

PALESTINE-ISRAEL Journal
of Politics, Economics and Culture

The Palestine-Israel *Journal* is an independent quarterly founded in 1994 by Victor Cygielman and Ziad AbuZayyad. It aims to shed light on, and analyze freely and critically, complex issues in the core of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. The *Journal's* purpose is to discuss all issues related to the conflict without prejudice or taboos, and to contribute to the efforts to end the Israeli occupation and achieve a political solution based on two-states, Israel and Palestine, on the 4th of June 1967 lines. Reproduction of material is allowed by permission only.

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Editorial

One Celebrates Independence While the Other Commemorates the Nakba

May 14th of this year marks the 75th anniversary of both the establishment of the State of Israel and the Palestinian Nakba. These are two sides of the same coin, with two conflicting narratives. But as has been said, everyone has a right to their own opinion but not to their own facts.

And the fact is that the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948, while it was a tremendous achievement for the Zionist movement, also led to the Palestinian Nakba in which 750, 000 indigenous Palestinians were uprooted from their homeland and became refugees all over the planet. Palestine was not a land without people for a people without a land. It was inhabited by the Palestinians, a people with their own culture, heritage, civilization, and public life, who were subjected to a severe historical injustice known as the Nakba, the Arabic word for catastrophe.

The Palestinians were expelled from their homes and lands by force, intimidation, and sometimes by massacres, and were replaced by Jewish immigrants, many of them Holocaust survivors from Europe, and others who left countries in the Middle East and North Africa. The Palestinians had to pay the price of a crime, the Nazi crimes, that they had nothing to do with and were not responsible for.

In an age when fake news is widely circulated on social media, our goal at the **Palestine-Israel Journal (PIJ)** is to try to understand exactly what happened in 1948 and how that affects today's reality. We believe in the need to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in a manner that will enable both peoples to exercise the right to freedom and grant them the ability to lead a dignified life. With this edition, we examine ways to address and reverse the injustice done to the Palestinians without committing another injustice against the Israelis who live in Israel/Palestine today.

This **PIJ** issue is being prepared at an extremely sensitive time in the history of Israeli-Palestinian relations. The November 2022 elections produced the most extreme ultra-right-wing government in Israel's history. It is a racist, messianic, and homophobic government which has a dangerous agenda of restricting Israel's independent judiciary and undermining its democratic character, while Orthodox ministers who make up half of the government aim to convert it into a *Halachic* state run according to Jewish

law. This government has key ministers such as Bezalel Smotrich, finance minister and minister within the Defense Ministry, and National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir, a follower of the racist Rabbi Meir Kahane, calling to continue and complete what was done to the Palestinians in 1948 by expelling the 6+ million Palestinians who still live under Israeli control in Israel within the 1967 borders and in the Occupied Palestinian Territory from 1967. The outcome of this situation is catastrophic for both peoples, with an increasing cycle of mutual and deadly violence and no political horizon in sight.

The Palestinian leadership has failed to provide its people with what it promised to achieve through political negotiations: conducive to end the occupation, resolve the refugee problem, and create a Palestinian state alongside the State of Israel on the June 4, 1967, armistice lines. Despite this failure, it still declares its full commitment to peaceful negotiations and its objection to violent struggle against the occupation. It even continues security coordination with Israeli security forces, incurring the wrath of its own people, many of whom no longer support this leadership and opt for violent armed struggle.

The unexpected emergence of a mass protest movement in Israel representing many important sectors of society, which is pushing back against the government's reactionary antidemocratic policies, is focusing on defending the independence of the judiciary, freedom of the press, education, and women's rights, but it has not placed the primary threat to Israeli democracy – the continuation of the occupation – on its agenda. No nation can remain democratic if it continues to deny democratic rights to another people.

What is urgently needed is to correct the historical injustice done to the Palestinian people without committing an injustice against the Israeli people. It is necessary to find a formula that will enable the two peoples to reconcile and compromise, so that both can live in peace and security.

We hope this issue will contribute to an understanding of the current, extremely complex and dangerous reality and to the quest for solutions.

The Editors

Hillel Schenker and Ziad AbuZayyad

Seventy-Five Years of Ongoing Nakba: 75 Years of Israeli Occupation

Dalal Iriqat

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What happened and what is happening today? What are the future directions? Where are we, and where are we going?

To answer any question on the Nakba, one needs to admit that for 75 years, Palestinians have endured injustice under the Israeli occupation. One must realize that this is not a matter of periodic flare-ups. This is about the ethnic cleansing of Palestine within the framework of a prolonged military occupation.

Seventy-five years of documented apartheid, colonialism, and war crimes. Putting things in context means the Nakba is now, the Nakba is continuing. One can say: “Oh, I didn’t witness what happened in 1948,” but what are the Israeli military orders of forced evictions that are taking place in Massafer Yatta and Sheikh Jarrah? What do we call what we witnessed during Shireen Abu Akleh’s funeral? What do we call withholding bodies of Palestinians in Israeli refrigerators? This is the practical translation of 75 years of Israeli apartheid and military occupation.

Tolerance of de Facto Annexation

When violence is rewarded, things can only get worse. For 75 years, the world has tolerated Zionist colonialism on Palestinian land and against the Palestinian people through annexation, forced displacement, turning people into refugees, destroyed villages, a colonial settler project, confiscation plans, isolating Jerusalem, and militarily abusing citizens. For 75 years, the world has been bearing witness to Israel’s de facto annexation of East Jerusalem with the aim of expanding the settlement blocs in the hope of completely isolating East Jerusalem from the West Bank, thus making the exercise of Palestinian rights in Jerusalem impossible. This is cultivated in the E1 and E2 plans, in Khan al-Ahmar, at Jaffa Gate, in the Old City and

Sheikh Jarrah. With 75 years of state-organized violence, it is high time for accountability instead of messages of congratulations on the independence of the State of Israel! Seventy-five years since the creation of this state, of recognition of a state without defined borders.

Successive Israeli prime ministers demonstrated to the world no intention of achieving a political peace. Instead, they favored a liberal peace-building agenda via economic peace and normalization with Arab regimes par excellence. It's not only Palestinians who will pay the price for the latest extremist government. For Israel, the occupying state, there will be a steep cost, too. The true racist and criminal face of the so-called "only democracy in the Middle East" will now be exposed. The pushback tactics are already clear: Parts of the international community declared that these figures, despite their extremism, were elected and gained their legitimacy through the ballot box. The debate continues between democracy and international law, yet members of the international community must have a déjà vu from when they rejected Hamas's democratic victory in 2006. Rather than being legitimized by its electoral victory, any Palestinian government incorporating Hamas was subjected to international boycott.

Soon the question of the prolonged occupation will come before the International Court of Justice (ICJ) (July 25, 2023) in response to the recent vote in the United Nations General Assembly. Framing the occupation in legal terms will shift the focus to the right of self-determination and to the urgency of ending the military occupation. A legal opinion by the ICJ will free the Palestinians of responsibility for dealing with the Israeli occupation via negotiations alone; arbitration and other legal mechanisms will soon be a real possibility.

A legal opinion by the ICJ will free the Palestinians of responsibility for dealing with the Israeli occupation via negotiations alone.

Netanyahu Brings Back Coercive Diplomacy

Seventy-five years ago, this was referred to as the Arab-Israeli conflict. The other question Palestinians face as they consider the repercussions of this new government is whether they can expect any leverage or solidarity from the Arab world. Netanyahu is the master of coercive diplomacy. The "Abraham Accords" signed with the UAE, Bahrain, Morocco and Sudan were achieved on the pretext that normalization with Israel would halt his plans for imminent annexation of the West Bank. His comeback means an intensified return to "economic peace" efforts, meaning the heralding of business and military deals rather than diplomatic negotiations to "solve," or rather bypass, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. All those deals prioritize

the interests of the state elites involved, not their people, and certainly not the Palestinians. This narrow understanding of national interests may be profitable, but it will not bring peace to the region as long as the question of the occupation is avoided.

With so much chatter now about Netanyahu's overwhelming desire to persuade Saudi Arabia to normalize ties, perhaps Riyadh should recall the Arab Peace Initiative, originally presented as the Saudi initiative and adopted by the Arab League in 2002. It promised full normalization with Israel after the establishment of a Palestinian state, a position Saudi Arabia has adhered to following the UAE's unilateral deal with Israel.

If the UAE established ties with Israel to prevent annexation, then surely other major Arab states can establish relations conditional on ending the occupation. There can be no progress toward a two-state solution and the establishment of a Palestinian state as long as the Israeli military occupation exists. If Netanyahu wants a regional settlement via a grand normalization process so badly in order to confront Iran, it would be a much bigger victory, and a genuine contribution to regional peace and security, to reach normalization with over 22 Arab governments, including Saudi Arabia, by finally achieving a just resolution of the always simmering conflict between the Israelis and Palestinians.

The international community needs to realize that the Palestinian public is dismayed by the damage that the previous U.S. Administration did to us, such as witnessing former President Donald Trump signing over Jerusalem to the Israelis and taking 'refugees' off the negotiations agenda!

A déjà vu Marshall Plan is not sufficient. The ATM approach for sustaining UNRWA and the Palestinian Authority (PA) instead of resolving the issue of refugees in accordance with international legitimacy (UNGA Resolution 194), while tolerating settlement expansion, settler terror, annexation, application of discriminatory laws, and fruitless years of negotiations, is a guaranteed return to coercive diplomacy that was sugar-coated under the umbrella of the peace process.

My fear is that the talk about a political settlement will only take us back to procrastination and Machiavellian negotiations that buy more time for Zionist land confiscations at the expense of Palestinian political rights. The international community bears significant responsibility for what has been happening for 75 years, providing impunity to Israel's occupation. It is also impossible to ignore the billions in military aid that Israel receives

annually; at the United Nations, successive states have given Israel cover to violate human rights with impunity – most recently vetoing or abstaining from UN resolutions to resort to the International Court of Justice for a legal opinion on the prolonged occupation.

Because of this, many regimes are implicated directly or indirectly in Israel's alleged war crimes against the Palestinians.

Israel's Disrespect for International Legitimacy

Ever since its establishment, Israel has violated not only UN resolutions and international humanitarian law but also the basic terms of the peace process and the Declaration of Principles (DoP) of 1995. For example, Jerusalem is a final-status issue and should be negotiated and agreed upon by the two parties alone, in accordance with the DoP. Unilateral recognition of Jerusalem as the Jewish capital of Israel is illegal. In 1980, a Knesset law was passed on a united Jerusalem and annexation of the eastern part of the city occupied in 1967. This was considered null and void by the international community; however, Trump's 2017 declaration of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel was NOT reversed by the Biden administration, although it is a breach of the interim agreement and international legitimacy.

The decision violates international law and the Fourth Geneva Convention, specifically Articles 49 and 146, and is considered a war



The United Nations General Assembly Fourth Committee votes on measures addressing the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, at the United Nations in New York, November 11, 2022. (Luke Tress/Times of Israel)

crime under the Rome Statute and the International Criminal Court (ICC) jurisdiction. Annexation violates the UN Charter, specifically Article 2 which prohibits the acquisition of land by force; it is contrary to the 1973 UN Convention on Apartheid; it is contrary to peace agreements and especially Paragraph 7 of Article 31 of the 1995 Oslo Accords. Trump's

At the United Nations, successive states have given Israel cover to violate human rights with impunity.

decision violates multiple UNSC resolutions that guarantee the Palestinian rights in the 1967 lands and East Jerusalem, specifically 242, 253, 267, 298, 476, 478, and 2334. Security Council member states are expected to uphold Article 25 of the UN Charter which obliges them to comply with all Security Council decisions. It is worth noting that more than 800 UN General Assembly resolutions and more than 100 UNSC resolutions have been passed regarding the Palestinian case, the last of which is 2334. Their failure to result in action is another example of how the international community is providing cover for the violations of the Israeli military occupation against the Palestinians.

Despite this failure, the fact remains that the Palestinians enjoy an embedded right in East Jerusalem and that settlements are illegal. This position is anchored in UNSC Resolution 2334 of December 2016, so it is high time for UNSC member states to abide by their ethical and legal obligations. UNSC resolutions clearly state that settlements impede the possibility of a two-state solution. Since the peace process started, the number of settlers has tripled to 750,000 in more than 432 settlements and colonial outposts established on Palestinian West Bank land. In May 2018, Military Decree 1797 was issued, allowing the demolition of any Palestinian structure in Area C within 96 hours!

Israel is violating international law and has been manipulating the law since 1948 as part of its ongoing colonial settler project. In 1950, it introduced the Absentee Property Law which defined any forced refugee as absent and gave ownership of their property to the State of Israel. The Absentee Property Law followed by the Protected Tenant Law of 1972 are the first legal tools used to transfer the property of Palestinian refugees without legal repercussions.

Sheikh Jarrah family property is protected by the Jordanian civil law Article 395 and by the agreement that Jordan signed with UNRWA in 1954. The Palestinians are suffering a second Nakba in the form of forced displacement orders in Khan al-Ahmar, Sheikh Jarrah, Beita, and Massafer Yatta; the confiscation of lands for colonial expansion purposes; and extrajudicial killings targeting every Palestinian. Journalist Shireen

Abu Akleh's murder is a solid legal case that shows Israeli crimes against humanity. The Human Rights Watch and B'tselem reports published in 2021 documented these crimes. Needless to mention, the Jewish Nation-State Law of 2018 clearly defined rights in the State of Israel that are for the Jews only, ignoring the Arab population of 2 million Muslims and Christians. Israel is holding around 5,000 prisoners, including 723 under administrative detention without trial. It is withholding more than 115 bodies, which are kept hostage in Israeli refrigerators while their families are deprived of the basic human right of a dignified burial. Extrajudicial killings take place on a daily basis. Every Palestinian is potentially a target of the Israeli occupation, including human rights and civil society organizations.¹ The Palestinians are subject to greater restrictions on their movements; Israeli settler colonies are growing; the West Bank is increasingly fragmented by the construction of bypass roads and the proliferation of Israeli checkpoints; and the Gaza Strip continues to be under siege. Constructing a separation wall, sealing off Palestinian communities, building settler colonies, destroying the Palestinians' quality of life, and even killing Palestinians are all clearly meant to hinder the possibility of creating a Palestinian state alongside an Israeli state. Israel continues to deal with the Palestinians via military orders in a blunt signal of its continued military occupation. For 75 years, Israeli crimes under the occupation have continued. Israel violates the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; the International Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination of 1973; the Hague Charter 1907, Article 46; the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949; and Security Council Resolution 198 of 1971; which stipulates that seizing lands by force and through military conquest is illegal. The report published by Human Rights Watch in 2021 confirmed that the Israeli authorities are committing crimes of apartheid and persecution.

Israel is violating international law and has been manipulating the law since 1948 as part of its ongoing colonial settler project.

A response limited to expressions of condemnation is too easily dismissed. This is impunity on steroids; it encourages more of the same or worse.

¹ On Oct. 19, 2021, apartheid state of Israel issued "military orders" declaring key Palestinian human rights and civil society groups as "terrorist organizations." These six Civil Society Organizations were: Defense for Children International - Palestine (DCIP), Al-Haq Organization-Defending Human Rights, Addameer Prisoner Support & Human Rights Association, Bisan Center for Research & Development, The Union of Agricultural Work Committees (UAWC), Union of Palestinian Women's Committees.

Security Is a Pretext

Israel has always appeared in the mass media and on the international stage as the victim, claiming that its violent actions were carried out for security reasons, but this is far from the truth. The Machiavellian style of negotiations practiced by the Israelis has ultimately been detrimental to the peace process and contributed to the prolonged occupation.

Israel did withdraw from Gaza and redeploy 9,000 Israeli settlers; however, Gaza remains under the total control of the Israeli occupation authorities. The goal behind the disengagement from Gaza was not to grant Gaza freedom. As articulated by Dov Weisglass, Ariel Sharon's top aide, the disengagement was actually meant to ensure that "there will not be a political process with the Palestinians." Today, Israel is using Hamas as a

Israel continues to deal with the Palestinians via military orders in a blunt signal of its continued military occupation.

fig leaf, and the rockets of the resistance are labelled terror. The Israeli withdrawal from Gaza was done unilaterally, without coordination with the PLO or the PA, and it led to the institutional and political split and division that has been in existence for

almost two decades now. Gaza has faced ongoing major military raids and incursions since 2007. Hamas relies on rocket fire as a negotiating tactic to pressure Israel to ease access of goods and people by loosening the blockade; on the other hand, Israel employs military might to deter Hamas. These tactics of Hamas and Israel enabled short-term victories for both at the expense of a long-term resolution. Fact uncontested: Palestine lives under a prolonged Israeli military occupation.

The right to self-defense is preserved in international laws, especially Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations, which guarantees the right of peoples to defend themselves. This is not limited to Israel but also applies to the Palestinians, who legally enjoy the right of resistance and self-defense.

From the settlers' perspective, inspired by Trumpism and the Jewish Nation-State Law, Jerusalem is the united Jewish capital, like 78% of the historical Palestinian land that was annexed for the purposes of creating the greater State of Israel so why not annex the rest of the West Bank?

Conclusion

Multilateralism can be applied effectively in the Palestinian case. Seventy-five years since the Nakba and 30 years since Oslo, it would be wise for the international community, which advocates for the two-state solution, to define the borders of the already recognized State of Israel and to

recognize the Palestinian state. This would translate into ending the Israeli occupation and would enable prosperous regional solutions to unfold.

Advocates for two states can't deny that the Palestinians recognized Israel's right to exist in 1988 and later again in 1993 with the beginning of the peace process in line with UN legitimacy on the borders of the post-1967 Naksa (setback) war. The Israelis never reciprocated.

The DoP said that the aim of the negotiations was to establish a Palestinian Interim Self-Government Authority and that a permanent settlement was to be achieved within five years based on Security Council Resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973).

There was NO mention of *statehood* for the Palestinians, and Israel treated the negotiations like an end in themselves rather than a tool toward a final agreement.

Annexation is ongoing de facto, as the State of Israel's doctrine is anchored in settlements which constitute the base of the colonial project. The discourse of human rights, justice, and prosperity is important; however, the starting point for any solution lies in an end to the occupation. The Marshall Plan approach is doomed to fail if not wrapped in a political context. Efforts to deal with the Palestinian cause from a humanitarian perspective provide cover for the continued Israeli occupation. International and private companies are profiting from the need for humanitarian assistance, while Israel is sustaining a cost-free occupation with Jewish supremacy over the entire land.

Seventy-five years of Nakba along with 75 years of independence for a recognized Israeli state without borders.

To conclude, one must call it the Israeli occupation; conflict is an understatement.

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The Right to Understand: Explaining the New Israeli Reality

Daniel Bar-Tal

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How is it possible to explain the collapse of the remnants of the State of Israel's democratic and liberal foundations, which is taking place before our eyes in the aftermath of the right-wing victory in November 2022? This is the question that is troubling commentators, politicians, and that part of the public that is shocked at the speed with which the process is happening: the dissolution of the regime's democratic and liberal foundations and the authoritarian-religious takeover of the entire system of the state.

We are witnessing an attempt by politicians to control the legal system and the media, to turn the education system into a socializing agent of nationalist and religious forces, to exercise censorship over criticism and the free flow of information, to govern public space according to Jewish religious law, and to institutionalize Jewish supremacy in legislation while reducing the laws that establish democratic principles. We are also witnessing increased violations of the principle of equality between Jews and Arabs and changes for the worse in relation to the occupied Palestinian population, the expansion of settlements, a change of status in the occupied areas, and the institutionalization of apartheid.

The causes of this process are not to be found in the present or even in the recent past, but rather in the way the State of Israel has developed and conducted itself from the moment of its establishment. The seeds of the catastrophe were planted over the decades of the state's existence; and ripened naturally into a regime overthrow under the conditions created by the results of the November 2022 elections. Among those protesting loudly now in 2023, figures like Dan Meridor, Tzipi Livni, Limor Livnat, Moshe Ya'alon, Ehud Barak, Yair Lapid, Gidon Sa'ar, and Avigdor Lieberman, all

contributed their part when they were in leadership positions, to the reality that is being created today by Itamar Ben-Gvir, Bezalel Smotrich, Yariv Levin, Shlomo Kari, Avi Maoz, Aryeh Deri, Yitzhak Goldknopf, and, of course, Benjamin Netanyahu and his family.

It happened as a surprise, but the group that is running the State of Israel today, are giving the final push to the fall of democracy by exploiting the suitable circumstances after they won the elections and built a strong supporting narrative. The speed differs from one's expectation that the process would happen over a longer period of time, like in Hungary and Turkey. Looking at its inception, it could perhaps be said that a state established in sin could not have existed otherwise, and that the breakdown of its democratic component was just a matter of time.

In the 1948 War of Independence, or the Nakba from the Palestinian point of view, Israel was victorious and established its state at a very high price, not only in Jewish victims. There was a high price in Arab victims as well, including the exodus/expulsion of some 750,000 indigenous Palestinians (about 70% of the Arab inhabitants of the land) and the destruction of some 450 Palestinian villages. This catastrophe, which happened to the Palestinian people 75 years ago, continues to pursue both its victims and its perpetrators to this day. The Jews in Israel are unwilling to take any responsibility for these events, and the Palestinians feel that the Nakba is still continuing.

The Beginnings in 1948 Were Authoritarian

Following the 1948 war, the State of Israel, under the leadership of its first prime minister, David Ben-Gurion, expanded the territories allotted to it by the UN Partition Plan. At the time it faced two difficult challenges: 1) Creating a nation out of the refugees streaming into Israel from myriad countries, many of whom were survivors of the Holocaust in Europe where six million Jews were slaughtered; and 2) Standing strong in the face of threats from the Arab countries that did not accept UNGA Resolution 181 (the Partition Plan).

The state that was established had all the characteristics of authoritarianism, and its leader ruled it completely autocratically. Ben-Gurion established a military regime that governed the Palestinians remaining within the state's borders; severely censored freedom of expression; demeaned the opposition and surveilled them; trounced any attempt to strike (the seamen's revolt); differentiated between citizens who supported the regime and those who opposed it ideologically; discriminated against Jews who immigrated from Arab countries; instituted indoctrination

into the school system; advanced his political cohorts to senior positions; and pressured cultural figures to refrain from criticism.

It's also important to remember that Ben-Gurion signed an agreement with the ultra-Orthodox in the areas of education, military service, employment, religion, and welfare that paved the way for the current discriminatory situation. Today's ultra-Orthodox, about 13% of Israel's Jewish population, are a heavy burden on the state: Most do not serve in the army; the majority of the men do not receive even a minimal (secular) education; and only about 50% of them participate in the workforce. Ben-

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Gurion also signed an agreement with the religious Zionists that allowed them to operate their own independent school system. They constitute about 11% of the Jewish population in Israel. Over the years, religious Zionists established a social-political-religious framework and infrastructure that began to lead the settlement enterprise; to influence all the social, political, educational and economic moves of the State of Israel; and to feel like an elite that has captured the hearts and minds of the people. The results are visible today as the representatives of this public lead the country toward nationalism, racism, and religiosity. In short, the golem has risen up against its creator.

Ben-Gurion opposed drafting an Israeli constitution, claiming that the British manage without one and that the issue could be addressed later. The lack of a constitution left a vacuum in the administration of the state. The results can be seen in the attempt at a *coup d'état* today. While there is no constitution, a Declaration of Independence was drawn up and signed by 37 of the nation's top officials in 1948. It states that the State of Israel "will foster the development of the country for the benefit of all its inhabitants" and will ensure "the full social and political equality of all its citizens, without distinction of race, creed or sex;" it will guarantee freedom of religion, conscience, language, education and culture; it will safeguard the Holy Places of all religions; and it will be faithful to the principles of the Charter of the United Nations."

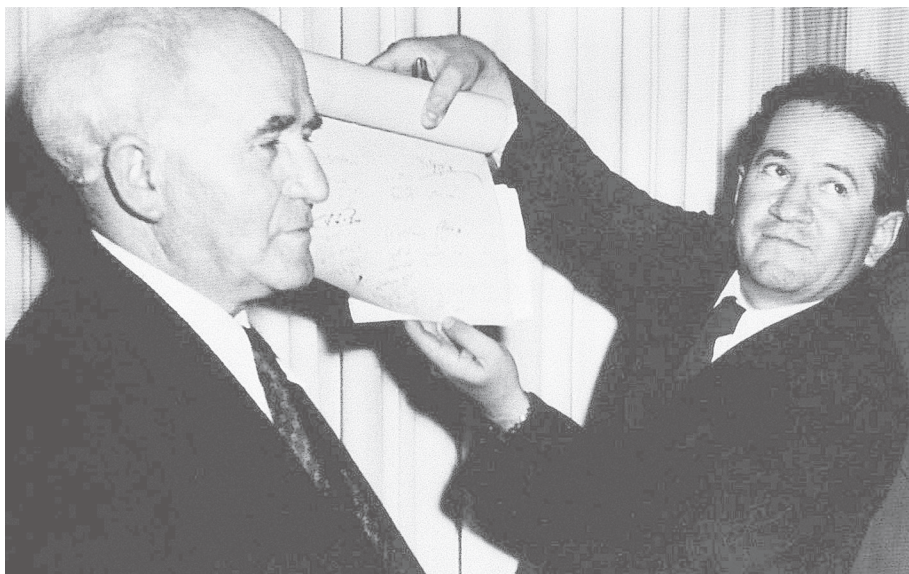
This document, however, has no legal status. It stands only as a symbol that is quoted a lot and used to convince Israeli citizens and the world that the State of Israel is a liberal democracy, a claim that had no practical foundation.

All of these decisions were made at the beginning of the state's existence in a context that was very different from today's context.

Therefore, their judgment should take into account the reality that prevailed at that time. I, however, am not a historian but a political psychologist, who claims that these decisions and the statements of the prime minister at the time has serious effects on today's reality. Apparently, Ben-Gurion did not foresee what would happen more than 70 years later, although a good leader is expected to foresee possible future outcomes of their decisions.

The reality created during the state's establishment left its mark on what is happening today. The seeds of authoritarianism were sown in the young state that was ruled as an autocracy, although its citizens constantly heard that Israel was the only democracy in the Middle East. Most citizens were not familiar with democratic principles and values and did not learn them from their leaders' behavior, since the majority of the public, including the leaders, came from nondemocratic countries or were socialized in Israel, without a democratic tradition.

The country's leadership appropriated the significance of the Holocaust and used it as a beacon for fateful decisions under the slogan "never again." They did not internalize the warning in terms of democratic, antiracist, and antinationalist education but in terms of moral disengagement, moral entitlement, and moral silencing. This allows them to ignore moral norms, because we have been victims throughout history and especially the victims of the Holocaust. The moral entitlement allows us to harm anyone whom we think wants to hurt us in any way. And the third premise states that other



An official shows the signed document that proclaims the establishment of the new Jewish state of Israel declared by Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion, left, in Tel Aviv at midnight May 14, 1948. (AP Photo)

nations have no right to criticize us because they did not take steps to save Jews during the Holocaust.

Basic Premises of Ben-Gurion

Some of the rules of behavior set by Ben-Gurion remain and are influential to this day. **Existential Insecurity:** *“Israel’s security problem is unlike the security problems of any other country: It is not a problem of borders, sovereignty – but a problem of physical existence, simple and straightforward.”*

Basic Suspicion of Arab Intentions: *“The Arabs in Israel must be judged according to what they might do, not according to what they have done.”*

Contempt and Condescension Toward the Jewish Immigrants from Arab Countries: *“Those from Morocco had no education. Their customs, the customs of the Arabs. They love their wives but beat them... Maybe in the third generation someone will appear among the Jews of the Mizrahi denomination who is a little different, but I don’t see it yet.”*

Distrust of the Nations of the World: *“On its long journey on the stage of world history, for 4,000 years, covering most countries of the world, east and the west, north and south, our people has constantly met with expressions of hatred and enmity, false accusations and assaults, persecutions and torture, destruction and slaughter... the hatred and enmity ...took many different forms, but its contents did not change much...”*

Ben-Gurion also stated in 1937, that **every compromise over the partition of the land should be accepted but the borders of the State must not be set:** *“The possibilities for expansion will not be realizable if, from the first moment, the Jewish state does not direct all its efforts, its actions and its relationships – in construction, in the creation of power and in the establishment of its relations with its neighbors – toward our expansion in the country, **with the desire, agreement and cooperation of our Arab neighbors.**”* This premise guides Israel today.

All these statements haunt us till this very day and serve as a basis for the policies of our leaders and even as grounds for the sentiments of the general public.

This reality was softened during the term of Prime Minister Levi Eshkol, who replaced Ben-Gurion in 1963. His government moderated the authoritarian traits dominant during Ben-Gurion’s rule, such as the cancellation of the military regime in 1966. The Six-Day War broke out in 1967, however, and Israel found itself in control of the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, the Golan Heights, and the Sinai Peninsula. This conquest was

particularly significant for the Palestinian population in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, where Jewish settlements soon began to spring up in their midst.

The Occupation and the Emergence of Religious Zionism

Thus began the period of occupation that continues to this day. Israel controls a huge population (in the case of the Gaza Strip, from the outside) by trampling on human rights, confiscating land, collective punishment, expulsions, house demolitions, torture, creating an infrastructure of tens of thousands of collaborators, mass arrests (hundreds of thousands) including children, widespread imprisonment, killing and injuring a population which does not want to live under occupation - including those who are not engaged in violence. According to the occupiers' doctrine, all resistance to the occupation is considered terrorism, and the occupied are not allowed to

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express their protest against the occupation in any way, even nonviolently. This state of affairs has lasted for more than 55 years and has destroyed Palestinian society. Both right- and left-wing governments have expanded Jewish control and settled some 200,000 Jews in occupied East Jerusalem, and approximately 475,000 Jews in some 125 settlements, and more than 100 illegal outposts in the West Bank. The effects of the occupation have spilled over into the State of Israel itself in many ways, such as discrimination against Palestinian citizens of Israel, delegitimization of the Jewish opposition to the occupation, restrictions on the free flow of information, etc.

These developments were led by the religious Zionists beginning already in 1967, with the support of the Greater Land of Israel movement that arose from the political, cultural, military, and social elites of both the left and the right. The influence of the Gush Emunim movement founded in 1974, after the shock of the Yom Kippur War spread and penetrated all aspects of the Israeli regime: political, social, economic, judicial, security, educational, and cultural. The entire system was captured by the idea of a Greater Land of Israel and cooperated fully. The judicial system, including the Supreme Court, accepted the lies of army officers and provided legitimacy for settlement construction under the guise of building military bases and, over time, found ways to authorize all the violent methods of the occupation. The economic system financed this enterprise. The educational system justified it with the removal of the Green Line from maps of Israel already in 1972. The military protected the security of the settlers and helped them expand into Palestinian areas. Without the support of all the

governments, right and left, it would have been impossible to establish and maintain the occupation and the settlement of Jews in the occupied territories. The religious Zionists and supporters of the Greater Land of Israel penetrated all the corridors of government and furthered their aims with strength, cunning, and determination. Israeli governments violated Israeli laws and proper procedures in providing support for the settlement enterprise, which also violates international law. All this was done in spite of the vast majority of countries around the world, including Israel's friends, which view the settlements as illegal and call for ending the occupation.

Peace With Egypt and the Emergence of Civil Society Resistance

In 1979, Israel signed a peace agreement with its number one enemy, Egypt. Protest against the continuing occupation began, mostly in academia and the cultural arena, and pockets of popular resistance arose in the form of mass demonstrations. Civil society organizations were established and began to voice their opposition to the persistent and systematic violations of human rights in the occupied territories.

In the mid-1980s, Education Minister Yitzhak Navon inaugurated studies in democracy and Jewish-Arab coexistence, and the atmosphere in the country opened up to expressions of protest against the occupation among the political echelons as well. This openness, among other factors, facilitated the 1993 Oslo Accords under the leadership of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin. All of this came to an end in 1995, with the assassination of Rabin by a religious Zionist activist, and the small window of opportunity to resolve the bloody conflict was closed.

The Netanyahu Era Begins

In 1996, Benjamin Netanyahu, a fierce opponent of an agreement with the Palestinians, was elected prime minister using the slogan "Peres will divide Jerusalem." Thus began a new era in Israel that has lasted until today. The process began when Netanyahu's religious Zionist Education Minister Zevulun Hammer cancelled the education in democracy and humanistic Jewish identity projects of Prof. Mordechai Kremnitzer and Prof. Aliza Shenhar. It continued with Netanyahu's famous whisper into the ear of the popular Kabbalistic Rabbi Kaduri in 1997, that "*the left has forgotten what it is to be a Jew. They think they will place our security into the hands of the Arabs.*" This whisper initiated a pattern of incitement whose echoes can still be heard years later, in the Labor Party as well.

In his short term as prime minister, Ehud Barak instilled the view that the Palestinians are not partners for peace and that Arafat had chosen

violence to liberate his people from occupation. The Palestinian resistance that brought suicide bombers into central Israel and the framing of the situation by Barak effectively transferred most Israeli supporters of the peace process into the arms of the right. In 2009, Benjamin Netanyahu returned as prime minister and, together with his coalition partners from the left, right, and center, continued to cultivate the foundations of the catastrophe which ripened in November 2022.

An Apartheid System and the Erosion of Democracy

Meanwhile, in the occupied territories a system of apartheid had been developing for years, wherein the Jewish settler population and the Palestinian population live side by side under different legal systems and with different treatment by the authorities. The settlers benefit from all the rights of Jews in Israel, while the Palestinians live under a violent occupation.

In a series of decisions over the years concerning the occupied territories, the Israeli Supreme Court validated Jewish rule and usually accepted the dispossession of the Palestinians and the damage to their human rights. It is one of the main institutions that gave legitimacy to the continuation of the occupation and to the actions of the settlers. The Court also ruled in 2020, that a person convicted of bribery, fraud and breach of trust could form a government. Yes,

The Israeli Supreme Court validated Jewish rule and usually accepted the dispossession of the Palestinians.

the Supreme Court in its decision unanimously said that it sees no danger to the fortress and allows Netanyahu to form a government. The Nation-State Law, passed in 2018 and upheld by the Supreme Court, continued the erosion of democracy in Israel. This is a Basic Law, a law with constitutional status, which makes clear that the state belongs to Jews alone. By openly privileging the Jewish nation over minorities who are also citizens of the state, this law violates the delicate balance between the State of Israel as a Jewish and a democratic state. The political echelon continued to exclude Arab parties from the government until the Lapid/Bennett government's attempt to cooperate with Mansour Abbas of the conservative Arab Ra'am party during its short one-year term.

The Education Ministry, headed by right-wing politicians like Gidon Sa'ar, who had close relations with the ultraright Im Tirtzu organization, or by religious Zionist ministers like Naftali Bennett and Rafi Peretz, continued the nationalist, racist policies begun by Hammer, who gave budgets and legitimacy to the settlement enterprise and the idea of Greater Israel while emphasizing

Jewish supremacy. Thus, generations of students were educated in the spirit of religious nationalism without adequate understanding of democracy.

For many years, organizations for the defense of human rights in the occupied territories have been considered traitorous. Being a leftist became illegitimate and so tainted that politicians fled from the label, which had once been a legitimate political opinion. Every criticism of Israeli policy is considered anti-Semitic. That's how Israel defends itself from within and without. Many leaders who are today crying out against the destruction of democracy have contributed to this situation.

The media lost much of its credibility when some of its channels were purchased by tycoons who set political agendas. Many reporters and commentators supported a strong-armed policy against the Palestinians, and journalistic mouthpieces for the government which made light of Netanyahu's criminal trial appeared. It is not by chance that the 2022 Freedom Press Index placed Israel number 86, after states like Nepal, Kyrgyzstan, and Ghana.

The damage to democratic values is also reflected in Israel's treatment of refugees and asylum seekers, including the non-Jewish refugees from Ukraine. The concern for safeguarding Jewish supremacy in Israel and the rejection of foreigners overcame humane considerations, which should have prevailed in light of the Jewish past of hundreds of years of exile culminating in the Holocaust. At the same time, the government continued its tough policy against the Palestinians and ignored settler violence against them.

The Role of Right-Wing Research Institutes

In the past two decades, a number of right-wing research institutes have sprung up, such as the Shalem Center, the Institute for Zionist Strategy, the Israeli Institute for Strategic Studies, the Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs, and the Kohelet Policy Forum. These institutes combine economic and political conservatism with nationalism and formulate position papers that form the basis for legislation and political policies. The Kohelet Policy Forum, funded by Jewish American billionaires, prepared the main points of the judicial and media overhauls announced by Justice Minister Yariv Levin and Media Minister Shlomo Kari. Nationalist and religious organizations, such as Elad, ImTirtzu, Regavim, Lehava, and many others, were established with the aim of disseminating right-wing religious ideology and preventing the spread of opposing narratives. On the other hand, liberal left organizations and institutes were also established, which devoted their efforts to defending the human rights of Palestinians and explaining the sources of Israel's deterioration.

We can sum up by saying that it is not surprising that the 2019 Democracy Index stated: *Comparing Israel's relative place concerning the state of its democracy to the 36 countries in the OECD, most of the time it is at the bottom of the list. Only in one measure – political participation – is Israel in the top half of the member states of this organization. In eight other measures (such as, civil rights, democratic rights, freedoms, civilian participation, freedom of the press, democratic equality) it is located at the very bottom of the lowest quarter In other words, Israel is a state which has a democratic electoral process but does not have a full commitment to the basic values of liberal democracy.*

The liberal democracy, the one that most of the speakers in demonstration are talking about, is based on the following values and principles. It demands a full equality in opportunities and standing before the law as well as equality of rights and duties. Liberal democracy demands respect of rights of the minorities and freedom from and for. The former refers to freedom from arbitrary detention, freedom of worship and freedom of the press, and the latter denotes free political organization, freedom to choose and be elected, the freedom to demonstrate and the right to receive information about the actions of the government. Liberal democracy requires independence of the three branches: executive, legislating and judiciary. But of special importance is the autonomy of the judiciary system. Liberal democracy demands transparency and the checks and balances that allow continuous independent supervision of the system. And lastly but the least in liberal democracy the protection of human rights is a must that cannot be compromised.

The right has not stood still but has pushed for far-reaching changes that have crossed new red lines, all with the consent of the courts and the support of state institutions. Programs were formulated for changes in the judicial system, education, society, and even the police and the military. The foundations for what is happening now were laid years ago in different ways. The torrent did not begin with today's deluge but with drips in an ever-strengthening flow, in anticipation of the conditions that would allow it to execute its ultimate plans for dismantling the state's democratic and liberal foundations. Their hour has now come. Unusual conditions have enabled all the nationalist, racist, messianic, and religious forces to join together in a homogenous coalition under the leadership of a man in the middle of a criminal trial, who wants to save himself from serving a prison sentence. In order to avoid this fate, he is prepared to give free rein to a bunch of extremists to carry out a regime coup without firing a single shot.

It Is Our Duty to Stop the Drive Toward a Totalitarian Regime

The present government coalition has been enabled to stride with confidence toward a regime with clear totalitarian indicators, as in the cases of Turkey, Iran, Hungary, and India. This disaster is happening because the coalition misrepresents the essence of democracy and is lying in order to whitewash the steps it is taking. The revolution we are witnessing today was crystallized over the years by these same forces, who only now have dared to reveal it as, in their view, conditions have ripened for a complete revolution in all areas of Israeli life, including religion, the judiciary, education, media, and the economy. Demography is on their side, and the religious circles are waiting to change the regime. At the same time, Jewish society, including the younger generation, has become predominantly rightist.

For decades the leaders have repeated the mantra that Israel is democratic, both during Ben Gurion's time and later, after the occupation became institutionalized with the settlements and turned into apartheid. They failed to grasp the essence of democracy, because the democratic regime is complex and multilayered and therefore requires reflective and critical thinking to understand it. In the battle for consciousness, however, whoever manages to control the narrative wins. The current battle is taking place over the democratic narrative: Was Israel ever a democratic state, is it now, and will it be in the future?

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I don't know if the forces of Israeli resistance which have arisen today in the face of the coalition's actions will succeed in stemming the tide. There is a high probability that many of the coalition's plans will be executed. There may be compromises that will erode Israeli democracy further. The government is in the hands of extremists who dream of a religious-nationalistic state. We need to remember that many of the leaders of the current resistance had a hand in the creation of the existing situation, although they never imagined that people who came to power in fair elections would take such an extreme direction. The latter want to dismantle the democratic and liberal foundations of the state and build a state with totalitarian culture. It is our duty not to allow them to do it. We have a one-time opportunity in view of the unprecedented demonstrations to improve the functioning of Israeli democracy rather than settle for compromises. The struggle for the future is still going on, and we can only hope that the democratic forces will prevail.

The Palestinian Nakba: Two Narratives - One is Based on Facts, the other on Falsification of Facts

Tayseer Khaled

Tayseer Khaled was born in Nablus and is a member of the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP) politburo. He was an advisor to President Yasser Arafat at Camp David 2000 and ran as a presidential candidate in the 2005 Palestinian elections.



In the eighties, the State of Israel revealed some documents from the state archives which were from the period of the British Mandate in Palestine, during the Nakba and the early years that followed the foundation of the state. This was a valuable opportunity for a number of those who became known as the “New Historians” in Israel, such as Benny Morris, Avi Shlaim, Ilan Pappé, Shlomo Sand and others. Since this enabled them to research the Nakba of the Palestinian people and what accompanied it, namely massacres, the policy of deportation, displacement and ethnic cleansing that took place in 1948. This disclosure triggered debate among various historians, and some started questioning the official Zionist narrative about what happened in 1948. Later, this limited step helped the launch of other activities of Israeli NGOs such as Zochrot, a Jewish civil society organization focusing on the Palestinian historical narrative. This helped to launch new historical work as an alternative to the central Israeli approach, which still rejects the Palestinian narrative of the Nakba. The opposing trends of the “New Historians” findings led the leaders of the State of Israel to reinstate obfuscation and secrecy on the archives of the state, as they were accused of slaughtering the holy cow.

On the Palestinian side, it must be recognized as we commemorate the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Nakba of the Palestinian people, which coincided with the establishment of the State of Israel, that we have failed to confront the Israeli narrative about the Nakba and have not presented our own version of it as it actually happened.

It is clear that the Nakba has two narratives: an Israeli one, which from a Palestinian perspective adopted lying and falsification of facts as a

methodology, and the second is Palestinian, whose events, beginnings and repercussions, were actually ignored. It was also absent from world public opinion due to multiple considerations, one of which is that the world had just emerged from the horrors of World War II and the crimes committed by the Nazi monster, which later it cast a heavy shadow on the crimes that were done by the victims of Hitler's Nazism.

Some Elements in the Israeli Narrative

Israel based its narrative on biblical historical claims that adopted myths and adhered to the legitimacy of the Zionist project, which calls for a return to the Promised Land after an alleged forced absence that lasted for thousands of years. It asserted that the Zionist project came to save the Jews from anti-Semitism and from persecution and extermination that took place in Europe, especially at the hands of the Nazi monster. An official disregarding and exclusion of all monuments indicating the existence of Palestine before 1948 was carried out, and instead Israel adopted the names of ancient Canaanite mountains, hills, plains, cities, and villages. To influence public awareness, Israel has also used multiple images in archaeology, botany, food, education, architecture, and tourism that focus on the central goal of obscuring Palestinian history in the country and erasing images of the Nakba from the consciousness of the average Israeli citizen.

The Zionist movement used to deny the mere fact that the Nakba had taken place and claim that the aim of talking about it was to delegitimize Israel. It continued to deny responsibility for the Nakba, and it attributed the responsibility for the mass immigration of Palestinians to the Arab countries, claiming that the Arab leaders were the ones who invited them to do so while waiting for the declaration of victory over the Jewish organizations conducting the fight at that time.

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Israel, along with the Zionist movement and the Jewish Agency, continued to refuse to even see Palestinians as victims of its practices and crimes, and worked hard to strip the Palestinian ability to present themselves as victims.

At best, Israel related to the refugee problem as a humanitarian problem for which Palestinian and Arab leaders are responsible. At the same time, it worked hard to erase memory through textbooks that ignore the human dimension of the consequences of the 1948 war, and used its political, security and media machine to delegitimize the literature of "New

Historians” that contradicted the Zionist narrative on war and the refugees. It recently enacted the Nakba Law, which aims to empower the Ministry of Education to impose penalties on educational institutions commemorating the Nakba.

We Failed to Present Our Palestinian Narrative

As Palestinians, we have failed to present our narrative as it has happened since the Balfour Declaration and during the British Mandate, which fused the denial of political rights of the Palestinian people, including their right to self-determination. The Balfour Declaration referred indirectly to the Palestinians as non-Jews in Palestine with civil and religious rights only, and denied their national aspirations or political rights. This took place many years before the Holocaust, and the rise of fascism and Nazism in Europe. By the end of the First World War, this became the context for dividing and re-dividing the world among the victorious colonial countries, and the Zionist movement emerged as one of the tools of colonialism and a natural and logical result of the development of its control mechanisms over the countries of the region after the end of the war.



The Palestinian village of Emwas (Emmaus)- District of al-Ramla, was completely erased from the map in 1967, and 5000 people of its inhabitants became refugees. The village had a Catholic church, a convent, and two Mosques. Its neighboring villages of Beit Nuba and Yalu were also demolished. Canada Park was built on their ruins (funded by JNF Canada).

The Plans for Ethnic Cleansing

Another equally important aspect is that during the British Mandate the Zionist movement carried out silent ethnic cleansing as Palestinians were displaced for the construction of the first Jewish settlements. In the first Jewish settlements they implemented the policy of Hebrew labor and carried out the construction of a closed society in Palestine and were organizing, training, and planning to practice ethnic cleansing on a large scale when the right moment came. They established military and paramilitary organizations, including Jewish terrorist organizations, and these were in full swing under the watchful eye of the British Mandate government. When the right moment came with the withdrawal of British troops from Palestine, the country was the scene of combat operations by trained, armed and equipped Jewish forces that outnumbered the Palestinian groups, which participated in the 1948 war.

The plan known as 'Plan Dalet' for 'Mass Ethnic Cleansing' was approved by the leadership of the Zionist movement and the Jewish Agency and was ready in March 1948, and the Zionist military groups were directed in detail on how to carry it out with the direct assistance of the British Mandate rule. Ethnic cleansing was a ***Ethnic cleansing was a central goal, with strict and detailed directives.*** central goal, with strict and detailed directives, called for killing without mercy, spreading terror, besieging Palestinian cities and villages, burning homes and properties, and planting mines in rubble to prevent the people from returning to their homes,

The plan which was disclosed by the "New Historians" also revealed how the Haganah (which became the nucleus of the Israeli army after the establishment of the State), and other Jewish organizations committed 28 massacres, the most horrific of which was in Deir Yassin. In addition, more than 530 towns and villages were demolished, displacing about 800,000 Palestinians, and turning them into refugees.

