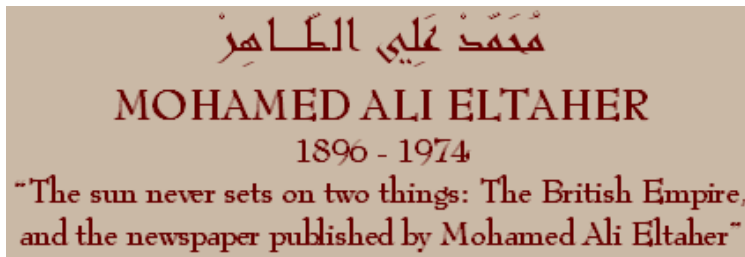




**Eltahaer at the entrance to "Dar Ashoura"
in Cairo - 1954**



Why This Website?

While history influences the lives of individuals, individuals also influence history. If it used to be said during the lifetime of this man that “The sun never sets on two things: The British Empire, and the newspaper published by Mohamed Ali Eltahaer”; there is a good reason to stop and note.

This website tells the story of Mohamed Ali Eltahaer (also known by his traditional Arab nickname, Aboul-Hassan). It is also the story of his wife. It provides the sources and references needed for those who are interested to learn more about him, and, more importantly, to learn about the history of the Near East and North Africa between 1912 and 1974, and the political and historical issues of the countries spanning from Morocco to Iraq, and from Syria to Indonesia. Those who know Egypt through the writings of Lawrence Durrell and Konstantin Kavafi and other famous Western writers, will be able to have a glimpse of that side of Egypt these talented writers

did not write about.

The website offers first-hand original material, written in the context, spirit and style of its time. Some material is either unpublished or out of print. It was compiled by individuals who have known or lived many of the stories told, or issues discussed, and by others who have known of, or met many of the persons appearing in the photographs featured in the website. The site would appeal to an interested reader, student, historian, academic, journalist, homme de lettres, or diplomat, without forgetting those seeking action-packed adventures.

The team overseeing the development of this website thought that it should not stop at simply telling Eltahaer’s story. It believes that it should build on his bitter experience and rethink the future in light of the present, and not only of the past. All the traditional approaches have been tried and tested in relation to the sad state of affairs between the Israelis and the Palestinians over so many decades. The current state of affairs between Arabs and Jews is not conducive to anything but perpetuating a permanent disaster zone. It is certainly time to think outside the box.

The proposed accommodation between the Israelis and the Palestinians detailed in the Biography, calls for [seven steps](#). This gradual approach will offer both parties a physical separation and a breathing space for as long as needed in light of the prevalent situation. As for peace, the process may require several years before the word “peace” is even mentioned.



Eltaher in about 1917

ACHIEVEMENTS

This outstanding individual went far beyond the confines of both his very limited education and his narrow socio-geographic environment. He skipped school; his parents divorced and both remarried, yet never owned land or property. They could not even dream of having a car; and he himself lived without ever owning or enjoying any of the above.

Yet, he eventually published a newspaper that was read in many countries, eight books, and hundreds of articles. The man who lived in a small two-bedroom apartment in the middle-class Shoubrah neighbourhood of Cairo, for which he could sometimes barely manage to pay the three Egyptian pounds monthly rent, kept the company of kings, presidents, leaders, rich and destitute people, and some of the best educated individuals of his day.

Perhaps the best description given of Eltaher is the title of an article written by Nabil Khaled Al-Agha, and published in the “Qatar Review”: “Mohamed Ali Eltaher: A Man Infatuated with Freedom”¹. Eltaher was passionate about his freedom and that of his people. He was a fierce enemy of injustice irrespective of where it came from.

He struggled with oppressive governments with the same fierceness he fought against foreign colonialists such as the British, the French, the Italians and the Dutch. Naturally he stood up to Britain, who came in to the region as an ally of the Arabs, but ruled over them as a colonized people, and then gave their ancestral homeland, Palestine, to new European Jewish settlers mainly from Eastern Europe to turn it into a national home exclusively for themselves, though probably too because the British did not want them in their own country.

THE STRUGGLE FOR FREEDOM AND INDEPENDENCE

He was not a member of any political party, social club or association of any kind, but he became an initiator, facilitator, enabler, catalyst, as well as a mover and shaker..

Eventually he helped others achieve their dreams, while he did not live to achieve his own. His ancestral homeland, Palestine, is the only country in the whole world that is still occupied by a foreign people. This quintessential pan-Arab freedom fighter never carried a gun, but used his mighty pen and his indisputable sterling silver ethics to get what money cannot buy: respect, and a brilliant name in the pantheon of those who lived and died for a principle.

He did not write to become a celebrity. He did not write in order to impress. He did not write in order for him to make a living. He wrote, published and died as an activist because, for him, the pen was his mighty weapon in the struggle for his people’s freedom.

As is almost always the case, the man and his family paid a heavy price for his unselfish dedication: prison, banishment, poverty, and quasi-forced self-imposed exile. But his efforts were always appreciated by all, and his relentless struggle for national liberation must have meant a lot to his enemies, since they too were relentless in pursuing him, though in order to advance their own careers. In the end, and before he died, he was sincerely and publicly hailed by many, and officially recognized at least by some, but loved and respected by all. Stories about him, or references to his work continue to appear in the Arab press until now.



**King Mohamed V of Morocco
decorating Eltaher at the royal palace
in Rabat in 1960**

THE WEBSITE AND YOU

The team in charge of developing this not-for-profit website is keen on transferring Eltaher's heritage from manuscript and paper format to digital media. The path it has taken is to follow the living-document approach, both for production capabilities and because of financial limitations.

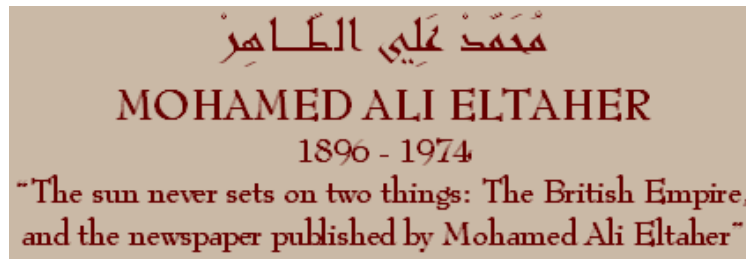
All source material available is in Arabic. The task of translating all of it into English and French is beyond the capacity and means of the team at this time to handle. Perhaps only part of it could be translated for starters. The three newspapers Eltaher published are accessible on-line through this website. The books, however, may only be partially accessed through [Google Books](#).

In the final analysis, the contents of this website do not belong to an individual or to a committee. They are part of the heritage and legacy of all those who seek freedom, emancipation and national liberation, whether they are fighting an occupying power, or struggling against injustice and internal tyranny. While it may sound somewhat odd, this story is part of the history of his enemies too. In the final analysis this website and its content belong to us all!

Should the readers wish to download pictures or quote from the contents of the website, or Eltaher's newspapers, books or articles, they are kindly encouraged to mention the source, i.e. eltaher.org for the benefit of all current and future readers.



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EARLY LIFE

Mohamed Ali Eltaher² (Aboul-Hassan)³ was born in 1896 in the city of Nablus (the ancient Roman town of Flavia Neapolis) in Palestine. One of four boys and three girls born to Aref Eltaher and Badia Kurdieh, some of them half brothers and sisters. It is believed that the Eltaher family roots go back to the Jaradat tribe, a descendent of Juhayna, a famous Arab tribe whose abode was the north western part of what is known today as Saudi Arabia.

Contrary to what several writers have indicated, Eltaher never went to school and whatever he learned was gleaned from a traditional Qoranic school (*Kouttab* in Arabic). Among the stories he shared with his son, he confided to him that he often skipped school to go and watch players play Draught games (Jeu de dames, or *Dama* in Arabic) in one of the many cafés of the *Mansheyya* and *Ajami* neighbourhoods of Jaffa, the city of his youth.



The city of Nablus in the 1950s

Those were the years when *Bilad Ash-Sham*, i.e. Greater Syria⁴, also known as the Levant, were struggling to gain their independence from the Ottoman Empire, which was itself in the midst of an overall internal change following the decline of its importance on the world scene after 600 years as a major imperial power.



**Eltaher in his youth
Cairo - May 5, 1912**

It was during these tumultuous times that Mohamed Ali Eltaher began his intellectual contribution to the issues of the day, relying on his pen as a means to conduct his struggle. Despite his relative young age, he was nonetheless far-sighted enough to realize that his writings would not reach the Arab masses and their leaders unless they originated from a major Arab capital. This impelled him to travel to Egypt, which by then was semi-independent and practically not under Ottoman rule. Cairo, a shining city, played an important role on the world scene both within the Arab⁵ and Islamic⁶ context, and even in the European context.



**In the foreground the Palestinian city of Jaffa
where Eltaher grew up**

TO EGYPT

In March 1912 Eltaher arrived in Port Said from Jaffa for the first time in a fisherman's boat. Egypt was then ruled by Khedive (i.e. Vice-Roy) Abbas Helmi II⁷.

Because of his early nationalist activities especially following the occupation of Palestine during World War I by the British after it was captured from the Ottomans, he was imprisoned on September 15, 1915 by Egyptian authorities, acting on behalf of the British, who were the de facto rulers of the country. He was first imprisoned in Alexandria, then at Giza near Cairo. He was released from prison in 1917 and kept on living in Egypt. His objective was to expose Greater Syria's grievances, following its dismemberment by Britain and France into several countries they divided among themselves according to the Sykes-Picot Agreement secretly drawn during the war. In particular, he wanted to forewarn the Arabs, following the uncovering of the [Balfour Declaration](#) in 1917, of Britain's intention to hand over Palestine to the European Zionist Movement to turn it into a Jewish National Home.

Eltaher relied on his pen and his writing skills to conduct his struggle in Egypt. After all, his writings were known in the Levant, as he used to contribute articles he wrote from Jaffa to several newspapers in Damascus and Beirut during his early youth in Palestine. In 1914, several years before the existence of the Balfour Declaration became known, a Beirut newspaper called "*Fata Al-Arab*" (Arab Youth) published an article he had written in which he warned about the creation of a National Home for the Jews in Palestine⁸. He specifically foresaw that the new entity would be called Israel. Eltaher kept publishing articles covering the situation in Palestine under British military rule, and some of his articles were published in Cairo newspapers. Ironically, in those years of British colonial rule, politely referred to as 'protectorate', Egypt enjoyed a good deal of freedom of speech due to the multicultural and multi-ethnic composition of the country and its opening to the world.

In order for him to make ends meet at the beginning of his residence in Egypt, Eltaher opened a small shop in the *Al-Hussein* neighbourhood of Cairo close to the famous *Al-Azhar* mosque. He sold olive oil which he imported from his native town Nablus, a well-known production centre for olive oil. Soon enough, the small store became a meeting point for Egyptian nationalists and their counterparts who had sought refuge in Egypt from various parts of the Arab and Islamic worlds, which were occupied by various European colonial powers.

ELTAHER'S FIRST NEWSPAPER

Once his income improved a bit, and in order to further increase the scope and reach of his nationalist writings, Eltaher applied for and obtained a license to publish a weekly newspaper in Cairo. The paper, named “*Ashoura*”, i.e. Consultation, dealt mainly with political issues related to the Levant. The first issue was published on October 22, 1924 and its mission statement was: “A newspaper concerned with issues of interest to peoples under oppression and enslaved nations.” He then changed the mission statement to “A newspaper dealing with issues of concern to Arab and oppressed countries”, then finally changed it one more time to: “A newspaper dealing with issues of the Arab and oppressed countries”.



First issue of the “*Ashoura*” newspaper - October 22, 1924

The newspaper quickly became the voice of the Arab nationalist movement in the Mashreq and Maghreb countries², including other countries of the Muslim World such as India and Indonesia, and even some African countries such as Sudan and the island of Zanzibar, now part of Tanzania since the 1960s. Nationalist newspapers published in those countries were silenced by the colonial masters, were they British, French, Italian or Dutch. Eltaher’s newspaper, “*Ashoura*”, published news it received from its correspondents in these countries about the doings of the colonialists including publishing names of traitors collaborating with the colonial powers, irrespective of their importance or the positions they held. It also listed the names¹⁰ of martyrs, donors to the nationalist cause, persons participating in nationalist events, and signatories of petitions calling for freedom and independence. It also published op-ed pieces, analysis, poetry, and even humorous news about certain events or ironic situations.

The full collection of “*Ashoura*” and its sister publications may be accessed through this link or through the publications tab above.

The only thing this unique newspaper did not publish was commercial advertising in all its forms, so that it does not find itself hostage to advertisers and to maintain its intellectual independence. Only in very rare occasions, did Eltaher publish advertising in support of nationalist projects such as advertisement for the Egyptian Spinning and Weaving Company, a subsidiary of Banque Misr (The Bank of Egypt)¹¹.



Talaat Harb Pasha
Founder of the Banque Misr group
of companies in 1930

Hence the newspaper's financial resources were extremely limited and consisted mainly of subscriptions from its supporting readership, even though some subscribers still managed to receive the paper without paying for their subscription!

Soon enough the colonial powers got wind of this newspaper and did not waste time fighting it either directly or through their Arab and Muslim proxies, and eventually succeeded in stopping its publication. The British Mandatory authorities in Palestine were also partially successful in preventing the paper from being distributed in Palestine.

Occasionally Eltaher succeeded in circumventing the ban on his newspaper and the seizure of its issues in Egypt and other countries by resorting to a number of stratagems. Sometimes he published the newspaper under other names such as “*Al-Minhaj*” and “*Al-Nas*”. Otherwise he would wrap the newspaper with outer pages of Egyptian papers appearing in foreign languages such as “The Egyptian Gazette” and the French language daily “*Le Progrès Égyptien*”. Occasionally he would mail the paper in bulk to friends, acquaintances and relatives in Europe, who would then wrap the paper in some of these countries' papers and re-mail them to various Arab and Islamic countries where his newspaper was banned.

Another obstacle facing nationalist newspapers was that import of newsprint was monopolised by companies owned by groups decidedly against the nationalist current, especially supporters of Zionism¹² vis-à-vis Palestine. By refusing to sell newsprint to those they did not like, they were partially able to curtail their freedom of speech.

One time he proceeded to use large manila envelopes similar to those used by the British Government, and had them printed with the then official inscription “On His Majesty's Service”, and used them to mail his paper. Despite all these restrictions and occasional seizures, there was a common saying among Arab nationalist circles at that time: “*The sun never set on two things: The British Empire, and the newspaper published by Mohamed Ali Eltaher*”.

PUBLICIZING THE PALESTINE QUESTION AND THE ACTIVITIES OF THE ARAB LIBERATION MOVEMENT

Before “*Ashoura*”, Eltaher had created in Cairo in 1921 the Arab Palestinian Information Office and the Palestinian Committee in Egypt. His office in Cairo, known as “*Dar Ashoura*”, i.e. *Ashoura* House, was first located at 30 Abdelaziz Street, off *Ataba El-Khadra* Square in downtown Cairo. Eventually he moved to the Manousakis building at 119 Queen Nazli Street, known today as Ramses Street.



Eltaher's old office on Abdelaziz Street in Cairo in 1939

The Palestinian Committee in Egypt was comprised of Palestinians, Egyptians and other Arabs, and included writers, religious learned men, poets, journalists, lawyers and other intellectuals. It kept the public in Egypt and the Arab and Islamic worlds aware of the activities of the various national liberation movements by issuing statements, calls, complaints and comments on current events in these countries. Thus Eltaher became the connecting point between the two worlds at the official and public levels by introducing each one to the other, and by keeping them aware of each other's issues and achievements.



A publication of Ashoura about the Great Palestinian Revolt of 1936-1939

Through his articles published by the Egyptian media, Eltaher created an awareness regarding the Palestine Question and corrected rampant misinformation. He also corrected numerous intentional factual errors and misleading insinuations printed in some Egyptian media owned by foreigners opposed to the Palestinian cause. He also contributed extensively to the planning and organization of the General Islamic Conference which convened in Jerusalem in 1931; the proceeds of the latter and the role Eltaher played in it were detailed in his book “*Nazarat Ashoura*” (i.e. Perspectives of Ashoura), published in Cairo in 1932.



Eltaher’s i.d. card at the General Islamic Conference held in Jerusalem in 1931



Delegates to the General Islamic Conference held in Jerusalem in 1931

Beside the Arab and Islamic countries, Eltaher’s activities covered events of interest to the Arabs in the various African, European, North and South American countries to which Arabs emigrated. This worldwide activity prompted Makram Ebeid Pasha¹³, one of the senior Egyptian Wafd Party leaders to describe him as “*Egypt’s ambassador to the Arab World*”. It is important to point out here that, beside the well-known Lebanese Druze notable and pan Islamic nationalist, **Emir Shakib Arslan**, Eltaher was practically the only writer and journalist in the Levant who concentrated his efforts on events taking place in the North African Maghreb countries, such as the struggle for independence from France by Tunisia, Morocco and Algeria, and by Libya, which had to endure an even harsher Italian colonial regime.

When “*Ashoura’s*” license was revoked and the newspaper was closed down by the Egyptian government working at the behest of British colonial authorities in 1931, Eltaher published the newspaper under other names such as “*Al-Jadid*” (The New), then “*Al-Shabab*” (i.e. Youth), which was published in 1937, then “*Al-Alam Al-Masri*”, (i.e. the Egyptian Flag) in 1939. The license authorizing publication of “*Al-Jadid*” and “*Al-Shabab*” belonged originally to Dr. Mahmoud Azmi Pasha, a well-known Egyptian nationalist and future Egyptian Representative at the General Assembly of the United Nations.



Eltaher’s Egyptian press card 1939-1940

Azmi Pasha transferred the license of his newspaper free of charge to his friend Eltaher “... in order for him to publish it as he pleases, so that his voice defending Arab rights is not silenced”, as he wrote to him in a letter dated January 23, 1937. However the Egyptian authorities refused to reinstate the license to publish “*Ashoura*”, and proceeded to ban “*Al-Shabab*”. This led Eltaher to publish his paper under the name “*Al-Alam Al-Masri*”, whose license was transferred to him also free-of-charge by its owner Abdelqader Al-Toumi as Azmi Pasha did with “*Al-Shabab*”. There were others too who had offered their papers to Eltaher free of charge to continue publishing whatever he wished, such as George Tannous, who offered his newspaper “*Al-Raquib*” (i.e. The Observer), followed by Hussein Shafiq Al-Masri, publisher of “*Al-Nas*” (i.e. The People), and Sheikh Ibrahim Tfayyesh, publisher of “*Al-Minhaj*” (i.e. The Way), and Mahmoud Aboul-Fath, publisher of “*Al-Goumhour*” (i.e. The Public).

In 1936 Eltaher had edited a book for publication about the “Great Palestine Revolt” of 1936, entitled “*Falastin Ard Al-shouhada*” (Palestine Land of Martyrs), but police confiscated the printing plates (clichés) and whatever sections already printed. The book was never published.

YOU ARE NOT PALESTINIAN!

While residing in Egypt, Eltaher visited Palestine and the neighbouring Syrian hinterland quite regularly to see his mother, brothers and sisters, as well as to consult with various nationalist movements and intellectuals in those countries. It was during those years that the British government was busy preparing the country to settle Jewish immigrants it brought to Palestine from various parts of Europe and the Western world in general, but particularly those fleeing the pogroms and injustices from the Balkans, Russia and Central Europe pursuant to its undertaking in the Balfour Declaration. It is quite likely that Britain brought them to Palestine, among other things, to prevent them from immigrating to the United Kingdom¹⁴.

The native Palestinian Jewish community lived in peace with the other communities. That is until the European settlers brought by Britain arrived and proceeded to arm themselves with the stated objective of taking over the country. This was going on of course without consulting with the Palestinians, or notifying them, or asking them “if you please”. As far as the Christian British politicians were concerned, Jews and Arabs were cousins and they would coexist without major problems. Of course things were not as simple as that, because the Jews Britain was bringing were mostly Eastern Europeans who had no ethnic connection to the peoples of the Eastern Mediterranean. Besides, the mostly Ashkenazi tradition they brought with them was already different from that of the local Palestinian Jewish community, whose members were rather Sephardic and Samaritan and much closer to the Islamic tradition. Furthermore, while Islam is heavily influenced by Judaism and Christianity, which preceded it, the three religions are actually pretty close from a religious perspective, though they also carry several important dissimilarities.

The British-administered Government of Palestine eventually decreed the “Palestinian Citizenship Law”, which was promulgated in order to naturalize the Jewish immigrants after it had offered them permanent residence in Palestine and thus provide them with a legal framework for their presence. As for the indigenous Palestinians, Jews, Christians and Muslims alike, they did not consider themselves to be in need of residence permits, citizenships, or naturalization since they were already at home in their own country. After all, they were all Ottoman subjects. Eventually the British issued Palestinian passports to the Jewish immigrants and to the indigenous Palestinians who applied for them, provided the latter were in the good books of the colonial power.



Jaffa Railway Station - Eltaher leaving Palestine for the last time in 1935.

During one of his visits to Palestine, Eltaher applied for a Palestinian passport, but his application was rejected, because he “*was not considered to be Palestinian*” by the Citizenship and Passport Office run by the British. He was advised though to apply for Palestinian citizenship first to establish whether he was entitled to a passport, which would be issued if he was found eligible. As expected, the application was rejected though he had been born in Palestine, to Palestinian parents and grandparents who still lived in the country for generations.

The excuse was that the administration deemed him to be a non-resident in his own country, while Jewish immigrants born and raised in Poland, Germany, Russia, Rumania, etc., who had no

organic relation to Palestine were granted residence and Palestinian passports by a third party, namely Britain! If religion were the only criterion linking the Jews to Palestine, then Christians and Muslims could perhaps make the same claim.

Eltaher told the story of his Palestinian passport in detail in his book “*Nazarat Ashoura*”. The book also contains several sections dealing with the various stratagems and laws, as well as the trickery and underhandedness, used pompously by the British colonial administration to refuse to allow him to reside with his family in his country of birth, at a time it was granting the right of abode to almost any European Jew who set foot on Palestinian soil.

“SEGN EL-AGANEB” (FOREIGNERS’ PRISON)

When World War II erupted in 1939 and Egypt imposed emergency measures in the country, anticipating the draconian measures to be imposed soon, Eltahaer decided to stop publishing his newspaper “*Al-Alam Al-Masri*”, dissolved the “Palestinian Committee” and closed the Palestine Information Office, but also went as far as refraining from all political activities. Despite all that, British authorities asked Egyptian Prime Minister Ali Maher Pasha to put Eltahaer under arrest. Ali Maher refused, but they eventually prevailed on his successor Hussein Sirri Pasha.



**Foreigners' prison in downtown Cairo in 1941
Eltahaer's cell is marked by (x)**

On September 20, 1940 Egyptian police arrested Eltahaer and kept him in “*Segn El-Aganeb*” (i.e. Foreigners’ Prison) in downtown Cairo not far from the current main railway station. He fell sick however after a few months in prison and was transferred to Demerdash Hospital where he was kept under police guard. But by mid-1941 he succeeded in escaping ¹⁵ and spent about eleven months as a fugitive travelling constantly all across Egypt under a variety of disguises.

When the government of Prime Minister Hussein Sirri Pasha was dissolved on February 5, 1942, and the Egyptian nationalist leader Moustafa El-Nahas Pasha was asked to form a new government, Eltahaer went surreptitiously to the Prime Minister’s office disguised as an Arab sheikh to deceive the police and surrendered to the Prime Minister in person. Nahas Pasha knew him quite well, and

immediately granted him his freedom, and Eltahaer returned forthwith to his apartment on Shoubrah Street in Cairo. The exciting Hollywood-like adventures of Eltahaer, which involved his wife too, from the time he was arrested until his release, are told in detail along with pictures in his book “*Zalam El-Segn*”, which was published in Cairo in 1951.



Eltahaer in various disguises during his fugitive years from 1941 to 1942

BITTER FRUSTRATION FOLLOWING THE FALL OF PALESTINE

The loss of Palestine, known as “*Al-Nakba*” (The Catastrophe), left Mohamed Ali Eltaher with a very bitter taste and immense sadness for the rest of his life. That is not surprising when a human being, or even an animal or a plant, loses their habitat, environment or heritage. This is even more painful when it comes as a result of depressing factors such as negligence, carelessness, coercion, treason and injustice, all the more so after he had dedicated his life to warn of this result. When Palestine disappeared for all intents and purposes in 1948 with the creation of the State of Israel, followed by the annexation of the West Bank by the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, and the appointment of an Egyptian military governor to rule over the Gaza Strip, nothing was left of his homeland.

Within a few weeks Palestine ceased to exist, and the Palestinians became a nation of refugees which continues to be psychologically scarred and effectively living as an outcast until now. Eltaher saw the people of Palestine turn despite of them from a peaceful nation harming no one into a violent fighting people as a result of Israel’s de-humanizing oppression, indifference by some of the Palestinians' friends, the loss of potential allies. Worst still is the on-going short-sightedness and incompetence of some Palestinian leaders, and, above all their ongoing lack of seriousness in handling the whole Palestinian Question and safeguarding the immediate vital interests of the Palestinian people.



In 1948 the people of Palestine turned from a peaceful nation into refugees in a geographic and psychological desert

THE 1948 ALL-PALESTINE GOVERNMENT

When Eltaher’s friend and companion in the long struggle for freedom, Ahmad Hilmi Abdel-Baqi Pasha, was asked by the League of Arab States in 1948 to form an “All-Palestine Government” in Gaza as a last effort to rescue what could be rescued of historic Palestine, Hilmi Pasha issued him Palestinian Passport N° 1.



He then invited him to join the Cabinet and asked him to choose any Ministry he liked. In 1949 he issued him Palestinian Diplomatic Passport N° 11.



Eltaher thanked Hilmi Pasha and accepted the passports with pleasure. But he was convinced that nobody would recognize these passports, starting with the Arab League countries which recommended that a Palestinian Government be created in the first place. He apologized from accepting any official government post in the All Palestine Government, even if it were an honorary position, in order not to lose his freedom of action and the freedom to write as he wished.

HUCKSTEP INTERNMENT CAMP

On July 21, 1949 then Prime Minister and Military Governor, Ibrahim Abdel-Hadi Pasha¹⁶ ordered the arrest of Eltaher and his imprisonment in Egypt because of his writings exposing Arab and Palestinian leaders he accused of being behind the loss of Palestine. He was led by police from his apartment on Shoubrah Street to Rod El-Farag police station, then to the Huckstep¹⁷ internment camp the following day.

Eltaher was eventually released on August 11, 1949 by order from Hussein Sirri Pasha who followed Ibrahim Abdel-Hadi Pasha as Prime Minister. The details of his incarceration were told in his book “*Moataqal Huckstep*” (i.e. Huckstep Internment Camp) which was published in Cairo in 1950. The book includes an illustrated account of the daily life of the political prisoners, many of whom being nationalists from the Egyptian Brotherhood, some members of the Egyptian Communist Party (the Democratic Movement for National Liberation, known by its Arabic acronym ‘Hadeto’), and others. In this book, Eltaher also details the reasons behind his imprisonment until he was released, and included numerous observations related to the political situation in the Arab World and the state of the Arab League.



Huckstep internment camp in 1949

The camp officials, one must underline, dealt with political detainees with deference, and refrained from abusing them. Eltaher's family was allowed to visit him once. But when the camp commander knew that Eltaher's young son Hassan, who was six years old, was going to be among the visiting party, he invited the visitors to meet with Eltaher in his own office so that the visiting child does not see his father in the holding shack!

"DAR ASHOURA" ¹⁸

From the day Eltaher published his first newspaper "Ashoura" in 1924, its offices, or "Dar Ashoura", became the meeting point for those who had fled their countries which were either under colonial occupation or were ruled by authoritarian regimes. Most of those who were unjustly treated, chased or whose homelands had been appropriated by others and were looking for security and a safe haven generally went to Egypt, whose welcoming people have always had a long tradition of tolerance and accommodation. These political refugees and asylum-seekers used to meet at "Dar Ashoura" without having to make a prior appointment. They all knew that the doors were open daily from 7pm to 9pm, and that they could even set their watches accordingly! As early as 1925, i.e. years before he created "Ashoura", one could see Syrian nationalists of all political stripes meet with Palestinian nationalists and others who had been forced to leave their homelands by the colonial powers, all getting together wherever Eltaher convened.



