

History told by the vanquished: A critical reading of 1947-1948 war diaries as historical sources⁽¹⁾

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Few studies and historical texts, especially in Arabic, discuss the battles fought over the coastal city of Jaffa during the 1947 - 1949 War. But alongside these few works, there do exist memoirs and autobiographies written by various characters active in the city during the same period. These texts are very important to writing the history of the first part of the War (December 1947 - 15 May 1948). Given the prominence of autobiographies and memoirs as sources, recent critical studies have considered their place in Palestinian historiography as a whole.⁽³⁾ Using a group of archival documents telling the story of the garrison of Jaffa and the role it played in the trajectory of the battle, I have worked to write the history of the garrison's military activities from December 1947 to April 1948. The central thesis of this work is that Jaffan memoirs – like most of those written about the war, at least in its first stage – are written from the perspective of the defeated. This has a negative effect on the accuracy of the information, comments, conclusions and assessments presented by these memoirs. Overall, these documents end up being accusatory or self-justifying, and must thus be approached with care.

Memoirs

Palestinian historiography

Jaffa Nakba

Palestinian history

Few studies and few historical texts, especially in Arabic, discuss the battles fought over the coastal city of Jaffa⁽⁴⁾ during the 1947 - 1949 War.⁽⁵⁾ But alongside these few works there do exist memoirs

and autobiographies written by various characters active in the city to a greater or lesser extent during the period. Most of these date from after the city's fall in May 1948 and after the end of the War more

1 This study was originally presented at the ACRPS's conference titled "Seventy Years Since the Nakba: Memory and History", which was held in May 12-14, 2018. It is set to be released in an Arabic book by the same title.

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3 See for example Issam Nassar and Salim Tamari (ed.), *Dirāsāt fī ṭ-Tārīkh al-Ijtīmā'ī li-Bilād ash-Shām: Qirā'āt fī ṣ-Siyar wa ṣ-Siyar adh-Dhātīyya* (Beirut: Mu'assasat ad-Dirāsāt al-Filistīniyya, 2007); Mahir Sharif and Qays Zirli, *as-Siyar adh-Dhātīyya fī Bilād ash-Shām* (Damascus: Dār al-Madā, al-Ma'had al-Faransī li'sh-Sharq al-Adnā, 2009).

4 For a short introduction to Jaffa, see "Yāfā" in Abdelhadi Hashim (ed.), *al-Mawsū'a al-Filistīniyya (al-Qism al-'Amm)* (Damascus: Hay'at al-Mawsū'a al-Filistīniyya, 1984), vol. 4, pp. 607 - 615. For more details on the history of Jaffa, see: Mustafa Dabbagh, *Bilādunā Filistīn* part 4, *Fī d-Diyār al-Yāfiyya* (Kafr Qar', Dār al-Hudā, 1991), pp. 95 - 300. For a discussion of Ottoman Jaffa, see: Hasan Ibrahim Saeed, *Yāfā min al-Ghawz an-Nābulūnī ilā Ḥamlat Ibrahīm Bāshā (1799-1831)*, 2ed. (Beirut: Mu'assasat ad-Dirāsāt al-Filistīniyya, 2008), vol. 1, pp. 54-164; Mark Levine, *Overthrowing Geography Jaffa, Tel Aviv, And The Struggle for Palestine, 1880-1948* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), pp. 28 - 60.

5 The best-known of these texts include Aref Al Aref, "Ma'ārik Yāfā 02/12/1947 - 13/05/1948," *an-Nakba, Nakbat Bayt al-Maqdis wa 'l-Firdaws al-Mafqūd, 1947-1949*, part 1, *Min Qarār at-Taqsīm 29/11/1947 ilā bid' al-Hudna al-Ūlā 11/06/1948*, Waleed Al Khalidi int. (Beirut: Mu'assasat ad-Dirāsāt al-Filistīniyya, 2012), pp. 218-259; Waleed Al Khalidi, "Wathā'iq Mukhtāra 'an Ḥarb 1948, Ādhār/Māris - Ayyār/Māyō, *Majallat ad-Dirāsāt al-Filistīniyya*, 9:34 (spring 1998, 19-84), pp. 77 - 85.

generally.⁽⁶⁾ These texts are completely important when writing the history of the first part of the War (December 1947 - 15 May 1948). This stage, in which Palestinians played the leading role, was brought to an end by the loss of scores of Palestinian positions, including the major cities of Jaffa and Haifa and large parts of Jerusalem. With these defeats the Palestinians lost most of the documentation covering Palestinian history before and during the war. Those seeking to study this period have been forced to look for alternative sources or to suffice themselves with the limited documentary evidence available as did Aref Al Aref (1891-1973). The most important of these sources are autobiographies and memoirs.

Given the prominence of autobiographies and memoirs as sources, recent critical studies have considered their place in Palestinian historiography as a whole.⁽⁷⁾ Some of these studies are based on comparative readings of autobiographies and archival documents: Mahir Sharif's work, for example, tests the credibility of memoirs as a source for the Communist Movement in Palestine by putting them into dialogue with relevant Comintern documents.⁽⁸⁾ But given the absence of Arab documentary evidence – particularly concerning the first stage of the war – comparative studies of this kind dealing with the war itself are few in number and offer only limited critique.⁽⁹⁾

At the beginning of 2016 I acquired a group of archival documents telling the story of the garrison of Jaffa and the role it played in the trajectory of the

battle. These documents were part of the garrison's records, which were seized after the defeat and deposited in the Israeli archives. Since then, I have been working to write the history of the garrison's military activities from December 1947 to April 1948, using the available primary sources (Arab, Zionist and British documents, Arabic and Hebrew newspapers, oral testimony and memoirs). Thanks to how detailed the historical materials on the garrison are, it is both possible and necessary to place Jaffa memoirs in dialogue with these materials in order to test the usefulness of these sources and how much they add to the history of the war in Jaffa specifically and the first stage of the war in general.

We thus come to this paper, which is the product of two years of research still being updated and expanded. Its central thesis is that Jaffan memoirs – like most of those written about the war, at least in its first stage – are written from the perspective of the defeated. They cover the last days of Jaffa and its defeat. The effect of defeat in Jaffa is amplified by that of the greater defeat embodied by the end of the war, the loss of their lands and their expulsion. This has a negative effect on the accuracy of the information, comments, conclusions and assessments presented by these memoirs. Overall, these documents end up being accusatory or self-justifying, and must thus be approached with care.

