

## Early Palestinian Emigration to the Americas and British Mandatory Citizenship Policies toward Returning Immigrants from Latin America, 19<sup>th</sup> to Early 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries

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**Abstract:** Thirty one years have passed since we began talking about the emigration problem in Palestinian society at Al-Liqa' Center in Jerusalem and Bethlehem and twenty six years have elapsed since the holding of the Al-Liqa' pioneering conference on the problem of emigration where Palestinian academicians, church leaders and others met to discuss this pressing issues facing Palestinian society. Emigration to the Americas was an inseparable part of international migration of human waves, which started between 1880 and 1920 from South and Central Europe and from the Ottoman Empire to the United States. This paper is an effort to analyze in detail about the early Palestinian emigration, Palestinian immigrants in Latin America and its historical perspective, related movements, and the

history of Palestinians' settlement in Latin America.

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## 1. Clarification of Terms

I will be dealing in my lecture with the phenomenon of international migration with a stress on our Palestinian case, that is on Palestinians, both Muslims and Christians, leaving Palestine for other areas of the world voluntarily as a result of economic, political, and psychological pressures connected with instability and wars in the region and with the Arab-Israeli conflict. The terms “emigration” and “immigration” will be used here. “Emigration” means “leaving one’s country or region to settle in another,” while “immigration” indicates “arriving in another country for permanent residency.”

The use of the terms “Christian” or “Muslim” in this chapter is not restricted to religious affiliation. Rather, the meaning includes as well the intertwining social, cultural, and psychological elements that are acquired as a result of the interaction of individual in his / her environment. The term “Arab” will be used to designate anyone who is Arabic speaking and who is proud to be an Arab. I will use “Christian Arab” rather than “Arab Christian” to stress the “Arabness” of a Christian and to clearly indicate that local Christians are not part of a religious minority but an integral part of the Arab majority inhabiting the land and who are rooted in the land of Palestine. For, in the final analysis there is no ethnic difference between a Muslim and a Christian Arab, for both have the same language and culture, history and aspirations<sup>1</sup>. Needless to say, this is important when fighting against the destructive mentality of the so-called “Christian minority” in Palestine, or “Palestine as a purely Muslim land.”

## 2. Al-Liqa’ Center and the Problem of Emigration

Thirty one years have passed since we began talking about the emigration problem in Palestinian society at Al-Liqa’ Center in Jerusalem and Bethlehem (see Al-Liqa’ quarterly review in Arabic, Vol. 1, October 1985) and twenty six years have elapsed since the holding of the Al-Liqa’ pioneering conference on the problem of emigration where Palestinian academicians, church leaders and others met to discuss this pressing issues facing Palestinian society (See the Proceedings of the 4th annual conference on Palestinian Contextualized Theology, entitled “Al-Hijrah” (The Emigration Problem), Jerusalem, 1990. Some parts of the proceedings were translated into English and were published in Vol. 2 (Dec. 1992) of *Al-Liqa’ Journal*. And see [www.Al-liqacenter.org.ps](http://www.Al-liqacenter.org.ps)

Reflecting on the past twenty six years, it is very clear that the Center has not been able to solve parts the problem. It never will by itself. Collective efforts are needed for such an undertaking involving many sectors of our society, including the state, the church, NGO’s and the diaspora..

Otherwise, except for the public awareness, the chronic bleeding of emigration continues unchallenged. And it is estimated in 2016 that out of the 13 million Palestinians and Israelis living in Israel/Palestine/ the Holy Land one finds at the most only 200,000 Christian Palestinian Arabs. 130,000 live within Israel proper and the rest live in the West Bank, Gaza Strip and Arab East Jerusalem. I believe that the problem will continue until a just peace between Palestinians and Israelis takes place. (see PASSIA, Jerusalem 2016, pp 372-374).

## 3. In Search of a Better World: Emigration from the Ottoman State to the Americas

The Mediterranean Region witnessed in the last quarter of the nineteenth century waves of emigration from the Ottoman State. Nevertheless, emigration to the Americas was an inseparable part of international migration of human waves, which started between 1880 and 1920 from South and Central

Europe and from the Ottoman Empire to the United States. Their number was estimated at 25,000,000 persons: Italians, Greeks, Slavs, Jews, Ottomans and others<sup>ii</sup>. The number of Arab Ottomans from Greater Syria (now Lebanon, Palestine, Syria and Jordan) in this immigration was estimated to be 250,000 persons not to mention the thousands of emigrants who ventured to Latin America.<sup>iii</sup>

According to a report by the Ottoman Consul in the City of Buenos Aires in Argentina, 46,000 Ottoman immigrants arrived between 1911 and 1913. The Consul urged his Government to put an end to this phenomenon<sup>iv</sup>. The number of Ottoman immigrants to the Americas between 1860 and 1914 was estimated to be 1,200,000 persons including 33,000 who came from Syria.<sup>v</sup>

The major factors that attracted immigrants to the Americas were economic. The tremendous industrialization process which was taking place in the United States required manpower. This was guaranteed by the large number of immigrants. High wages and rumors that the American Government was distributing agricultural land free of charge to anyone who migrated to the western parts of the United States (Homestead Act 1862) gave immigrants additional incentives<sup>vi</sup>.

The Ottoman Foreign Ministry, furthermore, received many applications submitted by a Brazilian land owner Paolo Duval from the City of Sao Paulo asking for large numbers of Ottoman agricultural workers<sup>vii</sup>. News about fortunes made by pioneers of emigration and checks sent to the mother country motivated others to follow suit. In 1914 immigrants from geographical Syria sent home remittances which were estimated at 8,000,000 dollars<sup>viii</sup>.