With the Lebanese Druze and pan Islamic nationalist Emir Shakib Arslan; the Egyptian children books author Kamel Kilani and Mohamed El-Hehyaoui, Editor-in-Chief of the Egyptian newspaper "Al-Omma". Note Eltaher's cat sitting on top of the radio at the old Ashoura office in Cairo in 1939.

At "Dar Ashoura" you would meet Iraqi poets such as Jamil Sidqui Al-Zahawi, historians such as Ahmad Ezzat Al-Aazami, or the political chronicler Rafael Butti, or the Yemeni leader Ahmad Mohamed Noman, who became Prime minister of his country many years later. You could also meet Muslim nationalist leaders from India such as Maulana Shawkat Ali and learned men such as Ajmal Khan.



Haji Agus Salim, first Indonesian Minister of Foreign Affairs following the independence of his country, along with other Indonesian nationalists at "Dar Ashoura" in Cairo 1946

You could also meet visitors from the Far East such as Dr. Sutomo from Indonesia, as well as his compatriots such as General Abdul Haris Nasution, Dr. Mohamed Hatta, Vice President of Indonesia, Ahmad Subarjo, Mohamed Rashidi, and

Zein Hassan, who both became Indonesian ambassadors to Egypt following the independence of their country. You could also meet Abduljalil Hassan who became Mufti (religious leader) of the Malay (today known as Malaysia) and Dean of its university, the Afghan leader and future Minister Plenipotentiary in Egypt Sadeq Al-Mujaddedi, or Ibrahim Al-Saqqaf, leader of the Muslim community in Singapore, and tens of others who found at “*Dar Ashoura*” immediate rapport among friends, comrades, companions, acquaintances and supporters.

Many well-known Egyptian writers, journalists and poets attended Eltaher's lively "salon" regularly such as [Wadie Philistin.](#), the famous writer, scholar, and former professor at the American University in Cairo. The latter continues until now to publish articles about Arab and Egyptian literature. Another famous Egyptian literary figure at Eltaher's salon was [Ali Ahmad Bakathir.](#) several of whose plays were staged at the Royal Opera House in Cairo.

“*Dar Ashoura*” also welcomed Shukri Bey Al-Quwwatli, former and subsequent President of Syria, and even his political opponents. When Syria was struggling for its independence, Al-Quwwatli and his political opponents used to meet at “*Dar Ashoura*” and discuss everything except their political differences. Even prior to the publication of “*Ashoura*”, the Tunisian leader Abdelaziz Thaalbi used to come to Eltaher’s shop when he visited Egypt in 1922 and meet with other nationalists from the Levant. A quarter of a century later, “*Dar Ashoura*” became the meeting place of Habib Bourguiba, the Tunisian nationalist who eventually became his country’s Prime Minister, then President as well as others among his Tunisian companions. They all found at “*Dar Ashoura*” a place where they could vent their frustrations from the brutality of colonial rule, and contact leaders of other countries and nations.



Mohamed Ali Eltaher and visitors at *Dar Ashoura* in Cairo in 1950.

From right to left: Saudi Ambassador to Egypt Sheikh Abdallah El-Fadl; Ali El-Moayyad, Minister Plenipotentiary of Yemen in Cairo; General Saleh Harb Pasha, Egyptian Minister of War; Ahmad Hilmi Pasha, Prime Minister of the All-Palestine Government; Emir Sayf El-Islam Abdallah, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Yemen

Among those who used to visit “*Dar Ashoura*” were the leaders of Moroccan independence, led by Allal El-Fassi, Emir Abdelkrim El-Khattabi, leader of the Rif region in Northern Morocco, and the senior Algerian Islamic scholar Sheikh Mohamed Bashir El-Ibrahimi. Another visitor was Idriss Senoussi, who became King of Libya after its independence from Italy in 1951, as well as Saleh Masoud Bouyasir, Libya’s Minister of Foreign Affairs under the Republic, who was killed in the shooting down of a civilian Libyan airliner by Israeli fighter planes on February 21, 1973 close to the city of Ismailia in Egypt, under the pretext that it was suspected of being close to Israeli air space.

Eltaher sometimes even acted as guarantor for those who needed references, or simply was an example to follow by others. He also played yet another role beside that of the writer, publisher and nationalist. Parents of children from other Arab and Islamic countries, who elected to send their children to Egyptian schools, often asked Eltaher if he could act as their guardian.

One day a young Indonesian named Abdulqahhar Muzzakkar, was sent by his parents to Egypt to pursue his high school studies. But when World War II flared, he found himself cut-off from his homeland. Eltaher, who acted as his guardian, did not waste time to come to his help. When the young Muzzakkar failed his final Arabic grammar exam, known as the “*Ashmouni*”, after the name of the author of the grammar book, and the school required him to repeat the school year, Eltaher became so furious that he went to see the Minister of Public Education.

He told the story to the minister, and described the situation of the unfortunate Muzzakkar, who was cut-off from his parents in a foreign land, and for whom Arabic was not after all his mother tongue. Eltaher pointed out to the minister, that if he, i.e. the minister, were to take the infamous “*Ashmouni*” test, he would fail it! The minister, believed to be Ahmad Ziwar Pasha, chose to be convinced by these arguments, called the School District and ordered that the graduation diploma be awarded to Muzzakkar despite his bad luck with Arabic grammar, which was already quite complicated for the Arabs themselves! Ironically, many years later following this incident, Muzzakkar was appointed Dean of the Islamic University of Jogyakarta in his homeland.

All of these people and many more used to find at “*Dar Ashoura*” an open door welcoming all to discuss anything of interest to them, but also of interest to Eltaher, because he believed that the cause of all these countries and nations were his too, and that the Palestinian question was part and parcel of all other Arab and Islamic issues.

THE ROLE OF MRS. ELTAHER

Eltaher led his struggle since his early youth single-handedly, and did not get married until relatively late in life. On February 23, 1939 Eltaher married the mother of his children, Zakeia Bezri, the third of six children born to parents from two well-known Lebanese families hailing from the city of Saïda (Sidon) in Lebanon, the Bezri and the Zantout families, both of which, it is believed originally hailed from North Africa. Following WWI, which resulted in a serious famine in Lebanon, Mrs. Eltaher's parents had moved with their six children from Saïda to Alexandria in Egypt, where she grew up until she graduated from a respected French school, les Soeurs de la Charité de Saint-Vincent de Paul (The Flying Nuns!).



**Mrs. Eltaher (1) and classmates with Sister Anne-Marie (3)
in Alexandria in 1932**

The couple first met during the summer of 1938 in the mountain resort of Hammana in Lebanon, while Eltaher was visiting her brother Salim Bezri, who was an acquaintance of his. Eltaher was around 42 then, and she was 24. It is interesting to note that, while practically the vast majority of marriages in those days were arranged, theirs was certainly not.



**Wedding portrait of the Eltahers
Cairo 1939**

Mrs. Eltaher played an important role in her husband's life. Totally supporting his mission, she stood by him through all the difficult times and crises which left their mark on their family life. She was educated and fluent in Arabic, French and English. She was also well-read, and quite aware of the national and world issues of the day. She helped him edit and type the manuscripts of his books and articles before they went to press. She also welcomed his guests, relatives and companions, whether in Cairo or in Beirut. She also befriended several of his friends and their spouses. Needless to say, that, while he was fighting his battles with her at his side, she was almost single-handedly raising their two children, and picking up the pieces of a difficult life.

She also had a taste of banishment and prison, as she was imprisoned by the Egyptian government in the Foreigners' Prison in Cairo, after being beaten by a police officer from what used to be known as the Arab Affairs Bureau at the Ministry of the Interior. The officer, Amir-Alay (i.e. Colonel) Mohamed Youssef, had almost staked his professional career for many years on arresting Mohamed Ali Eltaher to please the British authorities, which controlled Egypt in those days. Unfortunately for him, he failed in his mission despite the decoration awarded to him by the British government in recognition of his efforts in making life difficult for Egyptian and Arab nationalists.

To further illustrate the roughness of this officer, when Mrs. Eltaher asked, before being led to prison, to leave the canary, which the family kept as a pet, with the neighbours so that it did not die from thirst or hunger, the officer refused the request. She ended up leaving the bird in his cage on the staircase of the apartment building, hoping that one of the neighbours would find it and care for the orphaned bird!¹⁹

When Mrs. Eltaher was brought to the Foreigners' Prison in a police "box", i.e. van, the warden, Mr. Hickman, a Maltese, received her well and apologized that he had to play the role of jailer for a respectable lady like her. During the few days she spent at his institution he used to share with her some English magazines his wife subscribed to.

Other political prisoners, and in particular the famous Egyptian nationalist Ahmad Hussein, who was 'hidden' by the authorities in the Foreigners' Prison so that his supporters do not find out where he was kept, eventually spotted Mrs. Eltaher, whom they all knew, inside the same prison and staged a mutiny, while threatening to go on hunger strike if she is not liberated.

Prior to her incarceration, colonel Mohamed Youssef had ordered the police physician to perform a gastric lavage on her because he had suspected that she may have swallowed a piece of paper on which the address of Eltaher's hideaway was written. But the physician refused to perform the procedure, saying that this was something they performed on criminals and smugglers and that it was unbecoming to subject a respectable lady to the procedure.

When Colonel Mohamed Youssef could not capture Eltaher after he had fled from prison and after all attempts by the Ministry of the Interior to find him had failed, the government expelled her from Egypt in October 1941, i.e. during World War II, to twist his arm and get Eltaher give himself up. Her expulsion was built on the pretext that she was an undesirable foreigner. She was escorted by the police from her apartment in Cairo to the train station and put on a British military train going to Lydda (Lod) in Palestine. Mrs. Eltaher effectively carried a French passport issued by France, the mandatory power (a polite term to mean occupying power), in Lebanon at that time. After spending a week in Palestine, she went to Lebanon to live with her relatives while awaiting a resolution to her fugitive husband's situation.

While on the military train, Mrs. Eltaher was seated in an officers' section of the train, but as it sped with all lights out for fear of German bomber attacks around the Suez Canal zone, two soldiers got into a fight somewhere in the same train car where Mrs. Eltaher was seated. She told the story a number of times to her children and to some friends, and added that, in the pitch black darkness, one of the soldiers shouted a vulgar insult at his opponent. All of a sudden the whole officers' corps in the compartment, which was made up of British and Australian troops, immediately shouted back in disdain at the culprit: "shame on you, there is a lady here, and you must come immediately and apologize to her!" Mrs. Eltaher was pretty pleased, but also amused, when the two soldiers who were fighting, came to where she was seated, stood at attention, saluted and the culprit apologized to her: "I am sorry, Ma'am!"



Mrs. Eltaher's passport issued in 1940 by France, the mandatory power in Lebanon



110 Shoubrah Street in Cairo where the Eltahers lived on the fourth floor

Mrs. Eltaher's expulsion from Egypt was preceded by several months of ongoing intense surveillance around the Eltahers' apartment building by undercover policemen, who also followed her at all times wherever she went. Because with time she could recognize her 'guardian angels' as she used to call them, without much difficulty, she made it a point to gain their trust and talk to them. Eventually they helped her run errands, and she would return the favour by letting them take time off from their watch duties, to go and visit their families because they were assigned long working hours.

She undertook not to run away and shared with the undercover policemen her daily program. On one occasion, the undercover policeman insisted on

helping her carry a suitcase containing clothes she was going to spirit to Eltaher while in hiding! In another incident, that took place at Tel El-Kebir, not far from the Suez Canal, two undercover policemen, who did

not know each other, came to blows because each one of them thought the other to be the fugitive Eltaher and wanted to arrest him!

Surveillance included all members of Eltaher's relatives, as well as their friends and acquaintances anywhere in Egypt! Eltaher did not give himself up, and he and his wife maintained occasional contact despite all the arbitrary measures imposed on them. Some details of these movie-like adventures as well as others where she played an important part, are told in Eltaher's book "*Zalam El-Segn*" (Prison Darkness) in which he discusses his escape from prison and his wife's role.



Mrs. Eltaher wearing Egyptian traditional cover-ups of the 1940s to evade the police while attempting to meet her fugitive husband in the city of Tanta

After Eltaher gave himself up in person to the Prime Minister of Egypt Nahhas Pasha, as described earlier, following the formation of a nationalist cabinet that replaced the pro-British one, instructions were given to the Egyptian Consulate in Beirut to issue her a return visa, and border authorities were instructed to welcome her back to Egypt.

Mrs. Eltaher often shared with her children stories about her deportation. She also dwelled on the numerous Egyptian officials and ordinary people who stood by her during those difficult times and gave her support, though they were unable at the end to protect her from the police.

It is worthwhile mentioning that, before having her two children Hassan and Mona, Mrs. Eltaher had a baby girl named Jihad, who died in 1941 at eight months of age following a fever. When the child died, the authorities refused to allow her father, who was in prison at the time, to attend her funeral or her interment.



Last picture of Mrs. Eltaher in 1989

Prior to her marriage, Zakeia, future Mrs. Eltaher, had to find work right after graduating from high school despite the fact that she was recommended for medical school in France. Both her parents had passed away; and her older brother had found work in Jerusalem. There were still four young siblings to feed. So they moved back to Sidon, where she left the younger ones with her older sister to take care of. Mrs. Eltaher was eventually hired as a teacher in Iraq in the early thirties. She was not even twenty then!

THE FREE OFFICERS MOVEMENT IN EGYPT

When the Free Officers, led by Colonel Gamal Abdel-Nasser staged their coup d'état in Egypt, i.e. the July 23, 1952 Revolution, Eltaher was spending some time with his family in Alexandria. The King as well as the Royal Family, the cabinet and the diplomatic corps accredited to Egypt normally spent the unbearably hot summers of Cairo on the Mediterranean shores at Alexandria, which became for a few months the summer capital of Egypt.

Eltaher, like all nationalists in Egypt, was supportive of the Free Officers Movement. He occasionally received the secret tracts distributed by the officers before the coup d'état. While Eltaher was particularly angry at the role played by local stooges of British colonialism among some Egyptian officials especially within the police, the censorship office, the Ministry of the Interior, the Special Branch (*El-Qalam El-Makhsous*), the Arab Affairs Directorate and the Foreigners Department, which considered him to be a "foreigner", he was not opposed to the monarchy per se. Admittedly, King Farouk's personal behaviour and the state of debauchery that was pervasive towards the end of his rule had become unacceptable either officially or to the people. It would be unfair though to dwell just on the negative side of the king's personality, without pointing out to some of his positive actions as will be shown later in this site.

The new revolutionary regime though chose eventually not to deal with popular nationalists in Egypt, and tended sometimes to rely on some of those who collaborated with the British during the *ancien régime* and let them loose on the nationalists.



**With General
Mohamed Naguib in
1953**

Eltaher was one of those who got a similar treatment from the Ministry of the Interior, which prohibited him from re-publishing "*Ashoura*" after its license was reinstated to him in the short period during which General Mohamed Naguib was Chief of the Revolutionary Council and first President of Egypt. The Ministry of the Interior ordered Eltaher to sign an undertaking that he would not publish "*Ashoura*". When objections to their heavy-handed action increased and complaints from the public multiplied, he was forced to sign another document by which he had to undertake "... *not to try and publish the paper*".

Having had to go through that experience, and having observed how long-time Egyptian nationalists, both men and women, were treated, at a time when some of the Revolutionary council members had personal friends among them, he realized with much pain that Egypt had changed.

In April 1955 Eltaher seized the opportunity of an invitation by the Chief of Staff of the Syrian Armed Forces, Brigadier Shawkat Shoucair, to attend the commemoration of Syria's independence from France on April 17, 1947 and flew to Damascus for what was anticipated to be a few days' absence. It never occurred to him nor to his family that this would be the last time he would see Egypt, his homeland since 1912, when he reached it aboard a fisherman's boat that took him from the small port of Jaffa to Port Said as described earlier. Eltaher never returned to Egypt afterwards and lived and died wishing he could "... *go back to his adoptive homeland where he spent fifty years of his life, and longed to meet his long-time friend and supporter Moustafa El-Nahas Pasha before he died,*" as he kept repeating every now and then.²⁰

DAMASCUS

Eltaher lived in Damascus until 1957 surrounded by a crowd of appreciative Syrian nationalists among officialdom and long-time friends among the regular people, starting with former Presidents such Hashem Bey Al-Atassi, Shukri Bey Al-Quwwatli and Nazem Bey Al-Qudsi. That is until the government and the whole country fell under the spell and control of Military Intelligence (Deuxième Bureau) led by Colonel Abdel-Hamid Al-Sarraj, who grabbed control of the country from the politicians and became the effective ruler of Syria.



Inauguration of the new Yabroud Hospital in 1955

Right to left: 1-Prime minister Sabri Al-Assali 2-Eltaher 3-Syrian President Shukri Al-Quwwatli

Colonel Al-Sarraj worked closely with his counterparts in Egyptian Intelligence, which was fed up with Eltaher's writings against the behaviour of the 1952 revolutionary leaders vis-à-vis the nationalists and the nationalist press in Egypt. It is possible that they may have intimated to the Syrians that Eltaher should be pressured by them to stop bothering the Egyptian government or leave the country. Al-Sarraj succeeded in doing that. When Eltaher found out that his safety and that of his family, who had come from Cairo to visit him during the summer vacations, were in possible jeopardy, he left Syria for Lebanon during the summer of 1957, without ever returning to Damascus, the city he loved. His attempts to ask the President, the Prime Minister and the Speaker of the Parliament for an explanation as to what happened to him were pointless, since they were themselves on notice from their intelligence chief, and were soon to be removed from power with the declaration of the United Arab Republic that was supposed to unite Syria and Egypt in 1958.



Eltaher, Syrian President Quwwatli, and Syrian Prime Minister Sabri Al-Assali with King Hussein of Jordan during his official visit to Syria - Damascus, August 19, 1956

While Eltaher was in Damascus in 1955, the Syrian leadership succeeded in engineering a reconciliation between him and the Hashemite regime in Jordan. Eltaher was a life-long fierce enemy of King Abdullah I, the grandfather of the late King Hussein, and great-grandfather of the current King Abdullah II.

The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, initially called The Emirate of Transjordan was a creation of the British, and Emir, then King Abdullah Bin Al-Hussein I was parachuted there in 1921 from the Hejaz in Arabia. The king was supported, first by a British garrison, then by recruits among the Arab beduin tribes commanded by British officers and NCOs. They constituted what was known as the Arab Legion, “*Al-Jaysh Al-Arabi*”, under the command of Lieutenant-General Sir John Bagot Glubb, or Glubb Pasha, as he was known²¹.

Eltaher was opposed to this new entity for a number of reasons: First, because it was yet another British creation in the region. More importantly, because while the Palestinians were defending themselves against both British occupation of their country, and the influx of foreign Jewish immigrants and Jewish fighters in the 1930s and 1940s, King Abdullah I, was conniving with the leadership of the Zionist Movement and the Jewish Agency in order for him to get certain parts of Palestine²².

This was taking place while soldiers and officers of the Arab Legion, i.e. his own army, were falling under Jewish fire. Concurrently, he was preventing volunteers, military supplies and ammunition from reaching the Palestinian fighters. To the Palestinians this was tantamount to high treason during war time. No wonder they assassinated King Abdullah I in 1951 after the loss of most of Palestine.

Had it not been for the successful military operations led by the commander of the Arab Legion in Jerusalem, Colonel Abdallah Al-Tal and his officers in the West Bank in 1948 and 1949, the old city of Jerusalem and all of its surroundings would have fallen to the Israelis too at that time. Colonel Al-Tal’s initiative had prevented the old city and some of its neighbourhoods from falling into the hands of the Jewish Haganah forces²³. Though the city and what had remained of Palestine did eventually fall to them following the 1967 war, commonly known as the “Six-days War”.



Colonel Abdallah Al-Tal, Governor of Jerusalem in 1948

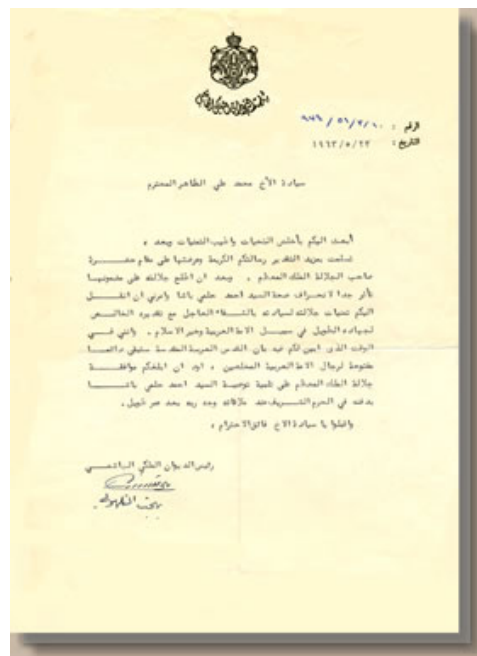
The Syrian leaders probably managed to convince their friend Eltaher that, since King Hussein, who had ascended the Hashemite throne following the abdication of his father King Talal, and later on dismissed Glubb Pasha, has been reaching out to the Palestinians in a number of ways, it would serve nothing for Eltaher to keep the fire on him and his kingdom, and that the time was ripe to let bygones be bygones. Eltaher must have agreed, because, when the King came to Damascus on an official visit, Syrian President Shukri Al-Quwwatli brought the two men together and staged the reconciliation.

Eventually King Hussein invited Eltaher to come to Amman as his official guest, which he did during the winter of 1956. Despite the fact that the two-men never met again, Eltaher and several Jordanian officials at the highest levels continued to maintain an ongoing warm and correct relationship.



Eltaher with King Hussein in Amman in 1956

When Ahmad Hilmi Pasha, the Prime Minister of the All-Palestine Government and former Governor of Jerusalem laid dying in Beirut in 1963, Eltaher proposed to King Hussein that Hilmi Pasha be buried within the campus of the Al-Aqsa mosque in Jerusalem when the inevitable happened. The same honour was granted earlier to the Palestinian leader Abdelqader Al-Husseini, who was killed during the battle of Qastal in 1948. Hilmi Pasha, after all, was one of those who successfully led the defence of Jerusalem during the 1948-1949 war along with Colonel Abdallah Al-Tal. The King immediately agreed and Hilmi Pasha was laid to rest there when he passed away.



Letter from Bahjat Pasha Al-Talhouni, Chief of the Royal Cabinet in Jordan dated May 23, 1963 to Eltaher confirming King Hussein's approval of his suggestion that Hilmi Pasha be buried within the campus of Al-Aqsa mosque in Jerusalem

BEIRUT

Since leaving Damascus under duress in 1957, Eltaher lived in Beirut amid much respect and consideration from all the Lebanese, Christians, Muslims and Druze, irrespective of their religious choices, i.e. very much like his relations with the various communities he had befriended during the half century he spent in Egypt, or before that, in Palestine. He resumed publishing articles about the state of the Arab World in a number of Lebanese newspapers, as well as in various countries of immigration, as he had done earlier in Cairo.

He also revived another activity he had in Cairo, where he used to hold a daily “salon” at his office “*Dar Ashoura*”, by organizing a ‘salon’ every Sunday morning in his apartment on Jeanne d’Arc Street across from the American University of Beirut .



**Eltaher and his young son Hassan with Camille Chamoun, the future President of Lebanon
Shepheard’s Hotel, Cairo 1950**

The salon was commonly referred to as “The Academy” (*Al-Acadimiyya*). He also held another salon every Monday evening at the same location, but this one was referred to as “The Forum” (*Al-Nadwa*). These assemblies attracted poets, writers, diplomats, political leaders, academicians, journalists and jurists from Lebanon and many other countries.

Beirut in the 1960’s was the hub of almost all airlines coming to, leaving or transiting through the Middle East. Anyone who had reason to travel made it a point to do so via Beirut for numerous reasons beside tourism. The central location of this unique city and the dynamism of the Lebanese people rendered visits by his many friends and fans quite convenient even for a few hours while in transit through Beirut International Airport.



**With Lebanese President General Fouad Chéhab at the Presidential Palace at Sarba, near Beirut in 1960. From right to left:
Minister Dr. Elias El-Khoury, Eltaher, President Chéhab, Druze notable Aref El-Nakadi and lawyer Mohsen Slim, President of
the Committee for the defence of public liberties**

THE END OF THE ROAD

Eltaher maintained his activities until he died peacefully during the early hours of August 22, 1974. He was buried in a very simple grave in the Martyrs' Cemetery in Beirut following a military funeral organized by the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and attended by representatives of King Hassan II of Morocco, President Bourguiba of Tunisia, and PLO leader Yasser Arafat²⁴. Lebanese President Suleiman Franjeh also delegated a representative to present Lebanon's condolences.



Eltaher's funeral procession in Beirut in 1974

Hundreds of telegrams and letters were received from friends and relatives around the world mourning their friend Aboul-Hassan. One such telegram was sent to Eltaher's family by his friend Ahmed Bensouda, Director of the Royal Cabinet in Morocco. In his telegram translated hereunder, Bensouda said:

"I was moved to learn with great sadness and much pain about the death of the head of your family the Great Arab Moujahed Mohamed Ali Eltaher, who has consecrated his life and dedicated all his efforts in the service of Arab causes in the Maghreb and Mashreq countries, especially the causes of Morocco and Palestine. Please be assured that, if you have lost a husband and a father, we have lost a comrade and a dear brother. While presenting my condolences for this great loss, I pray the Lord to bestow his mercy upon him and grant you comforting patience. We all belong to God and to Him we shall return.

Signed:

Ahmed Bensouda

Director of the Moroccan Royal Cabinet

RECOGNITION OF ELTAHER'S LEGACY

Eltaher's incredible struggle and relentless efforts have garnered much appreciation and recognition for his achievements throughout his life and after his death. Arab newspapers as well as political and literary magazines and journals continue to mention him and his work until now. He always had a special recognition and respect because he was a man of absolute integrity, who never asked anything for himself and refused to take any money from anybody in order to maintain his freedom to say and write whatever he thought was right. While many Arab political figures were pro-Ottoman, pro-British, or pro-French, or even on either one's payroll, Eltaher was none. That made him an inconvenience for some, but certainly a very popular breath of fresh air for most. He never shrank though from helping his friends and comrades and obtained funds for them from well-to-do nationalists and supporters of good causes without ever keeping anything for himself or his family.

When his financial situation worsened during the last few years of his life, by which time he was eighty years old, he accepted with much hesitation that his long-time friend President Habib Bourguiba pay his Beirut apartment rent. As all famous and successful people have their detractors, Eltaher did not escape sometimes this rule, as he was booed by those who had an interest with his opponents, or those who did not want to know anything about him, or those who simply imagined things that are totally false. Yet, at the end, it is righteous virtue and truthfulness that always prevail.

When, unbeknownst to him, the government of President Gamal Abdel-Nasser stripped him of his Egyptian citizenship in 1963, King Hassan II of Morocco did not waste time in issuing Moroccan passports to him and to his family. When President Anwar Sadat subsequently became President of Egypt following the death of President Nasser, he reinstated the Egyptian citizenship to the family. It was only then that Eltaher's friends and supporters in Egypt were able to publish his name or mention it without fear. Despite his fame and reputation, Eltaher did not obtain his Egyptian citizenship originally until April 1950, i.e. 38 years after he had arrived in Egypt, and not before the case was raised in the Egyptian parliament.