This abstract narrative is presented without clarifying its nature and political context, and does not include what Menachem Begin, Yitzhak Shamir and other leaders of Jewish terrorist organizations said about the Deir Yassin massacre.

Menachem Begin said that without Deir Yassin Israel would not have existed, while Yitzhak Shamir described the massacre as a humanitarian duty, and later both became prime ministers of Israeli governments.

Jacques René, then Director of Red Cross Operations in Palestine, visited the village and witnessed the horrific crime on the ground. He

submitted a chilling report on it to the Secretary-General of the United Nations and expressed his outrage at the barbaric practices of the Jewish forces that attacked children and women in the village.

Menachem Begin, head of the Irgun terrorist group at the time, who later became prime minister in 1977, described the massacre as a “*heseg gadol*” (great achievement) - while his deputy, Haim Landau, congratulated the Jewish militants who committed the massacre with:

*“The occupation of Deir Yassin is a wonderful achievement. Accept our congratulations on this amazing victory, convey to everyone, individuals and leaders, that we shake hands with them and are proud of their invading fighting spirit that made history in the Land of Israel, and to victory as in Deir Yassin as well as in other places, we will storm and exterminate the enemy, our Lord, have chosen us for conquest.”*¹

Landau spoke in the name of God, who had chosen the Irgun for that barbaric mission. Perhaps he thought he was the heir of Joshua bin Nun from the Old Testament, who (with the help of the Lord) conquered the city of Jericho in the thirteenth century BC and exterminated the men, women and children in it except for the adulteress Rahab, and followed it with the Canaanite city of Ai next to Bethlehem where he not only exterminated the population of men, women and children, but also all the animals in the city. Although historians and archaeologists agree that such an invasion did not take place at all, and that the city of Jericho was destroyed a century and a half before the appearance of Joshua bin Nun on its borders, and that Ai was also destroyed four centuries before the appearance of Ben Nun.

Nonetheless, we were late in presenting our Palestinian narrative to the world as a bridge between facts and lies, or in providing conclusive evidence of the crimes committed by the Zionist movement against our people. This allowed for the popularity of the Israeli claim that the inhabitants of Palestine left their homes in response to calls from abroad. Therefore, the world was as late to hear our narrative as we were late to put it forward.

The Nakba Narrative Should Not Stop at 1948

In addition to all this, the Palestinian narrative about the Nakba should not stop at what happened in 1948 but should evolve around what happened over the years, because the Nakba has been going on since its first year. Who can ignore what happened in 1967 after Israel occupied the West

¹ Walid Khalidi (1999) Dayr Yasin: al-Jum'a, 9 April 1948. *Dayr Yasin: Friday, 9 April 1948*. Institute for Palestine Studies, Beirut. (Arabic) – page 94., Walid Khalidi took this quote from the book by the Israeli historian Amos Perlmutter: “The Life and Times of Menachem Begin” (Garden City, N.Y. : Doubleday, 1987).

Bank, including Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip? In the early days of the occupation Israel carried out ethnic cleansing acts, brutally demolishing the villages of the Latrun area (Emmwas, Yalu and Beit Nuba) near Jerusalem, displacing the people and turning the area into a recreational park called “Canada Park” while transferring the ownership of their lands to the Jewish National Fund, turning them into a vital area for its economic activities.

What Israel did with the villages of Latrun was done also in the Old City of Jerusalem. It destroyed the Al-Magariba quarter and displaced its residents and also displaced another four thousand Palestinians from Haret Al-Sharaf, the Jewish Quarter, which was nearby. This should be added as another chapter to our narrative about the Nakba so that the same scene is not repeated in Jerusalem, as the occupation still threatens to displace its people in Sheikh Jarrah, Batn al-Hawa in Silwan, al-Mukabber, and other places.

The chapters of demolition of Palestinian villages and towns, displacement and ethnic cleansing did not stop at the borders of what happened in 1948 and 1967. They continued with scenarios, images, and brutal means through the theft of Palestinian land and property, turning it into an area for settlement activities that in themselves laid the foundation for building a cruel system of discrimination, apartheid and silent ethnic cleansing.

One of the cruel examples of the policy of ethnic cleansing is the Jordan Valley, where its population in 1967 exceeded 125,000 people, but today the number barely reaches 60,000 due to systematic expulsion of the population from that area and replacing them with Jewish settlers, which is a clear and unmistakable war crime. This constitutes, along with other facts, an appropriate legal basis for the work of the International Criminal Court and the International Court of Justice on the consequences of Israel’s continuous acts of changing the demographic situation of the population in the occupied West Bank, including Jerusalem, and its policy of ethnic cleansing.

The Situation Has Begun to Change

Today, as we enter a new year of the Palestinian Nakba, we notice a shift in the attitude of world public opinion. The situation has begun to change, and one of the indicators of this is the recent UN resolution in early December 2022 to designate the fifteenth of next May as a day in which the United Nations General Assembly commemorates at a high level the 75th

The Palestinian narrative about the Nakba should not stop at what happened in 1948 but should evolve around what happened over the years.

anniversary of the Palestinian Nakba. This transformation was a natural result of the steadfastness of our people in the 1948 areas in the face of aggression and Israelization attempts. They remained in their lands and preserved their identity as a national minority. Secondly, this is due to the

Ethnic cleansing did not stop at the borders of what happened in 1948 and 1967.

continuous clash between the Palestinian people in the occupied territories with the Israeli occupation and its war crimes, discrimination, and apartheid that is fueled by the continuous Israeli settlement policy.

And thirdly, there is the restoration of the role of refugee camps and the Palestinians in the diaspora as a leverage for the restoration of Palestinian refugees' rights under the banner of the Palestine Liberation Organization, the PLO, which kept the refugee issue alive and their right to return. This right does not fall by a statute of limitations as Israel and the American administration wish.

The task of preserving the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) and enabling it to play its role as a provider of services in various health, educational, social and humanitarian fields remains as a witness to a national, individual and collective right that must be upheld, and as a firm national position in the face of attempts to liquidate the most just cause in the history of mankind. Whoever thought that the old Palestinian generation will die and the new generation will forget, can easily find after 75 years of Nakba and struggle, that he was living in an illusion. The young generation is much more committed to the national struggle, and is stubbornly insisting that the Palestinian cause will not die, and one day they will achieve their rights and raise their flag on the walls of the Old City of Jerusalem, on the mosques and the churches.

Tel Aviv: 1948, Cradle of the State; 2023, Center of the Resistance

Hillel Schenker

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1948 – Cradle of the State

When the State of Israel was declared on May 14, 1948, at the Tel Aviv Museum of Art, people danced in the streets, particularly at the Star of David Square near where I live today. The newspaper headlines in bold letters read “THE HEBREW STATE HAS BEEN BORN!” The emphasis was on a Hebrew, not a Jewish state, since there was a feeling that a new national identity was emerging, based on the revival of the Hebrew language. The fact that Jerusalem was declared an international city by UNGA Resolution 181 (the Partition Plan) and therefore was not a part of the new state didn’t seem to dampen the celebrations.

It was natural that the Hebrew state would be declared in Tel Aviv, since it was known as “the first Hebrew city.” One of the main streets is named after Eliezer Ben-Yehuda, who revived Hebrew as a spoken language, and pre-state high school students used to roam the city throwing rotten tomatoes at people who spoke German or Yiddish, shouting “Jew, speak Hebrew!” The name of the city, founded in 1909 north of the 3,500-year-old city of Jaffa on the Mediterranean coast, came from the Hebrew translation of the utopian novel by the founder of the Zionist movement, Theodore Herzl, *Altneuland* (Old Newland), which had been translated by Nahum Sokolow into *Tel Aviv* (Hill of Spring). The novel imagined a future cosmopolitan modern society based on liberal, universal values, with equality for all, where religion would remain in the synagogues and the army in its barracks (very far from today’s reality).

It’s worth noting that 25% of all the 120 members of the first Knesset were kibbutz members, who together with the city of Tel Aviv formed the backbone of the new state, a combination of communal democratic socialism together with bourgeois entrepreneurship. That is one of the primary reasons why the progressive forces around the world supported the establishment

of the state; they believed that a socialist society was being built in the Middle East after British imperialism had been removed from the area. The Palestinian Nakba was not yet part of their consciousness at the time, though there was an awareness that a “refugee problem” had been created in the wake of the 1948 war.

A central element in the ceremony on May 14th was David Ben-Gurion’s reading of the Declaration of Independence, which proclaimed that the nascent Jewish state would be based on “freedom, justice, and peace” and would be “faithful to the principles of the Charter of the United Nations.” It is noteworthy that God is not mentioned in the declaration, since the state was not founded on the idea of a “Promised Land” but rather on the fact that *Eretz Yisrael* (the Land of Israel) was the birthplace of the Jewish people where their “spiritual, religious, and political identity was formed.”

Ben-Gurion lived in Tel Aviv, as did Herut Party Revisionist opposition leader Menachem Begin. So did much of the cultural elite. It had been the home of national poet Bialik, who developed a new secular way of celebrating the Jewish sabbath with his Friday night *Oneg Shabbat* cultural gatherings, which also spread to the kibbutzim. Tel Aviv was the home of the veteran 1948 generation poets, and all the major Hebrew-language newspapers were published there. The national theater, Habima, was located in Tel Aviv, which also hosted the Israeli Philharmonic Orchestra. And the two major artists whose paintings reflected a desire to integrate into the Middle East rather than a reliance on Biblical imagery, Reuven Ruben and Nahum Gutman, lived in Tel Aviv.

To return to the Declaration of Independence, it also declared that from the moment the British Mandate ended, a Provisional Council of State and Provisional Government would act “until the establishment of the elected, regular authorities of the State **in accordance with the Constitution which shall be adopted by the Elected Constituent Assembly not later than the 1st October 1948...**”

Yes, a constitution was supposed to be formulated and adopted about five months after the declaration of the state. This did not happen, primarily because Ben-Gurion was afraid of defining the relationship between religion and state that would have alienated the small religious parties. His excuse was that more urgent matters were the first priority, absorbing the Holocaust survivors and refugees from North Africa and the Middle East, building an economy, etc.

The failure to adopt a constitution then leads us to the crisis we are facing today.

Tel Aviv – Center of Resistance

Tel Aviv was always one of the primary centers of resistance to the antidemocratic and authoritarian trends within Israeli society.

In 1950, Uri Avnery and Shalom Cohen bought a weekly magazine called *HaOlam HaZeh* (This World) which was based in Tel Aviv. It became a muckraking, anti-establishment publication that constantly challenged the authoritarian practices of Ben-Gurion's Mapai party and was one of the primary critics of the antidemocratic military government that Ben-Gurion had instituted over the 160,000 Palestinian Israeli citizens who had remained in the country after the 1948 war.

In 1957, after the Sinai Campaign, another publication was established in Tel Aviv, the English-language *New Outlook* by kibbutz member Simcha Flapan, considered the father of the “New Historians” and his Jewish and Arab colleagues, inspired by Prof. Martin Buber's philosophy of dialogue, “I and Thou.” Its goal was to establish a dialogue with the Arab world and eventually achieve peace with all of Israel's neighbors.

In 1973, Abie Nathan founded the Voice of Peace radio station, which also promoted the idea of peace between Israel and its Arab neighbors. Although it was supposedly broadcast from a peace ship “somewhere in the Mediterranean” (off the coast of Tel Aviv), many of the broadcasts actually emanated from his home/studio on Dov Hoz Street in Tel Aviv.



A banner of the Declaration of Independence being carried by the demonstrators in Tel Aviv.

After President Sadat's historic visit to Jerusalem in 1977, when Prime Minister Begin began to hedge on responding to the Egyptian leader's initiative, what became the Peace Now movement organized its first mass demonstration in support of Israeli-Egyptian peace in Tel Aviv's Kings of

Tel Aviv was always one of the primary centers of resistance to the antidemocratic and authoritarian trends within Israeli society.

Israel Square in the spring of 1978, with the participation of 40,000 people. On Sept. 25, 1983, during the First Lebanon War, another Peace Now rally drew 400,000 Israelis, one-tenth of the country's population, to the square to protest Israel's involvement in the massacre in the Palestinian refugee camps of Sabra and Shatila. And in December 1988, after the PLO National Council meeting in Algiers issued a Declaration of Independence while retroactively recognizing UNGA Resolution 181, the square was filled with another Peace Now rally where, under the slogan "Speak peace with the PLO now!", MKs from the Citizens Rights, Mapam and Shinui parties spoke. Furthermore, for the first time in the movement's history, MK Abdel Wahab Darawshe from *MADA* (Arab Democratic Party), a Palestinian Israeli, was among the speakers.

On Nov. 4, 1995, 100,000 demonstrators rallied in the square under the slogan "No to violence, yes to peace" backed by Mayor Shlomo Lahat, with the support of Peace Now, to counter the vicious right-wing campaign against Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and the Oslo peace process. Tragically, that was the evening that right-wing national-religious extremist Yigal Amir assassinated the prime minister. The site was later renamed Rabin Square.

In 2011, a mass social protest movement began with the setting up of a tent city on Rothschild Boulevard opposite Tel Aviv City Hall. It lasted throughout the summer, culminating in a huge demonstration on September 3rd with the participation of over 250,000 people at Tel Aviv's Hamedina Square.

Another center of protest in the city is the Tel Aviv Cinematheque, a progressive venue that has hosted the annual Solidarity Human Rights film festival for the past 10 years as well as several anti-occupation film festivals. When Likud Culture Minister Miri Regev threatened to require all artists to sign a "loyalty oath" to get support for their work, many of them participated in a protest held in the plaza in front of the cinematheque. Tel Aviv Mayor Ron Huldai said that if the state would deprive any local cultural institution of funding based on such a bill, the city would provide funding from its own resources.

Tel Aviv is home to many other venues for progressive cultural and

political events, including the Tzavta Club, the Jaffa Theater (formerly the Hebrew-Arab Theater) run jointly by Jews and Arabs, the Tmuna Theater, the Alpha Theater, and the Gada HaSmolit (Left Bank).

We should not ignore the wonderful private initiative by Alice Krieger in her north Tel Aviv home. Every Friday night she hosts six diplomats and six peace activists for a Shabbat dinner. Twice a year, on Chanukah and in August, she hosts about 100 Israeli peace activists and diplomats in her garden, including some Palestinian activist friends when they can get permits to come from the West Bank. The highlight of these gatherings is always her rousing speech against the occupation and in support of activists working to end the occupation.

Tel Aviv 2023 - A Mass Protest Movement Emerges Against the Government's Plans

With the election of Benjamin Netanyahu's sixth government in November 2022, together with his extreme Orthodox religious coalition partners, everything changed. If it was up to Tel Aviv voters alone, Yair Lapid would have continued as prime minister, and the left-wing Meretz party would still be in the Knesset.

When Netanyahu and his Minister of Justice Yariv Levin announced their intention to carry out a total judicial "reform" that would undermine the independence of the Supreme Court and

the balance of powers, and other ministers began announcing plans to limit freedom of expression and to insert Orthodox religious elements and restrictions into the public and educational arenas, Mayor Huldai's response was to hang a huge

If it was up to Tel Aviv voters alone, Yair Lapid would have continued as prime minister, and the left-wing Meretz party would still be in the Knesset.

scroll of the Declaration of Independence on the walls of the Tel Aviv Municipality building. This followed Huldai's response to the passing of the 2018 Nation-State Law which stated that "only the Jews have a right to national self-determination in the Land of Israel," when he ordered the municipality to prepare and circulate to all the schools in the city a map of Israel showing the Green Line separating the sovereign State of Israel from the occupied West Bank which had been removed from the government maps in October 1967.

A struggle has begun between the idea of majority rule as the basis for democracy supported by the ethno-nationalist right and national-religious and ultra-Orthodox forces, and the concept of a balance of powers between the executive, legislative, and judicial branches and a constitutional bill of

rights as the basis for democracy, supported by the center-left (and even some of the moderate right and national-religious).

The first public protest against the government's plans was organized by the left-wing joint Jewish-Arab "Standing Together" movement and held in early January at Habima Square in Tel Aviv.

Then something unexpected happened. For the first time, hi-tech workers began to publicly protest government policy by assembling outdoors in Tel Aviv's Saron area during their lunchtime. This was followed by protests by lawyers, past and present judges and economists who wrote petitions and took to the streets. They were soon joined by reserve and current members of elite Israeli army units, current and former pilots, reserve officers, the 8200-intelligence unit, even a majority of the soldiers who had served in the elite *Sayeret Matkal* commando unit, former Mossad operatives and former IDF chiefs of staff. Also "Handmaiden" protesters and grandmothers defending women's and democratic rights. Former Prime Minister Ehud Barak, also a former IDF Chief of Staff and one of the most articulate speakers at the mass Saturday night protests who had been Netanyahu's commander in the *Sayeret Matkal*, called for massive "nonviolent civil disobedience, in the spirit of Martin Luther King and Mahatma Gandhi" against the attempt to undermine democracy and establish a dictatorship.

One of the central elements of the protest that began with the hi-tech industry, a key foundation of the Israeli economy, is the concern

The concern that if the independent powers of the courts are undermined, Israel will be seen as a less democratic country and its credit rating will go down.

that if the independent powers of the courts are undermined, Israel will be seen as a less democratic country and its credit rating will go down, foreign investments will decrease, and local capital and skilled workers will begin to leave the country. Even some Likud members are beginning to say "this isn't what we voted for." And Tel Aviv and its metropolitan area are

very much the basis of the Israeli economy, the people who create the export products and pay the taxes that enable the country to function and flourish.

The first small public protest was soon replaced by huge Saturday night protests, originally in two Tel Aviv locations: one organized by the Movement for the Quality of Government in Israel at Habima Square, and the other organized by a coalition of citizen's initiatives that took place on Kaplan Street opposite the government's Tel Aviv offices. Eventually the two protests merged, and they grew enormously, week by week, 80,000, 100,000, 150,000, 200,000 and they began spreading to Haifa, Beersheva,

Jerusalem, and other cities throughout the county. Soon a midweek “Day of Disruption,” “Day of Resistance to Dictatorship,” and “Day of Increasing the Struggle” were added. It was estimated that a total of 500,000 Israelis participated in the protests held on Saturday night, March 11th. Many Israelis, a majority according to public opinion polls, feel that the very nature of their way of life is being challenged by the extreme right-wing governments’ plans, and people who had never gone to a demonstration before in their lives are now out there in the streets every week.

One of the most interesting and controversial elements of the mass protests is the fact that the waving of Israeli flags has become one its primary symbols. This has never happened before. In recent years, the mass use of Israeli flags was associated only with the annual Flag Day march in the Old City on Jerusalem Day, carried by mainly young settler marauders who harass local Palestinians. Essentially, what the protesters are saying is that we are taking back the flag as a symbol of the democratic country that we want. At the first small demonstration Palestinian flags were raised, symbolizing the need to end the occupation as a basis for defending Israeli democracy. In the subsequent demonstrations, a small group of anti-occupation activists continues to bring Palestinian flags, although this was discouraged by the organizers who felt that it would enable the right to brand the demonstrations as “anti-Israeli.” However, an anti-occupation corner is present at every Tel Aviv demonstration.

One of the most interesting and controversial elements of the mass protests is the fact that the waving of Israeli flags has become one its primary symbols.

There is no question in my mind that the continuation of the occupation of another people, the depriving of basic human rights to the Palestinian people in an apartheid-like situation, is the fundamental cause of the development of antidemocratic trends in Israeli society. In the long run, there is no chance of developing and maintaining democratic norms in Israel without ending the occupation. This has to be based on a joint Jewish Israeli-Palestinian Israeli struggle. Strategically, however, I think it has to be a two-staged struggle. The current protest movement focusses on defending the foundations of democratic, liberal institutions within the State of Israel. The next stage is to promote an end to the occupation as the basis for the possibility of democracy for both Israelis and Palestinians.

This is the first time in Israeli history that a serious discussion about the nature of democracy has begun. Hopefully, it will eventually lead to an understanding about the connection between democracy and the occupation

and the need to end the occupation in order to guarantee that Israel become a full-fledged democracy.

Yair Lapid has proposed that the Declaration become a constitutional Basic Law, thus guaranteeing that its principles become the guidelines for Israeli life. He and the Movement for the Quality of Government in Israel have called for the drafting of a Constitution and a Bill of Rights. Politicians are not leading these mass protests, which are organized via various WhatsApp groups, but politics will be needed to resolve the crisis.

It's not clear how the struggle will be resolved. People frequently refer to "the Tel Aviv bubble," though that bubble seems to be spreading throughout much of the country. Demography is on the side of the religious

right with their large families, though *There is no chance of developing and maintaining democratic norms in Israel without ending the occupation.* currently the country is split down the middle, and the anti-Netanyahu bloc actually won a slight majority of the popular vote in the last elections. A not insignificant number of the secular and traditional Likud voters are uncomfortable with the current situation as

well. According to the polls, 25% are opposed to the judicial revolution, want a stable economy, and don't want a country run according to *Halakhic* law.

There always remains the option of declaring "the independent state of Tel Aviv," an idea that was first raised in the 1990s by Tel Aviv Mayor Roni Milo, who grew up in the Likud and left like many of his moderate, liberal colleagues. Out of frustration, some people are suggesting a future cantonization of Israel/Palestine, divided according to ideological, ethnic, religious, and national preferences. In such a scenario, Tel Aviv would be the center of a liberal, secular canton. If a canton arrangement can work well in Switzerland, can it also work in Israel/Palestine?

Meanwhile, Tel Aviv is participating and, in many ways, leading the struggle over the future of the State of Israel.

Is There No End to the Palestinian Nakba?

Ibrahim Abdullah Sarsour

Ibrahim Abdullah Sarsour is a prominent figure in the United Arab List Party, a graduate of Bar-Ilan University in English language and literature, former Knesset member, former head of the Islamic Movement (the southern branch), and former mayor of Kafr Kassem (1989-1998). He is an author of numerous articles on the Arabs in Israel and a renowned speaker and Islamic preacher.



After 75 years of the Palestinian Nakba, the question that we still confront is how should we deal with this tragic event in Arabic and Islamic modern history? Should we sit and weep, recalling our pain and suffering caused by having been uprooted from our homeland and tell an endless painful, tragic story of our Nakba? Or should we overcome being stuck at this stage of our past and move forward toward drawing our own conclusions, learning the lessons from past experience, and devising our strategy to overcome the impact of the past and head toward building our future, restoring our national rights, and living with dignity and peace.

It is possible to stand boldly and strong and face the devastating results of the Nakba that is ongoing till today and try seriously to analyze its reasons and results in order to be able to confront and change the course of history in the right direction for the sake of achieving justice for our people and their rights.

The Nakba did not end in 1948. It is still ongoing via the occupation that invades our homeland from end to end, with extreme waves of destruction, killings, and siege, almost on a daily basis, with no respect for our human lives, holy places, land, and agriculture.

The situation of our people in the Palestinian land and the diaspora is very painful, but this situation should motivate our people to act intensively to change it. There is no sense or logic to our living for seven decades under this oppression and injustice without doing anything to stop and change it.

This short essay written on the occasion of marking 75 years of the Nakba will try to answer the question: Have the components of the conflict changed since 1948 till today?

The 1967 Occupation Is an Expansion of the Nakba

To answer this question, we have to say first that the Israeli side, which perpetrated the Nakba, is still obsessed with excessive hatred motivated by the Zionist project. It is armed with a huge arsenal of conventional and nonconventional weapons, supported with unlimited political and financial aid from the United States and Europe, and doesn't recognize the rights of our people or even their existence.

Though the Nakba started in 1948, it was expanded after the 1967 occupation to include the West Bank, Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip. Israeli practices since the 1967 occupation began leave no room for doubt that Israel is pushing forward toward the creation of Greater Israel from the Mediterranean Sea to the Jordan River.

Furthermore, Israeli practices against the Palestinian Arabs, who remained in their lands after the creation of Israel and became Israeli citizens show that racist discrimination against Arabs is steadily increasing in all aspects of life.

Public opinion surveys conducted by different Hebrew media show an exacerbation of hatred against Arabs and the widening of the circle of rejecting the Arabs. The fanaticism emerging across all layers of Israeli society is accompanied by the diminishing power of the leftist streams and their absence from decision-making positions.

The Israeli side, which perpetrated the Nakba, is still obsessed with excessive hatred motivated by the Zionist project.

All these symptoms make the possibility of coexistence between Arabs and Jews almost impossible. This creates a fertile atmosphere for tension and clashes between the two sides inside Israel, especially under the current fascist Netanyahu-Smotrich-Ben-Gvir government.

The Responsibility of the West

On a wider spectrum, one cannot release the Western countries from their direct and indirect responsibility for the Nakba, because the Western world planned to get rid of most of the Jews in their countries by helping to create a Jewish homeland in Palestine. To achieve this goal, they started by getting rid of the Ottoman Empire and its Islamic Khalifah regime which was the political entity containing all the Arab Islamic Ummah. After World War I, they divided the Islamic Arab world into small entities, which coincided with the Balfour Declaration. Later they put Palestine under the Mandate of the UK, the godfather of the Jewish national home in Palestine. That project led to one of the ugliest operations of ethnic cleansing in modern

history: the expulsion of the Palestinian people from their homeland and the creation of Israel.

The recognition of the State of Israel by most countries, beginning with the United States and the Soviet Union, was not the only support that Israel enjoyed. These countries facilitated the Israeli takeover of 78% of the total area of Palestine, though the Partition Plan, UNGA Resolution 181 of 1947 designated to Israel only 54% of the land.

The result of the 1948 war was shocking. More than 800,000 Palestinians were uprooted and expelled from their homes; 520 cities, towns, and villages were destroyed; and dozens of massacres were committed against Palestinians with thousands of dead and wounded, concurrently with a systematic persistent campaign to erase the Palestinian civilization with its cultural and religious identity. All this is a portion of what Israel has continued to do against our people until today.

Israeli Leadership Looking to Commit a New Nakba

The current leaders of Israel do not hide their intentions against the Palestinians, and they say publicly that there may be a new Nakba to complement what Ben-Gurion left incomplete after 1948. By this, they don't want only to intimidate the Palestinian people and deter them from continuing their struggle to achieve their inalienable rights in their land, holy sites, refugees' rights, and independence but they also disclose their future plans and strategy.



Al-Araqeeb is an unrecognized village of the Al-Turi Arab Bedouin tribe, 8 km north of Beer Sheva / Bi'r as-Sabi'. Israel demolished the village 212 times, and was rebuilt by its residents 212 times. The aftermath of a previous demolition, 2010 (Getty Images)

The overwhelming majority of the Palestinian people in the Palestinian land and the diaspora have strong faith in the justice of their cause and the inevitability of its victory. They came to the conclusion that they should responsibility for their destiny into their own hands and realized that only by legitimate struggle according to international law and norms will they be able to regain their rights.

Israel is the same as in 1948: fierce, aggressive, and denying the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people in spite of the Oslo Accords and the mutual recognition between Israel and the PLO. At the same time, the Arabs also did not change. They are weak, helpless, divided, lack real democracy in their spheres, and suffer from corruption and dictators. This reality made the Palestinian people understand that there is no one to count on and that they should take up their cause and struggle until they achieve their rights.

Public opinion surveys conducted by different Hebrew media show an exacerbation of hatred against Arabs and the widening of the circle of rejecting the Arabs.

The Nakba did not stop with the Zionist movement and its allies' takeover of 78% of Palestine in the war of 1948/1949, because the Zionist plan was to take over all of Palestine from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean. This was not achievable by the leaders of the Zionist movement in 1948, because of internal tactical elements and external international considerations. But the idea of occupying all of Palestine, including Jerusalem, continued to dominate the agenda of successive Israeli governments until it was realized in the war of 1967.

Zionism as a Colonialist Movement

The books of the new Israeli historians, such as Benny Morris, Avi Shlaim, Ilan Pappé, and Tom Segev, adopted an approach calling for a new study of the history of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict with neutral standards. This meant refuting the traditional Zionist narrative - which for many Israelis became an established historical fact - and reconsidering the Palestinian narrative. This draws our attention to the myths upon which the Israeli policies were built before the Nakba and till today.

These historians considered the Zionist movement to be the other face of the Western colonial movement in modern history. It was expressed by the British-Zionist cooperation in planning and implementing the 1948 war that enabled the Zionist movement to execute its plan of expelling the Palestinian people from their homeland and settling the Jews instead of them in accordance with the conclusions of the Campbell-Bannerman

conference in 1905 and its document which was published in 1907. That document was the basis for all the resolutions and conferences that came after it. They include the Sykes-Pico Agreement, the Balfour Declaration, the Versailles Conference, the San Remo Conference, the Treaty of Sevres, the Treaty of Lausanne, the Partition Resolution of November 29, 1947, and the Declaration of Independence that established the State of Israel on May 15, 1948, which became a member of the United Nations on May 11, 1949.

As said earlier, the idea of expelling the Palestinians from their homeland was and still is the source of inspiration for all the Israeli governments' policies. Such inspiration found itself in the form of legal expression when the Nation-State Law was legislated in 2018. This law considers Jews alone entitled to all of Palestine, excluding any non-Jew from any right in this land. Such ideology makes it easier for us to understand Israeli right-wing leaders' statements about the necessity to fill the gaps left after the 1948 war, described as mistakes committed by Ben-Gurion because he did not expel all the Arabs at that time.

Israel is the same as in 1948: fierce, aggressive, and denying the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people.

The brutal Kafr Kassem massacre committed by the Israeli army on the eve of the Suez Campaign on Oct. 29, 1956, against innocent Arab civilians had a political agenda and exposes the hidden agenda of the fanatic Israeli politicians. Its aim was to terrify the Arabs and make them flee their homes to save their souls as happened after the massacres committed against them in several villages during the 1948 war. The massacre at Deir Yassin on April 9, 1948, became the most well-known of them.

Speaking about the Kafr Kassem massacre remains incomplete, however, if we do not mention Operation Mole¹, which was part of its execution.

Kafr Kassem Massacre Tied to Plan to Expel Arabs

Shalom Ofer, the deputy commander of the military brigade that perpetrated the massacre, was interviewed by the Israeli journalist Dalia Carpel in her special investigative report published in the *Ha'ir* weekly on Oct. 10, 1986, on the 30th anniversary of the massacre. In her report on the massacre, she wrote that "most of those who committed the massacre did not regret or feel guilty for what they had done and justified it by saying that the victims did not obey the orders." She quoted one of them, Shalom

¹ <https://www.akevot.org.il/en/article/plan-mole/>

Ofer, who ordered his soldiers to “harvest” the victims who were children, women, old men, and unarmed youngsters, saying: “We were like the Germans. They stopped the vans, took the people out of them, and fired at them. We did the same as them. We implemented the orders exactly as the German soldiers implemented the orders of their officers to kill the Jews.”

The Israeli historian Adam Raz authored a new book about the massacre titled *Kafr Kassem Massacre - A Political Biography*. According to a report published by *Haaretz* on October 12, 2018, this book is the first historical research about the massacre. Raz spent years reviewing all available documents in the archives and all the Israeli institutions’ meeting protocols and interviewing many of the persons who were involved in the massacre.

In his book, he says that “most of the information is still sealed. I was surprised to discover that writing about the history of the Israeli nuclear venture is easier than writing about Israel’s policy and intentions toward its Arab citizens,” and he calls the court to order the Israeli army to disclose the documents of this massacre.

One of the people interviewed in the book is Issachar Shadmi, commander of Battalion 17 of the Israeli army in the Central Region when the massacre took place. The interview was attended also by *Haaretz* correspondent Ofer Aderet and took place a year before the book was published in 2018.

Shadmi said in the interview that the trial that took place after the massacre was a staged show in front of the international community, and its aim was to release the security and military leadership from any responsibility for the massacre. This leadership included David Ben-Gurion, the prime minister at that time, Chief of Staff Moshe Dayan, and Commander of the Central Region Tzvi Tzur, who later became the army chief of staff.

Raz claims that he is convinced that the background of the massacre was an attempt to hide Operation Mole, a secret plan to expel the Arabs residents of the Triangle to Jordan, a plan whose details had not been disclosed until then. However, the Israeli Military Court accepted the request made by Raz and the Public Committee to Memorialize the Victims of the Massacre (chaired by the writer of this article) and ordered to disclose that document and hundreds of other documents from that massacre. All these documents shed light on the hidden policy of expelling the Arabs

that was admitted to by the army officers at the show trial. The documents can be found on the website of the Akevot Institute, which specializes in discussing the Israeli-Arab conflict and recently published the plan Israel intended to implement at the time of the massacre within the context of its ethnic-cleansing policy.

(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CCe6R2RZyeo&t=1s>)

Appeal to the International Community

To conclude, there is no doubt that the ultimate policy of the right-wing camp in Israel is to get rid of the remaining Palestinians and to create opportunities to justify their expulsion to neighboring countries. This is what a second Nakba means, and this is what the ongoing Nakba is. To prevent this from happening, the international community should not underestimate the dangers of the growing fascist movement in Israel. It should assume its responsibility for upholding human rights and democracy by first recognizing the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination on their own national land and by confronting the fascist trend in Israel by isolating it and preventing it from developing into another nightmare version of what the world witnessed in the modern history of Europe.

The Choice Between Fanatic Fundamentalism or Democracy and Equality For All

Ziad AbuZayyad

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The narratives of the Zionist movement and the Palestinian people are contradictory narratives. Recognition of one of them negates the legitimacy of the other. Therefore, there is no way to bridge the two unless one of them changes its nature and attitude towards the other.

From the Palestinian perspective, the Zionist movement was based on the transformation of the Jewish religion into a nationality and presented itself as a national liberation movement for the Jews. The Zionist movement failed in gaining the support of all worlds Jewry, as evidenced by the fact that most of the Jews of the world did not join the Zionist movement and did not adopt the ideology of returning to the historical Promised Land. Furthermore, there are religious non-Zionist Jewish groups such as Neturei Karta that do not recognize the State of Israel. They consider its establishment a violation of the will of God because it is not permissible to create a state before the coming of the Messiah and his creation of a Jewish state in the Promised Land.

In any case, the Zionist movement was not born in the Holy Land or founded by Mizrahi Jews. It began in Central and Eastern Europe, the regions in which anti-Semitism arose and flourished. There is no doubt that anti-Semitism played a leading role in the birth of the Zionist movement which was motivated by the goal of escaping anti-Semitism and persecution in Central and Eastern Europe, besides the fact that the Zionist movement was inspired by the 19th century European colonial movement, and that is why Uganda was once considered a potential place for creating a Jewish state.

The interest of Jews to escape from the oppression and persecution of anti-Semitism coincided with the interest of the Eastern European anti-Semites who wanted to get rid of the Jews. They welcomed the birth of the

Zionist movement and supported it to get rid of the Jews and expel them from Europe to the Jewish state in the making.

The Zionist movement succeeded in mobilizing large numbers of Jews, creating a collective identity and belonging among them, and convincing them that Judaism is nationalism.

The secular Zionist movement, which rode the wave of religion and related to the Torah to justify its claim to the historical Promised Land, could not turn its back to the religious Jewish community. It embraced religious Jews who were not anti-Zionist and cooperated with them, while avoiding a clash with the non-Zionist religious Jews, such as Neturei Karta.

It should be noted that the Zionism claimed to be the national liberation movement of the Jews, although they are not one national ethnic group, and they belong to different ethnic, national, cultural, linguistic and historical backgrounds. The only shared element between them is adopting the Jewish religion or being born to Jewish parents. But at the same time, the Jewish religion remained the only gate to become a Jew. And the only way for a non-Jew to acquire the title Jew is by conversion to Judaism, by religious Jewish authorities. There is no secular path toward Judaism, only one overseen by the Rabbinate. After converting, however, one can become secular or an atheist and remain Jewish and one of God's "chosen people," with the right to the Promised Land, regardless of country of origin or ethnic or religious background. A Muslim Arab from the city of Hebron in the West Bank, who worked in the settlement of Kiryat Arbaa' near Hebron and converted to Judaism, became a Jew entitled to citizenship and ownership of the Promised Land!

The Zionist movement succeeded in achieving its settler colonialism program in part of the land of Palestine in 1948 and was able later in 1967 to complete its conquest of all Mandatory Palestine from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea.

With this understanding of Zionism, the Palestinians perceived the Jewish immigrants to Palestine as invading colonizers who have no right to colonize in the Palestinian homeland and expel its Palestinian inhabitants and make them refugees. Therefore, the Palestinians are absolutely against accepting the Jewish narrative of creating the State of Israel in the land of Palestine, because accepting the Jewish narrative of the return of Jews to what they call *Eretz Yisrael*, the Land of Israel, means to them legitimizing the Nakba and the expulsion of the Palestinians from their homes and lands.

The Palestinians perceived the Jewish immigrants to Palestine as invading colonizers who have no right to colonize in the Palestinian homeland and expel its Palestinian inhabitants.

From 1948 until the early seventies, the Palestinians insisted on their own narrative that Palestine is their homeland, and they are the owners of the land, and the Jews were invaders who have no rights in Palestine and should return to where they came from. They held to this position, claiming rights to all of Palestine, refraining from calling Israel a state and calling for dismantling what they called “the Zionist entity,” seeking to establish a democratic secular state in Palestine for all its citizens regardless of their religion affiliation, and enabling the Palestinian refugees to exercise their right of return to their homes and lands in Palestine.



Palestinian refugees stream from Palestine on the road to Lebanon on November 4, 1948

This attitude continued until the end of the sixties-the beginning of the seventies, when a few Israeli Jewish peace activists such as Matityahu Peled, Uri Avnery and others made direct contacts with the PLO leadership. They convinced the PLO leadership that Israel is a fact, and that international public opinion supports the state of Israel and will not support the one-state idea, and that they should accept that fact and adopt a compromise based upon the principle of two states alongside each other. These contacts led for the first time in the history of the conflict to a resolution by the Palestinian National Council (PNC), the parliament of the PLO, in its session in Morocco, Rabat in 1974, calling for the establishment of a Palestinian National Authority on every inch of land that Israel evacuates. This was the beginning of a long-term process of moderation of the PLO, which ended in 1988 with a PNC resolution recognizing the UN Resolution 181 of 1947

(the Partition Plan) and Resolutions 242 and 338, which speaks about the integrity of the states of the region and the inadmissibility of obtaining land by force, and imply recognition of Israel on the 1967 borders and not the borders of the Partition Plan.

This pragmatic change of the Palestinian position from total rejection of the State of Israel to readiness to accept a mini state on 22% of the land of historical Palestine, alongside Israel on its 1967 borders, which comprises 78% of Palestine, was not well received in Israel. While the Palestinians were going down the road of moderation and readiness to territorial compromise, the Israelis were going up the road of radicalization and undermining the possibility of a two-state solution. They did this by establishing facts on the ground by settlements construction and expansion, in the West Bank and East Jerusalem to undermine any possible Israeli withdrawal from the Occupied Palestinian Territory (Opt) and the creation of a Palestinian state. And unfortunately, they almost succeeded in achieving this goal.

In the Israeli domestic arena, although the Zionist movement introduced itself as a democratic secular movement that seeks to establish an enlightened secular, democratic Jewish state as a shelter for Jews who are persecuted in Europe, it was unable to impose this pattern of thinking on all the Jews who joined under its banner. Eventually, symptoms of the development of a fascist political and religious current appeared within the Jewish community.

The flux of immigrants from diverse cultural and political backgrounds to Israel soon had its impact on the Israeli political scene. This was reflected by an increase in the influence of religious and right-wing Jews on political



A ship carrying 374 Jewish immigrants arrives at Haifa on July 18, 1947.

life. It culminated in the right-wing victory in 1977 under the leadership of Menachem Begin, who inflamed the feelings of Sephardic Jews who had experienced discrimination at the hands of the elite liberal Ashkenazi Zionists of the Labor movement. The bloc of right-wing parties, later known as the Likud, formed for the first time in 1977 a right-wing government led by Begin, who enabled some Sephardic leaders such as David Levy to occupy high positions in the state, and the Likud became the home of the Sephardic and Mizrahi Jews. This weakened the power of the other parties including the labor party, which became less liberal and adjusted their political platforms to the right to compete with the Likud and complement the fact that Israeli society was shifting toward the national right and to religion.

There has been a steady growth in the influence of religious parties and a gradual disengagement between them and the “liberal” Jews. The nationalist right and the religious right had an increasing influence on school curricula and yeshiva programs. Most of the education ministers in the past two decades were Likud or National Religious extremists, and the budgets allocated to the religious educational systems increased. And as a result, Israel entered a period of religiosity and religious extremism.

Over the past 75 years, since its establishment in 1948, Israel has witnessed a series of transformations, the most prominent of which was the right-wing political *mahpach* (upheaval) led by Begin in 1977. This was followed by a more right-wing move against Arik Sharon led by Benjamin Netanyahu in 2006, which forced Sharon to leave his Likud home and form Kadima, a more centrist party that did not survive for a long time.

The third, most dangerous upheaval is the one we are witnessing today, which is the regime coup being advanced by the ultra-right and religious Zionists’ which are dominating current coalition government, and they are pushing towards converting Israel to become a *Halachic* (Jewish religious law) state.

The religious Jews are now leading a coup against the secular, democratic Jews who established Israel as a secular, democratic state, even if its democracy is only for Jews. The battle that we are witnessing today through the so-called judicial reform aims to restrict the power of the Supreme Court in its capacity as a constitutional court, and dominating the judicial system by changing the combination of the committee which nominates Judges, and have governmental control over it, to guarantee appointing judges loyal to the political agenda of the government. The aim is preparing the ground to legislate laws of a religious nature without fear that the Supreme Court will invalidate them. This is only the beginning of

laying the foundations for a Jewish *Halacha* state that does not believe in laws legislated by human beings and does not recognize democracy, because it considers that the supreme legislative constituency is the law of the Torah. There is no doubt that the success of these so-called “reforms” will mark the first stage of failure of secular Zionism and the institutionalization of the state of *Halachic* law. And like all theocratic regimes, such a state do not believe in pluralism and will be based on the principle of exclusion of the other, including nonreligious Jews, the founders of Israel.

The success of this new phenomenon in Israel will mean that secular Jews who believe in democracy, will sooner or later find themselves either forced to flee from extremist Israeli Jewish religious persecution to elsewhere, or they will have to stand side by side with the Arabs to fight against fanatic fundamentalism, for a democratic state with equal rights for all its citizens.

If the religious trend succeeds, the *Halachic* state will not need the Zionists anymore more. It will mark the end of the adventure begun by colonizer European Jews and the beginning of a new chapter in this land.

If both sides, the liberal Jews and moderate Palestinians were free from the influence of fundamentalist religious parties, the Palestinian national movement would be the counterpart to liberal Zionists, if the later will realize that they cannot be democratic and liberal unless they will be against occupation and against oppressing another people and denying their right of self-determination. If both are weakened and marginalized, the alternative will be the fundamentalists.

If the religious trend succeeds, the Halachic state will not need the Zionists anymore more. It will mark the end of the adventure begun by colonizer European Jews and the beginning of a new chapter.

While the chances of coexistence between the liberal Zionist Jews and the moderate Palestinian nationalists is possible under specific conditions and mutual compromises as said above, the chances of coexistence between Jewish fundamentalism and Islamic fundamentalism are impossible in all conditions.

Democracy requires rejecting occupation and accepting equality for all citizens. If this will be adopted by those who identify themselves as liberal Jews, then the coexistence between them and Palestinian nationalists will be a reality and will stand firm in the face of fundamentalism. One probable future scenario which they should consider is going after the South African example by achieving a historical conciliation between Jews and Arabs and living in one state, a state of all its citizens.

Disciplining Public Commemoration of the Nakba in Israel

Tamir Sorek

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It has become an annual ritual in Israeli universities. Palestinian students gather on Nakba Day (May 15th) to commemorate the ethnic cleansing in 1948/9 and to protest the ongoing dispossession and oppression. They do so by delivering political speeches, reciting related poetry, waving Palestinian flags, and singing Palestinian national songs. In front of them, Jewish Israeli students gather with Israeli flags to protest the Nakba commemoration, while politicians and reporters support them with public calls to restrict the freedom of expression of the Palestinian demonstrators. In May 2022, the Nakba commemoration events were disrupted in three universities in Tel Aviv, Haifa, and Beersheba. Two weeks later, as a direct reaction to the campus commemoration of the Nakba, the Knesset approved in a preliminary vote a bill that would ban the waving of Palestinian flags in publicly funded institutions. This bill is almost a Zionist consensus: only four Jewish Knesset members voted against it.

The disrupted commemoration and the restrictive legislative process are two elements of a pincer movement that has developed in the 21st century for disciplining Palestinian commemoration of the Nakba within the Green Line, and which replaced the old-school disciplining measures used in the more distant past. The common reaction of Jewish Israelis to commemoration of the Nakba is rooted in two related and common anxieties. First, the mere mentioning of the price the Palestinians have paid for the establishment of the Jewish state is popularly perceived as undermining the moral justification for the existence of Israel and Israeli national identity.

Second, commemoration of the Nakba evokes the most sensitive controversy over the right of return for the Palestinian refugees, recognition of which is considered by Zionists as an existential threat. As a result, since 1948 a variety of methods have been developed to silence and discipline public expressions of the political memory of the Nakba. One could identify three distinct stages in the treatment of the Nakba commemoration by the state and Jewish citizens.

First Stage: Direct Coercion

Although Palestinian refugees in the West Bank added May 15th to their political calendar as early as 1949, inside the Green Line, under the strict surveillance of the military government, this would have been an impossible scenario. The extent to which the authorities were alert to any signs of temporal commemoration of the Nakba is evidence by their special attention they gave to Palestinians' behavior during Israel's Independence Day. For the military government officers and the *Shabak* (General Security Services) in the 1950s and 1960s, the celebration of Independence Day was the ultimate test of Palestinian loyalty, a litmus test that enabled the state to rank Palestinian citizens according to their levels of obedience. Every year, all state institutions in Arab towns and villages were required to perform festive ceremonies and raise the Israeli flag. Police informants received detailed instructions to report on the atmosphere in their villages on Independence Day. The end of the military government in 1966 did not immediately change these policies and methods. Although since the 1970s Palestinians have not been forced to celebrate Israel's Independence Day, state authorities continue to express strong concerns for how Palestinians in Israel construct their political calendar and used brute force to regulate it.