As one Western observer commented:<sup>ix</sup> “Hundreds of them have emigrated, consigning themselves from Jaffa to Marseilles (France) steerage agents, with no notion of their ultimate destination. They can be found peddling lace anywhere from Haiti to the Argentine. Out of an arm basket and five-peso credit they create bank account and fine stores. They emigrate as peasants in a fez and skirt; ten years later they show up in Bethlehem in a hat and trousers, and their former neighbors ... in fezzes and skirts ... address them as effendi...”

It is worth mentioning that areas where early immigrants had settled became an attractive factor for other family members and relatives who subsequently immigrated, not for economic reasons but to join relatives. Between 1908 and 1909 family relations were the main reason for 95% of Syrian immigration to the United States. This factor played a considerable role in the firm establishment and continuity of immigration that exists today. If this human drain continues, it will eventually result in the virtual extinction of whole Palestinian families, as has been the case in the Bethlehem area, which I shall mention shortly.

#### **4. Early Palestinian Emigration**

Historically, Palestine was connected in all aspects of life with Greater Syria. Artificial boundaries which now separate the Palestinian from the Syrian, the Syrian from the Lebanese and the Jordanian from the Palestinian etc...took shape in the wake of the French and British agreements as embodied in the Sykes-Picot Agreement, May 1916, the military occupation system, the Anglo French Agreement, September 1918, the decisions of San Remo, April 1920, and the Cairo Conference, March 1921.

Emigration from Palestine, thus, was an integral part of this movement in greater Syria. The fundamental motivating factor for emigration was the deteriorating economic and political condition,

which left its mark on all population sectors, Christian and Muslim alike. Outside negative influences escalated with the opening up of Palestine and Syria to new Western influences and technological innovations. As a result of the Industrial Revolution in Europe and the accompanying colonial movements in the Arab World, the region entered the Western economic network. Thus, “it was useless for local hand—made products to compete with European mass produced goods, severely affecting the local economy and deepening the political and economic servitude to the European system”<sup>x</sup>.

Instability in the region, furthermore, played a significant role in escalating emigration. The years between 1792 and 1853 were characterized by feudal disorders, wars, economic paralysis and demographic deterioration in the Ottoman Empire. Bribery, favoritism and administrative corruption were widespread. Peasants who constituted the great majority of the population felt the pinch of taxes and levies. Thefts spread everywhere. The word “Khawa”, a levy imposed on the weak by the strong, became an integral part of people’s daily dictionary. The continual wars of the Ottoman State in the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century drained the number of youths as emigration became an exit and a means for youths to dodge the draft and escape armed conflict including the First World War.<sup>xi</sup>

In addition to the above-mentioned factors, we should mention that the existence of the Holy Places in Palestine, the importance of Jerusalem and Palestine in the international arena, the spread of foreign religious institutions in the Holy Land, the crowds of visitors and pilgrims that came to Palestine from all over the world, mixing with Christian Arab interpreters and sellers of memorial curios who knew many foreign languages... all that eventually led to an increase in the awareness of Palestinian Arabs about Europe and the New World. This increased their desire to see those countries and immigrate to them, in order to exploit the available economic opportunities, as is the case with people all over the world.

Palestinian folk literature looked with much anger and disgust at the mass emigration of young people to America:

Oh No America! May the father of your friends be cursed... You have taught young people to knock at your doors

Oh No America! May the father of your people be cursed... Your great wealth has incited young people (to leave their homes)<sup>xii</sup>.

## 5. Early Palestinian Immigrants in Latin America

Information available to us indicates that the emigration of the Palestinians started in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. However, the first death among the emigrants to Latin America, recorded in the registers of the Latin Parish priest’s office in Bethlehem, however, goes back to 7/9/1796. The deceased traveler’s name was Andrea Francis Hanna Dawid from the Tarajmah Quarter in Bethlehem.<sup>xiii</sup> The question that arises: Was Dawid’s presence in Latin America simply an isolated phenomenon, or was it part of a wider Palestinian presence in those lands? What was the nature of the deceased Dawid’s journey? Are there any similar cases in the Parish’s office or other registers? This data must be scrutinized comprehensively. However, at least it confirms that the Palestinians were, “years ahead of Arab immigrants to explore the wilds of America” and that Palestinian preceded their Lebanese brethren in emigrating to the New World, although on a smaller scale, and did not settle down in the

countries they went to as the Lebanese did. This was confirmed by the elder of the Arab Lebanese community in Brazil in the 1950's, Rizq Allah Haddad, as mentioned in the book, "Arab Speakers in South America." According to him two brothers from the family Zakhariya from the Tarajmah Quarter in Bethlehem were among the first Arabs who arrived in Brazil in 1874. They sold mother-of-pearl curios such as rosaries, crosses and icons in the main jewelers' street in the city of Rio.<sup>xiv</sup>

International exhibitions held in the United States, furthermore, played a pioneering role in attracting Palestinian merchants. Many of them came to visit the Philadelphia Exhibition in 1876, the Chicago Exhibition in 1893 and St. Louis Exhibition in 1904, carrying with them Holy Land products such as mother-of-pearl, olive wood and Nabi (Prophet) Moses stone, so as to exhibit and sell them to the faithful for tempting prices.

