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The Palestinian Diaspora and The Voice of Resistance in Susan Abulhawa's *The Blue Between Sky and Water*

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores the way Palestinian history is woven into Susan Abulhawa's fiction, *The Blue Between Sky and Water*. It aims to critically analyze the novel with reference to Palestinian displacement, resistance, and diaspora. As the novel examines the role of Palestinian women in war, Abulhawa offers a feminist framework that binds together much of the events in the text. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is portrayed in the novel, and the emphasis is on the importance of the narrative technique employed in the novel. This paper also analyzes Palestinian resistance voice in the select novel, a story on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in Gaza.

KEYWORDS: Susan Abulhawa, diaspora, Israeli-Palestinian conflict, dispossession, displacement, resistance.

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INTRODUCTION

The Palestine-Israel conflict is one of the world's longest-running and most controversial conflicts in the earth which started soon after World War II. Long before the British mandate, Palestine was a pluralistic nation where people of different religious, ethnic and racial backgrounds lived together in relative harmony. Even at times of extreme persecution of Jews in Europe, the Middle East was a haven for them away from the Nazis. Jews in Palestine enjoyed a relative peace during the Ottoman Rule of the Levant region. At the peak of colonial period, it was the Belfour Declaration which recommended the establishment of a home for Jewish diaspora. Since 1946 the European Jews have been flocking to Palestine and they established their state. The reason behind Palestinian dispersal was the holocaust imposed on them for the forceful creation of so-called Israel by the Zionist forces. Jewish people were small in number compared to the Palestinian population before a century and a half. "According to Israeli sources, in 1822 there were no more than 24,000 Jews in Palestine, less than two percent of the whole, overwhelmingly Arab population."¹ Nowadays, most of the Palestinians are refugees in Arab countries as well as in the USA and European countries. The Palestinians have been scattered around the world because of the rough circumstances and they always constantly long to go back to their homeland. According to the most precise calculation yet made, approximately 780,000 Arab Palestinians were dispossessed and displaced in 1948 in order to facilitate the "reconstruction and rebuilding" of Palestine.¹

Palestinians face various attacks done by Israeli Zionists as well as by the Western media. In the Introduction of *The Question of Palestine* (1980), Edward Said states that Palestinians are under the Israeli routinely oppression but "... What is much worse, in my opinion, is the hypocrisy of Western (and certainly liberal Zionist) journalism and intellectual discourse, which have barely had anything to say about Zionist terror".¹ Western literary works have an attitude about Arab and Islam in general and Palestine in particular. Edward Said states:

Most of all, I think, there is the entrenched *cultural* attitude toward Palestinians deriving from age-old Western prejudices about Islam, the Arabs, and the Orient. This attitude, from which in its turn Zionism drew for its view of the Palestinians, dehumanized us, reduced us to the barely tolerated status of a nuisance.¹ Western media portray Palestinians as refugees, extremists, or as terrorists. They do not give a fair description of the Palestinian issue.

Palestinians have always been the victims of such tragic, unequal conflict. Their country is being slowly wiped off the map of the world due to Israel occupation. Palestinians are unarmed and oppressed indigenous population. They are powerless against the military power of Israel's technological death industry. Their fate is miserable. The main aspects of Palestinian life remain dispossession, exile, dispersion, disenfranchisement (under Israeli military occupation), and, by no

means least, an extraordinarily widespread and stubborn resistance. They endlessly bullied by the Western world too that has made it as a game of diplomacy. Palestinians lost their home, heritage, life, dignity, security, hope, culture, narrative, orchards and olives, history and artifacts, livelihoods, innocence, language and identity. Their villages have been renamed. Concrete has been poured over the ancient cemeteries. Israelis made brothels of the Palestinian churches and mosques. They even claimed that Palestinian *hummus*, *falafel* and *maqlooba* as the traditional food of Jewish foreigners who came to occupy the Palestinian ancient land. Despite all this, Palestinians are still “fighting, dreaming, writing, dancing, painting, loving, having babies - because, as Mahmoud Darwish once said: hope is not a topic. It's not a theory. It's a talent”.² Right of Return, in Arabic, Haq al Awda, is the right of the dispersed Palestinian to return to their homes and villages. Many international efforts have been put to make a deal for the return of Palestinian refugees and exiles, yet all efforts fail. Israel does not recognize this right and considers the return of Palestinians as a threat to their emerging state.

