

HHA-9

INSTITUTE OF CURRENT WORLD AFFAIRS

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**The Dream of a "Traitor": A Typical Palestinian Life**

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Dear Peter,

While all human beings confront numerous challenges in their lives, being Palestinian makes the set-backs one encounters more devastating. The following narrative is exemplary.

Jad is the owner/manager of the Cafe Europe, a very pleasant refuge for intellectuals tucked away on Al-Zahara Street in Jerusalem. Jad is an extremely kind, warm and cheerful person. He has been able to rise above the pain and frustration of a shattered dream.

JAK: My real name is Jidalla. That may surprise you because you haven't heard it before. My full name is Jidalla Anton Khamashta. I am originally from Beit Jalla, a small town near Bethlehem. Everybody calls me Jad.

I was born in Jerusalem in July 1962, and received my elementary and high school education at the Brothers' School (De La Salle) in Jerusalem. The school, a French private school, is located near New Gate in the Old City. I graduated in 1979. At that time, all of my classmates were dying to go to the States. The States were a big thing to us. During the 1970's and 1980's, this was everyone's dream. Young men wanted to go to the States and experience the Western world.

I remember sitting for the GCE (General Certification Exam), and we all did very well. We were about 35 graduates, and more than thirty of us left for the States. Only a very few came back. I was one of them. I had plans to go to California.

HHA: Why did you want to go to the States?

JAK: When Palestinians wanted to continue their education, especially in the fields of engineering, law or medicine or other sophisti-

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cated studies, we didn't have universities that taught such subjects. All Palestinians who wanted to study these subjects had to go somewhere. People who were well off considered the United States. Most of our subjects at De La Salle were taught in English from the time we were very young, so it was easier for us to go to an English-speaking country. The States was our best choice and we applied to go.

I applied to the school of medicine, and got accepted. I was accepted as a pre-med student. Almost everything was ready, and I was almost packed to go to California. Then a friend of mine Najib Zeid, who had been living in the States for ten or fifteen years, came to Jerusalem for a visit during the last week before I went to California. He came and asked me about my plans, and I told him about going to California. "Why to California? Come to Kansas!" he said. I had never heard of Kansas before. He said it was a beautiful place and promised to help me get an I-20 in less than a week. He promised to help me out and get me a job. He was very well known over there, and he said I'd love it. I was very encouraged because I didn't have anyone in the States. I didn't know anybody there. I was only seventeen, you know. I thought it would be much better and easier if I found some help. Also, financially speaking, he said Kansas was much less expensive than California. He said I could live in Kansas and go to a small college in Hutchinson.

I asked him to send me an I-20 as soon as possible. I decided to go there. He left in a few days, and I received my I-20 in a couple of more days. I had a choice between going to Berkeley and Hutchinson Community College. I decided to go to Hutchinson. It was a very nice place, and I was seventeen. I left in May 1980. My friend was there waiting for me at the airport. He picked me up, and the next day he showed me the town. He took me to the college. It was a very small town. They had never seen a foreigner from Palestine, the Holy Land, before, so I became very popular. I did quite well at Hutchinson Community College. I was a straight A student and I graduated in about eighteen months. I was still a pre-med student. I worked in Hutchinson as a cook in a Mexican restaurant called Casa de Saci. It was run by a Lebanese man who was married to a Mexican girl. It was the most popular restaurant in town. I started by washing dishes for a couple of months, but in about six months time, I was the chef. We did very well. The owner was my friend, and he helped me a lot.

I finished community college in Hutchinson, where I spent the most beautiful times of my life. The people were very nice--simple, friendly. I spent the first semester in a dorm, but the next semester I was offered free housing with an old American lady. She was a widow in her eighties, and she lived in a huge house. She wanted some company. She knew this friend of mine Najib, who had invited me to Hutchinson. She trusted him and asked him for some company. I spent about a year at her house for free. She was wonderful.

HHA: What other special memories do you have of Hutchinson?

JAK: The moment I would walk downtown, everybody in the street knew me. People would greet me, "Hey Jad!" They would ask me what I was doing on Sunday, where I was going for Thanksgiving, etc. I felt like I was at home; people were so nice. I had many friends. Each year I got three or four invitations for Thanksgiving. People would send their boys to pick me up in their cars on Sundays when there was a watermelon feast or a barbecue. I felt like somebody; I was noticed as a human being.

There was no crime in Hutchinson. It was a very simple place. I never felt like I needed to carry an ID, for example. In Jerusalem that is very important in our everyday life. I was never hassled by policemen there. I remember a beautiful and unforgettable incident. I got my driver's license when I was eighteen, and I was dying to buy my first car. This car was a Galaxy 5000--\$200 worth! I bought this old car from a banker. Now when you sell a car in the States, you take off the license plates because they belong to you. She took off the plates and gave me the car. I was dying to drive it, so I went off without plates. I was spinning the tires all over town when a policeman noticed me. I was going fast, and he stopped me. He spoke to me in English, and I understood him, of course. I knew I had done something wrong, so I pretended I didn't speak English. He must have thought, "What is this foreigner doing here?" I told him, "Arabic, Arabic, Arabic." He was frustrated at first, and then he was convinced I didn't speak English. He got me out of the car, took me to the back of the car, and pointed to the plates. "Where are your damn plates??" he asked. I told him, "Arabic, Arabic. Jerusalem, Jerusalem." He said, "You just leave the car here, and go." He locked the car and left me, without arresting or fining me. He didn't even check my ID. When something like this happens, you feel like you're a human being. You don't feel like you're being searched or watched by the government. The government is there to serve you, not to beat or offend you. I had other instances with traffic violations. I was never given a ticket in Hutchinson, even though sometimes I violated the traffic laws. They would explain that what you had done was wrong, whether you intended to do it or not.

I remember one time I was going the wrong direction on a road. The policeman followed me and turned me into an alley. I told him, "I'm sorry. I didn't know it was a one-way street." He said, "Be careful next time." It was just as simple as that. You don't experience this anywhere else in the world.

What I mean to say is that Hutchinson was a nice, simple place. I felt relaxed, safe and comfortable. I felt loved.

HHA: Did you experience culture shock at the beginning?

JAK: Yes, exactly. When I went to the United States, I had this image from television--bars, night life, corruption. These bad

places exist, but they are not all over. In Hutchinson, I felt more like I was in a village near Ramallah. People were quite conservative and traditional. In college, you are away from the bad streets. If you go look for the bad streets, you will find women all over just like here in Jerusalem.

I probably didn't have such a culture shock because I was brought up in Jerusalem. I was brought up in a disco. This place, the Cafe Europe, used to be a disco. As a young boy of fourteen or fifteen, I used to come here to help my father in the disco. I was used to foreign girls and how they treat guys, how guys treat them. I had seen the hustling, so it was no big deal for me. It wasn't a culture shock for me, to tell you the truth.

