Palestine International Institute

**Aspiring to Bind Palestinians in the Diaspora
and Expatriates to the Homeland**

The Palestinian Community In Spain

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Foreword

The Palestine International Institute (PII) pioneers in producing studies provided by researchers in the Diaspora, in coordination with the Institute, under the broad category, 'Palestinians in the Diaspora'. This time we are pleased to present our readers with the 2008 reviewed and updated edition of our study titled 'The Palestinian Community in Spain'. This study falls under the category of the 'Horizontal Studies' series which examines the emergence and evolution of communities and tackles issues related to the origins, structure, makeup, size, problems and challenges of Palestinian communities in the Diaspora. The PII also issues the 'Parallel Studies' series which are supplemental studies with indirect bearing on communities, such as the study on Arab-European relationships. These studies are overseen and supervised by the executive chairman and the research team. In addition, our scientific committee, comprising Dr. Mohammad Mikdashi, Dr. Hasan Al-Charif, Dr. Emile Nemah Khoury, and Dr. Nabil Dajani, looks over the upgrading and maintenance of the PII website, as well as the update of the 'Vertical Studies' series, which are studies on the elite, focusing on activists of the Palestinian communities in the Diaspora.

Before scrutinizing the data, statistics and information, we wish to indicate that this study presents academic insight based on scientific and objective research. This is indeed one of the goals for which PII has been established. Our researchers have exerted considerable efforts in order to overcome the difficulties imposed by the scarcity of resources and documents in an attempt to achieve integrated, rather than fractured data at a time when scientific research is considerably lacking and insignificant. The importance of this study, as well as other PII studies, comes from a number of factors, the most important of which are the following:

- It comes as an early harvest in virgin territory, where documents and sources of information on these subjects, in both Arab and foreign libraries, are virtually nonexistent, including the Internet and centers that specialize in Palestinian issues.

- No scholar or institution has come up with a partial, needless to say complete, series of studies about Palestinians in the Diaspora in countries where they exist, or about communities of countries that have hosted Palestinians. Despite all said, we acknowledge the fact that the present study is in its early stages and is open to further development and expansion on the basis of professionalism, authenticity, transparency and documentation, and with the intent of being broadened and updated. Our mission and duty dictate that we make sure it is subject to the above processes in each of its new editions.

PII welcomes any comments on the development of its studies and scientific and research references with the aim of achieving its final goals and aspirations. If it

appears that we are slightly lagging, it is because our human and financial resources are limited and the conditions under which the research is being conducted are difficult.

The time to pick the fruits of our labor is near. All this has been the result of an effort exerted by a dedicated team, despite our humble resources. Our gratitude goes to all scholars and researchers who have contributed to this and other studies which aim to reach those interested, address their patriotic, national, human and intellectual aspirations, and reveal facts and data which were previously unknown to those who have had no access to such information.

We further reiterate our desire to receive feedback, and urge our readers to send us their comments and suggestions that would serve to improve or advance our studies.

As'ad Abdul-Rahman,
Executive Director

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Introduction

Spain is considered the oldest country with a Palestinian presence in Europe. The motivation for Palestinian immigration to Spain was twofold: work and university study. The community consisting of those who sought work, located in the Canary Archipelago, has its origins in the Arab immigration to America which took place towards the end of the 19th and early 20th century. The second category, originally concentrated around the main university cities of the Spanish mainland, belonged to the broader immigration movement from the Middle East region, of students seeking to attend foreign universities, particularly in the second half of the 20th century.

The contrasting nature of the two migratory movements, because of their geographic distribution and period of arrival, contributed to the development of

characteristics inherent to each. With little further connection between the two, it was deemed methodologically pertinent to study each group separately, while recognizing that their differences do not negate the presence of common features. Both were migratory currents that attracted, either directly or indirectly, new immigrants, and both subsequently developed into Palestinian communities in the Diaspora. Undoubtedly, the Palestinian problem impacted the transformation of these communities in the new society, including their associative, socio-political expression and the challenges they faced in regard to the relationship between the Diaspora and the renewed Palestinian problem.

In retrospect, it is appropriate to study the migratory movement to the Canary Islands, associated primarily with students, independently from the more recent Palestinian migration to the Spanish mainland. To achieve this, the author of this study resorted to crucial references and oral testimonies including those of Palestinians residing in the Canary Islands, or of those returning to the Middle East, particularly to Palestine and Jordan. The old and early presence of immigrants in the Canaries has been addressed, including the issue of the deaths of pioneer members of the community. This made it feasible to only conduct interviews with second-generation immigrants who arrived in the Canaries in the 1930s or more often in the 1950s and 1960s. Secondary resources, such as widows and descendents of the original community who hold many testimonies and memories, have been used. Some of the difficulties facing the researcher were the absence of documentation, such as official consulate entry registers, memoirs of the immigrants and a shortage of statistical records. To overcome this deficit it was imperative to review and monitor studies on Arab and Palestinian communities in Latin America from the perspective of a researcher, since the author is both a member of the community in Spain and a researcher.

Chapter One
Palestinian Immigration Beginnings

The Palestinian Community in the Canary Islands-Crossing the Religious Divide

One’s first impression of Palestinian immigration to the Canary Islands was that it was linked to the Palestinian national cause and that it was a community of political refugees. However, further analysis reveals that this original immigration had little to do with the socio-political events of 1948, which resulted in the loss of Palestine (*Al-Nakba*). On the contrary, the roots of this movement date back to the Ottoman immigration to America, which started in the second half of the 19th century (Karpat 1985:175-209).

Despite this element, Palestinian singularities in this migratory movement are recognized in this study. The fact that Lebanese, Syrians and Palestinians were

also involved in this migration leads us to consider that some similarities (such as migratory motivation and trends) and dissimilarities specific to each region might be appraised. These migratory waves lasted until the First World War (1914-1918) and it was noted that most of the members involved held Turkish citizenship. This explains why immigrants in Latin America were called Turks[1] (Amado 1995), an expression with degrading and xenophobic connotations (Hernández 1994:249-272).

The Origins of Palestinian Immigration to the Canary Islands

The pioneers of the Palestinian community in the Canary Islands emerged from this migratory movement. According to the general office of the Foreigners' Registry of Security, 40 persons of Turkish nationality were registered between 1917 and 1918 in the Canary Islands.[2] Though imprecise about their specific regional origin, this data deserves analysis for these reasons:

1. Following the pattern of Ottoman immigration, these 40 Turkish persons could possibly be the first Arabs who came to the Canary Islands during seasonal migration.

2. This trend is corroborated by further data from 1930 (Van Der Laan 1992:531-547), when foreigners of Turkish nationality numbered only 27, in contrast to 219 Arabs, of whom 67 were Palestinians.

3. According to numerous testimonies of immigrants who settled in the islands during the 1930s, other compatriots were living there long before their arrival (Navarro 1985).

This information allows us to endorse the theory of an early presence of Arabs in the Canary Islands, despite the inaccuracy incurred in locating the countries of origin. However, the question arises as to why these immigrants settled in the Canary Islands rather than continuing on to their original destination of America. It is a difficult question to answer because there are no primary sources to rely on. Therefore, a hypothesis for this phenomenon must be forwarded.

Originally, the destination of Ottoman migration was America, although the Lebanese also settled on the western coast of Africa[3] among other places. In both cases, the geo-strategic position of the Canary Islands between Europe, Africa and America is vital. Even Christopher Columbus stopped at the islands before departing to what he thought would be western India. Due to the development of trans-oceanic transportation (Van Der Laan 1992:533-534), harbors in the Canary Islands acquired a growing significance in transcontinental routes as a passing station where vessels refueled during their long journeys (Alcaraz, Anaya, Millares 1986: 99-131). It is very probable that contemporary Arab immigrants did not know of the existence of the Canary Islands, given their

low educational levels and the distance from their place of origin. Presumably, a vague knowledge was all they had as they approached the Canaries. At that time, the Canaries were not well known internationally. According to the testimonies of several research participants, a number of circumstances influenced their decision to settle in the islands, as outlined below:

1. If the ship they were traveling on stopped for refueling or because of circumstances beyond control (for example, an accident or a breakdown), people who landed on the islands might have postponed their departures.