According to oral traditions, Bethlehemites Geries Ibrahim Suleiman Mansoor Handal, Geries Anton Abul-'Arraj, Hanna Khalil Morcos and Mishel and Gabriel Dabdoub and others attended these international exhibitions. The Handal brothers eventually settled down in New York while the Dabdoub brothers, who received a Medal during the Chicago Exhibition, returned to their native town. It so happened that a Mexican merchant was impressed with the Bethlehem products in the Chicago International Exhibition that he and the above-mentioned Hanna Khalil Morcos agreed that the latter would travel to Mexico with a number of Holy Land products. That is what Mr. Morcos did. He returned to Bethlehem, gathered various Bethlehem products, returned to Mexico in 1895 and settled in that country.<sup>xv</sup> Others followed such as Geries Anton Abul'Arraj, who went with his wife Sarah Dawid to the Republic of Guatemala after the termination of the 1893 International Exhibition. Having made his fortune selling Holy Land products, he decided to stay in that country and eventually took up trade.<sup>xvi</sup>

The news of these pioneers, their newly found wealth and the cheques they sent to their relatives to erect spacious homes like those of Jacir, Handal, Hermas, to mention only a few, spread far and wide. This created a jealousy in the hearts of others. Some Syrians and Lebanese followed the example of their Palestinian brethren in selling Holy Land curios until the number of professionals increased and rumors spread that these products were manufactured in Europe. Thereafter, Westerners abstained from buying curios. Inevitably Palestinian merchants had to turn elsewhere; settlement and free trade consequently began. At the beginning roaming peddlers followed the example of their Lebanese and Syrian brethren, and penetrated Central and South America. They chose Chile, Peru, Bolivia, Colombia and Honduras. In time Chile became a main center for immigrants from the two-sister towns Bethlehem and Beit Jala. The first Palestinian emigrant to enter Chile was the late Jubra'il D'eiq from the Tarajmah Quarter in Bethlehem. That was in 1880. He was followed by the late Yusuf Jacir from Bethlehem and the late Yusuf Geries Salah from Jerusalem. The three of them worked together in commerce.<sup>xvii</sup> However, May Kaileh, former chief Palestinian diplomatic delegate in Chile said that the first Palestinian registered in the official registries in Chile was in 1840 in the fifth region, i.e. in Vina del Mar.<sup>xviii</sup> This new information makes us rethink the history of Palestinian immigration to Chile.

At the beginning emigration was slow and temporary as the fundamental aim was making a fortune and returning home. Between 1908-1918, however, coups, wars and compulsory military service resulted in a notable rise in the number of emigrants. With the outbreak of the First World War the prices of basic goods went up sharply resulting in many shortages. In 1915 and 1916 hundreds of thousands of people were on the verge of death and starvation due to the spread of diseases such as the typhus epidemic. Collective fleeing from the draft became a familiar phenomenon<sup>xix</sup>. Thus the slow and

temporary emigration was transformed gradually into a dangerous social phenomenon in whose bitter reality we are still living.

## 6. Emigration from Palestine in the British Era, 1917-1948

Emigration continued throughout the British Mandate in light of the deterioration of the country's political circumstances. Most immigrants made their way to Latin America. Large groups of immigrants followed each other encouraged by relatives already living in Chile, Colombia, Peru, Honduras and Salvador. Very few immigrants arrived at the North American shores (United States) at this stage because American laws, which were enacted between 1917 and 1924, limited the immigration of non Anglo-Saxons such as Italians, Slavs Arabs, Asians and Africans. They aimed at the preservation of the cultural and ethnic hegemony of the Anglo-Saxon whites. These same years witnessed the appearance of racist movements antagonistic to anyone who was Catholic, immigrant, foreigner, black or Jew. One such movement was the Ku Klux Klan which reached its climax in 1923 when its followers were estimated to be in the millions.<sup>xx</sup>

Lack of official statistics makes it difficult to estimate the total number of Palestinian emigrants in this period, but the approximate estimate of emigrants in 1936 was 40,000.<sup>xxi</sup> With the arrival of vast numbers of emigrants to main immigration centers in Latin America, certain streets in principal Latin American cities began to acquire Palestinian characteristics. At the same time the names of certain large families in Palestinian cities began to disappear gradually from local registers, resulting from collective immigration and family reunification in the Diaspora. Such was the case in Bethlehem with the following families: (mentioned as samples only)<sup>xxii</sup>

Farahiyah Quarter	Anatra Quarter	Tarajmah Quarter	'Najaj rah Quarter	Hreizat Quarter	Qawawsah Quarter
Jada'	Shahin	Kamandari	A1-'Alul	Abu Jarur	Abu-Nifhar
D'eis	Dhawabah	Abu Fheilah	Qarqur	Hreizi	Sirriyeh
Barakah	Abu Gheith	Talamas	Hilwah	Abu Hermas	Abu Shunnar
Jidi	Silhi	Sam'an	Al-Qabas	'Afanah	Bsiseh
Bkhit	Wardah	Tarud	'Duzman	Sahuriyah	Nquli
Dakarat	Shamali	Dahburah	Za'nun	Dguban	
Miladeh		'Abis	Abu Arab	Adawi	
Zaitun			Al- Chat'ah	Al-Tqu'i	
Dardahiyyah				Al-Bahri	
Silsik				Hasluf	
Shhadah				Sabbagh	
Abu Shagrah					
Mua'allim					
Jacir					

7. Musalem Duery (Bethlehem Family): 106 years in Chile - in Spanish



*La familia Musallem pertenece al segundo "HARA" o clan de los 7 que conforman los habitantes de Belén denominados "FARAHIA" equivalente a "farah, ancestro de todos ellos.*

*Don José Antonio Musalem Bandak, padre, abuelo, bisabuelo, tatarabuelo y cuarto Abuelo, de las generaciones nacidas en Chile emigró a nuestro país en el año 1900 con su mujer María Duery y con sus hijos Salomón Musalem Comandari, Plácido y Afife Musalem Duery nacidos en Belén. Los menores Julio, Selim (ver cuadro) fallecido a temprana edad, Mercedes y Teodoro nacieron en Santiago de Chile. Los primeros viajaron en barco hasta Buenos Aires, Argentina. Debieron atravesar la Cordillera de los Andes a lomo de mula, único medio de transporte en esa época para llegar a Santiago de Chile.*