The commemoration of Land Day (a general strike and country wide protest in 1976, when Israeli police killed six Palestinians), became a focal point of the political memory of the Nakba, even if usually this was not explicitly stated. The emphasis on cross-border Palestinian solidarity is inevitably connected to the event that created the spatial separation between Palestinians. Slogans like "from Khan Yunis to Jenin, one people who won't give up!" and "From Sakhnin to Beirut, one people who won't die!" are unmistakable references to the Nakba and the refugees. During the annual Land Day, a previous tradition of private visits of internally displaced Palestinians to the remains of their homes was institutionalized and gained political structure. The methods used to discipline Land Day events were still taken from the manual of the Military government. For example, "preventive arrests" of activists before the annual Land Day

commemoration were common. As late as 1988, following the eruption of the Palestinian uprising in the occupied territories and the growing Israeli concern over its spreading into the Green Line, Prime Minister, Yitzhak Shamir decided to shut down the *al-Ittihad* newspaper from March 25 to 31, to prevent “incitement” around Land Day events.

Limited Liberalization

The second stage begins in the early 1990s. The state’s motivation and ability to discipline Palestinian memory had waned because of several interrelated sociopolitical processes in the region, the state, and within both Jewish and Palestinian societies. The strengthening of the liberal discourse of citizenship and the increased power of the Israeli Supreme Court, which defended this discourse, created a wider range of freedom of speech. The publications of the “New Historians” partially legitimized public discussion about Israel’s responsibility for the Palestinian tragedy. The exclusion of Egypt from the Arab-Israeli military conflict, as well as the Oslo process reduced the siege mentality in Israel by abating existential anxieties and increasing the collective self-confidence of Jewish society.

Yet even in the 1990s organized visits to the ruins of Palestinian villages sometimes faced police interference, and violent confrontations took place. Having said that, before the eruption of the al-Aqsa Intifada in 2000, public threats to the commemoration were vague and relatively minor in their tone. This dynamic prevailed, however, only as long as it was



Palestinian students (citizens of Israel) attend rally to mark Nakba Day outside Tel Aviv University, May 15, 2019. Credit: Hadash-Students

accompanied by a decline in the level of anxiety on the Jewish side. The events of October 2000 and the Intifada quickly interfered with the gradual processes of strengthening Jewish Israeli self-confidence. Historian Tom Segev, who celebrated post-Zionism in a book published shortly before the Intifada, wrote after its eruption: “Palestinian terrorism seems to push Israelis back into the Zionist womb,” and the “Zionist womb” opposes Palestinians commemorating their tragic past.

At the same time, it became impossible to restore the old state practices of disciplining memory, which were blocked by a combination of several sociopolitical developments. During the 1990s Palestinian civil society inside Israel grew and rapidly became institutionalized to create a strong web of self-confident civil activism. The profit-driven Arabic newspapers that emerged in the 1980s played an important role in the production of the cultural memory of the Nakba. In addition, the Internet and satellite TV have made the flow of information more difficult to control by the state and have strengthened the links of Palestinians in Israel to the Arab world.

The state’s motivation and ability to discipline Palestinian memory had waned because of several interrelated sociopolitical processes in the region.

Many organizations and media outlet directly or indirectly dealt with establishing the public presence of a Palestinian national narrative, and these organizations developed relatively effective skills in obtaining the protection of the Israeli legal system.

For example, in May 2008 the government-appointed temporary mayor of Kafr Kana, Ilan Gavrielli, denied a routine request of the local branch of the Islamic Movement to commemorate the Nakba in the local soccer stadium. Following an appeal, the district court in Nazareth overruled the mayor’s decision and the event took place as planned. The court’s decision in favor of the Kafr Kana Islamic Movement was a stark illustration that the old methods used to discipline Palestinian memory, namely, arbitrary decisions by state functionaries that are not necessarily backed by the rule of law, had lost their legitimacy. However, powerful forces have been working to reinstate the undermined disciplinary power of the state.

Civic Gaze and Public Intimidations

The above-mentioned counterdemonstration in universities is an example of one important mechanism in the third stage of commemoration-disciplining: the increasingly present voluntary “civic gaze” of ordinary citizens. The Jewish civic disciplinary gaze is as old as the state of Israel, and it has functioned from the very moment Palestinians met Jews under

the post-1948 imbalance of power. However, because of the effectiveness of state-controlled disciplinary practices in the specific field of political commemoration, most Jewish citizens never encountered commemorative events organized by Palestinian citizens. Since 2000, though, because Palestinian political memory has become increasingly public and more determined to broach topics sensitive for Jews in Israel, Jewish citizens gradually and increasingly have paid attention to these events and have expressed a readiness to correct “diversions” from the dominant Zionist narrative.

One example is the annual tradition known as the March of Return. The March is an incarnation of the organized visits to the ruins of the villages during Land Day commemoration. Since 1999, the March of Return has

The Jewish civic disciplinary gaze is as old as the state of Israel.

marched annually on Israel’s Independence Day, walking to a different village every year. The social anthropologist Paul Connerton noted that commemorative ceremonies are frequently “re-enactments of the past, its return in a

representational guise which normally includes a simulacrum of the scene or situation recaptured.” The Palestinian March of Return is an example of the exact opposite: the creation of a mirror image of the past, where the commemorative practice embodies a reversal of the event commemorated, the expulsion. The Jewish Israeli anxiety over this reversal can explain much of the reactions among Jewish citizens to the annual march.

From an early stage, the march had the potential for friction with the Jewish public and the state. This friction became inevitable both spatially and temporally. Spatially, many Jewish settlements were established on the ruins of Palestinian villages (sometimes with the intention of preventing the return of dispossessed residents). Temporally, the choice of Israel’s Independence Day for the march has been perceived by many Israeli Jews as a provocation.

Throughout the years there have been several attempts by counterdemonstrators to interrupt the march. In 2008, at the invitation of a newly founded organization named Ha-Shomer He-Hadash (The New Guardian), several hundred people came to a massive picnic at the Jewish cooperative settlement of Tsipori that had been established in 1949 on the land of the depopulated village of Safuriye. The route of the march was thereby obstructed because on its way to Safuriye, it was slated to go through Tsipori. The event itself was not officially defined as a protest but as a counter-celebration, and the official title was “Celebrating independence-in the face of the Nakba events.” The march deteriorated into a violent

confrontation between the police and Palestinian participants. Thirty-one Palestinian demonstrators were arrested.

The civic gaze of Jewish citizens is taken into account by the organizers of the March of Return. Through preliminary meetings each year, the organizers invest great effort in disciplining the expressions of protest to ensure that the slogans and signs will not put the march in danger of being interpreted as a provocation or in violation of any law. In addition, the mapping of the exact path of every annual march is dictated partly by the desire to avoid potential conflicts with Jewish residents of the existing settlement built on the village's lands.

The post-2000 modes of disciplining memory are not necessarily part of an organized and coordinated plan. Their main characteristic is their public visibility. Politicians, whether in office or aspiring to office, make public declarations that have the potential

to deter Palestinian citizens from organizing or participating in commemorative events. Sometimes these declarations are explicit threats, but the intimidator cannot always follow through; therefore, their main potential

effect is in creating an intimidating public environment. Some public intimidations inhabit the twilight zone of bizarre politics and potential crimes against humanity. In 2007, the Minister of Public Security and former head of the *Shabak* (GSS), Avi Dichter, declared, "Whoever cries about the Nakba year after year shouldn't be surprised if they actually have a Nakba eventually." Meron Benvenisti opined in *Haaretz* that "only paranoia and a repressed feeling of guilt could produce" this kind of statement.¹

Ironically, sometimes these threats include a recognition of the 1948 Nakba. Reacting to the planned commemorative events in universities, a member of the Jerusalem city council, Eliahu Yosef said in 2022 in a TV show: "It seems to me that they forgot the first Nakba and they need to be reminded by a second Nakba."

Outlawing Commemoration

When Turkish authorities are interested in silencing voices that describe the 1915 mass atrocities against the Armenians as genocide, they can use an existing clause in the penal code that forbids "insulting Turkishness." Israeli politicians who have tried to restrict Palestinian commemoration of the Nakba since the beginning of the twenty-first century might have been anxious like the Turkish authorities, but they were unable to find a clause

¹ Meron Benvenisti, "Time to Stop Mourning," *Haaretz*, 23 December 2007.

in the penal code to support a ban. Thus, recognizing that the authorities' ability to discipline commemoration of the Nakba is restricted by the rule of law, since 2001 Israeli politicians have been involved in recurrent legislative attempts to outlaw Nakba commemoration.

The most famous initiative is the bill approved in March 2011, which became known as the Nakba Law. According to the bill, the Minister of Finance is authorized to halt public funding for organizations (read: Arab municipalities) who support the commemoration of "The Day of

Since 2001 Israeli politicians have been involved in recurrent legislative attempts to outlaw Nakba commemoration.

Independence of Israel or the day of its establishment as a day of mourning." Note that the law is phrased in such a way that even the commemoration of Nakba Day on May 15th (rather than on Independence Day) would justify punishment. The earlier versions of this bill were much more extreme, but a concern that these versions were "unconstitutional" softened the law and left visible commemoration like the

Nakba Day ceremonies in Israeli universities legal. Therefore, occasionally we witness a legislative attempt aiming at sealing cracks in the silencing wall, and the 2022 flag bill is a major example. The declining power of the judicial branch (regardless of how far the current government will be able to go with undermining this power), might pave the way for a much bolder legal restrictions on Nakba commemoration.

The Changing Mode of Discipline

The anxiety of the Jewish public in Israel regarding the public appearance of a Palestinian national narrative has led to continuous attempts to discipline the public display of Palestinian political memory and to contain it. In the first decades after 1948, this discipline was imposed mainly by strict monitoring by the security services and even by forcing Palestinian citizens to publicly adopt the Zionist narrative. As the Jews' siege mentality abated and Arab self-confidence and organizational ability increased in the 1980s and 1990s, elements of the Palestinian national narrative gained more public visibility. The Second Intifada reversed the direction of abating Nakba anxiety, but it was too late to restore the old modes of disciplining memory. Instead of strict monitoring by the security services, however, Palestinian memory in Israel is monitored by the watchful civic gaze of ordinary citizens and its bearers are subject to public intimidation by government officials and to restrictive legislation. These modes are not completely ineffective, but they are far from pushing national historical remembrance back to the private sphere.

Realistic Hybrids: The Identity Definition of the Arabs in Israel

Maysoun Irshid Shehadeh

Dr. Maysoun Irshid Shehadeh was awarded a post-doctoral research scholarship in the Political Science Department of Bar-Ilan University.



Introduction

Identity is a description or a definition of a sense of belonging that is characteristically continuous and dynamic and is forged across unique conditions of time and place. As a result of this continuity and dynamism, individuals possess a variety of identities which are divided into two categories: “innate” (like family or ethnicity) and “acquired” (purposefully chosen by the individual).

The term “hybrid identity” refers primarily to an identity that has undergone transformation, which is the case of the Palestinians who, upon their transition from Palestine to Israel, had to redefine themselves from an ethnic majority to a minority within a national majority-ethnic state. Those Palestinians who survived the war and managed to stay in their homeland within Israel’s borders acquired for the first time a civil identity and became citizens of the State of Israel.

The first comprehensive identity study about young Arabs in Israel was done in 1965-1966 by the sociologists Yohanan Peres and Nira Yuval-Davis. Their conclusions became a milestone toward understanding the complex mechanism that affected not only their self-definition, but also their interactions with the state’s institutions and within their community. Using the word “compartmentalization” to differentiate between the Arab national identity and the Israeli civil identity, the researchers saw these two components as mutually contradictory and the outcome of divergent conflictual forces. In 1976, the sociologists John Hoffman and Nadim Rouhana used the conflict approach to determine that until 1967, the contradiction had been resolved by compartmentalization mechanisms, so that on the emotional level they upheld their Arab nationality while in their day-to-day life they conducted themselves as law-abiding Israeli citizens. However, this balance was broken after the June 1967 War, when

the Palestinian component gained more weight, and the Arabs became increasingly hostile toward the state.

After the conflictual identity approach, Rouhana proposed the “accentuated Palestinian identity” approach, whereby the Israeli identity was shunned due to the Jewish-Zionist character of the state, its symbols, laws, institutions, and discriminatory policies toward its Arab citizens. Left with no choice, the Arabs stuck to their alternative national identity, with which they could satisfy their basic need for a complete identity. According to this approach, the Palestinian national identity is accentuated and even exaggerated among Israel’s Arabs, because it is out of balance with their civil identity.

Both the conflictual and the accentuated identity approaches were unacceptable to the sociologist Sammy Smooha. In 1992, he proposed a third model, which he called “non-mutually dependent identities.” In his opinion, elite groups in the Israeli Arab leadership explicitly favored a Palestinian-Israeli identity and aspired to forge a new synthetic identity as a legitimate and pragmatic option for all Arabs in Israel. In his opinion, this move corresponded to the trend in other countries, where minorities developed a “complex and hyphenated” identity combining new and old, such as African American, Italian American, or Israeli American. In an article he wrote in 2001, Smooha emphasized that the very adoption of the non-mutually dependent identity model that sees them as both Israeli and Palestinian poses a great difficulty for Israel’s Arabs. This difficulty originates outside the Israeli-Palestinian-Arab collective, as neither most Jews nor most Palestinians see their nationality as like theirs. In his view, the combination of Palestinian ethno-nationalism and Israeli citizenship has created a “polluted” identity distrusted by both sides due to the very ethnic nature of the Arab-Jewish conflict.

A debate about the three models was not long in coming. In 1993, together with As’ad Ghanem, Rouhana developed the “crisis development approach,” whereby the definition of the state as ethnic-Jewish pushed the Arabs into a multidimensional predicament. In 1997, Majd al-Haj presented his “double periphery situation” thesis according to which both the civil and national identities are incomplete and have evolved into a sort of detached “half-identities.” In 2002, Eli Reches came up with the “radicalization thesis,” whereby as of 1967, the collective identity of Israel’s Arab citizens began to undergo Palestinization and Islamization, throwing Arabs and Jews into a historical process of mutual alienation and disaffection that could at any time turn into a violent conflict between the two sides. In 2009, Honaida Ghanim proposed the “liminal identity” model, according to which Israel’s

Arabs are simultaneously inside and outside opposite fields in both the Israeli and Palestinian space, so that they are neither really included nor completely removed. They oscillate between different layers of identity that do not overlap and at times even clash in a liminal space that is full of contrasts, ambivalence, and conflicts between past and present, civic and political factors, nationalism and politics, modernity and tradition. According to her, liminality turned from a temporary phenomenon into a permanent reality for the Palestinians in Israel after the Nakba in 1948. The official status of the few Palestinians left in Israel was less than full citizens and more than disenfranchised subjects. As they remained both inside and outside their native land, their homeland became someone else's country, and the Palestinian landscape became the ruin upon which a new state was built.

To sum up, all the aforementioned approaches agree that contradiction, tension, and incompleteness exist between the two collective identities of the Arabs in Israel, the civil and the national. However, they all fail to address the identity of the Arabs of Israel from two points of view, hybridity, and rationality.

On Hybrid Identity

In sociology, hybridity is a concept connected to the post-colonial discourse and to the debate between Edward Said's "Orientalism," attributing it to the dichotomy between East and West, and Homi Bhabha's 1994 theory ascribing it to the interaction between Westerners and natives during the colonial period, that redefined personal identities through reciprocal but unequal transcultural influences.

The hybrid identity, like any other identity, describes a sense of belonging comprising constant and fluid components that transform according to unique circumstances of time and place. A hybrid identity emerges within specific local contexts of domination and resistance, as well as acceptance, rejection, imitation, suppression, and more. Such an identity is created from contact between two "others" with different cultures and values: ruler and subject, majority and minority, local and external. It should be noted that hybridization does not see the encounter between these two "others" as a union of separate cultural value systems that merge into one structure, nor as a framework within which a new culture is consciously built from the combination of two or more cultural sources, but as something new that constantly recreates itself.

Bhabha claimed that the cultural space where the identity of both colonizer and colonized are formed is violated by a constant process of mutual hybridization. The "other" is always unconsciously present inside

the inner space of each of them, not outside or beyond it, which is why all cultural forms hybridize with each other through rejection, acceptance, and imitation. At the same time, these processes are accelerated and more prominent in the colonized (the Arab-Palestinian citizens of Israel, in our case) through colonial mimicry and the aspiration to become a familiar and renewed “other,” dissimilar and similar at the same time. Thus the original cultural identity of the colonized changes and is replaced with a new one: the hybrid model.



Tawfik Zayyad



Emil Habibi

Describing the hybridization of the identity of Israel’s Arabs in an interview with Yaakov Agmon in 1997, Emil Habibi said: “The Palestinian people have traits that distinguish them from the other Arab nations, traits which formed and developed through direct conflict with the Zionist enterprise. I say that the Jews in

Israel are also beginning to develop unique national characteristics that distinguish them from the rest of the Jews in the world. And the traits of both developed as a result of the influence of one on the other.”

The Hybrid Identity as Realistic

The negotiation that generated the hybrid identity of Israel’s Arabs took place under unique conditions of time and place. In political science and international relations theory, realism is the topmost factor influencing political decision-making. Realism ignores moral or ethical considerations and is based on the idea that states are similar in nature to man: selfish and self-interested, striving to maximize their power and self-preservation. This theory applies to Israel, but it can also apply to political groups and entities, be they collectives or a minority’s political leadership. It is based on the Freudian theory that man’s basic need for power stems primarily from his innate instinct to preserve the self and is motivated by rational considerations that are not necessarily guided by moral principles and ideals.

Citing the need to survive, to self-preserve, and later on to gain power and control, political realism explains why the Palestinians in Israel rushed to enroll in the Population Registry, obtain Israeli identity cards, and take part in the first elections held by the State of Israel already in January 1949, at a time when the wound inflicted by the Nakba was still bleeding profusely and the attendant pain kept reminding them of the balance of

powers which left them high and dry, without a national leadership, a roof over their heads, or protection.

With a bloody war between Jews and Arabs raging in the background, the State of Israel declared its independence on 14 May 1948, and approximately 750,000 Palestinians left their homes and became refugees outside their native land. Some departed even before the war, others during the fighting, and some were forcibly expelled from their places of residence or asked to vacate them temporarily by the Jewish army troops. After the war most of the refugees were not allowed to return to the territory of the State of Israel, while the land and property they left behind were transferred to the use of the Israeli Government through the Absentee Property Law.

After the State of Israel closed its borders, some 156,000 Palestinians remained within its territory. Of these, 25,000-40,000 (35% urban and the rest rural) became “Internally Displaced Persons (IDP)” who relocated to other Arab locales after the Israeli military forces forbade them from returning to their homes. Some IDPs settled in nearby villages, others migrated to localities where their relatives lived, and some were resettled by the state through the Refugee Rehabilitation Authority, which operated from 1949 to 1953.

On the eve of the war, city dwellers (some 445,000) constituted more than a third of the total Arab-Palestinian population (one quarter Christians and the rest Muslims), and about a quarter of them lived in Jaffa and Jerusalem. The urban population, which wielded enormous political, economic, social, and cultural influence, was the first to be hurt by the Nakba and the establishment of the State of Israel. Apart from Nazareth (which remained intact and became a haven for IDPs) and East Jerusalem (30,000 moved out of the western sector), they left their cities and became refugees outside Israel’s borders. The few who survived (3,000 out of 70,000 in Haifa, 4,000 out of 70,000 in Jaffa, 3,000 out of 15,000 in Acre, 1,400 out of 70,000 in Lod and Ramla) were barred from returning to their homes and were relocated to separate neighborhoods, while most of their houses



Rustum Bastouni



Seif al-Din al-Zoubi



Amin Jarjoura

were occupied by new Jewish immigrants. Other cities such as Tiberias (4,700), Bet She'an (6,000), and Safed (2,000) were completely emptied of Arabs (Goren, 2004).

The loss of the national leadership and the educated urban population allowed the emergence of a new dominant group, which took advantage of the opportunity offered by the Israeli Government to introduce itself as an alternative civil and national Palestinian Arab leadership. These were mostly communists led by Tawfik Toubi and Emil Habibi, who had accepted the UN Partition Plan and, already in September 1948, hurried to openly join their Jewish partners in one party and were elected to the Knesset. Seif al-Din al-Zoubi and Amin Jarjoura, clan patriarchs and remnants of Nazareth's bourgeoisie, joined the first Knesset's coalition on behalf of the Democratic List of Nazareth, which was a satellite party of Mapai. Rustum Bastouni, the first Arab graduate of the Technion Israel Institute of Technology - became the first Arab member of a left-Zionist party, Mapam, in the 2nd Knesset.

Their consent to become citizens of the Jewish democratic state was not enough for them to integrate with the Jewish citizens and construct their hybrid identity in a free and open space. On the contrary, the hybridization was managed, supervised, restricted, and delineated by two main bodies: the Military Government and the Minister of Minorities. Politicians on behalf of the Israeli government and the Communist Party operated in the same space, assisted later by representatives of the radical Al-Ard Movement in directing the hybrid identity negotiation.

After declaring its independence, Israel's Provisional State Council invoked the Defense (Emergency) Regulations enacted by the British Mandate in Palestine in 1945, to proclaim (on 19 May 1948) that a state of emergency existed in the country and to impose military rule on specific areas, primarily populated by Arabs. The Military Government's main mission was to monitor and suppress the national/political activities of the Palestinians who had become citizens of Israel by restricting their freedom of movement and action, controlling the press, and forbidding them from possessing weapons.

The Military Government's jurisdiction totaled 2,230,000 dunam and was divided into three regions: North, Center (The Triangle), and Negev. It functioned in territories occupied by the Israel Defense Forces which, according to the UN Partition Plan, were to have been included within the Arab state. Its operations were based on the concept that controlling the Arabs would thwart terrorism and protect the Jewish communities. Spatial control is a strategy usually adopted by a central government for the management and fair distribution of a geographic space (urban, rural,

inter-urban, etc.) and for security purposes, as well as for limiting the use of land, controlling population growth, overseeing the encounter of populations and impeding their symbiotic relations, creating more favorable conditions for certain ethnic groups at the expense of other groups, and so on. This is exactly what the Israeli government did to the Arabs by means of the Military Government.

The Provisional State Council, which served from 14 May 1948 until 10 March 1949, consisted of the same ministries that had operated under the British Mandate, with the addition of the “Ministry of Minorities.” This was a kind of provisional government dealing with the affairs of the Arab minority, which was established on a temporary basis (it was disbanded in June 1949, after the formation of the first Knesset) and functioned in collaboration with the other government ministries.

The security forces and the army were responsible for enforcing military rule over the Arabs, while the Ministry of Minorities was in charge of organizing their civil life. Based on the Emergency Regulations, Palestinians were prevented from getting to their fields and workplaces and from moving freely in search of a livelihood. These restrictions and physical isolation illustrate the control exercised over the creation of the hybrid identity.

This control was based on the knowledge that the Palestinians would be realistic. As many refugees were homeless or lived in inadequate conditions, a government committee established at the request of the Minister of Minorities was tasked with relocating them within the area under Israeli rule, reuniting family members who were separated at the outset of the war, transferring unemployed Arabs to places where they were guaranteed jobs aiding the construction of the State of Israel, and so on. Despite the demand by army commanders to forgo formalities and confiscate all Arab property in the occupied territories, it was the Ministry of Minorities that was put in charge of the issue.

The Ministry of Minorities had yet another important mission. The searches conducted in the Arab villages during the occupation resulted in throngs of Arabs being concentrated in various camps throughout the country, along with the prisoners of war. The Ministry was inundated with applications from Palestinians, who had overnight become “members of a minority” living within the boundaries of Israeli law, requesting the release of family members detained or held captive by the IDF. The Ministry’s response was based on such criteria as the prisoner’s age, his record, his involvement in anti-Zionist actions, whether he had children or a profession that could be used to strengthen Israel’s economy.

In keeping with the Foreign Ministry's guidelines banning any return to Israel before the end of the war, such applications were rejected, with some exceptions. According to a report written by the Minister of Minorities, these included "circles known for their long-standing cooperation with the pre-state Jewish *Yishuv* who were in touch with the Jewish Agency's political department and the Jewish National Fund, Arab dignitaries who recognize the Israeli state or advocate the idea of an independent government in the Arab part of Western Palestine. The Ministry has counseled minority representatives to agree to assist the army with fighting infiltrations by Arabs and sending them back outside Israel's borders." The control exercised by the Ministry of Minorities and the Military Government interfered with the hybrid identity negotiation, especially with acceptance, rejection, and imitation in exchange for survival, security, and maximizing power.

Immediately upon its establishment, Israel proceeded to determine the status of the Palestinians within its boundaries and chose to define them as a community. It adopted the classification of the International Court of Justice in The Hague¹ in order to highlight its modernity and multicultural character and to be able to define the Arabs as Israelis and not as Arab nationals. Defining the Arabs as a community would yield multiple benefits: in addition to the above, they would evolve as a fractured community and not merge into one collective against the state. In fact, this was yet another intervention by the state to entrench the identity of the Arabs as a religious community, a definition that affected many areas of their life, such as education, housing, employment, and more.

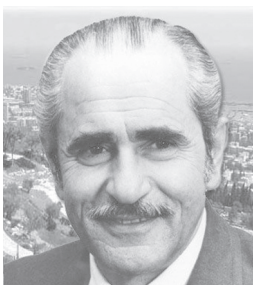
During and slightly after the Military Government's tenure (1948-1970), policymakers tried to inculcate a national-Israeli affiliation into the Arab citizens, by emphasizing Jewish and Hebrew content. But soon, especially after the erasure of the borders and the reencounter between the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip and the Palestinians in Israel following the June 1967 war, they realized that a takeover of the Palestinian identity by the Israeli identity was impossible, and that the two identities would remain separate. Consequently, they tried to weaken the connection to their national identity and to strengthen their connection to their civil-Israeli identity by blurring the national narrative, imposing Hebrew in the public space, demolishing abandoned villages and erecting new buildings on their ruins, emptying school curricula of any national content, imposing censorship on the press and the mass media, presenting Palestinian and Arab culture as shallow and deferent to the culture of the Jewish majority

¹ Permanent Court of International Justice, Advisory Opinion No. 17: Greco-Bulgarian 'Communities', 31 July 1930.

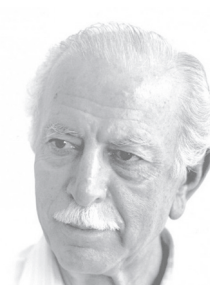
in textbooks, the media, and so on.

During the military rule, the State of Israel became the space where the hybrid identity of the Palestinians living within its borders was constructed. It was an overly complex space, where for the first time they were asked to push aside their identity as Palestinians and redefine themselves as an Arab minority and citizens of the State of Israel. In this space they were subjected to a hostile Military Government, yet they were allowed to exercise their democratic right, participate in equal elections, and vote. At that point in time, participating in the elections was a realistic step for the Palestinians. Every eligible voter received a number and a voting card, which led them to believe that they were registering their presence in the country and becoming part of a powerful political entity where they would be protected.

At a time when they were still having difficulty understanding and speaking the Hebrew language, the Arab MKs who joined the first, second, and third Knesset operated in the political space that was made available to them under the laws



Emil Touma



Tawfik Toubi

of the sovereign, Jewish, and democratic State of Israel and the confines of the military rule governing them and their people. These MKs were asked to join the efforts of the state in shaping the identity of the Arabs. This onerous burden fell on the shoulders of Tawfik Toubi, Emil Habibi, Emil Touma, Tawfik Zayyad, and other leaders of the bi-national Communist Party (MAKI), who assumed their role as the leadership of the national movement. With peaceful means and legal protests, the communist leadership encouraged a struggle against the Israeli authorities because of their unequal policy toward Arab citizens, but, on the other hand, they strove to establish their civil-Israeli identity within the state.

The hybrid struggle, framed as a legal ethno-national and political-civil struggle, has been pursued to this day by almost all Arab political parties (except for Al-Ard, an extreme-left national-Arab political movement established in 1959 by a group of Israeli Arab intellectuals, which aspired to turn Israel into a multinational state).

Due to the top-down manipulations by both the state and political party activists, as well as the acceptance, rejection, and imitation within the hybridization space, some Arabs leaned more toward their ethno-national identity without canceling their identity as Israeli citizens, a second

group did the opposite, and a third group adopted a civil-Israeli identity while activating a mechanism of denial and alienation and pushing their ethno-national identity aside. The wish to survive and live safely under a continuous overt and covert threat from the Israeli authorities, the military weakness of the surrounding Arab countries, and other factors hindered the emergence of a distinct and visible group that denies its Israeli civic identity and adheres to its ethno-national identity.

The wish to survive and gain a sense of security and power is also evident in the intergenerational struggle. The younger generation labors to improve their living conditions and move up the social mobility ladder, to raise their socioeconomic status over that of their parents.

Education was and remains the way to achieve social mobility among the Arabs in Israel, as illustrated by the over-the-top festivities that follow the publication of major test scores. At the same time, the desire for social mobility in an unequal ethno-national country places the young generation before the choice of getting an education or acquiring the capital that guarantees a sense of security. Unlike their grandparents and parents, social mobility among the children's generation has been less sluggish and has evolved along gender lines: the burden of education now falls on women (almost 70% of all Arab students in bachelor, master, and doctoral programs are women), whereas the burden of arduous work and making money fast falls on the men. Such a reality creates an unbalanced society in the education-gender context and induces an internal social struggle, especially because Arabs are a traditional and partly religious society. It should be noted that these findings do not indicate that Arab women hold enviable and influential jobs; despite their education they still have to struggle with policies of inequality, and in most cases they must settle for junior positions in the workplace.

Political realism is the most important factor shaping the identity of the Arabs in Israel. Realistic considerations affect the prominence of their identity circles and such components of hybridization as denial, suppression, acceptance, imitation, rejection, and so on. These translate in practice into a choice of more considered action in the political-civil-social space, where identity is shaped amid prolonged and continuous negotiation.

The Evasive Character of Forgetting National Traumas

Izhak Schnell

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Introduction

Catastrophic national events like the Holocaust, the Palestinian Nakba, and cases of genocide become traumatic chapters in the history of both the victorious and the defeated sides. In many cases, both sides tend to forget the event as it happened. After a while, the defeated side transforms it into a basic building block for establishing national collective memory. On the other hand, opposition groups and human right activists on the victorious side tend to undermine the official memory by exposing their side's collective responsibility for the catastrophic event.

Shaping Collective Memories

In order to understand the way such national catastrophes have been crystalized into a consistent story, we have to distinguish between historical descriptions and collective memories. Historical descriptions are based on systematic, critically tested logical arguments, while collective memories are articulated as ultimate, uncritical truths that supply justification to one's side in the conflict as well as positive identity. This is a necessary process in building social collectivities that can integrate society and develop collective identity and agreed upon definitions of situations, while motivating society members to action. Such stories also put the blame for the conflict and for the injustice perpetrated on the opposing side.

In such catastrophic situations, each side tends to victimize its own side and dehumanize the other in order to maintain their positive identity while managing the conflict. The defeated side tends to amplify the forces that stood behind the victorious side, and the victorious side tends to portray the

other side as inhuman in order to justify its oppression of the vanquished. As the conflict continues, both sides find themselves constituting a story that negates the story of the other side in the conflict in an unbridgeable way.

The catastrophe is not a one-time event but an ongoing drama whose story is changing and updated continuously in the service of identity formation. In contracted conflicts as in the case of Israel-Palestine, the conflict enters a vicious circle of extremism, with each side using more violent means to deal with it in response to the violence of the other side. Therefore, the collective memories emphasize more and more the victimization of one side and the dehumanization of the other, until the two stories become unbridgeable, immortalizing the conflict. Self-victimization and dehumanization of the other serve an important role in justifying one's own violence on the one hand along with the maintenance of a positive self-image on the other hand while managing the conflict.

Two scenarios are usually presented as possible routes for peace and reconciliation in such conflicts. The first is the emergence of a new more powerful enemy in the political arena, prompting the sides to give up their

The catastrophe is not a one-time event but an ongoing drama whose story is changing and updated continuously in the service of identity formation.

old conflict in order to confront the new threat. So far, the emergence of Iran as the new enemy helped bringing peace between Israel and some of the Arab countries but not between Israel and the Palestinians. Instead, the Palestinian case is pushed to the sidelines of the political

arena. The second is the articulation of a shared collective memory that gives place to both sides' stories. Unfortunately, this is a complex process that includes six complementary layers: knowing the other side's narrative of the collective memory; legitimizing the other side's story; showing empathy for the other side's story; understanding one's own responsibility for the catastrophic events that befell the other side; forgiving the other side for its responsibility for the suffering; fusion of the contrasting narratives into a shared one.

The demand to adopt a shared collective memory may require giving up dreams that are deeply rooted in religious and national myths, like giving up dreams of controlling the Promised Land. In such cases, it is necessary to understand that one side's full justice means doing injustice to the other side and that there is no way to grant full justice to both sides. The way out of this dilemma is to adopt a pragmatic moral position. Each side will insist on their most essential claims in order to enable them a promised future and will give up some of their aspirations in order to allow the other side

to get their most essential claims. In the process, the sides do not have to commit themselves to one shared collective memory; they may maintain separate stories of their collective memories as long as they recognize and legitimize the other side's collective memory.

In reality, the most common response of the victorious side in the conflict is to avoid responsibility for any of the evils done in the management of the conflict. Two examples may demonstrate this attempt to forget the catastrophic events: the massacre of the Armenians by the Turks and the massacres of Croats, Slovenes, and Albanians by Serbia.

The Turkish Case

The Turks consistently deny any responsibility for the massacre of Armenians at the beginning of the 20th century. Some 1-1.5 million Armenians were massacred by Turks under the supervision of the Ottoman Empire between 1894 and 1923, with most of them being murdered during the World War I. The Armenians as a Christian community enjoyed religious freedom, but they were designated inferior subjects of the empire. They suffered from harassment, mainly from the Kurds, with no protection on the part of the empire. Under these conditions, an Armenian national movement started to emerge as part of the nation's spring. In 1890 a revolt started, which Sultan Abdul Hamid cruelly crushed by sending Kurdish militia to Armenia. During the decade that followed, more than 250,000 Armenians were massacred with no response from the Sultan and probably with his silent support. The young Turks who took power in 1911 decided to develop the Turkish territories in Asia east of Turkey and, as part of the project, to cleanse those areas of Christians. A systematic expulsion took place in 1915-1918 in which more than 1 million Armenians were forced to march to concentration camps in the east. Many were massacred along the way or lost their lives due to starvation, sickness, etc.

The Armenians remained silent about the massacre until 1965. Only then was a monument to memorialize the massacre built, and it was only in the 1990's, after the independence from the Soviet Union, that the Armenians raised their voices about the massacre. They built a museum and began to pressure other nations to recognize the massacre. Unfortunately, Turkey was important to Western countries as a member of NATO. As a consequence, many countries were hesitant to admit that there had been a massacre. In 2000, 126 Holocaust researchers from around the world announced that the Turks are responsible for the massacre of the Armenians. Following that declaration, 30 democratic countries gradually started to recognize the genocide of the Armenian people. To this day, however, Turkey

In 2000, 126 Holocaust researchers from around the world announced that the Turks are responsible for the massacre of the Armenians. continues to threaten any country that considers recognition of the genocide of the Armenians. Modern Turkey refuses to take any responsibility for the massacre. It argues that the victims were casualties of war and that no crimes were committed against the Armenians. Furthermore, there is evidence that many documents about the massacre were removed from Turkish archives. Nonetheless, even within Turkey a small opposition of intellectuals has started to argue for the need to change this attitude and take responsibility for the Armenian massacre.

The Serbian Case

The Serbs in former Yugoslavia refuse up till now to admit any responsibility for the massacre of thousands of Croats, Slovene, and Muslim victims. In Yugoslavia, President Tito made a deliberate effort to replace the nationalistic collective memories of the countries that constituted Yugoslavia with a shared collective memory around the bravery of the partisans against Nazi Germany and with socialist ideology. With the disbandment of Yugoslavia, the country split into the national states that freed themselves from the dominance of Serbia – the dominant faction in former Yugoslavia that took control over the Yugoslav army. Serbia's Prime Minister Milosevich sent private militias that were under his control to fight Croatia, Slovenia, and Kosovo before the formal army entered the battle. They committed a series of massacres under his supervision until NATO got involved in the war. Despite this, till today Serbia refuses to take responsibility for the massacres. In response to international pressure, two Serbian low-ranking officers were convicted at the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia in The Hague. With new governments in Serbia, Serbian prime ministers issued several apologies directed at the people of Croatia, Slovenia, and Kosovo, but the apologies emphasized that the crimes were done by only a few individuals and that the Serbian people cannot be held responsible for the war crimes.

The Serbian elite reorganized the national calendar, declaring seven memorial days for Serbian casualties in seven different wars of independence. Thus, the calendar presents the Serbians as the ultimate victims of imperial oppression and heroic struggles for independence. All memorials relate to 19th century wars against imperial oppressors, but the wars of the 1990's are not memorialized. The Serbians chose the Serbia National Day, February 15, as their main holiday that symbolizes modern Serbia. It is a choice that serves internal aspirations and international pressure. For internal purposes,

it symbolizes the ethnic and religious roots of the Serbs, and for external purposes, it symbolizes the struggle for independence and democracy. By this, they tried to meet the pressures from Europe to take responsibility for war crimes and to put forward their nationalist identity of Serbia for internal needs.

The cases of Turkey and Serbia are not an exception among the countries that committed war crimes and genocide. All of them refuse to recognize and take responsibility for their cruelty. Dutch massacres in Indonesia after World War II remain in the shadows until today. Mass massacres in Cambodia and Rwanda, Japanese massacres of Chinese and the Chinese cleansing of Tibetan territories all remain unrecognized by the oppressors. The only exception is Germany, which took full responsibility for the Holocaust. However, even Germany took responsibility for the Holocaust of the Jews, but the same Germany failed to take responsibility for the genocide of the Roma people, probably because they did not gain political visibility in the international community.

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The Case of Israel-Palestine

In the Israeli-Palestinian case, a strong tendency to hide the memory of the Nakba can also be seen. Immediately after the 1948 war, the Israeli forces made every possible effort to avoid the return of the refugees to their homes and to erase any remains of their villages on the landscape. Palestinian-owned lands were confiscated by the government for Jewish settlements. In addition, the memory of the Nakba was hidden or undermined from schoolbooks, official maps etc. In studying the mention of the Nakba in newspapers, Prof. Amal Jamal finds four narratives: 1. The Nakba never occurred it is Palestinian propaganda. The Palestinians were defeated in a war and they try to find excuses for their defeat. While they committed massive war crimes, from the Israelis side only a few exceptional events of murder, robbery etc. took place. 2. The Nakba did occur but the Palestinians should be considered responsible for it. They started the war and they refused to compromise. They left their places responding to their leader's calls to leave in order to return after their expected victory. Since they failed to win the war they found themselves refugees in Arab countries. 3. Refusal to admit the Nakba because it may de-legitimize the existence of the state of Israel. 4. The Nakba did exist and we need to take responsibility for it. This is an attitude that was adopted by a small minority on the leftist side of the political spectrum in Israel.

The Palestinians under the shock of the defeat in the war remained also silent about the Nakba for many years. Their story was dominated by Arab countries that had their own interests of getting control over some of the Palestinian territories. The Palestinian voices increased once the Palestinians took responsibility for their history, establishing the Palestinian liberation movement. The Institute for Palestine Studies in Beirut took the lead in raising this voice.

The 1967 Six Day War and the failure of the peace negotiations restored to the front the story of the Nakba. While official Israel made desperate efforts to forget the Nakba by passing the Nakba law, the Palestinians made efforts to remember the Nakba and Palestinian life in the country prior to the Nakba. On Israeli Independence Day they started to carry out pilgrimages to abandoned villages, to draw maps of the villages, to write memories of the past and historical and novel books. Finally leftist organizations and scholars in the Jewish community started to research and expose the Jewish responsibility for the Nakba. For example, Zochrot memorializes the destroyed villages while calling to resettle them with Palestinian refugees. The organization of a Memorial Day for both sides organized by the joint Israeli-Palestinian Bereaved Family Forum and Combatants for Peace as an alternative to the official Israeli Memorial Day for the Israeli victims of the war attracts growing numbers of Israelis and Palestinians every year. The



Israeli right wing activists protest next to the annual Nakba Day ceremony, Tel Aviv University, May 14, 2018. (Yossi Zeliger/Flash90)

“New Historians” have exposed cases of massacres of Palestinian innocent people during the 1948 war and deportation of Palestinians from their villages and some towns in order to cleanse the new state from Arabs.

While official Israel made desperate efforts to forget the Nakba by passing the Nakba law, the Palestinians made efforts to remember the Nakba.

Conclusions

Massacres and war crimes are traumatic experiences that cause their survivors from both the victorious and the defeated sides to try to forget the catastrophic events. However, the silence around the events cannot be maintained for a long time. On the defeated side, the story comes out after recovering from the first shock, which may take up to a full generation. In addition, in many cases the defeated side does not have institutions and organizations that can take the lead in memorializing the story of the catastrophic events and in bringing it into the conscious of the people and developing it into a cornerstone in the collective memory. On the victorious side forgetting is a stronger tendency that may continue for decades as a means to avoid taking responsibility for the catastrophe. Official institutions may make any effort to avoid recognition of the events. Despite this, human right groups and progressive segments of society tend to raise the evil done by their society to the defeated side as a mean to correct society and to return a positive self-image to society. Therefore, we conclude that any traumatic memories must be treated and resolved in reconciliation between two societies in conflict. Otherwise, it remains an abscess that continues secreting and bleeding.

The Nakba Is Not an Event of the Past but an Ongoing Process

Talal Abu Rokbeh

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It is not possible to look at the Nakba on its 75th anniversary as a no more than a decisive battle that ended with the uprooting and displacement of the Palestinian people from their land, dispersing them in various parts of the earth and turning them into groups of refugees in camps inside and outside historical Palestine, while replacing them with another people. The Nakba must be seen as the core of the Israeli colonial system, which has not stopped for a moment over the past years in its attempts to dismantle the remaining Palestinian structures through the cleansing and dismantling policies that Israel carries out daily in the Palestinian territories.

The Israeli facts on the ground impose upon the Palestinians the need to revive the question of the Arab thinker Constantin Zureiq about the meaning and nature of the Nakba. There is an urgent need to re-read it, not as a passing event in history but rather as a continuous process in its repercussions and forms, in order to anticipate the future of the Palestinian people and their just cause.

Any attempt to understand the Nakba takes us to the establishment of the Zionist project, which realized early on, that the only way forward to establish the Jewish state, and enable it to continue cohesively is by pulling the Palestinian people apart, and finishing them off in a battle that began before the Nakba, and this is still perpetual up till now.

It will become evident to any observer of the Israeli policies — since the Nakba until now — that Israel has not hesitated for a moment, nor has it stopped taking that path. On the contrary, it has practiced and is still taking all possible measures to tear the Palestinian geography and demography apart and distort Palestinian history and memory.

Matrix of Israeli Control

Israel has succeeded in separating the components of Palestinian geography through the matrix of control it imposed on Palestinian society in the West Bank, including Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip. While the settlement policies and the separation wall turned the West Bank into a group of fragmented pieces of land that have no contiguity and are unable to communicate, the Gaza Strip suffers from a complete separation from the West Bank and Jerusalem created by the unilateral withdrawal in 2005. In addition, a political blockade has been imposed on Gaza, restricting the movement of its citizens and turning it into a large prison. As for Jerusalem, it has also suffered from the matrix of the policies of isolation and Judaization in all the city's neighborhoods and the expulsion of its residents as a result of the taxes and procedures imposed by Israel that make safe living impossible.

Since the Nakba until now—that Israel has not hesitated for a moment, nor has it stopped taking that path.

This matrix of Israeli control has always had a clear goal, which was clearly expressed by the American Zionist historian Daniel Pipes; it was dubbed the “Victory Rally” designed to end the conflict. He claims it is a result that will only come through the policy of subjugating life to the power of death in the Palestinian territories, which will ultimately lead to Palestinian acceptance of defeat and recognition of Israeli victory and commitment to it. It operates through two forms of violence: organic violence represented by the use of excessive destructive force, whether through continuous Israeli aggressions against the Gaza Strip or continuous incursions into the cities and villages of the West Bank or the policy of field executions practiced by the army and police forces in cold blood; and structural violence represented in a series of multiple “disciplinary” measures, such as the closure of cities and villages, the imposition of an unjust siege on the Gaza Strip, or the Judaization of the Holy City, etc. — the measures described by Amnesty International in a 2021 report entitled “They Crossed the Line,” The report indicates that Israel aims to inflict maximum annihilation and destruction on buildings and the population and to create worlds of death that make internal defeat a reality and a foregone conclusion for the Palestinians.

Thwarting a Two-State Solution

Since the Nakba, Israel has not abandoned the colonial essence of the Zionist movement, and therefore it has never stopped trying to deny

Palestinian existence materially and symbolically. In this context, Israel has continued its policies aimed at thwarting any solution that would lead to a Palestinian entity, even on part of the Palestinian land. Therefore, all

Israel has continued its policies aimed at thwarting any solution that would lead to a Palestinian entity.

Israeli policies since the start of the settlement process are aimed at thwarting the two-state solution by adopting fait accompli policies that it imposes on the ground and increasing the settlement movement by seizing the Palestinian geography and permanently attempting to impose legal sovereignty over Area C, which constitutes 60% of the total area of the West Bank. This leads to the impossibility of establishing a Palestinian political entity on a continuous and connected physical area in the West Bank.

Thus, it has become quite clear that what is known as the two-state solution (or the establishment of a Palestinian state on the Palestinian lands occupied in 1967) has become unrealistic. What is happening in the West Bank is proceeding according to an expansionist settler/colonial scheme, the establishment of an apartheid regime, and the construction of “Bantustan” ghettos on all the land of Palestine from the sea to the river, as recognized by Amnesty International and the Israeli B’Tselem organization, and before them the UN Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia.

Gaza Is an Israeli Dilemma

All studies indicate that before the Nakba, the Gaza Strip was not part of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, unlike the rest of the Palestinian cities at that time, such as Jerusalem, Haifa, and Jaffa. However, the consequences of the Nakba forced the Gaza Strip to enter forcefully into the conflict. It became the Palestinian spearhead in confronting all Israeli policies as a result of four main determinants imposed by the facts on the ground. The first is that the number of refugees in the Gaza Strip accounted for 75% of its total population, and the second is that the Gaza Strip lay between the influence of two regional powers at that time: the State of Israel and the Arab Republic of Egypt. The third factor is the lack of natural resources and wealth, and the fourth is the proximity that makes the Palestinian refugee in the Gaza Strip the only refugee who can see the village and lands from which he was expelled with the naked eye.