From right to left: Anwar Sadat, Secretary General of the Islamic World Conference and future President of Egypt; Lebanese parliamentarian Salah El-Bezri; Mohamed Ali Eltaher; Medhat Fatfat, Ambassador of Lebanon to Egypt; Emir Farid Chéhab, Director of Lebanese General Security; Younes Bahri, Iraqi journalist and founder of the Arabic program at Radio Berlin during World War II – Beirut 1955

Eltaher had a very warm relationship with Egypt, where he was particularly loved by people from all levels of society and religious denominations, from senior officials during the period preceding the mid-1950's, to simple citizens, be it in Cairo, the countryside, or anywhere else in Egypt. When his mother passed away in Palestine, Prime Minister Nahhas Pasha and his deputy Makram Ebeid Pasha visited him in person at his office on March 5, 1936 to present their condolences.



Egyptian Prime Minister Moustafa El-Nahas Pasha embracing Eltaher during a reception at Zaafaran Palace in Cairo in 1950. The two men always met in this fashion as a sign of warm friendship

FORMAL RECOGNITION OF ELTAHER'S ACHIEVEMENTS

Eltaher was known to all either by his full name, or by his traditional surname “Aboul-Hassan”. But, whoever referred to him in writing addressed him as “*Al-Moujahed Al-Aarabi Al-Kabir*”, namely the Great Arab Moujahed (i.e. Great Man of Struggle). The title came to him naturally from his close friends and those who respected his position, his knowledge, and the degree to which he had dedicated his life for the sake of just and rightful causes in the Arab World.



Eltaher receiving the medal award certificate from Mohamed Lamine, Bey of Tunisia in 1956. Prime Minister Bourguiba and the Royal Palace officials are grinning for something Eltaher must have said.

From a formal viewpoint, Eltaher was recognized officially for his long and sincere efforts through the following decorations:

1 – The Grand Order of *Iftikhar* (Excellence)

This decoration, the first ever awarded to him, was presented to him at the Royal Palace in Tunis by Mohamed Lamine, Bey (i.e. King) of Tunisia in August 1956.

2 – Order of the Throne (3rd Class)

Awarded and presented by King Mohamed V of Morocco at the Royal Palace in Rabat in July 1960.

3 – Order of Independence (2nd Class)



Awarded and presented by President Habib Bourguiba at Carthage Palace in Tunis in November 1961.

Tunisian medal award certificate



Moroccan medal award certificate

4 – Grand Order of the Throne

Awarded by King Hassan II of Morocco and presented by Dr. Omar Boucetta, Ambassador of Morocco to Lebanon in October 1962.

5 – Grand Order of Independence

Awarded by President Habib Bourguiba of Tunisia and presented by Slaheddin Abdallah, Ambassador of Tunisia to Lebanon in January 1974 in the presence of Mrs. Wassila Bourguiba.



Moroccan and Tunisian decorations awarded to Eltaher

The Indonesian Parliament had intended to hold a special ceremony in the capital Jakarta in 1965 to honour Eltaher, and present him with a decoration awarded by Indonesian President Dr. Ahmad Soekarno in recognition for Eltaher’s support to the national liberation movement against Dutch colonial presence in Indonesia. However, the coup d’état staged by General Muhammad Suharto changed the overall political direction of the Indonesian state and the ceremony was never held.

ELTAHER AND ARAB REALITIES

Throughout his life, Eltaher was a true and faithful Arab nationalist. Islam for him was the civilizational and cultural framework through which the Arab nation, with its various ethnic and religious components, lived and worked, but he was not a practicing person with respect to religion. Whether people were Arabs, Kurds, Berbers, Indians, Indonesians, Afghans, Christians or Muslims of all shades and beliefs had no bearing or influence on his relationship with them. His son was sent to the Catholic Christian Brothers schools in Cairo, and his daughter also went to Catholic nuns schools in Cairo and Beirut. Eltaher mentioned in his book *“Moataqal Huckstep”* that Egyptian political detainees of the Jewish faith incarcerated during the 1948 Palestine war, recognized him when they saw him at the internment camp and wished him well on Eid day. All to illustrate his tendency to stand by all those who were unjustly treated in their struggle against injustice and oppression. This is all reflected in the articles he wrote, the books he published and his personal relationships, which transcended all geographic, religious and ideological boundaries.

Because of his political and nationalist principles, and fierce stand against colonial powers, the latter obviously took an unfriendly stand towards him and frequently complained to the Egyptian government about his support to Arab and Islamic peoples under their colonial hegemony. On one such occasion, the Italian ambassador to Egypt complained directly to Mohamed Mahmoud Pasha, the Prime Minister of Egypt. The ambassador asked the Prime Minister to silence Eltaher, who, according to the ambassador, was *“a foreigner misusing his welcome in Egypt by provoking the people of Libya against the Italian colonial authorities”*, and that *“Egypt, as friend of Italy, should not allow him to affect its relations with the government of the Duce, Benito Mussolini”*. Mahmoud Pasha responded that in his view, as an Arab resident in Egypt, Eltaher was like other Egyptians, and added that while he had never met Eltaher previously, but certainly heard of him, he could appreciate his point of view regarding colonialism, and that he agreed with Mohamed Ali Eltaher that Italy mistreated the Libyans.

Eltaher’s writings also covered issues and details about the reasons for the loss of Palestine that were due to the gross incompetence of the Arab governments, and in one case at least criminal collusion with the enemy. Some Jewish and Israeli historians have either not considered or intentionally ignored in their works the degree of these shortcomings, possibly in order to assign all the credit to the prowess of their own fighters. Until today for example, the inexcusable behaviour of King Abdallah I of Jordan during the years of struggle, when he colluded with the Jews against the Palestinians is often described by a few Jordanian and Israeli historiographers as those of a man of astuteness and vision.

In an interview with the Egyptian weekly news magazine *“Rose El-Youssef”* on May 15, 1936 about the Great Palestine Revolt that was raging at that time, Mohamed Ali Eltaher said that *“Palestine was in revolt for the sixth time within fifteen years because the British were actively pushing the Palestinians out of their country in order to settle the Jews in their place”*.. He pointed out that *“the 1936 Revolt was against British colonial rule, and was triggered by national pride, the need for self defence, ensure their existence and love for one’s homeland”*.. Eltaher further recalled that *“the British came to Palestine as an ally of the Arab nation, but ruled over them as a colonized people, but the British were seeking a new road to India at our expense by creating a base that does not cost them anything. They thus brought the Zionists from all over the world, staked our lands to them until they constituted one third of the population, and soon they will become the majority.”*

He further added that *“at the beginning, the people of Palestine were wrong when they fought the Jews as being the source of their affliction, which is what happened during the previous revolts in Palestine in 1920, 1921 and 1929. However, they finally came to realise that the origin of the real calamity is British colonialism. From then on they directed their revolt against the British themselves as in 1930 and 1933”*.

During the interview Mohamed Ali Eltaher pointed out to the *“Rose El-Youssef”* reporter that the British *“did their best to hide the real causes of the revolt by alleging that it was nothing more than disturbances between Arabs and Jews. That is the British were angels who did nothing but maintain peace and order and prevent either side from attacking the other. The reality is that it was British soldiers who attacked the population and hunted both Muslims and Christians by firing at them, even when nobody confronted their troops”*.

Eltaher also often dwelt on the short-sightedness, or stubbornness certain Palestinian leaders displayed. He did not even spare his long-standing friend and most senior Palestinian leader, the [Mufti of Palestine Haj Amin Al-Husseini](#), from his criticism. All these factors combined allowed the Jews to take over the country and snatch it from its people with relative ease. They acquired a country with furnished houses, with closets full of clothes and toys, with schools, cars, planted fields, blossoming fruit orchards, and crops that the Palestinian farmers were not able to harvest, running underground and surface water, complete with ports, airports, beaches and even the air it breathes.



Palestinian resistance commander Aref Abderrazek (x) and members of his military staff Hamad Zawata, Mohamed Al-Amr and the Iron Guard during the 1936-1939 Great Revolt in Palestine

In his book *“Moataqal Huckstep”*, Eltaher made a comparison between how the British kept their word with the Jews and what the Arabs did at that time. He wrote that *“while there is no national, or religious, or ethnic, or common land between the British and the Jews, once they promised them that they will build the Jewish state in Palestine, they never wavered or let them down. They respected their word even when that cost the British rivers of their soldiers’ blood, and millions of their own money and even their reputation”*.

“The British fought the Palestinian people for thirty years and committed all kinds of violence against them and bore the enmity of the whole world, yet they never reneged once on their promise. They did not leave Palestine until they silenced the Arabs, besieged the people of Palestine and separated them from their brothers, then created the Jewish State and left without a word of thanks from the Jews!”



Members of the Palestinian Higher Committee exiled by the British mandatory power to the Seychelles islands in the Indian Ocean in 1937 to decapitate the Palestinian leadership. From right to left: Yaaqoub Al-Ghossayn; Rashid Al-Haj Ibrahim; Ahmad Hilmi Pasha; Dr. Hussein Al-Khalidi; and Fouad Saba.

“This is how the British kept their word with the Jews. Among the Arabs, however, you have witnessed and heard what happened, boisterousness, speeches, exaggerations, parties, resolutions and promises that drugged the people of Palestine and killed the spirit of



Palestinian leader Abdelqader Al-Husseini, killed in action during the 1948 war

fighting and resistance in defence of their homeland among many of them. This is because nobody ever imagined that the Arab League was lying all along, and that certain Arab governments all around Palestine would march their armies all the way there, then suddenly stop, retreat and go back to their respective countries.”

In another page of *“Moataqal Huckstep”* Eltaher added: *“The Palestinians have fought the British Army and the Jews from early 1936 to late 1939 and led a real war. They beat the first British army led by General Sir John G. Dill, then beat the second army commanded by General Sir Archibald Wavell in 1938, then tore apart the third army which came in 1939 under the command of General Sir Robert Haining”*.

Had the Arab governments supported the Palestinian resistance commander [Abdelqader Al-Husseini](#) with the types of weapons he needed in a timely fashion in 1947 and 1948 and allowed Arab volunteers to join his ranks without intervening officially, he and his troops and the volunteers, buttressed by their inalienable right of self defence, could have secured their own victory.

The Arab people have great attributes, which are unfortunately dwarfed by their constant factionalism. They are bitterly divided by family and religious clans. They are consumed by conflicting personal ambitions and petty rivalries of no consequence. They are as eager to fight each other as to fight their enemies. They are unable to prioritize national interests above personal interests. They go to great lengths to discuss and analyze political issues and propose solutions. But once they have satisfied their oratorical thirst, they go home with the impression that they have solved the problem. It does not come to their mind intuitively that this should be followed by conceptualization, implementation and follow up until the problem is resolved, as they very quickly suffer from short breath, and soon lose interest when they are required to hold tight for a long period. Yet, whenever they are well led, or when the matter is about a business deal of interest to them, they excel.

In view of these handicaps, especially with competing leadership among the kings and presidents throughout the period of the struggle between the Jews and the Palestinians, they have not been able to protect Palestine from the armed European Jewish immigrants during the confrontations of 1936 and 1948. The Jews had a dedicated and able leadership, good organisation, commanded well trained fighters following flexible tactics, and a capacity to conduct military operations while relying on their own initiative and without having to wait for orders from command posts set up far away from the battlefields.

A DIFFERENT APPROACH TO SOLVING THE PALESTINE-ISRAEL QUESTION

PREAMBLE

All the traditional approaches have been tried and tested over so many decades in relation to finding a solution to the standoff between the Israelis and the Palestinians. It is certainly time to think outside the box, not to reinvent the wheel, but to go back to old-fashioned reason and common sense.

Unless reasonably resolved, the Palestine Question will always be a trigger or an excuse for unrest, read violence, in the Middle East with possible international repercussions. But this should not be the only reason to solve the problem. To start with, the solution should not be for anything less than being just the right thing to do for the interest of both people and the rest of the world..

The Palestinians' ongoing resistance, occasionally by violent means, to Israel's various ingenuous stratagems at annexing the rest of their country is such an example. Another example is the Warsaw Jewish ghetto uprising against the Nazis which was an act of self-defence, not terrorism as the Nazis described it. This type of violence is different from terrorism rooted in a political, ideological or religious doctrine. Political opposition groups living in genuinely democratic countries can pursue a wide array of legal means to express their opposition within the system. Those who resort to violence in such systems are genuine terrorists in that case. This is why it is so crucial that things must be named by their name.

Nowadays everybody knows that the essence of the conflict between the people of Palestine and Israel is not about religion or ideology, except of course among the religious fundamentalists and the ultra-religious on all sides. Then of course there are the self-serving extremist politicians who, like their counterparts everywhere else, are interested in power, personal gain, or simply love to play the political game.

In a nutshell, to the Palestinians the struggle is a straightforward opposition and resistance to an invasion by a foreign people, an injustice, and plundering by one people against another...The European Jewish Zionists who took over the country from the Palestinians consider their "aspirations and enterprise (i.e. the seizure of Palestine) and aspirations as legitimate, indeed, as supremely moral".²⁵

The spiritual attachment of the Jewish people to the Holy Land is beyond discussion, so is that of Christians and Muslims. One should remember that both Christianity and Islam are heavily influenced by Judaism, which preceded them. The three faiths grew almost within the same extended region. The tales told in the Holy Books of the three faiths are, for all intents and purposes, practically the same. Most faithful consider these tales as definitive historical facts, which may be debatable, even though they may occasionally refer to some actual historical or geographical context.

CAN THERE BE A SOLUTION TO THE ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN STANDOFF?

The answer is, Yes! But Mohamed Ali Eltaher passed away before anybody in Israel or the Arab world could raise the issue of looking for solutions other than through the gun. When he died in 1974, Palestine was irretrievably gone, and the wound was still bleeding. It still is. His understanding of Arab realities and the state in which the Palestinians were did not inspire faith as far as the future was concerned.

The team overseeing the development of this website thought that it should not stop at simply telling Eltaher's story. It believes that it should build on his bitter experience and rethink the future in light of the present, and not only of the past.

Keeping in mind though that there is no way that any of the Palestinians who saw their homeland disappear from underneath them like in quicksand could have entertained scenarios that require them to bargain over their homeland. Psychologically this is extremely painful not just for them to consider but also for the Israelis. However, if we look at things as they are today, it does not hurt to try and salvage what can be salvaged for the sake of both peoples and the rest of the world.

The following is a proposal open for discussion that is different from what has been discussed so far as to how to break the current deadlock. The proposal, which calls first for a mutually acceptable accommodation between the Israelis and the Palestinians, leads towards a solution that could be envisaged, and hopefully tried. Without a direct hands-on role played by a major power such as the USA and its major allies, not just as facilitators, where they put all their weight and forces at play, then there will be no viable solution. The current state of affairs between Arabs and Jews both politically, and as a result of stubborn religious beliefs on all sides, is not conducive to anything but perpetuating a permanent disaster zone.

The proposed accommodation between the Israelis and the Palestinians requires a gradual approach that will offer both parties a physical separation for as long as needed in light of the prevalent situation. As for peace, the process may require several years. However, at the end of the day, this gradual approach will allow both parties to be able to converse like civilized partners, not like prehistoric cave dwellers.

To discuss politics or religion realistically and effectively, each of the parties involved in the discussions has to know the issues and tenets on both sides of the table. i.e. the Palestinians must appreciate the Israeli position, and the Israelis must put themselves in the shoes of the Palestinians. Each side must be willing to question its own religion and political nevers. It must be willing to hear things it does not usually like or want to hear. Above all it must come to the table with the intention of solving problems and not just to engage in polemics. It must be prepared to compromise. It must approach any realistic solution with creativity, but also differently from previous attempts. Finally both parties must be patient, patient, and one more time patient!

The proposed approach calls first for a backgrounder to understand the complexities involving Arabs, Palestinians, both Muslims and Christians on the one hand, as well as Israelis and Jews on the other hand. It also reflects on what the majority of the common people among the Palestinians and the Israelis want.

THE ROAD FROM PALESTINE . . .

When Britain volunteered to hand over somebody else's country, or at least part of it, to a new set of mostly Eastern European settlers not related at all to the peoples of the Middle East, the Palestinians stood against the uninvited newcomers. They did so not because they were of the Jewish faith, but because they were brought in as uninvited settlers whose declared Zionist goal was to snatch the land or as much of it as possible from its people and appropriate it for themselves. The indigenous Arab Palestinians of the Jewish faith living on the land along with Christian and Muslim Palestinians were not involved in the plan. Apart from a handful of individuals among the Jewish leadership, most of the new immigrants had practically no idea that there were still people of the Jewish faith living in the Holy Land since Roman times!

Having watched the beginnings of the subtle process put in place to dispossess them from their land after Britain officialised its commitment to turn Palestine into a Jewish National Home through the Balfour Declaration of 1917, Palestinian opposition became increasingly more vocal. By the 1920s the Palestinians became somewhat more organized, and started targeting *manu militari* both British troops and institutions, as well as Jewish settlements and individuals. The latter of course hit back at the Palestinians in self-defence. Thus started the cycle of violence that continues to this day.

The historic responsibility of Britain in the whole tragedy of the Palestinians is paramount; and the British should be accountable to the Palestinian people for what they did to them by appropriating their country, and worst still by giving it to other people without an "if you please"!

Senior leaders of the Zionist Movement, such as Dr. Chaim Weizmann and David Ben Gurion, knew very well that Palestine was inhabited, and that the Palestinian population would be opposed to the idea of bringing European Jews to their country to create the Jewish National Home. Many among the European Jewish immigrants/settlers, on the other hand, were quite surprised to discover that Palestine was already inhabited, and not a "land without a people looking for a people without a land"²⁶. A large number among the Jewish population, even today, viewed the Palestinians as "Arab squatters", and unwelcome strangers who came from neighbouring countries and took over "their Promised Land" while its legitimate owners were away during the previous two thousand years!²⁷

Of course Mohamed Ali Eltaher stood against this colonial invasion that was forced upon his country and his people against their will. Had the colonial settlers, who forced themselves in, been other than European Jews, even if they were Arabs or others, he would have opposed them with the same determination.

After all, the peoples of the Eastern Mediterranean, whose cultures are based on sharing, have hosted generations of refugees and displaced peoples including Jews, Christians and Muslims throughout their whole history going back thousands of years. Without dwelling on the infamous episode of the Spanish Jews who were chased from Spain during the Catholic Inquisition, there is the example of the Armenian refugees who were settled in Greater Syria after World War I, also without an "if you please".

The Armenian refugees, though, blended with the peoples of the region and did not threaten anybody or take away their lands. Most Armenian immigrants eventually succeeded as businessmen, craftsmen, artists, musicians, legal experts, ministers in Arab countries, members of Arab parliaments, and some of them even adopted the Arab and Palestinian causes as theirs. No one asked them to renounce their heritage, their religion, or their identity. They too never felt they had to become arabized or compelled to convert to Islam to improve their chances among the Arabs. The European Jewish settlers could have done just the same as their predecessors and shared with everybody else, and they could all have lived happily, or at least peacefully, ever after. Had that been the case, possibly no Israel-Palestine problem would have arisen, and the Holy Land could have remained truly holy for all believers.

... TO ISRAEL,

Anti-Semitism was never a Palestinian or an Arab issue. Occasional “gossipy” push and pull among all ethnic groups and religions, including among Muslims, Christians and Jews, is not something unheard of in all parts of the world. The tragic and inexcusable treatment of European Jews in Europe was not known to the world until much later close to the end of WW II. That includes the Arabs, who were themselves struggling in self-defence from the competing European colonial powers throughout several periods of their history. Warts and all, Arabs of the Jewish faith were part and parcel of the Arab family and of the Mediterranean mosaic.²⁸

Neither the Palestinian Jews nor the other Arabs planned to take over Palestine each for himself. They were all “at home”. Nor did the Muslims and Christians challenge the Jews' presence, whether the historic Samaritans, the Ashkenazi, or the Sephardic, among them. That included the individual European Jews who had chosen to come and settle among the Palestinians since the early nineteenth century.

The creation of a European Ashkenazi-populated Israel was as much a challenge for Palestinian Arabs of the Jewish faith (the *Mizrahim* – i.e. Eastern Jews), as for the rest of the population. Both Arab Jewish *Mizrahim* and Spanish Jewish *Sefardim* must have found themselves initially in an untenable position between their European co-religionists streaming from Europe on the one hand and their traditional Arab countrymen, who were their ethnic cousins on the other hand. It took several decades and generations after the creation of Israel for them to adjust to the new order.

Over the past ninety years there has been a subtle and smooth choice of words to describe the Palestinian opposition to British-supported European Jewish immigration. The conflict is deliberately portrayed as one between two sister communities, one Jewish, the other Arab, living side-by-side in Palestine for millennia. The fact that the conflict began only following the waves of European Jewish immigration into Palestine, especially in the thirties, forties and fifties, is intentionally omitted and never mentioned. The discourse continues that when the small Jewish community wanted to separate and create its own country and state on the land of Palestine, the non-Jewish community opposed that move by force with the help of Arab armies, which marched through the borders to stop the creation of the Jewish state.

This discourse has been maintained purposely, incessantly and with premeditation in order to create confusion in the minds of those unaware of the reality. As mentioned above, the Palestinians opposed the new European Jewish combatant settlers who had territorial designs, and not the millennial Palestinian Jewish community already living peacefully with everyone else, whether in Palestine or in the other Arab countries.

The widely held claim by Muslim and Jewish fundamentalists that the conflict between the two peoples goes back to the seventh century A.D., i.e. upon the advent of Islam, is inaccurate. What goes back to that period is the political and not the religious fallout between some Arab Jewish tribes and some Arab Muslim tribes in northern Arabia during the formative years of Islam. What also goes back in centuries is the clash of mythologies within the three communities that they thrive on until today. It is actually against the interest of the Muslims, Christians and Jews to use these mythological occurrences as a historical basis for today's political conflict.

These original conflicts had different reasons, took place in a completely different geographic setting, and with different types of people from those in conflict today. The old conflict was among Arabs of two sister faiths. The modern one is mainly between Arabs, both Muslim and Christian, and people of various European races who happen to be Jewish.

Under these confusing conditions, it is extremely difficult to carry on a dialogue based on logic about such a complicated topic as peace talks among modern-day enemies!²⁹

The Arabs, the Jews and the Israelis: Understanding the Complexities

From a national and cultural point of view, the inhabitants of Palestine today are Arabs. Ethnically, though, they descend from centuries-old migrations of Canaanites, Phoenicians, Arabs, Greeks, Italians, Maltese, Romans, Egyptians, Africans, North Africans, Kurds, Turks, Persians, Chechens, Daghestanis, Circassians, or descendents of Eastern and Western European Crusaders, as well as others.

The way the situation is today is that the Palestinian people are scattered geographically the same way the Jews were in the Diaspora.

1. There is a Palestinian Yishuv, i.e. a Palestinian community still living in its ancestral homeland, whose members are citizens of Israel, and whose life has become a cross between their historic Arab heritage and their day-to-day life in a rather European Israeli society.
2. There is a Palestinian refugee population scattered in various neighbouring Arab countries, most of whom are stateless, though some may have obtained the citizenship of their country of refuge. Those who did not acquire another citizenship, hence have no formal passports, but Laissez-passer documents issued by Arab governments, that renders the travel of pets easier than that of Palestinian refugees.
3. There is a world-wide Palestinian Diaspora on all continents; some are naturalized, such as Palestinian-Americans for example, and some live as foreign residents on temporary work permits, such as Palestinians bearers of Jordanian passports living in Saudi Arabia, for example.
4. There is a West-Bank population living under Israeli occupation in quasi-concentration camp conditions; complete with separation walls and watchtowers manned by machine gun toting guards.
5. Finally, there is the Gaza Strip, whose population is treated by all alike like a lepers' colony and kept under isolation, or at best like the untouchable castes of India.

In the Middle East, as in Northern Ireland and several other countries around the world, your religion is your identity. So the Palestinians and the rest of the Arab people everywhere refer to the Israelis as “Yahoud” (from Yahweh), i.e. the Jews, which is the term used since time immemorial. The Palestinians who became citizens of Israel are referred to by the Arabs in general either as the “Palestinians of Israel”, the “Arabs of Israel”, or the “1948 Arabs”. The latter description is considered by some Palestinian citizens of Israel to be a rather derogatory term, even though those who refer to them as such through common usage do not mean to belittle them in any way.

The way the Jews see themselves, as well as how the world of Goyim (i.e. gentiles or non-Jews) sees them, being Jewish is their identity, i.e. they are both Jews as a people and as a religion irrespective of their actual ethnic heritage. Ethnically they are not all the same, since some are Europeans, others Asians, Africans or Arabs. However, the creation of the State of Israel allowed for the ingathering of Jews from everywhere under one citizenship (In many cases of course, they could carry double or even triple citizenships). The Israeli citizenship also became that of practically all the Muslim, Christian, Druze, and Jewish Palestinians who did not leave or were driven out of Palestine in 1948 when the State of Israel was created. Common usage remains that when the description ‘Israeli’ is mentioned, it only means “Jewish” citizens of Israel.

Most Israelis refer to the Palestinians as “the Arabs”, the term being occasionally used as a derogatory term, or to further eradicate the identity and existence of the Palestinians as a distinct people, and partially because it somewhat encompasses everybody, i.e. both Christians and Muslims. When the Israelis want to further identify the Palestinians, they refer to them as “Muslim or Christian Arabs”. Palestinian followers of the Druze faith living in Israel are treated differently from the rest of the Palestinian population.

Many Israelis look down on the Palestinians more or less in the same way the Nazis looked down on Jews in Germany. Any Arab or Muslim is viewed as a potential terrorist. For Arabs in general, the word “Jew” is synonymous with Israeli intelligence agent, while Jewish settlers are nothing more than state-sponsored armed hooligans. That is of course a very sad situation, albeit an understandable one. Both people need to recognize what others consider as their heritage so that the other in turn recognizes theirs. As difficult as it sounds for some, the Weltanschauung (i.e. the world view) of both Israelis and Palestinians of course must include those next to them and around them. Easier said than done, but there is always a first step, and education at home and at school are always the best starting point, especially if the long term-goal is to achieve accommodation followed by peace between the two nations.

Having said that, it remains that a large number of Israeli and Western Jews are quite unhappy about the way Palestinians are treated by the government of Israel, and empathize with them publicly. Besides, an increasing number of Israelis, including military personnel, have taken courageous public stands against their own government by refusing to serve in the West Bank or Gaza and were harshly punished. They take such a stand because they see ahead of the politicians and realize that Israel's future is in the Middle East. After all, the original roots of the Jewish people are in the Middle East, not in Eastern or Western Europe. They say it themselves and have designed their history and the whole concept of *aliya* (i.e. return of the Jews to Zion, the Promised Land, or Israel) around this fact.

Members of the long-time active joint Israeli-Palestinian nonviolent resistance movement see the inhumanity with which the system treats the Palestinians and they immediately express their opposition.³⁰ Many, like young American peace activist Rachel Corrie, have been killed or injured on purpose, or accidentally, for their activism to prevent the ongoing dispossession of the Palestinians from continuing. Others have not been deterred by Israeli heavy-handedness and continue to resist. But, like in so many other countries, the Israeli population just wants to live without problems, so they refrain from rocking the boat and let the politicians who have their own multiple agendas run the show unchallenged.

The overall situation between Israel and the Palestinian native population is quite reminiscent of that existing between cowboys and Indians in the American Far West of yesteryears. The Israeli establishment and the settlers who are supported by the government of Israel as well as by international donors are taking on the role of cowboys, and continue to hound the Palestinians into submission, exclusion, suffocation, and death by psychological asphyxiation. As a first step they would like to relegate them to "Indian reserves" like those in North America before expelling them en masse towards the neighbouring Arab countries at the first opportunity, or at least by instalments as has been happening so far.

In addition to that, understanding the psychology of their enemy, the Israelis, particularly the unruly fundamentalist extremists, incite the Palestinians every now and then to commit an insignificant attack against the Jews. They do that by staging an attack, or by conducting a "visit" to a contentious religious site. This enflames the Palestinians who react, and that draws an Israeli military retaliation against Palestinian population centres in "self-defence". Unfortunately, the Palestinians continue to be manipulated by the Israelis in this elementary fashion. The rockets fired from Gaza against some ill-defined targets across the border inside Israel constitute an example.