I graduated from Hutchinson and applied to several medical schools in the United States. One of them was in Lawrence, Kansas, and I preferred to go there. It was a university near Hutchinson. I felt more comfortable there. I thought I could always come back to my friends and contact them. The University of Kansas at Lawrence had a very good reputation; it was considered one of the best schools in the States. After I was accepted at Lawrence, I packed up my bags and drove there. It was about three or four hours drive. (By then I had license plates on the car.)

Lawrence was a much bigger town, a university town with about 35,000 students. Here I felt I was in America. In Hutchinson, there wasn't much change in my life. In Lawrence, not everybody knew you. I was lucky to find a cheap apartment close to campus. It was five minutes away with very low rent. I had saved some money from working at the restaurant, so I managed to pay my tuition and fees and rent in advance for about a year. I was paying only \$90 a month for the apartment. I was well off. In Hutchinson, I could pay for my whole education by working in the restaurant. In Lawrence, however, I couldn't find a job, and I didn't have the time to work.

During the third year of pre-med, things were more difficult. I was carrying a heavy load. I always had to get special permission from the dean to take 24 credit hours per semester. I wanted to finish very badly. I was homesick. I couldn't afford becoming a professional student like most of the foreign students. At Lawrence, some people spent eight or ten years getting their BA. That is costly. In the American system, you pay the same amount even if you take extra hours. The extra hours are free. Instead of looking for a job, I took a big load. I managed to take 21 or 24 credit hours per semester. I was looking forward to going to medical school, so I needed good grades. I had saved some money, and I decided to concentrate on my studies. I bought a small car, a Ford, and stayed in that studio apartment. I made some friends. I was very popular in my pre-med classes because I was the only foreigner in those courses. As you know, in the United States, when you go to a state university, you have to have residency to get into medical school. You can do pre-med, but not medical school. According to them, it

costs tax payers some money to get you through medical school, so they won't pay for foreigners. Either you must establish residency or go home. My advisor was always trying to get me to switch to the school of pharmacy or to biology. I refused because I wanted to be a doctor. I liked the profession very much, and I always thought I'd be good at it. The more barriers I found in front of me, the bigger was the challenge to get through this thing.

So I was probably the only foreigner in these courses. The others were all Americans. There is a lot of competition in the school of medicine to get straight A's. I really stood out in courses like genetics and labs. All the students would come to me for the analysis. We did joint projects. I was happy with myself, and I did well. I got my BA in three years. They offered me a special program to get a master's degree in human biology in an additional year. I refused because I wanted to go to the school of medicine. I had a GPA of 3.74, which was not bad. I sat for the MCAT, the Medical College Admissions Test. It was a tough test, but I did ok. I was under a lot of pressure. Finally, my advisor got together a committee and called me for a meeting. The committee consisted of several of my professors. They tried to convince me that I shouldn't go to medical school in the United States, unless I could establish residency. Otherwise I'd have to apply to private medical schools. I told them I'd try to apply to private medical schools and see what happened. I would continue my studies if I could afford it. If not, I'd try somewhere else.

I went to the library and got addresses of schools--one of which was the American Medical School in Grenada. I did some research on the school and eventually got some grants to attend. I thought the fees were reasonable and they had a lot of foreign students. Unfortunately, Mr. Reagan decided to attack in that same period. They pulled all the American students out of Grenada.

During that same time, I had applied to American schools in Canada, Europe and Cairo. I got accepted at several of them, but I couldn't afford the fees. Some were \$17,000 a year. I decided that the best thing was to go to Egypt. It would be cheap.

So I returned here in 1984. I did my papers and passport, so I could go to Egypt. It was not allowed for us as Palestinians to go to Egypt directly; we had to go to Jordan. I packed my luggage, took some money and said good-bye to my family. Then I went to Jordan. In Jordan I had to do some papers and go through security. Unfortunately, while getting a permit to leave Jordan, I had to get an exemption from military service. I went to get a temporary exemption. The officer asked me why I was going to Egypt. I said I wanted to go to medical school. He asked me if I had any certificates. I said I had a BA. He asked to look at my certificate, my papers and my passport. I had a Jordanian passport which had been issued for the first time, and it had no visas on it. He asked me how I went to the United States without a visa or a passport. I

said, "Very simple. I went through Ben-Gurion Airport." "You went through the enemy's airport?!?" That was his answer. I thought I was a criminal. It was a state of alert.

He grabbed my passport and went to the next room. He was away for about thirty minutes before he returned to me. "You went through the enemy's airport. You traitor!" he said. I said, "You should understand that all your people go through the enemy's airport. If the enemy stops giving us bread, we will die of hunger. You are sitting in offices over here telling us how to behave and be patriots." Evidently, he didn't like what I said, so he told me to leave my passport there. I was supposed to pick it up the next morning. But the next morning they wouldn't let me in to the office. They had my name blocked out. They wouldn't give me my passport. This was in 1985.

Every day I went to that building and wait for hours. I begged this guy to let me in to talk to someone. I asked for a telephone number. I wanted my passport. They wouldn't allow me in. This lasted about a week. I sat in front of the door, and the soldier screamed at me. It seemed like he had nothing else but Jad to occupy his time. He wouldn't let me near the building. I was a big traitor.

I knew I had to get into that building. I had contacted some friends in Jordan. They questioned some government officials, but nobody was willing to help. They said they couldn't interfere with military security. My case was in the hands of the military, so it was a tough case. Some friends told me to go to the ministry of interior because the orders came from there. I managed to get there and tried to get an appointment with the minister himself. Nobody would talk to me. They said it was in the hands of the minister of the interior.

I was staying in a hotel, and I had already spent most of my money. I didn't have a passport, and nobody knew anything about me over there. There were no telephone connections between Jordan and Palestine. My parents knew nothing about me--nothing at all. I was always thinking, "Tomorrow I will get my passport and leave." It took me 48 days to get my passport. I will tell you about it.

I managed to get into the ministry of the interior, but I couldn't get an appointment to see the minister. Some people suggested I go to his house and talk to his kids and wife. They might be able to get me an appointment. I looked for his house and he had security out front. I had to get into his house through his neighbor's door. He was living in a house with two apartments, and one was rented to different people. I walked into the neighbor's house as if I were visiting them. The back door led to a corridor through which you could enter the minister's house. The minister was Hassan Al-Kayed.

I went to the neighbors and begged them to let me talk to his

wife and kids. We managed finally. The wife and sons of the minister told me they couldn't interfere in such a case. They told me to get an appointment through the ministry. We listened to them and went back to the ministry of the interior. We managed to get an appointment to see the attorney-general. My case was submitted to him. There was no treason law then about people who had left through Ben-Gurion Airport. The minister himself wanted this to be the first case. They wanted to put me on trial, but they didn't yet have a law to prosecute me. They wanted the ministry of interior to issue a new law in order to sentence me. My file was submitted to the attorney-general. But he was on sick leave! It's like in the movies, you know. They said he had had an accident. It took us a while to get to his office. He looked into the case, and there was an answer. I was to be tried for selling property to the Israelis.

