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REFUGEES, DISPLACED MIGRANTS, AND TERRITORIALIZATION IN INTERWAR PALESTINE¹

Abstract

The history of undocumented movement into mandate Palestine by non-Zionist displaced migrants and refugees is one which naturally highlights the territorialization of Palestine's geopolitical space. From 1920, Great Britain, as the mandatory power in Palestine, bolstered its control over the territory's physical space through its classification and categorization of refugees and displaced migrants, and the regulation of their movement. Yet, the reactions to these processes by migrants and refugees, highlighted by numerous examples from the archival record, are not entirely ones of resistance. Despite the changing definitions and benefits of refugee and migrant status from the late Ottoman through the interwar period, often-undocumented arrivals to Palestine actively engaged with the mandate's new immigration and mobility-control regimes and documentary-identity regulations. The active engagement of refugees and displaced migrants included circumventing and subverting these new regimes in a number of pragmatic and inventive ways. As the paper demonstrates, this very engagement serves to highlight the limitations of the mandate administration's policies on immigration and mobility and of its migrant classification system.



INTRODUCTION

At the turn of the century, migrants (including travelers and pilgrims) who navigated between the Ottoman, Central Asian, North African, and Arabian villages and cities were, in the words of Lale Can, "marked by extraordinary mobility."² It is then all the more historically striking that in the decades following the collapse of the Ottoman Empire in 1918, former sites of refuge and settlement in the Ottoman Arab provinces became zones in which deportations were carried out against anyone without a claim to citizenship, residence, or the correct documentary identity papers. Yet, long before the turn of the century, an imperial trend of increased state territoriality can be discerned in the Ottoman Empire's treatment of refugees and migrants in its domains. By 1920, these state-imposed processes of control over mobility and

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identity gathered force under the British and French mandate administrations in the Arab provinces. Migrants, however, should not be viewed as historical pawns in the processes of territorialization. Rather, they actively acknowledged and took part in the transition from Ottoman to colonial and nation-state modes of control and classification over movement. In what follows, mandate Palestine is posited as a case study in order to analyze layers of territorialization as they related to mobility. Throughout the interwar period of the twentieth century, Great Britain, as the mandatory in Palestine, implemented migration and mobility controls as a means to further its own support of the Zionist movement's establishment of a Jewish national homeland in the territory. This article argues that as both direct and indirect reactions to these processes, refugees and non-Zionist migrants, including economically and socially displaced persons from the wider region, created new nodes of mobility. Far from entirely refusing to recognize the existence of new borders, identities, and the classifications of desirable and undesirable migration, mobile persons and groups used new regimes of state control to their own benefit, manipulating and subverting them. A narrative study of the reactions by the migrants and refugees who hoped to enter and settle within Palestine can conceptually advance how historians frame migrants' engagement with border-control regimes in the interwar Middle East.

This article examines the modern methods of territorialization that took place in an Ottoman nineteenth-century framework and continued, albeit in different ways, immediately from the start of the British administration in Palestine. The methods discussed below largely focus on the gradual tightening of controls over the movement of migrants, inhabitants, and refugees into Palestine. The research engages with sociologist Robert Sack's basic definition of territoriality: an attempt or exertion by one group, in this case the Ottoman and then British colonial administration in Palestine, to affect, influence, and control people, phenomena, and relationships, by delimiting and asserting control over a geographical territory.³ The action of asserting control is usually understood as one of state centralization. The work by Peter Vandergeest and Nancy Lee Peluso on the modern history of Thailand sees territorialization as "excluding or including people within particular geographic boundaries, and controlling what people do. . . within those boundaries."⁴ Paolo Novak details the British colonial practice of territorialization in the Afghan borderlands from the nineteenth century, asserting that government practices of

classification, definition, and regulation of the population of a territory are generated in contingent ways as part of the contact between boundaries' state-centered legal inscriptions of space and the qualities of the populations which fill and transgress that space.⁵

Territorialization can occur on multiple levels, including state prohibition of, or permission for, certain activities at and across borders, and the government's use of immigration regulations to control movement. The sections below focus on the latter two elements of territorialization: its manifestations in the mobility regime and immigration policies of the Ottoman Empire and then the Palestine mandate. The article first demonstrates how, in the case of the Ottoman Empire, waves of migration and resettlement took place at the same time as the territorialization of state space during which new frontiers in the region became "increasingly tight filter[s]" meant to prevent disruption of state institutions.⁶ Similar waves of migration and subsequent state efforts to exert territoriality again took place at the start of the British and French mandates in the former Ottoman Arab provinces after 1920. This is analyzed using mandate legislation and case studies from Palestine to highlight the treatment by the mandatory toward different types of refugees and displaced migrants who attempted to cross its borders. Ultimately, I argue that displaced migrants, refugees, and former Ottoman inhabitants actively worked within the remnants of Ottoman state territorialization and the mobility-deterrents introduced by the British administration in Palestine. It is tempting to argue that the transgressive activities of illegal border crossing, undocumented migration, and false representation are symptomatic of ignorance by the region's inhabitants and travelers of new post-Ottoman borders, or of their refusal to recognize new borders and documentary identity regimes. Instead, I take heed of the words of caution by Hämäläinen and Truett against the troubling and simplistic historical assumptions that European colonial powers make borders, and indigenous populations resist them.⁷ In post-Ottoman Palestine, migrants and travelers did recognize these new controls. Migrants' subversion of territorialization was dependent upon their ability to engage with these controls and restrictions.

OTTOMAN TERRITORIALITY AND IMPERIAL PRECEDENTS TO MIGRATION CONTROL

Ottoman migration policy had a place within the larger administrative

changes undertaken by the state in order to centralize its control over the provinces. The nineteenth-century history of Ottoman territorialization as it related to refugee and migrant settlement is presented in this section. Reşat Kasaba's work on the long-standing relationship between mobile groups and empire in the Ottoman world is illuminating. Throughout Ottoman history, the great number of mobile peoples was significant to the empire's decentralized governance. The survival of largely unhindered mobility made these groups "integral parts of the Ottoman Empire."⁸ Ottoman statesmen curtailed the mobility of certain individuals and groups only beginning in the early-nineteenth century as part of reforms meant to administratively centralize the empire. By the middle of the century, hundreds of thousands of displaced persons and refugees poured into the empire as a result of conflict with neighboring empires and states. In what follows, the paper defines and contextualizes the empire's treatment of refugees and displaced migrants in order to demonstrate the Sublime Porte's increasingly heightened interest in crafting an exclusivist migration policy and greater bureaucratic controls over the mobility of its own subjects.

By the mid-nineteenth century, the Ottoman Empire had a pragmatically liberal, albeit limited, migration regime.⁹ Out of necessity, in 1857 the state formally invited migrants to settle throughout the provinces. It needed manpower, *inter alia*, to more intensely cultivate arable land. This need came out of the increased incorporation of the empire into the global economy. Migrants could also be used to defend the borders and frontiers of the state. The 1857 decree, part of the Tanzimat reforms, stated that anyone willing to offer allegiance to the sultan could freely migrate to Ottoman domains and thus receive imperial protection and the freedom to practice his or her religion.¹⁰ Yet, in a short span of time, certain historical processes led the Ottoman state to ideologically and practically shift away from this policy toward a regulated and restrictive migrant regime. Historian Ella Fratantuono argues that faced with territorial and demographic losses caused by the Crimean War, the Russo-Ottoman Wars, and nationalist succession by largely Christian groups, the empire decided to offer tax exemptions and citizenship privileges more exclusively to *Muslim* migrants.¹¹ By the end of the nineteenth century the empire could no longer offer space for the high numbers of refugees and migrants to whom it was obliged to provide settlement assistance, free land, and tax and conscription exemptions.

The Ottoman Turkish term *muhacir* (or in the plural, *muhacirun*) is translated alternately to refer to an immigrant, emigrant, or refugee. Fratantuono notes that a proper understanding of this term in Ottoman sources is dependent on the context in which it was used.¹² The state began to use the term for “refugee” only in the middle of the nineteenth century. Significantly, in its general historical usage, *muhacirun* referred to Muslims. The term bureaucratically indicated a person’s stateless status. By the latter half of the century, the term became more exclusive in its application to Muslim *muhacirun* as the empire’s territory shrunk and its population became overwhelmingly Muslim.