2. Boat owners in the harbor of departure might have claimed that their destination was America, when in fact they were going only as far as Spain, or to one of the harbors in the Canary Islands.

3. The anguish that such a long trip caused and the fear of continuing too far from their native land, or becoming too sick to continue, may have influenced their decisions to remain on the islands. Also there was the adventure of trying their fortune on the islands where many Arab immigrants had become successful businessmen, whereas their prospects in America were unknown to them.

A decision to stay on the islands carried certain risks. A particular case was that of the Lebanese people who immigrated to West Africa for reasons of commerce, leisure, or the climate. Many of the people registered in the Consular Registry of Lebanon in the Canary Islands came from West Africa, or worked there, while their families lived on the islands or their sons studied in boarding schools. Probably, the Lebanese were among the first Arabs who temporarily dwelled in the Canary Islands because of their proximity and ease of communication with West Africa. Some testimonies endorse this hypothesis. The Honorary Consul of the Ivory Coast in the Canary Islands, Antonio Haroun, who has Lebanese ancestors, states that his father was on the islands at the beginning of the century, around 1904. It is to be mentioned that the first wave of Lebanese immigration took place from the beginning of the 20th century, until 1914. This bears resemblance, as studies show, to the Lebanese presence in West Africa which coincided with the first Arab immigration wave to the Canary Islands, between 1904-1914, and to the second period of immigration which lasted until 1950. All immigrants traveled on sailing ships and steamboats. These studies also prove that some of the Lebanese, who left Africa, particularly Sierra Leone, finally settled in the Canary Islands.

Therefore, it could be that the origin of Arab immigration to the islands was a secondary effect of Ottoman immigration to America and of Lebanese immigration to West Africa. In the collective imagination of the immigrants, even that of their relatives, America was more than just a continent. It represented the 'Promised Land', a country that would welcome them and provide them with an honest and affluent living.

Demographic Characteristics

From this period onward, the presence of an Arab community on the islands, with a remarkable representation of Palestinians, Syrians and Lebanese, could be precisely described (Table 1). At that time, the entire Arab immigration to Spain was concentrated in the Canary Islands; the Palestinians were concentrated in the province of Las Palmas (Table 2). Generally speaking, this trend became more and more dominant after 1930.

The number of Arab immigrants was 219, with 130 males and 89 females. It was not a typical masculine migratory movement, given the remarkable presence of women and families (Table 3). Only 98 were married individuals, in contrast to 116 singles (Table 4), but children (under 10 years old), or youngsters (between 10 and 19 years old) were many and made up a total of 85 persons (Table 5). Their main economic activity was trade, run mainly by men (Table 6) while, with some exceptions, women were responsible for housekeeping.

The Second World War prevented migration to the islands, while the earlier Spanish Civil War (1936-39) encouraged the departure of Arab migrants from the islands to America or to their native countries for economic reasons due to material shortages experienced in war, and socio-political reasons. The repression and extortion by some members of the security forces that followed the military upheaval against the republic in Spain affected Arab citizens as well; a similar situation was experienced due to envy in the local commercial bourgeoisie who feared the enterprise and competition of these venturing merchants.

After the Second World War, Arab migration continued (Table 7). The majority of immigrants shared aspirations of improving their socio-economic status. Their migratory tradition continued also for the love of adventure and travel, but in the case of Palestinians, the emergence of the Palestinian problem added yet another reason. Nevertheless, the main group which arrived at the islands in the second half of the 20th century did not come from territories occupied in 1948, rather from those occupied in 1967. This was mainly the West Bank[4], an area which had not yet been occupied by the Israeli army, yet it was directly affected by the events of the 1948 war, the mass arrival of refugees, the Jordan annexation and its policy of transferring wealth from the West Bank to the East Bank (Mishal 1980:169-184), and also by the extended instability in the Middle East.

During the 1970s there was a 30 per cent growth in the Palestinian community, but this declined at the beginning of the 1980s in the province of Las Palmas, although it continued in Santa Cruz de Tenerife (Table 8). This growth was due in part to the occupation of Gaza and the West Bank in 1967. It was also due to the early presence of Palestinians in the Canary Islands who, by communicating with

their relatives through short-wave radio broadcasts managed to encourage many of them to relocate. The sudden decrease in the number of Palestinian immigrants was related to the acquisition by many of them, and their descendants, of Spanish citizenship, by the passing away of many immigrants due to natural causes and probably because of the update of the arriving foreigners' register.

During and after the wars, Palestinian migration to the islands did not stop. In the later decades, however, a few members consisting of businessmen, professionals and students joined the community. These had no connection to the former Palestinian immigration, apart from a few exceptional cases. Though equally integrated as their compatriots in the new society, they are not considered part of the Arab migratory movement. Their attitudes were different, but they shared the wandering fate of many of their people.

Chapter Two
Challenges of Living in the Canary Islands

Socio-economic Integration of the Palestinian Community in the Canary Islands

The socio-economic integration of Palestinians into Canary society was no different from that of other Arab immigrants. Their major labor activity was trade. Generally speaking, this activity can be examined in two stages. First, that of the peddler, and second, the textile shop. Peddler activity was common to Arab immigrants to America. This option was chosen because of low costs and risks. It did not require a large investment (a shop or great stock). On the contrary, the investment was minimal and sometimes money was not needed, as the community would often credit the goods[5]. A special professional qualification was not required since this activity was based on a very simple economic principle: give-and-take. The need for language was only to set prices and to name the goods, so it was possible to work in this field from the moment of arrival in the country. This was also an activity which mostly depended on individual effort and offered a degree of independence. Everyone was his or her own boss. From the very beginning one could realize the benefits obtained in everyday sales and this was a greater incentive than a weekly or monthly wage. In the end, every immigrant's dream was to become self-made.

The principal strategy of the immigrant was saving for the purpose of setting up a shop. Passing from a nomadic to a commercial sedentary lifestyle involved stability and remarkable socio-economic changes. In this context, through interaction with the host society, they learned Spanish (with the Canary dialect), the customs of the islands and many of them met their future wives. This change

in socio-economic status often extended to their civil status since the establishment of the shop and marriage tended to complement this transformation. In this way, social promotion was completed and with it came integration into the Canary Island's social fabric through Palestinian-Canary marriages. In a parallel mode, this was accompanied by a qualitative shift from individual business to a more stable family-run system, where women contributed to its success.

Immigration is high risk and demands sacrifices. Without planning, immigrants rendered a service to the host society, mostly to the popular classes who had little purchasing power and a peripheral position in the community of the islands. Places where communication links were poor were frequented by Arab immigrants who carried their bags and sold their goods at low prices and in installments, without any added interest or any other guarantee than their own good word (committing their own honor and their family's). Like all other commercial enterprises, this was not an altruistic gesture. With passing time, businesses expanded to include the distribution of basic goods (mainly clothes and shoes) among the poorest communities and in areas with poor communications. Many Arab shops were the first to be established on the main commercial streets, though this fact is not yet recognized in the historiography of the Canary Islands.