Later, these combined factors contributed to the Gaza Strip becoming a dilemma for Israel and pushed it to the forefront of events until the outbreak of the first intifada in 1987. The famous statement by Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin that Gaza he wished Gaza would sink into the sea implicitly

expressed the failure of Israeli policies designed to keep the Palestinians in check and suppress their voice which demanded their political rights to national salvation and the establishment of their independent state.

This led Israel to see the Gaza Strip as a dilemma by all standards, even after it reached a settlement with the Palestine Liberation Organization) and following the subsequent unilateral withdrawal by former Prime Minister Ariel Sharon in 2004. The withdrawal was not meant to acknowledge the political rights of the Palestinian people as much as it aimed first to free Israel from the burden of Gaza and secondly to delude the international community into thinking that Israel is serious about a peace process and that the main problem lies with the Palestinian side.

Palestinian Division Serves Israel's Goal of Domination

In June 2007, the internal Palestinian political division contributed to strengthening the Israeli narrative about the absence of a Palestinian partner, giving Israel a free hand in the West Bank to devour more land through the settlement policy and the construction of the Separation Wall and annihilating any possibility of the establishment of a Palestinian state on the lands occupied in 1967. It also helped Israel entrench the system of domination, control, and monopolization of the various Palestinian communities in the West Bank, Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip, which are subject to widespread Israeli sanctions against the background of attempts to resist the Israeli occupation. This is what we are currently witnessing in the Israeli dealings with the hotbeds of resistance in Jenin, Nablus, Jericho, Jerusalem and in the Gaza Strip.

Israel continues to create discrepancies and fundamental differences between all the Palestinian communities in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT) and deliberately and intentionally obstructs all possibilities of creating bridges of communication between them. This is done by imposing a racist, settler regime that tears Palestinian society apart, dispels Palestinian national identity, and makes the Palestinian environments unlivable, making it easier for the Israelis to carry out a transfer of the Palestinian people, especially the young generation, which is considered the primary target of these Israeli policies.

This reveals to us the urgent need to reread the Nakba as a continuous historical process that did not stop with the uprooting and dismantling of Palestinian society. Rather, it is a continuous cycle of Israeli action that never stops. And that is clearly evident in the current far-right government, considered the most fascist in the

The Nakba is a continuous cycle of Israeli action that never stops.

history of Israel as it adopts clearly racist policies toward the Palestinian people and seems determined to liquidate its national rights and resolve the conflict in favor of the Zionist colonial project, including the liquidation of the Palestinian Authority (PA) or at least transforming its role into a functional one that serves the colonial system.

The statements of Minister of National Security Itamar Ben-Gvir in this context were clear when he offered a number of options to the Palestinian people: either comply with the Zionist requirements of living under Israeli military rule without political rights in exchange for economic rights, such as work “economic peace” or, in case of refusal, emigrate outside Palestine or endure sanctions that will not have mercy on anyone who tries to resist Israel’s desires and dreams.

Such statements illustrate the real position of the Israeli Government backed by the Israeli public, which refuses to recognize the right to self-determination of the Palestinian people and all of their national rights. It is a position that had been quietly and subtly held by all successive Israeli governments since the Nakba until now, but this extreme right-wing government has revealed clearly the true face of all the Israeli policies aimed at liquidating the Palestinian presence on the land of historical Palestine, by continuing what the Jewish organizations were unable to do on the eve of the creation of Israel in 1948, to completely empty the land of its original inhabitants.

Policies of New Israeli Government Extend from the Nakba

It is not possible to separate the Israeli policies pursued by the extreme right-wing government from the process and essence of the Nakba, as they are rather a continuation. The processes of cauterizing Palestinian consciousness and awareness by the occupation government aim to complete the Israeli victory arc that it has been pursuing since the early beginnings of the Zionist movement on the land of Palestine.

Faced with this reality of fragmentation imposed on Palestinian society, an urgent need has arisen to propose Palestinian solutions to address the structural crises that the Palestinian national movement suffers from, especially in the face of the intractable political division which serves the Israeli vision and clearly threatens the entire Palestinian national project, which is retreating in the face of Israel’s policies.

The long Palestinian experience through the various stages of the Palestinian national struggle indicates that the Palestinian people have always been ahead of their leadership in their ability to capture the historical moment and the imperatives of confronting the occupation and its liquidation

plans; however, this requires rebuilding the Palestinian national movement on the basis of pluralism and political partnership and providing a leadership to the movement of the masses which has begun to talk of the launch of a new uprising in the face of the Israeli policies that are forcing the Palestinian situation to disintegrate. This is evident in the phenomenon of lone “tigers”: independents, armed Palestinian groups that were formed in different locations in the West Bank, such as the “Lions' Den,” the “Jenin Brigades,” and others. It is important, however, for the Palestinian action to be organized collectively and within a unified Palestinian vision and strategy, because individual action and diligence is more like a cry in the wilderness that does not accumulate and does not affect the central issues.

The Palestinian people have always been ahead of their leadership in their ability to capture the historical moment.

Need for Unity and International Support

I believe that those formations and uprisings that Jerusalem witnessed during the last five years, the latest of which was the uprising in Sheikh Jarrah, call for a number of conclusions. Most importantly, that they were not subjected to the logic and calculations of various blocs within the Palestinian division. Success in confronting the Israeli plans depends on the official institutions support to the Palestinian national movement, especially the PLO, by arming it with serious steps on the ground that are integrated and based on popular diplomacy and knocking on the doors of international courts to expose the racism of the occupying government and its endeavor to consolidate a system of racial discrimination in the OPT. It is also necessary to influence international public opinion through official and popular Palestinian diplomacy and mobilize the broad forces of international solidarity, especially in Europe and the United States.

Restoring a rereading and understanding of the Nakba puts two options before us: Palestinian surrender to Israeli policies, or start from the centrality of the national struggle and mobilize potential capabilities of the Palestinian people to end the political division, carry out radical democratic reform in the structure of the Palestinian political system, and strengthen the steadfastness of the Palestinian citizen on the ground in the face of Israel's colonial aggression and its delusional belief in its ability to defeat the national liberation project and resolve the conflict in favor of the Zionist colonial project.

Visions of a Shared Society

Shuli Dichter

Shuli Dichter is an Israeli educator and social entrepreneur, and a pioneer in the struggle for an equal, shared society for Jews and Arabs in Israel. He is the co-founder and co-director of the “Nisan” (the month of spring, both in Arabic and in Hebrew) center for research on shared society at the Van-Leer Jerusalem Institute; former CEO of “Hand in Hand,” a network of bilingual Jewish-Arab schools; and former co-CEO of “Sikkuy,” a leading advocacy group for equality in Israel. Dichter also served as a consultant to the Israeli Minister of Minorities Affairs during 2009-2010. He is the author of “Sharing the Promised Land: In Pursuit of Equality Between Jewish and Arab Citizens in Israel,” (October 2022).



I'll begin with the personal. I was born into a Mapam (United Worker's Party, eventually one of the components of Meretz) kibbutz, but my political and ideological home is in the civil society. I hope that everyone here at this conference in Tel Aviv belongs in one way or another to a joint Palestinian-Jewish civil society framework. Whoever isn't is invited to do so. I have an excel sheet in which I have counted those people who are involved in a joint Jewish-Palestinian framework, and I stopped counting when I reached 70,000.

I am pointing this out because, what we need today in the Israeli parliament is a body that should be the head of a pyramid that is based on daily joint activity that would be the representation of a world outlook. An “All Its Citizens” party should be the practical representation of a public that carries out such an approach, a shared Palestinian-Jewish society in the country.

What is a “shared society”? Work on this concept is being done at the Nisan Center at the Van Leer Institute in Jerusalem, and soon the first edition of a lexicon of concepts for a shared society will be published. It's already clear that the heart of a shared society contains two ideas: 1) There is no division or bias between citizens; and 2) The framework for such a society, the state, should be based upon shared and equal ownership. Shared with whom? Equal between whom? Between the children of the two nations that exist here: Underneath the land between the Jordan River and the sea there are two tectonic plates, Palestinians and Jews, the two nations that belong in this homeland.

Needed: An Equal Division of Power

In order to create the partnership and development of the country, the Jews have to relinquish their sole ownership of the state, of the power and privileges, and also of the narrative of always being in the right that we are brainwashed with from birth. From my personal experience and from the experience of an equal division of power – within shared civil society organizations – I can tell you that the giving up of power can be extremely challenging mentally. But in my view, it is easier than what I think the Palestinian side has to give up, which is the granting of legitimacy to the existence of the Jewish collective in this land. This requires from the Palestinians a great degree of generosity, and the overcoming of mountains of anger and frustration that we, the Jews, will have to live with that will not disappear overnight.

But the knowledge that we have to relinquish, “to let go,” can sometimes be misleading. There is one thing that if we relinquish it I think would cause damage to both sides within the framework of a shared society: our collective identities. In the eyes of many Israelis, the Palestinians have to give up their Palestinian identity in order to live together with the Jewish people, and that is a very serious mistake.



Members of the socialist left (SHASI) march in Tel-Aviv, May 1st, 1990. (+972 Magazine- Courtesy of the of the Kaminer family)

Zionism Has to Undergo a Transformation

At the same time, it would be a mistake to expect that the Jews will give up on their belief in the Jewish collective existence in the land of Israel, which is the core meaning of Zionism. And the Jews who are here – are Zionists, or what we can call **re-Zionists**. Zionism is the framework that for the last 130 years has encompassed the idea of Jewish nationhood.

It made a major and continuous historic mistake in its attitude towards the Palestinian people, and thus caused an ongoing disaster for the two peoples. It is the ideological framework for Jewish nationhood and should remain so. But now it also has to undergo a transformation. The deep change that Zionism has to undergo is the responsibility for those Jews who are here, and they, we, have to assume this burden. It would be too easy, and also not worthy, for us to simply abandon Zionism, as if that was even possible.

In the eyes of many Israelis, the Palestinians have to give up their Palestinian identity in order to live together with the Jewish people, and that is a very serious mistake.

For me, to be a Zionist is, first and foremost, **to assume personal responsibility** for the crimes of Zionism. Me too, as a member of a kibbutz, Ma'anit. I hope that all kibbutz members will understand that. I hope that everyone understands that “all its citizens” means a new fair re-distribution of all the property, including the land resources of the country. These include all the agricultural land that the kibbutzim and moshavim have generously received, to “guard over the land of the nation,” and also all of the areas under the jurisdiction of the Jewish municipal authorities and all of the properties that go with them – which include vast industrial and commercial centers of activity, municipal taxes and much more. **Every Jew** who lives here gains benefits in one way or another from Jewish privilege in this land. And this is also true for Jews around the world.

The second meaning is the responsibility **to change** the basis of Zionism: from supremacy to equality, from nationalism to citizenship. **In other words: re-Zionism**, rethinking, and a change in its meaning. I know it sounds fantastical to say this in a period like ours when we are being washed in a wave of a destructive hyper-nationalistic government. But everyone here wants to change the reality. Therefore, my proposals are part of an attempt to define **what we want**.

A Solid Palestinian Identity Alongside a Solid Jewish Identity

A solid Palestinian national identity alongside a solid Jewish-Zionist national identity, are the two building blocks for a shared society in our

joint homeland. And mutual recognition of this collective sentiment is a fundamental requirement. This is a partnership in the homeland between the children of this place, stemming from a deep, existential attachment to the homeland. In an article in *Sicha M'komit* (Local Call), Dr. Ameer Fakhoury gives it a name, **אומות-אחיות** **شعوب أنداد** **co-nations**. This provides the logic for the building of a joint political framework in the future, whether it will be within one state between the Jordan River and the sea, or two, or a confederation. With mutual recognition and legitimacy for the collective right of both Palestinians and Jews to belong in the beloved homeland, it is possible to make a history for the benefit of all of us, for all the sons and daughters of the homeland and their children. For all its citizens.

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This article is based on a presentation made at a public conference in Tel Aviv organized by PIJ editorial board member Dr. Alon Liel and others to discuss the idea of a joint Jewish-Palestinian party in Israel, registered under the name "All Its Citizens."

75th Commemoration of Recuperation, Reclamation and Remembrance

Manuel Hassassian

Prof. Manuel Hassassian is a professor of political science, a Palestinian diplomat, former Executive Vice President of Bethlehem University, and the President of Palestinian Rectors conference in Palestine.



The 15th of May marks the Palestinian Nakba -catastrophe-, which occurred in May 1948 when Palestine was nearly abolished by the precursors to the IDF brigades: the Haganah, Irgun, and Lehi.

With British backing, espoused in the Balfour Declaration of 1917 and via its policies on the ground, Israel was created, and Palestine was simultaneously shattered and destroyed. Almost 750,000 indigenous Palestinians were violently driven out of their villages and towns and forcibly displaced by Jewish settler militias. Today, Israel is in ‘Nakba denial’; it does not acknowledge the ethnic cleansing of the Palestinians because it seeks to justify its own existence. A conglomerate of fanatical elements, the current extreme right-wing Israeli government does not believe in or want peace, be that in the form of a two-state solution or otherwise.

Which begs the question: what now? Israel is using the foreign-policy failures of Europe and the U.S. to impose a solution, to act with utter and terrifying impunity, in dictating a ‘final solution’ of its own making by building more illegal settlements, demolishing more Palestinian homes and killings, conducting night-time raids and arbitrary arrests without due process. It restricts their freedom of movement and revokes the residency permits, thus strangulating the Palestinians living in East Jerusalem. All this amounts to a slow but calculated policy devised solely to render Palestinian-Jerusalemites helpless and impoverished.

These new tactics are designed to force and coerce the Palestinians to leave, to break their resistance, and are simply a modern form of ethnic cleansing. According to UN reports and officials, Gaza has been fragmented and will be uninhabitable by 2025. The occupied West Bank is also being fractured by illegal settlements and settler bypass roads. Israel is building more illegal settlements, demolishing more Palestinian homes, and using its brutal and violent occupation to intimidate Palestinian men and children living in East Jerusalem and the West Bank.

Israel utterly controls the economy, the water, and the movement of the entire Palestinian population. It wants to weaken the Palestinians physically, culturally, and emotionally. It should be emphasized that Palestinians in the refugee camps created by the Nakba of 1948 or in the Occupied Palestinian territory have an unbreakable connection to their land and the memory of Palestine. Despite Israel's violation of their human rights and repeated violation of international law, Palestinians will continue to resist in every form possible. United Nations General Assembly Resolution 194 states that Palestinian refugees have the 'Right of Return' to their homes and compensation for thousands of acres of the land they lost and their stolen assets, worth billions of dollars.

On the 75th anniversary of the Nakba, we reaffirm our right of return, our rights to our land, and our commitment toward establishing independent statehood.

Israel's first Prime Minister, Ben Gurion, said of the expelled Palestinians: "The old will die, and the young will forget." Many refugees from 1948 have died but the young generation of Palestinians and every other new generation will not forget.

From the Nakba until now, the Israeli government's policy towards the Palestinian people has been a global concern for many years. While some countries and organizations have condemned these policies and taken action to hold Israel accountable, others have been more reluctant, highly passive, or outright dismissive. In one such instance, Germany's Chancellor Olaf Scholz rejected the term 'apartheid' used by Palestinian president Mahmoud Abbas during a press conference in Berlin to describe Israeli policy regarding the Palestinians.

One of the most significant international reactions to the Israeli government's policies towards the Palestinians has been the growing support for the Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) movement. The BDS movement seeks to use economic pressure to force Israel to end its policies of occupation, settlement building, and discrimination against Palestinians. The movement has gained significant global support from many individuals, organizations, and governments. The United Nations has also been active in addressing the issue of Israeli policies toward Palestinians. It has passed numerous resolutions condemning Israel's actions, including its settlements and military acts. In addition, the UN has established several bodies and initiatives to support Palestinian rights and provide humanitarian assistance. Some countries have taken simple diplomatic measures, such as recalling their ambassadors from Israel or expressing disapproval of Israeli policies.

Others have imposed economic sanctions or limited their trade relations

with Israel. However, some countries have maintained close relationships with Israel, despite its controversial policies toward Palestinians, such as Viktor Orbán's regrettable recently reported readiness to relocate Hungary's embassy in Israel to Jerusalem. This rigid dichotomy of stances has been a bone of contention among those who believe that Israel's policies constitute apartheid and that the international community should take more decisive action to hold Israel accountable.

The world community's reaction to the apartheid regime in Israel has been mixed. While there is growing global concern about Israel's policies towards Palestinians, countries and organizations continue to support Israel, despite the controversy surrounding its policies.

The current Israeli policies towards the Palestinians have significantly impacted the mundane lives of Palestinians. These policies include restrictions on movement, land confiscation, settlement building, home demolitions, and military incursions. Furthermore, this ongoing conflict has resulted in the loss of thousands of Palestinian lives and widespread destruction and displacement. Palestinians are subject to daily violence



Palestinian refugees on the run at out for Iraq al-Manshiyya, March 1949. According to the Palestinian historian Walid Khalidi, the village remaining: "Only traces of the village streets remain, along with scattered cactuses."

and harassment by Israeli forces and settlers, restricting their access to necessities such as food, water, and healthcare. In addition, it limits their ability to access resources such as water and farmland. It has also led to the additional displacement of Palestinians from their homes and communities, further exacerbating the humanitarian crisis in the region at large.

The Israeli government's restrictions on movement have also severely impacted the Palestinian economy. The presence of checkpoints and the Separation Wall has limited the Palestinians' freedom of movement within the occupied territories, Israel and the rest of the world. This hindrance has made it difficult for Palestinians to access markets, jobs, and educational opportunities, exacerbating poverty, unemployment and destitution.

Today, the current Israeli policies toward the Palestinians have profoundly impacted their lives, and such approaches have culminated in the ongoing conflict, displacement, and human rights abuses.

A significant repercussion of the situation is the forced diasporization of the Palestinian people and the destruction of their national identity. Therefore, fundamental political and intellectual forces are necessary for retaining national identity. However, the formation of new social classes, the expansion of modern communications, the spread of education, and the introduction of mass politics have managed to portray a different form of national identity.

A significant repercussion of the situation is the forced diasporization of the Palestinian people and the destruction of their national identity.

Since the Nakba of 1948, Palestinian society has been dominated by the harsh realities of expulsion from the land. The Palestinians were fragmented, dispersed, and rendered dependent mainly on their hosts' goodwill to remain and provide themselves with the basic necessities of life. However, amid socioeconomic and political alienation, Palestinians have retained a strong sense of selfhood and national ethos. It is important to note that after the Nakba, nationalism re-emerged in refugee camps, schools and universities in a different context.

During the 1950s and early 1960s, Palestinian national identity was concretized in pan-Arab ideology; it was also incorporated into the Arab world and became proactive in local politics dominated by Arab sloganeering of unity, freedom and socialism. Predictably, the dislocation, alienation and frustrations with Arab nationalism bolstered the conceptualization of Palestinian national identity and Palestinian nationalism. Through literature, poetry and cultural heritage, Palestinians contrived to redefine their nationalism in their quest for freedom and independence.

It is worth mentioning that the Palestinian national identity had been

shaped by the historical realities encountered in the region, starting from colonialism until the eruption of the two intifadas of 1987 and 2000. Several political ideologies of the past century, such as Islamism, Nasserism, and Arabism, have dramatically impacted the structure and substance of the current national identity of the Palestinians.

Current Israeli Policies and the Ramifications

Seventy-five years after the Nakba, dramatic changes transformed Palestine's geography and demography, which effectively halted the negotiation process. The major political transformations, infused with racism and bigotry, shaped the Palestinian struggle to the point of a zero-sum conflict.

Today, settlers and the Israeli military forces are at loggerheads with the Palestinians in an effort to reshape the occupation within a different form of structured violence to erase the presence of the Palestinians from their geographic enclaves. This ideology, infused with violence against the Palestinians, portrays a new dimension to this protracted conflict.

The Conflict: Back to Zero-Sum

The inevitability of this historical struggle between Palestinians and the Zionist apartheid regime is a disastrous recipe for peace, security, and stability in the Middle East. Palestinians' reflection of a dashed hope in the Biden administration is another example of U.S. unequivocal support to Israeli occupation. Indeed, the watch-and-see approach by the U.S. is further exacerbating the continued violence and the extrajudicial killings of innocent Palestinians for the crime of seeking freedom from an inhumane occupation, which is the longest in modern history. The latest chaos and violent developments require a clear stand by the international community to condemn the daily atrocities committed against the Palestinians by the Israeli settlers, supported by the Israeli military forces. Resolutions of condemnation by international organizations are not enough to deter Israeli aggression. However, actionable physical intervention is required to protect the Palestinians during these critical times to end this occupation.

Netanyahu's newly elected Israeli government perpetuates the archetypical regime's policies that amplified settler aggression in appropriating Palestinian land. Today more than ever, the situation is precarious at best. It is already a known fact that peace, justice, and security can only be achieved by the resolution of this conflict, which is long overdue. Seventy-five years of protracted armed violence have shaped the unsettled Middle East since the latter part of the 19th century, passing

through the British Mandate until the present day of Israeli occupation. Nothing has been done to resolve the conflict, the root cause of which led to instability, insecurity, and lack of justice in the Middle East region. Almost three decades since the inception of the Oslo Accords, which brought more calamities and violence against the Palestinians who have been exposed to naked aggression in the West Bank, Jerusalem, and Gaza. The enigma of peace in the Middle East lies in the fact that everyone knows the solution, but unfortunately, the Israeli mindset is still in the realm of zero-sum conflict.

Consequently, almost three decades of the futile political process still reign supreme. The international community's impotence and lack of will and determination to resolve the conflict, let alone their double standards in dealing with it, has added to the situation's complexity, and exacerbated Israeli political jingoism and the ongoing oppression of an entire nation through brutal occupation. The inhumane and unjust treatment of the Palestinians is an indefinite badge of dishonor to the international community while it is sitting idle and watching the daily killings with no political stand to deal with the issue, let alone resolve it. It is ironic how the international community portrays its political vulgarism with its double standards and fake democracy, which is nothing less than undeniable hypocrisy. International laws and rules are clear on paper, but the lack of courage and the audacity of application when it comes to Israel is abhorrent. A state should not be considered above International Law, protected, and supported by various U.S. administrations, be it the Democratic Party or the Republican Party. Palestinians made their historic compromise in 1988, declaring their independence and acquiring the path of political negotiations, peace, and the end of conflict through the recognition of Israel by de facto over 78% of historic Palestine. Unfortunately, the media systematically blames the victims for resisting occupation along their quest for freedom; it is so biased that it has become a partisan to the conflict. The Palestinians, subjected to daily killings, torture and incarceration, are still committed to peace through dialogue and negotiations. However, the new Israeli government (a settler's government) headed by Netanyahu has no readiness for political accommodation, and instead is coordinating its efforts towards building more settlements and more support to the settlers, in desecrating the Abraham Mosque in Hebron and Al-Aqsa in Jerusalem and, as of late, the Holy Sepulcher Church. Such policies do not reflect any intentions about negotiations or political solutions to the conflict. The latest events exemplify this government's true nature of acting like a rogue state.

Furthermore, Israel's regime is exploiting the situation in Ukraine, which has become the top priority for the world's concern to implement

policies of oppression and muscle flexing. Besides moral sympathy from the Arab and Islamic states, nothing has manifested on the ground to stop the ongoing carnage in Jerusalem and the West Bank. Israel will eventually fail because it acts as a rogue state, using state-sponsored terrorism against the Palestinians to achieve its objective of annexing the West Bank and East Jerusalem to Israel. Many summits and meetings have taken place in Aqaba and Sharm El-Sheikh to assess the explosive events in Jerusalem and the West Bank to no avail.

Israel never upheld the principles of international law nor the resolutions of the United Nations. In reality, it acts above both by pushing the diktat of power politics to achieve its expansionist objectives while simultaneously challenging the status quo of the religious holy sites. The latest incursions and attacks on the worshippers at Al-Aqsa mosque and the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, are prime indicators and proof of its aggressive and belligerent attitude. However, despite such policies, the Palestinians steadfastly defend their holy sites and shrines. The military

The military power of Israel will never bring her any tranquility because it is evident by now that there is no military solution to this conflict.

power of Israel will never bring her any tranquility because it is evident by now that there is no military solution to this conflict. It is elementary not to reach this conclusion through the Israeli military-industrial complex and the various intelligence services. The prolongation

of this protracted conflict will continue destabilizing the Middle East region with clear ramifications on the world political scene. Israeli society, ironically, has shifted to the extreme right, and is unaware that aggression will backfire one day and regret will be too late. The current conflict in Ukraine has dropped the mask of Europe, the U.S., and the Western World in reflecting double standards regarding the issues of Islamophobia, the occupation of Palestine and other regional conflicts. Their legitimacy and credibility as democratic states are being questioned and criticized. National and religious wars in the history of Europe cannot be overlooked; hence, preaching democracy to the Islamic and Arab world, without introspection, is in vain. It is a virtue to admit mistakes and correct them with courage. Palestinians are not the children of a lesser God, for they can brag that the three monotheistic religions emanated from the Holy Land – i.e., Palestine.

This long overdue occupation should end, and with-it security, peace and justice will prevail for all. We hope these virtues will no longer be subject to selective application but instead be offered to those seeking them without prejudice or discrimination.

The History of the American Attitude Towards Israel/Palestine

Eric Alterman

Eric Alterman, an historian, is a CUNY Distinguished Professor at Brooklyn College, a contributing writer to The Nation and The American Prospect, and the author of 12 books, most recently We Are Not One: A History of America's Fight Over Israel (Basic Books, 2022).



It's hard to be optimistic about the hopes for any sort of solution to the Israeli/Palestinian conflict that offers the latter even a modicum of self-determination and collective dignity. Virtually everywhere one looks, apartheid, de facto annexation and an increasing possibility of a mass population transfer appear to be underway on the Israeli side, whose most extreme right-wing government ever is clearly moving in an anti-democratic, theocratic and even more militant direction. The Palestinians, led by Fateh on the West Bank and Hamas in Gaza appear all but powerless to resist.

In the United States, Israel has sacrificed much of the good will it has long enjoyed among large segments of the population, including especially American Jews. And yes, Democrats, young people, leftists and liberals, and Jews who answer to all three descriptions have all come to sympathize, to varying degrees, with the cause of Palestinian liberation. Due, however, to the rock-solid support Israel enjoys among Republican Christian Zionists, the “pro-Israel” organizations that lobby Congress and the wealthy and the conservative Christians and Jews who fund these organizations, these developments are not likely to result in any fundamental changes in U.S. policy toward the conflict. One only has to compare the Zionists' original struggle for statehood in the U.S.—and the historically unprecedented support it received from American Jews and their Christian allies—to the situation currently facing the Palestinians seeking to build support for their—one hopes—future homeland, is to invite even more pessimism into this political equation.

The most important fact to remember about the debate over what to do about Palestine in 1948 was the shock of the discovery of the Holocaust fewer than three years earlier; a discovery that energized Jews and shamed Christians. As the Zionist firebrand Rabbi Abba Hillel Silver put it, “Our

six million dead are a tragic commentary on the state of Christian morality and the responsiveness of Christian conscience.”

The American Liberals Chose the Zionists

At the dawn of the debate over Jewish statehood, liberals made their choice, and they chose the Zionists. *The Nation*’s editor-in-chief, Freda Kirchwey, discovered what she called “the miracle of Jewish Palestine”—the Jewish men and women who had emigrated to Palestine to help shape the future of the Zionist state, she said, were “‘free’ in the full moral

In the United States, Israel has sacrificed much of the good will it has long enjoyed among large segments of the population.

meaning of the word.” They had resisted imperialist interests driven by “oil and the expectation of war; oil and the fear of Russia; oil and the shortage in America; oil and profits.” America’s other leading liberal publication, *The New Republic*,

covered Palestine much as *The Nation* did, though with less intensity. Its early coverage was heavily critical of the British. In December 1946, former vice president Henry Wallace took over as the magazine’s editor before quitting, in July 1948, to run for president as a far-left challenger to Truman. While at *TNR*, he took a tour of Palestine in the winter of 1946–1947 and returned home to announce that “Jewish pioneers” in Palestine were “building a new society” there. Wallace found the Zionists in Palestine ready to teach “new lessons and prov[e] new truths for the benefit of all mankind.” They sought to do this, moreover, not from a “somber spirit of sacrifice,” but with “a spirit of joy, springing from their realization that they are rebuilding their ancient nation.”

Also reporting from Palestine for *The New Republic* was the legendary leftist journalist I. F. Stone. Working for an ever-changing series of left-wing publications, Stone sought to combine the human drama he was witnessing with his Marxist-infused interpretation of world history. He published a series of moving newspaper columns later collected in the now classic work *Underground to Palestine*, and later a celebratory book with the photographer Robert Capa titled *This Is Israel*. Stone traveled on the crowded, barely seaworthy vessels secured by the Zionists to smuggle refugees from Europe to Palestine, eluding British warships on the way. He sought “to provide a picture of their trials and their aspirations in the hope that good people, Jewish and non-Jewish, might be moved to help them.” More than any other contemporary journalist, he succeeded in capturing the desperation of Zionist pioneers as well as their passionate optimism. Stone became enraptured by the “tremendous vitality” of those who just

months earlier had been “ragged and homeless” survivors of Nazism, and who were now building Jewish Palestine. “In the desert, on the barren mountains,” and in “once malarial marshes,” he wrote, “the Jews have done and are doing what seemed to reasonable men the impossible. Nowhere in the world have human beings surpassed what the Jewish colonists have accomplished in Palestine, and the consciousness of achievement, the sense of things growing, the exhilarating atmosphere of a great common effort infuses [their daily lives].”

Ben-Gurion and Truman

With the political wind at their backs, the Zionists made their case eloquently, if not always honestly. Future Israeli Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion told The United Nations Special Committee on Palestine (UNSCOP) in 1947, “There will not only be peace between us and Arabs, there will be an alliance between us and Arabs, there will be friendship.” But Ben-Gurion himself knew this to be nonsense. In fact, in a 1937 letter to his son, he had written, “A partial Jewish state is not the end, but only the beginning.... We must expel Arabs and take their places, if necessary ... with the force at our disposal.”



President Harry S. Truman accepting a gift from Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion (seated) and Ambassador H.E. Abba Eban of Israel. (photo credit: Truman Presidential Library)

American Jews were an enormous resource for the Zionists, and they understood this. As early as 1941, Ben-Gurion had observed, “We must storm the American people, the press, the congress—Senate and House of Representatives, the churches, the union leaders, the intellectuals—and when these will be with us, the government will be with us.” He was not wrong. By the end of 1945, 41 governors and state legislatures had signed letters calling on Truman “to open the doors of Palestine.” Fully 27 speeches on Palestine were heard in the Senate in just one 48 hour period in February 1947, with another 34 senators adding statements of support to the Congressional Record. Mailings ran into the many millions: one Connecticut town with just 1,500 Jews managed to send 12,000 preprinted pro-Zionist postcards to U.S. officials. That same year, there were mass demonstrations in 30 cities in a single month. Together with the countless other municipalities that sent the same message, these pro-Zionist politicians and voices could be calculated to represent 90 percent of the U.S. population at the time. The combination of the pain and guilt inspired by the Holocaust, combined with the heroic narrative of Zionists being reported out of Palestine, all-but overwhelmed any potential alternative political position.

President Truman, Franklin Roosevelt’s successor, was no Zionist. He thought that nations based on religion and/or ethnic exclusivity belonged to the past. Yet Truman was also deeply moved by the increasingly desperate plight of the hundreds of thousands of stateless Jewish refugees—survivors of Nazi death factories, or those who had emerged from hiding places in attics and the like—who had now been shunted off to squalid, unsanitary Displaced Persons (DP) camps. Truman’s “basic approach,” as he described it in his memoir, “was that the long-range fate of Palestine was the kind of problem we had the U.N. for. For the immediate future, however, some aid was needed for the Jews in Europe to find a place to live in decency.” He hoped to provide such aid, however, without simultaneously granting the Zionist demand for Jewish sovereignty. He would find that this was impossible.

Truman’s heartfelt sympathy for the refugees’ plight, together with his admiration for the people of the Old Testament, constantly tugged at his conscience. His national security team felt otherwise, though, concerned that the establishment of a Jewish state would mean problems for the United States in the region in the future, and logically, Truman knew this to be true. But his political instincts, along with those of his political advisers, also pulled in the direction of the Zionists. New York City, where half of America’s Jews already lived, was crucial to Democrats in any national election. A pattern established itself relatively quickly. When

the president found himself with a choice between acceding to the Zionists' demands or siding with his own national security and diplomatic advisers, he would let loose with a fusillade of complaints about how infuriating the former were being before he ended up siding with them. British Foreign

Truman's heartfelt sympathy for the refugees' plight, together with his admiration for the people of the Old Testament, constantly tugged at his conscience.

Secretary Bevin recalled Truman saying, just before the 1946 election: "They [the Jews] somehow expect me to fulfill all the prophecies of the prophets. I tell them sometimes that I can no more fulfill all the prophecies of Ezekiel than I can of that other great Jew, Karl Marx."

Truman's closest friends and confidants worked hardly less relentlessly on behalf of the Zionists than the Zionists themselves. The president was heard musing not long before the 1948 election, "I am in a tough spot. The Jews are bringing all kinds of pressure on me to support the partition of Palestine and the establishment of a Jewish state. On the other hand, the State Department is adamantly opposed to this. I have two Jewish assistants on my staff, David Niles and Max Lowenthal. Whenever I try to talk to them about Palestine, they soon burst into tears."

Truman had good reason to be concerned. Not only had his likely opponent in the 1948 election, Thomas Dewey, a strong Zionist supporter, been the New York state's governor, but New York City looked to be fertile ground for Henry Wallace, who was challenging Truman from the left on the 1948 Progressive Party ticket. Whenever the administration appeared to deviate from Truman's stated pro-Zionist position, Wallace would speak of the "gift of a million votes" for him. Truman needed little convincing on this point. As early as 1945, he explained to four U.S. ambassadors to Arab countries that whatever their objections to a pro-Zionist policy, he had "to answer to hundreds of thousands who are anxious for the success of Zionism": "I do not have hundreds of thousands of Arabs among my constituents."

No Palestinian Narrative and Voice in the Mainstream Media

I do not need to explain to readers of this journal that in the 75 years since these events took place, the Israelis and their supporters in the U.S. have successfully created a mythical picture, not only of the events leading up to 1948 but of almost every aspect of Israeli/Palestinian relations ever since. The word "Nakba" did not even appear in *The New York Times* until 1998, Supporters of Israel have also dominated debate on *The Nation's* op-ed pages. Aside from a brief period when the paper looked to the late

The word “Nakba” did not even appear in The New York Times until 1998, Supporters of Israel have also dominated debate on The Nation’s op-ed pages.

Edward Said (the classical music critic of the magazine!) to give voice to the Palestinians anguish, the parameters of the page’s discourse have, with just a few exceptions from guest contributors, been defined by voices that ranged from

“liberal Zionist” rightward. According to the research of Maha Nassar, a Professor of Middle Eastern and North African Studies at the University of Arizona, published in 2020, during the previous fifty years fewer than two percent of the nearly 2,500 op-ed articles published in *The New York Times* that addressed Palestinians and the issue facing them were authored by Palestinians. This was twice the percentage achieved by *The Washington Post*. In *The New Republic* during this fifty-year period, the magazine published over 500 articles on the subject, and the number of Palestinians invited to contribute totaled zero.

Palestinians Need to Understand How the American Political System Works

The Palestinians and their supporters have never found their footing in the debate over U.S. policy. Even in recent years when their cause has made significant strides in leftist circles and on elite U.S. college campuses - where their supporters no doubt significantly outnumber Israel’s partisans - they have not succeeded in challenging Israel’s (self-defined) security needs as the primary purpose of U.S. foreign policy, regardless of its implications for the lives of the Palestinians who must suffer as result.

A part of the problem is the fact that even in the decades leading to their catastrophe of 1948, the Palestinians had rarely demonstrated a willingness to share the land as the Zionists did (if perhaps less than sincerely). What’s more they’ve shown little interest in the actual nuts and bolts of the U.S. political system. In an interview published in the *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Noam Chomsky tells of attending meetings with senior PLO officials during the early 1970s at the invitation of Edward Said. As Chomsky recalled, Said hoped to increase ties between PLO officials and “people who were sympathetic to the Palestinians but critical of their policies.” Chomsky found these meetings “pointless.” “We would go up to their suite at the Plaza, one of the fanciest hotels in New York, and basically just sit there listening to their speeches about how they were leading the world revolutionary movement, and so on and so forth.” Chomsky discerned in the PLO “a fundamental misunderstanding of how a democratic society works. . . . But the Palestinian leadership simply failed to comprehend this. If

they had been honest and said, ‘Look, we are fundamentally nationalists, we would like to run our own affairs, elect our own mayors, get the occupation off our backs,’ it would have been easy to organize, and they could have had enormous public support. But if you come to the United States holding your Kalashnikov and saying we are organizing a worldwide revolutionary movement, well, that’s not the way to get public support here.”

Only Five Percent of Americans Support BDS

Most of the political energy of the Palestinian movement and its supporters in recent years has been devoted to building support for the “Boycott, Divest and Sanction” (BDS) movement directed against Israel. Again, while it has achieved some success among college students and progressive activists, judged by its stated goals, the BDS movement has been an abject failure. Not a single major American university, corporation, or even labor union has agreed to boycott Israel. Its effect on the Israeli economy has been literally invisible. The BDS movement never did succeed in reaching enough Americans for even a remotely significant number of them to form an opinion on it. According to a May 2022 Pew Research Center survey, just five percent of Americans questioned said they supported the movement (with two percent doing so “strongly”).

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The movement produced a profoundly disproportional backlash. BDS supporters found themselves denounced and shunned by almost all mainstream Jewish organizations. At publicly funded universities, local officials often found BDS events an irresistible target. At Brooklyn College, New York State Assemblyman Dov Hikind — who represented a district heavily populated by ultra-Orthodox Jewish constituents—demanded the resignation of the school’s president because of her willingness to allow a joint lecture by BDS founder Omar Barghouti and the pro-BDS literary scholar Judith Butler. Inspired by a lengthy document compiled by the far-right Zionist Organization of America, filled with falsehoods, exaggerations, and McCarthyite insinuations, New York state legislators sought to radically cut back funding for Brooklyn’s parent institution, the City University of New York (CUNY). The tactic appeared on the verge of success until a way to have the cut deleted from the final legislation was found in a last-minute budget agreement with Governor Andrew Cuomo

The story inside the mainstream media is much the same. When, in 2018, the African American CNN commentator Mark Lamont used the

BDS slogan in a speech at a United Nations event and called for a “free Palestine from the river to the sea,” the ADL condemned him for allegedly “promot[ing] divisiveness and hate.” He was immediately fired by CNN. In 2021, a young Associated Press reporter found herself fired as well, owing to blog posts she had made as a member of Jewish Voice for Peace and Students for Justice in Palestine while a student at Stanford University—though the issues she covered for AP had nothing to do with the Middle East. The Israelis were so concerned about budding support for Palestinians on campus that their diplomats were known to contact college administrators to try to prevent pro-BDS professors—and even graduate students—from being allowed to teach courses on the conflict.

Is a Change in Attitude Possible?

Thanks to the growth of social media, in other words, for the first time since the debate over Zionism in the United States began, virtually anyone can access a steady stream of reasonably accurate, detailed information about the Israeli/Palestinian conflict from multiple ideological

The “new” Israel will likely cause considerable anguish among Israel’s liberal and centrist supporters in Congress, among American Jews and in the public at large.

and intellectual perspectives. Yet the political reality has remained largely unchanged. For all the criticism Israel has received in recent years, BDS supporters in Congress number three out of 538. On votes to condition U.S. aid to Israel on its treatment of the Palestinians, as many as eight or nine members of Congress are ready to be counted. President Biden, while on a celebratory visit to Israel in July 2022, attributed the entire phenomenon of Democratic dissent over America’s Israel policies as the politically insignificant “mistake” of just “a few” of the party’s members.

These voices will certainly grow louder soon as Netanyahu’s government demonstrates to Americans that the entire notion of “shared values” between the two nations is a thing of the past. The “new” Israel will likely cause considerable anguish among Israel’s liberal and centrist supporters in Congress, among American Jews and in the public at large. What it will not do, however, is inspire a fundamental rethinking, much less actual change in the direction of U.S. foreign policy toward Israel and Palestine.

Imagine an Abrahamic State in the Middle East

Albadr Alshateri

Dr. Albadr Alshateri is a professor at the UAE National Defense College in Abu Dhabi. He earned a Ph.D from the University of Michigan in comparative politics, international relations, and political economy as well as two masters degrees in political science and in Middle Eastern and North African studies. He holds a BA from Indiana University, where he studied political science and Near Eastern languages and cultures, as well as a certificate in African studies. Dr. Alshateri has received numerous awards, including a prize from the Society for Arab Gulf Studies (USA) for his dissertation titled "The Political Economy of State Formation: The United Arab Emirates in Comparative Perspective." Dr. Alshateri has contributed articles to Al Ittihad (Abu Dhabi), Al Khaleej (Sharjah), The National (Abu Dhabi), American Diplomacy, and Gulf News (Dubai).



The two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is long dead and buried! It died at Camp David in July 2000 when Yasser Arafat, president of the Palestinian Authority (PA) and chairman of the PLO, and Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak failed to reach an agreement. Whom to blame for the debacle is subject to endless debate, even among those who were present and involved in the minutest details of the negotiations. One thing was for sure, however; the United States did not show leadership befitting of the sole superpower.

After arduous negotiations between the parties concerned that lasted for decades, Israelis and Palestinians are stuck in interminable confrontations. Two experts on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, who had been partisans of a two-state solution, now argue that a two-state solution is a will-o'-the-wisp. In his book *Paradigm Lost: From Two-State Solution to One-State Reality*, University of Pennsylvania Prof. Ian S. Lustick argues that despite the two-state solution being "dead, its ghost remains, not as an inspiring blueprint for action but as distracting dogma." More emphatically, Prof. Avi Shlaim asserted in a recent piece that it is hardly an exaggeration to say the two-state solution is dead. However, he goes further to claim "that the two-state solution was never born." No Israeli Government since the occupation in 1967 has been willing to relinquish the territories or, according to Shlaim,

to countenance “an independent Palestinian state over the whole of Gaza and the West Bank with a capital city in East Jerusalem.” This point is also shared by former Israeli Foreign Minister Shlomo Ben-Ami.

Today, hope for relaunching a peace process is dim. The Biden administration has bigger fish to fry, domestically and internationally. The new Israeli government with its composition is not in the running for the Nobel Peace Prize but is definitely up for squeezing the Palestinians even more. The Palestinians are as weak and divided as ever and cannot present a strong partner to negotiate a final settlement of the conflict. And if all this is not enough, the political geography of the conflict precludes another state in the Holy Land. Successive Israeli governments on the left and the right allowed settlements to flourish in the purported areas for the Palestinian state. In addition, a web of highways connecting settlements to Israel proper dissect the occupied territories, making it impossible to have a contiguous state. Israeli critics sardonically call the future Palestinian state “Swiss cheese” with the cheese for the Israelis and the holes for the Palestinians.

The Abraham Accords

The recent agreements signed by some Arab states and Israel, known as the Abraham Accords, offer the potential to jumpstart a regional peace that will include a solution to the crux of the conflict — namely, the Palestinian



Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, former U.S. President Donald Trump and United Arab Emirates (UAE) Foreign Minister Abdullah bin Zayed display their copies of signed agreements of the Abraham Accords, at the White House in Washington, U.S., September 15, 2020. (Tom Brenner/Reuters)

issue. How can that happen after everything said about the impossibility of a two-state solution? I argue that the solution lies in these recent Abraham Accords.

Israelis and their supporters have shown great enthusiasm for these accords. Jared Kushner, former U.S. President Donald Trump's envoy, and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu were among their biggest advocates. Palestinians, on the other hand, rejected the accords, as they did not include them in any prospective solution.

The hurdles to a solution have been the so-called "final status" issues. Three issues hamper the final status: first, settlements and geographic boundaries for the proposed Palestinian state; second, the status of Jerusalem; and third, the Palestinian refugees. Settlements are an issue because they encroach on the Palestinian territories; hence, the demarcation of the would-be Palestinian state becomes problematic. Jerusalem is claimed by Israel as the unified and eternal capital of the Jewish state.

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Finally, the return of the refugees to their erstwhile homes is anathema, as most Israelis fear that their numbers together with the current Palestinian population in the occupied territories and inside Israel would overwhelm the Jewish population between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea. Israelis are in fact demanding that the Palestinian leadership recognize Israel as the exclusive nation-state of the Jewish people.

The History of Tolerance in the Middle East

An exclusivist state is not a Middle Eastern tradition, the international media's protestation notwithstanding. The region has always been home to multitudes of ethnic, religious, and sectarian groups. Even Arabia, the birthplace of Arabs and Islam, had many individuals of Abyssinian, Roman, and Jewish descent. Diversity did not mean equality but there was a level of tolerance.

In such a milieu, Islam was born. Historian Juan Cole has argued in a recent book, *Muhammad: Prophet of Peace Amid the Clash of Empires*, that Prophet Muhammad came with the message of peace and tolerance at a time of war and conflict. The fact that Jews and Christians, warts and all, thrived under Islamic rule lends credence to Cole's thesis.

Admiration should be reserved for the Muslims in Andalusia in particular. Muslims were veritable conquerors of the Iberian Peninsula, believing they were doing God's work and carrying his message.

Nevertheless, the Muslims established a civilization that was the epitome of tolerance and peaceful coexistence, in contrast to other parts of the world at that time. The late Cuban American professor, María Rosa Menocal, described that experience in her title as *The Ornament of the World: How Muslims, Jews and Christians Created a Culture of Tolerance in Medieval Spain*. What Christopher Hitchens, no fan of Islam, wrote about Menocal's book is worth quoting: "It is no exaggeration that what we presumptuously call 'Western' culture is owed in large measure to the Andalusian enlightenment...This book partly restores to us a world we have lost."