The Ottoman Empire witnessed mass migrations of refugees into its territory only in the second half of the nineteenth century as a result of Ottoman wars and conflict with its European neighbors. Between the 1860s and late 1870s, hundreds of thousands of Muslims fled into Ottoman territory from Crimea and the Caucasus which had been ceded to Russia. By the outbreak of the First World War, an estimated 2.5 million Northern Caucasians, or Circassians, crossed into the empire.¹³ The experience with these refugees shaped the empire’s introduction of a new mobility regime in the final two decades of the century. It deeply impacted policies of territorialization: Kasaba argues that the Crimean War of 1854–1856, and the refugees that the war produced, reflect a major turning point in the state’s attempt to exert control over mobile groups. More specifically, the arrival of refugees forced the state to recognize the need for new, clear policies on immigration and citizenship in order to manage the ever-increasing noncitizen population.¹⁴ The war led to an intense, state-run program to regulate the mobility and settlement of the Muslim refugees. In particular, the 1859 establishment of the Immigrant Commission (or Refugee Commission), *Muhacirin Komisyonu*, meant that all matters related to refugees and migrants fell within the mandate of a bureaucratic institution. In 1878, the empire reformed the Immigrant Commission as the Immigrant Administration, which housed the General Administration for Migrants. The General Administration opened a number of provincial branches throughout the empire in order to carry out a range of assistance measures for migrants-turned-citizens. This consolidated body readily embraced the imperial goals of bureaucratic and territorial centralization: the state, rather than local communities or provincial officials, had the responsibility to resettle migrants and refugees in new towns or along frontiers of the empire.

As an institution that essentially controlled the settlement, employment, and movement of new arrivals, the Ottoman state used

the commission as a means to further exert territoriality over parts of its domain. The commission worked to rapidly settle most Muslim refugees and migrants in areas of strategic importance. It granted them exemptions from taxation or military conscription for a number of years. The commission incorporated migrants into the state and the economy through the encouragement of agricultural production. It placed refugees and migrants on cultivable lands, as well as along the frontiers. In theory, communities settled along the borders could be called upon as local auxiliaries to protect Ottoman interests in the event of any external conflicts.¹⁵ In return, these migrants received immediate Ottoman citizenship and imperial protection. All of the elements of refugee settlement, according to Jared Manasek, presented opportunities for the Ottoman state. In one important way, the bureaucratic management of refugee movement and displacement helped the Ottoman Empire minimize potential conflict with other states.¹⁶

The bureaucratic experience with refugee mobility, resettlement, and the grant of citizenship is inherently linked with the mobility regime. Non-Muslim foreigners who came to the empire after fleeing from other conflicts or precarious political situations could also be resettled and given citizenship.¹⁷ The Ottoman government devolved some responsibility for the control and management of these migrants to the relatively new, centralized institution of border officials. With this, writes Fratantuono, the Ottoman Empire shifted strategy regarding the influx of migrants and refugees, and it began to enumerate and categorize these newcomers in order to systematically exercise control over them.¹⁸ Local authorities, including police and landowners, no longer had the task of controlling migrants' movements or of offering aid.¹⁹ Instead, border officials and the immigrant administration body managed these individuals and groups from the moment of their arrival. Yet, the bureaucratization of migrant mobility was not all positive for the arrivals to the empire: officials had the power to penalize undesirable and illegal movement, such as when migrants moved from their designated settlement locations. Officials could even deport individuals and families back to their countries of origin.²⁰

The resettlement of refugees and migrants—often recognized by both the state and refugees as a matter of life or death—was not an easy process. As part of its territorialization process, the state placed individuals, especially the Circassians, on lands that it requisitioned or

seized. In other cases, officials had to chase after migrants who went to various places in the empire without prior authorization from Istanbul authorities. Karpat notes that 365 Circassians went directly, and of their own accord, to Jaffa in 1883 and were later settled along the Jordan River.²¹ The aid that refugees received in the form of agricultural implements and seeds often came at the expense of unwilling local inhabitants of Anatolia. Furthermore, some migrants turned to theft, violence, and banditry to survive. Ryan Gingeras refers to these outcomes of resettlements in terms of the “social dislocations” they caused in parts of the empire.²²

The largely Muslim refugees from the Caucasus were not the only groups to be given refugee status in the nineteenth century. The Ottoman government also classified Algerians who fled northward in 1830 at the time of the French occupation of Algiers as refugees. Three decades later, in the 1860s, more Algerians arrived to the empire en route to Damascus with the anti-French resistance leader Abdul Khader. The government classified these Algerians as political refugees and the sultan gave them his own private lands to cultivate, including plots in Galilee.²³ Interestingly, H.B. Tristram’s 1865 travel account of Palestine refers to groups of Algerian Arabs as “refugees” living in “a collection of wretched huts” near the village of Qadas in the northern Galilee sub-district of Safad.²⁴ Just as it did for other Muslim refugees, the empire granted the Algerians exemptions from military service. However, despite the Ottoman Empire’s wish to retain Algerian refugees as economically beneficial, Justin McCarthy, Dawn Chatty, and a number of others have argued that the empire feared the political agency of the refugees that it received.²⁵

Indeed, officials noticed the social and political dislocations caused by the demographic changes in the provinces following the settlement of migratory populations and refugees. As resettlement continued, conflict over documentary identity and citizenship privileges pitted some refugees against the Ottoman state. For instance, some Muslims who fled from territory in Central Asia during the Russo-Ottoman War and received Ottoman citizenship as refugees continued to claim Russian diplomatic protection. Incidents of attempts by refugees to claim the citizenship and protection of both empires continued even into the twentieth century.²⁶ This threat of dual loyalty created tensions between refugees and the empire and between the Ottoman and Russian governments.

By the late 1870s, the state no longer looked so favorably upon requests by non-refugee foreigners for land in southern Syria, including Palestine. A small, but steady, stream of European Jewish migrants who refused to naturalize as Ottoman citizens began to settle in the Galilee region and lands near Jerusalem. The government in Istanbul wished to prevent the establishment of colonies in which only certain foreign religious and ethnic groups from outside of the empire would be welcome. Foreign enclaves, of course, could potentially provoke political, economic, and social strife.²⁷ Even so, by 1900 the Ottoman Empire conceded that it would allow strictly individual, rather than *en masse*, Jewish migration to Palestine.²⁸

The territorialization undertaken by the Porte included various prohibitions and permissions on out-migration. The Ottoman Empire, not unlike its European counterparts, used various systems to control the mobility of its own subjects. For at least a century before the First World War, empires and states did not generally require the use of documents for cross-border or international movement. David Gutman's work demonstrates the ways in which the Ottoman state imposed restrictions on travel, particularly *against* labor migrants from Anatolia. So too did the state target the emigration of Mount Lebanon's residents in the late-nineteenth century.²⁹ Port cities where clusters of migrant and rural labors gathered became especially subject to tighter, state-imposed controls over movement.³⁰

This scrutiny echoed the treatment of itinerant workers in Western Europe and colonial territories such as India from as early as the seventeenth century. In 1748, an imperial edict issued from the Porte ordered that anyone found "roaming" the roads without reason in certain parts of the empire be sent back to their province of origin.³¹ Laborers' mobility came under even greater suspicion at the same time that Istanbul attempted to curb the movements of nomadic groups in other parts of the empire. By the turn of the twentieth century, unskilled or seasonal laborers developed a reputation as thieves, vagrants, and transients as they circulated to find work in port cities and the countryside. The French and British-administered mandates adopted similar attitudes, and after 1920, instituted a wider system of surveillance on the movement of wage laborers and economic migrants.