*Durante su vida en Belén Don José Antonio trabajó en Artesanía produciendo objetos de alajamientos de hogares y muebles todos de "nácar y madera" los que acostumbraba a vender en sus varios viajes anuales a Europa. Su casa está a dos cuadras del lugar en que nació Cristo, donde se levantó la basílica de la Natividad. Es de piedra y se encuentra en excelente estado y su terraza tiene vista a un hermoso valle.*

*Mientras estuvo en Belén fue Mujtar, que quiere decir árbitro de los conflictos que se producían entre los miembros de la comunidad. Su decisión de venirse a Chile se debió a que el dominio de los turcos otomanos en esa época, era adverso a quienes profesaban el catolicismo ya que los sometían a todo tipo de discriminación y dificultades. Y a que no veía en Belén un futuro promisorio.*

*Llegado a Chile instaló un pequeño negocio que a su muerte continuó su hijo Plácido (SALEH). Posteriormente, éste entró al comercio en el ramo de librerías donde se incorporaron sus hermanos menores Julio y Teodoro. Luego se extendieron a cinco locales en el centro de Santiago. También, incursionaron en diversas industrias. Los abuelos están en el Cementerio Católico.*

*Hoy las cuatro generaciones posteriores son en su gran mayoría profesionales. Se han destacado en la política, en el tenis: José Musalem Saffie, abogado como diputado y Senador de la República y Leyla Musalem Rahal campeona nacional en la rama de tenis femenino. Muchos de ellos también han brillado en los negocios.*

*Jussef Anton Musallam Bandak  
Mariam Duery Abuzaarur*

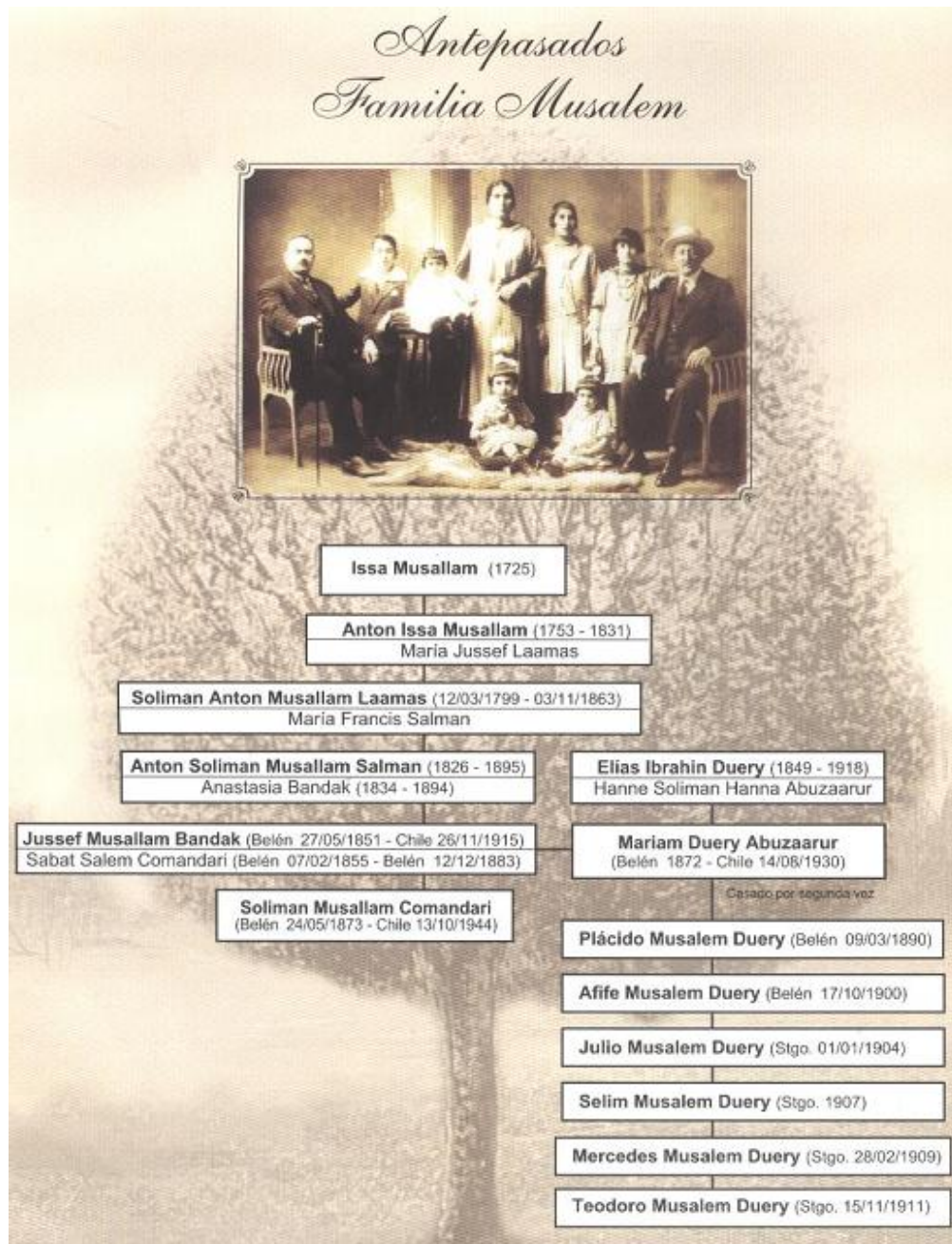


## *Llegaron de Belén Familia Musalem Duery*



*El apellido Musallam o Imsallem: en Chile y en otros países de América se adoptó a Musalem. La raíz del apellido es "Slm" de ahí vienen palabras como Salam igual Paz, Solimán igual Salomón y Musalem que significa "Hombre de Paz", "Hombre Bueno"y "Corazón para Dios ". Hay dos teorías en cuanto a su origen. Ellos provendrían presumiblemente de Wabi Musa y vivieron en el valle de Moisés en Petra, de donde habrían emigrado a Belén en el año 600 d.c. La segunda indica que la familia remontaría su origen a la Isla el ARABILLE cercana a Arabia Saudita. En el año 800 D.C.*

