

LATIN AMERICAN PALESTINIANS: MIGRATION, SETTLEMENT AND THE  
CREATION OF A PALESTINIAN DIASPORA IN HONDURAS

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Abstract of  
Latin American Palestinians: Migration, Settlement and the Creation of a  
Palestinian Diaspora in Honduras

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This study addresses the Palestinian emigration from Ottoman and British Palestine to Latin America, with a focus on the Diaspora created in Honduras. Through migration, diaspora and acculturation theory it analyzes the Diaspora and the migration itself. A historical background analyzes the factors that led to the emigration while field research allows for an in-depth analysis of the Diaspora today and how it has evolved. It hypothesizes that the Palestinian Diaspora in Honduras has enjoyed great economic success at the cost of deteriorating relations with the non-Palestinian population. Additionally, it hypothesizes that these Palestinians have no intentions to return to their homeland, and thus will remain in their host country. The study also compares the Palestinian Diaspora in Chile with that of Honduras. Furthermore, through a comparative analysis it identifies differences and similarities between the Jewish and Palestinian migration, and subsequent Diasporas in both Chile and Honduras. Through surveys, interviews and focus-groups, it concludes that the hypotheses are correct and that while Palestinians have enjoyed economic success, their image within Honduran society has suffered. Additionally they do not intend to return to their homeland. It also introduces the difference between Honduras' two main

cities; Tegucigalpa, the capital, and San Pedro Sula, the economic and commercial center of the country. Relations between the Palestinian Diaspora and the native population are strained in San Pedro Sula more so than in Tegucigalpa. It concludes that the Palestinian Diaspora in Latin America has grown to be one of the most successful within the Diaspora, both in terms of socioeconomic status and political achievements.

**Keywords:** Palestinian Diaspora, Honduran immigration, Palestinian migration, Jewish Diaspora, Chile, Honduras, Latin America

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This dissertation is dedicated to my parents,  
Samir and Vida Handal, who always dreamed of a return to Bethlehem.

And to the Palestinian identity,  
may it never be forgotten and may peace one day return

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## **Introduction**

*To you generous emigrants  
From the town of Bethlehem and its districts in all parts of the world  
I particularly mention among you, your children and grandchildren  
Who do not know the town of Bethlehem, the cradle of Christ  
The spiritual capital of Christendom  
And the birth-place of their fathers and ancestors  
Not knowing Jerusalem or Palestine, nor even the Arabic language  
We hope that you will always be the best descendants of the best forefathers  
And that you will never forget the birth-place of your fathers and ancestors  
But hasten to revive its memory with science and knowledge  
Striving to help it morally and materially  
Visiting it when the opportunity arises  
Returning to it when things stabilize  
If God wills  
As you are the dutiful sons of your inveterate nation.*

(Elali 1991, 1)

This is an excerpt from a book written by Giries Nicola Elali, who was born in Bethlehem and emigrated to Brazil to raise his family. The book was written specifically for the Bethlehemites living in the Palestinian Diaspora,<sup>1</sup> in an attempt to catalog the daily lives of Bethlehemites and the traditions of a culture so that those in the Diaspora could continue their traditions and not forget their ancestry. While it is not considered an academic source, it provides a glimpse into the first-hand experience of a Palestinian who emigrated from Palestine twice. Elali was born in Bethlehem and studied engineering, he emigrated first to Kuwait, then to

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<sup>1</sup> The literature varies on capitalization of the word, but for the remainder of the research when the word is capitalized it will refer to a specific diaspora, and when it is not capitalized it will signify that the term is being used as a general classification.

Baghdad and then returned to Bethlehem in 1960 to serve as the Municipal Engineer. He remained in Bethlehem for four years, after which he decided that with the economic conditions deteriorating he needed to emigrate again to seek improved living conditions—leaving before the 1967 Six Day War. Elali had two options, either travel to Chile or to Brazil. His wife, Mary Hazboun, had family in Brazil, and his uncles had emigrated to Chile decades before. Elali traveled to both and eventually chose Brazil, due to the “abundance of work” and planned to settle in Brazil for roughly five years, or until the conditions in Bethlehem improved so that he might return (Elali 1991, 187). Elali passed away in Natal, Brazil on December 24, 2007. He assisted in developing the city of Natal, building three hotels and several other building complexes throughout the city. He was immortalized by having a street named after him in Natal.

Palestinian emigration has taken place for more than a century. They formed a diaspora that in some cases has thrived outside of modern day Israel, while anticipating that someday they will return to their homeland. There is a great deal of research on and interest in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the political issues it has created. However, there is little research on the Diaspora itself, a Diaspora which has been overshadowed by the continued territorial conflict.

This dissertation is divided into eight chapters. First the interest in the topic and why it is important to the field of global affairs, particularly migration, diaspora and Palestinian-Israeli studies will be discussed. This is followed by the

first chapter, which outlines the available literature on migration, diaspora and acculturation theory. Chapter two introduces the Palestinian Diaspora in Latin America. Chapter three contains the research questions and hypotheses proposed by the researcher. Additionally, this chapter explains the methodology used and how the data was collected. Chapter four introduces the Jewish Diaspora in Latin America and compares its experience to that of the Palestinian. Chapters five through seven focuses on the Diaspora in Honduras and what led to their emigration from Palestine. Chapter five discusses the economic and political atmosphere of Ottoman and British Palestine and the implications it had on emigration. Chapter six introduces the accomplishments and failures of Palestinians in Honduras. Chapter seven introduces and analyzes the results from the data collected and chapter eight discusses the conclusion and future research on this topic.

### **Palestinians in Latin America: A Unique Perspective on this Diaspora**

Migration is inherent in human nature, fueled by either a need to migrate or out of a curiosity to explore beyond one's borders. Migrations have been accompanied by complications, as globalization has allowed for ideas and people to move freely around the globe while governments have made borders more restrictive. Over the past century Palestinians have emigrated from Palestine and later from Israel and the occupied territories to the Americas, Europe and the Middle East – as well as to Australia and Africa.

### **A Palestinian Christian?**

Ethnically, I am a Palestinian Christian from Bethlehem and have witnessed the Palestinian migration and have lived within the Palestinian Diaspora in Latin America. Church records in Bethlehem indicate that my family can trace its roots in Bethlehem back to the twelfth century. My parents, grandparents and their ancestors were all married in the Church of the Nativity<sup>2</sup> in Bethlehem. What is even more interesting is that contrary to popular belief and to many migration patterns, my family has a history of travel to and from Latin America. Many scholars believed that the Palestinians who emigrated to Latin America never returned to Palestine. This is a common misconception, as the early Palestinian immigrants flowed freely between Latin America and Palestine, under Ottoman rule and then under the British Mandate. My maternal grandfather was born in Chamelecón, Honduras in 1929 but traveled back to Bethlehem, British Palestine in 1934 as a child. His parents had migrated from Bethlehem to Honduras in the mid 1920s only to return to Bethlehem in 1934.

In addition, my great-grandmother (my maternal grandmother's mother) was born in Recife, Brazil in 1900 and also returned to Bethlehem, when it was part of the Ottoman Empire. Her parents, my great-great grandparents, had traveled to Brazil in the late 1890s in search of better economic conditions.

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<sup>2</sup> The Church of the Nativity is a basilica located in Bethlehem and was built on ground that, according to the Christian religion, is believed to be the birth place of Jesus Christ. The Church was constructed in 339 A.D. and is a UNESCO World Heritage site.

Therefore, this exchange was present early on between Palestine and Latin America. Furthermore, this notion of Palestinian emigration is inherent in my family. My grandparents had traveled throughout the Middle East establishing import/export businesses before finally settling in the United States—each of their children were born in a different country in the Middle East. While my mother grew up in Jersey City, New Jersey, she met and married my father on a trip to Bethlehem and then emigrated with him to Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, in the 1970s to take advantage of its growing economy. In the early 1980s they followed my grandparents to the U.S. where they opened an ice cream store.

Although I have never visited Bethlehem, I have an inalienable connection to the land, history and people. Like the Palestinian migration, culture and people, my upbringing is unique and complex. I was born in the U.S., yet grew up in Honduras. While in Honduras I was seen as a *turco*—a term used to define Palestinians. My father had traveled to Honduras in 1987 to start an ice cream business, which allowed us to live a modest life within the Honduran middle class. Growing up I only knew Palestinians existed through the people around me. We had a social club, a church that held mass in Arabic and was centered on Palestinian culture and a school that taught children Palestinian culture and the Arabic language. I grew up to know about Palestinian culture and traditions, yet at the same time did not recognize what it meant to be Palestinian, and how



politically charged the phrase “Palestinian” was outside of the Palestinian community in Honduras.

It was not until I returned to the U.S. to complete high school that I realized the importance of being a Palestinian and, in that, the rarity of being a Palestinian Christian. One incident that will forever remain with me was the period after the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks, when all Arabs were thrown into the limelight. One of my high school teachers, in discussing the attacks and what can be done, told the class that what the U.S. needed were people like John who look Arab. She continued with an explanation on how I know the language and the religion, and therefore I could infiltrate terrorist groups and gather intelligence to prevent further attacks. Many knew that I was Palestinian and knew I was Christian. However, my teacher assumed that because I was a Palestinian I must have been Muslim. One of my classmates, in defending me, told the teacher that I was Christian and not Muslim, however she went on to argue her point. I then told the teacher that in fact he was correct and that I am a Christian, and she defensively asked me, “Well, when did your family convert?” I was astonished, embarrassed and at the same time frightened at the level of ignorance displayed by an educated individual. Who was this person telling me who I am, who my people are, what we believe in—defining who I am to conform to her notion of who a Palestinian is. I told the teacher that my family has always been Christian, and that we actually come from the town in Palestine that was the birthplace of Jesus. She was amazed and to this day I do not think she believed me, because

all that she has ever known is that all Palestinians are Muslim. It was this incident that drove me to find out exactly who I am, through my heritage, culture and history. I decided that I would never again allow someone to define me, to tell me who I was or was not. Since that day I have researched the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and have educated myself about Palestinian history.

This was my initial interest in this topic. However, my interest expanded once I realized my unique ability to discuss and understand the Palestinian Diaspora. Scholarly work on Palestinians is dominated by the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The transnational migration of the Palestinian Diaspora is a subject that, in comparison to other groups, gets little attention in migration, diaspora or Latin American studies and even in major academic studies on Palestinians. While many Palestinians have migrated within the Middle East, it is those who have migrated outside of the Middle East who have created rather successful diasporas. Studies of Palestinian Christians in particular are not found as often as those that focus on Palestinians as a whole.

The Diaspora in Latin America has been the most successful within all of the Palestinian Diaspora, yet it has eluded notoriety and instead has remained rather understudied. The importance of my research is to analyze this Diaspora and to research their experience in their host countries. Additionally, their impact on the Palestinian-Israeli situation could be important. When the State of Israel was founded it relied not only on international support through governments, but also largely depended on the Jewish Diaspora which was scattered around the

world. If a Palestinian state is created, will this Diaspora play a role? Recent events have shown that Latin American nations are strong supporters of Palestinian independence. In addition, globalization has allowed for this Diaspora to reconnect with their homeland, reigniting support for the Palestinian cause.

Furthermore, there are important implications for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. This Diaspora has a great amount of influence in Latin America, a region that is beginning to contend on a global scale. The Diaspora's importance in global issues cannot be disregarded, it is rapidly developing and will play larger roles on the global arena. These Palestinians can influence Latin American governments to take a tougher stance on Israel, which would have severe consequences for that state. What must also be contemplated is whether these Palestinians will return to the Palestinian territories, or even a newly created Palestinian state. Many of these Palestinians in the Diaspora enjoy the lives they created in their host countries. However, they are notably nationalistic and identify with their Palestinian roots. While preliminary research has shown that a determination to return is non-existent, there is however, an exchange present between the Diaspora in Latin America and the Palestinian territories.

With this being said, it is important to also identify what this research will not discuss. The Palestinian emigration was both political and economic. It was political due to the conflict among Arabs, Jews and the British government and economic because the people sought out improved living conditions. This research will give a brief historical description of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, which will only be in the context of how it affected the emigration of these

Palestinians and the different waves of emigration from the early part of the twentieth century until the latter part of the century. In addition, when discussing a group that can be classified as refugees this implies that there are claims to a right of return.<sup>3</sup> However, a right of return will not be addressed. That is to say that the question of whether these Palestinians in the Diaspora want to return will be addressed, but their legal status and legal rights will not be discussed. The conflict is a controversial topic, and being a Palestinian I hold/have a certain bias; this is my attempt to not discuss the conflict unless it is in the context of the Diaspora and its effect on it.

This study will also compare the Palestinian Diaspora in Chile and Honduras as well as the Jewish Diaspora in both countries. However, the majority of the research will be focused on the Diaspora in Honduras. The most important contribution this study will introduce to the field is an analysis of the relationship between the Palestinian Diaspora and the native<sup>4</sup> population of Honduras. Their relations have deteriorated, and both groups have become polarized. Research on this Diaspora is primarily based on their economic success and political aspirations in Honduras. However, the relationship between both groups is centered on these same successes. Finally, the Diaspora will be analyzed using acculturation theory to attempt to address whether or not the Diaspora has assimilated to their host country.

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<sup>3</sup> "UN General Assembly Resolution 3236" Adopted November 22, 1974.

"1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees" Issued July 28, 1951.

<sup>4</sup> The researcher struggled with the appropriate term for non-Arabs. After discussing this with members of the community in Honduras the term *natives* was designated. This does not translate to indigenous, but includes any native Honduran who is not of Middle Eastern descent.

## **CHAPTER I:**

### **Migration, Diaspora and Acculturation Theory**

In order to properly understand the Palestinian migration and creation of a diaspora in Latin America three key terms must be analyzed and applied to this group; this includes migration, diaspora and acculturation theory. Throughout this section examples and comparisons of other diasporas will be used in order to better understand the application of these theories to the Palestinian Diaspora.

#### **Migration**

Migration has allowed for civilizations to expand and share resources, culture, politics and economies—creating an exchange between the country of origin and the receiving country. At times this has been a mutually beneficial exchange, while at other times it has had a negative impact. It is an important aspect of the global community, and has allowed for products, science and art to be shared globally. While some diasporas are created out of a natural human tendency to seek improved living conditions, or out of curiosity, there are others that are forced (Levaggi 2012).

For Palestinians, this has translated into emigration from Palestine to the Arab Gulf, Europe and the Americas—as well as to Australia and Africa on a smaller scale. During the middle of the twentieth century Palestinians flocked to the Arab Gulf to profit from the jobs offered by the oil boom and the need to build an infrastructure in the region. In Kuwait alone there were nearly 400,000 Palestinians in 1991 (Lesch 1991, 42). The Diaspora was close to outnumbering

the 600,000 Kuwaiti citizens at the time. The Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), which at the time was the diplomatic representation for the Palestinians, publically expressed their support for Saddam Hussein's military occupation of Kuwait. The Kuwaiti government needed an excuse to expel a large portion of these Palestinians and found one when the PLO publically announced this support. The Kuwaiti government was successful in deporting a large amount, leaving roughly 9,000 Palestinians in Kuwait.<sup>1</sup> Kuwait is important in discussing the Palestinian Diaspora because they were successful in Kuwait, and comprised a large portion of the Kuwaiti population. However, their success and size did not protect them from deportation by the Kuwaiti government, exposing a vulnerability to diasporas.

Latin America has been at both the receiving and sending end of migrants. After Europeans landed on the shores of the Americas, the possibilities of migration to and from were opened. Latin America became a destination for those seeking a new life, as well as for those escaping persecution and those brought as slaves. As African slavery ended in Latin America the need for foreign workers increased alongside the growth of their economies. This included indentured Asian workers as well as migrants from the Middle East and Europe. Europeans were responsible for a large portion of immigrants to Latin America, this was due to their colonial and commercial interests. Latin America proved to be a useful source of raw materials for the growing economies of European

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<sup>1</sup> "Angry Welcome for Palestinians in Kuwait" BBC May 30,2001. Accessed January 24, 2013 <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/1361060.stm>

powers (Sánchez-Albornoz 1974, 146). In respect to Chile and Honduras, it was the nitrates in Chile and the banana and coffee exports of Honduras that attracted immigrants to these lands. Those escaping persecution also found refuge in Latin America. We see this with the first Jews who emigrated to Latin America, escaping persecution from Spain during the Spanish Inquisition. While many Jews escaping the Inquisition fled to other parts of Europe and North Africa, some fled to North and South America.

In addition, today Latin America is the place of origin for many migrants traveling to North America. When migration and Latin America are used in the same sentence many immediately think of the sending aspect of Latin American migration, and rarely consider Latin America's historical receiving end of worldwide migration. During the first part of the twentieth century, Latin America's vast open lands and largely agricultural based markets appealed to individuals seeking a new way of life, and to those who sought economic opportunities. Between 1900 and 1940, Latin America's population doubled from 60 million to 120 million, mainly due to the migration of Europeans (Sánchez-Albornoz 1974, 168). Honduras' population grew from 350,000 in 1850 to 948,000 in 1930. Chile's population grew from roughly 1.3 million in 1850 to 4.4 million in 1930 (Sánchez-Albornoz 1974, 169). From 1900-1930 Honduras experienced a growth rate per annum of 2.6 percent, in comparison to the Latin American average of

1.8 percent for that same time period.<sup>2</sup> Chile, on the other hand, had a lower growth rate of 1.4 percent from 1900-1930. The first part of the twentieth century consisted of a large amount of European immigrants to Latin America, with a decrease that began in the middle of the century (Brea 2003). In addition to the European immigrants, Latin America received smaller numbers of immigrants from Asia and the Middle East.

It has been estimated that there are roughly 25-30 million people in Latin America who claim Arab ancestry, which translates into 5 percent of the total population of Latin America (Konrad 2012). They have penetrated every aspect of social, cultural and economic life of their respective host country in Latin America. While there are varied reasons for their migration, the main reason was to seek opportunities in the undeveloped lands of Latin America. Additionally, there has been a historical connection between Latin America and the Middle East, primarily during the period of the Spanish Empire in Latin America. Many Spanish words originate from Arabic, and historical figures such as José Martí have mentioned the Arab historical connection and solidarity between Latin America and the Middle East (Hishaam 2003, 1).

### **Emigration**

Emigration is the act of leaving one's homeland and settling in a foreign land. Reasons for emigration can vary, however in regards to the Palestinian Diaspora in Latin America the two most accepted reasons were for either

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<sup>2</sup> This growth rate was calculated using population statistics and does not factor in mortality or birth rates for the time period analyzed.



economic purposes or to escape conflict or persecution. First, individuals migrate to seek a better economic environment. They seek an improvement in their living conditions, a better way of life and/or prosperity. Conversely, migrations due to conflict often create conditions that impact both the diaspora and the host country. These migrations often can be quick, by force, and out of fear. These migrants leave with hopes to one day return to their homeland. At times migration due to conflict can lead to conflict in the final destination of migrants. Nancie González claims that “conflict both produces and is a product of migration” (González 1989, 1). This was the case in the migration of Jewish immigrants from Europe entering Ottoman and British Palestine. The growing tensions between the Zionists immigrants and the Palestinian population led many Palestinians to migrate to escape the conflict. The Jewish immigrants fled persecution and conflict in Europe, however, their migration into and intentions on creating an exclusively Jewish state in Palestine created conflict. As mentioned earlier, the Palestinian Diaspora has signs of both the economic and conflict migratory patterns.

### **Political and Economic Conflict**

There are four migration patterns, but two are applicable to the Palestinian Diaspora in Latin America; conflict driven and economically driven. Lenore Loeb Adler and Uwe Gielen, authors of *Migration: Immigration and Emigration in International Perspective*, give a unique psychological analysis of migration patterns and the human instinct to migrate—or what they label the pulls and

pushes that cause migration. They explain that it is the “push of discontent and adversity, and the pull of new possibilities and rewards” that leads to migration (Adler and Gielen 2003, 9).

Conflict—or political as some have referred to it—and economic migration often have two separate effects on the host country and the country of origin. Anthony Bouscaren, author of *International Migrations Since 1945*, gives an explanation:

Political migration usually has a disrupting effect on the short-run economic situation in both the country of origin and the country of asylum. Economic migration, on the other hand, generally benefits both the emigration and immigration countries by providing opportunities for millions of people (Bouscaren 1963, 3).

He continues by explaining that political migrations are often quick and inefficient, whereas economic migrations are categorized as “steady and predictable” (Bouscaren 1963, 3). His analysis explains that a group that migrates to escape a political conflict is usually not organized and instead is comprised of individuals fleeing that conflict. Therefore the migrants seek refuge wherever they can. An example is the flight of Palestinian refugees who fled the 1948 War and settled in refugee camps in the neighboring countries. While they intended to return, their migration was a mass exodus—which are generally unorganized and quick. Economic migrations are predictable because migrants will seek countries that can offer economic opportunities, or they will follow established family members to countries where they have enjoyed success. An example of this is the flow of Latin American migrants to North America in search of economic opportunities or to follow family members who have already migrated.

Moreover, conflict can be both a cause and an effect of migration (González 1989). People migrate because of conflicts such as wars, and out of fear of persecution. However, these migrations tend to cause conflicts between a newly created diaspora and the host population. This is the case in Honduras, where Palestinians are viewed negatively due to their success and, therefore, their migration to the country has caused conflict between the native population and the Palestinians. The Palestinian community is viewed as having accumulated an excessive amount of wealth and influence in the country. Another example of a political migratory conflict is that of the Palestinian refugees who poured into the neighboring Arab countries after the 1948 Arab-Israeli War. This changed the demographics of their host countries and many of them were placed into refugee camps. The conflict between Palestinians and Hondurans will be further discussed in chapter seven.

The other reason for migration that applies to this Diaspora is economically driven. Seeking economic opportunities and a better way of life are the main causes of this type of migration. Throughout the late 1800s and early 1900s, Palestinians migrated to Latin America to try to find the success that they could not find in Palestine. This lack of success can be attributed to competition between incoming Zionists and Palestinians and the weakening of the Ottoman Empire. Therefore, both types apply to the Palestinian Diaspora. Thus, the two

reasons<sup>3</sup> that Palestinians migrated were 1.) to seek improved living and economic conditions, before 1948; and 2.) to escape political conflict and persecution, after 1948. This however is not exclusive, in that, those that emigrated after 1948 did so due to a combination of political and economic reasons. This will be outlined and discussed in depth in chapters two and five.

### **Migration and Development**

Migration can also be viewed negatively by both the home country and the host country. The sending country can view it as a brain-drain, and the host country can view the migrants as burdening their infrastructure and economy. This is exemplified by the polarization of immigrant groups in many of the host countries vis-à-vis its native citizens. Alexander Betts, author of *Global Migration Governance*, explains that migration is not a zero sum game but instead can be beneficial to all three actors—the migrant, the host and the sending country. In the economic aspect, migrants search for improved economic opportunities. These migrants travel to countries that offer these opportunities, usually countries that are more developed than their own. The migrants are then able to earn wages that are much higher than they would earn in their home country. These migrants, in turn, lower labor costs for the host country by enlarging the work force. Therefore, this can be viewed as a relationship that allows all participants to benefit from the exchange. In regards to the potential “brain-drain” from the sending country, Betts claims that it is not a brain-drain but instead

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<sup>3</sup> These two reasons are a generalization of the political and economic developments that transpired in Ottoman and British Palestine which led to the emigration of the Palestinians. Therefore, smaller factors are not outlined here and instead will be discussed in chapter five.

allows for an exchange of ideas between both the sending and receiving country. He says that brain power is instead “enhanced and shared through ‘circular migration<sup>4</sup>’” (Betts 2011, 276).

In addition, political émigrés are able to better represent their homeland politics from the outside, particularly those that come from repressive regimes. Betts explains that “migrant-sending states can gain through the remittances, investments, knowledge transfers, and political influence of their diasporas” (Betts 2011, 280). While the Palestinian Diaspora in Latin America does not fit neatly into this circular migration that Betts describes, it does apply to the theory that migration can benefit the host country. As will be described in chapters two and five, the Palestinians in Latin America are credited with establishing several industries in their respective host countries and creating an exchange between Latin America and the towns in Palestine.

In discussing migration and development, there is also the theory of middleman minorities, which is explained by Edna Bonacich. This theory is useful in categorizing the Palestinian Diaspora in Latin America as middlemen. Middlemen are categorized as members of a diaspora, they are brokers between the host country and the homeland, and usually play an economic role in their host country's commercial sector. Middlemen start out as sojourners, therefore all middlemen begin as sojourners, however not all sojourners become middlemen

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<sup>4</sup> Circular migration is defined as “the fluid movement of people between countries, including temporary or more permanent movement which, when it occurs voluntarily and is linked to the labor needs of countries of origin and destination, can be beneficial to all involved” (“World Migration 2008: Managing Labour Mobility in the Evolving Global Economy” 2008, 302).

(Bonacich 1973, 583). Furthermore, when sojourners arrive in a host country they do not concentrate on assimilating, but instead "are there to make money, not spend it" (Bonacich 1973, 587). This happened with the Palestinian Diaspora in Latin America: They concentrated on making money, as many had the intention of returning home. In Honduras this led many Hondurans to label the Palestinians as frugal and cheap.

Additionally, Bonacich explains that once these sojourners become middlemen by settling in the host country they exhibit the following traits:

a resistance to out-marriage, residential self-segregation, the establishment of language and cultural schools for their children, the maintenance of distinctive cultural traits (including, often, a distinctive religion), and a tendency to avoid involvement in local politics (Bonacich 1973, 586).

The Palestinians in Latin America have exhibited all these traits. The first émigrés were reluctant to intermarry with the host country's population, however subsequent generations have intermarried. In Honduras the Palestinian Diaspora primarily resided in small enclaves that consisted of Palestinians. An example of this is the neighborhood of Bella Vista in San Pedro Sula which was primarily a Palestinian neighborhood. In both Honduras and Chile they have established cultural and religious identities through the establishment of cultural schools and churches that cater to the Palestinian Diaspora. Finally, the first émigrés avoided politics in both Honduras and Chile, however subsequent generations have become involved in politics and have held high government positions in both countries as well as other countries in Latin America.

### **Globalization in Migration Studies**

Globalization has increased, facilitated and encouraged migration. This phenomenon, which is defined as "a long accumulation of technological advance which has given human beings the ability to conduct their affairs across the world without reference to nationality, government authority, [or] time of day of physical environment" (Langhorne 2006, 2). Globalization has even changed migration patterns due to development, discoveries, political barriers and opportunities that are recognized and anticipated much earlier than before. Globalization has facilitated this dialogue between the diaspora and the home country through the increase in the availability and ease of telecommunications and information—in addition to the globally intertwined economic markets. The “extraordinary development of transportation and communication technologies” and the “information revolution have transformed emigrant political activity” (Koslowski 2005, 2). The combination of globalization and diaspora studies has created the term *diasporic globalization*. This term is defined as:

human migration, voluntary or involuntary, the dispersion of the emigrants to more than one site, the connection of the various sites to each other through various forms of social interaction, and the maintenance of transnational relations between the homeland and the resettled émigrés (Laguerre 2006, 5).

For the Palestinian diaspora this translates into the connection between homeland and host country, and the social interactions of the community. Palestinians, specifically those from Bethlehem and the surrounding towns, have created social groups to remain connected, whether through social media sites

such as Facebook or formal organizations such as the *Bethlehem Association* and the *American Federation of Ramallah Palestine*.<sup>5</sup>

In the past, repressive regimes have banished political activists and opponents as a way to prevent them from taking action. However, today's exiled activists are more effective outside of a repressive regime than inside. In addition, diasporas have acted as the "brokers" between host and homeland. An example is the Haitian Diaspora in the U.S. This Diaspora in Miami was able to broker a deal for the return of former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide to Haiti. Furthermore, there have been instances of diasporic influence on homeland politics to the extent that they are incorporated into the homeland's government policies. Haiti, for example, is divided into ten departments or districts; one of them, the tenth department, is categorized as the diasporic one and is comprised of members from the Diaspora (Laguerre 2006, 10). This dynamic shows the importance of diasporic communities to some nations.

One example of using host-country politics to influence homeland politics is the Iraqi exile Ahmed Chalabi, who convinced the U.S. government that the Iraqi people were ready to be liberated from the reign of Saddam Hussein, thus pushing for Operation Iraqi Freedom. Iraqi émigrés created the Iraqi National Congress in 1992, which became a lobbying entity in the U.S. Congress. The Iraqi National Congress was able to successfully lobby the Clinton and Bush

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<sup>5</sup> The Bethlehem Association, a non-profit registered in Media, Pennsylvania, consists of nearly 12,000 members from the Diaspora from Bethlehem, Beit Jala and Beit Sahour. The American Federation of Ramallah Palestine is a similar group consisting of members of the Palestinian Diaspora from Ramallah. See [www.bethlehemassoc.org](http://www.bethlehemassoc.org) and [www.afrp.org](http://www.afrp.org). Accessed December 3, 2013



administrations to take action against Saddam, both covertly and overtly. The U.S. government officially recognized the need for regime change when it passed the Iraq Liberation Act of 1998, under pressure from the Iraqi National Congress. The U.S. eventually took military action against Saddam, toppled his government, and instated a new government. Roughly half of the new government consisted of returning Iraqis and émigrés (Koslowski 2005, 2). This is an example of how members of a diaspora can influence the foreign policy of their host nation.

The Palestinian Diaspora did not face extreme repression in their homeland until after the 1967 Six Day War in which Israel occupied Gaza and West Bank. However, the Diaspora has played a role in helping to advance the image of the struggle of Palestinians as a whole. They have been able to do this through the creation of organizations that lobby for their interests. This has been eased and facilitated by globalization. With that said, a diaspora's image in its host country is as important as its image in its homeland.