The Arab immigrants reaped the fruit of their labors, especially after the revival of the Spanish economy in the 1960s and, particularly, the economy of the Canary Islands after the boom in tourism and subsequent development of services. In this context, Arab traders had a commercial infrastructure of shops and a client portfolio which they adapted with remarkable success to the demands of the island's market during the years of economic prosperity (Álvarez 1980:2 Vols). Parallel to this, there existed another method of socio-economic integration, less costly and faster, but also less widespread. This was connected to immigrants who came later and brought with them enough capital to invest at a time of great economic activity. Although originally the Arab-Palestinian immigrant was clearly identified with the textile trade, as soon as their integration was complete, their economic activities began to diversify. From their original activities, they evolved to the point of playing a role in businesses in the Canary Islands with their socio-economic diversity.

The image of the Arab peddler is now history. Though it has not yet disappeared from collective memory, only the elderly remember it. There is some proof of this in popular culture, which portrays the Arab peddler with special affection.[6] We should not forget the numerous jokes that Canary humor dedicates to the Arab's characteristic accent, given the fact that the majority learned Spanish on the streets. In contrast to their brothers in Latin America, the Arabs in the Canary Islands were not called 'Turks' as their arrival coincided with the fading away of the Ottoman Empire. However, they were known by various names in different areas of the islands, most notably *jarandinos* or *jarabandinos*. The origin of this

name seems to be related to a taboo word that many immigrants used repeatedly and the islanders adapted to their phonetics: *Ya Jareddinak*, meaning 'Damn your religion!'

The Community and Associative Trends and Belonging

The Arab immigrants were bound by the constitutive elements of a community because of characteristic similarities in their knowledge or origins (ethnic, historic, regional, cultural, linguistic, economic and social) and their recent life events, such as immigration, material expectancies, labor activity and the new social context. The behavioral trends, exogenous or endogenous, adopted by immigrants were usually connected with their social reception, either acceptance or rejection. Although Canary society did not seriously resist their integration, the immigrants devised informal community links (Taylor 1989), based on the principle: 'Whatever I do for you now, you can do back for me one day.' The socio-economic cooperation referred to in the previous section is a good example of this.

In the spirit of collective action, we can observe a higher tendency for cooperation in small and homogeneous groups than in large and heterogeneous ones (Olson 1971). The Syrian, Lebanese and Palestinian immigrants were a relatively small and homogeneous group. The aforementioned knowledge and common experiences in a social medium, in which they constituted a different collective from an ethnic and linguistic point of view, reinforced this group. Their relations crossed beyond economic ties. These links supported new immigrants as they integrated into society.

The immigrant community played a decisive role in this transition which is characterized by adjustment and integration. Its members often took in newcomers they did not know before. In the new social medium they became a family, joined by affection, community and identity links, as well as temporality (similar past, present and future), the physical space (the islands) and the social space (the society of the islands). The immigrant community functioned as a double link to the new society: to the inner space representing personal, interfamily and community relationships, engulfing expressions of affection and to the outer space involving impersonal, public and societal links, based on instrumental and formal relationships. At the same time, it divided both spheres and allowed cohabitation between them.

The community played the role of intercultural mediator between two symbolic and linguistically different cultures and enhanced the reception of immigrants by society on the islands. The social acceptance of the Arab community permitted their integration and exogenous development. Christian Arabs showed more endogenous growth with regard to marriage. Theoretically, Muslims expected more difficulties in getting married in a Catholic society. However, the majority of

Arab-Christians married Arab women and the majority of Arab-Muslims married Canary-Christians. This behavior can be traced back to the situation of the Christian minority in the Middle East, who are forced to adopt more endogenous traditions.

During the peddler activity period, the most prominent community trends were cohabitation, especially among relatives, meals — mainly Arab cuisine, and coffee time, which acted as a leisure space and a meeting point for the community.

Once married, community relations among Arabs and between Arabs and the Canaries, were organized through the family by sharing visits, meals, leisure time and lending help when needed — with bureaucratic dealings and money guarantees and on occasions of adversity, such as illness or death. Feasts took place on various occasions, such as weddings, baptisms and Christmas. The most celebrated time of the year was Ramadan, which brought together a large numbers of Christian and Muslim Arabs. This strengthened the links in the community as well as the tolerance and respect between both religions. As they became socially integrated, their community ties weakened in favor of the process of individualization inherent to modernization and the accompanying social change undergone through the host society. However, this reduction in social ties did not occur before the community fulfilled its supportive function of helping individuals integrate.

Community ties were also present among Arab immigrants. Their most successful enterprise was the Hispano-Arab Club, founded in Las Palmas at the beginning of the 1960s. Even though not all of the associates were immigrants, a great number of community activities took place at its headquarters. The club was a center for community life, but was limited to leisure activities without any further cultural scope.

In general terms, Arab immigrants failed to transmit their cultural heritage to their descendants in the context of Arabic, or their religious beliefs, in the case of Muslims (Abu-Tarbush 2001:79-92), (Abu-Tarbush 2002). They did pass on, however, some concrete elements such as culinary skills. This behavior is commonly justified in terms of adaptation to the new social setting, but with the passing of years it involved an implicit declination of their cultural tradition and, in the case of Muslims, of their religion. The inability of immigrants to transmit their cultural identity to the next generation was due in part to their deficient cultural links and their low collective self-esteem. More interested in material goods than culture, immigrants concentrated on investment in work and the education of their descendants, who inherited their economic capital, including businesses and properties, and received academic opportunities unavailable to their parents.

Immigration, Exile and Identity

The national identity of Palestinians who settled in the Canary Islands is very weak compared to other communities in the Diaspora. This singularity is a characteristic of the Palestinians' migratory movement, which is originally unrelated to the Palestinian problem. Since their migration to the Canary Islands was not triggered by war, they could not be regarded as refugees in a way similar to their compatriots who migrated to Lebanon, Jordan and Syria between 1947-1949 (Morris 1989). They cannot be considered political exiles, given the fact that the majority of them left their land for socio-economic and not political reasons.

It may be interesting to consider whether this migratory movement was voluntary or forced. Generally, Palestinian immigrants to the Canaries left their land before the *Nakba* voluntarily but afterwards, Palestinian migration was forced. The great political and economic instability in the region had also extended to the West Bank and Gaza Strip, even before they were occupied in 1967. However, it was after this occupation that the departure of the greater amount of Palestinians from their territories became fostered by Israeli policy aiming to displace the Palestinians and causing a demographic transformation of Palestine (Abu-Lughod 1987:139-163).

A noticeable difference distinguishes economic immigrants from the refugees. While immigrants can return to their native land whenever they want, refugees cannot go back even if they wish, until the causes that prevent their return disappear or are eliminated. Therefore, it does not matter whether Palestinian immigration was voluntary or forced as the Israeli occupation blocks Palestinian émigrés from returning to their lands or homes. Even those who immigrated after the 1967 occupation had risked their own right of return because of the supposed-bureaucratic obstacles of Israeli occupation policy. In this context, the Palestinians who lived in the Canary Islands were forced to change their status of voluntary or forced immigration to that of an exiled people. In so doing, the Palestinian community in the Canary Islands had effectively joined the Diaspora.

This new situation did not have immediate socio-political ramifications among the Palestinian immigrants in the Canary Islands because, in many cases, their immigration was more of a private departure. They had left in search of economic stability, rather than a demonstration of public and collective protest and resistance to the Israeli occupation (Hirschman 1970). However, the increasing process of reconstruction of the Palestinian national identity also reached its peak in the Canaries (Khalidi 1997). These dynamics, as in other communities in the Diaspora, accelerated after the drastic events of 1967, when the Arab dimension of the conflict lost ground and an exclusively Palestinian alternative became increasingly popular (Sayeg 1997). Parallel to this, the sharp contradictions between the ‘revolution demands’ and the ‘state demands’ which took place in Jordan and Lebanon during the 1970s, the Israeli occupation and the growing international acknowledgement of the PLO helped intensify their Palestinian identity.

