillance is used 'in order to run the whole show and control everything in "the perfect city"'(*Ibid*.). For the Israeli occupation, this surveillance is a means to control Palestinian life and to exercise their power.

The Israeli occupation's tactics to control Palestinian life are reminiscent of those used within the prison system. To be in prison is to be exposed and watched even during sleep. When Israel built the division walls and electrified barriers, like those already erected around the Gaza Strip, to fence in Palestinians in the West Bank, 'these cantons... [came] to resemble open-air prison camps' (Khalidi 2006: 202). The following sections consider the tactics of militarism and surveillance used by the Israelis to invade domestic and civil spaces, as well as how political subjecthood is constructed and shaped in the state of loss. The existing literature on occupied Palestine often focuses on the geopolitics of incarceration for the landscape of Palestinian territory, but much less attention has been given to the Israeli occupation's tactics of invading Palestinian homes; I am going to begin to address this gap.

House Invasion

> '*I used to wake up late at night and find the Israeli soldiers in my room. I remember the sound of shouting and shooting tear gaze everywhere.*'

This is how Hayam remembers the soldiers' continual invasions of her family's house, as they searched for fighters or weapons, or sometimes entering without a reason at all. Hayam lives in the Al-jalazon refugee camp near Ramallah; this camp was frequently targeted, in part because of its location in front of an Israeli settlement.

When there is a military operation in the Palestinian areas, the Israeli army legitimizes entry into any Palestinian house if there are any suspicions around it, or if they need it for starting a military point. In the latter case, the military forces invade a Palestinian home close to their operation. This house is then used for their soldiers to rest and await further orders until the operation finishes. As a child, Majd experienced several house invasions during the night. During the invasion of Nablus city in April of 2002 in the Second Intifada, many years before Majd was arrested, the Israeli army created a military point in her house. They locked Majd and her family in one room, allowing them to leave this room only at a fixed time. They had to ask permission to go to the toilet or to get something from the kitchen. The house was full of soldiers and guns. A tank was in front of their house and they heard heavy shooting at night. Majd's house was near the entrance of the old city of Nablus, and also near the school, which was turned into an interrogation centre for all the arrested youth from Nablus. Majd tried to watch what was going on around her house from the window without anyone noticing her. This kind of invasion and occupation of a house with its residents confined inside makes people feel they are in prison, thus changing the concept of the home for the inhabitants.

Palestinian women in such situations are prepared for this invasion. Their sleeping system changes. They become conscious of any expected invasion, and they wait for the soldiers to come to their homes. Salma and her husband used to follow the news all the time to check if there were any invasions in the city. Because of their active roles with Hamas, they were expecting the Israeli soldiers to invade their home at any time. She started to worry and found herself waiting for the soldiers to come. She would wake up her daughters if any Israeli jeeps were near and ask them to get ready in case of an

invasion. These practices of preparation were primarily aimed at protecting the women's privacy. By covering their bodies, for example, they would have an appropriate appearance when the house was searched or attacked. In this sense, they sought to appear in their homes as they would if they were outside. While this kind of preparation is aimed at protecting their bodies from exposure to the public, it also makes women feel they are disappointing the Israeli occupation by frustrating their attempts to expose them in this way. Thus through such practices, by knowing how to deal with the exposure, Palestinian women perform their sumud.

Closing Homes

Majd led a diasporic life since she was a child. During the first Intifada, the Israeli occupation asked her family to evacuate their home in response to her father's political activism and arrest. Majd's father was arrested when he was on his way to Jordan. The family were shocked to be confronted by the soldier and asked to evacuate on the same day as her father's trip. Majd's mother, who had three other children, was given only a short period to collect urgent necessities and to prepare the children. The whole family became homeless. Their home was closed with red labels. It wasn't demolished, but at the same time they couldn't go inside the house again. These evacuations transformed the family's life. They lost their space of safety and became dispossessed in all aspects of their life. They had to relocate to an unfamiliar area. The children had to go through a difficult process of adjustment, attending new schools, building up new friendships, and getting used to their new surroundings.

Majd recalled: *'They closed our house. We were in diaspora. We did not know where to go, we did not know anything about my dad. My uncle allowed us to stay at his house. People were nice and helpful to us, and still the Israelis attacked our new house, and destroyed everything.'* Majd's mother did not know where to go. She decided to go back to her family house, where she was welcomed and cared for by her brother and other family and friends. In the Palestinian context, the different experiences of loss lead to a growing sense of solidarity and support within the community, enhancing victims' sumud and helping them to deal with their loss. When someone helps a person, family or group to survive loss, it is considered a form of steadfastness, and also resistance against

the Israeli occupation, because it means that they helped the family to confront the Israeli forces, and kept their human dignity despite being homeless and in diaspora. For Majd and her family, the closure of the house meant not just losing their home, but also their familiarity with the space, their neighbours and community. Majd still remembers her childhood house and the day it was lost in great detail. I could see her anger as she narrated this experience. In the aftermath, they also lived in fear of losing their new house, especially when the Israeli soldiers began to go to their uncle's house and destroy their belongings. This made them feel vulnerable to being made homeless again and they found it hard to enjoy stability.

The closing of a room inside the home

In the First Intifada in late 80s, the prime minister of Israel, Itshak Shameer, ordered the army to close the rooms of imprisoned activists with cement or with red labels. After blocking windows and doors in this manner, they forbade residents from entering the room until the prisoner finished their court sentence. In this case, imprisonment was not just applied to subjects but objects as well. This tactic of closing a room inside a Palestinian home changed the family's system of interactions and relations. They felt they were watched all the time, despite the fact that the army was not physically present. They become anxious about what they could say and felt they had no privacy. In the 80s, Israeli soldiers had a court order to close Hayam's brother's room after he was arrested in Israel. Hayam described the experience: '*My brother was arrested, and so they closed his room till he finished his sentence. They did not close all our house, it was just the room where he had slept. We had two bedrooms, so all of us started sleeping in one room.*'

Palestinian homes inside refugee camps are very small, though the families are usually large. Most of them are divided into two rooms, with some sleeping in the living room. The residents of these houses do not enjoy much privacy, but some can be achieved through the division of women and men. Hayam had one sister and five brothers. Her sister had a disability and needed special care. When the room that her brothers slept in was closed, the whole family had to squeeze into one room, shattering the little privacy they had. They felt they had become prisoners in their own house. They

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felt the presence of the Israelis inside their house all the time, giving them the sense that they were continually under control. This strategy of closing a room, which has not been documented or discussed in the literature, is a collective punishment for the entire family and it also serves to warn other activists.

The rhythm of daily life and the social practices of the family change when they are under the presence of the Israeli occupation. Closing the room doesn't mean that the soldiers are actually in this room. Rather it becomes like the panoptic tower that Foucault (1976) describes. There may not necessarily be someone watching, but it makes inhabitants feel as if someone might be. It creates suspicion and fear. The main concern for the family in such situations is that the females' bodies will be exposed to the Israeli occupation. Women are trapped in the hijab all the time. They have to watch how they react and dress as the dress code for women's bodies is one of the most important components of conservative culture. The Israelis are aware of this and barricading a room inside a home is a tactic to make other Palestinian fighters reconsider their actions, warning them that their whole family could be subject to constant surveillance, exposure and control.

The Demolition of Homes

Salma and her husband used to hide freedom fighters that were in of need protection in their home. One night in April of 2004 as Nablus was under invasion, the Israeli army entered Salma's house, which had been given to her by her father, and ordered her to evacuate the house with her children. She said, *'The house being demolished and the killing of those people, God have mercy on them, in our house was the turning point and it was the biggest change for me and my family. This house was my father's house. It was a small villa, with a swimming pool and parking area. It was demolished completely and my husband was injured and they arrested my 14-year-old son.'* Salma still feels the pain of this loss. This house was part of her dream of living in Palestine. She was in tears telling me how the Israeli soldiers came inside to evacuate them and then blew up the house. It was particularly painful because she lost her father's gift and the site of all of his childhood memories. For Salma, it was a loss of memory and a connection to the past.

Losing the house was the first experience of being in diaspora for Salma. She lost a space of freedom and comfort and became homeless with her family. She also experienced the loss of her son, who was injured and imprisoned with her husband on the same day. She became uncertain about her family's future and where they would go. Watching her house being demolished created a lot of anger inside her, but she also had to show her strength and sumud. She felt that she should hide her anger from the Israelis because it would show her weakness. Resistance and sumud in this case meant hiding the impact of the family's loss. As such, she acted as if she didn't care in order to show strength. Steadfastness meant rebuilding what the occupation destroyed. She commented:

> *I was not aware of what happened when we lost the house. I was trying to give courage to everyone, even to my family in Jordan. I was so angry. I started saying things like, 'All this is sacrifice all for Palestine. We will keep resisting.' I don't remember saying these things. I know that I decided to be strong because I had nothing to lose. I lost everything, so I decided to hold myself together in order to protect the rest of my family. I couldn't stop at this point and collapse. I had to do something and be strong to face this disaster.*

Salma kept herself from collapsing to show everyone her sumud. Her neighbour brought her and the children in from the street after they had to evacuate and provided them shelter until the military operation finished. When she watched her house demolished on TV, she saw her husband covered in blood, and her son arrested. Despite all of these losses, she felt strong and steadfast. Palestinians live through trauma, and the mourning process, by showing their strength; denial is a form of resistance. It is means of surviving the continuous attack on Palestinian homes. Salma started repeating afterwards that *'all this is sacrifice for Palestine, we will keep resisting'* as a way to deal with the situation and to show her sumud. In Palestinian culture, we can't show our weakness. Any Palestinian in her position would express this feeling of defiance, not only in front of the media, but also to themselves, so that they can give mutual support and strength to each other. Salma tried to give strength to her family in Jordan, who couldn't be with her, and

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also to the rest of her children, who were afraid. In showing them her steadfastness, she wanted to teach them that what happened to them could happen to any Palestinian. For her, sumud meant not giving up and leaving Palestine, but insisting that this would make her stronger and more determined to stay.

Freedom fighters' homes are also part of the punishment system the Israelis use against Palestinians. When a freedom fighter commits an attack against Israel, his/her house will be demolished. Itaf's fiancé was arrested for his involvement in a military action in Hebron in 1980 that was called 'Dabouria.' *'It was one month after our engagement. They demolished the house that we had started to build, and arrested my fiancé and confiscated our car. This experience increased my motivation and I kept insisting I wanted to do something big for Palestine.'* Itaf thus lost not just her future husband, but also her future home. Furthermore, the Israeli army also confiscated their car, which they depended on to move and travel around. Thus, Itaf lost her stability, mobility, and future.

The conservative community that Itaf lived in insisted that she should leave her fiancé because he was going to be in prison for long time. Her brother felt that her relationship with her fiancé had no future and worried that if she waited for him, she would lose the opportunity to have children. Itaf's fiancé also felt there was no future for them. He felt it wouldn't be fair to her to remain engaged to him as he would be spending his life in prison. Itaf resisted the idea, but under all the pressure she faced, they broke their engagement. She realized that losing her fiancé, and her home, meant that she had lost her dreams. This experience deeply impacted Itaf; she lost everything in one event. She felt profound anger at the Israeli occupation and began to think of revenge. In particular, she began to think about how she might become involved in military actions. For Itaf, the anger and loss built up, and reached a point where she was thinking only about revenge. Such conditions, and the precarious lives that Palestinian women live, bring them outside of their homes and make them political subjects, reflecting the resistance and sumud ingrained in Palestinian culture. Yet, nevertheless, as previously discussed, women's contribution to the resistance is not well documented.

Women's Bodies Under the Israeli Occupation

> *'My dad was worried about us most of the time. First because my oldest brother*
> *was imprisoned and, second, he was worried because we are girls.'* (Anan)

Palestinian women live within a thoroughly political environment, but at the same time they are under the restrictions of the patriarchal gender arrangements. The political situation, the constant invasion of Palestinian homes, and the collective protest in the streets enhance fears around women's bodies and sexuality. While women are allowed to be part of the public, their presence is met with anxiety and hesitation. This contradiction is reflected in Anan's memories. Though her mother encouraged her and her sisters and educated them about nationalism, her father, who was an activist and open minded, worried about the girls being imprisoned like their brothers. Such fears around women are motivated by the traditional culture that emphasizes protecting and saving women. The extended family in Arab cultures ascribes sexuality to women; the violation of sexual mores is considered to be not only a personal disgrace but also a disgrace upon the family honour. The Israeli forces are aware of the sensitivity around women's bodies in Palestinian culture and strive to use it against them. Shalhoub-Kevorkian (2009) argues that colonialist military power imposes its strength and boundaries on most realms of women's lives, including their bodies, families, sexualities, homes, space and gender relations. And so Palestinian women suffer restrictions and limitations around their mobility and are also under a constant social surveillance. Palestinian women become an object of threat; the Israeli occupation exploits the conservative culture's sensitivity toward women, which leads to more fear over women's bodies in the Palestinian community.

Ahlam belongs to a Christian refugee family from A-Lod that settled in Ramallah after 1948. They were conservative and restrictive. She recalls that they were always watching her and restricting her movement outside the home. Her mother used to punish her if she was late. Ahlam compared convincing her mother to allow her out of the house for any reason to making bombs: '*I always needed to create excuses for my family to go out. It was much easier for me to go and plant a bomb than to ask my mom to allow me to go out…It was always hard to go out without justifications.*' Ahlam was aware of the

danger of planting a bomb because of her military training and the preparation she had undertaken before her imprisonment. She used the comparison of planting a bomb because, even with the lethal danger this involved, she found it easier than challenging her family's restrictions and the social laws. Both threaten explosion and the loss of freedom or life, and so she has to be delicate to avoid detonation. Brah (1996) argues that 'women may often stress the importance of the "family" but, by doing this, they do not necessarily accept as legitimate the hierarchal organization of the household, or the exercise of male power' (76). As Ahlam's story suggests, women's awareness of the power of the patriarchy doesn't mean they are subordinated to it or that they follow every order and expectation.

The political situation in Palestine intensifies anxiety around women and their perceived need for protection, resulting in more restrictions. Conservatism influences women lives, inside and outside the home. Most of my participants showed their understanding of traditions. They described how they would tolerate these restrictions but how they always knew how to negotiate them to get where they wanted. However, for women who grew up outside of Palestine and then moved back, the experience of all these restrictions was difficult. They needed time to learn how to create their own space of negotiation. Salma, whose father was Palestinian and mother Jordanian, lived most of her life in Jordan. She moved to Palestine when she married a man from Nablus. Salma had previously lived in a liberal, religious family, but her husband's family was very conservative and very religious. They strictly followed cultural and religious traditions based upon the separation of men and women, even within the extended family, at all times. As part of this strict division, they even prevented women from socializing in the same spaces as men. Her in-laws lived in the same building that Salma and her husband settled in when she returned to Palestine. She was angry about this shift in her life: '*I felt that everything was wrong. You can do this and you can't do that. I was a religious person before, and I had a religious background whenever I was outside… We never had problem with being in a mixed gender setting, we wouldn't sit near a man that was a stranger.*' In the Middle East, as Kandiytoi (1987) argues:

Women's experiences are embedded in the culturally defined systems of control over women's sexuality that crosscut class and sect and are expressed in an honour/shame complex that constrains women's public and sexual behaviours and the norms and structures of segregation that govern male- female interaction. (cited in Peteet 1991:20)

As illustrated in Salma's statement, even within the family, there are boundaries placed upon women. Salma was angry when she found herself in a very restrictive and conservative environment after being in an open family outside Palestine. For her, moving from the outside to the inside was like moving inside a closed box. She needed time to learn the family's rules and those of the community. She felt the space for her inside the family was severely limited and realized the difference between the world outside of Palestine and the one inside. Though she was a religious person before moving to Nablus, she found her new community more restricted, combining religion with traditions, especially when it comes to women. She expressed her feelings about the space saying: '*I felt like a person who was living in a city and moved to a village…I use to live in Amman, then Egypt, and then to come here! It is a really narrow space with a lot of restrictions. But Palestine was my choice. It is my home, but the social horizon is really narrow.*'

Salma had always dreamed of living in Palestine and she succeeded in convincing her husband to return to Nablus after they had lived in Jordan and Egypt with their children. Describing her experience when she first arrived in Nablus, she said, '*The first two years were really difficult. There is a difference between being inside and outside.*' Salma, an outsider, eventually became an insider. She loved and learned about Palestine through her father's stories, her husband and in-laws, and also through following the news. Through these interactions, Salma had an image of Palestine before moving there. She thought it would be similar to life in Jordan because it is a very similar culture and many families in Jordan and Palestine are related. But when Salma arrived in Palestine, she found more restrictions and a culture more conservative than she expected. It took her time to understand her new boundaries, but she continually tried to negotiate and challenge them and to take part in public life.

Salma was more concerned about these cultural and traditional limitations on women than my other participants. She felt that women were hidden and excluded from public and political life. This made her feel, as she said, as if she moved from a city to a village. In the Palestinian context, villages are conservative and more attached than urban communities to old traditions and culture. Village women are confined to their homes and male family members take the role of protecting them. Women in the village face more prescriptive traditions and culture than women in some Palestinian cities. While urban women have more freedom, the strength of restrictions they face varies from city to city. With her experience of being both an outsider and an insider, Salma learned to understand the politics of the social rules inside Palestinian homes through her experience with her husband family. She started to negotiate her boundaries, challenging the restrictions. She said, '*I made a revolution, I couldn't stay.*' Her husband supported her in all her efforts and she started to build her social network, volunteering in different community centres. This activism allowed her to be part of public social life. Salma's experience reflects how the home has become a highly gendered space; women are always the 'personification of home and even its literal embodiment' (Felski, 2009: 23). According to Brah (1996), feminists argue that patriarchal discourse constructs the home as the 'rightful' place for women, and 'the institution of the family constitutes one of the key sites where the subordination of women is secured' (76).

Women are always aware of cultural boundaries and the ways in which social laws and traditions differentiate between women and men. Women's 'bodies are the surface on which social law, mortality and values are inscribed' (Grosz, 1995: 197). Palestinian women are likewise aware of cultural boundaries and the power religion has over their bodies and sexuality. As such, they embody the cultural and social laws, carrying them in every aspect of their lives. Elizabeth Grosz's (1995) observations on the precise way in which culture becomes inscribed on the body is useful to consider in the context of Palestinian women. She argues: 'Bodies speak without necessarily talking because they become coded with and as signs. They speak social codes. They become intextuated, narrativized; simultaneously, social codes, laws, norms and ideals become incarnated' (35). In this sense, in the face of the occupation's threats against women,

aimed at subordinating Palestinians through the fear of attacks against their women, women's bodies become objects of the conservative culture.

One of the most important means to control and protect women is to force them to wear the hijab. It is a means to create barriers between women's bodies and the public, keeping women under cover and under control. Maram, who lives in a very small and conservative village, was aware of the traditions around her. Her father wanted her and her sisters to be covered so they would be protected against the community's gossip and maintain the family's reputation, which was judged according to the appearance of the women. She commented:

> *I decided to start wearing the Hijab to satisfy my father. He is really religious. He never asked me directly to cover and wear it, but I used to hear him crying in his prayers, asking God forgiveness because of me and to lead us to the right way. My dad was scared of hell and God's punishment…So I decided to please my father by wearing the hijab.*

Maram couldn't bear to see her father upset because she wasn't following the religious and social law of covering her head. Maram's father respected the law and religion, so she tried to show him that she was following what was expected from her as a woman. Maram understood that because her father was known in the village she had to cover herself and respect the laws and that, at the same time, wearing the Hijab would give her some space and freedom to move around.

Maram's understanding of her space helped her to negotiate and to be able to enjoy some freedom without the Hijab. She said:

> *I was wearing it just in front of him and then hid it in my bag. Once he caught me without it. He got really angry - he was shouting at me, asked me to take it off for good because this wasn't right… I felt really bad for my father, so I decided to keep it all the time.*

Her father was so angry because he found out that his daughter was misleading him; this was the exposure of Maram's secret negotiation of space, which illustrated her understanding that inside her village people had concerns, but in the cities she could enjoy some freedom. Her negotiation was based on not wearing her Hijab in the cities or when she was far away from her family. But when her father found out, Maram became worried because she realized that this could happen at any time. She did not want to upset her father and wanted to gain his trust again. Palestinian women find tactics to negotiate the traditions around them. In geopolitical theory it is argued that 'the interactions of human and the natural environment…creates geopolitical forces that can ultimately be brought into balance' (Sicker, 2010: 7-8). In the context of Maram's experience and other Palestinian women, geopolitical bodies are created by interactions among different subjects and objects and they are actively involved in negotiating and transforming the conditions in which they live their lives and in which they care for themselves and others.

Maram thought that marrying a communist man would liberate her and allow her to take off her Hijab, but her husband had other ideas. She said: '*When I married Amjad, he was conservative and liked to follow the social laws. He asked me to keep my Hijab… But I would just wear it in the village… When I went to the cities, I used to remove it…I had never been convinced of the Hijab.'* Maram, like other Palestinian women living in a patriarchal gender arrangements ideology, is under the responsibility of men. She couldn't take off her Hijab, even though she never believed in it. Her husband wanted her to wear it in order to follow the social laws rather than because of his religious beliefs, and this is why he allowed her to remove it when they were in the cities. As Grosz (1995) notes, struggle and resistance are actively inscribed on women's bodies through social practices. She argues that 'the activity of desiring, inscribing bodies that, though marked by law, make their own inscriptions on the bodies of others, themselves, and the law in turn, must be counter-posed against the passivity of the inscribed body' (36). With regard to Maram's experience and that of other women like her, I found that special laws come into play to control women's bodies, and to keep them safe from any threat they may be exposed to, but also traditions vary in the Palestinian context. In some cities women enjoy some amount of freedom, illustrated in the more liberal dress code. Maram's

husband understood this well and this is why he gave her the freedom to remove her hijab when she was in a liberal city.

In this section, I wanted to show how different gender relations shape the experiences of women and men and how their hopes and desires can become conflicted, especially when it comes to women outside the home. I have also shown how women live under the restrictions and limitations that are imposed upon them by the patriarchal gender arrangements using the religious system of their communities, which also structure life inside Palestinian homes, influenced by the fear of Israeli threats. I have shown how women's understanding of boundaries constructs their space of negotiation and enables them to navigate and be part of the public. The Israeli occupation is another force that constructs Palestinian women's lives. Though it encroaches on their private and public space, women nevertheless learn how to navigate and negotiate its strategies of domination. The conservatism of patriarchal cultures is also constructed within political movements. It is mostly men who are in the decision-making levels and they don't encourage women's participation in military actions because, as discussed, it is understood to be men's responsibility to protect the land. However, women still know how to use pressure and negotiation to take different roles within these groups. The following section will illustrate the varied strategies women used to take roles in the resistance movements, and to become part of political parties.

Tactics of survival: the politics of gender in precarious life

Looking closely at the narratives of Palestinian women who have been involved in military actions or political movements, we can see that their experiences inside their homes, on the street and in their everyday lives led them to go through a transformation. They undertook actions that resisted the traditional and cultural restrictions on women's movements in order to take roles in resisting the Israeli occupation. So the occupation's opening of the private to pubic, which makes politics integral to every detail of Palestinian lives, shapes Palestinians' political subjecthood. This is a reflection of how the political conditions and the precarity in which Palestinian women live can lead them to become something other than what they dreamed of or planned to become. Some of them become freedom fighters as a result of the surrounding conditions.

My dream was to become an important woman in this community… it meant that I would have a role in helping people and giving them the social support they needed. I like social work a lot. All my life I dreamed of helping poor people, elderly, and orphans. This was my dream.

This is how Maram talked about her dreams before she lost her husband, home, and future. She had suffered the Israeli occupation in her everyday life. Her husband was a freedom fighter who was wanted by Israel. They wanted to kill him, so he had to hide all the time. He gave up living in their home, and they then had to arrange their meetings in different spaces. She never had a stable and secure space to live; she lived a precarious life under constant threat of losing both him and her own life. She lived in a state of loss and began to deeply feel the oppression and injustice of her life. This experience changed her a great deal. Her experience recalls Butler's discussion of precarious life. She argues:

> To grieve, and to make grief itself into a resource for politics, is not to be resigned to inaction, but it may be understood as the slow process by which we develop a point of identification with suffering itself. The disorientation of grief - 'Who have I become?' or, indeed, 'What is left of me?' 'What is it in the Other that I have lost? – posits the 'I' in the mode of unknowingness. (2006: 30)

Experiences of loss and displacement create a precarious life for Palestinian women. These different experiences prompt them to start thinking about reactions to calm their grief, and to become something else other than what they wanted to become. As Maram and others experienced, their surroundings made them think of resistance. Another example, Seham, who lives in Hebron, lived through numerous attacks by the Israeli soldiers, as well as the Israeli settlers who live in her city. She was frequently targeted for investigation. She said, '*In circumstances like this and this hard political situation, you face a lot of pressure, you feel it all the time. I decided to stop going to university, and to do something to serve Palestine.*' The violence Seham faced made her

lose any feeling of security. She decided to withdraw from her social life and to avoid confronting the Israeli occupation in her daily activities. But after she realized her loss, she decided to become politically active. Her understanding of the politics of her city helped her to manoeuvre its challenges in order join the Islamic Jihad movement, working in community service, helping people in need of any social support. She also recruited other activists. To be able to survive their everyday lives, Palestinian women must exist in a constant space of negotiation. This space of negotiation enables women to perform in the manner expected of them in various situations, but it has also enabled those women who were in military groups or political movements to play vital roles in resisting the Israeli occupation. Those women were aware of how to negotiate traditions, and they also understood how to perform in specific situations; this awareness helped women gain the skills of negotiations to pursue what they wanted and to be involved in politics.

Women in Military Groups

The participants in this research were imprisoned for their roles in activities resisting the Israeli occupation. Some were in political movements that are banned by the Israelis as terrorist organizations. These women were just activists, recruiting supporters, or working in the community, but to the occupation they were supporting terrorism. Thus, just belonging to these groups puts Palestinians under threat of arrest. These women were always known in the community for their roles and the services they provided through their political movements. Other women were arrested for their participation in military actions against the occupation. These women's roles varied. For example, before and during the First Intifada, Palestinian women tended to be in guerrilla groups, receiving special training and even participating in creating or planting bombs. Some also served as snipers, attempting to shoot Israeli soldiers. On the other hand, most women imprisoned in the Second Intifada were arrested for planning to be suicide bombers - or for having helped others plan such actions- or for being activists in political groups that Israel considers terrorist.

In this section, I will argue that Palestinian women negotiate the social and cultural boundaries that restrict their involvement in the resistance movements.

Palestinian women are able to create a space of negotiation to hide their activism, and also to provide cover to conceal these groups' activities from the occupation. In this space of negotiation, women's work is always undertaken in complete secrecy. Some of them were able to get military training and help the freedom fighters in organized actions. By entering in this space, women risked being arrested or killed by the Israeli occupation, or being severely punished by their families.

> *I knew the people who were in these military camps were men… but I never categorized myself as a woman at that time… I even never had any interest in wearing makeup or buying clothes like other women… I always wanted to be part of the national movements…*

(Itaf)

In the late 60s, Itaf, then a child, went to visit her relatives in Jordan. She remembers visiting the PLO military camps with her cousin. She was impressed with the kind of training they got, and she was also aware that they were working to liberate Palestine. Thus she grew up wanting to be in these camps and to fight for her country. But, as reflected in her statement above, it was clear to her that these camps are mainly for men. She tried to diminish her feminine identity by not wearing makeup or caring about clothes. Itaf describes the expected performance of a woman in the traditional community, and she, like many other women who wanted to be part of military groups, insists that she never thought about herself as a woman. This is how Itaf prepared to be part of a military group.

Khawla belongs to a strict, conservative family that places rigid restrictions on women in order to protect the family reputation, especially as they live in a refugee camp where everybody knows - and watches - each other. In her youth, Khawla was aware of all the social surveillance and restrictions, but she insisted to herself that she wanted to be a freedom fighter. She did not understand her desire to fight in gendered terms. As she recounted to me later: '*I never thought about myself as a woman or a feminist or about doing something to confirm the importance of women's roles. I just wanted to be part of the national movements. I don't claim I had any feminist awareness.*' From an early age,

Khawla kept searching for ways to become an activist and to take roles in resisting the occupation. When she was student in university, she sought out the political movements and was recruited.