THE PALESTINE MANDATE: TERRITORIALIZATION,
CATEGORIZATION, AND IMMIGRATION AND MOBILITY

REGIMES

For the postwar colonial administrations in the former Ottoman Arab provinces, frontiers and borders increasingly served as deterrents to unhindered mobility; namely, they denied the entry of stateless individuals and undesirable, displaced migrants into the new mandate spaces. The process of territoriality, the tangible nature of which included identity documents and border controls, conveyed to migrants and refugees that a nationality based on fixed domicile in one territory was of the utmost importance. In the interim period between the world wars, nation-states and imperial powers developed forms of border control, population surveillance, and classification. Twentieth-century governments based these methods of control upon the policing of vagrants, the poor and destitute, and petty criminals a century or more prior in Ireland, England, and colonial India. In the post-Ottoman Middle East, as in Europe and the Americas, immigration regulations linked a new visa and passport regime with the explicit right of an individual to reside or to work within a territory. Wimmer and Schiller point out that during the period before and after the First World War, immigrants and migrants became natural enemies of the colonial model of the “unmixed” nation-state.³² The following section explores the Palestine mandate administration’s legislation against unfettered mobility and migration into the territory with a focus on non-Zionist migrants.

The largely forced nature of migrants’ movements during the period before the war should not be forgotten. Benjamin Thomas White argues that the issue of forced migration of Muslims in the Ottoman Empire is one of global history and with global implications.³³ One of the most important implications of the nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Ottoman bureaucratic structures that aided migrant resettlement is that they underscored the legitimacy of the movement of people labeled as refugees. The bureaucracy’s support for resettlement normalized what would, within a couple of decades, be defined as statelessness. Resettlement also made permissible the movement of displaced persons across imperial borders: it guaranteed both a just treatment for these people upon their arrival to the Ottoman Empire and permission to remain within its borders.

To be sure, regionally displaced persons and refugees from other former Ottoman provinces arrived to Syria in far higher numbers than they ever did to Palestine during the interwar period. This, White claims, led the Syrian mandate to intensify its territorialization and especially to extend its administrative reach into rural and frontier

areas. The movement of refugees and migrants into Syria called into question the definitions and classifications of *who* a Syrian was, and *how* one could become Syrian.³⁴ Unlike their counterparts in Syria, however, British officials in Palestine wanted little to do with the resettlement of non-European Jewish refugees and migrants. Although the French in Lebanon wished to maintain a majority-Maronite Christian citizenry, the administration in Syria and Lebanon accepted refugees and returnee-Arab emigrants. By contrast, the open stance toward refugees and returning émigrés in Palestine would have threatened the Zionist project.

John Torpey notes that the state regulation of movement “contributes to constituting the very ‘state-ness’ of states.”³⁵ Part of this regulation involved the classification and categorization of immigrants and citizens by the Palestine administration. These actions bureaucratically delineated which national, ethnic, and racial identities were permitted or prohibited from settlement and citizenship rights within Palestine’s borders. More significantly, the act of categorizing proscribed and accepted refugees, migrants, travelers, and inhabitants of Palestine served the mandate’s bureaucratic machinery of control over the actual and potential population. Globally, postwar states increasingly used similar systems of classification to regulate who received passports, visas, citizenship, and consular protection. In Palestine, classification served a second purpose: to ensure that certain types of immigrants could easily enter and contribute to the Zionist project. It is first important to briefly note how immigration rules in Palestine fit with wider British imperial policy on immigration. The following section further elaborates upon Palestine’s immigration orders and regulations between 1920 and the end of the interwar period.

Early in its establishment, the Palestine administration shaped mobility through the classification of “undesirable” migration. The discursive expansion of this term went hand in hand with the creation of legal frameworks that banned the entry of non-Zionist, non-capitalist, and financially dependent migrants. Undesirable migrants included political agitators such as Bolsheviks and communists, as well as prostitutes, unskilled seasonal laborers (as potential transients), criminals, and the mentally ill. The United Kingdom’s 1905 Aliens Act first introduced the classification of undesirable migrants.³⁶ The same classification appeared in French colonial legislation, as well as in Turkey and Egypt, and settler-colonial legislation for South Africa. In all of these places, the anti-alien sentiment associated with socially,

morally, economically, and politically undesirable persons justified and facilitated the legal infrastructure needed to control immigration.³⁷

It is this prewar legislation which offered the basis for the regulation of certain migrants into and from Palestine after 1920. Colonial administrators in Palestine applied elements of metropole immigration law to regulate Jewish Zionist and other Jewish, Arab, and European migration. The mandate administration swiftly established a documentary regime that included visas, passports, and frontier controls. Any person not defined as a national or citizen did not have the conditional right to enter the physical boundaries of Palestine without first meeting immigration requirements.

The strict nature of the requirement introduced in 1920—that all entrants to Palestine possess a visa or travel permit—almost certainly contributed to early subversion of the documentary-identity system. Migrants faced practical and logistical problems in obtaining a visa, passport, or *laissez-passer*. In accordance with the 1920 Palestine's Passport Ordinance, only officers of the Department of Immigration and Travel could distribute these documents. Every civilian who left or entered the mandate had to be in possession of the necessary paperwork and travel permissions. Palestine's director of immigration and travel made clear that "everybody travelling will have to be in possession of photographs, and no exceptions can be made." According to officials, the photograph requirement ensured that "persons travelling comply with the Passport Regulations of other countries."³⁸ Anyone who wished to receive a visa or permit first had to spend hours traveling to the nearest district office that had a government-employed photographer (and doing so only on days that the photographer worked), queue to have identities verified (provided the individual had proof of identity), and pay a fee for the visa or permit and the photograph. People caught attempting to bypass the rules risked imprisonment, a fine, or both.

The first Immigration Ordinance (also issued in 1920) and its subsequent amendments and replacements aimed primarily to keep impoverished or otherwise financially burdensome Jewish and non-Jewish migrants out of Palestine. It must be remembered that while Great Britain supported the establishment of a Jewish homeland in Palestine, it did not intend for that homeland or its members to be financially dependent on the administration in Palestine. The 1920 ordinance and its list of accompanying regulations stressed that no foreigner could enter Palestine without a steady income, the possession

of a specific minimum amount of capital, or assured maintenance. These stipulations fit with Leo Lucassen's argument that nineteenth-century codifications of citizenship throughout much of Europe went hand in hand with the trend of economic liberalization, which made state-granted nationality of acute importance. The responsibility for the poor shifted onto states: the mandate administration, perennially short of funds for welfare, wished to avoid this responsibility even for inhabitants and former immigrants with citizenship.

The mandate charter stipulated strong support for *European*, Zionist Jewish immigration to Palestine and encouraged the close settlement of Jews within the territory, privileges for Jewish institutions, and the creation of a citizenship law to ensure that immigrants received rights and privileges accorded to members of a future nation-state. Non-Jewish immigration compromised the facilitation of a Jewish homeland.³⁹ In light of this, the 1925 Palestine Citizenship Order-in-Council introduced a Palestinian citizenship for naturalized and indigenous residents who intended to remain in Palestine as habitual residents. The order stipulated that Jewish immigrants could either claim citizenship based on two years' minimum residence if they arrived before 1925, or for post-1925 arrivals, through the official, simple process of naturalization after two years of residence.⁴⁰

Any individual or family that wished to immigrate to Palestine, whether Arab or Zionist, had to apply for, and receive, an immigration certificate. Zionist Organization branches through Europe handed out these certificates to Jews, while Arabs had to apply to British authorities for them. The ordinance explicitly stated that before an individual could receive an immigration certificate, he or she had to belong to one of four immigrant categories. The mandate largely intended that these categories apply to prospective European Jewish immigrants, and specifically not to refugees. Persons of independent financial means as noted above belonged to category A, and its subcategories elaborated upon the amount of capital and income that one had to possess in order to qualify. A specific need had to exist in Palestine for additional members of certain professions who possessed the necessary financial wealth and income. Persons who could prove their financial maintenance to be assured could immigrate under category B: this category included orphaned children, members of religious occupations, and (primarily yeshiva) students who could prove they received sufficient maintenance until the time they could support themselves. Workers with definite prospects of employment belonged

to the third category (C), which later encompassed the so-called labor schedule. Lastly, category D included descendants of permanent residents or immigrants who already belonged to the above categories.⁴¹

Foreign, nonimmigrant travelers had to apply to a British consul or British passport control officer for a visa to enter Palestine. If granted a visa, the traveler received the right to remain for three months, so long as they met the medical requirements of the Immigration Ordinance and were not political activists. After three months, travelers could apply for further permission to stay, or they could apply to remain permanently as immigrants. However, travelers had to qualify for one of the specific immigration categories in order to be considered for permanent leave to remain. The 1920 ordinance and its categorizations existed in more or less the same form, with minor adjustments, through 1940.

