



“WE MAY GO, BUT THIS IS MY HOME”: EXPERIENCES OF DOMICIDE AND RESISTANCE FOR PALESTINIAN CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

Bree Akesson¹

Abstract

Since the start of the occupation of Palestine in 1967, Israel has demolished approximately 27,000 Palestinian structures, most of which are family homes. Porteous and Smith (2001) coined the word domicide to mean the intentional destruction of one's home by another, which causes distress to those who have become displaced. Domicide, or even the possibility that one's home may be destroyed, causes significant psychological effects; nevertheless, we only know generally what these effects are and we know even less about the effects on children and families as a social system. Drawing from qualitative place-based research with 18 Palestinian families, this paper explores how loss of home or the threat of loss of home affects their everyday lives. After providing an overview of the factors that lead to domicide—Israel's “matrix of control” and the proliferation of illegal Israeli settlements in Palestine—the paper describes the effects of domicide or the threat of domicide on Palestinian children and families and how they resist domicide through sumud (steadfastness). The paper concludes with recommendations to conceptualize home as a human right, and correspondingly, include domicide as a human rights' violation.

Keywords: Palestine, children, families, displacement, home, domicide

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Bree Akesson, PhD

Introduction: Domicide in Palestine

The Palestinian territories, encompassing the West Bank and Gaza Strip, have been occupied by Israel since 1967, marking the longest military occupation in modern history (Hajjar, 2005).¹ Since then, the Israeli military occupation of Palestine has resulted in ongoing violence, with tens of thousands—both Israelis and Palestinians—injured or dead (B’Tselem, 2013). Presently, many Palestinians express sentiments that their lives take on a routine of calm regularity. Yet daily proof of violence still exists. While the Israeli government maintains a public position of negotiating peace with Palestinians, it has also enacted an incremental process of Israeli territorialization while simultaneously engaging in Palestinian *deterritorialization* (Weizman, 2007; Yiftachel, 2006). According to Braverman (2009) and Falah (1996), Palestinian land in both Israel and Palestine continues to be transformed into a Jewish space, with roads renamed in Hebrew, Israeli settlements established in Palestinian land, industrial businesses developed, and in the process, most traces of Palestinian history removed from the landscape. But more important to Israel and contributing to the “hollowing” of Palestinian land (Weizman, 2007), these tactics create new “facts on the ground”—building settlements, creating bypass roads, controlling aquifers, and restricting Palestinian movement—that mark Israel’s presence and re-signifies the landscape as belonging to Israel (Abu El Haj, 2001). As a result, Palestinian geographical space is consistently shrinking under the weight of Israeli-driven policies such as the control of Palestinian movement (or Israel’s “matrix of control”), the continuing development of Israeli settlements in Palestinian land, and the intentional destruction of Palestinian homes.

The “matrix of control”

Over the last several decades, in the name of Israeli national security and supported by the international “war on terror”, Israel established a network of restrictions in Palestine dividing Israelis and Palestinians and controlling Palestinian movement. These policies contribute to what Israeli anthropologist Jeff Halper (2000) has identified as Israel’s “matrix of control”. The matrix of control includes the construction of the separation wall within the West Bank (B’Tselem, 2003, 2011; Jones, 2012; United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA), 2009), the maintenance of checkpoints controlling Palestinian movement to and from everyday places (Segal & Weizman, 2003; Tawil-Souri, 2011; Weizman, 2007), the use of outdated laws to confiscate Palestinian land, the construction of Israeli-only roads (Biesenbach, 2003; Misselwitz & Rieniets, 2006; Weizman, 2007), policies of border and checkpoint closures (Brown, 2004; Roy, 2001), the development of Israeli settlements on Palestinian land (Campbell, 2005; Gordon, 2008; Weizman, 2007), the doling out of differentiated identification cards and travel permits (Abu-Zahra, 2008; Tawil-Souri, 2010), and policies of land ownership and residency registration (Khamaisi, 1995). Some Palestinian families who wish to expand or

¹The term “Palestine” (as opposed to “occupied Palestinian territories”) reflects language used by leading international organizations, such as the United Nations Security Council, the United Nations General Assembly, the European Union, the International Court of Justice, and the International Committee of the Red Cross.

renovate their homes—for example, by constructing additional space to house their growing families—must apply for often unobtainable permits from the Israeli government. Consequently, if they proceed without the permit, they risk the Israeli government demolishing their whole home as punishment for defying the regulation (Jones, 2012). Ultimately, the matrix of control cultivates artificial borders, deprives Palestinians of their freedom of movement, and effectively suppresses the progress of human development within Palestine.

