The Arab-Palestinian citizens of Israel, describes the discursive ways decided to minority – many monuments that commemorate their victims in the Zionist-Palestinian conflict have been established in Arab villages and towns inside Israel.

The Arabs in Israel had indeed gained more freedom by then but were still closely surveilled by the authorities who restricted their freedom of expression. When the foundations for the monuments were built, the police arrested Salah Al-Din’s son and another Arab. Abdes was concerned that his work might turn the state’s authority against him. This was one of the reasons that he asked the Jewish sculptor, Gershon Knispel, to join him in creating the monument.

In contrast, Land Day was a clear political issue. What was at stake was the core of the struggle between Zionism and the Palestinian people: land. The Palestinian national narrative could be summarized in one sentence – the ‘Palestinian peasants’ land was robbed by the Zionists’. Land occupies a central role in Palestinian experience and mythology. After the end of military rule in 1966, the Arab citizens had reason to believe that Israel was going through a process of democratization, progressing to ward civil equality. The confiscation of lands in 1976 and the victims of the police shotting this illusión. But in contrast to the massacre in Kufr-Qasim, the absence of military rule enabled the relations to gain presence in the public space and to be linked to a shared Palestinian memory. Thus, the events of Land Day signify a historic turning point where Palestinian nationalism began to spill from the private walls into the public space – in building monuments and in the annual political rallies of protest and memory.

The Land Day monument

One event and one monument were crucial in triggering this process: on 30 March 1976, Israeli police shot to death six Arab citizens during violent demonstrations against the government’s confiscation of Palestinian land. This day, known as Land Day, and the monument built to commemorate the tragic event signify the stage in which the Palestinian memory began to be carved in the public space of the Arab minority in Israel.

Rabinowitz describes the discursive ways in which the state of Israel denied the Palestinian national identity of its Arab citizens, and how it tried to create a new, local Arab identity, loyal to the state of Israel. The main element in denying the Palestinian identity was denying the past, notably everything that happened before 1948. The Palestinianans were expected to ignore their common denominator as victims of the war in 1948 and the memories of their existence as a community before 1948. The exile of the Palestinian leadership, as well as many years of worry about possible repressive action and the disapproving stance of the Jewish majority, forced demonstrations of Palestinian national identity to follow the private sphere.

Private memories of the 1948 war and longings for exiled family members were transmitted orally within families. Poets and authors like Emili Habibi, Tawfiq Zayad and Hana Ibrahim wrote about the Nakba (the destruction of Palestine in 1948) in their posts, bringing this to the public sphere. However, public rallies and demonstrations where highly restricted and not a single Palestinian national monument was founded.

The year 1976 constitutes a turning point in the ways the Palestinians in Israel remember their past. In February of that year, the Israeli government declared its intention to confiscate land from its owners in the villages of Sakhnin, Azarbah and Dei-Hana in central Galilee. The wide protest demonstration planned for 30 March developed into a violent confrontation between the demonstrators and the Border Police troops, who entered the villages and the houses. The Israeli police killed six people and injured 70.

It was not the first time that the Arab citizens of Israel suffered fatal casualties from the shooting of Israeli security forces. Twenty years earlier, on 29 October 1956, a group of peasants from Kufr-Qassem returned to their village from the fields, not aware that their village was under curfew. Forty-seven of them were murdered by Israeli troops. The event is commemorated annually and two monuments were built in the village. However, it is difficult to consider these early memorial practices as national commemoration since they were not articulated by any Palestinian symbols and did not invoke, explicitly or implicitly, a common Palestinian past. However, the collective self-image of the Palestinians in Israel produced by this commemoration of Kufr-Qassem is one of a passive victim and not of an active political agent fighting heroically for rights.

In contrast, Land Day was a clear political issue. What was at stake was the core of the struggle between Zionism and the Palestinian people: land. The Palestinian national narrative could be summarized in one sentence – the ‘Palestinian peasants’ land was robbed by the Zionists’. Land occupies a central role in Palestinian experience and mythology. After the end of military rule in 1966, the Arab citizens had reason to believe that Israel was going through a process of democratization, progressing to ward civil equality. The confiscation of lands in 1976 and the victims of the police shotting this illusión. But in contrast to the massacre in Kufr-Qassem, the absence of military rule enabled the relations to gain presence in the public space and to be linked to a shared Palestinian memory. Thus, the events of Land Day signify a historic turning point where Palestinian nationalism began to spill from the private walls into the public space – in building monuments and in the annual political rallies of protest and memory.

