

التهجير والموت في رواية غسان كنفاني
«رجال في الشمس»: دراسة موضوعية

**Displacement and Death in Gassan Kana-
fani's Novel *Men in the Sun*: A Thematic
Study**

فاروق صالح ناجي الصباري¹
Farouk Saleh Naji Alsubari

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(1) Assistant Professor of English Literature - Faculty of Education,
Humanity and Applied Sciences-Aljawf-University of Saba
Region

E-mail: afaroukalsubari@gmail.com



Abstract

This study presents the Palestinian experience of displacement and death due to the impacts of the Israeli occupation over the Palestinian land. This research paper aims to trace the tragic predicament of the lives of the Palestinians through the literary narrative of Gassan Kanafani. This study analyses the novel *Men in the Sun* by a Palestinian writer, Ghassan Kanafani in an attempt to explore the themes of displacement and death and its impacts upon Palestinians. It also shows the story of Palestinian people who suffered oppression, humiliation, deprivation and injustice. In the novel "Men in the Sun", Kanafani reflects the hard consequences of military conflicts and compelled displacement for Palestinian people as well as their connections to their native environment. They appear as victims of the terror and chaos of the Israeli war on their land. The study also reviews the history of Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Moreover, it highlights the role of Ghassan Kanafani's commitment to the Palestinian cause who tries to reflect the suffering of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians who are forced to leave their homeland escaping from death, cruelty and harshness practiced by Israeli occupation.

Keywords: Death, Displacement, Palestinians, Exile, Narrative.





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المستخلص:

تعرض هذه الدراسة التجربة الفلسطينية في التشريد والموت؛ بسبب تأثيرات الاحتلال الإسرائيلي على الأراضي الفلسطينية. يهدف البحث إلى تتبع المآزق المأساوي لحياة الفلسطينيين، من خلال السرد الأدبي لغسان كنفاني. تحلل الدراسة أيضًا رواية «رجال في الشمس» للكاتب الفلسطيني غسان كنفاني في محاولة لعرض مواضيع الموت والتهجير وتأثيرها على الفلسطينيين. تعرض الدراسة أيضًا قصة الشعب الفلسطيني الذي عانى من الإذلال والحرمان والظلم. في رواية «رجال في الشمس»، كنفاني يعكس العواقب الوخيمة للنزاعات العسكرية والتهجير القسري للشعب الفلسطيني، وكذلك ارتباطاتهم ببيئتهم الأصلية، فهم ضحايا لإرهاب وفوضى الحرب الإسرائيلية على أرضهم، كما تستعرض الدراسة تاريخ الصراع الفلسطيني الإسرائيلي، علاوةً على ذلك، فإنها تسلط الضوء على دور التزام غسان كنفاني للقضية الفلسطينية الذي يحاول أن يعكس معاناة مئات الآلاف من الفلسطينيين، الذين أُجبروا على مغادرة وطنهم؛ هربًا من الموت والقسوة التي يمارسها الاحتلال الإسرائيلي.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الموت، التهجير، الفلسطينيون، المنفى، السرد.





Introduction

The story of "Men in the Sun" is one of displacement, death, and loss. It is the story of all Palestinian people who suffer humiliation, loss, deprivation and injustice. It is written by Ghassan Kanafani. Ghassan Kanafani, who lives as an expatriate Palestinian writer, tries to reflect the suffering of oppressed Palestinian people who displace from their houses and homeland because of Israeli occupation over their land.

Kanafani wrote this novel in early 1962 in Beirut. It has since been translated into several languages and was adapted into a film directed by Tawfik Saleh, titled *The Deceived*. This film won a number of awards: the Carthage Festival Award in Tunisia, the Catholic Film Festival Award in Paris, and the Human Rights Award in Strasbourg. Thus, the author was able with this work to rise above the humanitarian issues to polarizing the feelings of humanity.

How do the Palestinians experience cruelty of death and displacement? How do Palestinians have long departed their original homelands? How long the situation of Palestinian people will stay threatened with displacement or death? Where are Palestinian people headed? There is no doubt that Palestinian people suffer and face a variety of fears and obsessions. They face Zionist colonialism and its political and social pressures. Fear of oppression, bullying and Israeli security forces, torture, coercion, repression, daily killing and all forms of displacement and death. There is no escape from the inevitability of death with the brutality of the Zionist colonizer. There is no way for them to achieve their dreams and hopes for a decent life.

In the novel "Men in the Sun", Kanafani represents the tragedy experienced by Palestinians through death, displacement and exile. *Men in the Sun* is written specifically to explore the justifications for continued revolutionary struggle. It is an embodiment of steadfastness and confronting





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a painful crisis in which the entire Palestinian people live in.