Illegal Israeli settlements

Since 1967, Israel has established 135 settlements in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. Currently, over 350,000 Jewish settlers live in the West Bank, with an additional 300,000 settlers living in East Jerusalem (Sherwood, 2012). Settlements are organized residential, industrial and farming communities of Israeli civilians established on land in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, with the “approval and direct or indirect support of the Israeli government” (UNOCHA, 2007, p. 13). Israeli settlements have been constructed in violation of international humanitarian law (Defence for Children International (DCI), 2010; Hollander, 2007).

Settlements have a profound effect on Palestinian life. Apart from the loss of land taken for settlements, destruction of property is an everyday occurrence in the lives of Palestinians. Growth of settlements has also resulted in a sharp increase in Israeli-sanctioned demolitions of Palestinian homes, resulting in the displacement of Palestinian families (Save the Children UK (SCUK), Palestinian Counseling Centre, & Welfare Association, 2009).

Domicide: The intentional destruction of home

Porteous & Smith (2001) coined the term *domicide* to describe the intentional destruction of one’s home by another human, which causes distress to the former inhabitants. As a means resulting in homelessness, the act of domicile can be a unique form of trauma, mainly because the victims are not killed, but rather they experience their home being destroyed after being physically and oftentimes violently removed from it.

There have been few attempts to generalize about the effects of loss of home on children and families, whether by means of deliberate destruction of or displacement from home. Some examples include Abrams (1971) study on the negative effects of relocation and urban renewal upon the poor, research on the aftereffects of the Buffalo Creek disaster (Erikson, 1976a, 1976b; Gleser, Green, & Winget, 1981), Fullilove’s (1996) findings that disruptions to place compound negative physical and mental health effects, and Duyvendak’s (2011) conclusions that being without a home is akin to feeling permanently *out of place*. Though these studies contribute to a growing understanding of the effects of loss of place, they do not focus on places affected by political violence and are still generally only viewed through the lens of adults, who may be perceived as better able to communicate their loss of place.

The history of domicile in Palestine has been documented in studies ranging from loss of homeland (Falah, 1996; Graham, 2004) to the destruction of home (Gordon, 2008; Pappé, 2006; Save the Children UK et al., 2009). Most prominently featured in the scholarship is the 1948 *Nakba* (meaning “catastrophe” in Arabic), resulting in the widespread loss of home and community (Bronstein, 2005; Caplan, 2010; Farsoun & Aruri, 2006; Issa, 2005; Kimmerling & Migdal, 2003; Pappé, 2006, 2007). The Palestinian refugees who lost their homes in 1948 are still connected to those places in various ways. Some carry on an oral tradition, sharing experiences of these places with the next generations. Others still hold the keys to their homes

that they were displaced from, a tangible and metaphorical representation of their attachment to their homes.

Israel has demolished approximately 27,000 Palestinian structures since 1967 (Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions (ICAHD), 2013). The rate of home demolitions rose significantly during the second *intifada* (meaning “uprising” in Arabic). In the six years preceding the second *intifada*, 740 Palestinian homes were demolished in Israeli military operations. By comparison, in the first four years of the second *intifada*, 5,000 homes were demolished during military operations. The rate of home demolitions has not slowed. In the first half of 2013, UNRWA and ICAHD both reported a record number of over 300 home demolitions in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, displacing almost 600 children and adults (UNRWA, 2013). Since July 2010, one Bedouin village in the Negev desert in southern Israel has been destroyed 49 times by the Israeli military (Kestler-D’Amours, 2013). These home demolitions have been strongly condemned by Human Rights Watch (2013) and the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (2013).