I spent the worst times of my life in Jordan. I had to be tried. The attorney-general said no one could look into my case but the minister of the interior. The minister sent me a letter saying I was going to set an example for others. He said I would be tried as if I had sold property to the enemies. It was treason--a military court. The minimum sentence would be five years. I needed to see the minister himself because only he could help me. I brought some friends with me to help get an appointment with him. We finally got into his office. I took along some important people who explained my case to him. The minister asked for some time to collect his thoughts. He meant to say that he had already sent a letter to court martial me as a traitor. He needed some time to figure out how to withdraw the order.

The next day we called his office. The minister said he had signed an order to deport me from Jordan. That was the best he could do. I thanked him. He told me to go get my passport and get on the first jeep to the bridge. I went to the police station where my passport was supposed to be. It was Ramadan, and the feast was coming. I waited there for a few hours. When I got to the officer, I told him I wanted my passport because I was being deported. Those were the orders. He looked into the drawers and didn't find my passport. He told me the passport was with someone else, who was now on vacation. He would be back after the feast. My passport had moved around--through security, military security, the police, everybody's drawer. I told him I had orders to be deported. "I am dangerous here. I need my passport right now! I can't wait til the end of the feast because I don't have any money left," I said. I told him to open the other guy's drawer. He said, "I don't have the keys." I said, "Break it open. I want my passport now. I need to go home." They opened the drawer, but my passport was not there. "I must go home. I must be deported as soon as possible," I repeated.

Then I told him to call the bridge and tell them to let me pass. I would send someone to collect my passport later on. I had to go. He called the bridge and told them I was coming without a passport.

I took a cab to the bridge and passed through. That was the last time I visited Jordan!

I met a strange character in Jordan. I don't know if he told the truth or not. I was followed by people in Jordan. I was always watched. I met a person whose name I can't remember. I don't know whether he was sent after me or we met just by accident. He said he had studied medicine in Spain. He had the same problem with his passport because he went through Lebanon and the Israelis tampered with his passport. He had lived in Jordan without a passport for seven years. He was not allowed to leave the country or to work. I don't know whether it was a set-up for me or whether I met him by accident. Now when I look at it, I can think differently, but then I was so naive. I was young. I had never experienced such horrible things in my life. I was so naive. At that time I believed him, but now I don't know what to tell you. I met him in a coffee shop by accident. He just came and talked to me. He introduced himself. We had similar situations. I don't know how it was so similar. He told me his story. He was not allowed to see his parents who lived in a village near Ramallah. Maybe they were trying to set me up. He insisted on seeing me several times. Now I can guess that he was from the Mukhabarat.<sup>1</sup> At that time, I needed somebody to talk to. I needed somebody to relate to. I don't know if the intelligence was very smart and strong.

I met many other characters. I remember one incident. My room was on the fourth or fifth floor. I was so depressed and tense that I never went to bed before three or four o'clock in the morning. I would stand at the window and meditate. I was always tense. One night a voice shouted at me from down in the street, "Get in! Get your head in!" I was so mad. "What the hell do you want from me?" I screamed. It was a shocking experience.

HHA: Two questions before we go on. How did you feel about the officer who took your passport the first time?

JAK: Very simple. He was a dumb person. Unfortunately, they didn't think much before they acted. I don't know whether it was the whole system or whether I was unlucky. He was paranoid, scared, afraid of me. He felt like he had really caught a fish. I was his big fish. I felt like I hadn't done anything, but they wanted to break my pride. Probably they were uneducated and uncivilized. They wondered why I should get to go to the United States and get an education. They were jealous. This officer was so uneducated.

We had such a funny discussion. I remember he asked me where I got my CBS. I asked him what a CBS was. "Shut up! You know what a CBS is!" he shouted. I had no idea what he was talking about. "Who

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<sup>1</sup>The word used to describe the intelligence apparatus in the Arab world.



got your CBS for you? Who was your mediator?" he asked. I was confused. "This document you used to travel on," he explained. "Oh, the laissez-passer," I said. "I know what it is!" he exclaimed. You can't believe what I am telling you. I was so frustrated. I don't know if it was intended, if it was their system. He was just a dumb son-of-a-gun. I was sarcastic about it because I was so frustrated. I asked him for his name and ID number and said I'd get him a CBS. He was so mad. I explained, "For your information, anyone can go to the ministry in Jerusalem on Nablus Road and apply for a 'CBS'. Wait for a month and you'll get it if you have a Jerusalem ID." He kept asking about my mediator or middle-man. You don't need any help to get one.

I felt so bad because I never found a single person to talk to logically. I was innocent and hard-working. I was very active in the US. I was the president of the Palestinian Student Association on campus. I was active socially and politically in a very civilized way. Then this man tried to break me up and destroy my career just like that. I felt so bad and couldn't wait to get out of there.

HHA: One other question. How did you feel then and now about this whole business? They tried to portray you as a traitor just because you flew through the Tel Aviv airport.

JAK: I learned one thing in the States--you stand up for your beliefs. Nobody can change you. I always stood up for my beliefs, and I always loved my country and people. I love human beings, you know. I never for a single moment felt like a traitor. Yes, I was very disturbed and annoyed by those people, but I never felt like they would break me. I felt sorry for them because they were part of the system. They were just following orders. There was a state of paranoia between Jordan and Israel. The same was true of all Arab countries. They wanted to portray it as if they were dying to liberate Palestine. They were patriots and so forth. But actually something else was going on. I told him, "All of your men are going through Tel Aviv." I knew of meetings between Hussein and the Israelis. I knew of meetings in Paris between various officials. I felt I was above that, so I felt sorry for them and for every weak human being who got stepped on by them. Many human beings were destroyed by them. I was lucky enough to know people who got me out of this mess. What if I wasn't such a strong person? I would have been destroyed. I would be talking to myself now. Imagine--I was a young man, a new graduate, ambitious. Then suddenly I could have been thrown in jail for a silly, dumb thing.

Nowadays I have nothing to do with Jordan. I try to go places where I feel relaxed. I would never feel relaxed there. I feel sorry for the people of Jordan. We should be above this hypocrisy and lack of civilization. We should always think of our own people and their good. I've never felt that in Jordan. They don't think of the good of the people, but of the protection of their government. All Arab regimes are like that. Unfortunately, we are part of that world.

HHA: What would you say to this man today? Now Israelis and Jordanians can go back and forth.

JAK: I would tell him to go apply for a "CBS." It is funny to look at it now. It was a nightmare back then.

I am still grieving over what happened. So many things happened in Jordan and I got frustrated and mad. I cried several times because I was so depressed. I felt that my career was destroyed. Destroyed by whom? By people who were supposed to be of my own blood, culture, religion, background and language.