Israel's singular advantages³¹

In its fight against "local terrorism" Israel has several advantages:

1. It is present in the Palestinian "territories", the main breeding grounds of terrorism according to the Israelis, and the national resistance to Israeli control of their lives according to the Palestinians.
2. Israel controls most of the land, all borders, air space, coastal waters, all water resources, agriculture, and any kind of building in those "territories".
3. The Israeli military enter areas controlled by both the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank and by Hamas in Gaza at any time they consider it necessary for the security of Israel, which includes targeted assassinations; home demolition in certain areas; and home confiscation in others.
4. Israel's close proximity to the occupied territories has enabled it to make use of a variety of its intelligence capabilities.
5. Israel indirectly encourages the Palestinians, or actively creates the atmosphere for them to erupt and conduct attacks or launch homemade rockets against Israeli targets to further justify depopulating the Palestinians territories and maintain the high moral ground of "we are fighting a war against terrorism". Since the First Zionist Congress, which was held in Basel, Switzerland in 1897 the final objective without any deviation has always been the same: take the land away from the Palestinians bit by bit cowboy-Indians style, and prohibit them from ever setting foot there again.

On the ground today there is nothing but a continuation of the same old problem since 1917. On one side, the Israeli establishment uses all the tricks that imagination can invent to seize more Palestinian land without people on it, while on the other side the determined Palestinian population awkwardly attempts to hang on to its land and its existence, while reeling under its own questionable political and ideological power centres imposed on them. Whether secular or religious, these power centres have proven to be incompetent, irresponsible and devoid of any sense of accountability, irrespective of which officially sounding titles they have bestowed on themselves. What the Israelis do to the Palestinians is self-described as being part of God's command (a *mitzvah* in Hebrew) to reclaim the Promised Land as they choose to believe, and the Palestinians justify their attacks on even innocent Israelis also as being God's command to struggle (*Jihad* in Arabic) to liberate their homeland from foreign occupiers.

The reality remains that the history of Palestine is now part of the History of Israel, and vice-versa. Both people would gain by being interested in learning each other's history the way it is and not the way they imagine it to be, or the way it is forced to them. Few, very few, do. Some think they know, others have already made up their mind without having a clue, and the majority simply does not care.

The above-stated analysis is meant to separate the wheat from the chaff, by calling things by their names in light of history and of the realities on the ground today, and not on the basis of ancient mythologies and popular tales.

... THEN TO ISRAEL AND PALESTINE? OR TO WHERE?

Preparing for the future

Looking forward to the future will certainly offer a more attainable goal than pretending to move forward while looking into the rear-view mirror! The Jewish people “returned from the Diaspora to Zion” to live in peace: Peace for themselves, and let’s hope peace for others too. The Palestinians today are living their own Diaspora inside and outside their ancestral homeland, and they too long for the same peace. They need to make *aliya* too as the Jews did.

The tragic events that scarred the history of the Palestinians and the Israelis over the past hundred years are painful for both, and call for a gradual assisted recovery, that is if both people are willing and able to chart their course together freely and honestly. If they are unable to do that and unwilling to rethink their approach, then they can kiss peace goodbye, and the world will be a worse place.

Several Israeli writers, who are unfairly referred to on occasion by their detractors as “revisionists”, have in general been scholarly and accurate in their coverage of the problem from its genesis.³² Others are simply incapable of transcending their prejudices, or premeditated blindness, and inability to see that suffering is a universal human (and even animal) condition, not just a monopoly of the Jewish people.

The situation is reflected on the Arab side where there is also a good deal of self-blindness especially among the leaders as far as facts are concerned. Such types on both sides love what they say and thrive on it, whether it is factual or not, and irrespective of the harm it does even to their own case. These people constitute a mortal danger to any future mutually satisfactory accommodation or peace between the Israelis, the Palestinians, the Arabs and everyone who has a stake in world peace. Thanks to such individuals, there has been no dearth of reasons for the failure of previous peace processes, road maps and interim agreements despite the goodwill of many others who have their heads above their shoulders and their feet solidly on the ground.

Answering his own question, “Why did the Oslo agreement fail”, the Israeli writer Uri Avnery wrote that “From the beginning, the agreement was built on shaky foundations, because it lacked the main thing: a clear definition of the final objective of the process”. Avnery further notes that “for (Palestinian leader Yasser) Arafat, it was self-evident that the agreed “interim stages” would lead to an independent Palestinian state in the whole of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, with perhaps some minor exchanges of territory. East Jerusalem, including of course the Holy Shrines, was to become the capital of Palestine. The settlements would be dismantled”. As for the 1948 Palestinian refugees Avnery says: “I am convinced” continues Avnery “that (Arafat) would have been satisfied with a symbolic return of a limited number of refugees to Israel proper.”

“But Rabin’s aim” says Avnery, “was unclear, perhaps even to himself. At the time he was not yet ready to accept a Palestinian state. Absent an agreed destination, all the “interim phases” went awry...Rabin was a child of the classic Zionist ideology.... He carried in his body the genetic code of the Zionist movement, a movement whose aim from the beginning was to turn the Land of Israel into an exclusively Jewish state, which denied the very existence of the Arab Palestinian people and whose logic ultimately meant their displacement...Like most of his generation in the country, he absorbed this ideology with his mother’s milk, and was raised on it throughout. At the critical juncture of his life, he fell victim to an insoluble inner contradiction: his analytical mind told him to make peace with the Palestinians, to “give up” a part of the country and to dismantle the settlements, while his Zionist genetic heritage opposed this with all its might. That manifested itself visibly at the Oslo agreement signing ceremony: he offered his hand to Arafat because his mind commanded it, but all his body language expressed rejection.”

Avnery does not stop at analyzing what went wrong, but he proposed a way out, when he said towards the end of the article that “it is impossible to make peace without a basic mental and emotional commitment to peace. Impossible to change the direction of a historic movement without reassessing its history. Impossible for a leader to steer his people towards a total change (as the Turkish leader Kemal Ataturk did in Turkey for example) if he is not completely devoted to the change himself. Impossible to make peace with an enemy without understanding his truth”³³. Unfortunately, at the end, the internal forces that created the climate for (Rabin’s) murder were the winners, and both the Israeli people and the Palestinians the losers. In a globalized world, we all lost with them.

It may be fair to add that following decades of nothing but violence, neither the Israelis nor the Palestinians were properly “programmed” to know what to do to achieve peace. Besides, in both camps there were those who opposed the peace

process in all its forms. They simply did not want to see any agreement that accommodates the other side too. For these oppositionists, sharing is losing.

ON THE PATH TO A MEANINGFUL AND MUTUALLY SATISFACTORY ACCOMMODATION

At this very early stage of looking for a solution, and assuming that the world is anxious to solve the Palestine Question, and not to dissolve it to make it go away, we must first start by looking for a “mutually satisfactory accommodation”, before talking about peace. It is still too early for that. The requisite conditions for peace between the Israelis and the Palestinians do not exist yet, and the two people are way too far apart and too different from each other: One is rather a European-like population, and the other a typical Middle-Eastern society. If they both like to eat *hummus* (chickpeas), it does not automatically mean that they can share beds!

Those on the Arab side who speak about a one-state solution hoping to overtake the Jews through demographics are daydreamers, as are those on the Jewish side who think the Palestinians can be castrated and tamed in a one-state solution and turned into cheap labour and housemaids.

It is sad to say, but there are also some Arabs and Palestinians who dream of “throwing the Jews into the sea”, and there are Jews who dream of a final solution (Entlösung) to the whole problem by deporting the Palestinians en masse to neighbouring countries. The Arabs cannot do that. However, Israel can, and nobody will do anything about it. The only reactions that could be predictable are those of the U.N. Security Council, which will meet in an emergency session and disband as a result of a veto. Then the reaction of the delegates to the Council of the Arab League, who will shout, scream and jump up and down in disgust, then organize a number of dinners, and finally issue all kinds of ‘requests’ and ‘demands’. While the occasion presents itself, somebody in one Arab capital or another may hold a major Arab poetry contest to mark the event! However the end result as far as the Palestinians are concerned will be the total loss of their homeland; and the refugee camps in Beirut, Amman and others will become home to another two million Palestinian refugees. Is that what we want? Certainly not!

In the famous 1865 tale “Alice in Wonderland” written by Charles Lutwidge Dodgson (Lewis Carroll), when Alice was lost in the jungle and met the Cheshire cat, she asked him: “*Excuse me Sir, where ought I go from here?*” The cat replied half cynically: “*It all depends a good deal on where you want to get to!*”³⁴ With this in mind, let’s chart our route towards an accommodation first by defining who the players are, i.e. who is in charge, how do they perceive each other, what is it they want, where do they stand, and what is it that should take place first before talking about establishing peace between the adversaries.

WHO IS IN CHARGE?

The Two Governments of Israel and the Two Governments of Palestine

There are effectively two Israeli governments in the world; the elected government in Jerusalem, and the self-appointed *de facto* government in Washington, D.C., i.e. the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), along with many local and international affiliates, and competitors. AIPAC, which wields probably more political power in the USA than the AFL-CIO and the National Rifle Association combined, consists of a coalition of American government, business, media, finance, and Jewish as well as non-Jewish leaders with similar objectives.

AIPAC operates thanks to a dedicated professional and highly remunerated bureaucracy handling a multi-million dollar budget, much of which comes from tax-exempt donations collected directly or indirectly from taxpayers, Jews and non-Jews alike. Behind them is a vast network of hard-working volunteers, some deeply religious, others not. Some, while being American citizens, carry their devotion all the way to serving in the various ranks of the Israel Defense Forces (IDF).

In North America for example, organizations such as AIPAC work for what they decide is in the interest of the American Jewish community, which they consider to be identical to that of Israel. But that is not always the case, since the Israelis are the ones on the ground to collect the hits, not those in North America. Sometimes the government of Israel finds its US foreign policy hijacked by AIPAC and its praetorian guards in the White House, Congress, the Senate, the intelligence community, the Pentagon, the media and the international finance community. AIPAC can afford to be as extreme as it wishes, and so puts pressure on successively elected Israeli governments to accept what it says on the basis of the saying that “What’s good for American Jews is good for Israel”.

While AIPAC and the government of Israel may disagree on who represents the Jews in Washington, D.C., the Israeli embassy and AIPAC are both pragmatic enough to realize that they have a common interdependency. Israel needs organizations such as AIPAC and others such as the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations to

obtain what it wants from the US government; which it does. AIPAC also helps organize and influence at least part of the billions of dollars Israel has been receiving over the past many years from the US, to the tune of an estimated US\$46,500 per Israeli citizen per annum, as reported in the media. To justify, legitimize and finance its own activities, AIPAC draws on the deep belief among Jews that the requirement to support Israel is a “*mitzvah*”, or divine command.

The strength of the North American organizations lies on a number of pillars, but chief among them is their lethal grip on the US government and legislature by the jugular. Of course no American will agree that this is the case, but that is how things are ³⁵!

Those who think that the US government will put any meaningful sustained pressure on Israel at any time to reach a settlement with the Palestinians must be dreaming. The way things are, is that the US government supports the strong, the organized, and those who stand up for their own interests with round-the-clock steadfastness. The American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) is one such organization.

What do the Israelis want?

It is baffling that the people who are renowned world leaders in so many fields of the arts, sciences, philosophy, philanthropy, finance, the media and more, i.e. the Jewish people, have unfortunately abdicated their authentic Jewish ideals and their notorious intellectual independence at the hands of extremist politicians and religious fundamentalists. Not only that, but they almost blindly and unquestionably support a state that advertises itself as “the only democracy in the Middle East”, but that has become a leader in human rights abuses, like many of their neighbouring Arab states, though with a thin legal veneer.

A huge deal of effort, time, diligence, money and intellectual creativity is spent by governments, organizations and academic think tanks on perpetuating the memory of tragedies that befell the Jewish people in history. The same amount of zeal is spent on finding terrorism in anything and everything that is Arab or Islamic. Had half of those resources been invested in finding a reasonable and mutually satisfactory accommodation between the Israelis and their Palestinian neighbours, a settlement to the problem could have been found a long time ago.

The onus of the initiative falls primarily on the Israelis because they are the occupiers. The Palestinians must behave responsibly as full-fledged partners. Painful as it is, and despite all their sufferings, whether they live in the West Bank, Gaza or anywhere else in the world, it is up to the Palestinian people to work hard and persevere in using all the means available to them to strengthen their internal and external steadfastness. They should not waste the opportunity of finding a mutually satisfactory settlement before the opportunity for a future peace with their adversary is lost forever.

Whatever “generous offer” made to the Palestinians by Israel that was “rejected by the late Palestinian Authority Chairman Yasser Arafat”, as former Israeli Prime Minister General Ehud Barak keeps talking about repeatedly is simply hogwash. It is no more than one of those advertising slogans or one-liners that are invented every now and then and hammered into peoples’ minds as an absolute truth. Barak keeps repeating this mantra, which is similar to that of “a land without a people for a people without a land”, and everybody else parrots him. He knows that well. He would have been the first to reject such a “generous” offer had the tables been turned.

Adherents of the Jewish faith have already achieved the ingathering they have dreamt of throughout their history, which also put not just Jewish, but also Christian and Muslim holy shrines in their hands. The government of Israel’s ongoing policy on behalf of all Jews in the world, of pulling more land from under the Palestinians to build settlements or other schemes, is nothing short of institutionalized greed. Fortunately, not all Jews in Israel and in the rest of the world condone such practices.

In his 2009 book “*One State, Two States: Resolving the Israel/Palestine Conflict*” about the various ideas regarding possible future solutions to the Palestine Question, Benny Morris quotes grudgingly from an article entitled “*Israel: The Alternative*”, published by Tony Judt “himself a Diaspora Jew”, in 2003 in the New York Review of Books. Judt says that “non-Israeli Jews feel themselves ... exposed to criticism and vulnerable to attack for things they didn’t do (that is, Israel’s behaviour in the occupied territories – Benny Morris’ clarification). But this time it is a Jewish state, not a Christian one, which is holding them hostage for its own actions. “The depressing truth,” Judt told his readers, “is that Israel today is bad for the Jews”.³⁶

Benny Morris states that “it is today clear that no Israeli leader will initiate a pullout from the West Bank – unilaterally or in agreement with the Palestinians – before the IDF acquires the technological capability to protect its population centers from short-range missile attacks (from Gaza). But that is only a fig leaf. The real reason is that they don’t want to let go of the land. Morris then states that “a majority of Israelis still favor a pullback from the West Bank within the framework of a peace agreement with the Palestinians”. Even though he qualifies his statement by saying that it is “unclear whether most Israelis would support an agreement providing for Israeli withdrawal from all or large parts of Jerusalem without a full, definitive peace settlement”. Relying on opinion polls results among Israelis, Morris concluded that “the overwhelming majority of Israelis, as opinion polls have consistently shown for decades, support partition and a two-state settlement of the conflict.”³⁷

Today, nobody cares on both sides. In some cases the Israeli soldiers do what they are ordered to do without thinking twice; in other cases, the soldiers, the officers and senior commanders themselves come from families belonging to religious fundamentalist or politically extremist groups, and are convinced as to the righteousness of their actions.

The Palestinians, on their side, consider that they have nothing to lose by dying but their chains. To them though, keeping their steadfastness and armed resistance to the occupier is the only thing to be proud of that is left to them under the circumstances. Their situation resembles that of the French resistance to the Nazi occupation of France during WW II.

Neither resistance was particularly decisive in the field, yet the people could not just stand there and let their enemy crush them. The Jewish resistance in the Warsaw Ghetto against the Nazis, who also built a separation wall around the Jewish Ghetto, was another example along those lines. The rockets launched at Israeli settlements may provide the launchers with psychological satisfaction, yet they offer the Israelis what they would pay gold for, namely, a justification for their brutal retaliation in the name of self-defence. And the world is buying the argument!

As the saying goes, where there is a will, there is a way. But today there is simply no will, and whenever a way appeared on the horizon, it was bypassed, ignored, or assassinated. The Israeli extremists and the AIPAC king-makers, who consider themselves to be the real or sole stakeholders, are not interested in any solution that does not give them the whole of Palestine without one single breathing Palestinian on its territory. If they were capable of eradicating the Palestinians (the infamous German word for that is Vernichtung) or at least pushing them across the border into Jordan, Lebanon, Syria or Egypt, or dumping them in some faraway land, they would have done so long time ago.

Governing the Palestinians

Not to be outdone, the Palestinian territories now also have two governments; one claims to represent the Kingdom of God in Gaza, and the other represents the earthly kingdom in the West Bank, almost mirroring the government of Israel in Jerusalem and that of AIPAC in Washington, D.C. Of course the comparison ends there, because while Israel has strong leverage in the international relations equation, the Palestinians have practically none, other than the Christian holy sites, which do not offer anymore the same leverage they used to have in the past. Without intravenous economic support from outside the occupied territories, the Palestinians cannot even survive on their own, especially since the valve handle of the oxygen they breathe is in the hand of Israel.

Before the 1993 secret Oslo Peace negotiations came to be publicly known, a sudden flood of media reporting surfaced about Palestinian policemen and security personnel being trained in Egypt and Jordan. One would think that following decades of occupation, dispossession and violence, the Palestinian population would be offered hope for a better future rather than more police. Instead of training doctors, nurses, teachers, farmers, agronomists, water specialists, and offering them the prospect of job opportunities, the first thing the Palestinians were offered by their leaders under pressure from Israel and the United States in cahoots with Egypt and Jordan after all these years was an orgy of more police and spies, as if they were inveterate criminals! Today, and as of 2012 yet another multilateral military and police force is imposed on the Palestinians in the West Bank to train - and keep watch on - Palestinian police and intelligence. The latter are trained on the most modern means of controlling the Palestinian population, thus playing the same role as Jewish Kapos in Nazi concentration camps! Then we are surprised when people revolt, and individuals launch attacks that we will label as 'acts of terrorism'. Have we learned anything?

Since 1916 the Palestinian people were subjugated by British forces, police, and intelligence, then the Egyptian and Jordanian heavy-handed emergency rule, followed by the Israeli suffocation in Gaza and the West Bank respectively. Finally, they had to contend with the Palestinian Authority and Hamas, each in its own territory, both of which have demonstrated to the population what they have learned from the above-mentioned minders. That, beside the array of oppressive and arbitrary measures to which the Palestinian refugees were subjected to in camps scattered in Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Jordan, the West Bank and Gaza, either from the security agencies of host countries or as a result of infighting among the various Palestinian groups vying to control those wretched people. Actually, all affairs pertaining to the Palestinian refugees in most Arab countries since 1948 have been conducted and managed by the various intelligence services of the host countries! Finally, there were the unimaginable complications the Palestinian refugees have had to endure, and still do; not to be allowed to travel to some exotic country overseas, but simply to visit family and relatives, or to seek medical attention in other neighbouring Arab countries for instance.

Now, after all that mayhem, what do they get? Two vast gulags in Gaza and the West Bank, with Kapos from among them as the Nazis used to do in concentration camps, and of course the Israeli border police, the Israel Defense Forces and the various intelligence services, as well as the local agents they manage to recruit. They are used as live targets for Israeli soldiers to practice their firing skills, and as a test ground for innovative weapons of devastation and mass killing produced by Israel and by other countries that do not dare test them on live targets on their own soil.

All that because the Palestinians continue to resist and refuse to abandon their homeland so that Israel can take over their land, which has been from day one the sole purpose for all this. **NOTHING ELSE!**

What do the Palestinians want?

In light of the current realities on the ground, all the Palestinians want is to regain their dignity, rely on themselves through national unity, and run their own affairs thanks to a modern, caring, competent, representative and accountable leadership. Continued dependence on international charity, much of which disappears without being accounted for, is no less than a catastrophic and disgraceful national insult. That is what the Palestinian people do not want!

Today, the Palestinians have nothing left to offer their own people or the world. The erstwhile strategic position along the Eastern Mediterranean and the Red Sea is long gone. The olive trees that provided some mild agro-industrial economic potential have been uprooted by the Israelis who pretend that “terrorists could be hiding behind them”. Anyone who has even seen an olive tree knows that there is no space for a cat to hide behind it.

The Holy Land has become a skeleton of what it used to be. There are fewer and fewer Christians in the land of Jesus Christ, and we cannot blame only Israel for that. Aside from the difficult and worsening socio-economic conditions in the West Bank and Gaza, and the ill-advised actions of certain Islamic extremists, the major European and North American countries follow a low-key policy whose apparent objective is to 'save' the Christians of the Levant by helping them to emigrate from the Holy Land. One should not forget the short-term effect of this perhaps well-intentioned policy, that is also encouraged by not only a certain Jewish lobby, but also among American Evangelists. The latter see in this policy an efficient way to empty the Holy Land as well as other countries in the region from their Christian population through sustained and proactive emigration programs. Keeping in mind at the same time that most of these Christians follow the Orthodox and Catholic rites, i.e. Christian Arabs who are not interested in the Evangelical program.

As far as the Evangelists are concerned the exodus of Christian and Muslim Palestinians constitutes an efficient process towards returning the Holy Land without its native population to the Jewish people in order to accelerate the Second Coming of the Messiah. As far as Israel is concerned, it facilitates considerably its seizure of what's left of Palestinian land, while it removes a point of pressure on the government of Israel by Christian powers including the Vatican and other major churches. But this accelerated exodus represents a highly alarming danger for the Palestinian cause, because this Christian emigration empties the Palestinian file from its international weight and accelerates the process of emptying Palestine, now a backwater, from its historic content. The abysmally self-blinded and extremist Muslim groups may think this is to their advantage, while it is actually a major catastrophe for the future of the Holy Land and even for Arab and Islamic civilisations, and an additional major phase towards the disappearance of what's left of geographic Palestine.

As for the Palestinian leaders, they are either praying for the Biblical manna from heaven, or they are busy playing at presidents and ministers among themselves, and at cops and robbers with the population. Most of those aptly qualified among the Palestinians who could have made a difference are long gone, scattered around the world. Not only that, they are neither welcome by the occupiers (what else would you expect?), nor by their own people, who accuse them of “not understanding” the reality of the Palestinian people: A typical reaction of long-time hardened prisoners.

As a matter of fact, the Palestinian Authority is rather a blown-up municipal council. If the people in charge concentrated more on the tasks and functions of a municipality than on grandiose pretensions, the people of Palestine will be much better served. Their list of needed basic necessities is long, and looking after that is what makes the people feel that their ‘government’ is looking after them.

While “corked in the bottle like cockroaches”, as Israeli Lt.General Rafael Eitan once described his plans regarding the future of the Palestinians, they nevertheless maintained their combativeness and daring against the occupier courageously, though disastrously. When such combativeness and resistance do not constitute part of an overall integrated strategic plan with a well-defined objective in sight, they end up harming more than helping.

The Palestinians today don't count in the world of international politics, and if they do, it is because their problem is linked to Israel. Politics is a market; if you want to be in it, you must have something to buy or sell. In the market of politics, Israel is both a big seller and a big buyer. It sells weapons, espionage skills, security equipment, terrorism and counter-terrorism techniques. But it is also a major contributor to science and technology, research and development, agriculture, medicine and banking, etc. For good or ill, it is definitely omnipresent!

To be able to enter the marketplace, the Palestinians need at least one good saleable product which is marketed skilfully. This product does not necessarily have to be one with just a commercial value. It could even be artistic, intellectual, or other, as long as it distinguishes them from others. As mentioned above, the most salable 'product' for which there is an international 'market', if we could use such terms, namely what the Christian Holy Land represents, is on its way to

disappear. It is true that all the chips are stacked against the Palestinians by friends and foes alike. Today, under the overwhelming stranglehold imposed by Israel, they cannot even use their own water resources freely to drink or water their plants without permission from Israel. Under such draconian conditions, there is no way they could produce anything, neither of economic nor even intellectual value.

Yet, by just having the opportunity to organize their internal life and adopt priorities ranked where they belong just like other aspiring nations, they could go a long way towards securing a place in the market of international politics, get the world to listen to their message and secure their freedom and independence. At the end of the day **ALL THEY WANT IS TO BE LEFT ALONE!**

Getting out of the Mental Straightjacket

Several countries in the world have tried in one way or another to address the Israeli-Palestinian conundrum, but none of them has succeeded in a sustained manner. As far as the world is today, without the moral and effective leadership of a major power, which today is the United States, this whole situation is going nowhere. Keep in mind that the US is handicapped first by its own accumulating problems, and then by the fact that the American body politic is continuously bowing to the extremists within the American Jewish community and their allies, the Christian evangelical fundamentalists, as well as to Israel's subtle and veiled nuclear blackmail.³⁸

The situation within all other neighbouring Arab countries in the region has changed so much since 1948; and the current Palestinian and Israeli leaders are neither capable nor equipped to establish peace, partially because some of them do not have peace on their agenda, and others are unable to obtain it. Any solution would call for a totally new approach and state of mind, which the current leaders in all the countries of the Middle East, including both Israel and Palestine, are hopelessly ill-equipped to even consider.

Despite the complexities of the issues, the key premise remains that Israel must leave the Palestinians alone, and the Palestinians must understand that they cannot undo today what their own leaders and incompetent Arab governments led them to in the past, and continue to pursue along the same path in the present. The internal divisiveness and ongoing push and pull among Palestinian leaders since the end of World War I will end up erasing what's left of Palestine from existence before the Israelis do it.

Before even mentioning the word "peace", there must first be a will on each side to genuinely take the other into consideration, until both people regain a certain sense of normalcy in their respective lives. The Palestinian and Arab people need to simmer down, regain their humanity and live like human beings. They need schools, job opportunities, dignity and peace of mind. This is not a problem of security as it is almost always described. Lack of security is the reflection of the problem, and not the problem itself. Therefore, establishing a cooling-off period in the region as a whole is a condition *sine qua non* to start with, during which the Palestinians will be able to breathe and live like human beings. This period will also allow the Israelis to catch their breath and live peacefully without having to be at war, generation after generation.

The peace that we must seek is the one between the people, and not mostly between public servants, generals, and "elected" politicians who are only interested in playing the game for fun or for personal gain. For many among them, this is a zero-sum game. The millions who stand to gain or lose are treated condescendingly like little children who do not know what they want. With these types of secular and religious "leaders", who have imposed themselves and their interests or their ignorance on the people, there is simply no hope for humanity in this world.

Now, getting there calls for competent leaders who are capable of thinking in conciliatory rather than in adversarial terms. Most of today's Arab and Israeli leaders unfortunately represent the narrow interests of certain groups, while maintaining their own personal financial or ideological goals. That is leaders whose brains' "search engines" cannot recognize terms such as decency, sharing, humanity, or justice. The Berlin Wall has fallen. It is time for other walls to fall too such as those of stupid ignorance, self-justified greed, backwardness, narrow-mindedness, arrogance and self-righteousness beside the blind association of mythologies and fairy tales with the Creator. Man-made religions neither solve municipal problems nor ensure the necessities of daily life.

Under the existing realities on the ground, the starting point should not begin by pondering again over a contentious non-starter, i.e. haggling over a division of cities and real estate between Israel and the Palestinians, not even talking about it. It is too early for that. We must think in terms of people rather than in terms of real estate. Furthermore, expecting that the two antagonists could talk or listen to each other rationally under the current conditions would be an exercise in futility. It is also of major importance to constantly keep in mind that the warring parties come from two totally different cultures.

SEVEN STEPS TO PEACE

During the secret Oslo negotiations in Norway in the 1990s, both Israelis and Palestinians have proven that they can talk to each other clearly and with minimum ambiguity.³⁹ There are qualified people in both camps who can still do that if given the opportunity. Occasionally, each one of the contenders will need a “lawyer” to consult with. At time of writing, despite their major handicaps vis-à-vis Israel, the United States remains to some extent the only lawyer the Israelis may at least partially trust. Being the country that was at the origin of the mayhem in the Holy Land, Britain should be in a better position than most to act as the occasional lawyer for the Palestinians. The two powers have been involved the longest in this conflict, and they command the respect and attention of both people. The representatives of the USA and the UK must absolutely not be the same individuals who played that role so far, and almost appeared as if intentionally, but sometimes out of culturally misunderstanding both Palestinians and Israelis, as if they were bent on sabotaging all agreement between the two adversaries.