The Israel government’s policy of domicide poses “a contradiction in place” (Akeson, 2014b). The Israeli government claims that demolitions are ordered when a homeowner does not acquire planning, zoning, and administrative permits. However, obtaining permits is virtually impossible. According to ICAHD (2013), demolitions are ordered for two reasons: to make life so difficult for Palestinians that they leave the country and to drive Palestinians off their land. There can be wide variation in the time taken to enact a demolition order. Overwhelmingly, families are given little time to lodge an appeal with the courts once an order has been issued. However, time can vary from one day to several months to a couple of years, leaving families in a constant state of limbo. Even when there is no eviction or demolition order, many Palestinian families live with the fear that an order will come. As Jewish settlements grow to accommodate an increasing settler population, Palestinian homes are being demolished even though the Palestinian population has quadrupled since 1967.

There is one study that has examined the effects of home demolitions on Palestinian children (Save the Children UK (SCUK) et al., 2009). Compared to children of similar demographics living in the same location, children who had their homes intentionally destroyed fared significantly worse on a range of mental health indicators including: withdrawal, somatic complaints, depression/anxiety, social difficulties, higher rates of delusional, obsessive compulsive and psychotic thoughts, attention difficulties, delinquency, violent behavior. Families also reported deterioration in children’s educational achievement and ability to study. Not surprisingly, the study found that children’s mental health was closely tied to their caregivers’ mental and physical health. The study found that demolishing a home not only destroys a meaningful physical place, but also negatively impacts family structure, increases poverty and vulnerability, and ultimately displaces a family from an environment that typically provides cohesion, support, protection, and identity. Children become acutely aware of how they are perceived differently from their friends and peers at school after a home demolition. Some children have reported that they feel as if they stand out and that people look at them with pity, which makes them feel like outsiders (Pellicano, 2013). This paper expands these findings, giving voice to the wide-ranging consequences of losing one’s home or living with the fear that one’s home may be intentionally destroyed.

Methodology and Design

This paper represents a part of a larger qualitative research project exploring the concept and meaning of “place”—specifically home, school, neighborhood community, and nation-state—for children and families living in Palestine. In 2010, pilot interviews were conducted with Palestinian children, families, and organizations. Research continued in 2012, with a sampling of three families from various administrative regions of the occupied West Bank and annexed East Jerusalem, for a total of 18 families. Sampling from multiple sites and in various settings (refugee camp, village, city, encampment), under a range of territorial control (Israeli and/or Palestinian), and with different population densities—provided diverse examples of how children and their families interpret, understand, and navigate places such as the home.

Human subjects approval was obtained through McGill University’s Research Ethics Board prior to commencement of the study (REB # 369-0510). Family interviews—lasting between one and two hours—were conducted after full and informed consent by each family member was obtained. Participants were guaranteed anonymity and assured that all information would remain confidential and used only for research purposes. All names and identifying details about the participants have been changed to ensure anonymity.

A minimum of three family members (parent, older child (aged 9-18), and younger child (8-and-under)) were invited to take part in a collaborative interview focusing on their experiences with place. Interviews often included members of the larger extended family, or *hamula*, with some interviews including up to 12 family members. The inclusion of the *hamula* uncovered valuable data in regards to the importance (and messiness) of family interactions and differences in perceptions based on generation.

Basic demographics—gender-age, education, and employment—were collected from each family member and used to develop a brief family summary used in subsequent data analysis. A total of eighteen family members were interviewed for a total of 149 individual family members (48% male and 52% female)—50 adults and 99 children. There were 103 family members who were from the primary index family (*a’ila*) and 46 family members who were part of the extended family (*hamula*). Of the eighteen families who participated in the study, ten were under a real threat of being forcibly removed from their homes or their homes intentionally being destroyed. Of the same eighteen families, five had experienced being forcibly displaced from their homes or their home being destroyed. However, whether or not there was a real threat or past experience with domicide, all families spoke about the fear of losing a home as being a pervasive aspect of the Palestinian experience.