I came back here to Jerusalem with no place to go. My dad still had his disco. A lot of people encouraged me to apply to Hebrew University here in Jerusalem. I visited campus and got into some lectures. I was interested. They told me to sit for an exam. I applied to the medical school and sat for the exam. I got discouraged when I found out that not a single Palestinian had been accepted or graduated from the school of medicine. I thought I had no chance. Still, I applied and sat for the exam. I spent over 500 shekels (or around \$200) to take the exam. I never received an answer. I didn't care much because I had already been through so much. I knew I didn't have any opportunities there, so I began to look for a substitute, something else to do. I couldn't just sit around and wait.

An uncle of mine came back from Dubai. He was a graduate of the Luzerne School of Management. He was ambitious, and he wanted to settle down here and open a business. He talked me into turning by dad's disco into a sophisticated coffee shop, like it used to be thirty years ago. I told him I didn't mind, but I could not spend a single penny. I didn't have anything. I offered to help start the business, but I couldn't promise to keep working there. I wanted a career; I wanted to pursue my education. He agreed.

He had the money, and I had the skills. I also had contacts since I was brought up around here. He had always been abroad, so he knew nobody. If we wanted a carpenter, I always knew one. We did everything here. We created this Cafe Europe. I had experience in restaurants, and he taught me some new things. He taught me the finer points of business. He is considered one of the best in the Middle East in this field of business. He spent about a year and a half here as my partner. We did well, but things went bad economically speaking. They were hard times. He had plans to get married and settle down here, but things didn't work out. He didn't find his dream girl. He decided to take off. I was stuck with a new business, which my father could not run. It was different from what he used to do, and he was getting old. It was our only source of income. I was supporting my parents and sisters. Times were very bad. So I ran the business myself and did well. I made more profit because I didn't have a partner.

Then in 1988, I had an offer from a friend of mine to go to Lisbon, Portugal. He was on a deal at the school of medicine in Lisbon. He was a businessman as well. He offered me not a job, but a partnership in running a coffeeshop with him. I could also attend medical school. By then I had been out of school for three or four years. I decided to take a break and go pay him a visit. I thought I'd see how things went. Maybe I'd go to medical school.

Imagine the Palestinian misery. There was no Portuguese consulate here, so I had to get a visa through the Spanish consulate. They told me to get a visa to Spain here, and I would get a visa on the spot when I flew to Lisbon. I called my friend and told him I didn't have a visa. There was no diplomatic relationship. He said he'd get me a visa, and it would be waiting for me at the airport. He is Palestinian, but he has a Portuguese passport.

Listen what happened, it is very interesting. On the night I was flying on Iberian Air to Spain, I came over here to the Cafe Europe to say good-bye to some friends. The cafe was very busy because I had a group here. I started helping. While we were busy, the kitchen caught fire. I had just come to say good-bye to friends. I grabbed the deep fryer with my hand. I had a full house and I wanted to get it out of the place. I grabbed it with my hands to throw it out in the street. It was so hot that it burned my hand down to the bone and I didn't even feel it. I put out the fire, and they took me to the hospital. I definitely had to delay my flight. Both my hands were wrapped up for the next six months. I could have had a disability if I hadn't gone to Hadassah Hospital, where they took good care of me. For six months, my hands were in casts. Luckily, I managed to get my fingers back in shape and moving fine. I needed a bit of plastic surgery.

To go on with my story, I delayed my flight. After about six months, my friend called me and sent me the ticket. He didn't know what had happened; he thought I had changed my mind. I decided to take a break because I had been working hard. He sent me the ticket but I still didn't have a Portuguese visa. I took off to Madrid. I decided to spend a week in Madrid. This was in 1987 before the intifada. I spent 8-10 days in Madrid; I had a good time.

I decided to go see the school of medicine in Madrid. I wanted to apply because I knew Spanish from my studies in the States. I always knew that Spain had good medical schools. I decided that while I was there I would stop over and check out the university. I had met a good friend at the school of medicine in Madrid, and he had given me his card. He encouraged me to continue my education. I met with the dean of the school of medicine. I had all my papers and transcripts with me. He looked at my transcript and told me that they could not consider all my credit hours in the States because the system in Spain is annual. He told me I had to start from the beginning, as if I hadn't been to university. I told him it was impossible for me to go back to general chemistry and biology. I had a B.A. I couldn't afford to spend seven or eight more years of my

life in education. It was a waste of time.

Then I wanted to go to Lisbon. I took off on a flight to Lisbon. I called my friend, and he said my visa was waiting. He offered to pick me up at the immigration office. I arrived at Lisbon airport and stood in line. I had a suit on; I was well dressed. At passport control, I gave them my laissez-passer. The officer looked at me and asked me for my passport and visa. I explained that I had a laissez-passer as a travel document. I said that my friend Rafael Palasios was waiting outside and that he had issued a visa for me. They should have had the visa on their computer. He didn't talk to me. He hit a buzzer and security came. Two big men and a tall lady, the head security officer, came and told me to go with them. "What is wrong?" I asked. "Can you please step into this room," they said. They looked at my papers and asked me a lot of questions. They interrogated me. They asked for my visa. I said that I was supposed to get a visa on the spot. I told them about my friend. They said, "Well, where is your passport?" I replied, "I don't have a passport; I'm a Palestinian!" They said I had to leave on the same flight. I asked them to check for my friend. They were afraid I would ask for political asylum. They told me I had to get back on the same flight to Madrid. I asked them for a moment to talk to my friend. They started pushing me, and I yelled and shouted. Then two soldiers with machine guns came and shoved me into a jeep. They took me back to the flight. There was no room on the flight so they made me sit on the hostess's chair. The soldiers didn't move until the plane was ready to leave. I was deported out of Portugal back to Spain! Typical Palestinian.

I was back at Madrid airport, but I had a single entry visa to Spain. Rafael was waiting for me in Lisbon. I had said good-bye to my family because they thought I was going to finish my education. I had packed up everything. I didn't want to go back to Israel. I had had enough. I couldn't get back into Spain. I was at the international terminal. Suddenly my eyes landed on the departing flight schedule. There was a flight going to Ecuador. I have brothers in Ecuador. I was sitting there for hours wondering what to do. I went to the desk and asked the clerk how much it would cost to go to Quito, Ecuador. He told me \$1350. This was my survival instinct. I didn't know what to do, but I knew I couldn't go back to Israel. I had nothing to go back to. I had left my business; my family had hopes.

HHA: And you're still a cheerful man...

JAK: What can we do? I went to the desk, and the guy told me \$1350. I said I'd come back to him in fifteen minutes. I had to think about it. Maybe I'll surprise my brothers, who knows? I went back to the clerk and said I wanted to get to Quito. He asked for \$1800. I swear to God. I told him, "Do you remember I was here just ten minutes ago?" He said, "Yes, of course." I said, "I asked you about the price of a flight from here to Quito. How much did you tell me?"