Gassan Kanafani

Kanafani was an activist, a teacher, an artist, a journalist, a critic, a social worker, a literary writer, a revolutionary and a socialist. Gassan Kanafani is a committed writer to the Palestinian issues and the impacts of the occupation over the Palestinian land. Kanafani was born in (Akka), Palestine, in 1936. He left the country with his family alongside hundreds of thousands of Palestinians during the fighting. He moved with his family to Syria where he worked as a teacher in the schools which are specified for the Palestinian refugees before he moved to Kuwait and then to Beirut where he became an editor of Al-Hadaf Journal, the journal of the Liberation of Palestine. Gassan Kanafani (1936–1972) was a prominent Palestinian writer, considered to be a leading novelist of his generation and one of the Arab world's leading Palestinian writers. In addition to his passion for literature and writing, Kanafani was a political activist, and "it was this combination that honored him as the Father of Resistance Literature in Palestine" (Bader, 2016: 11).

Gassan Kanafani's personality was talented and multifaceted. His contributions varied in literature, criticism, art, culture, and politics. He enriched the Arabic library with his writings. He wrote several novels and short stories, prepared valuable research and studies; and issued plays worthy of representation on stage.

Kanafani was martyred in the prime of his youth in 1972. He endured the misery of life and its bitterness of displacement and alienation. He also lived the life of a lost refugee in neighboring Arab countries. He is a writer who struggled with his pen and ideas throughout his short life, which does not exceed thirty-six years, but it is full of productions that are full of struggle and resistance. Mahmoud Darwish comments that Kanafani was "one of the rare people who gave the ink the momentum of blood..."





He transferred the ink to honors and gave him the value of blood, not only that, but his life is full of political and social activity as well". (Darwish, 2008: 32).

On the other hand, the Palestinian people's preoccupation with their new displacement or exile after 1948 was reflected in the literary scene. Ghassan Kanafani was among the first novelists who made the Palestinian cause both a personal and literary preoccupation (Starkey, 2006: 131). Roger Allen also highlights the role of Kanafani as a committed writer to the Palestinian problem:

"No modern Arab novelist has been able to project the tragedy of the Palestinian people in fiction with greater impact than Ghassan Kanafani. This is hardly surprising in view of the fact that he devoted his life to the illustration in both fact and fiction of the circumstances of the Palestinians and to an investigation of the complexities of Arab attitudes to them". (Allen, 1995: 147).

Moreover, Youssef AL Youssef emphasizes the importance of Ghassan Kanafani to reflect the Palestinian catastrophe through his narrative work:

"his importance also comes from the fact that he was the first Arab writer who was able to transfer the Palestinian catastrophe into the narrative that achieves the integration of technical conditions, and that he was the first to provide a deep understanding of tragedy". (Al-Youssef, 1985: 6-7).

The issue of death has preoccupied the Palestinian writer Ghassan Kanafani remarkably in his novels coinciding with the absurdity of life that he suffered in exile away from his homeland. Alsaafeen comments:

"If the issue of death is one of the issues that its great impact is manifested in thought and creativity, Ghassan has appeared at





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various and complex levels as well... The free death that man reaches physiologically without carrying a human delusion, or being disturbed by the issue of death for the sake of the message of martyrdom or a life that flows in others" (Alsaafeen, 2008: 82).

Importance of the Study:

This research paper is important as a vehicle for presenting Palestinian issues to readers through the discussion of the novel "Men in the Sun" by Ghassan Kanafani. The importance of this paper also arises from the oppression, injustice, and violence inflicted on the Palestinian people by the Israeli occupation.

Study Problem:

Since the Palestinian people live under the war from 1948 till today. It is a humanitarian duty to review their issues of death and displacement as represented in the literary work of Ghassan Kanafani. The war in Palestine becomes the order of the day. The unequal conflict between Israel and Palestine has resulted in the death and displacement of Palestinians. Thus, it is the right for Palestinian people to defend themselves and resist the Israeli occupation over their land. It is the right for Palestinian people to stand against Zionist oppression to set themselves free from the iron fist of Israeli domination and to determine their own destiny with no occupation.

Objectives of the study:

The overall objective of this research paper is to demonstrate the suffering of the Palestinian people caused by the Israeli occupation.

To explore the themes of displacement and death and its effects upon Palestinians.

To highlight the role of Gassan Kanafani as a committed writer





to the Palestinian cause.

Methodology:

This study deals with the novel "Men in the Sun" by Ghassan Kanafani. This study employs an analytical and descriptive methods to trace the themes of death and displacement as reflected in the novel "Men in the Sun". This paper will be devoted to describe the predicament of Palestinian suffering and struggle. It involves critical analysis of the issues of displacement and death in general. The study also relies on textual analysis. Textual analysis is indispensable for literary texts. Textual analysis is one of the main research methods for English studies.