Data were collected using rapid ethnography (Handwerker, 2001; Mignone et al., 2009; Millen, 2000). All participants were encouraged to draw during the interview in order to illustrate a point or tell a story. This process better elucidated how children and families negotiate and understand the places that they encounter on a daily basis. Children were asked to produce at least three drawings (though they often drew many more): (1) a free drawing, or a drawing of anything they wanted to draw, (2) a neighborhood map, showing the important places in their community, and (3) a dream place, where they would like to go one day.

In addition to family interviews, children participated in GPS-tracked neighborhood walks around their home communities. The neighborhood walk, lasting between two and 45 minutes depending on the level of violence in the community, consisted of one or more children leading the research team on a tour of the immediate community: for example, beyond the home, past the school, and through the playground. Conversation about the places experienced in the neighborhood walk allowed for dialogue to develop as the walk developed, prompted by the

people and places encountered along the way. Neighborhood walks were recorded by global positioning system (GPS) technology.

To further ground the data, ten interviews were conducted with key community informants who work with Palestinian children and families. A majority of family interviews and neighborhood walks were conducted in Arabic, using a translator; a majority of key informant interviews were conducted in English. With the participants' permission, interviews were audiotaped and transcribed.

Dedoose—a web-based platform for qualitative data analysis—was used to facilitate coding and analysis. Using a grounded theory approach (Charmaz, 2006), analysis of the data involved careful reading and annotation of the collated information so as to ascertain the meaning and significance that participants attributed to their experiences. A list of tentative units of meaning was created, and using constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Maykut & Morehouse, 1994), these lists were further combined and categorized by merging any overlapping ideas. Themes were grouped around places that children and families interacted with in Palestine: home, school, neighborhood community, and nation-state. This paper focuses on the theme of home, specifically the effects of home demolitions on Palestinian children and families.

Findings and Discussion

Experiences of domicide

Previously published research from this study concludes that the physical place of home is one of the most meaningful places to Palestinian children and families (Akeson, 2014a). For several families in this study, home was “everything”. This sentiment was particularly acute when families were asked what would happen if they no longer had their home, which was a key question during collaborative family interviews. Each participant was asked what would happen if his or her family was forced to leave home or if he or she returned to find one's home destroyed. Needless to say, each participant responded with strong emotion. For example, 34-year-old Umm-Nacer² replied, “Personally, I would collapse” (BE3). Thirteen-year-old Rachid asked, “Where would we go? I will be sad” (EJ2). And 24-year-old Amina said, “I would feel lost” (EJ3). Amina's expression of “feeling lost” did not just represent the physical expression of not knowing where one is located, but it also influenced how participants identified with a place. This feeling of being lost connects with the effects on one's sense of identity.

The most salient example of the experience of domicide comes from the Abu-Mourad family of East Jerusalem. Abu-Mourad and Umm-Mourad have three sons and a daughter; for the collaborative family interview only Umm-Mourad, 23-year-old Sanaa and 10-year-old Mourad were present. The family had always lived in East Jerusalem, and the place that they are most attached to was the home from which the Israeli police violently evicted them several years ago. And the family spent a majority of the interview speaking about this experience. Sanaa described how her family had received a home demolition order from the Israeli government. The family subsequently lived with the fear that they would be forcibly removed from their home any day:

...we made shifts, some of us sleeping, some of us wake up. Every night, we make shifts to be looking outside, looking and going in the car, making a circle near the neighborhood to see if there is police (EJ1).

²In Arabic culture, after the birth of the first child, parents are given the honorary title of *abu* (father of) and *umm* (mother of), followed by the name of the first-born son. This paper uses these identifiers to indicate fathers and mothers from the index families.

This constant vigilance, and the stress that comes with it, continued for six months. At one point, the family was notified that the police would evict them in ten days. Sanaa described her family's reaction:

At the end of July, the police came and gave for us ten days. They say for us, 'You have ten days, like, a deadline. If you don't evacuate and empty the houses by then, we will bring the police and evacuate you.' And actually for us, ... we are grateful, we feel happy. We say, 'We have ten days, like, a break.' ... We don't have to make shifts, we don't have to, like, wear our [outside] clothes [to bed]. Finally, ... we were sitting in our pajamas (EJ1).