### **Diasporas**

Diasporas are created through migration. However, in order to understand this research the definition of what the word *diaspora* signifies today must be discussed—this is to ensure an understanding of the word in the context of this study. The term *diasporas* can have different meanings to different groups. For example, for the Jewish Diaspora the term has a very different significance than it does for the Italian Diaspora. For some, it means a group that lives away from

its native lands and may or may not have lost its traditions or culture. However, for others it signifies a constant struggle to continue to practice traditions and cultural beliefs, with the hope that one day they will be able to return to their native lands and continue their society; it represents a fear of losing one's identity, or becoming a forgotten people (Cohen 1997). It is displacement from what was once known to the unknown. It is an "ideology of separation from, and a longing for return to, the homeland" (Knott and McLoughlin 2010, 9). This idea of a *homeland* has been at the core of diasporas, a term first translated by Greeks and appearing in the Septuagint (Knott and McLoughlin 2010, 263). This is one of the reasons why, historically, the term referred to the Jewish Diaspora and the Jewish longing to return to their homeland. Moreover, the three criteria of a diaspora are comprised of "a common ethnicity, a second is internal organization and a third is a significant level of contact with the homeland" (Dorai 2012, 88). This self-awareness, or identification with a common cultural heritage, and contact with a homeland is what classifies a group as a diaspora. In addition, other researchers have added that in order to classify a group as a diaspora there has to be settlement in "a minimum of two destinations" (Butler 2001, 192). The Palestinian community in Latin America fulfills all of these criteria, therefore they can be classified as a diaspora. There are several different types of diasporas, with each having particular characteristics.

Recent history has allowed for the term to be used as a descriptive adjective and noun to represent the migratory patterns of groups of people from

their homeland. Academics have now categorized different sets of diasporas based on the reasoning for their migration (Brubaker 2005). In *Global Diasporas: An Introduction*, Robin Cohen discusses the different types of diasporas and explains their categorizations. The four types of diasporas are 1.) *victim*; 2.) *labor and imperial*; 3.) *trade* and 4.) *cultural*. Victim diasporas are created by conflict, persecution and fear. They migrate out of an attempt to survive. The Jewish diaspora is an example of a victim diaspora—but can also be viewed as an economic migration. The second diaspora is labor and imperial. This classification is given to diasporas that are created due to migrant workers, however certain elements must be present. It simply cannot be applied to a group that migrates for employment and loses all ties to their cultural heritage. Those that migrate for work yet keep strong connections to their heritage, traditions and homeland are labor diasporas. Cohen gives the example of the “indentured Indian workers employed on the tropical plantations of the European colonial possession” (Cohen 1997, 62).

Imperial diasporas represent those that were created by imperial powers when its citizens would settle in foreign countries and create, in of itself, a diaspora. Examples include descendants of the British colonies in Africa. The next type is trade diasporas. These diasporas are created by international trade. A group or individual would travel to another country, settle and get accustomed to the ways of life, and then shortly after they would begin trade between the country of residence and of origin. Cohen’s example of this type is the Lebanese

Diaspora. According to Cohen this type is “advantageous to the diaspora itself, its homeland and its place of settlement” (Cohen 1997, 99). The Lebanese in Brazil have established trade between Brazil, Lebanon and other parts of the Middle East. The fourth type is the cultural diaspora. This diaspora is one that uses culture to continue traditions, yet has no true connection to territorial identity. This is largely caused by forcible separations from their homeland, thus having no claim to a homeland. The African Diaspora in the Caribbean is an example of a cultural diaspora, their culture is well represented, yet they make no territorial claims and are not nationalistic in regards to a homeland. However, these types are not exclusive, and thus a diaspora can be classified within more than one type of diaspora.

Palestinians in general would be classified as a *catastrophic diaspora*, or as referred to before, a *victim diaspora* (Cohen 1997). However, only one classification cannot be applied to the Palestinians in Latin America. After 1948 they fled their homeland out of fear and continue to this day to hope that they will one day be allowed to return. Essentially, they mimic the Jewish Diaspora’s struggle from the late nineteenth century to return to their homeland. With this being said, the Palestinian Diaspora in Latin America has several different factors that allow it to be viewed as a victim, cultural and a trade diaspora. As mentioned earlier, some of the Palestinians who emigrated to Latin America fled persecution—from both the Ottoman Empire and the incoming Zionists. However, many emigrated due to trade and to seek economic opportunities.

Therefore, the Palestinians as a whole are labeled a victim diaspora, but the Palestinian Diaspora in Latin America, a sub-diaspora, exhibit characteristics of a trade diaspora, a victim diaspora and a cultural diaspora. This correlates to their migratory classification as being both political and economic. This will be explained in further detail in chapter two.

Until recently, the influence a diaspora has on its host country has been understudied. The "traditional" notion of nation-states and their role in the international community is challenged by the influence of diasporas. That is not to say that they have given up their sovereignty, but that diasporas have a growing influence on homeland and host country politics and economics. Moreover, globalization has allowed for diasporas to play greater roles in the politics of their homeland by allowing them to remotely access information and news, and convey this information and their opinions to the host country.

Current research has shown the extent of political and economic influence a diaspora can exhibit on the relations between the host country and the country of origin. Examples include the impact of the Irish-American Diaspora on relations between Ireland and the United States, and the Chinese Diaspora in Africa and the relations between African nations and mainland China and the Cuban Diaspora in the United States. A very useful and well documented example is that of the Cuban Diaspora and the impact it has had on U.S. foreign policy towards Cuba.

The Cuban Diaspora in the U.S. realized that through organizational strength they could mold U.S. foreign policy toward Cuba to reflect their own interests (Haney and Vanderbush 1999, 344). Cuban-Americans created the Cuban American National Foundation (CANF) in 1981 to effectively voice their concerns regarding Cuba. As a homogeneous group, they were able to utilize this organization as a very effective lobbying mechanism, and become what has been labeled as *ethnic lobbying*. This term, coined by Terrence Lyons and Peter Mandaville, refers to an ethnic group in a host country that has created a lobbying group powerful enough to exert influence and pressure over the host country's government to enact change in its policies towards their home country. This type of lobbying has increased due to accessibility and globalization, allowing diasporas to become directly involved in their country of origin's politics and issues. (Knott and McLoughlin 2010, 97). CANF began a relationship with President Reagan in 1983 and pushed its agenda on U.S.-Cuban relations through this type of lobbying. This is a prime example of how a diaspora can influence a host country and the country of origin's relationship, as they have been successful in lobbying for the continuation of the Cuban embargo.

In addition to lobbying and impacting the host-origin countries' relations, diasporas can improve economies, tying their home country's economy to that of the host country's economy. Having the ability to speak the language and trace one's ancestry back to another country creates a connection between the host and country of origin. This connection, or kinship, creates a need for an

intermediary, which is filled by individuals from the diaspora. In 2011 during the World Forum on Diaspora Economy,<sup>6</sup> the President of the United Nations General Assembly Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, from Qatar, explained the “untapped potential” posed by global diasporas. He stated that “diasporas are at the forefront of economic globalization. In recent years, there has been a rise in international awareness of [a] diaspora's important economic contributions, both to their countries of origin and of destination.”<sup>7</sup> This is also reflective throughout the United Nations, as the Secretary General’s 2008 *Report on International Migration* states that migration and diasporas are now routinely discussed on the agendas of nation states, intergovernmental and non-governmental agencies, signifying that it has become a topic of interest among nation-states.<sup>8</sup>

Diasporas have introduced goods, ideas and concepts to markets in host countries, becoming the link between the country of origin and the host. An examples includes the Chinese-Americans in Chinatown in New York City. Chinese-Americans facilitated Chinese investment in New York City. Chinese from China began to invest in Chinatown in New York based on suggestions and many times with the help from Chinese-Americans, bringing foreign investment to the city’s real estate market. Another example includes the Lebanese merchants

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<sup>6</sup> This is a forum held every year, organized by the Financing for Development Business Advisory Group, a non-governmental organization based at the United Nations headquarters in New York City.

<sup>7</sup> Section, United Nations News Service. “UN News - Diasporas Have Important Role to Play in Fostering Development, Says Assembly President.” *UN News Service Section*, December 2, 2011.

<sup>8</sup> U.N. General Assembly, 60<sup>th</sup> Session, Agenda item 54 (c). Globalization and Interdependence: International Migration and Development. Report of the Secretary-General. May 18, 2006. A/60/871

in Mexico, who brought in trade from the Middle East to Mexico, introducing spices, fabrics and customs to the country which became absorbed by the host society. This exchange benefits both countries. In the Palestinian case, they arrived in Honduras with their own cuisine, which has become a staple in many Honduran households.

### **Acculturation Theory**

Acculturation is defined as “phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact, with subsequent changes in the original cultural patterns of either or both groups” (Redfield, Linton, and Herskovits 1936, 1). It is something that all migrants have experienced and have had to contend with, it is an inevitable part of migration and an important factor in analyzing migrant groups. The literature on acculturation theory explains that assimilation, integration and acculturation are treated as separate but related concepts. While acculturation does not signify assimilation or integration, it does imply that both are a part of the acculturation process (ibid). Additionally, ethnic identity is the sense of acculturation to one’s own culture (Phinney et al. 2001, 495). Acculturation does not always signify an abandonment of one’s culture to conform to another, but instead, it can signify an ability to incorporate both cultures independently. Therefore acculturation is the process while assimilation and integration are the classification or level of acculturation.



Several researchers have developed a classification system in order to understand and classify the acculturation of immigrant groups. Jean Phinney et al., explain that there are four classifications of acculturation; they are *integration*, *assimilation*, *separation* and *marginalization*. Assimilation signifies that an individual identifies with the host society's culture and does not identify with their ethnic culture. In the broader sense, assimilation is defined "as the decline, and at its endpoint the disappearance, of an ethnic/racial distinction and the cultural and social differences that express it" (Alba and Nee 1997, 863). An individual who identifies with both the host society's culture and retains their own cultural identity can be classified as being integrated into their host society. An individual who does not identify with the host society's culture and retains their ethnic identity is classified as being separated. Finally, marginalization is used to define an individual who identifies with neither their ethnic culture nor their host society's culture (Phinney et al. 2001, 495). They also explain that in order to classify an individual's acculturation classification they ask two questions: *Is it considered to be of value to maintain one's cultural heritage?* and *Is it considered to be of value to develop relationships with the larger society?* A yes answer to both signifies an integrated individual, while a no answer to both questions would indicate a marginalized individual. A yes to the first answer and a no to the second signifies separation while the opposite signifies assimilation.

Acculturation is an important factor when defining a migrant group. The Palestinian Diaspora in Honduras will be analyzed using the categories outlines above and classified in chapter seven.

## **CHAPTER II:**

### **Palestinian Diaspora**

Palestinians have emigrated from Palestinian territories with a constant outward flow. Darcy Zabel, author of *Arabs in the Americas*, explains that the study of Arabs in Latin America and their immigration was of little interest to many, until recently. According to Zabel, the first instances of Arab migration to Latin America were during the seventeenth century, when King Phillip II issued a decree expelling the Arabs from Spain in 1609 (Zabel 2006, 4). These Arabs traveled to Latin America during the conquest of the Americas. The first reported instance of emigration outside of Palestine to Latin America was in 1899 in Honduras. However, there have been accounts of Palestinian travel to Latin America that dates back to the late 1700s. One such account comes from a church record in Bethlehem which indicates the death of a Bethlehemite in South America in 1797 (González 1989, 78).

There are differing views on the reasons for Palestinians choosing Latin American countries as host nations. Some claim that they were victims of “unscrupulous travel brokers or honest misunderstandings” thinking that they were going to the United States but ended up in Latin America (Zabel 2006, 117). Others explain that these Palestinians followed their family members to Latin America, “that once a nucleus was established, others came to join their relatives” and “many and maybe the majority, of the early immigrants headed intentionally for Honduras” (González 1992, 64). Both accounts have been

described by members of the Diaspora, therefore it is quite possible that both did occurred.

In 2010 there were an estimated 6.8 million Palestinians in the Diaspora outside of Palestine.<sup>1</sup> Their emigration was two-fold. As mentioned earlier, many of the first to emigrate were Palestinian Christians (Schulz 2003). Migrations before World War I were largely based on socioeconomic reasons and to escape the growing persecution by the Ottoman Empire prior to the war. These Christians usually had family members that had migrated previously and had established businesses in the Americas or Europe. This migration was characterized as family-related chain migration (Cruset 2012, 45). They used the Western based education that they received from Christian schools and their language skills to communicate with the Western world (Schulz 2003).

While the United States was a destination for many, a large majority traveled to and settled in Latin America. During the 1920s the United States had begun to restrict immigration, to the point that Congress passed the Immigration Act of 1924, also known as the Johnson-Reed Act. This reform sharply limited immigration of Eastern Europeans and Asians to 2 percent of the nationality of the foreign-born population in the U.S. based on the 1890 U.S. census. This exclusion curtailed Eastern Jews who were attempting to enter the U.S. to escape persecution, as well as a large majority of Asian immigrants, with very

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<sup>1</sup> Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics 2010 Estimated Number of Palestinians In the World by Country of Residence Report.  
[http://pcbs.gov.ps/Portals/\\_Rainbow/Documents/PalDis-POPUL-2010E.htm](http://pcbs.gov.ps/Portals/_Rainbow/Documents/PalDis-POPUL-2010E.htm)

strict limitations on Middle Eastern immigrants. Thus, immigration to Central and South America was easier for many immigrants, including Palestinians.

Followed by this was the migration during and after the 1948 Arab-Israeli War, which is characterized as migration due to political conflict. This migration is what has become known to the world as the Palestinian refugee issue, and can be explained through two narratives. These narratives are the pre-*Nakba*<sup>2</sup> and post-*Nakba* migration—those that emigrated before the mass Palestinian exile and those that are commonly referred to as refugees after the three year (1947-1949) exodus of Palestinians from their towns and villages. This concept can also be used to identify where Palestinians have emigrated to. Pre-*Nakba* émigrés usually were able to settle permanently in host countries, while the post-*Nakba* group makes up a large portion of the Palestinian refugees. Palestinian elites were successful in settling in host countries outside of the Middle East, while others were forced to enter refugee camps expecting to return home (Dorai 2012, 87). This is an important facet of the Latin American Diaspora because it is primarily comprised of pre-*Nakba* Palestinians. Additionally, researchers have gone to lengths to avoid classifying Palestinians as being members of a Diaspora in order to strengthen their classification as refugees, which would give them certain legal and political rights under international law. This concept does not apply to the Latin American Palestinians, as their migration has been a

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<sup>2</sup> *Nakba* refers to the flight, or exodus, of nearly 750,000 Palestinians from their villages and homes from late 1947 through 1949.

permanent relocation, and their intentions on returning to a homeland are near-nonexistent. This will be further discussed in chapter seven.

The Palestinian Diaspora in Latin America has the largest Palestinian population outside of the Middle East. In Chile it is estimated that there are nearly 300,000 Palestinians, which makes it one of the largest communities of Palestinians outside of Palestine in a non-Arab country.<sup>3</sup> In Honduras, the proportion of Palestinians to native Hondurans is 3 to 4 percent of the entire population (Zabel 2006, 117), with some estimates being as high as 6 percent (Amaya 1997, 137). Both of these create a very sizable community which has an impact on the country and can be seen through all aspects of the society.

The Diaspora in Latin America has succeeded in many aspects of their lives, be it economically, socially or politically. In 2004, two descendents of Palestinian immigrants, Antonio Saca and Shafiq Handal, ran for the office of the president in El Salvador. Antonio Saca won the election and was President of El Salvador from 2004 to 2009. Both were born in Usulután, El Salvador, but their parents were born in Bethlehem. Both families were Christian and emigrated around the same time to El Salvador. The Palestinians in Honduras and Chile are the two most prominent groups in the Palestinian Diaspora, for two reasons. The first is that both countries possess the largest number of Palestinians in Latin America, both in terms of proportion to the domestic population and quantity.

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<sup>3</sup> El Economistas. 11/02/2009 "Los Palestinos Miran Con Esperanza Su Futuro en Chile Sin Olvidar Gaza e Irak" <http://ecodiario.eleconomista.es/sociedad/noticias/1028142/02/09/Los-palestinos-miran-con-esperanza-su-futuro-en-Chile-sin-olvidar-Gaza-e-Irak.html>

With the second reason being that this Diaspora has succeed politically, economically and socially in both countries, with more economic success being concentrated in Honduras and more success in assimilating occurring in Chile. It is important to mention that the Diaspora in Latin America is among the wealthiest out of the entire Palestinian Diaspora (Smith 1986, 91). With this success they have faced struggles. These struggles are more apparent and widespread in Honduras than in Chile, where the Diaspora is more so assimilated than their Honduran counterparts. The Diaspora has suffered resentment and discrimination from the native Hondurans who have seen the Palestinian Diaspora as having too much influence on the country's politics and commerce.

The reasons for their emigration were fairly simple: to find a better life and/or to escape conflict. What is profound about the Palestinian emigration to Latin America is that the first migrants were primarily comprised of Christians from Bethlehem and the surrounding towns of Beit Sahur/Sahour and Beit Jala (Levaggi 2012, 46). Therefore, a large percentage of the Diaspora, and most notably the first settlers, were from the same and neighboring towns. Joshua Hammer, journalist and author of *A Season in Bethlehem*, explains this Diaspora and a discussion he had with a resident of Beit Jala and the story of that resident's great-grandfather's emigration. He says:

In 1907 the Ottoman rulers began forcing Palestinian Christians to serve as porters and servants for their army, and many Beit Jalans boarded boats for the Christian lands of Latin America to escape the draft. Samir Zedan's

great-grandfather, one of the first Beit Jala turcos—as the locals called these Palestinian immigrants to Latin America—had caught a freighter to El Salvador in 1914. He had worked first as a street peddler and then prospered in the import-export business. Nearly everyone in Beit Jala has relatives in El Salvador, Panama, Honduras, Peru, Ecuador, Colombia and other countries in Central and South America (Hammer 2004, 63).

There were several waves of Palestinian emigration. Ariel Levaggi outlines the Palestinian emigration to Latin America in three main waves: 1.) the Ottoman period (1876 to 1914); 2.) the Colonial period (1918 to 1945); and 3.) the Post Colonial period (1945 to 1989) (Levaggi 2012, 43). The Ottoman and Colonial periods consisted of those that were classified as both economically and politically driven, whereas the Post Colonial period consisted of those classified as political migrants. After 1989 there have been smaller waves; however, they have not greatly impacted the Diaspora in Latin America. Instead these waves headed to the United States or to the Arab Gulf. Chapter five gives a detailed explanation of each wave and the political and economic factors that led to the emigration of these Palestinians.

These Palestinians grew in numbers and continued to practice their traditional cultural norms in Latin America. Many soon forgot their native tongue, but subsequent generations were taught about their culture and at times used it as a way to be dissimilar from the native population in their new countries and to hold onto their cultural identity. As with many diasporas, the first generation can recollect the migration itself and memories of their homeland, but later generations simply “are the heirs to diasporic memories that are told and retold,

reappropriated and reinterpreted in light of the here and now” (Knott and McLoughlin 2010, 27). With the Palestinians this has created a sense of connectedness to their homeland and a curiosity to become involved in their homeland. It has also created a skewed sense of homeland, in that all they have known about their homeland and culture has been passed down from generation to generation, which can lead to the reinterpretation of the culture and history. Additionally, Palestinian identity is based on two factors, “the village of origin and family networks” (Dorai 2012, 92). This is central to the understanding of the Diaspora in Honduras, as village and family relations played a crucial role in helping to establish their Palestinian identity in Honduras.

Since this topic is fairly new and available research being from the 1980s, there is little scholarly material available that directly relates to this Palestinian Diaspora or their migration. Recently, there was a book published that specifically looks at the Palestinian communities in Latin America (Raheb 2012). However, it does not thoroughly analyze the Diaspora and instead simply catalogues the experiences of Latin American Palestinians. With that being said, there are also contradicting accounts of the emigration of Palestinians from the Ottoman Empire. For example, Darcy Zabel introduces the research of Michael Humphrey, who opposes the notion that Palestinians fled the Ottoman Empire and that Christians were fleeing Ottoman persecution during the late nineteenth century. Scholars explained that during the Ottoman draft Palestinian Christians fled enlistment, however Humphrey contradicts this by citing Ottoman



immigration records indicating that Ottomans at first tried to prevent emigration but then encouraged it in an attempt to add to the economy through remittances (Zabel 2006, 5). Citing these records, Humphrey ascertains that “more than one third of all Ottoman emigrants returned home” (Humphrey 2004, 335). This would be an example of reverse-migration of Palestinians back to the Ottoman held territories. Humphrey also fails to include whether this return was primarily composed of Muslims, Christians or both and provides little evidence to sustain his claim. This was the only indication of large scale reverse-migration found.

### **Support for a Homeland**

A key issue that few scholars have explored is whether or not the Palestinian Diaspora in Latin America, the most successful within the entirety of the global Palestinian Diaspora, will economically and politically support an independent Palestinian state. During the formative years of the State of Israel, the Jewish Diaspora contributed nearly one-third of Israel’s gross domestic investment, allowing the state to invest in its infrastructure and build an economy (Kleiman 1996, 10). The Jewish Diaspora donated nearly US \$100 billion (2013 figures) to the State of Israel between 1952 and 1984.<sup>4</sup> This connection between the Diaspora and the homeland allowed for the Diaspora to assist with the continued support of Israel without having to physically travel to Israel. This became known as *cheque-book Zionism* (Wasserstein 1996, 102).

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<sup>4</sup> The figure was quoted as financial support by World Jewry to the State of Israel, and consisted of all private and public Jewish donors, and direct capital investments, as well as the sale of Independence Bonds from the State of Israel to the Diasporas (Kleiman 1996, 4). The figure, \$60 billion in 1992, has been adjusted for inflation using the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics CPI inflation calculator to reflect the 2013 adjusted price.

While remittances have always been a factor when discussing the economic potential of a diaspora, in the case of the Jewish Diaspora and the Palestinian Diaspora this does not hold true. Remittances are based on remitting money back to one's homeland, mainly to support family members. Up until the creation of Israel the Jewish people's identification was based on their religious beliefs, therefore they were united as a people through religion and culture and not through a nationalistic identity. This changed with the creation of the State of Israel which allowed them to share a nationalistic identity tied to their religious and cultural identity. Therefore, a Russian-Jew living in the U.S. would not only send remittances back to family members in Russia but would also donate to a global Jewish organization such as the United Jewish Communities or the Jewish National Fund (JNF). The person would be indigenous to Russia, living in the U.S. but supporting a foreign entity that he/she identifies with primarily through the shared religious beliefs. An example of organizational support through this mechanism is the JNF, which was created in 1901 during the Fourth Zionist Congress. The idea of the fund was to have donations "collected from all Jews of the world to establish a general Jewish fund" (Lehn 1974, 76). This fund allowed for the purchase of land in historic Palestine to support Jewish migration to Palestine. Before the creation of the State of Israel, the unifying element of Jews around the world was through religion and this identity was then used to assist in the support for, and subsequent creation of, the State of Israel.

What is unique about today's diasporas and remittances is that they not only support family back home but allow the diaspora to remain connected to

their purported homeland, as exemplified by the Jewish case. Israel and American-Jews have mutually benefited from this support system. American Jews benefit from the “psychological comfort” of knowing that Israel is safe due to their financial contributions and lobbying efforts in the U.S., while Israel knows that it will continue to have the political and financial support of American-Jews (Šain 2007, 35). Palestinians can utilize this example to help support and grow their economy in the West Bank and Gaza, using the Diaspora to financially support a potential Palestinian state. That is to say, that large obstacles must first be overcome, in which many of them consist of political barriers. According to the World Bank, the 2011 remittance rate was equal to only 1 percent of the West Bank's total GDP.<sup>5</sup> However, the support received from the Diaspora, both through philanthropy and investment, is equal to the same amount of foreign aid received (Smith and Stares 2007, 101). Sari Hanafi, a researcher on Palestinian refugees and the Palestinian Diaspora, explains that the total amount of aid received in 1997 by the Palestinian National Authority through investments and philanthropic contributions was US \$410 million, with a majority of this aid coming from middle income Palestinian families—especially from the Gulf (Lesch and Lustick 2005, 69). The remainder of this chapter will be divided into two parts, one dedicated to the Diaspora in Honduras and the other to the Diaspora in Chile.

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<sup>5</sup> World Bank database *Remittance Inflows*. Accessed April 4, 2013

### **Palestinian Diaspora in Honduras**

There have been three books published on the Palestinian Diaspora in Honduras and Central America: *Dollar, Dove and Eagle: A Century of Palestinian Immigration into Honduras* by Nancie González (1992), *Los Árabes y Palestinos en Honduras 1900-1950* (2012) by Jorge Alberto Amaya, and *A Century of Palestinian Immigration into Central America* by Roberto Marín-Guzmán (2000). All these authors discuss the Palestinians in Central America and outline their successes and influence on Honduran culture, and on Central America as a whole. The authors conclude that many of the Palestinians arrived in Central America with the intention of going to the United States, but without understanding the mode of transportation at the time, and due to the increase in immigration regulations in the United States, they settled in Central America.

The first Palestinians arrived in Central America during the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century, this is not to be confused with the Arab migration to Latin America mentioned earlier—including Syrian and Lebanese (Marín-Guzmán 2000). According to Jorge Amaya one of the first recorded Palestinians was Rosa Handal who entered Honduras on December 22, 1898. Furthermore, in 1899 Salomón Handal was registered as one of the main commerce traders of that time (Amaya 2012, 43). He states that subsequent families that arrived around the same period consisted of the Larach, Nini and Yacamán families. Additional records indicate earlier arrivals, such as Elias Ibrahim Handal who was born in Bethlehem in 1865 and died at the age of

twenty seven in Honduras in 1892,<sup>6</sup> indicating that he arrived in Honduras sometime between 1865 and 1892. Arriving on Ottoman travel documents they were immediately labeled as *turcos*, or Turks. From this point forward Palestinians have been known as *turcos*, and at times Lebanese and Syrians have been grouped into this classification. What is interesting about the Diaspora in Honduras is that they are primarily from Bethlehem and its two neighboring towns, Beit Sahur and Beit Jala. Over 75 percent of Middle Eastern inhabitants in Honduras originated from one of these three towns. Table 2-1 analyzes a combined list of Middle Eastern surnames in Honduras according to research by Jorge Amaya and Nancie González.<sup>7</sup> If one removes the surnames with location listed as *unknown*, then over 87 percent of the Middle Eastern surnames in Honduras originated from one of these three towns.

**Table 2-1. Percentage Breakdown of Middle Eastern Surnames in Honduras by Origin from 1950 to Present** (*combination of charts provided by Jorge Amaya and Nancie González*)

Origination	Percentage of Middle Eastern Population in Honduras
<b><i>Bethlehem</i></b>	<b>57.41%</b>
<b><i>Beit Jala</i></b>	<b>14.81%</b>
Unknown	12.50%
Lebanon	4.63%
<b><i>Beit Sahur</i></b>	<b>4.17%</b>
Jerusalem	2.31%
Syria	1.85%
Ramallah	1.85%
Acre	0.46%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

<sup>6</sup> According to records kept by the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem. The family tree of Nasser Handal was analyzed, in which this record was found. Accessed October 12, 2012.

<sup>7</sup> Please see Appendix B for the combined list of Middle Eastern surnames in Honduras created by combining the lists of Jorge Amaya and Nancie González.

Once in Central America they began to grasp every opportunity available and immediately grew in terms of business and wealth. “As early as 1918 Arabs owned more than 40 percent of businesses in San Pedro Sula (Honduras), the country’s most vibrant commercial city” (Bunck and Fowler 2012, 253). Many settled in the Northern Coast, in cities such as San Pedro Sula and La Ceiba. The first documented Palestinian in the capital of the country, Tegucigalpa, was Eduardo Curí, who arrived in 1907 from Beit Sahur (Amaya 2012, 49). However, it was on the Northern Coast where they were able to grow their businesses. This coast includes the port city of Puerto Cortes and the economic and industrial city of San Pedro Sula. Additionally, the Palestinians had an “almost complete control of the import and export commercial sector” (Euraque 1996, 33) in the country, further advancing their business ventures. The literature describes the Palestinians in Honduras, also classified as Arabs, as being prominent business men. By 1930 there were 58 clothing factories in Honduras, of which twenty belonged to Palestinians. By 1931 they controlled a major section of the industries in the main cities across Honduras. Table 2-2 shows the percentage of businesses owned in San Pedro Sula in 1918 by ethnic group. During this period Hondurans owned the least amount of businesses in comparison to the other ethnic groups, with Palestinians owning the largest share.

**Table 2-2.** Percentage of Business Ownership Based on Nationality in San Pedro Sula, 1918<sup>8</sup>

Nationality	Percentage
Palestinian/Arab	41.5%
Spanish (Spain)	14.3%
U.S.A	14%
German	12.5%
British	4.1%
Cuban	3.2%
Other	7.9%
Honduran	2.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

Honduras provided the appropriate economical and political environment to encourage growth and development, and Palestinians took full advantage of this. This was due to it being an underdeveloped market, with potential for many industries to be introduced to the market. Nancie González argues that the Palestinians who came to Honduras arrived with capital, and those who did not have capital reverted to selling and farming. They quickly turned their profits into investments in order to create bigger enterprises (González 1992). Honduras was an economy that was still in its infancy at the time, labor and resources were cheap and if one possessed the capital to invest he/she would quickly see a return on their investment. In addition, the Palestinians had been merchants throughout history, and had experience in commerce and trade. Mike Edwards, an author for the magazine *The National Geographic*, had visited Honduras in 1983 and spoke with some of these early immigrants and their descendants. He stated that “few Hondurans had deigned to enter commerce; there was little

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<sup>8</sup> See Amaya 2012, 111

manufacturing. Long tradition in trade well prepared the Arabs to fill the vacuum” (Edwards 1983). The reason for the lack of trade among Hondurans is unknown, however it has historically been controlled by foreigners, this included the Spanish, the U.S., the Germans and eventually the Palestinians.