Review of Literature:

Abdullah Bin Safiyah in his research paper entitled "The Problem of Alienation in the Novel of Men in the Sun by Ghassan Kanafani – The Process of Narration and the Question of Being" elaborated that the novel Men in the Sun represented a critical stance of harsh psychological conditions that passed on to the Palestinian people. To the extent that the Palestinians' biggest concern is to get out of these intolerable war conditions. The research also addressed the causes of alienation among Palestinians. It also dealt with alienation in its spatial concept, as it had its authority at the level of the plot in the story. It also has its power and the Palestinian reality. The research also dealt with the manifestations of expatriation in the Palestinian reality into three sections that reflect the status of expatriate personalities. What preceded predeath – after death – during death. The research also concluded that the alienation in its forms and indications sought in the text is likely to be due to the reality and harsh conditions experienced by Ghassan Kanafani himself on the one hand and the Palestinian people on the other. The writer's strong and deep belief that change can only be done by pointing the gun at the enemy instead of fleeing and dying on other than the homeland. (Bin Safiya, 2017).





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Laila Zaimen in her research paper entitled "Self-affirmation and the crisis of identity in the novel (Men in the Sun) by Ghassan Kanafani as a Case Study" pointed out that identity is one of the most important discourses whose issues are raised in the cultural and literary critical arena. It also showed the cases of disintegration and internal disintegration of the individual due to the practices of dependence and colonization or the policy of alienation and exile or other statements that establish the center and change the other. The research also addressed the problem of fractured identity and revealing the same fragmentation of individuals through the novel "Men in the Sun" by the novelist Ghassan Kanafani, who seeks to diagnose the occupied Palestinian reality through distinct personalities forced to be displaced from the homeland. Israeli hegemony has disguised the identity of Palestinian man and forced him to live on the fringes of reality.

Moreover, the research paper dealt with the issue of exile in the Palestinian reality through the novel of Men in the Sun by Ghassan Kanafani. Further, it dealt with various patterns of exile and national, ethnic, religious, cultural and national marginalization. Furthermore, the research also pointed out that identity is the cornerstone on which the civilizations and cultures of nations are based, because it is linked to the origins of man that expresses his existential affiliation, which is the basic basis for social stability. Thus, its importance is more evident when it is exposed to the images of dismantling and tearing imposed on it by the oppression of wars. It is believed that "wars, despite the destruction and devastation they lead to, they play a positive role in terms of helping to unite identities between nations, especially when the enemy belongs to a different identity." (qtd in Boualskik 61). For Ghassan Kanafani, death in the homeland is pride and honor, much easier if its image is compared to the world of exile imbued with brutality and coldness.





Historical Review

The Arab-Israeli conflict is very old, and has taken many aspects, including religious, political, economic, cultural, and existential. It turns back to those promises made by the British at the expense of the Palestinian Arabic lands. It is Considered as a land without people, and people without land. They work to spread this concept among Jews in particular, and the world in general.

Lies and fictional images of the Promised Land were painted in their writings, and then they believed in these images and treated them as facts. They also fought for that. Judaism fulfilled all the basic conditions for the formation of a Jewish nation except two important conditions: Language and the homeland. They came to Palestine from all over the world, their goal was to establish a state that would enable them to sovereignty, after years of shameful migration. They occupied Palestine to establish a national homeland for all the Jews of the world.

Since its inception, Zionism has focused on developing the affiliation of the Jew to his religion and doctrine and to defend it under any circumstances. It has also established the concept of Jewish superiority. It means that Jewish people is superior and distinguished to the rest of the human race. They believe that they are the chosen people of God. In this way, they have sown the first seeds of Jewish nationalism among the Jews of the world, regardless of their different countries, languages and cultural references.

Nationalism was an important concept on which the Jews relied to rise from their deteriorating reality, fragmentation and hatred. They had nothing better than nationalism to restore their dignity that was lost throughout the years of displacement. When they set foot in the land of Palestine, they felt for the first time that they belonged to a certain land, they came to reconnect with it, to create a civilization and high values.





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Thus, the Jewish people can make a mark that distinguishes them from the rest of the people of the world. Jews no longer need prayers and wishes to return to the promised homeland Palestine; they own it today (Halper, 2008: 67). Based on these inherited historical stories, the Zionists encourage the Jews of the world to migrate to the promised land that is Palestine. Zionists, are those who consider themselves as the right doctrine of Jews, an independent national people, which should be resettled as an independent political entity in Palestine in order to establish their national state for Jews. (Al-Sharif, 1985:11). The issue of displacement and exile of Palestinians goes back to more than 70 years due to Israeli violence. Hundreds of Thousands of Palestinians were forced to leave their homeland escaping from cruelty, harshness and humiliation practiced by Israeli soldiers. Palestinian suffering of displacement was considered as one of the largest problems in the twentieth century. Peteet Comments that the displacement of Palestinians "embedded in a logic of displacement integral to a particular form of ethnonational, neocolonial state formation and consolidation" (Peteet, 2005: 2).