Although there have been many great writers from Palestine like Edward Said, Mahmoud Darwish, Samih al-Qasim, Mourid Barghouti and Ghassan Kanafani but recently many women writers have risen in the literary scene of Palestine, voicing their narratives especially against the inhuman treatment practiced by Zionist forces against Palestinians. Women Writers like Susan Abulhawa, Selma Dabagg, Shami Boianjiu, Randa Jarrar, Sahar Khalifeh, Randa Abdel-Fatteh, Halima Alaiyan and others wrote and still writing about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the consequences on the social and political make up of Palestine as a nation. Though being far away from their homeland, these writers have strong attachment to it which is quite visible in their writings as one can trace their subjectivity in the form of feelings, sentiments as well as the characters which they portray in their literary genres. Palestinian writers made attempts and are still making attempts to put Palestine and Palestinians' realities before the readers throughout the world. The Palestinian writers attempt to put before the readers a broadly representation of Palestinian position through their writings. Palestinian writers constructed a political identity; they have developed a remarkable resilience and remarkable national resurgence. They have gained the support of all the peoples of the Third World; despite the fact that they are geographically dispersed and fragmented, despite the fact that they are without a territory of our own.

Susan Abulhawa is one of the advocates of the Palestinian self-determination. This paper is an attempt to examine the way Abulhawa reflects on the history of Palestine and identity construction through fiction. The aim is to offer a critical reading and identify the feminist voice in the Palestinian discourse.

THE VOICE OF RESISTANCE IN SUSAN ABULHAWA'S FICTION

Susan Abulhawa is a Palestinian American writer and human rights activist known for her best-selling novel *Mornings in Jenin* which published in 2010. She wrote another novel called *The Blue Between the Sky and Water* which published in 2015. She was born in a Palestinian family in a refugee camp in Kuwait in June 3, 1970. Susan Abulhawa was born to refugees of the Six Day War of 1967, when her family's land was seized by Israelis. Wherefore, she has witnessed huge miseries, sorrows, sufferings, displacement and uprootedness in her life because of Zionist occupation of her motherland, Palestine. She grew up in an orphanage in Jerusalem and went to USA at the age of 13. She moved to America as a teenager, graduated in biomedical science and established a career in medical science. So, she grew up away from her parents due to some forceful reasons. She is the founder of an NGO, "Playgrounds for Palestine" which works for Palestinian children; building playgrounds for them in Palestine and UN Refugee camps in Lebanon. Currently she lives in Yardley, Pennsylvania with her only daughter.

Susan Abulhawa usually upholds a nonviolent resistance which is the right of the Palestinians. More importantly, she refutes the Israeli false narratives propagated to validate the occupation of Palestine. Her writing is about Palestinian people who still live under Israeli occupation, who live in refugee camps and are stateless and impoverished, and who ended up in the diaspora. She advocates Palestinian women's case in general, narrating the stories of Palestinian women and their daily experiences of resilience in the face of Israeli occupation. In this regard, Susan Abulhawa in an interview with Graeme Green in 2015 states that "I'm very interested in the ways they [Palestinian women] navigate their lives under these extraordinary conditions."³

Exile has been associated with Palestinians, and literary works have captured different aspects of such an experience. In *Reflection on Exile*, Edward Said explains that exile is strangely compelling to think about but terrible to experience.⁴ Exile, according to him, is the unhealable rift forced between a human being and a native place, between the self and its true home: its essential sadness can never be surmounted.⁴ The question of exile is very efficiently portrayed by Abulhawa in both her novels.