*el Islam la habría invadido, lo que los obligó con Wabi Musallem a emigrar al valle de MUSA al lado de Jericó donde habitaron por cuatro siglos. En el año 1230 D.C. bajaron a Belén donde se convirtieron del rito Ortodoxo al católico. Parte de la familia en el correr del tiempo, hermanos menores de Wabi Musa, se fueron a las ciudades de Nables, Saggie en el Líbano y Birget y uno de ellos llamado SAIEH Musalem adoptó como apellido Saieh, cosa común en esa época. Hoy los hay en varios países de América, USA, Ecuador, Chile, México y al parecer en Brasil.*



## 8. The Question of the Return of the Immigrants from Latin America and British Citizenship Policies

It is worth mentioning that a considerable number of immigrants in Latin America desired to return to their country, because they did not emigrate for the love of emigration but for the improvement of their economic conditions or in an attempt to flee the horrors of continual wars. After the end of the First World War, many decided to practice their natural right of return to their birth-place. The British authorities, however, closed the doors in their faces at a time when the doors of Palestine were wide open to Jewish immigrants. The Palestinian Citizenship Law embodied in the Citizenship Order-in

Council which was ratified in 1925 with the main aim of facilitating the granting of Palestinian citizenship to Jews coming to Palestine, according to Item 7 of the Mandate Charter.<sup>xxiii</sup>

Lauren E. Banko points out the following:

“The process of ‘inventing’ Palestinian citizenship was unlike anything else Great Britain had done in their colonial empire, especially because they had to take into account international treaties and regulations, Ottoman laws and the Balfour Declaration as it was included in the Mandate’s charter”.<sup>xxiv</sup>

The covenant of the League of Nation’s Article 22, was vague about citizenship of former Ottoman subjects and articles, focuses on acquisition of nationality by Jewish immigrants and does not mention Arab inhabitants of Palestine.<sup>xxv</sup> Furthermore, the British saw Arab inhabits and as Ottoman citizens since the Allies were at war with Turkey until 1923.<sup>xxvi</sup> The interaction at recognition of Palestinian nationality took place in light of Treaty of Lausanne, between Turkey and the Allies on 24 July 1922.<sup>xxvii</sup> Concerning Palestinian residing abroad Article 34 of the Treaty clearly mentions that these persons have two years to apply for the Palestinian nationality.<sup>xxviii</sup>

Concerning Palestinian emigrants who left the country before 1920, Britain considered them Turks because they traveled during Ottoman Turkish rule with Ottoman passports. This British stance totally contradicted Item 34 of the Treaty of Lausanne which stipulates that citizenship must be given to those who were born in countries which were once parts of the Ottoman Empire, within two years of the effective date of the Treaty, 6 August 1924, but not late than 6th August 1926.<sup>xxix</sup> But the Government of Palestine did not enact the Palestinian Citizenship Law and did not promulgate it in the official gazette, until 16 September 1925. Thus the Government wasted more than half of the period as specified in the Treaty. In addition to this tragedy, the British Government failed to circulate the Law in the local papers, neither did the British representatives in the Americas circulate it in the press so that immigrants could be informed.<sup>xxx</sup>

The British Ambassador in the Mexican capital stated that the British Government “had not authorized him to spend three pounds to publish the mentioned Law”.<sup>xxxi</sup> In October 1927 the British Mandatory Government issued a statement saying, “The Palestinian citizenship is given to the emigrants who left the country after 1920 or before this date, and returned to the country and resided six months in it.” As for the emigrants who had left the country before 1920 and did not return, who constituted ninety per cent of all immigrants abroad, they were considered by British, as I said before, to be Turks, completely ignoring the fact that they were not” Turks: by race, nationalism, language or emotion”<sup>xxxii</sup> As a consequence of this British policy only one hundred applications were approved of a total of 9,000 submitted by emigrants wanting to return to their mother country.<sup>xxxiii</sup>

## **9. The Bethlehem area Committee for the Defense of Immigrants’ Rights to Palestinian Citizenship**

The notables of the Bethlehem region took up the case, under the leadership of Khalil ‘Issa Morcos from Bethlehem, ‘Atallah Hanna al-Najjar from Beit Jala, ‘Issa al-Khury Basil Bandak from Bethlehem (owner of newspaper “Sawt al-Sha‘b” and later Mayor of Bethlehem) and founded “The Committee for the Defense of Immigrants Rights to the Palestinian Citizenship” in 1927. The Committee led the campaign against the oppressive British policy which allowed the incoming alien Jewish immigrants to obtain citizenship under the easiest conditions, while placing numerous obstacles in the face of native-

born Palestinians who wanted to return to their country. The Committee launched an appeal to the British people in the form of a booklet on the question of the immigrants and the obstacles created by the British authorities to prevent Palestinian abroad from obtaining Palestinian citizenship. The above mentioned 'Issa Bandak, Mayor of Bethlehem (1934-1938), raised the question before "Lord Peel's Royal Commission" which came to Palestine in 1936 to investigate disturbances and rebellion in the country and issued its recommendations for the partitioning of Palestine in 1937. The Royal Commission recommended in its report the facilitation of measures of return for those emigrants with genuine intentions who kept a continual personal contact with Palestine.<sup>xxxiv</sup>