From historical perspective, Edward Said comments: "Zionism seems to have culminated in the creation of the state of Israel, it is also argued that the historical realization of the idea confirms its unchanging essence". Said also comments that: "To the Palestinian...Zionism was somebody else's idea imported into Palestine and for which in a very concrete way he or she was made to pay and suffer, these forgotten things about Zionism are the very things that are centrally important" (Said 1). (Said, 1979: 1).

Further, the Palestinian term "Al Nakba" represents a turning point in the history of Palestinians. Al Nakba represents only a part of treachery and betrayal of a political plan prepared by British rulers against Palestinians. British policymakers helped Zionist Ideology to be implemented in Palestine. Maha Nassar sheds light on the historical events that took place prior to Al Nakba and paved the way for the establishment of Israel state.





According to Nassar "Zionist leaders implemented colonial ideology to justify the creation of a Jewish state in Palestine" (Nassar, 2017: 22). It is proved that the British, A. J. Balfour, a foreign secretary, supported the colonization of Palestine by Zionists. For Maha Nassar: "Balfour officially revealed Britain's intention to establish a Jewish state in Palestine" (Nassar 23). Thus, this is the historical story of conflict between Palestine and Zionism which was supported by Britain.

Analysis and Discussion:

"Men in the Sun", is the missing legitimate scream. It is the voice of the Palestinian who is long lost in the tents of displacement and asylum, who suffocates inside a vehicle driven by a vanquished eunuch for the first time that leads everyone to death. It is the story that expresses the Palestinian reality lived in its intertwined relations. It is a symbolic framework for multiple relationships, centered on the Palestinian death, and on the need to get out of it towards discovering the historical act or searching for this act. Condemns cases of individual salvation that are not joined to the masses, because they are doomed to catastrophic failure and death in a lifeless desert, after they have been cut off from the causes and paths as a clear result of the occupation, and for those who decide to flee to countries other than their own.

On the other hand, "Men in the Sun" is a classical depiction of the powerlessness of dispossession that is haunted by nostalgia for a lost past. The three exiled Palestinians who make arrangements in Iraq to be smuggled over the border into Kuwait in the empty water tank of a truck end up with dead bodies. Their bodies are dumped on a pile of garbage heap in the middle of the desert. Their sheer impotence and failure to meet the challenges of displacement is the recognition of the difficulty of overcoming stateless alienation and atomization. Deeply they are involved in their own individual lives and pasts, their separateness is thus never overcome. Their common act only leads to death which is the denouement





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of the plot. Even in death, the story suggests, they are unresisting. In other words, the novel "Men in the Sun" encourages the reader to engage in the persistent struggle against the imperialistic interests of Israel in uprooting and destroying a whole culture and distorting the very established history, trying to establish certain myths. The contextual relevance of the novel and its participation in the history of the Palestinian struggle is further confirmed when we see the question pending at the end of it. This allegorical interpretation is not made for the purpose of the discussion of resistance ingredients in the novel, but taking into consideration the fact that Kanafani was involved in a historical project, a critical interpretation of the question, "Why didn't they knock on the sides of the tank?" This question resonates at the end. (Abu-Manneh, 2016: 78).

The novel "Men in the Sun" consists of seven chapters. The first three chapters are introductory chapters that talk about the three main characters Abu Qais, Asaad and Marwan. Each chapter talks about one character and his circumstances and the reasons for thinking about emigration to Kuwait. The first three chapters talk about the three Palestinian personalities who represent the peak of Palestinian misery, humiliation and suffering after the Nakba of 1948. The novel also embodies the bitterness of asylum, expulsion and living as displaced in camps after the loss of land, house and trees. Abu Qais, an old man residing in a camp, while Marwan is a 16-year-old boy who supports his family after the marriage of his father and the interruption of the support of his expatriate brother "Zakaria" to the house. Marwan is still young, his brother in Kuwait leaves him and his family without a breadwinner because he gets married in Kuwait. His father also leaves his mother to marry Shafiq, who loses her leg due to the bombing of Yaffa, and who owns a house at the edge of the town. In this way, Marwan has to support the family. Marwan's father is like Abu Qais, another symbol of laziness and passivity. "As an old man, he just wants to settle down, and not find himself obliged to feed his children.... His old friend, Shafiq's father, suggested that he marry her. She





owned a three-roomed house on the edge of the town, which she had bought with the money collected for her by a charity" (Kanafani: 1980: 41). Marwan's father thought about the matter; if he let two rooms and lived with his lame wife in the third, he would live out the rest of his life in security, untroubled by anything, and more important than that, under a concrete roof. It is upon Marwan, who is just sixteen, the responsibility of feeding his four siblings. "Who else will buy May's clothes, and bring back bread for Riyad, Salma, and Hasan? Who?" (Kanafani: 1980: 40). He must find in Kuwait the means to provide for his mother, who has been deserted not only by her husband for another woman, but by her eldest son who, already working in the Gulf, has ceased sending the remittances necessary to support the family he left behind. Asaad is the third character who faces the same fate as that of Marwan and Abu Qais.