Women create a rhythm in their everyday lives in order to camouflage their activism. For example, they say they are volunteering in a community centre that is part of their school or visiting a friend or a family member. These excuses require the skill of negotiation, and form a component of their space of negotiation. Bhabha (1988) defines negotiation in his discussion of 'third space'. Here he draws attention to 'the structure of *iteration* that informs political movement (in both senses of the word), that attempt to articulate antagonistic and oppositional elements' (11). Palestinian women repeatedly coming home late on specific days of the week, or claiming to visit friends, is part of the politics to create the space that allows them to be in military groups, and to manage the threat of social punishment from their family.

> *I was late every day. They used to prepare an interrogation party for me. I would find my dad in the door saying that I was late and asking where I had been and with who. I was used to these questions. I was punished sometimes for the delays. I used to say to myself, 'It's okay. They will punish me and it will be over.' So I used to do what I wanted without caring about punishment.*

Khawla grew accustomed to what she would face when she was home late and learned how to deal with it. She used to go out to meet with her military group's leaders to be trained. Her family were concerned about her constant delays. In the patriarchal gender arrangements, a woman can't stay outside late at night without being accompanied by a relative, or she will put her family's reputation at risk. People will start talking and making their own assumptions about her activities. Khawla had to face intensive questioning and sometimes violence. In the passage above, she associates her family's questions with the interrogation process, in which the interrogator wants to know every detail. For her, both situations required sumud. Khawla added, '*I used to go out at night, to take part in the military group…I never cared about anything…I used to like going out with Isa [her boyfriend] without being worried about anyone seeing us…It was forbidden*

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but I wanted to do it…Of course, I used to pay for this. I faced a lot of humiliation and violence from my family.' Khawla was aware of the consequences of going out with her boyfriend, who was also the leader of her political group. She knew she would face punishment and would be locked up in her house, but after awhile her family would give her space again. She described herself as a revolutionist who knew the social law but was challenging it. Having knowledge about the social space they live in makes women more comfortable in this space of negotiations, allowing them to follow their own will, and also to deal with the social pressure of everyday life and the violence they may face.

Maram grew up in a family that was active in the PLFP and she married a freedom fighter, who was later killed. After his death, she decided to take revenge on the occupation by joining the military wing of her party. It wasn't easy for her to convince them:

> *In the beginning, the men of my political party refused to let me make any contribution, or have any involvement in the military section… It was because my husband, before he died, asked them not to allow me to be there or to take any responsibility…I asked my husband once before he died to help him and to be involved with him…But he refused and warned the others not to allow me…He said to them, 'Don't go near Maram'… So this was my husband's will… I threatened them that if they didn't give me roles, I would go to other political movements and they would welcome me…I just wanted to continue my husband's path… So they accepted in the end.*

In this description, the different tensions that marked Maram's involvement in military activity are highlighted. She knew how to negotiate with the leaders of the political movement who initially refused her involvement. They were aware of her family's objections around women being involved. Her family was deeply involved in political activism but at the same time they lived in a totally conservative community. Also, as she notes above, her husband never accepted her taking part in any military activity when he was alive, and even warned his comrades against asking her to do so, because he was

aware of the danger she would put herself in if she became involved. After his death, his comrades at first refused to allow her to participate.

Political movements in general do not encourage women to take part in military groups. As discussed previously, it is perceived to be men's responsibility to fight the Israeli occupation. Palestinian women have to convince political leaders of their willingness to sacrifice for Palestine. Many women succeed in becoming activists, receiving military training, and even taking part in some actions. Some of them are killed, others are imprisoned, and others succeed in keeping their identities secret. In the Palestinian context, there is usually competition between the different political movements in recruiting supporters and activists. Maram was aware of this competition and used it strategically in her negotiation with the party leaders. They accepted in the end, but did not allow her to become a freedom fighter. Instead, she helped in the operations to prepare fighters, dressing them up and helping to smuggle weapons. In this way, her husband's friends kept their promise to keep her safe.

Some political movements refuse women's contribution to armed resistance, especially Hamas and the Islamic Jihad. Secular movements accept women's contribution, but not in all cases. My participants always felt that they had to take part in and contribute to the liberation of Palestine and that their roles and responsibilities should be equal to men's. Sabreen was a university student activist with the Islamic Jihad during the Second Intifada. She wanted to become a freedom fighter and to be part of the military group. She used her network and reached out to the man responsible for the Islamic Jihad's military wing.   She recalled her conversation with him in our interview.

I could reach the people who are responsible for sending suicide bombers, but they refused. but thebeginning, the Islamic Jihad did not want women. They were worried about Halal and Haram.[5] They were worried that when a woman commits such an attack her body will be exposed, They were worried that when a woman commits such an attack her body will be exposed, he refused, and said they have enough men and they don't want women...So they refused. I threatened

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[5] Haram is an Arabic term that defines anything prohibited under Islam, and Halal refers to that which is permitted or lawful.

to go to Fateh, who send women. He said Fateh sent two women and they failed in their actions. Two weeks later, they contacted me.

Sabreen was aware of her political movement's fear of exposing women's bodies to the enemy, which would be a sin according to their beliefs. Sabreen had never been convinced by their arguments around women's participation and she was aware of how important it was for political movement's to maintain their membership and to gain popularity in the community. Sabreen used this to negotiate, threatening, as Maram had, to go to another party to a become freedom fighter. This put them under pressure to rethink and negotiate their stance. Because Sabreen was stubborn and insistent, they gave her a role and trained her to become a suicide bomber.

Some women never manage to convince their party to give them roles, and so they decide to go to another group that doesn't know their family or social backgrounds, or that has a different ideology from their community. Randa, for example, did community work with Fateh. All of her family were also activists with Fateh, and some had been imprisoned or killed because of their roles. When she decided to help the freedom fighters in the Second Intifada, she couldn't convince the Fateh leaders in her refugee camp near the city of Tulkarem to allow her to participate. They refused because she had children and family and was also pregnant. Randa kept trying until she eventually was allowed by Islamic Jihad to start helping in their military actions. She said, '*I was Fateh, but when I was arrested it was because of my role in the operation with the Islamic Jihad…I am Fateh but I wanted to do something.*' Political movements constantly strive to show that they are more effectively resisting the occupation than other groups. Each group try to recruit more members and freedom fighters to establish more support in the Palestinian community to enable them to win elections and be strong decision-makers in the Palestinian political future. Like Maram and Sabreen, Randa insisted on taking roles and helping fighters. However, her political party, Fateh, were aware of her pregnancy and also that her family would be upset if they heard she was helping them, so they refused even when she pressured them with the threat of going to another political party. When she went to the Islamic Jihad, they were in need of someone to help them in smuggling weapons and bombs. Because of her pregnancy, she could do this easily

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without putting herself under any suspicion. In the end, she was able to negotiate and achieve her desired role in resisting the Israeli occupation.

Most of the political movements historically allow women to take roles in military actions resisting the occupation, but not Hamas, as explained in the Introduction. Therefore, many women involved in Hamas have to join other political movements if they want to take up armed resistance or become suicide bombers. In an article entitled 'Young Bombers Nurtured by Despair', Williams (2002) describes the experience of Daren Abu Aisheh. She was a university student activist who represented Hamas on the student council. She wanted to be part of the military resistance and to become a suicide bomber. Hamas leaders rejected her because she was a woman. Like the Islamic Jihad leader who spoke to Sabreen, they felt it was unacceptable for women to be part of such actions because at the moment of death her body would be exposed. Daren went to Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades, the armed offshoot of Fateh, who accepted her wish, and trained her to become a suicide bomber. She detonated herself in 2002.

Women planning to implement attacks receive intensive organizational training and preparation in case of failure or arrest. If women are not involved in the actual process of the attack, they may still play a role in preparing freedom fighters. Dressing them, applying the makeup used to help disguise them, sewing the bombs around their bodies in the case of suicide attacks, or driving them to the site of the operation. Maram described her role in supporting military action. '*I recruited people to be in military training. I was in one of these training as well. Because of my skills in doing makeup, I have done it for two girls who wanted to become freedom fighters.*' Maram wasn't on the frontline and her role was more typically female, in accordance with the wishes of her party leaders. Eventually, however, Maram started to take the more dangerous role of smuggling weapons and bombs.

Mariam was one of the first Palestinian women to be imprisoned in the late 60s. She was arrested for planting a bomb at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. She said, '*I was so happy that I succeeded in planting the bomb. I went home and heard in the news, I was so happy…This was resistance. Now there isn't resistance like before.*' Many women's roles in the 70s and 80s were similar to Mariam's. Most of them were arrested after the success of the operation. It is also important to note here that these women were

arrested after another member of their military group was arrested and broke under the pressure of Israeli interrogators, identifying the network of freedom fighters involved. Thus, activists in military groups try to maintain secrecy all the time, even with those close to them, so that if any one of them is arrested, they would not be able to identify the others, even under the pain of torture. In this context, any mistake can be life threatening.

Remaining in the shadows also required negotiation skills. In her interview, Ahlam emphasized the secrecy involved in this kind of work, describing how, in order to protect the group, they didn't meet all at the same time, and were forbidden from talking to anyone about the training. She said:

> W*e used to meet as individuals with the leaders to get our training. This is part of the security in our work. I can't go early or late. I have to be on time because you don't want to be questioned or to make people recognize you. I was arrested because of some mistake. I went early to the meeting and met one of the girls who was arrested and confessed about all of us.*

Given these dangers, the women involved try to always be under cover. They don't want anyone to know about them, so they can feel safe participating in these groups, and also to keep people from talking about their family reputation. As Ahlam said,

> *It was very important to feel safe, so your family would never be suspicious about you, or worried if they caught you with the leader somewhere. A woman with a man is very sensitive. For me as a Christian woman with a Muslim man, that is a big deal. Once my dad saw me and locked me in the house for a week…*

Ahlam was concerned about her father response if he knew about her relations with the military groups and that she was in contact with a man. She understood that her family would be upset, firstly, because she was with a stranger doing secret work they were not aware of, which would threaten their family reputation. Secondly, they would be upset if she was with a Muslim man if they thought he was her boyfriend, as that would make her an infidel to her family and religion. So for Hana and others who had to work directly

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with men, they had to make sure that they remained undiscovered, moving and training in secrecy, and to keep their space of negotiation flexible.

Palestinian women have played important roles in the resistance movement for a long time. Their awareness of their boundaries allows them to create this space of negotiation that they used to take active roles, even if they are in shadow. Some of their experiences have been documented and acknowledged, but others have remained invisible. Little has been done to understand how women challenge and become part of resistance groups. Within the patriarchal gender arrangements of the political movements, Palestinian women are always relegated to be followers under the responsibility of men. However, in this context, women's roles in military groups challenge this patriarchal structure. Women within these groups are able to negotiate and to take responsibilities, even though their activities are always supervised by male movement leaders. Furthermore, while their roles were often orientated around feminine tasks, these tasks were crucial to the success of military actions. There has, however, never been any documentation of a woman being a leader able to make military or political decisions in any political group.

Conclusion

This chapter has shown how the Israeli occupation's tactics of invading private space has made Palestinians live a precarious life, always under threat of attack. This breaks down the boundaries between public and private, and homes become the home front. This continuous attack makes women live in a state of loss that affects their bodies, safety, privacy, and lifestyle. Furthermore, Palestinian women face patriarchal gender arrangements that have deep-rooted fears around women's bodies and sexuality. These fears are heightened by the occupation's forced exposure of the private, thus leading to the imposition of more restrictions and social surveillance.

In this chapter, through the different narratives of my participants and informed by Bhabha's concept of 'third space', I have reflected on how Palestinian women are able to create a space of negotiation. Here, I sought to explain the complexity of Palestinian women's experiences and their continuous negotiations with both conservative Palestinian culture and the Israeli occupation's invasion in their everyday lives. I have

shown how women utilize their understanding and experience to become active political subjects. I have used Grosz's concept of becoming to show how women in the state of loss construct their sumud and how their personal experiences under occupation impel them to become part of political groups, transcending private space to become freedom fighters. Women's awareness of their space enables them to use different tactics of negotiation. In the following chapter, I am going to show how women's arrest and interrogation by the Israeli authorities creates the moment of their exposure, and how this exposure transforms the space of negotiation as the women come into direct confrontation with the Israeli occupation.

Chapter Five: Sumud is the Only Weapon: The Experience of Arrest and Interrogation

Introduction

In this chapter, I am going to trace the experience of arrest and interrogation for Palestinian women in Israeli colonial prisons, places that constitute a space of direct encounter with Israeli soldiers. I illustrate the manner in which sumud emerges in this space, reflecting on how Palestinian women captives have managed the exposure of their secret roles in military and political action. During this exposure, Palestinian women transform their space of negotiation to enact agency and resistance to reflect their sumud and steadfastness not to cooperate with the Israeli interrogators. To cope with their exposure, they maintain an active political subjectivity. I attempt to explore how the conflict between Israeli soldiers and Palestinian women defines power relations in this space. On one hand, Israeli forces employ a variety of torture techniques, including physical, psychological and verbal intimidation. Palestinian women, on the other hand, try to resist coercion at the hands of Israeli interrogators. I will show how withstanding cruelty and terror, refusing to confess or accept the allegations the Israelis confront them with, is a performance of their political subjectivity – a performance that requires them to hide their agency.

The Politics of Arrest

The experience of arrest is a process wherein detainees are consumed by dread, uncertainty and fear for their lives and the fate of their loved ones. The process is also terrifying for the suspect's entire family. When the police raid the house, all of the arrestee's family members must evacuate with their IDs and go through a security check. They leave the house, exposing themselves to the public. They have to answer all the questions they are asked and follow the strict disciplinary procedures they are subjected to by Israeli officers. Once outside, men and women are separated. The arrest of a family member, especially individuals involved in secret resistance groups, is often shocking for the family and those in the surrounding community, who never knew that this person was involved in politics or military activity. In other cases, if the person is known to be an

activist, their arrest might be expected. In such cases, when there is an Israeli invasion in any area of the Palestinian territory, the activist and their family begin to prepare for their arrest, particularly if another member of their group has already been arrested and might have given them up in interrogation. When a woman is arrested, it is usually particularly unexpected and disturbing. When the soldiers single out the 'wanted' woman, without any explanation, the family is left shocked and suspicious about her likely charges. In this moment, the woman's secret space of negotiation is exposed.

A Visit Unexpected and Expected

According to my participants, the process of the arrest can take a few hours; it involves complex interactions of power and resistance. At the same time, it is an emotionally charged moment for the woman who is being taken from her family to an unknown space. Usually, it takes place in the early hours of the morning when people are sleeping. If there are suspicions about the wanted person without concrete evidence, they do not go for a long interrogation, but are sent to administrative detention. B'Tselem, the Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories, defines this as detention without charge or trial.[6] It is authorized by administrative order rather than by judicial decree. Such prisoners fear that they will spend a long time in prison and worry that something or someone will prove the accusations against them.

Majd was studying for her final exam early one morning when she heard the noise of Israeli soldiers in the street. She saw them through her window and then phoned one of her relatives to warn him and ask if he knew what was going on. It never occurred to her that she would be arrested. As soon as she finished the call, she saw the Israeli soldiers around her house. She woke up her parents and told them to be prepared for an invasion of their home. Majd's older brother had been imprisoned a few weeks before this. She said, '*They were near Jamal Abd Alnaser school, near our home…A few minutes later they left to bring someone to lead them to our house. I don't know what happened after.*' In the process of the arrest, the Israeli forces bring a human shield with them to lead them to the house. Usually this person is a neighbour or relative of the family. First the person starts calling to the family to open the door, and then knocks so

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[6] http://www.btselem.org/topic/administrative_detention

that the soldiers can go inside. If this takes a long time, and no one responds, the soldiers start shooting in order to scare those inside and their neighbours.

After the Israeli soldiers invade and evacuate the house, sometimes without giving any of indication of who they are looking for, they begin searching the house and creating chaos. Harassment and violence accompany these invasions. The family are full of fear, often not knowing why they have soldiers inside their home. Retab, who was surprised to be arrested and was never even informed of the crime for which she was imprisoned, described her arrest:

> *First of all, it is the most scary thing ever… We are a very peaceful family. They came at 4 o'clock in the morning, a lot of soldiers. They started shouting at us to evacuate the house…I held my sick dad's hand. He had a stroke before so he couldn't move quickly; they started shouting at us again and again to get out of the house. I can't explain our feelings. It is very hard and I feel the same fear again, even talking about it. It is something painful inside you. It is oppression, injustice. You don't know what they want from you and where they will take you.*

The experience of the arrest was the most difficult stage of imprisonment for my research participants. The evacuation of the family in early hours in the morning or late at night while they were often in their pajamas is another instance in which the occupation exposes the private to the public. Similarly, when the Israeli soldiers search the house after forcing its residents outside, the family's privacy disintegrates. At the same time, the woman being arrested is suddenly exposed to her family.

> *I expected something else, but I got arrested. I expected to do something I would be proud of. I never thought about death, maybe martyrdom, but no, not being in prison…I just wanted to do something, whatever would happen. But being imprisoned never entered my mind…When I used to hear about women in prison, I used to think about them a lot and feel sorry for them, and was more sorry when I heard about their family's struggle to go and visit them…. When they came to my home, they made a mistake. They went to another woman who has a similar*

name and arrested her. When they realised the mistake they made, they came to me.

Randa was pregnant and a mother of four at the time of her arrest. She was accused of smuggling weapons between cities and of owning and hiding weapons for fighters. Randa never thought that she would be arrested for her role in these activities; she expected to be killed while smuggling weapons. Randa used her pregnancy as cover to go to hospitals and travel between cities. Her medical condition meant that she was never held in checkpoints or subject to questioning. Using her pregnancy was also a good strategy to hide her activism from her husband and family. Because she told them that she was attending appointments related to the pregnancy, they never suspected she might be involved in military groups. They were aware she was cooking for fighters and sending them food, but not that she was taking roles that would put her life in danger. She enjoyed her freedom and her movement outside of the house was never restricted. Randa's story illustrates how some women make use of their expected roles as women to conceal their political or military work. Randa thought that her pregnancy and motherhood removed any threat of being arrested, as well as any social suspicion. When the soldiers did come to her home, she knew it was for her because the neighbour with a similar name had been arrested a few days before and then released when they realized this woman was not the person they wanted. This had concerned Randa, but she had not expected her arrest to happen so quickly.

Dalal, a mother of two sons, was in shock following the detention of one of her sons, just few months before her own arrest. Dalal was keen on taking revenge for his incarceration, in whatever way she could. She had decided to become a suicide bomber, but she never expected to be arrested or imprisoned. She thought she would die taking her revenge. This experience was common among the women I interviewed who were undertaking preparation to become suicide bombers. Dalal told her sister that she had communicated with one of the military groups. Her sister was angry with her because, in her fixation on avenging her son in prison, she never thought about what would happen to her other son. Her sister warned her that she could be arrested. On the same night of her argument with her sister, Dalal was arrested.

It was 2:30 in the morning. I was sleeping in my young son's room. When I saw the soldiers I knew it was for me. But my parents never expected this, never expected that I could be involved in such things...They thought that my life was just about work and home...On the previous day even I had cleaned the house really well, and done a lot of chores, and thought that on the following day I would be a martyr. But I was arrested.

Dalal, like many of my participants, focused intensely on her daily activities in the days before she thought she would carry out the bombing. Performing their household activities, for example, taking care of their children or cooking for their families, is part of Palestinian women's everyday practice, and can also be a tactic of negotiation to hide their involvement in acts of resistance.

Most of the women I interviewed told me that they concentrated on their cleaning and cooking in the days before their arrest. Wanting to explore why this was such a common theme, I asked Hayam why household chores became so important at this time. She said, '*It can be a feeling,*' but did not elaborate. In my understanding, my participants' descriptions of their household activities and feelings during this time reflect that they were expecting arrest but were trying to deny it. As the fear occupied their minds, the household became an escape. Hayam's statement suggests that women involved in secretive work have anxieties of being arrested and exposed to their family and community. This can also be a tactic of negotiation; focusing on their everyday roles as women is perhaps a way to repress their fear of the consequences of their actions. It is also a means of keeping their activism under the cover of their typical roles as women inside their homes, so none of their family or community will have any kind of suspicions. Randa, who never thought about being arrested, realised her fear after her neighbour was taken. On the same day of Randa's arrest, she cooked her children their favourite meal, cleaned the house and visited her mother. Through such activities, women insist on their feminine roles, in a sense denying to their families, and also the Israeli occupation, that they could be part of any group or trained to become freedom fighters.

Some women were clear during their interviews that they expected to be arrested and had been waiting for this moment. Sabreen was part of a military group with the Islamic Jihad who were planning to become suicide bombers inside Israel. Some of the group's members were arrested, including the other female. Sabreen said:

> *The girl they arrested was my best friend. She used to come to my house to sleep over. My family knew her well. They used to ask me about her when she stopped coming, but I decided not to tell them that she was arrested. I hid it from them. Just my oldest sister knew that my friend was arrested… The day of my arrest, my sister saw the solders downstairs and she said to me, 'They are coming to arrest you'…I said to her, 'Why me?' She told me to get ready. They brought a guy from the same political movement to show them my home, and to knock on the door. My oldest sister opened it, but they told her they wanted me not her.*

Sabreen was aware she would be imprisoned after the arrest of her friend. She hid this from her family, so they would not worry about her or try to do anything. Her oldest sister knew through the media about her friend's arrest for planning to become a suicide bomber. This made her sister suspicious about Sabreen, as they were very close friends. They spent a lot of time together, sleeping over at each other's houses and going to university together. So when the soldiers came into their neighbourhood, her sister was aware that they were there to arrest Sabreen. She told her to prepare so that when they came she would be in conservative clothes and fully covered with her veil. Her sister tried to talk to the soldiers to give Sabreen more time, but she failed because the soldiers recognized that she wasn't Sabreen.

Salma was a political activist and the representative of Hamas in the Nablus municipality when she was arrested in 2006. She was aware that she would be imprisoned after her colleges from Hamas were arrested. At that time, members of Hamas were targeted by Israel. That night, the soldiers went to her best friend's home but did not find her. The Israeli authorities were upset about Salma's friend's disappearance and began searching for her everywhere in the city. The night of the arrest, she and her husband stayed up all night watching the local news to find out what was

going on in the city. They kept a close watch on the windows to see if the soldiers were coming. Salma's husband was worried while they waited, so he decided to go for dawn prayers in the mosque. He told her to call him if the Israeli forces came. Salma stayed by the window, watching. When she saw the Israeli tanks approaching her neighbourhood, she woke up her children and asked them to be prepared. She described the arrest:

> *We all evacuated the building, men and women. My son was there, the one who was still traumatized after our first house was demolished, but he was older…In fact, in that moment I did not want my son to go through this again…But he did. Thank God, though, it was just an interrogation. Then they told me I was under arrest. The officer told me to call my husband to tell him to come, and for me to say goodbye to him. But I found out later it was a trick to arrest him as well…My husband looked at me and smiled when he was arrested.*

Salma was primarily worried about her children, who had already been traumatized by the occupation. She was aware that the Israelis considered her involvement with Hamas illegal and that she could be imprisoned. The shock for her was her husband's arrest. She had thought that he would take care of their children while she was incarcerated, so when he was also taken, she feared for her children and their future.

When Women's Bodies Become Weapons

Unlike Salma, most of my participants never thought about the possibility of going to prison; it would be too agonizing to cope with. Unexpected or expected, it is a difficult experience for women and one that transforms their space of negotiation. The moment her house is invaded and she is arrested, a woman's space of negotiation is critically altered. She may feel terror, but her fear must be concealed. Women, and their families, feel they must perform strength and resistance, showing their sumud to the Israeli soldiers. The family members try to make a show of support for their daughter, hiding their fear. This direct encounter between the Israeli forces and the Palestinian family reflects the power each side tries to show the other; it is an exercise of power. The

Palestinians show their sumud and steadfastness. The Israeli occupation is all too familiar with Palestinian culture and the position of women in their conservative communities. As such, they are aware of how sensitive the community is around issues connected to women's honour and protection. The Israeli authorities capitalize on such issues to threaten women and their families.

Illustrating this tactic, Dalal remembered a conversation between one of the officers who arrested her and her father:

> *When they took me, the officer told my dad, 'Your daughter is planning to kill herself... You should have taken more care of her and observed her mobility more. She would have been dead by now without you noticing'... My dad said, 'It is impossible for my daughter to think of committing such a thing. She is fainthearted and scared of everything.'*

In this exchange, it is clear that the Israeli officer tries to blame the father for not taking care of his daughter. According to him, the father is oblivious to his daughter's activities and the places she frequents; the father has fallen short of controlling his daughter in a conservative community where women are typically under men's authority. At the same time, the father's denial of his daughter's involvement in the breach of law is mixed with shock and the desire to protect his child. The father insists that his daughter is fearful, shy and meek, denying his inability to control her. To protect his daughter from imprisonment, the father stresses his daughter's innocence, and that, contrary to the officer's claims, he is taking good care for her. This denial reflects sumud, and also gives his daughter, who is listening to the conversation, the strength she needs. Furthermore, it reminds her not to cooperate with the soldiers.

When a woman is arrested, her family deeply fears her body being violated and exposed. This fear will stay with the family during the entire period of the woman's imprisonment. Palestinians are aware that under Israeli law, when there is an arrest, Israeli forces should include female soldiers to deal with women. Knowing that no strange man will touch their daughter gives some comfort to the family. However, Palestinians know that the Israeli occupation does not always respect international laws

and might still pose a threat to their daughters. Majd's father was a lawyer and his legal knowledge gave him power in his dealings with the Israeli soldiers and officers. During Majd's arrest, he had two confrontations with them trying to protect her. Majd described the first one:

> *My dad was talking to them most of the time. He insisted they bring female soldiers to search me. He said, 'She is a woman and you should bring a female soldier to search her'... They asked him to shut up. I started repeating my dad's words... The officer came and stripped my coat off and threw it on the floor. I decided to turn my trouser pockets out so he wouldn't touch me.*

In this confrontation, Majd's father found it hard to watch her being searched in front of him by a man. He tried to challenge the officer with his knowledge of the law. However, by removing Majd's coat, the officer threatened to expose her body, showing her father that he had more power than the law. Majd's decision to turn out her pockets was meant to protect herself from the soldier touching her and to calm her father's fear. It was also meant to show him that she could protect herself and to reassure him that she could handle the soldiers. This situation brings to mind Butler's (2004) argument about violence. She writes:

> Violence is…a way in which the primary human vulnerability to other humans is exposed in its most terrifying way, a way in which we are given over, without control, to the will of another, the way in which life itself can be expunged by the willful action of another. To extent that we commit violence, we are acting upon another, putting others at risk, causing damaged to others. (22)

The form of violence the Israeli soldiers use makes Palestinians feel vulnerable and exposed. Palestinians respond to this violence in a violent way; Majd's father in the example above was shouting and getting angry with the soldiers. It is clear that the Israeli soldier tried to make her father to feel vulnerable, which made Majd react and respond to the soldiers. Majd's repetition of her father's words was also a way of showing her

political subjecthood and her knowledge. She was trying to show her strength and acting to protect her father and her family. She did not want to put her father at risk. Other women react to the soldiers and become violent, which can cause them problems after their arrest, and put them and their families at risk of physical violence.

Majd's father's second confrontation occurred when they told him they were going to arrest her.

They told my dad that they were going to arrest me, but my dad refused, in the beginning, to accept the idea. He said, 'She's a girl and I can't leave her to go alone.' He said that he was lawyer and he knew the law of arresting a woman. He said they should bring a female soldier or take me or my mother to be with me, if there were no female solders. They then agreed to bring my mother with me. My dad refused. He said he would sue them if they took me without a female soldier.

Majd's father was trying to protect his daughter from being taken away by the male soldiers without a female figure present. He believed a female soldier, even if she was an agent of the occupation, would still provide some protection for his daughter. He was particularly worried about her being left alone with a group of male soldiers because one of them had already stripped her coat away in front of him. When he used his knowledge of the law to challenge the Israeli officer and threatened them to sue them, they agreed to allow her mother to accompany Majd until they came to the military point, where there were female soldiers. Majd was handcuffed and blindfolded and thrown inside the prisoner car, along with her mother, who was also blindfolded.