The Land Day monument

One event and one monument were crucial in triggering this process: on 30 March 1976, Israeli police shot to death six Arab citizens during violent demonstrations against the government’s confiscation of Palestinian land. This day, known as Land Day, and the monument built to commemorate the tragic event signify the stage in which the Palestinian memory began to be carved in the public space – in building monuments and in the annual political rallies of protest and memory.

The Land Day monument

The establishment of monuments for commemorating the victims of violent confrontations constitutes a major element in the construction of modern national consciousness. The Arab-Palestinian minority – many monuments that commemorate their victims in the Zionist-Palestinian conflict have been established in Arab villages and towns inside Israel.

Abedi and G. Knispel created two separate sculptures for deepening the understanding between the two peoples.

In the first, it signals the beginning of a long process of stitching both the Palestinian immigration and the Arabic language. After the end of military rule in 1995, it expresses an extroverted defiant secularism, a moment before it became impossible to live in peace. 4. The national monument Ð an unimaginable scenario Ð in later days in Israel. In this sense it is still connected to the ‘decade of hope’ that followed the end of military rule in 1995. Finally, it expresses an extroverted defiant secularism, a moment before it became impossible to live in peace.

A quarter of a century after the creation of the Land Day monument, dozens of other monuments have been established all over Arab villages and towns in Israel. These monuments commemorate the martyrs of the rebellion against the British in 1936–1939, the Nakba in 1948, and recently, the 13 victims who were shot and killed by the Israeli police during the violent demonstrations of October 2000. Where possible, there is an effort to draw a direct line between all the victims, emphasizing their common destiny. From a contemporary perspective, looking back on 54 years of the existence of in state of Israel, the crucial place of the Land Day events and Land Day monument is evident. It was the basis of the rise of identity and mentality, the moment when the Palestinian identity of the Arabs in Israel started to gain presence in the public space.

Notes

1. S. Robinson, ‘Local Struggle, National Struggle: The Nakba of 1948, and recently, the 13 victims who were shot and killed by the Israeli police during the violent demonstrations of October 2000. Where possible, there is an effort to draw a direct line between all the victims, emphasizing their common destiny. From a contemporary perspective, looking back on 54 years of the existence of in state of Israel, the crucial place of the Land Day events and Land Day monument is evident. It was the basis of the rise of identity and mentality, the moment when the Palestinian identity of the Arabs in Israel started to gain presence in the public space.


3. N. Robinson, ‘Local Struggle, National Struggle: The Nakba of 1948, and recently, the 13 victims who were shot and killed by the Israeli police during the violent demonstrations of October 2000. Where possible, there is an effort to draw a direct line between all the victims, emphasizing their common destiny. From a contemporary perspective, looking back on 54 years of the existence of in state of Israel, the crucial place of the Land Day events and Land Day monument is evident. It was the basis of the rise of identity and mentality, the moment when the Palestinian identity of the Arabs in Israel started to gain presence in the public space.

4. N. Robinson, ‘Local Struggle, National Struggle: The Nakba of 1948, and recently, the 13 victims who were shot and killed by the Israeli police during the violent demonstrations of October 2000. Where possible, there is an effort to draw a direct line between all the victims, emphasizing their common destiny. From a contemporary perspective, looking back on 54 years of the existence of in state of Israel, the crucial place of the Land Day events and Land Day monument is evident. It was the basis of the rise of identity and mentality, the moment when the Palestinian identity of the Arabs in Israel started to gain presence in the public space.

5. N. Robinson, ‘Local Struggle, National Struggle: The Nakba of 1948, and recently, the 13 victims who were shot and killed by the Israeli police during the violent demonstrations of October 2000. Where possible, there is an effort to draw a direct line between all the victims, emphasizing their common destiny. From a contemporary perspective, looking back on 54 years of the existence of in state of Israel, the crucial place of the Land Day events and Land Day monument is evident. It was the basis of the rise of identity and mentality, the moment when the Palestinian identity of the Arabs in Israel started to gain presence in the public space.