Some exceptions did exist; for instance, the administration allowed some undocumented economic migrants from the Hauran region in Syria to remain as laborers in Palestine. The need for agricultural labor on Jewish settlements, and the willingness of many Syrian and Transjordanian Arabs to work on these settlements, meant that Zionist leaders supported their entry into Palestine. This in turn convinced the mandate to refrain from mass deportations during the agricultural season.⁴² Egyptian wage laborers regularly came to Palestine for work on the ports and railways, although the mandate allowed this only when workers had confirmed employment. The administration did not treat all labor migrants equally, however. Responding to fears voiced in letters and petitions by Jewish groups to the mandate in the early 1930s over excessive numbers of “illegal” Arab transients, the government made clear its policy to deport anyone deemed to be a financial burden upon mandate resources or any community in Palestine.

Officials criticized the mandate’s immigration policies. The 1930 Hope-Simpson Commission report on land settlement and immigration found that all immigration orders and regulations up to that date had been unsatisfactory. Immigration and border controls, carried out by both mandate officials and Jewish Agency authorities, largely failed to prevent thousands of undocumented and undesirable migrants from entering Palestine each year. Hope-Simpson calculated that between 1927 and 1930, nearly 8,000 individuals settled in Palestine without permission.⁴³ There is not space here for a discussion

of the types of persons and groups who evaded immigration controls, but it is clear that thousands used new networks and modes of mobility to clandestinely cross Palestine's borders and subvert its surveillance tools and documentary identity regime.

In 1933, the administration backpedaled on the mobility restrictions it placed upon undocumented migrants. The change highlights the mandate's failure to put its mobility restrictions into practice: it simply could not keep up with deportations of the thousands of undocumented migrants and refugees that had by then settled in Palestine. The administration published a regulation that granted amnesty from deportation to all migrants who entered Palestine without permission but who settled and maintained habitual residence prior to November 1933 and had never been convicted of any crime. These people did not become citizens, but rather came under the status of "permanent immigrant."

The immigration restrictions, documentary controls, and migrant-classification system naturally led to their subversion and co-option by Arabs and Arabic-speaking Jewish migrants and refugees. The actions by the latter represent a range of subtle, overt, and inventive methods of engagement with the mandate's territorialization processes. A number of case studies are analyzed in the following sections in order to highlight the active agency of the region's mobile individuals and groups in the face of colonial territoriality.

CLAIMING AND DISPUTING REFUGEE STATUS IN MANDATE PALESTINE

None of the categories within Palestine's immigration ordinances mentioned refugees or displaced persons. In fact, the mandate actively discouraged the entry into Palestine of stateless, undocumented persons, or indeed of any individual that could become a financial burden. The following section explores the use of "refugee" as a status after the First World War in mandate Palestine. It demonstrates that through an active engagement with the classifications for migrants and the documentary regime established by Great Britain, individuals began to classify *themselves* as refugees.

Prior to the end of the war, only *states* that took in displaced or persecuted groups could offer them refugee status. In the absence of recognized and rigid national borders during much of the nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries, the crossing of certain spaces by an individual did not constitute the making of a refugee. Only with the

1922 creation of the Nansen passport specifically for stateless persons could the latter be classified as internationally recognized refugees or stateless persons. By the end of the Second World War *only* the host state or in some cases, the United Nations, granted this status.⁴⁴ A person who self-defined as displaced or as a refugee had no right to a Nansen passport or to official recognition as such.

In a divergence from nineteenth-century Ottoman policies, refugees could not expect to enter Palestine and receive a grant of citizenship, nor could they even expect permission to settle within that territory. The mandate administration had no obligation to recognize people found in Palestine without permission as refugees. Yet, people often did request the administration do so. The request for citizenship usually accompanied that for refugee status. Citizenship offered the benefits of residency rights, a passport, and diplomatic protection. To prevent financial and welfare burdens placed upon the administration by refugees, British officials regularly refused to classify undocumented migrants as refugees.

The case of Syrian and Lebanese Druze who actively resettled themselves in Palestine is illustrative of the bureaucratic uncertainties that resulted from the absence of refugee status in any of the mandate's immigration regulations. In 1925, Palestine's high commissioner authorized the entry of a certain number of Druze who had fled the then-ongoing revolt in Syria against the French. More than two decades later, this community, consisting of approximately 5,000 (mainly) Syrian Druze, remained near Jaffa. In 1946, their spokesperson petitioned the administration to grant the community automatic Palestinian citizenship on the basis of their long residence there.⁴⁵ In his reply to spokesperson Mahmoud Shannan's request for automatic citizenship, the commissioner for migration and statistics wrote that the community of Druze remained Lebanese or Syrian because they had entered Palestine without immigration certificates. Although they received permission to enter in 1925 to escape hostilities, they did not receive permission to remain there long-term. By the late 1940s, the government considered these Druze to be illegal migrants and ineligible for citizenship as a group. Each member of the Druze community had the option to individually register with the authorities as an immigrant. In accordance with Palestine's immigration ordinance, the starting date for an immigrant's *legal* residence in Palestine counted as the beginning of the two-year habitual residency period necessary for a person to qualify for citizenship.⁴⁶ This meant that while the Druze had been in Palestine for nearly twenty years,

their legal residency period only began on the date each person officially registered with the authorities as an immigrant.

The commissioner for migration admitted that the large number of Druze who crossed into Palestine during the Syrian Revolt did so as refugees, by virtue of fleeing Syria to escape violence. The migration commissioner further accepted that the government in 1925 and 1926 did not force Druze refugees to return across the frontier. However, Palestine's high commissioner never gave them blanket, formal permission to enter or stay in Palestine.⁴⁷ Legally, they had no special residency provisions as refugees. The commissioner failed to mention whether or not the community received amnesty under the aforementioned 1933 regulation.

The situation of the Druze reveals that not only did Palestine's immigration regulations not provide for refugees, but that they differed significantly from the late Ottoman policy since the administration pointedly refused to offer residency provisions for groups of refugees. The Druze chose to resettle in Palestine and call themselves refugees rather than return across the border. Refugee status meant so little to the mandate administration that these individuals received neither a promise of residency nor the chance to request citizenship unless they *dismissed* their refugee claims and registered with the government as immigrants. In context, this is not surprising, since recognized refugee status, and the necessary citizenship provisions that accompanied it, potentially threatened the aim of Palestine's immigration policy: the creation of a Jewish, capitalist state in Palestine whose inhabitants would not be dependent on Great Britain for economic or welfare assistance. Any immigrant – including 5,000 Druze – who could not be economically absorbed into the territory threatened this policy.

Individuals who described themselves as refugees did not fare any better in pressing their claims to citizenship. For instance, one North African man who defined himself as a refugee upon his entry to Palestine in 1929 received a deportation order nearly two decades later in 1946. Abdel Khader Gheith El-Mugrabi left Benghazi in Libya in the late 1920s after Italian forces attacked the town during the civil war that began in 1928. After El-Mugrabi's two brothers were killed when the Italians attacked the family home, he fled north and eventually arrived to Palestine. El-Mugrabi possessed a valid travel document, which gave permission to enter Palestine. In 1935, he obtained an Italian passport, and entered into the service of the Italian vice-consulate in Jaffa. The Criminal Investigation Department (CID)

of the Palestine Police issued the deportation order many years after he fled Libya, but incidentally just after the Italians left that country. In the meantime, El-Mugrabi had settled permanently in Palestine and had children of his own there. He also had a stable job and had never come to the attention of the police.⁴⁸ Still, mandatory authorities rejected his claim to refugee status and considered his presence in Palestine as illegal.