Sumud and the Last Goodbye

Saying goodbye is the hardest moment for female arrestees. It is a mixture of emotions, memories, fear, and resistance. Women try to create excuses to spend more time with their family, such as asking to change clothes, put shoes on, or use the toilet. They hug each family member. 'Space is no more concrete than time, nor is it easier to represent. The subject is no more clearly positioned in space than in time; indeed, the immediacy of the "hereness" of corporeal existence is exactly parallel to the "nowness"

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of the subject's experience' (Grosz, 1995: 85). Connecting Grosz's argument to the way the women use the time during their arrest clearly reflects how time becomes more important for women than space. They want to spend more time with their family and they try to focus their attention on using the time they have left. Time becomes the challenge for women. They try to show their sumud and strength during the arrest and they also use the time to resist and delay the soldiers.

During their arrest, women use different tactics to frustrate the Israeli soldiers. When she heard the knock on the door, Rania realized that she would be arrested, as most of her comrades had already been detained. Describing how she felt when she realized she would be imprisoned, she said, '*I was trying to steal the moment.*' Wanting to spend more time with her family, she created delays to 'steal' some time before she was taken. This statement reflects her awareness that she was going to be absent from her life. Women think about prison as disconnected from their lives (Davis, 2003). As they become absent from their own homes, the memories of the house raid and arrest and their family's experience become strongly present. They worry about their family and how they handled the arrest. Rania decided to give the Israeli officers a hard time. She was aware of her rights, and she decided to use them. She delayed leaving the house, asking to change from her pajamas, dressing as slowly as possible, and then asking to go to the toilet. This tactic of being slow is a form of resisting Israeli power.

Salma tried to tell the officer that they couldn't arrest her at that time, and that they should come back another day, as she was on her period. Of course, the officer did not listen to her, but this enabled her to demand some basic rights. She insisted on using the toilet, changing her clothes and bringing extra clothes with her. Like Rania, other women respond slowly to the soldiers. They obey the soldier's orders, but also demand to do things like hug their children and family members. Salma said:

> *When they were putting the handcuffs on me and my husband, I asked them to wait. He was standing near me. I hugged him and gave him a kiss in front of them. I did not see him for two months. He had been in prison before. He told me to take care of myself and to think just about myself. I told him not to worry and then they took me to the jeep.*

Her husband's support, and his insistence that she should think about herself and not worry, meant a lot to Salma. She had the strength to tell her children to take care of each other, especially her older daughter. '*I said to Asma to put me in her mind, and to remember how I did things and take my role.*'

Saying goodbye is an important moment for women prisoners; they have to show their strength, encourage their families and not show any weakness or emotion. Randa described how she dealt with her arrest:

> *I was so strong… I did not want to show them or my children and my husband my weakness. I told my husband and children not to worry or be afraid for me, and that I would be back for them… My youngest child, the sick one, was crying… I told him to shut up and promised him that I would come back quickly.*

Hiding her emotions from the Israeli occupation was a tactic of resistance, but she also wanted to give her family strength and to make them feel confident that she would survive prison. She spoke harshly to her son who started crying because she didn't want him to collapse in front of the Israeli soldiers. She wanted him to keep his sumud, but she also tried to comfort him with the idea that she would soon be back to support him, even though she was aware she would spend a long time in prison. At the moment of encounter with the Israeli occupation, the shape of the space of negotiation starts to change. It becomes based on showing strength and political subjecthood. As we have seen, this takes various forms, from being slow to demanding basic rights. In this space of negotiation, women have to constantly hide their fears. They are aware of the difficult situation they are in and the ambiguous future they face in prison. They are worried about their bodies and the family they leave behind, but they manage these feelings by showing strength and resistance in every action.

Sabreen knew all the stages of imprisonment, so she understood the process she would be subject to. Most of her concerns were for her family. She said: '*I felt sorry for my family. When they put me in front of my mother blindfolded, my heart was bleeding. Poor mom, how she would handle my arrest… Then I started to think about the next step*

and what would happen.' Sabreen resisted succumbing to the pain and anxiety about her family by concentrating on the future and what she was going to face. She convinced herself that her mother would be in good hands and that she had to think about her imprisonment and how she would pass the interrogation. Sabreen's experience reflects Butler's (2006) description of the precarious life of the dispossessed. She argues, 'When we lose certain people, or when we are dispossessed from a place, or a community, we may simply feel that we are undergoing something temporary, that mourning will be over and some restoration of prior order will be achieved' (22). Women feel guilt, and worry about their family, but then they realize that this is something temporary and they will be released. After her arrest, Sabreen, for example, recalled: *'My mother use to repeat to me that, at the end, prisoners will be released and will go back to their families, but with martyrs it is harder. They are buried and they will never come back.'* Sabreen thought that her mother would understand, and would be happy that Sabreen would be alive when the ordeal was over. This thought gave her the strength to resist and to keep her sumud during her arrest.

The following image illustrates how Palestinian women perform strength and sumud. Resisting the Israeli soldier's orders, the woman is raising the victory sign in order to give strength to the people who are with her and watching her, and to show that she will be free. Her gaze reflects her determination to face her battle with the Israelis. We can see the Israeli soldiers trying to bring her arm down. They want her to obey their orders. It is a conflict of power: the woman's sumud is her only weapon in this encounter, but the Israeli soldiers have their weapons, and are trying to break her.

Figure (3): Palestinian woman arrested by Israeli soldiers.

Some women believed that the arrest and interrogation are much harder on the prisoners than their families, and that no one can truly understand how hard this experience is without going through it. Retab said, '*I know my family had a horrible time during my arrest, but for me, the moment they arrested me from home, no one understands such feelings. Even my mom and family, they will never understand how I felt.*' Retab's comment reflects the fear that all of the women experienced during their arrest. Women are concerned about their bodies and sexual violence and the unknown journey they are undertaking. Women keep thinking about their unknown future, fearful of being sexually assaulted during the journey to prison. They remember all the stories they have heard, news they have read or movies they have watched about women being sexually abused during their imprisonment, either in Israeli prisons or elsewhere.

The Journey to Prison: The Threat to Women's Bodies

When transported to prison, the arrested woman is painfully handcuffed with plastic ties, blindfolded and taken away in a military jeep at the feet of the arresting soldiers. The soldiers usually have dogs. For Palestinians, dogs are not popular animals; they invoke terror and disgust. The woman is often kicked as well as verbally abused during the journey to the detention centre (PSC, 2012: 1). The following image shows women being brought to the military jeeps. As they are blindfolded, they don't know where they are going, and can't see the road they are taken through. They can't move without the supervision of the Israeli soldiers. The women are gathered close together, trying to give each other confidence and support, though their fear and hesitation are evident in the way they walk. They try to avoid the soldiers touching them, by leaning into each other and squeezing their bodies towards the centre.

Figure (4): Israeli soldiers take Palestinian women political prisoners to prison.

When taken to prison, women are transported in a military jeep, which the prisoners call 'the postage'. Hayam described the vehicle when I interviewed her.

It's a mobile prison isolation cell. It's made with thick metals and surrounded by wire mesh. It's hard for a person to see anything. The seats are made out of hard metals. It's hard to sit, it's hard to move, because you are handcuffed and your legs are tied. It's really hard when the driver makes a sudden movement and you fall down. It's hard to get up, it's such a closed space.

Like the postage that is used to send letters and packages to their destinations, this 'postage' is used to send Palestinian women to their ambiguous future. They don't know where they are going; all they can hear is the soldiers shouting. In the following image, we can see a Palestinian woman looking out at the outside world. She is not sure where she is going and her face reflects this uncertainty, her eyes are wondering, trying to find something familiar.

Figure (5): Palestinian woman political prisoners taken by Israeli jeeps.

During the journey in the 'postage', the women worry that they won't reach a space of safety or fear that they will be sexually abused and dishonour their family's reputation. As Hayam noted, women are unable to move comfortably while they are inside. Retab said, '*It's like a bus. You go inside, it's like a very small box. It's just the size of a chair. You sit on it. You can't move. You can't even rest your leg*s.' When women lose the ability to move, they start realizing how this will restrict them from defending themselves from violence and sexual abuse.

> *I was thinking of one thing - if they attacked my honour. This is what I was thinking all the way. In the past, many things used to happen to woman prisoners, and people used to say there is sexual abuse, and we women… I don't know what to say. But, I mean, if they hit me, shoot me, I don't care. The most important thing is my reputation and honour…We are Arab and Muslim and you know…to kill me or my son is easier than to touch my honour….This was the major fear all the way in this postage car.*

For Dalal, the journey in the postage from her home to the military point seemed to take a long time. She didn't know where she was going and it was late at night when she left her home. These factors made her think she was being taken to a hidden place to be sexually abused. Dalal, who lived in a very conservative community, preferred to be killed, or even for her children to be killed, than to be raped. In Palestinian culture, if an individual is killed by the Israeli occupation, they will be honoured, but to be sexually violated

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brings dishonour. Dalal's comments reflect the importance placed on women's bodies and their protection.

Other participants who did not know what to expect on the journey to prison also described their fear of sexual abuse in the postage, as they were surrounded by soldiers, without any physical power to defend themselves. Retab said, '*The most scary thing for me was for them to touch me.*' In my review of the literature about Palestinian women's experience in Israeli prisons, I have been unable to find statistics or documentation of women being sexually abused. In the late 60s, Aisha and Rasmia Odeh publicly spoke in depth about their experience in this regard; their experience have been publicized in media. It is clear, however, that women still face sexual harassment and the threat of sexual abuse.

Women who had military training had received an induction about the prison experience and were thus aware of what would happen and where they would be taken once removed from their family home. Sabreen, for example, was concerned about her family, but never thought about sexual abuse. She said, '*I heard from people that it is impossible for this thing to happen, and nothing related to sexual abuse ever came to my mind*.' The women, like Sabreen, who felt that sexual abuse was unlikely were more able to remain calm in this encounter with the occupation. They felt more in control and confident that nothing would happen to them.

After a few hours of driving in the darkened postage, prisoners are disoriented. They don't know if there are any other Palestinian prisoners in the postage with them and they don't know where they are when they reach their destination. The military points they are taken to usually contain a detention centre. The prisoners' time in the detention centre is a transition stage and marks the start of the formal interrogation. Israeli officials make sure they arrest the correct person, and carry out various administrative processes before transferring prisoners to the actual prisons and interrogation centers. The officers take fingerprints and photographs, do medical checks and collect basic information.

According to the participants' description of this stage, it is isolating, uncertain, and lonely. They face physical violence and they still don't know where they are. Each woman is assigned to a small, isolated cell, lacking the facilities to meet basic human needs. The rooms are filthy and contain only a dirty mattress and blanket. When a

woman needs to use the toilet, she must ask the guards to take her. Her hands remain restrained and the guard waits behind the toilet. Majd recalls the humiliation of this situation: '*After a long walk, we reached a disgusting toilet. It wasn't clean at all. I couldn't sit but I really needed to go...I wet my clothes. I felt sorry for myself. I told the female guard. She brought me soap. I cleaned my clothes, and put them on again, wet.*' All of my participants had experiences similar to Majd's, which made them realize how difficult life in prison would be.

In this space, women look for sources of tranquillity and safety, which will give them the strength they need to resist in this space of deprivation and also to maintain their sumud. Some of them find this through reading the Quran. Some choose to be silent, trying to think about good moments with their family, children or friends and others try to find a window to the outside to get any information they can about the space and where they are. Some of my participants realized that they were close to Palestinian cities when they heard morning prayers coming in from the outside. Sabreen was arrested during Eid. Before her arrest, she had watched the prayers from her home or had gone to the mosque to pray. In the detention centre, she felt comforted when she was able to hear the prayer from outside. She said, '*I heard the prayer for Eid from Hawara. I just thought, "It is God." Well, I planned to watch the prayer and pray but I couldn't. But I could hear it.*' As she expressed many times during the interview, she felt this was a call to her to be strong, to keep her sumud and survive this experience.

According to the website of Al Dameer, a prisoner support and human rights organization, some Palestinian women are placed in Hasharon and Damon prisons. As both of these prisons are located in Israel, outside the 1967 occupied territory, this is 'a direct contravention of Article 76 of the Fourth Geneva Convention, which states that an Occupying power must detain residents of occupied territory in prisons inside the occupied territory.'[7] Families would struggle to visit these prisons as they need to cross myriad checkpoints and seek permission to pass through the temporary border areas. These prisoners, therefore, are completely isolated from their communities.

When leaving the detention centre, women are put in the postage car again, knowing that their destination is the prison interrogation centre. Here women go through

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[7] http://englishweb.aldameer.org/

another admission process in which their fingerprints and pictures are taken again. They are then strip searched and placed in a dark, isolated cell, without any communication with the outside world. These cells, which contain a toilet and a bed, usually do not have any windows. During this time, women go through interrogation, and face different kinds of torture and violence from the Israeli interrogators. At this stage, women enact their political subjectivity at all times, showing their resistance and sumud by refusing to confess or to cooperate with the Israelis. There are some women who confess to protect other people in their group, or when they realize that they might die under the torture they face. Palestinians do not consider this cooperation, but self-defence. The interrogation is considered the first direct encounter between the prisoner and the Israeli authorities, so it is a direct battle in which the individual must negotiate tactics of resistance and steadfastness.

The Shock of Body Exposure

It was the first day in prison…It was Ramleh prison. It's a civil administration where some political Palestinian prisoners are allocated, in addition to Israeli criminal women. We entered the prison and they asked us to strip off for a body search. We all refused…Thank God, we all refused. We didn't know their laws, but we know the limits of our religion, and we knew it is a sin to show our private body. We all refused. They left us in the room till the end of the day…And they were insisting on the strip search…We had never heard of such a thing… Former prisoners never told us. We never knew about it in the training. It wasn't easy at all…To be honest you feel one thing - they just want to humiliate you and to break you…But I felt I am a stronger person and I could do it in my way.

(Sabreen)

The first moment of humiliation comes when women are strip searched and forced to change into prison clothing, sometimes in the presence of male security officials (Deancà 2012). Sabreen, like many Palestinian women, was surprised by the strip search. As she notes above, it was something the women had never heard about. Goffman (1961) argues that the strip search 'creates a milieu of personal failure in which one's fall from grace is

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continuously pressed home' (63). Many participants were deeply impacted by the search. Retab said, '*Your body is your honour…. I felt really ashamed.*' For Retab, it was hard to show her body to a stranger. She was emotional when she described how the experience made her feel. She said it was as if someone stole something from her. In forcing them to do something they do not want to do, the prison authorities demonstrate their control over the women, showing that their power extends even to their private bodies. Describing a different context, Voglis (2002) argues: 'The body and the psyche no longer belong to the inmate; they become objects of the custodians' (130). Foucault (1976) draws attention to two modalities of these techniques of power: the first is concerned with 'the subjugation of bodies' and the second with 'the control of a population'. Foucault called this power relation 'surplus power', which can be identified as 'the power to punish without using the personal power of the sovereign' (140). However, in the context of Palestine, women are able to resist and refuse to cooperate, by preserving their sumud and refusing to subjugate themselves to the power of the Israeli prison authority.

Many of the former prisoners chose not to talk about this particular part of their experience in prison and were surprised when I asked them if they had experienced it and how it felt. Some of them said they did not have to remove all of their clothes or that they used some tactic to cover their bodies during the search. According to Al Dameer reports, Palestinian women political prisoners have made complaints to numerous human rights organizations about the Israelis' systematic practice of body searching, which they describe as 'a process by which all, or almost all of their clothing is forcibly removed by Israeli soldiers, sometimes including their undergarments' (Addameer, 2011: 10). According to my participants, these searches were routine when a women was transferred to a court hearing, and could sometimes take place in the middle of the night as a disciplinary measure.

Majd asserted that what I had heard from women who described being strip searched was not completely true. She was surprised that I knew about it, and tried to convince me that women do not go naked. She said:

Listen, it is not like the other women have maybe told you. They can exaggerate sometimes…Sorry, but it is not to strip and to be totally naked. For me, I was

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never totally naked. I used to keep my trousers on and take off my shirt, and then my bra. After the search finished for these, and I put them back on, I'd give her my trousers and my underwear.

Majd wanted me to know that women can use tactics to protect their bodies to avoid being completely exposed in front of the Israeli prison authorities. Even though no one had taught them how, most participants used the method Majd describes for removing their clothes, which allowed them to feel they kept their honour protected. I argue that because Palestinians are accustomed to the constant exposure of their private space, as discussed in the previous chapter, once in prison, the women were adept at finding ways to maintain some aspect of their privacy. This again illustrates De Certeau's argument that the private learns how to open itself to the flow of people from the public. The women's manoeuvring of the strip search illustrates their skill at dealing with this exposure.

Palestinian women often refuse to obey the order, causing the prison authorities to threaten them by bringing male or female soldiers to strip them. Sabreen wasn't alone when she arrived at the prison. She was with a group of Palestinian women, who were all as shocked as Sabreen at the order to strip. They took power from each other and refused. The prison authorities responded by locking them in a small cell as punishment for not cooperating. The narratives of Sabreen, Majd and other participants reflect how Palestinian women are raised to cover their bodies from strangers, even if they are female. The idea of exposing one's body, especially to a stranger, is a sin for Muslim women. It is part of religious education, and is also ingrained in the conservative Palestinian culture. The feeling of shame associated with the act of stripping and the fear that, if acknowledged, it could lead to the dishonour of their families, compel women to refuse to talk about it.

Retab was alone when she arrived at the prison. She had tears in her eyes as she told me about her first day.

When I arrived at Ramleh prison, they asked me to strip off my clothes. I refused, but they brought five female soldiers…To be honest, female soldiers can be worse

than males. They stared at me in a strange way. They are shameless…It is my
honour…I always feel shy even with my mom and sister. I don't change in front of
them… It is really very, very hard.

Retab's story shows how sensitive it is for Palestinian women to be unclothed in front of any one, even if it is their own mothers. In the body searches, women were usually asked to squat while naked. This act is disturbing and makes women feel dishonoured. As Retab describes, the sexualized gaze of the female soldiers is a further source of disturbance. Davis (2003) argues that 'sexual abuse is surreptitiously incorporated' into the strip search, which she describes as 'one of the most habitual aspects of women's imprisonment' (81). Abdo (2014) writes that '[w]omen political prisoners' bodies are transformed into sexualized and racialised objects; stripped by the colonial state, they are turned into tools of oppression' (14). Palestinian women are aware of the power relations involved in this act. As Sabreen says above, they feel that the prison authorities use this technique to 'break' them, to make them feel they can't hide anything. This sentiment encourages women to resist and refuse to obey the orders, which can be described as a form of steadfastness in the confrontation with Israeli colonial power.

The Politics of Sumud During the Interrogation

The interrogation space has the intimacy of a small room, without much space to move. The presence of both the interrogator and the interrogated is continuous, sometimes with physical attention from the interrogator to terrify the interrogated. In this space, the single Palestinian activist encounters the Israeli interrogators, 'who have the power to determine the details of the interrogation setting, and to control the provision of the activist's basic needs' (Meari, 2010: 9). According to Lena Meari, 'The interrogation encounter signifies a direct battle between the ideologies, beliefs and value system of the Palestinian activists and the Israeli interrogators within non-symmetric conditions' (15). Meari argues that time and space are deployed as central techniques in the interrogation setting; she extends this observation from the interrogation room in particular to the colonial order in general.

The interrogation of Palestinian women is carried out by male interrogators, in many cases without giving them access to lawyers. Even if a female guard is present in the room as an observer, for young women and girls, the male authority increases pressure and fear (Falcione 2011: 6). In Israeli interrogation rooms, violence and beatings are common. The process of interrogation is an exercise of power between the Israeli interrogator and the Palestinian women. The Israeli interrogators not only use physical violence, but also psychological torture, which impacts on the prisoners' identities; they try to break the prisoners' sumud, and make them feel they are alone. As a result of this violent confrontation, Palestinian women become disoriented and more suspicious of everything around them. They feel the threatened, and worry about their future. As Peteet (1994) argues, violence has been a part of the apparatus of domination since the beginning of the occupation, both in public and as an integral part of the interrogation process (31).

Fadwa was proud of her resistance during interrogation. She recalled:

I had a special experience during interrogation. I gave no confession. I was imprisoned because of someone else's confession; I was the only woman who was in the Hebron detention centre. The interrogation took place there. It is a men's prison with no women at all. I spent three nights and days in interrogation. I was handcuffed and hanged. They thought I would confess. With all these exceptional conditions, I left without disclosing a single piece of information. I had read a lot about interrogation before, but when you go through this experience in practice, it is completely different.

Fadwa's description illustrates how important the practice of sumud is for Palestinian political prisoners in the Israeli colonial prisons. During the interrogation, to show their sumud, women resist any cooperation with the Israeli interrogators. They affect carelessness and hide the suffering caused by the conditions in the cell. Fadwa was in a men's interrogation centre, but she never showed her fear about it. She was proud of her resistance and refusal to cooperate. She told me that she spent her time there playing

sports and painting on the wall of her small cell, but she refused to show her weakness to the Israelis or to cooperate, even when she was worried about her children. Palestinian women face coercion with resoluteness. Loath to deliver up information or confess offenses when interrogated, these women militate against the prison's bad living conditions and torture. Theorizing resistance in relation to disciplinary power, Foucault (1978) asserts where there is power, there is resistance. He writes:

> [T]he exercise of power is heterogeneous, mobile and transitory. The general recipe for the exercise of power over people is the mind as a surface of power inscription. With semiology as its tool, the submission of bodies is produced through the control of ideas. (102)

Resistance is a method of becoming that holds the possibility of escaping the pressure of the Israeli interrogator's power, as well as shifting the way Palestinian women challenge the Israeli soldiers, creating a more direct encounter. They create a space of negotiation, in which they can hide their political beliefs and fears, showing the interrogators their carelessness and adaptation, performing the denial of any accusation, or pretending that they don't know what the interrogator is talking about.

The interrogation techniques are constructed on the occupation's knowledge of Palestinian society and its culture, which they use to pressure the Palestinian inmate. Knowledge around religion and sexuality are particularly useful for extracting confessions or information from the prisoners. Most women were threatened with having someone from their family arrested or abused. They were also subject to threats of sexual abuse when they didn't cooperate or confess wrongdoing. Abdo (2014) argues that the use of women's bodies and sexuality is a prime tactic of the prison institution. It is accomplished not only through direct acts of sexual torture, but also through sexual psychological torture. For example, she writes, prison officials sometimes fabricate stories about women's sexuality and threaten female detainees with the publication of such stories in order to force them into submission and confession (161-166). In Addameer's report on Palestinian women prisoners, they argue that sexual harassment and the threat of rape, wielded against the prisoners themselves or their family members,

should be understood as a systematic form of racial and gender based state violence (2011: 11).

As Addameer suggests, sexuality has commonly been employed as part of a complex of interrogation techniques. The Israeli Shabak[8], for example, incessantly use the term 'whore' to refer to interrogated Palestinian females or to female family members of male detainees. Dalal deeply disturbed by her interrogator's use of this word. '*He told me a very bad word. He said, "You whore…yalla ya sharmota.[9] Go to the room.' I was scared they would do something to me.'* Dalal was ashamed telling me what they called her. The prison guards' repeated use of this language subjugates and shames women and also makes them fear that they will be subject to sexual abuse, as Dalal's story illustrates. In the Palestinian culture, it is very humiliating to call someone a whore. It is extremely sensitive, as it is not only connected to the woman but to her entire family.

Techniques of investigation and interrogation underwent several transformations during the years between 1967 and 2009 (Meari: 2010). In her study, Meari argues that the interrogation-encounter is mutually constituted through the conflict between Palestinians and Israelis (554). She asserts that 'these changes have been influenced by the shifts in the perceptions, ethical values, and practices related to the encounter and the Palestinian/Israeli conflict in general' (*Ibid*). Palestinians and Israelis alike constantly plan and train subjects for this encounter. Palestinian activists who have experienced the Israeli prison become familiar with the Israeli interrogation techniques, and so they educate the community about these different methods through talking about their own experience in the media. Some of them even give trainings to political activists, so they can be prepared if they are arrested.

 Itaf was aware of the tactics used to pressure and intimidate women, so she decided to challenge them.

Itaf: They threatened to sexually abuse me and take my honour.

Me: How did you deal with these threats?

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[8] Hebrew acronym for the Israel's internal security service.

[9] 'Come whore… move whore'.

Itaf: Easily. I decided to go on hunger strike. I had heard about a lot of women who were threatened with sexual abuse, so I thought, 'I have to challenge these threats'…I went on hunger strike… They started begging me to stop.

Itafe resisted because she had knowledge. She was aware that the threats were just talk to pressure her. They just wanted information, but she was aware of the aims of the interrogation. She said:

During interrogation, there is a conflict of wills. They own everything, and you own nothing. But for them, they know that you own your volition and so they start to attack it and weaken it. The most important thing for me was to resist and to challenge them and refuse to cooperate.

Itaf's knowledge and strength helped her survive the interrogation and even subvert the process. But not all women had the same awareness. Many of the participants spoke about their fears of these threats, but never went into details about how they responded to them. Goffman (1961) describes the form of prisoner resistance in which inmates refuse to cooperate with staff as the 'intransigent line'. In forming such an 'intransigent line', Palestinian women prisoners deliberately try to challenge the prison system and the wider Israeli occupation, which dehumanize Palestinians as a central technique in the exercise of power.

The Israeli occupation uses different tactics to pressure women to cooperate and to confess, seeking any information about their activism. If the woman is a mother, they might tell her that if she gives them some information, she can see her children or even go home to them. Fadwa had three children when she was imprisoned. The interrogator used to tell her stories about his time with his children. She described one of their dialogues:

They used to tell me that they would release me from prison if I confessed. I had my own monologue in my mind. Even if I didn't reply to them, in my mind I had

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answers…For example, they used to tell that my children would come behind the prison windows and start crying, 'Mama… Mama,' and I wouldn't be able to hug them. The interrogator used to tell me he was going home to his children, to play with them, listen to music, and eat together… I would tell myself he was just doing his job. When he finished his work, he could go to his family, but for me it was different. It was about my beliefs and I had to keep my sumud. It is all for Palestine. I had to keep this in my mind all the time to keep going…do you understand me?

Fadwa's example reflects the internal negotiation women undergo to deal with the situation of the interrogation and to be prepared to respond to the interrogator. Fadwa worried about her children, but she had to hide this from the interrogators and resist her feelings for her children in order to focus on her political beliefs and why she was in prison. For her, as many women, her sacrifice '*is for Palestine*'; this gave them the strength to keep their sumud, and to resist Israeli power in the interrogation.

To pressure Palestinian women prisoners, the Israeli interrogators put them in isolation cells where they are deprived of their basic rights. In these cells, women feel disgusted by the unhealthy conditions. They spend many days alone, leaving only when they have to face the interrogators. Abeer described the isolation cell in detail:

It is a room like a grave, very small, and very dark, with harsh walls. You can't lean your body against the wall. The door is really thick, like a refrigerator door. It contains something small like a fan. You can't see any light. They put me there three times. I tried to sleep so I could get some rest. The floor was covered in urine. In the beginning, I wondered how I could sit down in such gross conditions… but I did after a while. I did not have a choice. When they came to get me some hours later, they started to spray air-freshener on me… I felt like an insect…It hurt but it wasn't a problem, I had the strength; it wasn't a problem.'

Meari (2010) notes that Shabak interrogators are determined to make the time of the interrogation feel as if it is eternal (549). At the same time, they regulate the detainee's space and isolate them from the other political prisoners. Being alone in the isolation cells created a lot of pressure for the women, and made it very difficult to maintain their sumud. Sabreen spent ten days in this cell. She used this time to sleep because the interrogation she was enduring was exhausting. She also suffered from exhaustion because the prison officers frequently interrupted her sleep to take her back to the interrogation.

> *They would take me for interrogation, and then I would go back to the cell to sleep. The interrogator would ask me what I had been doing. I said that I was sleeping, and that's all. He'd tell me, 'I am going to ask you some questions and then you can go and think about them while you're in the cell.' I told him, 'I can't think when I'm asleep, so I can't take questions.'*

The interrogation encounter reflects how Palestinian women's sumud shapes the space, and helps prisoners interrupt the colonial dialectic through its cultivation. In these isolated cells, prisoners lack sleep and comfort. The interrogators try to put pressure on them to make them feel tired in hopes that this will make them confess. Palestinian women were trying to show their sumud and had their own tactics to deal with the interrogation pressure. Sabreen tried to evade the interrogator's questions by telling him that she used the time in the isolation cell to sleep, and so she would not have time to think about his questions.