Palestinian children are deeply affected by the war "They're traumatized in serious ways. In Gaza, 98.6 percent of kids exhibit some symptom of post-traumatic stress disorder."⁵ Susan Abulhawa was also involved with the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) campaign against Israel. "The boycott campaign is a tool and an avenue for everyone to take a stand in some way. It's a nonviolent method of resisting an injustice that has gone on for too long and where there seems no end in sight."⁵ It seems that there is no hope about the peace process between Palestinians and Israelis. The peace process narrative in the media is fake. Susan Abulhawa indicates:

I know people talk about this in terms of two sides, but I don't talk about it in that way. When people speak like that, it suggests that these are just two equal parties who disagree on something. It's a false narrative. You have a highly armed nuclear power that uses its might against a principally unarmed, principally defenseless civilian population that has no military, no navy, no army, no air force and no real weapons to speak of; yet the focus is often on homemade Palestinian rockets that most often land in open fields.⁵

Abulhawa here shows the vast differences between a state that uses its mighty power and the Palestinian civilians who have nothing to defend themselves against such atrocities. Israeli snipers routinely kill people in Gaza. Israel makes 1.6 million people live under crippling economic, psychological and military siege but none of these things are spoken of as aggression. When Palestinians respond to Israeli oppression, it is viewed as aggression. Clearly, everything an occupied people do is a response to the occupier, but it's never framed that way in the media. This sort of discourse tries to create parity between an occupier and an occupied people.

Some readers of Abulhawa's novels accuse her of being anti-Semitic and her book of being biased. But she declares that "this novel is not pro or anti anything. It is an authentic human narrative set against a well-documented historic context. It is for readers to make their own conclusions and opinions about it, which are never wrong or right."⁶ When Susan Abulhawa was asked about what she wants to achieve through her writings, she replied "what every writer wants to tell a story. In some ways, I hope to give voice to those who have been muted."⁷ She was asked in an interview about the solution to the Israel-Palestine conflict, and she explained:

The solution is written in the various tenets of international law and essential human decency. Palestine was always a multi-ethnic, multi-religious country where people of many backgrounds existed in relative harmony. This is the ideal that other nations strive toward. Other nations fought wars and struggled through civil movements in order to attain a situation where all citizens are treated equally under the law. This is what we want and expect. To be accorded the same basic human rights that are applied to the rest of humanity. We are the natives of that land and we expect to live in dignity in the land of our forefathers. This is the solution - That we live as citizens, equal under the law, whether we are Jewish, Muslim, Christian, or any other religion. Measuring the worth of a human being by their religion should not be accepted in the 21st century.⁷

It is the role of the Palestinian writers to raise the Palestinian issue and deliver the reality of what is going inside Palestine by the Zionist soldiers against unarmed people of Palestine. Palestinian literary narrative should reveal the reality for the world in order to weaken Israel's ability to manipulate public opinion. As a result, the global consciousness and the international attitudes will turn against Israel. Palestinian writers attempt to write about liberty and justice, and in the opposite

side, Israelis, attempt to mute their voices. In an interview with Jessica Rohan in 2016, Susan Abulhawa proclaims that “one of the important factors that have enabled Israel to destroy Palestinian society and colonize our land has been their ability to control the narrative”.⁸ By suppressing the other narrative (Palestinian), Israelis attempt to drive the Palestinian issue into oblivion. Nonetheless, Palestinian diaspora writers have reached out and tried to address such a concern. They today form an important nodal of Palestine, educating the western media and people about Palestine and how Israel treat them. The Palestinian-Israeli conflict has been among the common themes in Palestinian Literature. Palestinian literature mostly talks about the Palestinian struggle for independence, and the Palestinian diaspora also provide an international frame to the Palestinian issue in general.