The family's relief at being given a deadline versus living in uncertainty reflects the emotional and physical stress that families may experience while under the threat of domicide. Mourad continued the family's story by explaining how during this brief time, his family was happy and at peace because they had purchased a watermelon and received a gift of Swiss chocolate from a family friend, which they were eating one evening. Then he vividly recalled how that same evening—and before the ten day deadline—the police forced their way into his home and “focused laser guns into my eyes”. Sanaa further described that evening:

When they ask me to leave the house, I said, 'No, I don't want to leave the house.' They broke my hand, and five of the police took me... and threw me outside. The same thing for my brother. He said, 'I don't want to leave.' They say for us, 'If you leave, we will not touch you.' And we say, 'No.' When we say no, we don't want to leave ..., they try to beat us. You know what they are doing for my brother? I find ten police put my brother on the floor and just beat him and beat him. I am just seeing police, and I don't see my brother. Then I am looking for my brother, and I felt like he was dying (EJ1).

Umm-Mourad, Sanaa, and Mourad each spoke about this incident in detail and with much emotion. Being forcibly removed from their home was clearly a defining moment for the family, an incident at which they spoke at length about.

In Palestine today, Palestinian families are being forced to leave their homes due to eviction or demolition orders. Losing one's home is followed by the challenge of having to relocate and build a new life. One research participant noted: “You will find some [Palestinians], if their home is destroyed, they will rebuild it again or reconstruct it again. So you will find that they are connected to the land” (KI2). Research has found that home demolitions are followed by a protracted period of displacement for Palestinian families, with over half of families taking more than two years to build or find their next permanent residence (Save the Children UK (SCUK) et al., 2009). And oftentimes, families such as the Abu-Mourad family, feel stress and unhappiness in their place of relocation, because it is not connected to the land that they originated from. For example, Umm-Mourad described being “lost” when her family was forcibly removed from their home in East Jerusalem. Rather than find a new home, the family lived on the street outside of their home for another six months:

...when we evacuated, we like choose—we and our uncles and our neighbors—to sit near our houses, because we have hope to come back. But, you know, we spend six months sleeping on the street. The women were sleeping in the car, and the men were putting down mats and sleeping in the street. And it is a very difficult situation. And after one month, we have Ramadan. We are fasting on the street. Our kids should make *homework*, not *streetwork*. And it is very difficult. And the weather is changing. It is like summer going to winter. It is very difficult. And everyone is feeling sick, feeling tired on the street. It is a very hard life on the street (EJ1).

Despite the hardship of living homeless on the street, Sanaa and Mourad continued to attend school, struggling to regain a sense of normalcy for the children. Sanaa told a story about how the younger children in the family sought to purchase a new home rather than holiday presents:

When we [were] evacuated, imagine!... I say for my cousin and for my brother, that we go to the toy shop, so we buy some games, so we have fun for *Eid* (*marking the end of the Muslim holiday of Ramadan*). You know what they answer me? ‘No, we don’t want to buy games. We want to save this money to buy a new house’ (EJ1).

Sanaa’s 10-year-old brother, Mourad reflected upon his older sister’s story:

[Children] want to be something in the future. And there, [outside Palestine], the children think to buy a toy, and it’s a normal thing. But we, the people of Palestine, all we think about is that when we grow up, we want to set Palestine free, and we want to bring our homes back. This is all we think about (EJ1).

Mourad’s words implied that home, and the potential loss of home, is a defining element of the everyday Palestinian experience. And one’s commitment to defending or reclaiming home is a pervasive thought, reflected in the concept of *sumud* or steadfastness, which will be discussed in the following section.

