

# Ex-Gazans in Jordan:

## From Legal ‘Outsiders’ to Political ‘Outsiders’

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To Sukayna,

This essay is dedicated to you and your family. I owe so much of this research to your generous help. Thank you for showing me warmth, hospitality and friendship beyond measure; thank you, most of all, for sharing your story with me.

I regret that we did not meet again before you passed on. I do not know anyone with a stronger spirit and a kinder soul, and I pray that your family find solace in remembering you. May your daughters inherit your kindness and strength of will. Rest in peace.

سكينة، انا دائما رح اتذكرك  
الله يرحمك ويجعل مثواك الجنة

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*The ex-Gazans in Jordan are a minority group of Palestinian refugees that rarely feature in academic literature. Despite facing systemic conditions of statelessness that are particular to them, their distinctive experiences are often rendered invisible in research which focuses on the Palestinian community in Jordan as a whole. This article examines how ex-Gazans construct their identities as Palestinians in view of their social and legal circumstances. Using interviews conducted with residents of Hussein camp and Jerash camp in Jordan, this article argues that the ex-Gazans' experience of discrimination in Jordan is layered with pervasive reminders of an 'outsider' status that other Palestinians are not subject to. Their constructions of Palestinian identity consequently align with this 'outsider' status such that they avoid making political demands of their host state, Jordan. These findings problematize scholarly explanations given for Palestinian refugees' apparent political apathy in Jordan, which neglect the distinction between Palestinians with Jordanian citizenship and stateless Palestinians.*

## **Introduction**

Since the creation of the state of Israel in 1948, displacement has become a defining feature of being Palestinian. Entire generations of Palestinians have grown up as displaced persons across the Middle East, Europe and the Americas. Some Palestinian families have suffered displacement more than once, including those who have fled the ongoing civil war in Syria.<sup>1</sup> The sheer diversity in Palestinian experiences of displacement means that there is hardly a singular understanding of what it means to be Palestinian, and questions of Palestinian identity and selfhood become exceedingly complex. Hanafi (2011, 455) acknowledged this complexity in arguing that understanding a prospective Palestinian return to the homeland first requires “a sociological understanding of the political, social and cultural attributes of the Palestinian people” that accounts for the socioeconomic and cultural integration of Palestinians in their host countries. In this essay, I aim to contribute to such a sociological understanding of Palestinian

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<sup>1</sup> Bolongaro, Kait. *Palestinian Syrians: Twice Refugees*, Al Jazeera, 23 March 2016, <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2016/03/palestinian-syrians-refugees-160321055107834.html>. Accessed 8 October 2018.

identity by examining questions of integration and identity among a community of Palestinians residing in Jordan commonly referred to as the ex-Gazans.

Jordan remains the only state to have granted full citizenship to Palestinian refugees en masse. Most of the country's 2.2 million Palestinians are therefore able to express themselves as legitimate members of the political community. However, the same cannot be said of the approximately 158,000 ex-Gazans in Jordan who do not enjoy the suite of privileges that citizenship entails.<sup>2</sup> These ex-Gazans are typically the families of Palestinian refugees who fled to Jordan from Gaza during the Six-Day War in 1967. Drawing on my own fieldwork, I argue that the status of ex-Gazans as legal 'outsiders' transforms them into political 'outsiders' who avoid making political claims on their host state, even on issues concerning Israel. This stands in stark contrast to the attitudes of Palestinians with Jordanian citizenship, for whom a sense of Palestinian identity translates into political demands on the Jordanian state. Through my discussion of the ex-Gazans, I will also dispute the notion that Palestinian refugees in Jordan generally enact a retreat into an 'ordinary' realm, a proposition put forward by political anthropologist Luigi Achilli (2014).