All aspects of Palestinian life are almost controlled by Israelis. Israel’s occupation created hundreds of checkpoints, roadblocks, and huge barriers everywhere in Palestine which makes Palestinian’s life more difficult. All these are captured in Susan Abualhawa’s fiction. Israeli settlements are created continually there in West Bank and in Gaza strip. Nowadays Israelis have the ability to erase the remaining of Gaza and West Bank from the map if they want. They are heavily-armed with latest technology and most importantly they have numerous supports from the powerful countries in the world like USA and Britain. Arabs almost forget their Palestine consciously or unconsciously. Palestinian Professor Walid Khalidi in *From Haven to Conquest* maintains that the Arab capitals had neither the will, nor the intention, nor the force to destroy the newly-born Jewish state.⁹

Susan Abulhawa writes about misery, trauma and love at the same time. When she began writing her popular *Mornings in Jenin* she said that she writes “to put a Palestinian voice in English literature.” Her novels express humanity and keep the Palestinian people alive. The narrator of the novel *"The Blue between Sky and Water"* is the boy Khaled. He has got the so-called locked-in syndrome, which means that he is paralyzed but at the same time completely conscious. Susan Abulhawa said in an interview in 2017 by Miriam Abdollahi:

“Khaled is deeply meaningful to me and on multiple levels to the characters in the book, to Palestine, to Gaza and to history. There are some places in the book where he talks about these connections, between the living and the dead, between history and time and especially about the sense of time not being linear.”¹⁰

It signifies the status of Palestine and how the Palestinians are powerless but they have a strong hope that their “land will rise again.” The novel is also about four generations of powerful Palestinian women in Gaza. The novel begins with Um Mamdouh, a widow, and ends with Nur, her great granddaughter. The women in the novel are depicted as resilient and passionate. They put their family first and they aren’t afraid to make sacrifices to protect their own people. The main characters in the novel are female characters, Nazmiyah and Nur.

The Blue Between Sky and Water shows the attempts by colonial regimes to erase the history of indigenous people. The writer chooses to set her novel in Gaza and illustrate the myriad wretched experiences Gazans have had to endure since 1948. This makes the novel all the more timely but the real story is one of resilience. The novel ends just before last summer's war in Gaza. The writer uses this event to praise Palestinian resistance fighters for reflecting the will of the Palestinian people to die fighting rather than to continue living on their knees.

The Blue Between Sky and Water is dynamic, resilient and multi-faceted text which depicts the nature of the Palestinian people. Thus Abulhawa through her works shows the condition of women and children who were affected by Israeli raids, struggling of Palestinian men in their daily lives, crisis of Palestinian identity.

Abulhawa through both the novels *Mornings in Jenin* and *The Blue Between Sky and Water* tries to give a voice for the voiceless Palestinians, where human conditions are formed, fragmented and dislocated memories and voices. It is all about Abulhawa's experience of her diasporic identity, trying to explore the suffering endured in the lives of Palestinian people. *The Blue Between Sky and Water* deals with the forceful creation of the state of Israel by imposing holocaust on the innocent native Palestinians who were displaced from their ancestral home and were forced to live a life of refugees throughout their lives. It's a multigenerational epic set in Palestine, specifically Gaza. The main characters are women, strong but flawed and vulnerable. This novel has many themes such as exile, resistance, displacement, dispossession, suffering magical realism, political conflict, feminism, *Naqba* (the catastrophe), hatred, love, trauma, courage, sex, rape, identity, belonging, survival, death, loss, belonging, celebratory dances, partying on the beach, mourning, fear, mysteries, dirty jokes, national heroism, personal freedom, salvation, violence, fragility, separation, heartache, endurance, renewal, friendship, family, emotional strength, etc. It is the story of four generations, beginning from Um Mamdouh, a widow and ending with Nur, her great granddaughter. The story begins in Beit Daras, a rural Palestinian village near Gaza in the year 1947, where Baraka family lived comprising of a widow, Um Mamdouh and her three children, Mamdouh, Nazmiyeh and Mariam. The eldest daughter, Nazmiyeh is a very responsible child who looks after her widowed mother. Her younger sister, Miriam is a day dreamer and fond of reading and writing. Her brother, Mamdouh works at the village bees for their living. Mamdouh was the man of the Baraka house. Before he became the apiarist's apprentice, his family had lived on whatever he could peddle or earn from the small jobs and what charity they got from the mosques.