The paper consists of two sections. The first gives a summary of the months of fighting in Jaffa

6 C.f. The memoirs of Jaffa Mayor Yusuf Haykal, taken from his *Madīnat az-Zuhūr (Yāfā)* and published in: Yusuf Haykal, "Yāfā fī Sanawāt al-Akhīra," *Yāfā 'Aṭru Madīna*, Imtiyaz Diab ed. (Beirut: Dār al-Fatā'l-'Arabī; Nazareth: Markaz Yāfā li'l-Abhāth, 1991), pp. 29 - 56. Another work by Haykal also covers moments from the war: *Jalasāt fī Raghadān* (Amman: Dār al-Jalīl, 1988), pp. 9-23; the memoirs of Salah al-Nazir, a member of the National Committee and one of the leaders responsible for the safety of the city published in Salah al-Nazir, "Suqūt Yāfā bi-Yad al-Yahūd," *Yāfā li'l-Abad Kamā 'Ashahā Nāṣir ad-Dīn al-Nashāhibī, Ṣalāh Ibrāhīm an-Nāzīr, Muḥammad Sa'īd Ishkantnā* (Beirut: al-Mu'assasa al-'Arabiyya li'd-Dirāsāt wa'n-Nashr, 2013: 69-100); the journalist Muhammad Saeed Ishkantna, published in the same book as "Asrār Suqūt Yāfā: Sijill Tārīkhī Yafḍaḥu'l-Mu'amarāt 'alā 'Arūs Yāfā," Hashim Al Sab', *Dhikrayāt Ṣaḥāfi Muḍṭahad al-Juz' al-Awwal* (Jerusalem: [self published], 1953); Muhammad Nimr al-Huwari, *Sirr an-Nakba* (Nazareth: Maṭba'at al-Ḥakīm, 1955); Fawzi Qawuqji, *Mudhakkirāt Fawzī al-Qāwuqjī 1890-1988*, edited by Khayriyye Qasimiyye, 2nd ed with accompanying documents (Damascus: Dar an-Numayr, 1995), pp. 349, 371 - 388. See also the memories recorded in *Yāfā 'Aṭru Madīna*, such as Ahmad Abu Laban, pp. 107-108; Ahmad Abderrahim, pp. 115 - 126. See also the following memoirs written by inhabitants of the city who witnessed parts of the war: Tamam al-Akhal, *al-Yad Tarā wa'l-Qalb Yarsum: Sirat Tamām al-Akhal wa-Isimā'il Shammūt*, edited by Ghanim Bibi, introduction by Elias Khoury (Beirut: Mu'assasat ad-Dirāsāt al-Filistīniyya, 2016); Shafiq al-Hut, *Bayn al-Waṭan wa'l-Manfā: Min Yāfā Badā al-Mishwār* (Beirut: Riyad Al Rayyes, 2007); Eric Rolo ed., *Filistīnī bilā Huwwiyya: Ṣalāh Khalaf Abu Iyād, Sayakūnu lanā Dhāt Yawm Waṭan*, edited by Fuad Abu Hajle, 2nd ed (Amman, Dār al-Jalīl li'n-Nashr wa'd-Dirāsāt wa'l-Abhāth al-Filistīniyya, 1996); Khayri Abu'l-Jabeen, *Ḥikāyāt 'an Yāfā* (Amman: Dār ash-Shurūq li'n-Nashr wa't-Tawzī', 2008).

7 See for example Issam Nassar and Salim Tamari (ed.), *Dirāsāt fī'l-Tārīkh al-Ijtimā'ī li-Bilād ash-Shām: Qirā'at fī's-Siyar wa's-Siyar adh-Dhātīyya* (Beirut: Mu'assasat ad-Dirāsāt al-Filistīniyya, 2007); Mahir Sharif and Qays Zirli, *as-Siyar adh-Dhātīyya fī Bilād ash-Shām* (Damascus: Dār al-Madā, al-Ma'had al-Faransī li'sh-Sharq al-Adnā, 2009).

8 See the conclusion of Sharif's *Tārīq al-Kifāh fī Filistīn wa'l-Mashriq al-'Arabī: Mudhakkirāt al-Qā'id ash-Shuyū'ī Maḥmūd al-Aṭrash al-Maghribī (1903-1939)* (Beirut: Mu'assasat ad-Dirāsāt al-Filistīniyya, 2015), pp. 349 - 359.

9 Similarly, many studies have discussed oral history as a source for studying the 1947 - 1949 war. The most prominent examples of studies comparing Zionist archival material with oral histories include Kobi Bilid, "ash-Shahādāt ash-Shafawīyya wa'l-Maṣādir al-Arshīfiyya wa'l-Ḥarb al-'Arabiyya - al-Isrā'īliyya fī Sanat 1948: Naẓra 'an Kathab ilā Iḥtilāl Qaryat Fassūta al-Jalīliyya," *Majallat ad-Dirāsāt al-Filistīniyya 110* (Spring 2017), pp. 110 - 137.

(December 1947-May 1948), highlighting the formation of the garrison and its military activities from the beginning of hostilities until its dissolution in May 1948 and giving a general description of the context in which the Battle for Jaffa took place. It also introduces the memoirs that are discussed in the second section. The second section juxtaposes

these memoirs with archival documents concerning the garrison's activities, in order to examine how these memoirs became vehicles for accusation or self-justification and how this affects the accuracy of the information and analysis they contain. The conclusion then discusses the extent to which this thesis can be generalised to other similar contexts.

Jaffa at War (December 1947-May 1948) Formation of the Arab and Zionist Fronts (December 1947-February 1948)⁽¹⁰⁾

The Arab and Zionist lines began to emerge during the strike that began on December 19 with the announcement of the UN Partition Plan, with local inhabitants and the first organised groups of defenders throwing up fortifications in the border areas. By the time the strike ended thirty days later, the neighbourhoods of Manshiyeh (north), Jbaliyyeh (south), Suknet Darwish and Tel Errish (southeast) and Abu Kbir (east) all had preliminary fortifications. From January through February, most confrontations between Arab and Zionist fighters took place in these areas from behind these fortifications, which gradually developed into fully-fledged frontlines that would remain in place until the defeat of Jaffa.

Confrontations took various different forms. Armed clashes took place on an almost daily basis, alongside the constant sniping operations that formed the most prominent element of conflict during the first few weeks. Arab fighters also targeted Zionist supply lines in the city's suburbs and hinterland – which were the first points of contact – along the Jerusalem-Jaffa road and the route connecting Tel Aviv and the southern suburbs. The Zionists responded first by deploying armoured cars and subsequently by building alternative roads like the security road connecting Bat Yam and Tel Aviv, which cut across the sand dunes far from the villages and the Arab positions. These were solutions they had previously deployed alongside the British Mandatory Authority to protect supply lines during the 1936 - 1939 Revolt. They also made use of experience in building desert roads gained during the Second World War.

Alongside these daily operations, a few major – and exceptional – battles also took place on the city's

various battlefronts. But all of the tit-for-tat special operations launched in December 1947 and January 1948 were limited in both size and geographical area, despite constant Zionist complaints regarding the Haganah's poor performance in the Tel Aviv area and its relative inability to launch retributive attacks in Jaffa and its environs compared to other areas of Palestine. This is attributable to the dearth of organised forces capable of conducting broader attacks on both the Arab and Zionist sides and the lack of the requisite weaponry.

By early February the Arab lines in Jaffa had been placed under the permanent command of the Commander of the Eastern Sector of the Central Zone, Hasan Ali Salameh (1913-1948), having briefly been supervised by the lawyer Mohammad Nimr al-Huwari (1909-1990), head of the Arab Youth Organisation (*Munazzamat ash-Shabāb al-'Arab*) in Jaffa and leader of the city's Committee of Safety (*Majlis al-Amn*). They were supported by various local personalities, most prominently Salah Ibrahim Al Nazer (1910-1992) and Mustafa Rashid Al Taher (1908-1981), both members of the National Committee, and Sheikh Hasan Hassouneh (1902-1995). By this point, the area targeted by the Zionists had expanded beyond the border neighbourhoods that had seen the first clashes, encompassing new areas like Madhbah Elbaladi and Karam Ettout (east) from mid-January onwards.