## **Methodology**

I conducted semi-structured interviews in April 2017 with Palestinian residents of Palestinian refugee camps in Jordan. Of the ten recognized Palestinian refugee camps which house approximately 370,000 Palestinian refugees in Jordan, I chose Hussein camp and Jerash camp as my field sites due to their stark demographic differences.<sup>3</sup> Built in 1952 to accommodate refugees from the first Arab-Israeli war, Hussein camp accommodates 32,000 registered Palestinian refugees, 90% of whom hold Jordanian citizenship.<sup>4</sup> On the other hand, Jerash camp comprises mostly ex-Gazans, having been set up in 1968 to shelter refugees from the Six-Day War. Consequently, only about 6% of Jerash camp's 29,000 residents hold Jordanian citizenship (Tiltnes and Zhang 2013).<sup>5</sup> The different geographic locations of the two camps was also a salient consideration for my choice. As Hussein camp is now spatially integrated into downtown Amman, residents of Hussein camp are deeply embedded in the social environment of a cosmopolitan city where intermarriages between Palestinians and Jordanians are common and

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<sup>2</sup> Estimated population sizes of Palestinians and ex-Gazans in Jordan are cited from *Protection in Jordan*, UNRWA, <https://www.unrwa.org/activity/protection-jordan>. Accessed 8 October 2018.

<sup>3</sup> Estimated total Palestinian refugee population residing in the ten Palestinian refugee camps in Jordan is cited from *Where We Work*, UNRWA, <https://www.unrwa.org/where-we-work/jordan>. Accessed 8 October 2018.

<sup>4</sup> Estimated population size of Hussein camp is cited from *Jabal El-Hussein Camp*, UNRWA, <https://www.unrwa.org/where-we-work/jordan/jabal-el-hussein-camp>. Accessed 8 October 2018.

<sup>5</sup> Estimated population size of Jerash camp is cited from *Jerash Camp*, UNRWA, <https://www.unrwa.org/where-we-work/jordan/jerash-camp>. Accessed 8 October 2018.

intercommunal divisions matter less to the burgeoning middle class (Tobin 2012). However, Jerash camp is located well beyond the Amman municipality, in a village cluster where Palestinian-Jordanian social divisions are firmly entrenched. As will become apparent later, the interview responses of my research participants largely reflect the different social environments they inhabit in Hussein and Jerash camp.

I conducted a total of four interviews in Jerash camp and five in Hussein camp. Given my limited proficiency in spoken Arabic, these interviews were conducted with the help of a translator who was herself a Palestinian with Jordanian citizenship. All of my interviewees in Jerash camp were ex-Gazans without Jordanian citizenship, except one ex-Gazan respondent who had obtained citizenship through marriage. Of my interviews in Hussein camp, four respondents were citizen Palestinians and one was ex-Gazan without Jordanian citizenship. Additionally, my participant sample comprised an even balance of males and females. As the objective of this essay is illuminate the political identities of the ex-Gazans, I focus largely on the responses of my ex-Gazan participants here. Where relevant, however, I contrast their responses with those of my other interviewees to illustrate the peculiarities of being ex-Gazan in Jordan.

## **Palestinians and the Jordanian State**

### The historical roots of Palestinian-Jordanian tension

To gain a comprehensive understanding of ex-Gazan identity, their statelessness must first be situated within the wider context of the Palestinian-Jordanian tensions in the country. Historically, the extension of Jordanian citizenship to Palestinian refugees was a means of territorial expansion. King Abdullah I of Jordan had long harbored ambitions to rule over Greater Syria, and the 1948 Arab-Israeli war presented him the opportunity to fulfill his expansionist agenda in Palestine (Massad 2001). Following Jordan's military annexation of central Palestine in December 1948, King Abdullah signed an addendum to the 1928 Law of Nationality that extended Jordanian citizenship to the Palestinian residents of Jordan's newly extended borders. Article 2 of the 1949 addendum states that

“All those who are habitual residents, at the time of the application of this law, of Transjordan or the Western Territory administered by the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, and who hold Palestinian nationality, are considered as having already acquired Jordanian nationality and to enjoy all the rights and obligations that Jordanians have.” (Massad 2001, 39)

Citizenship was thereby granted to the Palestinian refugees of the 1948 war who had settled in Jordan, providing the formal political basis for the unification of central Palestine and

Jordan (Brand 1995). A year later, the Jordanian government renamed central Palestine the “West Bank of the Hashemite Jordanian Kingdom” (the “West Bank” in short) to reflect this absorption of territory (Massad 2001, 229). In 1954, the Jordanian Law of Nationality was again amended to include Palestinians and their descendants who were “habitually residents in February 1954 in Jordan” (Achilli 2014, 237). From the state’s perspective, ‘Jordan’ in 1954 included the West Bank. The Palestinians who later fled the West Bank to Jordan during the 1967 Six-Day War were therefore Jordanian citizens by default. By contrast, Gaza was administered by the Egyptian government prior to 1967 (Feldman 2012). Palestinian refugees who arrived in Jordan in 1967 from Gaza thus were not entitled to Jordanian citizenship.