In the late 19th to the early 20th century, the Middle East experienced a level of intercommunal coexistence as a result of Ottoman reforms. Ussama Makdisi, in his *Age of Coexistence: The Ecumenical Frame and the Making of the Modern Arab World*, showed the intellectual project of the Tanzimat "reforms." The Tanzimat "sought to reconcile a new principle of secular political equality with the reality of an Ottoman imperial system that had privileged Muslim over non-Muslim, but that was also attempting to integrate non-Muslims as citizens."

An exclusivist state is not a Middle Eastern tradition, the international media's protestation notwithstanding.

A New Andalusia in the Middle East

If all these illustrious authors are right, then sectarianism is the exception rather than the rule. The signing of the Abraham Accords was intended to usher the region into a new age of peace, prosperity, and coexistence. Can Israel assume the moral leadership shown by Muslims in earlier times to establish a new Andalusia in the contemporary Middle East? An entity that will preserve its identity as a Jewish polity but where Palestinians, of all stripes, will prosper culturally, spiritually, intellectually, economically, politically, and scientifically? Would a Muslim Maimonides be born out of such an Abrahamic admixture?

Former Israeli President Reuven Rivlin, a Likudnik no less, believes in such a possibility – an Israeli-Palestinian confederation where both sides will live in harmony. "When you have two political entities, the Palestinian entity and the Hebrew Zionist one," the president averred, "we may well have to live in a confederation, with each side running its affairs in one way or another, and global issues managed by the system as a whole."

A Swiss Model for the Abrahamic State

An appropriate model exists in the multiethnic, multilingual, and multi-confessional Swiss Confederation. The new Abrahamic Confederation

will consist of several autonomous cantons that include communes or municipalities. Admittedly, there is more than one way to skin a cat; however, one approach is to divide the confederation into four communes. The largest will be the Israeli canton that will include all of today's Israel minus the Arab region of the north that will form a separate canton. The West Bank will become an autonomous canton; so will the Gaza Strip.

The four cantons will form a higher council of the confederation with legislative power only for the confederation. It will consist of equal numbers of Israeli Jews and Palestinian Arabs. The higher council will elect an executive council of equal numbers that will represent the confederation's interests externally and domestically. Each canton will run its own affairs, with minimal intervention from the confederation, and will be represented by a

Can Israel assume the moral leadership shown by Muslims in earlier times to establish a new Andalusia in the contemporary Middle East?

council at the canton level based on the number of communes it includes.

The Israeli military forces will act as a provider of defense for the Israeli canton and the confederation. Each canton will provide for its domestic security; however, a supreme council of defense will be appointed by the confederal authority to coordinate the defense and security arrangements for all of the confederation. For the first decade at least, UN defense observers should be in place to monitor the security of the confederation and the cantons. If a crisis breaks out, the supreme council of defense in coordination with the UN observers will address the situation.

All final-status issues will be tackled under such a confederation. Jerusalem will be the capital of the confederation, the 1852 status quo of the Holy Sites in Jerusalem will be respected, and all faiths will have free access to their holy sites. No settlements will be dismantled in the Palestinian canton, and they can form communes of their own to manage their affairs while being represented at the canton level. Likewise, the Arab population in the Israeli canton can form communes to manage its affairs. The refugees, a tough nut to crack, will be dealt with within the confederation. Palestinians born in Palestine will be granted the right of return to their homes immediately throughout the confederation. The descendants of the original refugees will choose between compensation or the right of return to the Palestinian canton. Those Palestinians with family connections will be reunited with their kin anywhere in the confederation.

Some might dismiss this as unrealistic, given the bad blood between the two nations. First, for any project to succeed, it needs imagination, a vision before it can be realized. A Jewish state smack in the heart of the Arab

world was an idea in the late 19th century. Half a century later, the Zionist Jews realized this impossible dream. The Israelis could show ingenuity and magnanimity to realize this idea of a new Abrahamic state. After all, Jews,

The Israelis could show ingenuity and magnanimity to realize this idea of a new Abrahamic state.

Christians, and Muslims believe in the miracle of the parting of the Red Sea, so conceiving and achieving an Abrahamic state is infinitely more realistic. A wise Jew (Albert Einstein) once observed that doing the same thing over and over and expecting different results is the ultimate insanity.

It is the ultimate irony that a medieval state in Andalusia gave more rights to Christian and Jewish minorities than a state with some democratic credentials and backed (to the hilt) by Western democracies. Redressing the century-long Palestinian grievances will not only be good for the Palestinians and Israelis but also will keep Israel from sliding into right-wing authoritarianism.

Is It Possible for Israel Not to be a Fascist State?

Marwan Emile Toubasi

Marwan Emile Toubasi is a part-time lecturer at the Palestinian National Security Research Institute. He held various distinguished positions in the Palestinian Authority, is a former Palestine Ambassador to Greece (2013-2021), Governor of Tubas and the Northern Valley (2008-2013), and Undersecretary of the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities (2002-2008). He was President of the Arab Orthodox Council in Palestine (1993-2004).



The Crisis in Israel

Israel was founded on the basis of ethnic cleansing colonialism, after 75 years without accountability from the international community. On the contrary it is going ahead in advancing a society which is characterized by racist religious thought in fascist forms. The current escalation of its internal crises and political chaos is compounded by the desire to adapt its legislation and judicial system to undemocratic principles.

According to the platform of Netanyahu's new ultra right-wing government, "The Jewish people have an exclusive and inalienable right throughout the Land of Israel, so that the government encourages the expansion of the Jewish presence throughout the Land of Israel - in the Galilee, the Negev, the Golan Heights and Judea and Samaria."

This trend is emerging as the foundation for implementing the vision for the final solution to the Palestinian question in the manner of Smotrich, Ben Gvir and their like, as is illustrated in the book of Joshua in the Torah. It describes the military campaigns to acquire the land that "the Lord promised" after the exodus from Egypt and the forty years of wandering in the desert: "*The newly formed nation is ready to enter the Promised Land, to triumph over its inhabitants and to occupy the land.*" According to this vision as described by their rabbis and religious Zionist thinkers, "the invading Israelites carry out a genocide against the native Canaanites, so as not to leave a single soul breathing. Joshua, who inherited leadership after Moses, sent the Canaanites a letter advising them to flee, and those who remained could accept the status of inferior citizenship and enslavement, and finally, if they resisted, they would be exterminated."

Smotrich and others have publicly presented this narrative as a plan and vision for the needed shift to the crucial phase of the conflict: “if the Palestinians do not flee and refuse to accept inferior citizenship, as any person with dignity would reject, “the IDF will know what to do.”

The Question of Using the term ‘Fascism’

What is happening today is that Israel no longer hides that it is the state of the Jewish people only. In addition to that, it is no longer showing any interest in being or appearing to be a democratic state and is openly undermining the liberal Zionist thought in it.

Instead of raising the question *whether Israel is now becoming a fascist state*, I opt to propose the question *is it possible for Israel not to be a fascist state*. This issue is not limited to the state or its political structure, the Israeli society is gradually shifting towards becoming fascist, and it is sliding into absolute racism.

Israel was founded on the basis of ethnic cleansing and run through settler colonialism. It is an ethnocratic state where Jews monopolize all rights as codified in the 2018 racist Nation-State Law.

However, the insistence on using the term ‘fascism’ alone is misleading as it points to a process that paves the way for approaching Israel as a normal state that has local problems of anti-democracy, liberalism, human rights, and minority rights, and are merely shared problems with global regimes that have descended into fascism.

Rather, insisting on the character of ‘fascism’ alone might be a free pass for Israel to integrate into the Arab region which is governed by a number

Israel was founded on the basis of ethnic cleansing and run through settler colonialism.

of undemocratic regimes that were described as fascist in the stages of their formation. This approach of only using the term ‘fascism’ marginalizes the nature of Israel as a settler-colonial state based on ethnic cleansing of the indigenous population. And it also normalizes the U.S.-sponsored Abraham Accords, whose policies are based on the core of Jewish-Zionist thought, which is also encouraged by the European Union, at a time in which fascism in some of its countries is on the rise and became normal.

The approaches of Zionism with American political support, and the West in general, are linked to multiple determinants, including sources of Zionist thought itself and the interpretations of the Christian religion from the Evangelicals to the Torah and the Christian Zionists. It aims, by adapting it to the vision of the West, to replace the historical and political

Palestinian national rights with financial incentives and economic solutions, most of which fall into the category of promises and illusions under the continued adoption of the principle of the two-state solution, which has been undermined substantially. The aim is to sustain the occupation and the Jewish settlement on 60% of the occupied Palestinian territory in the West Bank without high cost, and the presence of 700,000 Jewish settlers in it.

Hence, the vision of the current Netanyahu government, which is acting without a clear confrontation with the United States, especially with the Republican right controlling a Congress supportive of Israel's colonial policies, and even in the Democratic Party, President Biden brags about supporting the Zionist ideology. The assumption is that the new Israeli government will focus on escalating daily atrocities against the Palestinians, increasing oppression, annexation and settlement, while absorbing statements and verbal criticism from the international community. This will be done under the slogan of improving the conditions of life until the end of the next four years of Netanyahu's rule. It will be accompanied by various internal crises given the weakness of the Arab situation and the slow transformations taking place on the global level. This policy aims to achieve the last step of Netanyahu's program, from managing the current conflict to closing the Palestinian file and announcing the end of the Palestinian issue as a key station in the Zionist-American-Israeli plan. This will be



Palestinians march during a demonstration marking the anniversary of the Nakba in Ramallah, West Bank on 15 May 2017 [Issam Rimawi/Anadolu Agency]

accompanied by the promotion of more normalization agreements with new Arab and Islamic countries, without there being any serious obstacles to the Israeli settlement project.

The next and most dangerous point will be America's recognition of the Jewish Nation-State Law after recognizing Jerusalem as their capital, which was approved by the Israeli Knesset under the previous Netanyahu government, which says that Israel is a Jewish nation-state, and the Jewish people are the owner of the land.

The question before us is how to promote global support to halt this aggression, to stop the Israeli aggression against our people, and help us

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to realize our right of self-determination and national independence. The answer to my question lies in the course of the Palestinian struggle, what message should be conveyed and what are the foundations required for the confrontation approach now. Since the Nakba, the narrative of Palestinian displacement, exile, occupation and racial discrimination has faced organized systematic efforts aimed at emptying it of its connotations, "normalizing" the status quo and portraying the conflict as a matter of "disputed territory," or a matter of improving living conditions or limited autonomy at best.

How the Palestinians Ought to Respond

If we assume that the current process will allow the establishment of a limited Palestinian entity, that entity will be de-sovereign, socially and economically unsustainable, dismembered geographically, with Israeli control over the territorial divisions that resulted under the Oslo Accords, with a little less than one million settlers. Israel aims to sustain a status quo now, while ending the possibility for a political compromise.

This means the deliberate abortion of the international solution based on the principle of the two-states and the remaining margins of the previous agreements that were dropped by the occupation in preparation for that purpose. This will be carried out with the knowledge that what was originally agreed upon in Oslo for a transitional period had ended in 1999, without mentioning the establishment of the state. After that the negotiations on the final status issues were not held, as they were supposed to, because the Israelis worked to undermine the powers of the Palestinian National Authority and besiege it in a new form of the concept of autonomy-minus without sovereignty.

In this context, there will be no sustainable solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict while ignoring the right of Palestinian refugees to return to their homeland from which they were displaced. We need to implement the right to self-determination for our people and to achieve our national independence and guarantee our national rights, regardless of the final solution. It may be in the form of two sovereign states in accordance with the fact that 140 countries have recognized our independent state with East Jerusalem as its capital, or the solution of a one-democratic state in which national and social rights are equal without discrimination and the absence of the Zionist religious or ethnic supremacy that is now being exercised. That is a solution that the Zionist movement will not accept, because it wants a Jewish state from the sea to the river consistent with the Talmudic vision of the Kingdom of Israel.

Since the Nakba, the narrative of Palestinian displacement, exile, occupation and racial discrimination has faced organized systematic efforts aimed at emptying it of its connotations.

We must rely on a clear vision according to these developments and variables, based on a broader networking with the forces of progress and democracy of people in Israel and around the world, while strengthening the role of the PLO by building a comprehensive and unified strategic national vision for its role in leading the struggle of our people — with national unity in all its places — without reducing the Palestinian cause to those who are in the occupied territory of 1967.

The PNA tasks ought to be implementing a real steadfastness program that would enhance the empowerment of our people in various economic and social sectors, and realize that sustainable development under the occupation is a myth, and to promote serious work towards disengagement from Israel and its various organs in various aspects of life, and integrating popular resistance.

The decisions taken by the Palestinian leadership are considered natural given the current situation, but they are important in drawing the vision of the current confrontation required, which I believe must be based on the foundations mentioned in correcting some fallacies so that the narrative is complete and correct.

Each of these decisions taken, especially those related to the cessation of security coordination, comprehensive national dialogue, follow-up work in international forums and courts, and the escalation of popular resistance, each of them needs precise details that constitute serious and practical work programs and effective and clear tools in order to achieve them within an

alternative national strategy to that which was carried out by the Palestinians in the last two decades. This will enable our vision to be taken seriously by the international community and by those who practice policies of intimidation against us in exchange for mirages and flimsy promises from the United States. Accepting this situation will only perpetuate the status quo.

The U.S. and the Two-State Solution

The vision of the two-state solution that Biden is talking about is not based on international borders or on full sovereignty and geographical contiguity of the Palestinian state. Talk about it comes from Biden and his predecessor Trump in the deal of the century, after the Jewish settlement expansion in the Opt already exhausted this solution so that it became almost impossible.

This American administration has not fulfilled all previous promises regarding the cancellation of Trump's decision on Jerusalem, the transfer of the embassy to it, and the reopening of the PLO office in Washington.

The constants and determinants of the strategic relationship between the United States and Israel aim to protect Israel under any circumstances and under any composition of its governments with the use of soft diplomatic

We need to implement the right to self-determination for our people and to achieve our national independence and guarantee our national rights, regardless of the final solution.

guidance and with full multifaceted support, which will not stop even in light of marginal differences between them. It seeks in the region to create alternatives that are similar to the Village Leagues that our people rejected in the late seventies, or hybridized from as those used by the United States in many countries in the face of national liberation movements but did not withstand the will of the peoples. These alternatives and tools target our basic right to self-determination, national independence and ending the occupation, and work to close the Palestinian file as an autonomy project over some areas without sovereignty.

Replacing the political solutions represented by ending the occupation with others based on economic and security initiatives and plans will only lead to the continuation of the management of the conflict without resolving it and plunging us into labyrinths aimed at sustaining the occupation as a fait accompli.

The United States is seeking today to strengthen the Abraham Accords for normalization to increase the role of Israel in the region, in order to serve the American strategies in the face of international changes, while

there is a consensus in Israel supported by the U.S. that there is currently no political horizon to reach a permanent settlement or even initiate any political process with the Palestinians.

In the short and medium term, the Americans are focused on their proxy war against Russia in Ukraine. In the longer term, the grand strategy of the U.S. deep state will focus on managing geopolitical and economic alliances and challenges with China and the Pacific Rim to maintain its now-crumbling hegemony and try to regain its position in Latin America by returning to the policy of coups there. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is not one of the priorities of the United States now, so it seeks to maintain the continuation of the status quo and just manage it.

This will not work, and to confront it requires new objective conditions that contribute to the creation of a multipolar international system.

And subjective circumstances require a re-arrangement of Palestinian internal home in the face of this settler-colonial occupation, and to implement an integrated strategic national vision through clear political programs of struggle at all popular and official levels until justice is achieved and the occupation and apartheid regime fall. This is needed to confront the attempts of the Israeli and international Zionists to deny us the right to self-determination and erase us from history, as they delusionally believe.

“But anytime it bangs, please just get in touch!”

(bangs means bombings)

About tuning out, concealing something and self-censorship in German media reporting on Israel and Palestine: a personal account

Johannes Zang

Johannes Zang lived from 2005 to 2008 in East Jerusalem and worked as a freelance journalist for German media as well as a organ teacher within the Anglican Diocese of Jerusalem. He has published four books on Israel/Palestine and still works for a dozen German language papers, magazine and online platforms. Zang has accompanied more than 60 groups on pilgrimages or political journeys to Israel/Palestine since 2008.



East Jerusalem, December 2005: Angela Godfrey-Goldstein of the *Israel Committee Against House Demolition* (ICAHD) phones. “Right now three houses in East Jerusalem are being demolished” I hear the peace activist say, who I had met a few times at demonstrations and vigils. She had put me at my request onto the phone and mailing list. “Where?” I ask nervously. I need details since in certain parts of East Jerusalem neither street names nor a functioning sewage system exist. Angela, originally from South Africa, names the quarters. Hearing Jabbal Mukaber I ask for more details, since I want to go there immediately.

Within a few moments I pack a camera, note book, voice recorder and a bottle of water. In front of my house in Nablus Road I try to stop an empty taxi. After a few minutes a car stops. Isn’t that Abu Kaff who I fleetingly know? Right. “Please, to Jabbal Mukaber, there a house is being torn down,” I say breathlessly. “I can show you my demolished one,” he responds placidly and takes off. From underneath his seat he pulls out a laminated newspaper page showing a mountain of rubble, his lifetime dream burried. Dozens of people were displaced that day. He, his wife, his children, grandchildren and relatives having lived together in a 4-level-building became displaced and homeless. “On that very day five houses in my neighbourhood were destroyed,” Abu Kaff says.

What could I expect to see in Jabbal Mukaber in a few moments I ask myself discomposedly. My thoughts go back to Silwan/East Jerusalem where I had interviewed a family in their partly demolished house with a

lot of cracks everywhere. The municipality had “only” destroyed the illegal floor where we were sitting in the saloon without a ceiling. Now I am going to witness a demolition myself ...

Hours later, I am back at my desk: agitated, troubled, outraged, indignant about the injustice I had witnessed. I still feel the inner tension after Israeli soldiers and border policemen had threatened me, because I was not able to present an official Israeli press card. One of them had made a phone call and prevented me from approaching the demolition site. I really had feared being arrested for a few hours. Finally the “security personnel” had sent me home. I managed to hide behind olive trees, take pictures from between them and talk to neighbours. In the middle of winter, on an uncomfortable, cold, grey day the municipality made a family homeless. Germans readers must know about this I feel strongly. Who in Berlin, Stuttgart or Hamburg knows that Palestinians in East Jerusalem hardly ever get a building license? Some do after waiting for years, paying five-digit US-dollar-sums for the building permit or after providing “information” to the Israeli secret services. An additional problem is Israel’s refusal to approve zoning plans for the development of Palestinian neighborhoods. So most of the Palestinians are “forced” to build illegallyⁱ on their own piece of land because the family gets bigger, the son or daughter wants to get married and to start a family.

At my desk, boiling inside, I try to think calmly and clearly: Could I transfer that negative energy into something positive? I, who could not prevent the demolition, could at least inform the German public. And I should!

I start to write emails and to call newspaper offices, from Aachen in the West of Germany to Cottbus in the East, from Kiel upnorth to Konstanz at Lake Constance in the South. By the end of the day, I had contacted 24 papers and magazines and had heard or read sentences like “no space for that since we have to deal with so many domestic affairs” or “we have to take into consideration our audience/readership.” Only one paper prints the article, the regional daily of *Aachener Nachrichten* (circulation 2022: 45.000, probably higher in 2005).

In an article about terror in the German weekly *Das Parlament* (published by the German parliament *Der Bundestag*) I later managed to integrate a few sentences about house demolition. The woman editor deleted my sentence “For Palestinians house demolition is terror – terror by a state” without consulting me. She inserted instead “Israel is entitled to destroy illegally built houses and rightly so.”

Some of the Obstacles to Reporting About Israel/Palestine

This already illustrates some of the obstacles and limits of reporting about Israel, Palestine and especially the military occupation for German media. Most of our TV or radio stations, papers or magazines suppress too many facets of the occupation on the day to day life of Palestinians in Bethlehem, Gaza, Tulkarem or East Jerusalem. Especially the hardly noticeable aspects. for example bureaucratic sisyphos-like processes Palestinians are facing are hardly known in Germany, such as family reunification, child registration, the system of permits or landownership issues. Handling of such applications can last for decades as many human rights organizations know first hand.ⁱⁱ

A very practical obstacle: Travel into the Gaza Strip has often been prevented for journalists by Israeli authorities. *Reporters Without Borders* rank Israel 86 out of 180, stating: “Several smear campaigns against the media have been carried out by politicians, as well as their party and supporters. The journalists in question were harassed or received threats, requiring them to be placed under protection. Palestinian journalists are systematically subjected to violence as a result of their coverage of events in the West Bank. Israeli reporters are barred from visiting the Gaza Strip.”ⁱⁱⁱ Not being able to provide the whole picture – i.e. these aforementioned daily



Source The Nieman Journalism Lab

struggles with papers and permits, daily harrassment or night raids – means distorting the conflict.

Rejections and Other Problems

Another aspect is disapproval of topic suggestions. I remember offering a daily paper in eastern Germany an article about various peace groups and like-minded initiatives in Israel/Palestine. The answer: “There is no room for that, but anytime it bangs, please just get in touch!”

To a Catholic weekly paper I offered a text about Israeli resistance against the 2nd Lebanon war in 2006 including a petition signed by more than 1,000 Israeli intellectuals. The editor’s reaction: “It might seem sarcastic, I know, but what do 1,000 signatures mean in light of millions of Israelis?”

Most of our TV or radio stations, papers or magazines suppress too many facets of the occupation on the day to day life of Palestinians.

I didn’t agree at all: Translating the figure to Germany would have meant the signatures of 10,000 writers, musicians, artists or mathematicians. It did not help. I could not publish that article.

A recent example of rejection: the Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel EAPPI, “celebrated” 20 years of existence last November. The volunteers, called EAs, from 25 countries come for three months to Jerusalem, Hebron or Bethlehem to accompany Palestinian students through checkpoints or near settlements on their way to their schools. They also support Israeli and Palestinian peace and human rights groups. I interviewed EAs and two people in charge of the program at the World Council of Churches (WCC) in Geneva. My text offer to an extremely Israel-friendly Christian online-platform called *Christliche Medieninitiative pro e.V.* was denied with “no interest.” The woman editor wrote: “Thank you very much for the offer. We see EAPPI critically because it ignored the huge danger of terror when it was founded.” She sent me a commentary on EAPPI her platform had published years ago. It reads: “For years the WCC is ‘observing’ the behavior of Israelis towards Palestinians in areas conquered by Israel in 1967. In 2002, of all days, in the midst of the Al-Aqsa (2nd) Intifada, WCC started EAPPI. So far, about 1,000 volunteers from Western countries have been in the conflict area. These observers concentrate almost exclusively on the ‘oppression’ of the Palestinians. Israel’s security concerns however hardly play a role.”

Other frequent reactions are “Our readers do not want to read about Israel/Palestine anymore, they are fed up with the same news of violence and terror. Call or email again in (two, three, a few) months!”

While editors decline text offers or do not respond to noncommittally sent texts, some of them write articles or comments themselves, in the case of a minor Christian weekly paper without having visited Israel/Palestine even once!

I know of a quite influential daily nationwide German paper, where the editor heading a department grabs the phone and talks to relatives in Jerusalem in order to obtain information for an article.

In addition to the aforementioned difficulties and limitations one has to add the probably most powerful obstacle: self-censorship. German correspondents and freelancers know far too well how devastating the accusation of being anti-Israeli or anti-Semitic can be. Two examples: Sabine Schormann, director of the art exhibition *documenta* had to resign in 2022 because of an allegedly anti-Semitic painting by Indonesian artists. Peter Schäfer, former director of the Jewish Museum in Berlin, an expert on Judaism himself, was criticized by Prime Minister Netanyahu for the exhibition *Welcome to Jerusalem* in 2019. Netanyahu said the Jewish perspective was neglected and the Palestinian-Muslim one emphasized. Then Schäfer was accused of being a BDS supporter.^{iv}

Bettina Marx working from Tel Aviv for German *ARD* radio explains that she or colleagues got “baskets of letters most of them full of vituperation/vilification after publishing a comment critical of Israeli policy or politics.”^v She has experienced pressure by the Israeli Government Press Office (GPO) or “pressure groups who try to influence reporting. This pressure can be very massive.”^{vi} It manifests by having a hard time upon arrival at the airport, letters-to-the-editor-campaigns or pressure on chief editors in Germany. Marx knows of foreign correspondents “who were pushed/forced out of the country by permanent pressure.”^{vii} “Criticism of our reporting is rarely factual (...), but mostly malicious and defamatory.”^{viii}

Journalists for German media are also well aware of the numerous (often last minute) cancellations of lectures or films on Israel/Palestine (some with Israeli and/or Palestinian speakers), Nakba exhibitions, Palestinian culture festivals or award ceremonies by municipalities, churches, *Volkshochschulen* (adult education centers), libraries, foundations, museums, initiatives, universities or schools. I have obtained a list (2005 until 2020) of **101 events** in Germany alone which were either cancelled or the use of a hall or room was prevented (most of the cases) or the event was held but disturbed (few cases).^{ix} Almost 90 percent of the cases happened

between 2014 and 2020. Christoph Rinneberg, responsible for the collection of this data stopped that work, one reason being “the club/cudgel/bludgeon of anti-Semitism was swung increasingly insolently/rascally/brashly.”^x

Recently the Lutheran Church Congress *Deutscher Evangelischer Kirchentag* which will be held in June this year in Nuremberg refused to show the exhibition *Nakba – flight and expulsion of Palestinians 1948*. Letters, emails and phone calls to find out the reasoning were fruitless.

Criticism of our reporting is rarely factual (...), but mostly malicious and defamatory.

Summarizing the Obstacles

Before I address the Nakba, let me summarize the obstacles for reporting about Israel/Palestine in German media according to my experience:

- 1) No reaction or disapproval of text that highlights the military occupation and its facets by editorial staff in Germany.
- 2) No reaction to articles sent to editors (that they had requested: “Let us see the text, non-bindingly!”).
- 3) Direct rejection of texts dealing with seemingly dull issues like problems with family reunification or dialogue initiatives between Israelis and Palestinians.
- 4) Insertions or cuts into texts of correspondents living in Israel/Palestine without consulting them.
- 5) Editorial office in Germany decides on photos without consulting with correspondent/freelance journalist in Israel/Palestine.
- 6) Travel restrictions in Palestine, impediment or intimidation by Israeli military or police, problems with Israeli censor.
- 7) Alleged weariness of the German readership about Israel/Palestine.
- 8) Self-censorship in order not to jeopardize own career.

Trying to Write About the Nakba

What does this all mean for the 75th anniversary of the Nakba? On reporting about it in a country that has already cancelled dozens of Nakba exhibitions or exerted such pressure that organizers withdrew “voluntarily”?

Why not start with a survey on what already exists on serious articles on the Nakba? I first checked the websites of German political foundations that operate in Israel/Palestine. To my great surprise the *Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES)*, a supporter of PIJ has more than 200 hits for Israel and about

60 for Palästina/Palestine but not a single one about Nakba. Simply none.^{xi} The same is true for both the foundations *Friedrich Naumann* and *Hanns Seidel* (both share one office for both Israel and Palestine).^{xii}

The *Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung* (office Ramallah) provides four articles, one named “Refugees – hope to return” (Flüchtlinge - Hoffnung auf Rückkehr).^{xiii} The same amount of publications holds the *Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung* one is an interview about the “ongoing Nakba.”^{xiv} The website of *Heinrich Böll Stiftung* produces 15 hits, the most recent one being an article from 2011.^{xv}

What about articles on the Nakba in German mainstream media? *Die Deutsche Welle* (programs in different languages) published an insight-article on 70 years of Nakba, written by Diana Hodali, a journalist born in Germany to Palestinian parents. Hodali portrays a 90 years old Palestinian woman in the Burj el Barajneh refugee camp near Beirut.^{xvi}

Years earlier the German daily *Süddeutsche Zeitung* (sold copies: 298.000, /reach: 1.3 million people) printed an article about “Nakba, the catastrophe.”^{xvii} Journalist Tomas Avenarius quotes historian Benny Morris and dares to write sentences like this one: “Escaping before the war Arabs left their villages. Hundreds of thousands however were purposefully expelled: Official Israeli documents prove that destruction of Arab villages and expulsion of their inhabitants was ordered from on high.”

Remarkable is a commentary published by the left *taz* (copies: 45,000, reach 250.000). Author Charlotte Wiedemann starts like this: “It

Germany hosts the biggest Palestinian community in Europe: 200.000 people, but never was ready to listen to their stories of flight and expulsion.

is a requirement of German history to talk in the country of the Shoah about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict with care and mindfulness. What are the criteria for this? For example accuracy, historical integrity and self-critical self-inspection. The reality however looks different. By now a considerable part of the German establishment draws a no-protest-zone around everything which contains ‘Palestine’: Caution! Look out! Anti-Semitism! You better not approach!”

Wiedemann has recently published her book *Den Schmerz der anderen begreifen* which one could translate: To grasp the pain of the other side. She writes that Germany hosts the biggest Palestinian community in Europe: 200.000 people, but never was ready to listen to their stories of flight and expulsion. “In the official culture of memorizing there is no place for these biographies, as long as Germany uses a *passepartout*/ frame for the foundation of Israel where only the Shoah has room. The

eviction of the Palestinians is a collateral damage, beyond our responsibility and compassion. This isn't logical: Regarding the Holocaust as the overshadowing reason for the foundation of the state of Israel means that the Nakba should also be part of our history, part of a common history.”^{xix}

I really hope that this extraordinary book will find many readers and will finally lead to a long-missed, fair and fact-based discussion on the Nakba in Germany and its (non-)implications on German policy.

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ⁱⁱⁱ Reporters Without Borders: Israel | RSF (7.2.2023).

^{iv} Deutschlandfunk: Direktor Peter Schäfer nach Kritik zurückgetreten, 15.6.2019, siehe <https://www.deutschlandfunk.de/juedisches-museum-berlin-direktor-peter-schaefer-nach-100.html> (7.2.2023).

^v Vortrag von Dr. Bettina Marx, Tagung DIAK u. H.-Böll-Stiftung, Evang. Akademie Arnoldshain, 29.10.2006.

^{vi} Ibid.

^{vii} Ibid.

^{viii} Ibid.

^{ix} Data collected by Christoph Rinneberg, Germany. Title of document: Übersicht be- oder verhinderter, menschenrechtsorientierter Veranstaltungen.

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^{xix} Charlotte Wiedemann: Den Schmerz der anderen begreifen. Holocaust und Weltgedächtnis, Propyläen/Ullstein, Berlin 2022, Seite 240

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Al-Ard Episode: From “Stranger in My Own Land”

Fida Jiryis

Fida Jiryis is a Palestinian writer and editor who has written on life as a Palestinian in Israel and the West Bank. Her published works include Stranger in My Own Land (Hurst, 2022), and three collections of Arabic short stories: Hayatuna el-Sagheera (Our Small Life), al-Khawaja (The Gentleman), and al-Qafas (The Cage). She contributed to Kingdom of Olives and Ash, a Washington Post bestseller on fifty years of Israeli occupation, and BeLashon Kruta (Amputated Tongue), a Hebrew-language anthology of Palestinian literature.



This excerpt from “Stranger in My Own Land” (Hurst, 2022), by Fida Jiryis, recounts the experience of al-Ard, founded in 1959 as the first Palestinian national movement after the establishment of Israel. Sabri Jiryis, the author’s father, was one of the leaders of the movement, together with Habib Qahwaji, Saleh Baransi, and Mansour Kardosh.

The new group needed a name. Confiscation of their land was one of the greatest problems facing the Palestinians in Israel, and they chose ‘al-Ard’, The Land.

Al-Ard adopted a pragmatic approach and acknowledged the United Nations Partition Plan and the State of Israel, but it stressed the right of the Palestinians to their own state, and the belonging of this state to the greater Arab nation.

The movement applied for a license to publish a newspaper. Months passed with no answer. According to a law from the time of the British Mandate, any citizen could publish a single issue once a year without a license, as long as it was not a regular publication. Jewish organizations had resorted to this law before the establishment of Israel. Al-Ard decided to do the same. Its members would take turns publishing issues of their newspaper every few weeks under their various names, and would change the title, keeping the name ‘al-Ard’ in it so that the public would recognize it.

The newspaper was printed at an old press in Acre, al-Zeibaq, the only commercial press to agree to print it. Some of the group had good connections with Mapam, Israel’s left-wing party. Yet, although the party’s printing press needed work in Arabic, it refused to print the newspaper.¹

The first issue, in late 1959, was simply titled 'al-Ard' and published under Habib Qahwaji's name. Many young people waited at the doors of the press in excitement, and many volunteered, alongside the founders, to distribute the paper and collect donations. Two thousand copies were gone within a week. At the time, most popular newspapers sold less than a thousand copies per issue.ⁱⁱ The paper spoke out against Israeli policies and made the following calls:

Equal rights for the Arabs in Israel in all respects. The repeal of the discriminatory laws designed to destroy Arab identity, and the enabling of the Arabs to develop in the framework of their own customs and national character;

Recognition of the right of the Arab refugees to return to their homeland. No peace is possible while a million people are unable to return to their homes and are living on bread and water in tents ... We do not ask for mercy for these refugees, nor do we play on the liberal conscience of humanity, for we believe that their problem is a political one.ⁱⁱⁱ

No sooner had the first issue circulated than a concerted smear campaign was launched in the Israeli press, accusing the founders of being anti-Israeli and of wanting to create a sabotage movement. But al-Ard's work was open and public. It distributed a letter stating its objectives to the Israeli press and to all members of the Knesset.

We demand:

1. The end of the military government
2. The return of plundered lands to their owners and an end to the seizure of lands and the Judaization of the Galilee
3. The raising of the standard of Arab schools in order to turn them into institutions in which one can have access to education
4. Equal rights for Arab workers
5. Aid to the Arab economy and the Arab peasant by helping them develop and not attempting to destroy them
6. The return of the Arab refugees to their villages. An end to the blowing-up of villages, whose inhabitants now go there on pilgrimages to cry over their lost land and homes (Biram and Iqrit)
7. A license for the newspaper.

There will be no peace without the return of the refugees, and this is their natural right ... We are part of a larger nation (the Arab nation). Why are we not allowed to express our opinion as to its future and fate?^{iv}

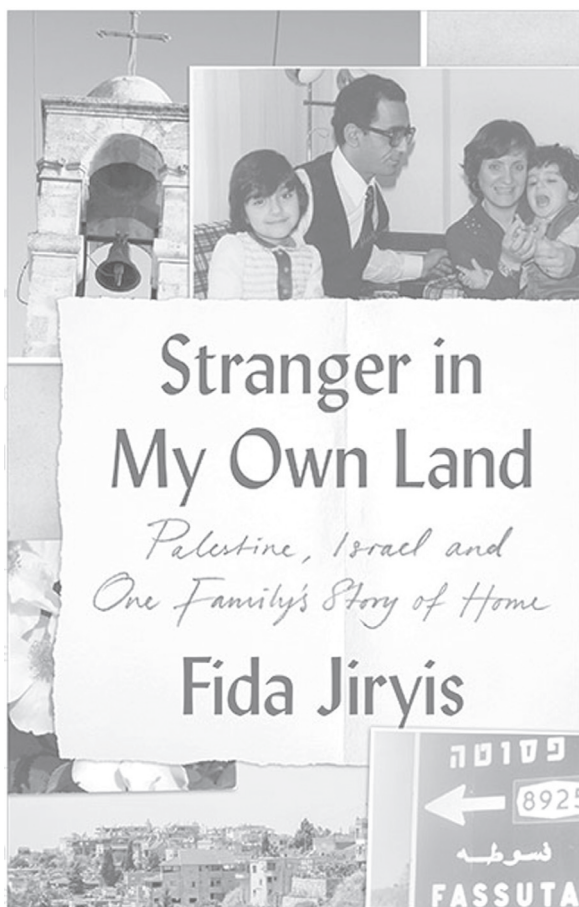
Al-Ard urged Palestinians to organize and handle their own affairs,

calling for a boycott of the Israeli elections until the establishment of true democratic participation. Its call led to a 42 per cent abstinence rate among Palestinians in the 1959 Knesset elections. At the same time, it urged Jews and Palestinians to live in peaceful coexistence and saw this as the only option to move forward, with full rights for all.

That year, Israel lifted some curfews [under its military rule] during the day, allowing large numbers of villagers to go to the towns and cities to work. After a decade of restrictions, Palestinians could reconnect and recognize themselves as members of their larger community. Al-Ard developed branches in most Arab villages. Mansour was the leader in Nazareth; Habib, in Haifa and Acre; Saleh, in The Triangle; Fakhri Jdai, in Jaffa; and Sabri, in Jerusalem.

The two friends, Sabri and Mohammed Mi'ari, worked together in al-Ard on the Hebrew University campus, where they were studying.

The Zionist groups on campus fought them as they had fought the Arab Student Council. But, soon, al-Ard drew in most of the Palestinian students at the university. The group was made up of people with different, sometimes conflicting, leanings, and a large number who had no clear political path. Many Palestinians were looking for an independent organization, free from the constraints of the Israeli Communist Party [which had been the only avenue open to them], and they found this in al-Ard. Within a few months, it attracted tens of laborers, peasants, lawyers, merchants, writers, and poets.



Al-Ard was the first Palestinian movement in Israel to call for self-determination and a just solution to the Palestine problem. It fought on two fronts: the lifting of repression from Palestinian citizens and the

Al-Ard urged Palestinians to organize and handle their own affairs, calling for a boycott of the Israeli elections until the establishment of true democratic participation.

granting of equal rights, making Israel a democratic state for all its citizens; and the Palestinians' right to their own state, as defined by the 1947 United Nations Partition Plan, where they could live in peace alongside the State of Israel. The group's leaders saw these aims as the only realistic options after the Nakba. They

called for cooperation between Palestinians and Jews within a framework of justice and mutual recognition, and they were open in their desire to work with Jewish progressive and democratic groups.

Al-Ard was still waiting for a license to publish its newspaper. It applied again and again, and, despite the law stipulating an answer within a set period, there was no word from the authorities. It continued with its single issues. People encouraged the group and felt it belonged to them, and many made donations to the newspaper.

The paper reported news from the Arab world, particularly on Nasser, and anything that would bring the Palestinians in Israel out of their isolation. It exposed the problems facing Palestinians as a result of government policy: the lack of jobs and budgets for industry or agriculture, the persecution of those who spoke out, and the severe problems in their education system.

The attacks in the Israeli press grew intense. The group replied to them in its newspaper, defending the Palestinians' right to self-expression. After the sixth issue, the authorities began to crack down and consider the group's work illegal and a danger to state security. Most of its leaders were put under house arrest. But the newspaper continued, increasing its circulation four-fold.

In January 1960, Shmuel Divon, advisor on Arab affairs to the Israeli prime minister, held a press conference in Tel Aviv in which he launched an intense attack on al-Ard. He claimed that the group worked underground and was planning the destruction of the state. The press warned the Palestinians in Israel of the 'grave danger' that al-Ard posed to them due to its 'extreme' views, and the Communist Party itself joined the attack, in order to keep its standing as the sole political channel among the Palestinians. For the first time, Sabri, still a student, was summoned for interrogation. He was frank about what his group was doing, that it was a political movement trying to reach people through its newspaper, which the authorities had refused to

license. He explained that they wanted to work through lawful, political means. But the authorities began a campaign against al-Ard's leaders. Three or four agents took turns trailing them and watching their homes at night.

Al-Ard managed to print twelve issues of its newspaper before the authorities intervened. Two weeks after Divon's public denunciation, the secret service offered the owner of al-Zeibaq press in Acre the equivalent of six months' profit if he stopped printing the paper. He refused, but agents returned as soon as the thirteenth issue was printed. They amassed all the copies and took them away. They then arrested Mansour, Habib, Saleh, and Sabri, together with Mahmoud Srouji and Elias Muammar, and searched their homes. The six were charged with publishing a newspaper without a license and given heavy fines of 1,000 pounds each and three months in prison. After appeal, they were able to suspend the prison terms and lower the fines. But the ruling took a toll on their limited financial means.

They needed another way, and they decided to register al-Ard as a company. This would allow them to print the newspaper as part of the company's commercial activities, as well as give them a base to continue political work and to receive funds. On the day of the court's ruling against them, Sabri filled in an application for 'al-Ard Limited Company for Printing and Publishing', and sent it to the registrar of corporations in Jerusalem.

The response was swift. A few weeks later, he received a letter that the application was rejected for reasons of 'public security and interest'. Meanwhile, many al-Ard members were placed under house arrest or had their movement permits revoked.

Al-Ard appealed to the Supreme Court against the decision to prohibit the registration of its company. The Court overruled the registrar's decision, stating that his authority did not extend to assessing national security interests,^v and approved the registration. But the judicial advisor to the government appealed the ruling. At the hearing, the registrar said that he had rejected the application because the company intended to engage in acts of 'incitement'. The judge replied: 'You cannot base a decision on speculation. When they carry out incitement, you can take legal action.' The court upheld its decision to permit the registration of al-Ard Company, Ltd. In early 1962, the company was finally registered and its shares were sold to the leaders of the group and a few of its supporters.

It was a small, rare victory. The next step was to apply for a license to publish its newspaper. Again, the authorities resorted to delays and evasion.

Meanwhile, al-Ard was making contact with a number of Jewish circles. One was the Semitic Action Group, led by Uri Avnery, editor of the Israeli weekly *ha-Olam ha-Zeh*, who became a friend to the movement.

Another was Mordechai Stein, a leftist lawyer known for his defense of Arab rights and for fighting Zionist policy. Stein formed a small political organization, The Third Force, which published *The Democratic Newspaper*.

Al-Ard had formed many cultural and sports clubs in Palestinian villages, mostly in The Triangle. But its application for a newspaper license had still not been answered. The group had applied with Saleh's name as editor. Stein offered to help. He would publish al-Ard's material through his newspaper and would not interfere in its content, nor put any political conditions on the group. Al-Ard was in discussion to take up his offer for a few months, until Sabri turned 25 and could apply for a license in his name, if Saleh's name was rejected. But the authorities threatened to close down *The Democratic Newspaper*.^{vi}

The contacts with influential Jewish figures helped garner opposition to military rule, and another demonstration was held on 19 February 1963, in Jerusalem. Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion retorted in a speech in the Knesset, determined to keep the military government.

There are in this country two organizations which resent Israel, one called 'the Front' ... a communist organization in disguise, and the other a nationalist group called 'al-Ard', both of which periodically distribute poisonous propaganda in the form of leaflets and pamphlets.^{vii}

He pointed to the alleviations that the government had made in the system of military rule. But these had, in fact, made things worse.

Blacklists were drawn up of Palestinians who were deemed 'security risks', and they were forbidden to leave their towns or villages. Blacklists were drawn up of Palestinians who were deemed 'security risks', and they were forbidden to leave their towns or villages, day or night, without movement permits—when they had previously been allowed out in the day without any restrictions. Although the military government had relaxed some of the repressive measures imposed on the general population, it had devised a harsher system to target those individuals. Anyone who expressed dissent was put on this list.

Shortly afterwards, Sabri was placed under house arrest for the first time. The order was issued by the northern military commander, and its terms were:

Not to reside outside the municipal limits of Haifa

Not to change his place of residence in Haifa without police permission

Not to leave the Haifa area without police permission

To report to police headquarters at 3:45 every afternoon

To return home no later than one hour after sunset and remain there until sunrise the next day.^{viii}

In the evenings, a policeman could arrive at any time, without warning, to check that he was home.

These administrative rulings, issued under the Defense (Emergency) Regulations still in effect, did not require justification nor court approval, could not be appealed, and could be renewed indefinitely. Sabri found himself a prisoner in the city and, at night, in his home. For his legal training, if he had to attend any court sessions outside Haifa, he needed police approval. His friends were given similar orders.

After months of waiting and back-and-forth correspondence, al-Ard finally received an answer from the Haifa district commissioner, who did not grant a license for the company to publish a newspaper because the proposed editor, Saleh, did not fulfill a requirement of the Israeli Press Ordinance of having a secondary school certificate. Al-Ard reapplied, giving Sabri's name as editor. When the commissioner saw that there was no further reason for refusal, he cited the Defense (Emergency) Regulations, which allowed him 'in his discretion and without assigning any reason therefore' to grant or refuse any permit.^{ix} Al-Ard appealed to the Supreme Court, but the court upheld the absolute powers of the district commissioner.^x Without its newspaper, al-Ard could not reach people and its work was crippled.

The group decided to expose the situation on the international stage. In June 1964, they wrote a seventeen-page memorandum describing the plight of Palestinians under military rule and a list of discriminatory practices against them in all public sectors. They cited al-Ard's battle for legal means to publish its newspaper. The letter demanded equality for all citizens, the respect of basic freedoms, and the end of discrimination. It also called for Israel to recognize the 1947 United Nations Partition Plan and to allow the establishment of a Palestinian state. A copy of the letter was sent to all foreign embassies in Israel, members of the Knesset, the prime minister, and Israeli institutions, as well as to international newspapers and dignitaries abroad.^{xi}

At the same time, al-Ard decided on a different route: to register itself as a political party in order to work openly and express its demands. On 30 June 1964, the group met and drafted its by-laws,^{xii} which were signed by twenty-two founding members. They included:

Raising the levels of education, science, health and economy of the Arabs in Israel, as well as their political status;

Seeking and achieving a true and just social equality among all social strata in Israel;

Finding a just solution for the Palestine question, as a whole and indivisible unit, in accordance with the wishes of the Palestinian Arab people; a solution which meets its interests and desires, restores it to its political existence, ensures its full legal rights, and regards it as the first possessor of the right to determine its own fate, within the framework of the supreme aspirations of the Arab nation;

Achieving recognition of the United Nations decision of 29 November 1947, which would provide a solution for the Palestinian problem, a just solution which would maintain the rights of both Israeli Jewish and Palestinian Arab peoples and would strengthen the stability and peace of the area;

Support of liberation, unity and socialism in the Arab world by all legal means, recognizing the Arab national liberation movement as a decisive force in the Arab world, which Israel should regard positively;

Acting for peace in the Middle East and in the world in general;

Support of all progressive forces throughout the world, opposition to imperialism and support of all peoples who are trying to free themselves from its yoke.

Al-Ard Stressed the Need to Establish a Palestinian Arab State:

It is true that the Arabs in Israel are not a nation, but they form part of a great nation. The Arabs of this country were and still are part of the Palestinian Arab people, who are indivisibly part of the Arab world ... Their right to establish a Palestinian Arab state has been forcibly taken from them. If the Jews have a right to an independent state, the people of Palestine also have a right to an independent state.^{xiii}

Sabri printed a copy of the by-laws and submitted it to the Haifa district commissioner for registration as a non-profit association, the legal entity for a political party. Two days later, the commissioner replied that al-Ard 'had been formed with the intent of violating the security and the very existence of the State of Israel' and that the registration was denied, based on the Defense (Emergency) Regulations in effect.^{xiv}

Within weeks, the Algerian representative to the United Nations received a copy of al-Ard's letter and shared it with the members of the UN's General Assembly, including the Israeli representative.