On the Zionist side the frontlines in the Jaffa/Tel Aviv area were quick to settle because there was an organised military structure that had been built up over a number of years (although it became clear during the first few months of the war and the period

¹⁰ This brief overview is based on previous work by the author. See the chapter titled "Fajran Aqla'nā: Faṣl 'An Inṭilāqat Muqāwamat Yāfā" in Bilal Mohammed Shalash, *Yāfā Damm 'Alā Ḥajar... Ḥāmiyat Yāfā Wa Fi 'luhā al-'Askarī: Dirāsāt Wathā'iq* (Beirut: ACRPS, 2018).

immediately before that this organisation suffered from a number of problems which negatively affected its performance in practice). The group with the largest

presence in the Jaffa region was the Haganah, whose forces were spread out over five different fronts. The Irgun and Lehi had a less significant presence.

Arab and Zionist military action in Jaffa (February-May 1948)⁽¹¹⁾

In the second third of February 1948 Jaffa received Arab League reinforcements, coinciding with the arrival of the first non-Palestinian Arab garrison commander after the Military Committee's restructuring of the leadership of Arab forces across Palestine. This presence had an obvious effect on the garrison, whose numbers and quality of equipment were dramatically strengthened; military operations were now stepped up. During this period (February-May 1948) the day-to-day war of the barricades continued to be the dominant form of military activity for the garrison. This kind of operation suited the priorities of the Military Committee, for whom the garrison's role was restricted to defence until such time as sufficient forces arrived to go on the offensive. It also suited the garrison's limited equipment, supplied almost exclusively by the Military Committee alongside a few guns purchased on the local market or manufactured in Jaffa itself.

Nonetheless, the garrison's fighters continued to carry out a series of exceptional operations at a greater intensity than those seen during the early clashes. The main aim of these exceptional operations was reinforcing the garrison's defensive position, with occasional special operations intended to respond to the enemy's increasingly frequent central assaults. The garrison also occasionally made use of locally-made artillery and missile launchers to bombard areas under enemy control in order to achieve some form of deterrence parity and in order to respond in kind to attacks on Arab areas using the newly-made Davidka cannon. Most of the enemy's central assaults were repelled successfully, although they sometimes succeeded in breaching the city's defences and destroyed much of the Arab neighbourhoods along with their fortifications. The Zionist forces were better organised and better armed, particularly with the introduction of the Davidka.

But even with reinforcements, the garrison was not strong enough to decisively win the battle for the city. The fight was not limited to Jaffa itself – it was taking place across Palestine. These battles intensified during April as the British withdrawal drew closer and the USA's commitment to the partition plan decreased somewhat. The Zionists launched a series of attacks with the aim of occupying several strategically important villages and cities, the most important of which were the fall of Tabarna and Haifa alongside parts of Jerusalem; the British authorities either remained silent or actively colluded with these efforts. These attacks showed the enemy's growing offensive capabilities and the superiority of its equipment, which was strengthened by the arrival in April of Czechoslovakian armour plating. This coincided with important Arab losses, most importantly the death of the most prominent Palestinian leader, Abdelqadir Musa Al-Husayni (1908-8 April 1948) and the failure of the Mishmar Haemek (4-17 April) and Ramat Yohanan (11-18 April) offensives.

The Zionists saw similar successes close to Jaffa in April, levelling the Western Sector headquarters and occupying one of the most strategically important areas around Jaffa, the Tel Litwinsky Camp, the first step towards encirclement of the city. The Haganah planners seem to have been set on beginning the Battle for Jaffa from outside by occupying the Arab hinterland and cutting off its links with the outside world, allowing them to tighten their stranglehold on the city and force it to surrender. Given the nature of the defensive strategy the garrison were forced to adopt, the city could do no more than wait to discover its fate. Some leaders of the garrison were aware of the need to reinforce the garrison so as to narrow the growing gap between the city's defensive capabilities and the offensive capabilities of the enemy, and to make it capable of launching its own offensive to break the siege. These feelings grew stronger with every successful Zionist offensive.

¹¹ This brief summary is based on the chapters "Shuhūr al-Istinzāf: Faṣl 'an Bunyat Ḥāmiyat Yāfā wa-Fi'lihā al-'Askārī Shubāṭ/Fibrāyir – Nīsān/Abrīl 1948" and "Laylu'l-Manshiya: Faṣl 'an al-Hazīma", from the author's *Yāfā Dam 'ala Ḥajar*, vol 1.

But the Arab Military Committee's limited resources and the length of the frontlines – especially in key areas like Jerusalem and Haifa – prevented such measures being taken. By the time that the Military Committee realised that it needed to change its strategy and go on the offensive, it was too late. And the repeated calls of some local inhabitants for the Arab Legion to intervene and reinforce the city's defensive and offensive capabilities fell on deaf ears.

On 25 April 1948 the Irgun launched a major offensive with the aim of occupying Manshiyeh, which they hoped to use as a forward base for the occupation of Jaffa as a whole. The offensive was accompanied by unusually heavy random mortar fire targeting the various neighbourhoods of the city. The garrison repulsed the offensive on 25 April and again on the following day. On 27 April a third attempt was

made, coinciding this time with a Haganah offensive (Operation Hametz) aiming to occupy several neighbourhoods as well as some of the surrounding villages. But this attack too was repulsed on 28 April, inflicting severe losses on the attacking force in Tel Errish, and the British Army intervened to force Irgun forces who had penetrated Manshiyeh to withdraw. The British forces then imposed a general ceasefire across Jaffa.

However, the garrison's successes and the British intervention were not enough to stop the flow of refugees fleeing the city or the successive breakdown of the garrison that had begun during the most recent battle. On 5 May the British colonial government proclaimed Jaffa an open city. This proclamation brought an end to the battle for Jaffa. On 14 May the Haganah successfully occupied the city after five months of fighting.

The Writings of the Vanquished: Defences and Accusations

As previously noted, there are several Jaffan autobiographies and memoirs available. Some of their authors played an active or pivotal role in the administration of the city and its security affairs during the War. Yousuf Mustafa Haykal (1907-1989), for example, was the Head of the Municipality; Salah-Nazir was a member of the Jaffa National Committee as well as being one of the people responsible for the management of the garrison, later serving as an Internal Administration Officer. Muhammad Nimr Al-Huwari was the head of the Jaffa Arab Youth Organisation and of the city's Committee of Safety. Some authors, on the other hand, were eyewitnesses to the events of the war as experienced by the city. Muhammad Sa'id Ishkantna (1930-[1960]) was an 'opposition' journalist, as was Hashim Abdullah Al Sabe' (1912-1957); Rashad Muhammad Arfeh (1914-2005) was a member of the Youth Organisation and of its military wing.

These texts were written at various times from the early 1950s onwards. The majority were produced a relatively long time after the final defeat had taken place, when their authors had found new jobs, and this inevitably reflects on their content. Like most

autobiographies, they suffer from a number of problems. They are subjective, in that they reflect the personality and experiences of their authors and events in them revolve around this single central personality. They also suffer from problems of memory and an inability to recall the past as it was. Many of them, as we will see, conflate different events and times. And there is a noticeable tendency here as elsewhere in autobiography to deliberately forget or to remember selectively, and for memory to cast its protagonist in a favourable light as well as viewing their story through the lens of the present.¹²

But as noted above, the most significant problem in these texts as sources in the history of the 1947 - 1949 War, particularly its first phase, is that they tend to take the form of lists of accusations or of defences. Their writers – especially those who were in positions of responsibility during the War – seek to absolve themselves while placing the blame on others. Pursuit of this aim produces a particularly high frequency of both outright forgetting and selective memory, as well as tendentious analyses, even if they approximate actual events.