King Abdullah’s expansionist ambitions would end in failure. Jordanian policy vis-à-vis the Palestinians underwent a drastic reversal after the 1970 civil war in Jordan known as Black September. The events of Black September pitted the guerrilla forces of the Palestinian Resistance Movement (PRM), the *fedayeen*, against the Hashemite monarchy in Jordan in a violent struggle for the right to represent the Palestinian people. The Hashemites emerged victorious and subsequently evicted the PRM organizations from their strongholds in Jordan (Fruchter-Ronen 2008). Black September was a battle between the PRM leadership and the Hashemite monarchy rather than between Palestinians and Jordanians. A sizable number of the soldiers who fought for the Hashemites against the PRM were of Palestinian origin, and a significant proportion of the approximately 5000 soldiers who defected to the PRM were Jordanians of Jordanian descent (Massad 2001). An inter-communal divide between Palestinians and Jordanians became prominent only after the war, when the Jordanian state sought to mold a nationalist Jordanian identity which excluded Palestinian elements.

Key to the creation of this exclusionist national identity was the appointment of Wasfi Al-Tall as prime minister on 28 October 1971. Under Al-Tall’s administration, hundreds of Palestinian officials deemed pro-*fedayeen* were dismissed from the civil service and security forces of Jordan. In conjunction with the appointment of high-ranking public officials whose anti-Palestine dispositions were widely known, the purge succeeded in drastically diminishing Palestinian influence within state institutions. The resulting ‘Jordanization’ of the bureaucracy was accompanied by Al-Tall’s campaign to cripple Palestinian influence outside state apparatus, namely in professional associations and unions (Fruchter-Ronen 2008). The state effort to minimize Palestinian influence in all major spheres of life would in the 1970s extend to higher education, with the introduction of unofficial quotas for Palestinian faculty in Jordanian universities. The proportion of faculty who were Palestinian quickly shrunk from the majority to a minority (Massad 2001).

Even cultural expressions of Palestinian identity were curtailed by the state, with decidedly Jordanian cultural symbols promoted in their stead. Nimr Sarhan, an expert in Palestinian folklore, established the Committee for the Annual Palestinian Folklore Day in 1981. He was later incarcerated by the Jordanian government, his folklore exhibits were cancelled by the police, and he was subsequently prevented from returning to his work on Palestinian culture. By contrast, the state-launched Jerash Festival of Culture always features Jordanian Bedouin ‘*Dabkah*’ performances and songs (Massad 2001). The state-endorsed marginalization of Palestinians in Jordan has rendered them what Massad calls an ‘othered’ community, whose collective identity is not only relegated to second-class but is, more significantly, defined by its exclusion from the national Jordanian identity.

#### Contemporary tensions between Palestinians and Jordanians

The state animosity towards Palestinians has paved the way for significant Palestinian-Jordanian tension within the general population today, much of which revolves around a stark economic divide. Ever since Al-Tall’s administration, the Jordanians have controlled the public sector whereas the Palestinians have come to dominate the private sector. This paved the way for widespread fear among Jordanians that Palestinians could use their economic power in the private sector to destabilize the Jordanian economy. Adherents to this view typically point to the aftermath of Jordan’s disengagement with the West Bank in 1988, when Palestinians caused the Jordanian dinar to crash by withdrawing their money from Jordanian banks all at once (Reiter 2004). In response, the Palestinians decry their political disempowerment in the country, often citing parliamentary under-representation as evidence of the vice-grip that Jordanians maintain on political influence (Ryan 2011).

Palestinian grievances against the Jordanian community are compounded by their lack of access to state resources. In Jordan, the ease with which a citizen might access state resources relies considerably on an individual’s *wasta*. Literally meaning ‘the middle,’ *wasta* refers to the use of family or tribal connections to obtain jobs, credit, favors, and housing among other things (Achilli 2014). That the overwhelming majority of state employees are Jordanian means that everyday Jordanians are likely able to use *wasta* to cut red tape in bureaucratic processes. On the other hand, Palestinians are denied this privilege because of their diminished numbers in the public sector (Brand 1995).