In Israel, the backlash came. The media reported the incident and launched another incitement campaign against al-Ard. They began to

receive anonymous threats. The government spokesman announced that the Knesset had discussed al-Ard in its latest session, taking note of the district commissioner's decision, and that most of the ministers considered the formation of such a political party to be a 'grave danger' to the state. Levi Eshkol, prime minister and defense minister, consulted with his advisor on Arab affairs and with the security service on how to stop the group.^{xv} Israeli radio broadcast the news in its Arabic and Hebrew segments.

Al-Ard submitted another appeal to the Supreme Court against the denial of its registration as a non-profit association. In a long ruling, the court stated that the article of al-Ard's by-laws about the Palestinian people was 'an absolute and utter condemnation of the existence of the State of Israel',^{xvi} and that the article on 'liberation, unity and socialism' in the Arab world supported 'the hostile attitudes [of the Arab

world] toward Israel and the elimination of Israel by force'.^{xvii} The court upheld the district commissioner's decision. Sabri, Saleh, Mansour, and Habib were again arrested, released, and placed under house arrest for three months. For the second time, the police raided their homes. At

The court stated that the article of al-Ard's by-laws about the Palestinian people was 'an absolute and utter condemnation of the existence of the State of Israel'.

Mansour's house, the police confiscated all his materials; even the text of the memorandum to the United Nations was seized and no copies were left. Prime Minister Levi Eshkol then used his powers under the Defense (Emergency) Regulations to declare al-Ard an illegal association. Shmuel Toledano, his advisor on Arab affairs, described the movement as a 'threat to the very existence of the state'. He added that the notion of 'Israeli Arabs' was a contradiction in terms because they belonged to 'another nationality'.

With this declaration, the al-Ard Company was terminated and all its assets were frozen. The movement's activities were banned, with the threat of ten years in prison for anyone who tried to continue. Its leaders had their house arrest extended for three months, then for another six, bringing it to a year. Many al-Ard members and supporters were also placed under house arrest and had their movement permits denied.

Saleh Baransi made their final statement.

We have worked ... side by side with other progressive and democratic forces in order to win for the Arabs their rights and equality. We still feel that the world must hear the voice of our masses ... crying out against oppression, discrimination, military rule, land robbery, and demolition of houses, when we do nothing to impose on the rights of others to live in peace.^{xviii}

But there was one more chapter to al-Ard. Its leaders decided to form an independent list, the “Socialist List” and run in the 1965 Knesset elections. In the face of this, on the eve of the elections, Sabri was arrested and internally expelled to Safad; Mansour Kardosh was expelled from Nazareth to Arad; Saleh Baransi, from Taybeh to Bisan; and Habib Qahwaji, from Haifa to Tiberias. The expulsion order was for three months, and they had all been sent to distant towns with no remaining Palestinians and separated from each other so they could not organize and run in the elections. The government instructed the Central Elections Committee to disqualify the Socialist List, on the grounds that it was ‘an unlawful association, because its promoters deny the [territorial] integrity of the State of Israel and its very existence’.^{xix} A media onslaught resumed against the group. Al-Ard went to the Supreme Court to dispute the decision.

On 7 October 1965, the Supreme Court heard the appeal of the Socialist List against its disqualification. Ya’acov Yeridor, counsel for the list, argued before Justices Shimon Agranat, Yoel Sussman, and Haim Cohn that the Knesset Elections Law did not empower the Central Elections Committee to invalidate lists because of their members’ personal affiliations. The committee itself had admitted that it had no right to disqualify individual candidates, yet had disqualified a whole list solely on the basis of its composition, on the grounds that five of its ten candidates were members of the outlawed al-Ard movement. Yeridor then handed the court an affidavit stating that the list had no proposals against the existence or integrity of the State of Israel.

Attorney General Moshe Ben-Ze’ev, who appeared for the Central Elections Committee, reviewed the previous court decisions against al-Ard’s attempts to register as an association and publish a newspaper. He quoted from a ruling by Justice Alfred Witkon that it would be ‘foolhardiness to give the organization the power which it seeks’.

On 12 October, the Supreme Court upheld, by a 2:1 majority, the committee’s ruling. The dissenting justice, Cohn, noted that ‘in the material which was in front of the Central Elections Committee, and which was presented to us, too, there was nothing to justify, let alone mandate, the finding that there is a real or clear or present danger’ posed to the state or to any of its institutions by the Socialist List.^{xx} The other judges did not dispute this, but argued that the grave issue placed before them justified diverging from the strict letter of the law, for the sake of ‘defensive democracy’. Al-Ard’s objection to the Jewish character of the State of Israel was tantamount, in their eyes, to objecting to the state’s very existence.^{xxi}

Justice Agranat wrote, in his decision: ‘This is a realistic matter of a

list of candidates aimed at achieving the elimination of the State of Israel.’ Justice Sussman likened the proposed list to ‘someone who wants to throw a bomb in the Knesset and cannot do so from the runway, so he wants to enter the hall through Knesset membership for this purpose’. He added that the state ‘does not have to agree to be eliminated and wiped off the map’.^{xxii}

Those statements had come in response to al-Ard’s call for the implementation of the 1947 Partition Plan and the establishment of a Palestinian state alongside the State of Israel. It was this point, more than anything else, that eventually drove the authorities to eliminate the movement.

With this, al-Ard had exhausted all avenues in its battle for legitimacy. In the five years of its troubled existence, its disputes had reached the Supreme Court six times.^{xxiii} The movement was consumed with trying to break the restrictions on it and to form an independent organization, to obtain some kind of legal standing so it could work openly. In the end, it could not achieve much beyond protest meetings and public lectures, and the clubs that it formed in Palestinian villages. Sabri later wrote: ‘One of al-Ard’s obvious mistakes was to trust in Israeli justice and democracy; another was to underestimate the Zionist concept of “security” and how widely it could be interpreted when convenient.’^{xxiv} For two decades afterwards, no independent Arab party would attempt to field a list of candidates in Knesset elections.

Sabri later wrote: ‘One of al-Ard’s obvious mistakes was to trust in Israeli justice and democracy; another was to underestimate the Zionist concept of “security.”

References:

ⁱ El-Asmar, 1978, p. 74.

ⁱⁱ Ibid., pp. 74–5.

ⁱⁱⁱ Ibid., p. 72.

^{iv} Ibid., pp. 76–7.

^v *The Challenge of Ethnic Democracy: The State and Minority Groups in Israel, Poland and Northern Ireland*, Yoav Peled, Routledge, Abingdon-on-Thames, 2014, p. 110.

^{vi} Qahwaji, 1972, p. 168.

^{vii} Knesset Debates, 20 February 1963, pp. 1215–16.

^{viii} Rosenberg, 1996, p. 327.

^{ix} Defence (Emergency) Regulations, 1945, Article 94 (2).

^x Jiryis, 1976, p. 189.

- ^{xi} Ibid., p. 190.
- ^{xii} Al-Ard's Bylaws (Arabic); translation cited in el-Asmar, 1978, p. 77–8; Jiryis, 1976, p. 190.
- ^{xiii} Jiryis, 1976, p. 191.
- ^{xiv} Judgments 18, part 4: 670, Sabri Jiryis v. the Haifa District Commissioner, case 253/64, cited in Jiryis, 1976, p. 192.
- ^{xv} *Haaretz*, 24 July 1964, cited in Jiryis, 1976.
- ^{xvi} Judgments 18, part 4: 677, Sabri Jiryis v. the Haifa District Commissioner, case 253/64, cited in Jiryis, 1976, p. 192.
- ^{xvii} Ibid., part 4: 680.
- ^{xviii} *Al-Ittihad*, 14 August 1964, cited in Jiryis, 1976.
- ^{xix} *The Legal Status of the Arabs in Israel*, David Kretzmer, Westview Press, Boulder, CO, 1990, p. 24.
- ^{xx} Judgments 19, part 3: 365, Ya'acov Yeridor v. the Chairman of the Central Elections Committee of the Sixth Knesset, Elections Appeal 1/65, cited in Jiryis, 1976, p. 194; *The Jerusalem Post*, 14 November 1965.
- ^{xxi} Peled, 2014, p. 110.
- ^{xxii} 'Sabri Jiryis: "Al-Ard Movement" ...', Sabri Jiryis, 11 August 2017.
- ^{xxiii} 'A Case Study in the Banning of Political Parties: The Pan-Arab Movement El Ard and the Israeli Supreme Court', Ron Harris, *bepress Legal Series*, Working Paper 349, 22 August 2004.
- ^{xxiv} Jiryis, 1976, p. 195.

Iraqi Jews and the War for Palestine: An Autobiographical Fragment

Avi Shlaim

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The establishment of the state of Israel in 1948 had a profound effect on the status of the Jews in all the surrounding Arab countries. In Iraq there was a thriving Jewish community with a rich heritage and roots that went back to the Babylonian exile two and a half millennia ago. This community was better integrated into Muslim society than the Jewish communities in the rest of the Arab world. My family was an upper middle-class Jewish family. My father was a wealthy merchant with high social status. Our nationality was Iraqi, and our religion was Judaism. There was nothing unusual about that: Jews were just one minority among many. Unlike Europe, Iraq did not have a “Jewish problem.” We were Arab-Jews. We lived in Baghdad and we were well-integrated into Iraqi society. We spoke Arabic at home, our social customs were Arab, our lifestyle was Arab, our cuisine was exquisitely Middle Eastern, and my parents’ music was an attractive blend of Arabic and Jewish music. We had much more in common, linguistically and culturally, with our Iraqi compatriots than with our European co-religionists. We felt no affinity with the Zionist movement, and we experienced no desire to abandon our homeland in order to go and live in Israel. It is only a slight exaggeration to say that we were conscripted into the Zionist project. The forces of nationalism, both Arab and Jewish, disrupted this settled way of life. By giving the Jews a territorial base, Zionism created tensions between us and the Muslim majority in the region. We were increasingly perceived not as natives but as outsiders, as allies of the Zionists in Palestine, and even as a fifth column. What follows is an extract from my forthcoming autobiographical book about this turbulent phase in the history of the Jewish community in Iraq.¹

On the geopolitical front, 1947 was an eventful year, the year in which the struggle for Palestine reached a crucial phase. The battle lines

¹ Avi Shlaim, *Three Worlds: Memoir of an Arab-Jew* (London: Oneworld, 2023).

were clearly drawn between the Zionists and their international supporters on the one hand and the Palestinians and their Arab allies on the other. A much tougher kind of Zionism, “fighting Zionism” as it was sometimes called, had been forged in the course of the Second World War, and the commitment to Jewish statehood grew deeper and more desperate in the shadow of the Holocaust. The prospect of minority status under Arab rule was considered little better than a death sentence for the Jewish community in Palestine and for the survivors of the Nazi “Final Solution.” Zionist leaders were determined to proceed to statehood by diplomatic means if possible, but by military force if necessary. Having repeatedly failed to find a peaceful solution to the conflict between Jews and Arabs in Palestine, Britain tossed this political hot potato into the lap of the infant United Nations, the successor to the League of Nations. In February 1947, Britain gave formal notice of its intention to terminate the Palestine mandate on May 15, 1948, and on November 29, 1947, the General Assembly of the United Nations voted for the partition of mandatory Palestine into two states: one Arab, one Jewish.

The General Council of the Iraqi-Jewish community sent a telegram to the United Nations opposing the partition resolution and the creation of a Jewish state. Like my family, the majority of Iraqi Jews saw themselves as Iraqi first and Jewish second; they feared that the creation of a Jewish state would undermine their position in Iraq. Throughout the Arab and Muslim world, the partition plan was seen as a grave injustice to the Palestinians for which local Jewish communities were held partly responsible. The distinction between Jews and Zionists, so crucial to interfaith harmony in the Arab world, was rapidly breaking down.

The Jews of Palestine greeted the UN partition resolution with jubilation and rejoicing; the Arab states, loosely organised in the Arab League, rejected it as unfair, illegal and impractical and they went to war to frustrate it. The war for Palestine was divided into an unofficial phase and an official phase. The unofficial phase was between the two communities in Palestine and lasted from December 1, 1947 until May 14, 1948. It ended with a Jewish victory and the proclamation of the State of Israel at midnight. During this first phase of the war, Palestinian society was decimated and the first wave of refugees set in motion. The morning after the birth of Israel, the regular armies of seven Arab states invaded Palestine with the aim of frustrating partition and keeping the whole of Palestine in Arab hands. Fighting in this official phase of the war continued in three rounds until January 7, 1949, and ended with a Jewish victory and comprehensive Arab defeat.

In the course of the war the Jews extended the territory of their state

from the 55 per cent allocated to them by the UN cartographers to 78 per cent of mandatory Palestine. The West Bank was captured and later annexed by Jordan; the Gaza Strip remained under Egyptian military government. Three quarters of a million Palestinians, more than half the Arab population, became refugees and the name Palestine was wiped off the map. For the Israelis this was “The War of Independence;” for the Palestinians it was the “Nakba,” the catastrophe.

All the neighbouring Arab states – Syria, Lebanon, Jordan and Egypt – signed armistice agreements with Israel when hostilities came to an end. Iraq withdrew its army from the Palestine front without signing an armistice agreement and, as a result, it has officially remained in a state of war with Israel ever since. Refusal to sign an armistice agreement with the “gangster state” was something Iraq’s leaders wore as a badge of honour. By sending the Iraqi army to the rescue of the Palestinians, the royal family had gained immeasurably in prestige. In the past it had been viewed as a puppet of the British; now it was seen to be serving the cause of Arab nationalism.

Another effect of Iraq’s participation in the war for Palestine was to fuel the tension between Muslims and Jews at home. Whether or not they sympathised with Zionism, Iraqi Jews were widely suspected by the general public of being secret supporters of the state of Israel. A powerful popular



Iraqi Jews posing in front of the Prophet Ezekiel's Tomb in Al Kifl, Iraq in 1932. Photo: Wikimedia Commons.

wave of hostility towards both Israel and the Jews living in their midst swept through the Arab world in the wake of the loss of Palestine, and Iraq was no exception. Demonstrators marched through the streets of Baghdad, shouting “Death to the Jews.” A campaign was launched to raise money “to save Palestine from the Jews” and newspapers called for a boycott of Jewish shops to liberate Iraqis from the “economic slavery and domination imposed by the Jewish minority.” The arrival in Iraq of some eight thousand Palestinian refugees in the summer of 1948 brought home the human cost of the Arab failure on the battlefield.

Defeat in Palestine was a deeply felt national humiliation. To deflect attention from their own responsibility for Iraq’s poor military performance, its leaders looked for a scapegoat and found in the Jews who dwelt among them a convenient target. The Iraqi government did not simply respond

Iraqi Jews were widely suspected by the general public of being secret supporters of the state of Israel.

to public anger but actively whipped up popular hysteria and suspicion against the Jews. Using nationalism as a crude but powerful tool, the government led the campaign of incitement, denouncing the Jews as aliens, traitors and a dangerous fifth column. It was at this point that the official persecution of the Jews began. A law was passed in July 1948, making Zionism a criminal offence punishable by death or a minimum sentence of seven years in prison. Jewish officials were fired from their government jobs; Jewish employees dismissed from the railways, the post office and the telegraph department, ostensibly to prevent them from carrying out acts of “sabotage and treason.” Jewish merchants were denied import and export licences, and restrictions were placed on the freedom of Jewish banks to trade in foreign currency.

The trial of Shafiq Ades in September 1948 stunned the Jewish community. Ades was the wealthiest Jew in Iraq with close ties to high-ranking Iraqi officials, including the Regent, Abd al-Ilah. After a show trial that lasted only three days, he was convicted on false charges of selling arms to Israel and supporting the Iraqi Communist Party. The presiding judge at the military court was Abdullah al-Naasni, a member of the nationalist, anti-Jewish, pro-Nazi Istiqlal (Independence) Party. The court was presented with no credible evidence, no witnesses were allowed to appear, and the defendant was denied the right to a proper defence. He was sentenced to death by hanging and ordered to pay a fine of five million dinars; the rest of his estate was appropriated by the ministry of defence. In the media, Ades was variously denounced as a serpent, a traitor, a spy, a Zionist and a Jew. To Moshe Gat, an Israeli scholar of Iraqi heritage, “It was clear that

the Ades trial was stage-managed, that he was a scapegoat of Iraq's defeat in the war with Israel; and that revenge was being taken against the Jewish community through this attack on one of its eminent members."² The downfall of Ades set off alarm bells in the Jewish community, especially as he was an assimilated, non-Zionist Jew. If such a powerful man could be treated in such an arbitrary way, there was little hope of protection for less well-connected Jews. Some of them started escaping by secretly crossing the border into Iran and from there continuing the journey to Israel.

My family experienced directly the mounting anger against the Jews at both popular and official levels. The war for Palestine was a major turning point for the worse in Muslim–Jewish relations. My late mother, Saida Shlaim-Chitayat (1924–2021), singled out the birth of Israel as the decisive point in the crisis of Iraqi Jewry. When Israel was created, to use her own words, “everything was turned upside down. This is when the trouble started. There was harassment and persecution. We suffered a lot.” Martial law was proclaimed, severe censorship was imposed on the media and an alarming number of Jews were arrested. Letters written by Jews were opened by the military censor in search of incriminating evidence. Jews were summoned for interrogation by the police on the flimsiest evidence of links with Israel, and sometimes when there was no evidence at all. The police pressed charges in the military courts against Jews for supporting Zionism and they were not above fabricating evidence. In some cases, the threat of court action was used by policemen as a means of extorting money. In other cases that went to trial in the courts, Jews who were convicted were given prison sentences of varying lengths in accordance with the severity of their alleged offence. There was no appeal against the verdict of the military judges.

On one occasion, after their letters had been opened by the censor, Saida and her mother, Mouzli Obadiah, were summoned to the local police station on suspicion of support for Zionism. Both of them had British passports because Mouzli's husband, Meir, had been born in India under the British Raj. In letters to Saida's elder brother Isaac, who lived in London, they had referred to Salim Sanduq, a codeword for the newly established state of Israel. (‘Sanduq’ in Arabic means a chest.) Salim Sanduq was a real person, a relative who had left Iraq illegally via Iran to go and live in Israel. At the police station Saida and Mouzli were separated. Saida was taken first to see a police officer. “Who is Salim Sanduq?” he demanded to know. Saida improvised on the spot and replied that he was a fat man who always stayed hungry no matter how much he ate. As she left the room, Mouzli was ushered in and Saida just managed to whisper in her ear a word about

² Moshe Gat, *The Jewish Exodus from Iraq, 1948–1951* (London: Frank Cass, 1997), p. 38.

Salim Sanduq. The officer asked Mouzli the same question to which she replied, with theatrical flourish, that this was an enormously fat man who ate like a hog but was never satisfied. Although the two accounts tallied, Saida was taken back to the office for further interrogation. This time she summoned her courage and said to the police officer: "Look here, we are British. We have not done anything. So just leave us alone." The implicit threat to involve the British authorities seemed to work.

In everyday life the Jews experienced minor pinpricks as well as more serious injuries. Individuals who harboured resentment against Jews were now less constrained in giving vent to their sentiments in public. Small incidents are indicative of a more general shift in the climate. Amid the changes she experienced all around her at this time, my mother recalled one incident in particular. Our driver had picked her up at home to take her to my father's wholesale store for imported bathroom suites. This was before the days of traffic lights – instead, a policeman with a whistle stood on a stand at the cross-roads to direct the traffic. That day the policeman stopped our driver and asked him why he was speeding. Our driver replied that he was in a hurry to get to his master. On hearing this, the policeman loudly cursed the driver and his master. There was no doubt in my mother's mind that the policeman knew instantly from their dialect that they were Jewish and that he would not have dared speak to them so offensively in normal times.

My parents had no friends who were openly Zionist. In a context where Zionism was punishable by death, this was hardly surprising. In Israel my mother reminisced nostalgically about the wonderful Muslim friends we had in Baghdad and the happy times we spent with them. Among the qualities she singled out for praise were their many acts of selfless kindness and their unswerving loyalty even when the popular tide turned against the Jews. One day I asked her whether we had any Zionist friends. My question took her by surprise. "No!" she replied emphatically. "Zionism is an Ashkenazi thing. It had nothing to do with us!" While insisting that the persecution of our community in Baghdad was orchestrated by the authorities, my mother admitted that many Jews greeted the Arab defeat in Palestine with barely concealed satisfaction and even glee. Israel was called by the Arabs *al-dawla al-maz'uma*, the so-called state. One Jewish song that made the rounds after the Arab defeat in Palestine spoke of *saba' duwal mahzuma min al-dawla al-maz'uma* – seven states ran away from the one so-called state.

Before the defeat, the mood in the Arab street was buoyant and it was accompanied by blood-curdling rhetoric about throwing the Jews into the sea. Cartoons depicted seven big Arab soldiers, representing the seven regular Arab armies who took part in the invasion of Palestine, with

bayonets at the end of their rifles, driving a little Jew with a hooked nose from a diving board into the sea. These cartoons were crudely racist in their imagery, but they reflected the prevalent conviction that the infant Jewish state did not stand a chance against the combined might of the Arab armies. Overconfidence was palpable not just in the street but in the higher political and military echelons of Iraqi society.

My grandmother Mouzli lived in a villa in the Karrada near the Tigris River. Her neighbour and friend was a Muslim woman called Umm Ahmad, the mother of Ahmad. Ahmad was a senior officer in the Iraqi army. One day Mouzli went to pay a routine social call on Umm Ahmad. Ahmad was in the house with a small group of fellow officers. They stood around a table on which was spread a map of Palestine

and were engaged in a very animated argument. My guess, and it is only a guess, is that this was the map prepared by the military committee of the Arab League for the co-ordinated invasion of Palestine following the expiry of the

Zionism is an Ashkenazi thing. It had nothing to do with us!" While insisting that the persecution of our community in Baghdad was orchestrated by the authorities.

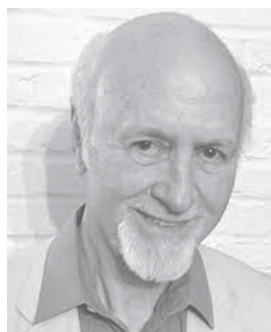
British mandate. Umm Ahmad was not impressed with them. She elbowed them out of the way, got to the map and demanded to be told: "Where is this so-called state?" The officers pointed on the map to the area that had been designated by the UN for the Jewish state. Umm Ahmad made no attempt to conceal her contempt for the officers who argued and agonised so much about alternative strategies for dealing with the embryonic state of Israel. "Aren't you ashamed of yourselves?" she demanded to know and then quickly added: "I, on my own, can pick up this so-called state and crush it between my teeth." My grandmother listened to her friend in stunned silence. She did not doubt Umm Ahmad's assessment of the military balance and she was full of foreboding about the fate that awaited her younger sister Ghala and her other relatives in Palestine.

Years later, when we lived in Israel, my grandmother repeatedly recalled this scene with a triumphalism all her own. Every year on 15 May the Israeli army put on an Independence Day parade. The parade was an awesome demonstration of military might. Infantry units marched through the streets, accompanied by tanks and artillery pieces, while air force pilots performed acrobatic exercises. My grandmother used to watch this spectacle with evident admiration. To her way of thinking, this newly acquired Jewish military might offered some compensation for the impotence of the Jews in Iraq. "Where are you, Umm Ahmad?" Mouzli would exclaim. "Let us see you put this so-called state between your teeth and crush it."

The 1948 Villages – A New Approach to the Refugee Issue

Jerome M. Segal

Jerome M. Segal is the director of The Peace Consultancy. This article is largely an excerpt from his book, “The Olive Branch From Palestine: The Palestinian Declaration of Independence and the Path Out of the Current Impasse,” University of California Press.



1. In a previous essay, “Palestinians Can Create Their Own Horizon” (*al Quds* - Feb. 17, 2022), I argued the case for UNSCOP-2, that is, going to the UN General Assembly to re-establish UNSCOP (the 1947 United Nations Special Committee on Palestine) to develop a fully detailed plan to resolve all of the permanent status issues. This plan would then be put to a referendum of the Palestinian people, approved in that referendum, then signed by the PLO, and deposited with the UN Secretary General, for transmission to the Israeli Government whenever they decide that peace is more important than more land.

In that essay I made only one mention of the refugee issue, saying that the expected boycott by Israel of the UNSCOP Commission has the advantage that it would “enhance the ability of the commission to consider creative solutions’ to the plight of the refugees while respecting Israel’s demographic concerns, to use a phrase from Yasser Arafat’s *New York Times* 2002 op-ed ‘The Palestinian Vision of Peace.’

In this essay, I want to present what that new approach might be. But first let me make a critical point: There is no way that what I am about to propose could emerge from a negotiations process. While I do think, that in the end it will be acceptable to the Israelis because for the first time there will be a proposal on refugees that does not betray the refugees (yet does not cross Israeli redlines), it will be the first proposal that can with credibility offer, not merely a Palestinian signature on a peace agreement, but real peace. Almost everything ever proposed in the negotiations had a built-in instability because there was no step at all towards justice. The Palestinian sense of injustice done during the Nakba will never be fully relieved, because no Israeli government will ever agree to anything remotely close to what Palestinians believe would be required. However there is a world of difference between what the Israelis have offered in previous

negotiations and what can be attained with new thinking. But it will not emerge through the negotiations. Rather, it has to be put on the table, fully developed by an outside agent, such as UNSCOP, and then approved by a Palestinian referendum, and then, accepted by Hamas, put to the Israelis as a real solution, and as a peace offer from the Palestinian people themselves.

Almost everything ever proposed in the negotiations had a built-in instability because there was no step at all towards justice.

Secondly, without a power new approach to the refugee issue, there is no reason to be confident that the UNSCOP plan will win the critical Palestinian referendum. However, if the UNSCOP plan offers the most powerful plan on refugees, one that goes as far as possible within the reality of Israel as a Jewish-majority state, one can be confident of approval in a referendum.

2. The Village Based Approach to the Refugee Issue

[What follows is an advance excerpt from “The Olive Branch From Palestine: The Palestinian Declaration of Independence and the Path Out of the Current Impasse,” printed by permission of the University of California Press.]

Background

In discussing the refugee issue, the most important distinction to bear in mind, is the difference between the right of return and actual return. UN General Assembly Resolution 194 is the primary basis in international legitimacy for the right of return of the Palestinian refugees. Resolution 194 in its key passage stated:

“the refugees wishing to return to their homes and live at peace with their neighbors should be permitted to do so at the earliest practicable date, and that compensation should be paid for the property of those choosing not to return.”

In speaking of those “wishing to return” the resolution embraced the idea of refugee choice. It did not explicitly use the concept of “rights” but this has been widely understood to mean that refugees have a right to choose whether to return or not to return.

Of importance, the Resolution spoke of a “return to their homes.” For most of the refugees this means a return to their homes in the hundreds of small villages that dotted Palestine before the 1948 war. In almost all cases not only do those homes no longer exist, the villages themselves no longer

exist. As a result of the war, whether because of fear and flight or because of outright expulsion, some 418 villages were depopulated. Then almost all of these 418 villages were bulldozed by Israel. Thus, for most refugees a “return to their homes” must be interpreted as meaning a “return to the places where their homes once stood.” An analysis of the 418 villages shows that only 71 of them were fully built over by Israel. For the most part the village areas, often very small, are today open areas with scattered rubble, often in areas designated as national parks and forests.

If the seven million refugees were allowed to choose whether or not to return, how many might be expected to actually make that choice? How many would actually choose to live in Israel, a Jewish state, rather than to stay where they are, or move to the State of Palestine, or go to other countries such as the United States or to those in Europe, or elsewhere?

No one really knows the answer to that question, and if the refugees were ever given such a choice, much would depend on the specifics involved. The only study of this question of which I am aware was undertaken by Khalil Shikaki in 2002.¹ While his specific numbers cannot, in any sense, be viewed as definitive, they are quite interesting.

Refugees living in Jordan, Lebanon, the West Bank and Gaza were polled with respect to various alternative places of permanent residence. Of those living in Jordan, 5% said they would choose to return and live in Israel. This choice was made by 23% of those in Lebanon, and 13% of those in Gaza and the West Bank. If we assume that those in Syria would choose similar to those in Lebanon, and that those in the rest of the world would choose as did those in Jordan, and then multiply by the current number of refugees in each area, we find that out of 7 million refugees, some 682,000 would choose to actually return to Israel. Roughly speaking, the 2002 study suggests that around 10% of the 7 million, some 700,000 refugees might actually choose to return to live in Israel if all were given the choice, and if compensation plus alternative choices were available.

This is very important, and suggests that in presenting any peace proposal to Israel, some specific number of those who might actually return should be used, rather than any reference to the “right of return” which for Israelis conjures up the image of 7 million refugees flowing into Israel. Palestinian discourse is strongly committed to recognition of Palestinian rights, but the emphasis should not be on a verbalization from Israelis, but on an agreement which make it possible for large numbers to exercise a right of choice.

¹ Khalil Shikaki, REFUGEES' PREFERENCES AND BEHAVIOR IN A PALESTINIAN-ISRAELI PERMANENT REFUGEE AGREEMENT, January-June 2003, <https://www.pcpsr.org/en/node/493>

The Refugee Issue in Negotiations Since 1993

The 1993 Oslo Accord identified the key issues of the conflict that were to be addressed in the permanent status negotiations: Jerusalem, refugees, borders, settlements, and security arrangements. In the twenty-eight years since the White House signing ceremony, there was serious engagement with these issues in only two periods; the negotiations when Ehud Barak was Prime Minister, most importantly the Taba negotiations in January 2001, which followed the Camp David talks in 2000, and secondly, the negotiations between December 2006 and mid-September 2008, when Ehud Olmert was Prime Minister.

In the course of those negotiations, the gap between the positions of the PLO and the Israeli government narrowed considerably on all permanent status issues, except refugees. On refugees, while the gap was narrowed at Taba, it significantly widened in the Olmert negotiations.

At the Camp David negotiations in the summer of 2000, the refugee issue received only limited attention. Israel, unsurprisingly, rejected the idea of a right of return, even in principle, and was prepared to allow the return of only an unspecified, but small, number of returnees, and these only on humanitarian grounds. The Clinton parameters, put forward in December 2000 during the last days of the Clinton Presidency, identified



Former Secretary of State John Kerry stands between Israel's former chief negotiator Tzipi Livni, right, and the late Palestinian chief negotiator Saeb Erekat, after the resumption of Israeli-Palestinian peace talks, July 30, 2013, at the State Department in Washington. (Charles Dharapak/AP)

“five possible final homes for the refugees,” but with respect to the most contentious, admission to Israel, Clinton adopted the Israeli position that this would be determined solely by Israel.

The negotiations at Taba began a few weeks later. The U.S. was not present, and the negotiators took a different tack on refugees. Discussions centered on three sub-issues: the actual return of refugees, compensation for the refugees, and a narrative statement that might satisfy the Palestinian insistence that Israel take responsibility for the refugee problem.

On compensation, the idea of an international fund was accepted, but no specific numbers were agreed to. As to a joint narrative, an effort was made, but no agreement could be reached. The most that Israel would agree to was an Israeli expression of regret for the suffering that the refugees underwent, but no acceptance of responsibility for that suffering.

With respect to the actual return of refugees, rather than insisting that this would be left to Israel, as Clinton had proposed, the Taba negotiators sought agreement on a specific number. Regardless of their affirmation of “the right of return” of the refugees, the Palestinian negotiators never sought nor expected Israeli agreement to the *actual return* of any substantial part of the 6-7 million refugees.

Accounts of the specifics at the Taba negotiations differ somewhat. The report prepared by EU representative Miguel Ángel Moratinos states that there was an Israeli “non-paper” that proposed that 25,000 Palestinian refugees would return over the first three years of a 15 year period. There was no commitment to an additional 25,000 for each of the four remaining three year segments, but if such were the case, the total would have reached 125,000, about 2% of the refugees. This was considerably below what the Palestinians would have accepted. In private conversations, Palestinian negotiators have said that 400,000 (6.6%) would have been “in the ballpark.”²

In the Olmert-Abbas negotiations, the Israeli position shrank to approximately 0%. Abandoning the much larger, even if vaguely defined Israeli proposal at Taba, Olmert proposed that a total of 5,000 refugees return, and he subsequently said that he had been prepared to go to 10,000. There were reports that the Palestinian negotiators had countered with a proposal that 150,000 would return, some 30 times the number Olmert offered.³ Other accounts say that the Palestinians proposed 100,000.⁴ Despite these

² Personal communication to the author, in 2015, from a Palestinian negotiator deeply involved with the refugee issue in the Taba negotiations.

³ <https://electronicintifada.net/blogs/ali-abunimah/palestine-papers-whistleblower-revealed-and-saeb-erekat-responds>

⁴ Ethan Bronner, “Documents Open a Door on Mideast Peace Talks,” *New York Times*, Jan. 24, 2011.

reported sharp declines in Palestinian negotiators' requirements from the Taba level, the Israeli willingness to accept refugees had declined more sharply, and subsequently, Israeli negotiators such as Tzipi Livni asserted that Israel would not accept any returning refugees.

This decline in the Israeli stance to zero returnees was subsequently reflected in the 2014 American effort, led by Secretary of State Kerry, to spell out parameters for permanent status negotiations. Kerry's proposal spoke of four possible destinations for the refugees, the State of Palestine, their current countries of residence, other countries around that world, and in special humanitarian cases, admission into Israel, which "will be decided upon by Israel, without obligation, at its sole discretion."⁵

Regardless of their affirmation of "the right of return" of the refugees, the Palestinian negotiators never sought nor expected Israeli agreement to the actual return.

All of this will not work, not for a peace agreement, and certainly not for attaining a lasting peace. On this most fundamental issue, negotiations not only failed, but going from Taba in 2001 to Olmert in 2008, they moved further from resolution.

Arafat, to his credit, put the matter correctly in a 2002 op-ed which ran in the New York Times, entitled "The Palestinian Vision of Peace."⁶ He wrote, "There are those who claim that I am not a partner in peace. In response, I say Israel's peace partner is, and always has been, the Palestinian people." Addressing the refugee issue he said:

We understand Israel's demographic concerns and understand that the right of return of Palestinian refugees, a right guaranteed under international law and United Nations Resolution 194, must be implemented in a way that takes into account such concerns. However, just as we Palestinians must be realistic with respect to Israel's demographic desires, Israelis too must be realistic in understanding that there can be no solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict if the legitimate rights of these innocent civilians continue to be ignored.

And he correctly stated the problem "no partnership" also recognizes, that "Left unresolved, the refugee issue has the potential to undermine any permanent peace agreement between Palestinians and Israelis." But unlike those who reach the "no Palestinian partner" conclusion, Arafat believed the

⁵ "Exclusive: Obama's Detailed Plans for Mideast Peace Revealed – and How Everything Fell Apart," Amir Tibon, *Haaretz*, June 8, 2017

⁶ Yassir Arafat, "The Palestinian Vision of Peace," *The New York Times*, February 3, 2020.

problem could be solved. He called for “creative solutions to the plight of the refugees while respecting Israel’s demographic concerns,” and it is this reference to “creative solutions” that are sensitive to “Israel’s demographic concerns,” that I have proposed as terms of reference for the UNSCOP-2 Commission.

What Arafat did not see, is that negotiations were not capable of generating such solutions. Today it falls to the Palestinians to put forward those “creative solutions” that both they and most Israelis can accept, and to do so outside negotiations.

Tellingly, Arafat published his “Vision of Peace” article in an American paper, rather than an Israeli one. The focus on the United States and the

This decline in the Israeli stance to zero returnees was subsequently reflected in the 2014 American effort, led by Secretary of State Kerry.

American audience, rather than the Israeli audience is reminiscent of matters discussed earlier with respect to the problem of having the Palestinian Declaration heard by the Israelis, and Arafat’s lack of interest in my proposal that the PLO address the terrorism issue, in ways the Israelis would hear, prior to issuing the Declaration of Independence. It raises a question about the extent to which he ever fully grasped that just as Israel’s partner is the Palestinian people, the Palestinians’ real partner, if they are to have one, is neither the United States nor the Israeli government, but the Israeli people. At its core, the strategic turn the Palestinians must make is to re-center their efforts on this basic. To the Palestinians this comes easily when raising the cost of the occupation is proposed, but far less so, when overcoming “no partnerism” is the issue.

A village-based approach to the refugee issue

The village-based approach has two components. The first is that the refugee issue must be connected to the question of land swaps. Back in 1992, after Prime Minister Shamir was replaced as Prime Minister by Yitzhak Rabin, Shamir said that his intention was to draw out negotiations for ten years during which time a half million Israelis would settle in the West Bank, preventing a Palestinian state. In the course of negotiations, this “creating facts on the ground” strategy was undercut by the idea of land swaps, whereby 70%-80% of the settlers would not have to be forced to return to Israel because the settlements close to the Green Line could be swapped for land inside the Green Line that would come under Palestinian sovereignty. The exact specifications of these swapped areas remains to be resolved in any future negotiations. Palestinian negotiators have sought to

keep the swapped areas as small as possible, and to avoid long fingers of Israeli sovereignty intruding into the West Bank.

On the village-based approach, land swaps would take on a second purpose: transferring to Palestinian sovereignty as many of the 418 villages as might be possible.

In addition to the swapped areas being equal in size, they would also be equal in degree of intrusiveness. If there are Israeli “fingers” going into Palestine, there would be Palestinian “fingers” going into Israel, in order to include more villages. With swaps at roughly 4% of the occupied territory, depending on the extent of agreed mutual intrusiveness, it should be possible for 25-75 villages to come under Palestinian sovereignty. Each of the villages, on average, had in 1948 a population of roughly 900 people, and today is viewed as the area of their homes by about 9,000 refugees. In a few years this will reach 10,000, and for simplicity I will use this number. If we assume that 50 villages are contained in the swapped land, then 500,000 refugees will have the option to choose to return to their homes, which will now be inside Palestine, with the future of those village areas determined by the refugees and the State of Palestine.

Today it falls to the Palestinians to put forward those “creative solutions” that both they and most Israelis can accept, and to do so outside negotiations.

The second part of the village-based approach is that for all of the villages that remain inside Israel, let’s assume this is 368 villages (418 minus 50) the refugees from each village would form a village-committee that would have qualified ownership or managerial authority to determine what happens to their village in the future. With respect to the 71 villages that have been built over, this would be quite limited, perhaps only the installation of an historical plaque on which a village narrative would be written by the refugees and be placed at the site. But for the remaining 297 villages, the homes of 2,970,000 refugees, substantial ownership rights of each village area would be given to its village committee. Being within Israel, these villages would remain under Israeli sovereignty. Within an overall cap, of perhaps 100,000 permanent residences for all 297 villages, the village committees would decide what would happen in their village.

Perhaps there would be 100 villages in which roughly 150 homes for 1,000 refugees would be built, with the remaining villages having guest houses for short-term refugee visits. Or perhaps it would be decided to divide the 100,000 permanent residence slots evenly among the 297 villages, thus building homes in each village for the return of 337 refugees, about 60-65 homes in each village. Many ideas would emerge, and each committee would

make decisions about various degrees of restoration and commemoration depending on the desires of the refugee committee from that village, and negotiations with Israel.

Specifics could include excavating the ruins of the village, restoring cemeteries and mosques, beautification, establishing a guest house for refugee visits or a historical center and so forth. It may even turn out,

In the course of negotiations, this “creating facts on the ground” strategy was undercut by the idea of land swaps.

that most refugees and most village committees will have a preference that new homes not be built in the village areas, but rather that the villages be excavated and preserved as bearing permanent historic witness to the tragedy of the Nakba. This might be termed “the narrative preference” in which it emerges that when given actual control of the village sites, refugees, seeing that return to the agrarian world of 1947 is possible only in the imagination, prefer that villages be a visible narrative of the Nakba, rather than new housing developments. But one way or the other, all of the 4,180,000 refugees connected to the 418 villages, would have the opportunity to re-engage in various ways and make decisions with respect to their home villages. Of these 500,000 would be engaged with villages transferred to Palestine, and 3,680,000 with the villages that remain in Israel.

Beyond the villages, and 100,000 returning to them, I would suggest that a Palestinian peace proposal call for an additional 200,000 actual opportunities to return. This would bring the total number who could return to 300,000. It could be agreed that all of those returning would hold citizenship in Palestine, and would live as permanent residents inside Israel. Thus there would be no impact on Israeli elections.

Moreover, this total number of 300,000 Palestinian refugees returning as permanent residents would be offset by a decline in the number of Palestinian permanent residents currently living in Israel. These are the Palestinians living in East Jerusalem, areas that in the peace proposal, (as in the Clinton Parameters and agreed to by Israel at Taba and in the Olmert negotiations) would become part of Palestine. This current population is also around 300,000, so the proposal would result in zero net growth of Palestinian permanent residents inside Israel.

The proposed actual return of 300,000 refugees is a number that, if Shikaki’s data is relevant, may be sufficient to satisfy the choice of whether to return to ten times that number, to 3 million refugees. When this is added to the 500,000 who would have the option of returning to their homes in the 50 swapped villages, this comes to 3,500,000 with a fulfilled choice of whether to return, roughly 50% of the worldwide refugee population.

To sum up what this approach offers:

- 500,000 refugees would have full right of return to the 50 villages swapped to Palestine.
- 100,000 refugees would be allowed to return to their villages inside Israel.
- 200,000 refugees would be allowed to return to other areas in Israel.
- If the 10% choosing to return ratio is assumed, this would mean 3,000,000 refugees would have a fulfilled choice of returning to Israel.
- 4,180,000 refugees would have qualified ownership rights over their villages (368 of which remaining in Israel).

In total, the proposal offers vastly more than anything ever broached in the negotiations, yet poses no demographic threat to Israel.

Compensation

The compensation issue is enormously complex. It has been an element of every negotiation over the refugee issue, and meaningful levels of compensation for those refugees unable or not choosing to exercise an option to return is a critical part of any solution to the refugee issue. Moreover the higher the level of compensation for those not returning, the lower the percentage choosing to actually return.

Palestinians have claimed compensation for multiple harms, but the most straight-forward claim is simply to be compensated for their property which was taken from them, either directly for those expelled, or indirectly from others who were simply not allowed to return once the 1948 war ended.

The issue cannot be addressed here, but I would offer a simple suggestion: Israel should provide to refugees compensation equal to 1% of Israeli's present GDP, annually, over a period of 100 years, adjusted upwards for inflation. The starting point, 1% of current GDP, is not an extensive burden, and if it brings peace, it will be more than offset in savings on military expenditures. Israel's current GDP is roughly \$400 billion, thus 1% is around \$4 billion. This figure is also roughly what the United States provides in aid to Israel each year. Distributed to 1 – 1.5 million refugee families, this would be about \$3,000 a year, enough to make a very substantial impact for most refugees. The proposed 100 year time frame provides the kind of permanence to a family that land ownership once did, and is supportive of "a century of peace." In total, over a century, \$400 billion (in real terms) in compensation would be paid out. Yet with Israeli economic growth, this \$4 billion a year, even adjusted upwards for inflation, will be an ever

Israel should provide to refugees compensation equal to 1% of Israeli's present GDP.

smaller portion of Israeli national income; by year 75, it would be around 1/8 of 1% of GDP.

The other elements of the UN peace proposal would likely be along the lines explored in the Taba negotiations, the Olmert round, and the secret parameters agreed to by Palestinian President Abbas and Labor Party leader Isaac Herzog, prior to the 2015 Israeli elections. (Herzog was recently sworn in as Israel's largely ceremonial President).

Essentially:

- Adjusted by land swaps the territory of the State of Palestine would be equal to that which Israel occupied as a result of the 1967 war.
- There would be a Palestinian capital in East Jerusalem.
- Israel would not have exclusive sovereignty over the historic walled city of inner Jerusalem, and the Temple Mount/Haram al Sharif would be jointly administered and also not under exclusive Israeli sovereignty.
- The Palestinian state would be non-militarized, with special provisions to ensure Israeli security.

Finally, to strengthen the appeal of this proposal for the Israelis the Palestinians could offer permanent residence inside the State of Palestine to those Israeli settlers living outside the settlements that would be included in the land swaps. Overall, there are roughly 450,000 settlers living in the West Bank, and if 70% were encompassed within land swaps, then 135,000 remain, around 30,000 families. Some would choose to move back to Israel, some would choose to relocate to settlements covered by the land swaps, and an option of permanent residence, under Palestinian sovereignty, can be offered to the remainder, perhaps no more than 5,000 families, thus avoiding the forced evacuations that characterized Israel's withdrawal from Gaza.

Over the years there has been substantial polling of both Israelis and Palestinians with respect to a peace agreement along these lines (minus the refugee proposal). At times majority support was found on both sides, and if not, then at least solid minority support. On the Palestinian side the greatest issue was that little was offered on the refugee issue. The addition of the refugee proposal just detailed will very significantly increase Palestinian support. If it is presented to the Israeli public after having been approved in a Palestinian referendum and after Hamas has been brought on board in virtue of the referendum, and after the linkage to relations with Iran has been made visible, it will find majority support among Israeli citizens. And coupled with international support, especially from the American people, it will bring forth an Israeli partner, a future Israeli government that also says "YES."