In other words, "Men in the Sun" tells the story of three men Abu Qais, Asaad, and Marwan. They have been portrayed by Ghassan Kanafani as Palestinians who represent different ages of generations, who die by the intense heat inside the tank of death as they are on their way to Kuwait. The novel is a vivid and honest depiction of the story of the Palestinian displacement that is characterized by humiliation, bitterness and hunger. All Palestinian generations are subjected to displacement, suffer from alienation and loss of identity. They fight for living in any place under the sun. Abu Qais, Asaad, and Marwan live in the displacement camps. They decide to leave the camps seeking another homeland to live in safety and happiness. They decide to escape to Kuwait. Their lives in the refugee camps are almost impossible to live in, as no water, no food, no work which prompt them to leave the camps.

The writer inserts in the third chapter the personality of " Abu Al-Khizran", a man who loses his manhood due to the war of the 1948. He works as a truck driver. In search of happiness in an alternative homeland, the three men met in Basra. They decide to travel to Kuwait by smuggling. They are three Palestinians who do not know each other who came to





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Basra at once to cross the border into Kuwait illegally. In Basra, they met a Palestinian called "Abu Al-Khaizran", a driver of a fresh water truck in Kuwait. They agree with him to smuggle them to Kuwait in exchange for a few dinars each. They climb up next to the driver at the beginning of the road. When they reach the Iraqi border barrier, they move into the empty water tank, until the driver finish stamping his papers, and then return to sit next to the driver to continue their journey.

The desert stands for an endless journey of suffering without hope of reaching the desired goal, it is a symbol of a tragic conditions of the Palestinian people as depicted by Ghassan Kanafani. The unmarked journey towards the desolate desert begins under the blaze of the scorching sun. The fear of checkpoints is increased. Fifty meters before they reach the checkpoint at the Iraqi border, the three must hide inside the tank of the truck for several minutes, and once the inspection procedures are completed, they have to continue traveling and taking turns to sit in front of the driver's seat.

The fourth chapter is "The Deal". Despite of the danger, insecurity and the high temperature of the tank due to its direct exposure to the sun, the alternatives are not available to the three men. Thus, the deal is done. As for the fifth chapter entitled "The Road", it is the escalation of the plot and the crisis in the novel. In this chapter, the writer deals with the implementation of the agreement, which is the means of smuggling from Basra to Kuwait. Since travel through the vast and scorching desert, the hardships of travel are fatal and reach their peak when the truck approaches the Kuwaiti border and the border check point. Then the truck driver stands to carry out the dangerous task of ascending the three inside the tank, which is described as hell due to the intensity of its heat for seven minutes. Indeed, the first operation is successfully completed and the truck stands after moving away from the first check point. However, Chapter Six entitled "The Sun and the Shade", where the three come out of the tank and have exhausted most of their strength and patience.





They exchange locations inside the truck along with Abu Al-Khaizaran. In the midst of an extreme heat and a scorching desert until Abu Al-Khaizaran approaches the last check point site. Abu Al-Khaizaran stops the truck and asks them to rest at the shadow of the truck in preparation for the last hardship and let the three hides inside the tank for another seven minutes. The three reluctantly enter the tank, and the truck reaches the border. Abu Al-Khaizaran hurries down, presents his papers to the employee waiting to sign it, and here the wind comes with what the ships do not desire. A deliberate disruption comes from the border employee, who is trying to inquire about an alleged mistress of Abu Al-Khaizaran in Baghdad named Kawkab. The three men inside the very hot tank, and the attempts of Abu Al-Khaizaran to suppress the sex-starved employee more than once when he asks him to sign and begs him to accelerate the task. Abu Al-Khaizaran delays twice the specified time and comes out quickly and drives the truck as soon as he reaches a safe place. He quickly descends and opens the tank. He screams and calls upon the three men inside the tank. He decides to go down inside the tank but he discovers that there is no life for the three, soulless bodies. The three Palestinians die inside the tank at the border check point. The last chapter, entitled "The Grave", is the place where Abu Al-Khaizaran thinks of hiding the crime and throwing the three lifeless bodies in it. Abu Alkaizaran is "Dragging dead bodies of its feet one by one and throwing them on the head of the road, where municipal cars usually stand to throw their garbage in order to get a chance to see them in the first minutes of early morning". (Kanafani, 1980: 92 Abu Alkaizaran throws them near a garbage dump in the desert. He takes away what is with them and chanting his famous cry: "Why didn't you knock on the walls of the tank? Why didn't you talk?!". (Kanafani 93).