To capture the sense in which Palestinian identity in Jordan is defined by exclusion from the national Jordanian identity, anthropologist Luigi Achilli (2014) borrows the concept of the friend-enemy distinction from German political theorist Carl Schmitt. Schmitt argued that ‘the political’ is inherently antagonistic, since identifying as a member of any political community

requires a concomitant understanding of the conditions which disqualify that membership. Because the ‘other’ is defined precisely as that which ‘we’ members of the political community are not, the ‘other’ is said to be “existentially something different and alien” (Schmitt 2008, 27). But the ‘other’ is not simply different – it is an enemy. In the Schmittian ‘political,’ the designation of ‘enemy’ follows concrete actions of the ‘other’ which are “judged to pose an immediate existential threat to the life of the community” (Rae 2016, 263). Identification with ‘friends’ of the same community, then, is predicated on a perception of existential threat posed by the ‘enemy.’

Schmitt’s friend-enemy distinction aptly describes the dynamic between the Palestinian and Jordanian communities in Jordan. Besides facing exclusion from the national Jordanian identity, the Palestinians are also often construed as an existential threat to the Jordanian community. To many Jordanians, the events of Black September and the 1988 dinar crash demonstrate that the Palestinians are capable of mounting damaging campaigns against them. Palestinians in Jordan are generally all subject to this process of ‘othering’ and are designated as the ‘enemy’ of the Jordanian community.

Within the Palestinian community, however, an important distinction should be made between those who possess Jordanian citizenship and those who do not. The ex-Gazans belong to the latter category. In the following sections, I seek to demonstrate that statelessness significantly colors the experiences of ex-Gazans as the ‘other’ and manifests in a political identity markedly different from those of their citizen counterparts. I conclude with a discussion of how my findings problematize Achilli’s use of the friend-enemy distinction to explain the political inactivity of the Palestinian refugees. His explanatory account makes no distinction between citizen and non-citizen Palestinians, which I argue qualifies the applicability of his theory.

### **Being an ex-Gazan ‘Other’**

#### Not only stateless, but an ‘outsider’

The vast majority of ex-Gazans in Jordan remain legally stateless to this day, though a few have obtained Jordanian citizenship through marriage. They hold temporary Jordanian passports which require renewal every two years, but do not possess a national ID number. This ID number is the crucial administrative detail that allows Palestinians with citizenship to access all the same political and civil rights as Jordanians. Those without national numbers face severe handicaps in accessing economic opportunities and aid services. Formal employment requires a work permit from the Jordanian government, the successful application for which requires ex-Gazans to prove they have skills or qualifications not already available in the Jordanian workforce. They cannot

drive taxis or buses because a national number is needed to apply for public driving licenses. Employment opportunities abroad are greatly curtailed by the 2-year validity of their passports (Tiltne and Zhang 2013). Furthermore, ministerial permission is required for non-citizens to own immovable property or to rent property for more than three years, making the acquisition of property beyond the cramped confines of the camp effectively impossible. Reports have thus surfaced of ex-Gazans entering informal agreements with Jordanian citizens who purchase land on their behalf. Feldman (2012) provides the example of a Jordanian man who passed away while holding title to the property of approximately one hundred ex-Gazan residents of Jerash camp. She notes that the heirs of the deceased man were under no legal obligations to honor the claims of the ex-Gazans to their property, even if they did so out of compassion.

Furthermore, citizenship status impacts a Palestinian refugee's access to financial aid. Non-citizens face severely limited access to monetary aid from the Jordan National Aid Fund (NAF) and rely instead on the United Nations Relief and Work Agency (UNRWA), the humanitarian arm of the UN dedicated solely to Palestinian refugees. This is significant considering that the NAF on average disburses more than five times the financial support that the UNRWA provides to each poor refugee household. Within the camps, the median annual support received per refugee household from the NAF was 792 JD, while the corresponding figure for the UNRWA was 184 JD. Given the huge disparity between citizen and non-citizen access to socioeconomic resources, it is unsurprising that poverty rates are much higher in Jerash camp than in Hussein camp (Tiltne and Zhang 2013).