Roundtable

75 Years Israel/75 Years Nakba

*On March 22, 2023, **Palestine-Israel Journal** convened an internal Zoom round-table on the topic of “75 Years Israel/75 Years Nakba.” The Palestinian speakers were former Ambassador Dr. **Ahmad Soboh** and writer **Firas Yaghi**. The Israeli speakers were historian **Adam Raz** and filmmaker/journalist **Noam Sheizaf**. The moderator was **Daoud Kuttab**, an award winning Palestinian journalist and former Ferris Professor of Journalism at Princeton University and a regular analyst with Al Monitor and Arab News. Participants from the PIJ editorial board were Former Ambassador **Ilan Baruch**, Prof. **Galit Hasan-Rokem**, Dr. **Gershon Baskin**, Prof. **Frances Raday**, Dr. **Yudith Oppenheimer**, **Suhair Freitekh**, Former Ambassador **Alon Liel**, **Ziad AbuZayyad** and **Hillel Schenker**.*

Daoud Kuttab: Since this round-table is about “75 Years Israel/75 Years Nakba” let’s start the discussion by looking back at 1948. I’ll begin with what 1948 means for me. I am part of the 1967 generation, I was 12 years old, when what we call the ‘Naksa’, happened, but everything about 1948 is connected to my dad and my family. My dad and my family lived in the Musrara neighborhood, in East Jerusalem. My dad left for Zarka city in Jordan when the conflict began. His brother followed him to Zarka, and he told him: “don’t worry about the house, I locked it, It’s going to be safe.” And of course, it was not safe. They became refugees although they never lived in a refugee camp. The sad story is that my Aunt Hoda, the mother of Mubarak Awad who some of you know, and Alex and Bishara Awad. They also lived in Musrara and they chose not to leave. Their father, my aunt’s husband, was killed as he went to get food and was buried in Musrara. And my aunt who had become widow had to raise seven very young children. Bishara Awad just wrote a very powerful story of what happened to him. I would like everybody to give us a personal story, **what does 1948 mean to you?**



Daoud Kuttab

Ahmad Soboh: Good afternoon, everybody. I’m 70 years old, a retired diplomat. I was ambassador to several countries, starting with Spain, Portugal, Mexico, Brazil and Morocco. Now I’m the Director General of the Yasser Arafat Foundation in Ramallah. Let me start by saying that the Nakba and the 48 story is part of the heritage of all of us. My grandfather

and father were expelled from **Umm al-Shawf**¹, a small town in Haifa district, close to ‘**A’ra and Ar’ara**’² and they went via **Umm al-Fahm**³ to Jenin. I was born in Jenin after Al-Nakba. But I remember the stories of my father. Two years ago, when my father died, he put in my hands ‘*the coshan*’, the documents of the property of the lands of my grandfather and the grandfather of my father. And I had the opportunity to see exactly where those properties are, and visited them in a settlement called ‘**Givat Nilli**’ today, constructed in the same side of the destroyed Umm al-Shawf old town. When I came back with the Palestinian Authority in 1994, the first thing my father recommended was to register myself and my family with UNRWA, not to get the aid, but to have the card, the document that we are refugees, and that we have our rights inside Israel in our hometown. This is the story that all of us are sharing.

Galit Hasan-Rokem: I was born in 1945 in Helsinki, Finland, and the first refugees I knew about were almost half a million of **Karelian Finnish refugees**⁴ who moved from the Soviet Karelia into Finland after the wars that happened between Finland and the Soviet Union. I remember 1948, very vaguely. I was three, but I remember seeing a movie with the big head of Chaim Weizmann, the first president of the country, mentioning the founding of the State of Israel. In 1956 my mother died, and my father then moved with us from Finland to Israel in 1957. And I became aware of Palestinian neighbors through the youth movement, I joined **Hashomer Hatzair**⁵ in the late 50s. I lived north of Haifa in a place called **Kiryat Haim**, and we visited many nearby Palestinian villages and towns in the Galilee. There was a parallel youth movement belonging to the Mapam party, with whom we interacted very much. I knew Palestinians. I was not strongly aware about the refugees, but knew that there were places that had been

¹ **Umm al-Shawf** or Umm ash Shauf was a Palestinian Arab village located 29.5 km south of Haifa, on the sloping section of Wadi al-Marrah. It was depopulated as a result of a military assault carried by Etzel- a Zionist paramilitary organization-between May 12–14, just before the outbreak of the 1948 war. **Moshav of Givat Nili** was founded in 1953 on the village’s land.

² **A’ra and Ar’ara**’ Arab towns in the Wadi Ara region in northern Israel.

³ **Umm al-Fahm** is a city located 20 kilometers (12 miles) northwest of Jenin in the Haifa District of Israel.

⁴ **Karelian Finnish refugees** as a result of the 1940 Moscow Peace Treaty that concluded the Winter War, Finland ceded a portion of Finnish Karelia along with other territories to the Soviet Union. As a result, about 410,000 people, or 12% of Finland’s population, were relocated to the remaining parts of Finland.

⁵ **Hashomer Hatzair** 1913–ongoing. A Zionist-socialist youth movement founded in Galicia (today’s Poland). Established what was the Mapam party, following the migration to Israel and founding of kibbutzim by many members in the early 1920s. Its members were heavily involved in Jewish resistance in the ghettos of Nazi Eastern Europe including Mordechai Anielewicz, leader of the Jewish Combat Organization during the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. Active internationally.

Palestinian towns or villages that had been destroyed and you could see the ruins. Sometimes even in kibbutzim like **Bar'am**⁶ you could see nearby the villages. And I have a very strong experience of demonstrating against the Military Government over the Arabs in Israel until 1966. I was even arrested, painting in big letters on the police station of 'Kiryat Haim' '*Yevutal Ha'memshal Ha'tzva'i*' meaning 'terminate the Military Government'. And I have a very strong memory of the months following the abolition of the Military Government, between 66 and the beginning of the occupation in 67, a couple of months when Israel was almost, almost democratic.

Daoud: Adam Raz is a historian from **Akivot Institute for Israeli-Palestinian Conflict Research**.⁷ He is the author of "Kfar Qassam Massacre: A Political Biography" (2018), "Looting of Arab Property During the War of Independence" (2020) and "The Military Rule, 1948-1966" among other books, Adam, what does 1938 mean to you?

Adam: Well, I was born almost 40 years after the 48 war. But most of my research in recent years it's about 48 about Nakba, it's about the '*Yom Ha'tzmaout*'-Independence Day, etc. I'm from a very leftish Zionist family. Every year we celebrate Israeli Independence Day with a barbecue. And my grandmother, my grandfather, my uncles all fought in the war. My grandfather and grandmother were in the **Palmach**.⁸ I was raised on those stories. Until two years ago, my neighbor was Muhammad Naser, a good friend. We lived door by door, his family and my family for I think 8 years, and the two families become almost one. Mohammad is a sort of an uncle for my children.

Daoud: Where do you live?

Adam: Beit Berl, near Tira, Taybeh, Kufr Qasem. It's a 'No-man's-land' so Palestinians and Jews live there together. For 7-8 years, we met every day, drank coffee, etc. And every year, only one day, Mohammad is not coming to my house. It became strange for my children, and they ask me every time why Mohammad is not coming on Independence Day. I try to explain to them the situation of a Palestinian and a Jew who have different

⁶ Kibbutz Bar'am is located in the Upper Galilee on the northern border of Israel and Lebanon. In 1949, the Palmach soldiers founded it as a secular kibbutz of the Hashomer Hatzair movement. The Kibbutz was founded near the ruins of the Palestinian destroyed village of Kufr Baram, from which it derives its name.

⁷ <https://www.akevot.org.il/en>

⁸ The Palmach acronym for *Plugot Mahatz*, "Strike Companies" was the elite fighting force of the Haganah, the underground army of the Yishuv (Jewish community) during the period of the British Mandate for Palestine.

memories of the same events. And every year on this specific day that we don't meet, I think it is the most important day for me to think about the Nakba and about the Palestinians.

Daoud: Thank you very much Adam. Firas Yaghi is a writer and political analyst from Jerusalem specializing in social society and elections. He has an MA degree in regional and Israeli studies from Al-Quds University and is a former senior official of the Palestinian Legislative Council. Firas and I are on different WhatsApp groups, so I'm following him.



Firas Yaghi

Firas Yaghi: I am from a refugee family. My father and my grandfather are from **al-Masmiyya al-Kabira**⁹, near Lod, Ramleh, and Askalan, and we were expelled from there by force in 1948 to Hebron, then were moved to Aqbat Jaber refugee camp near Jericho in the West Bank. I was born in Hebron. Nakba is very important for us because we lived the Nakba, because we remember all of my father's stories about al-Masmiyya. Today the senior officers of the Israeli pilots live in **al-Masmiyya**.¹⁰ And I think also there is an airport.

Daoud: What part of Israel?

Firas: It is in the south, near Lod, Ramleh, near **Kiryat Malachi**.¹¹ The people of my village worked in agriculture, especially watermelons and corn. Many people from the West Bank, especially from Ramallah, used to come before 1948 to work for us in cultivating our land. We have many stories about al-Masmiyya.

Daoud: Tell us the most dramatic story.

Firas: The most dramatic story was the story of my fathers' cousin. Few days after my family and relatives arrived to Hebron, they did not have something to eat. Then some of them including my father and his cousin decided to penetrate back to their houses and bring some wheat and corn

⁹ **al-Masmiyya al-Kabira** was a Palestinian village in the Gaza Subdistrict, located 41 kilometers (25 mi) northeast of Gaza. The village on the southern coastal plain was bordered by a wadi to the north. It was located at a major road junction to the city of Al Majdal in the southwest, al Ramla to the northeast and the Jerusalem –Jaffa highway. al-Masmiyya was mentioned by the Syrian Sufi traveler Mustafa al-Bakri al-Siddiqi who journeyed in the region in the mid –eighteens century. (Zochrot Website)

¹⁰ Two Jewish settlements, **Bnei Re'em** and **Hatzav**, were established on **al-Masmiyya al-Kabira**'s land in 1949, with **Yinon** also founded on the village's former land in 1952. In 1976, another new village, **Ahva** was established on its land.

¹¹ **Kiryat Malakhi** is a city in the Southern District of Israel, 17 kilometres (11 mi) from Ashkelon.

from what they left behind them in their houses. When they tried to go to our house, they were seen by the Israelis who started shooting at them. My fathers' cousin and his camel were shot dead, and the rest of the men succeeded to run away but could not bring anything from their houses.

We had corn and wheat on our land, and my father and his cousin went there to try to bring them to their family so that they would have something to eat, because there was no work at that time. We don't know exactly what happened, and his wife did not believe that he was killed and she spent 15 years waiting for him, hoping that he would return, but he never did. She was my aunt.

Daoud: Noam Sheizaf is co-director with Idit Avrahami of the documentary film: **H2: The Occupation Lab (2022)** which described the H2 area in Hebron as a model for the occupation as a whole, and was a founding executive director and editor in Chief of the +972 online magazine which provides independent commentary and news from Israel and Palestine. I read it all the time; Noam, tell us what 1948 means to you.

Noam Sheizaf: I was born in 1974, and I'm part of the generation of Israelis that grew up without knowing the word Nakba at all. For us it was Independence Day. But in the 90s, we started to hear this word and we started to hear it through the work of the "New Historians," and through books that were published in Hebrew, among them books by Raja Shehadeh, Mohammed al-Asa'ad and other testimonies of the Nakba. The Nakba started appearing in our cultural and historical world. At the same time, we used to go on school trips and saw the ruins of Palestinian villages all over. I live in central Tel Aviv, right near Rabin Square, and about 800 meters away were the last ruins of the village **al-Mas'udiyya (Summayl)**¹², on a hill in Tel Aviv where Jews live, but the original houses still existed. Today there is a big hole in the ground where a Tel Aviv Tower, is about to be built. What we experience in Israel is a dual movement of a concentrated effort because of economic and political reasons, to erase the Nakba and to erase the memory of the Nakba, which goes hand in hand with the general displacement of Palestinians all across 48. On the other hand, the Nakba continues to appear like a ghost or shadow



Noam Sheizaf

¹² al-Mas'udiyya (Summayl) The village was situated on sandy, flat terrain on the central coastal plain, 1.5 km east of the seashore and 1.5 km south of the al-'Awja river. It was 5 km north of Jaffa. There are no settlements on village lands, but the expansion of Tel Aviv has encroached on them. All that remains of the village is one deserted house that belonged to Muhammad Baydas. (Zochrot Website)

that's looming over the Zionist project and over Israeli culture and Jewish culture through the work of many Israelis, like Adam more recently, and the "New Historians" before him. As Jewish Israelis, this is the conflict that we feel right now.

Daoud: Ziad AbuZayyad, we met in the editing room of the *Al-Fajr* newspaper. I always learn from your journalism. But I'd like you to speak about 1948, the Nakba from your perspective. What do you know, what do you think of it? What does it mean generally?



Ziad AbuZayyad

Ziad: I was born in April 1940. So when the war took place, I was about 8 years old, I live in Ezareya in the eastern side of Jerusalem, and I have some memories about visiting West Jerusalem before the war, but during the war. I remember a few things. I remember that, there is a Russian convent near my home, and during the war it was turned into an emergency hospital. And I remember how they were bringing wounded and dead civilians, to treat them in the hospital. I remember one incident that a man was shot in his arm while he was driving his car, and he was so courageous and stubborn that he kept driving his car until he came to the hospital, and when he stopped and tried to get out of his car, he fainted. We were small boys in front of the hospital, just watching the victims and the people who brought them to the hospital. I remember the refugees coming from different villages (**al-Qastal**¹³, **Suba**¹⁴, **Bayt Nattif**¹⁵) to our small village, with different ways of dressing themselves, especially the women. In each part of Palestine they have their own, different folklore and clothes. I remember that these things were new to me, were very exciting, and my village was overwhelmed with refugees. But gradually some of them started to go to other refugee camps and a small number remained in our village until now and became part of the village.

Daoud: Hillel, can tell us what the 1948 Nakba means to you.

¹³ **Al-Qastal** was a Palestinian village located eight kilometers west of Jerusalem and named for a Crusader castle located on the hilltop. Used in 1948 during the War as a military base by the Army of the Holy War, virtually all of its residents fled during the fighting and the village was eventually captured by the Palmach.

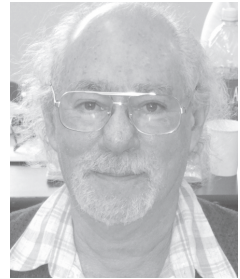
¹⁴ **Suba** was a Palestinian Arab village west of Jerusalem that was depopulated and destroyed in 1948. The site of the village lies on the summit of a conical hill called Tel Tzova, or Jabal Suba, rising 769 meters above sea level, and it was built on the ruins of a Crusader castle.

¹⁵ **Bayt Nattif** was a Palestinian Arab village, located some 20 kilometers (straight line distance) southwest of Jerusalem, midway on the ancient Roman road between Beit Guvrin and Jerusalem, and 21 km northwest of Hebron. The village lay nestled on a hilltop, surrounded by olive groves and almonds, with woodlands of oak and carobs overlooking Wadi es-Sunt (the Elah Valley) to its south.

Hillel: I was born in an urban kibbutz in New York City.

Daoud: Were there kibbutzim in America?

Hillel: Yes, there were seven urban kibbutzim, of the **Hashomer Hatzair**, and **Habonim**¹⁶ youth movements. They had to stay together during World War II because they planned to go and establish a kibbutz and couldn't do it until after the war because the British White Paper prevented Jews from going to Mandatory Palestine. Although I was born before 1948, I have no memory of the establishment of the State of Israel. I never heard the term Nakba, though I knew there was a refugee problem. In 1962, when Golda Meir was foreign minister, she came to the UN and agreed to meet with representatives of the Zionist youth movements. I was designated to ask a question on behalf of Hashomer Hatzair and I asked her "As a goodwill gesture, why doesn't the government of Israel express a readiness to allow 100,000 refugees to return to the State of Israel?" She got very angry, and shouted at me. It turns out she had been asked that question by the Saudi delegate at the UN General Assembly meeting that morning, and didn't expect to encounter the same question on her home turf.



Hillel Schenker

The first time I met Palestinians was when I came to live on **Kibbutz Barkai**¹⁷, near the West Bank border in 1963. On the hill on top of the kibbutz was what we all called the "Arab House," the house of the **Effendy**¹⁸ who had owned the whole area. He fled to **Jericho** in the Jordanian-controlled West Bank in 1948, and when asked by two Arabic-speaking members of the kibbutz to come for a visit after 1967, he welcomed the invitation, but never came. When I was head of the younger generation on the kibbutz we had very good relations with the Palestinian neighbors who did not become refugees, in **A'ra**, **Ar'ara** and **Kufr Qare'**. What I particularly remember is the village of **Barta'a** which was divided between Israel and the Jordanian controlled West Bank. From 1948 to 1967 people could not meet their own relatives on the other side of the border.

¹⁶ **Habonim Dror** Merger of Dror (est. 1915) and Habonim Union (1929) in 1980. Associated with Labour Zionism, the United Kibbutz Movement and Labour Party. Dror members were among the leaders of the Warsaw ghetto uprising. Active internationally. A secular youth movement.

¹⁷ **Kibbutz Barkai** was founded on 10 May 1949 in the Wadi Ara area that was controlled by the Iraqi forces in 1948 and handed over to Israel when the Green Line border was arranged as part of the April 3, 1949 armistice agreement.

¹⁸ Effendi or effendy: originally from is a title of nobility meaning sir, lord or master, especially in the Ottoman Empire and the Caucasus.

Daoud: Ilan, what are your memories of 1948?

Ilan Baruch: I can draw a line between two points in my life. I was born in Jerusalem. I lived in **Givat Shaul**¹⁹ with my German-born parents, who immigrated to Palestine before the war.



Ilan Baruch

Givat Shaul is where German born Jews who left Germany in haste for their lives lived. They had no interest in Zionism. For them this was a safe place to go to. I was haunted by the harsh stories of my parents about what happened at nearby **Deir Yassin**²⁰. I remember myself, deeply worried for my parents because of a fear of retribution. It was the world of a

3–4-year-old child. At the time the east side of Jerusalem was not Palestine, but Jordan. And as children, we used to go to the Mandelbaum Gate and stick our faces through the railings and watch the privileged few that were allowed to cross over to a land that was for us a complete mystery. And then, fast forward, I'll jump over my Hashomer Hatzair experiences. I was deeply moved by the request of my director general in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the late **Uri Savir**²¹, to launch and run the Palestinian Autonomy desk. In October, 1995, I was asked to travel to Gaza, A whole new world was opened to me, all the sentiments, frustrations and hopes of my Palestinian counterparts. Of course, I had to be very careful where I went. I was sort of escorted by **Nabil Sha'ath's**²² driver and bodyguards to the headquarters of the newly born Palestinian Authority, and I was introduced to a guy that was supposed to be my counterpart on the Israel desk in the Palestinian Authority. A man I admire and have huge respect for who was my teacher on anything I know about Palestine, **Sufian AbuZaida**.²³ Very often he was speaking on Israeli media and was the face of Palestine for many Israelis. When I was in Gaza, in his home in Jabalia and with the

¹⁹ **Givat Shaul** is a neighborhood in West Jerusalem.

²⁰ **Deir Yassin** was a Palestinian Arab village of around 600 inhabitants about 5 kilometers (3.1 mi) west of Jerusalem. Deir Yasin was the site of the bloodiest atrocity of the 1948 war. Although the massacre was carried out by the Jewish Irgun Zvai Leumi (IZL) and Stern Gang (LEHI), the occupation of the village fell within the general framework of the Haganah's Operation Nachshon, (Zochrot website).

²¹ **Uri Savir** (7 January 1953 – 14 May 2022) was an Israeli diplomat and politician. He was Israel's chief negotiator for the Oslo Accords and served as a Member of Knesset (MK) from 1999 to 2001.

²² **Nabil Shaath**, born in 1938 in Safad (in present-day Israel), Nabil Sha'ath has been a top Palestinian official for decades, serving as foreign minister, ambassador to the UN, planning minister, and in many other posts. He has been in the Fatah Party Central Committee and the Palestine Legislative Council.

²³ **Dr. Sufian Abu Zaida** is a senior Palestinian leader, a member of Fatah and the PLO, and a former Minister of Prisoner Affairs at the Palestinian Authority.

other individuals that I met and interacted with had a huge impact on me and on whatever I think, know and believe in about Israel, Palestine and the Palestinian future today.

Daoud: Thank you Ilan, I was among the journalists who you invited to the Foreign Ministry once or twice.

Daoud: Yudith, it's your turn.

Yudith Oppenheimer: I was born in Haifa, raised in my early childhood in a religious kibbutz “**Chofetz Chaim**,” (Desirer of Life) which is five minutes’ drive from **al-Masmiyya** that was mentioned. When I was six my family moved to Jerusalem and I grew up in **Katamon**²⁴, between Katamon and the Greek Colony. The Nakba was there all around me. But it was only many years later when I became a Jerusalem activist and researcher that I began wondering about the presence of the Nakba. My family lived in a block of houses built in the early 60s. All around us there were beautiful Arab houses, populated by Israelis of course. And there was no secret that they belonged to Palestinians who fled from the country during the 1948 war. And yet it was never there. It was never actually present. The stories were never told. What actually happened before that was not part of the way we thought about our environment. It’s only when I actually started researching about Jerusalem before and during my PhD, that I learned the stories, that there were all of a sudden faces and stories to these building, not only in Katamon and the Greek Colony, but also in **Talbiyeh**²⁵ and **Baka’a**²⁶ and all of these places all around Jerusalem. I often think about it. How can you actually know things and know nothing about them? We are aware to some extent, that you know the history, you



Yudith Oppenheimer

²⁴ **Katamon** or **Qatamon** is a neighborhood in south-central Jerusalem. The neighborhood was established in the early 1900s, shortly before World War I as a wealthy, predominantly Palestinian Christian neighborhood.

²⁵ **Talbiyeh** is an upscale neighborhood in Jerusalem, between Rehavia and Katamon. It was built in the 1920s and 1930s on land purchased from the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem. Most of the early residents were affluent Christian Palestinians who built elegant homes with Renaissance, Moorish and Arab architectural motifs, surrounded by trees and flowering gardens.

²⁶ **Baka** was established in the late 19th century after the completion of the Jerusalem Railway Station. The station created the nucleus of a commercial center that eventually attracted mostly wealthy Muslim, Christian, and Armenian families from the Old City, who built mansions there in the 1920s. During the 1948 War, the neighborhood was left on the Israeli (western) side of the dividing line between West Jerusalem and East Jerusalem. Its population changed, as was the case with many neighborhoods on both sides of the dividing line. After 1948, many streets in Baka were renamed for the Twelve Tribes of Israel: Judah, Issachar, Levi, Zevulun, Reuven, Shimon, Gad, Ephraim, Menashe, Benjamin, Dan, Asher and Naphtali.

think that you know the history, but you don't know anything about it. And to many Jerusalemites, to Israelis in general, this is still the case.



Alon Liel

Alon Liel: I think my story is not very different, but still unique, I think I didn't speak with a Palestinian or with an Arab-Israeli until my mid-20s. I grew up in Tel Aviv. My parents were capitalists and I don't think we can define them as Zionists, I knew nothing about the conflict. My high school was a relatively right-wing school, at least the headmaster was. We never ever were told, not only about the Palestinian people, even about the Arabs in Israel. I was living in the northern part of Tel-Aviv, I didn't see them, didn't meet them. When I joined the army when I was eighteen, and the enemy was Egypt, we were told a lot about Egypt. And in 1967, we fought the Egyptians. I think the first time I saw Palestinians was when I entered Jordan with a tank to the city of Karameh.²⁷

Daoud: We were celebrating that yesterday ...

Alon: Yes, you were celebrating, and we were not celebrating. I was an officer in the armored units and there was shooting all over Karameh. So I think the first Palestinian I ever saw, I was shooting at. ...

Daoud: The Jordanians say they were the bigger force.

Alon: The Jordanians hit my tank, and I was very badly injured. It took me half a year to recover. When I went to the university, in the cafeteria I started speaking with students from the extreme left **Matzpen**.²⁸ This was the first time I met such arguments, and then Golda Meir said there is no Palestinian people in 1968. Bezalel Smotrich said the same thing just two days ago. And I remember, in the cafeteria people arguing if there is a 'Palestinian people'. And I had no idea about what the Palestinian people was. Nothing, we had no such component in our education system. Then I joined the foreign ministry, and then gradually you start hearing things. I think the change was when I studied at the London School of Economics. I was already in the ministry. I took a leave, and I realized some people

²⁷ **Al-Karameh** is a town in west-central Jordan, near the Allenby Bridge which spans the Jordan River. The town was the location of a 15-hour military engagement between the Israeli Army and combined forces of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and the Jordanian Armed Forces (JAF) on 21 March 1968, during the War of Attrition.

²⁸ **Matzpen** is the name of a revolutionary socialist and anti-Zionist organization, founded in Israel in 1962, which was active until the 1980s. Its official name was the Socialist Organization in Israel, but it became better known as Matzpen after its monthly publication.

are hating me. And I still didn't understand why people are hating me. Only I think in the mid-80s, when Shimon Peres, and Yossi Belin came to the ministry and we started meeting Palestinians that I started getting the picture. Imagine, wow. One anecdote about Sufian AbuZaideh, in 1996. I went abroad with Sufian AbuZaideh, three Palestinians and three Israelis, and in Germany I took Sufian to the house where my mother grew up in Freiburg-Germany, it was a late evening 10:30, and the neighbors knew my grandparents, and even knew my mother, and said this is your house, and Sufian came to me and said: What are you doing? You have a house here, go back, what are you doing in Israel. We joked about it. I think it was only in my late 30s that I started realizing what the whole story is about.

Gershon Baskin: When I was 16 years old, I had already decided that Israel was my home, even though I was living in a very comfortable suburban life outside of New York City. I had some connection to Israel, I got very involved in a Zionist youth movement and I spent a year in Israel in kibbutz **Ein Harod**²⁹, and half a year in Jerusalem, and I spent a lot of time wandering around the country. When I got back to go to university before emigrating to Israel, I came to understand that



Gershon Baskin

there was a whole part of Israel that I did not understand and it was about the Palestinians, and I went to seek out understanding. The first Palestinian I actually met was **Zuhdi Labib Terzi**³⁰, who was the PLO ambassador in the United Nations, an elderly diplomatic gentleman originally from Jerusalem, who I and two friends went to talk to naively to suggest that the PLO should recognize Israel, to accept the two-state solution. This was in 1975, and so it was quite early, Terzi's response to us at that time was: "over my dead body," you Jews have no place taking our land. You stole our land. You should go back to where you came from. You shouldn't come to Israel. It's not your land of Palestine. It was quite a disappointing experience for me, because I already knew at that point that when I would immigrate to Israel, I wanted to dedicate my life to trying to bridge gaps between Jews and Arabs or Israelis and Palestinians. But I didn't really have anyone to talk to. So, when I did finally move to Israel in 1978, I went to Kibbutz Barkai where I met Hillel the first time, and in the end of 1978 I moved to

²⁹ **Ein Harod** is a kibbutz in northern Israel near Mount Gilboa. Founded in 1921, it became the center of Mandatory Palestine's kibbutz movement, hosting the headquarters of the largest kibbutz organization, HaKibbutz HaMeuhad.

³⁰ **Zuhdi Labib Terzi** (20 February 1924 – 1 March 2006) served as the first Palestinian Ambassador to the United Nations from 1974 to 1991.

Kufr Qare' in Wadi Ara, and I spent two years living in Kufr Qare'. The story of the Nakba is not only the story of those who became refugees, it's also the story of people stayed. In the two years that I lived in Kufr Qare', I visited more than 500 homes in the village. I documented my visits, and more often than not, I would ask people to tell me their family stories. I heard hundreds of stories of the Nakba. It became part of the understanding for me about this country that I was living in. And it created for me a sense of seeking to understand the political geography of where I am living. I learned from people in the village how to recognize when I was traveling around the country, a place that had been a Palestinian village and was no longer there. One of my good friends in Kufr Qare' married her cousin who lived in the Askar refugee camp in Nablus. After she got married, they invited me to come and spend a weekend with them. This was in 1980, and I spent a weekend in the Askar refugee camp, a surreal experience for me. I lived first-hand the stories that I heard from people in the camp, and I kept contact with these people. I think ever since I've been involved in trying to help to build bridges and resolve this conflict. The Nakba, has been part of the awareness that I live with all the time. I think it's very important for people talk about their experiences in their past, and it's important for us to try to understand that.



Suhair Freitekh

Suhair Freitekh: My story with the Nakba is different. I was born in Nablus, and when I was still very young, I used to watch people gathering every month to get packages of food and clothes. I wanted to know why these people were gathering here close to our house, and there was a place named UNRWA that used to distribute packages of food and clothes. I asked mama, why these people are gathering here and getting food? Why don't we go there and get food also like them? My mother was shocked, and she felt afraid. She said, oh my God, may God forbid to be like them. So, I asked why? She was very scared, as if she was going to lose her house at that time. She said, these people had lost their houses and they are not in their towns, they live in camps, they are poor, all kinds of words that made me feel who did this to them? She said the Jews. Who are the Jews? She said do you see the soldiers in the streets of Nablus who shoot here and there? These are the Jews. I became very afraid when I saw any soldier in the street. I feared that they would come and take us out of our house. The image here came to my head, I want to understand what they did to my people and where

are these people now? I started to visit the camps, and to get to know them more, and work voluntary in collecting oral history and things from there. The Nakba just came to my mind, and I start to feel that, yes, there is a catastrophe there. There's a Nakba. So, this is my story with 1948.

Frances Raday: I think the stories we've heard, the personal stories, are far more important than mine. I grew up with the knowledge of the Holocaust and, the more I read about the Holocaust, the more I became convinced that the way forward was universality and equality beyond religious, ethnic or racial boundaries. I went to the London School of Economics and, after I graduated, I had a very well paid job in London. I



Frances Raday

decided that this was too privileged and that we the privileged English, owed the Africans, whom we had colonized, to share our educational privilege there, so I applied to the Ministry of Overseas Development and I went to lecture at the University of East Africa in Dar al-Salam, in Tanzania. The reason I chose it was because of **Julius Nyerere**³¹, who I thought was an outstanding leader. Having read **Franz Fanon**, my first move in my quest for equality was anti-colonialism, post-colonialism and a desire to compensate, to put things right. When I was there the Six-Day War took place. The reaction to the Six-Day War amongst my very left-wing colleagues, neo-Marxist, and New Leftists, was very hostile to Israel when it won the war. And I did not understand that. I found it tragic in view of the history of the Holocaust of which I was aware. I was not aware of the Nakba. I was only aware of the Holocaust and the creation of Israel in the wake of the Holocaust. Then I decided that instead of going to Oxford where I had been promised the place of a junior fellow, I would spend some time in Israel. I would contribute to Israel becoming or staying the kind of socialist country for justice between peoples which I dreamt should be in this new post- Holocaust state for a people who had suffered as victims. I was convinced that that was the way forward and I thought actually that would be a very widely accepted way forward for Israelis. Over the years, I learned that this was not a shared conviction amongst Israel's Jews and Arabs too. Talking to you today when we're faced with such a catastrophic worsening of xenophobia, racism, move toward apartheid, discrimination against Arabs and women in Israel openly by the coalition government, I

³¹ **Julius Kambarage Nyerere** (13 April 1922 – 14 October 1999) was a Tanzanian anti-colonial activist, politician, and political theorist. He governed Tanganyika as prime minister from 1961 to 1962 and then as president from 1962 to 1964, after which he led its successor state, Tanzania, as president from 1964 to 1985.

try not to despair at the failure to adopt the universalism of human rights as the only sane basis for conducting our lives together.

Daoud: Thank you everybody for the fabulous opening round. As a journalist, I deal with words and I recorded without your knowledge all kinds of words that were used. I want to ask our main speakers, Firas, Dr. Soboh, Adam and Noam, if they can comment on the following terms. What is the politically correct term, should we have a single term or should we agree on different terms, let me give you a list. We heard the terms: *Jews and Israelis*, we had *Arabs and Jews*, we had *Israeli Arabs* and *Arab Israelis*. And I remember when I was working on the Sesame Street program with Israelis and Palestinian from Nazareth they were saying: "Don't use the word Israeli Arabs. We are Palestinian citizens of Israel, not Palestinians, not Israeli Arabs." So, in Jordan they say *Arabs of 1948*. We heard the word *Six-Day War*. Which the Arabs don't use - the Arabs say *67-war*, or they say *Naksa* which means setback, *Nakba* means a catastrophe. And also there is *Nakba* and there's *Independence Day*, or the Hebrew word for it '*Yom Ha'atzmaout*' somebody said it. Also, in the Arab world they don't say the word Israel, they say Zionist entity. All these terms are about our conflict, our people, our region. And I would like to start with Firas, Adam, Noam and Dr. Soboh. **What do you think of terminology? What term should we use? What term should we not use, and why?**

Firas: These terms are something real, happening on the land. It is history, and it is also the present. We still use these words. We do not recognize what Zionism wants, their project on the Palestinian land. I don't want just to speak about history, I want to speak about the present and the future. We are living here now, Palestinians. The Palestinians are Arabs, Muslims and Christians inside Israel or in the occupied territories. We also have Jews living in Israel and we have settlers living in the West Bank and in Jerusalem. I don't think that we can separate between the two peoples. I think that all the people who live from the sea to the river must reach a solution, that they are human, and they must live together, and they must build a state that contain all these people inside this area, within religion or within nationalities. I don't think that Israel now can be separated from Palestine or Palestine can be separated from Israel. We have the same air, we have the same energy, the same agriculture, the same climate. We cannot separate between the Jews and the Palestinians. I don't think that Jew is a nationality. I think Jew is a religion. And now we have an Israeli since 1948, there are Arabs, and there are Jews, and Christians and Druze and others. We have people living from the sea to the river and they must live

there together, because it is very difficult to have a two-state solution now. It is something we cannot speak about it now. We spoke about it because of the United States and the international community, but on the ground, there will be no two-state solution, only if we have apartheid state in the West Bank and in Jerusalem, and an equality state in Israel between the Arabs and the Jews.

Daoud: Our discussion is on the 75th anniversary of the 1948. I'd love to talk about the future and the present, but let's focus on this. Adam, what do you prefer? What do you think we should call an Arab from Nazareth? An Arab? An Arab-Israeli, a Palestinian citizen of Israel?

Adam: I will ask him, and I will respect his choice. I'm trying to escape from this ongoing debate about words and to talk about the essence of the phenomena.

Daoud: Words have meaning Adam.

Adam: Yes, of course, but I don't like all the cosmetics. Sometimes it's funny to discover that the leftist-Israeli-Jews are more difficult than the Palestinians. When I'm meeting with Jews from the left, and someone will say "Arab" or "Israeli Arab"... it can cause a problem because, of course, we are talking about a "Palestinian." In Hebrew "*Falastenyem Ezrachi Yisrael*" - *Palestinian citizens of Israel*. But when I'm sitting with a friends in Kufur Qasem, they don't have a problem to identify themselves as Arab-Israeli, Israeli-Arab. I'm not sure that we need to focus all the time about the words, because the words, of course has meaning, but you need to talk about what is behind them. I will give you a short example. The name of my latest book, I'm translating from Hebrew is: **The Looting of Arab Property in the War of Independence**. When I sent the manuscript to friends, before publication, everyone told me to change the name from '**The Looting of Arab Property in the War of Independence**', to '**The Looting of Palestinian Property in the 1948 War**'. I decided not to do it, and this was a political choice, A few months ago, when I was invited by the PLO to give a lecture in Ramallah about the book, I thought that the people there, of course all of them Palestinian, understood why I choose the words the "War of Independence." The term "independence," and not the "Nakba," although all of the book is about the Nakba. For me, and as a historian of the Nakba, the 48 War is a natural term, but I was born in Israel, and I am a part of a family and a society, and I'm writing about the



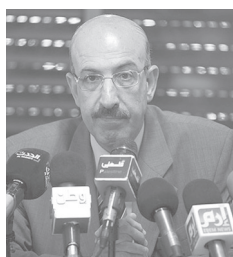
Adam Raz

war crimes of Israel during the last 75 years. But for me it is the “War of Independence.”

Daoud: You’re saying that every people have a right to decide for themselves what they want to call it. Israelis want to call it ‘War of Independence’, Palestinians want to call it ‘Nakba’, each should respect whatever each side wants to call it.

Adam: It’s ‘the War of Independence’, and it’s the ‘Nakba’. It’s the same thing from a different perspective. When I’m using the word ‘War of Independence’ - *Milchemet Ha’atzmaout*, I’m not trying to throw away the ethnic cleansing aside.

Daoud: Dr. Ahmad, so, Arabs of 48, Arabs of Israel, and I remember Sabri Jiryis when he wrote his famous book: **The Arabs in Israel**. That is how he overcame the problem, by calling his book **The Arabs in Israel**.



Ahmad Soboh

Ahmad: Part of our problem is that we have more history than geography in this conflict. And our geography is so small, but let us focus on the facts. The General Assembly of the United Nations will commemorate soon, for the first time, 75 years of al-Nakba. It is important for the Palestinian people to focus on this expression Nakba, because it was ignored by others. Nakba is not a fact which took place in 1948, It is a continuous process. We are suffering the Nakba today by expanding the settlement activities in West Bank, Jerusalem and Gaza. The process of al-Nakba is still here, we are still in the Nakba, and I prefer using the term ‘Nakba’. Concerning the term Palestinian people, we are called Palestinians in Lebanon, Palestinians in Jordan, whereas the Palestinians in Israel are called *Israeli Arabs*. They were looking to the entire Arab world to preserve their culture, to preserve their identity in the new state of Israel by not saying we are only Palestinians. They were expanding their identity to all of the Arab history and culture. Not only focusing on their condition as Palestinians. Let me focus on those Palestinians who were not forced to immigrate from the State of Israel to West Bank or Lebanon, Syria and Jordan, those who were moved within the State of Israel. Two-hundred thousand Palestinians saw their villages destroyed, and they were forced to move even two, three, four, five kilometers out of their hometowns within Israel. The Nakba for them is still there. Following UN Resolution 194 of December 1948, what we Palestinians call the resolution of the return of the Palestinian and their

compensation, a reconciliation committee was formed by three countries, United States, France and Turkey. This committee created a clear list of Palestinian properties inside the State of Israel today. I can tell you officially, we have our copy. And it is open for the public to have 221,000 Palestinians, with five and a half million dunums of their private properties in Israel with available documents. This is important for the final solution of Nakba and the talks about the final solution of our Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

Yudith: Ahmad created the basis for what I want to say. The Nakba is not an event that took place in 1948, and we are only dealing with the consequences, but it's actually still happening. The Absentee Property Law is still in effect. It's a law that was passed in 1950, as an emergency law, except that the emergency situation from Israel's point of view has never expired. We are not only bearing the results of what happened in 1948, this law is still active, at least in East Jerusalem. And in recent years it is activated even more than before. It is used to deprive and to evict Palestinians from their homes. And with new recent legislation it is used again in order to deprive Palestinians of their lands. In 1970, after the 67 war, Israel passed the legal administrative procedure law that enabled it to take further properties from Palestinians, and those that belonged to Jews before 1948. 1948, is still here, and these two measures are still being used on a daily basis in East Jerusalem and elsewhere.

Noam: So, as Adam said, with your question, you are deliberately pushing us into a minefield, because words and culture are absolutes. We in the conflict need to move at a certain point to politics, which is relative. Like Adam, I'm trying to navigate this field and question my own use of terms. My rule of tongue is trying to use language which is respectful of the people I talk to, whether it's Palestinians or Israelis. Because there's no point in alienating the people in the conversation, just for spite. I would say one more thing from the position of an Israeli and as an Israeli writer. Part of the challenges for us in the Israeli left, and I apologize in advance if it sounds like an accusation, is the disintegration of the Palestinian national movement. It's totally a Zionist and Israeli strategy, to lead to this disintegration, it didn't happen by itself. But this strategy was so effective. And as a writer you use your own terms, very often it is not just from Israelis which you are attacked. You will be attacked from the Palestinian diaspora for saying something that is in the line of Palestinians of 1967, of Palestinians of 1948. I think the challenge of a united discourse is part of the bigger challenge of united political institutions, and a united national movement, which will be a breakthrough within the political field, but also

in the conversation and cultural field.

Adam: Daoud, I want to mention one more thing. When I meet someone, I don't want to walk on eggs shells, I want to smoke a cigarette and to know him from "inside." When I meet someone, I want to meet the person. I want to drink coffee or beer with him or her, to smoke a cigarette. And to talk about life, about the essence of life and so on. I totally understand your question. I've been asking this question a lot. But when you need to be careful all the time about words... Do you say "Arab" or "Palestinian" or "Palestinian citizens of Israel" or... all the time, and I'm afraid that I will hurt someone. These words are becoming a disaster. It changes the way people talk with one another. This is a problem.

Firas: The problem till now is that the Israelis do not recognize that there are Palestinians, that this is a Palestinian people inside Israel, in Jerusalem, in the West Bank, in Gaza, in refugee camps, in Lebanon, in Jordan, in Syria, and everywhere. This is the people of Palestine. What's happening to the Palestinian people after 1948, is the problem of the Zionism. Officials speak all the time about the Israeli Arabs or Druze, or Bedouin, trying to separate, divide and rule. They speaks about us as Arabs, but when they want to speak about the Egyptian that's, they say Egyptian, Jordanian, Lebanon. But here we are Arabs. You have 20 Arab countries - go to any of them. No, we are Palestinians, living for thousands of years in Palestine from the sea to the river, and they must recognize this, because this is very important for the Israelis, especially for our friends in Israel. We do recognize them, and we want to be together, to reach a solution to this conflict. If we only concentrate upon these terms, there will be a problem.

Galit: Since we're talking about words, I want to mention that presence of the Palestinian refugees and Palestinians in general, through words, which is literature. I think this is very important, and there is a very impressive presence of the Palestinians in Israeli culture. Not all Israelis, but to Israelis who read books. There are Palestinian authors, like **Emile Habibi**³², maybe not the novel '*The Secret Life of Saeed the Pessoptimist*', but '*Saraya, the Ogre's Daughter*', for instance, which talks about the presence of the absent, about the fact that there are places in which language is a spoken presence of the absence of the Palestinians.



Galit Hasan-Rokem

³² **Emile Shukri Habibi** (28 January 1922 – 2 May 1996) was a Palestinian-Israeli writer of Arabic literature and a politician who served as a member of the Knesset for the communist parties Maki and Rakah.

And **Mahmoud Darwish's**³³ poetry has been influential and beautifully translated into Hebrew, and **Ghassan Kanafani**³⁴, *'rijal fi ash-shams*, 1963 (Men in the Sun), and especially his Return to Haifa (1969) which explicitly raises the comparison between Jewish refugees from the Holocaust and Palestinian refugees. Both of them were produced in Hebrew theaters in Israel and stimulated much public discussion. I thus think that Palestinian literature has been very, very important in conveying the pain, the strong presence of the absence of the refugees.

Ziad: Just a few comments about terminology. I think we use different terminology, because we look on things from different angles. As Firas said, when the Israelis talk about Arabs they deny the existence of the Palestinians, we from our side we also use our own terminology. Behind each word we have a political intention, we have something hidden. We don't say Israeli Arabs and they don't want us to see them as Israeli Arabs. We are confused about this. Sometimes we say *Arabs of 48*, *Palestinian Israelis*, all of these things are because of terminology, and each word has a meaning behind that word. I will tell you something very interesting. I was the editor of the *Al-Fajr* newspaper in Arabic, and one of our colleagues was obsessed with using terminology about Zionism, and Zionists. And once he wrote a news item and he said, "the Zionist Menachem Begin said so and so and so and so..." And we had to send everything to the censorship. So, when we sent this item to the censor, he made a circle around the word 'Zionist' and he stamped censored. And when I got the material back from Beit Agron from the censorship office. I called the censor, and I told him why you don't want us to say about Menachem Begin that he is a Zionist. He said, I know Ziad what you mean by that. You say Menachem Begin, the prime minister of Israel. I said, but he will be angry if we don't say about him that he is a Zionist. He said, look, when you say about him a 'Zionist' you curse him, you mean something negative by that. I will not let you curse Menachem Begin, by using the word 'Zionist'. So, terminology in our conflict plays a big role. And each word has a different meaning than you may think or expect of it.

Daoud: I think we should move on. I still like what Adam said, the very first statement, that we should respect whatever people want to be called. If Israelis wish to be called Israelis, they should be called Israelis.

³³ **Mahmoud Darwish** (13 March 1941 – 9 August 2008) was a Palestinian poet and author who is regarded as Palestine's national poet.

³⁴ **Ghassan Kanafani** (8 April 1936 – 8 July 1972) was a Palestinian author and a leading member of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP). On 8 July 1972, he was assassinated by Mossad.

Palestinians want to be called whatever they want to be called. That's up to them. But let me move on to another issue, a demand that was made in the negotiations and the refugee track. We all know that the refugee problem is like Jerusalem, though I think Jerusalem is the bigger problem. Still, the fate of the refugees is one of the biggest problems in solving the conflict, and the Palestinian negotiators requested that Israel recognizes publicly its moral and historical responsibility for causing the refugee problem. Now my question to all of you and is **do you think this is a fair request that Israel has to recognize**, because a confession, normally is the first step towards reconciliation. Unless you have genuine confession, you'll never have reconciliation. Is this a fair demand or not? I'll start with Dr. Ahmad.

Ahmad: Let me tell all of you a story about the negotiations. I think we had no official negotiation between Palestine and Israel regarding the issue of the refugees. But during Camp David II in 2000, a paper was exchanged on July 19, 2000, between two teams at the negotiations. The Israeli side was headed by Shlomo Ben Ami, and the Palestinian side by Nabil Sha'ath. That paper was discussed between the two sides but unfortunately, nothing was concluded. But what I would like to tell you, that at the dinner that day, President Arafat and President Clinton with Prime Minister Barak discussed that paper. And Arafat told President Clinton that the right of the Palestinian refugees is the same as the basis of capitalism. President Clinton didn't understand Arafat. He asked the translator Jamal Hilal to translate what Arafat really wants to say. And Arafat insisted that the right of the Palestinian refugees is similar to the basics of capitalism. Which means private property and freedom of choice for the residents. The Palestinian political leadership had no mandate to renounce the collective right of the Palestinian refugees regarding their properties in Israel. The historical compromise, the historical deal should be clear and satisfactory for everyone. For example, ten Palestinians who were born in Chile came to see Arafat here in Ramallah. I was there at the meeting. They told Arafat, you should not talk on our behalf when it comes to the issue of the refugee rights in Israel, because it is our individual right. It is not a collective one. If you as the PLO sign any historical agreement which undermines our rights to our properties in Israel, we can create another PLO. Because it is our basic individual right. I have my own homeland in Haifa or Yafa or in Nazareth. This is my right. Any solution should address my own individual and collective rights. I want to conclude that the rights of the Palestinians in Israel as refugees, as a result of the Nakba, will be on the table all the time, until a compromise will be reached, political solution according with the international law will be satisfactory for everyone.

Daoud: Adam, moral and historical responsibility, is that an acceptable request?

Adam: It is not a matter of acceptable request. The question is, if in the current political situation, it is at all meaningful. Of course from the historical perspective the Israeli army or the Israeli Government or whatever you call it bears responsibility for the deportation of 700,000 or more. But is this the time for such an exchange between the two parties? I don't think so. In the current situation I don't see any solution to the conflict. To talk about the refugees, about Jerusalem is like a fairy tale for me. Of course, from the historical perspective, the Israelis have responsibility for this problem.