The Israeli Shabak utilizes many methods to get confessions from Palestinian women, imposing pressure, creating desperate living conditions, and using violence. They also mislead Palestinian prisoners by placing them in rooms with Israeli collaborators. These collaborators usually speak good Arabic and pretend to also be political prisoners. They are known in Arabic as *asafeer*, which literally means 'birds', because they trap the Palestinian prisoners who are in the cell with them in need of someone to talk to. The asafeer take all the information and document it for the interrogators. Most of the participants, especially those who were imprisoned in

administrative detention without any charge, have experience of asafeer. Retab who never found out why she was imprisoned, talked about her experience:

> *I stayed in isolation for 18 days. I shared a room with a girl who was praying all the time. She was so nice to me and took care of me. I was surprised that her family could send her clothes… At the time, my family were trying hard to send me my glasses and I could never get them. I heard people knocking in the wall. They started warning me about this girl. They said 'Retab, we heard about you. Don't say anything, for the one in your room, she is an asfora.'[10] I was so scared. I was alone with her. They told me to be strong and never to talk about politics with her. The guards heard us, and they started shouting. I still remember her name and how she was always talking about nationalism and fighting Israel.*

Creating confrontations between prisoners, particularly those who are from the same political group, is another tactic Israeli interrogators use. It is usually a very difficult experience for Palestinian women and they try to stay strong and not to say anything about their comrades. Maram shared her experience of confrontation:

> *They took me for interrogation. They brought Lena and Adela, the women who were in my group. They introduced me to them. I said, 'I don't know them,' and they also refused to say they knew me…They pressured us a lot and then we confessed. But we just confessed about the three of us and a man who was killed, but not about the rest of our group… My brother used to say in front of me all the time that a person should not confess about anything. I was worried that he would stop respecting me… It's really hard and I feel a lot of guilt.*

In the Palestinian political culture, for a prisoner to confess to the Israeli interrogators means that they could not maintain their sumud and that they have betrayed their country. Maram was aware of this and was worried what her brother, who was a political leader in the PLFP, would say about her situation. She felt guilty and ashamed. But, at the same

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[10] Singular form of the word asafeer.

time, she felt that she had no other option. The interrogators already had the information and had already arrested all of the members of her military group. As such, she and the other women couldn't deny anything, especially when they met in the same room.

Maram and all her female group were imprisoned in the same cell, but they never felt anger toward each other because they understood that it was beyond their control. Sabreen was also placed in a cell with a friend who had confessed about her. She said, '*They put me with my friend. When I saw her, I hugged her and tried to calm her. They thought we would fight and that I'd be angry with her. But it wasn't in her hands. She's my friend...They were in shock.*' The prison authorities assume that putting prisoners who confess about each other in the same cell will create conflict, thus making life difficult for both prisoners. Sometimes this tactic is successful. Ahlam, for example, is still angry that her friend's confession caused her and others in her group to be arrested. Thirty years after her imprisonment, she still doesn't talk to this woman. She considers her a collaborator, and when I tried to ask for more details, she refused to talk about it. She said, '*Let's not talk about it...It's painful. I don't want to talk about it at all.*' I will discuss the tension these situations create for prisoners placed in the cells in more detail in the following chapter.

Conclusion

This chapter discussed the experience of arrest and interrogation for Palestinian women as a site of struggle in which Palestinian women battle with Israeli power. These direct encounters showcase the agency of Palestinian women as political subjects, able to speak, strike and, through these testimonies, write back to the power of the occupation forces. Through this experience, as well as through the training and education they received before their imprisonment, Palestinian women learn how to be political prisoners - how to seek rights and behave distinctly from civil prisoners. This identity will stay with them for the whole period of their imprisonment. And so the prison becomes a site of reflective political and symbolic significance in state conflict. This chapter reflected on how sumud becomes an important means for Palestinian women to keep their strength in their direct encounter with the interrogators and how it is shaped by

refusing to collaborate with the Israelis. Sumud becomes a way of resistance, which will be an important element for Palestinian women inside Israeli colonial prison.

In this chapter, I aimed to show how the uncovering of women's secret roles in military groups during the arrest triggers a reshaping of Palestinian women's space of negotiation. After this shift, they must perform their political subjectivity at all times, resisting Israeli power and threats. In the following chapter, I am going to discuss how politics construct the everyday life of Palestinian women prisoners and the ways in which they perform the political and national themes, hiding their desire and emotions. However, as I will show, women succeed in maintaining a secret space of negotiation in which they can express their individualism under the cover of the politics; this space is forged from women's understanding of the boundaries that restrict them inside prison, where they are under the direct panoptic of the prison guards, as well as the indirect social panoptic of patriarchal gender arrangements in the Palestinian community.

Chapter Six: The Politicization of Everyday Life Inside Israeli Prisons

Introduction

In this chapter, I am going to discuss the politicization of everyday life for Palestinian women inmates inside Israeli prisons. I will argue that politics is the most important element of prisoner life. Political ideology is central to Palestinian women's performance at all times inside prison, regulating their relations with other prisoners and also with the prison authority. I will show how relationships among prisoners are built and developed on the basis of the political beliefs and affiliations and how commonalities and trust are enhanced through the system of allocating prisoners to specific wings. In this chapter, furthermore, I will draw out the relationship between the political sphere inside prison and the Palestinian political movements on the outside, examining the influence of the latter on prisoners' decisions, actions and relations. I am going to illustrate how Palestinian women challenge the isolation and restrictions imposed upon them inside prison through different activities, such as reading, writing, and handcrafts. These activities, furthermore, reflect and reinforce their political context, becoming a means of resistance against control and deprivation. Instead of succumbing to isolation and suffering, women try to use their time to educate themselves and prepare for their freedom. This demonstration of sumud is central to their political subjecthood as political prisoners, as well as in marking their distinction from the Israeli prisoners. In addition, I am going to discuss how Palestinian women create spaces of freedom in which they share their emotions, feelings and secrets and build up secure social networks with other women through interactions in their cells, common spaces and group activities. In such spaces at some times, women can act and speak in ways that would be impossible in the world outside. In this chapter, I rely on participants' interviews, which forms the basis of the data. In order to give rich insight, I am going to use the documentary *Inside Israeli Prisons,* produced by the BBC, as it helps capture a sense of women's life inside prison and their relationships with the prison authority and each other. Some of my participants are featured in this film and it was useful for me to have a means of visualizing their lives in prison.

What is prison?

Ahlam, who served five years of a life sentence, started our conversation by describing prison. She used powerfully evocative metaphors to illustrate the experiences of isolation, restriction and control.

Prison is doors and keys, like a big box with four doors, with another box inside, and another box. This is prison… I left prison with breathing problems because everywhere is closed.

This statement is a reflection on how closed and isolated space inside prison is. To live in a box is to be disconnected from the outside world, with innumerable boundaries imposed upon a person's thinking, behaviours, mobility, and actions. In response, the inmate starts to create a world of her own inside these boxes, solitary and disconnected from the things going on outside the box. Incarceration begins with disengagement with the outside world. For Whidin & Tate (2005) incarceration entails the inmate's social death in the outside world; it simultaneously produces the possibility for both a lack of a sense of personal autonomy and for selfhood to arise through resistance. Indeed, Ahlam experienced a form of social death; cut off from her interaction with her family and community, she was left alone.

Ahlam describes how this concatenation of boxes that constructs prison creates multiple layers of isolation for the prisoner, namely the isolation from the outside world and especially from her own family and community. In her account, women are thus severed from their most critical ties of social belonging through the organisation of space. In this regiment of isolation, women lose their own space, privacy, and autonomy. We learn from Ahlam how people become something other than 'autonomous' in such conditions. It is in prison that some women start to think about who they are, and also seek to represent themselves as political subjects having not understood themselves in this way prior to imprisonment. Relatedly, though the women are bound by the Israeli prison authority's control over them, and also the surveillance outside, women nevertheless attempt to resist and become more autonomous. Though severely isolated,

the imprisoned women are always aware of being watched - of being under the constant surveillance of the prison guards. Ahlam imagines the guards as dogs:

The guards are like dogs, with keychains around their neck…Each guard with the same thing, a lot of keys. You enter from one door to another door to another door till you reach your room. The doors are really thick, and closed all the time. They were only allowed to be opened at specific times, and you would have some time for relief.

Ahlam's description of the prison guards as dogs reflects her sense of fear and mistrust in their presence. As noted previously, in Palestinian and other Arab cultures, dogs are not well thought of animals. Rather than being associated with friendliness and loyalty as in many Western cultures, for Palestinians, dogs evoke violence and aggression. Ahlam perceives that the guards' role is to make sure that she is behaving well, and if she is not, to attack her. These ominous guards also wear keys, reminding the prisoners of the space and momentary freedoms over which they control all access. If these guards are satisfied with prisoners' attitudes, then they can decide to open doors, thus controlling the prisoners through 'rewards' as well as surveillance and violence.

The guards and the prison administration have control over prisoners' daily life and also set the rules of prison. The keys they wear are physically the only means through which women can go through the different doors of the prison, and thus access such necessities as family visits, medication, reading material, and open space. But, as these keys are worn round their necks, the guards are the ones who have the power and wield control over the space. The authorities are an ever-present feature of the women's life in prison. As one of the women in the film *Inside Israeli Prisons* (2005) put it, '*The administration is watching us all the time. If it is not the officer, then it is the guards.*' The social life and relationship between Palestinian women political prisoners acts as a form of disciplinary power. The women's constant awareness of being watched shapes their action, both physically and psychologically. Bearing the surveillance becomes part of their daily lives in prison; it becomes natural. Moran, Pallot and Piacentini (2013) argue that this surveillance becomes a 'natural strategy' for everyday life in prison (16).

Women in prison live in a suffocatingly limited space, a series of boxes, as Ahlam vividly describes it, reducing the space allocated to the body under surveillance. But this space is interacting directly with the subject's agency of resistance. Feldman (1991) argues that the 'shrinkage of the space of political enactment' corresponds to the expansion of personhood (cited in Nashif, 2008: 75). I argue further that it also entails an expansion of the ways in which women resist the Israeli prison authority's control and surveillance.

Severed socially and physically from the outside world, women have very limited methods to learn about what is happening outside. Family visits are heavily restricted, whatever reading material they can get through the Red Cross or other charitable donations, radio and TV programs (again restricted), letters, and lawyers' visits. Family visits are only allowed every three to four weeks if the person is lucky and not facing any punishments. These visits typically last for a maximum of half an hour and take place through a thick glass divider, preventing any physical interaction. These visits, furthermore, take place under surveillance (Falcione, 2011). The restrictions governing their interaction with family increase the prisoners' sense of isolation, and living, as Ahlam says, in a box. As Ahlam explains, the experience is dehumanizing. '*Prison is a zoo,*' she says, *'they put you in a cage and start looking at you…It is hard and humiliating.'* Being locked up, even during visits, with continual restriction and surveillance, made Ahlam feel she was being managed as if she were a dangerous animal that needed to be caged and under constant supervision. Rosenberg (1990) argues that political prisoners are subject to abuse and oppression by prison guards, who treat them 'harshly and place them in maximum-security conditions' (2).

There is an important transition for women prisoners from the interrogation period, during which they were in isolation cells, to the prison cells that they share with other women. As Abdo (2014) describes it, this represents a move to 'a more public' area of detention (178), which has its own complex social and political relations. Itaf reflects upon these relations: '*Prison is a cemetery of living people, the experience of friendship, and the gloating of enemies.'* This statement reflects the death of the outside world for inmates and the ways in which their lives become structured through interaction and relations with the others inside this cemetery. To live in a cemetery means the death of

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their dreams and future. But for most of the women I interviewed, building relations inside helped them to survive their isolation from the outside world and also to normalize the space of prison. These relations are forged in a socio-political hierarchy that is based on solidarity, similarity, and unity. Women in prison are in a constant confrontation with the Israeli occupation. Most women in prison believe in the injustice of their imprisonment and the Israeli control over the Palestinian prisoners. In their perception, the Israeli authorities enjoy this control as a form of revenge, a notion reflected in Itaf's description of '*the gloating of enemies.*' This sense of the Israelis' pleasure in their incarceration encourages women to resist and hold steadfast in their imprisonment by acting strong and creating their own lives inside prison. Mariam was in prison in the late 60s with Aisha Odeh, whose biography was discussed in the literature review. Mariam recalled when the Israeli prisons staff were celebrating Israeli Independence Day, which is the same day on which Al-Nakba is memorialized. The prison staff had put Israeli flags up around the prison, which made Palestinian women angry. They felt that this was a provocation directed at them and decided to challenge it. They arranged to take down all the Israeli flags when they were in time out. They succeeded in doing so, and were happy about their achievement. For them, taking down the flags was a means of showing their sumud inside prison. The women were put in isolation for punishment and then moved to another prison in harsher conditions. However, as Mariam said, '*We never cared about their punishments.*'

The Politics of Prisoners' Allocation

The admission process for women prisoners is an immediate interaction with the staff, beginning with fingerprinting, the assignment of a number for the count in the morning and evening, and, when its needed, the preparation to be with the other Palestinian women in the different wings. Goffman (1961) calls it the admission procedures, involving the 'trimming' or 'programming', 'because in thus being squared away the new arrival allows himself to be shared and coded into the administrative machinery of the establishment to be worked on smoothly by routine operation' (16). In this way the administration of Israeli prison is coding Palestinian political prisoners, and distributing them in the different wings. This process reflects how prison works as a

space of exercising power. Corcoran (2006: 27) argues that prisoners' distribution is a complex of other penal powers, such as regulation and discipline. Israeli prisons are organized through the allocation of Palestinian prisoners according to their political affiliations. Palestinian women were placed together without any divisions until the late 80s according to the participants in my research. But during the First Intifada, as the number of female political detainees rose dramatically, political affiliation became the factor determining which cells women would be assigned to (Abdo, 2014:179). These distribution techniques work to organize individuals into large units through which their activities can be managed and control maintained (Ather and Hassaun, 1984). Abdo (2014) argues, however, that despite this division, most women report that a sense of co-operation and unity among all Palestinian detainees, regardless of political affiliation, was characteristic of their experience in prison - especially when they undertook any collective action against the prison authority; Even if they have disagreements among themselves, they try to hide it from the prison authority because it reflects a sign of weakness (179).

Israel uses the classification and allocation of Palestinian prisoners as a means to enhance their control over the prisoners, to facilitate the communication with each political party inside prison, to ensure that women in the same wing have the same political views and ideology, and also to reduce the political tension and potential for conflict among prisoners. In some cases, the Israeli prison authority may mix prisoners from different political parties as a way to create tension in order to uncover information about what prisoners think, as well as any points of unity or division among them. An Israeli officer from Hasharon prison commented on the classification process: '*I am sure there will be tension between them… about money, food, and other things…. It is healthy and serves my interest*' (*Inside Israeli Jails*, 2005). From this statement, we see a direct illustration of Foucault's account of power. Foucault (1979) argues that mechanisms of power become embodied in imprisonment precisely through the classification, distribution and regulation of individuals, and their activities down to the most minute of details (197). This power, turns the subject into an object of knowledge and of power; this power means that relations are 'organized in a hierarchal coordinated cluster' (*Ibid*). More precisely, power signifies the ensemble of actions exercised by classifying

individuals, which guide conduct and structure possible outcomes. But in this context it also enhances resistance, which can be illustrated through the ways women resist this system of classifications that the Israeli prison authority uses to control Palestinian political prisoners.

Majd described the way she was allocated: '*When they decided to move me with the other Palestinian women, the soldier told me there were rooms for Fateh, and others for Hamas. He asked me where I wanted to be.*' The Israeli prison authority explains the system of allocation and how it works to the women, giving them the choice of which political party they want to spend their imprisonment with. Women have different experiences with this. Some of them were charged with being in a military action or being an activist in a political party. For such women with clear affiliation to a particular political party, it is easier for them to choose than those women who have administrative detention or secret files, as they are worried that choosing will make their prison sentence longer. Still, women from any background may refuse to cooperate. This refusal may be understood as a resistance against the prison system and a means of creating difficulty for the Israeli prison authority. Women also use different tactics to be placed in the cell they want to be in, where they will feel comfort and trust with the other women. However, the prison authority sometimes tries to interfere by advising women where to go, thus creating suspicions and fear among the women that they will be allocated with Israeli collaborators. Most women have heard about collaborators before their imprisonment through stories of former prisoners, or, as discussed in the previous chapter, have experienced them directly during the interrogation process. This is a means to display the power of the prison and to attempt to demonstrate to the women that everything is in the prison authority's hands.

Majd was in administrative detention; she never knew what she was accused of. The accusations against her were sealed in a secret file, which neither she nor her lawyers were allowed to access. After her arrest she was transferred to the women's prison without interrogation. Given these circumstances, she was wary of saying anything to the Israelis which might confirm whatever accusation had been made against her.

The officer asked me which political party I was - Fateh or Hamas. I replied not any…He started to tell me about the girls from both groups making problems. I told him why don't you put me in the street, it would be better for me as I don't like problems and fights. He allocated me to wing number 11. It was Fateh and some communists.

Majd's allocation in the wing was her first encounter with the prison authority, the first time she had talked to them or been questioned. The prison officer tried to exploit her unease by planting suspicions about the girls in her mind and stoking anxiety about her future in prison. When she suggested the officer put her on the street (and thus out of the prison) in response to his demand that she choose where to be allocated, Majd's answer was an act of resistance against cooperating with the prison administration. Had she cooperated in choosing where she would like to be placed, this choice could be used as a confession, and then she would confirm any accusation the Israelis had against her. That she did not cover her head or wear conservative clothing led the officer to believe that she was not affiliated with any of the religious groups; so her allocation with Fateh and the communists was most probably due to her appearance.

Searching for familiarity with other women in prison is another tactic some inmates use to influence their placement within the prison. This tactic is aimed at resisting any cooperation with the prison officer by avoiding discussion of their political beliefs. So women try to say names of individuals they know who are imprisoned, or they ask the officer to tell them names in case if they can recognize any of them. Randa was pregnant with twins at the time of her arrest. She had a miscarriage and lost one of the babies during interrogation. After her recovery in the Israeli prison hospital, she was placed in the women's prison. She based her choice of where to be allocated on her recognition of a neighbour in the Fateh wing.

The girls were divided into two wings. The Islamic Jihad girls wanted me, and the girls from Fateh wanted me. The officer asked me where I wanted to go…I was really tired after the miscarriage. He started to tell me women's names in case if I could recognize any of them to be with…I recognized a woman, she was from our

camp and she was arrested before me. She was in the Fateh wing... I was there for
six years. In general, I am Fateh. I hate the others, but I was imprisoned because I
was in the Islamic Jihad action.

Randa's political situation was complex as she was a Fateh activist, but was imprisoned because of the Islamic Jihad. She tried to find somewhere where she would be familiar with the women around her, confident in her knowledge about them, and would thus feel safer in the space of imprisonment.

Salma was an activist in Hamas when she was arrested, but denied this affiliation as she was in administrative detention. When the prison officer asked her with whom she wanted to spend her imprisonment, however, they were aware of her political affiliation. She refused to cooperate. '*I told him I wanted to be with respectful people, non-smokers...He said, 'You mean Hamas.' I answered that I don't know if Hamas smoke or not...They allocated me with the Islamic group.*' Salma's knowledge about the character of each political wing, and the nature of relations and daily life inside them, allowed her to assert a condition that would place her in the wing she wanted to be in without revealing her activism. She was aware that women from religious groups would not smoke and would have a restricted schedule in order to respect Islamic practices. Her stated preference therefore clarified for the prison officer that she wanted to be with a religious group. The information they had about her beforehand also facilitated the officer in allocating her to the wing without more clarifications.

The allocation process can also be used as a punishment; it is a way of showing the power of the Israeli prison authority and how it can be used against prisoners. Placing people from very conflicted political backgrounds together is also a means for prison guards to exercise control over prisoners' lives. When prison authorities know a woman's political attachments and they want to make it difficult for her to adapt to prison life, they might place her with an opposing group to make her to feel even more intensely isolated and confined as she can't participate in the group. As noted previously, Maram was imprisoned as a result of taking part in a military action with the PLFP. It is well-known that she is activist with the PLFP, that some of her family members are leaders in this movement, and also that they have been involved in resistance actions. Maram went

through a long and difficult interrogation. She faced torture and prolonged isolation. As a result, she confessed everything, so the prison authority knew very well where she should be allocated. However, as they wanted to further punish her, they decided to allocate her with an Islamic group. As a communist encountering Islamists, she was worried about being with the women in that wing because they had completely different views. She was furthermore unsure of who they were and whether they were genuinely political prisoners.

Political Life Inside

The political environment is the most important aspect of prison life for captive Palestinian women. Politics become the centre of their daily practices. Women organize themselves as collectives, dividing themselves into different committees. Itaf talked at length about these committees and the ways in which they shaped life inside. *'The life inside prison is somehow very organized, there is collective work, and committees, which are the security committee, the financial committee, the educational committee, and cultural committee, under the supervision of the representatives.'* Itaf described how, through these committees, some individuals are responsible for formal education, others for organizing political discussions, and others for consciousness-raising sessions. Each wing chose their own representative, whose role I will explain in the following section. Each wing also assigned women to lead these committees and liaise with the representative, as well as the other women in the wing. Though each wing has their own schedules, which they organize according to their political views, there is still a unified structure across the wings in that each has a representative and the different committees.

The Representative Elections

Locked in a restricted space, the women feel that creating a system to manage their relations and decisions is a necessity. Palestinian political prisoners have an internal system that has been developed over years, and which has been adopted by other prisoners. The system organizes and structures prisoners' lives inside prison, as will be discuss later. Towards this end, each wing chooses a representative who is responsible for maintaining daily activities, including collective reading and political discussions, as well

as prisoners' finances. They are the only people who have the right to communicate with the prison administration. They organize the women's meetings with their lawyers and follow the problems and needs of the women in their wings, taking responsibility for everything connected to the well-being of prisoners. The representatives are also charged with presenting the prisoners' interests and transmitting their complaints to the prison authority and officials visiting the prison, as well as to the Red Cross and other human rights organization (Abdo, 2014).

The Election Day is one of the big celebrations for women in prison. Any woman can nominate herself to be the representative by presenting her agenda and what she can achieve for the prisoners. In my analysis of the Election Day, I am going to draw upon the film *Inside Israeli Prison* (2005), as it provides an in-depth account of the politics of elections. Women consider these elections to be lessons in democracy. Ameneh, who was the representative of the Fateh wing comments, '*Throughout the historical struggle for Palestinian people, democracy has always started in prison…In a small way, we as prisoners are setting an example, which people on the outside need right now.*' The community of prisoners tries to be an ideal society, and to reflect on how they can organize themselves in a very restricted and controlled space, in direct confrontation with the Israelis. By showing that they still can practice democracy under such circumstances, they feel they can teach the Palestinians on the outside.

Usually the representative is a strong individual, able to negotiate with the prisoners and also the prison authority. She should be able to build relations with the people around her, to speak up for prisoners to ask for their rights, and to negotiate ways to improve their life conditions. In addition, she is responsible for working with the other political parties' representatives to negotiate actions, to make decisions related to the prisoners of her wing, and to make collective decisions related to all prisoners. In her talk with the other women before the election, Ameneh clarifies the role of the representative: '*We must all remember that this election is not about who wins, it is about serving you all.*' Ameneh thus emphasises to the other women that the role of the representative is to serve the prisoners. It is a role that requires hard work rather than being merely for status or show. In the film, Ameneh again reflects on her role, commenting, '*To the girls I am more than a leader. I am a sister. On top of that, I help them in humanitarian social*

matters.' Each representative becomes aware of her duties and how she will occupy a very important place in prisoner life. Responsible for the other women's well-being, the representatives occupy the top of the wing hierarchy.

This representative should, in theory, be approved by the prison authority, as she is the one who has to communicate with them, but prisoners can still elect someone the prison authority doesn't want. In the film, one of the prisoners comments on choosing Ameneh: '*I can see from their faces, the look they gave us, they are not happy with the results, and right now no one can control the girls' reactions…The basic goal is to control us. They won't succeed as long as we stick together.'* Women use the election to challenge the control the Israeli prison authority tries to impose on their decision-making and self-determination. The tension between the prison authority and prisoners is clear in the film, as both sides try to challenge the other. It is apparent, for example, when the officer of Hasharon prisons comments, '*The representative is chosen by the prisoners but I have the final say.'* This struggle for power creates some violent confrontations in which the elected representative is placed in isolation after facing violence and torture. Nevertheless, the women find ways to communicate with her and follow her directives as a way to challenge the prison authority and resist their decisions.

In addition to the representatives that the prisoners elect from among themselves to communicate between different political parties, another representative is chosen to act as the spokesperson representing them to the outside world. Each political movement in the prison thus has a representative responsible for reporting what is happening in the prison to the political leaders of her movement on the outside, and also to liaise with the prison leaders in the men's prison. Representatives use different methods to communicate their reports. It can be accomplished through lawyers, family visits, or smuggling letters. The leaders outside use the same methods and also communicate orders through radio programs that the women listen to. Rania described this network of communication:

> *We had the national meeting. Each group chose their representative. We meet and discuss what we are doing, then each representative has to communicate with the leaders of her political party, and report what was going on. The representative has some space to make decisions, and if things got complicated*

and difficult, we have the national committee in the prison that usually agrees about the things not to vote about, and so we represent the women there.

Rania's description illustrates that the women are not independent in making decisions connected to collective actions, like going on hunger strike or asking for changes in the prison system. This reflects how the politics inside the prison are highly dependent on the politics outside. The political movement outside prison supervises their prisoners, following their needs, problems, arguments, and their relations with the other political parties. Most of the time, women prisoners must follow what the leadership on the outside decides for them, even with regard to the daily practices of life inside. In addition, these representatives are also responsible for updating her political movement about each woman's attitudes and loyalty. So the role of the representative is not just to supervise and guide prisoners, but it is also one of surveillance, verifying that everyone does what she has clearly been told is required of her.

The Politics Inside Wings

Each political party organizes their own daily schedule; the representative and the different elected committees arrange collective educational, social, and political sessions. The ideology of each political party is at the core of these activities. Thus the structure of daily life varies from wing to wing. For example, women in the Islamic groups' wings have religious themes at the base of their daily schedules. They call for prayer at a specific time and women in each cell gather to pray. They have religious sessions for education and memorizing the Quran. They also organise large celebrations for Muslim holidays, creating decorations and making sweets. They have some educational sessions around the establishment and the politics of their political party ideologies, and also discuss the political situation outside prison. In Fateh and the leftist groups' wing, most of their educational sessions are based on reading and discussing Marxist books. Here women have more freedom in their religious practices. They try to teach the basics of the political movement ideologies, in addition to celebrating national as well as religious holidays.