"\$1350," he replied. "Now you are telling me \$1800?" I asked. "Yes," he said, "and you will be on a waiting list." I swear to God. I asked to see the supervisor. When he came, I told him that this guy was trying to rip me off. He said that if I wanted to go, they would put me on the waiting list. The ticket would cost \$1800. I agreed, and they put me on the waiting list. (laughter)

So I took off to Puerto Rico, and from there to Ecuador. In Quito I called my brother, whom I hadn't seen in ten years. I called from the Quito airport and asked him to pick me up. He said, "Come on, don't tease me. How is my dad?" I said, "They're fine. Come and pick me up at Quito airport."

HHA: So you had a visa for Ecuador?

JAK: I was encouraged to go to Ecuador because I knew that you got a visa on the spot at the airport. My brother didn't believe that I was in Ecuador. He thought I was in Jerusalem. I told him, "I am tired. If you don't come and pick me up, I will take a cab. I am at Quito Airport, and the airport looks like this. The doors look like that." He said, "You're not kidding!" So he came and picked me up. I spent about a month in Ecuador. I got introduced to the minister of health.

HHA: What ever happened to Rafael who was waiting in Lisbon?

JAK: I called him from the Madrid airport. His wife answered the phone and told me he was still waiting at the airport. I told her I was in Madrid. "But he's waiting for you at Lisbon airport," she screamed. "Rafael told me he would come inside the airport and pick me up. They checked in the computer, and there was no visa for me. They were scared, and they didn't understand my laissez-passer. They were afraid of me because I'm a Palestinian. They were afraid I would ask for political asylum. Please tell Rafael I'll call back when I find a place," I explained. Poor Rafael waited there for hours.

The minister of health of Ecuador was a good friend of my uncle. The minister of health told me to go to the University of Quayaquil's school of medicine. He welcomed me to attend lectures and see if I liked it. He said they'd be happy to accept me as a student. I started going to the medical school over there. After being in the States, I found Ecuador a very different world. It is extremely underdeveloped. You feel like you're at al-Ibrahimiyyeh College over here. I just didn't feel that it was right. I might as well have a forged certificate from America. There was no funding. I didn't like it at all.

HHA: You were not after the image of being a doctor. You really wanted to be one.

JAK: Exactly. I could have gone to Russia and saved all the hassle,

but it wasn't the right place for me. I decided to spend a month in Ecuador. I had some good times and saw my brothers, whom I hadn't seen in ten years. Then I decided to return to Jerusalem to the Cafe Europe. This was in 1987. Things were going well for the Cafe Europe.

I always had determination. If you remember, back in university my advisors tried to dissuade me. There were many barriers. It was hard for me to get into medical school in the States, but I was still determined. On my way back from Madrid, I still had hope. I always thought that nothing could stop me because I had already been through so much. I had always wanted to be a doctor. Until now when I talk with Hanan, my wife,--a lot of people ask me the same question you asked. "Do you still think of going to medical school?" I always say that if I had enough money, even if I were forty or fifty, I would try to go to medical school.

I was definitely hurting. I was deprived of my ultimate dream. It was then that I felt how much I needed a passport. I needed an identity. I was humiliated in Jordan because I had no passport or nationality. I was humiliated in Lisbon for the same reason. I couldn't go to Egypt through Israel because I didn't have a passport. Why did I have to go through Jordan? It was our only entrance to Egypt. It was then that I felt I should establish an identity. I should have a passport.

When I got back to Jerusalem, I knew that the cafe was my career. I had tried enough, and I couldn't go on anymore. Psychologically, I was relaxed. I did what I had to do. I came back here and spent more time at the Cafe Europe. But unfortunately, the next blow came--the intifada. After starting to make money and much planning, I had offers to franchise the Cafe Europe. My dreams started to come true. Then the intifada broke out. At first, I thought this was my chance to be free. I wanted to get a passport--no more Lisbon airport, no more "CBS." I want to be free. I said to myself that I was still a lucky person. Some people had lost their lives for the sake of freedom. I shut my business and went through the intifada. At first it was marvelous.

But you know the rest of the story. I got bankrupt during the first couple of years of the intifada. I had to shut my business. We had to shut down completely for a while. I didn't mind at first since I needed a break. I had been working all alone. Then I spent all my money because I had no business or income. I always thought that the intifada would end tomorrow or the next day. But it became very long. Then there was a decision by the Unified Leadership of the Uprising that we could open until twelve noon. We started opening until noon. But in our business at the Cafe Europe, people don't start coming in until later. It wasn't worth opening up. I had to look for a different job because of expenses and taxes. We didn't pay taxes at first. We had several court orders to pay our taxes, but we refused.

I started looking for a job. My first job was as a receptionist at the Palace Hotel on the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem. It's a nice little hotel. I worked the graveyard shift from night until the morning. I was paid 500 shekels a month (\$150 at today's exchange rate.) In addition, I made about \$50 in tips each month.

I haven't spoken about my marriage. The first year of the intifada I didn't work, and I started taking care of a piece of land we owned in a village called Qubeibeh near Jerusalem. It is a Biblical village. We started going there to spend time, take care of the land and pick the fruit. My marriage story is really funny. It was summer of 1988, a year after the intifada. I picked the summer fruits--plums, grapes. I decided I had to do something with the fruit; I couldn't just throw it away. I wanted to give it to members of my family. All my family lives in Beit Jalla, so I decided to fill up the trunk of my car with whatever I could take. I put it in little boxes to give away. At least, this kept me busy. I picked up the plums and went to Beit Jalla. I knocked on the doors of people I hadn't seen in ten years--or even before. My present father-in-law is a relative of mine, whom I didn't see very often. His daughter, my wife now, was a lady whom I had never seen before. She was a remote cousin of mine. When I knocked on the door with this box of fruit, they came out and offered me a coffee. "This cousin has been in the States, and we haven't seen him for a long time," they said. They wanted to chat with me, so I went in. They asked their daughter to show me around their house.

And there was this lovely woman! She was supposed to be my cousin, but I had never seen her before. Ah, thanks to the plums... I started talking to this young lady and asked her what she was doing. I told her about myself. I liked the girl. On my way back, I started talking to my mother. Who is this beautiful lady? I hadn't seen her before. "Don't you like her?" my mother asked. "Yes," I replied, "she's very nice." She said, "Why don't you get married?" Get married? "Don't worry, we'll talk to her father. You'll be engaged and get married," my mother said. I had never considered marriage. I remember that I didn't sleep well that night. That lady impressed me very much. I had never been close to a Palestinian woman before. I had always dated Western girls. Even in my business, you don't get close to Palestinian girls. So I didn't know how to behave. I went and talked to my mother. I told her I wanted to go out with this girl. "You're crazy! You can't go out with this girl," she said. "What do you mean? She's my cousin. I want to go out with her." "You have to get engaged," my mother insisted. "No," I said, "I don't want to get engaged. I want to talk to her and take her out. How can I get engaged to a girl I don't know or understand?" My mother agreed, "Ok, we'll talk to her father. He likes you very much. He's a nice man." She picked up the phone and called my current father-in-law. She told him that I liked his daughter and that I wanted to go out with her. He said, "He's her cousin. He can take her anytime he wants. I have nothing against it." So we started going out for a while. In a couple of

months we decided to get engaged. We were engaged for about a year. We went out together and had good times. Then I got married.