The most difficult part will be choosing representatives for the Israelis and for the Palestinians who will be partners in the process. Negotiations and agreements must be handled by people on both sides who are capable of being politically balanced as much as can be. These empowered representatives must be chosen among the most highly respected, qualified and knowledgeable individuals within each nation, who are familiar with the roots of the problem on both sides, who believe in settling the conflict equitably, and who can reach an accommodating settlement between the two parties.

Arab governments, which are incapable of solving their own internal problems, which were created by them in the first place, may be consulted occasionally for their opinions, but they certainly should not be directly involved in the negotiations or implementation unless it is a bilateral border-related issue. Otherwise, implicating the Arab governments during the initial stages of negotiations will certainly lead to a dead-end!

The proposed mutually satisfactory accommodation between the Israelis and the Palestinians calls for seven steps. Some steps must be accomplished in sequence in the proposed order, while others can take place simultaneously depending on the prevailing conditions.

This gradual approach towards a mutually satisfactory accommodation would allow the Israelis not to be unduly edgy about security threats. It would also allow the Palestinians not to keep looking behind their back every minute of day and night fearing an Israeli incursion or attack of one kind or another. It should offer both parties a physical separation and breathing space for as long as needed in light of the prevalent situation.

As for peace, i.e. when the two parties will be ready to enter into direct bilateral negotiations to establish peace between them, the process may require several years, and possibly a generation or two, before the magic word is even mentioned.

STEP ONE: CESSATION OF HOSTILITIES

The first step on the path to a meaningful accommodation between the two sides must be a simultaneous positive, highly visible, concrete and meaningful gesture by both parties towards each other. The confidence-building gesture should consist of a mutual declaration of cessation of hostilities, which includes a freeze on confiscating more Palestinian lands and home demolitions, as well as stopping all attacks by individual Palestinians against Israel and by armed Israeli settlers against the unarmed Palestinian population.

STEP TWO: BORDER SECURITY

Step two will be accompanied by the stationing of a sizeable, adequately well-armed bilateral military force, and not a UN peacekeeping contingent along the current separation lines. These troops from third parties acceptable to both the Israelis and the Palestinians will be equipped with heavy armament and their operational mission will be to seal the borders between Israel, the Palestinian territories and the neighbouring Arab countries, i.e. enforce a total separation between these three entities.

It is proposed that both Moroccan and German forces be called upon to take on that role. The Moroccans will monitor the borders between the Palestinian territories and the neighbouring Arab countries (i.e. Jordan, Syria, Lebanon and Egypt), and will also ensure that no infiltration or launching of rockets across the borders from the Palestinian or Arab territories against Israel takes place.

Why Moroccans? While being a well-disciplined military force, the Moroccans have gained a protracted experience in preventing border infiltrations during their long war with the Polisario. The Moroccans are technically from outside the region, while still being Arabic speakers, hence relatively close to the Palestinians. They would be more acceptable to the Palestinians and less objectionable to Israel, in view of the fact that Morocco has a Jewish community of its own, and Israel counts a sizeable Jewish community of Moroccan origin. This is in addition to the fact that the two countries have managed to maintain a reasonable relationship despite the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

The task of the German forces will be to protect the Israeli-Palestinian borders from attacks by either side, including by or against the armed extremist Jewish settlers. The Germans are relatively new in this role and have never led or participated in any military operation against the Palestinians. On the other hand, the German government maintains a privileged relationship with Israel, especially from a military point of view. This is in addition to the fact that Israel has an important community of Jews of German origin, and Germany counts an expanding and influential Jewish community.

STEP THREE: LEADERSHIP CHANGE

The Palestinians must be brought to change their leadership in both the West Bank and Gaza in order to consolidate the management of the two territories. They must also invite experienced technocrats from among the Palestinians living overseas to join the administration as advisors for a number of years. Their task will be to harmonize governance between the two territories and set up the essential modern infrastructure needed to establish a viable economy, and to ensure a rather normal daily life for the population, in step with other advanced countries.

STEP FOUR: THE SEPARATION WALL AND THE MOVEMENT OF POPULATIONS

The existing separation wall built by Israel will be maintained integrally during those early stages, which could probably last for several years. The wall will then be moved back gradually towards the Israeli territory, i.e. to the limit of the original Green Line marking the de facto border separating Israel from the West Bank. Priority should be given to stretches of the wall where it separates agricultural land belonging to Palestinian villages along the Green Line and to reinstate territorial contiguity in the West Bank. This will reconstitute to the Palestinians badly needed economic agricultural resources for their survival.

As soon as this is completed, borders will open between Jordan and the West Bank to allow the Palestinians to travel and trade, subject to the existing bilateral agreements and regulations currently enforced among advanced countries. Similarly, borders between Gaza and Egypt will be opened along the same lines until the Gaza Strip is reconnected to the West Bank as described under Step 5.

No Palestinians will be allowed to cross the border to work in Israel during this stage, but opportunities will be made available for them to work in their own territory, i.e. in the fields reconnected to their original villages, or in small manufacturing industries. Once the borders with Egypt and Jordan are open, Palestinians will also be able to transit through them to work in any other country needing manpower, as is the case for so many other migrant workers around the world. They could always return at any time to a home in Palestine, i.e. Gaza and the West Bank

It is interesting to note that opening the borders is in the interest of the Israeli people too. Relieved of as much tension as possible due to the inhuman Gulag-like conditions under which they live, the Palestinians would have less reason to fire rockets across the border with Israel now that they have hard-to-get jobs to protect outside the Palestinian territories.

STEP FIVE: RECONNECTING THE WEST BANK AND GAZA TO THE REST OF THE REGION

This step shall witness the beginning of initial work to build an underground rail and car tunnel that will connect the West Bank and Gaza, and thus link the two parts of Palestine together without crossing through Israeli territory. This will be like the Chunnel between continental Europe and the British Isles, or like the new underwater metro line linking between the two shores of the Sea of Marmara in the city of Istanbul. The proposed tunnel would also provide the West Bank with an outlet to the Mediterranean and to the Egyptian border, as well as link Gaza with the Arab hinterland east of the Jordan River. It will equally provide Jordan with an access to the Mediterranean.

As a matter of fact, this connecting tunnel would connect Jordan, Syria, Lebanon and Iraq back to Egypt and North Africa for the first time since the land route via Palestine was cut following the creation of Israel in 1948. The positive economic repercussions of this project on the economy of Palestine and the adjacent countries including eventually Israel would be enormous.

STEP SIX: THE FUTURE OF PALESTINIAN REFUGEES

All Palestinians wherever they are, including Palestinian refugees, would automatically become citizens of Palestine. They can reside on its territory at their pleasure. They could also opt for a permanent foreigner resident permit in their current countries of refuge, by agreement with and subject to the laws of such states. If any country wishes to naturalize any number of refugees, this can be done at the discretion of the governments involved. The question of compensations for the 1948 refugees would be addressed in future stages later in the process.

STEP SEVEN: THE FUTURE OF PALESTINIAN AND JEWISH POPULATIONS

Start the gradual repatriation of Jewish settlers in the West Bank towards Israel, beginning with those living in the midst of Palestinian populations in urban areas such as those in Hebron for instance, followed by those living in isolated areas. Should some Jewish settlers elect to live among the Palestinians under Palestinian sovereignty, that choice will be open to them. This means that they would be equivalent to the Palestinians living in Israel and carrying its citizenship. Instead, if they opt to simply live like foreign residents in the Palestinian Territories, then they will be issued a renewable Residence Permit, as long as they reside subject to the laws and regulations in force in Palestine.

Palestinians who are citizens of Israel may elect to stay where they are and maintain their Israeli citizenship, or move to the areas that will become Palestine. The same applies to Palestinian residents in Jerusalem. Such Palestinians may choose to become Israeli citizens as well as obtain Palestinian citizenship, exactly like Israeli Jews who are dual nationals of Israel and other countries, including some Arab countries such as Morocco for example..

As for the future of Jerusalem, it will maintain its current status until an effective peace is reached between the Israelis and the Palestinians in the future. Today Israel has Jerusalem firmly in its hands. Anybody who thinks that it will relinquish its control of the city, even partially through negotiations, or even under threat is certainly naïve. They will keep it, and the Palestinians will keep the West Bank and Gaza. The Palestinians and everybody else will be able to visit the Muslim and Christian shrines in Jerusalem and the Israeli and non-Israeli Jews will be able to visit the religious shrines in Hebron and elsewhere in the West Bank the same way Muslim pilgrims do when they visit holy shrines in Saudi Arabia. They apply for a visa, visit, do some tourism while there, and certainly go shopping too, then return home to their respective countries.

WILL IT WORK?

There will certainly be those on either side who will immediately express their doubts about this approach. Doubters about everything and anything exist everywhere, and they should not be allowed to spoil the party. Both Israeli and Palestinian communities have the potential for sharing beautiful things in the future, yet due to the existing clash between them, they can only exchange the worst humans can exhibit.

The world is doing the impossible to save the environment and accommodate the habitat between wildlife and human beings. Sadly enough, humans have so far been incapable of simply accommodating fellow humans who have become instead an environmental hazard to each other! Perhaps finding a solution to this intractable problem could set the example for future solutions to other problems facing humanity.

To conclude, suffice it to say that the Palestinians are more than just refugees, and the Jews are more than just Holocaust survivors. Should an illuminated soul wake up one morning and discover that “what’s good for the Palestinians is good for the Jews”, perhaps the whole perspective towards this problem could change. After all, given the proper atmosphere, the best neighbours the Israelis could have are Palestinians, and some of the best allies the Palestinians have today are Jews.

POSITIONS AND INITIATIVES TAKEN BY ELTAHER

Sometime in the 1960s Eltaher was asked to write a brief about his life and some of the actions he undertook of which he was particularly proud. Here is a summary of what he wrote:

“My life was characterized by unhappiness, misery, troubles, deprivation, poverty, and homelessness until now i.e. after I had passed the age of sixty five. The struggle I led through the newspapers I published dealt with the issues of Egypt and ‘Bar Eshsham’, (namely all the countries of the eastern Mediterranean, also known as Greater Syria). The newspapers also covered the overall issues of the Arab and Muslim countries in general. Throughout fifty years, before I published ‘Ashoura’ newspaper and thereafter, I wrote and published some one thousand articles in defence of my Arab homelands everywhere they existed; and in particular my ancestral homeland, Palestine. The articles were also published in other newspapers and magazines in other Arab countries as well as in countries of immigration in the Americas. As for the actions I am proud of, here are some of them:

1- In 1921 I succeeded in rescuing the Sudanese leader Mohamed Al-Hassan Kamel from the Khartoum prison where the British and their collaborators had him incarcerated.

2- In 1924 I managed to extricate the famous scholar Sheikh Mohamed Nassif of Jeddah from the remote village of Aqaba in which King Hussein Ben Ali (The then Sharif of Mecca) had exiled him to.

3- In 1942, with the help of the Egyptian nationalist leader Mostafa El-Nahhas Pasha, Prime Minister of Egypt, and with the assistance of his right-hand man Dr. Mohamed Salaheddin Pasha, Minister of Foreign Affairs, I succeeded in rescuing the famous Palestinian resistance commander and its martyr Abdel-Qader Al-Husseini from a prison in the town of Amara in Iraq where British authorities had kept him.

4- I am also proud of my success in involving King Farouk of Egypt and the process I initiated in 1947, which resulted in saving Emir Abdelkrim El-Khattabi, leader of the Moroccan Rif Revolt, and his family from French captivity

5- Saving the Yemeni leader Ahmad Mohamed Noman from the cruel hands of Imam Ahmad, the then King of Yemen.

6- Liberate the Algerian nationalist Al-Fodayyel Al-Wartalani from his detention aboard a ship sailing between the Red Sea and the Mediterranean in 1948 after he managed to escape from Yemen where he was to be executed.

7- In 1950 I succeeded in sparing the Syrian activist Dr. Amin Ruwayha from execution for allegedly attempting to assassinate the Syrian Chief of Staff, Colonel Adib Shishakly, who eventually became President of Syria.

8- Saving Dr. Amin Ruwayha a second time during my visit to Jeddah in Saudi Arabia in 1953 from the wrath of Prince Mishaal Bin Abdel-Aziz.

While living in Egypt, I did my best to help Arab and Muslim expatriates, and support the freedom fighters who used to visit Egypt to publicize the struggle of their respective countries against foreign occupation, and their attempts at liberating their homelands. I used to help them as much as I could whether tangibly, morally or through publicizing their cause. I sought out those who collaborated with the colonial powers wherever they could be, to fight them, expose them, pursue them, attack them verbally, and in writing; and sometimes physically!

I also gave support to the perplexed among the young and the students hailing from Arab and Muslim countries I came into contact with in Egypt. I facilitated their admission into schools, colleges and universities especially before the Arab countries got their independence and prior to the opening of diplomatic and consular missions. Thank God I also succeeded in liberating many political detainees and innocent prisoners, and when I confronted with similar misfortunes and afflictions myself, I found support from everybody I know and even from people I had never met.”

Eltaher played an important role not only with respect to Arab issues, but took initiatives affecting other freedom fighters like him that had a marked effect on the conduct of their own struggle towards independence from foreign colonial occupation. To take such initiatives would naturally presuppose a background built on principles that feed into these initiatives.

His stand towards the British Military Governor in Nablus is one of the early positions Eltaher took which reflect his principles, then his support for the Tunisian nationalist leader Habib Bourguiba and the Tunisian cause. Another case in

point was his success in snatching the leader of the Rif revolution in Morocco, Emir Abdelkrim El-Khattabi, from French captivity. These three examples among many shed light on his unique personality, his keen knowledge of people, his hands-on, action-oriented style, and his grand view of the Arab nations' issues.

THE NABLUS POST OFFICE INCIDENT

When WW I ended, Eltaher returned to Palestine where he contributed to a local newspaper published in Jerusalem called "*Sourya Al-Janoubeyya*", i.e. Southern Syria. British occupation forces, which had seized the country from the Ottoman Turks, were of course aware of his nationalist positions first in Palestine, then in Egypt when the war started. In order to ensure his silence, especially after signs of opposition to the Balfour Declaration of 1917 by the Palestinians became more evident, and to pre-empt him from inciting public opinion against British authorities through his writings, the authorities appointed him in 1918 Manager of the Post and Telegraph Office in Nablus. Having learned some English during one of his prison sojourns facilitated his appointment.

The story has been told in a number of versions over the years, but the end result is the same. According to Eltaher's account of the events to his son, a few days, or weeks, after his appointment, a registered letter addressed to the British Military Governor in Nablus was received at the post office. Eltaher asked a postman to prepare a notification and deliver it to the Governor's office so that he could come to the Post Office, sign the register and receive his registered letter. However the postman quickly advised Eltaher that the previous Post Office Manager used to take registered letters and the register itself to Government House every time a registered letter addressed to the Military Governor was received at the Post Office.

Eltaher told the mailman that he was appointed to manage the Post Office subject to the rules and regulations of His Britannic Majesty's Government, and that these rules and regulations did not stipulate that the Post Office Manager must carry the incoming registered mail register to anybody to sign it, including the Military Governor. The mailman carried out his instructions and delivered the Notice of Registered Matter Arrival to Government House. The following day, the Military Governor rode to the Post Office, tied his horse at the door, walked into the Post Office, signed the register and received his registered letter. He then returned to his office and fired Eltaher from his position as Manager of the Post and Telegraph Office in Nablus!

LOOKING FOR BOURGUIBA IN CAIRO

Every nation has in its history a man or a woman who has had a major effect on the country and was able to change its destiny appreciably. Some leave the worst of memories, and the examples are abundant even today, and some leave an outstanding legacy, which would have not happened had it not been for such an individual.

Tunisia was blessed, first by having been the centre from which shone the father of social geography in the fourteenth century, the Andalusian Abdel-Rahman Ibn Khaldun; then by being the birthplace of Habib Bourguiba, who led its struggle for liberation until its independence in 1956. The fact that Bourguiba was successful in rescuing Tunisia from French colonialism is understandably due to several enabling factors. Bourguiba, though, was the trigger and tenacious catalyst who was realistic enough not to attempt to hold a gun to France's head. Rather he helped his enemy see the logic behind the factors that justified granting Tunisia its independence, and become convinced that Tunisia's independence was in France's interest too. Eventually France did what Bourguiba and the Tunisian people wanted to achieve all along, namely, grant the country its independence with minimum bloodshed.

The more important achievement Bourguiba eventually made post independence was to re-prioritize the important issues of interest and benefit to the Tunisian people. He proceeded to build the basic infrastructure of the country without which he could not have effected the core changes he made, and which at one time propelled Tunisia to a relatively higher qualitative and quantitative orbit than all the peoples and countries surrounding it.

The reason why Bourguiba succeeded while others failed was his concentration, first and foremost, on education at all levels. He then relegated religion to where it belongs, so that it is not used as an argument to hamper the struggle for liberation from ignorance, backwardness and isolationism. At the same time, he liberated women from customs falsely attributed to Islam, to mythologies, social obscurantism and the resulting convoluted judicial and administrative complications, whose only outcome was to stifle women and subjugate them. He also concentrated on building the industrial and agricultural infrastructure of his country. Bourguiba was thus able to offer Tunisia and the Tunisian people a distinguished and respectable position among the civilized peoples of the world.



**Bourguiba addressing the population
in the city of Sousse in Tunisia in 1960**

Eltaher and Bourguiba had known of each other since the 1930s, though Eltaher's relationship with Tunisia went back to the early 1920s when he used to write about Tunisia in Egyptian newspapers and also in Tunisian publications. The story of the relationship between the two men has been told in a number of articles and books. Bourguiba himself mentioned it several times during his public speeches after he became Prime Minister, then as President of Tunisia.

At first the two men had never met since they were both in two different countries. Eltaher was a well-known personality in Egypt and the Arab World, while Bourguiba was an unknown lawyer outside Tunisia.

Bourguiba led a separatist movement against the Tunisian Destour Party, which was under the leadership of its historic leader Abdelaziz El-Thaalbi, who was, before Bourguiba, the main leader of the struggle against French colonial presence in Tunisia. After Bourguiba

split from the Destour Party and created the Neo-Destour Party, Eltaher stood against the rebellious faction in his newspaper for fear that the split would harm the future of the national movement in Tunisia.



Following a luncheon at the house of "Al-Jihad" newspaper publisher Toufic Diab in Cairo on Saturday, 21 March 1931
Seated from right to left: Wafd Party Deputy Leader Makram Ebeid Pasha – Egyptian legal expert and future member of the
Regency Council following the July 23, 1952 revolution Baheyeddin Barakat Bey – Palestinian nationalist Sheikh Abdelqader
Al-Muzaffar – Tunisian nationalist leader Abdelaziz EL-Thaalbi – Egyptian Prime Minister Moustafa EL-Nahhas Pasha – Haj
Amin Al-Husseini, Mufti of Palestine – Egyptian nationalist Hamad EL-Bassel Pasha – Future Egyptian Prime Minister
Mahmoud Fahmi Al-Nokrashi Pasha – Egyptian writer Wahid Bey El-Ayyoubi.
Standing from right to left: Unidentified person – the host Toufic Diab - Engineer Mohamed Hamed – Dr. Mansour Fahmy –
Eltaher - the other two persons are not identified.

With time, however, Eltaher noticed that the youth movement Bourguiba was leading brought to light new perspectives and techniques for standing up to the occupiers that were smart, well-thought out, and which reflected prior planning, not just outbursts and reactions undertaken without planning. Furthermore, Eltaher noted something new was happening in Tunisia and that leadership had started moving from the control of essentially religious leaders into the hands of a new, young and highly educated generation representing a mix of graduates of European and Arab universities, as well as a good cross-section of the Tunisian population at large. That's when he supported the movement and its leaders, including Bourguiba.

Bourguiba's unique vision and personality had already been noticed by Hooker Doolittle, then US Consul General in Tunisia, who was eventually instrumental in ensuring that Washington was well-informed about the important role played by Bourguiba.



Right to left: Eltaher; Hooker Doolittle, former US Consul in Tunis; Sadoq Moqaddem, Speaker of the Tunisian National
Assembly; President Bourguiba. During the National Day Parade - Tunis 1966



**Ataba Square in Cairo in 1945
with "Lokandet Masr" in the background**

During one of the phases of his clash with French colonialism in 1945, Bourguiba fled Tunisia in a fishing boat that took him from southern Tunisia to the Libyan shore nearby. From there, crossing hundreds of kilometres sometimes in a vehicle, on a saddle or by foot, he finally arrived in Cairo. The city then was akin to the centre of the universe, not just for Arab and Muslim nationalists struggling to publicize the case of their beleaguered nations, but also for Europeans who sought refuge in Egypt during the war. i.e. Egypt offered refuge, solace and a safe haven for both colonizers and colonized!

When Eltaher heard of Bourguiba's presence in Cairo from some people, he immediately undertook to locate him and started looking for him in Cairo's hotels one after the other until he found him in "Lokandet Masr", i.e. Hotel Egypt, in Ataba El-Khadra Square. When Eltaher arrived at the hotel, by sheer coincidence, Bourguiba happened to be sitting in the small lobby

adjacent to the reception desk. Neither of the two men had seen the other previously, so they obviously did not recognize each other. But then Eltaher asked the hotel receptionist whether "Tunisian leader Habib Bourguiba" was a guest at his hotel.

The reception clerk looked at him condescendingly because no "leaders" stayed in such a modest establishment as "Lokandet Masr". However, Bourguiba heard his name being mentioned, so he stood up and said: "I am Bourguiba, and you must be Mohamed Ali Eltaher". The two men immediately hugged each other with emotions flowing not just on both sides, but also on the part of the reception clerk, who was more surprised than both men about this unique encounter and for discovering all of a sudden that there were "leaders" who resided at his hotel!

Eltaher then took Bourguiba to a nearby café to discuss issues of common concern. Eltaher learned more about the situation in Tunisia and what Bourguiba was hoping to achieve in Egypt. Eltaher also got to appreciate the common situation that links all true nationalists, namely a lack of funds, and the fact that they survived and spent on their struggle from their own pockets and from donations made by friends and supporters who believed in their mission. Eltaher of course knew first-hand about this situation, starting with his own experience..

While his financial situation was barely better than that of Bourguiba, Eltaher pulled all the money he had in his wallet, which was 20 Egyptian pounds in that era's currency, gave half to Bourguiba, and kept the other half for himself and his family. He then advised Bourguiba that as long as he stayed in the substandard "Lokandet Masr", nobody of consequence would meet with him or listen to him. He advised him that he had to find another more conducive place to stay in. Bourguiba, of course, understood the logic behind his friend's reasoning, but did not find the suggestion logical from a practical viewpoint. However, Eltaher asked that he give him a couple of days to find a solution.

Immediately thereafter, Eltaher contacted his friend General Saleh Harb Pasha, the former Egyptian Minister of War, who was president of the Young Muslims Association (A kind of YMCA). At the time, the association, which is not related to the well-known Muslim Brotherhood, ran a sports club at its headquarters on Ramses Street in downtown Cairo. General Harb originated from "Al-Saeed", i.e. Upper Egypt, and had no house or apartment in Cairo, but the club had kept a room for him, which he used whenever he was in Cairo. Eltaher met with General Harb and told him Bourguiba's story. He then convinced him to give up the room for some time to accommodate Bourguiba until another place was found. General Harb accepted and left his room to Bourguiba!

Having succeeded in securing at least temporary quarters for Bourguiba, Eltaher eventually managed to obtain some money from friends and acquaintances and gave it to him. He then took him, to his utter amazement to the “Continental Savoy Hotel” in Opera Square across from the Royal Opera House. In those days the Continental was among the three or four most fashionable hotels in Cairo.

Eltaher had arranged with the hotel manager that Bourguiba could use a room on the roof, which had probably lodged some hotel staff. Eltaher then explained to Bourguiba that, as a hotel ‘guest’, he could receive people in one of the salons, and that those who would visit him or communicate with him would do so in the salon, but would not go to his room. He further indicated that staying at a hotel of that standing would enable him to get in touch with those who counted among the Egyptian nomenclatura. And that is precisely what happened!

After Eltaher had published a number of articles in the Egyptian media about Bourguiba’s presence in Cairo and his activities, and introduced him to his daily guests at “*Dar Ashoura*”, scores of journalists, nationalists, politicians, pashas, ministers, ambassadors, writers and other Arab leaders who, just like him, had sought asylum in Egypt went to meet with him at his hotel. Bourguiba was a good-looking man with a strong personality radiating determination through a pair of deep blue eyes set in a tanned face. He was well-versed in Arabic and French in addition to his intimate knowledge of issues related to the Arab world and to the West, because of his previous academic training in France as a lawyer. Besides, he was married then to a French woman (Mathilde Lorrain). In no time Bourguiba became a political and social star in the salons of Cairo and the rest of the Levant.



Bourguiba with Prince Faysal Bin Abdelaziz Minister of Foreign Affairs of Saudi Arabia and his advisor Sheikh Hafez Wahba at the United Nations in New York in 1946

The friendship that linked the two men and their spouses subsequently lasted until the end of their respective lives. Bourguiba never forgot his friend Eltaher and invited him as well as his wife to visit Tunisia as soon as the country won its independence in 1956 and told the story of their first encounter during a public speech.



**Mr. and Mrs. Eltaher with Prime Minister Bourguiba
at his Kasbah office in Tunis 1956**



**Eltaher with President and Mrs. Bourguiba
in a motorcade in Tunis 1963**

Bourguiba eventually invited Eltaher a number of times to visit Tunisia after he became President. When he paid a state visit to Lebanon in March 1965, Bourguiba, his second wife Wassila (née Ben Ammar), and some of his ministers went in an official motorcade to visit Eltaher in his apartment on Jeanne d'Arc Street in Beirut.



**President Habib Bourguiba visiting Eltaher in his apartment in Beirut while on a state visit to Lebanon in March 1965.
From right to left: Eltaher's son Hassan – Mohamed Ali Eltaher – Eltaher's daughter Mona wearing Tunisian/Punic traditional dress President Bourguiba – Mrs. Bourguiba – Mrs. Eltaher**

When Eltaher passed away on August 22, 1974, Bourguiba sent condolences to his family in a telegram written personally by him. A translation of the telegram is provided hereunder:

“It is with great regret and affliction that I received news of the passing away of my sincere and trustworthy friend and companion the Arab Moujahed Mohamed Ali Eltaher. A man who has spent his life in an ongoing struggle and in support of all Arab causes with his pen, his voice and his money. I shall not forget that period during which our brotherhood borne out of our common struggle brought us together. He was the first I have met among the true Arab nationalists, and as such he was the best companion in my years of wandering and the most capable help in introducing the Tunisian question to the Arab media and Arab officials. He has always maintained his resolve and his kind faithfulness and pure friendship whose steadfastness increased with time. We ask the Lord to bestow patience on us all in order to face this great loss, and we pray to Him that He surrounds Eltaher with His kind compassion and bless him in the company of the martyrs and the virtuous. Indeed a worthy companion to them. God is greater than all and to Him we shall all return.

Signed:

Habib Bourguiba

President of the Republic of Tunisia

A short time later a street in the chic neighbourhood of Mutuelleville in the capital Tunis was named after Eltaher.



Mohamed Ali Eltaher Street in Mutuelleville (formerly Notre Dame) Tunis 2000

THE RESCUE OF EMIR ABDELKRIM FROM FRENCH CAPTIVITY

The story of how Emir (i.e. Prince) Abdelkrim El-Khattabi⁴⁰ was spirited out of French captivity has been told in several Arabic and French⁴¹ books in different scenarios, each with a variety of details. The “stardom” of who was behind it all has been attributed by or to a number of people. However, none of the “stars”, story-tellers, or authors ever produced the sources of the story save in one book and two Arabic newspaper articles. The book is “*Zalam El Segn*” published by Mohamed Ali Eltaher in Cairo in 1951, and the newspapers are “*Al-Hayat*”, published in London on March 5, 1995, and “*Asharq Al-Awsat*”, also published in London on 11 and 12 July 1993. “*Al-Hayat*” had also published the story of Abdelkrim written by Eltaher himself in its June 7, 1962 issue when the paper was still published in Beirut.