12 See: Khayriyye Qasimiyye, "al-Mudhakkirāt wa's-Siyar adh-Dhātīyya Maṣḍaran li-Tārīkh Filistīn fi'l-Qarn al-'Ashrīn," *Dirāsāt fi'l-Tārīkh al-Ijtīmā'ī li-Bilād ash-Shām: Qirā'āt fi's-Siyar wa's-Siyar adh-Dhātīyya*, edited by Issam Nassar and Salim Tamari (Beirut: Mu'assasat ad-Dirāsāt al-Filistīniyya, 2007), pp. 44 - 66. Compare with the methodological insights provided by Dr. Kawtharani in the same book: "Ishkālāt az-Zaman at-Tārīkhī fi Qirā'at al-Mudhakkirāt: Mudhakkirāt Jamāl ad-Dīn al-Qāsīmī wa-Mushāhadātuh," *Dirāsāt fi'l-Tārīkh al-Ijtīmā'ī*, pp. 33 - 34.

What follows is an attempt to demonstrate this problem in practice through three examples juxtaposing the content of autobiographical texts with the information provided by selected archival documents. The first example is taken from Muhammad Nimr Al-Huwari's account of how he became head of the Committee of Safety and later his dismissal and the Council's dissolution. This issue is raised in much of the historical literature on Jaffa as well as other Palestinian autobiographies in order to accuse the Higher Arab Committee (*al-Hay'a al-'Arabiyya al-'Ulyā*) and its leader Hajj Muhammad Amin Al-Husayni (1895-1974) of suppressing opposition and exacerbating social divisions during the War. The second example considers the autobiographies' praise for and defence of garrison commander Abdelwahhab Al Sheikh as compared to the accusations they level at Lt. Colonel Adil Najmeddin, the commander of the joint Arab force. The third example considers accusations made against the Iraqi fighters and officers sent to reinforce the garrison and attempts to place responsibility for the failed defence of the city on their shoulders.

Huwari, accuser/accused

"We gathered together feeling sick to our stomachs because of how bad the situation was. We decided to try and put an end to our [internal] strife... paying no heed to the rumours spread about us by the unjust leadership among the ignorant masses, who in moments of anger seize their finest sons and hand them over to tyrants, and who oppress their redeemers and revivers because they are drowning in a sea of humiliation."⁽¹³⁾

Muhammad Nimr al-Huwari begins his account of the outbreak of the war in Jaffa by accusing Al Hajj Amin Al-Husayni and his supporters of spreading "strife" (*fitna*) in collaboration with the British force stationed there. The reader is given to understand that Huwari was working to put an end to this strife

and to further the cause of peace, justifying his later welcoming of a Haganah representative.⁽¹⁴⁾ He makes a series of accusations against Husayni and the Higher Arab Committee as well as the newly-formed National Committee in Jaffa and Rafiq al-Tamimi:

"All of them would flit over to Lebanon to take instructions from the Big Man [Husayni], who was observing the conflict from a short distance. And what sort of instructions are to be expected from the head of strife to its fins, from the furnace to its lackeys, from a murderer to a butcher, to the agents of al-Hajjaj⁽¹⁵⁾ in the days of strife and revolution? The results are well known: a stray bullet, a clever plot, and then denunciations and pleas for mercy. And then hypocritical mourning⁽¹⁶⁾ from those who have "mourned" many others before them."⁽¹⁷⁾

The reader imagines Husayni and his supporters, with the help of the "ignorant masses", imprisoning the members of the movement opposed to "strife"; that from the moment that the National Committee delegation returned from Lebanon at the beginning of December the order to kill Huwari (the leader of this movement) had been issued. He or she will be shocked to discover, then, that Huwari was officially tasked with responsibility for the security of the city by Husayni himself! The letter – delivered by Rafiq al-Tamimi after the Jaffa delegation's return on 5 December – charges Huwari with cooperating with the National Committee in order to preserve the lives and property of the city's inhabitants.⁽¹⁸⁾

It was on the authority provided by this letter that Huwari formed the Jaffa Committee of Safety. He repeatedly emphasised this authority in his addresses to the inhabitants of Jaffa, as in his speech of 10 December 1947, in which he noted that the Higher Committee in Lebanon had ordered him to preserve the safety of the city.⁽¹⁹⁾ But in his memoirs, Huwari dispenses with this paradox by describing the

13 Al-Huwari, *Siyar an-Nakba*, pp. 36 - 37.

14 Ibid, p. 41.

15 TN: The reference here is to Al Hajjaj ibn Yusuf, an ostensibly tyrannical governor of Iraq in the classical period.

16 TN: Literally "walking in funeral processions". This is a reference to a popular expression, "he kills a man and walks in his funeral procession" – i.e. acts with flagrant hypocrisy.

17 Ibid, pp. 37 - 38.

18 Ibid, p. 38.

19 "Ijtimā' Majlis al-Amn fī Yāfā, Qarār at-Taqsīm Sayazallu Hibran 'Alā Waraq", *Filiṣṭīn*, 11 December 1947, p. 2. See also: *ad-Difā'*, 11 December 1947, p. 2., and the speech as given in *ash-Sha'b*, 11 December 1947, p. 4.

deterioration of relations with the National Committee and Tamimi, the HAC's representative, driven by a series of disagreements. These disagreements revolved around allegations that the Committee had hidden weapons from him and did not consult him on the truce with the Jews as well as Tamimi's opposition to Huwari's overstepping of his remit by attempting to raise money from the city's inhabitants directly, circumventing the National Committee.⁽²⁰⁾

Huwari's fiercest criticisms of the Higher Arab Committee and its leaders appear in his discussion of his disagreements with the National Committee and HAC after they discovered he had met with a delegate from the Haganah. In this section Huwari is attempting to do two things. Firstly, he is trying to justify his meeting with the Haganah: his public persona as an anti-"strife" advocate states that he agreed "to put an end to strife and effect a ceasefire, with each of us working on his own side, so that things could be set aright."⁽²¹⁾ Secondly, he is publically accusing the HAC and the National Committee by emphasising discussions like those he had with Hasan Salameh summarising his dispute with the HAC:

"I have no personal dispute with any of them. But there was a hostility on matters of principle, a hatred born of their ignorance, pride and shortcomings, their disorganisation, their selfishness, factionalism, nepotism and frivolity – and of the fact that they were clearly no more than puppets and idols. [... As for the National Committee], it was a microcosm of the HAC. Moreover, all of them were greedy and keen to enrich themselves off the backs of the poor and innocent, from the piles of meat and rivers of blood flowing through the Holy Land."⁽²²⁾

Huwari personalises some of the accusations further when discussing individual members of the National Committee like Muhammad Saleem Abullaban, Haj Khalid al-Farkh, Muhammad Nimr Awdeh, Salah al-Nazir. He sets forth the various objections he had to the actions of the National Committee – implying

that these acts were no more than theft of Jaffans' property – such as their imposition of taxes, their refusal to let anyone enter or leave the city, and his general opposition to the collection of any subsidies or subscriptions by any Committee.⁽²³⁾