The phenomenon of death formed the basis of Ghassan Kanafani's novel "Men in the Sun". For the Palestinian man, death and displacement remained the main problems in his life throughout the ages he lived with





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the Zionist occupation, which was and still in daily confrontation with his lethal weapons that threatened the life of the Palestinian family. As long as the Palestinian people were in a permanent confrontation with the Israeli colonizer. The result of this conflict was death in this grinding war.

The narrative work of the novelist Ghassan Kanafani is linked to the idea of death through stations, historically arranged according to the circumstances experienced by the Palestinian people. It shows that the Palestinian man is powerless and shackled in front of death, which ravages him on all sides. Al-Mehdawi highlights that the novelist Kanafani of Palestinian origin and identity:

“tended to glorify death as the throne of the martyr and a basic entrance to the land and identity from the hands of the colonizers. This trend was fueled by the need of the Palestinian situation to inject enthusiasm into the hearts of the fedayeen, especially during the rise of national awareness and the fueling of national sentiment with the accompanying bloody events and famous massacres.” (Al-Mehdawi, 2013: 200).

The importance of death lies when it turns from the meaning of a negative absurd death to death with honor, glory, martyrdom and sacrifice.

Rahima Alkhawaldi gives death another significance of existence due to Israeli occupation over Palestine that “...It leads to death, as this death may be forced to part the homeland or a feeling of loss, loss of identity, hatred or killing that chases the resistant everywhere abroad and even inside Palestine.” (Alkhawaldi, 2012: 262). This confirms the intensification of the conflict with the Zionist occupier until the end, so that the result is the death of the Palestinians, carrying with it a symbol of martyrdom for the homeland.

The issue of death is not only about the dead but also about the alive.





The death anxiety of the Palestinian person, in particular, is caused by the absence of the grave, there is no place for burial, and there is no one who will take care of the funeral or to honor the dead. There is no expansion of his dreams of liberation and stopping the act of death as long as he is on his land; and in his homeland a Jewish occupier seizes his property.

Ghassan Kanafani presents the specificity of the Palestinian experience of displacement and death. He highlights a tragic and dark image that reveals the weakness of the Palestinian people in resisting the act of death, and this is embodied in the novel "Men in the Sun". The death of the Palestinian man is a horrific incident. Abu Al-Khaizaran, a companion of the road and travel towards Kuwait, is stunned and horrified when the life of his three companions ends with suffocation in the tank of his truck without any resistance to the act of death. After experiencing many hardships and horrors of escape from one place to another, the old man Abu Qais, the young man Asaad, and the child Marwan eventually die in a horrific death that terrifies the bodies and arouses terror in the souls. Gassan Kanafani states in the novel that:

"They used to tell them that someone did not return from Kuwait, because he died, he was killed by a sunstroke, he was planting his shovel in the ground when he fell on him and on top of it, and what? Sunstroke killed him, do you want to bury him here or there? That's it, sunstroke! ... But can the sun kill them and kill all the momentum folded in their chests? As if thoughts were flowing from head to head and reduced by one obsession" (Kanafani, 1980: 78).

For the three characters Abu Qais, Marwan and Asaad, Kuwait is the other world that can be described as paradise which is waiting for them. It is also the main motive for their hellish journey. This journey which is like the straight path that people would pass on in the resurrection day. The scene is described in the novel:





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"Do you imagine that these 150 kilometers are as a straight path that God has promised His creators to follow before they are distributed between heaven and hell; whoever falls from the path, he will go to the hell; and whoever passes it, he will reach heaven. The angles here are the men of borders" (Kanafani, 1980: 59).

There is no way except crossing this path for those who want to reach the land of Kuwait. It is the risky place for which the three Palestinian persons fight for reaching there. For them, Kuwait is the place of livelihood. This is confirmed by Asaad that "his friend migrated there and worked as a driver and came back with bags of money" (Kanafani 18). Marwan also talks to the smuggler Abu Alkhaizaran about the reason behind his migration saying that: "I was in school two months ago but I wanted to work to support my family" (Kanafani 43). Thus, in order to achieve what they want, they have to pass this difficult bath that is the desert road linking Basra with Kuwait. From here the journey of tragedy and death begins across this road. And at last, the desert became their grave. They were ambitious, and preferred personal prosperity to the national interest. Hence, they were trapped in the burning heat of the water tank. The desert was full of fatal signs. Their dreams were fated to die with them in the scorching heat of the sun

In fact, "Men in the Sun" makes clear that the present for Palestinian refugees is about soulless and dubious interactions, money and opportunism, corruption and empty promises. There is no return, fulfillment, prospects, power, or dignity in existent society. As the driver Abu Alkhaizaran puts it to Marwan, another migrant Palestinian: 'I am glad you are going to Kuwait, because you will learn many things there. The first thing you will learn is: money comes first, and then morals' (Kanafani 44). Self-interest trumps commonalities and solidarities.