During my engagement period, I started looking for a job. That's when I got my job at the Palace Hotel. I spent my whole day with my fiancée and the night at the Palace. I wasn't making enough money, so I decided to take another job. I bought a very small car for about 2000 shekels. The Gulf War started then. I started taking merchandise--cosmetics and perfume--from Tel Aviv to the West Bank. I sold it through my uncle who was a wholesaler and made a profit of 15-20%. That improved my income. I managed to pay for my marriage and rent an apartment in Beit Jalla for \$150 a month. This was almost my whole salary at the Palace Hotel! That wasn't enough. I needed more money, so I started helping my father-in-law. He was a carpenter in Beit Jalla. It was hard for him to get along in Jerusalem without a car. I had yellow (Jerusalem) plates on my car, so I started taking him around. I used the tape measure and dealt with his customers. I picked up carpentry for a couple of years.

All through this period, the business was either closed, or my dad would open for a couple of hours. He would sell 40 or 50 shekels worth of goods and make some pocket money. I had several jobs and managed to make 1500 or 2000 shekels a month. It was tiring, but fun. I felt I was really involved in the intifada. I felt that I was part of the Palestinian people because I had to suffer as well. I had to make every effort to survive. I learned how to survive just like any other Palestinian. I picked up a couple of professions during the intifada, that is carpentry and sales. It was a tiring, but nice experience. Later on during the intifada, we were allowed to open the Cafe Europe more. We were opened until four or five in the evening. There were leaflets specifically about the opening of restaurants. I decided I might as well give it a try, even though the economy was terrible. Tourism was terrible especially after the Gulf War, but an extra buck wouldn't hurt.

I was already deep in debt from the taxes. During that period, the Arnona people came and confiscated the business.<sup>2</sup> I wasn't there, but my father was. They took everything: the furniture, stereo, stored goods, shakers, fans and whatever they could find. They confiscated it. We didn't have money to pay what they were asking for, but we managed to get back part of what they took. They had to auction it to Russian immigrants. We managed to get back the chairs and tables. I remember it was a hassle. We had to pay back the debt. We paid some checks through my sister who works at the Hyatt Regency. She had to give them checks as a guarantee, so that they would give us what was left of the goods. I started paying the monthly checks for the Arnona. I managed to get out of it.

Then business started to pick up a little bit, depending on

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<sup>2</sup>Arnona is the Israeli property tax.



locals. We stayed open later and later. After the Gulf War and the Madrid conference, tourism started to pick up. We started seeing some tourists, and business became better. I had to drop my other jobs as a salesperson and carpenter. I came back full-time to the Cafe Europe and took over again. I certainly didn't have any money to renovate or improve the business. I had to keep things the way they were. I kept the prices very low to attract customers. The economy was bad; there was no good tourism. I had to depend on locals, and they can't pay what the tourists do.

My father and I managed; he helped me a lot. He's an old man, 64 now, but he was my only help. We managed to get things going again.

Now things are much better for us. I have some help in the kitchen, and I depend mainly on intellectuals in the society here, as well as foreigners who live and work here. The Cafe Europe is back. It is a place to meet interesting people. I am very happy with it. Psychologically, I am not too relaxed because this is not really what I wanted to do from the beginning. I really never had a chance to do what I wanted, which is medicine. I would like to study and keep up with new technology and research. In this kind of business, I never have a chance to pick up a magazine and read. I put in a lot of hours, and it doesn't pay off very well. We hardly make anything.

HHA: As a customer, I can say with certainty that Cafe Europe is one of the most wonderful places to visit in Jerusalem. What does it mean to you to deal with all these people? Tell us what the Cafe Europe has been through.

JAK: This is actually what keeps me going--seeing people like you coming to this place. It's my way out of all the troubles and hassles I've been through to keep this business going. It is a feeling of success when I see people like you, Dr. Hisham, coming to this place often. People feel comfortable and meet their friends. This has always kept me going. At least I'm doing something worthwhile. It is not just a business to make money. To me it is a place to hang out, where you can really be separated from the rest of the world. When you're inside the Cafe Europe, you don't have to worry about anything else outside. It's a nice, peaceful place. There is no hassle or disturbance. I try to maintain this feeling, this picture. People think I'm crazy in the way I do business at the Cafe Europe because I don't care much about the business side. I worry about keeping the place the way I want it to be--the same quality of clientele, the same atmosphere. A lot of people tell me that they've never heard of the place, even though they live in Jerusalem. When I tell them the place is thirty years old, they don't believe me. I don't advertise. I don't want just anyone to come into the Cafe Europe. It is my hang-out place. It is a special place, and I want to keep it that way. It isn't just for business. They think I'm crazy when I say this.

It is all because of my experience and ambitions. I didn't open this place to make business. I was tacked onto this place, so I'm trying to make the best of it. At the same time I don't want to hurt my ambitions, psychology or personality. I want the Cafe Europe to pay me enough money to keep me going and dreaming. That's what I'm doing.

HHA: This is the corner where you feel you want to be, at least at this stage. Once you spoke in passing about how you feel about the role of your father. He started the place, and you picked it up. It's a family tradition. How does it all feel to you?

JAK: This Cafe Europe started in 1961. It was a partnership between my father and my uncle. My uncle Sami is a sophisticated man who has been around the whole world. You know him very well. His partner was a very unexperienced, simple villager called Anton, who is my father. My father is a dedicated, honest, reliable person. He is a villager. Sami was a big shot, who couldn't stay in one place. But he had a dream and a plan. He put this place together. Sami planned the Cafe Europe and started it. He needed my father to stay here and run it, to do the hard work. Meanwhile he ran around the world. Sami couldn't stick to this place for long. There was no way on earth he could stay, so he wanted to sell out. My father was ready, and he bought the shares. My father became the sole owner of the business.

My father is illiterate. After he finished the third grade, his father died, so he had to take care of his brother and sister. He managed to put his brother through university. In the business, my father started speaking English with tourists. He learned the etiquette of the business and how to deal with the customers. He did very well. Sami stayed here and taught him for 4-5 years, which was quite a period. My father stayed here alone, but Sami's brothers (my uncles), who were young men, stayed around my father in the business. He employed them all, so it was a family business. My father was the owner/manager, and my uncles and brothers helped him.