Until that moment, the vision of Palestine which was shared in the Canary Islands was nostalgic, with romantic references and an idealization of the lost paradise. Palestine became the daily bread, with its fertile land and its lovely people. Home became the relevant question in everyday life and the most typical greeting became, 'Did you hear the latest news?'[7] (Karmi 1999:52- 63).

The practical development of these nationalist feelings, however, met several obstacles.

- First, their political culture, both traditionalist and personal, based on tribal, religious and regional links, which were stronger than the national ones, tended to fragment and erode collective action.

- Second, their geographical position, their remoteness and isolation exacerbated communication difficulties among members on the different islands and with other communities in the Diaspora.

- Third, their legal and political position in Franco's Spain added problems as they had no freedom of movement or expression and they were constantly under suspicion and surveillance because of the globalization of political violence that some Palestinian organizations encouraged.

- Fourth, their socio-cultural and economic profile, which focused on material assets and individual values, left no space for political matters and instilled a fear of losing their possessions for ideals in the immigrants.

These obstacles which faced the community did not prevent activity fostered by some of its members who had joined the national liberation movement as supporters or activists. Though these were not political professionals in the traditional sense, they acted as if they were. Their main activity, restricted to the Arab and Palestinian community, was focused on the collection of money for the Palestinian movement, especially when it faced real difficulties, and on developing contact with delegates of the movement upon their arrival in the islands. Unfortunately, collecting money for the Palestinian cause raised suspicion among members of the local community. Because of their weak national conscience, their individualist and mercantile socio-economical profile and even the conservative spirit of the Palestinian commercial bourgeoisie in the islands, it was noticeable that, without a serious labor of political pedagogy, it would be difficult to generate the necessary positive attitude and confidence for cooperation within the community.

This state of affairs began to change with the generational shift in the Palestinian community. This process coincided with the transition in Spain, which was accompanied by a volatile socio-political period. A few members of the second generation, who were born on the islands, took part in community activities, but in a new and different way. They organized Palestinian popular art exhibitions,

performances of the Palestine National Folk group, conferences on the Palestinian quest, meetings with Canary political parties, speeches in the mass media (press and radio, mainly) and developed contacts with relevant members of Canary society like journalists, intellectuals and scholars.

This young group fostered the creation of an association whose aim was to promote links with Palestinian youngsters for the purpose of organizing the community from its base, given the difficulty of the first generation to achieve more ambitious goals. Despite the celebration of the first Congress of the Palestinian Community in the Canary Islands in the early 1980s, the scope of activities was limited and did not fulfill these youngsters' aspirations. In this sense, the foundation of the organization *Sanaud* — 'we will go back', in the mid-1980s represented a growth in the Palestinian presence in the Canary Islands, qualitatively and quantitatively. *Sanaud* had two aims, first, to group together the descendants of the Palestinian immigrants in the Canary Islands and second, to disseminate information about the Palestinian quest among Canary authorities and society in order to gain support and promote solidarity. The sons and daughters of the immigrants who came to the islands as peddlers were now part of and fully integrated members of Canary society. Their values, especially material values, were radically opposed to those of their parents (Inglehart 1989).

The success of the community can be measured by the number of activities and contacts it formulated with society in the Canary Islands. *Sanaud* was an important reference for the Palestinian and Arab community. However, a crisis in the early 1990s, caused mainly by its members and other members of the Palestinian and Arab community, led to its disappearance. The Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) was also responsible for the wrong conception of the community agenda in the Diaspora. The Central Palestinian Office underestimated the fact that most of the political duties in the islands fell on the younger members who tried to organize a project that exceeded the capacities of the community. This was a proposal that copied the Arab and Palestinian models in Latin America, but was larger and more resourceful. The PLO dissolved many of the organized leagues and unions of the community in the Canary Islands, took over their scarce resources and swayed those few active members who occupied leading positions in the different unions to join the PLO. This ended up generating suspicion and distrust among members of the community. At the same time, the PLO, in a very risky tactic, played a role of reference and sent several delegations to the islands in order to rectify the coordination problems and to consolidate its position as an authority that should be reckoned with and constantly consulted.

The result was that many youngsters of Palestinian origin living in the Canary Islands withdrew from the public sphere where they had exerted unprecedented effort, serving the Arab-Palestinian community and its position in Canary society, and focused on private matters related to family and friends. Frustrated and exhausted by the organization and cooperation problems that were constantly at

the core of their meetings, they abandoned a decade of collective public activity. During that time they had successfully promoted the presence of the Palestinian community in the Canary Islands as no one had done before.

However, the transfer of the Palestinian quest from the Diaspora to the inner territories, which started with the *Intifada* and ended with the establishment of the Palestinian National Authority, had displaced the traditional role of the Palestinian communities in the Diaspora. Besides, the dissatisfaction of these communities with the Oslo Accords and the peace process in general had instituted a certain degree of indifference among their members. Disenchanted with the activities of local society and on a national level, the Palestinian community in the islands became far more passive on nationalist issues.

Chapter Three
The Palestinian Community in Spain

Transformation of a Young Community

In recent decades, many Palestinian students have chosen the Spanish peninsula as a destination for their university studies. Their arrival in Spain impacted, quantitatively and qualitatively, the Palestinian community there, which until then consisted only of the integrated Palestinians residents in the Canary Islands. Unlike the latter, the new Palestinian immigrants were more numerous and younger, and for the most part, single males who sought a university education and academic advancement.

The new profile of Palestinian immigration to Spain reflected the changes which were taking place in Palestinian society, both in the occupied territories and the Diaspora, towards greater investment in academic resources, public dedication and political commitment. The Palestinian community in the Spanish peninsula is mainly composed of young students who remained in the country after concluding their studies. They were well integrated into Spanish society via the labor market, mostly as professionals and businessmen and as part of its social fabric through mixed marriages that resulted in a new generation of Hispanic-Palestinian descendants.[8]

As for the immigrant Palestinians who came from the Third World, they brought along and nurtured knowledge and skills, which they were unable to substantially reinvest in their society of origin despite their numerous areas of expertise, including economic, scientific, technical and many more. The so-called peace process did not produce a significant return of Palestinians who settled in Spain to the West Bank or Gaza Strip except for visits undertaken by individuals or families. This was principally a result of the slight relaxation in Israeli controls over the Palestinian Diaspora of Western Europe.

Moving to a Familiar Land

Spain was one of the countries chosen by immigrating Palestinian students during the 1960s and 1970s. This migratory movement was attributed to the difficulties which Palestinian youths faced in pursuing their higher education at home since entry to universities was selective and places were limited. Admission to Arab or Western universities was also prohibitive because of high costs and difficulties in getting visas. Spain was chosen for its quality of life, which was affordable for the middle and more modest classes.

The origins of the Palestinian students were varied. Mainly they came from the West Bank and Gaza, followed by Jordan, Kuwait, Syria and Lebanon. This also meant differences in passports and travel documents. Their Palestinian origin is not included in the census of Spain's foreign population, of which Palestinian students are estimated to number between 3,500 and 5,000. The highest number was reached during the 1960s and 1970s because at that time Spain did not present great difficulties for foreigners wishing to reside and study within. But Spain's admission into the European Union increased the bureaucratic obstacles for the entry of non-union foreigners. Equally, the rapid process of development improved the quality of living and elevated university entrance requirements. These factors explain the gradual reduction in the number of Palestinian immigrants to Spain throughout the 1980s and 1990s. Another contributing factor was the growing capacity of the Arab region to absorb more students due to the establishment of new public and private universities.