From the intensity of the fear that afflicted him, Abu Al-Khaizaran did





not know how to act in front of this terrifying situation in which he was placed. He thought that he would lead them to safety, but he sent them to death without achieving for themselves one ordinary individual goal in their lives. Their surrender was to the act of death although they could scream and ask for help to save their lives. Thus, Abu Al-Khaizaran went crazy. "He jumped out and slowly closed the nozzle, then the ladder fell to the ground. The darkness was thick and tight, and he felt relieved because this would save him from seeing the faces." (Kanafani 92).

Abu Alkhaizaran is the symbol of the failed and defeated Palestinian leadership, unable to resist the Zionist occupation in the time of the Nakba and beyond, and he is the one who carries the three Palestinian men to death, a leadership that does not fulfill its promises, and does not bear its responsibilities. There is no doubt that the inability of the leaders is one of the main reasons that led to the Nakba and displacement. Moreover, the smuggler, Abu Al-Khaizaran, is the symbol of human exploitation in its ugliest form, the symbol of the political class and the capitalist bourgeoisie, who exploit the tragedy of the Palestinians for personal benefit and trafficking.

On the other hand, Abu Al-Khaizaran is not satisfied of his work. When he throws the bodies on a dustbin surface, he returns to a sudden consciousness, for a shocking idea that shook his heart and mind that he himself throw in his hands the bodies of three Palestinians of different generations who come to the ends of the world in search of work. It means that he has to realize that the end of these Palestinian people and his destiny would not be different to them. It must be remembered that Abu Al-Khaizaran has described himself as a trivial person, which means that he is dissatisfied with himself, his behavior and his fate. This description is a reflection of his image in front of himself and his self-esteem. It is the moment of the acute escalating crisis that Abu Al- Al-Khaizaran faces with the three dead bodies. The idea or question comes in a moment of





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positive transformation in his awareness, sense and personality. The novel stops at the big question, and Abu Al-Khaizaran could not continue his journey, which means there is a suggestion of another alternative fate.

It is really important to add that Abu Al-Khaizaran in his last historical question is not only aimed at the three men but also to reach all the Palestinian and the Arab peoples. The transformation of the consciousness of Abu Al-Khaizaran is proved through his question. Gassan Kanafani uses the question that indicates the past, once in the form of the absentee and once again in the form of the addressee:

"Why didn't they knock on the walls of the tank?"

"Why didn't you knock on the walls of the tank? Why didn't you say? Why?"

"Why didn't you knock the walls of the tank? Why didn't you knock on the walls of the tank? Why? Why? Why?" (Kanafani 93).

In my view, the first question, in the form of absentee, is addressed to the three men, the second question to the Palestinian people, and the third question is addressed to the entire Arab peoples.

It is no longer surprising, according to this vision and this analysis that the question comes through the words of Abu Al-Khaizaran, who reports a sudden and shocking moment that restores to him a consciousness that is absent, psychological and mental balance that is blocked by events of great pains and cruelty that have a deep impact upon the injured human being. Thus, the death of the three Palestinian men was inevitable, leaving them with no choice but death. For Ghassan Kanafani, death in the homeland is an honor much more if it is compared to that of the world of exile that is saturated with brutality.

So, the death of the three Palestinian men inside the tank puts an end to pain and a sense of helplessness. The characters find their comfort when





there is no longer hope for life. But the issue remains, the desert remains, time remains, and the earth remains waiting for someone to knock on the tank and cry out. The title of the novel itself "Men in the Sun" is a symbol of the magnitude of the suffering of these men and the intensity of the heat that the heroes of the story face, whether in Basra, the desert or inside the tank. Symbolically, death is the symbol of escape to the new life and the symbol of the dark Palestinian night that brings a new dawn, which is the Palestinian revolution. According to Alshahaat, death in the novel "Men in the Sun":

“... makes the act of coming out of the darkness towards the sun (...) The idea of an allegorical representation colludes with the eloquence of condensation, reduction and sometimes abstraction in order to formulate the features of (...) with special aesthetics that are full of ridicule that envelops the tragedy of the Palestinian human being. “ (Al-Shahat, 2006: 146).

On the other hand, "Men in the Sun" is the novel that contributes to the cultural construction of a national cause having all the features of major human issues in the history of Palestinians. In the novel, we see people dying in another desert when they try to cut it off to escape from war seeking individual solutions. The story is written in a simple and direct framework. The writer tries to present the way of how people depart from the land of Palestine. The novel also represents migration after migration, escape after escape, escape and migration from the life of war and suffering. In its entirety, the novel represents a critical life of all the circumstances that face Palestinians. This critical situation is depicted in the novel through the characters chosen by the writer. An old man Abu Qais consults his wife to smuggle from Palestine to Kuwait so as to compensate what he loses due to war. He argues his wife as in the following conversation:

“He looked at his wife”





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"How do you see Qais's mother?"