***Sumud* as a means to resist domicile**

The Israel government’s push to take over Palestinian homes and land is not a new phenomenon. Abu-Majd explained his family’s history of being pressured to leave their home in Hebron:

In this house, we’re under stress, pressure since 1980.... In 1980, they gave us 14 days to leave, and they were encouraging us, saying, “We will pay you.” And they offered us a big amount of money, starting with my father—may he rest in peace. They offered us \$1,000,000 to leave, and they ended the negotiation by giving us an open check. They said, “Put in the number you want.” And they offered to send us to America then, and offered a job and a passport, an American nationality, all the comforts, and educational means would be available to us, just so we would leave our home (H21).

Abu-Majd’s refusal to accept compensation from Israeli settlers for his family’s land represented a collective *sumud* (steadfastness) by Palestinians. Despite the extreme economic hardships facing most Palestinians, they believe that the compensation offered by Israel is nowhere near the value of what would be lost: history, connection to place, identity. Some families noted that their steadfast defense of the home ensured that they did not “repeat what was happening in 1948” (EJ1), when Palestinians left their homes to escape fighting, only to return to find their homes had become occupied by Israelis. As Sanaa from East Jerusalem explained: “In 1948, my grandfather left Jerusalem and after a week, he came back. But when he came back, he found that the Israelis had taken everything” (EJ1). Additionally, Palestinians who do accept compensation for their property from Israelis can be labeled as traitors and shunned by their Palestinian communities (Ayyoub, 2013). Umm-Ayoub explained the emotional impact of the threat of the settlers wanting to take her family’s home in East Jerusalem:

The situation will never be better here, because the [settlers] want to take the houses. And each one has his own house, and they want to take it from everyone else. And it is like taking your soul out of you (EJ3).

Like Umm-Ayoub, many families displayed *sumud* by never leaving their home even if threatened with coercion or violence or even when they had been physically removed from their homes. These families struggled to wage legal battles in order to acknowledge their land rights. Other families responded with *sumud* by continuing to live in their neighborhood communities, even homeless on the street, like the Abu-Mourad family in East Jerusalem, if their home was taken away from them. For example, when Umm-Imed was asked what she would do if she was forced to leave her home, she replied: “I’ll go in the street, build a tent, and stay there” (VI3). This was a common refrain from families who were so connected to their homes that they insisted they would never leave. 72-year-old Abu-Kaddour explained his connection to home: “I have lived here my whole life, and I will stay here forever. This is my home” (VI2). Similarly, Abu-Younes from Hebron explained:

I decided to live here. You know, we have land and houses here and the whole family is living here, my mother and all my brothers, but I’ll stay here until death (H11).

Also in Hebron, Abu-Majd elaborated:

...this is our place. Here is our home. Here is our land. We may go, but this is my home, and this is my land. ...to leave this home, means that we confirmed that this is *their* neighborhood, and this is *their* land, and they will enter our house, and we give them Israel's legitimacy. So the meaning is not to leave this house. For every person, his home and land is his entire life, everything, his honor, and his dignity. This is our land. These are our lands. Our parents and grandparents save it and maintain it, so we keep it as they left it. This is Hebron, and these are Hebron’s people, and as the Israelis knew them, they will stay the same (H21).

Abu-Majd’s words perfectly capture the concept of *sumud*—the determination to stay so that Israel will not take the home or destroy it. Staying in place is therefore a means of resistance. Porteous and Smith (2001) note that when home is threatened, inhabitants are often roused to defend it. When I asked Abu-Rachid what he would do if he was forced to leave his home, he replied,

Well, this question has always been hard question to ask.... Usually, I don’t think about it. But I told once to my wife, that I am going to get out ... only with a gas bomb. And she went crazy.... I can’t imagine not going to that house. I was born there. I can’t imagine myself just not going to that house. I can’t. I just can’t. I hope it won’t come to it, but...I won’t get out walking.... (*speaking slowly*) I won’t get out of my house walking with my feet.... That’s for sure. If they will carry, I will be carried (EJ2).

Abu-Rachid said that if his home were threatened, he would have to be carried from his home—implying that he would potentially risk physical harm to defend his home. Some parents spoke about the significance of teaching their children to stay in their homes, despite the potential for violence. And children reflected their parents’ commitment to *sumud*. Abu-Younes’ 9-year-old daughter, Dalila, explained her devotion to the family home:

Dalila: (*encouraged by her father, Abu-Younes*) I love it.
Interviewer: What do you love about it?
Dalila: To stay.... Here is my home (H11).