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Most of the time, women are allocated into the different wings according to their political ideology, which facilitates their involvement in the different activities. For some women, participation leads to taking a leadership role in organizing such sessions. Women learn about the politics of the daily life in prison from the former prisoners they meet before their imprisonment, or through the literature around Palestinian prisoners. As such, most women quickly become aware of how their daily lives should be scheduled around politics when they enter prison. In each wing, there is a collection of notebooks that have been written by former prisoners and left in the prison library. These notebooks explain the way every political prisoner should act, the details of daily schedules, how to deal with the prison authority and the guards, and also some ways to resist confessing to or cooperating with the Israelis. The following images are from notebooks found in Al-Junid prison in Nablus in 1995, which was evacuated with the establishment of the Palestinian Authority.
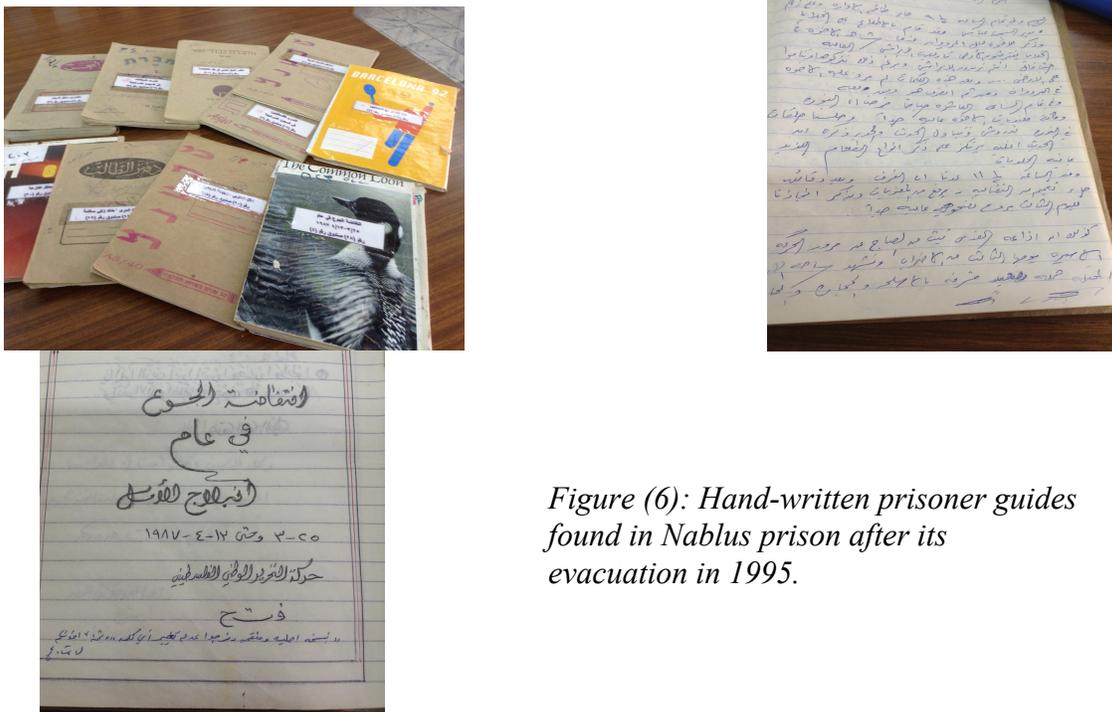

Figure (6): Hand-written prisoner guides found in Nablus prison after its evacuation in 1995.

When a new prisoner is allocated to a prison wing, the representative receives her, explains the system to her, and tries to learn more about her. The representative also gives the new prisoner some of the aforementioned notebooks, while, on the other hand,

also trying to reassure the other women in the wing about their new comrade. While women in each wing belong to the same political movement, most of the time they come from different socio-political backgrounds. These differences create important variances in the women's subjective experiences, and also shape the social relations and the construction of the hierarchy in the wings. These different aspects of women's political, social, and geographical backgrounds can be the basis for both conflict and unity among prisoners. Women who share many similarities become close, constructing their own small group of people who can trust each other. Usually after collecting basic information about each new prisoner, the representative will allocate her with women who may share the same background. For every woman, this initial entry to the wing is one of the most important moments in building trust and solidarity.

Breaking the Ice

For most women, the first period of imprisonment is beset by feelings of uncertainty. This period differs from one woman to another depending on their knowledge of the prison system, the women with whom they are sharing their cell, and also their socio-political backgrounds. Women use different tactics to find comfort and build trust with the others. New prisoners often find the prisoners in their cell to be welcoming and appreciative. The new woman may have contradictory feelings about this unexpected welcome. On one hand, she may be uncertain about who these women are, if they are Palestinian political prisoners or collaborators. On the other hand, she may feel warmth, solidarity and comfort from them. Hayam, for example, said she felt reassured by the women who welcomed her, but remained apprehensive at first. She said:

> *I was looking into the girls, I did not know where I was. I can see they are Arab, but they were in the Israeli criminals' wing. But the way they dress, the way they talk, the way they welcomed me and comforted me, made me feel they were Palestinian prisoners, not Israelis.*

Women need some time to deal with their uncertainty of the people around them and to recognize who they are.

Each woman has her way of coping with the new space and a way of building relationships within it. Social relations in the prison are forged within a rigid socio-political structure. They are based upon a different kind of trust, one that is full of caution, but also a strong sense of solidarity to keep steadfast in front of the Israelis. In order to navigate life inside, when women enter the wing they start to search for similarities with others that may provide a basis for trust, or they try to find individuals they have some previous social connection to or about whom they have some knowledge. Such individuals can act as a guide to help them integrate into the wing's social life, to become familiar with the daily activities and to understand the politics of relations among prisoners. Majd tried to feel at ease when she entered the cell, but was nevertheless full of anxiety. She describes taking a jovial tone as she met the other women:

I looked at them and said, 'I don't know where I have seen you before.' I felt familiar with them. They started laughing. I recognized one of the girls. I knew her family. I felt comfortable. She spent so many years in prison before me, so I thought with her experience, she can help me and guide me to know who to socialize with and who to avoid.

Majd started laughing with the girls as a mechanism to cope with her fear. Asserting that she knew them before was a means of both comforting herself in this uncertain space and also a way of breaking the ice with strangers. For Majd, finding a woman she recognized filled her with confidence that she would be fine. She was able to relax knowing she had found a person she could trust who could help her understand and deal with prison life. Building relations with the other girls was one of her worries after the prison officer warned her of the problems and violence among women in prison. As Majd's experience illustrates, finding someone to trust is critical for new prisoners. Women are entering a deeply uncertain space; they don't know the system, rules, nor how they are expected to act, all of which is compounded by the fact that they don't know if they are with Palestinian women or collaborators. Therefore, by becoming close to a person they knew before, they can be confident with the other girls and build up their own boundaries and relations with the others.

Previous knowledge about women in prison gained from the media or from the stories they hear about women freedom fighters in their communities also shapes new prisoners' views and expectations of the women they meet in prison. Recognising women from stories about their roles in resistance movements can also provide a means of comfort and confidence for those entering prison. Rawda, for example, shared her experience of arriving in prison:

When I entered the wing, a young pretty girl approached me. It was Aisha. I knew her when I was a child. I remember them demolishing her house. All the village were talking about her and how good she was. In my mind, I thought Aisha would look different as I heard a lot about the torture she faced. I thought I would find her in wheelchair, with white hair…But she was blond, moving all over, laughing all the time… This was the first shock for me.

Rawda, who was imprisoned in the late 70s, was well informed about women who were imprisoned before her. She knew the stories of women resisting the Israeli occupation from the community glorifying them; some of whom were from her area. She still remembers the moment she entered the prison cell with an arm injury sustained during military action. She encountered a warm welcome from the women and also felt surprised that, contrary to her preconceptions, they looked healthy. The women's well-being, and especially the welcome and appreciation she felt when she met them, gave Rawda the courage to be part of the resistance movements, instilling her with a sense of security.

When women are allocated in the wing by their own choice, they need some time to understand the rules, the system, and the politics of relations among the women in within it. Randa, who chose where she wanted to be, decided to be silent. She did not speak to anyone other than her neighbour, leading most of the women to believe she had speech problems. Randa explains, '*I created my own world in prison. I wasn't talking to anyone. I was speechless. All the women were trying to talk to me but I was just listening.*' Randa's silence was a strategy for learning to understand the system of the prison. She was constantly careful, listening to everything around her to learn about the world she had been placed in. She had deep concerns about some of the girls in her room,

as she did not know anything about them and had also heard about the problems and violence that could happen in any room. After spending weeks in silence, Randa succeeded in building good relations with the women who gave her support during her pregnancy. These women replaced her family inside prison.

For women who are allocated to a particular group by the prison authorities as punishment, it is difficult to build trust or any relations with the other women, especially when there is a difference in their political views. Maram did not know any of the women in the wing she was allocated to. As noted above, Maram, a member of PLFP, was placed in the wing for the Islamic Jihad. As such, she tried to be silent and avoided interacting with any of the women.

I was so careful in the way I used to talk to them and deal with them. The representative of the room came to me to ask me about the reasons for my imprisonment. I started shouting at her that it wasn't her business. She asked me why I was angry. I said because she can't ask me such questions. She asked the girls not to talk about any politics with me.

As Maram's example illustrates, doubts and fear occupy women's minds when they are allocated in a wing in which they don't know the women or the reasons for their imprisonment. These fears are particularly intense when they are placed in a wing with women who have completely different ideology from their own.

Being obligated to follow their rules and also being subject to their daily schedule and activities makes women feel isolated, and can, as in Maram's case, provoke violent reactions. The representative for Maram's new wing explained the prison's system and rules. She clarified the daily schedule - the time for sleep, the general meetings, discussions, as well as the system of cooperation among prisoners to keep the wing clean and organized. Maram told the representative that she did not want anyone to ask her any questions related to her political views or the reasons for her imprisonment. The women in the Islamic Jihad wing respected Maram's wishes, as they knew her political background and the strength of her family's affiliation to PLFP. The women tried to make Maram feel comfortable and they also felt solidarity with her conditions. They

realized that her allocation to the wing presented an opportunity for them to challenge the prison authority. By respecting Maram's boundaries and treating her with friendship and trust they subverted the authority's attempt to punish Maram by placing her in an Islamic group.

Maram felt comfortable in this environment and she built good relations with all the girls. In this very religious environment, when she decided to remove her hijab, the other women never opposed her decision. They insisted it was a personal choice but said that she couldn't keep changing her mind about putting it on or removing it. She decided to remove it. The women close to her tried to convince her to change her mind because they believed it is God's will to cover. They also felt covering was important because of the particular context of prison in which they were constantly surrounded by male guards. Maram, however, maintained her choice, which also was her wish before prison, and decided to live by her own choices, which she couldn't do so before prison. Nevertheless, she respected the way the other women spoke to her about it. She recalls, '*It was nice, the way your sister talks to you because she loves you.*' Despite her anxiety in the beginning, Maram felt solidarity with the other women and their harmonious relations became a means of indirectly defying the prison authority's control.

When prisoners realize that a woman has been subject to violence by the prison authority, they attempt to join forces in resistance. A woman featured in *Inside Israeli Prison* comments in this regard: '*Do you think after one of our friends was on the floor, after the guard hit her, and threw her and kept hitting her, do you think the girls would do nothing?*' The sense of solidarity grows among women when they face a problem or punishment from the Israelis, even if they have differences or disagreements. When there is any confrontation or when any individual woman is having problems with the Israeli prison administration, all the women try to unify and put their internecine problems aside.

Khawla talked at length about the relations women create, the rules that govern those relations, and the centrality of political ideologies to the management of prison life. She reflected upon how important it was for the women inside to act and perform as political prisoners and to be unified when it came to challenging the Israeli prison authority.

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We agreed to respect each other. We live together. We had a common interest. We were unified around one goal and idea. So even if we disagree, when it comes to issues of resistance, we forget our differences and come together. I really don't remember during the three years having any serious disagreement that made me stop talking to anyone or made me feel really upset.

Sisterhood, Trust, Family

On arriving in prison, women find it hard to come to terms with the political architecture of the prison wings, cells, and the outside space for release time. They start to realize how small the space is in which they must live with fellow prisoners. Khawla described the architecture of prison: '*It was a long corridor, with rooms on both sides. We were six women in a room. We used to see the others from small windows, and also during Al-Fora* [the release time].' The architectural and regulatory construction of prison naturalizes the prisoners as depersonalized units, making the hyper-management and loss of agency normal within the prison walls. The woman becomes a number, a body to be counted for the prison authority (Stoller, 2003). Contravening the limitations of space designed to isolate subjects is one of the major tactics women use to resist the prison architecture.

Building relations with the other women is one of the most important elements of steadfastness for prisoners, as it enables them to be united in their encounter with the Israeli prison authority. Women challenge the prison architecture by communicating with each other through the small windows. They can talk with each other, sing together, and make up games to play through these small windows. Such interactions ease the feeling of isolation and foster solidarity, and also it is away to resist the prison architecture of isolating them. They use the short time of release to strengthen relations, arrange daily schedules, and coordinate any political actions against the prison authority. These interactions and the activities they organize together are important means of resisting the depersonalization of the prison system. They also reflect the strong agency the imprisoned women have to create their own lives in prison, using their imprisonment as a stage to empower themselves for the future.

The old prisoners try to support the new prisoner by giving her strength and warmth in this uncertain space. All of them understand how she feels because they went through the same experience before her. The benefit of the relationship is reciprocal. When a new prisoner enters the wing she offers relief from the prison routine. She brings news and stories from the outside. Prisoners who have been incarcerated for a long time and have lost connections with the outside world particularly value these stories. Maram vividly describes the excitement prisoners feel at the arrival of a new person. *'You can feel how happy and excited we were when a new prisoner came. We always waited for those people. We waited for them because they would tell us how things looked outside of prison, how life developed and how cities changed.'* The new prisoner provides a window to the outside world, allowing the older prisoners a means to see and feel life outside the prison's walls. Some women spend much of their incarceration in total isolation from the outside - their families are restricted from visiting them, they can't write or exchange letters, and they also sometimes spend long periods in isolation cells as punishment for various infractions. Meeting a new prisoner may be their only chance to form connections with the life they are missing and to catch up with the changes and developments outside.

When a new arrival comes from the same area as another prisoner, or if they knew each other before prison, the new woman's presence is a tangible reminder of the place and people the older prisoner is missing and can give her a sense of belonging. The new prisoner is like a conduit for the older prisoner to re-experience their lives before prison and reconnect with the outside. Rawda recalls meeting Aisha, the girl from her village who welcomed her when she arrived in the prison: *'She told me I can smell Al-Tibeh and Der-jrer in you.'* [11] Through these first interactions, women begin to construct relationships and also to learn about each other. They begin to ascertain who they can be close to and whom they cannot trust. Women express that their relations are based on sisterhood; as they share the experience of imprisonment, they are on the same side of the battle in this direct confrontation with the Israelis. But when it comes to their personal relationships, they rely heavily on trust.

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[11] These are two Palestinian villages near Ramallah. In Arabic, saying that one can smell something in someone is a metaphor for missing a place or a person.

Welcoming the new prisoner and asking questions about life outside is a means of learning about this woman, who is she, and what her background is. Women are aware that they should keep the talk general and avoid any direct political discussion relating to women's roles or anything connected to security, as such questions arouse suspicion. Maram's experience illustrates these sensitivities. She was worried and found it difficult to trust the women in her wing. She felt paranoid that they were collaborators that might try to get information from her. The women in her room tried to reassure her by introducing themselves to her and talking to her about very general topics, unrelated to politics. Though Maram began to feel safe with the women, she remained uneasy about sharing her political ideologies in case this would create conflict with the Islamic Jihad. Women have a mixture of feelings when they are in prison with the other women; they feel insecure in the space and then they gradually become closer to each other after a process of getting to know one another. Many women come to feel commonality with their fellow prisoners through the shared problems and experiences of being locked inside.

Mutual solidarity also develops when a new woman is allocated to a cell and meets the five strangers who will come to be part of her daily life. Hayam described her first day inside:

> *In the room we were six girls, with three bunk beds. In the beginning because it was a new situation you feel strange and awkward…They told me we are sisters so that I can feel comfortable. They told me they understand me because they went through this before and that I would be fine after.*

The sense of solidarity is the basic foundation from which to start a relationship with the other women in the room. The women insist that they are sisters to comfort the new prisoner and to prepare her for the life in prison, in which she will be part of their group. The new prisoner often feels sympathy for the others who have spent a longer time in prison. Hayam reflected further on her initial interactions with her cellmates: '*I felt really awkward about taking anything from them. I told time they have to keep everything for themselves. They said again that we are sisters, we share everything. I was new, I had*

nothing.' Hayam felt awkward taking any of the women's belongings because she had nothing to give in return and also because she knew that what they offered may be the only things that they owned. Her reluctance also reflects the guilt she felt towards the women who were in prison before her. Her guilt was based on the sense that these women had been imprisoned for a long time, living patiently in this restricted space, while she had only just joined them and had not suffered the deprivations that they had.

When women become part of a cell, they start to realize the meaning of being in prison and being separated from the outside world. Goffman (1961) argues that in this separation from the outside, inmates are stripped of the connections to their previous lives, bringing a feeling of loss and mortification (47). But the older prisoners play an important role in easing new prisoners' transition into prison, as they were in her place before. In Hayam's case, the women explained their relations with each other and that they share all their personal things as part of the sisterhood they have built. These relations of sisterhood are based on understanding, solidarity, support and trust. Each cell considers themselves a family, and so they have to live together and understand each other. As a family, the prisoners will all be on hand to encounter the Israeli prison authority if there is any need.

Difference as a Source of Conflict

Many women are able to find commonality and thus solidarity through their shared experience of imprisonment. However, at the same time, the pressures of prison life can also often make political differences and disagreements more salient and disruptive. In such situations, people may become more prejudiced and fundamental with their ideologies. As noted, Palestinian women in Israeli prisons are from diverse social, economic, geographical, and political backgrounds. Nashif (2008) argues that 'in the context of colonial prison, the Palestinian peasant, city dweller, worker, and professional all meet together in the confined colonial space/time' (78). This meeting creates a community, but this new community has certainly not replaced the pre-existing identities; rather it interacts, competes, and merges with them. These backgrounds influence women's positions within the wings, and also their relationships with each other.

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Each political party strives to be the biggest in the prisoner community in an attempt to win control over decision-making processes and different privileges within the prison. As such, each political group is anxious about losing any of their members. They also try to recruit those women who were not involved in any political movement before their imprisonment. The prisoner community refers to these women as 'social case prisoners', as they committed individual action against the Israeli occupation, without being affiliated to any political party. Rania was selected to be the representative of the PLFP in the 90s. She was chosen as she was the oldest prisoner in her party at that time. She described the pressures of recruitment:

It is exhausting. You have to recruit women. With some of them you start to blame yourself for bringing them, especially when they are causing a lot of problems, and you start waiting in hope that another political party will recruit her. But if that happens, and they take her, you should be ready to fight for her and argue with them to get her back. It is like stealing someone from you.

Profound tensions can be created between the different political movements, with each representative attempting to ensure that all the women in her wing have the same political affiliations. As described above, daily activities are arranged and organized around the themes of each political party. If any of the women have different political affiliations, problems can emerge. Such individuals can feel isolated, and may refuse to participate or take roles in their activities, as she doesn't believe in the group's ideology. This can be the case even if they have strong relations with the other women and share a basic sense of solidarity and understanding. Women in this position may try to negotiate with the prison authority through their representative to be transferred to a wing in which the women share their ideology, where they can be involved and take active roles in the daily life.

Maram's situation illustrates the complexities that may arise. Though she felt good with the Islamic Jihad group, she also felt isolated and couldn't take any role in their activities, which were very distinct from her own political views. She heard about other PLFP women in the Fateh wing and asked the prison authority to transfer her there

as well. She felt the need to be with people who shared her ideas and beliefs, and with whom she could discuss and arrange activities. The prison authority agreed for Maram to be reallocated to the Fateh wing. Maram never expected to find any problems there. '*You would expect the restriction and conflict with the Islamic Jihad,*' she says, '*but it was with Fateh who has secular beliefs close to ours in PLFP.*' The first day she was allocated, Ameneh, the representative of Fateh who was featured in the film described above, welcomed Maram and then explained to her that all the women in her wing should be Fateh and therefore she could not arrange any activities or sessions in the name of the PLFP. Maram refused to change her affiliation, as she was an activist with the PLFP. She decided to challenge the representative, creating deep tension between the two of them. Maram reflected on the situation in retrospect: '*Her girls used to like me a lot, so she started to feel fear. She was worried that I would recruit her girls to the PLFP, so we would be bigger in numbers and win the election and get the representative to become one of us.*' Such conflicts over power are part of the prisoners' daily life. Each political party vies to become the strongest, so they will be more autonomous and have greater control over prisoners' decisions.

Maram was among the minorities in the Fateh wing. The representative of the majority worried about losing some of the women, and potentially her own position as the representative, and thus her power to make decisions. This representative tried to impose restrictions on Maram. She even went as far as to punish her by isolating her and forbidding the other women to talk or communicate with her, threatening to punish anyone that did. Maram described the situation: '*The tension between us reached physical violence. She isolated me, confiscated the TV from my room. I couldn't complain about this violence to the prison authority. I was patient.*' Most of the women I have interviewed who lived through this period felt empathy with Maram though they were from the Fateh group. All of them commented that there is a great deal of injustice in prison. They didn't have any power compared to the representative and her supporters, and so they felt they couldn't intervene. If they tried, they would face their own problems with the representative, which would furthermore lead to problems with their political party outside, as the representative would report them.

Outside-Inside Politics

Women try to avoid raising any complaints to the prison authority, which might diminish their unity against the Israelis. If any woman thought about or attempted to make a complaint to the authority, the other Palestinian women would consider her a traitor. The prison authority, in their constant surveillance of the women, is aware of such tensions. One prison officer commented in *Inside Israeli Prison*: '*When Ameneh was in wing 12, you would meet prisoners who had hot oil thrown over them by her.*' Such conflict is internal among prisoners and they will never ask the prison authority to interfere. They are aware that this tension serves the prison authority's interest, and can be exploited by them to further interfere in prisoners' lives and decisions. Therefore, a woman suffering in these conflicts will be in total isolation, yet will prefer to remain silent or to try to use her own tactics to deal with the situation by communicating complaints to outside leaders and family.

These tensions between political parties affect women's relations with each other, as some women become more rigidly entrenched in their political ideologies while in prison. By restricting and isolating women into small cells and areas according to their ideologies, the architecture of the prison can also work to intensify prejudices. Salma, allocated to the Hamas wing, was surprised when she met one of her best friends in prison. She was eager to talk to her and tried to be close, but the other woman, who was in the Islamic Jihad wing, was cold and didn't welcome her as Salma expected.

> *I am sad about this. We were in Hamas and the Islamic Jihad, but each one had their programs and agenda. They never visited each other. They had real problems. There were ten rooms for Islamic Jihad, and five for Hamas. We have a system for visiting each other's rooms, but we never exchanged visits with the Islamic Jihad.*

This conflict among the different political parties is stronger and clearer than it is outside of prison. As Colvin (2011) argues, prisons are 'a mirror and a microcosm of society', and inside these societies there are power inequalities and people who can dominate the lives of others (10). The political division between Hamas and Fateh in 2006 illustrated

and influenced political prisoners relations, and also increased the conflict among them, as many of the participants who were imprisoned after that period have discussed.

A network of communication exists between the women inside prison and political leaders and families on the outside, which allows the women to ask for assistance in easing problems and conflicts with other women. Women are able to complain about these problems and ask for intervention from the leaders outside prison. Such complaints can be passed through lawyers' visits or family visits. In return, the leaders communicate directives to the women through special radio programs. All women follow these orders, as they are organizational decisions. Maram described her experience with the Fateh representative:

> *Ameneh stopped her girls being violent with me because I went to my brother who is the representative and leader of the PLFP in the men's prison. He threatened her family that if anything happened to me something really bad will happen to them. She was worried about losing everything so she stopped…The lawyer came specially to tell us to stop this.*

The relationships and power dynamics among the different Palestinian political parties thus greatly influences the relationships among prisoners, and is also a reflection of these relations.

The lives of Palestinian women inside Israeli prison remain tightly connected to outside politics. Even though the women are isolated and physically removed from the outside world, they obey the orders and follow the directions from their movement's leaders on the outside, or those given by the leaders of the prisoner movements in the men's prison. Given the confined space within prison, the tension between groups can become more aggravated than on the outside. For example, disagreements between Fateh and Hamas in 2006 created intense problems between the two parties inside prison. As a result, the prison authority had to divide the Islamic and secular groups into two different prisons in order to maintain control.

Normalizing the Politics of Body Exposure

From the previous section it is clear how the Israeli prison administration tries to control Palestinian prisoners through the system of allocation -- posting a representative for each wing, controlling the prisoners' periods of sleep, waking and outdoor release, and counting them every morning and evening. Such strategies also work to diminish the agency of prisoners, in contrast to the Israelis interrogation tactics that focus on individualism in order to get confessions. When a prisoner enters prison and is allocated to a cell, they become part of the collective prison body. To be part of this body, women have to perform their political subjecthood all the time. They start to organize reading groups, and political education sessions, as well as sessions for learning other languages, educating illiterate women, and so on. They lose their agency and choice of how to act, and instead perform as part of the political prisoners' body. Even their individual activities are expected to be political. As such, women read a lot, or take up hobbies, such as embroidery or other handcrafts, through which they produce political pieces that represent their sumud. Palestinian women in prison try to represent Palestinians in a respectable fashion. Ahlam was proud of how the Israeli prison administration held Palestinian women prisoners up as a good example for the Israeli civil criminal prisoners to follow. She said, '*They used to say, "Look at the Palestinian girls. They are tidy and clean. They have a system. They read and study. They know how to use their time."'* Ahlam's description of the performance of women as political subjects reinforces the notion of a collective identity. The individual is never mentioned, nor does she speak about her own experience as an individual. She envisions the collective act as a unified and organized political body.

Palestinian women confront the loss of their individualism in their first experience of being allocated to a small cell with four or five other women, in which all must share a small shower room without doors. At first, this makes women feel estranged, alienated, and also embarrassed at being exposed to people they don't know. Most of the women I interviewed expressed concerns about this bodily exposure. Palestinian women learn at an early age that they must protect and cover their body, even from their loved ones. Retab felt self-conscious even just telling me about her experience with the other women in the first few days of her imprisonment. She said, '*I feel shy about changing my clothes*

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in front of my mother and sister. It was really hard to change or to take off my clothes in front of others.' Retab, like many other Palestinian women, grew up in a conservative community, so it was a difficult experience for her to start changing her clothes in the presence of people she just met. But over time, and through the sense of solidarity the women show new prisoners, she began to feel at ease.

Like many women, Salma felt awkward sharing the cell with other women. She felt deprived her own space, in which she could experience privacy and a sense of individualism. She felt exposed to the others all the time, even when using the toilet. She said, '*You can do whatever you want in the room. The bathroom was without doors; we had a small curtain to cover…It was embarrassing, especially when you share the room with someone. It is really hard. You can hear the noises of body fluids, or smell things. But we dealt with it… and accepted.'* At first Salma envisioned the space as one of freedom, in which she, as a religious woman, would be able to enjoy being without the restrictions of her hijab. But she found it was not a closed space of comfort, but one of exposure in which she was forced to sacrifice her own privacy.   Just as she could revel in taking off her hijab, she also found that she had to reveal other things in this space, exposing her body and privacy. Salma and the other women succeeded in finding ways to improvise some moments of privacy. While they couldn't cover the entire door, they learned to accept the lack of privacy as they did not have any other choice.

The duration of imprisonment and the sense of solidarity between them enable the women to feel at ease after getting to know the other women around them. To become exposed to the others becomes a normal act; it becomes part of who the women are in prison and how they share the same experiences and feelings. It strengthens their sense of being of one body. Rania described her relations with the other women in her cell, saying, '*You share the room with other women, you share their personal life 24 hours a day. You learn about their different habits -- how she brushes her teeth, how she fixes her hair, how she showers. All these small details your father never knew about you.'* Rania became minutely aware of every woman in the room, aware of their habits, and ways of living. Women reach a high level of understanding in the same room. They try to accept each other and act as one family. As Rania intimates above, they become closer than a real family, and become even more exposed to each other.

Goffman (1961) argues that 'any group of prisoners… develops a life of their own that becomes meaningful, reasonable, and normal when they become enmeshed within it' (ix-x). After some time, the new woman starts to understand the prison system, the schedule of its daily life, and the nature of its social relations, and thus adapts to her performance as a political prisoner inside the Israeli prison.

The Politicization of Space

> *'I know the architecture of the room was very small, but it is wide with the things you gain. It was a space to learn. I managed to use this space for three years.*

Khawla was aware of the limitations and deprivation of prison space. As her comment above suggests, this awareness, however, was the starting point for managing its confines and finding different tactics to subvert its restrictions. Lefebvre (1991) argues that space can be used in ways beyond those intended by its planners. Being aware of the space, and its politics, allows Palestinian women to manipulate it. Women are conscious that this space is the site of a direct and unrelenting battle with the Israeli occupation. For Palestinian prisoners, Israeli prison is a confrontation with the enemy. Palestinian women try to resist the power of the Israeli prison administration by refusing cooperation, creating different political activities, and producing Palestinian political themes through their handcrafts and writing. Such resistance is the foundation of everyday life for Palestinian prisoners. Khawla, and other women, emphasized how busy they were during their imprisonment, and how they wanted to use their incarceration to gain knowledge to help them after their release. They also desired to show the Israeli occupation that imprisonment would not stop them from learning or hinder their empowerment or preparation for release, and also that prison was a space for them to keep their sumud. Most of the prisoners considered prison a preparation stage for the outside world.

