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Ex-Gazans in Jordan: From Legal ‘Outsiders’ to Political ‘Outsiders’

## Introduction

Since the creation of the state of Israel 70 years ago, the condition of displacement has become a defining feature of being Palestinian. Entire generations of Palestinians have grown up as displaced persons in their various host countries. Some families have been displaced more than once, including the Palestinian families who fled the ongoing Syrian crisis to Europe.<sup>1</sup> The relationship between Palestinians and Palestine is thus exceedingly complex. It cannot even be said that there is a singular Palestinian attitude towards the right of return. Hanafi (2011, 455) argues that understanding a prospective Palestinian return to the homeland requires “a sociological understanding of the political, social and cultural attributes of the Palestinian people” that takes into account the socioeconomic and cultural integration of Palestinians in their current places of residence. In this essay, I aim to contribute to such a “sociological understanding” by examining questions of integration and Palestinian identity among a particular community of Palestinians in Jordan, 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.<sup>2</sup> 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>3</sup> These ex-Gazans are typically the families 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 15 October 2017.

<sup>2</sup> The estimated size of the Palestinian Population in Jordan is taken from *Where We Work*, United Nations Relief and Work Agency (UNRWA) for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, 1 December 2016, <https://www.unrwa.org/where-we-work/jordan>. Accessed 14 October 2017.

<sup>3</sup> *Protection in Jordan*, UNRWA, <https://www.unrwa.org/activity/protection-jordan>. Accessed 14 October 2017.

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.

### **Methodology**

I conducted semi-structured interviews in April this year with Palestinians residents of Palestinian refugee camps in Jordan. Specifically, I chose Hussein camp and Jerash camp as my field sites due to their stark demographic differences. Built in 1952 to accommodate refugees from the first Arab-Israeli war, Hussein camp is home to a Palestinian population of which 90% hold Jordanian citizenship. On the other hand, Jerash camp residents comprise 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>4</sup> The different geographic locations of the two camps were also salient considerations 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 capital city where intermarriages between Palestinians and Jordanians are common and intercommunal divisions matter less to the burgeoning middle class (Tobin 2012). However, Jerash camp is located well beyond the Amman municipality. As we will see later, the responses from my ex-Gazan interview participants in Jerash camp reflect a

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<sup>4</sup> Population size of Jerash camp is taken from *Jerash Camp*, UNRWA, <https://www.unrwa.org/where-we-work/jordan/jerash-camp>. Accessed 14 October 2017.

social environment far removed from the cosmopolitan capital in which Palestinian-Jordanian social divisions are firmly entrenched.

I conducted a total of 4 interviews in Jerash camp and 5 in Hussein camp. Given my own limited proficiency in spoken Arabic, these interviews were conducted with the help of a translator who was herself a Palestinian with Jordanian citizenship. My participant sample of comprised an even balance of males and females, and of citizens and non-citizens. For the sake of brevity, I will focus largely on the responses of my ex-Gazan participants rather than of my participants with citizenship.

### **Palestinians and the Jordanian State**

Historically, the extension of Jordanian citizenship to Palestinian refugees was purely a means of territorial expansion. King Abdullah I of Jordan had long since harbored ambitions to rule over Greater Syria, and the 1948 Arab-Israeli war presented him the opportunity to fulfil in Palestine his expansionist agenda (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 Palestinians 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)

The extension of citizenship to the Palestinians provided the formal political basis for the unification of central Palestine and Jordan (Brand 1995). A year later, the Jordanian

government renamed central Palestine as the “West Bank of the Hashemite Jordanian Kingdom” to reflect this absorption of territory (Massad 2001, 229). The name ‘West Bank’ is still commonly used today. The 1954 Law of Jordanian nationality was later introduced 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. On the other hand, Gaza had been under Egyptian administration prior to the Six-Day War (Feldman 2012). This meant that the Palestinian refugees who fled from the West Bank to Jordan in 1967 were already Jordanian citizens, while those who arrived from Gaza were not entitled to Jordanian citizenship.