There are various contradictions between Huwari's autobiography, his speeches and his actions as covered by various historical sources such as newspapers, and sometimes other parts of the same autobiography. Some of the discussions he cites must also have been fabricated because they discuss issues that were not yet on the table – such as the ban on leaving or entering the city. But this aside, Huwari's autobiography can also be juxtaposed with other sources showing a public rhetoric quite unlike the "peacemaker" image presented in his memoirs, as well as behaviour not in keeping with the attitudes he describes there. The first document of this kind is the Jaffa Committee of Safety's first proclamation, published in local newspapers on 12 December 1948 under the title "Proclamation of the Jaffa Committee of Safety to the Jaffan People: Obedience, Order and Courage are the Duty of Every Arab Today."⁽²⁴⁾

This proclamation shows Huwari's public rhetoric as Head of the Committee of Safety rather than as peacemaker. Zionist gangs are responsible for a major breach of the peace, murderers of innocent Arabs and destroyers of property. Arabs are praised for their patience and levelheadedness. The Zionist project aims to burgle the Arabs in their homes; "they hope to colonise our souls, rule our country, control our future generations – but they have not realised that we will resist!" The proclamation emphasises the urgent need to organise to foil the enemy's plans.

As far as his actions are concerned, Huwari states above that he objected to the National Committee's imposition of taxes in Jaffa, accusing them of avarice. But one of the points of the proclamation stipulates that "the raising of funds for national projects by any individual or body is forbidden unless ordered by the Higher Arab Committee or its representatives."

20 Al-Huwari, *Sirr an-Nakba*, pp. 39 - 40.

21 *Ibid.*, p. 41.

22 *Ibid.*, p. 43.

23 *Ibid.*, pp. 44 - 46.

24 *Filistīn*, 12 December 1947, pp. 1, 4.

Huwari's line at the time was thus that the HAC and its representatives (i.e. the National Committee) were legitimate and the only body with the power to impose taxes and raise money to support the war effort. He was clearly unopposed to the National Committee's collection of taxes.

What all this shows is that Huwari used his memoirs in order to list his accusations against Husayni and the members of the National Committee. These accusations place responsibility for the fall of the country on their shoulders,⁽²⁵⁾ in an attempt to exonerate himself of any responsibility and conceal the real reasons for the dispute with the National Committee and the HAC. The real reasons appear clearly when comparing the memoirs with archive documents. One of the most prominent such documents, alongside the Declaration and Huwari's speech of 10 December 1947, is the record of his meeting with the representative of the Haganah Intelligence Officer Joshua Fieldman on 11 December.⁽²⁶⁾

Before discussing the real reasons for the dispute that Huwari seeks to conceal, it should be noted that Husayni's decision to place him in charge of security in the city – circumventing the National Committee – and to lay out his powers explicitly in a letter, reflected a clear desire to move past historic divisions, close ranks and put all available energies in service of the war effort in order to prevent partition. This was the HAC's stated goal, on which in December 1947 there was a local consensus. But as shown by the records of the meeting, Huwari continued to feel a deep hostility to the Committee's leading figures, believing that Husayni would not cease to undermine him and that he would sooner or later conspire against him.

But what was the real reason for this hostility between Huwari and the National Committee/AHC? The first signs of disagreement can be traced to 10 December 1947, when Huwari exceeded his remit

as laid out in the Council of Safety Proclamation by imposing a popular tax – to be collected by the Council of Safety's Financial Committee – to raise funds for defence purposes.⁽²⁷⁾ This placed Huwari into direct conflict with the representatives of the HAC in Jaffa (the National Committee and the Treasury) in their jurisdictions. It can be seen from Huwari's memoirs that this incident might have been put to bed after Tamimi's warnings, were it not for later events.⁽²⁸⁾

The second time Huwari exceeded his remit – in which he also broke with the consensus that had formed around the HAC and its decision to fight partition even if this meant war – was his meeting with a representative of the Haganah. This incident was to be one of the reasons for the HAC's decision to remove Huwari from Jaffa, albeit carefully, since they were eager to avoid any internal splits during the battle; this, too, indicates quite a different approach to opposition (or betrayal) from that which dominates Huwari's memoirs.⁽²⁹⁾

The minutes of this meeting lay out Huwari's real motivations for opposing the HAC. His memoirs attempt to conceal these motivations, reflecting his public statements after his meeting with the Zionists was exposed: his aim was to put an end to strife and secure a ceasefire.⁽³⁰⁾ The minutes of the meeting, however, show that Huwari was in fact trying to further his own political interests and ambitions by cooperating with the Zionists, exploiting his position to expand his influence across all of Palestine. The language he uses in the meeting resembles that of an informer. He highlights his role as an advocate for peace attempting to exploit the chaotic situation to play a bigger part in politics, but who lacks a certain mutual understanding with the Zionists; if an understanding can be reached, then he will control not just Jaffa but all Palestine, with Yusuf Haykal taking responsibility for the political side of things while he manages security. Haykal presents a wish-list of ambitions to strengthen

25 Huwari, *Sirr an-Nakba*, pp. 53 - 54.

26 "Maḥḍar al-Ijtimā' ma' Muḥammad Nimr al-Huwārī bi-Tārīkh 11 Kānūn al-Awwal/Dīsimbir 1947". Central Zionist Archives, S25-4011.

27 "Ijtimā' Majlis al-Amn fī Yāfā, Qarār at-Taqsīm Sayazallu Ḥibrān 'ala Warāq", *Filistīn*, 11 December 1947, p. 2. C.f. *ad-Difā'*, 11 December 1947, p. 2; *ash-Sha'b*, December 1947, p. 4.

28 Huwari, *Sirr an-Nakba*, p. 40.

29 On Huwari's exit from Jaffa, see: al-Huwari, *Sirr an-Nakba*, pp. 52 - 55. His quiet withdrawal allowed him to continue to play a political role among the members of his organisation, whose own papers make it clear that they were unaware of his ambitions and his willingness to support the Zionist movement if it helped him to realise them. See for example Rashad Urfeh's writings in: Abu'l-Jabin, *Ḥikāyāt*, p. 157; Ishkantna, *Asrār Suqūt*, pp. 81 - 82.

30 Al-Huwari, *Sirr an-Nakba*, p. 41.

his project: he wants to convince the Jews to take the matter less seriously and to recruit villagers loyal to him rather than to the fight against the Zionists. In his view city-dwellers have an inferiority complex regarding strength, and seeing delegations of villagers fills them with a sense of security. Huwari takes pains to convince the Jews not to object to a force of this kind because it will not be targeting them.⁽³¹⁾

But the minutes also highlight Huwari's opposition to the HAC. He emphasises that his successes in Jaffa are temporary, that Husayni is conspiring to lay them low. He also states that he hopes for a Jordanian royalist coup backed by a symbolic detachment of

Jordanian soldiers from King Abdullah to Jaffa – or by a visit from the King himself, his Crown Prince or one of his prominent Ministers opposed to incitement against the Jews – as well as financial and material support.⁽³²⁾ It is thus clear that when writing his memoirs, first transcribed according to the author's preface in 1950 and published in 1955, Huwari was attempting to defend his own positions by making accusations against his enemies. In framing these accusations he attempted to invoke prejudices and stereotypes that had taken root since the defeat. Such a text cannot be used to produce a balanced historical narrative, never mind an accurate one.