The important difference between González and Marín-Guzmán is that González recognized the fact that many of these Palestinians were Christian. This is an important factor in contributing to their ability to succeed, whereas Marín-Guzmán leaves the discussion of religion out of his analysis. This was an important factor because it allowed Palestinians to identify with the largely Christian country. Additionally, as will be discussed in the Jewish-Palestinian section, it gave them an advantage of having similar religious beliefs to the host country's citizens over the Jewish Diaspora.

In Honduras the Palestinian Diaspora is almost entirely Christian, with only one or two families being Muslim, and all can trace their ancestry back to the greater Bethlehem area. A visit in January 2014 to the only mosque in the country, located in the city of San Pedro Sula revealed that only two Palestinians attended prayers there, and members there claimed that most Palestinians in Honduras are Christian.<sup>9</sup> The Christian community in Bethlehem was either Roman Catholic or Greek (Eastern) Orthodox. As mentioned earlier almost all went to school and were educated by the Church, which in turn taught them English, French and at times Spanish. Therefore these immigrants came to

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<sup>9</sup> Based on an interview conducted on January 16, 2014 at the mosque *Fundacion Islamica de Honduras* located in Colonia Prado Alto on 10<sup>th</sup> Avenida between 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Calle, San Pedro Sula.



Honduras not only with experience as merchants but also with the ability to communicate in the native tongue of the country. Many spoke French, and some spoke Spanish, however they were able to learn the language easily and communicate with the Hondurans. This will be discussed further in chapter five.

In addition, both authors discuss the heritage and tight-knit community both abroad and at home among the Palestinians. This has allowed them to utilize ties that, at times, transcend generations, which in turn has helped newer generations coming to Central America become familiar with the new culture. The main criticism of this literature is that it is now nearly thirty years old and focused on the first generation of Palestinians. Due to its datedness, it does not discuss the tensions between the Diaspora and the host population or the subsequent generations of Palestinians. Although Palestinians are now third and fourth generation and have integrated themselves in Honduran society, they are also targets of discrimination and hatred due to their success within the country.

### **Hondureño vs. Turco**

The *Hondureño vs. Turco* ideology has ignited a great deal of resentment towards the Palestinians, who are now seen as a group which has abused the underdevelopment of Honduras in order to achieve their own economic gains. However, this resentment dates back to when the Palestinians first arrived on the Northern Coast. At first they thought of Honduras as primitive, and as a “backwater in comparison to what they had left behind” (González 1992, 170). Honduras, for the first émigrés, was to be a temporary relocation until they were

able to return back to their homeland, however this temporary status transformed into a permanent host country. Dario Euraque, a prominent Honduran historian, gives an example of the first Chamber of Commerce in San Pedro Sula, and its demise due to the Palestinian involvement. He states in 1927 the eleven year old San Pedro Sula Chamber of Commerce was dissolved “because Turks made up the majority of its membership and the minority did not want to be oppressed by the Turks” (Euraque 1996, 35). His reasons for the lack of involvement in politics during the first generation of migration were two-fold, one being that Palestinians themselves were self-exclusionary and second that the non-Palestinian middle class was unwelcoming to the idea of non-native Hondurans being involved in the political sphere of the country.

### **Dario Euraque Dissertation: Palestinians in Honduras**

A separate section has been dedicated to Dario Euraque’s dissertation, which was completed in 1990 at the University of Wisconsin. His research includes an extensive look at the early commercial interests of the Palestinians, and has been used by other researchers such as Jorge Amaya and Roberto Marín-Guzmán. Entitled, *Merchants and Industrialists in Northern Honduras: The Making of a National Bourgeoisie in Peripheral Capitalism, 1870’s-1972*, the dissertation discusses the Palestinians’ contributions to the economy and industry of Honduras from the late nineteenth century to the middle to latter part of the twentieth century.

Euraque also discusses the migration of Palestinians and the immigration restrictions they faced after creating a niche of Palestinian culture within Honduran culture. The establishment of this economic and cultural niche happened rather quickly during the 1930s, and the Honduran government took notice. Although the government sought more capital to bring in foreign investment, they felt threatened by further immigration from Palestine, and so they tightened their requirements on incoming Middle Eastern and Asian immigrants. This threat may have been due to the growing economic influence of Palestinian in Honduras. They differentiated between European businesses and migrants and Palestinian businesses and migrants. They viewed Palestinians as racially inferior to the Europeans who were entering the country based on their physical traits. Therefore, a blonde haired fair skinned European would have an easier time entering Hondurans, as opposed to a dark skinned and haired Middle Easterner. This, however, did not slow the influx of Palestinians, nor did it slow their unprecedented growth. These Palestinians, having contacts already in Honduras, were able to contribute to the economy through capital that they brought with them. They created businesses and industries in Honduras. In addition, Euraque discusses the significance of these Palestinians being Christian, agreeing with the notion of this Christian emigration which was addressed earlier. However, unlike the other authors, Marín-Guzmán and González, who claim that most Palestinians came with little to no capital, Euraque claims that they indeed arrived with capital and wealth (Euraque 1990, 190). While González explains that some did arrive with wealth she does not

elaborate on how much or how many arrived with wealth. Without having verifiable records, and relying on past and conflicting interviews, this cannot be corroborated or rebutted. Therefore, some Palestinians may have arrived with wealth, while others may not have.

In addition, Euraque introduces the concept that the United States' fruit companies had to contend with the Palestinians in Honduras. This was the only notion of this involvement in the literature on Honduras and Palestinians and is important in recognizing their economic growth. United and Standard Fruit Companies, magnates in the commercial sectors in Central America, had to deal with the Arab merchants. Euraque brings to light Samuel Crowther's book on Latin America and the United States, *The Romance and Rise of the American Tropics*. Crowther states that at the time U.S. representatives of both United and Standard Fruit Companies complained to U.S. officials of the Syrian merchants creating difficulties for them in Honduras. Crowther states:

However in spite of the fact that Honduras without the American companies would be little better than a savage wilderness, the agitation against the American companies is continuous. One of the planks in every political platform has to do with taking their land away from them. A party with the responsibility of power never tries anything of the sort but the opposition party invariably gives a pledge to rid the country of foreigners. This has nothing at all to do with the land. It is part of a movement kept alive by the Syrian merchants who want to put American commissaries out of business. The Syrians control more than half of the merchandising of the country and they are supreme everywhere except in American zones. They cannot undersell the American stores even though they bribe or smuggle most of their goods into the country and also pay no taxes. Their only course is political. However a growing intelligence among the people

is checkmating them and removing a real source of danger.  
 For a good part of their trade is in bad liquor and firearms  
 (Crowther 1929, 262).

Little did they know that these Syrians were in fact Palestinians. While this is the perspective of an American business, it sheds light on the impact Palestinians were having on Honduras' markets. Their ability to undersell the American commissaries<sup>10</sup> and the notion that American companies took notice showcases their economic ability in the country at the time. Euraque points out this misclassification saying that it was inherent in European and American investors in Latin America to see natives and Asians—the category in which Middle Easterners fell into at the time—as being inferior. They categorized all Arabs as Syrians, an Ottoman era category. Additional information on the impact the Palestinians had on the U.S. fruit companies' enterprises in Honduras can be found in Thomas Karnes' *Tropical Enterprise: The Standard Fruit and Steamship Company in Latin America*. Referring to Honduras, Karnes claims that non-Honduran merchants were creating difficulties for U.S. companies, mainly because they wanted to capitalize on the decline of Standard, United and Cuyamel fruit companies. While some Palestinians at the time were citizens, others were not yet citizens, thus classifying them as non-Honduran—however a more appropriate term would be non-native. Karnes said that the Palestinians wanted to dismantle the monopoly the fruit companies had on commissaries, in order for them to gain that business.

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<sup>10</sup> Grocery stores created by the fruit companies to sell products to plantation workers, usually at inflated prices.

Two American consuls on the north coast, one at La Ceiba and one at Puerto Castilla, concurred in their reports to Washington that a number of non-Honduran agitators were promoting the strike, and that some of these were new merchants—Syrians, Armenians and Palestinians—who wanted the commissaries weakened or destroyed so that they could assume the commerce for themselves (Karnes 1978, 96).

As U.S. fruit companies began to dismantle and scale down their operations in Honduras, the Palestinians were able to position themselves to fill the void left by these companies.

### **Palestinians in Chile**

The Palestinian Diaspora in Chile mimics the Honduran Diaspora. They arrived mainly from Bethlehem and the surrounding areas, were mostly comprised of Christians and sought a better way of life. With this said, the Diaspora in Chile has diversified its community and assimilated very well to Chilean life. The migration started during the late nineteenth century and lasted through the twentieth century, with intermittent migration continuing into today.

Chile experienced three main waves of Palestinian immigration. The first came during World War I, when Palestinian Christians fled Ottoman persecution and the Ottoman draft as mentioned earlier. The second wave came prior to and right after the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948. These Palestinians were fleeing the massacres and the conflict between the Palestinians and the incoming Zionists. The key difference between this wave and the previous wave is that these Palestinians believed that their time in Chile would be temporary

and they would be able to return to their homeland after the fighting stopped.<sup>11</sup> This plays into Edna Bonacich's middle-man theory and the idea of a sojourner. The third wave arrived after the Six-Day war in 1967, when Israel occupied East Jerusalem, the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, the Golan Heights and the Sinai. Palestinians left those occupied territories due to the harsh Israeli military rule and economic repression. Moreover, Israel did not allow Palestinians who happened to be outside the occupied territories in June 1967 to return home, therefore some of those people sought havens outside the Middle East. Some of these displaced Palestinians migrated to Chile in hopes of starting a new life—however, they would be defined as conflict not economic migrants due to the widespread conflict.

Like the Diaspora in Honduras, the Chilean-Palestinians succeeded almost immediately upon their arrival. They established the textile industry in Chile and expanded their business ventures to include all aspects of the economy in Chile. The key difference between both communities is that the community in Chile was able to penetrate all aspects of society, entering the political, entertainment and socialite, sports and economic realms. The community in Honduras consolidated its influence in politics and commerce, and did not enter the entertainment or sports aspects of Honduran society to the extent that the Chilean community did. In addition, their political influence was established and visible in Chile much earlier than those in Honduras. In 1947

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<sup>11</sup> "This Week in Palestine" Issue 119 (March 2008) Studio Alpha: Jerusalem. Pp36-40

when the international community was voting on the partition of Palestine, the Diaspora was able to influence the political atmosphere of Chile and have the government change its vote from being supportive of the partition to abstaining from the vote entirely.<sup>12</sup> Due to their relatively quick assimilation into Chilean society the Palestinian Diaspora established *Al Muerched* in 1917, the first newspaper written in Arabic in Chile (Levaggi 2012).

In addition, the Diaspora established a sense of community in Chile, creating a Greek Orthodox Church in Santiago and a newsletter. The newsletter included updates about members of the Diaspora and news from Palestine. The Saint George Greek Orthodox Church was established in 1917<sup>13</sup> in Santiago by the Palestinian Diaspora, whereas the Orthodox Church in San Pedro Sula, Honduras was not established until 1963 (González 1992, 121). The community in Chile created a sense of unity among themselves much earlier than their Honduran counterparts. The community in Chile was also better able to assimilate to the country than their Honduran counterparts. This is primarily due to their larger size and diversity. The Diaspora in Chile is comprised of Palestinians from all over Palestine, as opposed to those in Honduras who originated from three neighboring towns, thus creating a very closely knit community. Being so diverse, the Palestinians in Chile were able to coordinate and organize themselves under the notion of being Palestinian, without regard to social or religious status. The Diaspora in Honduras placed a great deal of

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<sup>12</sup> UN General Assembly Resolution 181 "Future government of Palestine: Resolution," November 29, 1947.

<sup>13</sup> "This Week in Palestine" Issue 119 (March 2008) Studio Alpha: Jerusalem. pp 36-40



importance on where one's roots originated from within the three towns, and what one's religious sect was, as Bethlehem is a polarized Christian society between Greek (Eastern) Orthodox and Roman Catholicism.

### **CHAPTER III:**

#### **Research Questions and Methodology**

The research questions are comprised of two main questions researched as well as subsequent questions that were included in the research. The Palestinian Diaspora in Honduras is the main subject of analysis, with a comparison between Chile and Honduras. The questions stem from an interest in this Diaspora, mainly because of the underestimated influence they have in Honduras. This influence is not entirely recognized or known outside of Honduras. In addition, the relations between the Palestinian and the Jewish Diaspora were questioned and analyzed.

#### **Main theoretical research questions:**

- 1.) What has been the economic, political and social impact of this Diaspora in Honduras?
- 2.) What is the current relationship between the Diaspora and the native population in Honduras?

#### **Secondary Question that will be addressed in the research:**

- 1.) What are their intentions concerning returning to their home country?
- 2.) Based on acculturation theory have Palestinians in Honduras assimilated to their host country?

#### **Jewish Palestinian Relations:**

- 1.) What is the relationship between both groups in Chile and in Honduras?
- 2.) What has been the Jewish influence on Honduras?

### **Hypothesis**

Existing research indicates that Palestinians have had a great impact on the economy of Honduras. Furthermore, there is indication that they have influenced politics in the country. Using the literature on diasporas and migration studies, the Palestinian Diaspora and its experience in Honduras can be analyzed. The literature discusses the impact the Palestinian Diaspora has had on the country, mainly through their economic endeavors. Building on this existing scholarship I hypothesize that the success of the Palestinian Diaspora as a whole in Honduras, coupled with the large income inequality gap in the country, has led to poor relations between the majority of Hondurans and the Palestinians. The data collected and presented addresses this.

For the secondary question I hypothesize that Palestinians in general do not want to return to their homeland, but instead will continue to participate through being a diaspora. For the second question I hypothesize that Palestinians have assimilated, and have accepted their host country as a permanent settlement. Based on assimilation theory, the surveys were able to measure how assimilated Palestinians are into mainstream Honduran culture.

The remaining research question deals with the Palestinian-Jewish relationship in each country. I hypothesize that the relationship between both groups relies more on commercial interests than political or ethnic identities. It does not reflect the Jewish-Palestinian relationship in the Middle East. That is to say that Jews and Palestinians in Honduras must coexist in the commercial

sphere of the country, and their relations are based on these interests. There have been instances of Jewish-Palestinian business ventures in Honduras, which will be explained in chapter six.

### **Methodology**

The majority of the existing research is nearly thirty years old and comes from three main sources, Roberto Marín-Guzmán, Jorge Amaya and Nancie González. These researchers have completed a great deal of research on the Palestinian Diaspora in Latin America, specifically on Honduras. Their data included interviews and historical records kept by the government of Honduras, as well as family histories of the first emigrants. Since then no attempt has been made to gather updated data. The Diaspora has grown, and the political climate of Latin America has evolved since the 1980s.

### **Part One Historical Background**

The methodological approach will be divided into three parts. The first part consists of a qualitative historical narrative, which concentrates on the emigration itself. In order to understand the Diaspora we need to understand how they arrived and what factors motivated the migration. This will be performed through a qualitative analysis of secondary sources. It will discuss the existing literature on diasporas, international migration, Latin America, the history of Palestine, the history of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the history of the British Mandate of Palestine, and the history of migration to Honduras and Chile. For the Jewish comparison I will include literature on the Jewish Diaspora in Latin America.

Figures for the Jewish Diaspora as a whole are relatively extensive, and are comprised of rather well kept records.

### **Limitations of Part One**

The common limitation of a historical narrative on this topic is using sources that are not properly researched, or those that are not at an academic standard. In order to circumvent this I have gathered sources that are published through academic sources and ones that have been cited by other academics on the specific subject matters. The literature that I have gathered comes from dissertations, published academic books and articles from known academic journals. In addition, I have used newspaper articles from known outlets such as the *New York Times*, the *BBC* and the Israeli *Haaretz*.

### **Part Two: Surveys and Interviews**

The next part consists of data collected from original interviews and surveys that were distributed randomly to the Diaspora. The Diaspora in Honduras was the main focus of these surveys, thus field research was not conducted in Chile. It is important to note that for the Honduran-Palestinian sample I excluded all other Arab groups in order to ensure that viewpoints were compiled solely from the Palestinian perspective. There were four focus groups, one with six Palestinian participants, one with five native Honduran participants, one with six native Honduran participants and one that consisted of two native Hondurans, one Honduran of Irish descent and two Palestinians. In addition, several interviews were conducted with individuals who were willing to

participate. All together eleven individual interviews were completed, in addition to the focus groups.

The survey was constructed to try to gauge the relationship between the native Honduran population and the Palestinian community. A likert type scale was used to define how the Palestinians identify themselves, be it Honduran or Palestinian, and how assimilated they feel in the country. In addition, the Emory Bogardus social distance scale,<sup>1</sup> a proven method in measuring assimilation, was incorporated into the survey. The standard Bogardus questionnaire was modified to reflect only relevant questions that would give insight into how each population interacted with the other. In order to gather data on income, the World Values Survey, an organization that has used proven methods to gather data on the culture and values of individuals worldwide, was used.<sup>2</sup> In order to gather information about socioeconomic status without jeopardizing the participant's willingness to reveal personal information, the MacArthur Scale of Subjective Social Status Ladder method was used.<sup>3</sup> This consisted of incorporating a ladder diagram into the survey and having participants gauge where they consider themselves socioeconomically, on the ladder. See appendix A for complete surveys.

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<sup>1</sup> See Bogardus 1928, references question five in the Palestinian survey and six in the native survey.

<sup>2</sup> See World Values Survey, 2005-2006, question V252. This method was used for question thirteen in the Palestinian survey.

<sup>3</sup> See the University of California's MacArthur Research Network on SES and Health, references question 15. Accessed October 30, 2013. This was used for question fourteen in the Palestinian survey and question nine in the native survey.

### **Palestinian Sample**

The surveys were distributed in San Pedro Sula and Tegucigalpa, the two main cities in the country. Target locations included the Orthodox Church and the *Club Arabe*, both gathering places for Palestinians in San Pedro Sula. They were not given to participants of the focus groups or those who participated in interviews. This was to avoid creating an environment where participants felt intimidated or coerced, thus skewing the results of either method. In San Pedro Sula thirty surveys were distributed, with fourteen being completed—thus having a response rate of 47 percent. There are two reasons for the high rate of completion. First, the surveys were handed out in an area with a high concentration of Palestinians, and in a location where they are among others with similar beliefs. It was clearly stated that the surveys were anonymous, that participation was voluntary, and that no remuneration was being offered.

Many participants were eager to complete the surveys, therefore most of the surveys handed out were completed. Additionally, out of the thirty surveys, four of those were handed out to participants who wanted to take them home to give to family members to complete. However, after two attempts these surveys were never returned to the researcher. The surveys that were handed out in the Orthodox Church also had a higher completion rate than the *Club Arabe*. The reason for this was that people at the club were more concentrated on the social setting and socializing rather than participating in the survey.

In Tegucigalpa, where there were no defined cultural or religious locations in which Palestinians gather, the surveys were handed out to participants of Palestinian descent who were verified through surname. Ten surveys were handed out with four being returned completed—making the completion rate 40 percent and a combined rate of 45 percent for San Pedro Sula and Tegucigalpa. The completion rate and distribution of surveys in Tegucigalpa were lower due to the lack of a location where Palestinians gather.

### **Native Sample**

For the native population, the design and distribution mimicked the approach to that of the Honduran Palestinian sample. Surveys were handed out to employees at a hotel, at a mall and at restaurants. In San Pedro Sula twenty surveys were handed out at a hotel and a mall. Fifteen of those surveys were returned completed, making the completion rate 75 percent. In Tegucigalpa, ten surveys were handed out at a restaurant, with only one being returned completed, making the completion rate 10 percent. Out of the thirty surveys, sixteen were completed and returned—making the completion rate 53 percent.

### **Jewish Population**

The Jewish population in Honduras is small, comprised of only about 100 families. The surveys created were similar to the other surveys, but targeting the Jewish population. Several attempts were made at the only synagogue in the country, located in San Pedro Sula, to speak to a representative of the community. The only representative present at each attempt was the



groundskeeper. The surveys, information regarding the study and contact information were left with him, and he was instructed to inform the Rabbi, or any synagogue official, to call the telephone number that was provided. After returning two more times to the synagogue, and after several attempts at contacting a representative the surveys were returned uncompleted and contact with any member of the Jewish Diaspora was unsuccessful. According to the groundskeeper, the synagogue is only used for special events, and rarely for prayer. He said prayers take place Friday evenings at 7:00 pm, however a visit during that time offered no assistance due to the fact that no one was present, including the Rabbi.

### **Limitations of Part Two**

The disadvantage of using these methods—surveys and interviews—is that some in the Diaspora did not feel comfortable discussing these issues. The reasons were two-fold; out of fear of being a victim of a kidnapping and out of fear that the information would be used against them by individuals or the government. Many kidnappings occur in Honduras and common tactics involve luring the victim away from their daily routine, thus most citizens are weary of interacting with people they do not personally know. The researcher was consistently asked why the data is being collected and what it would be used for. Many members of the Diaspora are comprised of Honduras' social and business elite, they feared that any information given could be used against them. The researcher's response to this was that the information was anonymous and that

the information, nonetheless, would be safeguarded and visible only to the researcher. Moreover, the researcher's ethnicity turned out to be advantageous during the interviews and surveys with members of the Palestinian Diaspora. They were familiar with his heritage, and thus felt comfortable participating in the surveys, focus groups and interviews. This provided information that other researchers have been unable to acquire, due to the fact that Palestinians in Honduras are very close knit and rather suspicious of outsiders.

The native population was more apprehensive in participating. Of the four focus groups conducted only three provided useful data. The other group was more reluctant to engage with one another and thus the researcher had to carry the conversation. This was done by probing and trying to have them expand on the discussion. This group was the one that consisted of the five native Hondurans. Members of these groups were reluctant to speak about Palestinian-Honduran relations.

Survey distribution to the native population was limited to the areas mentioned above, limiting the sample pool. This was mainly due to the security concerns of traveling to the downtown and densely populated areas. The malls, restaurants and hotels all have private security, and were considered safer locales to conduct the research. Additionally, when government officials were interviewed they were willing to provide me with information on the commercial class, however many requested that they remain anonymous. Their willingness was due to the researcher's heritage, as they saw him as being a member of this

commercial class due to his surname. One of the interviewees provided a list of the top businessmen and wealthiest citizens of the country with their personal contact information and stated “you should call and ask to speak with them, your families probably know each other.”<sup>4</sup>

### **Part Three: Commercial and Industrial Influence**

The final part consisted of trying to quantify the market share of Palestinian owned commercial interests in Honduras. This was by far the most difficult part of the research. It is common knowledge that Palestinians comprise most of the commercial sector in Honduras and yield great influence on all other sectors. When asked about the percent of ownership of the market by these Palestinian, estimates ranging from 60 to 90 percent of the commercial sector were given. Access was granted to individuals from several different government agencies through established contacts in the government. This included the Chamber of Commerce, the Customs office and the National Association of Industry.

Information is available prior to the 1990s, which quantifies their market share, however recent information is not available. The interviews yielded one common theme, that the commercial sector has been able to successfully hide behind the government in making their earnings and holdings private. Tax records in Honduras are not public knowledge and individuals have created corporate groups in which they are able to conceal their identity. While these groups are not classified as shell corporations, they function in a similar manner

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<sup>4</sup> John Handal, interview with government official from the Chamber of Commerce in Tegucigalpa, January 13, 2014.

by being able to conceal company information through legalities. Government officials provided information on some of these groups and their CEO's, however in many cases the government officials wished to remain anonymous.

Although, the CEO's, or presidents, of these groups are known to the public, a paper trail is hard to follow when researching these conglomerate groups. When participants were asked how they knew this information, they explained that even though San Pedro Sula and Tegucigalpa are cities, they function like small villages. Most people know each other, or have mutual acquaintances, creating an environment where personal lives become very difficult to conceal. There are about 8 million people in the country, with San Pedro Sula's and Tegucigalpa's population each being just over one million people.

### **Limitations of Part Three**

The main weakness of this method was that the commercial class has been able to successfully hide their influence. This made it very difficult to quantify their market share of the commercial sector in the country. Additionally, government officials explained that any sort of income or earning reports were confidential and unavailable for viewing. During visits to the offices of where the interviews were conducted it was interesting to find that many of the past and current Directors, or Presidents, of each of the commercial sectors agencies were predominantly of Palestinian origin. For example, eight out of the past seventeen Presidents of the Chamber of Commerce in Tegucigalpa were of Palestinian descent. This was a possible reason for their reluctance to provide

quantifiable information, being that their superiors are members of this commercial class.

## **CHAPTER IV:**

### **The Jewish—Palestinian Dynamic in Chile and Honduras**

There has been a long history of Jewish-Latin American transnational relations, which is evident in the amount of scholarship on the topic. Jeffrey Lesser and Raanan Rein claim that if one looks at the academic library holdings in the U.S., one could find a plethora of material on Latin America Jews<sup>1</sup>, more so than literature on Middle Eastern-Latin American relations, making their presence in Latin America an important topic (Lesser and Rein 2008, 26). Lesser asserts that Jews, like Palestinians, had to either abandon their cultural practices and assimilate to their host country, or separate themselves from the host country and risk discrimination. Both Palestinians and Jews in Latin America have successfully balanced both and kept their cultural practices, while assimilating to the host country, and in some cases creating a sub-culture within the host country.

The Jewish Diaspora in Latin America, like the Palestinian Diaspora, was created out of both economic despair and transnational conflict. Jews began immigrating to Latin America in the mid nineteenth century, coming mainly from Europe and Russia. Comparing Chile and Honduras, one sees that the Jewish immigration to Chile is much greater than that to Honduras. When combing through the literature there was no mention of a Jewish Diaspora in Honduras, because it is comprised only of a handful of families. An October 7, 2009 article

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<sup>1</sup> Throughout the literature the terms Jew and Jewish are used as follows: Jew to signify a noun and Jewish to signify an adjective.

titled "Radio Host's Remarks Add Troubling Note to Honduran Crisis" published by the *New York Times*, estimated that about 100 Jewish families lived in Honduras (Malkin 2009). On the other hand, as of 2010 Chile was home to an estimated 20,500 Jews.<sup>2</sup> It is important to note that the Jewish population in Chile has declined over the past fifty years by 10,000 inhabitants (Lesser and Rein 2008, 6). Many have traveled to Europe or North America, with few traveling to Israel. From 1948 to 1951 there were 48 documented individuals immigrating from Chile to Israel. The peak immigration from Chile to Israel reached 1,468 for the period from 1965 to 1971, dwindling to 299 individuals from 2001 to 2004 (Lesser and Rein 2008, 18). This trend of emigration from Latin America is consistent throughout the region among the Jewish Diaspora. Therefore, the majority of the remainder of the analysis and comparison will focus on the Jewish population in Chile, with a short section dedicated to those living in Honduras.

### **Jews in Chile**

Jacob Beller, author of *Jews in Latin America*, has provided a great deal of analysis and historical information on the Diaspora in Chile. He spent time with members of the Jewish community and took a historical approach to examining its origins in Chile. The other essential author is Judith Laikin Elkin, whose *The Jews of Latin America* provides a narrative of Jewish immigration to Latin America and their experiences in each country.

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<sup>2</sup> Jewish Virtual Library: World Jewish Population. Accessed March 13, 2012 <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Judaism/jewpop.html>

Jewish immigrants in Chile date back to the early Spanish Inquisition. However, very few remained in Latin America as most returned to Europe and Asia. In 1562, Chilean city councilors asked King Philip II of Spain to expel Jews from Chile because they were believed to have entered the country on false documents (Beller 1969, 146). These early Jews were not categorized as settlers, as they returned to Europe and did not establish themselves in Latin America. The Chilean census of 1907 counted only 92 Jews in Chile (Elkin 1987, 101). Table 4-1 indicates their numbers in Chile and their percentage of the population from 1930 to 1970.

**Table 4-1. Jewish Population in Chile 1930 to 1970<sup>3</sup>**

	<b>Jews in Chile</b>	<b>Total Population</b>	<b>Percentage of Total Population</b>
<b>1930</b>	3,697	4,424,000	.08%
<b>1940</b>	8,333	5,147,000	.16%
<b>1950</b>	11,496	6,058,000	.19%
<b>1960</b>	15,827	7,683,000	.21%
<b>1970</b>	16,359	9,717,000	.17%

The earliest evidence of an established Jewish community in Chile was in 1862, when the Jewish community founded a newspaper (Elkin 1998). In 1909 the first Jewish organization was formed in Santiago and an influential Jewish community soon arose in Chile (Beller 1969, 152). When they first arrived they had difficulties assimilating with the Latino communities. In addition, and unlike the Palestinians, they did not share similar Christian religious beliefs with the

<sup>3</sup> For the Jewish population in Chile see Elkin 1987, 101, for the population of Chile see Sánchez-Albornoz 1974, 184.