The union across the Jordan river would prove short-lived. The crucial turning point which precipitated the reversal in Jordanian policy vis-à-vis the Palestinians was the 1970 civil war in Jordan known as Black September. The events of Black September pitted the guerilla 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). It is important to note that Black September was a battle between the PRM leadership and the Hashemite monarchy rather than between Palestinians and Jordanians. A sizeable 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 Palestinian and Jordanians became salient only after the war, when the Jordanian state sought to mold a nationalist Jordanian identity which excluded Palestinian elements.

Key to 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 who were deemed *pro-fedayeen* were dismissed from the civil service and the security forces of Jordan. This purge, in conjunction with the appointment of high-ranking public officials whose anti-Palestine dispositions were widely known, succeeded in a ‘Jordanization’ of the bureaucracy which drastically diminished Palestinian influence within state institutions. Outside the state apparatus, Al-Tall worked to cripple the professional associations and unions which were controlled by Palestinians (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. Palestinian faculty, who had until then formed the majority of professors, were thereby reduced to a minority. 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 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, more significantly, defined by its exclusion from the national Jordanian identity.

The state animosity towards Palestinians has led to significant Palestinian-Jordanian tension among the general population, 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 fears 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 further exacerbated 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 Jordanians means that other Jordanians can 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 and their lack of affiliation with Jordanian Bedouin tribes (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 is thus predicated on a perception of existential threat posed by the ‘enemy’.

The Palestinians are in fact 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. What evokes a constant fear of similar future episodes is a contemporary equivalence between Palestinian-ness and disloyalty to the Jordanian state. The 24<sup>th</sup> March *Shabab* movement during the 2011 Arab Spring is an instructive example. Most of the participants in the pro-democracy demonstration on 24<sup>th</sup> March 2011 were Jordanians, and by carrying national flags, wearing flag face paint and playing nationalist songs, they signaled that they were calling for reform and not regime change (Ryan 2011). Even so, the protests were met the next day with violent counter-demonstrators allegedly sent by the Jordanian state, who identified the demonstrators as Palestinian *fedayeen* working to remove the monarchy (Ryan 2011, Achilli 2014). The episode underscores that the act of protesting was interpreted by the state simultaneously as an act of disloyalty and as a Palestinian act, despite the Jordanian participant majority and the explicit displays of Hashemite symbols. Insofar as the Palestinians are continually perceived as a threat to the life of the Jordanian community, Achilli’s application of the Schmittian friend-enemy distinction to Palestinian-Jordanian relations in Jordan seems justified.

Achilli stretches the friend-enemy distinction too far, however, is using it to explain the political reticence of Palestinian refugees living in camps. Achilli (2014, 241) argues that Palestinian refugees possess a “desire to live as both Palestinian refugees and Jordanian citizens” simultaneously. Yet the equivalence between “Palestinian-ness” and disloyalty in instances like the March 24<sup>th</sup> *Shabab* movement demonstrates how adversarial positions within politics are mapped onto the Palestinian-Jordanian dialectic. The historical ‘othering’

process initiated by the state and internalized by at least the ethnically Jordanian citizenry renders these two identities incompatible and mutually conflicting; engaging in politics thus requires choosing a side, either Palestinian or Jordanian. Unwilling to make such a decision, 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).

The state othering of Palestinians described thus far applies to all Palestinians in Jordan, and likewise Achilli’s account of the ‘ordinary’ makes no distinction between citizen and non-citizen Palestinians. However, such a distinction bears crucial consequences for Achilli’s theory. In the following sections, I will show that Achilli’s account of the ‘ordinary’ is premised on the assumption that most Palestinians in Jordan possess Jordanian citizenship, and demonstrate its inadequacies in characterizing those outside this majoritarian demographic, namely, the ex-Gazans.

### **Statelessness in Jordan**

Though a few ex-Gazans have since obtained Jordanian citizenship through marriage or other means, the vast majority of ex-Gazans in Jordan remain legally stateless to this day. They hold temporary Jordanian passports which must usually be renewed every two years.

While they therefore possess Jordanian passports, they do not have 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 (Tiltnes 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. Non-citizens also face severely limited access to monetary aid from the Jordan National Aid Fund (NAF) and rely instead on the 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. (Tiltnes and Zhang 2013).