It was a very popular business because during the 1960's, when the Jordanian government was here, there were no such places in town. There was no other place to have a margarita or a Manhattan or a dry martini. People had never heard of such things. This was Sami's idea. He brought ingredients from Frankfurt, Milano and the States. It was a very sophisticated and expensive place in the 1960's. It also had a very special clientele: actors such as Omar Sharif, ministers, the royal Hashemite family, deputies, doctors, lawyers, big shots, and people who got their education abroad. People came back and found this place to relate to. The Cafe Europe was a very hot, popular place. Things were easier then because of the sense of stability and protection. Nobody could hassle you at the Cafe Europe. A soldier stood outside and patrolled the area. Nobody could say no to a soldier. Now we have to protect ourselves. We do it by being very particular about our customers. It's a burden for

me now. Back then the door was always open. You could kick someone out if he gave you trouble. So many things are involved now.

I don't believe that the Cafe Europe belongs to me anymore. The Israeli government can come in and confiscate it any time they want. I don't have any legal protection. It's very scary. That kills your ambition. That's why I don't plan to enlarge or improve my business. Why should I? I might lose everything overnight. This explains why the Cafe Europe was better in the 1960's.

After the 1967 war, the Israeli government came in. The Cafe Europe couldn't go on the way it had because it had a new clientele. The new Jewish clientele that came here was very uncivilized. They had no Ben Yehuda or Tel Aviv at that time. Nothing was going on there. They didn't know what a hamburger or milkshake was. All they knew was falafel, hummous and black coffee. But they had the money, and they started to pour it into this part of town. We had to go down to their level. The Cafe Europe became just another place, a boring coffee shop. We had to let everyone in. We couldn't kick out a Jew or a teenager. The standard of the Cafe Europe went down. To make more money and suit his clientele, my father turn the upper floor into a disco. It became the only disco in Jerusalem, East and West. It was the only disco in town that stayed open on Fridays and Saturdays. We had people coming from all over the country, from Tel Aviv and Haifa, to the Cafe Europe. It became the most popular disco in town among Jews and Palestinians. But it wasn't the old Cafe Europe though. You couldn't sit there quietly and meet intelligent people. You couldn't have a sophisticated mixed drink or a nice ice cream. It became a fast place with teenagers. It was very crowded, and there were lots of problems. Sometimes there were fights. It was easier to run, though.

To tell you the truth, it made good money. That's how our father managed to pay for our education. We went to the best private schools in town. It was better money, but as a family, we weren't particularly happy about it. We wanted to get rid of it as soon as possible, but there was instability. We didn't know what was going to happen the next day. It remained a disco until 1983. It was not until I came back from the States that we decided to renovate and go back to the old Cafe Europe. That's where we are right now.

In 1983, my father told me to take over the business. He was too tired to go back into the cafe business. He had hearing problems, and he was in his 60's. He thought that the new generation could do new things. Unfortunately, he kicked back for a couple of years, but these were the worst years of his life. He was always a very active person, always the supporter and very strong. It hurt him to sit down and relax. Fortunately, I decided that he should come back to the business slowly. He came to help me, not only because I wanted him or because he needed to get back in the action, but we couldn't afford employees. He came back willingly and unwillingly. I really depend on him. He is a good cook. Many

customers like him a lot; they have seen him for years and years. The Cafe Europe keeps him going, I think. That's why I want him to stay here. His spirit is in it.

H: You came back from several trips abroad to the intifada. What did the intifada mean to you?

J: At first, I remember it was a very beautiful feeling to me. I had the same feeling as other Palestinians. It was the fulfillment of our dreams to be free. I thought we were close and that it was going to work. The start of the intifada was a good feeling. I felt like we needed it. I felt that this was the thing that would change my life, especially after my experience in Portugal. This would be my fight for identity. I quickly closed my business and refused to pay taxes. I participated in civil disobedience. I was happy to become a carpenter and a salesperson and a night receptionist. I really felt it would pay off. But then I started seeing how things were going the other direction and backfiring on us. Only then did I recognize that we were not going to be helped. I always knew that no one would help us as Palestinians, but I felt for a little while that we were strong enough. Things started getting worse and worse.

The Gulf War came. The reality of matters became apparent, even though deep inside I knew the reactions and intentions of other Arab countries, the West, and our own leadership. The Gulf War transformed my beliefs and feelings toward the whole situation in the Middle East. It took the last bit out of me and made the reality of our situation hit home. After the Gulf War, I started seeing the negative aspects of the intifada. What concerned me most was the psychological and social damage done to us. I felt that because I live here. I deal with people all the time, and I feel their spirits, reactions and attitudes. Unfortunately, it's not that I am hopeless right now, but I'm not too optimistic. I don't care much about having a Palestine anymore. I care about having a Palestinian people. I feel we're losing a lot. We're losing our close ties, culture and morality, very, very quickly. I feel sorry for the new Palestinian generation because nobody is paying attention to them. The new generation will hurt us a lot. It will be felt more in the next few years. I feel that we've never been any weaker as Palestinians. It's a tragedy because it kills your ambitions when you think you're weak. It kills your motives; you're desperate. This is what I'm feeling.

HHA: Can you give some examples of what makes you feel this way?

JAK: As a businessman, I can't make predictions. Therefore, I can't invest in my business. I can never enlarge it or plan in it because I have no protection and no rights. What is the use of a human being if he cannot plan, dream and think? That is what is happening to me right now. I can hardly dream and invest. I feel like I'm breathing, eating and working; that is all. I don't care if a customer

comes in anymore because it doesn't make much difference to me. It's a dangerous feeling. It kills the whole economy when businessmen think like this. Imagine this in terms of education and all aspects of our life.

HHA: What about the peace process? Has it made any difference in terms of people's thinking?

JAK: I have always believed that peace should have a chance. We should give peace time. While we're waiting, we should at least feel the breath of this peace. This is one thing we've never felt. On the contrary, every day things are getting worse, and no one does anything about it. I am supposed to be an intellectual and thinker. I should be more patient about it, but I'm a human being. You can only keep someone hungry for so long. We know that they are working on it, but there are no tangible results. I know that I am one of the luckiest Palestinians in this part of the world. We've lost a lot, but not in comparison to others.

I know my father-in-law was destroyed by the intifada. He depended in his carpentry work on Jerusalemite customers, mainly Jews. The closure of the West Bank prohibited him from coming to Jerusalem. He left a lot of business unfinished. He wasn't allowed to continue, so he couldn't collect his money. He lost hundreds of thousands of shekels. Now he can't get new business with new clients. He can't come over to Jerusalem, and he's not used to working with customers in the West Bank. He's one of the old carpenters, an artist. He's not used to doing cheap carpentry. He couldn't compete with other carpenters in the area, and he lost everything. He's in debt, a very simple man. He has no expenses at all now because he managed to marry off all his children. He lives with his wife and daughter now. His lifestyle is extremely simple. He doesn't go out or buy clothes or anything for his house. He eats and sleeps. He is a humble person without ambitions. He doesn't care for a Mercedes. He has a car that cost 2000 shekels. He's a typical Palestinian.

