Once Upon Palestine is an audio documentary that sheds light on a very personal aspect in my life. I personally draw back to the history of the Palestinian Nakba (catastrophe) with the assistance of Professor Ashraf ElSherif from the Political Science department at AUC as well as I shed light on the Egyptian perspective regarding the Palestinian cause.

Once upon Palestine, my friend,

There was a land whose grounds I barely kissed
A land whose grounds were blessed with the birth of Prophet Jesus
And has engraved Prophet Abraham and his sons.
A land my friend that has brought the finest of oranges, grapes, and olive oil.
A land that has been caged for sixty-nine years today my friend and no one, not even us, can walk back in.
A land where prayers need the occupiers’ consent to fly through the sky,
A land where liberation cries out through tears down a child’s eye.

Palestine, my friend.

Palestine on the fifteenth of May nineteen forty-eight has lost the solid statehood it had. It has been partitioned, divided, and dried out.

AS: “They left their lands under force.” (1 sec)

AS: “There was clear plan ordered by top leaders Israeli government of genocide.” (6 sec)

Ashraf ElSherif, a political science professor at the American University in Cairo has acknowledged that the Nakba, which means Catastrophe in Arabic, is existent. He continues to validate that
As: “People when they talk about the Nakba they refer to a specific year which is 1948, the year where state of Israel was created and officially people of Palestine were expelled from their land. But this was just the end of the story and the beginning of another chapter. It was the culmination of a bigger history which has started as early as 1896 which is when the Zionist project has started officially, Zionist movement was created.” (27 sec)

Within the same swoon of war zones in Palestine, pride and joy still exist.

Nour Khalil, an Egyptian friend of mine expressed her thoughts on the matter.

NK: What I admire most about Palestinians is that they always know how to take something that’s so negative and have the courage to turn it into something way more positive.” (10 sec)

The partitioned zones that is allocated for Palestinians, which are Gaza and the West Bank, resemble the ongoing struggle for survival. Almost two million Palestinians are caged within the small Gaza strip and have been fighting to keep it Israeli-free.

As: “Palestine is not land without people, there is people.” (3 sec)

There are people who are battling wars many of the Arabs know nothing about.

NK: “It saddens me that we call them people who sold their land. (4 sec)

Many of my Egyptian friends generally believe that great number of Palestinians have sold their lands and moved out. This, with no doubt, resembles a marginal portion of Palestinians, one that does not even sum up to about six percent of the entire Palestinian population.

Emily John, an Egyptian who has traces of Palestinian identity says that

EJ: “When I hear my grandma telling me what happened and how they moved out, of course it’s according to perspectives so the part of the world does not see us as being kicked out and the other part sees us as being kicked out but I think it’s still somewhere I belong to.” (18 sec)

EJ: “I just love how we’re all over the world and part of Palestine is with us.” (5 sec)

Egyptians, in specific, have been divided in terms of their opinions on the dilemma. The Palestinian cause has been an-ongoing issue, that all Egyptian presidents during their reign has had a different response towards.
Back in time during President Nasser’s reign, Arab unity has been imposed as the base to Arab states’ prosperity. Right after, during President Sadat’s era, Camp David agreement has been imposed. When President Mubarak had his hands on the presidency, the relations were in the grey zone, in between, yet with the peace treaty remaining in process. With the downfall of his rule and with the up rise of the Muslim Brotherhood’s status, the outlook towards the Palestinian cause started to go down the drain.

NK: “It saddens me that they have such huge trust issues because of their experience with Egyptians and with other Arab people.” (9 sec)

NK: “It saddens me that once upon a time our president sold them off and made a peace treaty with Israel.” (9 sec)

Egyptians take on the matter has been swaying between black and white. Although Nour has shed light on the peace treaty that President Saddat has signed with Israel, professor Ashraf provided an example that portrays the genuine take on the matter.

AS: “Since 1930s Egyptians would go to fight in Palestine as volunteers, I mean many Egyptians you know for example there is a famous street in Mohandesin Share’a Batal Ahmed Abdul-Aziz, who is Batal Ahmed Abdul-Aziz? He is a military officer in Egyptian army who resigned from the army and went to volunteer in the fight in the war in Palestine not with the Egyptian army but with the Palestinians.” (22 sec)

May the fifteenth is coming up soon. This day marks the story of the downfall of Palestine. Many of us stand in silence, powerless towards the situation. Sixty-nine years is quite too much for the genocide and war zones to remain on play. Sixty-nine years is quite too much to not have access to your home. Sixty-nine years will grow into seventy and hundred and ages if the world remains silent.

NK: “It’s been 69 years since the state of Israel was established. I think on a day like this we should advocate more on the recognition of Palestine as a state on the map.” (13 sec)

NK: “We cannot liberate ourselves without the liberation of Palestine.” (4 sec)
And with these words I conclude
Leaving you with the thought of Palestine, my friends
To the people of Israel, I call
Who fear our liberation for days to come
Do not fear our freedom whenever it strikes
For we will liberate you too the day we rise

This audio documentary was produced by Haya ElSayed for the Audio Production course at the American University in Cairo taught by Professor Kim Fox in Spring two thousand and seventeen. Special thanks to Professor Ashraf ElSherif, Nour Khalil and Emily John for their interviews. Credits for the music goes to Palestine Will Be Free by Maher Zain and Mawteny by Murad El Sweity.