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"The Peace on The Horizon - 70 Years after The World War 2 in the Middle East"(36)

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Chapter 4: War and Peace in The Middle East

4-8(36) East of Nakba(great catastrophe)

The Arab countries have been disastrously defeated by Israel in the First Arab Israeli War in which Israel aimed for Independence. That was the reason why Arab countries called this war "Nakba (Great Disaster)" and Israel called the War of Independence. The greatest victim was the Arab-Palestinians who lived in Palestine. Approximately 750,000 Jews flowed from all over the world into Palestine after the war. As a result, the same number of Arab-Palestinians were pushed out of the country and became refugees. More Palestinian refugees came in the later Arab-Israeli wars. The number of refugees reached approximately ten million in total. Most of them evacuated to the east neighboring country - Jordan. Jordan was "the east of Nakba".

Jordan, however, was the poor country from its foundation. Palestinian refugees had a difficult time in Jordan. Many of them had to migrate to the Gulf countries such as Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, where the oil boom began. They moved from the land of Nakba in Palestine to Jordan and thereafter toward to the east again. This time, Gulf countries became "the east of Nakba". Palestinian refugees were the diligent workforce in the Gulf oil-producing countries. Palestinians were the same Arabs with inhabitants in the Gulf countries. They could easily communicate by speaking Arabic language. They believed the same religion of Islam as the same Sunni sect. The Saudis and Kuwaitis appreciated the excellent knowledge of the Palestinians.

In the Gulf countries, they called migrants coming from abroad as "guest workers" and called themselves as "host countries". Palestinian migrants who spoke Arabic and worshiped together at the mosque on Friday were the best "guest workers" for "host countries". However, do not be misled by the softness of the word "guest". Palestinians coming to Gulf countries in search for getting a piece of oil wealth were merely migrant workers. Palestinians were given cold shoulder. Inhabitants in the Gulf countries were blind to own faults and abused the Palestinians. Children imitate their parents and teased Palestinian children irrationally.

Palestinians, however, had to endure remained silent, otherwise they might lose good salary which was pretty high than their home country. Their status was unstable. The employment contract was

depended on the temper of their lords. The lords were easily dismissed migrants and expelled them. Migrants were exactly modern slavery.

It is necessary to point out that migrants are different from immigrants. Immigrants are those who emigrated from other countries and acquired the citizenship of that country. Although there might be social discrimination, immigrants have the same political rights and the right of social security same as the original citizens. But migrant "guest" workers are not given such a right.

The Palestinians were obviously more educated, experienced and diligent than the Kuwaitis or Saudis. But under the modern slavery system of migrant workers, they had to endure humiliation and continue their duties. They sent the most of their salary to their relatives at home. Someday in the future when they would retire and return to home, it might be their dream to build an apartment and become a landlord, or to open a small shop and become the owner of self-employed business.

Palestinians were also enthusiastic about giving university education on children. As refugees living in other countries it was necessary to have excellent knowledge and expertise. The Shatillas and Al-Yassins who were Palestine refugees from Turkam had been working in Kuwait as teacher or doctor, respectively. They were keen on education more than others. The second son of the Shatillas was sent to the United States for studying though their household spending was painful. The eldest son of the Shatillas who had been working at an oil company in Saudi Arabia handed over a part of his salary to his father to support his brother's tuition. The Shatillas expected that their young son got citizenship of the United States after graduating university. Furthermore, the family had hidden agenda that if something happened in the Middle East they would rely on him and migrate to the United States.

Father himself did not lose hope to return to Turkam. He had a dream to open a private school in his hometown and spend the rest of his life to teach Palestine children. When he retired a teacher in the late 1970s, he left Kuwait and returned to Jordan. Around the same time Al-Yassin also sent his daughter Rania to American University in Cairo and the family returned to Jordan. He had a doctor's license, so he decided to settle permanent residence in Jordan and changed their nationality from Palestine to Jordan.

When the "Black September" incident took place in 1970, the PLO, Palestine Liberation Organization, moved its headquarter to Beirut, Lebanon. Jordan restored a peaceful condition under King Hussein. The Palestinians who emigrated to the Gulf countries returned to Jordan with various expectations in mind. Once the Palestinians had moved eastward from the land of "Nakba" to Jordan and again settled in Gulf countries in eastward. This time they moved westward and back to Jordan. Most of them waited for the day when they could return to Palestine.

(To be continued ----)