Palestinian women's understanding of the prisons as a direct battle with the Israeli occupation influenced the way in which they perceive space and time. Khawla commented on how she spent her time, saying, '*I don't remember I had time. I was so busy. I used to read nine hours a day, and then we had group discussions. I used to teach*

women who couldn't read or write. We did not have time.'   Most of the imprisoned women created their own world. They dealt with space and time differently, but all of them had to act as political prisoners, which meant that their activities, as individuals or collectives, had to reflect their politics and steadfastness. Prison is not an empty receptacle, independent of its contents. Its space is shaped by the ways prisoners perceive and utilize it. Khawla repeatedly reiterated how busy she was and that she never had time; she was using her time to educate herself or to educate other women.

Mariam asserted that every prisoner has access to both internal and external resources that can be used to challenge the limitations of the space. She said:

> *You own your brain and you have books, and the other people around you, Israelis or Palestinian. These people will extend your circle. However, you have the walls of the prisons, but with this you start to move out of it. This is not an easy story at all. When you live it, you go through stages… These stages help you to lead this space. You use your imagination. It should work because it is connected to a partly forgotten reality.*

She explained how the passage of time was very important element in enabling prisoners to understand the nature of the space. She describes prisoners going through stages connected to the time they had spent in prison. But time is not the only factor. Their interaction with the other prisoners, and the prison administration, is another element that constructs the space for prisoners. Mariam also focused on how subjects themselves determine their experience of prison. She asserted that prisoners should use their minds, read and communicate with others to build their own world. Imprisonment does not just entail the subjection of the prisoner. Prisoners also interact with and relate to the objects around them. Imprisonment is shaped by the kind of objects and the possible kinds of relations any subject has to those objects. The understanding of space creates different kinds of relations, but transforms according to the subject's affective and instrumental relation with the space of incarceration.

The geography and management of the space and the limitation on movement over-determine women's daily life in prison. The women's day-to-day activity is

organized collectively in each wing, usually consisting of reading, discussion groups, social and recreational activities, as well as some individual activities such as reading, writing, socializing, and practicing handcrafts, embroidery and other hobbies. These activities and interactions help women to create their own secure social relations, as women become close to others who have similar interests. These activities enable women to understand each other and talk with each other without worries or fear. Some of the activities have to be serious and political in nature. Below I discuss some of these activities in more detail, and consider how they influence women's subjectivities and relations.

Educational Activities

For Palestinian prisoners, educational activities are a form of resistance against the prison's restrictions and isolation; so prisoners attempt to educate themselves by reading as much as they can. In the Palestinian culture, the Israeli prison is often looked upon as a school. Ahlam described it in the following terms: '*You can say that prison is a school, another life. It is a university to learn a lot from…It is a zoo… Do you want me to tell you why? Sometimes they have this sudden search, they come to the cage and start looking at you, it's hard and humiliates you.*' It is clear that Ahlam was deeply impacted by the limitations, restrictions and disciplines she was subjected to in prison. It was dehumanizing space, which she related to the experience of animals in the zoo, watched, caged, and guarded, as discussed in previous section. Ahlam's comments illustrate the contradictions within prisoners' experience of the space, and how they challenge and resist the dehumanization through educational and political activities.

Reading and writing are the primary activities prisoners try to focus on during their imprisonment. Nashif (2008) argues that reading and writing are ritual practices. These are the main activities practiced by political prisoners in order to establish themselves as a social group; they are signs of political subjectivity that Palestinian prisoners use to mark themselves as political prisoners and to differentiate themselves from Israeli civil prisoners. Most women I interviewed expressed that prison provided an opportunity for them to read and learn as much as they could. The Palestinian political prisoners understood the meaning of culture (*thaqafa*) as seeking to reinstall, reconstitute,

and reaffirm Palestinian-ness as a national identity. The context of thaqafa delimits a site of liberation from prison conditions that frees the captive (Nashif, 2008: 74). They read Marx, communist literature, Chinese literature, Islamic literature, and many other political, social, and educational books. Salma said, '*It was a golden chance to read. In the prison there was a small, nice library. I used to take out and exchange books.*' In each prison, there is a library, like Salma's, where prisoners can borrow books. These libraries contain books donated through the Red Cross and other organizations, sometimes in response to the prisoners' requests. However, the women's library is under-resourced, and it is hard for them to request books from the outside.

Their time in prison teaches women how to lead their own life, organized and constantly occupied with educational and political activities. This is a means of steadfastness, through which women are able to challenge all the restrictions and deprivations of prison life, and also the power of the Israelis to disable their development. Khawla, as many other women, used the time inside to learn and read as much as she could. She said, '*I told you I never had time. I wanted to use every minute. I was in confrontation with the time. I was worried the time would finish without learning.*' Palestinian prisoners try to challenge the Israeli practice of isolating them by making the space one of production. Nashif argues in his research that Palestinian prisoners try to transform the colonial relations in the Israeli colonial prisons as the dominant 'mode of production'. 'The reading/writing sign, site and space of actions, practices and rituals are the main activities practiced by the political captives in order to establish themselves as a social group' (78).

Is It Just Embroidery?

Embroidery is a popular craft among women in prison. They often feel that it helps them to release their emotions around the isolation and the hardship of prison. As most Palestinian women learn embroidery in schools as part of the effort to preserve Palestinian identity, women in prison can spend a great deal of time practicing this hobby, producing pieces they can give their families or even keep themselves for their future houses after release. They teach each other different patterns and exchange different designs and colours. Women try to always reflect political beliefs in their work.

Rania commented, '*We did pieces that had Intifada themes. Others represent Palestine. Others were connected to national figures like Handthala. We used to write poetry from Mahmmoud Darwish, that we copied from magazines. We made portraits for walls, bags, pillows.*'

The practice of embroidery and handcrafts creates a social environment for women. They can chat about personal topics, discussing their dreams or sharing their sorrow and loss with their close friends. It also becomes a means of building trust, when, for example, a woman asks another inmate to show her how to make something, or to help her to choose colours, or to draw some patterns for her to make something special. Women produce very original pieces that reflect their own individual identity within the political themes. Embroidery here is not just the craft of sewing; more fundamentally, it is about the construction of relationships. It creates a time and space for women to open up and become closer to their emotions, and, importantly, to be individuals. Through these activities, women are able to talk about their memories and share their private lives and experiences with the other women. The women's use of embroidery as an important social and emotional practice is reminiscent of Marjane Satrapi's graphic novel, *Embroideries*, which examines the sex lives of Iranian women. Marjane's grandmother, mother, aunt, and their friends and neighbours gather over embroideries and afternoon tea. As they drink and talk, naturally the subject turns to love, sex and so on. Like the women in Satrapi's novel, Palestinian women prisoners exercise their agency under the cover of these socially accepted female activities.

Social Circles

In prison, the environment is built up to diminish agency and individualism. Women are generalized into political subjects (political prisoners, political movement activists, freedom fighters, resisters, and so on). There are, however, moments in which they can not only express their individualism but also exist as individuals. During the day, prisoners are granted a short time of release for 45 minute from their cells. They spend the time outside of their rooms in a small communal hall, usually an open space. Prisoners have the opportunity to meet with the women from different cells. They gather to chat, eat and drink coffee together, and to exchange books and ideas. Sabreen felt that

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this was her time to build relationships and meet with her close friends. She said, '*I used to have strong relationships with all the women. We used to have nice gatherings, inviting each other for lunch in the release time, or to have coffee. We use to do a lot of simple things but it made us feel really happy.*' Sabreen and her friends tried to create their own world, in which they could normalize, and cope with, the prison structure. Stoller (2003) argues that people create their sense of place, through unthinking practices or through the creative use of materials, memories, and interactions.

Incarcerated women learn indirectly how to live in this space, and also create their own social life. Through their social practices, like drinking coffee and chatting, women make prison resemble a feminine space. In these periods of socializing, women perform as women, momentarily released from the pressure of performing as political prisoners. They cook, eat, laugh, sew, gossip, and share secrets. Rania described her interaction with the other women in this time of release. She said, '*You share with the other women simple dreams and secrets.*' Women become close to each other, developing trust and confidence among their small circle.

In this circle of friends, women create a space of liberation in which they can talk about their experiences, emotions and secrets, without surveillance or expectations. Khawla shared her romance with the group leader of her political organization, who was also imprisoned during the same period, with her cellmates. All of them read his letters to her. She said, '*We loved each other before prison. He used to write me letters. He was a poet, and he used to write nice words for me. All our wing used to read them. I wasn't shy at all. These letters used to change the prison environment.*' For Khawla sharing her private letters with her close friends was a way of strengthening solidarity with them. Sharing her dream world, a world of the love and emotion they were deprived of inside prison, made women feel happy and created something new to talk about.

Can Women Talk About Everything? When There Are Hidden Limits

Over time, women become familiar enough with each other to talk about many personal topics. Khawla described the discussions she took part in within this small circle of friends. She said: '*We used to talk about everything and nothing. We talked about politics. We talked about our secret loves, about our dreams, our ambitions. We talked*

about our losses, but it was clear they were hiding a lot of their stories and emotions.' Despite their closeness, women try to avoid expressing some of their emotions and feelings. They remain worried about the conservative culture and still felt restrictions around issues connected to their feelings, emotions and private lives. In addition, women fear the judgments of the others or that someone will find something out about them that will then influence other people's perception of them.

Women can't talk about everything openly. They try to keep their secrets and feelings with those women who they trust, but still they have some limitations on their expression and the subjects they feel they can discuss. For example, women avoid talking about their losses and fears of the future because this kind of talk is often judged as distorting the reputation and the experience of prisoners. After her initial comment that the women in her circle talked about 'everything,' Khawla clarified that, in fact, not everything could be freely spoken about. She said:

> *You can face some aggressive reactions from some women when we were talking about some issues. This reaction can be part of the feeling of need and deprivations… I don't know, but you are forbidden to talk about such issues because you have to be strong and you are a freedom fighter…So your personal loss and issues are not important, and you have to focus on national and political issues.*

As Khawla suggests, the main areas women try to avoid talking about are those connected to their sense of loss. Many women felt profound worry about aging in prison or that, because they were getting older, they may remain single and childless all their lives. For some women there was a sense of loss around their desires and sexuality that they were discouraged from expressing. All of these deprivations are consequences of their imprisonment, so to articulate emotion over them would impact their performance as political prisoners. It would make them appear more concerned about their own personal problems than national and political issues, which is deemed to be the central concern for political prisoners.

As discussed in previous chapters, the Palestinian community is very conservative on issues connected to romantic relations between men and women, sexuality, and women's bodies. Despite its isolation, prison space is still very much subject to the restrictions and control of the outside culture, as are the women in their role as political prisoners. The women who react aggressively when others attempt to discuss such issues are using the logic of censorship. As Foucault describes it: '[T]his interdiction is thought to take three forms: affirming that such a thing is not permitted, preventing it from being said, denying that it exists. Forms that are difficult to reconcile' (1976: 86). Sawsan was enraged by the women in her room. She felt their behaviour debased the image of Palestinians and political prisoners. She said:

Once we were in the cell, some women were revealing their bodies, wearing shorts, and sleeveless shirts. You could see their boobs…This faggot woman would say that she had desire to have those boobs. They would hug her; they used to tell her that they had desires to have a man to hug… I would get really mad hearing this talk. I would shout at them, trying to remind them who they were, and how they were shaming political prisoners. I would ask them to act with respect, and would accuse them all the time. I couldn't stand this talk, or this situation. I asked to be transferred to another prison, so I wouldn't need to see these disgusting people.

Sawsan felt angry remembering this encounter. She felt these women should not be treated as political prisoners because their talk and actions were shameful. Sawsan's story illustrates that some women reach the point to trust each other enough to be open about their sexuality, a matter considered taboo to act on or even talk about outside of prison, especially for women who are expected to protect and cover their own bodies at all times. But in their small cell, these women were able to talk about their needs and sexual desires and even act upon them through their physical intimacy with each other. Sawsan attempted to impose the laws and power of the culture they came from to control the situation. She felt disgusted by it, deciding to leave the space, because, for her,

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expressing sexuality, whether through speech or action, is not part of the performativity of political prisoners, and also defies cultural laws over women.

Though the prison space is not free from the control of conservative culture, in creating their own world inside prison, as Sawsan's story reflects, women are often able to talk and act in more open and liberal ways than in the outside world. This environment recalls the space of 'the harem,' in which women gather and socialize to evade the restrictions they normally face from conservative cultures. Fatema Mernissi, a Moroccan Islamic feminist, examines Islam and women's roles within it. She gives her own account of such spaces in *Dreams of Trespass: Tale of a Harem Girlhood*, in which she describes her youth in a Moroccan harem during the 1940s, considering topics such as Islamic feminism, Arab nationalism, French colonialism and the clash between the traditional and the modern. Like the women in the harem that Mernissi describes, women in prison are in negotiation all the time, between what is allowed and what is not, between how they are expected to perform and the need to find their own world within all these restrictions, between living under surveillance and trying find a space with other women in which they can open up without any restriction or fear.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have analysed the politicization of everyday life for Palestinian women inside Israeli prison. Israeli prisons are the sites of immediate confrontation with the Israelis prison authority who represent the Israeli occupation. For many Palestinian women, their incarceration is the first time they will have prolonged interaction with individual Israeli soldiers. Palestinian women feel they must present their political beliefs all the time, in all their daily activities, such as reading, writing, embroidery, and handcrafts. Palestinian women try to show that they are using the time of their imprisonment as a means of resistance and that the experience of prison is not breaking them, but can be utilized to learn in preparation for the outside world. The system of allocating women inmates into the different wings related to their political movements enhances the politicization of the prison environment and shapes the development of the relationships among the women. Outside politics also influence, and often determine, the

relations inside prison, so that prisons cannot be thought of as independent spaces but as intricately connected to the outside.

Prison is a space that works to diminish political prisoners' agency. Because of the strong politics that dominate this environment, Palestinian women try to be part of a collective prisoner body, with the common goal to resist the Israeli prison administration by performing political subjecthood all the time. This means they try to talk, work, and act politically in every small detail of their lives. Palestinian women find their own ways to create their space of negotiation, they try to negotiate all of these constant restrictions to find spaces of liberation. In such spaces, in often-gendered activities, they can express personal needs and individualism, providing respite from the selfless, impersonal performance expected of political prisoners. The relationships they build inside prison, based on familiarity, similarity and also the shared experiences of bodily exposure, facilitate the building of secure social networks. Within these bonds of understanding, trust and solidarity, women create a feminine space that I have likened to the harem. In this space, women socialize, cook, eat, and sew together, this gathering offering opportunities for women to share their hidden desires and also to escape from the political pressures of the space. As women become closer, they start sharing their secrets, and can sometimes talk about topics that are usually forbidden, both inside and outside prison in the conservative culture they belong to. However, some women feel that it is inappropriate for Palestinian women inmates to discuss their feelings of loss or desire in such an environment. Those women who have rigidly internalized this conservative culture refuse such discussion, which they consider an aberration from the appropriate performance of political prisoners. It is organized upon notions of resistance and sumud and also upon individuals' experiences. Any analysis of prison life can only be partial because behind the walls of any prison there is another world. We can't fully perceive all of its details or access all of its secrets and relations without becoming part of the prisoners' body.

Chapter Seven: Women's Experiences of Reentry to the Community

Introduction

This chapter discusses the experiences of Palestinian women after they are released from Israeli prison. The transitions from prison into the home and community, a process that Visher and Travis (2003) refer to as 'reentry', can be a difficult experience for some. They comment that 'prisoner reentry and integration experiences vary considerably based on individual characteristics, family and peer relationships [and] community contexts' (91). In addition, for my participants, their relationships with their political movements also play a role in shaping their lives post-prison. Abdo (2014) argues that reintegration into society and community is not a smooth process for many of Palestinian women. Upon their release, the women are moved from a small, walled prison to a large open-air prison. Additionally, as Abdo notes, women must deal with the realization that the world outside has changed, often drastically, from when they were imprisoned (197).

This chapter will focus on women's struggles to integrate in the community. As we have seen, the Palestinian community is very traditional and conservative when it comes to women participating in politics or military resistance. Many in the community are concerned about women being detained in Israeli prisons. These concerns centre on women's bodies and sexuality and whether they faced any kind of sexual violence during their imprisonment. Usually, the Palestinian community remains silent on such issues, but this silence is conspicuous. Women can feel it in the way they are treated, or in the different metaphors that are used to talk about these concerns. Sometimes, a woman might be asked direct questions about whether she faced any sexual abuse inside prison. Former prisoners feel that they are under surveillance all the time in their community; as such, they often try to perform a conservative persona. They talk about politics all the time, continually emphasizing their resistance against the prison guards and their sumud in the face of deprivation and Israeli violence. In this role, they must keep silent about the political conflicts and violence that some of them experienced in prison from other

Palestinian women. Silence is a strategy women use in order to present their experience as heroic and to present themselves as *munadelat*, the Arabic term for 'freedom fighters'.

Former prisoners often feel estranged and alienated when they encounter the changes that took place in their world while they were incarcerated, as well as when they begin to realize how much they themselves have been changed by their experiences in prison. While inside, these women forged new social networks with other prisoners and developed relations with the political movements, media, and different organizations that work for prisoners. These networks and relations influence women's social roles. They become political figures and behave according to the community's expectations of former political prisoners. This chapter will focus on former women prisoners' experiences of reentry, with emphasis on their feelings and social interactions after release, as well as how they shape their space of negotiation.

Moving From a Closed Prison to an Open-air Prison

The initial release from imprisonment is full of joy, as women experience (relative) freedom after the isolation, restrictions, control, and surveillance of the Israeli prison. The conditions of women's release vary. Some of the women I interviewed were released after finishing their sentences; others were released through prisoner exchange agreements between Palestinian political movements and the Israelis. Most of the women have similar feelings upon being released to a new world. They don't know if they have changed or if it is the world outside that has changed. Rania, who was released in a prisoners' exchange after spending ten years inside, observed:

> *It is really tough. It is a new space. You need to learn about it, to build up relations with people again, but the problem is you have a lot of contradictions. You have a lot of memories, but your perspectives, beliefs, and feelings have changed. But they are the same people. The contradiction is the people are the same, so how can I change my feelings, how can I adapt my mood among all of these contradictions... It was really hard to integrate.*

Former prisoners feel a gap between themselves and the world they left. Women start to realize how prison has changed them and feel distant from those close to them. Rania's statement highlights her contradictory feelings about the space and people around her. The experience of release is a search for a link between two worlds. Within the confinement of prison, the women created their own world. They built strong relations with the women who shared the same room, food, and experiences. Sometimes, they felt close to each other inside this space. In the outside world, where they had memories and experiences before imprisonment, after release, they begin to feel like strangers. They often still feel imprisoned as they try to adapt to the space, and find that even with their close family they feel like strangers.

Many of the participants in this research stated that they felt they had left a small prison to live in a larger open-air prison. Aisha ended her interview in the *Women in Struggle* documentary saying, '*You discover that you cannot get prison out of you, you carry it inside you…It confronts you with every detail…Your life in prison dictates to you, your behaviour on the outside world…In other words you did not leave prison, you actually carried prison with you.*' The manner in which prison can become internalised in former inmates, which Aisha describes here, illustrates how the prison experience influences women and affects their lives and relations with their surroundings. They built their own world and routine inside prison for the period in which they were incarcerated, and so when they leave prison, they leave it with contradictory emotions. After spending time with their friends inside, with whom they built trust and understanding to become like family, upon release they feel estranged, and this can cause feelings of isolation. Reflecting upon her experience in this regard, Maram said:

> *My mother was very close to me, was closer than any one, but after prison I started to feel safe with my friends who were with me in prison, more than my mother. They understand me more than anyone else. It is easier to talk to them…My sister was very close to me. She was my soul mate, but now, I can't talk to her. If you see us, we're like complete strangers.*

The distance that Maram felt from her family is a result of the long time she spent in prison. She was in total isolation from her family. They were restricted from visiting her during most of her five years of imprisonment, making her miss out on their experiences and forcing them to be absent from what she went through as well. This separation, which was created by the Israeli prison authority, increased the gap between Maram and her family so that both sides became like strangers.

Prison became like a home for Maram and her cellmates became like her family members. She commented: '*After spending one year in prison, I felt it was my place, my home, and those people around me became closer.*' When Maram left prison she felt she left home and the closeness of her prison family. They shared the hardship she faced during her imprisonment and they felt solidarity with her struggles. She described the uniqueness of their bond, commenting, '*No one can understand the experience of prisoners and their feelings without being a prisoner yourself.*' Women who share the experience of prison often believe that they are the only ones who can understand each other's feelings and struggles. They are able to support each other because they are the only ones who went through similar experiences and so know the details of imprisonment. This is one of the reasons women after release find that they miss prison friends and even prison life, where they shared experiences and memories and understood the space and its politics.

Formerly imprisoned Palestinian women maintain strong ties with their cellmates after release. They meet to remember their imprisonment and also to support each other in adapting to life after prison. Maram felt that only her prison cellmates were able to understand her feelings and her life after prison. She said, '*My friends before my imprisonment, I find it hard to interact with them. I can't deal with them at all. But, on the other hand, I find it much easier to interact and have relationships with former prisoners. I really prefer them.*' Maram and my participants try to meet with other former prisoners as often as possible. They try to create their own world, searching for understanding and solidarity. They are constantly aware of feeling different from women who have never been in prison. Prison has created new subjects, perpetually suspicious and disconnected from their surroundings, always feeling that they have missed something. So these subjects seek a comfortable space, understanding, and similarity.

Once they find it, they start to feel solidarity with each other and become close, even if they were in prison at different times. In this space, they are able to share the feelings and experiences of release.

Thus women often try to build a safety network with other women who have been in prison. I met Hayam for the first time through her friend Seham who came from Hebron to visit with her and other friends. I accompanied Seham to their meeting. It was warm and welcoming; they were joking and, as they said to me, feeling like themselves. They commiserated about the difficulties of finding a job or returning to university to finish their education. This group of friends was from the Islamic Jihad, and because of the conflict between Fateh and Hamas over control of Palestinian political decisions, which had been ongoing since 2006, it was hard for them to find employment. Any security check on them would reveal their political activism. This was highly frustrating for them and instilled them with a sense of uselessness. The women also shared frustrations around their families restricting their mobility and limiting their opportunities to go out. They felt constantly obliged to inform their families of what they were doing and with whom they were socializing. Most of the women in this group said they were always eager to meet with their friends from prison, and frequently invented excuses to travel to Ramallah, the most central city for all of them.

Building these safety networks and maintaining close relations with other former prisoners simultaneously tends to entrench the distance the women feel from those who have not been imprisoned. Maram commented, '*Maybe the person who went through the same suffering will understand me more than the other. You will never understand the conditions of prison because you have never been. So it is much easier for me to deal and interact with prisoners.*' Like Maram, most of the other women also told me that it was impossible for me to understand their feelings and experiences. They feel that they belong to a different world from those who have never been in prison, and I felt like an invader in their world. When speaking to me, they continually marked this division with their language, using the pronouns 'we' and 'you.' The sense of division grows through the rupture they felt with the community upon their release. They then often enhance it by socializing primarily with former prisoners, making their integration into the community even more difficult.

The women start to be present in society in different ways but their prison experience still follows them, remaining with them in their memories, their attachment to other prisoners, and in their feelings of alienation from the community. Feeling the loss of her prison friends, Abeer commented on the time of her release:

> *At that time, I was wishing to go back to prison. I know there is nothing worse than prison but that was my wish…I felt like a stranger with these people… For, all of a sudden, you are separated from the other girls and each had to start her own life… I was feeling like people don't understand me and also like they are not the same people. They changed. They are like new people.*

The five years Abeer spent in prison created a gap between her and her family; she felt that she was released to a new space she had never experienced before and to family and once-close friends who were now new people. Abeer's feeling of alienation made her wish she was back in prison, where she shared experiences with women similar to her. These feelings of alienation and estrangement make the experience of prison present all the time. Thus the women were 'absent' in some way from the society they returned to and their experience of prison remained present in many aspects of their lives. The overwhelming existential domination of prison – from which they wanted to escape – still acted upon them even though they were physically free from it.

To live in the Occupied Territories of Palestine is to live in a bigger prison. The complicated relationships and entanglements between the colonial Israeli occupation and the conservative and traditional Palestinian culture regulate Palestinian women's bodies and everyday movements. When these women are released from prison, they are watched by both the community and the occupation. This is what Foucault (1975) has described as the 'panoptic' gaze of 'bio-power', whereby the individual is under constant social surveillance. Most women feel upon their release that they must perform in a way that reflects their political subjectivity, and thus behave and dress in a conservative way. They become highly conscious of community expectations and also the double surveillance they start to face.

Majd realized that she had to be conservative in her appearance, so when she was

released she asked her mother to get her long and very conservative clothes. After some time, she started to wear the Hijab. She commented:

> *When I was released from prison I changed my style of dress. I wasn't wearing the Hijab, but I started to be conservative, never wore short sleeves…When people look at a former prisoner, or a prisoner's wife, or a martyr's wife and she is not modest in her appearance, people start to think that she can do whatever. People will think that she is not taking care of herself. So after a while, I started wearing the Hijab.*

Majd was sensitive to the community's ideas about women who were in prison, and so she began to perform a very conservative persona to protect her reputation and the reputations of the other women. This is what Evans (2011) calls 'double consciousness', which is the sense of always 'looking at one's self through the eyes of others', of 'measuring one's soul by the standards of a world that watches on in amused contempt and pity' (12). The community's expectations of former Palestinian women prisoners' form their lives, relationships, and performance. These expectations also influence how women shape their space of negotiation as women need to match what the community expects from them as former prisoners, and also negotiate their exercise of their agency which they build through their relationship with other former prisoners.

The Price of Freedom

Women leave prison excited to go back to their own lives and continue the dreams that were on hold for so many years. They don't fully comprehend how much things have changed because they were living in complete isolation, even if they were trying to follow the changes of the outside world through stories, radio programs or TV. They might be prepared theoretically to return but in practice it is a completely different story. Most of the women described how the space at home was different, people were different, and concepts were different. They frequently described their response to all of these accelerated changes in the outside with the comment, '*We felt a gap.*' What does this gap mean? Is it the shock of being confronted with the changes to their social world now that they have been released to face the missing pieces in their lives? In their years

of isolation and deprivation, the women did not have real interaction with the outside world and the people they knew. They only had their imaginations and memories to review from all the years of imprisonment. They prepared themselves to be released back to their normal lives not realizing that the lives they knew before imprisonment would be irretrievable. In the world outside prison, we know things change quickly because we can see it and also take part in it. Even if we are not in a particular space, we can experience the changes taking place there because technology facilitates this for us. But this is not the case for prisoners who live in complete isolation. Thus, the experience of release can create a gap for these women, especially those who have been in prison for long periods.

Released prisoners are confronted with the political changes that took place in the Palestinian territories after their release, especially when there are major changes connected to peace agreements, or another Intifada, or any change in the political atmosphere, or if there is tension between Palestinians and Israelis. For example, the Oslo Accords in 1993 constituted a Palestinian state limited to the West Bank and Gaza Strip, 'a mini state' next to the state of Israel (Hassan, 2011: 65). This agreement created a lot of conflict among Palestinians. Hassan argues that the left in Palestine, mainly the PLFP, and the DFLP who were supporting the peace process with Israel, were opposed to the Oslo Accords 'because of the absence of any promise or even mention of Palestinian statehood. In their thinking Israel offered only autonomy, thereby freeing itself of the economic burden of the Palestinian population, while granting itself overall control and keeping all of the Jewish settlements within the West Bank and Gaza' (67). The Islamic groups were against any peace agreements with Israel, and so they also strongly opposed the Oslo Accords (*Ibid*.). As a result of Oslo Accords, the Palestinian Authority was established and most of the leaders of the PLO were returned to the Palestinian territory, which created a lot of tension and disagreements among Palestinians. Prisoners who were released as a result of the Oslo Accord were confronted with these transformations in the political situation and, subsequently, in Palestinian daily life. Most former prisoners, even the ones from Fateh, found it difficult to understand the changes accompanying the establishment of the Palestinian Authority.

