Hamed Moussa, was born in Dayr El Assad, in the Akka district, over a 100 years ago. When I interviewed him in 2012, he told me that he didn’t know his exact age.

Hamed Moussa was one of the lucky few Palestinians who was neither exiled from his homeland or became an internally displaced refugee in 1948. Although he was interred in a forced-labor camp for five months, when he was released, he managed to return to his village and what remained of his family’s farmland. The majority of his family’s land was expropriated by the new state of Israel and he had to support his family by earning a living as a tile-setter. But a small segment of his family’s land that was too rocky and elevated for the settlers to farm, was not seized by Israel. Hamed Moussa had the very rare privilege for a Palestinian farmer, of continuing to cultivate that small part of his ancestral land throughout his life.

Hamed Moussa belonged to the land in every way and never intimated any patronizing, self-conscious, or defensive claims that the land belongs to him. One of the fundamental differences in the relationship to the land between the Palestinians and the Israelis, is that the settlers forcefully insist that the land belongs to them while the indigenous Palestinians simply and naturally belong to the land.

“\textit{I saw all of this with my own eyes. The men and the women and the boys were separated into groups. I sat on the edge of the group near the road...}
The soldiers picked four men out of the group and marched them out of the village. Then one of the officers told the gathered villagers that they all had to leave for Syria and the soldiers began forcing the villagers onto the road out of the village... At Nahf (a village where displaced Palestinians from a number of other villages had been gathered) we saw the bodies of the four men who were earlier taken out of Dayr El Assad. They had been executed and left along the side of the road... There were four other men that had also been executed and their bodies left out as a public display....

Those who left the country didn’t imagine that the state of Israel would remain, and they thought that they could quickly reclaim their land. They didn’t realize that all of the land would be expropriated and that they would remain in exile... I thank God that we were able to remain in our village... I thank God that we were not all expelled…”

Hamed Moussa