Latin Americans, which further isolated them. In 1911, the first Jewish club opened in Chile. However, out of fear of persecution, the organizing members named it the *Filarmónica Rusa* to avoid any reference to Judaism, which translate to the Russian Philharmonic organization (Elkin 1998, 60). They were merchants, and similarly to the Palestinians, began selling items on the streets and engaged in door-to-door sales. Thus, they were quick to enter the commercial sector. As their businesses grew, they opened up stores and eventually had enough capital to invest and expand their business ventures. The influx of Jewish immigrants continued throughout the remainder of the nineteenth century and into the mid twentieth century. An example was that of German Jewish technicians, who migrated in 1885 to capitalize on the growing nitrate industry in Chile (Beller 1969, 149). These first Jewish settlers paved the way for continued European Jewry emigration to Latin America during the first half of the twentieth century. According to Judith Laikin Elkin, these first Jews played vital roles in developing the economy of Chile and other Latin America nations (Elkin 1998).

The important difference in Jewish migration to Chile is that it was not their first destination of choice. Many had traveled to Argentina in hopes of finding the fortunes that previous waves of Jewish immigrants had enjoyed. Elkin attributes this disinterest in Chile to the fact that Chile was not a stop on the world trade route. Therefore, their flow of immigrants was much slower than Argentina's (Elkin 1998). In addition, upon arriving in Argentina, they discovered that jobs were few and opportunities were not as plentiful as previously thought. Instead of

remaining in Argentina, many decided to travel to Chile and attempted to start a new life in the developing country. Moreover, Elkin explains that in addition to the previously mentioned reason, there was a fear of the police repression during the labor riots of 1909 in Argentina, thus fueling emigration. This emigration had no impact on the Chilean population other than allowing these Jews to have an advantage over other Jews who arrived from non-Latin American countries. Argentine Jews had the advantage of knowing the culture and language.

This notion of being a second country of choice created an issue for the Jews in Chile, as they were not comprised of families and had no cohesive bond to unite them. They consisted of both Sephardic and Ashkenazi Jews, this is important because both groups have differing religious views, as well as settlement views. They quickly overcame this separation as the Diaspora continued to grow in the country. With this being said, there are still indications of a lack of cohesiveness among Jews in Chile. Jewish traditions were lost between the first and second generations. However, there was a revitalization in the second generation which sought its Jewish roots (Beller 1969, 16). This is a very similar experience with the Palestinians in both Chile and Honduras. The first generation Palestinians wanted to distance themselves from being seen as Palestinians or Arabs in order to assimilate; however, subsequent generations yearned for their Palestinian roots.

Jews in Chile experienced anti-Semitism and discrimination upon arriving in Chile and later on. One major issue for the natives of Chile was the rapid economic success of the Jewish immigrants. Beller explains that second

generation Jews in Chile were isolated from the general public and therefore created an identity within an identity. In other words, they saw themselves as Jews first and Chileans second. Beller continues by saying that anti-Semitism was initiated by the Germans who emigrated to Chile prior to World War II and followed the Nazi ideology during the rise of Hitler in Germany. Beller also claims that anti-Semitism, in all of Latin America, was pushed by the Arab League after its creation in 1945. Beller states, "the Arab League has also started anti-Israel and anti-Jewish propaganda as in all the Latin American countries. Until then there was harmony and friendly relations between Jews and Arabs, and for many years they had business connections with each other" (Beller 1969, 154).

Beller is only able to provide details on the German initiated anti-Semitism by saying that in 1932 there was an organization that functioned as the Chilean Nazi party under the name of the Popular Socialist Vanguard. This is the only indication that he provides of anti-Semitism in Chile, with the exception of discrimination faced by the elite of the country from the lower socioeconomic classes. This form of discrimination is still present in Chile and Honduras and it does not seem to discriminate between religion, as the Palestinians in both countries face similar treatment. This treatment is described as *envy* by Beller. It has more to do with income inequality and socioeconomic status than religious or ethnic identification. According to Beller, the native population was envious of the wealth and influence accumulated by the Jewish community in Chile, similar to the envy of successful Palestinians in Honduras.

### **Jewish and Palestinian Diaspora in Chile**

The Jewish and Palestinian experience in Latin America is somewhat identical, with one main trajectory. The key difference between the Jewish Diaspora and the Palestinian Diaspora in Latin America is cohesion. As both Elkin and Beller point out, the Jewish immigrants in Latin America were comprised of Jews with different national (state) identities, mainly those from Europe. As mentioned earlier, they consisted of both Sephardic and Ashkenazi Jews. The importance of differentiating between Sephardim and Ashkenazim is that they had differing views of their final settling intentions.

Ashkenazi Jews are those that come from Western Europe, and Sephardic are those that originated from Eastern lands (primarily from the Middle East, including Turkey and Iran). This is not to say that these classifications are exclusionary, there were Sephardic Jews that came from Europe and vice versa, however the majority of both groups came from separate regions. Sephardic Jews usually remained in their place of immigration, but Ashkenazi Jews' end goal was to emigrate to the U.S. (Sheinin and Barr 1996, 265). Ashkenazi's identified more so with Western culture, therefore they were comfortable emigrating to those countries. They do not share many beliefs or practices and lead dissimilar lifestyles than Sephardic Jews. However, when they arrived in Latin America they became known simply as Jews (Elkin 1998, 47). Another key difference is that Sephardic Jews tended to settle in the countryside, whereas the Ashkenazi Jews tended to settle in the large cities (Elkin and Merks 1987, 37).

This stems from the West vs East cultural lifestyle of both groups, leading both groups to have different lifestyles. Thus Ashkenazi's preferred a city's more *Western* lifestyle whereas Sephardim's preferred the countryside or a more *Eastern* lifestyle. In addition, Ashkenazi Jews often considered themselves more sophisticated than Sephardic Jews, thus they tended to settle in cities as opposed to the countryside, being that living in a city was viewed as a status symbol (El-Attar 2011, 192).

In contrast, Palestinians did not have such social divisions among them. The first Palestinians in Honduras and Chile originated from Bethlehem and the surrounding areas, and usually consisted of large families that followed the first pioneer. While faced with discrimination, Palestinians shared the same religious beliefs as the native population. The Jewish Diaspora had to endure the remnants of European Christian anti-Semitism that was carried over by European colonies to Latin America. Elkin explains that,

there existed two inexorable enemies of Christ: the devil and the Jews. Inevitably, it was assumed there was an alliance between the two. This ancient legend, transmitted to Latin America by missionaries sent to evangelize the Native Americans, was imposed upon pagans who had never seen a Jew, producing a situation where the concepts "judío" and "diablo"<sup>4</sup> came to be synonymous (Elkin 1998, 20).

Palestinians did not encounter religious intolerance as the Jews did when first arriving in Latin America. Instead, they were discriminated against due to their cultural and traditional differences, in addition to the envy of their economic

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<sup>4</sup> The Spanish term judío means Jew in English and diablo means Devil.

success. When comparing the religious acculturation of both groups, it can be said that the Palestinians had an easier time due to their shared Christian beliefs with their host country.

There has historically been a large Jewish and Palestinian Diaspora in Chile, therefore it was crucial for both groups to coexist. Heba El-Attar, author of “Palestinian and Communal Press in Chile: The Case of Al-Damir and La Palabra Israelita,” calls this dynamic *apart together*, meaning that the first generations faced the same cultural obstacles assimilating, but the subsequent generations were able to lobby for their ideological goals in regards to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (El-Attar 2011, 204). According to El-Attar, this dynamic has not been visible to the mainstream Chilean public, yet this does not signify its nonexistence.

Through this *apart together* dynamic, both groups have created newsletters and have built reputable communities within every aspect of Chilean society. While they have enjoyed good relations with each other, there have also been instances where their interests have collided. Unlike the Palestinian Diaspora in Honduras, the Palestinian Diaspora in Chile has had to compete with their Jewish counterparts, especially when it comes to Israeli-Palestinian issues in the international community. One example involved the Palestinian owned soccer team in Chile, *Palestino*, receiving a fine in January 2014 for including the map of historical Palestine on their team shirts. Jewish organizations complained that the map indicated that all of the land belonged to Palestine and excluded

any notion of Israel. The Chilean Soccer Federation issued a fine in the amount of \$1,300 and made the team redesign their shirts, claiming that any form of discrimination, religious or political, would not be tolerated (“Chile Bans Palestino Football Club ‘Anti-Israel’ Shirt” 2014).

### **Jews in Honduras**

In 2002 President Ricardo Maduro was elected to office. Maduro’s family descended from Spanish Jews who converted to Catholicism in an effort to assimilate and avoid persecution from the Spanish government before migrating to Honduras (Arbel 2002). Palestinians and Jews have enjoyed a great deal of success in Honduras—politically, economically and socially. However, the Jews in Honduras have enjoyed success within a concentrated and very small enclave.

Honduras is one of the most heterogeneous societies in Central America, making it an ideal country to compare the Palestinian and Jewish Diasporas (Amaya 2000, 69). As mentioned previously, estimates of the Jewish Diaspora in Honduras are about 100 families. The Israeli Consul General to Honduras, Yuri Leiva, estimated the total Jewish population to be around 500 in 1991 (Amaya 2000, 20). Literature on the Jewish Diaspora in Honduras is very limited, most likely due to the small size of the Diaspora. However, their small size does not reflect their influence in the country. Their history is catalogued by the Honduran historian Jorge Alberto Amaya in his book *Los Judíos en Honduras*.

One of the first ethnically Jewish families in Honduras was the Lindo family from Spain (Amaya 2000, 55). The family converted to Christianity out of

fear of persecution. In 1847 Juan Lindo was elected the President of Honduras, making him the first President of Jewish ancestry in the country. Honduras at first was not a destination of choice for many Jews traveling to Central and South America; however, the few families that arrived enjoyed great economic success. The first documented Jews arrived in Honduras during the middle of the nineteenth century, when Jews began to emigrate from Europe to the Americas. According to Amaya, the first Jewish family to arrive in Honduras was of Sephardic origin, with Ashkenazi Jews arriving around 1920.

Honduras saw three waves of Jewish immigration—the first was towards the end of the nineteenth century, the second was shortly after World War I (the 1920s) and the third was prior to World War II (during the 1930s and 1940s). The origin of these new immigrants varied with each wave. The first wave consisted mostly of Jews from Eastern Europe, with some traveling from the Middle East. The second wave came from Poland, Russia and Romania (Amaya 2000, 22). The third and final wave was mainly due to Adolph Hitler's persecution of the European Jews, which motivated their immigration to Latin America from Poland and Germany. These Jews came right before and during World War II, with those that were able to survive the war wanting to emigrate to the United States or Israel, after its creation.

The Jewish Diaspora followed a similar path to those in Chile and to their counterparts, the Palestinians, in Honduras. They began as small time peddlers, and shop keepers and soon grew their businesses, expanding into all sectors of the market. In addition to the Jews who lived in Honduras, there were also



Jewish businesses based outside of Honduras that were influential inside the country. The Jewish entrepreneur Samuel Zemurray, founder of the Cuyamel Fruit Company (later to be known as the United Fruit Company and today known as Chiquita Brands) played a very influential role in the politics and economics of Honduras during the first half of the twentieth century. In fact, his company controlled a majority of the agricultural industry in Honduras. Although Zemurray was not living in Honduras, his company had a great impact on the agricultural and economic aspect of the country. He was not a Honduran Jew, but an American Jew who had transformed Honduras into a banana republic. As mentioned previously, Palestinians were seen as interfering with U.S. business interests by his company and U.S. diplomats.

In 1939, President Tiburcio Carias' son devised a plan to admit nearly 10,000 Jewish families from Europe. His reasoning was two-fold; first to try and help them escape persecution in Europe, and second to raise foreign capital for the country. Each member of the Jewish family would donate US \$10,000 to the government of Honduras. This would have raised nearly US \$10 million for the country, a substantial amount of money for a banana republic.<sup>5</sup> Tiburcio's son said that the money would be enough to fund the creation of the *Banco Central de Honduras*, the national bank (Amaya 2000, 59). The Jewish families in Honduras at the time were not involved in the plan, and the President decided against the proposition for reasons that are unknown.

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<sup>5</sup> This has not been adjusted for inflation. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics the adjusted 2014 inflation rate for \$10,000 in 1939 would be \$168,907, therefore \$10 million would equate to nearly \$170 million.

Jorge Amaya explains that the arrival of Jews in Honduras coincided with a period of social and economic transformation for the country (Amaya 2000, 69). The first Jew was admitted to the exclusive *Casino Sampedrana*<sup>6</sup> in 1950 and the first synagogue was established in San Pedro Sula in 1954. There are two main Jewish families in Honduras, the Goldstein and Rosenthal families. The Goldstein family originated from Poland and the Rosenthal family from Romania (Amaya 2000, 58). During the 1980s the Rosenthal's economic might reached its highest, with the family owning roughly 10.89 percent of the country's financial capital wealth, or 10 percent of the national wealth (Amaya 2000, 21). The Rosenthal's empire will be discussed in chapter six.

The Jewish Diaspora played a role, albeit a small one, in gaining support for the creation of the State of Israel during the 1940s. In 1945 the Jewish community in Tegucigalpa created the *Comité Hondureño Pro-Palestina Hebrea* (The Honduran Committee for a Jewish Palestine). This was an attempt to garner support for a Jewish homeland in Palestine, however they quickly realized that any attempt to raise support in Honduras would be futile due to the large and powerful Palestinian community. Amaya quotes Moshé Tov, the Latin American representative for the Jewish Agency, as saying: "The work had to be done patiently and arduously, given that there is a large Arab presence, who are economically and financially powerful"<sup>7</sup> (Amaya 2000, 90).

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<sup>6</sup> A casino in San Pedro Sula in which admittance was based more so on social status than socioeconomic status.

<sup>7</sup> Translated from "El trabajo tuvo que ser paciente y arduo, dada la presencia de una vasta comunidad árabe, económica y financieramente poderosa"

This sentiment was echoed by Benno Varon, author of *Professions of a Lucky Jew*, who writes about the Arab propaganda before the creation of the State of Israel and the Arab's inability in gaining enough support to prevent the creation of the state. He says that:

If the Arabs managed to induce a few countries to abstain, it was not the merit of their belated propaganda effort, but by the direct intervention at the highest levels of government, where they could argue that a vote for the partition would offend the huge Arab communities in the respective countries (Varon 1992, 148).

This shows that the Jewish Agency at the time knew about the Arab populations in Latin America and their potential political and economic influence in the region. As mentioned earlier, Chile's vote was changed at the last moment, from a vote in favor of partition to abstention. At the time, the most crucial vote for a future Jewish state was centered around the United Nations General Assembly Resolution 181 "The Future Government of Palestine," in which six out of the seventeen Latin American countries that voted abstained. This included an abstention by Chile and Honduras.<sup>8</sup>

### **Jewish and Palestinian Diasporas in Honduras**

As in Chile, the Palestinian Diaspora and the Jewish Diaspora share many similarities. Their reasons for emigrating were mostly due to conflict, persecution and discrimination. The Jewish emigration is slightly different in that they did not emigrate for economic reasons. Discrimination within Honduras was another key

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<sup>8</sup> Dominican Republic, Cuba and Haiti voted on the resolution, however they were excluded by the researcher in an attempt to isolate Central and South America's votes. The votes were as follows: Cuba voted NO, the Dominican Republic and Haiti voted YES.

similarity between both groups. Hondurans recognized that the Palestinians and the Jews in the country controlled a majority of the commerce, and this caused both groups to be resented by the native population.

The Jews arrived to find a very influential Palestinian community. This is one of the main differences between both groups. The Palestinians arrived around the same time, but in much larger numbers. Amaya estimated that from 1919 to 1936 Arabs (Palestinians) controlled about 72.2 percent of the import and export sector in San Pedro Sula, whereas the Jews controlled .1 percent of this sector. By the end of the 1980s 25 percent of Honduran capital was under Palestinian control, in comparison to 12.59 percent under Jewish control (Amaya 2000, 128).

Differences between both groups are not as pronounced as their similarities. For example, in the 2009 coup d'état of President Manuel Zelaya, the Palestinians and the Jews were grouped together, thrown into the spotlight, blamed for the coup and were equally resented. Supporters of the ousted president even made claims that the Jewish community and the State of Israel were directly involved in the ousting of the president by supplying commandoes and poisonous gas to the perpetrators of the coup (Ravid, 2009). Many in Honduras believe that Palestinians and Jews have accumulated a great deal of wealth through exploitation of the country's resources, as well as exploitation of the poor.

However, there is greater discrimination against the large Palestinian community as opposed to the smaller Jewish community. This discrimination, as mentioned before, dates back to the arrival of both immigrants. Jews, like Palestinians, had trouble entering the United States during the 1920s when U.S. immigration laws were changed to curb incoming groups. This was evident in the passing of the Immigration Act of 1924 by the U.S. Congress. Honduras, in an attempt to bring in Western culture, opened up its borders to Europeans, while trying to prevent the entry of "Asians", the category under which Arabs were classified. The immigration laws of 1866, 1895 and 1906 all reflected this sentiment (Amaya 2000, 37). When Palestinian power began to be noticed during the 1920s, the Honduran populace tried to fight back by changing their immigration law in 1929 to limit the influx of Arab immigrants. Amaya gives the example of a 1922 magazine article from *El Cronista*, a well-known publication in the country. It said the "*Turcos* from San Pedro Sula and the Northern Coast should be expelled because they are harmful to the country" (Amaya 2000, 37).<sup>9</sup> This was an advantage to the Jewish population that entered under European travel documents.

In addition to the favorable immigration laws that the Jewish Diaspora enjoyed, their relatively small community allowed them to remain closely knit, unlike the Chilean Jews. This allowed for traditions and culture to be carried from one generation to the next, with little generational loss. On the other hand, the

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<sup>9</sup> Translated from "Por ejemplo, en 1922, el influyente diario *El Cronista*, pedía desde sus páginas la expulsión de los "turcos" de San Pedro Sula y otras localidades de la Costa Norte, acusándoles de ser nocivos para el país"

Palestinians had a much larger community making them more vulnerable to losing their culture in an attempt to assimilate.

While Jorge Alberto Amaya's research was published recently, it lacks an effective analysis of both the Palestinian and Jewish Diasporas in the country. Both groups have large stakes in the political and economic sectors of the country. However, his research fails to address the dynamics between both groups. The Jews of Chile were outspoken supporters of the creation of the State of Israel; however, literature is limited in relation to support by Honduran Jews. In addition, a comparison of both groups' financial assets would provide an understanding of their growth over the last century, which is also not included in his research.

Another important factor between both groups is their readiness to intermarry. Jews and Palestinians in Honduras have, most notably with the younger generation, intermarried. Examples include the Facussé-Starkman, Kafie-Schacher and Jaar-Schacher families. This willingness to intermarry indicates that relations between both groups are not as polarized as they are in Israel-Palestine, or elsewhere in the world.

### **Relations with Israel**

As mentioned previously, Palestinians and Jews have enjoyed rather amiable interactions with one another, this is mainly due to the fact that their business dealings are intertwined with one another. However, they have also been involved with support for the Israeli and Palestinian cause. Many Arabs, including those originating from the Levant, have supported the Palestinian

cause. The two main Jewish newspapers in Chile, *Mundo Judío* and *Palabra Israelita*,<sup>10</sup> have expressed their support for the Zionist cause in Israel and have discussed the Arab community in Latin America and its support for Palestine. During the 1970s they criticized the government of Salvador Allende (in office from 1970 to 1973) for being pro-Arab, deviating from the traditional stance of Chile towards Arab nations (Kaufman, Shapira, and Barromi 1979, 42). In addition, Arab press in Latin America has discussed the role of what they deem the Zionist manipulation of “press, radio and T.V.” (Kaufman, Shapira, and Barromi 1979, 42). Both these examples showcase that both sides support their respective cause and that this has filtered into their host country's politics.

Researchers have analyzed the UN voting pattern of Latin American nations and have found that the Jewish and Palestinian communities did have somewhat of an impact on the overall voting records. Edy Kaufman, Yoram Shapira and Joel Barromi, authors of *Israel-Latin American Relations*, analyzed the voting records of the Latin American countries. They found that the Palestinians in Honduras, being very large in comparison to their Jewish counterparts, have influenced Honduran voting records to be largely anti-Israeli. However, Chile, which also has a rather small Jewish population had a pro-Israeli voting record (Kaufman, Shapira, and Barromi 1979, 203). This difference in voting records can be attributed to the success of each community's ability to influence, or lobby, the government to vote in their favor. Kaufman mentions that

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<sup>10</sup> *Mundo Judío* translates as the *Jewish World* and *Palabra Israelita* translates as the *Israeli Word*

during the United Nations Fifth Special Emergency Session on July 3, 1967<sup>11</sup> to discuss the situation in Israel after the June 1967 Six Day War, the Honduran representative expressed his appreciation for the Arab population in his country and their contributions (Kaufman, Shapira, and Barromi 1979, 212).

### **Conclusion**

The literature on the Palestinian Diaspora is very limited, and the few publications on the topic lack an effective academic analysis of the Diaspora in the context of individual countries. In addition, while there are sufficient publications on the Jewish Diaspora in Latin America, it does not recognize the Palestinian Diaspora nor does it compare both Diasporas living in Latin America. The Jewish Diaspora shares many similarities with the Palestinian Diaspora in Latin America. These similarities have created somewhat of a cohesive bond between both groups, however homeland politics continue to keep both groups *together, apart* as described by Heba El-Attar. Aside from the migration similarities, both groups have enjoyed economic success in the commercial sector and at times have conducted business transactions together.

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<sup>11</sup> Kaufman, et al. cite the Fifth Emergency Session as taking place in 1976, however UN records indicated that the session took place in 1967, shortly after the war.



**CHAPTER V:**  
**Palestinian Emigration: The Creation of a Diaspora**  
**From the Time of Ottoman Rule to the 1948 Arab-Israeli War**

**The Ottoman Period**

The Holy Land, as many refer to it, has been a region desired by many, and inhabited by a few. The world's three major religions, Christianity, Judaism and Islam, all regard this place as the cradle of their creation and place a significant amount of religious importance on the region. Palestine and the Levant were the center of a struggle between many empires and the location of several Crusades, experiencing conflict for a large portion of the first through sixteenth centuries. Without neglecting the importance of the empires that prospered in the region, all subsequently met their end, with the longest and most prominent being the Ottoman Empire.

Ottoman rule over Palestine began in 1516 when it captured the region from the Mamluk Sultanate of Egypt. It continued its rule until it lost the region to the British during World War I in 1917. Palestine represented legitimacy to the Ottoman Empire in the Middle East. The Empire was Muslim in nature and relied on Shari'a law, and after capturing the Middle East it was able to control the main Islamic religious cities along with the pilgrimage routes. This legitimized the Empire as a Muslim one, with Palestine's Islamic monuments playing a large role as "the nerve centers of the Muslim world" (Muslih 1988, 19). The importance of the Ottoman Empire in the discussion of the Palestinian Diaspora in Latin America is that many Palestinians, mainly Christians, emigrated during their

reign. This happened towards the end of the Empire's rule during World War I. In addition it allowed for the incoming Jewish population to grow under its rule. Ottoman rulers opposed and feared Arab nationalism, as they feared it would lead to Arab independence. This however, did not stop Arab nationalism from growing towards the end of the Ottoman Empire.

### **Early Political Structure and Nationalism**

The Middle East as a whole did not experience a sense of nationalism until the late nineteenth century. This sense of nationalism individualized each area of the Middle East, giving Syrians, Lebanese and Palestinians (as well as others) a national identity. The notion of nationalism is nonexistent in Islam, which defined the Middle East through the ruling of an Islamic empire, therefore a sense of nationalism was not evident in the region (Goldschmidt 1979, 165). Within Islam there is no national loyalty, there is only loyalty to Islam and protecting Islamic lands. This is described as follows,

In traditional Islamic thought, the ummah, or “community of believers”, was the sole object of political loyalty for Muslims. Loyalty meant defending the land of Islam against rulers or peoples of other faiths. All true Muslims were supposed to be brothers or sisters, regardless of race, language, or culture. Although there were differences between Arabs and Persians, or between them and the Turks, common adherence to Islam was supposed to transcend these divergences. Nationalism was not meant to exist in Islam (Goldschmidt 1979, 165).

As nationalism arose in Europe during the nineteenth century, some Arabs also began to identify themselves by nation, rather than by religion. Nationalism became an important issue during the end of Ottoman rule in Palestine among

some Palestinians, whether they were Jewish, Christians or Muslims. Former U.S. President Jimmy Carter explains that Christian and Muslim Arabs had “no real commitment to establish a separate and independent nation. Their concern was with family and tribe and, for the Muslims, the broader world of Islam.” He continues by stating that nationalism did not gain ground until after Zionist immigrants began to enter Palestinian society, he says, “strong ideas of nationhood began to take shape among the Arabs only when they saw increasing numbers of Zionists immigrate to Palestine, buying tracts of land for permanent homes with the goal of establishing their own nation” (Carter 2006, 56). Organizations such as the Jewish National Fund raised money to purchase land in Palestine which in turn would be allocated to Jewish settlers with the restriction that it never be sold to an Arab. During the 1870s and 1880s the Arabs classified Zionism as a migration movement, or a land purchase movement, and did not classify it as politically charged. However, by the 1890s they realized the political nature of the movement and recognized the threat it posed to their existence in Palestine (Muslih 1988, 79). The idea of an Arab nationalist movement grew out of the collapsing Ottoman Empire, and was catapulted forward by Jewish immigration.

Arab nationalism, although at the time a minority trend, was growing and Arabs were increasingly at odds with their Ottoman rulers. Towards the end of the Empire’s existence, the Young Turks, who headed a movement towards “Turkification” of the Empire, ended up creating the final division that pushed

Arabs towards recognizing their Arab identity. This occurred after the 1908 coup d'état by the Young Turks. The shift from pan-Islam, which was the center of ideology of the Empire prior to the Young Turks, to pan-Turanism motivated the Arab's self-identity (Goldschmidt 1979, 186). The Young Turks, also known as the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP), began to promote the Turkish language and traditions and also began teaching the Quran in Turkish throughout the Empire. They referred to Arabs as "the dogs of the Turkish nation and considered them to be an inferior ethnic group" (Muslih 1988, 61). This is not to discount the notion that the Palestinian elite had functioning roles in the government, but that the policy of Turkification by the Young Turks began the deterioration process of relations with Palestinians as a whole. As Turkish nationalism increased so did Palestinian/Arab nationalism. This created a division between the ruler and the subjects, and was the foundation for further Arab nationalism. The more the Young Turks pushed for Turkism and isolated the Arabs, the more the Arabs realized the need to become nationalistic in order to preserve their identity. This was the movement that created Arabism, creating a national identity and politicized being Arab and a Turkish subject.

### **Ottoman Draft**

As the Ottoman press began to allow for more freedom of expression during the early 1900s, many Arab nationalists used newspapers to express their concerns. These concerns included being subjects of the Empire and the refusal of the Empire to recognize the Arab subjects, as well as their growing concern for Zionist immigration. The CUP enacted a mandatory military service for all

Ottoman subjects in 1909. A large majority were recruited from the areas that would become known as Syria, Lebanon and Palestine (Masters 2013, 217). Thus, Christians, Muslims and Jews all tried to avoid being drafted by emigrating out of the Empire's grasp. By the end of the Second Balkan War in 1914, the loss of life in Palestine alone was estimated at 6 percent of the total population, from both war and disease (Masters 2013, 218). Both Jewish and Christian men were drafted during this time period. However, after the first roll call, few showed up. These men had either emigrated to dodge the draft or paid the exemption tax to exempt them from military service. The Ottoman government attempted to curtail emigration by restricting travel documents and imposing heavy taxes on the émigrés. However, these attempts did little to curb the emigration. This restriction was in addition to physical travel restrictions due to World War I, an example includes the naval blockade by the Allied forces imposed on the region.

As the Ottomans became desperate and the Allies were able to advance into the Arab lands, the people of Palestine, Syria and Lebanon suffered. The Allies cut off sea access to the Ottomans by blockading the Mediterranean. However, this also cut off supplies to the population in the area, creating famine and inaccessibility to necessities (ibid). This is another factor to keep in mind when discussing the emigration of Palestinians.

The Ottomans had faced defeat earlier in Libya (1911) and in the Balkans (1913), prior to World War I. During the war, the British attacked Palestine from

the south (modern day Egypt) and Emir Hussein's<sup>1</sup> forces approached from the southeast (modern day Jordan). As the Ottoman Empire began to retract during World War I, the Arabs were faced with supporting a dying empire or risk being taken over by the West. Realizing that the Ottomans would lose control of the Levant, the French and British governments, with the participation of Russia, took part in secret agreements on how to divide the Empire.<sup>2</sup> One such agreement took place in May 1916 and was called the Sykes-Picot Agreement, named after its two authors. The agreement would give "Syria and Lebanon to France and divide Palestine into zones of British and Anglo-French control" (Segev 2001, 42). After the war, at the Conference of San Remo in April 1920, the Allied powers discussed the dismantling of the Empire and carried out this agreement once the Ottoman Empire signed the Treaty of Sevres on August 10, 1920. The Treaty laid out the allocation of the Levant to each Allied power, with Palestine being placed under British Mandate through the League of Nations.

### **Jewish Immigration to Ottoman Palestine**

In the late 1800s and early 1900s the Palestinians encountered a growing Jewish immigration, creating tensions between both groups. The Jewish immigration posed three types of threats to the Palestinians, 1.) *demographic threat* through the non-natural increase of the Jewish character of the country; 2.) *territorial threat* through the purchase of land by wealthy Western Jews or Jewish

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<sup>1</sup> Emir Hussein bin Ali was a central figure in motivating the Arab Revolt and in pushing Arab nationalism towards the end of the Ottoman Empire's rule.