Rania and Abeer, both from Ramallah, were imprisoned before the Oslo Accord and were released in 1997. These two women went to prison in the First Intifada, before

the Palestinian Authority was established. They lived under occupation when the West Bank and Gaza were in full Israeli control and when the invasion and the curfew were constant in all Palestinian cities. They were released to find a profound shift in the cities, which they encountered in the ministries and all the government buildings that they had only heard about. They searched for the Ramallah and the people they knew. Rania, who was imprisoned for ten years and released to live in Ramallah, commented on the social changes.

> *I felt a huge gap. Before prison, the social life and the economy was really simple. The occupation was inside our cities and villages and streets. The Israeli jeeps were like 'Good morning' for me. Life was really simple in the First Intifada. We were released five years after Oslo to find the division of opinions between people with Oslo or against Oslo… with suicide bombers and against. There was a social gap between people, and the structure changed a lot. A lot of people become PA employees…Phones and mobiles were new…new cars, all this is different from what we imagined and prepared for in prison. We were released to a globalized world. I always say out of my house is a world I don't own…I don't like this situation in the city… I don't know people.*

Abeer described her reaction to such changes after five years of imprisonment.

> *When I was released, it was really hard to find Abou Amar [Arafat] in Ramallah. This shift was really hard, as hard as the interrogation period in prison. I never understood the situation and conditions I was released to. It was a completely strange place for me…In 1992, it was the First Intifada and in 1997 the Palestinian Authority…Concepts changed. We can't use words like 'enemy' about Israel anymore and a lot of concepts disappeared.*

The physical appearance of the city was also transformed, as property laws and zoning regulations were changed to allow for the ownership of individual units in apartment buildings and the construction of multi-story buildings. The skyline of Ramallah changed

dramatically in the decade following the Oslo Accords. As Liza Taraki (2008) argues, the arrival of the PA led to the 'surprisingly rapid elaboration of a new globalized urban middle-class lifestyle, which found its most hospitable terrain in Ramallah' (13). Many of the new higher-ranking bureaucrats were PLO figures allowed to enter the West Bank and Gaza after decades of exile. As Taraki notes:

> These returnees (*'a'idin*), while small in number, made their imprint on Ramallah's cultural and social scene through their outlook and lifestyles, all of which contributed to the elaboration of the urban and modernist culture they had imbibed in Beirut, Tunis, and other Arab cities. (*Ibid.*)

Ahlam, who is considered to be an a'idin, was imprisoned for five years and after that spent 18 years in exile before returning to Ramallah. She said:

> *Ramallah people used to know each other, even people from Al-Berih, we knew them… I was craving to come back to Ramallah after all these years… But when I was back, I felt…'No, it is not the Ramallah that I wanted.' People used to know each other. There are a lot of random buildings, streets are dirty, people you don't know…Never accepted the place in the beginning, but now I am used to it.*

Ahlam had memories of her neighbourhood and family house. She thought she would come back to the same space, but found everything unfamiliar. She couldn't find any of her old neighbours or even her family, who had migrated to the United States. The terrain across the entire city had altered as Ramallah became the capital for the PA. Most of the PA's employees relocated to the city, which both increased and diversified the population, reshaping the local social structure.

The Palestinian territory was divided by checkpoints and closures all over the West Bank and Gaza, which is also a result of Oslo Accords. Edward Said insists that

> Oslo's fatal; it was neither an instrument of decolonization nor a mechanism to

implement UN resolutions relevant to the Israeli Palestinian conflict. Rather it was a framework aimed at changing the basis of Israeli control over the Occupied territory in order to perpetuate the control. (cited in Hassan, 2011: 70)

As a result of this in the Second Intifada, cities were divided because of Israeli hegemony, 'as opposed to the partition through a comprehensive Israeli withdrawal from the West Bank and the Gaza Strip' (*Ibid*.). The Second Intifada created another change for Ramallah. With the intensification of the spatial regime of cantonization, Ramallah's status as a city apart has been consolidated. Since 2000 it has become more socially heterogeneous than it was at the onset of the Oslo process and the Israeli closure of the Palestinian cities that drew new residents from all over the West Bank and Gaza. Hayam was imprisoned for three years, released, and then imprisoned for another three years. She said:

> *When I went back home, because I was absent from the community, I felt the difference. It was a completely different community inside prison. So many things when I went home were a surprise for me. When I walked in Ramallah for the first time, I couldn't walk. A lot of buildings, a lot of people. A lot of changes happened. Before I was imprisoned, there were a lot of killings and bombings in 2003. It was the Intifada. When we were released it was completely different. I remember the streets were ruined and a lot of buildings were destroyed. Now everything has changed, a lot of new buildings. The first month was really difficult. I did not like to go anywhere…I was in complete quiet in prison. We never heard cars or children, there were no noises. And it was quite a long period. And then to be released to all this sound and chaos in the city…*

The presence of too much noise is invasive. Many of the women described their exposure to urban noise after the quiet of prison as tense and disruptive. When they were distant and isolated from all the noises they were used to, prison had its own schema of sound, predominated by doors and keys.

When women were detained, they did not exactly move from a state of

sovereignty, freedom and independence into a dungeon (Abdo, 2014: 197). When they are released, they trade the prison doors and bars for identity cards, borders, house invasions and curfew. As described in the Introduction, checkpoints, barriers and walls carve up the area of the Palestinian territory into small, circumscribed spaces, making even the most ordinary of movements, such as a trip to see relatives or friends or to buy food, fraught and difficult. The simplest of journeys becomes arduous and degrading. We can spend hours trying to circumnavigate checkpoints to reach a destination. Some of us now only go out when we have to, preferring not to make ourselves vulnerable to intimidation or danger.

Many of the participants express that even when they leave prison, they still feel it in their everyday lives, as if they are still imprisoned. It influences their interactions with the community, their self-discipline and their attitudes, especially around mobility. Checkpoints, in particular, become sites that recreate the prison experience. Many of the released women I interviewed explained that they hate to move between Palestinian cities because of all the restrictions and the checkpoints. Khawla is still an activist with the Fateh movement and also occupies a high position in the Palestinian Women Union. As such, she has to travel frequently between cities in order to attend meetings in Ramallah. She said:

> *My borders are so limited. Bethlehem is a very small city…It is easy to move around. To go to Ramallah is really hard. However, now the roads are good and there is less restriction, but I don't like to see the Israelis. The way there always reminds me of the Israeli occupation.*

Khawla chooses not to go out of her city in order to avoid going through investigations in the checkpoints or having any interaction with the Israeli occupation. Khawla prefers her city, Bethlehem, because it is small and she is aware of and familiar with everything there. There, she is in a secure space, without any need to interact with the Israelis, or remember her experience. Rania views her home as her world. She is restricted from travelling outside the Palestinian territory, even though she was released from prison 18 years ago. She travels only rarely between cities. She said of the Israeli soldiers she would encounter through travel, '*I can't bear them - full stop. I can't bear seeing them,*

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hearing their language or anything.' Rania and others try to avoid any interaction with the Israelis because the sound of their language and their military uniforms bring back the feeling of being in prison. Like Khawla, they prefer to stay in the area they are familiar with, where they feel comfortable and secure.

Former prisoners feel the Israeli presence in their daily lives, especially when they need to move between cities. Most women feel they are watched and are subject to investigation or arrest at any time. Majd feels constantly suspicious when she needs to travel between Nablus and Ramallah. She becomes worried and tense when the Israeli soldiers hold her ID for a long time. She is also subject to the soldiers questioning her on the bus, which causes a delay for the other passengers and humiliates her. Most former prisoners have similar experiences, and some of them believe the Israeli occupation is still watching them. Gazal, who spent more than a year in administrative detention, decided to stay inside her home, quitting university, because she was perpetually subject to interrogation. She found hiding from the Israelis inside preferable to causing inconvenience to her family or the other people around her.

Foucault (1977) argues that the major effect of the panopticon is 'to induce in the inmate a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power' (201). The Israeli occupation employs pointed strategies - holding former prisoners longer at checkpoints, keeping them under continual surveillance, restricting their mobility, or asking them to sign forms to confirm their presence at military points – in order to maintain this state of feeling permanently exposed within former prisoners. This panoptic power acts directly on the individual making them suspicious of being watched all the time and giving them the sense that anything they say or do might lead to their imprisonment. As Foucault argues, 'it gives power of mind over mind'(155). Through their ubiquitous presence, the architecture of the occupation in the West Bank, and their division between cities, the Israeli authorities act directly on the former prisoners' minds.

Some objects central to the material and social systems of the prison can continue to influence subjects after their release. These women feel tension and fear when they

encounter these reminders. Their memories are powerfully enhanced, prompting them to put up defenses to protect themselves. For example, when they hear particular noises or find themselves in a room without windows, former prisoners feel angry or stressed. Most women I have interviewed try to be in an open space all the time. They hate feeling they are stuck in a room without windows or with closed doors. Rana was released in the early 80s but continues to struggle with closed doors or windows. She said:

> *In my house, we live on the first floor. People are always asking me why I don't have iron bars to protect my windows. But I can't stand the idea of it…. In the house, if my children close the door to my room while I am sleeping, I get angry and start to shout. I do not like to close the door and I do not like closed doors.*

The feeling of anger that Rana describes reveals how prison continues to shape her subjectivity. She tries to avoid talking about it, but these five years of imprisonment left a side effect in her sense of space. For Rana, and many other women, to be in a closed space brings back the sensation of imprisonment. It reminds them of their dreams to be in the free world and of the deprivation they experienced inside Israeli prisons.

It is not just closed space that reminds women of prison, but also some sounds or smells. Women may react to these stimuli with violence, aggression, or irritation. Salma, among others, describes how agitated she becomes when she hears the noise of keys jangling. The noise of keys makes these women feel tense and suspicious. Similarly, the noise of a door shutting reminds them of the prison guards and the unannounced searches in their cell. When Salma hears a door shutting, she feels angry. She said, '*I feel really annoyed. I feel I am crazy when our door shuts and it makes any noise. I become crazy, I start asking my son why he closed the door in this way. It was really bad especially in the first year of release.*' These noises disrupt the women's minds, reminding them of the violence they suffered under the prison authority, which endeavoured to constantly disturb the prisoners.

To conclude this section, time is one of the most important factors in helping women adapt to and understand their space after release. Most women found it very difficult when they were first released, experiencing profound confusion and alienation.

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They try to find the space they had left upon imprisonment and instead realize that things have changed and that they have also changed. Families become strangers to them, the cities' landscapes are foreign to them, and the politics, in some cases, have changed as well. These transformations enhance women's feeling of being in a strange space. They become sensitive to some noises and this makes them feel a gap with the free world. Such challenges make women search for familiarity, building relations with their former cellmates in order to find understanding and support. They find that even after release, they continue to have closer relationships with other former prisoners than with their families.

The Politics of Relations Outside

Solidarity with Those Remaining in Prison

Women feel uprooted when they are released from prison; it became a world where they felt secure and bonded with their cellmates and their political movements. Sabreen was 20 years old when she was imprisoned. She spent six years in prison sharing the cell with the same women almost the entire time. They became very close to each other. She described being conflicted upon her release: '*I had mixed feelings when I was released because I left people I lived with for six years, sharing good times and bad. We lived in one room, ate, drank together.*' Sabreen felt she was betraying her friends because she left prison and they stayed behind. Randa similarly felt she was taken from her friends and her new family when she was released: '*I was waiting for the moment the prison doors would open, but at the same time I did not want to leave people. They are really close to me, I shared moments with them, happiness…We ate together.*'

The women's focus on sharing food has a metaphorical meaning based on the traditional saying in Palestinian and Arab culture, '*We ate bread and salt together.*' This expression is used as a metaphor to reflect the strength of relations between people. It is like a contract of trust and understanding. If a person eats with someone else it means this person has become close and can be trusted, and that this person should respect this trust. The women who were in prison thus evoke the memories of sharing food as a way to reflect their feelings of guilt toward their friends who remain in prison. The released women feel incapable of doing anything to support or help their friends inside prison.

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They know the struggle and the deprivation they are experiencing, and find it hard to stop thinking about them. They try in all the ways they can to support them, such as participating in or organizing activities in solidarity with prisoners. Amal, for example, was in the Fateh wing, and never had good relations with Maram, who belongs to the Islamic Jihad and remains in prison. Amal nevertheless felt solidarity with her and all the prisoners: '*My heart is bleeding when I remember Lena and the other prisoners, the conditions and the injustice they live in.*' Outside prison, former prisoners try to forget their disagreements and come together when there is a need to organize a campaign or to participate in protest.

As noted in the Methodology chapter, I started my fieldwork in the solidarity tent with the Palestinian prisoners during the hunger strike of Khader Adnan in 2012.[12] The tent was the meeting point for the former prisoners to show their support and they organized themselves to be present during the time of the solidarity campaign. Most of them were also on hunger strike to show their solidarity against the injustice Palestinian prisoners experience in Israeli prisons. Maram was on hunger strike in the tent, suffering with the other former prisoners in order to support her colleagues in Israeli prisons. When I first spoke to her, she insisted that they, as former prisoners, were uniquely aware of the current prisoners' suffering. '*No one can feel with prisoners like us,*' she told me.

Former prisoners show their support in many different ways. Itaf, for example, said that after her imprisonment she generally felt lazy and too busy to participate in any kind of political activities. She would find many excuses not to participate in anything. But when it came to campaigns and protests to support prisoners, she would make sure to be there, holding an image of her close friend who remains in prison and faces continuing injustice. '*I have a huge poster for Lena,*' she said. '*Wherever I go, I hold it. People offer to help hold it, but I always refuse to give it to anyone. I always feel I have to do something; I always feel that I am not fulfilling my obligation toward her.*' Itaf's comments reflect her desire to support her friend in prison, and also her feelings of guilt over enjoying freedom while her friend remains in prison.

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[12] Khader Adnan is a former Palestinian prisoner in Israel. Israeli authorities did not make any formal charges against him, but said he was arrested for 'activities that threaten regional security.' He was released on 18 April 2012, after being on hunger strike for 66 days.

Rania, who was released in a prisoner exchange, similarly feels an obligation toward people in prison, though she is not involved in any other political activities. She said, '*I am an activist on issues related to prisoners. I am still attached to this world. My friends and comrades are still in prison, so I feel I am part of their issues, especially when it comes to hunger strike.*' Rania and other women who were released in prisoner exchanges feel a particular obligation toward, and solidarity with, their comrades and leaders who were arrested in the same period and remain imprisoned. The image below shows former women prisoners who organized a campaign. They show their support by being in the first line of the protest, and all hold the same image of Lena. Lena is considered the oldest prisoner as she has been imprisoned for more than ten years, never having been released in a prisoner exchange.

Figure (7): Palestinian women former prisoners in support of Lena Jurboni.

What Happens Inside Stays Inside?

Outside prison, the political movements that the women belong to have more direct control over them than when they were in prison. Most women become involved in their party's social and political programs and follow what is expected from them. The political parties try to present the women in all their activities to show appreciation for the political prisoners once they are released from prison. Other women prefer to maintain distance from any political movement and even refuse to talk about their experiences. They focus more on their personal lives, for example, through trying to

continue their education, or developing some of their skills in order to find a job. Such women are usually those who had never been involved in any political activities before their imprisonment, or those who face restrictions from families anxious that further political action will lead to another period of imprisonment.

Women try to respect the appreciation expressed by the community and their political parties. They are careful to represent their experiences as perfect resistance to the Israeli occupation, and also to represent prisons as a space of unity among the different political parties. Women avoid talking about any personal conflicts or struggles that they experienced with other prisoners. They keep these experiences to themselves, though they still avoid interacting with those women with whom they had problems or arguments. Outside prison women can avoid each other because they have more space and the option to choose who they want to interact with. Most of the participants in this research did not like to talk about these conflicts. Women often gave me examples and stories from other wings' because, as they said, nothing happened in their wing. Each one of them, especially those who were in leading roles in prison, emphasized how organized and positive relations were among all women in prison, whatever their political movement.

Former prisoners also avoid talking about the political conflicts or violence they experienced inside prison. They try instead to reflect the ideal images of political prisoners, often focusing on the daily practices of sumud through which they resisted Israeli domination. I felt a strong reticence from the women around the political divisions and conflicts they experienced inside prison. There is a sense that talking about the conflicts and violence would bring shame on all political prisoners. Maram and other women told me directly, '*We don't like to talk about this - it is shameful.*' The first time I heard about this violence was shocking for me. Former Palestinian women prisoners; often try to glorify their experience. They like to talk about it in a very idealised way; this hides their suffering and conflicts, and maintains a nice image for the community. Women had never thought about what to say about their release, but for me this was part of the imaginary community they belong to. The women did not necessarily know what the others were saying, but they were aware that they had to uphold the idealised construction of political prisoners. In this way, former Palestinian women prisoners'

construct their space of negotiation by presenting their experience as idealistic.

As a Palestinian, I had always been told stories about prison as a perfect space to learn and to build skills. I had often heard about the unflagging resistance against the Israeli order inside prison, and the political education prisoners receive. I had read Aisha Odeh's autobiography, where she focused on heroic women who took part in the resistance inside prison by refusing to cooperate or confess, or by going on hunger strike; but I had never heard or read about conflicts between the prisoners. When I held my first interview and heard about these conflicts, I was surprised. I never expected to hear such things. I thought maybe this woman was angry and had a different experience, but then other women recounted similar stories. I started questioning myself why this was happening, and why we don't hear about these stories.

I realized that these narratives were given by women who had been in prison after the Oslo agreement. In contrast, the women imprisoned before that focused on how powerful their experience was, and how they could challenge the Israeli occupation. When I asked them if they ever experienced these conflicts, most of them denied such things, and others said it was normal to have conflicts in a small and limited community, but that they successfully dealt with tension. I conclude from my experience of asking questions and researching the politics of prison relations that there is a great deal of silence when it comes to political conflicts and divisions inside Israeli prisons. The Palestinian community considers political prisoners to be national figures and symbols of the resistance to the Israeli occupation. Prison is viewed as the perfect world in which to create political subjects able to resist the Israeli occupation. Because prisoners are in direct confrontation with Israelis, prisoners gain a better understanding of them. It is forbidden to distort the image of political prisoners because, by extension, this is seen as a distortion of the image of Palestinian resistance itself. When women were telling me about the violence they faced from other Palestinian prisoners, there was a lot of hesitation and feelings of shame. Many of the participants deny it altogether; others told me not to discuss it in my research, and some asked me not to use their names.

For many it is critical that the image of Palestinian resistance remains perfect,

representing the ideal world of politics. Thus anyone trying to represent the conflicts and tension among prisoners inside Israeli prison is perceived to be undermining Palestinian national resistance. During my fieldwork I met with high-ranking women from the Fateh movement. When speaking with me about my research, they asked me not to distort the prison experience. However, I believe it is important to discuss these conflicts because they reflect the conflict and disagreements between the different political movements outside prison. Inside the closed space of prison, these conflicts are obvious. For me it was important to understand women's real experiences, and this means discussing their daily lives inside Israeli prison and the ways in which these are influenced by outside politics.

Is Prison a Factory of Masculinity?

As noted in the Introduction, prison for the Palestinian community is more than just a masculine space - it is a site in which masculinity is itself manufactured. For Palestinian women to be in prison, from the community's point of view, is an invasion of a masculine space. Prison is for heroes, men whose responsibility is to protect the land and resist the Israeli occupation, and also to protect their women from its violence. For women to be in prison means they are taking the responsibility of men and occupying a space where masculinity is produced; this is a contradiction for the patriarchal culture. Palestinian women, therefore, have a conflicted experience. On one hand, they are happy and proud of sacrificing their freedom or life for a national cause. They represent themselves as heroes, something reflected in the pride with which they speak about their experiences. On the other hand, women encounter an undercurrent of silent blame from their community and family. Though family and community members may try hard to hide this, the women easily recognize it. 'Women prisoners are even more overlooked by mainstream society than their male counterparts' (Law, 2002: 8). They have not passively accepted the conditions of their female position, which is perceived as subversive, particularly if the woman is married or a mother. The community assumes a mother's role is to raise her children. When she has to work or to take other roles, she should constantly remind herself of her responsibilities to her family.

Once outside of prison, women political prisoners usually characterize themselves

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as virtuous. Despite the large number of women who have faced prison, many continue to face contradictions between their political and social lives. On the political level, for example, they have been received home as heroines who sacrificed themselves for the nation. At this level, they are seen as equal to their male counterparts. But on the social level, these women still have to be under society's protection - and they are watched. Prisons are the embodiment of masculinity as a socially developed characteristic; Kennedy (2008) argues that, in Palestinian cultural discourse, prison is tied to nationalism as a masculine space.

As such, it is important to think about how the experience of incarceration is different for men and women. Women do not realize this difference while they are in prison because they only receive appreciation and support from their families and the community. When the women were released, their families and communities celebrated them and other women's organizations. Such celebrations, however, did not last long. Abdo (2014) argues that for female fighters, 'the struggle is almost always personal as much as it is national since national commitments will not erase her personal transgressions as far as family and society are concerned' (195). She concludes from her interviews that most women had to go back to face new challenges and fight to gain or regain a position in their society. I strongly agree with Abdo that women have different experiences than their male counterparts. They have to fight on a personal level to find their position and status in the community. They face all the cultural restrictions placed upon them and at the same time must also face the restrictions of the Israeli occupation, which keeps them under surveillance and restricts their mobility.

Palestinian women who have been released from Israeli prison have divergent experiences within the community upon their release. Some of them gain position and respect for their contributions as freedom fighters; others face challenges from their families and communities. Abeer, like many others, was met with appreciation and respect from her family who tried their best to support her and to help her readjust to her life. They supported all of her decisions after her release. On the other hand, Ahlam, for example, did not maintain good relations with her family. They abandoned her and some of her brothers have only recently started speaking to her again, more than twenty years

after she left prison. She commented:

> *When it was time to be released…I remember I left prison with the prison uniform. I did not have any clothes on me. My family took all my clothes and they did not have time to bring me any…Of course, I am from a Christian family. None of them came to meet me because I was in prison, and because I got married to a Muslim man…My husband's family welcomed me. It was a nationalist festival, not Christian or Muslim.*

Women's socio-political background plays a role in determining their experience after release, as does the extent of their family's support and whether or not their political movement acknowledges their sacrifice or gives them a position. Ahlam did not find support from her family, but her political movement supported her. Her family never accepted the fact she was involved in a military action and then married her Muslim group leader. Ahlam missed her family's support and felt isolated. However, her political movement stood by her and she now holds a high position in the Palestinian government. Many women have experiences like Ahlam and Abeer. But others, especially those who were neither political activists nor from families involved in politics, would face different challenges and responses from those around them. It is rare, however, to find one who will talk about her release, or her life after prison, because most of the women prefer silence to talking about their feelings.

Women's Bodies and Sexuality

Retab spent only a few weeks in prison, but she faced intolerance from the community who were suspicious of her experience in prison. She was in tears as she described her treatment after release.

> *It is not easy at all. Our community will never tolerate a girl who was in prison. They don't say it but not everybody can accept the fact that you were in prison… Look, I have always been proud of myself wherever I go till now. But sometimes you feel the community will never accept you as a prisoner. It is stupid how people can think in this way. We are in a very close community and I felt it when they were talking. I isolated myself from the world.*

The blame and scrutiny directed toward Retab are common reactions to formerly imprisoned women in conservative communities. This blame is painful for women and they prefer silence to this kind of blame. Some choose isolation and distance from the community, as Retab did. Avoiding others' judgements makes them feel more confident and also allows them to feel proud of their experiences.

Women's bodies and sexuality are of critical concern to the families of women prisoners after their release. The women were confined in an unknown space to which they had limited access, so they knew very little about the women's lives and experiences inside prison. Many women commented that their families were worried about them being in prison because they were women from a traditional culture under the control of a foreign male administration. This makes families anxious about their daughters' bodies and whether they experienced any sexual violence. This is a matter of deep importance for them, as discussed in previous chapters, as women's bodies are considered to be the repositories of family honour, most often symbolised in a woman's virginity. Women are thus continuously watched and policed by the wider community. If a woman is suspected or accused of inappropriate sexual behaviour, the disgrace is not only personal but also brings dishonour to the family. As a result, women are vulnerable to all manner of surveillance and violence.

As noted at the beginning of the thesis, Rasmia and Aisha Odeh are the only women who have spoken publically about being sexually abused by Shabak interrogators. In Rasmia's case, the attack was carried out in front of her father. She witnessed the pain her father suffered during the ordeal, which caused him to lose consciousness. She never saw him again afterwards because he died a short period later. Her sister went to visit her in prison and, as Rasmia recalls in the film *Women in Struggle* (2005), the first question she asked was: '*Did they take your honour?*' Rasmia comments, '*I answered her my honour is to fight for Palestine, and I will never let them take this honour. She was silent and did not ask any further questions.*' This question was direct, which surprised Rasmia and made her feel guilt toward her family, especially her father. Similarly, Rawda remembered the first question her mother asked when she came to visit her in prison for the first time: '"*Are you okay?" My mother meant to ask if I was still a virgin. I said to*

her, "Yes, I am fine." She asked if they hurt me. I said, "No, I am really all fine."' Most women face such concerns from their families, who never accepted their daughters' imprisonment. They fear that women are losing their honour, which is immediately connected to the honour of the whole family.

Women feel their families' blame and pain from the moment they leave prison, but all these feelings are never talked about directly with their families, or with anyone else. Sabreen's family, for example, welcomed her home but still she felt an underlying atmosphere of hurt and recrimination. She said:

> *My brother came to welcome me after I was released from prison with his children. When I looked in his eyes, I could feel pain. I felt bad. I felt he wanted to ask me why I had done this. I could feel it in all my family's eyes, but he never talked about it. Because I am a woman, it wasn't easy at all for my family to accept this.*

Sabreen received a warm welcome when she met her brother, but also felt the pain she caused him. She realized that this pain was caused by his sense of failure that, as her guardian, he couldn't protect her from going through the experience of imprisonment. She felt she needed to justify her actions but, at the same time, she couldn't. Instead she chose to be silent in order to keep a good relationship with her brothers and her family. Most women keep silent when it comes to issues related to their sexuality, or to their bodies, and they find another silence from their families and the community. This silence is salient and intrusive; the women feel it in every look and every expression of concern from the community. It makes them feel a constant sense of guilt toward their families, and also unable to talk freely about their experiences. For example, former women prisoners never mention the prison strip search to anyone. The women who spoke to me about the pain and humiliation of this experience, as detailed in Chapter Five, felt that they couldn't talk to anyone in the community about it because it would shame their families and provoke suspicion.

The Experience of Motherhood and Family

When I was visiting the tent of support for the Palestinian prisoners in 2012, I engaged in a lot of discussions with the people in attendance. They frequently spoke about those women who left their children and were in prison. Most people I met condemned women's contribution to the military groups, and subsequently their imprisonment, as if it had been their choice to become prisoners. One line of reasoning was that these women were merely trying to escape lives they were unhappy with or responsibilities they couldn't manage. Another suggestion was that some of the women had tried to clean themselves by participating in a national act to repair their reputations. Such judgements are a reflection of how the patriarchal gender arrangements deal with women's imprisonment.

After spending time in prison disengaged from their families, women with children are released back to their positions as mothers. They try to compensate their children and families for their loss and the time they were away. Some women feel guilty towards their children. Women resist talking about their experience and feelings after release, and, in particular, try to avoid discussing it with their families. They are worried they will be blamed, or will feel guilty. Women use different strategies to cope with their new lives with their families and children. As they re-assume their roles as mothers, they must find ways to manage the silence they face when they return and the distance their absence created, all the while resisting the pressures they face from their families, or their communities, who indirectly blame them for their own imprisonment.

Some families feel angry and find it hard to accept their married daughter's imprisonment. Salma's mother was angry and blamed Salma for putting herself in such a situation. Salma said:

> *For a long time after release, my mother was calling me every day, to check on me and whether I was participating in any political activities. She insisted she would abandon me, and would never talk to me again. I felt really sad for my mother, I asked myself why I had done this to her. Poor mom.*

Salma's mother forbade her daughter from participating in activism; she blamed her for leaving her family, becoming involved in such activities and putting herself in danger. For Salma's mother, Salma's role as a married woman was to take care of her family. She expressed her anger and threatened to disown her as a daughter if she put herself in danger again. Salma felt sorry for her mother, and tried to calm her when she called and to reassure her that she wasn't participating in any political activities and was taking care of her children and responsibilities.