The Defense Committee demanded in its campaign that all Palestinian immigrants residing abroad should be considered, at their request, Palestinian citizens, and that all Palestinian immigrants, who have returned to Palestine, or have temporarily stayed away, should obtain their right to Palestinian citizenship as soon as they submit official applications to the relevant departments. The Defense Committee, furthermore, demanded that orders must be circulated to all British Government representatives throughout the Palestinian Diaspora to defend and protect the interests of all Palestinian Arabs until the government acknowledged their right to Palestinian citizenship. "The Government should consider these applications indicative of the feelings of Palestinian Arab public opinion in the country and aboard..."<sup>xxxv</sup>

The British Government, on its part, expressed its readiness to defend the interests of those who had acquired citizenship, but it refused to protect those who did not acquire it, that is the overwhelming majority. It did not want to bear the responsibility of great number whose sole aim was to benefit from British protection, though item 12 of the Mandate Charter stipulates that "the Mandated Power had the right, too, to extend the protection of its ambassadors and consuls to Palestinian subjects living abroad." (32) When a delegation from the Palestinian community living in El-Salvador met the British Consul and asked him to carry out this item, the Consul 's reply was: "The British State accepted the mandate over the land of Palestine only, and this mandate does not include the affairs of the Palestinians."<sup>xxxvi</sup>

Palestinian emigrants deprived of their citizenship faced extremely difficult circumstances. For example in July 1927 in the Republic of El-Salvador in Central America the Government enacted a law forcing every merchant whose capital exceeded thirty pounds to register his name and produce his citizenship papers. If the merchant failed to observe this order, he would have his stores closed. When Palestinians asked the British Consul to give them a citizenship certificate he refused. When some Palestinian tried to obtain the Salvadorian citizenship to protect their interests, the Government refused on the basis that their need to acquire citizenship did not stem from their love and commitment, but from personal benefit only.<sup>xxxvii</sup>

The emigrant who did not carry Latin American citizenship faced other difficulties:

- He could not travel from one country to another to tend to commercial interests.
- The American republics, El-Salvador and Guatemala in Particular, enacted laws to deport anyone who did not possess citizenship...
- Coups and rebellions frequently happened in the American republics. Normally foreigners took shelter with their consuls; but Palestinians came under the mercy of the strong and thus becoming a victim of blackmail.

- When an immigrant was unable to obtain his citizenship, he was inevitably compelled to acquire the citizenship of the country in which he was residing, thereby gradually becoming out of touch with his country and relatives and losing the incentive of returning to found industrial and commercial projects.<sup>xxxviii</sup>

The various governments of Palestine continued to impede immigrants' return to their country. After the formation of the Kingdom of Jordan, in 1950, Jordanian Citizenship Law Number 56/1949 was enacted. It was a great disappointment for immigrants who had expected Jordan to take care of them and protect their interests. The Law deprived immigrants of Jordanian citizenship on the basis that they were not in Jordan when the two Banks were united. Jordan's refusal to give citizenship to Palestinian Diasporas in Latin America became a paramount issue in 1951-1954. *Al-Mahd* (The Nativity) weekly and its owner and editor and former mayor of Bethlehem, Mr. Ayyub Musallam, lobbied strongly for the need for Jordan to protect the Diaspora. In 1953-1954 Mr. Musallam and his weekly took a prolonged visit to the Diaspora centers to underline the need to protect the Diasporas. Jordan finally took the first step in that direction when it appointed Mr. 'Issa al-Khoury Baseel Bandak former mayor of Bethlehem and later Jordan's chief diplomat to Spain, as the chief diplomatic delegate of Jordan to Chile and the beginning of Jordan's diplomatic missions and activities in Latin America.<sup>xxxix</sup> ... It was similar to the Palestinian Citizenship Law, 1925, which deprived them of citizenship on the basis that the immigrants were not present in the country in 1920. And since 1967 Israel has placed other great obstacles. Its aim has been clear, namely to vacate the land of its legitimate owners. Anyone who studies carefully the "family reunion laws" and restrictions imposed on "exit permits across the bridge" and "the Laissez-passer and its renewal" will find that all of them encourage, in one way or another, emigration without return.

## 10. Setting Down in Latin America Stories of Success and Failures

As a result the Palestinian immigrants who did not acquire citizenship settled in the Diaspora for good and played a pioneering role in the development of their new homes. Stories of the brilliant success of immigrants are numerous and documented. The following are examples: The Brothers Hunain and Nicola Jarur from the Hreizat Quarter, Bethlehem, were extremely brilliant in Chilean industries. This is evident in the economic projects they established, such as the Jarur Brothers' Factories of cotton goods employing about 3,000 labourers in an area of 80,000 square meters. The Sahuri Brothers from Bethlehem who have erected a modern industrial city for cotton goods with an area of 150,000 square meters; the factories of Sulaiman Zummar from Beit Jala; the factories of Hermas Brothers from Bethlehem and the factories of Abu Sabal Brothers from Beit Jala and hundreds others.<sup>xl</sup>

Few are the stories we hear about emigrants who followed the example of the late 'Abdul Majid Shuman who traveled to the United States in 1911 carrying with him eight gold pounds. He returned home in 1929 to lay the foundation of the Arab Bank which since then had become one of the greatest banking institutions in the Arab world.<sup>xli</sup>

Little do we hear about such persons as Badr and Ibrahim 'Abdullah al- A 'ma (Lama) who returned from Chile in 1927 armed with a knowledge of the art of photography and cinema acting. Their aim was to establish a cinema company in Palestine. However, a stop in Alexandria, Egypt, convinced them that opportunities in Egypt were better than in Palestine. They settled down and founded the Condor Cinema Film Company," which presented in May 1927 the first silent Arabic film in the history of

Egyptian cinema, entitled “A Kiss in the Desert.” In the thirties and forties Lama Studios became one of the major cinema companies in Egypt.<sup>xlii</sup>

Though success stories of immigrants are documented and available, thousands of stories of failures are not, such as the stories of those who could not return home despite their deep love, as they did not possess even the fare to return to their homeland. They preferred the hardships of life and a slow death in the Diaspora, as dignity did not and would not allow them to return as failures, and at the same time becoming a joke to their fellow Palestinians.