The socioeconomic disadvantages of statelessness have a substantive impact on the identities of ex-Gazans. Their lack of citizenship rights leads to frequent encounters of discrimination that never allow them to forget their legal status as 'outsiders' in Jordan. One of my ex-Gazan interviewees from Jerash camp, Amani, used to work as a teacher in a private school. Out of the 150 JD monthly salary fixed in her contract, she was given only 90 JD. Amani recounted that to justify the exploitative wage reduction, her employer would tell her she "should be thankful" she was even employed, given the extreme difficulty that ex-Gazans face in securing employment. Her story is one of the many in which ex-Gazans, due to their non-citizen status, have vastly different experiences of ordinary, daily activities compared to those of Jordanian citizens. Tissam, another ex-Gazan from Jerash camp, recounted an incident in which she sought medical treatment for her mother in a local hospital. Upon entering the hospital, they were immediately asked if they had the necessary insurance coverage for free treatment. Only Jordanian citizens are eligible for this insurance, however, and Tissam subsequently paid the full cost of the treatment. In her case, unlike Amani's, there was no malice on the part of the hospital staff. It was a simple, necessary administrative procedure that sufficed to remind Tissam and her

mother that in the eyes of the state, they were foreigners; that alone evoked considerable resentment in them. Both Amani and Tissam further noted that when ex-Gazans attend university, they pay the tuition fees of foreign students. In innumerable aspects of their lives, ex-Gazans are forced to confront their lack of citizenship privileges, making them acutely aware of their formal exclusion from the Jordanian nation. An additional layer of ‘foreign-ness’ thus attends the ex-Gazan experience of ‘other-ness’ that all Palestinians in Jordan are subject to.

This would explain the tendency among my interviewees who were citizen Palestinians to personally identify as Jordanian whereas my ex-Gazan respondents typically disavowed a Jordanian identity. Palestinians with Jordanian citizenship can conduct their daily affairs without pervasive reminders of foreign-ness. Though aware of the state discrimination directed at all Palestinians, they are able to speak as a legitimate member of the Jordanian nation. Khalid, a citizen Palestinian from Hussein camp, claimed that Jordan is “my country too” and “in my blood” while acknowledging in the same interview that he was not a “son of this country.” By contrast, the ex-Gazans overwhelmingly refused to assume the label of ‘Jordanian.’ Two ex-Gazans remarked to me that even if they were offered Jordanian citizenship with all its benefits, they would reject it. The imposition of ‘foreign-ness’ upon the ex-Gazans induces an internalization of their exclusion from the Jordanian polity, allowing the ex-Gazans to situate themselves squarely on the Palestinian side of the friend-enemy distinction.

An exception is to be found in the person of Amani. She was granted Jordanian citizenship when she married a Jordanian man, and her story illustrates the drastic effect citizenship can have on ex-Gazan identity. When I asked her to define Jordanian-ness, our exchange went as follows:

Me: What makes a Jordanian a Jordanian?

Amani: Everything is available to them. Being Jordanian-Jordanian represents the right situation of having access to all the services – health, education – all of it. They are citizens in every sense of the word, with access to all their rights and services.

Like the rest of the ex-Gazans interviewed, Amani takes citizenship to signify material benefits such as access to health services, education and employment. Unlike most ex-Gazans, she was able to gain access to these benefits. After marrying her Jordanian husband, her new legal status as citizen enabled her to secure stable employment in Amman with a 350JD monthly salary. Recalling that Amani had previously been subject to illegal wage reduction, her Jordanian citizenship had essentially rescued her from absurdly low wages and the indignity of exploitation. Amani appeared consequently to identify as Jordanian, as seen in the following exchange:

Me: Do you see yourself as Jordanian?

Amani: Yes. And I do not want to go back to be a Palestinian because I suffered from that.

Me: What do you mean by saying you do not want to be a Palestinian?

Amani: When it comes to official papers, documents, I am more satisfied to be a Jordanian because it makes my life easier. But of course, I love that I am Palestinian.

How is it that Amani both loves being Palestinian and yet does not want to be Palestinian? My interpretation is that Amani has taken the suffering induced by her statelessness as emblematic of Palestinian-ness. In addition to her mistreatment by her previous employer, Amani had also recounted incidences of being shunned in university by Jordanian students who realized she was Palestinian. Given the host of difficulties she associates with being recognized as Palestinian in public arenas like employment and education, it appears that Amani disdains being publicly Palestinian while preserving a wholly private sense of Palestinian-ness. Intriguingly, Amani's constructions of Jordanian and Palestinian public identities were still mutually exclusive. Being Jordanian did not mean that Amani now identified with both sides of the friend-enemy distinction; rather, she simply switched allegiances. Amani's identifying as Jordanian in public matters contrasts starkly with how the other ex-Gazans choose to identify. But like them, she seeks to situate herself on only one side of the friend-enemy distinction.