Noam: I think that to begin with history and the question of responsibility is a non-starter. Our division lies in the implications on the ground, and in this regard I think Israelis shouldn't comment on it. We're entering a space in which we start in those conversations to have fake negotiations. Why should the Palestinian renounce in advance the right of his ancestors, the history of his people? Would the Jew do that on his history? Never, so I will not be asking any Palestinian, and I'm always opposed to the tendency of Israelis to throw cards on the table in this theoretical debate. You put a group of kids together and someone asks what about the 'right of return', are you denouncing that? The question of responsibility is obvious. But the question of the political implementation is for the final status agreement with a credible leadership on the Palestinian side. I think it's not the business of any Israeli to demand right now concessions in exchange for anything, for an exchange for nothing, because this is always the Israeli game. To ask for legitimacy to what happened in the past, to the Nakba or to other, without offering anything in exchange. If I was a Palestinian, I would refuse that.

Daoud: It was suggested that it's a good opener to build trust, moral and historical responsibility.

Noam: It's way more simple than that, Daoud. If we're denying the Nakba, we're denying our own past, we are at war with our own history. It is a fact of life.

Ilan: Daoud, excuse me for saying this, but I think we are having a conversation that was valid 30 years ago. We have a leadership now that is aiming at defeating the Palestinians not only territorially but also the narrative, your narrative. We need to recruit whatever forces we have to struggle for your narrative and for your territory, I think of Hawara, it is a

sort of a Deir Yassin. The question of whether we respect the Palestinian conversation or not should be put it aside. We'll come back to it later. We have to think what is needed now to put some barriers to a process that is gaining speed. We need to involve the international community, and we need to involve intellectuals, not only politicians. We need to define our objectives right now in light of Hawara, rather than the question of if we respect the vocabulary that is being preferred by the Palestinians or not ...

Daoud: I understand Ilan, but I'm asked to moderate a session on the 75th anniversary of the Nakba. My question was, and I think Noam answered it in a very nice way: Is this a legitimate request because we're not dealing here with the actual implementation of the refugee issue. I understand that has to go with demographics and politics and give and take. The question was and is still on the table. Instead of talking about how many will return, a family reunion or not, Abu-Mazen (Mahmoud Abbas) left his house in Safad, and he doesn't want to go back there. The question is we cannot start dealing with 75-years of the Nakba until we begin by admitting responsibility. That's what I was trying to say. I want to give Hillel and Ziad the final words on this.

Hillel: Obviously this is a very sensitive moment that we're reaching, the 75th anniversary of both the State of Israel and the Nakba, particularly given the fact that on the Israeli side we have the most extreme right-wing government that we have ever had, and on the Palestinian side we have a leadership which has lost the confidence of the people. So, the question is how do we relate to all of this? I think that some of what Ilan just said is very relevant, that all of us, both Israelis and Palestinians, have a major responsibility in ensuring that the fact of the Nakba is known by everybody. And of course, given Smotrich saying that "there is no Palestinian people," the fact is that we are talking about two peoples, we're talking about the Israelis and the Palestinians. I believe that we all have a lot of work to do.

Ziad: Thank you Daoud for moderating this session and thanks to everybody for a very interesting discussion and interesting ideas. We are now remembering the 75th year of Nakba and the creation of Israel, and I would say that we are at a turning point. I'm not sure, where we, and when I say we, I mean Palestinians and Israelis, are going from here. Israel is on a crossroads of becoming a country governed by the *Halacha* (religious law). If Israel becomes a '*Halacha*' country, then Alon Liel, Ilan Baruch, Noam and Adam and many people like them and us, we will be facing the same danger and the same threat. So, we should think about this moment, and think what should be done to stop this craziness that is taken place in

Israel, going towards the direction of a '*Halacha*' country, and defeating the Palestinian narrative. Maybe that is their goal, the denial of the existence of the Palestinians as a people, like Smotrich said. That we are a new invented people, less than 100 years old, and that we were not existing before that. This kind of thinking will be very dangerous for the Israelis much more than it is dangerous for us. We witnessed many nations in this region, across the centuries, none of them continued to exist. However, let's think about what's going on now and learn wisdom from what happened in the past. Ilan said that Hawara is another Deir Yassin. In my view, Hawara is a small rehearsal of *Leil Habdolech*, of *Kristallnacht* (Crystal Night). What happened then in Nazi Germany is exactly what happened in Hawara, and this is the danger we should think about it. These people if they were in Europe, they are the new Nazis. These people in Israel, you don't dare to tell them that they are the new Nazis, but they are dangerous for you as well as they are for us.

Alon: I only recommend to call these days with the legislation and the coalition agreement, to call it the second Nakba.

Ziad: It is a continuous Nakba, the Nakba didn't stop. It is an escalation of the Nakba. And I think Yudith made this clear when she said that the Nakba wasn't just an event, and we are now behind it. It happened and it's still continuing and going on.

Daoud: Thank you so much everyone. It's been a very interesting and useful discussion. I think we need to get back to this more and more. But you are all right that we need to deal with the issues of today, which is unfortunately very sad and there's no light at the end of the tunnel. We need to give people hope and remembering 75 years, without any possibility of a hope of change is not a good omen. We're in dangerous territory now, and I don't see a light at the end of the tunnel. Let's pray that we can find that light, because unless we do that, it's going to be another Nakba or continuation of the existing Nakba. Thank you very much everyone.

Culture

Palestinian Poetry

Three Generations of Nakba

Compiling three generations' poems written about the Nakba: Abd al-Karim al-Karmi, Ghassan Zaqtan, Mosab Abu Toha

I. We Will Return

Abd al-Karim al-Karmi (year 1951)

Abd al-Karim al-Karmi (1909–11 October 1980), was born in Tulkarm, known as Abu Salma. He studied law and worked in Haifa in Mandatory Palestine until April 1948. He then moved briefly to Acre and then to Damascus. He was a member of the Palestine Liberation Organization. He was the recipient of several awards and chairman of the General Union of Palestinian Writers and Journalists until his death.

Beloved Palestine,
how do I sleep
While the spectrum of torture is in my eyes
I purify the world with your name
And if your love did not tire me out,
I would've kept my feelings a secret
The caravans of days pass and talk about
The conspiracy of enemies and friends
Beloved Palestine! How do I live
Away from your plains and mounds?
The feet of mountains that are dyed with blood
Are calling me
And on the horizon appears the dye
The weeping shores are calling me
And my weeping echoes in the ears of time
The escaping streams are calling me
They are becoming foreign in their land
Your orphan cities are calling me
And your villages and domes
My friends ask me, "Will we meet again?"
"Will we return?"
Yes! We will kiss the bedewed soil
And the red desires are on our lips
Tomorrow, we will return

And the generations will hear
The sound of our footsteps
We will return along with the storms
Along with the lightening and meteors
Along with the hope and songs
Along with the flying eagle
Along with the dawn that smiles to the deserts
Along with the morning on the waves of the sea
Along with the bleeding flags
And along with the shining swords and spears

II. Also The House¹

Ghassan Zaqtan

Ghassan Zaqtan (b. 1954) Born near Bethlehem, Palestinian poet, novelist, and editor. He is the author of numerous collections of poetry, including The Silence That Remains: Selected Poems (2017) and Like a Straw Bird It Follows Me (2012) that won the 2013 Griffin Poetry Prize, both translated by Fady Joudah; Ordering Descriptions: Selected Poems (1998); and Early Morning (1980). Zaqtan is also the author of the novels Old Carriage with Curtains (2011) and Describing the Past (1995). In June of 2013, his name appeared for the first time among the speculation list for the Nobel Prize Literature for the fall of 2013.

Near the camp was a river
and in our house were absentees and hands
that will one day wake us in vain

I had just turned seven
while he was sitting in the shade
ironing his clothes
the blue jacket sagging over his shoulders

I paid no attention to the road
or the three steps
and didn't notice the carpet

I don't remember who was it that said
to me or to another
"When you grow up poetry will become your house"

The dust that eats the memories
always distances those folks

yet their chairs appear from afar,
from behind the hills and over the houses,

¹ From *The Silence that Remains: Selected Poems 1982-2003*.

to hang in an air of summer and holm oak,
those shaded chairs that reach the heart
on shoulders topped
with five flowers

Which flowers are speech
which flowers are silence?

And I can't remember
whether it was my uncle who stood at the door,
whether we had palm and lotus trees
in our house in Karameh,
whether my mother
who gave birth to me on the shelf
was folding our clothes behind our father's back
so he could sleep

The watchdogs used to cry from the heat,
and poetry, Husseini of Jerusalem,
and Khidr the mystic were all in our house
as was my uncle who came from a pond
within Hebron's walls

Twenty years would pass before a photo could tell us
we have grown older
and that's that

My father used to discompose his friends
with his days, and women
with the thread of seduction in his voice
as he would sprinkle chatter in their rivers
while walking about here or there with a lilt,
he'd let his days fall off him
and let others gather them as he walked
on gold that came only for him

And I can't remember:
in our courtyard there were holm oaks,
a fountain, a tiled floor by a huge door,
we were confused and in a hurry

The closet that faced us in the second room
had a mirror
the mirror we now seek

And my father was standing alone in the hall that led
the stairs to the roof

thanking his days
or preparing for Wednesday's nap
or Thursday's morning
as he left, among the things he'd leave, the water can
full of water
while around his chairs our Saturdays rose

My father didn't want too much from life:
a house, five boys
who don't mess with his papers,
which were already chaos,
and two girls
so that braids could float all around the house

—translated by Fady Joudah.

III. My Grandfather and Home

Mosab Abu Toha

*Mosab Abu Toha is a Palestinian poet, short story writer, and essayist from Gaza. Abu Toha is the author of *Things You May Find Hidden in My Ear: Poems from Gaza* (2022, *City Lights*), which won a 2022 Palestine Book Award. Abu Toha is the founder of the Edward Said Library, and from 2019 to 2020, he was a visiting poet and librarian-in-residence at Harvard University.*

I
my grandfather used to count the days for return with his fingers
he then used stones to count
not enough
he used the clouds birds people

absence turned out to be too long
thirty six years until he died
for us now it is over seventy years

my grandpa lost his memory
he forgot the numbers the people
he forgot home

ii
I wish I were with you grandpa
I would have taught myself to write you
poems volumes of them and paint our home for you
I would have sewn you from soil
a garment decorated with plants
and trees you had grown

I would have made you
perfume from the oranges
and soap from the sky's tears of joy
couldn't think of something purer

iii

I go to the cemetery every day
I look for your grave but in vain
are they sure they buried you
or did you turn into a tree
or perhaps you flew with a bird to the nowhere

iv

I place your photo in an earthenware pot
I water it every Monday and Thursday at sunset
I was told you used to fast those days
in Ramadan I water it every day
for thirty days
or less or more

v

how big do you want our home to be
I can continue to write poems until you are satisfied
if you wish I can annex a neighboring planet or two

vi

for this home I shall not draw boundaries
no punctuation marks

Source: The Poetry Foundation's website

Israeli Poetry

The Jewish Time Bomb²

Yehuda Amichai

Yehuda Amichai (1924-2000) is one of the best recognized Hebrew poets of the second half of the 20th century. Born in Germany, he came to Mandatory Palestine as a child and was raised in Jerusalem where he lived most of his life. His many volumes of poetry are rich in tonality and imagery, encompassing themes from intimate love to issues of Jewish history including the Shoah and Israeli statehood. His poetry is widely quoted, set to music and taught in schools and universities. In his late poetry Amichai expressed his support for peace building with Palestinians and Arabs in general. Amichai's poetry is translated to over forty languages, he has been awarded many international prizes and honors and he was regularly nominated for the Nobel

² From: Yehuda Amichai, *Open Closed Open*, Harcourt 2000, p. 173 Courtesy of C. Kronfeld

Prize in literature during the last decades of his life. He also published several novels and dramatic works. Amichai is perhaps the closest to what may nowadays be called an Israeli national poet.

On my desk is a stone with "Amen" carved on it, one survivor fragment,
of the thousands upon thousands of bits of broken tombstones
in Jewish graveyards. I know all these broken pieces
now fill the great Jewish time bomb
along with the other fragments and shrapnel, broken Tables of the Law
broken altars broken crosses rusty crucifixion nails
broken houseware and holyware and broken bones
eyeglasses shoes prostheses false teeth
empty cans of lethal poison. All these broken pieces
fill the Jewish time bomb until the end of days.
And though I know about all this, and about the end of days,
the stone on my desk gives me peace.
It is the touchstone no one touches, more philosophical
than any philosopher's stone, broken stone from a broken tomb
more whole than any wholeness,
a stone of witness to what has always been
and what will always be, a stone of amen and love.
Amen, amen, and may it come to pass.

—translated from the Hebrew by Chana Bloch and Chana Kronfeld

Exercises in Practical Hebrew

Dan Pagis

Dan Pagis (1930-1986) was born in Bukovina, in a community today included in Rumania. As a young child before World War II he was separated from his mother who died young and his father who left Europe for mandatory Palestine in the nineteen-thirties. Pagis who was raised by his maternal grandparents, was imprisoned in 1944 in a concentration camp in Ukraine from where he escaped and lived on the run until the end of the war. He came as a survivor and a refugee to Palestine in 1946. Pagis' poetry echoes his biography as well as in subtle ways also his academic work as a prominent scholar of medieval and baroque Hebrew poetry, especially in Spain (Andalusia and beyond) and in Italy. His poems are often characterized by a deep irony towards life, humans and fate and his restrained almost enigmatic style seldom allows for an explicit outpour of strong emotions, exerting a powerful effect for the readers. A short poem titled "Written in Pencil in the Sealed Railway Car," memorializes the victims on site at the Death Camp Belzec in Poland. Pagis published six volumes of poetry, another one was published posthumously as was a volume of his collected poetry. His poetry was translated into English, German, Spanish and Swedish. He also published an immensely popular children's book and several works of scholarship.

“Do you live in peace? Have you murdered and also taken possession?”
(Examples of interrogative sentences in a grammar book)

1

Shalom, peace.³ Hebrew has past and future,
But there is no present, only a present participle.
Let us move to the sentence.

2

A land devouring its dwellers.
Its lovers devour its lovers.
Turn everything into the future tense.

3

Lands flowing with milk and honey. That is a declarative.
If you see them, give them regards, that is an imperative.
And now an interrogative sentence: What's new?

4

Woe me if I speak, woe me if I don't.
Say which is the main clause and which a conditional dependent.

5

Greetings and courtesies.
Good morning, good evening, happy new year, congratulations,
The same to you, it's never too late.
Pardon, is this the right place? Come back tomorrow.

6

A short essay. We went for a walk nearby.
The cemetery on the left.
The cemetery on the right.
Where did we get lost?
Thank you.

7

A phrasebook. Whose are you, child?
Daddy's. The second wreath to the left.

8

Formulate precisely. Don't say: It was for nothing.
As you have already paid.
Say: It was in vain.

9

Synonyms: Disgrace, shame and scorn, disdain,

³ The Hebrew word Shalom means peace and serves as the main greeting at meetings as well as partings.

Indignity, ignominy, infamy, opprobrium, humiliation,
Scandal, outrage, offence, fault,
Woe to the ears that hear thus,
Derision, degradation, disrespect, dishonor, blame
Contempt, condescension, reproach, reprimand,
And shame on you!

10

Adorn your words with idioms.
Don't be sweet lest you be swallowed.
The flesh rots only from within.
Be a head to foxes, not a tail to lions,
Everything follows the head,
That's where the dog is buried!
Here you are, know what to ask.
Have you asked well?
Do you live in peace? Have you murdered and also taken possession?

11

And now a small exercise to end with.
It consists of two words. Make a clear distinction
Between the two words:
Shalom, shalom.

—translated from the Hebrew by Galit Hasan-Rokem

Justice, Hope

Tahel Frosh

Tahel Frosh is a contemporary Hebrew poet in Israel, a journalist and a social activist, born in 1977 in Tel Aviv and raised in Herzliya. Her poems often address all too common socio-economic ills, as the titles of her two published books of poetry reveal: Betsa (2014; could be translated as "Dirty money") and Yahasei Ba'alut (2020, "Ownership"). With a law degree from Hebrew University and a degree in clinical psychology from Tel Aviv University, she is currently a doctoral student in Hebrew literature at Ben Gurion University of the Negev where she teaches, and a columnist for Israel's leading Haaretz newspaper. She appeared on the cover of World Literature Today in 2015. The following poems will soon appear in Hebrew.

1

At cafes *Hope* eats a fish in orange
The fish does not observe her
But moves in her breast cage
Hope tells the fish to stop!

The fluids of her breast cage are caged in *Hope*
Forbidden ribs pile up in *Hope*
The iron of her hope
The hope of *Hope*!

What does a slaughtered woman hope for
What can a woman who has been shot hope for
Her eyes are covered like a mare's eyes

2

Justice is murdered
Many times
In Israel and Palestine
And has not yet died

Sometimes he passes by
In one of the streets
Afraid and shaking
Walks and stumbles

He almost calls while he is passing by
Wondering about himself
What is it I see?

And the fantasies perhaps
Make him laugh
And the more he laughs
He almost dies

Hops among the murdered
And hops between
Those who make a living from all this
No matter what season

Because in all seasons of the year
Justice is murdered
But knows
That he survives

As if he were a flower
Perhaps like a red anemone

Drawn to rain sun and sky
Drawn by will power
Mysterious and complete
As *Justice* is drawn to life

—translated from the Hebrew by Galit Hasan-Rokem

Reflections

On Belonging

Sari Nusseibeh

Sari Nusseibeh is a Palestinian Professor of Philosophy and former President of the Al-Quds University in Jerusalem (1995-2014). Granted a B.A. (M. A. Oxon), Politics, Philosophy, Economics and Ph.D. (Harvard), Islamic Philosophy (1978), Nusseibeh also held the positions of Developer and Coordinator of MA program, "Philosophy in Islam" (2014), Chairman and Steering Committee Member of Palestine Negotiating Team (1991-1994), Professor of Philosophy at Birzeit University (1987-1992) and chairman of Philosophy and Cultural Studies Program (1982-1984).



This article is based upon a presentation delivered in the conference "Martin Buber and His Legacy," hosted by the Israeli Academy of Sciences and Humanities, January 24-25, 2023.

‘Belonging’ is an associative or relational but ambivalent word that we use - apart from when talking as a third party about a relationship between two people or two items that we think go together - to denote both a feeling I or we have to something, as well as a feeling of possession of something that belongs to me or to us. It is not clear if these two contrasted senses of the word are at first undifferentiated and cognized simultaneously as one in a child or at an early period-for example when I feel both that I belong to my mother and that my mother belongs just to me - but we can surmise they are both clearly very basic instincts in the early development of the associative self. While the distinction between the two senses of the term as possessive and affective is later made clear in our language it is nonetheless often blurred as when the sense of the Jewish belonging to Zion for example becomes collated with or translated into the sense of Zion belonging, or belonging exclusively to the Jewish people; or, similarly, when the sense of Palestinians belonging to Palestine becomes collated with or translated into that of Palestine belonging or belonging exclusively to the Palestinian people. But whereas affective belonging seems to be something two different people and strangers can share for what has a hold on them - a city or a country, for example-possessive belonging has the contrary meaning of what a person or a people have in their hold, or what they view as their own, as

when I say this item belongs exclusively to me. A further ambivalence is nested in the term and needs to be unraveled when either singular or plural pronouns are used - whether I am talking about myself as a Palestinian or a Jew, or about my people - the conversion here from affective belonging to possessive belonging either implying in one case a shared possession of what both a Jew and a Palestinian as individuals belong to, or in the other case an exclusivist possession by one people or the other of what they respectively feel belongs to them. 'Feels' is the keyword to keep in mind here and in what follows, as I shall be staying clear from addressing the meta-question of what ownership or property or even 'rights' mean. Another interesting feature of the word 'belonging' is its embeddedness of the verb 'to long for', when this expresses a primary desire or want, I have for what I feel I belong to or belongs to me but is somehow beyond my reach. I may or may not long for that which belongs to me, but longing for what I belong to and is not or no longer my belonging or mine makes perfectly good sense. That would explain a pre-Israel Jewish longing for Zion as a physical place as well as a present-day Palestinian longing for Palestine. As is hopefully clear, apart from such feelings as I may experience

That would explain a pre-Israel Jewish longing for Zion as a physical place as well as a present-day Palestinian longing for Palestine.

as an infant for my mother, or 'the suited to each other' special sense of belonging said of a couple, the emphasis so far in all the above examples on longing and belonging is on lands, or things, or place, the subject in all these examples being the individual or group. Then there is my personal longing for and the belonging to community. While connected with place this kind of belonging is more complex. It is not a demographic classification, or only that. I may have a thin or deep sense of belonging to a community, like being Palestinian or Arab or Muslim or Jew, but long nonetheless for that community to be more as I believe it can or should be, or as what its real but buried nature is, than for it as it now happens to be or as it currently displays itself. Here my belonging to a living community - who the people are and their way of life - seems more to be a belonging to an idea of this community than to the community itself, for example to my idea of the Jewish community and of being Jewish, or the idea of Palestinian nationalism and being a nationalist. These two - what I think ought to be or really is on the one hand, and what actually is on the other - may at some point be so apart and even contrary to one another that I may find myself in a predicament: either to stand up and fully engage myself in an attempt to make my community closer to the idealistic version I have of it; or to

turn, in disillusionment, elsewhere or everywhere for communal comfort; or - as is more common - to decide to sit back and melt myself in the crowd simply by peeling off what I may come to decide to be excessive ideological yearnings I have. But, unlike the belonging associated with a physical place or items which can have both possessive and affective meanings, that associating myself with a community typically only has an affective meaning: to say this is my community is not literally a claim to own it but perhaps to amplify or emphasize its affective meaning - my belonging to it, or my self-identification with its collective identity. Stretched even further, or viewed in its primal mode, this affective meaning can also be assumptive, or empathetic, as when one instinctually takes on anyone else's plight in one's community, feeling it to be one's own, or even putting it before one's own, the heartbeat of one in the community naturally thumping in the heart of the other. With the community stretched farther, this instinctual assumptive sense of belonging to community may transform itself into a duty I become bounded by, or a submission to a collective communal assertion of authority over me-that of a family, a tribe, and

that, ultimately, of a State. But by the time this assumptive sense of belonging turns into a formal duty it stands to split into different and opposite directions: a blind loyalty to the community or

This instinctual assumptive sense of belonging to community may transform itself into a duty I become bounded by.

State on the one hand, or a break-down of its affective sense altogether, and a growing sense of alienation from the group or State that comes to replace it on the other. Typically, alienation is when an individual who is an objective member of a group comes to feel she no longer belongs to it. Less typically, that individual's sense of belonging to the group hides beneath it an unconscious alienation from herself, or from what would have been her affective state if she had confronted herself in a genuine act of self-reflection. One may think of this state as that of an illusory belonging. It is a state where one unconsciously allows oneself to be part of the herd. But I will distinguish later between illusory belonging and what I shall later describe as misplaced belonging. Last but not least there is God, of course, or the Semitic ideas we have of Him, and what belonging in this context means. Significantly, we have come to entertain or experience feelings about God that are more alike to place than to community, many of us believing both we belong to God and that God belongs to, or for us! Our belonging relation with Him is thus both affective and possessive. For example, we may feel that we belong to a God who is transcendent over everything and everyone, but also that this transcendent God favors us or belongs to us more than to anyone else. What is significant - even striking-

about this is that we come in effect to liken these mutual feelings about Him therefore to those about place that we can possess, as opposed to likening them to people or community. Place and God thus come to seem closer to one another in our eyes than people and God. In effect we come to value place, or to regard this to be more sacred, than we value people. We need only consider the massacres committed in this Holy Land in the name of God to realize how true that is.

There seems however, to be another possessive sense of 'belonging' in the case of God - an offshoot, perhaps of the main one-where 'belonging to' comes to be seen as 'belonging in'. This kind of possessive belonging can get round that which sets people and God apart from one another, and that puts place above people. The story is told about the Sufi al-Hallaj from the 9th century claiming he did not need to go to Mecca on pilgrimage to God since God was already within him, and that the pilgrimage he therefore needed to make in order to reach God was the pilgrimage into himself. He was clearly not claiming exclusive ownership of God but emphasizing that God dwells in us as human beings rather than in some specific place on earth, however holy we may have come to regard that location. Also, in Sufi tradition, he in all likelihood viewed the Islam he belonged to as a spiritual medium for discovering God in our selves rather than as a system defined entirely by its mundane rituals and beliefs. Believing what he did, al-Hallaj felt compelled to agitate for his views, naturally addressing his own community and drawing on mystic vignettes in its own religious tradition to support them. But agitating in his milieu in the manner he did he only brought about his eventual execution by the established authorities. To them it seemed he was claiming that he himself was God. In a sense, they were of course right. For to them our belonging is to a transcendent God ruling over us, and favoring us over others, whereas to him belonging to God fuses into His dwelling in us as human beings, and that into our being one with Him, the distinctness of one individual over another - or indeed, of an individual identity separate from God-eventually vanishing altogether! But if God 'ruling from above' may encourage the belief of some among us of being favored by Him as individuals or a community over others, 'dwelling in us' reinvents the notion of place, or that God can or needs to dwell somewhere - a notion that also may encourage the belief that there are places or people He may have dwelled in sometime, more manifestly than in others, and with which we, as people in whom God dwells, be it faintly, should be bonded.

These, then, are some of the different meanings of belonging, of the different shades of these meanings, as well as of the different subjects

and objects associated with all these. Whole lives may on the surface be contentedly spent in the folds of one kind of belonging or the other, perhaps occasionally disturbed by some incident or the other, only to find their way back to a state of reassured normalcy. In a way, however, these different aspects of belonging, framed by the three parameters of God, place, and people, seem to lie behind and persist in defining the triangular form of the political turmoil we as different communities living here keep finding ourselves embroiled in. Let us for example consider place and community: these are not typically separate from one another but are found coupled together. However, once forcefully severed from one another the picture may begin to change. The dispossessed place may become an accelerating agent in the constitution of the community's identity, as transpired more recently in Palestinian history. Further back in time it also transpired in Jewish history. In such circumstances place may become, partly, the source of collective memory and as such, the spiritual heart of the community; but it may in addition become the focus of the faith in and vision of a future physical and longed-for restitution of body and heart. Thanks to the modern media, we currently have access to abundant material in contemporary Palestinian literature and art for trying to unravel and understand what

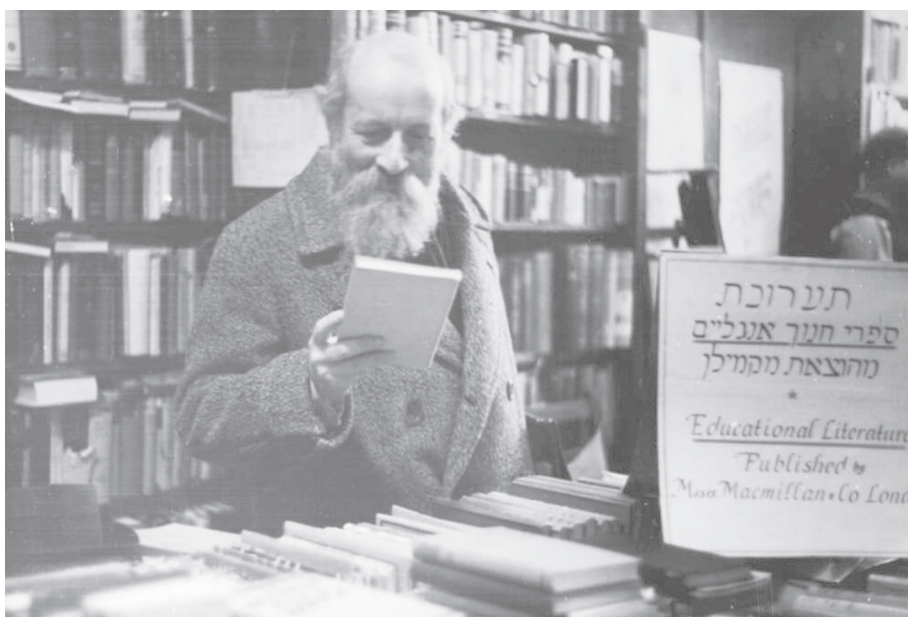
These different aspects of belonging, framed by the three parameters of God, place, and people, seem to lie behind and persist in defining the triangular form of the political turmoil.

that severance between country and people means. Yet, despite this literary and artistic abundance, it is still hard to understand fully what longing for such a restitution means, or what restitution itself means. Al-‘Awda is the Arabic term Palestinians use to connote both something tangible and identifiable that can be described, but also something intangible and amorphous that it is hard if not impossible to describe or put into words, or for others to understand even if it is skillfully described. But hard as that is, it is even harder when God is believed to be an essential part of the picture of both dispossession and restitution, and memories that were once live need to be substituted by religious narratives. A telling example is Yehuda Halevi who, writing in the Andalusian 12th century, is more often referred to nowadays by the quote from his ‘My heart in the East’ poem, which was followed by his unfortunately shortly cut pilgrimage to Jerusalem, than by the exposition of his theological views about the mutual centrality of the Jewish people to the Holy Land, attributed to the Rabbi in a dialogue with the king in his Kuzari. One can’t help wondering what the heart meant or stood for in Halevi’s poem as one can-because of its contemporaneity,

though admittedly in a limited way-associate oneself with the memory of the scent of the coffee his mother used to make that Mahmoud Darwish tells us he longs for in his famous poem about longing to be back in his country. In the case of Halevi one wonders if the heart is theoretical rather than sensual. Did he literally envision it or feel it as a place the people he belonged to were dispossessed of, then being torn asunder by crusaders and Muslims, but where a Jewish kingdom will or must again arise and the country taken possession of, somewhat in the image Israel eventually was born, in fulfilment, perhaps, of the special promise made by God to his favored people that he believed in? Or was the heart he longed for a lifeless account of a treasure left behind which remains a spiritual source whose buried light in this ancient land could be drawn upon to awaken the Jewish people to their true calling as a light unto the nations-as his narrative in the Kuzari suggests? Perhaps he did not tease apart all those different yearnings, or these different kinds of longing and belonging, but saw place, community and God in one light, or as a single vision that can only be fulfilled in an ingathering of the Jews and their repossession of the land. In this kind of vision, place becomes the cradle where the spiritual source could be rekindled, and the people's divine calling be finally fulfilled. God and Place align here with one another, the Jewish spirit somehow finding a nest for itself on their wall. Necessarily, the non-Jewish 'other' in this vision is shelved aside as being of secondary cosmic concern.

But the dispossession of a community can in its immediacy set alight the nationalist flame of longing to place, as enshrined now in the Darwish-penned Palestinian Declaration of Independence, God being brought in as fuel at a later stage in the process of the struggle for restitution long after lived memories have become buried or objectified in museums or on bookshelves. God and place now come to be aligned with one another, their union slowly becoming or playing the role of the heart of the people, as seems to have already begun happening in the Palestinian case. Martin Buber was clearly well-aware of the deep psychological pulls the different kinds of belonging generally have on people and couldn't himself but have shared in the rising wave of 'longing for' condition felt in or by his own Jewish community in Europe as Zionism was taking shape. But thinking on it he seems to have felt that this state of 'longing for' - while symptomatic of a growing anxiety in his community-had not yet been fully grasped as really being a longing for something far more basic than place, something more to do with God and the essence of his community's religion. Looking further into what 'longing for' means-what the 'belonging to' the 'longing for' is, he believed one could identify a more primary or "pre-belonging"

condition, a spiritually pristine point where the human soul stands fronting and being fronted by a limitless space which presents itself before her, but of which she is part, and through which she breathes her existence. There in, he believed, in the pre-belonging state, lies the origin and ultimate longing-for of the human condition, one that later breaks into different states of anxiety, once that limitless space collapses into the multifarious pieces with which we can and do seek one kind or another of belonging. In a short and intriguing passage that struck me in the biography by Mendes-Flohr the writer mentions a brief conversation Buber has in the early sixties with his psychoanalyst friend Anna Jokl where Buber asks her - questioning Freud's definition of what 'angst' means-what she thought it really meant. "I believe angst is not to belong," she tells him in a somewhat ad lib manner. "Yes," he ponders. "That may be - not to belong." Did Buber believe that all our feelings about belonging are in the end misplaced...that they hide behind them that which we constitutionally long for - that pre-belonging or pre-experiential phase which we should long for? Or did he just have a post-experiential phase in mind? By that time Buber was already settled in Jerusalem but, judging by his life until then, not feeling quite settled. It is reasonable to assume of course that his comment concerned his own situation, both about how he related to his own community and how he felt his community, now embodied in a state, related to the non-Jewish 'other', which we as Palestinians represented. But it is also possible to assume



Martin Buber in the "He-Atid" bookstore in Jerusalem, 1946 (Martin Buber Archives).

that he had that root of the common condition of anxiety in his mind-what I called above the pre-belonging or pre-experiential phase -the one that breaks up into pieces at the cross-roads where I, Thou and It converge. Buber goes into great lengths to explain the nature of that cross-roads, but I want to choose two interesting snapshots from his writings that may shed partial light on his thoughts, the first being about encountering a cat where, interestingly (in the Arabic translation of I and Thou), the only time the word

Did Buber believe that all our feelings about belonging are in the end misplaced...that they hide behind them that which we constitutionally long for.

for anxiety, *qalaq*, appears. He thinks he sees the sudden anxiety in her eyes. The familiar open space in her vision has been interrupted by his appearance before her. She hesitates as her eyes turn on him. In those eyes, he imagines he sees a glimmer of bewilderment at the presence before her of something other than herself that now occupies her familiar

space. It is a momentary bewilderment about the encounter, about herself now, what he, or that other which has appeared before her, is or may be to her. Does she matter to that other? Is he or it something that recognizes her? Someone who may care for her? For her it is a passing moment that will quickly fade from memory as she resumes her movement. For him it is a momentary observation of that primary moment when one's attention is suddenly caught by an encounter with a strange 'other'. This may mark the beginning of a relationship. But what kind? It can end as it begins, the cat slipping back into her private world.

It can end with a relationship of belonging. But it can also be of a very special kind when the holder and beholder are both human, as he elsewhere tells us, and we both find ourselves present in that moment of bewilderment at what it is we are precisely beholding. Can I see, through the glimmer in those beholden eyes, that vast space with which I am spiritually, primarily connected? Can she and I help each other to understand our mutual connection with that space? The other snapshot comes earlier in the book. The image he uses is that of birth, of the non-self-identifying new-born now fronting undiscriminated space, feeling, if anything, a dependent part of that space; or later lying in her cot with her arms gently reaching out in that space as if in search of something unidentifiable, an anchor or a life-source perhaps to hold on to, an invisible 'other' that is or is in that space and touching which she unconsciously seeks to complement herself, to have a relationship with. This is a primal moment, one where the unconscious self yearns for connection with the outside world, and in so doing is also groping to find its own self. It is a pre-rational, pre-verbal, and pre-physical

process, which at some point however gets broken once a physical object - a teddy-bear in the metaphor Buber uses here-is placed in the infant's hands. Now the infant has a soft 'it' to connect with, or to anchor herself to, one with which to establish a relation. Henceforth it as a belonging comes to mediate between I and Thou, that life-source, perhaps even to obfuscate and obstruct the primal relation between them. Significantly, unlike the image of the mother and her infant introduced at the beginning of this talk, it is the window to that life-source that the infant seeks through her mother; it is that bewildered wonder, and complementarity with the other that holds her, rather than belonging. In these images, and in his narrative, Buber emphasizes the relational primacy of one's existence in a binary world. One is only one in relation with what is outside of one! But this is both the reductive experience of a sudden appearance of a stranger before me if I am a cat, and of the soft teddy bear my hands suddenly touch and hold in their grip if I am a child; or it is that prior and mutual presence of myself encountering an intangible life-force that gently enables me to experience touching, feeling and seeing in the first place. Thereafter, I could lose touch with that universal presence, and become overtaken by the teddy bears of this world - how I could experiment on them, use them, live with them, or by them, becoming content with or confused by my possessive and affective belonging relations to them and with them. But, interacting with them as I must, I can and should nevertheless not lose sight of my mutual presence with that life-force, and of seeing the light of that life force

I can and should nevertheless not lose sight of my mutual presence with that life-force, and of seeing the light of that life force infusing others.

infusing others, thereby seeing other human beings neither as instruments nor yet as ends in themselves; nor see them as a community, mine or others', but as individual sacred portals for a common

humanity. Here Buber interestingly employs a geometric figure to further emphasize the primacy of the individual over the community-the one-by-one connectedness with the primal source. If Buber believed in a special calling the Jewish people had, he probably believed it is above all to awaken people to the light God infuses in us, to the 'longing for' that precedes belonging, so that we could regulate our work in the world by opening our hearts to it. His worldview, thus, transcends or goes behind the triangular form in which we find ourselves embroiled. It was a humanist worldview right from the start of his active engagement with Zionism, which he saw first and foremost as the Jewish people's need to unearth the essential humanism of their Jewish identity, a divine humanism that at once would

reveal that to be the genuine spiritual home the Jewish people belonged to, its real identity, as well as pave the path for a mutually enriching 'togetherness of life' with the wider world, where he thought he saw a nascent humanism - a moral enlightenment-beginning to make its intellectual mark in Europe. Above all his Zionism seems to have been less a political reaction to rampant antisemitism, or the desire to the taking to oneself of a piece of land in the world to call exclusively one's own. as it was an act of *tikkun olam* which - if I understand it correctly - is a proactive attempt to bring moral enlightenment to the world from the very heart of Judaism. But for this to happen, the Jewish people had to find themselves-first one by one, and then as a community-to identify the heart that thumps in them. But his dream of such an enlightenment and a common humanity beginning to raise its head in Europe was dashed as the Germans turned to exclusivism, embodying themselves as a nation in a possessive and supremacist state machinery that began with implementing racist policies against Jews but that ended with their wholesale massacres in pursuit of eliminating the country from what they saw as the dirt that had become stuck to them. For Buber, Nazism as an exclusivist nationalism must have seemed like a catastrophic miscreant of an ideological 'belonging', a total abandonment of 'thou' - the God whose light is in each of us - in favor of an it, a glorified meta-biological concoction by us of country and state that now stood in the way of both God and the human being. With grander dreams dashed and life choices for Europe's Jews shrinking, both Palestine as a country and an emerging Yishuv in it forced themselves on him to seem the only but also most natural environment for sowing the seeds to bring about the longed for 'Jewish home' Buber believed in, and that needed to be made to come to life in its full glory. However, two interrelated and thorny issues clouded his confidence that the seeding will yield the right crop...that of the vision of embodying the community in an exclusivist state form, and that of the existence of another people in the land. How was it possible to reconcile a universal 'living in togetherness' idea of a Jewish home with the idea of State - one whose very notion depends on exclusivism and the dispossession of the 'other'? How can the circle be squared? Or, to use the image of the triangle of God, people and country, how could these three disjointed sides be harmoniously made continuous as in the simple form of a circle? Ideas of sharing the country with the other in one state or two to circumvent this challenging question were contemplated by Buber and others but these were sidelined by a growingly stronger possessive Zionism that pursued its own goal, leaving him with nothing but hope on the one hand, and an increasing angst-a sort of state of suspended belonging on the other. It is

this angst - Buber's and others' - which I think many of us experience today - that prompted me to address the idea of belonging on this occasion. Would the idealistic mission of the Jewish people as Buber saw it have been possible if we, the other, did not exist, and if the Arab world had turned the other way as Israel was being created? It is not clear how one could answer that question. Perhaps the Jewish community he wished for could have made itself come into being as a light unto the nations. More likely, however, Israel and its people would have been like any other nation state in the world, better than some but worse than others, its internal dynamic being like that of other states, and its people being driven by the same kind of instincts, desires, and ambitions we witness the world over, separated or fractured within by the different ideas of what being Jewish meant, or what different sectors of society want, with each faction or group seeking more power in the political structure for itself, though perhaps in a less exacerbated manner than the one we witness today and that is now partly at least caused by the fact that we happen by mere happenstance to exist. I say 'by mere happenstance' because we - the other people who lived and live here - did not have a grand project. Perhaps we lived at the tail end of such projects... now seen, in the eyes of Zionist planners, as an inconvenient glitch, or, in the words of the racist Winston Churchill, as the dog in the manger that should be shooed away. But our mere existence by happenstance has become a test if nothing more for what Zionism as a project in the making is, what direction it will take, and what future awaits it. It is paradoxically therefore a circumstance that far outweighs all military victories Zionists achieved over us and all the might Israel now holds us with. For, though not itself a constituent of Zionism, it has become a power with the fortuitous capacity to define the nature and future of Zionism itself

Our mere existence by happenstance has become a test if nothing more for what Zionism as a project in the making is, what direction it will take, and what future awaits it.

— whether this will adhere to its overridingly possessive and exclusivist character or find its way to some form of 'togetherness of life' with us. Looking with Buberian eyes one wonders whether it is therefore mere happenstance or divine fate that has made us, Palestinians, unwilling partners in the hewing of a Jewish home, whether as a state, or as a community. Only history of course will tell us what our binary future will be like. One hopes that we do not spill more blood or cause more pain in the process, nor will we allow ourselves to be blindly led by our idol teddy bears into a corner where the spilling of blood and the causing of pain will simply be the hallmark of our mutual existence.

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We would like to thank all of the foundations and friends who contributed to **Palestine-Israel Journal** in 2022. Given the challenges facing both the Israelis and the Palestinians today, without your help we could not continue our work. As the only joint Israeli-Palestinian publication, our goal remains “to shed light on, and analyze freely and critically, the complex issues at the core of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, without prejudice and taboos, and to contribute to the efforts to end the Israeli occupation and achieve a political solution based on two states, Israel and Palestine.”

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Documents and Resources Related to the Nakba

Convention and protocol relating to the status of refugees Published by UNHCR:

Communications and Public Information Service www.unhcr.org: Text of the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees-Text of the 1967 Protocol-Relating to the Status of Refugees-Resolution 2198 (XXI) adopted by the United Nations General Assembly-with an-Introductory Note-by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

<https://www.unhcr.org/protection/basic/3b66c2aa10/convention-protocol-relating-status-refugees.html>

International Convention on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid: G.A. res. 3068 (XXVIII)), 28 U.N. GAOR Supp. (No. 30) at 75, U.N. Doc. A/9030 (1974), 1015 U.N.T.S. 243, entered into force July 18, 1976.

https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/documents/atrocities-crimes/Doc.10_International%20Convention%20on%20the%20Suppression%20and%20Punishment%20of%20the%20Crime%20of%20Apartheid.pdf

The 1948 Palestinian Refugees and the Individual Right of Return An International Law Analysis-BADIL Resource Center for Palestinian Residency and Refugee Rights

https://badil.org/phocadownloadpap/Badil_docs/publications/individualROR-en.pdf

Jerusalem 1948: The Arab Neighborhoods and their Fate in the War

PUBLISHER: Institute for Palestine Studies in collaboration with Badil (2002), Edited by: Salim Tamari. <https://www.palestine-studies.org/en/node/1649524>

ILAN PAPPÉ: Special Document File AN INDICATIVE ARCHIVE: SALVAGING NAKBA

<https://www.palestine-studies.org/en/node/1650358>

How Israel Legalizes Forcible Transfer The Case of Occupied Jerusalem

<https://www.palestine-studies.org/en/node/226907>

Rashida Tlaib introduces historic Nakba resolution

<https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/house-resolution/1123/text?q=%7B%22search%22%3A%5B%22rashida%20+tlai%22%2C%22rashida%22%2C%22tlaib%22%5D%7D&r=1&s=3>

Humanitarian Atlas of the occupied Palestine Territory- Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)

<https://www.ochaopt.org/atlas2019/images/db/atlas-final.pdf> | Publication Date: 20/03/2019

American University of Beirut-Al-Nakba: 1948 Palestinian Exodus: Documents:

The guide was created in support of The Palestinian Oral History Archives Project at AUB Libraries. The guide focuses on the various aspects of historiography of 1948

Palestinian Nakba and highlights selective library resources, projects and websites. | URL: <https://aub.edu.lb/libguides.com/Al-Nakba>

Commemoration of the 75th anniversary of the Nakba at UNHQ: <https://www.un.org/unispal/committee/>

The UN Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People (CEIRPP) will organize on Monday 15 May 2023 a commemoration of the 75th anniversary of the Nakba at UN Headquarters in New York, for the first time in the history of the United Nations. Pursuant to General Assembly resolution A/RES/77/23 of 30 November 2022, the CEIRPP will organize a High-Level Special Meeting on 15 May 2023, from 10 am to 12.30 pm (NY Time) in Conference Room 4. Commemorations of the Nakba will continue in the evening with a cultural event in the General Assembly Hall from 6 pm to 8 pm (NY Time). The cultural event will bring to life the Palestinian journey and will aim at creating an immersive experience of the Nakba through live music, photos, videos, and personal testimonies.

UNPal-UN Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People <https://www.un.org/unispal/document-subject/nakba/> (search database)

List of United Nations resolutions concerning Palestine: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_United_Nations_resolutions_concerning_Palestine

Jewish Voice for Peace: Facing the Nakba offers educational resources to U.S. Jews and a general U.S. audience about the history of the Nakba (“Catastrophe” in Arabic) and its present implications in Palestine/Israel. <https://www.jewishvoiceforpeace.org/facing-the-nakba>

Zochrot is an Israeli NGO that has been working since 2002 to expose and disseminate historical information about the Palestinian Nakba in Hebrew, with a view to promote accountability for the Nakba among the Jewish public in Israel and the implementation of the Right of Return of Palestinian refugees. <https://www.zochrot.org/welcome/index/en>

ACRI (Association for Civil Rights in Israel) is the oldest and most influential civil and human rights organization in Israel. Founded in 1972, ACRI is the only NGO in Israel advocating across the broad spectrum of human rights and civil liberties for everyone living in Israel and in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. Our strategic focus areas include: the Arab minority, migrants and refugees, the Occupied Palestinian Territory, and social, economic rights, and political rights. <https://www.english.acri.org.il/publications>

B’Tselem – The Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories: <https://www.btselem.org/publications>

The Legal Center for Arab Minority Rights in Israel- Adalah (“Justice” in Arabic) is an independent human rights organization and legal center. It was founded in November 1996 as a joint project of two leading Arab NGOs - The Galilee Society and the Arab Association for Human Rights (HRA), and it became an independent NGO in 1997. <https://www.adalah.org/en/content/index/2052>