<sup>2</sup> Another such discussion was the McMahon-Hussein Correspondence, in which Henry McMahon, the British High Commissioner for Egypt, promised Emir Hussein control of portions of the Arab lands.

organizations; 3.) *religious, political and ideological threat* by the continued Zionist ideology of establishing a Jewish state in Palestine (Campos 2011, 158). For example, Ann Lesch describes the notion of *avodah ivrit*, meaning Hebrew Labor, which created labor tensions between the groups (Lesch 1979, 16). This was the idea that in order to maintain a Jewish national identity and in order to have incoming Jewish immigrants employed, the local Arab population, which provided cheap labor, must not be employed. This was initiated by the second *aliyah*<sup>3</sup> (early 1900s), which convinced the members of the first *aliyah* to pay and support them as it would benefit and strengthen their Jewish identity (Shafir and Peled 2002, 40). Another example was the territorial threat posed by the increase of land purchases by immigrants, as well as by the Jewish National Fund. As mentioned previously, the notion of conflict creating migration and migration creating conflict described by Nancie González can be applied to this situation.

As the fabric of Palestine changed, the Muslim and Christian Palestinians began to respond. As early as 1891 Muslim and Christian notables in Jerusalem sent telegraphs to Istanbul asking the Sultan to prohibit the purchase of land by Jewish immigrants (Lesch 1979, 28). The Empire responded by creating a ban on land sales to Jews in Jerusalem. However, before the ban could be enforced throughout the region the Ottomans were pressured by the West against enforcing the ban. Palestinians, both Christians and Muslims, began to unite under one ideology, “the religion of the homeland (i.e. nationalism), which

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<sup>3</sup> Aliyah refers to the Jewish immigration to Israel from the diaspora, leading to the return of the Jewish people from exile.

granted equal rights to all” (Segev 2001, 106). These organized groups of Palestinians petitioned the Ottoman Empire to limit the influx of Jewish immigrants, but declared that Jews living in Palestine would be treated equally among Muslims and Christians. They did, however, declare their opposition to the immigration of Zionists into Palestine, claiming that “Zionism has no roots at all in Moses’ law. It is an invention of Herzl’s”<sup>4</sup> (Segev 2001, 106). This sense of nationalism was a combined reaction to the Young Turk’s Turkification policy and the policy of Zionism.

Arabs, both Christian and Muslim, rallied against the incoming Jewish immigrants in order to try to protect their economy and national identity. In 1911 two delegates<sup>5</sup> who represented Jerusalem in the Ottoman Parliament attempted to stop the sale of agricultural land to foreign incoming Jews but were unsuccessful in preventing the sales (Masters 2013, 213). The Jewish identity in Palestine also evolved as more “secular and politically motivated” (Lesch 1979, 27). Many of the incoming immigrants were Jews escaping persecution in Europe and wanting to settle in the historical land of the Israelites. Additionally, the incoming Jewish population had a sense of superiority over Palestinians and did not understand Arab or Middle Eastern culture and traditions, and thus created a division between Jew and Arab. An example was the misinterpretation of animal grazing rights. Many Arabs had flocks of animals and had an established customary pasture right to adjacent lands. The incoming Jews did not adhere to

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<sup>4</sup> This is in reference to Theodor Herzl, an Austro-Hungarian born to Jewish parents. He was a writer and philosopher and is credited with being the father of modern Zionism.

<sup>5</sup> These parliament members were Ruhi al-Khalidi and Sa’id al-Husayni.



this and blocked adjacent lands. They usually confiscated any animals found trespassing and fined the Arab owners (Muslih 1988, 71), causing tensions between both groups.

By the middle of the 1910s the Ottoman Empire was unable to control Palestine any further, nor was it able to control the incoming Zionist migrants. The Empire was incapable of effectively controlling the “forces that favored Jewish immigration and Jewish economic development” (Divine 1994, 153). The condition that favored Jewish migration and success were the lack of enforcement of immigration regulations by the Empire. This aggravated an already tense situation, and furthermore exaggerated the economic and political tensions between both groups. While political tensions were apparent, there was growing economic tension between both groups. Palestinians who were able to leave did so, thus creating the Diaspora. An Arab newspaper published an article recognizing and condemning the Arabs who were migrating away from Palestine. Najib Nassar, founder of the newspaper *al-Karmil*, wrote in 1908:

While societies are being established for the purchase of our country and for its colonization, and while these societies are concentrating on reviving every aspect of their nationality, we migrate to foreign countries to make room for others (Muslih 1988, 80).

A large portion of the Palestinians in Latin America emigrated during this time period (1890 to 1920). This was the sentiment of the dying Ottoman Empire, and what the British would inherit after World War I.

### **British Mandate of Palestine**

After the defeat and subsequent collapse of the Ottoman Empire, the newly created League of Nations appointed the British as the legal body to govern Palestine. This mandate was created in 1920, enforced in 1923 and lasted until the creation of Israel in 1948. During the mandate the British were caught between the Jewish and Arab nationalist movements and promised the territory to both groups. An important example of this was through the Balfour Declaration.

The Balfour Declaration announced on November 2, 1917, began as a request from Lord Walter Rothschild, honorary president of the Zionist Federation of Britain and Ireland, to Lord Arthur James Balfour, the British Foreign Secretary (Goldschmidt 1979, 193). This request was to create a Jewish homeland in Palestine. The Declaration stated that the British government would fully support a Jewish homeland in Palestine. It stated:

His Majesty's Government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavors to facilitate the achievement of this object, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine, or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country.<sup>6</sup>

The Declaration was interpreted differently by Jews and Arabs, each shaping it to accommodate their intentions. However, it also attempted to protect the civil and religious rights of the 93 percent of the population which was "non-Jewish" but

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<sup>6</sup> Balfour Declaration accessed through The Avalon Project based at Yale University Law School. Accessed October 29, 2013. <http://avalon.law.yale.edu/>

not their political or national rights at the time of the declaration (Goldschmidt 1979, 247). This was comprised of Christians and Muslims who identified themselves as Palestinians, disregarding their religious beliefs in their quest to establish one nationalistic identity with separate religions. It was then used as a tool to establish the support of the British government towards the creation of a Jewish state. Chief Administrator Major-General H.D. Watson explained the fear that many Palestinians had in a correspondence he sent to the British Foreign Office in August of 1919. He stated:

The great fear of the people is that once Zionist wealth is passed into the land, all territorial and mineral concessions will fall into the hands of the Jews whose intensely clannish instincts prohibit them from dealing with any but those of their own religion, to the detriment of Moslems and Christians. These latter, the natives of the soil, foresee their eventual banishment from the land (González 1992, 17).

This fear became reality when the employment, economic and political conditions deteriorated and tensions turned into violent revolts and riots.

The Ottoman Empire accidentally "created" Palestinian self-awareness, but the British Mandate created the modern-day Palestinian identity. The Zionist quest for British intervention in creating a Jewish homeland in Palestine continued. Herbert Samuel, a Cabinet Member in the English Parliament, was one of the inspiring forces behind the Balfour Declaration and later on would be criticized for his interpretation of the Declaration. Samuel was the first High Commissioner in Palestine (1920 to 1925) and was the first Jewish ruler in the Holy Land since A.D. 135 (Wasserstein 1976, 753). He was blamed by Arabs

and Jews for the 1920 riots in Jerusalem and the growing amount of violence between Arabs and Jews due to the Zionist policy of Jewish immigration. Samuel believed that in order for a Jewish state to be created there must first be a large influx of Jewish migrants in order to create a ruling majority in the country. At first he underestimated the Arab nationalists, but upon visiting Palestine prior to his appointment, he realized the great opposition to Zionism and Jewish migration by the Arabs. His religious identity as a Jew ruling over a disputed territory between Jews and Arabs and having Christian British soldiers under his authority added to the tense situation (Wasserstein 1976, 761). It was his support of the Zionist immigration policy that made him disliked by the Arabs, but it was his later modification of his initial view of the Balfour Declaration that made his fellow Zionists turn against him.

Riots between Arabs and Jews were growing and Samuel realized that this was due to the increase in Jewish immigrants. Arabs declared that if the immigration did not cease then Samuel was to expect more violence. Samuel then decided to cease Jewish immigration temporarily and in certain categories, which was unsuccessful. Following this attempt, Samuel declared that the Balfour Declaration did not signify that a Jewish state was to be created in order to quell Arab opposition. On June 3, 1921, during a speech delivered in honor of the King of England's birthday in Jerusalem he declared that the Declaration "did not mean the setting up of a Jewish government to rule over the Muslim and Christian majority" (Wasserstein 1976, 767). Samuel followed this by expressing

the need for Zionists to issue a declaration that they do not intend to set up an exclusive Jewish state.

By the 1930s the British had to combat Arab and Jewish nationalist movements, along with Arab and Jewish terrorist attacks. In order to maintain the Arab majority, the British enacted an immigration restriction in 1939 by issuing what is referred to as the White Paper of 1939. The White Paper of 1939 canceled the partition plan of 1937. This was a shock to the Jewish community, as the 1937 partition plan would have created a Jewish state in 44 percent of the territory, giving the remainder of the land to Emir Abdullah<sup>7</sup>, with the exception of Jerusalem. This White Paper indicated that the British would limit immigration to 75,000 over the next five years and declared the need for a joint government comprised of Arabs and Jews.<sup>8</sup> This enraged the Jewish population, whose hopes had been raised by the partition plan, which led to further riots. It also allowed the British to declare that the declarations listed in the Balfour Declaration had been fulfilled, which allowed them to cease being obligated to fulfill the Declaration. The White Paper explained that continued Jewish immigration into Palestine created a fear among the Arab population, and that,

this fear has made possible disturbances which have given a serious setback to economic progress, depleted the Palestine exchequer, rendered life and property insecure, and produced a bitterness between the Arab and Jewish populations which is deplorable between citizens of the same country.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Emir Abdullah I bin al-Hussein was another central figure in initiating the Arab revolt and would become the first ruler of modern day Jordan.

<sup>8</sup> The White Paper of 1939 accessed through The Avalon Project based at Yale University Law School. Accessed November 7, 2013. <http://avalon.law.yale.edu>

This fear and the incoming Zionists continued to impact emigration of Palestinians.

The doctrine of the Zionist leaders was two-fold, “Jewish immigration and Arab emigration” (Calvocoressi 2009, 322). Migration statistics collected by the British during the mandate signify that there was an increase in emigration from Palestine prior to the creation of Israel. Emigration of residents permanently leaving Palestine in 1943 were recorded as 432 (85 Jews and 347 non-Jewish émigrés). This number jumped to 1,460 (405 Jewish and 1,055 non-Jewish émigrés) in 1945 (McCarthy 1990, 184). While these numbers seem nominal, it is important to note that many did not see their emigration as being permanent, and had intended on returning. Thus, many would not have been documented as permanently leaving. In comparison, arrival and departure records indicate that departures of residents jumped from 39,233 in 1940 to 89,197 in 1946 (McCarthy 1990, 179).

As World War II came to an end, the Jewish-Palestinian conflict intensified, and Jewish terrorist attacks were increasingly focused on British military installments. By the late 1940s Jewish groups began to expel Palestinians and seize Palestinian lands through the use of terrorist tactics. On November 29, 1947, the United Nations issued the partition plan of Palestine, outlining the future plans for Palestine once the British mandate was complete, which in turn started a civil war. The partition proposed two states with Jerusalem being governed by an international force. This plan enraged Palestinians and

neighboring Arab countries, as they would be giving up their land and agreeing to what they foresaw as their "death warrant" (Segev 2001, 496).

On May 15, 1948, Israel declared its independence and the 1948 Arab-Israeli War broke out. The escalations leading up to the war and massacres that took place created fear among the Palestinians and Jews; however, it led to the eventual expulsion of nearly three-quarters of a million Palestinians. After the creation of Israel there were a series of wars that broke out between Arabs and Jews which had an impact on Palestinian emigration. Aside from the 1948 Arab-Israeli War, the 1967 Six-Day War had an impact on Palestinians. It was this war in which Israel annexed Jerusalem and seized the West Bank and Gaza (as well as Syria's Golan Heights and Egypt's Sinai peninsula). Moreover, Israel restricted those who fled in 1967 from returning, further adding to the refugee dilemma and adding to the growing Palestinian Diaspora. A key issue to conclude this section with is that the 1948 Arab-Israeli War had a great impact on parts of the West Bank, including Jerusalem, but not in other parts, such as the Bethlehem area. In contrast, the 1967 Six-Day War had a much greater impact on the Bethlehem area, in which Palestinians were displaced and Israel occupied the West Bank.

### **Christian Presence**

Christians in the Middle East were a "protected" minority during this period. Each Christian sect was protected by their Western counterpart, and was governed by the *millet* system. This system allowed the Ottoman Empire to offer "communal autonomy to religious minority populations" (Haiduc-Dale 2013, 21) by allowing these minorities a limited amount of autonomy. They enjoyed

protection and assistance from Western powers, especially towards the end of the Ottoman Empire. This system provided the Middle Eastern and the Muslim governance with "the pre-modern paradigm of a religiously pluralistic society by granting each religious community an official status and a substantial measure of self-government" (Virginia 2000, 96). For example the Maronites and Catholics were overseen and protected by the French, and the Greek Orthodox (including Syrian Greek Orthodox) by the Russians. In addition to protecting them and their continued survival, they sometimes provided educational opportunities for them. This is not to say that the Christian population was or is homogeneous, there are several different sects of Christianity that have existed and continue to exist in Palestine. These Christians increasingly relied on Europe during the first part of the twentieth century and "by the eve of World War I most Christians of the Arab East looked to Europe both for protection and cultural inspiration" (Betts 1978, 121).

Allowing for these Christian Arabs to be educated through Western systems, and introduced to Western ideas, was an important difference between them and their Muslim neighbors (Goldschmidt 1979). This allowed for the Christian Arabs to have a great deal of advantages over their Muslim counterparts, leading to the average Christian being "far superior to his Muslim neighbor in terms of education and material well-being" (Betts 1978, 122). One of the most advantageous aspects was the ability to read and write in Western languages, and thus be able to easily conduct trade, and travel to the West,



facilitating an exchange of ideas between both groups. Nancie González writes about Bethlehem and the benefit it had over Muslim cities by saying “not only did the town host frequent Christian visitors and immigrants from abroad, but the various religious entities these outsiders represented provided formal educational facilities unknown elsewhere in the area” (González 1992, 83). She also adds that Christian Palestinians served as interpreters or advisers to the British officers during the mandate (González 1992, 55). Not only did they have the language advantage but their "westernization" allowed for communication with a culture they understood. For example, many of the members of the faculty of the Catholic schools were Priests from the West (González 1992). Their education level and literacy rate was also beneficial in allowing them to become involved in Palestinian nationalism during the latter part of the 1800s and into the 1900s. Christians were among the first to claim that the Zionist migration and ideology would lead to the inevitable demographic transformation of the land. An example includes a 1908 newspaper edited by a Palestinian Christian explaining this threat (Haiduc-Dale 2013, 23).

In addition, Christians to this day living in Israel and Palestine have had a higher level of education than the remainder of the population. According to the Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Arab Christians have the highest rate of matriculation examination in comparison to Muslims, Druze and Jewish students

(Sharon 2012).<sup>9</sup> In addition, the Palestinian Christians have enjoyed a “significantly better” socio-economic situation than that of their Muslim counterparts (Weinreich and Saunderson 2003, 174). The influence of the West, coupled with their strong economic ability and higher education level all played vital roles in facilitating the Christians to emigrate in contrast to their Muslim counterparts (Tsimhoni 1983, 56). An example is during the Arab migration to the United States during the 1880s through the 1920s, only 5 to 10 percent of the migrants were Muslims, with the rest being Christian (Arab Americans: An Integral Part of American Society, 8). Future migration to the U.S. would include a greater number of Muslims.

Christian Arabs played an important role in early Palestine, under both the Ottoman and British rule. In 1904 and 1905 a manifesto by Najib Azuri, a Christian Arab (Palestinian), brought the notion that there was a Palestinian national identity to the attention of European powers (Lesch 1979, 29). In addition, Christians had a separate notion of being Palestinian than Muslims did during the Ottoman rule. The Empire was Islamic in nature, thus Muslims believed that any threat towards the Empire was a threat to Islam.<sup>10</sup> However, Christians “were less likely than the Muslims to feel strong loyalty to the Empire” (Goldschmidt 1979, 183). They not only made the European powers aware of this, but it created a national unity within the Palestinian populace. This shared

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<sup>9</sup> Accessed through the Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs. “Christians in Israel-Christmas 2012”. Accessed November 26, 2013

<sup>10</sup> This is not to understate Palestinian nationalism among Muslims or to say that Muslims at the time were not becoming nationalistic. They played an important role in developing the Palestinian national identity.

religious belief and interaction with the West was one of the reasons why it was easier for Christians to emigrate from Palestine than Muslims (Suleiman 1999, 61).

According to Ann Lesch, during the 1920s and 1930s the “middle stratum of society was composed disproportionately of Christians, who worked as merchants, lawyers, teachers, journalists, civil servants, and artisans” (Lesch 1979, 60). Furthermore, the “emergent commercial bourgeoisie, especially the import-export merchants, tended to be Christian minorities” (Farsoun 2006, 46). This is one of the factors which allowed for Palestinians in Latin America to succeed in the commercial sectors, most notably in the imports-exports industry. Educated and trained incoming Jewish immigrants began to compete with the Christians, creating a direct conflict between both groups. Christians and Muslims began to recognize that they shared the same threat from the Jewish immigrants. Thus, Christians emigrated for both political and economic reasons, and their numbers declined to coincide with the growing Jewish immigrants entering Palestine and the redistribution of the Muslim population within Palestine.

Although the first pioneers of the Palestinian Diaspora in Latin America were primarily comprised of those from Bethlehem, Beit Sahur and Beit Jala, there were some from Jerusalem. Jerusalem experienced the largest decline in Christians living in the city. In 1944 the population of Jerusalem’s Christians was about 30,000, in June 1967 (shortly after the Six-Day War) the population was

12,000, and in 2012 the population remained at 11,700<sup>11</sup> (Sennott 2003, 24). One of the reasons for the large decline in June 1967 was that after the Six-Day War the “families that fled the fighting were never permitted to return” and their properties “were seized by ‘Israel’s Custodian of Absentee Property’ and the Jewish Agency turned them over to new Jewish immigrants” (Sennott 2003, 24). This is not evident in those living in Bethlehem since their emigration was for more economic reasons than political ones. Table 5-1 indicates the total population of each religious group during the Ottoman and British rule of Palestine.

**Table 5-1. Population of Each Religious Group in Ottoman Palestine and the British Mandate of Palestine.**<sup>12</sup>

<u>Year</u>	<u>Muslims</u>	<u>Jews</u>	<u>Christians</u>
<b>1922</b>	486,177	83,790	71,464
<b>1925</b>	550,850	121,725	75,512
<b>1928</b>	616,402	151,656	79,812
<b>1931</b>	693,147	174,606	88,907
<b>1934</b>	747,826	282,975	102,407
<b>1937</b>	816,893	395,836	110,869
<b>1940</b>	881,293	463,535	120,587
<b>1943</b>	962,162	502,912	131,281
<b>1946</b>	1,076,783	583,327	145,063

<sup>11</sup> Figures for 1967 and 2012 include the annexed portions of Jerusalem. Figures for 1967 and 2012 are cited from Sharon 2012

<sup>12</sup> See McCarthy 1990, 65

Based on these statistics, we can see that the growth rate of the Jewish population was greater than that of both the Muslim and the Christian populations. The Jewish growth rate per annum was 8 percent, whereas the Muslim and Christian rates were 3.3 percent and 2.9 percent per annum, respectively. This large increase of the Jewish population replaced “through war its indigenous population with an immigrant population” (McCarthy 1990, 38). The end result was the emigration of Christians from Palestine, thus adding to the Diaspora in Latin America and elsewhere—and the exodus of roughly three quarters of a million Palestinians, both Muslim and Christians.

Today this emigration continues, albeit on a much smaller scale, with many seeking visas to the United States. Former Mayor of Bethlehem, Hanna Nasser, explains the current circumstances of this emigration as economically and politically based. He says,

It is sad to see the Christian character of the place where the Lord Jesus was born disappearing. But why is this happening? Why are our Christian families leaving? It is pure economics. The historical fact that precipitated an exodus of Christians was the creation of the state of Israel. The Israelis have confiscated land around Bethlehem, much of it belonging to Christian families and institutions, to build Jewish settlements. And then the Israeli military used these settlements to close off our access to East Jerusalem. When they did this, they cut off the lifeblood of our economy (Sennott 2003, 119).

While the Mayor does not reference the waves of emigration prior to the establishment of the State of Israel, he expresses the concern of those currently living in Bethlehem and the reasons for their continued emigration today. This decline can be seen in table 5-2, which indicates the Christian population by

percentage of the population in each of the major *sending-towns* that the members of the Latin American Diaspora originated from. Many of these émigrés joined established family members in the Americas, thus creating this century long link between the Americas and Palestine. Additionally, each city was known for emigrating to certain regions of the world. For example, those in Jerusalem primarily emigrated to North America while those from Bethlehem emigrated to Latin America (Tsimhoni 1983, 56). This was due to the established networks in the region and the tendency to follow relatives when emigrating.

Table 5-2 indicates a decline in the relative numbers—but not absolute numbers—of Christians in each town. Therefore, this does not signify that this decline was solely due to emigration. During the mandate there was a great deal of internal migration, which redistributed the demographics of the land. Additionally, after the 1948 and 1967 wars many Palestinians fled conflict zones, and thus another redistribution of the population took place. For example, as a result of the 1948 Arab-Israeli War a large number of Muslims fled to the Bethlehem area. This is most notable after the 1967 Six-Day War, which impacted the Bethlehem area by Israel's occupation of the West Bank. Therefore this table illustrates a decline in the Christian population proportionate to population as a whole for each town. A final factor to incorporate is also the high Muslim birth rate in comparison to the lower birth rate among Christians.

**Table 5-2.** Population of Bethlehem, Beit Sahur and Beit Jala from 1922 to 2007<sup>13</sup>

<b>Town</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Christian Population</b>	<b>Total Population</b>	<b>Christian Percentage of Population</b>
<b>Bethlehem</b>	1922	5,586	6,658	84%
	1931	5,790	7,320	79%
	1961	7,253	22,453	32%
	2007	7,140	25,266	28%
<b>Beit Sahur</b>	1922	1,233	1,519	81%
	1931	1,538	1,942	79%
	1961	3,455	5,316	65%
	2007	8,160	12,367	65%
<b>Beit Jala</b>	1922	3,060	3,101	99%
	1931	3,147	3,377	93%
	1961	4,437	7,966	56%
	2007	7,140	11,758	61%

### **Conclusion**

Palestinians during the early part of the twentieth century emigrated for both political and economic reasons. Furthermore, the founding of the Jewish state compounded their reasons and forced further emigration. Their history indicates that the economic and political conditions under the Ottomans influenced their emigration, in addition to the Zionist immigration and the competition this caused. Members left the territories thinking that they would be able to return once the political situation improved. However, this did not happen. These Palestinians continue to hold onto the ideology of a Palestinian homeland, and the memories that were left behind.

<sup>13</sup> See Betts 1979, 72 and Kark and Oren-Nordheim 2001. For 2007 statistics see Collings 2008, 7

Additionally, an important aspect of the Palestinian Diaspora in Latin America is that it is largely comprised of Christians. Their ability to emigrate, due to their economic and educational advantage, allowed them to travel and establish transnational familial connections between members in the Diaspora and the homeland. Today, Christians continue to emigrate from Bethlehem, Beit Sahur and Beit Jala. The continued growth of the Muslim population, through natural births and the internal migration over the course of the conflict, has changed the character of these three historically Christian cities. This new wave of émigrés follows family, and many have migrated to join the Diaspora in Latin America. Another important factor is the continued Israeli policies which significantly curtail Palestinian political and economic autonomy. This is done through the continuation of settlement construction in the West Bank and the confiscation of Palestinian land, which infringes on the Palestinian right to their land. In addition, the construction of a security wall sharply limits Palestinian movement and access to their land, creating an unnecessary economic burden on these three towns. The following chapter will discuss what the Diaspora in Honduras has accomplished, and why it is seen as one of the most successful within the whole Palestinian Diaspora.



## **CHAPTER VI:**

### **Growing a Diaspora in Honduras**

The Palestinian Diaspora in Honduras, as mentioned previously, has enjoyed great success within Honduran society, from arts and entertainment to business. Their business and commercial accomplishments stand out in comparison to all others, therefore this will be explained in the most detail. Additionally, Palestinian commercial interests in Honduras are expansive. Therefore, in order to remain focused, only the top businessmen and their collective importance will be discussed.

### **Palestinians Represented in the Arts:**

#### **Literature, Music and Television**

Palestinians and other Arabs have had an increasing impact on the arts in Honduras. During the early 1900s they were depicted as the stereotypical Oriental miser, one who is very frugal with his money and lives in deprived living conditions. Conversely, Arab women were usually depicted as lustrous and exotic. Heba El-Attar, professor of Latin American literature, explains that “Arabness” has evolved in Latin America from *Turcophobia* to *Turcophilia*; from a fear of the unknown to an embrace of it. She explains that this early Latin American literature was comprised of stories that vilified Arabs. She includes an analysis of Honduran author Jorge Luis Oviedo’s *La Turca (The Turkish Woman)*, a work of fiction whose protagonist is a Palestinian immigrant who ends up becoming successful in Honduras. Oviedo’s novel was published in 1988, showing that these stereotypes lasted well into the latter part of the century. *La*

*Turca* is a useful example of not only Arabs in Latin American literature, but is also reflective of the narrative of the early Palestinian experience as a whole in Honduras. The summary is as follows:

An independent female immigrant, she begins as a peddler and crosses through numerous Honduran towns selling her merchandise. The number of towns she visits, as the novelist remarks ironically, exceeds those visited by any Honduran politician. Soon she is able to save a huge sum of money, and build a hotel and a local pub, and in doing so provide jobs and a recreational space for the locals. And yet the rumors continue to fly that maintain that she is insensitive to the townspeople. Meanwhile her image as a lusty Oriental woman does not seem to subtract from her agency, for throughout the novel she makes enormous efforts to find a man capable of satisfying her desires (Alsultany and Shohat 2012, 255).

The protagonist eventually finds a man who is able to satisfy her needs and invites the whole town to her wedding. In a true display of assimilation, she plays Latin American music instead of the anticipated European music the townspeople thought she would play, due to it being regarded as a status symbol. Oviedo writes that, "the *Turca* gave us a lesson, an evident performance of patriotism and Latin American identity"<sup>1</sup> (Alsultany and Shohat 2012, 256). Oviedo's novel clearly illustrates the presence of the *Turcophobia* that once existed in Honduran literature. While their depiction in the arts was evident, their contribution to the arts is also of importance.

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<sup>1</sup> Translated from, "La *Turca* nos dio una lección, una muestra muy evidente de patriotism e identidad latinoamericana"

In 2013, Ángela Bendeck and Lidia Handal were named among the top singers in the country. Lidia Handal has eternalized the historical significance of the *campesino*<sup>2</sup> and the banana industry through her folkloric song “el bananero” (“Las Mejores Canciones de La Música Hondureña” 2013). Lidia is recognized as one of Honduras’ great folk songwriters while Ángela is known for her contributions to the new-age rock genre. While American mainstream music is the most popular in Honduras, these aforementioned artists have established themselves within the country and are widely recognized for their talents.

*O Clone* is a Brazilian *telenovela*<sup>3</sup> based on the relationship between a Moroccan girl and a Brazilian man. The major theme of this television show is the Arab culture and how it has become intertwined with Brazilian culture, in addition to the major thematic issue of the role that Islam plays between the lovers. It is able to depict Arab life, and sparked interest throughout Latin American in Arab culture, including food, music and dance. This is an example of *Turcophilia* that El-Attar discussed earlier. This *telenovela* became a highly watched television show, not only in Brazil, but in over 90 different countries<sup>4</sup> and is even the highest rated soap-opera in the history of Telemundo.<sup>5</sup> *O Clone* became not only an entertainment piece, but an educational one as well, as “the viewers learn vicariously by watching the televised drama” (Barbosa 2005, 82). El-Attar does not contend that *Turcophobia* has been replaced by *Turcophilia*,

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<sup>2</sup> Spanish for a land laborer, or farmer.

<sup>3</sup> This is the Spanish term for a television soap opera

<sup>4</sup> See “Encaminada La Version Hispana de ‘El Clon’” 2009

<sup>5</sup> Telemundo is a U.S. based Latino television broadcasting company. See Hishaam 2003, 16.

but instead she explains that this fear of Arabs is being replaced by an embrace of their culture. *O Clone* is an important contribution in regards to Honduran perceptions of the Palestinian Diaspora because of its depiction of Islamic traditions in a country whose Arabic population is primarily Christian. *O Clone's* popularity in Honduras allowed for a different perspective of Arab culture.

### **Business and Political Influence**<sup>6</sup>

*Over the years, Arabs have quietly become a potent force in this small, impoverished Central American country, with an influence in its business and political life that is unparalleled anywhere else in the Western Hemisphere*  
(Luxner 2001, 1)

The country's business wealth is in the hands of several powerful Palestinian families (Pine 2008, 5). This concentration of wealth has come to be known as the Honduran aristocracy that is controlled by these families. The two most powerful businessmen in Honduras are Miguel Facussé Barjum and Freddy Nasser.<sup>7</sup> Business is important because it has created the ability for Palestinians to succeed not only economically in the country, but also politically and socially. Estimates of Palestinian wealth range from 25 percent to 40 percent of Honduran GDP.<sup>8</sup> Additionally, Honduras, which is the second poorest country in Central America,<sup>9</sup> has the second highest number of multimillionaires in the region, with

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<sup>6</sup> The data gathered for this section comes from interviews with officials from the Chamber of Commerce in Tegucigalpa, the Asociación Nacional de Industriales and the Customs office, unless otherwise noted.