In their memory: Sheikh Ali was an honourable man, Najmeddin turned tail and ran

“Major Abdelwahhab Sheikh Ali did not come back to Jaffa because he was a man of honourable military conduct, so he could not accept the responsibility of defending the city without a force capable of facing unexpected danger.”⁽³³⁾

“When [Ali] inspected Jaffa's weaponry he was shocked. As a wise leader he realised that being present as a fighter among unarmed people was a blow to his military reputation and honour [...] the Military Committee appointed a new commander, Adil Najmeddin, who was the worst possible successor to the best possible predecessor.”⁽³⁴⁾

“When Adel Najmeddin turned tail and ran, Michel [Isa] came in. Abdelwahhab Sheikh Ali was the first one to come to us – the pure, honourable man.”⁽³⁵⁾

These three quotations are a representative sample of the esteem expressed by the people of Jaffa – whether politically active figures from the city's elite like Haykal, journalists like Ishkantna, or everyday citizens like Abu Darwish Falaha – for Abdelwahhab

Sheikh Ali's decision to resign from the Jaffa garrison and leave the city. This image is accompanied in most of the memoirs and biographical texts by a considerably more negative one of his successor Lt. Colonel Adil Najmeddin.

Abdelwahhab Sheikh Ali was appointed to lead the Jaffa garrison after the HAC's decision to bring it directly under its own command; it had previously been the responsibility of Hasan Salameh, Commander of the Central Zone's Western Strip. Sheikh Ali arrived in Jaffa, most likely on 7 February 1948, accompanied by a detachment of soldiers and officers sent to reinforce the garrison. The available documents from the garrison attest to Ali's assiduous inspection of the frontlines from his arrival in the city and his efforts to fully apprise himself of the general situation, seemingly in order to submit a full report to the Military Committee. But he did not stay long in Jaffa, leaving quickly for Damascus, which he reached on 14 February. There he submitted a general report on the situation and the support required to Taha Al Hashimi. Having submitted his report, however, he washed his hands of any responsibility for the garrison and decided not to return.

31 “Maḥḍar al-Ijtimā' ma' Muḥammad Nimr al-Huwārī bi-Tārīkh 11 Kānūn al-Awwal/Dīsimbir 1947”, Central Zionist Archives, file no. S25-4011.

32 Ibid.

33 Haykal, *Jalasāt fī* p. 44.

34 Ishkanta, *Asrār Suqūt*, p. 84.

35 Abu Darwish Al Falaha, “Abū'd-Darwish al-Falāḥa”, *Yāfā 'Aṭru Madīna*, ed. Imtiyaz Diab (Beirut: Dār al-Fatā al-'Arabī, 1991: 133-135), p. 134.

There are few details available about this incident, but the Jaffa memoirs and autobiographies noted above suggest that Ali – having familiarised himself with the military situation in the city – resigned his post because the Military Committee did not meet his demands. The most prominent of these texts is that written by Haykal, who accompanied Ali to Damascus. Haykal’s conflation of different times notwithstanding – he discusses the visit, mentioned in two places, as though it had happened on 22 March 1948 – he states that he met with Ali in Amman on his way from Jaffa accompanied by Dr. Hamdi Al Taji. Ali told Haykal that he wanted to meet King Abdullah. The next day, Ali and Al Taji continued on to Damascus accompanied by Dr. Awni Hanoun and Haykal. Haykal then met with Hashimi, claiming that the Arab forces in Jaffa were very weak and complaining that they had been insufficiently trained. He then requested that trained fighters be redeployed from outside the city to support the garrison.⁽³⁶⁾

Hashimi also gives a summary of his meeting with Haykal and Muhammad Izzat Darwaza, as well as his meeting with Ali, in his diary entry for 14 February 1948. By comparing this text with other memoirs we find that in fact Ali gave a positive assessment of the Arab forces in Jaffa, dismissing Haykal’s claims and saying that there were many trained fighters in the city. He suggested that it was better to use locals in order to mitigate the food supply problem. And Haykal makes no reference to any disagreement with Ali regarding support and armament for the city.⁽³⁷⁾

It thus appears from the summary given by Hashimi that Ali was not in fact surprised when he inspected Jaffa’s armaments. Indeed, the Military Committee had already familiarised itself with the status of the garrison and its armaments in its meeting with Hassan Salameh on 5 February 1948, and Ali would certainly have been made aware of these details himself. Hashimi’s text also shows that Ali did not cede responsibility in order to preserve his military honour because the Committee had refused to support him. Like most of the Military Committee, Hashimi

was convinced of the necessity of supporting the city with weapons and men. On 12 February he records the decision of the Military Committee to supply the Jaffa garrison with more weapons, and in a later entry gives details of this supply. So why did Ali resign his post?⁽³⁸⁾

The sources available do not give a clear answer to this question, but Hashimi does allude to a cause quite different from that recorded by our memoir-writers. In one entry, he records that Ali visited King Abdullah of Jordan in Amman shortly before his trip to Damascus, and that the latter undermined his morale and cast aspersions on both the capacity of the Arab force and the need for it:

“Mahmoud Al Hindi told me that Major Abdelwahhab Sheikh Ali the garrison commander does not want to return to Jaffa and is determined to go back to Iraq. Yesterday Abdelwahhab gave me a letter from King Abdullah requesting me to meet Abdelwahhab’s demands and reinforce Jaffa with weapons and men. Abdelwahhab said that when he crossed the Allenby Bridge he was asked to visit the King and so stayed overnight in Amman. He then visited the King, who as usual was talking about how pointless it is to resist, that the Arabs stand no chance against the Jews, and that they are backed by England and America; that the people of Jaffa support him, that he is intent on annexing the Arab portion of these lands and then seizing the Hijaz, and that his army are ready to rescue Palestine should its people ask him to do so, and that he is awaiting his opportunity keenly.”⁽³⁹⁾

Haykal’s text confirms that this visit took place, but neglects to mention its effect on Ali or to give any hint of what was discussed. However, it does inform us that Ali was accompanied on this journey by one of the most prominent Jaffan supporters of the Jordanian King, Dr. Hamdi Taji Al Farouqi – and that this visit coincided with that of various Palestinian political figures (one of them Haykal) in which the

36 Haykal, *Yāfā Fī*, p. 44.

37 Taha Al Hashimi, “Naṣṣ Yawmiyyāt”, manuscript, copy held at the Institute for Palestinian Studies in Beirut. Entry dated 14 February 1948.

38 Hashimi, “Naṣṣ Yawmiyyāt”, 12 February 1948.

39 *Ibid.*, 15 February 1948.