Susan Abulhawa used Magical Realism in *The Blue Between Sky and Water*. Abulhawa's use of magical realism underlines the sense of predestination that permeates the book. It offsets the agonies her characters endure, and links members of this family who are separated by geography,

circumstance and chronological time. Some characters in the novel can speak with spirits, with jinn, specifically with Sulayman. Um Mamdouh speaks with spirits. “My great-teta Um Mamdouh could not speak with the unseen except for Sulayman, an old djinn cast from his tribe for having fallen in love with a mortal.”¹¹ Nazmiyeh was able to talk to Mariam after Mariam’s death “Nazmiyeh tried to gather her sister’s body into her arms, even as her apparition continued to speak. “Please leave me here. I do not want to leave BietDaras,” Mariam said. “You must go now. Have a daughter, and named her Alwan. Now go!”¹¹

The whole village was living in peace, but those golden days of their lives were soon to be perished as a catastrophe came to the village in May 1948 when European Jewish immigrants declared a new state of Israel in place of ancient Palestine which was supported by the British. It was a forceful creation by inflicting holocaust on the Palestinians. These immigrant Jews who came from Europe massacred native people, took away their property and home, making it their own and Palestinians were left to live a life of refugees moving from one place to another and still now their problem is not solved. Though various peace talks have been held, the issue hasn’t been resolved.

As Nazmiyeh became well-known for people in BeitDaras and surrounding villages, everyone seeks her advice and predictions “In February 1948, five men arrived at the Baraka home. Village elders and chosen Mukhtars each of the main families of BeitDaras. “We have come to seek your help and the help of Sulayman”¹¹ She asked “You come to learn the intentions of the Jews? They all nodded, so she continued. Our peaceful neighbors in the Kibbutz are not our friends. They harbor treacherous plans toward BeitDaras”¹¹ Nazmiyeh clearly states that:

“Our neighbors will come joined by others, and they will spill the blood of Bedra was is of Beit Daras. “Biet Daras will be victorious. You will all fight and you will live, but some of your brothers and sons will fall: yet, that will not be the end. More Jews will return and the skies will rain death upon Beit Daras. The big-headed stubborn Bedra was is of Beit Daras will not surrender. Time and again they will repel the enemy, but the enemy’s fury is great. Native blood will pour from these hills into the river, and the water will be lost...only Allah can know the unknown, but if Biet Daras does not surrender, this land will rise again, even if the war is lost.”¹¹

Um Mamdouh’s speech becomes true when the Jews attack Beit Daras and they were repelled by the two thousand residents of BeitDaras and their loyal jinni, Sulayman. They came again and again, in March and several times in April of 1948. A small village of farmers and beekeepers couldn’t overcome the firepower of the highly trained Haganah, with their mechanized weaponry and fighter planes, which they had smuggled under British noses from Czechoslovakia in preparation for conquer. During last attack in April, fifty women and children from BeitDaras were

slaughtered in a single day, after which the men ordered their families to flee to Gaza, while they remained to fight.

The people of BeitDaras had to flee from their lands and homes by force along to Gaza “Without words they walked away from their lives, away from these new conquering soldiers, who were drunk on an ancient virulence that mixed greed and power with God.”¹¹ When the villagers of BeitDaras were fleeing to Gaza for 35 kilometers, Israeli snappers killed and injured many of them. They shot Mamdouh on one of his legs and killed his mother, known in the novel as Um Mamdouh. “Dazed and confused by an unimagined fate, the villagers continued on the thirty-five kilometers to Gaza.”¹¹ Um Mamdouh was carrying her wounded son Mamdouh going to Gaza but the Zionist’s soldier interrupted their way. They killed her but Sulayman burnt a group of them. All the present people were astonished at that incident.

The pain of leaving one’s own ancestral home forcefully is very realistically portrayed by the novelist. This novel is set in Gaza and extends four generations of the Baraka family’s experience of the great Palestinian tragedy of the Naqba, past and present. The novel centers on the miseries of the Baraka family, forced to leave their historical idyllic village of BeitDaras in 1948 for a refugee camp near Gaza’s southern shores, (the Nusseirat refugee camp). After that, the family scatters. They are living away from their native place and they are not constantly in touch with their land, culture and heritage. Some of the family members remain in the camp, where the majority of the novel takes place, while others travel to the Gulf and then to the US.