<sup>7</sup> Miguel Facussé's mother's maiden name is Barjum, another Palestinian family, however Miguel is commonly recognized by his father's last name, Facussé. The Nasser and Facussé families originated from Bethlehem.

<sup>8</sup> John Handal, Interview with Fernando Garcia, Executive Director of ANDI. Tegucigalpa, January 14, 2014. Also see García 2013

<sup>9</sup> Based on World Bank Development Indicators for 2012, Poverty Headcount at \$4 a Day.

215 individuals worth \$30 million or more (García 2013). Income inequality is a growing concern in global affairs, and Honduras has trumped all of the Latin American nations in having the highest income inequality. According to a report issued by the Center for Economic and Policy Research, Honduras' top 10 percent "captured over 100 percent of all income gains" during 2010 and 2011 (Johnston and Lefebvre 2013). This income inequality and the success of Palestinians in the commercial and industrial sectors has pegged them as the culprits of Honduras' economic and political instability. Their commercial success has been the source of the poor perception of Palestinians by the majority of native Hondurans.

Palestinians were able to amass great wealth for two reasons. The first is that they had the advantage of language, and knowledge of the Western world when they arrived. As mentioned in chapter two, they were able to use their language skills to communicate with traders outside of Honduras. In addition, their knowledge of commerce, stemming from centuries of trade between the Holy Land, the West and the East, allowed for them to establish commerce in a country that virtually had none prior to their arrival. The other reason for their wealth is that when they arrived in Honduras, there was a large land-owning class in the country comprised of descendants of members from the Spanish colony, commonly referred to as *Criollos*. These *Criollos* controlled the agricultural business in Honduras, and the eastern part of the country was primarily where they settled. This forced the Palestinians to enter trade and

commerce in the northwestern part of the country, particularly in San Pedro Sula (which lies within the Northern Coast). Palestinians benefited from being unable to purchase large tracts of land, and thus being excluded from the land-owning class. They were able to use their knowledge and skills to flourish in commerce and trade in the northern coastal region, establishing a commercial class in a largely agricultural country. In fact, many Palestinian families were able to grow empires in just one generation. Below, table 6-1 lists the largest businessmen in San Pedro Sula in 1930.

**Table 6-1.** Top Palestinian Businessmen in San Pedro Sula in 1930<sup>10</sup>

Palestinian	Non-Palestinian
Elena Viude de Canahuati	W.H. Bennaton
E.S. Canahuati	Catarino Flores
Antonio Handal	Manuel Flortín
Bishara Handal	Torres Godoy
M.A. Kawas	Juan R. López
Elías Kokali	Tomé Rivera
Constantino Larach	Nicolás Rosanía
Jesús Larach	
Larach Hermanos (Different from the above)	
Jesús Sahuri	
Jesús Saybe	
Juan Sikaffy	
Elías Yacamán	
Bishara Yuja	

With this being said, the families in table 6-1 still exist today and remain very powerful and influential. However, other families were able to introduce and

<sup>10</sup> See Amaya 2012, 115

capitalize on industries that were non-existent in Honduras and actually surpassed the wealth and power of these early pioneers. The Facussé, Nasser, Canahuati, Faraj, Kattan, Siman and Kafati families all grew in power, and today they comprise a large majority of the industrial, agricultural, energy and financial sectors of the Honduran economy. These families comprise the Honduran oligarchy.

As mentioned in chapter two, Dario Euraque has provided an extensive amount of research on Palestinian owned industry in Honduras. He was able to create a graph showcasing the financial capital of Palestinian owned businesses. Table 6-2 below showcases the Palestinian owned businesses and their market share in the 1980s. During this time period the Palestinian families were able to capitalize on growing industries in Honduras and further advance their market share.

**Table 6-2. Palestinian-Honduran and Jewish-Honduran Companies Listed by Financial Capital in Honduras During the 1980s<sup>11</sup>**

<b>Name of Group</b>	<b>Percentage of Financial Capital</b>
Inversiones Facussé	8.27%
Inversiones Continental*	6.29%
Grupo Goldstein*	4.49%
Inversiones Andonie Fernández	3.95%
Inversiones Bendeck S.A.	2.90%
Inversiones Kafati S.A.	2.58%
Inversiones Kattan S.A.	2.57%
Inversiones Larach S.A.	1.94%
Inversiones Canahuati	1.88%

*continued on next page*

<sup>11</sup> See Euraque 2009, 266

*Table 6-2 continued*

Grupo Hasbun	1.60%
Inversiones Sikafy	.58%
Inversiones Handal S.A.	.15%
Inversiones Kafie	.06%
<b>Total Jewish Capital</b>	<b>10.78%</b>
<b>Total Palestinian Capital</b>	<b>26.48%</b>
<b>Total Capital</b>	<b>37.26%</b>
*Inversiones Continental and Grupo Goldstein are the only Jewish companies.	

Furthermore, Honduras exhibits signs of crony capitalism, as well as being a rent-seeking economy—both going hand-in-hand with each other. Crony capitalism is best described as occurring when "those close to political authorities who make and enforce policies receive favors that have economic value" (Haber 2002, xi). Therefore, an individual in the commercial sector with political clout is able to influence factors which are favorable and, most importantly, profitable to their commercial interests. It is both an economic phenomenon as well as a political one. Crony capitalism often takes hold in a rent-seeking market, one in which individuals essentially pay "rent" in return for future government concessions, or cronyism. While corruption and income inequality are not always effects of these two phenomena, it can be said that these factors in Honduras are all related to one another. The Honduran oligarchy, which will be outlined below, has played a role in the creation of this economic and political phenomena.

### **A Family Affair: The Most Powerful Men in Honduras**

Miguel Facussé was born in Tegucigalpa in 1924 to parents who originated from Bethlehem. He attended the University of Notre Dame and



graduated in 1944 with a degree in Nautical Engineering. He quickly established himself as a prominent businessman in Honduras and Costa Rica, and by 1960 was able to welcome an envoy from Notre Dame to Honduras with an invitation to the Honduran Presidential House from President Ramon Villedas Morales (1957 to 1963) (Armstrong 1960, 4). In 1960 Facussé established *Químicas Dinant de Centroamérica*, a chemical company which would later produce agricultural and food products. He created production and distribution centers for his products and was able to introduce them to markets in El Salvador and Guatemala (“Cohep Reconoce Trayectoria Empresarial de Miguel Facussé” 2012). From 1982 to 1986 Facussé served as President Roberto Cordova’s (1982-1986) Chief Economic Adviser. By 2000, he had amassed a large empire, including chemical manufacturing, agricultural (primarily palm oil)<sup>12</sup> and food production. Through his corporations, Facussé was able to win bids to work with companies such as Procter & Gamble, Colgate-Palmolive and Nestle. In 2000 he sold his *Cressida* corporation for \$322 million, with Mr. Facussé himself netting \$120 million from the deal. This corporation was founded and run by Facussé, and was classified as the “biggest food and cleaning products manufacturer in Central America” (“Honduras Finance: Regional Links Attract Foreign Direct Investments” 2000).

In addition to his commercial interests, he is a political heavyweight, and is described as “the octogenarian patriarch of one of the handful of families

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<sup>12</sup> Facussé is a palm oil magnate in Honduras, having the largest share of the \$250 million industry. See “Informe de Comercio Exterior de Mercancías Generales” 2013

controlling much of Honduras' economy" (Malkin 2011). This is certainly true of Mr. Facussé, as his family has grown in wealth and power over the last fifty years. Through his political connections, Mr. Facussé assisted his nephew in a successful presidential bid in 1998. President Carlos Roberto Flores Facussé was president from 1998 to 2002. The former president now runs the family owned business, *Diario La Tribuna*, one of the country's largest print newspapers whose widest circulation is in the capital, Tegucigalpa.

Mr. Facussé, being a wealthy elite, also faces corruption allegations. In 2012 he was accused of using his economic and political clout to strong arm and quell land reform activists who were against the continued use of nearly 22,000 acres of land owned by *Químicas Dinant* for palm oil plantations. Meanwhile, the World Bank's International Finance Corporation granted Facussé a \$30 million loan through his *Corporación Dinant* to develop its palm oil plants and production (Woodsome 2014). The World Bank was criticized for allowing the loan to go through even though these accusations against Mr. Facussé were still unresolved.

Miguel's niece, Elisa Facussé, is married to Fredy Nasser, the president of *Grupo Terra*. Fredy Nasser is a graduate of the University of Texas A & M in the field of architecture and is now labeled as the second most powerful man in the country. Fredy Nasser's monopolistic *Grupo Terra* controls Honduran electrical production, the petroleum imports into the country, the hydro power plants, and was granted management rights to the country's four airports under his company

*Interairports*.<sup>13</sup> Fredy Nasser was granted the Honduran electrical concession in 1999, one year after President Carlos Flores began his term (Indiano 2009, 38). In 2000 the decision to privatize the management of the country's airports was made under the Flores administration, and Nasser was given the concession. Additionally, *Grupo Terras'* energy subsidiaries have the exclusive rights to the hydro and coal power production. These businessmen were able to capitalize on the government's privatization of several sectors, thus making them into the business elites they are today.

Schucry Kafie is another prominent businessman in Honduras, and has a large share of the dairy production in the country. His company *Lacthosa* is one of three major dairy producers in the country. Additionally, his *Lufussa* energy company controls the nation's thermal energy production. Schucry manages these companies alongside his family members, Eduardo and Luis. It is important to note that the connection between Schucry and Freddy is through his wife, Marlene Nasser, Freddy Nasser's sister. These connections illustrate how expansive the control of industry and commerce is in Honduras through familial connections, be it marriage or otherwise.

### **Canahuati Family and Media Outlets**

The Canahuati family is one of the other major influential families in Honduras. It has interests in textiles, newspapers, magazines, and pharmaceuticals. The Canahuati family is also intermarried with one of Honduras'

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<sup>13</sup> Interairports manages the airports in La Ceiba, Roatán, Tegucigalpa and San Pedro Sula. The latter three are all international airports.

other large Palestinian business families, the Larach family. Jorge Canahuati Larach is president of *Grupo Opsa*, which is comprised of *La Prensa*, *El Herald*, *Diez*, *Estilo*, *Honduras Tips*, *Estrategia Negocios*, *Chicos*, *Guía Médica*, *elCeibeño* and the *Progreseño*. Jorge Canahuati is also Chairman of the Board for *Laboratorios Finlay*, one of the country's largest pharmaceutical companies. *Grupo Opsa* consists of gossip tabloids, tour guides, and medical and city print magazines. *La Prensa* is the country's largest print newspaper, with a circulation of 60,000 printed copies. Newspapers in Honduras are primarily distinguished by their circulation between San Pedro Sula and Tegucigalpa. *El Herald*, which can be labeled a citywide newspaper, is distributed in Tegucigalpa, whereas *La Prensa* is distributed nationwide but primarily found in San Pedro Sula. Therefore, Canahuati has a stronghold on print media in both San Pedro Sula and Tegucigalpa. His competitors are Carlos Flores Facussé's *Diario La Tribuna*, and Jaime Rosenthal's *El Tiempo*.<sup>14</sup>

The media is an important factor when discussing the Palestinians in Honduras, mainly because the majority of media outlets are in their hands. This has eased their ability to market their businesses, and control the type of information that is disseminated through the print and broadcast media outlets. Honduras is "the most obvious example of media oligarchy on display in Central America" (Rockwell and Janus 2003, 21) and the Canahuati family is at the forefront of this oligarchy.

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<sup>14</sup> As mentioned earlier Carlos Flores Facussé is the former President of Honduras and Jaime Rosenthal is a member of the Jewish Diaspora in Honduras.

In addition to the large ownership of the country's leading print information outlets, members of the Canahuati family are also invested in the *maquila*<sup>15</sup> industry. Juan Canahuati was a textile entrepreneur and founded the *maquila* giant, *Lovable*, which is now owned and operated by his sons Mario, Jesus and Eduardo since his death in 2010. These are Jorge Canahuati's cousins. *Lovable* is one of the largest lingerie and undergarment manufacturers in Central America, and in Honduras alone it employs roughly 11,000 people.<sup>16</sup> The company manufactures products for Hanes, Russell Athletic, JC Penney and other U.S. corporations. Moreover, Mario Canahuati served as Foreign Minister under President Porfirio Lobo (2010 to 2011) and Ambassador to the U.S.

### **Kattan Family and the Textile Industry**

As in Chile, the Palestinians were the first to operate both fabric and finished textile production in Honduras on a large scale. In 1920 Gabriel Kattan was the first to create the textile industry in Honduras under the name *La Sampedrana*.<sup>17</sup> They soon grew and were granted licenses to produce clothing under several U.S. designers, such as Van Heusen. Today, their factories employ nearly 10,000 people. In addition to their *maquila* business, the Kattan family founded *Grupo Kattan*, which is comprised of a real estate free-trade zone

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<sup>15</sup> Maquila refers to the textile factories that have grown in Honduras and within Central America. They consist of both the production of the fabric itself and the assembly of the finished clothing product.

<sup>16</sup> Based on statistics provided by the Asociación Nacional de Industriales de Honduras (ANDI) which is an association of industries in Honduras. The association represents the industrial sector's interests in the public and political spheres.

<sup>17</sup> Accessed from Grupo Kattan's website [www.kattangroup.com](http://www.kattangroup.com), February 3, 2014

industrial park, a telecommunications company and automobile dealerships throughout the country. Jacobo Kattan currently manages the family's industries.

These two textile giants, Canahuati and Kattan, now produce complete products, from the fabric used to create the final products, to apparel, to the packaging used for retail sales. Their presence in the maquila-run city of Choloma, just outside of San Pedro Sula, is well represented through their various factories and advertisements of employment opportunities at their *maquilas*.

### **Kafati Family and the Coffee and Fast Food Empire**

Coffee is Honduras' biggest traditional agricultural export, triple that of the banana exports. In 2012 Honduras exported \$1.3 billion worth of coffee ("Informe de Comercio Exterior de Mercancías Generales" 2013). The Kafati family has been the dominant growers and roasters of coffee in Honduras since the early 1900s. Gabriel Kafati, originally from Beit Jala, was initially headed towards Colombia, however after arriving he was not pleased with the country and decided to visit friends from Beit Jala who were living in Honduras. Upon arrival, he decided to settle in Honduras and founded the coffee company, *Gabriel Kafati S.A.* in 1933 (Luxner 2001). The company grew exponentially, and the family has since maintained a monopoly on Honduran coffee production through their control over the country's market. Today, the two largest coffee producers in Honduras are *Café El Indio*, owned by Andres Kafati, and *Café Maya*, owned by Eduardo Kafati— brothers and both Gabriel's grandsons. *Café El Indio* is also

managed by Jesús Kafati, Andres and Eduardo's uncle. In addition to coffee production, in 1994 Eduardo Kafati established a Starbucks-like coffee chain called *Espresso Americano* which now operates 150 locations throughout Honduras. In addition to being in the coffee business, Oscar Kafati, Gabriel's grandson, was the country's Minister of Commerce and Industry under President Roberto Flores Facussé (1998 to 2002). He was also Ambassador to Egypt from 1995 to 1998, and then Italy for a short time in 1998 before his return to Honduras.

In addition to having a dominant position in the coffee production market, the Kafati family runs the conglomerate *Grupo Intur*. This group is run by Eduardo Kafati (not the same individual as the one mentioned above) and owns each franchise location of the following food chains in Honduras: *Pollo Campero*, *Chili's Restaurants*, *Dunkin Donuts*, *Baskin Robbins*, *Popeyes Louisiana Kitchen*, *Burger King*, *Little Caesars*, *Church's Chicken* and the *Circle K* convenience stores. The group has been criticized for its ability to acquire a tax exclusion from the government for a period of 20 years. It successfully petitioned the government to create tax exclusions for companies that can be classified as touristic companies. They then were designated a touristic company based on their international brands, and enjoy the tax free status. This was met with resentment by many small business owners, as they were unable to compete with a group this large which was able to lobby the government for its own benefit.

### **Pharmaceuticals and the Faraj and Síman Families**

As mentioned previously, the Canahuati family maintains a large share of the pharmaceutical industry in Honduras. However, in retail sales the Faraj and Simán<sup>18</sup> families have saturated the market with their pharmacy chain stores. Dr. Antonio Simán opened the first *Farmacías Simán* in 1957 in San Pedro Sula, and since then it has grown to be one of the top three largest pharmacy chains in the country.

Karim Faraj is on the board of *Grupo Farinter*, and is the general manager of *Farmacéutica Internacional S.A.*, commonly referred to as *Farinter*. Their holdings include *Farmacías Kielsa*, one of the three largest pharmacy chains in Honduras. In addition to their retail locations, the Faraj family controls a large percentage of the pharmaceutical distribution centers in the country through *Farmacéutica Internacional S.A.* The *Simán* and *Kielsa* pharmacy chains have grown so rapidly that they have nearly eliminated all small business competition in the pharmaceutical market—making it untouchable due to their saturation and control in this sector.

Another influential family in the pharmaceutical industry is that of Miguel Andonie Fernández. Their family controls *Grupo Mandofer*, which is another large pharmaceutical distributor in the country and within Central America. However, the Faraj and Simán families have the market share of retail pharmacies.

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<sup>18</sup> The Faraj family originates from Bethlehem and the Simán family originates from Beit Jala. See appendix A for surnames and their origination.



In addition to the Faraj family having a large share of the pharmaceutical industry they have also intermarried with one of the two Lebanese families in Honduras, the Atala's. Camilo Atala de Faraj is CEO of *Banco Ficohsa* and *Supermercados La Colonia*, both being large contenders in their respective industry. *Banco Ficohsa*, a subsidiary of *Grupo Financiero (FICOHSA)*, is one of the largest banks in Honduras. Additionally the group also contains one of the largest insurance companies in Honduras. Their supermarket chain *Supermercados La Colonia* has 27 stores in the country, making it one of the largest supermarket chains.

### **Rosenthal and Goldstein Businesses**

While the previous businessmen were all of Palestinian descent, the other prominent businessmen in Honduras are both of Jewish descent. Table 6-2 shows that over 10 percent of the financial capital in the country belonged to two Jewish families, the Rosenthal's and the Goldstein's.

Jaime Rosenthal was born in Honduras to a Romanian father and an El Salvadorian mother. He is the CEO of *Grupo Continental*, which consists the bank *Banco Continental*, the newspaper *El Tiempo*, the meat processing company *Mogami*, the crocodile farm *Cocodrilos Continental*, and a gated residential community outside of La Lima called *Residencial Oro Verde*. In addition to this, Rosenthal owns the national cement company *Cementos de Honduras*. The history of this cement company is of importance because it exemplifies the Palestinian-Jewish business connection. The company was

started as a private business in 1958 by Antonio Mata, but was nationalized from 1981 to 1992<sup>19</sup> and then privatized again in 1992. The initial shareholders of this cement company consisted of Palestinian and Jewish members. They included Yude Canahuati, Elías Kattan, the Siwady family, the Yuja family, Jacobo Weizenblut, Boris Goldstein and Yankel Rosenthal<sup>20</sup> (Euraque 1990, 252). Today the cement company is owned by the *Grupo Continental* along with other groups, however Rosenthal's group and *Grupo Atlantida* own a joint majority. In an interview in 2001 Rosenthal stated that his annual sales were \$100 million, with profits fluctuating from "US \$2.5 million dollars in a bad year to US \$10 million or US \$15 million in a very good year" (Luxner 2001c). Like some of his Palestinian counterparts he made an unsuccessful bid for political office in 2001 and was the Vice President under President Jose Azcona Hoyo from 1986 to 1990 (Rockwell and Janus 2003, 22).

Boris Goldstein is another important Jewish businessman in Honduras. However, his financial influence is now surpassed by others. He has a majority share of *Grupo Atlantida* which consists of the largest and oldest bank in Honduras. In addition to that, the Goldstein family owns the *Hotel Honduras Maya*, a well-known hotel located in Tegucigalpa. While the Goldstein's business ventures were not as diversified as the Rosenthal they have earned their place in

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<sup>19</sup> According to their website. <http://www.cenosa.hn> Accessed February 23, 2014

<sup>20</sup> The first four individuals are of Palestinian descent while Jacobo Weizenblut, Boris Goldstein and Yankel Rosenthal are of Jewish descent. Additionally, Yankel Rosenthal is Jaime Rosenthal's father.

the hierarchy of wealthy individuals in Honduras. These two families comprise the Jewish business elite in Honduras.

### **Business Conclusion**

Honduras business elites are comprised of many Palestinian surnames, and while only the largest and most influential were discussed above, it must be stated that there are many others that were not included. They consist of the Handal, Kafie, and Larach families, in addition to the Lebanese Atala and Malouf families. While their economic power is existential, it is not nearly as concentrated as that of the families discussed in this section. The rapid expansion and amount of wealth the Palestinians have experienced has created societal tensions between them and the native Honduran population.

### **2009 Constitutional Crisis**

The 2009 constitutional crisis in Honduras was a pivotal point between native and Palestinian relations and is discussed in this chapter because many of the individuals discussed in the previous section have been accused of financing the crisis. It is one of the most contested and discussed coup d'états in Latin America. During the January 2014 field research many participants discussed the vilification of Palestinians among the populace by then President Manuel Zelaya.<sup>21</sup>

In late 2008 President Zelaya was battling the growing resistance from the business sector to transform the country into one that mimicked the Venezuela of

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<sup>21</sup> It is important to note that Zelaya comes from a wealthy landowning family in the Olancho section of Honduras. His family's roots are deep within Honduran society.

Hugo Chávez. President Zelaya planned a full scale attack on the business elite of the country, which is primarily of Palestinian descent. He was able to convince the landless class that the reason the country had been unable to develop and enjoy the same success as some of the other Central American republics was because the *turcos* controlled the government and business sectors. Knowing that he need to seek reelection, but was forbidden to under the Honduran constitution,<sup>22</sup> he attempted to hold a referendum on June 28, 2009 to have the constitution changed to allow longer terms and reelection. The Honduran Congress voted this act illegal and an arrest warrant was issued for Mr. Zelaya's arrest. On the morning of the proposed referendum vote the military arrested and flew Zelaya to Costa Rica.

This created an international crisis, and both sides have valid reasons for their support. However, it is very clear that Zelaya targeted the commercial class, and, in that, the Palestinian elites. In 2010 Jorge Amaya commented on the political crisis of 2009 and identified the Facussé, Canahuati, Nasser and Atala families as being the financiers of the coup (Mena 2012). Victor Meza, a Honduran intellectual, is quoted as saying that the coup was orchestrated by the

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<sup>22</sup> Article 239 places a strict term for presidency and outlines that those that seek reelection are in violation of this article and will automatically give up their office. Article 42.5 states that any citizen who attempts to seek reelection will also have his citizenship revoked. Article 239 is as follows in Spanish “El ciudadano que haya desempeñado la titularidad del Poder Ejecutivo no podrá ser Presidente o Designado. El que quebrante esta disposición o proponga su reforma, así como aquellos que lo apoyen directa o indirectamente, cesarán de inmediato en el desempeño de sus respectivos cargos, y quedarán inhabilitados por diez años para el ejercicio de toda función pública.”

Article 42.5 is as follows in Spanish: “La calidad de ciudadano se pierde: Por incitar, promover o apoyar el continuismo o la reelección del Presidente de la República” Accessed through the Edmund Walsh School of Foreign Service, Center Latin American Studies at Georgetown University.

elite industrialists and that the six to eight *turco* families have made decisions for the government for years, but that Zelaya threatened this established system<sup>23</sup> (García 2013).

Many Hondurans on the left are quick to underscore that the oligarchs who perpetrated the coup and who control most of the country's wealth are of Palestinian descent, known popularly as los turcos, and not, in their view, Honduran; hence the widely seen graffiti demanding Fuera Turcos! (Frank 2010)

Additionally, a U.S. Department of State Country Report on human rights practices in Honduras comments that, "Many observers argued that a small elite exercised considerable control over the country's economic, judicial, and political institutions, which created the potential for abuse of the country's institutions and democratic governance" (Department of State 2008).

This is why, according to many, Zelaya was overthrown and exiled from the country after trying to hold the referendum in 2009 to extend his term in office. Zelaya's supporters rallied around this notion that the *turcos* formed this powerful group that did not do what was best for the country. The events leading up to the 2009 political crisis saw tensions between native Hondurans and Palestinians soar. Protesters graffitied *Fuera Turcos*, and *Complot Facussé*, *Canahuati*, *Larach*, *Ferrari* on buildings throughout the country and threatened Palestinian owned businesses.<sup>24</sup> Many companies redesigned their employee

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<sup>23</sup> His direct quotes are "El Golpe de estado fue el golpe de las élites empresariales que utilizaron al ejército. Esas seis y ocho familias toman las grandes decisiones y aunque Zelaya jamás afectó sus intereses no están acostumbrados a que el presidente no les obedezca". See García 2013.

<sup>24</sup> *Fuera Turcos* translates to *Turcos leave*. *Complot Facussé*, *Canahuati*, *Larach*, *Ferrari*, means that these families are conspirators against the state. Rafael Ferrari is a prominent businessman of Italian heritage.

uniforms to exclude any logos so as to avoid threats against their employees by advocates of Zelaya's ideology.<sup>25</sup> These companies included one of the largest owned banks in Honduras, *Banco Ficohsa*, which is owned by the Faraj family. These tensions continue today, even after Manuel Zelaya was deposed. Graffiti stating *Fuera Turcos* is still frequently scrawled across walls throughout the city of San Pedro Sula.

### **Cultural Life**

#### **Palestinian Cuisine in Honduras**

When walking through a supermarket in San Pedro Sula one witnesses the array of Middle Eastern inspired foods and ingredients. Supermarkets now sell items imported directly from the Middle East and carry brands such as *Ziyad* and products such as tahini, grape leaves, dried chick peas, and red lentils—all staples in Middle Eastern cuisine. In addition, many Palestinian women sell prepared, ready-to-cook, ethnic food from their homes, with customers being of both Palestinian and non-Palestinian descent. When driving through the city one will view many signs on residences indicating the sale of Middle Eastern food, saying “Se Vende Comida Arabe,” which translates to “Arabic food is sold here.” Throughout the city, Palestinian inspired dishes are very apparent. The national coffee chain *Espresso Americano* serves *Sambusec*, *Kibbeh*, and *Baklava*,<sup>26</sup> in all their shops. The most famous Middle Eastern dish in Honduras is *marmahon*,

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<sup>25</sup> John Handal, interview with Honduran political campaign adviser. February 7, 2014, New York City.

<sup>26</sup> Sambusec are small triangular shaped meat filled pastries, kibbeh consists of ground meat and wheat germ and are shaped in a cone on both ends. Baklava is a sweet, made with walnuts and filo dough and sweetened with simple syrup.

which is a mixture of flour and water that is rolled into tiny balls and then cooked in chicken broth. It has become a favorite dish among Palestinians and non-Palestinians in Honduras.

### **Preservation of Palestinian Traditions**

The Palestinians in San Pedro Sula have retained their culture and heritage more so than their Tegucigalpa counterparts. Palestinians who settled in San Pedro Sula retained their culture and heritage through the establishment of a Palestinian exclusive social club and an Orthodox Church. Palestinians in Tegucigalpa assimilated to a greater degree and, while they did establish a similar social club, it eventually lost support and was forced to close.

The *Centro Social Hondureño Arabe*, herein referred to as the *Club Arabe*, was founded in 1968 by a handful of Palestinian families,<sup>27</sup> with a vision to create an environment that encompassed the Palestinian social life in Bethlehem. The *Club Arabe* consists of six tennis courts, four racquetball courts, a gymnasium, a heliport, and several restaurants, of which many serve typical Palestinian and Honduran dishes. The *Club Arabe* also serves as a banquet hall, with all of its rooms named after villages in Palestine, such as *Belén*, *Nazareth*, *Palestina*, and *Jerusalém*. In addition, the Palestinian flag can be observed flying alongside those of the Central American republics, as outlined in the *Club Arabe's* bylaws.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Founding members included many of the parents and grandparents of those Palestinians who are well positioned in the business and the political sphere of the country. They include members of the Canahuati, Handal, Kattan, Larach, Siwady and Yuja families.

<sup>28</sup> Article 5 of the bylaws states:

"En las instalaciones del C.S.H.A. permanecerán izadas las banderas de: Honduras, El Salvador, Guatemala, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Palestina y San Pedro Sula. En la celebración de eventos

The *Club Arabe* has always been open to the public, regardless of heritage. However, due to the expensive membership fee, the majority of members consist of the country's upper middle and upper class. Additionally, the exclusivity of being a member and the safe haven created, appeals to many Palestinians and non-Palestinians in a city as dangerous as San Pedro Sula. According to the *Club Arabe*, there are no Jewish members, and the cost to join for 2014 consists of a one-time US \$8,000 membership fee and a US \$200 monthly payment.<sup>29</sup> The *Club Arabe* has also been host to major events in Honduras, most notably the visit of U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton in 2009.