King criticised the Palestinian leadership and asked them to be realistic and accept partition rather than move towards war.⁽⁴⁰⁾

Despite the paucity of sources it is possible to conclude here that the circumstances surrounding Ali's resignation suggest that it was not because the Military Committee refused to meet Jaffa's needs, since he was fully aware of its situation before his visit to the city. Nor can it be attributable to the city's actual military situation, especially given his positive assessment of its fighters' military performance. There must be another reason – and this reason may be his meeting with King Abdullah Haykal, a supporter of the Jordanian regime, may at the very least have neglected to emphasise the effect of this meeting because of his biases and his unwillingness to show the King in a negative light. It may also be the military and political leadership's rejection of Ali's plan to declare a truce in the city, a point which is ignored by all of the memoirs. Ben Gurion records in a diary entry dated 17 February 1948 that on 13 February a British visitor informed

him that the previous suggestion of a peace had not been rejected deliberately but on the initiative of a single member of the Military Committee. He thus suggests a new two- to three-month arrangement for the Lidd District. But with Ali's exit the peace proposal, which is unmentioned by the available Arab sources, once again disappears.⁽⁴¹⁾

The memoirs thus laud Ali despite him refusing to carry out his military mission and letting down the city for reasons unknown, projecting a heroic role onto this disappointment. Adil Najmeddin, meanwhile – who was active in the city from 20 February 1948 and led the garrison until his dismissal by Fawzi Qawuqji on 30 April – is made to stand in the dock. He and the force that joined him in defending the city became, in the words of Salih al-Nazir, a “demolition team” through their bad behaviour, becoming one of the factors encouraging people to flee the city despite their fears of what might happen to their property. They saw the recklessness and disorganisation of the garrison and realised that it was incapable of defending the city.⁽⁴²⁾

In the dock: the Iraqis

Any discussion of the reasons for Jaffa's defeat in our memoirs inevitably alights on the Iraqis. The most prominent example of this appears in the opening of Salah al-Nazir's work. Here Nazir lays out the reasons for the fall of the city, first and foremost the Iraqis' desire to accumulate as much money as possible, from any source, confiscating civilians' weapons and selling them for this purpose. The flow of weapons to civilians thus stopped and those that remained in their possession were hidden, depriving the city of support. He also describes the Iraqis' poor treatment of civilians, which motivated many of them to leave the city, as well as their attempts to restructure the garrison by dismissing fighters. He also accuses the officers of spending their time at brothels and abandoning the frontlines. Other reasons include officers' inability to impose discipline on their

troops; the Iraqis' control of the disciplinary squad, meaning only they could hand out punishments; their failure to compel the troops to remain at their posts on the fortifications; their refusal to put their headquarters on the frontline; the imposition of a new system dispensing with some of the civilians who had supported the garrison; and the Iraqis' failure to successfully operate this system.⁽⁴³⁾

Nazir's list of accusations is copied wholesale by Muhammad Ishkantna without any indication that it is taken from Nazir – a common practice in the Jaffan memoirs – prefaced by a short summary:

“Here we conclude that Jaffa and its people were perfectly fine before the arrival of the new commander [Adil Najmeddin]. The force sent to defend the city proved more skilled in

40 C.f. Haykal's description of his meeting with the King and his encounter with Ali in Amman, *Jalāsāt Fī*, pp. 9 - 15.

41 David Ben Gurion, *Yawmiyyāt al-Ḥarb 1947-1948*, Gherston Riflin ed, Samir Jabbour trans, 2nd ed (Beirut: Mu'assasat ad-Dirāsāt al-Filistīniyya, 1998), pp. 197 - 198.

42 Nazir, *Suqūṭ Yāfā*, p. 47.

43 Nazir, *Suqūṭ Yāfā*, pp. 45 - 46.

destroying it, bringing about its collapse and surrendering it to the enemy.”⁽⁴⁴⁾

But what does the documentary evidence tell us about the Arab coalition presence generally and its influence on Jaffa, particularly the Iraqi presence? And what about the role that the Iraqi officers played in battle? The first thing that can be noticed from the documents is that the memoirists, particularly Salah al-Nazir, conflate various different events that took place in different contexts. Most of the events described by Nazir date to the last days of Jaffa, after 28 April 1948 – particularly the accusations of negative influence on the city. Excessive concern for this period and its imposition onto the rest of the conflict is a common trait of these memoirs.

A comprehensive reading of the garrison documents⁽⁴⁵⁾ shows that the Arab coalition presence as a whole represented a meaningful addition to the garrison’s forces, reinforcing it with both men (officers and rank and file troops) and weapons. This presence helped to develop the structure of the garrison and its administrative skeleton. These documents show that it was the logical option to restructure the garrison in order to incorporate the new additions and to reinforce the frontlines with military expertise. They also show that the garrison’s old structure was not much affected by the changes – with limited exceptions that had not a negative but a positive effect on the garrison’s military performance – since an entirely new link in the chain of command added to those that previously existed, including the leaders of the garrison and the line commanders (who were predominantly locals). This new link served as an intermediary between the garrison leader and the front commanders. There were thus no essential changes on the frontline itself. The changes were limited to increased organisation in the garrison’s ranks.

The garrison documents also show that Nazir’s accusation that the garrison command dismissed local

fighters is reductive. It was not the garrison commander who decided the strength of the garrison but the Arab Military Committee, on whose orders some local soldiers were dismissed. But once Najmeddin was settled in his position, and in response to the changing realities on the ground, he resumed local recruitment in Jaffa. The Military Committee also periodically reinforced the garrison with graduates of the military training courses it ran in Syria.

As far as the accusation that the Iraqis stole civilians’ weapons is concerned – or that they abandoned the front to visit brothels, etc – it is important to note that these problems were not limited to the Iraqis, whose number for the most part never exceeded fifty. The documents record incidents in which both locals and Iraqis stole, frequented brothels, drank heavily or sexually assaulted soldiers. But the garrison command did not simply allow these incidents to go on happening. They established administrative bodies (the Discipline Squad, which was never monopolised by the Iraqis, a Military Court and an Internal Court) to deal with complaints referred to them from the frontlines and sometimes from local bodies.⁽⁴⁶⁾

Neither was the garrison’s decision to confiscate weapons from civilians Najmeddin’s invention. Hasan Salameh had already issued a declaration indicating the need to inventory and organise weapons in the possession of civilians under the garrison’s oversight, shortly after the garrison was added to his command.⁽⁴⁷⁾ And despite Najmeddin’s affirmation of the necessity of imposing order on these weapons,⁽⁴⁸⁾ the civil and support groups organised on the margins of the garrison continued to support the frontlines during combat – and front commanders continued supplying ammunition for these weapons until the last days of the battle. The Iraqi commanders’ inability to impose discipline on their soldiers was also more complicated in reality. The case that Nazir emphasises concerns Hamawi soldiers who deserted their posts. Analysis of the different sources shows

44 Ishkantna, *Asrār Suqūt*, pp. 87 - 88.

45 This section is based on a detailed reading of hundreds of documents conducted as part of the project *Yāfā Dam ‘Alā Ḥajar... Ḥāmiyat Yāfā wa-Fi ‘luhā al-‘Askarī: Dirāsa wa-Wathā‘iq (Kānūn al-Awwal/Dīsimbir 1947 – Nīsān/Abrīl 1948)*.

46 As well as the creation of administrative structures to handle impropriety, whose activities are recorded by the documents, Najmeddin banned the sale of alcohol in the Jaffa Municipality after 7PM, apparently in order to prevent prostitution. See: “Bayān min Āmir Ḥāmiyat Madīnat Yāfā,” *ad-Difā‘*, 22 March 1948, p. 2.