While it may be countered that Amani is merely instrumentalizing her Jordanian citizenship without a substantive change in identity, I maintain that the instrumental benefits of Jordanian citizenship cannot be straightforwardly divorced from one's identification as Jordanian. It was common among my ex-Gazan interviewees to define being Jordanian as having access to state resources in healthcare and education. Furthermore, as argued earlier, the ex-Gazans' lack of access to the privileges of citizenship has the effect of reinforcing their exclusion as an 'other' from the Jordanian nation. A Palestinian refugee's socio-political inclusion or exclusion from the Jordanian nation therefore hinges on their access to the benefits of citizenship. Insofar as enjoying these benefits can be said to be a defining characteristic of being Jordanian, Amani's claim to public Jordanian-ness should not be dismissed as mere instrumentalization. Furthermore, whereas all my other ex-Gazan interviewees, including Amani's own father, had said that given the chance they would return to Palestine immediately, Amani indicated that she would rather remain in Jordan to continue the life she has built here. This striking difference between her response and those of the other ex-Gazans suggests that her claim to Jordanian-ness was not simply cosmetic, but indicative of a deeper shift in identity. Little wonder then that when Amani was asked if she identified as Jordanian, her answer was an unflinchingly 'yes.'

Overall, my ex-Gazan interviewees' responses suggest that their legal condition of statelessness translates into a Palestinian identity that is excluded from Jordanian national identity and that rejects the simultaneous possession of a Jordanian identity. In the next section, I discuss how this particular construction of Palestinian identity shapes the political claims that the ex-Gazans make.

#### Making political demands of the Jordanian state

During my interviews, I asked my participants for their opinions on the 2016 Israel-Jordan gas deal, under which Jordan will import US\$10 billion worth of Israeli gas for 15 years.<sup>6</sup> If there is one subject towards which Palestinians are expected to have a predictable stance, it is Israel. The Palestinian layperson is commonly assumed to support any endeavor to harm Israel and to rally against any collaboration with Israel. Indeed, the announcement of the gas deal in Jordanian media was met with weekly demonstrations in Amman, corroborating this assumption.<sup>7</sup> Yet, the difference in responses between the citizen Palestinians and the ex-Gazans in my interviews yield an important nuance to this understanding of Palestinian attitudes towards Israel.

Those Palestinians with citizenship tended to fit the typical characterization of the Palestinian layperson. They were all willing to participate in a hypothetical boycott movement of Israeli gas, and further argued that Jordan as a state should not have entered the gas deal. Ahmad, a citizen resident of Hussein camp, told me he had protested against the gas deal because he heard that "they will put the Israeli flag on the gas bottle even though they are our enemies. The idea itself does not make sense to people." If his incredulity alone did not imply a claim on Jordan to withdraw from the gas deal, then his participation in the street demonstrations did. Palestinians with Jordanian citizenship thus have few qualms expressing political demands on the state of Jordan.

The ex-Gazans, however, tended to distance themselves from what they depicted as matters 'for the government.' To the question of the gas deal, Amani's father responded,

"I do not interfere. It has to do with the government. These are the agreements of the country. If the governments give it away for free, if they export it, if they did whatever they need to do, it's fine."

While his nonchalance was surprising, it was consistent with his status as a legal 'outsider.' If ex-Gazans are reminded daily that the Jordanian government is not their government and therefore not accountable to them, it makes little sense for them to place any

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<sup>6</sup> Abu-Nasr, Donna. "Unwanted: The \$10 Billion Gas Deal with Israel that Jordan Needs." *Bloomberg*, October 27, 2016, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2016-10-26/unwanted-the-10-billion-gas-deal-with-israel-that-jordan-needs>. Accessed 8 October 2018.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

sort of demand on it. Nor is the nonchalance of Amani's father reducible to political apathy. All the ex-Gazans indicated that they would individually take part in a boycott of Israeli goods, suggesting that each person was still inclined toward political action, albeit action that is by nature confined to a private sphere. Amani's father's nonchalance should therefore be attributed to the governmental nature of the gas deal, and the distance ex-Gazans place between them and governmental affairs.