## 11. Palestinian Diaspora in Latin America: Four Generations of Immigrants

Mr. Giries Nocola El-Ali says in his book **Bethlehem: The Immortal Town**, Jerusalem 1991, pp. 182-189

**First Generation:** During the lives of my grandfather Ya’qub Salih Jaqaman El-Ali, born in Bethlehem in 1850 who represents here the first generation, and his wife Hilwah Murqus, Palestine was under Turkish rule which continued until the middle of the First World War, that is 1917. Turkey was oppressive, cruel and poor. Earning one’s living was difficult. The Turkish Government was unable to undertake projects to employ people and did not attempt to make life prosperous. There were no schools at that time. Teachers taught boys in their homes. There were no hospitals either. In fact the first hospital built in Bethlehem was the French Hospital with a French administration.

My grandfather Ya’qub used to work in winter in his home producing rosaries from olive kernels and dorm, and similar products sold to tourists. In summer he used to build houses. Fortune was with him, and in 1889 he won a tender to deliver the stones needed to build the French Hospital (in Bethlehem). He was responsible for the builders and workers. The Administration of the Hospital knew him for his intelligence, loyalty and trustworthiness as was testified by the old. My grandfather had four daughters and a son. They were: **Jamila, Rosa, Mannah, Miladah and Nicola** **Second Generation: Jamila** She married Hanna Jaqaman Al-‘Ali. They emigrated to Chile and had two daughters: Miladah, who married Khalil Jaqaman Al-‘Ali, had no children and died in Chile; and Rojina, who married Elias Juha. They lived in Lima, Peru. They had ten children, who are all married and had grandchildren. The progeny of Elias and Rojina is estimated to number 105 persons. **Rosa**, married Ibrahim Thaljiyyah and emigrated to Bolivia; their progeny is estimated to be more than 85 persons. **Mannah** married Hanna Qteish al-Bandak and immigrated to Honduras. Their progeny is estimated to be more than 90 persons. **Miladah** remained a spinster and died in Bethlehem.

Most immigrants travelled to countries where they had relatives. The former immigrant used to help the latter as he first began his life in the diaspora. Most settled there with their progeny instead of returning home because of the continuous instability.

My father **Nicola** represents the second generation. He was born in Bethlehem in 1878. My mother, Maryam Sa’id Andoniah was born in 1888. My father studied in the Lutheran School situated in Madbash Square. Like most people of Bethlehem he worked in beads and the like. As he was dissatisfied with the condition of the country and also being ambitious, he travelled to Bolivia, starting his life as a mercantile pedlar. Then he became a store owner, made a reasonable fortune and returned to Bethlehem. He expanded his father’s house and bought two plots of land cultivated with olive trees. As he had chosen his father’s craft of building houses, he began to draw up plans for houses and

supervise their construction. He was the first in Bethlehem to build the ceiling from armed concrete and that was to a flour mill owned by Khadr al-Qanawati situated at the end of the road leading to Beit Sahur.

My father had six children: **‘Afifah, Najib, Giries, Elias, Ya’qub and Mary.**

**Third Generation: ‘Afifah:** She married Said Marzuqa and had four sons and three girls. Her sons Yusuf, George and Fuad work in in South Carolina, while Elias is a merchant in Kuwait. Her daughters, Maria, Rossa and Victoria are married and live in Bethlehem. ‘Afifah died recently.

**Najib:** He emigrated to Chile when he was seventeen years old. There he married Anisa Salman and had two sons and a daughter. His sons, Victor and Mikha’il, work in commerce; his daughter, married an engineer from Chile. Najib died and was buried there.

**Elias:** When he was a young man, he followed his brother Najib to Chile. Years later he returned to Bethlehem and married Mary Hanna Hazboun. They both returned to Chile and had two sons and a daughter: Hanna, Rodolpho and Vivien. They all work in trade.

**Ya’qub:** He was born in 1928. He studied engineering by correspondence and worked both in engineering and building

in Bethlehem and Kuwait. He married ‘Aidah Jamil El-Ali and had three sons and three daughters: Nicola worked in trade and died a few years after his marriage. Nadir and Nabil work in trade; Nadia and Nadirah married and are living in California. Nariman is married and lives in Ramallah. Ya’qub won the 1976 Municipal election. He died in Bethlehem in 1985.

**Mary:** She married Hanna al-Masriyyah Hazbun and has three sons and two daughters. ‘Issa died young. William and George, both married, work in trade. Hilda, who is married, lives in Amman while Vera, also married, lives in Washington.

I, Giries Nicola Yaqub Jaqaman Al-‘Ali, was born in Bethlehem in 1922. My wife Mary Giries al-Masriyyah Al-‘Ali was born in Bethlehem in 1929. She finished her schooling at the Good Shepherd’s School and studied modern sewing art. In Brazil she practised trade, and she now works as an administrative assistant in our hotel (Natal Mar Hotel). We represent the third generation.

I studied elementary sciences at the National School (Government), finishing the seventh grade which was the highest. There were neither preparatory nor secondary schools nor universities. Circumstances were difficult and the political conditions unstable. Conflicts were taking place between Arabs and Jews, and even going to Jerusalem was fraught with danger. Few parents were rich enough to send their children outside Palestine to continue their studies. Thus, I was compelled to continue my studies by correspondence. At the same time I used to help my father in drawing up plans for houses, accompanying him to work-yards to supervise the progress.