Conclusions and Recommendations

The willful destruction of a home can be one of the deepest wounds to one's sense of self (Porteous & Smith, 2001). Tuan (1974) notes: "To be forcibly evicted from one's home and neighborhood is to be stripped of a sheathing which is in its familiarity protects the human being from the outside world" (p. 99). Khalidi (1997) has acknowledged a positive reaction to the threat of loss of place, acknowledging the "powerful local attachment to place" (p.153) as a critical element in the formation of Palestinian identity and modern national consciousness. This phenomenon is seen most clearly among residents of Palestinian refugee camps, where both adults and children identify with their villages and towns of origin even if they have lived in exile for two or three generations (Khalidi, 1997; Sayigh, 1979, 1994).

Home demolitions have played a central role in Israel's attempts to dispossess the indigenous, non-Jewish population since the creation of the Israeli state in 1948 (Halper, 2010). And participant reactions to questions about home demolitions or loss of home highlighted that this is a highly sensitive subject for Palestinians. Even the thought of destruction or loss of home was viewed as being devastating for all families. Participants conveyed that when a home is destroyed, the physical structure is lost in addition to the entire emotional essence of home, including aspects of centeredness and self-identity. Certainly, loss of home causes significant psychological effects; nevertheless, we still only know generally what these effects are and we know even less about the effects on children and families as a system. This study is a cursory attempt to better understand these effects.

Home as a human right

When people lose control of where they live—due to the threat or actual loss of home—they have lost fundamental human rights (Bales, 1999, p. 159). Yet most of the international human rights frameworks do not specifically address access to home or neighborhood communities as a human right. Therefore, the loss of these important places does not constitute a human rights violation. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) (1948) does not provide specific principles to protect those whose homes have been destroyed. The right to a home is vaguely referred to in Articles 9 ("No one shall be subjected to arbitrary ... exile"), 12 ("No one shall be subjected to arbitrary interference with his ... home"), and 17 ("No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his property"). The meaning of the word *arbitrary* impacts the way that articles are interpreted especially in the context of Palestine, where Israeli authorities argue that their actions are legal under Israeli law and have followed due process. Like the UDHR, the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (1991) also does not explicitly address loss of home. It does, however, call for,

...recognition that a human settlement is more than a grouping of people, shelter, and workplaces; the basic human right of people to participate in shaping the policies that affect their lives; and for high priority to be given to the rehabilitation of expelled and homeless people who have been displaced by natural and human-induced catastrophes.

According to the United Nation's Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), children have a right to good housing. Therefore, an unsafe home environment as a result of political violence should also be reframed as a violation of children's rights. Additionally, considering the above research, restricted access to places beyond the home—which turns a child's home into a *cage* as opposed to a *castle* (Akeson, 2014a)—should also be considered a violation to children's well-being in the context of political violence.

Domicide as a human rights violation

The United Nations (2009) has identified six grave violations against children in situations of conflict, which are classified as war crimes. These grave violations include: (1) killing or maiming of children; (2) recruitment or use of children as soldiers; (3) attacks against schools or hospitals; (4) denial of humanitarian access for children; (5) abduction of children; and (6) rape and other grave sexual abuse of children. The listing and enforcement of these violations creates a mechanism to punish offenders for war crimes. Yet, the exclusion of destruction of home within this listing is a major lapse in the protection of children, especially children whose well-being is centered around the home. In addition, the demolition of homes of families within the context of political violence violates the Fourth Geneva Convention (1949) (Articles 33 and 53) and various clauses on the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), which guarantees that children have the right to an adequate standard of living. Advocacy around inclusion of intentional destruction of home as a serious violation against children is one step towards consideration of place as vitally linked to children's well-being. Furthermore, consideration of domicile as a violation of the *family's* rights—in addition to children's right—broadens the scope of the impact on the larger social ecological system, which can be reinforced in order to better protect children and families affected by political violence.

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