Even internationally recognized refugees received no special privileges under Palestine's mobility and documentary regime. Waves of Armenian refugees came to Palestine after 1918 from Lebanon and Syria, where the majority initially settled.⁴⁹ Most then resettled in Jerusalem alongside the existing small Armenian community in the Old City. Yaacoub Krikar Terzakian arrived in Palestine at age seven in 1922 as part of the Armenian refugee group. In the early 1940s, Terzakian came to the attention of the Palestine Police who decided that his story of seeking refuge in the mandate territory as a child was neither true nor a valid reason for his continued residence there. The police recommended Terzakian's deportation unless he offered evidence to disprove their understanding of the situation. In response, Terzakian argued that when he entered Palestine at such a young age, had no documents, and could not produce personal references from Syria or Lebanon who could verify that he left as a refugee at age seven. He worked in Haifa since the age of fourteen, and had neither relatives in Syria, Lebanon, or Turkey. Naturally, he did not have authorization to legally reside in those places.⁵⁰ In reality, Terzakian had been an Ottoman citizen before his arrival in Palestine in the years before the Citizenship Order-in-Council. By that logic, he automatically became a Palestinian citizen once the order passed in 1925.⁵¹

Even so, Terzakian's individual attempts to engage with the administration's legal frameworks for immigration and citizenship were futile. His initial version of events, which depicted his arrival as an Armenian refugee, complicated claims to citizenship: as noted in the Druze case, individuals had to register as immigrants before the mandate would consider their petition for residency rights, and thus naturalization. The facts of Terzakian's case were such that he could not produce the documentation demanded by the authorities to prove his former Ottoman nationality.

In some cases, the actions of the mandate administration may have been dictated by past experiences with falsified claims to refugee status. Examples of these claims offer a broader analysis of how

migrants understood and thus manipulated the new documentary identity and migration regimes. In particular, mandate officials suspected petitions from certain Jewish communities in the Middle East to be fraudulent. In fact, officials flagged as suspicious such cases of individuals or groups who claimed to have experienced persecution in order to receive permission to enter Palestine. In 1930, Colonel Kisch, a British member of the Zionist Committee for Palestine, reported to the Jewish Agency's political secretary on appeals made by the Jewish community in Kamishleh, Syria, for sanctuary from persecution in Palestine. The community's spokesperson in Kamishleh, one of the few majority Arabic-speaking Jewish towns in Syria, wrote that on Passover of that year, it had suffered attacks at the hands of the town's Arab Christian residents. The community initially called upon the French high commissioner for Syria to investigate the attacks. In their complaints, Jewish residents wrote that hundreds of Arab Christians went on a terror spree, entering Jewish homes and smashing the property of their owners. The mob even went so far as to severely beat one Syrian Jew and then verbally threaten to throw the individual and his family into the sea. The Syrian mandate government, the petition claimed, did nothing to punish or stop the Christians' persecution of the Jews. The only option, it concluded, was to ask the Palestine government to rescue the community.⁵² The record does not state the final outcome of the appeals but there are no further records to indicate that the Jewish villagers received visas or immigration certificates to enter Palestine as refugees.

One year later, Kisch and his colleagues in Jerusalem again received written appeals by Jews in the region who claimed persecution. In June of 1931, a group of Kurdish Jews settled in Jerusalem called at the offices of the Va'ad Leumi (Jewish National Council) to report ongoing persecution of Kurdish Jews in Iraq. Iraq's small Jewish population clustered in Baghdad and Basra, but Zionist emissaries had no presence in the country until the early 1940s.⁵³ Thirty Jewish families lived in the town of Amidie (Amadiya) in Iraqi Kurdistan, the location where the purported persecution took place. According to the Kurds in Jerusalem, Muslims in Amadiya had attacked their Jewish neighbors as retaliation for the rumored killings of Muslims by Jews in Jerusalem. Their story possibly refers to the 1929 riots in Jerusalem at the Western Wall in which over one hundred Arabs perished, although only a tiny number died at the hands of Jewish attackers.⁵⁴ Jerusalem's Kurdish Jews claimed that five Jewish men had been killed in Amadiya, and that Muslim men frequently

abducted Kurdish Jewish girls. The Jews of the town expressed to their brethren in Jerusalem their wish to flee from Kurdistan to Palestine as refugees. Of significance, they claimed that the authorities in Iraq did nothing to stop the assaults against their community.

Since no branch of the Zionist Organization existed in Iraqi Kurdistan, its Jewish community had no way to request immigration visas for Palestine.⁵⁵ In fact, a number of Jews from Kurdistan attempted to cross the frontier between Palestine and Syria without proper visas in the months before the request made at the offices of the Va'ad Leumi. Frontier guards turned these Jews back to Iraq.⁵⁶ Meanwhile, in July 1931 Kisch personally received a delegation of Kurdish immigrants in Jerusalem, who emphasized the deterioration of the situation of Jews in Kurdistan.⁵⁷ As a result, the Jewish Agency requested that the British Residency at Baghdad verify the reports of murder, abduction, and persecution against Kurdistan's Jewish population. Ostensibly, this would allow the Jews from Kurdistan who came to Palestine to qualify as refugees fleeing persecution. However, one month later, the British Residency and the high commissioner in Iraq reported to the Agency that no incidents of persecution or violence of any kind against any Jew in Kurdistan had been reported to the authorities. The allegations of the Kurds in Jerusalem, British officials claimed, were entirely unsubstantiated.⁵⁸ In fact, British officials went as far as to send representatives to the town in question to determine the nature of the situation. The inspector charged with interviewing residents of Amadiya found those Jewish residents to be "quite happy" and they had no complaints of violent crime. The inspector found the same situation in the surrounding towns which had Jewish populations: reports of crime included theft of donkeys, and the murder of a Jew by outlaws, for which religion had not played any role.⁵⁹ Thus, British colonial officials explained the falsified reports of violence against Jews in Iraqi Kurdistan in relation to immigration restrictions: Jewish immigrants in Palestine on tourist visas from Kurdistan or elsewhere in Iraq falsified these claims in order to circumvent restrictions on immigration.⁶⁰

It is unclear where the reports about Amadiya originated, considering that the Jews living there had no knowledge of any violence. While mandatory authorities did not explicitly state it, the reports perhaps originated solely with the Kurdish Jews in Jerusalem so that Kurdish Jews caught illegally in Palestine could escape deportation and arrest. The Kurdish Jewish community attempted to

manipulate both the border control and immigration regimes of Palestine in order to subvert the mandate's—and the Zionist Organization's—restrictions on the entry and settlement (and grant of citizenship) of an entire Kurdish community from Iraq.

Challenges posed to the mandate's restrictions on refugee entrances continued to be dismissed by the administration, even when these challenges came from Arabic-speaking Jews who fled persecution after the start of the Second World War. By then, the situation for certain indigenous Jewish communities in the wider Arab world had changed. Following the 1941 pogrom (known as the *farhud*) against Iraq's urban Jewish community, its leaders requested that Palestine grant them refugee status.⁶¹ Mandate officials refused. They argued that no reason existed not to deport Iraqi and Iranian Jews who entered Palestine without permission. According to correspondence on the subject, officials believed that most of these Iraqis had no special circumstances that could exclude them from deportation.⁶² In the months immediately after the pogrom, the Jewish Agency appealed to the mandate's chief secretary to grant a small number of Baghdadi victims the right to stay in Palestine. These Iraqi Jews had been arrested and imprisoned by the police for entering without permission by evading frontier control. The Agency defined the Iraqis as "refugees" and asked that they be treated as "fugitives from a fearful massacre" despite their illegal cross-border movements.⁶³ It referred to twenty-four Iraqi Jews found near Safed in October 1941: three held Iraqi passports and one held an Iranian passport. The others had no passports or identity documentation. The following month, the administration reported that it would not grant special treatment to Iraqi and Iranian Jews perceived to be illegal migrants.⁶⁴

In a number of cases Middle Eastern Jews impersonated refugees in their attempts to enter Palestine. In 1945, the mandate chief secretary received a petition from an advocate who represented seven members of a family of Iraqi Jews apprehended on the charge of settlement in Palestine without permission. In their defense, the advocate wrote that the family brought its elderly patriarch, Ezra Reuben, from Iraq to Palestine in 1935 so that he could be cared for by one of his sons already resident in the latter territory. The son claimed to be a citizen of Palestine although when questioned, he allegedly could not find "the papers" to prove this. Police arrested Ezra, over eighty years of age, upon his return to Palestine from Baghdad with other members of the family and charged him with entering without

permission. His son Yehuda insisted that his father simply wanted to return to Palestine with his elderly wife in order to die “in the Holy Land . . . for eternal salvation.”⁶⁵ Meanwhile, another member of the family, discovered by the police at the same time, claimed to be in Palestine in order to seek specialized medical treatment unavailable in Iraq.