Medicine was the main specialty undertaken by students, given its social prestige in the homeland, where people pride themselves on the fact that their son will be a doctor, or *hakim*. This was also because of the relative ease of admission to medical education programs in Spanish universities in comparison to other European countries or the United States (Musin 1982:70). The second major option was pharmacology. There were also a variety of other subjects, but always within the predominant branches of experimental and technological sciences. Humanities and social sciences occupied a very peripheral place and were not a first choice; rather they were an option due to failure in the sciences. This trend explains the relative shortage in the number of Palestinian intellectuals in Spain, compared to Anglo-Saxon countries or France where they enjoyed a more prominent role in cultural, intellectual debates or interviews by the media,[9] particularly on matters related to Arab and Islamic issues, and the Palestinian quest.

It is worth mentioning that a good number of Palestinian students studying at European or American universities had a more affluent background, better education and were bilingual. In Spain, on the other hand, the social profile of Palestinian students was more modest. This was a migratory movement consisting mainly of university age male students, between 17-19 years old, of

mostly rural origin. The nature of their stay was temporary, depending on the duration of their studies. In general, this took longer than usual for various reasons, some of which included learning the language, and facing economic problems. Although the time taken to complete a degree varied according to the individual's effort, on average it was – discounting the period for language training — between 6 and 7 years for students not specializing in medicine. The group's demographic distribution followed the main university cities: Barcelona, Granada, Madrid, Valencia, Valladolid, Salamanca, Santiago de Compostela, Seville, Zaragoza, etc.10

The Community and its Binding Laws and Orders

As the number of Palestinian students increased, small nuclei of students were forming around the cities of their residence and the universities where they were studying. The older students acted as a focal reference for the new ones. In fact many students shared common origins: upbringing, family, friends, etc., both on a local and a regional level. In Spain under Franco, students did not face great difficulties in terms of social reception since current legal barriers to the residence of non-EC foreigners did not exist then. Apart from the clichés associated with Arabs, which were more the product of ignorance than a deliberate campaign and the political dictatorship — causing a total absence of freedoms — the Arab-Palestinian students faced only the language barrier and the need to complete their studies.

The circles of coexistence consisted mainly of students and young people of a similar age. Places of residence were varied. Some lived in university residence halls or in houses attended to by elderly ladies, others in designated homes with Spanish families or in flats shared with Spanish, Arab or Palestinian youths. The prevalent housing patterns varied over the years. In the early years, the demand was greater for maintained flats in which basic services of catering, cleaning and ironing were provided, while in later years, with increased experience and a greater desire for freedom, shared flats became more popular.

The principal areas of social gatherings were cafeterias and student dining rooms. Food and drink were generally cheap and the space allowed for larger groupings than at home, to the effect that they became the main setting for student socialization. There, Palestinian students were able to meet a good number of young people as well as other students from different academic departments. Recently, new students had the capacity for self-orientation in their new surroundings, able to find accommodation, take language courses, conduct dealings of money exchange, visas, residency permits and registration, and learning the norms and traditions of Spanish society. This is in addition to meeting other students and maintaining contact with friends, relatives or neighbors in the same cities or elsewhere.

The people who frequent the service areas came from diverse sections of the student community. They had grown accustomed to living alongside the Palestinian students via flat-sharing, dining together, socializing and frequenting parties and trips. This group solidarity compensated for the absence of family support at times of hardship as a result of illness, traffic accidents or assaults. In some cases, it carried out the most traditional of family functions associated with marriage proposals, patronage in weddings and child-related practices of baptism and circumcision. This student solidarity network provided an entire series of services including financial assistance, medical attendance, searching for lodgings, assisting with language classes, loans and the forwarding of letters to family through those who were traveling to the homeland, etc. Thus, the student environment was of unusually profound importance in a time of growing political agitation characterized by hot debates and instability. The various factions of the Palestinian national movement were instrumental in investing this public space and informal forum as a key to political polarization. The most obvious example of this process was the creation of the Spanish section of the General Union of Palestinian Students (GUPS).

Chapter Four
Political Activity of the Palestinian Students

The Student Movement

In the network of Palestinian institutions, GUPS had particular importance. This was the first Palestinian student organization that evolved after the catastrophe (*Al-Nakba)* of 1948 (Brand 1988:64-84). Its main objective was to regroup the various Palestinian student circles in the Diaspora and support them from an organizational, educational and politically active base. Unlike other sectors of the Palestinian community, students had a repertoire of resources and skills, whether communicative, because of their knowledge of languages and political and mass media terminology, or academic, through conducting studies, seminars and debates, or mobilization via solidarity networks, organization and planning. Equally important was their availability because of their flexible time schedules, their energy, which is characteristic of youth, and their dreams and aspirations which were driven by their sense of national mission.

GUPS was the center of socio-political activism for Palestinian university students who lived far from their countries of residence. Some students prolonged their university life to devote themselves more to collective student movement activities at the expense of their studies. It was not always easy to coordinate both missions: the academic program, seeking to get a degree and the extra-curricular, leading to socio-political learning.

GUPS was indivisible from the Palestinian national movement, since many of its members were militant or sympathetic constituents of some of the political

organizations of the PLO. For that reason, the political differences among the various factions of the PLO were also reflected in GUPS. An example of this was the debate raised in the early 1970s around the Geneva Conference (Muslih 1976: 127-140). The controversy created a significant division between the Fateh movement and the GUPS section in Spain (Manuel, David 1975: 239-260), which inevitably marked their subsequent course. In fact, the crisis that affected the Palestinian national movement in Spain cannot be understood without considering this schism.

The growing process of the institutionalization of the PLO and its recognition by Spain during Yasser Arafat's visit and the reception he received by Spanish President Adolfo Suárez in 1979 directed the attention of GUPS towards the PLO's office, which opened in Madrid around the same time, as a source of information. Until then, Palestinian representation had an unofficial character and students contacted the Arab League's office in Madrid for information. Social support originally came from the students who, given the absence of official recognition of the PLO in Madrid, acted as its spokesperson. Contact between GUPS and Spanish democratic forces, mainly with secretive political parties, was common. However, with Spain's political transition to democracy and the diplomatic and political recognition acquired by the PLO, the focal point of Palestinian political activism shifted from GUPS to the new PLO delegation. Nevertheless, GUPS remained active though it became more focused on student circles. Its bilateral relations with Spanish organizations were reduced to those involving student counterparts, as represented by youth associations, Spanish NGOs, student unions and youths from political parties. The GUPS leadership in Spain had an office at the headquarters of the PLO delegation in Madrid. From an institutional viewpoint, the PLO cooperated closely with GUPS, frequently delegating various tasks to the student representatives, who acted on behalf of the PLO in various activities, particularly those related to the Palestinian quest, which took place at universities, meetings, festivals, dialogues, exhibitions, etc. The student social base was a primary source of support for the increased PLO activity in Spain, during the late 1970s and early 1980s.

During this period, the Palestinian student movement in Spain became one of the most active in Western Europe, a matter which was also reflected at a national level.[11] In Spain, GUPS was the forerunner of Arab student organizations, and it stirred other Arab students into forming their own associations. It was a school of political thought, similar to the youth organizations and student unions often nurtured by political parties in democratic countries. Many of its members acquired exquisite experience in inter-Arab and international relations. These considerable socio-political tools contributed to GUPS' ascent in the Palestinian national movement and the evolution of some of its well-known leaders of the political past, to become part of its current political and bureaucratic elite. Many of the young students were not only GUPS figureheads, but also carried out important functions at the forefront of the PLO and, subsequently, of the Palestinian National Authority (PNA). Some became PLO ambassadors in

various Latin American states such as Ahmad Soboh, Hussein Abu Ali, Farid Siwan, George Salameh, Marwan Tahbuk and Sabri Atille.[12] For his part, Isam Salem Kamel died in the autumn of 1993, while still acting as ambassador for the PLO in Spain and having represented the PLO in Cuba and in the former Democratic Republic of Germany. Not to forget, probably the most famous of that entire era was Jawwad Abu Sha'aer, who led the Palestinian Fateh militias in Beirut in the mid- to late-1970s, where he lost his life (Mesa 1978: 207-209).