### **Greek Orthodox Church in San Pedro Sula**

Palestinians from Bethlehem, Beit Sahur and Beit Jala are split between Eastern Orthodox and Roman Catholics. Honduras, being primarily Roman Catholic, proved to be a relatively easy transition for those that followed the Roman Catholic belief and rites of Christianity. However, the Orthodox population had no house of worship until a group of families built one in 1963. Ten Palestinian families established and built the *Iglesia Catolica Apostolica Ortodoxa*

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que involucren países distintos de Centro América y Palestina se les permitirá izar el o los pabellones de ese o esos países si así nos lo solicitaran, para lo cual se arrearán las banderas de El Salvador, Guatemala, Nicaragua y Costa Rica que cederán su asta a las banderas invitadas” Which is translated to state that the flags of Honduras, El Salvador, Guatemala, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Palestine and San Pedro Sula will remain hosted on the premises of the property. The article continues by saying that if a celebration is held in honor of a country other than those of Central America then the flag of the hosted country will be allowed to fly in place of one of the countries of El Salvador, Guatemala, Nicaragua or Costa Rica.

<sup>29</sup> John Handal, interview with *Clube Arabe* membership secretary. January 27, 2014, San Pedro Sula.



*Antioqueña de Honduras*.<sup>30</sup> The Church displays a large portrait of Jesus Christ on its ceiling looking down on its parishioners, painted by Elias Chahín in 1963 when the Church first opened its doors. The Church has roughly 800 to 1,000 parishioners between San Pedro Sula and El Progreso.<sup>31</sup> Honduras has had a growing number of converts in recent years, as displayed by a handful of non-Palestinian parishioners in the Church during a January 2014 mass. Parishioners enjoy an Orthodox mass given in Spanish and intertwined with liturgies and songs in Arabic. After the celebration of mass, the parishioners are invited to the adjacent hall where Turkish coffee and Middle Eastern sweets are enjoyed.

In addition to the house of worship, a school and an orphanage were built alongside the Church. As of 2014, Father Jorge Faraj presided over the Church, the school and the orphanage. The *Escuela Trilingue San Juan Bautista* teaches 150 children from kindergarten to 12<sup>th</sup> grade.<sup>32</sup> Students are given English, Spanish and Arabic lessons. In the past this school was attended by the children of most Palestinian emigrants, in an attempt to maintain their language and traditions. Today, however, many non-Palestinian families send their children here to learn the Arabic language. For example, the 2014 kindergarten class is predominantly composed of non-Palestinian children.

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<sup>30</sup> These founders were: Elías S. Chahín, Juan M. Canahuati, Nakle E. Hazim, Jorge Sammur, Elías C. Yuja, José S. Chahin, Bishara Sikaffy, Miguel Kawas, Elías Nustas, Kawas S. Kawas, Antonio J. Saybe, Jorge Bendeck and Antonio Fanous. Out of these founding members only one is a non-Palestinian, Antonio Fanous, but of Lebanese descent.

<sup>31</sup> John Handal, interview with Jorge Faraj. January 20, 2014, San Pedro Sula.

<sup>32</sup> *ibid*

The Church is also home to roughly 27 non-Palestinian orphans who are cared for under the *Hogar de Niños San Nektarios*, named after the Greek Saint Nektarios of Aegina. This orphanage was a recent addition to the Church and has assisted the children by not only giving them the care they need but also the education. Additionally, parishioners are able to “adopt” a child, which does not entail physically removing the child from the orphanage but instead gives each child the ability to have a sponsor.<sup>33</sup> The children are also taught the Orthodox religion, which will in turn create more converts in the future. All the children take part in mass, and the older children accompany the Priest when visiting parishioners at their homes.

### **Palestinian Social Life Within Honduran Society**

Palestinians in San Pedro Sula are regularly included in the socialite section of the country’s major newspapers. Their birthdays, weddings, funerals, and birth announcements are covered and published by the newspapers and tabloids. In addition, they lead the country in styles and fashion. For example, in 2013 the fashion magazine *Estilo* listed the country's best dressed. Out of the eleven women that were mentioned, six were of Palestinian descent and one of Lebanese descent.<sup>34</sup>

### **Palestinians Involved in Honduran Organized Crime**

Organized crime is included in the social section because it has the greatest impact on the social aspect of Palestinians as a whole, on the Honduran

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<sup>33</sup> It is similar to the big brother/sister sponsor programs in the U.S.

<sup>34</sup> The January 2014 edition of *Estilo* listed the best dressed in 2013 as Tania Atala Norma Callejas, Elisa Nasser, Annamaria Kafati, Rina Guillén, Mercy Bueso, Tyara Kafie, Antonia Corrales, Jo Ann Chahín, Elena Kafie, Melissa Garza, Sofia Bendeck.

populace, and on the stability of the country. Honduras has become one of the most important transit countries for cocaine cartels. In 2010, 65 out of the 80 tons of cocaine that entered the U.S. were transited through Honduras, equating to 80 percent of all shipments to the U.S. (“Transnational Organized Crime in Central America and the Caribbean” 2012, 37). This has created a lucrative opportunity for those that dared enter the criminal enterprise of drug smuggling. With that being said, the successes of Palestinians must also be accompanied by what is considered a failure within Honduran society. In 2013, the U.S. Department of the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control identified Jose Miguel “Chepe” Handal as a key facilitator in the Honduran organized narcotics underworld. Prior to being designated as a drug kingpin Chepe and his family ran a successful auto parts company, along with other small businesses under *Corporacion Handal*. This identification allowed the U.S. government to freeze any U.S. assets and prevents any U.S. citizen from conducting business with any of his companies (“Treasury Designates Honduran Drug Traffickers” 2013). Chepe Handal facilitated the transportation of cocaine shipments through Honduras, with most of these shipments heading towards the U.S.

After his indictment in 2013 his political ambitions and run for Congress in that year's elections quickly dissolved. Shortly after the U.S. issued this statement, the Honduran government decided to arrest Chepe but found that he had eluded the authorities and had gone into hiding. As a recent reporter stated “It is bad news for the Handal family—one of the wealthiest and well-connected

families in Honduras. And it is bad news for anyone who does business with the Handal's and has political ties to them" (Cáceres 2013). This has caused many native Hondurans to identify the country's drug issues and violence with Palestinian businessmen. Another prominent Palestinian accused of being involved in organized crime is Miguel Facussé. Mr. Facussé is accused of allowing his property to be used as a landing strip for drug smugglers. However, Chepe Handal has been the only Palestinian identified and charged as a drug kingpin.

### **Conclusion**

The Diaspora in Honduras is unlike any other among the Palestinian Diaspora as a whole. Members of the Diaspora have succeeded in every aspect of society in Honduras, and were able to successfully integrate themselves in Honduran society. This does not signify a lack of assimilation, but instead implies that the Diaspora was integrated into every sector of Honduran society, creating a niche for themselves among Hondurans. This chapter explains that Palestinians were able to become part of their host country while preserving their cultural and ethnic traditions. They introduced these traditions to Honduras, and some were embraced while others were allowed to dwindle through the generations. Additionally, members of the Diaspora are proud of their Palestinian heritage and their Honduran citizenship, acknowledging that they feel a connection to both their homeland and host country. While this has been a mutual beneficial relationship between the Diaspora and Honduras, it has also created a division among Palestinians and native Hondurans. When one looks at

the Facussé-Nasser-Kafie connection and the amount of control they exert within the country, in addition to the greater Palestinian commercial class, then the source of these tensions becomes apparent. The next chapter will address these tensions and their causes, as well as the results from field research conducted in January 2014. In addition, the discussion of acculturation will be included at the end of the next chapter.

**CHAPTER VII:**  
**Relations Between the Diasporic Population  
 and the Native Population**

*Arab people are aggressive.  
 They like to work, they like to make money,  
 they like to live good* —Edgardo Canahuati<sup>1</sup>

Like many migrant groups, the Palestinian Diaspora faced xenophobia when they first arrived in Honduras. This stemmed from their frugal nature and their traditional way of life, which differed from the rural way of life in Honduras at the time. Today, many of the preconceived notions of Palestinians have vanished, but views of Palestinians as wealthy, powerful individuals who exert a large share of control over politics and economics have not vanished—these views have been compounded and have intensified over the years. Native Hondurans have held onto these early preconceptions about Palestinians—or *turcos*.

**Surveys Comparing Palestinians and Native Hondurans**

The surveys were able to provide a small glimpse into certain factors that influence the relationships between the native Hondurans and the Palestinian Diaspora. One of those results was the significant relationship between how much a Palestinian identifies with his/her heritage and how she/he perceives the relations between Palestinians and native Hondurans. Questions seven and nine from the Palestinian Diaspora survey were analyzed using the Pearson

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<sup>1</sup> See Edwards 1983, 623.

correlation method. Question seven asks, *At what level do you think relations are between Palestinians and the native population?*, and question nine asks, *At what level do you identify with you Palestinian heritage/ethnicity?* The results indicated that the correlation between both responses was  $-.05$ . This signifies that as Palestinian heritage identification increased, perceived relations between them and the native population decreased. Additionally, according to the Emory Bogardus social distance scale, the Palestinians viewed themselves as slightly assimilated.

For question six, participants were asked to rate a set of statements based on a one through five scale where one signified *strongly disagree* and five signified *strongly agree*. The mean result for the statement *I think of myself as a Honduran* was 3.4 with a standard deviation of 1.2. The following statement, *I have a strong sense of being Honduran*, and the subsequent statement, *Being Honduran is an important part of my life*, both yielded means of 3.5 with a standard deviation of 1.2 and 1.33 respectively. The statements that focused on culture yielded the highest results. The statement, *I feel that I am part of the Honduran culture*, had a mean score of 3.6 and the statement, *I feel that I represent the Honduran culture*, yielded a 3.8 mean. The standard deviations were 1.1 and 1.4. This signifies that, of those interviewed, they largely identified themselves as being Honduran, and identifying with the culture.

The surveys were also able to shed some light on the transnational relationship between Palestine and Honduras. All but one participant had family

in Palestine and had visited them, illustrating a strong tie to the homeland. Participants in the focus groups also discussed their travels back and forth to Bethlehem, Beit Sahur, Beit Jala and Jerusalem. They had a strong sense of pride in their heritage. Question nine on the survey designed for the Diaspora asked participants to rate their identification with their heritage. The scale was on a one through five with one being, *does not identify with*, and five being, *identifies a great deal with* their heritage. The mean was 4.5, with a standard deviation of 1.019. Only three participants responded with a 3 or lower, and all other responses were 5. This signifies a strong identification with their heritage.

Both tables 7-1 and 7-2 compare the responses given by participants from the Diaspora and non-Palestinians for question nine. When comparing both results the Palestinian participants expressed a greater willingness to interact with the native population. The biggest disparity was on statement four, in which Palestinians were more willing to entertain a native Honduran overnight as a houseguest than vice versa. Additionally, native Hondurans were less likely to decline a Palestinian friendship than vice versa, as displayed by the responses to statement six.



**Table 7-1. Results From the Palestinian Diaspora Survey (Question 9)**<sup>2</sup>*Rounded to the nearest hundredth*

	<b>S1</b>	<b>S2</b>	<b>S3</b>	<b>S4</b>	<b>S5</b>	<b>S6</b>	<b>S7</b>	<b>S8</b>	<b>S9</b>
<b>Minimum</b>	2	2	3	2	2	1	2	1	1
<b>Maximum</b>	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
<b>Mean</b>	4.23	3.85	4.54	4.23	3.77	2.54	3.77	3.46	3.54
<b>Standard Deviation</b>	0.93	0.99	0.76	1.01	1.01	1.51	0.93	1.51	1.33

**Table 7-2. Results From the Non-Arab Survey (Question 6)**<sup>3</sup>*Rounded to the nearest hundredth*

	<b>S1</b>	<b>S2</b>	<b>S3</b>	<b>S4</b>	<b>S5</b>	<b>S6</b>	<b>S7</b>	<b>S8</b>	<b>S9</b>
<b>Minimum</b>	3	1	3	1	2	1	3	1	1
<b>Maximum</b>	5	5	5	5	5	4	5	5	5
<b>Mean</b>	4.07	3.54	3.93	3.36	3.71	1.58	4.15	3.07	3.57
<b>Standard Deviation</b>	0.62	1.05	0.73	1.28	1.07	0.90	0.69	1.21	1.34

### **January 2014 San Pedro Sula Focus Groups and Interviews**

Various members of both communities were interviewed in January 2014.

This consisted of both one on one interviews and focus group discussions. The focus group discussions were very fruitful and provided insight into how each group perceives the other. They were split between non-Palestinian and

<sup>2</sup> Both questions asked to rate each set of statements below on a 1 to 5 scale based on their application to a Palestinian or a native Honduran. (i.e. "Would have a *Palestinian/native* as my regular friend")

1: Would have as my regular friends

2: Would marry

3: Would have as my guests at private dinners

4: Would entertain overnight in my home

5: Would have merely as speaking acquaintances

6: Would decline to have as friends

7: Would have their young people as social equals for my adolescent sons and daughters

8: Would have as president of my country

9: Would have them as my business partners

"S" signifies statement

<sup>3</sup> Same question and statements as above.

Palestinian groups, and one group was comprised of both Palestinians and non-Palestinians.

### **Non-Palestinian Focus Groups**

The resentment of Hondurans by the economic success of the Palestinians mentioned by Nancie González is still evident three decades later (González 1992, 169). The participants in the non-Palestinian group expressed their concern for the amount of wealth Palestinians control in their country. While many have friends that are of Palestinian descent, those that did not displayed the most resentment towards Palestinians. The native Hondurans who were interviewed believe that Palestinians are frugal and would do anything to make money—giving many of them the impression that they are inherently corrupt. Some expressed the notion that Palestinian businessmen are in control of the economic and political sphere in the country, and that they would help each other out, due to the fact that they share the same ethnic lineage. The group differentiated themselves from Palestinians, and did not seem to recognize Palestinians as equals, as Hondurans.

Another important issue that was discussed is that native Hondurans feel as though Palestinians look down upon them, and felt that the Palestinians excluded them from the social hierarchy within the country. Many explained that they heard stories of difficult Palestinian employers, and that Palestinians in general were not kind to their employees. Another common concern amongst this group is that, because Palestinians usually do business with each other, this

leaves native Hondurans with little opportunity to compete and forge business relationships with them. As such, the native population has convinced themselves that the Palestinians see their own group as superior to native Hondurans.<sup>4</sup>

According to representatives of the *Asociación Nacional de Industriales de Honduras (ANDI)*, many of the Palestinians have grown to become business and political elites, which in turn has made them sociopolitical targets of the leftists in the country.<sup>5</sup> The Palestinian businessmen have not effectively publicized their social responsibility efforts throughout the years, which has led to the widespread perception of them as being frugal and not integrated into the country. In other words, the native population would argue that Palestinians have never acted in the best interests of the Honduran economy and government. In turn, this equated to not acting in the best interest of the populace. However, many of the Palestinian owned (as well as other) companies have rolled out social programs as a way to engage with the society. Examples range from supporting schools to assisting with the rehabilitation of villages. With that said, this lack of advertisement of their social contributions to the country has led them to become targets, most notably during the administration of President Manuel Zelaya.

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<sup>4</sup> John Handal, focus group participant Cecilia Paz. January 23, 2014, San Pedro Sula.

<sup>5</sup> John Handal, interview with Fernando García, Executive Director of ANDI. January 14, 2014, Tegucigalpa.

### Palestinian Focus Groups

Of the Palestinians interviewed, the older generation was more outspoken regarding their relations with natives. While focus groups in Tegucigalpa did not display poor relations with the natives, San Pedro Sula revealed the opposite. In a focus group held on January 17 at the house of a Palestinian woman who had spent most of her life in Honduras, the current and past state of relations was discussed. This Palestinian explained that when she arrived in Honduras in 1958 at the age of 15, after marrying another Palestinian who was born in Honduras. She noted that the country was a stark contrast to the town of Bethlehem. She and the other participants explained that Palestinians had worked hard to accomplish their business and political aspirations. Discrimination was also discussed. They stated that being a Palestinian made you a target, whether through discriminatory practices in public by individuals, petty crime or kidnappings. They claimed that being Palestinian signified a certain degree of wealth, thus making them targets.

They also identified several stereotypes that Palestinians place on the natives, or *hanuud*<sup>6</sup>. They said that Palestinians labeled native Hondurans as unmotivated, and that there was a general lack of ambition among the people. They also explained that they believe natives are heavy consumers, as opposed to Palestinians who are frugal by nature. They explained that this was why most natives were living in poverty. This was also voiced by members of other focus

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<sup>6</sup> This is the Arabic word for a native or indigenous person.

groups. According to these participants, such characteristics helped Palestinians advance as quickly as they did in the commercial sector. During a focus group on January 18, a participant expressed similar views when he explained, “*when I give my employees a paycheck on Friday, they go out Friday night, Saturday and Sunday, and by Monday morning they have no money because it was spent on drinking.*”<sup>7</sup> This view of natives as being consumers was also expressed during a focus group that consisted of both Palestinians and natives.

The most interesting and fruitful focus group was one that consisted of both Palestinians and natives. It consisted of two native Hondurans, a Honduran with Irish ancestry, and two of Palestinian descent. This was interesting because the participants knew each other and were very comfortable discussing this dynamic with one another. One of the Palestinians, Michelen, was very proud of her heritage, and outspoken about her views on this topic. She explained that her grandfather arrived from Beit Jala in 1949 after leaving Palestine during the 1948 Arab-Israeli War. She explained that he left because of the war and the rumors of massacres, specifically mentioning the Deir Yassin massacre of 1948. Michelen stated that Palestinians were an educated populace and were thus successful no matter where they settled. “*They saw what was missing,*”<sup>8</sup> and simply took advantage of the opportunities present in Honduras. The other two participants agreed, but also explained that the country’s colonial history has also played into this dynamic. They all agreed that Honduran people were used to oppression, be

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<sup>7</sup> John Handal, focus group participant Jose Handal. January 18, 2014, San Pedro Sula.

<sup>8</sup> John Handal, focus group participants Michelen, Jessica, Eileen. January 18, 2014, San Pedro Sula.

it by their government or a foreign force, and thus allowed Palestinians to thrive in their country. In other words, the legacies of colonialism had relegated most native Hondurans to an inferior socioeconomic class.

One of the native participants, Jessica,<sup>9</sup> explained that older generations of Palestinians were seen as harsh employers, thus creating the perception of Palestinians being ruthless by nature. Jessica further elaborated on this by providing the Faraj family as an example. As mentioned in chapter six, the Faraj family is one of the more influential Palestinian families. They successfully lobbied the government to allow pharmaceutical distributors to be allowed to operate retail locations. According to Jessica, a Faraj family member was in a government position at the time, and thus helped to push the change to the previous law which prevented distributors to also own retail locations. This law was an anti-monopoly law, being that small pharmacies had to purchase from distributors. It eventually led to the eliminated all nearly all the small business pharmacies in the country. This however, could not be verified, and can be considered indicative of the conspiracy type behavior of the native population when it comes to the Palestinian population and/or the crony capitalistic and nepotistic practices in Honduras and this group.

Another example she gave was *Costas Burger*, a fast food chain owned by a native Honduran family. This company has been unable to compete in the fast food market because they have not enjoyed the tax exclusions granted to

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<sup>9</sup> This person wished to be anonymous and her name has been changed.

other fast food chains, primarily those owned by the *Grupo Intur*. This status allows *Grupo Intur* to expand and grow its operations, whereas those that were not granted this status must continue to pay taxes, which equates to an unfair advantage. Issues such as this one have further complicated relations between Palestinians and natives. Jessica continued by explaining that Honduras' natural resources have been sold to wealthy Palestinians, and that the Palestinians have had a history of helping each other out. But she agreed with the other two participants about the work ethic of the Palestinians. She said "*they came here and started a business, it didn't matter what business, but they started it. Us Indians think too much about it, we worry about it, we try to compete without the effort.*" Michelen also explained that while she saw herself as a Honduran, she was also proud of her heritage. She explained that her father did not want to give up his Palestinian papers in order to become a Honduran citizen until two years ago, equating it to giving up his Palestinian identity. This is an important facet of ethnic identification.

This notion of introducing commerce and industrializing the country was expressed by participants of Palestinian and non-Palestinian descent. An example of this was Yusuf Zummar, an entrepreneur and respected businessman in San Pedro Sula.<sup>10</sup> Zummar was born in San Pedro Sula but returned to Bethlehem during World War II, and then came back to San Pedro after the end of the war. Throughout the years he opened industrial factories and

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<sup>10</sup> John Handal, interview with Yusuf Zummar. January 21, 2014, San Pedro Sula.

then sold them at their peak value. In 1984, Mr. Zummar opened a factory that mass produced *machetes*, a large knife that is commonly used in Honduras. This was the first factory of its kind in Honduras. Before this factory opened, *machetes* were produced by blacksmiths. This is indicative of the entrepreneurial nature of the Diaspora.

### **Tegucigalpa vs San Pedro Sula**

Another interesting outcome of the focus groups was the stark difference observed between participants from Tegucigalpa and San Pedro Sula. Each city appears to have a different perspective on the relationship between Palestinians and natives. Tegucigalpa has a more homogenous populace, whereas San Pedro Sula is extremely polarized. When discussing relations with Tegucigalpans, there was little evidence that poor relations existed between both groups, signifying greater assimilation. Both Palestinians and native Hondurans actually expressed their coexistence and comradery. One of the reasons for this is that when Palestinians arrived in Tegucigalpa, they encountered an established class of wealthy and educated families to contend among.

César Indiano, a Honduran historian, explains that these Palestinians had to compete with these families—many having historical ties to the country. He states that the Palestinians who arrived in Tegucigalpa faced three realities that did not exist in San Pedro Sula; 1.) *this was the state's political center therefore it was more established than San Pedro*; 2.) *it contained the wealthy elites of the country*; 3.) *it contained the country's intellectuals* (Indiano 2009, 377). In order to



make their way into the commercial sector they had to fill the voids that were left behind by these already established native families (Indiano 2009, 380). He says that when they arrived in Tegucigalpa, expecting to find a barren commercial sector, “les cayó la gota fría,”<sup>11</sup> when they realized that a commercial and elite class already existed (Indiano 2009, 379). This forced these families to integrate themselves into the society in order to be able to compete, thus forcing them into a greater degree of assimilation than their San Pedro Sula counterparts.

In addition, being the political center of the country, the Palestinians of Tegucigalpa were better able to compete in the political arena. For example, Salomon Barjum, the patriarch of the Palestinian families in Tegucigalpa, forged a friendship with General Tibucio Carías of the Honduran army in the 1930s. Salomon was able to pledge support for Carías’ political ambitions on behalf of the Palestinian community<sup>12</sup> in Tegucigalpa. Indiano explains that as General Carías consolidated his power he was able to return the favor to the Palestinians by becoming their “*padrino*”, or protector. When Carías was elected to office from 1933 to 1949, the Palestinians gained a direct link to the Presidency (Indiano 2009, 384). In contrast, the San Pedro community was more interested in business ventures than becoming involved in the country’s political sphere.

Moreover, another reason for the difference is due to the labor composition of each city. San Pedro Sula, being the commercial center of the

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<sup>11</sup> This is a Spanish saying which is used to describe a startled reaction, similar to the one you would expect from someone who is splashed with cold water.

<sup>12</sup> These Palestinians consisted of Carlos Handal, Domingo Larach, José Yacamán, Mitry Simán, Elías Kattan, Jesús Larach and Jacobo Zablah. Some of these Palestinians also represented interests in San Pedro Sula, such as Jesús Larach. See Indiano 2009, 384.

nation, primarily offers employment in the private sector. Therefore, their interactions with Palestinians are solely employer based. In the capital of Tegucigalpa, the primary source of employment is the government, not the private sector, and so the working class does not interact with Palestinian business owners. As such, the same employer based relationships do not exist for both cities.

### **Assimilation or Integration?**

The discussion of the Diaspora's ability to assimilate seemed appropriate to include in this section due to its relationship with the data, and the previous chapter's discussion on Palestinian life in Honduras. A proper classification of the Diaspora in Honduras would be *integration*. Sari Hanafi explains that classifying a group as a diaspora inevitably contradicts its ability to be deemed assimilated (Hanafi 2003, 161). Diaspora signifies the memories of a homeland, and the constant desire to return to this homeland, whereas assimilation signifies removing one's customs and norms, and taking on the host country's customs. Additionally, he explains that Palestinians who emigrated to Latin America have indeed assimilated, and their knowledge of their homeland comes from memories passed down from generation to generation (Hanafi 2003, 173).

Based on the interviews and the data collected, the Diaspora in Honduras can be classified as integrated, and not assimilated. While it would be unfair to state that these terms are zero-sum, the Diaspora exhibits signs of a group that has integrated itself into a new society, and has introduced new customs and

norms, in addition to accepting the host country's lifestyle—more so than a group that has assimilated to the host country's norms. Examples include the cuisine, arts, and business sectors explained in chapter six. Furthermore this can be analyzed using the two question acculturation method outlined in chapter one. Palestinians do see it as being important to maintain their cultural identity while incorporating their host country's culture, signifying an integrated acculturation. Additionally, Palestinian culture was introduced to Honduran society. For example, *marmahon* has become a part of Honduran cuisine. Many outsiders do not know that its origins stem from the Palestinian migrants who introduced it to the country's cuisine.

As mentioned earlier, there are distinct differences between San Pedro Sula and Tegucigalpa. That is to say that the Diaspora living in Tegucigalpa can be classified as more assimilated than their counterparts in San Pedro Sula. Based on interviews and on the previous section outlining the differences, the Palestinians in San Pedro Sula focused more on integrating themselves into Honduran culture. They were not preoccupied with assimilating to the culture, but instead used their shared Palestinian heritage to assist each other and conduct business together. In Tegucigalpa, members of the Diaspora had difficulty integrating themselves into the society, and therefore had to assimilate to a greater degree in order to succeed.<sup>13</sup> Another important factor in understanding this integration and its causes is the origin of this Diaspora. Being from three

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<sup>13</sup> John Handal, interview with Georgette Handal. January 13, 2014, Tegucigalpa.

neighboring towns that shared the same history allowed them to establish a small enclave in Honduras, and transferred their culture and traditions to their host country. They did not just identify with each other on an ethnic level, but on a much smaller and intimate level. Therefore, when Palestinians arrived in Honduras there was no need to assimilate, and thus a close-knit community within the larger sphere of Honduran society was created.

### **Palestinian Return**

As mentioned in the first chapter, Palestinian identity is comprised of village and family networks, which this Diaspora clearly demonstrates. Many members of the Palestinian Diaspora in Honduras regularly travel to the West Bank to visit relatives, attend celebrations and some even return in search of a spouse. The latter was exemplified by many members of the older generation of Palestinians, whereas the younger generations are more inclined to intermarry with native Hondurans. This is evident in the social section of the country's newspapers which frequently list newlyweds and other celebrations. Some members of the Diaspora even returned to live in their hometowns in Palestine. One example was a participant of a focus group who preferred not to be named.

She was born in Honduras and went to Palestine in search of a spouse. She married, moved to Bethlehem, where she lived for ten years, but eventually moved back to Honduras and separated from her husband. Her reason for leaving was because of the lifestyle in Bethlehem. She was unfamiliar and uncomfortable with living in a community characterized by a patriarchal system.

In addition, she said that she did not feel welcome, and was referred to as *al-najabiya*, which means foreigner in Arabic. She explained that she was *al-najabiya* in Bethlehem and a *turco* in Honduras, caught between two worlds. She said that while Bethlehem offered her security, she was unable to conform to the social system. Additionally, she said that economic opportunities in Honduras are greater.<sup>14</sup>

### **Returning to their Homeland**

Most literature about Palestinian return is focused on three issues: the right of return, Palestinian refugees, or the Palestinian Diaspora in the Middle East and North America. While the Palestinian National Authority claims that there are nearly four million refugees that would exercise their right of return, the true number is in fact, much smaller.<sup>15</sup> The distinction between homeland and host country begins to intertwine after the first generation. Subsequent generations are raised and acculturate their host country, and the illusion of homeland becomes just that—an illusion. The Palestinian Diaspora in Honduras fits into this category, although not as neatly as others. As explained earlier, there is a flow between homeland and host country within this Diaspora. Furthermore, many within the Diaspora have family, both immediate and extended, that remain in the Palestinian Territories. Both of these factors have allowed the Diaspora to maintain a close and up-to-date relationship with the homeland and all relevant current affairs. An important factor to mention is that

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<sup>14</sup> John Handal, interview. January 17, 2014, San Pedro Sula.

<sup>15</sup> See Hanafi 2002 for a detailed explanation of the possible implementation of the right of return among Palestinians and the Diaspora.

the economic and political hardships faced by many Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza deter many in the Diaspora from returning.

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, there are members of the Diaspora who have returned to Bethlehem or their village of origin, with many of them eventually returning to Honduras. This is also exemplified by the experience of Sophia,<sup>16</sup> a member of the Diaspora who was born in Honduras in 1992 and lived there for seven years before emigrating to Bethlehem. Sophia was born to parents of Palestinian descent; her father was born in Kuwait and emigrated to Honduras at the age of eight and her mother was born and raised in Honduras. In 1999, her parents made the decision that a better future was possible for their children if they emigrated to Bethlehem. After living in Bethlehem for nearly one year they returned to Honduras. According to Sophia, life in Bethlehem was not what they had expected. Her parents decided that the best option was to return to Honduras in 2000, albeit for a short period of time.

When safety became an issue in Honduras, Sophia's family decided to move to North Carolina for two years, followed by a return to Bethlehem for an additional two years. When conditions improved in Honduras, Sophia and her family eventually settled back in Honduras, with Sophia attending college in Nicaragua. Sophia explained that Bethlehem's patriarchal system, both in family life and social settings, was one of the reasons for her poor experience there. Sophia and her family's experience are an example of the struggle between

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<sup>16</sup> John Handal, interview with Sophia Burbara,. January 19, 2014, San Pedro Sula.

homeland and host country. Additionally, her parents are an example of the Palestinian Diaspora as a whole, as her mother is from the Latin American Diaspora while her father is from the Arab Gulf Diaspora.