The advocate linked the movement of the family as one primarily of refuge. The members not only had medical and spiritual reasons to come to Palestine, but they were “miserable people,” fearful of their future in Iraq where affairs “rendered the Jewish tragedy a more acute one.” He ended his petition by asking the government for leniency on behalf of the family of refugees who sought protection in Palestine.⁶⁶ After it received the petition, the office of the chief secretary asked that the CID supply further information on the arrest of the seven family members. The CID reported that neither it nor immigration officials had a record of any member of the family ever legally entering or establishing presence in Palestine, including Ezra and his son Yehuda. It argued that the individual subjects of the advocate’s petition falsified their names and reasons for claiming refuge in Palestine: four of them actually held Syrian citizenship.⁶⁷ The police deported the seven individuals to Syria and Iraq. Despite harsh punishments, the attempted use of fraudulent visas and passports remained a mainstay used by refugees and non-refugee migrants.

Attempts at impersonation continued apace until nearly the end of the mandate. In the mid-1940s, police arrested a Turkish Jew who travelled overland from Turkey and clandestinely entered Palestine. At the time of his arrest, the man informed police officers that he was a Bulgarian Jew “on the advice of incompetent friends” to prevent deportation.⁶⁸ The man, Joseph Talvy, was not a Zionist, but he could have qualified to enter Palestine as a capitalist immigrant. However, for tax reasons he did not wish to declare his capital when he arrived to Palestine. Instead, by impersonating a refugee he took advantage of Britain’s horror at Nazi atrocities and the widespread sympathy for the plight of Bulgaria’s Jews.⁶⁹ Talvy’s case demonstrates the lengths wealthier individuals went to in order to challenge Palestine’s immigration policies.

The examples here have shown that, quite simply, refugees did not have permission to enter Palestine solely as *refugees*. The treatment by the administration in Palestine toward non-Zionist refugees can perhaps be better framed through a deeper conceptual understanding

of what the term “refugee” meant in the interwar period. Fratantuono argues that migration regimes and categories of migrants have changed over time in relation to use of the term “refugee.” Beginning with the Ottoman state’s assumption of responsibility for refugees and displaced persons in the mid-nineteenth century, the concept of the *muhacir* changed in significance: by 1914, it denoted aid, charity, citizenship, and ultimately, state protection. The cases above demonstrate the ways individuals and communities challenged the mandate through their own beliefs and justifications as to why they deserved refugee status. By the time the Allied powers and Turkey signed the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne, which stipulated protections for stateless persons, both migrants and governments understood the figure of the refugee as one “attached to the distribution of rights and resources.”⁷⁰ Certain migrants to Palestine no longer perceived themselves passively as refugees, but actively engaged with the material consequences of the international understanding of refugee status.

DISPLACED AND UNDOCUMENTED MIGRATION AND THE SUBVERSION OF TERRITORIALITY IN PALESTINE

The increased territorialization of Palestine’s space and its inhabitants meant that refugees and displaced economic and social migrants constantly created ways to subvert borders, passports, identity documents, and population classification schemes. Beginning in the first decade of the mandate, would-be migrants did so by impersonating residents and citizens. Others acquired fake visas and passports. The following section offers an analysis of the ways in which non-refugee migrants manipulated and pushed back against the mandate’s attempts to exert territoriality at their expense. Here, I examine non-Zionist (but not necessarily non-Jewish) subversion of the overland mobility control mechanisms put in place by the administration.

Many of the undocumented and displaced migrants and their families who illegally entered Palestine could do nothing else *but* live at the social and economic margins of society. They could not meet the wealth and capital requirements necessary for immigration certificates, they had no recognized guarantor or source of maintenance, and they did not qualify for certificates by virtue of the labor schedule. These migrants did not come to Palestine in order to turn themselves into wealthy capitalists. They came for work, or if socially or politically displaced, they came because of family connections. The occurrence of

economic displacement alongside the continuation of older patterns of labor migration clashed with the measures of territoriality enacted by the mandate.

In particular, the territorialization of Palestine's geopolitical space went hand in hand with the mandate administration's classifications of lawful and unlawful residency within its borders. The following case illuminates one harsh outcome of this convergence. In 1932, then-eight-year-old Mohammad al-Samman ran away from his father in Syria and crossed into Palestine. Al-Samman left his childhood home due to his father's mistreatment of his mother, who had since moved to Istanbul. Eight years later, police arrested al-Samman in Haifa on the charge of being in Palestine without lawful permission. They required that he prove his legal residence in Palestine in order to avoid deportation. Police authorities discovered that he had been to visit Syria in 1937, and other times since. Despite al-Samman's insistence to the contrary, the police declared that they had no proof that he had run away as a young child years earlier, and instead suspected his involvement as a cross-border rebel during the 1936-1939 Palestine Revolt.⁷¹ Al-Samman offered an explanation for his "visits" to Syria. A teenager at the time of his arrest, he claimed that his business competitors spread the rumors to the police that he had left the country in recent years. They did so, he claimed, as jealous attempts to undermine his burgeoning business. He requested a stay of his deportation order, insisting he had no connection with Syria or Syrian citizenship. After several months, the Palestine Police withdrew their deportation order.⁷² Nonetheless, Al-Samman's case highlights that even young migrants understood the new borders and state-imposed restrictions on mobility, and they used inventive, possibly embellished claims to avoid the consequences of those restrictions.

Territorialization and new mobility regimes impacted groups of displaced migrants just as often as they did individuals. From the start of the Palestine mandate, temporary-labor migrants and displaced persons faced imprisonment and deportation if authorities discovered they had crossed the border without visas or passports. Mandate officials viewed labor migration with suspicion and actively tried to discourage it. Seasonal migration to Palestine, such as that by Syrians from the Hauran as mentioned earlier, also put a strain on limited economic resources at various times during the year. Police and CID officials perceived labor migrants as undesirable elements of the regional population and depicted them as akin to transients, potential

criminals, or drifters. Their lack of permanent domicile, Palestinian citizenship, and steady employment fed into this characterization.

Between 1929 and 1930, a number of Egyptian laborers accompanying British troops entered Palestine. In theory, their stay could have been regularized if they continued to work for British military units in Palestine. A number of these Egyptians did choose to continue their service in order to gain documented residency. One of these men appears in the archival records as a result of the deportation notice that he received in 1941. The notice stated that the man had never regularized his stay and that the government did not consider him to be a lawful resident. In response, the Egyptian laborer petitioned the administration to revoke the deportation order. He argued that he had been resident in Palestine as a continuous employee of the British armed forces since 1930. He noted his marriage to a Palestinian citizen and his children, all born in his country of residence. Palestine, he added, "is where I belong now."⁷³ In asking the government to grant him permanent immigrant status, he even mentioned the 1933 regulation that granted certain illegal migrants amnesty from deportation. The administration's act to deport the Egyptian laborer, simply for the fact that his work in Palestine led to his residence, naturally led to the latter's loss of the economic livelihood that had sustained his family for at least a decade.