From Students to an Established Community

GUPS was more than just a student movement. Given the absence of institutions which could facilitate the integration of the aforementioned young immigrants, it operated as an important symbolic reference and helped them to successfully achieve social integration. In that sense, it attenuated the difficulties associated with integration in the host society, including the potential psychological impact and possibility of social deviation, which immigrants could experience in the face of irregularities and maladjustment to the new society (Grimberg, Leon and Rebeca 1984). Participation in GUPS was a means of political socialization with new norms and values which reinforced in members of the community a sense of belonging and loyalty. The activism in the group, estimated at 70 per cent of Palestinian students, was more extensive than in any of the other political organizations of the PLO. Thus, this socio-political involvement was something more than a means of attaining objectives, because it became an end in itself. It endowed a feeling of national dignity and recreated the collective identity of Palestinians in the Diaspora.

Although many were determined to prolong their student life by way of their participation in GUPS, the passage of time had taken its toll. By the mid-1980s, the Palestinian student movement in Spain showed serious signs of fatigue that led practically to its crumbling by the early 1990s. There were several causes for the GUPS paralysis and subsequent demise.

Demographically, the Palestinian student population in Spain gradually ceased to be renewed by subsequent waves of students. The influx of Palestinian students began to decrease in the 1980s. In addition, the socio-political character of the new arrivals was very different from that of their predecessors. They demonstrated greater political indifference, simultaneously becoming more concerned with the recreational aspects of Spanish society, given the practice of liberal customs there compared with the situation in their original societies. The studies they pursued became more inclined towards technical subjects because they were shorter in duration and provided quicker access to the labor market.

Politically, the national movement's crises, exemplified by the displacement of its leadership from Beirut to Tunisia, the divisions in Fateh and within the PLO, inevitably had impact on the Palestinian students in their various geographic locations. The national movement in Spain was no exception and it even

underwent its own internal disputes, or autonomous conflicts. The dynamics of PLO institutionalization changed, after the political-diplomatic representation in Madrid collided with that of the social movement embodied by GUPS. At the same time, a sharp disagreement evolved between elements of civil society in the Diaspora, represented by political parties, social movements, unions, professional associations, etc. and the 'state' or the PLO. The work dynamics basically depended on the results of frequent disputes between civil society and the ‘state’, or on the ambassador's mood, given the somewhat personalized character of the PLO’s external representation to the detriment of professionalism and teamwork.

Socially, the changes were no less drastic. The social profile of students arriving in Spain during the 1960s and 1970s, who had by then completed their studies, completely changed by the 1980s and 1990s; they were no longer students, nor young. Though it is unnecessary to fix a boundary on age between youth and maturity, the onset of a new chain of responsibilities, such as work, marriage, children and property decisively marked that transformation. In addition to the two previously mentioned areas of demographic and political change, social change is the best gauge of transformation of Palestinian residents in Spain. Without considering the population’s new social profile, it would be difficult to understand its new behavioral norms which became more centered on private concerns, mainly work and family, and on individual political interests. Moreover, the private sector provided refuge from public and political frustrations. In contrast, people often took up public action only after their private demands were met or after they were bored with these demands (Hirschman 1982). On completing their studies, the Palestinians who remained in Spain changed their status from temporary to permanent residents. This resolution was opted for by many students, with the majority coming from countries bordering Palestine, though some had come directly from the West Bank and Gaza, and a large proportion of those had lost their residency status in these territories after occupation by Israel in 1967. Also, many of those who left the occupied territories lost their residency permits due to expiry during their time abroad. Given the precarious political situation in the area, some feared returning to their places of residence whether in the occupied territories or in some Arab countries known for their political militancy[13]. Others simply decided to start afresh or continue their lives in Spain, where they perceived better prospects of work, personal autonomy and family (engagement or mixed marriage) development. The original body of student immigration had opened the way to a new collective of Palestinians in the Diaspora in Western Europe.

On obtaining a first university degree, or even a PhD, the next step for students was to look for work in the field of their specialization. Those who did not complete their studies, or were unable to develop themselves professionally, went into other areas of work which required less qualification, or ventured into selected types of business[14]. In turn, to be able to work required the resolution of their legal status with regard to residence, work permit and nationality. A large

number of them acquired Spanish citizenship, especially after Spain's entrance into the European Union and the gradual closure of its borders to non-European foreigners. With rare exceptions, often attributable to activity in the Palestinian political movement in Spain[15], most were nationalized with little difficulty because they tended to meet the specified requirements of good behavior, years of residence in the country, work, knowledge of the language and Spanish customs, not to mention the clear advantage of being married to a Spaniard and having descendents in the country.

Mixed Arab-Hispanic marriages were quite common among the older students (around 85 per cent). This incorporation into the Spanish population was testament to the students' high level of integration, which was reinforced by Hispanic-Palestinian descendants. Given their professional skills, principally as doctors, pharmacists and managers, many experienced a remarkable ascent in the Spanish social hierarchy, gained greater social recognition and some acquired distinguished socio-economic status. Notwithstanding, they have been less successful in the bicultural education of their children. With some exceptions, most of their descendants know little about their paternal language and, even worse, the culture from which it emanates. In general, parents exercised control over their young children but failed to guide them during adolescence and early youth, a critical phase in life when individuals seek freedom, particularly in modern societies. Perhaps more than anything else, it has been this cultural and linguistic 'divorce' between parents and children that raised the alarm to the disintegration in collective social identity, the holders of which, paradoxically, fought so hard to preserve.

With the exception of rare individual efforts, Palestinians, as a group, failed to create some form of community institution that would preserve their identity among their descendents who were living in a bicultural environment. In principle, many showed great reticence in accepting the idea that their period of residence in Spain would extend beyond their initial intent. Therefore, they had to adopt appropriate measures to facilitate a lengthier stay. But even after they accepted this new reality, there was little substantial change in their approach to the issue.

Although the Palestinian student movement in Spain was very active and its members enjoyed the status of nationalists, no similar associative experience has been reproduced in the community, despite the fact that its members now have far greater access to material resources than during their student years. Even so, the organizational models and motivational incentives of the past, including identity, political militancy, peer pressure, grants, scholarships and economic support have since become rare or even nonexistent. Even when available they are inadequate and ineffective. Regrettably, repeated and generous attempts to give a collective voice to Palestinians residing in Spain have succumbed to failure and frustration (Alami 1993).[16]

The difficulties challenging the community, without overstatement, are confined to the following reasons:

1. The politicization of social issues, which sought to compensate for political frustrations that had become a reminiscence of their student activist past (Abumalham1995).[17]

2. The interference of PLO representation, which played the role of judge, bringing to the surface its usual clientele and political allies, and complicating the setting up of a strong Palestinian community in Spain that was able to supervise its own affairs and could influence, for example, the selection of a suitable ambassador

3. The interpersonal relationships, based on distrust and a protagonist *mukhta*r mentality, which derives from a personalized, narrow and localized cultural outlook, in which personal and regional loyalties prevails and takes precedence over rational and national loyalties.

It is certain that private interests represented by the embassy, political organizations and interest groups prevailed at the expense of community benefits. Worse still, there has been a failure to provide an appropriate platform to bring descendants together. On the contrary, meetings of parents at a café or during social gatherings which, at the risk of trying to delve too deeply into a cultural ghetto, seem to perpetuate the notion of separate identities, or what was referred to earlier as cultural 'divorce'. This makes the new generations unable to retain their Arab identity as they blend into Spanish society, a matter dissimilar to their parents who were able to do so when they came seeking education at Spanish universities and stayed after graduation.