The story is reproduced with documentary evidence hereafter essentially as told by Eltaher in his books “*Khamsouna Aaman fil Qadaya Al-Arabeyya*” pages 804 to 808 and “*Zalam El-Segn*” pages 871 to 874; and as told in the above-mentioned newspaper articles, as well as in the autobiography of Karim Thabet Pasha, press Counsellor to King Farouk of Egypt, who knew Eltaher quite well⁴².



Abdelkrim at the time of his capture in 1926

"Abdelkrim was born in the Rif regions of northern Morocco along the Mediterranean in 1881. His family hails from the Ouriaghl Berber tribes. During his early youth he fought Spanish colonial occupation of northern Morocco, while the Moroccan nationalist movement was fighting for the independence of the rest of the country from French colonialism."

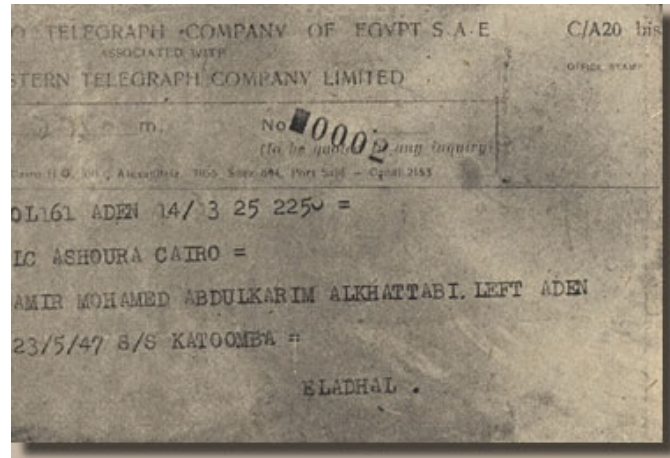
"The battle of Anoual in 1921 between Abdelkrim's forces and those of General Manuel Fernandes Sylvestre, commander of the Spanish colonial forces, was the decisive battle in which Abdelkrim defeated his enemy, killing hundreds of soldiers and taking others as prisoners of war. Afterwards Abdelkrim pushed his area of operations towards central Morocco. This raised the alarm among both the French and the Spaniards who felt the incoming danger. So France decided to send troops to support the Spaniards, and it was eventually successful in taking Abdelkrim as prisoner. France then exiled him and most members of his extended family in 1926 to the island of La Réunion in the Indian Ocean, where they remained until 1947"⁴³

The circumstances of his capture have affected the course of Morocco's modern history, especially after he had declared the northern part of Morocco a republic. At that time the other parts of the country were under French occupation, even though these parts were under the nominal rule of the Alaoui dynasty to which the current King Mohamed VI belongs.

In Cairo, Eltaher maintained contact with the nationalist movement in the Maghreb countries Libya, Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco since the 1920s. He had also maintained a strong friendship and camaraderie with leaders of the liberation movements in these countries, including Abdelkrim, even though the two men had never met before. Eltaher used to print ongoing news about the Rif revolution as well as the overall Moroccan liberation movement in his newspaper and in the books he published.

On May 23, 1947 Eltaher received a telegram from Abdo Hussein Eladhal, a well-known public figure from the town of Sheikh Osman near Aden, now in Yemen. In his telegram Eladhal said: “*Amir Mohamed Abdulkarim Alkhattabi left Aden on 23/5/47 S/S Katoomba. Signed: Eladhal*”.

That telegram is reproduced hereunder as received by Eltaher.



Eladhal's telegram to Eltaher

Rumours had preceded the telegram that France was about to move Abdelkrim from his exile in La Réunion to a new prison in France. Eltaher and members of the Arab Maghreb Bureau in Cairo during the 1940s⁴⁴ were aware of these rumours, but did not know how and when the transfer of Abdelkrim to France would take place.

The moment he received the telegram, Eltaher consulted with them about the matter and they all agreed on a plan to rescue Abdelkrim from French custody when the ship arrived in Egypt.



At the Arab Maghreb Bureau offices in Cairo in 1945.

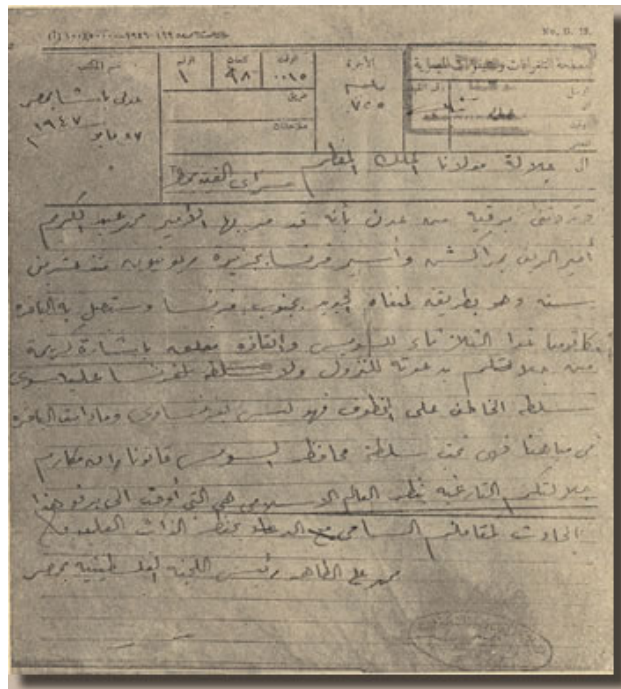
From right to left: Habib Thameur; Allal El-Fassi, founder and leader of the Moroccan Istiqlal Party; Haj Amin Al-Husseini, Mufti of Palestine; Tunisian leader Habib Bourguiba, and Mohamed Ali Eltaher

Eltaher triggered the first action by addressing the following telegram translated from Arabic to King Farouq of Egypt sometime after midnight on May 27, 1947:

“His Majesty the King
Koubbeh Palace – Cairo

I have received a telegram from Aden indicating that Emir Abdelkrim El-Khattabi, Emir of the Rif in Marrakech⁴⁵ and, since twenty years, France’s prisoner in the island of La Réunion, is presently on his way to a new exile in southern France. He will arrive tomorrow Tuesday at Suez aboard the ship ‘Katoomba’. His rescue hangs on Your Majesty’s kind consideration by inviting him to land. France has no authority on him save that of a kidnapper over his kidnapped. He is not French, and as long as the ship is in our waters, it is by law under the authority of the Governor of Suez. Your Majesty’s historic good deeds in the eyes of the Muslim World have inspired me to submit this matter to your majesty along with my prayers (to the Almighty) to protect your sublime self.

Signed;
Mohamed Ali Eltaher
President of the Palestinian Committee in Egypt”



Eltaher's telegram to King Farouk

Eltahir sent the telegram directly to Koubbeh Palace, which was then the official residence of the King, but not to his office at Abdine Palace to ensure that it was received the same night. When the telegram arrived, the Commander of the Guards delivered it to the King, who read it, put it in his pocket, which indicated the importance he gave to the telegram, and ordered the Commander to ask the Prime Minister and the Chief of the Royal Cabinet to come and meet with him before noon the following day at his office in Abdine Palace.

The details of what happened at the Royal Palace are told in the “Memoirs of Karim Thabet Pasha”, in which he points out that the “unknown soldier” behind Abdelkrim’s asylum-seeking in Egypt from a to z, and the one who sent the telegram to the King, was Mohamed Ali Eltahir, publisher of the “*Ashoura*” newspaper.

Eltahir and his friends from the Arab Maghreb Bureau started the second phase of the plan on May 30, 1947. A group of them went to Suez harbour to meet with Abdelkrim when the ship arrived and discuss the escape plan with him. The other group went to Port Said harbour to carry out the last phase. When the ship arrived in Suez, Amir-Alay (Colonel) Mohamed Hussein Helmi Bey, who was tasked by King Farouk to present his royal greetings to Abdelkrim, went aboard the ship and shared with him the King’s proposal regarding seeking asylum in Egypt. Abdelkrim, who was surprised by the King’s move, accepted the offer in principle and asked to discuss it with his family and provide their final response once the ship had arrived at Port Said after the ship had crossed the Suez Canal. The Colonel later took a train to Port Said where he would await Abdelkrim’s move.

When the ship moored at Port Said, Helmi Bey went aboard and learned from Abdelkrim that he had decided to accept the King’s invitation. Helmi Bey then agreed with him as to the details of the scenario they would follow to enable Egyptian authorities to say that Abdelkrim had put Egypt before a *fait accompli* by requesting political asylum for him and his family.



©Australian War Memorial

The Australian ship SS Katoomba

Abdelkrim left the ship at Port Said with his family, pretending to visit the city in the same way he had done before at Aden. However, he proceeded with the reception party composed of members of the Arab Maghreb Bureau and Eltahir to the office of the Governor of Port Said, Fouad Shirine Pasha, where he made his request for asylum, and immediately left with them to Cairo as planned. Once in Cairo, Abdelkrim proceeded to Abdine Palace, where Karim Thabet Pasha, representing the King, welcomed him in Egypt. From there a convoy of official cars from the Palace drove Abdelkrim and his family to the King’s retreat at Inshas, just outside Cairo. By nightfall Abdelkrim and his family were now official guests of Egypt, and were thus rescued from French captivity.



© Karim Thabet
**King Farouk with Emir Abdelkrim to his right
 and Karim Thabet Pasha to his left at the King's retreat in Inshas**

By quite a coincidence, in 1977 Eltaher's son Hassan, who was working in Saudi Arabia, had learned that the French officer who was escorting Abdelkrim from the port of Djibouti where the SS Katoomba had stopped en route, until he was spirited out in Port Said, was also residing in the Saudi capital Riyadh and that his name was Lieutenant Colonel Michel Lessourd. Hassan met with Lessourd and learned from him that he was chosen to accompany Abdelkrim from Djibouti on to Aden, then Suez, then Port Said, where Abdelkrim defected. He was selected for this mission because he spoke Moroccan Arabic beside one of the Berber languages. Lessourd confirmed the story of Abdelkrim's defection and shared his tale about the degree of confusion among French officials, who never suspected what had happened. ⁴⁶



Right to left: Mohamed Ali Eltaher; Marshal Aziz Pasha El-Masri; Emir Abdelkrim; Sheikh Sabri Abdin at a ceremony in honour of Abdelkrim in Cairo in 1947



Sayf El-Islam Yehya; Sayf El-Islam El-Badr, Crown Prince of Yemen; Mahammad El-Khattabi; Emir Abdelkrim; Ahmad Hilmi Pasha and Eltaher standing – “Dar Ashoura”, Cairo 1947

The wheels of Abdelkrim's flight were actually set in motion when the SS Katoomba stopped in Aden. The details of what happened there were told by Farouq Loqman, son of Mohamed Ali Loqman, publisher of the Adeni English daily "Aden Chronicle", who was a friend of Eltaher. In an article published by the London daily "Asharq Al-Awsat" in July 1993, Loqman mentioned that he was a young student in Aden and knew Abdo Hussein Eladhal, who had sent the telegram to Eltaher notifying him that Abdelkrim had left aboard that ship on its way to Suez. In his memoirs, Eladhal mentioned that "on May 22, 1947 the Australian ship SS Katoomba, with Abdelkrim on board, moored at Aden to refuel.

"Nobody was aware of Abdelkrim's presence, of course. However, Abdelkrim's children went ashore to visit the city and, by pure coincidence, Eladhal bumped into them on Zaafaran Street. Recognizing that they had an Arab profile from their clothes and language, he welcomed them, but soon learned from the conversation with the elder son that he was the son of the Rif hero Abdelkrim. The son then invited Eladhal to accompany him to the ship, where he met Abdelkrim in preson, and invited him and his family to honour the city by a visit."

Eladhal goes on in his memoirs and tells about a luncheon he organized at one of Aden's hotels to which he invited several of the city's personalities. He added that "...as soon as news of Abdelkrim's presence hit the streets of Aden, a large number of people converged on the hotel to cheer him and filled the neighbouring streets. When Abdelkrim and his party were driven around town, several people drove along as well". Eladhal concluded that "at 3 p.m. on May 23, 1947, the SS Katoomba left Aden with Abdelkrim and his family on board. After he bade them farewell, he dispatched telegrams to several people he estimated would be able to rescue Abdelkrim from his captors." One such telegram was the one sent to Eltaher as mentioned and illustrated above.



At the entrance to the Arab Maghreb Bureau in Cairo 1947
Front row right to left: Mohamed Ali Eltaher; Tunisian nationalist Habib Bourguiba; Abdelkrim El-Khattabi;
Emir Fadl Bin Abdel-Karim, Sultan of Lahj and Allal El-Fassi, leader of the Moroccan Istiqlal Party
Second row right to left: Tunisian nationalist Habib Thameur; Mohieddine El-Klibi in Tunisian national costume; Abdallah
El-Jeffry, Advisor to the Sultans of Lahj, wearing a Lahj turban; the others "unidentified"

In his above-mentioned 1962 interview with "Al-Hayat" newspaper, Eltaher said that "when France moved Abdelkrim and his family in 1947 from their exile in La Réunion, it had declared that they were being transferred to southern France for humanitarian reasons. In reality, France wanted to use Abdelkrim to threaten King Mohamed V of Morocco, whom France was not able to subdue, let alone pacify its people. France thought that if Mohamed V would not do as told, it would wave with Abdelkrim, and threaten to install him as ruler instead of Mohamed V.

Before his capture, it must be recalled, Abdelkrim had declared a Republic in northern Morocco before his capture. It must also be pointed out that France had used the same tactic in the nineteenth century in its war with Emir Abdelqader Al-Jazaeri, when it deceptively suggested to Sultan Abderrahman of Morocco that Emir Abdelqader, the leader of Algeria, intended to conquer Morocco and end the Sultan's dynasty. France was thus able to incite the Sultan against Abdelqader and prevent Morocco from supporting the Algerians who were fighting against the French".

BOOKS AND NEWSPAPERS PUBLISHED BY ELTAHER

The first articles written by Eltaher were published in newspapers printed in Jaffa, Haifa and Beirut, and eventually in Cairo; that is, until he published his own newspaper, “*Ashoura*”, and subsequently its sister publications “*Al-Shabab*” and “*Al-Alam Al-Masri*”. The three newspapers are accessible through this website.

Eltaher also published eight books and many articles and interviews appearing in several newspapers and periodicals in the Arab world, in various countries of Arab immigration, and elsewhere in the world. The books are all out of print, save for one or two copies of each. However, selections from each book may also be accessed through [Google Books](#).

Should the readers wish to download pictures or quote from the contents of the website, or Eltaher’s newspapers, books or articles, they are kindly encouraged to mention the source, i.e. eltaher.org, for the benefit of all current and future readers.

NEWSPAPERS PUBLISHED BY ELTAHER

1 – *ASHOURA* - ISBN 978-0-9784447-8-5

Published from October 1924 to August 1931, when Egyptian authorities acting on behalf of the British colonial administration cancelled its license, the “*Ashoura*” newspaper, which means “consultation” in Arabic, became the flagship of Eltaher’s national and intellectual activism, whence his office came to be called “*Dar Ashoura*”, or Ashoura House.

2 – *AL-SHABAB* - ISBN 978-0-9784447-9-2

The “*Ashoura*” newspaper license was suspended by the Government of Egypt from August 1931 until January 1937. That same year Dr. Mahmoud Azmi, offered his newspaper, “*Al-Shabab*”, i.e. Youth, to Eltaher free of charge “... *so that he could resume publishing his nationalist views*”. Eltaher published “*Al-Shabab*” from February 1937 until April 1939 when its license was again suspended by Egyptian authorities acting on behalf of the British colonial administration.

3 – *AL-ALAM AL-MASRI* - ISBN 978-0-9784760-0-7

After “*Al-Shabab*” was suspended, the Egyptian journalist Abdelqader El-Toumi offered his newspaper, “*Al-Alam Al-Masri*”, i.e. The Egyptian Flag, to Eltaher free of charge so that he could resume publishing his nationalist views.

“*Al-Alam Al-Masri*” was published from April 1939 until August 1939, when Eltaher stopped publishing it on the eve of World War II and the imposition of emergency measures in Egypt.

In 1953 the Government of Egypt under General Mohamed Naguib reinstated the publication license of “*Ashoura*”, but the Ministry of the Interior, which was under Colonel Gamal Abdel-Nasser, who was also Deputy Prime Minister, still prohibited Eltaher from publishing it. He never published any newspaper after that.

BOOKS WRITTEN BY ELTAHER

1 – “*Nazarat Ashoura*” (Ashoura’s Perspectives)

Ashoura Press - Cairo, June 1932 - ISBN 978-0-9784447-0-9

The book contains articles, observations and insights about the situation in the Islamic world, and the evolving situation in Palestine. The book also contains Eltaher’s story about his frustrations with the British authorities governing Palestine regarding his Palestinian citizenship issue, and his observations and thoughts regarding the General Islamic Conference held in Jerusalem in 1931. In his book “*Moataqal Huckstep*”, which was published subsequently, Eltaher observed that, “...after twenty years of its publication, I cannot but disavow myself from “*Nazarat Ashoura*” despite the fact that it is already out of print. If asked why do I say that? My response would be that when I wrote that book I was such a simple kid, as I looked at some swindlers around me then and thought they were pure angels, as I have described them in my book. But these individuals eventually turned into jackals!”

2 – “*Aan Thawrat Falastin Sanat 1936*” (About the Palestine Revolt of 1936)

Arab Palestinian Information Office – Cairo December 1936 - ISBN 978-0-9784447-7-8

Description of the events going on in Palestine along with news, photographs and documents collated in a book that Mohamed Ali Eltaher distributed for free in order to create awareness about the situation in Palestine.

3 – “*Zikra Al-Amir Shakib Arslan*” (In Memory of Emir Shakib Arslan)

Cairo, July 1947 - ISBN 978-0-9784447-1-6

This book includes a biography of Emir Shakib Arslan, the Lebanese Druze and pan-Islamic nationalist who was referred to as “Amir Al-Bayan”, i.e. “The Master of Eloquence”. It also relates the repercussions of the death of this great Arab figure in various parts of the Arab world, the commemoration of his memory in the Mashreq and Maghreb countries as well as in the countries of immigration. The book also includes articles published in his memory in newspapers, magazines and poems recited on such occasions. It is worthwhile mentioning that much of what was published about Emir Shakib Arslan after his death was “inspired” from Eltaher’s book whether in terms of material or pictures. Most authors of these books did refer to the source of their information, while others must have found reasons to skip that small detail!

4 – “*Awraq Majmouaa: Kitabon Ahmar Aan Fzae’a Al Ingeliz Fi Falastin, wa Ghadr Al-Yahoud, wa Sabr Al-Arab*” (A Red Book about British Cruelties in Palestine, Jewish Deceit and Arab Patience)

Arab Palestinian Information Office - Cairo, April 1948 - ISBN 978-0-9784447-2-3

This illustrated book describes the situation in Palestine in 1948 on the eve of its fall into the hands of the European Jewish settlers, and the courage of its people in defence of their homeland. It also gives an overall picture of British cruelty and settlers’ deeds. The book was distributed free of charge.

5 – “*Moataqal Huckstep*” (Huckstep Internment Camp)

Addar Al-Alameyya Bimars - Cairo, 1950 - ISBN 978-0-9784447-3-0

This book provides a description of Eltaher’s third imprisonment in 1949 during the “rule of terror”, i.e. under the government of the Saadi Party in Egypt, and includes news, analysis and behind-the-scenes details regarding the situation in the Arab World and the Palestinian “Nakba” (i.e. catastrophe) and its reasons. The book also offers an illustrated account of the daily life of political detainees, many of whom were members of the Muslim Brothers and Jews who were put in protective detention during the Palestine war. In this book, Eltaher also provides observations related to the state of the Arab League since its creation and details the reasons behind his imprisonment until he was released.

6 – “Zalam El-Segn” (Prison Darkness)**Dar Ehya’e Al-Kotob Al-Aarabeyya - Cairo, 1951 - ISBN 978-0-9784447-4-7**

This book consists of Eltaher's account about life in prison, life as a fugitive, oppression by both Arab and foreign tyrants, views on the state of the Muslim and Arab worlds, while unmasking those responsible for the loss of Palestine. The exciting adventures of Eltaher as a fugitive, which involved his wife too, from the time he was arrested until he gave himself up are also told in movie-like detail in the book.

7 – “Rasael Bourguiba ela Sadiqihi Mohamed Ali Eltaher” (Bourguiba’s Letters to his Friend Mohamed Ali Eltaher)**Beirut, June 1966 - ISBN 978-0-9784447-5-4**

This book contains a selection of letters sent by the Tunisian nationalist leader and future President of Tunisia, Habib Bourguiba, to Eltaher during the years of wandering in the world to make the case for Tunisia’s quest for independence.

8 – “Khamsouna Aaman fil Qadaya Al-Aarabeyya” (Fifty Years in Arab Politics)**Mo'assassat Dar Al-Rihani - Beirut, 1978 - ISBN 978-0-9784447-6-1**

Before he passed away, Eltaher started collecting a selection of his own writings, whether published or not, in order to consolidate them in one book. He had mentioned once that he planned to name the book “Khamsouna Aaman fil Qadaya Al-Aarabeyya” (i.e. Fifty Years in Arab Politics). However, he died before printing the book and before deciding on the final title. His widow took on the task of completing it after his death and had it printed in its present form. It must be pointed out though that the suicidal civil war that overwhelmed Lebanon from the mid-seventies to the mid-eighties had its effect on the quality of the final product, as several errors were made in the order of binding the various chapters from one copy of the book to another!

BOOKS AND ARTICLES ABOUT ELTAHER

Several writers, such as Awatef Abdel-Rahman, Philippe de Tarazi, Wadie Philistin, Khayriye Qasmiyeh, Wadad Sakakini, Fathi Radwan, and many others have written about Eltaher in their books and articles dealing with matters related to Egypt, the Levant, the Maghreb countries and other Arab and Muslim countries. Several others also published books in which they wrote about him and others in the same text. Only one author, namely Samih Shbib, as far as is known, has dedicated a book written entirely about Eltaher. Here is a sample of such articles:

1 – Samih Shbib

“*Mohamed Ali Eltaher: Tajribatahou Assahafiya fi Masr Min Khelal Sohofihi: Ashoura, Al-Shabab, Al-Alam 1924-1939*” – (“Mohamed Ali Eltaher: His Journalism Experience in Egypt Through his Newspapers”) Sharq Press - Nicosia, Cyprus, February 1990 – ISBN 9963-585-09-4

The contents, documents, references and pictures included in this book from Arabic and foreign sources make it the most comprehensive work on Eltaher until its publication date.

2 – Sheikh Taha El-Wali

“*Al-Moujahed Al-Arabi Mohamed Ali Eltaher: Wasf biqalam Al-Sheikh Taha El-Wali*” – (The Arab Moujahed Mohamed Ali Eltaher: A profile by Sheikh Taha El-Wali) Al-Bayan Press – Beirut, Lebanon, January 1966

Sheikh Taha El-Wali, a prominent Lebanese Islamic cleric and writer, was a close friend and confidant of Eltaher.

3 – Bayan Nwayhed El-Hout and Khayriye Qasmiyeh

“*Faqidan Felastinian Kabiran: Abdel-Hamid Shoman wa Mohamed Ali Eltaher*” (Two Major Palestinian Losses: Abdel-Hamid Shoman and Mohamed Ali Eltaher) Shou’oun Felastinia – Research Centre – Beirut - Issue number 39, November 1974

4 – Fathi Radwan

“*Mohamed Ali Eltaher Kateb Watani wa Fadel Horr la Yahda*” (Mohamed Ali Eltaher a Nationalist Writer and a Free Virtuous and Restless Man) Al-Doha Magazine, Qatar, May 1985

5 – Nabil Khaled El-Agha

“*Mohamed Ali Eltaher Aasheq El-Horreyya*” (Mohamed Ali Eltaher: A Man Infatuated with Freedom) Al-Doha Magazine, Qatar, April 1981

6 – Youssef Haddad

“*Britania wa Tahwid Falastin fi Outrouhat Mohamed Ali Eltaher*” (Britain and the Judaisation of Palestine in Mohamed Ali Eltaher’s Writings) Majallet Al-Kateb Al-Filastini (Journal of the Palestinian Writer), Beirut, Issue number 7, February 1979

7 – Yaaqoub El-Odat

“*Min A’aalam Al Fikr wal’Adab fi Filastin*” (Prominent Figures among Thinkers and Intellectuals in Palestine)
Wikalat Al-Tawzi’e Al-Ourdouniyah (Jordan Distribution Agency) – Second Edition, Amman 1978

8 – Zouhayr Mardini

“*Aashra minan’Annas*” (Ten from among the People)
Dar Al-Irfan, Beirut and Sidon, 1975

9 – Wadie Philistin

“*Wadie Philistin yatahaddathou aan A’aalami Aasrihi*” (Wadie Philistin talks about distinguished people of his times) –
Volume 2, pp 179-189 - Dar Al-Qalam Press, Damascus 2003

10 – “Al-Mawsou’a Al-Filastinia” (The Palestinian Encyclopaedia)

This reference book contains an annotated biography and bibliography covering most major thinkers and intellectuals in Palestine, or of Palestinian origin.

11 – Mona El-Assi

“*Saqr Falastin wa Sayyed El-Moujahedin*” (The Falcon of Palestine and Master of the Moujahedin) - *Al-Khalij* (The Gulf) newspaper, Issue number 7666, May 15, 2000

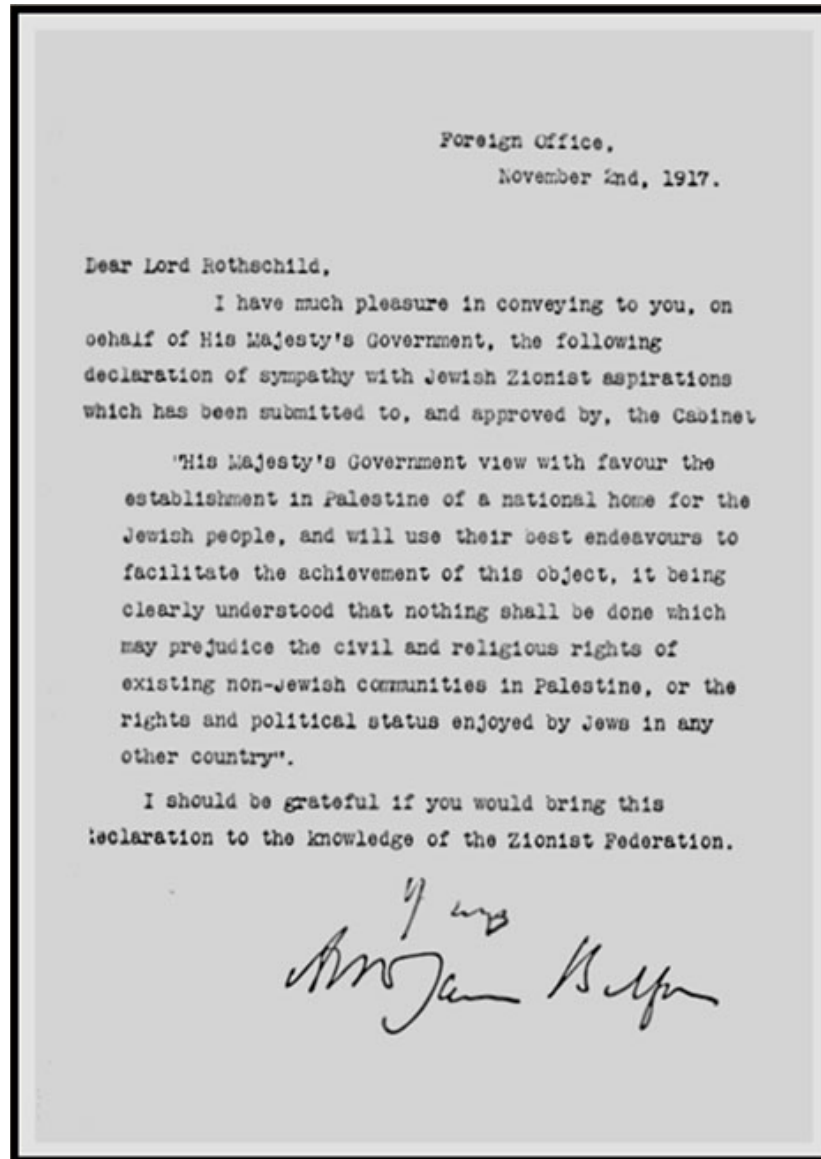
12 – Jaafar El-Khalili

“*Hakaza Araaftahom*” (This is how I knew them)
Volume 5, Dar El-Kutub Press, Beirut 1980

APPENDIX 1

THE BALFOUR DECLARATION

What came to be called “The Balfour Declaration” was a letter dated November 2, 1917, from Arthur James Balfour, British Foreign Secretary, writing on behalf of the British Government, to Lord Walter Rothschild, a Zionist activist and leader of the British Jewish community. The letter was originally drafted by the Jewish Zionist Federation.