As noted above, the mobility and border control regimes did not spare Arabic-speaking Jews who wished to migrate to Palestine. Two Iraqi Jewish brothers, both tailors for a British army unit in Iraq, traveled with the unit to Palestine around the year 1940. Neither Eliahu nor Anwar Levy believed that he needed special permissions or a visa to enter Palestine, and so both settled and continued to work as tailors. Anwar even became engaged to a Palestinian Sephardic woman. In 1944, some years after their arrival, police apprehended the two brothers in Tiberias after they displayed their Iraqi passports but could not offer documentation to prove their permission to be in Palestine. The Levy brothers' advocate petitioned immigration authorities for their release, insisting that neither man caused any trouble or had ever come to the attention of the police. However, unlike the case of the Egyptians employed by the British army in Palestine, the advocate for the Levy brothers attempted to use the mandate's migration controls in his clients' favor. He requested that the brothers not be deported, but instead be allowed to settle in Palestine under the labor schedule for Jewish workers.⁷⁴ The CID, meanwhile, insisted both men intentionally entered Palestine clandestinely and that their employment with the

British military offered no benefits. The government agreed.⁷⁵ Although the deportations did take place, the Levy case demonstrates an example of an attempt to use of Palestine's own classification and control schemes to enhance the position of the migrants.

Migrants' engagement with immigration controls, especially through subversion of these controls, and the new networks of mobility that resulted from this, did not go unnoticed by the administration. In 1924, the Immigration Department's controller of permits argued the main weakness of the mandate's immigration restrictions to be their inability to control settlement by travelers and non-Zionist migrants. "Some thousands of persons settled in Palestine," he insisted, who had "entered the country on the undertaking that they would not remain there more than three months." In many cases, he added, men (and likely many women) refused immigrant certificates simply reentered as travelers in order to remain in the country, setting a "contagious example."⁷⁶ Through the 1930s and 1940s, the administration annually deported thousands of Arabs and Europeans for their illegal presence in Palestine. In 1941, for instance, the government carried out over 1,500 deportations of illegal Arab migrants.⁷⁷ In other years, deportation totals rose to over 2,000.

The question over the nationality of undocumented migrants led to uncertainties in their proposed deportations. Migrants could use these uncertainties in their favor. Immigration officials did not always correctly list—or even know—the specific nationalities of some migrants slated for removal from the territory. In early 1935, the government reported on a hunger strike in Jerusalem Central Prison carried out by eleven prisoners all held in custody and scheduled for deportation. In part due to the hunger strike, and in part because police could not correctly identify the nationality of some prisoners, immigration officials temporarily suspended the deportation of all eleven men.⁷⁸ If the authorities could not confirm the nationality of an illegal migrant or a displaced person, immigration officials could not justify asking neighboring Arab territories to accept them. Furthermore, the deportation process could be lengthy and the validity of the passports that some illegal migrants possessed could expire when the time came for their removal. In those cases, the government had little choice but to allow them to remain. The lack of a passport or nationality documents meant the authorities risked making deportees entirely stateless. If that happened, the responsibility for those people fell to Great Britain.

It is important to note that for “undocumented” Arab migrants, no method existed to prove that they lacked Palestinian citizenship, since the mandate only recorded the names and paperwork of *naturalized* citizens. At no point during the mandate did habitual residents receive paperwork to prove their citizenship. Individuals residing in Palestine for decades, whether born there or not, faced deportation if they attempted to travel and reenter Palestine without proof of citizenship. Just one visit by a settled migrant to family or friends outside of Palestine could be grounds for deportation. Even so, the government carried out these deportations without any official way to discover whether inhabitants’ claims to citizenship were actually valid.

CONCLUSION

During the period between the two world wars, state-building efforts in Palestine brushed sharply against the movement of peoples into and across the territory. British officials in Palestine endeavored to prevent the entry of both self-ascribed and internationally recognized refugees and stateless persons. The treatment of refugees and the displaced is important to historicize in the interwar period: non-European Jews and non-Palestinian Arabs faced significant obstacles when they attempted to present themselves to Palestine’s authorities as deserving, desirable, and legitimate migrants.

From the nineteenth century onward, the tangible nature of territorialization included identity documents, official crossing points between imperial and colonial frontiers, and immigration laws. All of these elements conveyed to migrants and refugees that *nation-state* allegiances had to be chosen in the form of nationality in order to be given documentary-identity papers and permission to migrate. In fact, while refugees and migrants often did wish to pledge loyalty to their new homelands, governments increasingly saw them as threats to nation-state building, to homogenous citizenship, and to control over borders. Although the Palestine mandate was unique in its provisions for the establishment of a Jewish national homeland, a deeper understanding of territorialization processes in the wider Arab Middle East can be gained from the examples of how refugees and migrants engaged with the state-imposed mobility and documentary-identity regimes. Ultimately, migrants worked within the new mobility control and documentary-identity regimes in order to subvert them.

NOTES

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² Lale Can, "Connecting People: A Central Asian Sufi Network in Turn-of-the-Century Istanbul," *Modern Asian Studies* 46 (March 2012): 388.

³ Robert David Sack, *Human Territoriality: Its Theory and History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 1.

⁴ Peter Vandergeest and Nancy Lee Peluso, "Territorialization and State Power in Thailand," *Theory and Society* 24 (June 1995): 388.

⁵ Paolo Novak, "The Flexible Territoriality of Borders," *Geopolitics* 16 (2011): 742.

⁶ Sabri Ates, *The Ottoman-Iranian Borderlands: Making a Boundary, 1834–1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 33.

⁷ Pekka Hämäläinen and Samuel Truett, "On Borderlands," *Journal of American History* 98 (September 2011): 352.

⁸ Reşat Kasaba, *A Moveable Empire: Ottoman Nomads, Migrants and Refugees* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2009), 4.

⁹ Kemal Karpat characterizes Ottoman immigration policy as liberal, at least up until the state introduced restrictions in in the 1880s.

¹⁰ Kemal H. Karpat, *Ottoman Population, 1830–1914: Demographic and Social Characteristics* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985), 61–62.

¹¹ Ella Fratantuono, "State Fears and Immigrant Tiers: Historical Analysis as a Method in Evaluating Migration Categories," *Middle East Journal of Refugee Studies* 2 (Winter 2017): 99.

¹² For more, see Fratantuono, "State Fears and Immigrant Tiers," 98–115.

¹³ Kemal Karpat's demographic study arrived at this figure for Circassians. See Karpat, *Ottoman Population*, 69.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 108–109.

¹⁵ Ryan Gingeras, "Notorious Subjects, Invisible Citizens: North Caucasian Resistance to the Turkish National Movement in Northwestern Anatolia, 1919–1923," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 40 (February 2008): 91.

¹⁶ Jared Manasek, "Protection, Repatriation and Categorization: Refugees and Empire at the End of the Nineteenth Century," *Journal of Refugee Studies* 30 (2017): 303, 306.

¹⁷ Kasaba, *A Moveable Empire*, 112.

¹⁸ Fratantuono, "State Fears and Immigrant Tiers," 99.

¹⁹ Manasek, "Protection," 307.

²⁰ Fratantuono, "State Fears and Immigrant Tiers," 110.

²¹ Karpat, *Ottoman Population*, 70.

²² Gingeras, "Notorious Subjects, Invisible Citizens," 92.

²³ Cyrus Schayegh, "On Scales and Spaces: Reading Gottlieb Schumacher's *The Jaulân* (1888)," in *A Global Middle East: Mobility, Materiality and Culture in the Modern Age, 1880–1940*, eds., Liat Kozma, Cyrus Schayegh, and Avner Wishnitzer (London: I.B.Tauris, 2014), 38.

²⁴ H.B. Tristram, *The Land of Israel: A Journal of Travels in Palestine, Undertaken with Special Reference to Its Physical Character* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1865), 579.

²⁵ Justin McCarthy, *Death and Exile: The Ethnic Cleansing of Ottoman Muslims, 1821–1922* (Princeton: Darwin Press, 1995); Dawn Chatty, *Displacement and Dispossession in the Modern Middle East* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Isa Blumi, *Ottoman Refugees, 1878–1939: Migration in a Post-Imperial World* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 48; Mustafa Abbasi, "From Algeria to the Holy Land: Algerian Communities in the Galilee from the Late Ottoman Period until 1948," *Horizons in Geography* 68/69 (2007): 56–72; James H. Meyer, "Immigration, Return, and the Politics of Citizenship: Russian Muslims in the Ottoman Empire, 1860–1914," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 39 (February 2007): 15–32.