Summary

The origin of an Arab and Palestinian presence in the Canary Islands dates back to the period of Ottoman and Arab immigration to America. The Arab community started with a focal group consisting of Lebanese, Syrian and Palestinian immigrants who arrived in the early 20th century. The key to their economic integration began when they started working as peddlers roaming the towns and cities at a time when transportation and communication means and commercial networks were weak. Applying the principle of 'a lot of work and a little expenditure' and adopting a strategy of saving enough money to open clothing stores, they compensated for their commercial ventures during the periods of tourist and service sector booms. Their social acceptance faced little difficulty on account of the numerous registered Arab-Canary marriages. A telling indicator of the magnitude of Arab community integration, even meltdown, in Canary society is the fact that Arab immigrants did not pass on their cultural identity to the new society. Regardless of the motivation for their migration, which was mainly work or study, the era of their arrival (early-, mid- or late-20th century), or the areas in

which they settled (the Canary Islands or the Spanish peninsula), the Palestinians, now integrated into Spanish society, have a series of common features which allow conclusions to be drawn about the community as a whole.

1. In passing from immigration to exile, the Palestinian community in Spain has been transformed from a group of temporary immigrants, intending to work or study, to community-integrated permanent residents, and from seeking private and material interests that are related to work and family, to public and post-material ones based on socio-political and community needs.

2. Considering the problems the community has faced with regard to maintaining its identity, one cannot overlook its profound social, cultural, economic, political and ideological transformation. Most of its members have spent more of their lives in Spain than in Palestine or any other Arab country for that matter. In most cases, their behavioral norms are governed not by the society from which they came, but that in which they have come to reside. The result of this profound process of re-socialization is that today's Palestinians in Spain have little to do with those who arrived on its shores and universities a few decades ago.

3. Bridging the difficulties it has encountered in striving for association, trying to have a greater voice and become a noteworthy pressure group in Spain, the Palestinian community has undergone another equally significant change from a state of political and ideological confusion, derived from the current collapse of the peace process, to the necessary demarcation between ‘state’ representatives and civil society in the Diaspora and the delimitation of boundaries between official Palestinian representation and the Palestinian community. Any forthcoming initiative that does not recognize the significance of defining the role of each and drawing the margins of cooperation between the two is bound to fail.

Despite the PLO’s lack of community work in the West, the Palestinian community’s experience in the Canary Islands shows how it is possible to reconstruct the associative fabric of an isolated, displaced community while remaining aware of the sometimes undesirable effects of quasi-state organizational interference in civil society in the Diaspora. It is important to note that the shift in the Palestinian question’s focal point from the Diaspora to the occupied territories themselves – initiated at the time of the first *Intifada* – has taken away from the traditional role of communities in the Diaspora. In turn, dissatisfaction with the Oslo Accords and the peace process in general has produced a marked melancholy among members. These sources of disillusionment, both at community and national levels, may explain the current passiveness of the Palestinian community in Spain. This said, it is certain that political events in the region, as has been the case in the second *Intifada*, can stir the Diaspora into being more active, which has lately manifested itself in the use

of new technology, namely the establishment of websites by various Palestinian collectives and organizations.

The situation in Spain is different because the community is made up of highly qualified specialists who initially came to the country to study and became involved in social and political service. Many of these professionals have been able to preserve ties and intercommunity relations and provided assistance to their kin under Israeli occupation. A larger interest in the social, cultural and educational activities is also evident, not only in Spain but amongst Palestinian communities in Europe. Along with this is a commitment to political issues which is manifested in financial and other forms of support and bridging cooperation with relief organizations in the guest society.

Looking to the future, two important trends may be identified in regard to the Palestinian community in the Canary Islands. First, the community is tending to disappear, both due to the advanced age of its members and the near non-existence of any new immigration. Its only remnant will be descendants fully integrated into Spanish society and distributed throughout its social structure. Second, it is somewhat unlikely that associative movements such as those propagated by GUPS and *Sanaud* will be reborn in the community, unless they are conducted under a different premise to that previously invoked, since the Palestinian situation, both locally and nationally, has changed significantly. In this regard, a revision of the Palestinian community's role in the Diaspora is necessary, especially in light of the ongoing, monumental changes to the Palestinian issue and its geopolitical coordinates. The need is pressing to preserve a common Palestinian cultural identity, define a formula for cooperation with the center and reinvent the community's role in the society of its residence.

Appendices

Appendix No. 1

The Barcelona Conference

The Barcelona conference was held May 25-27, 2007. The conference stressed the need to stay firm on the issue of the right of return. This was an outright initiative in the strife for Palestinian legitimate rights. It was also a continuation of the Palestinian meeting which was held in Geneva in December 2005. One hundred Palestinian personalities, from all continents and political parties participated in the meeting, with the attendance of Farouq Qaddumi, head of the political department in the PLO and Tayseer Qubah, vice president of the Palestinian National Council (PNC).

The conference was initiated by Riyad Al-Shoaibi, a Palestinian businessman who owns real state in Barcelona and was backed by prominent figures in

European Arab communities. The conference advocated a revitalization of PLO institutions, called for a Palestinian people's conference and conducting free elections for the Palestinian refugees in the Diaspora and refugee camps and concentrated areas outside Palestine, to enable children of the homeland to elect their representatives in the PNC.

The Barcelona conference was different from the Beirut conference. It relied on Palestinian communities, institutions and activities, first in Europe and then the Americas. It bridged relations with Palestinians everywhere, particularly with the PLO through the leadership of the PNC and its political department, headed by Farouq Qaddumi. In contrast, the Beirut conference excluded persons affiliated with Palestinian divisions and depended primarily on independents, especially the elite who were well-recognized in the arenas of national Palestinian work.

The conference gained the support of the Palestinian presidency after the conferees declared that the objectives of the Palestinian communities and bodies in the Diaspora were not to displace the PLO, but to help in its rebuilding, restoration and dispensing with bureaucracy, through its embassies and various agencies. Tayseeer Qubah, vice president of the PNC, addressed the conference, announcing the PNC's support for the conference and warned against manipulating Palestinian slogans. He reiterated the Palestinian unity both inside and out of Palestine.

Farouq Qadumi tried to play the communities 'card' in an attempt to curb the absolute control exercised by Mahmoud Abbas when he withdrew the political department's power of authority with regard to ambassadors and diplomats. He failed when the conference received endorsements and solidarity letters from all Palestinian factions and symbols, and ahead of all, the PNC.

Appendix No. 2

Tables

Table 1 Distribution of Arab immigrants in Spain in 1930

Country	Spain	Canaries	Difference
Arabia [A]	13	13	0
Palestine	74	67	7
Syria/Lebanon [B]	142	139	3
Total	229	219	10

Source registered foreigners in the Census of 1930, Madrid 1935.

Table 2 Provincial distribution of Arab immigrants in 1930

Country	Canaries	Las Palmas	Santa Cruz de Tenerife
Arabia	13	6	7
Palestine	67	66	1
Syria/Lebanon	139	100	39

Source registered foreigners in the Census of 1930, Madrid 1935.

Table 3 Distribution of Arab immigrants in 1930 **M** Male, **F** Female

Country	Las Palmas de Gran Canaria	Santa Cruz de Tenerife	Total Canaries
Arabia (M)	3	5	8
Arabia (F)	3	2	5
Palestine (M)	39	1	40
Palestine (F)	27		27
Syria/Lebanon (M)	52	30	82
Syria/Lebanon (F)	48	9	57

Source registered foreigners in the Census of 1930, Madrid 1935.