"she looked at him and whispered:"

"As You See"

"We can educate Qais ..."

"Yes"

"And we may buy one or two roots of olive"

"of course,"

"And we may build a room in somewhere"

"yes"

"If I arrive ...If I arrive" (Kanafani, 1980: 20-21)

In Kuwait, Abu Qais hopes to find money to send his son to school, to buy a small house and perhaps even one or two olive shoots. Through the dialogue, Kanafani attributes in a smooth and fascinating manner a momentum of indications and suggestions expressing the tragedy of the real life of the Palestinian man. The dialogue also reflects the concerns of this simple man and reveals the motives for the persistence of his struggle.

On the other hand, when Abu Qais experiences the life of despair, wretchedness and humiliation outside his homeland, he proudly remembers the fate of Teacher Saleem, his son's schoolteacher in their countryside, who died one day before their countryside was attacked by the Zionists. Abu Qais, dying in the homeland is a blessing of God and Teacher Saleem was lucky for he died "one night before the wretched village fell into the hands of the Jews" (Kanafani 14). Moreover, according to Abu Qais, it is really a divine favor to Teacher Saleem that he was buried in the homeland; "... all the same you stayed there ... you saved yourself humiliation and wretchedness ... the mercy of God be upon you, Teacher Saleem.





If you had lived, if you had been drowned by poverty as I have... would you have been willing to carry all your years on your shoulders and flee across the desert to Kuwait to find a crust of bread? (Kanafani 15)".

Another image of smuggling is embodied through the character of Asaad who dreams of dinars in Kuwait. He borrows fifty dinars from a man who wants to marry off his daughter. He pays twenty dinars to be smuggled by Abu Al-Abd from Amman to Baghdad, but Abu Al-Abd takes the dinars and leaves Asaad alone in the middle of the road. Abu-Al-Abd also "lied to him! He exploited his innocence and lack of knowledge of the place, he deceived him, he got him out of the car, after a sweltering day trip, he asked him to go around the H four to avoid falling into the hands of the border men" This shows the escalation of the real crisis, the intensification of the tragedy of the Palestinian man, displacement and loss; and continuous daily suffering. (Kanafani 25).

In the novel "Men in the Sun", Kanafani reflects the hard consequences of military conflicts and compelled displacement for individuals and their families as well as their connections to their native environment. He could represent the critical situations of the Palestinian people and their unenviable condition of displacement and death. They appear as victims of the terror and chaos of the Israelian war on Palestinian land. However, the Palestinian victims start to regret by feelings of guilt and shame for leaving home and other belongings behind. In addition, Kanafani points out that psychological concomitants of a humiliating experience of displacement with victims preferring death to a life which lacks honor and dignity. A narrative of the life of Abu Qais and his family (wife, teenage son, and last infant) live in half room. He looks exhausted after ten years of stopping his life waiting for his return to his village, his house and his ten olive trees, but he now believes that his dream of returning has become impossible. Abu Qais represents the life of the displaced and homeless Palestinian who searches for his identity at every moment of his displacement, dispersion and loss. He also carries his homeland and all the





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villages and places that fell in his heart and mind wherever he goes. He is looking for a stable place (death) for himself to forget the loss of parents, loved ones and the homeland. Abu Qais says to himself: "In the past ten years, you have done nothing but waiting,". (Kanafani, 1980: 18). He means that he should have done something, so why did he not do it? He wants to say, within ten years, he could not expel the occupation from his homeland. He continues to be incapacitated and helpless. In this way, he preferred death to life: "You die?! Ha! Who says it's no better than your life now?". (Kanafani 20) In this case, death is a happy release for Abu Qais.





CONCLUSION

The paper is devoted to depict the story of the Palestinian suffering that is characterized by humiliation, bitterness and oppression. All Palestinian generations are subjected to displacement, suffer from alienation and loss of identity. Due to Israeli violence, hundreds of thousands of Palestinians were forced to leave their homeland escaping from cruelty, harshness and humiliation practiced by Israeli occupation. Palestinian suffering of displacement was considered as one of the largest problems in the twentieth and twenty-first century. Palestinians fled their war-torn country seeking safety and refuge in different countries in all over the world. The phenomenon of death and displacement formed the basis of Ghassan Kanafani's novel "Men in the Sun". For the Palestinian man, death and displacement remained the main problems in his life throughout the ages he lived with the Zionist occupation. This paper made an attempt to show the circumstances of the Palestinian struggle, through the literary narrative of Gassan Kanafani. It also traced the impact of colonial domination on Palestinians that the colonial power not only occupied and robbed their land but also their right to live in dignity since the first Nakba in 1948 to the present. As a committed writer, Kanafani has succeeded in turning the attention of the world towards the predicaments of his people in Palestine.





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