When the Israeli-Palestinian conflict increases, Um Mamdouh’s children each endure their exile differently: Nazmiyah becomes a matriarch, reconstructing a sense of BeitDaras in a refugee camp for the next two generations; her brother, Mamdouh, left Palestine for the Gulf countries and, finally, emigrate to America; Mariam, who sees auras from the time she is born, goes permanently into the blue between sky and water then she is killed by Zionists. Two generations later, the Baraka descendants continue along the paths already forced by the choices of their parents, grasping at what makes them whole and what separates them: There will be a homecoming, a jail sentence, a life of piety, and another departure into the blue.

In the novel, the protagonist, Nazmiyah was a young bride when she had to flee away from her village along with her family, relatives, neighbors and many other native people. They left their home, property and other belongings in fear of being killed, raped and looted by the Zionist forces. Though she had to face this nightmare and in search of her sister when she came back to her native village, she was gang-raped by the Israeli soldiers and her sister, Miriam was murdered in front of her by them. This incident haunted her day and night throughout her life as it not only damaged her body but also soul. When she got a call from her brother from Kuwait who told her that he was

moving to North Carolina, America and one of her son was already engaged and was planning to go to Saudi Arabia for work. In this way, her family was scattering in various places as in the same was her country, Palestine was also getting scattered.

On the other hand, Nur, granddaughter of Nazmiyeh's brother, Mamdouh who was born in America but destiny brings her back to Gaza to meet his family and people living there in worst condition because of the seizing of the place. Her father died in an accident when she was a child and her mother left her in the care of her grandfather who looks after her very nicely but he also died leaving her alone in an alien country. Nur belonged to the category of those people who though by origin are Palestinians but because of displacement they are far away from their country, culture and heritage. The fictional character Nur shares the plight of many Palestinians living in exile in various parts of the world; dispossessed and disinherited and living away from their native place they are not constantly in touch with their land, culture and heritage. Abulhawa herself is a fine example of such kind of people but still Palestine lives in the heart of many such people and they are always ready to serve their motherland in any form.

Nur fell in love and married but later her husband ditched her and she followed him to Gaza. She also had the motive to serve her people there. She had mismatched eyes like her grandfather's sister, Miriam and so Nazmiyeh had not seen her but believed that Miriam lived in her and she had come back in the form of Nur to serve them. When Gaza was bombed by the Israeli forces then NazmiyehdaughterAlwan lost her husband in the bombing and her only son, Khaled went into coma-like condition. He was in such a state that no doctor was able to find his ailment and when Nur saw him and his mother and grandmother being interviewed on TV by foreign correspondent, she felt an urge to see the child and being a psychologists she felt it is her duty to cure the child and this urge also paved her way to Gaza. There she was able to find her roots as her grandmother's sister; Nazmiyeh was able to recognize her by her mismatched eyes.

Though the story of the novel revolves around Nazmiyeh and Nur but there are many other minor female characters in the novels who have exhibited their courage in living in a place which is called as world's biggest open air prison. The book deals with the story of brave women of Palestine living in Gaza and sharing and supporting each other, as Abulhawa herself says in the novel: "Mama and Nur found in each other a shared fear of loss, loneliness, and longing for love, and it made sisterhood from there".¹¹ Indeed it is their courage, which is their unifying force to fight in such an adverse circumstance of being displaced from their own soil because of the Zionist colonial settler who called themselves as "God's chosen People". So the novel tells the story of the exiled Palestinians who had to flee from their family and ancestral home due to political and other reasons. Their invisible physical scars are penned down by the Abulhawa in the form of novel.

