



## VIRTUAL EVENT

*On the margins of the Commission on the Status of Women*

***“Memories of the Nakba and its impact on Palestinians”***

Convened by the  
UN Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People (CEIRPP)

15 March 2023

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### CHAIR SUMMARY

The event “**Memories of the Nakba and its impact on Palestinians**,” a discussion with Nadine Sayegh, author of the book “Oranges from Jaffa” was held on the margins of the 67th Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) and was convened virtually, on 15 March 2023, under the auspices of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People (CEIRPP).

The event was moderated by **H.E. Mr. Neville Gertze**, Vice-Chair of the Committee and Permanent Representative of Namibia to the United Nations. It consisted of an opening session with remarks by the Vice-Chair and **H.E. Ms. Feda Abdelhady-Nasser**, Deputy Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine to the United Nations. **Ms. Nadine Sayegh**, author of the book “*Oranges from Jaffa – A True Story about the End of the Golden Age of Palestine*”, discussed the enduring impact of the Nakba on the lives of millions of Palestinians as a result of that historic displacement and dispossession that continues to this day. The book, a personal family story, showcases Jaffa in 1948, the ancient Palestinian city, and the rising tensions and violence that lead to the Nakba forcing entire families to leave the city without knowing that they would never return.

Member States participated in the two-hour event, which was also livestreamed on UN WebTV as well as the Committee’s YouTube channel. The public had an opportunity to make comments and pose questions to the panellist.

At the opening, **Ambassador Gertze** emphasized that General Assembly resolution A/77/23 adopted on 30 November 2022, called on the Committee to dedicate its 2023 activities to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the Nakba. He highlighted how the current event aimed at building upon the General Assembly’s request, at highlighting the challenges faced by Palestinians, including women, and at disseminating reflexions on the long-lasting trauma inflicted upon generations of Palestinians through dispossession and exile. He introduced Ms. Nadine Sayegh and her book “Oranges from Jaffa” narrating the coming-of-age story of her father, Nicolas Sayegh, a Palestinian boy whose carefree childhood in Jaffa ends abruptly when

his family and other Palestinians had to flee. **Ambassador Gertze** further explained that the Nakba, which refers to the pivotal and catastrophic events of the spring of 1948 that led to the loss of life, displacement, imprisonment, and exile of thousands of Palestinians seemingly continues to this day through the dispossession, expulsions of Palestinians from their homes and lands, collective punishment and annexation. He commended the number of Palestinian authors, most notably female ones, for unearthing the history of the Nakba through their essays, novels, and movies and welcomed the panellist relevant contribution to this legacy.

Ambassador Gertze also stated that the continuing endurance of the Palestinian people required the international community's continued support in bringing justice to them and to realize their right to self-determination, freedom, independence and return to their homeland.

In her introductory remarks, **Ambassador Abdelhady-Nasser** spoke about how the book depicted the vibrant life that thrived in Palestine before the Nakba. She further stressed the importance of humanizing the story of a people who have been dehumanized, the victims of violence and displacement whose history was under threat of being erased. Ambassador Abdelhady-Nasser further underlined that Palestinians were still victims of an ongoing Nakba, and that the Palestinian people were continuing their struggle for justice, dignity and their rights. Such longings were perpetuated among generations after generations of Palestinians, 75 years after the Nakba.

**Ms. Nadine Sayegh** presented her book and explained what encouraged her to write her family story. She mentioned that she wanted to capture the story of her father, a "time witness," and part of the last generation who could claim to have been born in "Palestine". The book's story enhanced her father's descendants' pride to be Palestinians. The author also read extracts of her book, which portrayed Palestine before the Nakba as a modern, hard-working, culturally rich and tolerant society. The extracts she read also described how different religions lived side-by-side in Jaffa, and how its inhabitants were proud of the city's rich heritage.

The presentation included a background slide show with photos of Ms. Sayegh's family and old Jaffa. During the reading, and while showing the photos, the author re-evoked the long history of Jaffa and the economic role it played in early-20<sup>th</sup> century Palestine, especially thanks to the citrus business which concurred in making Jaffa the privileged entry point to Palestine, besides being an almost obliged destination for pilgrims on their way to Jerusalem. Turning towards the end of the presentation, she recalled the traumatic events that led her family to flee Palestine in 1948, describing, in particular, the fundamental role played by her grandmother in choosing to leave to save their lives. Lastly, she shared her experience of traveling to the Holy Land recently and visiting the family house to retrace her family history while writing the book.

During the **Question-and-Answer** session, Ms. Sayegh was asked about how the book and the history of pre-Nakba Palestine could help better understand the present situation. She responded that her book aimed at raising awareness on the events of 1948 since they were often not taught in schools; the lack of such knowledge was evident during her readings to different audiences in Europe. Furthermore, the book helped the reader debunk the mainstream media representation of the question of Palestine as a religious conflict.

In response to a question, Ms. Sayegh emphasized that one of the most important sections of the book was a passage in which local Jaffa residents were confronted by unusual silence which befell upon the city, following the departure of many Palestinian families fearing for their safety. Asked about what she expected from readers who read the book, the author answered that she hoped her readership reinforces empathy with the Palestinian plight.

In her closing remarks, **Ambassador Abdelhady-Nasser** thanked the participants, the Bureau of the Committee and the Division for Palestinian Rights. She reminded the UN's responsibility towards reaching a fair solution to the question of Palestine, stressing that it was time for accountability and justice to prevail through addressing the root causes of this situation.

**Ambassador Gertze** concluded that the book's account highlighted the importance of women's perspectives and contribution to the achievement of a just and peaceful solution to the question of Palestine, until the establishment of two States, Israel and Palestine living side-by-side in peace and security, with East Jerusalem as the capital of the State of Palestine. He finally highlighted the future activities of the Committee to commemorate the Nakba, including a special event to be held on 15 May 2023 as mandated by the General Assembly.

**Ambassador Gertze** closed the event.

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*\*\*\*Note: This Summary attempts to provide an overall picture of the deliberations of the virtual Event. A video of the Event can be found on the webpage of the CEIRPP, [www.un.unispal.org](http://www.un.unispal.org) as well as in its official Facebook page and YouTube account.*

*\*\*\*Note: The views and opinions expressed in this summary are those of the speakers and do not necessarily reflect the official position of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People.*