Having spent so many years in isolation without actual interaction with their children and husbands, married women face many challenges when they are released. Most married women who were in prison find it difficult to return to their husbands, and to fulfill their responsibility as wives. Some of them even find it hard to communicate and go back to having a good relationship. Aisha's experience in the interrogation and in prison strongly affected her marriage, as she explained in *Women in Struggle*:

> *My relation with my husband was not very healthy. In other words, and excuse me for the topic, but what I suffered while I was being tortured does not allow me to function as a normal female…It was the most important thing when my husband was deported. I felt liberated from him, because I was unable to be natural with him…Because of the experience of the interrogation with regards to that specific matter, it had gone into my human nature, into the chemical composition of my body.*

Aisha was aware of how her sexual torture influenced her relationship with her husband, and even, as she said later, with all men. She was aware of how prison made her different than other woman in the community, and so commented that she was not 'normal' when describing her relations with her husband. But for most women, there is often a feeling of guilt and a sense of alienation. Again, most women try to avoid talking about their experience with their husbands, as they do with their other family members. Randa was angered by the question when I asked her about her husband's reactions to her imprisonment. First she said that she asked him for a divorce when she was in prison, so he would be free to get married to another woman, but he refused. When she was

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released, they never talked about her sentence or the reason behind her imprisonment. She said:

> *My husband knew that I was making sandwiches for the fighters. Someone always came to take the food for those wanted men who couldn't go to their homes to eat. This is what my husband knew about me…But that I was smuggling weapons, trained how to use weapons, of course, no…he did not know.*

As described in Chapter Four, Randa, who was pregnant at the time, was working in a secret group. She was able to use her condition and her need to access hospitals to follow up her pregnancy. Because of complications with her condition, she was referred to a hospital in Jerusalem. She used the opportunity of going to Jerusalem to help the fighters smuggle weapons. She undertook this work without her husband's knowledge. She hid everything from him, only telling him that she was preparing food for the fighters, which is acceptable work for women. But being part of the group was something she had to hide because her husband and family would not accept her putting herself in danger like this. Randa has still never talked to her husband about why she was imprisoned. She said:

> *Even now we never open this subject, and he doesn't know. He never asked me. I think he said to himself, 'If I ask her, she will be really angry.' He knows that if I get angry, it is impossible to calm down. I will leave the house, turn off my mobile, no one will know where I will be.*

Randa is afraid of having a conversation with her husband about her military activism because she is aware of the blame she will face. Such a discussion would also raise suspicions about her duties with the military group before imprisonment. Randa's husband avoids making her angry because of his underlying worry that she might put herself in danger again. So they maintain silence about her imprisonment. Usually in conservative traditional communities, for a married woman to hide things from her husband or to leave the house without his permission is considered misbehaviour that disrespects the family. It is particularly unacceptable for a woman to be involved in a

military group - an activity that already subverts her role as a wife and mother- without her husband's awareness or approval. So if Randa's husband were to talk about her activism and involvement in this secretive work it would further erode the trust between them. Randa resists justifying her imprisonment to her husband. She has tactically avoided talking about it even with her children. She is aware that the consequences of speaking openly about her imprisonment could impact on her marriage and distance her from her family. She reconciled with her family by keeping silent about this. She now gives all her attention to her family and is not involved in any political activities. She had a new child after her release, and now has good relations with her family. She returned to her previous identity of being a wife and a mother.

Salma tried to maintain a strong relationship with her husband and her children, but she found this difficult. She said:

> *The first year after prison was really hard, it is hard from all aspects. You are back to your children, to your husband. It is hard, however. My husband was in prison many times, but he was strange, very strange. My imprisonment affected him a lot.*

Salma thought that her husband would understand her experience because he knew prison and what happens there. But it was hard for him to accept her imprisonment, and she felt that there was a rift between them. She described how his demeanor changed after her imprisonment: '*He was badly affected by my experience. I told him he was strange...I told him I am the one who was in prison, so now we are both free to feel bad. He was silent. Everyone was telling me that my husband was silent during my imprisonment.*' Salma tried to talk about her imprisonment with her husband. She also made an effort to understand his feelings and reassure him.

It was hard for Salma's husband to see his wife in prison, leaving behind children who needed her. In his view, neither he nor anyone else could fill her absence in the children's lives. She said:

> *He said he felt sad when he was with the children without me. When he looked at*

them at night, he was crying, he was going crazy. I tried to calm him and said our children could manage, and he was with them. But he said it is not the same as having their mother around. He insisted that he couldn't give them what I was giving them.

Salma's husband focused on her absence from the home, and her role and responsibilities as a mother. However, she insisted on trying to make him understand the importance of her political activism, and the unjust imprisonment she went through. Nevertheless, in a traditional community, her role is to take care of her children and her home.

Bloom, Chesney & Owen (1994) argue that 'the lack of contact between imprisoned mothers and their children negatively affects the relationship between them while she is incarcerated' (6). The attempt to reunify with children after release can create another form of pressure for women trying to reintegrate into their former lives. When returning to the life from which they have been absent, some women immediately recognize the changes that have occurred while they were inside, while others try to ignore them and get back to their lives as if their imprisonment never happened. Randa was released after four years of incarceration. She went back to her home and tried to ignore the fact she had been in prison. She behaved as though nothing had changed. She recalled: '*I used to treat them like children, young children, the same age that I left them…Once I was trying to help my son to put on his socks. He was 13 or more. His sister looked at me and said, "Mom, he is old, not a child. Why are you doing this?"'* When her daughter said this to her, she realized that her children had grown and become independent. They didn't need her help. She also realized that she had missed some of their growing up. Randa tried to compensate them for her four-year absence, not acknowledging that her children had changed and that they felt strange about the way she was treating them. During her absence, their needs changed.

Women have to get to know their children and learn to understand the ways they managed to grow up without their mothers being there. Yet this must take place within a pervasive silence around why she was absent in the first place, as neither the mother, nor the children or the family talk about it. Salma's husband had been aware of her activism and even encouraged her to take leading roles. As noted in Chapter Four, he had been

imprisoned many times, and he was actually arrested again on the same day as Salma. Although he was lucky enough to be released long before Salma, so he could take care of their children, they still felt the need of their mother, especially the oldest daughter. Salma talked about her relationship with her children during the first period of her release. She said:

> When I was released I never felt a gap, I just saw sadness in their eyes all the time. I really felt sad for them. Nothing changed in our relationship because we have a strong relationship with each other. I have a deep relationship with each one and it stayed strong, somehow, with all of othem.

Salma tried to keep a strong relationship with all her family members, and tried to understand their feelings about her being absent from the house. After her release, she tried to give all her time to her family and to compensate for her time away.

While in prison, women maintain contact with their children through different methods, such as the few visits they are allowed, writing letters, or through lisetning to the greetings and news from their family in special radio programs on Palestinian channels that inmates can hear in prison. Mothers try to be present in their children's lives, despite their physical absence. Mothers try to give strength and support to their children, however many of their children feel angry and don't understand their mothers' position. Salma's daughter resented her during her imprisonment. When she was released, her daughter begged her to stop her activism. She said, '*When I was released, Safa was really angry because I was in prison…She asked me to swear to God that I would not go to prison again, as if I locked myself in there…She said they don't want any of my activities.*' Salma's daughter tried to pressure her mother not to be an activist. She was harsh with her; she wanted her mother to focus only on her family and play her role as a mother. This made Salma feel guilty about her absence from them, although she wasn't in prison as a matter of choice. Faced with her daughter's anger and anxiety, Salma began to understand the difficulty her family went through while she was imprisoned.

Many women assumed that family and friends would take care of their children while they were incarcerated but came to realise that their children had been left without the help and support they expected them to have. Sawsan was deeply saddened to find that her children did not have the good life she had hoped they would. Her sister took care of them for the eight years while she was away. She reflected on the situation, saying:

> *To be honest my sister, who was taking care of them, was uneducated and she did not have any sense of how to raise someone. This created a lot of problems. She couldn't control them, and they did not respect her…My daughter had an early marriage to escape this…My children suffered a lot.*

Sawsan was a single mother. She left her children when the oldest was 15 and the youngest was five years to navigate their own way with some volunteers from her family to look after them during her imprisonment. But she was disappointed with the way her children grew up, with her uneducated sister who did not know how to take care of them. After her release, Sawsan tried to build a strong relationship with her children. She described how she tried to become close to them, in order to understand them. She said, '*I said to my kids, "I am your mother, and also your friend, you can share with me whatever you want."*' Still, Sawsan is not totally satisfied with the way her children grew up. She remains disappointed with her sister because she did not take care of them as she should have.

Salma was also saddened that other family and friends neglected her children. She said:

> *It was a disappointment for me, to be honest, in the people around me. I thought they would take more care of my children. The thing that affected me most is how people reacted toward me. When I was released, my children started telling me what people said, and how people reacted toward them as well. It was really, really hard for me…. I did not find what I had expected from people.*

Some women find support and help from their families and husbands, which ensures that their children will be in a safe place and also gives the women themselves the strength to remain steadfast. As Fadwa, who left three of her children, said, '*It was a hard experience for me as a mother, and also for my children. But the exception was that I had my husband and his sister's support. They stayed with the kids at home. They did not become homeless. They kept the family tied.*'

When women are released they begin to see how their children survived and what sort of support network they had during their mothers' imprisonment. Most of the time this support network is made up of immediate family members, but not always with the consequences the mothers wished for, as Sawsan's experience illustrates. Most of them start to feel guilty for being away and for the hardship their children went through without them being there. They never talked to me directly about feelings of guilt, but I observed that most of them have shifted their life's focus to their families and children. Rarely do any of them participate in political activity. When I asked Randa, for example, what she was doing, she responded: '*I do nothing. I am at home all the time. I just take care of my children. I have a lot of responsibilities.*' They still talk to their children about the period of their imprisonment, asking them what they were doing and how they survived while their mothers were absent. Mothers share stories from prison with their children, especially those that reflect resistance and steadfastness. In this talk, women and their children share laughter and at other times they cry. As Sawsan said, '*When something happens, we bring it all up and we start crying.*' The experience of imprisonment leaves its effects for a long time, and it becomes part of everyday life for each woman. Even if she doesn't talk about it to any one, it is still on her mind.

The Reflection of Prison in the Space of Everyday Life

I met with Rania in her house in the city centre of Ramallah. I was amazed at the number of windows she had and the light coming in from everywhere. I also noticed the political themes of the decor. We started a conversation before the interview while preparing coffee in her kitchen. The house was on the third floor, which overlooked the city of Ramallah, and I could see the city centre, the green areas, and trees. Rania told me that she wanted her home to be open, so that she could always see outside. Rania's

husband had been imprisoned as well, so both of them wanted to have a spacious house, constructed to be open to the outside but with a lot of privacy. For them, their home reflected their struggle to gain freedom and to subvert their experiences of being confined behind locked doors and without any privacy. Rania was very excited to tell me about her home. She explained the windows to me:

> W*e told the architect that we want wide windows as a compensation for the closure we experienced in prison…So wherever you walk in our house, you can see the sky, stones, trees and this wide horizon in front of you…It is hard for cleaning purposes to have wide windows, but it was our request.*

Rania and her husband wanted their home to be a compensation for the deprivation they experienced in prison and a reflection of freedom. The wide scope of the windows enables them to see the outside freely at all times, an architecture that is antithetical to that of the prison.

Memorial Objects from Prison

Most of the homes of participants I visited during my fieldwork were full of traditional Palestinian embroidery depicting political themes. The image below is of the embroidered Palestinian map in Rania's home. It is placed in a prominent position in the middle of the living room. Rania made this original piece in the last and longest prisoners' strike, which was organized to demand her freedom. In this piece, she expresses her steadfastness and political beliefs. She portrays the historical map of Palestine to reflect its previous geographical nature, with the names of the main cities as they were in 1948. There are no dividing walls or barriers between cities in this map. Along the side of the map is the Palestinian flag and the word Palestine written in Arabic. She signed the piece with the olive tree. Because of its strong roots and ability to survive the hardship of the environment, the olive tree is used by Palestinians as a symbol of sumud and steadfastness. She then wrote the name of the prison where she produced it (Thelmond), and the year in which she finished it (1996, the year before her release).

Figure (8): Embroidered map of Palestine handmade by Palestinian woman during her imprisonment.

Rania was eager to show me all the pieces she or her mother had produced while Rania was incarcerated. These pieces make a visible record in her home of their history of political struggle and imprisonment. These objects are a reminder for them of their strong sumud and also of their important contribution to the national movements and Palestinian history.

Conclusion

This chapter discussed the aftermath of Israeli prison in the lives of Palestinian women. These women move from confinement within walls and locked doors to the broader confinement of life under occupation. This experience interpellates subjects, influencing their reentry in the community and their performance as political prisoners. Abdo (2014) argues that after leaving prison, time and space re-emerge, having new functions, and that women also take on the new public role of the former prisoner. Women find strategies to create their space of negotiation which enables them deal with the new /old and open space, and also to deal with the vast changes that took place while they were imprisoned. A sense of solidarity grows among women who have experienced prison, which makes them able to understand each other's feelings and experiences. Some of them perceive a divided world in which they only feel truly comfortable and understood when socializing and interacting with fellow former prisoners. The majority of former prisoners focus their political and public activism on showing solidarity and

support for the prisoners still inside Israeli prisons. Silence is a common strategy women use to resist feelings of shame or to deflect blame from their families or communities. Silence, furthermore, is a strategy to deal with the concerns and suspicions of those around them about sexual violence and the dishonouring of women's bodies inside Israeli prison. Silence is a way of hiding and avoiding. The fear of distorting the pristine image of political prisoners also entrenches silence. Most women try to deny any political conflict or personal violence they experienced from other Palestinians. They feel that if they said anything, it would destroy the community's image of prisoners and would be considered a betrayal of Palestinian politics. To sum, former Palestinian women prisoners feel that they are watched all the time. They are watched by their families and they are watched by the community, so they act and interact as the community expects them to as former prisoners. The Israeli occupation is present in their daily lives directly through the checkpoints, or indirectly as the authorities collect information about them after their release. These panoptic gazes follow them all the time, making women feel suspicious, worried, and constantly subjugated.

Conclusion: Palestinian Women's Sumud and Israeli Colonial Prisons

We Palestinians are supposed to be dedicated to one subject - liberating Palestine. This is a prison. We're human, we love, we fear death, and we enjoy the first flowers of spring. So to express this is resistance against having our subject dictated to us. If I write love poems, I resist the conditions that don't allow me to write love poems.

Mahmoud Darwish, *In the Presence of Absence*, 1988[13]

In this quote Darwish defines sumud and resistance in an artistic way to illustrate its importance in the liberation of Palestine. For him, sumud means keeping strong and maintaining life and hope under the Israeli occupation. Sumud is an important theme that has been developed throughout this thesis. I have examined how it is constructed in the everyday practices of Palestinians, who bear the restrictions of the Israeli occupation as a means of resistance. This research set out to explore how experiences of imprisonment in Israeli colonial prisons have influenced Palestinian women socially, politically, and individually. I have focused on former Palestinian women prisoners' life experience before, during, and after imprisonment in order to trace the way in which their political subjecthood - which I define as their roles in the Palestinian national struggle and their political performance - has been constricted and transformed.

Sumud is an important resource for former Palestinian women prisoners' through their journeys. It is shaped and reshaped according to the politics of the space and situation. This study sought to understand how women create a space of negotiation, constructed according to their understanding of the boundaries drawn around them by the patriarchal gender arrangements and also by the Israeli occupation, which is present in all aspects of their everyday lives, inside and outside prison. Inspired by Homi K. Bhabha's (1988) concept of Third Space, I have suggested that the space of negotiation is flexible and transformative and is also organized by the social translation and transformation of experiences. This conceptual framework is useful in understanding how Palestinian

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[13]http://www.mahmouddarwish.com/ui/english/ShowContentA.aspx?ContentId=5

women become part of military groups and how their political subjecthood is constructed in specific spaces. Women have to perform different identities suitable for the particular situation and space. Women chose these identities according to their understanding of the boundaries imposed upon them by the different technologies the Israeli occupation uses to control the Palestinian Territories and also the boundaries drawn around Palestinian women by the patriarchal gender arrangements. Sumud is an important element for former Palestinian women prisoners' in building the space of negotiation, which is constructed according to the limitations and difficulties that women are negotiating. Sumud is reshaped when a woman is arrested and stronger resistance is demanded. Women should not collaborate with the Israeli colonial prisons authority and also should use incarceration to educate themselves. Sumud here becomes a strategy to challenge the isolation and deprivation of prison. After women are released, their sumud in prison glorified, by them and the community, but is still a part of their everyday lives. In this thesis, I have illustrated how sumud is the basis from which Palestinian women build a space of negotiation, before, during and after imprisonment.

Theoretical Implications

This thesis addresses a gap in literature on Palestinian women, their experiences in the national struggle, and the practice of sumud in resisting the Israeli occupation. Palestinian women's experience is scarcely documented. In most cases, the existing literature describes women's roles without detailed analysis or focuses on their roles in community and social work. In this literature, women are also often discussed primarily as victims, lacking agency. In this regard, Shalhoub-Kevorkian (2010) argues that much of this discourse focuses 'only on women's victimization, their displacement, and so on without looking at the complexity of the geo-economic politics of their suffering and loss' (2). This thesis seeks to address the lack of studies that focus on former Palestinian women prisoners'. Discussing the literature on Palestinian political prisoners, Nashif (2008) argues that most of this work 'deals with male political captives, and when female political captives are discussed, they are brought in to illustrate the differences between the experiences of men and women in the prison, in order to elaborate on the arguments concerning the male captives' (17). As Ahmed (1992) points out: 'Like every other

national project, the Palestinian one is a male project' (cited in Nashif 2008: 17). Abdo suggests that more work needs to be done on the experiences of Palestinian women political prisoners, and their roles in the resistance movements. In her book *Captive Revolution* (2014), she highlights 'the absence of academic and especially feminist institutional interest in the lives and experiences of women's anti-colonial armed struggle' (1). In the beginning of my research, I also encountered a distinct lack of resources to shed light on women's political subjectivities and how they become involved in the resistance movements. In this case, this thesis gives much needed attention to the narratives of former Palestinian women political prisoners', who have rarely been the subject of sociological research.

This research is based on feminist standpoint theory, which aims to facilitate voicing silenced and marginalized groups such as Palestinian women political prisoners, through focusing on their own narratives and contributions. By giving these narratives weight, this thesis helps us to understand how Palestinian women political prisoners' experiences are different and need to be considered. As a Palestinian woman researcher, I was able to understand the gender arrangements and women's position within it, as well as the precarity and restriction of life under occupation. This helped in negotiating the interviews, getting data and making connections with the participants. It also facilitated my communication with them and helped me to build trust with them.

Research Questions

I have formulated research questions that I had been interested in before starting my PhD, and which I have further refined and developed through the process of doing the research. I wanted to understand how the Israeli occupation opens the private space to the public and how women deal with this exposure. I was interested in examining how resistance and sumud are performed by Palestinian women, and how their sumud is constituted. I have asked how Palestinian women come to understand themselves under the surveillance and restrictions of the occupation, as well as how they challenge their everyday roles as women and their invisibility within resistance movements. I have also asked how Palestinian women who were or are involved in political and military resistance movements challenge the patriarchal gender arrangements. I have investigated

how they negotiate their boundaries, limitations and the complications of participation in armed groups. I was also interested in learning how women negotiate the different political movements to become part of the military groups, to understand what roles women played within these groups, and what their positions were.

I was interested to understand how prison, a place of repression and silencing, can also become a space enabling women to articulate a political identity. How does this political identity function and how is it performed? I have also asked how politics on the outside influences prisoners' decisions, social relations, and daily lives. I have further investigated how agency can be performed inside prison, and how women negotiate the restrictions of carceral space and the tactics they use to survive. To understand how incarceration impacts upon Palestinian women's social, political, and individual experiences, I have argued that it is important to pay attention to what happens to women after prison, examining the experiences of my participants after being in an Israeli colonial prison, which is, as noted, perceived to be a very masculine space. I have considered how women define themselves and deal with the labels, stigma and suspicions of the community, asking what tactics women use to negotiate their re-entry and to situate themselves as political prisoners, and how they structured their space of negotiation.

Findings Discussion

This research was an opportunity for me as Palestinian woman and researcher to learn about former Palestinian women prisoners', and their contribution to the national struggle. I have learned how women negotiated and dealt with the restrictions around them, challenging the conservative culture that appears to encourage women and to consider them as partners in the liberation of Palestine, but which, underneath the surface, discourages women from taking roles in armed resistance. I argue that the Palestinian community is a hybrid society; it produces and reproduces itself according to the political situation and the different tactics that the occupation employs against it. As such, the themes of the patriarchal gender arrangements transform in response to the constant state of attack and exposure in which Palestinians live under the occupation, allowing this system to maintain its power.

Palestinian women use different tactics to create and define identities that are suitable for the space of negotiation in incarcerated and restricted space. Shalhoub-Kervorkian (2010) argues that women develop various methods to participate in the political struggle as invisible actors, an invisibility necessitated by the patriarchal culture's highly charged symbolization of womanhood as an object of protection. Here her primary focus is on women on the home front and their struggle under the occupation and the patriarchal community. I argue, however, that women have used this invisibility as a tactic not only to deal with the Israeli occupation on the home front, but also to be part of resistance movements and armed groups. I have shown that women use their invisibility to manage and negotiate within conservative Palestinian communities that oppose women's involvement in military resistance. As such, their personal experience and awareness of their surroundings give women the skills they need to negotiate and survive the restrictions and surveillance around them.

Palestinian women live in multi-layered boundaries. The conservative culture is anxious about women's bodies and sexuality and places further social restrictions on women in order to protect them. Palestinian women become political subjects without a choice; their private homes become the home front through the different tactics employed by the Israeli occupation, including intrusion in and confiscation and demolition of homes. Palestinian women are targeted by the Israeli occupation, which is constructed in the everyday lives of Palestinians, inside their homes and in the streets. All these attacks to the private realm expose women to the public, where they have to face the Israeli occupation in the activities of everyday lives. Palestinian women have to keep sumud as part of their resistance and to put emphasis on Palestinian rights. This experience of sumud and their personal experiences under occupation encourage women to become part of political groups and become something other than wives, mothers and daughters who are always relegated to private spaces. Palestinian women are thus subject to what Foucault terms the 'panoptic gaze', a constant social surveillance that follows women in every aspect of their lives. This constrains women's mobility and their ability to freely take part in political activity. But Palestinian women develop different tactics to survive these restrictions and boundaries and to shape their space of negotiation. Palestinian women, therefore, learn how to negotiate restrictions and surveillance and to create their

own opportunities to take part in the resistance movements. The invisibility of their political subjectivity is tactically necessary in order for them to deflect attention from their roles in militant groups.

I found that the moment of arrest constitutes the moment of exposure for Palestinian women. The arrest uncovers women's secret roles in military groups and triggers a reshaping of their space of negotiation. After this shift, they must perform their political subjectivity at all times, resisting Israeli power and threats, and keeping their fears and worries undercover. And so Palestinian women are pressured to perform their political subjecthood, and act strong, like ideal political prisoners. The experience of arrest and interrogation is the first direct encounter with the Israeli occupation, and so women have to keep their sumud, which is shaped by refusing to cooperate. These direct encounters showcase the agency of Palestinian women as political subjects, able to speak, strike and resist the Israeli interrogators. Palestinian women transform this space of negotiation to enact agency and resistance to reflect their sumud and steadfastness not to cooperate with the Israeli interrogators. The Israeli occupation use different tactics to pressure women to confess, such as the threat of sexual abuse and isolating women in a very small cells lacking basic hygiene or a space to sleep. Palestinian women, however, cope with this deprivation and violence and try to show the Israeli interrogators their carelessness and their sumud, while hiding their fears and worries.

Politics construct the everyday life of Palestinian women prisoners inside Israeli colonial prisons. They gain knowledge before and through their imprisonment about their rights as political prisoners, and they use this knowledge to enable them to perform as political prisoners. This identity will stay with them for the whole period of imprisonment. And so the prison becomes a site of reflective political and symbolic significance in state conflict. Inmates perform the political and national themes, hiding their desire and emotions. Sumud is performed strongly in the prison space which is shaped through challenging the deprivation of prison, through the different political activities, and the educational sessions prisoners organize. The women also perform sumud through bearing the hardship of the surveillance of the prison in order to maintain their political activities. Women succeed in maintaining a secret space of negotiation in which they can express their desires under the cover of politics; this space is forged from

women's understanding of the boundaries that restrict them inside prison, where they are under the direct panoptic of the prison guards, as well as the indirect social panoptic of patriarchal Palestinian culture. Palestinian women prisoners are not divided or isolated from this culture because they are physically separated from it. I conclude from the different stories and experiences of the women I interviewed that the patriarchal gender arrangements are themselves restructured inside prison, where some women play the role of censors, watching other women and directing them to perform as political subjects at all times. This new structure is not divided from the outside system, but it is connected to it, and directed by it.

Reintegration into society and community is not a smooth process for many former women prisoners. Upon their release, the women are moved from a small, walled prison to a large open-air prison (Abdo, 2014: 197). Women must deal with the realization that the world outside has changed, often drastically, from when they were imprisoned. Former prisoners feel that they are under surveillance all the time in their community; as such, they often try to perform a conservative persona. They talk about politics all the time in public, continually emphasizing their resistance against the prison guards and their sumud in the face of deprivation and Israeli violence. Women former prisoners try to glorify their sumud in prison all the time, they try to focus on how they succeeded in surviving the prison, and perform the political subject they built inside prison. Women find strategies to create their space of negotiation which enables them to deal with the restrictions and pressure around them, and also to deal with the vast changes that took place while they were imprisoned.

A sense of solidarity grows among women who have experienced prison, which enables them to understand each other's feelings and experiences. Some of them perceive a divided world in which they only feel truly comfortable and understood when socializing and interacting with fellow former prisoners. Women develop their own strategies of negotiation to counter the suspicions, restrictions, and blame around them after prison. Silence is a common strategy women use to resist feelings of shame or to deflect blame from their families or communities. Silence is a way of hiding and avoiding. But it also gives women space to live and interact with their surroundings without worry. Time is the only healer, as some of the participants have commented.

For many, their prison experience becomes a part of their past that they are proud of, but most of them nonetheless avoid talking about it in detail to other people in the community, and this is part of the adaptation to, and survival of, life after prison.

Recommendation for future research

The period of writing this thesis is synchronous with the uprising in Jerusalem that some people have called the Third Intifada. Youth in different cities went to Israeli checkpoints and started throwing stones at the Israeli soldiers. There have also been numerous attacks in which Palestinian youth have stabbed Israeli settlers or soldiers. Women are very active and they are on the street, side-by-side with the Palestinian men. According to an article published by Aljazeera and written by Khaled Diab (2015), most of the stabbings in Jerusalem against the Israeli soldiers and settlers are a feature of this current uprising. People under the age of 25 carried out the majority of these attacks; high numbers of the attacks were carried out by young women. A central concern for me as a researcher is to explore why Palestinian women have become visible and acknowledged in this uprising, and how they become part of these actions, challenging the patriarchal gender arrangements. I am also interested in how the community deals with these women and talks about them. What tactics did these young women use to negotiate and become visible in this uprising, and how will this change the position of Palestinian women in politics?

Conclusion

Palestinian women have always played important roles in resisting the Israeli occupation. They have been side-by-side with men, and their experiences are worthy of documentation and analysis. We need to understand how women survive and keep their sumud through their lives under the occupation. It is also important to understand how women's bodies become a battlefield for the Israeli occupation and also for the Palestinian patriarchal gender arrangements, both of them using women's sexuality as a method to exercise their power. In most research about Palestinian women under the Israeli occupation, they have been represented as victims, lacking agency, or described generally and without depth. It was important for me to show how Palestinian women are

able to keep their sumud under all the pressure they face in their lives, and to resist the boundaries around them by creating this space of negotiation. In this way, women can exercise their agency, enjoy some amount of freedom and choice and reflect their agency. For this I felt it was important to raise the voices and highlight the experiences of these women who have sacrificed their freedom and spent years of their lives in prison to resist the Israeli occupation.

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