This pain of lost home and nostalgia permeates the work of Abulhawa and she had again and again raised this issue in her novels because she herself has experienced such trauma in her life which she has portrayed in her writings through various characters in different situations. From novel to novel, Abulhawa is establishing herself as a strong Palestinian voice in literature. This is the greatness of Susan Abulhawa's narrative technique and characterization which is displayed in all her novels whether it is *Mornings in Jenin* or *The Blue Between Sky and Water*. In the portrayal of characters, she has tried to portray them in a very sensitive way and has justified in her attempt in highlighting the sufferings of the Palestinians through her characters. "Israel calculated the calorie intake of 1.8 million Palestinians in Gaza to make them go hungry, but not starve"¹¹. There was a siege all over Gaza strip. "... the tunnels were dug under the border between Gaza and Egypt to smuggle things of living..."¹¹ The only way for People in Gaza was to dig tunnels to Egypt to get the necessary things for living like "... ropes, levers, and pulleys that pumped food, diapers, fuel, medicine, batteries, music tapes, Mama's napkins, crayons ..." ¹¹ Therefore, the Israel bombed the tunnels and as consequences a lot of Palestinians were killed. People of Gaza were like on diet. They resisted and dug the tunnels again, bigger, deeper, and longer.

Israelis with the help of US and Egypt installed wall, an impenetrable underground steel wall along the Rafah border to cut off the tunnels dug by Gaza people. By this high-grade steal wall, they meant to cut Palestinians off sustenance. The Palestinian boys cut this underground wall and recycled it into other things¹¹. The author also mentioned the Six Days War in the novel and how the Zionist soldiers were very hungry to kill Palestinian people "When Nazmiyeh was carrying her tenth son, in 1967, Israel attacked Egypt, igniting a war that would last only six days and would bring a new generation of Zionist soldiers parading triumphantly into her life."¹¹ The Zionists did every savage thing to the people of Gaza "... helmeted soldiers in ominous uniforms and tall boots ... ransacked and looted their homes, raped and killed, burned the land, and renewed the glory of Arab degradation"¹¹

Palestinian people were astonished at the Israeli savagery. Jews gathered from everywhere around the world to Jerusalem to take in under their authority "The humiliation of the war soaked into their skins. People watched on their televisions as their Jewish army of Poles, Austrians, Germans, French, Brits, Italians, Russians, Ukrainians, Iranians, and others marched into Jerusalem, demolishing, neighborhoods of neon-Jews. It was a shocking moment that split the world in two: those cheering and those crying"¹¹ Palestinians suffered a lot from the war. Eventually, the abnormal was normalized, and the constant brutality of Israel went on.

In the early years after the Naqba, Gaza was ruled by Egypt. Mazan was the first born child for Nazmiyeh. Nazmiyeh has twelve children. The huge increase of Palestinian population threatens

Israel demographically. “The resistance in Gaza was growing and an underground railroad ferried weapons and organized fighters to join the PLO guerillas”¹¹ The Palestinian fighters managed to destroy several gas pipes supplying nearby Jewish only colonies, causing havoc for Israelis. Now Mazan is 20 years old. When Nazmiyeh decided to make a party on the beach for Alwan, who was just learning to walk, a group of Israeli soldiers came and took Mazan by force with them. Mazan had masterminded the sabotage to cut the pipeline to Israeli colonies. He had been a leader of the underground resistance. Mazan resisted when Israelis were taking him to the jail. He said “your bullet cannot touch my humanity! It cannot touch my soul! it cannot rip my roots from the soil of this land you covet! We will not let you steal our land!”¹¹

In this event, the Israelis “... killed four, injured eleven, and kidnapped eight sons and daughters of Palestine that day.”¹¹ When Mamdouh was telling his granddaughter about their family in BeitDaras, he said “We had no choice but to leave. No matter how hard we fought, we were no match for their weapons. Not even when soldiers from Sudan came to help us. So we started to leave with everyone else.”¹¹

Chapter three in the novel was all about Nur and her grandfather Mamdouh in exile in Charlotte, North Carolina, in America. When Atiyeh died naturally, the people in Gaza weren't surprised because they are usually killed by Israelis. It is proven when Abdel Qader said “At least Abu Mazan died naturally”¹¹ Abdel Qader and his cousin Murad and two other men, Abu Michele and Abu al Banat were fishing on Gaza shore on a small boat, and before they reached the limits of the three miles imposed by Israel, Israelis naval vessels shot directly at their boats. They were not “beyond three miles”¹¹ But the Zionist soldiers “ordered the fishermen to throw their catch back into the sea, and they all watched those sea creature swim away. Then the soldiers count to a hundred while treading water. When they finished, the soldiers ordered them to start counting all over”¹¹ The Israeli soldiers ordered the fishermen to swim ahead to the beach. While they were swimming they shot Abu Michele's shoulder.