In some cases, this distancing allowed for a rational, measured pragmatism that was conspicuously absent from the responses of most citizen Palestinians. The most spirited ex-Gazan response against the gas deal came from Tissam, but even she conceded that "if it's necessary, then it's ok to take [the gas] from Israel." Amani extended this logic of pragmatism, even agreeing with the gas deal because "Jordan was paying Egypt for gas anyway. It will be better for Jordan to do it this way, they will even save money." In other cases, the distance between the ex-Gazan and Jordan resembled that which occurs between guest and host. For example, Amani's father made sure to qualify his involvement in the boycott of Israeli goods. He clarified that he would take part only if it was for the good of Jordan, because "it is the country that hosted the Palestinians, and I ate from the bread in Jordan." Whatever the individual disposition, the striking commonality was that the ex-Gazans always held governmental affairs at a remote distance from themselves.

For the ex-Gazans, the natural corollary to this distance from politics is an ethic of forbearance. Even when discussing the recent protests in Amman against rising prices, Amani's father remarked,

"We don't do this because this is their country, and they are the ones who protest and express their feelings about raising the prices. We as Palestinians, whatever happens, we resist. If they increase the prices, it is alright; whatever they do, it is alright, we can deal with it."

Amani's father's sentiments here illustrate how the cognizance of one's place as a legal 'outsider' transforms one into a political 'outsider.' Much like how the economic pains of statelessness became emblematic of Palestinian-ness for Amani, forbearance has become a hallmark of Palestinian-ness for Amani's father. In his self-understanding, to be Palestinian is not to publicly participate in politics, nor to campaign for an end to Israel; being Palestinian is precisely the act of keeping silent and resiliently adapting to change. Yusuf, a 25-year-old ex-Gazan, echoed a similar aversion to political participation in the following conversation:

Me: What do you think your duties as a Palestinian are?

Yusuf: In here [the camp]? Doing work, doing your duty to your parents, to your husbands and wives. Just doing your work. Nothing else.

Me: Not to try to push for a return to Palestine publicly?

Yusuf: No, it's hard to push. There are limitations.

Translator: What about the right of return?

Yusuf: No. The right of return is not a big deal. You cannot return.

The 'right of return' is the rallying cry of Palestinian nationalism, and yet for Yusuf, being Palestinian does not necessitate a commitment to it. Instead, being Palestinian means embracing a life far removed from affairs of the government, no matter how banal. Unlike those with Jordanian citizenship, a stateless Palestinian does not make political demands of the Jordanian state. His enactments of Palestinian-ness are stripped of all its political leanings and reduced to basic familial and economic duties.

The aversion to governmental affairs that Amani's father and Yusuf express here should not be reduced to the fear that political action will be met with violent reprisal by the Jordanian state. While this fear no doubt features strongly in the minds of ex-Gazans residing in Jordan, what is of note is that this fear, in concert with the fact of being political 'outsiders', has molded a Palestinian identity among ex-Gazans that relinquishes the claims that citizen Palestinians typically place on the Jordanian state. Amani's father and Yusuf both invoked Palestinian identity in their responses above, indicating that they perceived the enduring of hardship and their distancing themselves from governmental affairs as more central to Palestinian-ness than a commitment to traditionally 'Palestinian' causes, like the right of return. The same cannot be said of citizen Palestinians like Ahmad, who expressed explicit condemnation of the Jordanian state's action and who, despite facing similar risks of incarceration and police abuse, joined public protests in Amman against the Israeli gas deal in a clear expression of Palestinian-ness.

### **Implications for Existing Literature**

At this juncture, it is appropriate to revisit Achilli's application of the friend-enemy distinction in the Jordanian context. While the friend-enemy distinction maps accurately onto Palestinian-Jordanian dynamics in Jordan, Achilli stretches this Schmittian idea too far in his explanation of the political reticence of Palestinian refugees living in camps.