Like Prime Minister Lloyd George, Balfour was a Christian fundamentalist, who believed that the return of the Jewish people to Zion, i.e. to the “Promised Land”, would herald the second coming of the Messiah. The thought of him, Balfour, playing a role in that divine enterprise was instrumental in getting him embarked on a political crusade to make this happen. As a fundamentalist Christian, his main motivation was that the return of the Messiah to earth is supposed to signal the conversion of all the Jews to Christianity. Little did Balfour know that the idea of a second coming of the Messiah is not germane to the Jewish people, because, according to Jewish tradition, the expected Messiah has not come yet to earth in the first place. Besides, the Jews are certainly not interested in a second coming that forces them to be converted into Christianity.

This outwardly simple letter transformed what was a private endeavour by a Jewish Zionist group to acquire a National Home for the Jews, into official British Government policy. That is the British Government undertook to use its might and power to make this endeavour a reality on the ground. Except, that the promise was not to give away British land, but to take away somebody else's homeland, i.e. that of the millennial Palestinian nation, who, according to the letter, were reduced from being the overwhelming majority of the native population, to a mere "*existing non-Jewish communities*"!

For further readings about the Balfour Declaration and other related matters, please consult the following works:

- "A Peace to End All Peace" by David Fromkin, Henry Holt publishers, New York 1989
- "Paris 1919" by Margaret Macmillan, Random House publishers, New York 2000
- "Trial and Error: The Autobiography of Chaim Weizman", Harper, New York 1949

APPENDIX 2

EMIR SHAKIB ARSLAN



Emir Shakib Arslan (Abou Ghaleb) (1869? - 1946) and Eltaher were very close to each other. It would be no exaggeration to say that Eltaher looked up to the older Emir in many aspects. Emir Shakib Arslan was a well-groomed, prominent Lebanese notable and one of the princes of the Druze community, who played an important role in Lebanon's and Syria's political life. His family continues to play that role nowadays through his grandson Waleed Jumblat, who is presently considered to be the dean of the Druze community in Lebanon.

Emir Shakib equally played an important, multilateral role in an attempt to bring together the Arabs in general and the Muslims in particular to take a unified stand versus foreign colonialism which drained their countries and peoples. Without delving into the religious aspects of Islam, he looked at it as a socio-political factor that could help unite these people around a common goal.

Had he not been from a prominent family at a reasonable level of wealth, and had he not earned credibility with the Ottomans, he may have not been able to play the nationalist role he created for himself.

In 1908 Emir Shakib was Deputy Governor, "*Qaem-Maqam*", of the Shouf region in Lebanon, then deputy for Horan (in Syria) in the Ottoman Parliament. He also played a major political role during the years of exile in Switzerland imposed on him by France, especially through his strong connections to the modern rulers of Turkey close to the end of the Ottoman Empire, namely Enver Pasha, Talaat Pasha, Jemal Pasha and Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. He also maintained strong contacts with senior German officials between the two World Wars, as well as with the nationalist movements in the Mashreq and Maghreb countries. Emir Shakib and his wife Salima El-Khass, who was Circassian, had a son, Ghaleb, and two daughters, Nazimah and May (mother of Waleed Jumblat).

To learn more about the role played by Emir Shakib, readers are encouraged to consult the following books, beside the book written by Eltaher himself, namely "*Zikra Al-Amir Shakib Arslan*" "In Memory of Emir Shakib Arslan":

- "*Amir Al-Bayan Shakib Arslan*", i.e. "**Emir Shakib Arslan: The Prince of Eloquence**" by Sheikh Ahmad El-Sharabassi, Cairo 1963.

- "**New episodes in Moroccan nationalism under colonial rule: reconsideration of Shakib Arslan's centrality in light of unpublished materials**", by Dr. Umar Ryad, *The Journal of North African Studies*, Vol. 16, No. 1, March 2011, 117-142.

- "**Islam against the West: Shakib Arslan and the Campaign for Islamic Nationalism**"
By William L. Cleveland, University of Texas Press, Austin, Texas 1985.

(The first part of the title, namely "Islam against the West" is unfortunate and misleading to say the least. Neither Islam, nor Emir Shakib are against the West, and the contents of the book do not reflect this assertion. It is possible that that particular expression was added to the title to make this otherwise good book more marketable in North America.)

APPENDIX 3

AHMAD HILMI PASHA



Ahmad Hilmi Abdelbaqi Pasha (1882 - 1963), as his full name goes, has played a distinguished political, economic and humanitarian role in the evolution of the Palestine Question. He also played some significant military roles in the quest to save Arab Palestine and defend it since the beginning of the last century. His involvement in Arab nationalist causes actually started when the region was still part of the Ottoman Empire, and specifically when he participated in the defence of Iraq and Greater Syria against British occupation.

Hilmi Pasha, as he is commonly known, actually commanded a group of volunteers and fought alongside the Ottoman forces which succeeded in defeating Major-General Charles Townshend at the battle of Kut El-Emara (Not Kut El-Amara) in Iraq in 1915 during the First World War. When Emir Faysal Bin Al-Hussein (His role was played by Sir Alec Guinness in the film classic “Lawrence of Arabia”) became ruler of Syria, he appointed Hilmi Pasha as Director General of the Ministry of Finance. Hilmi Pasha kept this position until Damascus was occupied by French forces. He then went to Amman, where the Sharif Hussein Bin Ali (the Sharif of Mecca) appointed him Inspector of the Hejaz Railway (The same railway which provided exciting action sequences in the same film.)

In 1930 he participated in founding the Arab Bank in Palestine, then the Agricultural Bank, then the Nation’s Bank and finally the Arab Nation Bank in 1940. The chief purpose of the last three banks was to make funds available to Palestinian farmers to enable them keep their lands, which the Jewish Agency was trying to acquire with the help of the British administration of Palestine.

In order to decapitate Palestinian intelligentsia and leadership especially during the Great Revolt of 1936-1939, the British mandatory authority exiled Hilmi Pasha to the Seyshelles islands in the Indian Ocean along with the other members of the Arab Higher Committee, namely Dr. Hussein Fakhri Al-Khalidi, Yaaqoub Al-Ghossein, Fouad Saba and Rashid Al-Haj Ibrahim.⁴⁷ In 1948 King Abdallah I of Jordan appointed him Military Governor of Jerusalem. At that time he was the only senior Palestinian leader physically present in the city. Besides, he had already taken it upon himself to organize the city’s defence. The chief Palestinian leader, namely the Mufti of Palestine Haj Amin Al-Husseini, was on the run from the British outside Palestine.

When the Arab League created the All-Palestine Government ⁴⁸ in Gaza on September 23, 1948 and appointed Hilmi Pasha as its first Prime Minister, King Abdallah I immediately relieved him from his duties. The King was vehemently opposed to this government, which he suspected of having been created by the Arab League and his opponents among the Arab leaders so that he does not take over the city of Jerusalem. He was also convinced that these leaders wanted to prevent him from annexing certain parts of Palestine to his kingdom. An objective he was pursuing in secret negotiations with leaders of the Zionist Movement. By then most of Palestine was captured by the Jews and the remaining parts, mainly what became known as the West Bank, was kept by King Abdallah I and was eventually annexed to Jordan.

When the Jews finally took control of most of Palestine, and the other Arab governments which sent their troops to defend the country capitulated under the cover of a permanent truce, Hilmi Pasha found himself heading a government without national territory. He remained in Cairo as Director of the Arab Nation Bank, which he had founded as described above. When the Egyptian government nationalized all foreign banks in 1961, he left Cairo and settled in Beirut. By then he was seventy nine years old. He died in Lebanon in 1963 and his remains were flown to Jerusalem to be buried within the campus of the Al-Aqsa mosque like the Palestinian guerilla leader Abdelqader Al-Husseini before him, as mentioned elsewhere in this website.

Hilmi Pasha, who, beside his busy public life, was also an accomplished poet, had one son, from a second marriage, Mohamed (He married Soad, the daughter of Rashid El-Haj Ibrahim; another famous Palestinian nationalist from Haifa). Hilmi Pasha also had three daughters from a previous marriage: Wasfeyya (wife of Mansour Qadara, a Libyan politician), Saneyya (wife of Abdelhamid Shoman, owner of the Arab Bank), and Naela (wife of Abdelmajid Shoman, i.e. Abdelhamid’s son). Ties of friendship between Hilmi Pasha’s family and grandchildren, and that of Eltaher and his children have always been close.

APPENDIX 4

WADIE PHILISTIN



While the Arabic version of his name “Philistin”, i.e. Palestine, suggests that he could be Palestinian, he is not, though he prides himself of it. He was born at Akhmim in the Province of Sohag in Upper Egypt, to a pure-bred Egyptian Christian Coptic family whose roots go to the town of Naqqada⁴⁹ in the Province of Qena, not very far from the famous Luxor.

A 1942 graduate in Journalism from the American University in Cairo, then a well respected author, teacher and, for the past 67 years a political, economic and literary journalist. Between 1945 and 1952 he worked for the famous Cairo newspapers “*Al-Moqtataf*” and “*Al-Moqattam*” where he headed a number of departments and wrote the daily lead editorial, which was regularly quoted by various Arab and foreign media outlets.

He is well-known in the Arab world as the author and translator of over forty books in literature, economics, biographies, politics and journalism. He also taught journalism at the American University in Cairo between 1948 and 1957.

He also assisted in the compilation of three encyclopaedias: the Encyclopaedia Coptica, published by the University of Utah, the simplified Arabic version of the Columbia Viking Encyclopaedia, The “Encyclopaedia of Egyptian and World Personalities”, and the Arabic version of the Spanish Kombi Illustrated Encyclopaedia.

His most recent work, published in 2003, consists of a two-volume anthology of distinguished Arab writers, intellectuals and orientalisists he has known throughout his career. It is reported that he was the first to predict that Naguib Mahfouz, the Egyptian winner of the 1988 Nobel Prize in literature, would one day become an international celebrity.

Aside from the hundreds of articles he authored and were published around the Arab world, he became the General Manager of the Cairo office of the Arabian-American Oil Company (ARAMCO) and supervised the publication of its monthly Arabic magazine “*Qafelat Al-Zayt*”, the prestigious sister publication of Aramco World Magazine, which is specialized in the Arab and Muslim cultures and history, and is considered to be the closest thing to a National Geographic.

Several writers in Egypt and in other countries have written about Wadie Philistin and his work, such as the full page profile about him written by Ms. Safynaz Kazem and published in the 1996 issue of the Egyptian “*Al-Ahram*” daily. Ms. Kazem points out that “his intellectual hobby is to hunt down scientific terms which have been overlooked by specialized dictionaries”. She further describes his usage of Arabic as “so elegant (that) it makes those who love the language gasp in wonder...his elegant, witty pen fathoms the depths of the character he depicts, obliterating the barriers between the subject and the reader”.

He was eventually elected member of the prestigious Arabic Language Academies of both Syria (1986) and Jordan (1988), though curiously enough not in his own country! Philistin is one of the rare Egyptian writers who have been at home intellectually both in Egypt and the rest of the Arab World. Like Eltaher, he has a wider vision of the world around him, and did not fall victim to national introversion. While some people pigeon-hole themselves under this or that religious label, he was intellectually beyond all that, and those he dealt with were almost all in that category. This was the era of pan Arab intellectualism, when certain men and women had freed themselves from the constraints of narrow-mindedness and suffocating ‘localitis’.

Wadie Philistin and Eltaher were very good friends and maintained a long-lasting correspondence during the life-time of the latter. As ever and whenever he could, he never misses mentioning his friend Eltaher and “*Dar Ashoura*”. Like his friend, and like so many other thinkers, he was imprisoned and treated ignominiously. Three generations of Egyptians have never heard of him, and, like Safynaz Kazem, are just discovering him.

Wadie Philistin, who is over eighty years old at time of writing in 2010, maintains an active correspondence, and continues to write, translate and participate in literary conferences in Egypt and overseas. Now that he has been “rediscovered”; his cultural articles and literary reviews have reappeared in Egyptian publications.

APPENDIX 5

ALI AHMAD BAKATHIR



Ali Ahmad Bakathir was one of Egypt's most famous playwrights during the forties and fifties. While he hails from Indonesia, he is originally from Hadramout in Southern Yemen. A large Arab community of traders from Hadramout in South Yemen had immigrated to Indonesia and settled there for a very long time. It was thanks to these traders that Islam was spread in those far away lands. Among his famous plays one could mention "The Caliph's Jester" which was staged at the Royal Opera House in Cairo in 1954, and the "Hodja's Nail" also staged at the Opera in 1955. Bakathir's wife and his adopted son Fawzi often visited the Eltahers and vice-versa.

An exciting adventure has linked Bakathir and Eltaher when the latter escaped from prison and hid in various parts of Egypt between 1940 and 1941. The friendship that linked the two men went back to 1933 when Bakathir came to Egypt from Indonesia via the Hedjaz and his ancestral homeland Hadramout to enrol at Egyptian universities. He was admitted at Cairo University from which he eventually obtained his B.A. degree in literature. He then obtained a teacher's diploma from the Teachers' Higher College. Once he had completed his education, and while getting ready to return to his native country Indonesia, the Second World War erupted and he found himself unable to travel to the Far East.

He remained in Egypt and worked as a teacher while authoring a number of successful historic and literary novels. Every time the Ministry of Education or one of the cultural organizations announced a competition for a novel or a play, Bakathir participated in it. And every time he did that, he not only won the prize, but also got his work recommended for printing at no cost to him. His outstanding output reached a point where in 1947 the Ministry of Social Affairs launched a competition for six novels covering predetermined subjects and announced an appreciably high financial prize. The ministry received five hundred submissions. After it had reviewed this mountain of novels, the evaluation committee chose six out of them. When the envelopes containing the names of the winners were opened, it turned out that Bakathir had amazingly won two of them. A newspaper suggested jokingly that he should be barred from participating in any future competitions...

Bakathir provides assistance to a prison fugitive

A year after World War II was declared, British authorities in Egypt intimated to the Egyptian government their desire to arrest Eltaher and jail him as discussed earlier in the biography because of the articles he was writing and publishing against British colonialism in Egypt and other countries of the Near East, as well as against French colonialism in North Africa and greater Syria, Dutch colonialism in Indonesia and Italian colonialism in Libya. The British did not complain about Eltaher's writings against Italian occupation of Libya, since Italy had allied itself with Britain's enemy Nazi Germany!

When Eltaher succeeded in escaping from the prison's hospital he disguised himself as a Muslim clergyman from the countryside and kept moving continuously around Egypt. One of the cities he hid in longer than in others was the city of Mansourah, which has a long well known history.

One night, while walking along one of the side streets Eltaher was surprised to see his friend Ali Ahmad Bakathir pass in front of him. So he followed him, then came closer to him, put his hand on his shoulder and greeted him. Bakathir quickly recognized Eltaher from his voice. The two then walked together while Eltaher was telling him his story. They eventually ended up in Bakathir's house where the latter told his story and that he had been appointed as English language teacher at Al-Rashad High School after he was cut off from his family in Indonesia. He also informed him that he had been living in that house in Mansourah for a few months. He also added that he was not alone in the house because he had gotten married in the meanwhile and that one of his wife's relatives also lived with them.

The following morning Bakathir went around town to find a suitable place for Eltaher to live in that could provide him with a refuge from government agents working for the British colonial power until things settled down. Bakathir succeeded in finding a small apartment that suited the purpose in a narrow alley of the "Mit Hadar" neighbourhood. The lease was drawn in Eltaher's assumed name but Bakathir acted as a guarantor. Had Bakathir not been living and working in Mansourah, it would have been difficult for Eltaher to find a refuge for himself.

During that period a significant incident had happened in Egypt when the aircraft of Field Marshal Aziz Pasha El-Masri crash-landed at Qalioub, north of Cairo. Aziz Pasha was



Bakathir and Eltaher in 1942 in Mansourah in front of the Talkha Bridge

known for being against British occupation of Egypt, and was considered by the British as being a Nazi sympathizer. The British had suspected him of trying to defect to the Germans whose forces were at the borders of Egypt in the western desert when his aircraft crashed. A 500 Egyptian Pounds bounty was posted by the Egyptian government for whoever would give information that would lead to his arrest along with his two companions, Abdel-Monem Abdel-Raouf, the pilot of the aircraft, and Hussein Zulfiqar Sabri, the co-pilot. The amount was substantial enough in those days to attract a lot of hopeful hunters.

Eltaher kept all that in mind, and estimated that he could be mistaken for Aziz Pasha. This prompted him to move fast. He picked up all his belongings and books and packed them in a bundle and went to Bakathir's house. He told him the story and left the bundle as well as his house keys with him and recommended that he avoid going to that area, because if

anything happened, they would certainly come asking about Eltaher by his assumed name. The police would have asked the landlord for information about Eltaher, and he would have told them that he did not know much because he had rented the place via Bakathir. If the latter were to be asked, all he could say was that Eltaher had gone to Cairo to bring his family, but without telling them that he had left the keys with him. Having given Bakathir these instructions, Eltaher left Mansourah, not to Cairo, but to Domiat (Damietta), then Tanta, then Alexandria, then Zaqaziq. He returned to Mansourah the third day. He took position not too far from Bakathir's house to observe him until he saw him and established contact. Bakathir reassured Eltaher that nothing had happened during his absence and nobody came to ask for him.

On a dangerous mission to Cairo

While Eltaher was on the run, his wife remained in their apartment on Shoubrah Street in Cairo. But she was under strict ongoing surveillance day and night by the police, the Special Branch and the Arab Affairs Bureau agents whose commanders were all working for the account of the British. Despite all this surveillance, she remained the major point of contact between her husband in his hiding place and the various nationalists and the many gallant people in Egypt and the Arab World. One day Eltaher asked Bakathir to travel to Cairo to deliver a letter to his wife. Bakathir agreed and left for Cairo with the letter in his pocket.

Before doing that, he and Eltaher planned the steps to be taken in order to carry out this mission: Once he arrived at the apartment building where Mrs. Eltaher lived, Bakathir was to avoid taking the elevator and take the stairs instead to the fifth floor. In those days taking the elevator meant having the building concierge accompany the guest in the elevator. Bakathir was not to even ask the concierge about Mrs. Eltaher's apartment so that the undercover policeman sitting at the entrance of the building does not overhear him and suspect him. Assuming he was asked which apartment he was going to, he was to say that he was visiting Mr. Abbas Gamgoum. Gamgoum and his wife Nefissa were Eltaher's next door neighbours and knew everything about Eltaher and his flight from prison. Upon arriving at the building, Bakathir was to act in a manner that reflects somebody well familiar with the building and accustomed at climbing to the floor he is going to, all that to avoid the suspicious eyes of both the concierge and the undercover policeman. Eltaher finally advised Bakathir that Mr. Gamgoum will be very reticent and will deny having anything to do with the Eltaher family.

Making contact and delivering the letter

Bakathir rang the bell at Mr. Gamgoum's apartment door, which was just next to the Eltahers' apartment. He answered the door and invited the unknown, but safe looking, guest in and accompanied him to the living room without having any clue as to who that person was. Once seated, Gamgoum asked him if there was anything he could do for him. Bakathir replied by using words and topics that only Eltaher and Mr. Gamgoum were familiar with. Nonetheless Gamgoum remained reserved. At that point Bakathir reached in his pocket for the letter which had Mrs. Eltaher's name and asked Mr. Gamgoum to have his wife Mrs. Nefissa hand it over to her. Bakathir pointed out that the name on the envelope was in Eltaher's handwriting, which Mr. Gamgoum recognized, and thus felt more relaxed. He asked his wife to take the letter to Mrs. Eltaher.

When Mrs. Gamgoum explained to her that an emissary from her husband was waiting for her at their apartment, Mrs. Eltaher rushed there and of course recognized Bakathir immediately and took possession of the letter. Her happiness was great as she had had no news from her husband for about two months. It is interesting to note that British authorities were under the impression that Mr. Eltaher had sneaked out of Egypt to Lebanon or Palestine, and had sent its agents to investigate and look for him in the homes of friends and relatives over there, at a time when he had not left Egypt at all!

Eltaher's hidden papers

Eltaher noted that he had too many papers lying around in his hideout, especially those on which he had scribbled notes for his memoirs. He suddenly realized that he had to put these papers in safekeeping away from him. But who dared take responsibility for these “scorpions” as Eltaher described his papers and the writings on them, at a time when their value to him was as valuable as his own life, as he described this episode in his book “Zalam El-Segn” (Prison Darkness). He eventually remembered a trick he had read about in some American novels. He bought a framed picture of a European village, removed the glass from the frame, disposed of the picture and substituted it by a picture he ripped out of a magazine of a pretty beduin girl and put it in the frame. He then hid all the papers he wanted to safeguard between the picture and the supporting backing carton. He then hung the picture back on the wall.

It did not take him long to realize that that was not enough, because if the police managed to discover his hideout, they will automatically confiscate everything in the room including the picture, thus exposing it to danger whether the police left it behind or took it with them. However he noted that every time Bakathir came to visit him he always looked at the picture with particular interest. Bakathir liked the picture so much, that one day he asked Eltaher if he would give it to him! Eltaher did not wait to be begged, and without any hesitation he removed it from the wall and gave it to him without telling him anything about its secret. Happy to have the picture, Bakathir took it home and hung it in his den without having any clue as to the treasure hiding inside it.

As the days passed Eltaher made it a point to visit Bakathir a bit more than he usually did so that he could reassure himself about the picture. During every visit Bakathir would talk to him about the beauty of the picture and its impact on his visitors, who would look at it intently even though it was simply removed from a magazine and had no intrinsic artistic value! Eltaher thought he was unlucky with all this unwanted attention, especially when Bakathir asked him one day if he could give the picture to a friend of his who insisted that he would like to have it for himself. At that point Eltaher could not but divulge to Bakathir the secret of the treasure hidden inside it.

When Bakathir heard about what was behind the picture, he was astounded. From that day on he kept particular good care of it and would not let anybody bring it down from the wall. As the number of pretenders grew, he finally resolved to remove it and hide it in a box full of books and thus avoided the refined curiosity of those who have good artistic taste, but whose genius relative to recognizing the value of art did not blossom except on the day Mohamed Ali Eltaher hid his papers inside the picture’s frame!

APPENDIX 6

COLONEL ABDALLAH AL-TAL



Colonel Abdallah Al-Tal (Aboul-Muntasser) (1918 - 1973) was a famous officer of the Arab Legion during the 1948-1949 Palestine war. The Legion's Arabic name is "*Al-Jaysh Al-Arabi*", i.e. The Arab Army. It was created by the British following the foundation of the Emirate of Transjordan, "*Imarat Sharq El-Ordon*", in 1921, which is known today as the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan.

He held various commands throughout his relatively short military career, but was a Major, then Colonel and Military Governor of Jerusalem during the crucial days of the battle for the Holy city in 1948. Colonel Al-Tal hails from a famous and well respected Arab tribe spread between Jordan and other parts of the region. Its abode in Jordan is the area of Irbid in the north-western corner of the country.

Colonel Al-Tal, a charismatic officer, who also loved music and had a beautiful voice, was an example of military aptitude and chivalry on the battleground, whether his troops were winning or losing battles. Several serious historians including among Israelis have written about him and his unblemished role during that war. Actually it is impossible to talk about the 1948 battle for Jerusalem without mentioning Colonel Abdallah Al-Tal.

A DVD film entitled "[O Jerusalem](#)", partially based on a book by the same name published in 1971 by Larry Collins and Dominique Lapierre, was released in Europe in October 2006 about the Battle of Qastal and the Battle involving the Jewish quarter in Jerusalem. The film partially portrays the roles played by Abdelqader Al-Husseini and Colonel Abdallah Al-Tal during those two battles respectively, which served as background for a story involving Palestinians and Jews.

Military operations conducted by Colonel Al-Tal during the latter phases of the battle for Jerusalem during which he stepped up fire power against the Jewish forces were not sanctioned by the British Commander of the Arab Legion, Lieutenant-General John Bagot Glubb, better known as Glubb Pasha, who considered Colonel Al-Tal's actions akin to insubordination. To avoid criticism by his fellow Arab rulers, King Abdallah I only hesitantly acquiesced with Colonel Al-Tal's zealous initiatives. The King was already pursuing secret negotiations with some of the leaders of the Zionist movement and the Jewish Agency, namely Golda Meir, Moshe Sharett and Eliyahu Sassoon about getting a piece of Palestine for himself. Colonel Al-Tal's military initiatives reflected the fact that he and his troops could not just stand by and watch the Palestinian population of Jerusalem defenceless at the mercy of enemy fire, while his King was plotting with that same enemy.

Once a truce was signed between Jordan, the other Arab governments and the Jewish leadership, (The Palestinians were not part of the truce or any subsequent agreements.), King Abdallah I manifested his anger at Colonel Al-Tal's initiatives, which could have jeopardized his plans. Ironically enough it was Colonel Al-Tal's "insubordination" that saved the old city of Jerusalem for King Abdallah, otherwise it would have been captured by the Jewish Haganah forces in 1948.

Perhaps the King was also becoming increasingly jealous of Al-Tal's growing popularity, because suddenly the latter was disingenuously accused of trying to seize power in Jordan in order to annex the kingdom to Syria. Instead of returning to his home-town and country as a hero, Al-Tal found himself compelled to seek asylum in Egypt, where he spent next to twenty years as a political refugee.

In the final analysis, the battle for Jerusalem was in fact the only recorded significant Arab military victory during the entire 1948-1949 Palestine war. Colonel Al-Tal's initiative had prevented the old city and some of its neighbourhoods from falling into the hands of the Haganah forces. Though the city and what had remained of Palestine did eventually fall to the Israelis following the 1967 war, commonly known as the "Six-day War".

Abdallah Al-Tal passed away in Jordan on August 13, 1973. He had six children; one girl named Inas, and five boys Montasser, Salah, Oussama, Khaled and Hamza. The close links between his family and that of Eltaher's continue until now.

Colonel Al-Tal published his memoirs "*Karithat Falastin*" (The Palestine Catastrophe) in Cairo in 1959. The book soon was out of print, but most of its essential contents were included in a subsequent book "*Abdallah Al-Tal Batal Maaraket Al-Qods*" (Abdallah Al-Tal: Hero of the Battle for Jerusalem).⁵⁰ It was edited by his brother Dr. Ahmad Youssef Al-Tal and

published in Amman in 1999. The two books were published in Arabic of course, but the Israelis, and possibly the British, must have produced Hebrew and/or English translations for their own purposes.