There was no work on the land. Israel's siege of Gaza saw unemployment rise to eighty percent and malnutrition began a slow creep into the new generation.¹¹ “When the sky, land, and sea were barricaded, we burrowed our bodies, into the earth, like rodents, so we did not die. The tunnels spread under our feet, like story lines that history wrote, erased, and rewrote”¹¹ Israelis were bombing Gaza from time to time. “Blood poured and dust rose. Smoke painted lungs and hearts raced. The remaining flour mill, the last source for bread, was bombed. Schools, homes, mosques, and universities, too. Then Israel sprayed Gaza white phosphorous”¹¹. As everyone know that Palestinians in Gaza have no weapons to fight against Israelis. Gaza is a place where 1.7 million

Palestinians have been locked for nearly a decade in huge open air prison, a human laboratory that Israel uses periodically to test its weapons.

Israel blocked building materials from entering Gaza. Palestinians recycled the rocks and rubble into the new building bricks. They used various and mixtures instead of cement, which was impossible to find in Gaza. Abdel Qader was killed by Israelis. “When Israel began a devastating assault in Gaza in December 2008, Nur had been working as a psychotherapist for the City of Charlotte, helping teens confront histories of rape, incest, abuse, neglect, drug use, and inconceivable traumas.”¹¹ Nur lived married man called Jamal, a psychologist from Gaza. She got pregnant from him.

According to *The Blue Between Sky and Water*, it happened when Hamas fighters captured an Israeli soldier named Gilad Shalit. Israel broke the ground open looking for him, but they couldn't find him. They killed so many of the Palestinians to get their soldier, but they couldn't. Israelis ruined, wrecked, and shattered Palestinians. But again, they came up empty-handed. Hamas was beyond their violence. “Hamas had won. Gilad Shalit, the captured Israeli soldier, would be exchanged for one thousand Palestinian Political prisoners.”¹¹

The narrative technique of Abulhawa is highly commendable, the way she narrates any incident attracts attention of the readers making it spontaneous and natural. In the portrayal of characters, she has tried to portray them in a very sensitive way and has justified in her attempt in highlighting the sufferings of the Palestinians through her characters. Her description of the events and incidents seems as realistic because being a Palestinian directly and indirectly she herself had witnessed all these atrocities and emotional traumas which the displaced people go through who have to leave their ancestral home forcefully as their lands are being occupied by migrants coming from Europe which don't belong to the land.

The publication of Susan Abulhawa's *The Blue Between Sky and Water* marks a giant step in the development of Palestinian fiction, a feat of imagination and storytelling. Abulhawa through both her novels *Mornings in Jenin* and *The Blue Between Sky and Water* tries to spot a light on rare voices of Palestinians, where human conditions are formed, fragmented and dislocated memories and voices. It is all about Abulhawa's experience of her diasporic identity trying to explore the suffering and the life of people of Palestine.

CONCLUSION

This paper attemptsto explore the ways historiography drawn by Abulhawa in her novel corresponds with reality of Palestine today. Her novel is timeless imbued with lyrical prose and insight into the historical afflictions and disorder in Gaza. *The Blue Between Sky and Water* narrates the stories of generations and families. All of the sections come together to deliver a satisfying

conclusion that resembles the importance of family and the importance of being there for one another. This novel is beautifully written, filled with magical realism to tell of the absurd reality of life in Gaza under Israeli oppression, injustice, and occupation. Abulhawa uses autobiographical elements such as her childhood in exile, the loss of her family, her odyssey through various foster families and homes, and her final achievement of independence. Her characters are invented but they bear similarity with the Palestinian condition as much of the narrative is based on the stories of people she's met and largely personal experiences and memories.

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