The exchange between homeland and host country has allowed for the Diaspora to feel connected to the homeland without having to physically emigrate from Honduras. Many of the desires of the first émigrés of the Diaspora were to return to their homeland once the economic and political atmosphere was appropriate, however this did not occur. With each generation that passed, the members of the Diaspora became further integrated into the society and their homeland became an illusion, or a myth that they felt connected to through their heritage. That is to say that they did not abandon the notion of their homeland, but it is apparent that their desire to return home is not as strong as previous generations. The memories of their homeland passed down from their fathers is not the reality of the current state of Bethlehem. Thus this notion of homeland is somewhat of a myth that these members follow, allowing them to be both connected yet apart. Additionally, current émigrés from Bethlehem, Beit Sahur and Beit Jala have joined family members in Honduras. In fact, data from the survey designed for the Diaspora indicated that the most recent migrant among the participants arrived in 2010.

While members of the Diaspora did not show signs of wanting to return to their homeland, their strong sense of pride in their heritage remained a constant throughout the generations. Additionally, this has been beneficial to Bethlehem,

Beit Jala and Beit Sahur through an exchange of culture between the West Bank and Latin America. While field work in Bethlehem was not possible, the works of others displays this exchange. Joshua Hammer explains that during his visit to Beit Jala he frequently experienced Hispanic culture. He says, “Many people have spent a few years or decades in that part of the world [Latin America], made money, and then returned to Beit Jala, imprinting the village with both signs of wealth and a Latino flavor.” He continues by saying that he had to constantly remind himself that he was traveling “through a West Bank village and not a hamlet in El Salvador,” especially due to the Spanish greetings that villagers greeted each other with on a frequent basis (Hammer 2004, 64).

There are other documented instances of Palestinians returning to Bethlehem. Giries Elali explains that during the British Mandate there was a boom in construction, and “emigrants returning from the Diaspora began constructing houses and buildings to rent in Jerusalem and in the [Jerusalem] districts of Al-Baq’a, Al-Qatamon, Al-Musrarah and other parts” (Elali 1991, 149). He writes that after the 1948 Israeli declaration of independence and the exodus of Palestinians, many of the properties came under the control of the incoming Jews, deterring further émigrés from returning. While this case is not directly related to Bethlehem, it does show that Palestinians did return before the creation of Israel. As mentioned earlier, after the 1967 Six-Day War, Palestinians were greatly restricted on returning to their homeland.



### **Conclusion**

The information gathered through the interviews and focus groups have provided a glimpse at how each group perceives one another, and themselves. While the sample pool of the surveys was not as large as expected, they were useful in helping to understand the Diaspora's and native population's relations. They also provided information on assimilation, showing that Palestinians have integrated themselves into Honduran society, instead of assimilating to the country's culture. The Diaspora's economic and political success has marred relations between the native Hondurans, who see them as outsiders that inevitably exploited the underdevelopment of Honduras. Honduras' socioeconomic structure and economic stagnation, relative to its neighbors, has been blamed on the Palestinian Diaspora. This resentment was apparent during the 2009 political crisis in which President Manuel Zelaya.

In discussing a return, members of the Diaspora are willing to remain in contact with their homeland, but as a diaspora they have no actual intentions of returning. Instead, they have created a flow between Palestine and Honduras. Their intentions of not returning home does not signify an abandonment of their ideological connection to their homeland, as seen in their support of the Palestinian cause regarding Palestinian-Israeli issues. Instead, this Diaspora utilizes the transnational connection to remain in contact with family members, as well as remaining active in supporting the Palestinian cause.

## **CHAPTER VIII: Conclusion**

### **Overview of the Study**

This study addresses the Palestinian Diaspora in Latin America within the context of migration, diaspora and acculturation studies, in addition to Palestinian and Latin American studies. Furthermore, it analyzes the similarities and differences between the Palestinian and Jewish Diasporas in Chile and Honduras. It uses migration, diaspora and acculturation theory, as well as a historical analysis to explore the Palestinian Diaspora, with a concentration on the Diaspora in Honduras. In addition, the study examines the relationships between the native Hondurans and the Palestinian-Hondurans, as well as the polarization of the cities of Tegucigalpa and San Pedro Sula within the context of Palestinian-native relations. These relations have been at the forefront of race, socioeconomic and political issues within Honduran society.

### **Findings**

The findings include the historical impact on the Palestinian migration to Latin America, the Jewish Palestinian relationship, the origin of the Palestinian community in Honduras, the economic success of Palestinians in Honduras, the relationship between the native Hondurans and Palestinian community, the acculturation level of this community within Honduran society and the Palestinian intent on a return to their homeland.

First, the historical importance of the migration was largely based on the economic and political events of the late 1880s into the mid 1940s. The study

found that a large amount of these émigrés migrated due to growing economic concerns and thus, sought economic opportunities elsewhere. This is not to negate the important political events of the era in that region. These émigrés had to contend with the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, the establishment of the British Mandate of Palestine, and the political and economic competition from incoming Zionist migrants to the area. Additionally, the establishment of the State of Israel was another factor that influenced their emigration. These factors led to the emigration of Palestinians from their homeland.

Next, the relationship between the Jews and Palestinians in Latin America was discussed. The Jewish and Palestinian Diaspora both experienced xenophobia and other difficulties during their initial migration to Latin America. The Jewish Diaspora was ostracized both due to their cultural and religious beliefs, in comparison to the Palestinians who had to contend with a cultural difference but shared the same religious beliefs as many in Latin America.

The town of origination is another important factor in this study. Their historical and familial ties helped them establish close communities in Honduras, as well as forming a niche within Honduran society. This research found that 87 percent of the Middle Eastern surnames in Honduras originated from Bethlehem, Beit Sahur and Beit Jala. The fact that many originated from the same three (neighboring) towns allowed these members to continue to practice their culture and traditions in their host country. Additionally, it allowed them to carry over the established kinship network from the Bethlehem area to Honduras. This dynamic led to social and economic success within Honduras, as Palestinian

businessmen were more willing to conduct business together, and assist one another. Based on interviews and research, the top three businessmen in Honduras are of Palestinian descent, and the current total Palestinian market share ranges from 25 to 40 percent of Honduras' GDP. In 1980 this share was 26 percent of the financial capital in Honduras. Palestinians have established themselves in every sector, from dairy production and textiles, to electrical and palm oil production. Additionally, they brought a variety of new industries to Honduras, including mass production of machetes and large scale textile factories. They are well established within the commercial elite of the country, which in turn leads to the next finding of the research.

The Palestinians in Honduras have been victims of the xenophobia within Latin America, and have been blamed for many of the political and economic shortcomings of Honduras. Due to their large economic success, and in comparison to the widespread poverty of Honduras, the Palestinians have been viewed as self-interested and motivated solely by economic gains. While there is some evidence that a handful of families have operated in this fashion, the majority have been stereotyped to represent this notion of Palestinian frugality and commercial ruthlessness within the Honduran national consciousness. The most apparent example was during the 2009 constitutional crisis (coup d'état), when President Manuel Zelaya publically blamed Palestinian elite for the economic and political troubles of the country during that time. This created a widespread stereotype that labeled Palestinians as perpetrators of the coup and disinterested in the well being of Hondurans or the country itself.

Another important finding was the difference in the polarization of the relationships between Palestinians and native Hondurans in Tegucigalpa and San Pedro Sula. Both groups in San Pedro Sula expressed a more polarized relationship than those in Tegucigalpa. There are two reasons for this, first and primarily because of the difference in the importance of each city. Tegucigalpa is the political and government capital of the country, while San Pedro Sula is the commercial capital, therefore the interactions between both groups is different in each city. Another reason was that in order for Palestinians to succeed in Tegucigalpa they had to assimilate. This was to a greater extent than their counterparts in San Pedro Sula, thus Tegucigalpan Palestinians gave up some of their Palestinian identity in order to assimilate within Tegucigalpan society. This is not to say that the Palestinian community in Honduras, as a whole, has assimilated, but instead describes the experience in Tegucigalpa. In discussions with Palestinian-centric focus groups it was discovered that many did in fact see themselves as Hondurans, and considered Honduras their home. Instead of identity being a zero sum classification, they identified themselves as Honduran by nationality and Palestinian by ethnicity, allowing them to become part of the host country while retaining their homeland identity.

Acculturation is an important aspect when discussing diasporas and migrations. According to acculturation theory the Palestinians in Honduras can be labeled integrated, and not assimilated. Palestinians identify with Honduran culture, yet they have retained their ethnic identity, signaling integration. Based on Phinney et al's two question classification theory, *Is it considered to be of*

*value to maintain one's cultural heritage?* and *Is it considered to be of value to develop relationships with the larger society?* and based on interviews and focus group discussions, a "yes" response to both questions would be representative of Palestinians in Honduras—which equates to an integrated classification.

Finally, their intentions to return to Palestine is non-existent. Members of the Palestinian Diaspora have achieved success in their host country and have been left with historical memories of their homeland passed down from generation to generation. This does not signify an abandonment of their homeland, but instead is part and parcel to their Palestinian-Honduran identity. The study found that some have returned to Palestine only to find a very different scene from the one described to them by their forefathers.

### **Contributions to the Field**

Much of the research on Palestinians in Honduras has been recycled material which dates back to research conducted in the 1980s. This study contributes to that research in several different ways. First, it adds to the Palestinian narrative outside of the widely researched and discussed Israeli-Palestinian one. Second, it provides an updated narrative to the established Latin American-Palestinian narrative, and in particular it expands on the Palestinian-Honduran narrative. It provides results from interviews and focus group discussions with Palestinian and non-Palestinian participants, and analyzes the findings from these methods. The most important contribution is the discovery of the difference between Tegucigalpa and San Pedro Sula in the context of Palestinian and Honduran relations. These relationships are of growing

importance when discussing xenophobia in Latin America and the success of Palestinians in Honduras.

In addition to this, and as mentioned above, it provides updated information on the Palestinian commercial elite and compares the Jewish and Palestinian Diasporas in Latin America. It expands on this topic by also including the Palestinian Diaspora in Chile, and compares it to the one in Honduras, drawing both similarities and differences. It found that those in Chile were more active in supporting a Palestinian cause, in comparison to the community in Honduras. One reason is that the Palestinians in Chile are from various regions or sections of Palestine, as opposed to their Honduran counterparts whose roots lie predominantly within three neighboring towns. This allowed for the former to share a unified Palestinian identity, whereas the community in Honduras identified themselves according to their origination within the three towns.

### **Limitations of the Study**

As outlined in the methodological section in chapter three, the research was limited in a number of ways. First, the ethnicity of the researcher was both advantageous and disadvantageous. Being able to penetrate the close-knit Palestinian social circles allowed for a deep analysis of the Palestinian community in Honduras. It provided insight into the community that is often limited to members of the community. On the other hand, it limited the ability to gain the trust and willingness of native Hondurans to discuss their relations with Palestinians. This is not to say that some natives that were interviewed did not discuss these relations openly and freely, but the possibility that more candid

conversations could have occurred is a factor which must be recognized. Additionally, and not mentioned in chapter three, was the influence funding can have on participation. It was difficult trying to find willing participants for the study. Potential participants frequently asked if remuneration was being provided and when told that it was not would become hesitant to participate. As with any research, a larger sample would have benefited the research.

Another factor was that the security situation in Honduras prevented an analysis of sections of the city that were deemed unsafe, particularly the downtown and city center areas. Additionally, this also includes sections of the country outside of the two major cities where the research was conducted, which are less developed and have been known to harbor gangs and drug cartels. Analysis in these areas may have provided additional results, and would have added to the research as a whole.

### **Future Research**

While this research advances and adds to former research on the Palestinian Diaspora in Honduras, it also opens up the possibility for further research on this Diaspora. One main concept introduced in this research is the Palestinian relationship with their host country. Given the limitations of time, safety and funding, this issue was introduced and only explored superficially, leaving the potential for further exploration and analysis. These relations are of deep importance to the Palestinian and Honduran narrative, as it has had a great impact on the country. Additionally, Palestinian contributions to Honduran culture are just being discovered, leaving it open for potential research. An example



includes the musical compositions of Lidia Handal and the impact she had on Honduran folkloric music. These largely unknown contributions exist, but have yet to be analyzed or properly researched. One last area of study pertaining to this topic is the commercial interests of Palestinians in Honduras. Their control of the commercial and industrial sector is immense, however it has yet to be identified with a precise number. Being that corporate records are protected under Honduran law, it would be a difficult, but attainable, project to undertake.

### **Concluding Statement**

In conclusion, the Palestinian Diaspora in Latin America is not only representative of their Palestinian ethnicity but of Latin America as a whole. Palestinians in Honduras have enjoyed great success in their host country and have integrated themselves into Honduran society. They have not abandoned the Palestinian national struggle, but instead continue to support the Palestinian identity while living in their host country. Their traditions and culture have been preserved and intertwined with Honduran customs, creating what is now considered the Palestinian-Honduran identity.

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**Appendix A:**  
**Surveys Distributed to Palestinians and Native Population**

**Encuesta para los palestinos de la**  
**Diáspora en América Latina**

Usted está invitado a participar en un estudio de investigación que se lleva a cabo John D. Handal (doctorando en derecho, Universidad de Rutgers), para la realización de su tesis doctoral sobre la comunidad palestina en América Latina.

El propósito de esta investigación es determinar la influencia que ha tenido la inmigración Palestina en Honduras y las relaciones entre la población nacional y la comunidad palestina. La encuesta debe durar entre 5-10 minutos y será estrictamente confidencial y su participación será anónima. La participación es voluntaria y no se ofrece ninguna remuneración. Son 16 preguntas y 6 páginas. Gracias por su tiempo.

## Comienza

1.) ¿Es usted de origen palestino?

☐ Si

☐ No

2.) ¿En que año emigró usted o su familia a Honduras?

Año \_\_\_\_\_ ☐ No Se

3.) ¿Qué nivel es su capacidad de habla árabe? Marque con una X, 1 significa que no puedes leer o hablar árabe y 5 significa que puedes leer y hablar árabe

	1 Ningun árabe	2	3	4	5 Lee y habla árabe
Leer					
Hablar					

4.) ¿Es usted casado?

☐ Si

☐ No



¿De qué raza es su cónyuge?

☐ Palestino

☐ No es Palestino

5.) Indique en qué medida está de acuerdo o en desacuerdo con las siguientes afirmaciones. Estas declaraciones se refieren a la relación entre la comunidad nativa de Honduras. **Ejemplo:** "Me casaría" si significa "te casarías con un hondureño nativo".

Declaración	Totalmente en desacuerdo (1)	En desacuerdo (2)	Ni de acuerdo ni en desacuerdo (3)	Acuerdo (4)	Totalmente de acuerdo (5)
Tendría como mis amigos regulares					
Se casaría					
Tendría como mis invitados a cenas privadas					
Entretenía durante la noche en mi casa					
Habría simplemente como conocidos de habla					
Declinaría tener como amigos					
Tendría sus jóvenes como iguales social para mis hijos e hijas adolescentes					
Tendría como presidente de mi país					
Tendría como mis socios de negocios					

6.) Indique su grado de acuerdo o desacuerdo con cada afirmación.

Declaración	Totalmente en desacuerdo (1)	En desacuerdo (2)	Ni de acuerdo ni en desacuerdo (3)	Acuerdo (4)	Totalmente de acuerdo (5)
Creo en mí mismo como un hondureño					
Tengo un fuerte sentido de ser hondureño					
Siento que soy parte de la cultura hondureña					
Siento que represento la cultura hondureña					
Ser hondureño es una parte importante de mi vida					

7.) ¿En qué nivel cree que están las relaciones con la población nacional? 1 significa poco, or las relaciones son pobres y 5 significa que las relaciones son buenas y mucho.

	1 Poco	2	3	4	5 Muy buena
Relaciones					

8.) ¿Ha usted sufrido discriminación a causa de su herencia étnica?

Nunca	Raramente	A veces	A menudo	Muy a menudo

9.) ¿En qué nivel se identifica con su herencia palestina?

No se identifica con la herencia (1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	Se identifica con la herencia (5)

10.) ¿Todavía tiene miembros de su familia inmediata en Palestina/Israel?

☐ Si

☐ No

11.) ¿Todavía tiene parientes (p.ej., 2dos y 3ros primos) en Palestina/Israel?

☐ Si

☐ No

→ ¿Los ha visitado alguna vez en Palestina?

☐ Si

☐ No

12.) ¿Eres propietario de un negocio?

☐ Si

☐ No

→ ¿Tiene empleados?

☐ Si

☐ No

→ ¿Cuántos empleados tiene?

☐ 1-5

☐ 10-15

☐ 6-10

☐ 15<

**13.)** La gente a veces describen a sí mismos como pertenecientes a la clase obrera, la clase media o la clase alta o más baja. ¿Se describiría a sí mismo como perteneciente a la:

- ☐ Clase alta
- ☐ Clase media alta
- ☐ Clase media baja
- ☐ La clase obrera
- ☐ clase baja

**14.)** En la parte superior de la escalera son personas que están mejor fuera de los que tienen la mayor cantidad de dinero, la educación y los puestos de trabajo más respetados. En la parte inferior de la escala son los que están en peores condiciones- que tienen menos dinero, menos educación, y los trabajos menos respetados, o ningún trabajo. Cuanto más alto se encuentra en esta escala, cuanto más cerca esté de la gente en lo más alto, el más bajo esté, más cerca se encuentre a la gente en la parte inferior. Marque con una "X" en el peldaño donde crees que estás parado en su vida, o el estado de su hogar, en comparación con otros en Honduras.





15.) ¿Cuál es el nivel superior de educación que ha recibido?

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Estudiante actual  | <input type="checkbox"/> Estudios Universitarios  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Escuela primaria   | <input type="checkbox"/> Maestría o Doctorado     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Escuela secundaria | <input type="checkbox"/> Doctor medico or abogado |

16.) ¿Cuál es su religión?

- ☐ cristiano    ☐ musulmán    ☐ judío    ☐ ateo    otro\_\_\_\_\_

Gracias por su  
participación y asistencia

**Para obtener más información:**

**Estudiante:** John Handal  
(john.handal@rutgers.edu)

**Director de la Disertación:** Carlos Seiglie  
(seiglie@andromeda.rutgers.edu) Habla Español.

Rutgers University Office of Research & Sponsored Programs  
ASB III - 2nd Floor, 3 Rutgers Plaza, New Brunswick, NJ 08901  
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**Survey for the native Population**

**Encuesta para los participantes de descendencia non- árabe**

Esta revisión es la parte de la investigación realizada por John D. Handal (candidato del Doctor en Filosofía, universidad de Rutgers), para la finalización de su tesis en la Diáspora palestina en América Latina. Todos los resultados serán estrictamente confidencialmente y la participación permanecerá anónima. La participación es voluntaria y ninguna remuneración se ofrece. Son 9 preguntas y 4 paginas. Gracias por su tiempo.

1.) ¿Es usted de origen palestino?

☐ Si ☐ No

2.) ¿Cuál es el nivel superior de educación que ha recibido?

☐ Estudiante actual ☐ Estudios Universitarios  
☐ Escuela primaria ☐ Maestría o Doctorado  
☐ Escuela secundaria ☐ Doctor medico or abogado

3.) ¿Cuál es su religión?

☐ cristiano ☐ musulmán ☐ judío ☐ ateo ☐ otro \_\_\_\_\_

4.) ¿Es usted casado?

☐ Si ☐ No



¿De qué raza es su cónyuge?

☐ Palestino ☐ Non-Palestinino

5.) ¿Cuál ha sido la contribución económica al país por la comunidad palestina desde su llegada?

No Contribucion	1	2	3	4	5	Excepcional
Contribucion						

- 6.) Indique en qué medida está de acuerdo o en desacuerdo con las siguientes afirmaciones. Estas declaraciones se refieren a la relación entre la comunidad nativa de Honduras y los palestinos. Ejemplo: "Me casaría" si significa "te casarías con un palestino".

Declaración	Totalmente en desacuerdo (1)	En desacuerdo (2)	Ni de acuerdo ni en desacuerdo (3)	Acuerdo (4)	Totalmente de acuerdo (5)
Tendría como mis amigos regulares					
Se casaría					
Tendría como mis invitados a cenas privadas					
Entretendría durante la noche en mi casa					
Habría simplemente como conocidos de habla					
Declinaría tener como amigos					
Tendría sus jóvenes como iguales social para mis hijos e hijas adolescentes					
Tendría como presidente de mi país					
Tendría como mis socios de negocios					

- 7.) ¿Siente como si la llegada a Honduras de la comunidad palestina ha asistido al país en el crecimiento económico?

☐ Si

☐ No

- 8.) ¿Ha creado la comunidad palestina el concurso económico, que ha sido desventajoso a la población nacional?

☐ Si

☐ No

- 9.) En la parte superior de la escalera son personas que están mejor fuera de los que tienen la mayor cantidad de dinero, la educación y los puestos de trabajo más respetados. En la parte inferior de la escala son los que están en peores condiciones- que tienen menos dinero, menos educación, y los trabajos menos respetados, o ningún trabajo. Cuanto más alto se encuentra en esta escala, cuanto más cerca esté de la gente en lo más alto, el más bajo esté, más cerca se encuentre a la gente en la parte inferior. Marque con una "X" en el peldaño donde crees que estás parado en su vida, o el estado de su hogar, en comparación con otros en Honduras.



Gracias por su  
participación y asistencia

**Para obtener más información:**

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### **Appendix B: Middle Eastern Surnames in Honduras**

<b>Last Name</b>	<b>Origin</b>	<b>Last Name</b>	<b>Origin</b>
Abbassy	Acre	Bader	Beit Jala
Abboud	Bethlehem	Balahwy	Bethlehem
	Syria	Bamar	?
Abdala/ Abadalah	Bethlehem	Banayotti	Bethlehem
Abdelnur	Bethlehem	Bandy	Beth Jala
Abdo	Bethlehem	Baracat	Jerusalem
Abedrabo	Beit Sahur		Jordan
Aboumohor/Abumojor	Beit Jala	Barjúm	Bethlehem
Abou-nehra	?	Batarse	Bethlehem
Abraham	Bethlehem	Bedran	?
	Beit Sahur	Belot	Syria
Abudeye	Bethlehem	Bendeck/Bandak	Bethlehem
	Beit Jala	Bishara/ Bichara	Beit Jala
Abudoj	Bethlehem	Boadla	?
Abufele	Bethlehem	Botto	Bethlehem
Abugattas	Beit Jala	Burbura	Bethlehem
Abuid	Beit Jala	Busmail	Bethlehem
Abularach	Bethlehem	Camal	Bethlehem
Abumojor	Beit Jala	Canahuati	Bethlehem
Abureyes	Beit Jala	Cassis/Kassas	Bethlehem
Aburuman	Beit Jala	Chahín	Bethlehem
Abuyiries	Beit Jala	Chenadeh/Chehadeh	Beit Jala
Affif	Lebanese	Comandari	Bethlehem
Ahmad	Jerusalem	Cronfel	Bethlehem
Alí	Bethlehem	Cury	Bethlehem
Aljobhan	?		Beit Jala
Amer	?	Dabdoud	Bethlehem
Andonie	Bethlehem	Dacaret	Bethlehem
Asfura	Bethlehem	David	Bethlehem
Assaff	Bethlehem	Dieck	Bethlehem
Atala/Atallah	Lebanese	Dip	Ramallah
Atti	Bethlehem	Dogadher	?
Atuán	Bethlehem	Duaje	Lebanese
Awad	Bethlehem	Eid	?
	Beit Sahur	El-Hayek/Al-Hayek	Syria
	Beit Jala	Elias	Lebanese
Azar	Lebanese	Ennabe	Ramallah
Azize	Lebanese	Facussé	Bethlehem
Azzad	Lebanese	Falas	Beit Sahur
Babún	Bethlehem		

Last Name	Origin
Fanous	Bethlehem Lebanon Egypt
Faraj	Beit Sahur Beit Jala
Fattaleh	Jerusalem
Fayad	Bethlehem
Fléfil	Bethlehem
Frech	Bethlehem
Fuabi/Fuadi	?
Gabrie/Gabrieh	Bethlehem
Ganem	Beit Sahur
Gattas	Bethlehem
Gawy	?
Giacomán	Bethlehem
Yiacamán	
Yacamán	
Jacamán	
Haman	Bethlehem
Hamis	Beit Jala
Hananía	Bethlehem
Handal	Bethlehem
Hanna	Beit Jala
Hasbun	Bethlehem
Hashu	Bethlehem
Hassan	Bethlehem
Hassim	Bethlehem
Hawit	Jerusalem Ramallah
Hiaczi	?
Hilsaca	Bethlehem
Hoch	Bethlehem
Hode	Bethlehem Beit Jala
Hreizi	Bethlehem
Ibrahim	Bethlehem Beit Jala
Ictech	Bethlehem
Isabrin	Beit Jala Beith Sahur
Jaar	Bethlehem
Jalal	Beit Sahur
Jamal	Bethlehem

Last Name	Origin
Jamis	Beit Jala
Jarufe	Beit Jala
Jibrin	Lebanese
Jorge	Syria Lebanese
Kafati	Beit Jala
Kafie	Bethlehem
Kaled	?
Kalil/Khalil	Beit Sahur
Kamal	Beit Sahur
Kamandari	Bethlehem
Kamar	Bethlehem Jerusalem
Kattán	Bethlehem Beit Jala
Kawas	Bethlehem
Khoury	Beit Jala
Kokali	Bethlehem
Konkar	Beit Jala
Ladat	Bethlehem
Lama	Bethlehem
Larach	Beit Jala
Macharido	Jerusalem
Mahchi	Bethlehem Jerusalem
Mahomar	Bethlehem
Malaki	Syria
Maloff	Lebanese
Maoussa	Bethlehem
Marcos	Bethlehem
Marzouca	Bethlehem
Massou	Bethlehem Beit Jala
Massú	Bethlehem
Mena	Bethlehem
Michel/Mikel	Bethlehem
Michelen/Michalen	Bethlehem
Miguel	Bethlehem
Miladeh	Bethlehem
Miselem	Bethlehem Beit Jala
Misleh	Beit Jala Beit Sahur
Mitri	Bethlehem

Last Name	Origin
Mourra/Murra	Bethlehem
Mukaquer	Beit Jala
Musalam	Bethlehem
Nahomer	?
Nahum	?
Napky/Nafky	Lebanese
Nasdy	?
Nasralla/Nazralla	Beit Jala
Nasser	Bethlehem
Nastas	Bethlehem
Nazar	Bethlehem
Nicoli	Bethlehem
Nimer	Ramallah
Niní	Beit Jala
Numman	Ramallah
Nustass	Bethlehem
Odeh	Bethlehem
Paranky	Bethlehem
Rabat	?
Rafeq	?
Richmawy	Beit Sahur
Rock	Bethlehem
Román	Beit Jala
Saad	Bethlehem
Saade	Bethlehem
Sabat	Bethlehem
Saca	Bethlehem
Sacaan	Bethlehem
Safie	Bethlehem
Sahury	Bethlehem
Said	?
Sakhel	Beit Jala
Salamé	Bethlehem Beit Jala Beit Sahur
Salem	Bethlehem Beit Jala
Salman	Bethlehem Beit Jala
Salomon	Bethlehem
Salty	Bethlehem
Samara	Bethlehem

Last Name	Origin
Sansur	Bethlehem Beit Jala
Saybe	Bethlehem
Segebre	Beit Jala
Shaman	Bethlehem
Sikaffi/ Sikaffy	Bethlehem
Simán	Beit Jala
Simeri	Bethlehem
Simón	?
Sirene	Beit Jala
Siwady/Sowadi	Bethlehem
Solimán	Bethlehem
Stefan	Bethlehem
Talhami	Bethlehem
Tanios	?
Tome	Beit Jala
Touche	?
Yacoub	Beit Jala Beit Sahur
Yaghmur	?
Yamani	?
Yarour	?
Yazbek	?
Yibrin	?
Yones	Bethlehem
Yuja	Bethlehem
Zabath	Bethlehem
Zablah	Bethlehem
Zacarías	Beit Sahur
Zakier/Zakieh	?
Zarky	?
Zaror	Beit Jala
Zaruk/Zarruck	Bethlehem
Zarzar	Bethlehem
Zoghbi	Bethlehem
Zummar	Beit Sahur
Zurene	Beit Jala
<b>?= unknown origin</b>	



## Curriculum Vitae John D. Handal

**Email:** johndhandal@gmail.com

**Date of Birth:** August 20, 1984

**Place of Birth:** Hackensack, New Jersey

**Education:**

*May 2002* Passaic Valley High School, Little Falls, New Jersey

*May 2008* Rutgers, University, Newark, New Jersey  
*Bachelors of Science* in Political Science and Criminal Justice  
*Award:* Dean's Academic List 2005 to 2007

*May 2011* Rutgers University, Newark, New Jersey  
*Masters of Science* in Global Affairs  
 ΣΙΡ Honor Society

*May 2014* Rutgers University, Newark, New Jersey  
*Doctorate of Philosophy* in Global Affairs.  
 ΣΙΡ Honor Society  
*Award:* Dissertation Fellow, 2013 to 2014

**Employment:**

<i>September 2013 - May 2014</i>	Rutgers University Division of Global Affairs, Newark, NJ <i>Dissertation Fellow</i>
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<i>September 2009 - September 2013</i>	Rutgers University Division of Global Affairs, Newark, NJ <i>Administrative Support</i>
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**Languages:** English (fluent), Spanish (fluent), Arabic (moderate)