²⁶ James Meyer details this more extensively in Meyer, "Immigration, Return, and the Politics of Citizenship," 16, 23–25. Lale Can notes records of Central Asian Muslims "pragmatically" using both Russian and Ottoman imperial citizenships: Can, "Connecting People," 396.

²⁷ Chatty, *Displacement and Dispossession*, 74.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 75.

²⁹ David Gutman, "Travel Documents, Mobility Control, and the Ottoman State in an Age of Global Migration, 1880–1915," *Journal of the Ottoman and Turkish Studies Association* 3 (November 2016): 347–68, and David Gutman, "Agents of Mobility: Migrant Smuggling Networks, Transhemispheric Migration, and Time-Space Compression in Ottoman Anatolia, 1888–1908," *Interdisciplines* 1 (2012): 48–84. For the Lebanese case, see Engin Deniz Akarli, "Ottoman Attitudes towards Lebanese Emigration, 1885–1910," in *The Lebanese in the World: A Century of Emigration*, eds. Albert Hourani and Nadim Shehadi (London: I.B.Tauris, 1992): 109–38.

³⁰ For instance, see the discussion on the case of Ottoman Salonica in Eyal Ginio, "Migrant Workers in an Ottoman Port: Ottoman Salonica in the Eighteenth Century," in *Outside In: On the Margins of the Modern Middle East*, ed. Eugene Rogan (London: I.B. Tauris, 2002): 126–48.

³¹ Ginio, "Migrant Workers," 134.

³² Andreas Wimmer and Nina Glick Schiller, "Methodological Nationalism, the Social Sciences, and the Study of Migration: An Essay in Historical Epistemology," *International Migration Review* 37 (Fall 2003): 590.

³³ Benjamin Thomas White, review of *Ottoman Refugees, 1878–1939: Migration in a Post-Imperial World*, (review no. 1690), *Reviews in History* (2014), <https://doi.org/10.14296/RiH/2014/1690>.

³⁴ Benjamin Thomas White, "Refugees and the Definition of Syria, 1920–1939," *Past & Present* 235 (May 2017): 143–44.

³⁵ John Torpey, "Coming and Going: On the State Monopolization of the Legitimate 'Means of Movement,'" *Sociological Theory* 16 (Nov. 1998): 240.

³⁶ Alison Bashford and Catie Gilchrist, "The Colonial History of the 1905 Aliens Act," *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 40 (September 2012): 409–12.

³⁷ For comparative instances, see Edhem Eldem, "The Undesirables of Smyrna, 1926," *Mediterranean Historical Review* 24 (2009): 223–27, and Andrew MacDonald, "Forging the Frontiers: Travellers and Documents on the South Africa–Mozambique Border, 1890s–1940s," *Kronos* 40 (November 2014): 159–60.

³⁸ Memo, Director of Immigration and Travel to District Commissioner, Beersheba, 10 September 1920, M2/8, Israel State Archives (hereafter, ISA), Jerusalem, Israel.

³⁹ Further information of the dual administration and society framework of the mandate can be found in Zachary Lockman, "Railway Workers and Relational History: Arabs and Jews in British-Ruled Palestine," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 35 (July 1993): 601–27.

⁴⁰ Lauren E. Banko, *The Invention of Palestinian Citizenship, 1918–1947* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016), 51.

⁴¹ Immigration Ordinance Regulations, 1923–1924, M6630/22, ISA.

⁴² CID Report on Hauranis in Palestine, 19 October 1935, S25\22735, Central Zionist Archives (hereafter, CZA), Jerusalem, Israel.

⁴³ Sir John Hope-Simpson, *Report on Immigration, Land Settlement and Development in Palestine*, presented by the Secretary of State for the Colonies to Parliament, October 1930 (Cmd. 3686) (London: HM Stationery Office), 125

⁴⁴ Novak, "The Flexible Territoriality," 756.

⁴⁵ Petition, Mahmoud Shibly Shannan to High Commissioner, 6 February 1946, M253/55, ISA.

⁴⁶ Commissioner for Migration and Statistics to Chief Secretary, 3 March 1946, M255/35, ISA.

⁴⁷ Commissioner for Migration and Statistics to Chief Secretary, 6 April 1946, M255/35, ISA.

⁴⁸ Advocate for Mugrabi to Inspector General, CID, 2 May 1946, M257/16, ISA.

⁴⁹ By the time of the mandates' establishments, most former-Ottoman Armenians were stateless. See Keith David Watenpaugh, "The Uncomfortable Inhabitants of French Colonial Modernity: Mandate Syria's Communities of Collaboration (1920–1946)," in *Transnational Spaces and Identities in the Francophone World*, eds. Hafid Gafaïti, Patricia M.E. Lorcin, and David G. Troyansky (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009), 27–29.

⁵⁰ Correspondence on deportation of Terzakian, January–February 1943, ISA M255/34.

⁵¹ For more on the citizenship order on 1925 and its amendments, see Banko, *The Invention of Palestinian Citizenship*.

⁵² Letter from Jewish residents of Kamishleh to Jewish Agency, 14 April 1930, S25\9821, CZA.

⁵³ Yehouda Shenhav, "The Jews of Iraq, Zionist Ideology, and the Property of the Palestinian Refugees of 1948," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 31 (November 1999): 607–8.

⁵⁴ Most of the 116 Arabs were killed by British security forces; 113 Jews were killed, primarily at the hands of Arab rioters. The British authorities executed three Muslim Arabs for their role in the riots and killings. For more, see Alex Winder, "The 'Western Wall' Riots of 1929: Religious Boundaries and Communal Violence," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 42 (Autumn 2012): 6–23.

⁵⁵ Va`ad Leumi to Kisch, 26 June 1931, S25\9822, CZA.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ Note by Kisch, 3 July 1931, S25\9822, CZA.

⁵⁸ Chief Secretary to Executive of the Jewish Agency, 21 August 1931, S25\9822, CZA.

⁵⁹ Draft telegram, Colonial Office, July 1931, S25\9822, CZA.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ The history of the farhud has been most eloquently written by Orit Bashkin. See Bashkin, *New Babylonians: A History of Jews in Modern Iraq* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2012).

- ⁶² Handwritten correspondence, Palestine Government, 24 February 1942, M255/5, ISA.
- ⁶³ Letter, Jewish Agency to Chief Secretary, 10 October 1941, M255/5, ISA.
- ⁶⁴ Chief Secretary to Jewish Agency, 13 November 1941, M255/5, ISA.
- ⁶⁵ Letter to Chief Secretary, 28 August 1945, M4346/7, ISA.
- ⁶⁶ *Ibid.*
- ⁶⁷ CID to Chief Secretary, 26 September 1945, M4346/7, ISA.
- ⁶⁸ In 1941, the Bulgarian government joined the Axis powers, in the midst of the government's signing of anti-Semitic legislation targeted at Bulgarian Jews. See Dušan I. Bjelić, "Bulgaria's Zionism, the Colonization of Palestine and the Question of Balkan Postcoloniality," *Interventions* 19 (2017): 231–33.
- ⁶⁹ Letter to Inspector General, Palestine Police, 4 September 1944, M705/1, ISA.
- ⁷⁰ Fratantuono, "State Fears and Immigrant Tiers," 99.
- ⁷¹ Correspondence, CID and Chief Secretary, February–March 1941, M226/12, ISA.
- ⁷² Petition, Mohammad Mozaffer al-Samman to Chief Secretary, 5 Oct. 1941, M226/12, ISA.
- ⁷³ Correspondence, Appeals against deportation, vol. 2, M255/3, ISA.
- ⁷⁴ Joseph Maman, advocate, to Chief Secretary, 28 April 1944, M256/13, ISA.
- ⁷⁵ CID to Chief Secretary, 13 July 1944, M256/13, ISA.
- ⁷⁶ Controller of Permits memorandum on draft immigration ordinance, 24 November 1924, M6630/22, ISA.
- ⁷⁷ File: Returns of deportations of illegal immigrants from Palestine, 1941–45, M226/10, ISA.
- ⁷⁸ High Commissioner Wauchope to Colonial Secretary, 10 April 1935, S25\22735, CZA.