The key idea in Achilli's explanatory framework is that there exists for Palestinian refugees a realm of the 'ordinary' beyond the reach of politics and the friend-enemy distinction which defines it. In Jordan's politics, the adversarial dynamics of the friend-enemy distinction are mapped onto Palestinian-Jordanian relations. The historical 'othering' process initiated by the state and internalized by at least the ethnically Jordanian citizenry renders Palestinian and Jordanian identities incompatible and mutually conflicting; engaging in politics thus requires choosing a side, either Palestinian or Jordanian. Achilli argues that Palestinian refugees,

however, possess a “desire to live as both Palestinian refugees and Jordanian citizens” simultaneously (2014, 241). Unwilling to pick a side, Palestinian refugees decide instead to descend into a non-political realm of the ‘ordinary’ (Achilli 2014). Drawing on his field research in Al-Wihdat camp, Achilli explains that the realm of the ‘ordinary’ is “substantially nonpolitical and largely encompassed within the prospect of full socioeconomic integration in Jordan” (Achilli 2014, 244). The ‘ordinary’ might include getting married, owning a house, progressing in one’s career, and setting aside time for recreation. Within this non-political socioeconomic realm, they can enact both Jordanian and Palestinian identities without betraying either. Retreating into these “ordinary” spheres of life is thus a refusal to “play the game of politics,” and represents “an attempt to limit, control and hold back the upsetting dynamics of the we/they distinction” (Achilli 2014, 244).

My findings from my interviews with my ex-Gazan respondents problematizes the applicability of Achilli’s dichotomy between the ‘political’ and the ‘ordinary’ to ex-Gazan refugees. On the surface, the ex-Gazans seem to be enacting precisely what Achilli termed a ‘retreat into the ordinary’; Yusuf advocates withdrawing into a nonpolitical life preoccupied with socioeconomic activity. However, the applicability of Achilli’s ‘ordinary’ ends at this superficial level. In Achilli’s theory, Palestinians withdraw into the ‘ordinary’ because they want to enact both Palestinian and Jordanian identities. The ‘ordinary’ is purportedly the space within which a Palestinian refugee can be both without contradiction. It follows that if a Palestinian desired only to enact either Palestinian or Jordanian identity, that Palestinian would have no need to retreat from the ‘political’ into the ‘ordinary.’ The ex-Gazans I interviewed show no desire to enact a Jordanian identity and yet distance themselves from politics, suggesting that Achilli’s account is not quite the right explanation for their political reticence. Furthermore, the friend-enemy distinction permeates even the mundane in the lives of the ex-Gazans. The experiences recounted by my ex-Gazan respondents made clear that they were confronted by the friend-enemy distinction even when conducting activities which should belong in the realm of the ‘ordinary,’ like visiting a hospital for medical treatment. Taking seriously the Schmittian concept that the ‘political’ is defined by the friend-enemy distinction, it follows that for ex-Gazans there is no ‘ordinary’ realm that exists distinct and separate from ‘the political.’

## **Conclusion**

I do not claim to have demonstrated the falseness of Achilli’s theoretical schema. Rather, what I have shown is that Achilli’s explanation of the political reticence of Palestinian refugees in Jordan is predicated on the assumption of citizenship. Achilli fails to flag this assumption from the outset, but it lies implicit in his work; after all, 90% of the Palestinian residents of Al-Wihdat

camp, where Achilli conducted his study, hold Jordanian citizenship (Tiltnes and Zhang 2013). His application of the Schmittian friend-enemy distinction to the Jordanian-Palestinian tensions is both insightful and accurate. However, while his account of the ‘ordinary’ could very well hold among Palestinians with citizenship, it can scarcely extend to the stateless population of ex-Gazans. Achilli’s theoretical framework thus presents an example of a scholarly narrative concerned with the Palestinian refugee community in Jordan in general which, though insightful, obscures the experiences of the ex-Gazans as a minority group.

Examining the ex-Gazans as a subgroup of Palestinians in Jordan subject to distinctive systemic challenges, I have argued that the political reticence of the ex-Gazans is rooted in their legal status of statelessness. It is not the case, as Achilli may argue, that the ex-Gazans disengage from politics out of a desire to be embody both Palestinian and Jordanian identities. Rather, their formal exclusion from the Jordanian citizenry imbues their experience as an ‘other’ with an experience of ‘foreign-ness’, transforming the ex-Gazans from legal ‘outsiders’ to political ‘outsiders.’ As political ‘outsiders,’ the ex-Gazans perceive that they have no claim on the Jordanian state. Even as they confront the friend-enemy distinction in virtually every aspect of their lives, their choice is not to flee but to endure and forbear, without expressing any kind of political claim on the Jordanian state.

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