The socioeconomic disadvantages of statelessness have a substantive impact on ex-Gazan identity. Their lack of citizenship rights leads to frequent encounters of discrimination that never allow them to forget their legal status as ‘outsiders’ in Jordan. Amani, an ex-Gazan from Jerash camp, recounted how she used to be paid only 90 JD out of the 150 JD monthly salary fixed in her contract when she worked as a teacher in a private school. Her employer justified the exploitative wage reduction by saying that Amani “should be thankful” she was even employed, given the extreme difficulty that ex-Gazans face in securing employment. Her story is one of many in which ex-Gazans, due to their non-citizen status, have vastly different experiences of ordinary, daily activities compared to Jordanian citizens. Tissam, another ex-Gazan from Jerash camp, recounted an incident in which she sought medical treatment for her mother from 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 this 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 every aspect 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 citizen Palestinians to personally identify as Jordanians whereas ex-Gazans typically disavow

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 case 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. Like the rest of the ex-Gazans interviewed, Amani took citizenship to signify material benefits such as access to health services, education and employment. Unlike the rest of the ex-Gazans, she gained access to these benefits. The resultant change in identity was momentous: Amani now readily identifies as Jordanian. Her new citizen status 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 citizenship had essentially rescued her from absurdly low wages and the indignity of exploitation. Little wonder then that her newfound sense of Jordanian-ness is more than a cosmetic change. Whereas other ex-Gazans, including her father, had said that they would return to Palestine immediately given the chance, Amani indicated that she would rather remain in Jordan to continue the life she has built here. Most notably, when asked if she saw herself as Jordanian, Amani said,

“Yes, and I do not want to go back to being a Palestinian, because I suffered from that...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. She disdains being Palestinian in public, since her economic woes stemmed from being recognized by others as Palestinian, while she preserves 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. Despite the contrast between Amani’s identity and that of the other ex-Gazans, she, like them, seeks to situate herself on only one side of the friend-enemy dialectic.

I have thus far shown that the legal status of ex-Gazans as stateless refugees translates into a Palestinian identity that is excluded from Jordanian national identity and that rejects the simultaneous enactment of a Jordanian identity. In the next section, I discuss the impact of this particular construction of Palestinian identity on the political claims of the ex-Gazans.

### **Articulating Political Claims as an Ex-Gazan**

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>5</sup> If there is one subject towards which Palestinians are expected to have a predictable stance, it is Israel. The Palestinian layman is commonly assumed to support any endeavor to

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<sup>5</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 14 October 2017.

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>6</sup> Yet, the difference in responses between the citizen Palestinians and the ex-Gazans in my interviews yield an important nuance.

Those Palestinians with citizenship tended to fit the typical characterization of the Palestinian layman. 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.

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 given that Israel was the topic at hand, 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 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

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

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 ex-Gazan and Jordan resembled the distance between guest and host. In this vein, 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 non-interference and 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 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, the ethic of silent forbearance became 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 an apolitical life in all its banality. 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.

## **Conclusion**

I would like to conclude by re-examining Achilli's account of an 'ordinary' realm circumscribed within socioeconomic integration in Jordan. 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. The applicability of Achilli's 'ordinary' ends at this superficial level, however. 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. The corollary of this argument is 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'. Yet the ex-Gazans distance themselves from politics even without a desire to enact a Jordanian identity, suggesting a different reason for their political reticence. Furthermore, if we take seriously the Schmittian concept that the 'political' is defined by the friend-enemy distinction, then the fact that the friend-enemy distinction permeates even the mundane tasks of the ex-Gazans' daily lives challenges the distinction Achilli draws between the 'political' and the 'ordinary' realms.

I would like to qualify my problematization of Achilli's account of the 'ordinary'. I do not claim to have demonstrated the falseness of Achilli's schema. Rather, I have shown 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. It thus faces serious challenges as a useful schema for the general Palestinian refugee camp populations in Jordan.

What then could explain the political reticence of the ex-Gazans, if not Achilli's concept of the 'ordinary'? I propose that the explanation is to be derived from the legal status of the ex-Gazans. The formal exclusion of ex-Gazans from the Jordanian nation 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; they cannot make political demands of it. Any sense of Palestinian-ness they seek to enact must be wholly private, and never political.

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