HHA: I know that you have a Jerusalem identity card. Do the soldiers at the checkpoint hassle you when you go in and out of the West Bank to Beit Jalla?

JAK: During the last four or five days, I have driven my car to Beit Jalla and parked it at my father-in-law's house. Then I walk to my house. I can't park my car in front of my house because there are rumors that the soldiers will come at night from door-to-door to register all i.d.'s of people in various houses. I don't want to be registered as living in Beit Jalla. I don't park my car in front of my house. I have told my neighbors to report that nobody is living in our apartment. I've decided not to open up the door if the soldiers come; they will have to break into the house. This is how I've been living the past few days.

A couple of weeks ago I had to stay in Jerusalem with my parents. We couldn't go to Beit Jalla, but then I got tired. I wanted a change of clothes and a decent shower. I wanted to relax and stay up late. I decided to shut off the lights and park the car away from our house so they wouldn't find me in the apartment. It is all quite tiring. It involves a lot of frustration and tension.

Three nights ago my neighbor knocked on my door at 12:30 at night to warn me that the soldiers were in the next neighborhood. I jumped out of bed, got dressed and drove my car to my father-in-law's house. I left the car there. I couldn't find a ride home, so I had to walk home at one o'clock in the morning.

HHA: How do all of these experiences compare to your years in the States?

JAK: Whenever I talk to Americans about this, I always explain to them how lucky they are. As Palestinians, we don't know what we are missing, and Americans don't know what they are gaining. I believe that we live in a jungle. We are never looked upon as human beings. We are treated as animals. Even pets in the street are treated better than Palestinians here. This is from my personal experience. I believe that this is a very uncivilized world, and we are victims of this so-called new world order. Unfortunately, the American government manipulates the lives of peoples like us for the sake of oil, money and personal interest. The average American doesn't know what is going on and what the government is doing with his tax money all over the world. I can't see how I can compare my life in the States with my life here. I suppress my memories of life there.

I always say that I will never be dumb enough to send my son abroad to get his education. I would be hurting him more than helping him, especially if he comes back. After I came back, I was alienated from my own people. I'm living with these contradictions in my relationships and my business. I really have to fight. I feel that my life as a Palestinian has no value here. I feel I have no ambitions or dreams. When I was a student in the States, I did more. I was more important and functional and happy, even with the little I had. Now it is so sad. This reflects not only my feelings, but the feelings of my friends and people I have met. Many people have gone to the States and returned. The worst part about it is that we can't do anything. We try, but we can't change things here. Foreign powers beyond our reach control our lives and destinies. We were unlucky enough to be born in the third world. It's an accident of birth. I could have done so much if I had stayed in the States. I had no responsibilities then. I was energetic; I had my dreams. I was a very active member of society. I was an active, important person in Kansas. It was easy for me to make it. I had different businesses in the States. I returned here with experience and languages and talents, but I hardly make a living. This doesn't help me psychologically.

HHA: In your view, what does the future hold? Where are people going?

JAK: I think that things in Palestine are going to get much worse because I don't think there will ever be peace. The intifada and the occupation have created a big disease among both the Jews and the Palestinians. As for the Jews, they became very insecure, proud and megalomaniac. That's very dangerous, especially if you track their history. Twenty years ago they had nothing, and now they're starting to place themselves among the superpowers. Hatred and crime play a big part in the Jewish society. They have a sense of superiority. The new generation of Palestinians have grown up in misery. The intifada generation has been out of school and university. They have seen a lot of blood; they are more aggressive, insecure, untrusting and very independent.

All these factors add up to the fact that these people will not just stand still in the face of the injustice that has been done to them. They are politically experienced enough to understand that they need to relax a bit and collect their powers. They will fight back because justice will never be done. There is no equilibrium in the equation of peace between the Palestinians and Israelis.

I always compare it to a treaty between a father and a little boy. Unfortunately, we are the little boy. We cannot negotiate with our father since we are very little. The moment he gets tired of us, he tells us to shut up and take it or leave it. That will happen. The moment this little boy grows to be a young man, he will tell his father, "I'm not going to take this shit anymore." Excuse the language. The boy will retaliate and fight back. This is the equation. A real peace can be negotiated only by equal powers. Might is right, believe it or not. That is why I have no hopes for this peace treaty. They say that the whole world is behind it, but why would the whole world back this treaty? So that Israel signs peace treaties with the other Arab countries? Why would America pay for the Palestinians to have jeeps and police forces? Why should Europe do that? To me, it is a matter of time. I don't think this peace treaty will last for long.

HHA: What about the internal problems within Palestinian society?

JAK: Yes, we have internal problems just like any other society, but I don't think they are so devastating. They will be controlled because Palestinians are experienced politically. They know that they must solve their own problems. I've never believed that there will be internal fighting among Palestinians. They've been fighting the same enemy for so long. They come from the same background, the same factions. I doubt that there will really be big internal problems. I think we are above this. Gaza has proved this already. Every time things start to get out of control, the leaders sit down, talk and bring things under control.

HHA: Over ten years ago, you were a traitor. The man at the Jordanian office stormed in your face and prevented you from going to Egypt to pursue your studies. What happened to the dream?

JAK: The dream is still there. I might not try to fulfill it through my own person. I hope that when I have children, I will help them to fulfill their own dreams. I might not fulfill my dream of becoming a doctor. If I ever have kids, I will help them fulfill their dreams. Maybe a son of mine will decide to be a doctor. That would be a miracle. I will see myself in my son.

What I have learned is that life goes on. We might as well try to make the best of what we have. I learned to live day by day. For today, I've done what I have to do. Tomorrow I will try my best. I am sure that at least 90% of the Palestinian people had the same sort of dreams, and they were never fulfilled. Still they are going and working. They fulfill some of their children's and brothers' dreams. It is the nature of our people to be givers. I can see it through my father. He deprived himself to fulfill my needs and dreams. I believe I am part of this society. It is my nature to give, and by giving I fulfill some of my dreams. The happiness of others is my dream.

Every time I'm in a hospital or speaking with a doctor, I always see myself in his shoes. I think of being in that hospital or operating room. I was so close, and then I was deprived. I was deprived for silly, silly reasons. Everything that happened to me was a lie, a bad dream. I always wanted to wake up from the nightmare. Unfortunately, this is the reality of the matter. In the States, I learned that life goes on. That is what keeps me going. When I think about Jordan, I can't believe that such a silly problem changed my whole career.

I hope I am mistaken and that things will change. I hope there will be peace in this part of the world. We need it; we're dying for it. I can't imagine a peaceful life in this part of the world. We don't know what peace is anymore. We are used to a state of war and enmity and depression. We've forgotten what life is about. The sad thing is that this state of war has become a part of our lifestyle.