47 See Salameh’s declaration: “Bayān min Ḥasan Salāma ilā Ahālī Yāfā al-Ashāwis bi-Tārīkh 27 Kānūn ath-Thānī/Yanāyir 1948,” Central Zionist Archive, file no. S25-4015.

48 See: “Bayān min Āmir Ḥāmiyat Yāfā ilā’s-Sukkān,” *ad-Difā‘*, 4 April 1948, p. 2.

that this was not the result of Najmeddin's failure to control his soldiers, but of various factors including the internal (the Hamawi soldiers' way of thinking, their idea of their role in the war) and the external (the effect of leaders who had settled in the countryside around Jaffa on this force).⁽⁴⁹⁾

In summary, the garrison's collapse on 28 April 1948 did not generally have anything to do with the issues that the Iraqis stand accused of in the memoirs. Likewise, the state of the garrison certainly did not force locals to flee the city. Indeed, until 28 April Jaffans had seen nothing from the garrison but resilience and a willingness to fight until the last breath. The garrison was militarily successful in foiling the last attack on Jaffa, and the area in which the lines were breached – Manshiyeh – continued to resist until the last man, with their soldiers preferring to lay down their lives rather than abandoning the area by sea.

To the contrary, it might be said that one of the reasons for the garrison's breakdown was the desire of local fighters to secure a safe haven for their

families. But one of the most prominent factors was the ill-conceived intervention of Fawzi Qawuqji's envoy Michel Isa, who arrived in Jaffa at the head of a detachment of soldiers after the fighting had ended and its defenders had won the Battle of Tel Errish. This coincided with the beginning of the garrison's collapse as the result of military pressure, the growing flow of refugees looking for safety after exceptional shelling targeted the city, encirclement and siege through Operation Chametz, and the fall of dozens of Arab positions and settlements including Tiberias and Haifa.

Isa presented Najmeddin with a letter relieving him of his post in reward for his forces' stalwart resistance, a letter which Najmeddin and most of his forces refused to accept.⁽⁵⁰⁾ Some texts describing the last days of Jaffa cite as one of the reasons for the collapse of the garrison and the fall of the city the absence of any public figure capable of directing the resistance and making the decision to keep fighting until 15 May 1948. With the garrison gone and refugees flowing out of the city, most prominent Jaffans had given into despair.⁽⁵¹⁾

Conclusion

The cases cited here are examples alone – there are plenty of other cases that could be presented, perhaps most obviously the attitudes expressed by the Jaffan memoirs towards the Arab Military Committee and its most prominent member Taha Al Hashimi. It is noticeable that the memoirs as a whole represent above all else lists of accusations intended to defend their authors or their later biases and decisions. When Muhammad Nimr Al-Huwari attacks the HAC, Husayni, and various members of the National Committee, what he is really doing is defending his own political positions – positions which despite his efforts to conceal them are cast into stark relief by juxtaposition of these memoirs with archival documents.

Likewise, when Yusuf Haykal praises Abdelwahhab Sheikh Ali's abandonment of Jaffa and its garrison because of his alleged desire to preserve his military honour – while attacking his successor and the Military Committee – he does so in order to refute any possible accusation that might be levelled at Haykal and his support for the Jordanian government, which only became deeper after the defeat when he joined the Jordanian establishment. The same applies to Salah-Nazir and those who reproduce his narrative (most prominently Muhammad Said Ishkantna), finding endless fault with the Iraqis and their leader Adel Najmeddin. Nazir's accusations ultimately constitute a defence of his own actions and role in the defence. Both Haykal and Nazir pre-empt

49 This question is discussed in detail in Shalash, "al-Qādim al-'Arabī: Idāfa Am Nuqṣān?" *Yāfā Dam*, vol 1.

50 C.f. Nazir's discussion of Najmeddin's dismissal, which contradicts the accusations he makes elsewhere by emphasising his central role in the city and in the leadership of the garrison. *Suqūṭ Yāfā*, pp. 51 - 52.

51 See for more on the elite's attitude: Motti Golani, *The End of the British Mandate for Palestine: The Diary of Sir Henry Gurney 1948* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), p. 181. Haykal refers to a meeting held by the remaining members of the National Committee and the garrison command (at that point led by Michel Isa) at the house of Muhammad Abderrahim. Discussion centred on whether to declare Jaffa an 'open city' or to risk the lives of the remaining members of the garrison and the police to defend the city after 15 May. According to Haykal the attendees concluded that it would be pointless to sacrifice the remaining defenders and that continuing the defence – which in practical terms had already collapsed – would simply give the Jews the right to enter Jaffa by force. See: Haykal, *Yāfā fī Sanawātihā al-Akhīra*, p. 54.

any accusation that they were incapable of carrying on the defence of the city and gave up. Their military concerns with the defence of the city give way to a humanitarian mission to save civilians and ensure the safety of the city's inhabitants before its fall.

The point here is that despite the interest in searching for 'alternative', 'subaltern' or 'lost voices' in memoirs or autobiographies or other texts written by the defeated after their defeat, we must be very cautious. Whenever we try to use these texts as historical sources, the fact that what we are reading may be intended to accuse others or defend its author must always be borne in mind. It is vital to draw out the limits of these texts and their narratives when it is impossible to produce a comparative historical

reading based on juxtaposition of different primary sources. And this caution should be extended to other similar sources, as noted by some of the literature.⁽⁵²⁾

Nonetheless, it must also be recognised that in other respects these memoirs do incorporate scattered fragments that cast light on aspects of history rarely touched on by other sources. The most prominent of these aspects include the transformation of the geography of the city into a reality with which people could coexist,⁽⁵³⁾ and the filling of gaps and highlighting of lesser-known figures that only appear on the margins of the archival sources.⁽⁵⁴⁾ They also humanise events, describing the effect of battles on civilians, and provide a description of the exit from the city.⁽⁵⁵⁾

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52 See for example Crouthamel's study of letters sent by injured German WWI veterans suffering from shellshock, which argues that despite their importance as a vital historical source they must be approached with caution. The veterans studied had accommodated their experiences to the prevailing political environment, making their individual memory accord with collective memory, and there was much to suggest a certain opportunism and a distortion of facts in these letters intended to defend their authors during their political struggle against ill-treatment as victims of shellshock. Jason Crouthamel, "Memory as a battlefield: Letters by traumatized German veterans and contested memories of the Great War" in: *Memory and History Understanding Memory as Source and Subject*, Edited By Joan Tumblety, (London: Routledge, 2013), pp. 155 - 156.

53 See for example the description in Al Hout, *Bayn al-Waṭan*, pp. 34 - 31.

54 An example of this appears in a Haganah intelligence report describing Rajab Al Akhal's assumed role in the construction of mines and his participation in the Arab demolition squadron. No further information is provided on this by other archival documents, but some fragments do appear in the autobiography of Tamam Al Akhal, Rajab's nephew. See: Alon Kadish et al, *The Battle for Jaffa in 1948* [Hebrew] (Sde Boker: Ben Gurion Research Institute for the Study of Israel and Zionism – Ben Gurion University, 2017), Document 3, p. 204. Al Akhal, *Al-Yad Tarā*, pp. 18-20, 22, 36.

55 See for example al-Akhal, *al-Yad Tarā*, p. 28; Al Hout, *Bayn al-Waṭan*, pp. 32 - 33.

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