I studied engineering with Egyptian correspondence schools finishing the required curriculum. I then studied civil engineering, architectural branch, with the International Correspondence Schools (I.C.S.) in London. Unfortunately the start of the Second World War and the suspension of international mail did not allow me to continue the required programme...

When conditions worsened, I immigrated to Kuwait and worked in engineering and contracting for seven years. Then, by invitation from Tawfiq Qattan, Member of Parliament, I went to Baghdad to supervise his company's work, which included the building of a hall for government meetings as well the Grand Karbula' Hotel.

After that I returned to Bethlehem and occupied the post of Bethlehem Municipality Engineer from 1960 until the end of 1964. Conditions continued to deteriorate, discouraging my ambition and hindering my work. Hence, in order to guarantee a good future for my four sons, I resigned from the Municipality. I decided to travel either to my brothers in Chile or to my wife's brothers, 'Issa and Tawfiq Giries al-Masriyyah Hazbun who lived in the city of Recife in Brazil with their maternal uncles, the sons of 'Abdulla 'Asfurah, and my brother-in-law, Dr. Khalil Hazbun. I visited both countries and chose Brazil because of the abundance of work. I considered staying only five years after which I hoped that understanding and peace would be reached between Palestinians and Jews, so that we could return to our country and town and live in peace.

But the days passed quickly. In fact, more than 26 years have now passed since our arrival in Brazil, the peaceful and hospitable country, without any peace being concluded back home. To this day the whole world hopes peace will come to the region and prevail.

**Fourth Generation:** My four sons represent the fourth generation. They are: Sami, Ramzi, Makram, and 'Isam.

**Sami:** He studied architectural engineering at the Government University in Recife in Brazil. At the same time he studied business administration by night at the Catholic University in Recife. He succeeded in his engineering work. He and his brothers have designed and constructed our hotel, "Natal Mar Hotel" in 1983 which consists of 150 rooms (three stars) of which he is the General Manager. With his diligence and toil he has obtained the award given to the best three-star hotels in all of Brazil every year. He married a Brazilian magistrate, Sandra Dantash Al-'Ali, and they have two children, a boy, Andre and a daughter, Marina.

**Ramzi:** He studied engineering and has been very successful in his work. He has just finished the construction of a fourteen storey building. He has already started on the construction of another building of ten storeys, of his own design and construction. He is married to his cousin Anna Maria Hazbun Al-'Ali. She is the holder of a business administration certificate. They have a son, George and two daughters Christiani and Moniki.

**Makram:** He studied civil engineering (calculation of armed concrete). He practised his profession for many years but then opened a big computer store, making programmes for institutions, companies, hotels and similar bodies in and out of the province. He married a Brazilian architectural engineer, Glissy Azamboga El-Ali. They have a daughter, Luisy.

**'Isam:** He studied architectural engineering and practised his profession for a while. His hobbies are drawing and photography. At present he owns three stores which sell photographic equipment and two laboratories for developing film and quick printing. In addition, he runs a publicity office for newspapers, magazines, television and the like. He married a Brazilian, Suzani Nobrega El-Ali, a university graduate and a publicity specialist. They have a son, Edwardo and two daughters, Micheli and Barbara.



**Fifth Generation:** My nine grand children represent the fifth generation. Though they are living in Brazil in peace, tranquility and luxury, we do our best to inculcate them, as their fathers did before them, that their family origins are deeply rooted in their native town, Bethlehem, the birth-place of Christ, may peace be on Him.

## 12. The Palestinian Emigration Compound

The “Emigration Compound” which aggravates the emigration problem continues unchallenged until this minute. The Compound includes, among other things, the following:

- Israeli military occupation’s strangulation of Palestinians psychologically, economically and politically, as a result of collective punishments, which have been imposed on Palestinians since 1967. Not everyone can withstand this pressure. Some emigrate. This task is made easier if persons opting for emigration join their relatives in the Diaspora in Latin American, North America or Australia.
- This leads to another segment of the Compound which is aggravating the problem, that is family networks in the Palestinian Diaspora centers which have been building up since early in the century in the republics of Chile, Peru, Ecuador, Brazil, Honduras, Colombia, El Salvador, the Dominican Republic, Haiti, Mexico, United States, Canada, Australia. It is easier to emigrate if you have relatives who can get you a visitor’s visa or an immigrant visa and ensure your livelihood.

We can see this clearly in the disappearance of tens of Palestinian families from the local registers only to reappear in Latin American cities as a result of emigration and of family reunification in the Diaspora, a sample of the names of these families from Bethlehem was mentioned earlier:

Jidii, Dakarrat, Mu’allim, Komandari, Abu Fheilah, Talamas, Sam’an, Tarud, Dahbura, ‘Abis, Za’nun, Abu Jarur, Sabbagh, Sahuriyah, Hriezi, Abu Hirmas, ‘Afaanah, Nquli, Bsiseh, Kaffyeh, and tens of other families which now prosper in the Diaspora.

- In this Compound, the Christian Arab is constantly being fed the idea that he / she is a member of a religious minority. Accordingly, migration decreases the number of Palestinian, and weakens those who stay behind in carrying out the message. If it solves the problem of individuals who emigrate, it enlarges the problem of the remaining Palestinian Christians and increases the burden. It should be noted that no mention here is made of the nation or fellow countrymen of the other faiths who can help the Christian Arab to steadfast on the Arab land. This is clearly a destructive approach, which leads only to alienation of individuals from both society and land and only invigorates the phenomenon of emigration.

I hope Palestinians will rise to the challenge of fighting this chronic disease in the body of the nation. We are not merely discussing the question of a few thousand emigrants but the gradual disappearance of the indigenous Arab population against the background of the influx of Jewish immigrants from the Russia and other parts of the world and the arrival of thousands more in the coming few years to set up more colonial settlements in the West Bank and Arab East Jerusalem.

## ENDNOTES

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