A. With this so-general a term, it is possible to think of it as meaning 'of Arab nationality' or 'from Saudi Arabia'. Though this nationality is not included among members of immigration dealt with in this study — Syrians, Lebanese and

Palestinians — it was decided to include it as it can be attached to any of the already mentioned Arab nationalities.

B. Though only Syrians appear in the quoted source, it was considered relevant to introduce the Lebanese, because it is rather probable that the Lebanese were counted as Syrians as both countries were under the French mandate, a fact corroborated by oral sources and the Lebanese presence since that period, which was quantitatively higher than the Syrians.

Table 4 Distribution of Arab immigrants according to civil status in 1930

Country	Single	Married	Widows	Unknown
Arabia (M)	4	4		
Arabia (F)		4	1	
Palestine (M)	20	18	1	1
Palestine (F)	12	14	1	
Syria/Lebanon (M)	51	30	1	
Syria/Lebanon (F)	29	28		
Total Males	75	52	2	
Total Females	41	46	2	
Grand Total	116	98	4	1

Source registered foreigners in the Census of 1930, Madrid 1935.

Table 5 Distribution of Arab immigrants according to age in 1930

Country	Under 10	10-19	20-39	30-39	40-60	Over 60	Unknown
Arabia (M)	1		3	1	2	1	
Arabia (F)			2	1	1	1	
Palestine (M)	6	5	14	9	4	2	
Palestine (F)	10	2	10	5			
Syria/Lebanon (M)	13	16	24	19	10		1
Syria/Lebanon (F)	20	12	11	7	6		
Total Males	20	21	41	29	16	3	1
Total Females	30	14	23	13	7	1	
Grand Total	50	35	64	42	23	4	1

Source registered foreigners in the Census of 1930, Madrid 1935.

Table 6 Distribution of Arab immigrants according to professional activity in 1930

Country	Agri-culture	Indus-try	Trade	Profes-sionals	Own-ers	House-keeping	Day Laborer	Unem-ployed	Other
Arabia (M)			7					1	
Arabia (F)						4		1	
Palestine (M)	2	2	27				1	8	
Palestine (F)						16		11	
Syria/Lebanon (M)		4	47				7	23	1
Syria/Lebanon (F)			1			33		23	
Total Males	2	6	81				8	32	
Total Females			1			53		35	
Grand Total	2	6	82			53	8	67	1

Source registered foreigners in the Census of 1930, Madrid 1935.

Table 7 Citizens from the Middle East in the Canary Islands *

Years	Las Palmas de Gran Canaria	Santa Cruz de Tenerife	Total Canaries
1955	302	203	505
1956	228	196	424
1958	340	204	544
1959	371	303	674
1961	299	194	493
1963	294	183	477

Source Yearbooks of mentioned years - Institute of National Statistics.

* Syrians, Lebanese, Jordanians, Israelis and Iranians are here registered under this generic name. Palestinians are registered as Jordanians, as the majority of them traveled with Jordanian passports – at least those who arrived in the islands, where no Jordanian person was registered. In the second place, despite the fact that in this record two different nationalities appear — Israelis and Iranians, with little presence — no data is available at the moment with regard to other nationalities, so this register offers an approximate estimate of the number of Arab immigrants in the Canaries.

Table 8 Palestinians living in the Canary Islands according to year

Years	Las Palmas de Gran Canaria	Santa Cruz de Tenerife	Total Canarie
1965	155	75	230
1966	154	62	216
1967	151	66	217
1969	153	67	220
1970	183	91	274
1971	191	77	268
1972	197	78	275
1973	205	87	292
1974	211	82	293
1975	229	82	311
1976	230	83	313
1977	233	82	315
1978	235	79	314
1979	238	90	328
1980	238	96	334
1982	110	86	196
1983	9	87	96
1984	7	89	96
1985	4	79	83
1986	4	86	90
1987	2	91	93
1988	4	93	97
1989	5	95	100

Source Yearbooks of mentioned years - Institute of National Statistics.

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Endnotes

1 With the same expression, Latin American literature refers to their presence in America.

2 Instituto Geográfico y Catastral de Estadísticas, Extranjeros inscritos en el censo de población de 1930. Madrid, 1935. (Foreigners Registered in the 1930 Census for Inhabitants).

3 The author gained access to these documents with the kind offer of Mr. Eduardo Mansur which is acknowledged here.

4 The majority was from Tormosayya (Ramallah) followed by a diversity of people from Aqraba (Nablus) and above all Beit Sahur, Beit Jala and Beit Lehem.

5 It is widely known that some Arab merchants in the islands made easier the integration of new comers when they provided goods for them to start work. The most famous case is that of Mohammad Yuma, a Palestinian who arrived in the Canaries in the 1930s from the village of Bir Nabalah, in the province of Jerusalem.

6 The Canarian folk group Bejeque in its CD 'Con tierra y viento' (With Land and Wind) dedicates a song to the Arab merchants of the area with a specific reference to Julián Ali, a Palestinian established during the 1930s in Vecindario, Gran Canaria. On the other hand, the Canary poet Francisco Tarajano is the author of the poem 'The Palestinian', which he dedicated to Rosa Mishal, daughter of a Palestinian, Musa Hussein Mishal, who settled in Gran Canaria during the 1930s.

7 At that time the radio was usually connected in order to follow the most relevant news on the Middle East. Despite the new and sophisticated media avenues (TV, Internet, Satellite TV), the tradition of listening to the radio is still present among those who used to be youngsters but are grandfathers today. They have witnessed the history of the second half of the 20th century in the Middle East from these islands, listening to those celebrated broadcasts such as the BBC which transmits from London. Curiously, several members of its staff in its Arabic edition were exiled Palestinians.

8 It is worth mentioning that in recent decades, other Palestinian immigrants, at different stages of professional training (graduates from Cuba for example), and with different financial resources (from businessmen to workers) have been added to the existing Palestinian community in Spain.

9 Arabs who studied in the USA came to be members of the Association of Arab-American University Graduates which remains quite active in the USA.

10 Among the numerous sources consulted, Mr. Fayez Saqqa and Mr. Mahmoud Hussein are well acknowledged. In recalling their youth informally, on many occasions, they had helped recreate the social landscape.

11 Salah Kakaban was first elected member of the administrative council (intermediary body between the central committee and national assembly) in the historic GUPS conference in Jordan in 1969, after which he was elected president of the GUPS General Conference held in Algeria in 1972. For his part, Fayez Saqqa was elected to represent GUPS in meetings involving counterpart organizations in Latin America, where he was posted on numerous missions in the eighties.

12 Hussein Abu Ali is currently director general of the International Planning and Cooperation Ministry in the PNA. In the same ministerial department, Dr. Ahmad Sobeh is the general director of international relations.

13 In fact, some were encouraged to remain in Spain by their own families, who feared for their lives if they returned to the region, and in many cases this was a survival strategy used by families who counted on members abroad to provide more efficient financial support.

14 Among the most prominent was the export of Spanish products to Arab countries, given the benefits of knowing both cultures and languages – Arabic and Spanish – not just for the purposes of translation, but also to help bring about such commercial ventures, either individually or as the head of one or more companies.

15 Many had to wait for years longer than usual to obtain Spanish nationality and were the subject of close surveillance by the Spanish secret service, CESID.

16 In the mid-late eighties the Hispano-Palestinian Community Association 'Jerusalén' was set up in Madrid. Despite its members' efforts and good will, since its establishment, it has experienced a series of ups and downs which illustrate the Palestinian community's associative state.

17 On this note it is worth highlighting that some sections of the Palestinian community have assumed the voice of Islamist sentiments in the area, which should not be confused with the re-evaluation and practice of Islam in Europe.