APPENDIX 7

Haj Amin Al-Husseini



Haj Amin Al-Husseini (1895?-1974), Mufti of Palestine, head of the Arab Higher Committee and the Supreme Muslim Council in Palestine, was the consummate diplomat. He not only reigned in Palestine as well as on the international scene as the uncrowned king of Palestine, but he actually conducted himself as one. He was fair-skinned, had green-blue eyes and sported a well groomed reddish beard on a messianic face. He was soft-spoken and you had to listen carefully to be able to hear what he had to say. Eltaher often joked that if one were to paint a facial portrait of Jesus Christ, Haj Amin, would have been the best model to copy!

Throughout his life Haj Amin made as many enemies as he made friends among the Palestinians and the Arabs. Eltaher and Haj Amin maintained a long-standing friendship, though both men have had several fallouts because of political differences. When Eltaher was detained at the Huckstep internment camp in 1949 in Egypt, he suspected Haj Amin's involvement in encouraging the Egyptian authorities to detain him. Eltaher did not support his policies regarding the struggle for Palestine during the few years preceding its fall in the hands of the Jews, and actually blamed this defeat partially on Haj Amin. Their personal, though not political, reconciliation following a long break came about only close to the end of their lives. Haj Amin and Eltaher died forty days apart and were buried not far from each other in the same cemetery in Beirut. Haj Amin had one son, Salah, and six daughters Asma, Souad, Zeynab, Nafissa, Amina and Jihad.

Haj Amin may have fought his own battles the way he thought best, but there is no doubt that he was a master politician and a true Palestinian nationalist. He spent his last years in Lebanon in a suburb called Mansourieh in the hills overlooking Beirut. He had a large house with a garden, but did not live in luxury. He had a driver and a guard to ensure his security and that of his family. When the Lebanese civil war flared up in 1975, it was reported that undetermined Christian militias attacked his house and set it on fire, and as was reported, though not corroborated, the fire destroyed his extensive library and all his archives.

Most Israeli and Zionist writers, as well as those who copy-cat them, have maintained a classical line of attack against Haj Amin, namely that he used religion as a political weapon. This is obviously pretty disingenuous, since the whole concept behind the creation of Israel is based on nothing but religion.

Haj Amin also continues to be vilified as a pro-Nazi, Hitler-lover, with pictures of him with the Führer, or with SS Chief Heinrich Himmler, or Foreign Affairs Minister Joachim von Ribbentrop and others in support. To put things into historical perspective, Haj Amin did seek Germany's support against British occupation of Palestine, as well as against its policy of inundating his country with European immigrants of the Jewish faith. While his policy line was not supported by all Palestinians, Haj Amin did not have much choice, since he was being chased by the British before, during and after the Second World War because of his resistance to their colonial policies in Palestine.

The British kept hounding him to ensure that the Palestinians remain leaderless, and left him no choice but to seek help from their enemies, first the Italians, then the Germans. It must be noted that, at first, the Palestinian leadership considered their relationship with British officials as one with "English gentlemen". They were always resisting and fighting back within the means they had. First 'politely' through meetings, letters, memorandi and petitions, as they imagined 'English gentlemen' behaved. They were soon to discover that that was only in appearances, while those "gentlemen" behaved with them in a most immoral manner. The Palestinians then had no choice but take up arms against them as they realized that this was the only language they seemed to understand. The responsibility of Britain in the whole tragedy of the Palestinian people is paramount, and the British should be accountable to the Palestinian people for what they did to them by self-appropriating their country and worse still, give it to other people without their approval.

Haj Amin was quite certainly aware of the lost love between the Nazis and the Jews in Europe, but neither he, nor his supporters, had any idea about the mass extermination of Jews, Slavs and Gypsies in concentration camps⁵¹. Be that as it may, Haj Amin was rather following the famous saying: "The enemy of my enemy is my friend"; and who did not do that in history old or modern?

In this context, here is what Mohamed Ali Eltaher wrote under the title "The Jews in Germany" in his book "Nazarat Ashoura" about the people of Palestine and the Nazis in Germany:

“According to a media report from Breslau in Germany dated June 19, 1932 a confrontation between the Jews and Hitler’s supporters erupted when some three hundred Hitler supporters marching in the streets came face to face with a Jewish funeral procession. Whenever Hitler’s supporters met Jewish passers by, they shouted at them: “*Jews, go to Palestine!*” Now when they saw the Jewish funeral procession, they shouted: “*Here is one who is already gone to Palestine. We will soon get rid of the others*”. “When I read this news wire”, wrote Eltaher, “I felt so depressed and could not but join the Jews in wishing that Herr Hitler fail and that his neck be broken before he and his partisans become strong enough to take over power in Germany.”

“Yes, my point of view as an Arab Palestinian vis-à-vis Hitler is identical to that of the Jews. We and the Jews have agreed and disagreed at the same time. This is the first time in my life that I stand against a national movement and wish its failure. Here is why.

“It is important for me as a Palestinian Arab that no motive should exist anywhere in the world that pushes the Jews to come to Palestine. By hounding the Jews, the German nationalist Hitler will succeed at the end in chasing them or at least some of them out from Germany. They will find no haven to settle in other than Palestine. The fall of Hitler, even if it hurts the German nationalist movement, affects the survival of my country. That is why I beg my readers to pardon my selfishness, because survival is an innate human trait that does not waver. Thus, in spite of me I wish the Jews well in Germany. What a dark catastrophe will befall Palestine should Hitler triumph in Germany and start persecuting the Jews – God save them there only. Otherwise, God forbid, they will then swarm Palestine like locusts.”⁵²

APPENDIX 8

ABDELQADER AL-HUSSEINI



Abdelaqader Al-Husseini (Abou Moussa) (1908-1948), son of Palestine's first leader Moussa Kazem Pasha Al-Husseini, was the most widely known Palestinian resistance commander during the various phases of the Palestinians' struggle, first against British Military forces occupying Palestine, then against the armed Jewish settlers brought by the British from Europe.

He fought during the Palestinian Great Revolt of 1936-39 and organized resistance from the mountains around the city of Jerusalem. He was seriously wounded in battle in 1939 and went to Iraq to seek medical attention. He eventually joined the revolt of the Iraqi nationalist Rashid Aaali Al-Kilani (Aaali not Ali), and fought in 1941 with the Iraqis against British forces in Iraq. He was captured by the British and detained for about two years, while his wife, Wajiha Al-Husseini, was put under house arrest in Baghdad. He was released in 1943 following the interference of King Abdelaziz Ibn Saud of Saudi Arabia. After a brief stay in Saudi Arabia, he went to Egypt in early

1946. In order for him to continue to defend his homeland Palestine, he and his wife sold whatever land and real estate they owned in order to buy weapons and ammunition.

His attempts at obtaining weapons and ammunition for the Palestinian fighters in Palestine through the newly created Arab League in Cairo failed. This did not prevent him though from returning to Palestine secretly to dodge the British who were after him, and succeeded in reaching Jerusalem after the Palestine Partition Plan in 1947 was made public. He led a desperate attempt at defending the city, but he was killed in a successful Jewish counter attack on 7 April 1948 at the village of Qastal, west of Jerusalem, and was buried within the campus of Al-Aqsa Mosque. His funeral was attended by thousands in Palestine, and equal numbers marched in solidarity through the streets of most other Arab and Muslim countries. If one were to compare him with other daring, dedicated and charismatic youthful guerilla leaders in modern history, Abdelqader Al-Husseini would be the "Che Guevara" of the Palestinians par excellence.

Abdelqader and Wajiha had one daughter, Haifa', and three sons: Moussa, Faysal and Ghazi. The Eltahers and Abdelqader's family, men, women and children, have always maintained a warm friendship through the years.

His son Faysal (or Faisal) was a long-time nationalist, political activist, and Director of Orient House in Jerusalem. He also served occasionally as Minister for Jerusalem Affairs in the Palestinian National Authority under Chairman Yasser Arafat following the Oslo Accords. Faysal died of a heart attack while attending a conference in Kuwait in June 2001. Had the Israelis been genuinely interested in a meaningful accommodation for both peoples during his life-time, and had the Palestinian leadership also risen to the occasion, Faysal Al-Husseini could have been the best partner and would have provided serious and effective leadership to achieve this elusive objective.

A DVD film entitled "[O Jerusalem](#)", partially based on a book by the same name published in 1971 by Larry Collins and Dominique Lapierre, was released in Europe in October 2006 about the Battle of Qastal and the Battle involving the Jewish quarter in Jerusalem. The film partially portrays the roles played by Abdelqader Al-Husseini and Colonel Abdallah Al-Tal during those two battles respectively, which served as background for a story involving Palestinians and Jews.

REFERENCES AND ENDNOTES

- 1 - Nabil Khaled El-Agha, "Mohamed Ali Eltaher Aasheq El-Horreyya (Mohamed Ali Eltaher: A Man Infatuated with Freedom) - Al-Doha Magazine, Qatar, April 1981.
- 2 - Most Arab last names take the article "El" or "Al" meaning "the". There is no definite rule as to which spelling to use when translating from Arabic into other languages. Roughly speaking, Arab countries which were influenced by French culture have used "El". Those influenced by English culture use "Al".

The use of a (-) between El/Al and the name is also a matter of usage rather than rule, but the hyphen denotes that the two go together, since El or Al as stand-alones are meaningless. Furthermore, transliterating names of persons or places from Arabic into any other language has no universally accepted rules, hence the diversity in spelling one encounters. This Website will respect name spellings as normally used by the individual concerned, or as it is customary in his country, otherwise it will be rendered in a manner that is phonetically easier to read and pronounce by the reader.

- 3 - Aboul-Hassan, i.e. Father of Hassan, is the traditional form by which men are addressed in most, but not all, Arabic speaking countries. Normally a man is addressed as such by attaching his first-born son's name to the prefix "Abou", or "Aboul", but there are cases where the individual would be addressed as such without having a male son, or even if he were not even married. Such was the case for Eltaher before he was married and his son was born.
- 4 - "Bilad Ash-Sham", i.e. the Sham countries, means Greater Syria, or the Levant, which included then current Syria, Lebanon, Palestine and what became known later on as Trans-Jordan. The name Sham is also used to mean Damascus, whose formal Arabic name is Dimashq.
- 5 - The term "Arab and Islamic world", which appears quite often throughout this website, is meant to define the nature, or rather the composition of this "world". When speaking of the "Arab world", what is meant by that is the Arabs in general, whether they are Muslims or Christians, and whether they are ethnically of Arabian extraction or from other roots, but whose main link among themselves is the Arabic language and culture. However, when reference is made to the "Islamic world", the term is meant to define the countries that have already been described as Arab, but also includes those with large Muslim populations or large Muslim minorities, but who have no ethnic links to the Arabs, such as Indonesia, India, Turkey and Iran for example.
- 6 - It is very important to remind the reader that in those days, and to a great extent even today, peoples' identity in many parts of the world, including in the Arab countries, is defined by their religion rather than by their ethnic origin. In the context of Palestinian historiography in particular, until the creation of Israel, Jewish Arabs were considered as Arabs of the Jewish faith. Today the term Jews is used to mean the Jews as a whole, irrespective of whether they were of Arab descent, or were European Jews who had entered Palestine illegally, or were allowed in by British colonial authorities. In the same vein, the term Muslims means people of the Muslim faith anywhere in the world, irrespective of whether they were Arabs or not. The reference to "All Arabs" as indicated in this document is meant to include both Arab Muslims and Christians.
- 7 - For an in-depth pictorial and historic view of Egypt during the early to mid-twentieth century, please consult the following quality website by Samir Rafat: www.egy.com
- 8 - As is the usage in Northern Ireland as well as in other countries religion is considered to be one's identity. A person is either an Irish Catholic or an Irish Protestant. Until 1948/1949, even now, members of the community of the Jewish faith in Palestine called themselves Jews ("Yahood" in Arabic), following the "millet" (ethnic or religious origin) system that the Ottomans used to identify the various communities. The other communities referred to themselves as Christians (Nosrani, or Masihi, in Arabic); and Muslims. The Jews of Palestine eventually adopted the expression Israelis following the creation of the State of Israel. In the Arab world, the terms Jews and Israelis are often used interchangeably to mean the same thing, the same way some Israelis refer to the Palestinians as "The Arabs", while others simply refer to them as "The Palestinians".

9 -

The Maghreb countries, i.e. "the countries of the setting sun", are Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, and sometimes Mauritania. The expression Mashreq denotes the countries of the Levant, i.e. all the other Arab countries starting from Egypt.

- 10 - For further information on Palestinian nationalists, freedom fighters and public figures, please consult the following academic website.
www.passia.org
- 11 - Banque Misr and its group of companies were founded by Talaat Harb Pasha in 1920 as the first national and totally indigenous Egyptian modern economic enterprise. His purpose was to counteract the economic invasion of the country by foreign interests, specifically to discourage the shipping of raw Egyptian cotton for weaving in mills in the U.K., instead of weaving it in Egypt, by Egyptian labour.
- 12 - The word "Zionism" is derived from the word "Zion", or "Sahyoon" in Arabic, which denotes biblical Israel. Zionism is also the name of a nineteenth century European socialist political movement calling for the establishment of a homeland for the Jews in the "Land of Israel" (Eretz Israel in Hebrew), i.e. in Palestine.
- 13 - Pasha, Bey, Effendi, etc. are all Ottoman-style honorific titles, used extensively in Egypt under the monarchy and other countries of the Levant and given to civilians and military officers depending on rank, much along the same lines of the peerage system in the U.K.
- 14 - Michael J. Cohen, "Churchill and the Jews", 2nd Edition, Frank Cass, London, 2003.
- 15 - The policeman assigned to watch over Eltaher the day he run away was eventually flogged by his superiors for having let this happen. Following his release, Eltaher looked for the policeman until he found him, and paid him a compensation for what he had endured because of him.
- 16 - Some Arabic names and first names start with the attribute "Abdel" or "Abdul", which by itself does not have a useful meaning. Hence, all such names must either be attached or hyphenated, e.g. Abdel-Nasser or Abdelnasser. To simplify things even further, the attribute Abdel is sometimes dropped altogether, and the name becomes simply Nasser.
- 17 - Russel B. Huckstep was an American officer whose name was given to a U.S. military base north of Cairo on the Suez Highway a few kilometres from Farouk Airport, which is the current Cairo International Airport. After World War II, the base was turned by the Egyptian government into an internment camp for political prisoners.
- 18 - Dar Ashoura, i.e. House of Ashoura, is the name given to Eltaher's office whence his newspaper was published. The large sign behind him in the very first portrait of him on the Home page of this website shows the name "Dar Ashoura" in Arabic.
- 19 - To her great astonishment, the neighbour, Mrs. Nefissa Gamgoum, found the cage and the bird, which she recognized readily on the staircase. She brought it into her apartment after having knocked at Eltaher's apartment without getting an answer. She understood immediately that something serious must have happened. The Eltahers loved animals, and kept a cat wherever they went. Even when he was a fugitive, Eltaher kept a cat in his hideout, which he named "Habissa", i.e. "prisoner"!
- 20 - For an indication as to the political situation in Egypt during that period, please consult the following book (In Arabic): "Muzakkerat Ibrahim Talaat" (The Memoirs of Ibrahim Talaat), Dar Al-Hilal, Cairo 2002.
- 21 - John Bagot Glubb, "A Soldier with the Arabs", Harper (1957)
- 22 - Avi Shlaim, "Collusion across the Jordan: King Abdullah, the Zionist Movement, and the Partition of Palestine". New York: Columbia University Press, 1988. See also the movie "A Woman called Golda", starring Ingrid Bergman, released in 1982 by Paramount Television.
- 23 - The full name of the Haganah in Hebrew is "Irgun ha-Haganah be-Eretz-Yi'sra'el", i.e. "Organization for Defense in the Land of Israel". The Haganah was the forerunner of the current Israel Defense Forces (IDF, or TSAHAL in Hebrew)

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It is ironic that when the PLO was created in 1964, its first leader, Ahmad Shuqairy, had asked Eltaher to support the organization, but Eltaher refused categorically to do so, and pointed out that the PLO was an organization created by the Arab governments in order to control and liquidate the Palestine question. The second leader of the PLO, Yasser Arafat, never met Eltaher, but, after the latter's death, he presented his condolences to Eltaher's family in person.

- 25 - Benny Morris – 1948: *The First Arab-Israeli War* – Yale University Press, New Haven, Connecticut (2008) - P392. See also Vincent Sheean – "Personal History", Doubleday, Doran & Co., Garden City, New York (1935), particularly the last Chapter entitled "Holy Land", pp.333-398.
- 26 - In July of 1853, as the Crimean war loomed and the position of Turkey was challenged by Egypt's ruler Mehmet Ali, Anthony Ashley-Cooper, 7th Earl of Shaftesbury, an Evangelical Christian, wrote to Prime Minister George Hamilton-Gordon, 4th Earl of Aberdeen that Greater Syria was "a country without a nation" in need of "a nation without a country... Is there such a thing? To be sure there is, the ancient and rightful lords of the soil, the Jews!" In his diary that year he wrote "these vast and fertile regions will soon be without a ruler, without a known and acknowledged power to claim dominion. The territory must be assigned to someone or other... There is a country without a nation; and God now in his wisdom and mercy, directs us to a nation without a country. Thus was born the phrase that eventually became the Zionist slogan of "A land without a people for a people without a land". . ." It is worthwhile to note that there is no indication if Earl Shaftesbury who wrote these lines had ever visited that part of the world to find out if there were people living there, or if it was an empty wilderness.

Source: Diana Muir, *Middle East Quarterly*, spring 2008, pp. 55-62 as cited by Garfinkle, Adam M., "On the Origin, Meaning, Use and Abuse of a Phrase." *Middle Eastern Studies*, London, Oct. 1991, vol. 27, p. 539).

In his book "Jerusalem: The Biography", Simon Sebag Montefiore specifies that "Shaftesbury borrowed the notorious phrase "a land without a people" from a Scottish minister, Alexander Keith, and it was later attributed (probably mistakenly – Montefiore's qualification) to Israel Zangwill, a Zionist who did not believe in settling Palestine, precisely because it was already inhabited by Arabs. See Simon Sebag Montefiore, "Jerusalem: The Biography", footnote p. 348 - Alfred Knopf, New York (2011).

- 27 - Benny Morris – 1948: *The First Arab-Israeli War* – Yale University Press, New Haven, Connecticut (2008) - P393. "David Ben-Gurion well understood these contradictory perspectives. As he told his colleagues, against the backdrop of the Arab Revolt of 1936-1939: We must see the situation for what it is. On the security front, we are those attacked and who are on the defensive. But in the political field we are the attackers and the Arabs are those defending themselves. They are living in the country and own the land, the village. We live in the Diaspora and only want to immigrate (to Palestine) and gain possession of the land from them." (Ref: Protocol of meeting of the Jewish Agency Executive, 7 July 1938, Ben-Gurion Archive).

"Years later, after the establishment of Israel, (Ben-Gurion) expatiated on the Arab perspective in a conversation with the Zionist leader Nahum Goldmann: "I don't understand your optimism....Why should the Arabs make peace? If I was an Arab leader I would never make terms with Israel. That is natural: We have taken their country. Sure, God promised it to us, but what does that matter to them? Our God is not theirs. We come from Israel, it's true, but two thousand years ago, and what is that to them? There has been anti-Semitism, the Nazis, Hitler, Auschwitz, but was that their fault? They only see one thing: We have come here and stolen their country. Why should they accept that?" (Goldmann, Nahum. *The Jewish Paradox*. Translated by Steve Cox. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1978.

- 28 - The Jewish people hail originally from the Mediterranean as well as the Arabian Peninsula. Ethnically, or even possibly genetically the ancient Jews could have been cousins or brothers to the Arabs. Actually many Jews look exactly like Arabs, hence they are occasionally stopped and frisked by Israeli police suspecting them of being "Arab terrorists".
- 29 - For a better understanding of the forces at play within the Israeli and Jewish political establishment refer to the following book (in French only): "Au Nom du Temple: Israël et l'Irrésistible ascension du Messianisme juif" by Charles Enderlin, Seuil Publishers, Paris 2013.
- 30 - See Gila Svirsky's description of New Profile's 2002 "Women Refuse" campaign, in which the participants refused: "To raise our children for war, to ignore war crimes committed in our name, to support the occupation, to continue our normal lives while another nation is suffering because of us".

Gila Svirsky, "Nonviolence in the Israeli Women's Peace Movement" August 31, 2003

- <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/GSN/message/22207> - Quoted from the book by Maxine Kaufman-Lacusta, "Refusing to be enemies", Ithaca Press, Reading, UK (2010) pp. 334, 437.
- 31 - For further reading, please see: Seth G. Jones, "Fighting Networked Terrorist Groups: Lessons from Israel", Studies in Conflict and Terrorism, By RAND Corporation, Arlington, Virginia, USA - Security Studies Program, Georgetown University, Washington, DC, USA – 30:281–302, (2007).
- 32 - For a good example, please refer to the book by Shlomo Sand, "The Invention of the Jewish People", Verso Books, London (2009). Originally published in Hebrew "Matai w'ekh humtza ha'am hayehudi?" When and how was the Jewish People Invented? Shlomo Sand has dedicated his book "To the memory of the refugees who reached this soil, and those who were forced to leave it." Another example is Professor Avi Shlaim. See in particular "Reflections on the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict". Edited text of a lecture he gave to the Royal Society for Asian Affairs on 20 October 2010. Asian Affairs, vol. XLII, no. 1, March 2011.
- 33 - Uri Avnery, "Count me Out", Gush Shalom, October 31, 2009
www.gush-shalom.org
- 34 - Lewis Carroll (Charles Lutwidge Dodgson), "Alice in Wonderland", 1865
- 35 - For a more in-depth analysis, please see: "The Israel Lobby, and U.S Foreign Policy" - By John J. Mearsheimer and Stephen M. Walt, John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University - March 2006.

<http://web.hks.harvard.edu/publications/workingpapers/citation.aspx?PubId=3670>
- 36 - Tony Judt, "Israel: The Alternative", New York Review of Books, 23 October 2003. Quoted from Benny Morris, One State, Two States: Resolving the Israel/Palestine Conflict, Yale University Press, New Haven, Connecticut (2009), p. 9. Tony Judt passed away in August 2010 as these lines were written.
- 37 - Ibid p. 165
- 38 - Israel's real or implied nuclear threat or rather nuclear blackmail/deterrent does not necessarily have to be aimed at any country in particular in the Middle East region. It ensures a front row seat for Israel within the nuclear club of nations; it serves as an efficient threat to the Arab governments, and through them a visible scarecrow to the strategic interests of their allies.
- 39 - For a comprehensive and very well presented study regarding the various phases of the Middle East Peace Process including the Interim and Permanent Status Negotiations between the Palestinians and the Israelis, it is highly recommended to consult the following book: "Back Channel Negotiation: Secrecy in the Middle East Peace Process", by Anthony Wanis-St.John – Syracuse University Press (2011).
- 40 - The Emir's first name is Mohamed and his father's first name is Abdelkrim. He also had a brother whose name was Mahammad (not Mohamed). However, throughout history the Emir was known by his father's first name, i.e. Abdelkrim. The same usage will be continued in this site to avoid further confusion.
- 41 - Zakya Daoud, "Abdelkrim - Une épopée d'or et de sang" - Séguier, Paris 1999
- 42 - Karim Thabet - "Aashru sanawaten maa Farouq" (Ten Years with Farouq) – The Memoirs of Karim Thabet Pasha – Dar Ash-Shourouq, Cairo (January 2000) – Second Printing, volume 2 Pages 54-57 (In Arabic). Selected parts from the memoirs were originally serialized in the "Al-Gomhoreyya" daily in Cairo starting from May 2, 1956.
- 43 - Aziz Mhidi, "El-Khattabi Batal Tahrir Al-Maghreb" (El-Khattabi Hero of Moroccan Liberation), article published in Arabic in "Koul Shay" newspaper, Toronto - Canada, issue number 67, 23 January - 5 February 1995.
- 44 - The bureau was created by Maghreb nationalists to disseminate information about the various issues of concern to their colonized countries. Among its prominent members were Habib Bourguiba (Future Prime Minister and President of Tunisia), Habib Thameur (Killed in an airplane accident in Pakistan), Rachid Idriss (Future Tunisian Minister), Hammadi Badra (future ambassador to Syria, Italy and the Holy See), and Tayeb Slim (Future Tunisian ambassador to the United Nations) on behalf of Tunisia; Allal El-Fassi (Leader of the Istiqlal Party), Mohamed Larbi Alami (Future

Moroccan ambassador to Egypt), and Mohamed Ben Abboud (Killed in the same airplane accident with Habib Thameur), as well as others representing Morocco; and Ibrahim Toubal representing Algeria.

- 45 - Morocco's name in Arabic is "Al-Maghreb" (i.e. Land of the Setting Sun). "Al-Maghreb Al-Arabi" is also used to denote all four North African countries, namely Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya and sometimes Mauritania. Morocco however used to be referred to by Arabs in the Levant as "Marrakech", which at one time of its history was the capital of Morocco. In Turkey, Morocco is called until now "Fas Memleket", i.e. Kingdom of Fez, which at one time was also Morocco's capital under a different dynasty.
- 46 - Hassan M. Eltaher, "Emir Abdelkrim El-Khattabi", Asharq Al-Awsat daily, London, June 24, 1993.
- 47 - Rashid Al-Haj Ibrahim "Defending Haifa and the Problem of Palestine: The Memoirs of Rashid Al-Haj Ibrahim (1891-1953), in Arabic – Institute of Palestine Studies, Beirut, July 2005.
- 48 - Avi Shlaim – "The Rise and Fall of the All-Palestine Government in Gaza", Journal of Palestine Studies, vol.20, No. 1 (Autumn, 1990), pp. 37-53.
- 49 - Naqqada is the small town in Upper Egypt where the 'father of Egyptology' Sir Flinders Petrie undertook successful archaeological excavations in 1894 following meticulous scientific excavation techniques. The forty two years he spent as an archaeologist in Egypt left an indelible mark on Egyptology until our days.
- 50 - "Abdallah Al-Tal: Batal Maaraket Al-Quds" (Abdallah Al-Tal: Hero of the Battle for Jerusalem), by Dr. Ahmad Youssef Al-Tal – Dar Al-Fourqan, Amman 1999 (In Arabic). (This is a modified re-issue of Colonel Abdallah Al-Tal's original book "Karethat Falastin" (The Palestine Catastrophe) published in Cairo in 1959 (in Arabic).
- 51 - The history of Haj Amin Al-Husseini is well told by Zvi Elpeleg in his book "Mufti Ha-gadol" (The Grand Mufti: Haj Amin al-Hussaini, founder of the Palestinian National Movement). Translated from Hebrew by David Harvey, Frank Cass, London (1993). Despite some mistranslations and mistransliterations of source material from Arabic into Hebrew and then into English, beside gratuitous, stereotyped, inaccurate comments by the author regarding Haj Amin and the Holocaust, the book provides a good read about Haj Amin and his times.
- A more recent book by Ilan Pappé gives a fuller, more accurate and certainly more balanced account of the life and times of the whole Husseini family including of course Haj Amin: Ilan Pappé – "The Rise and Fall of a Palestinian Dynasty: The Husaynis 1700-1948", University of California Press, Berkeley, California (2010). First published in Hebrew as "Azulat Haaretz: HaHusaynim Biographia Politis, Bialik Institute, Jerusalem (2002).
- A few years before he died, Haj Amin had commissioned Zuhayr Mardini, a Syrian journalist resident in Beirut in those days, to write a book about his life. Eventually Haj Amin changed his mind and offered to pay Mardini for the work he may have already completed and asked him to return whatever reference and source material the Mufti had lent him. According to the writer of those lines, who witnessed the conversation, Mardini seemed to have acquiesced, but it is not clear if he had returned the documents as agreed, and if he had received any payment from the Mufti as agreed.
- 52 - Mohamed Ali Eltaher, "Nazarat Ashoura", Ashoura Press, Cairo (1932), p. 252.