

The Right of Return

Author(s): SALMAN ABU SITTA

Source: *Insight Turkey*, Fall 2023, Vol. 25, No. 4 (Fall 2023), pp. 63-78

Published by: SET VAKFI İktisadi İşletmesi, SETA VAKFI

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/48754794>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <https://about.jstor.org/terms>



SET VAKFI İktisadi İşletmesi, SETA VAKFI is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Insight Turkey*

JSTOR

The Right of Return: The Only Future for Palestine

SALMAN ABU SITTA

Palestine Land Society, United Kingdom

ORCID No: 0009-0003-1435-095X

ABSTRACT *Since the October 7, 2023, the world has been deeply affected by the ongoing conflict in Gaza, resulting in the tragic loss of countless innocent lives. To gain a comprehensive understanding of the current situation in Gaza, it is imperative to delve into its historical roots. This commentary offers a meticulous and critical examination of the Palestinian Nakba and the enduring Israeli-Palestinian conflict. It underscores the profound and lasting repercussions of historical events such as the Balfour Declaration and the British Mandate on Palestine, shedding light on the profound displacement and suffering endured by the Palestinian population. Furthermore, this commentary advocates for the fundamental right of Palestinian refugees to return to their homeland, presenting it as a pivotal element in the path towards conflict resolution and lasting peace. Lastly, it scrutinizes the roles played by international powers and their policies, highlighting their impact on perpetuating the conflict.*

Keywords: Palestinian Nakba, Israel-Palestine Conflict, Displacement, Balfour Declaration

Insight Turkey 2023

Vol. 25 / No. 4 / pp. 63-77

Received Date: 11/11/2023 • Accepted Date: 15/12/2023 • DOI: 10.25253/99.2023254.5

Introduction

The Palestinian Nakba is unsurpassed in history. This is a fact that cannot be denied, but it is concealed from and denied by most of the Western world. The concealment of this fact is a crime under international law. It is crucial to examine the facts to gain a comprehensive understanding of this issue. First, a foreign army from Europe invaded Palestine in late 1910. It occupied the land of Palestine by force of arms through a trail of massacres. It was emptied of its people, who were driven into refugee camps. Second, Palestine's physical and cultural landmarks were systematically obliterated. Its geography was taken over and renamed fictitiously by the invaders. Its history was erased from all records and replaced by a mythical version. Its heritage was expropriated as the invader's own. Third, Israeli airplanes, tanks, and artillery have been consistently bombing the victims in refugee camps and everywhere over the past 75 years.

In the Western world, the destruction of Palestine and the dispersion of its people were celebrated as a miraculous act of God and as a victory of the righteous few over the savage many. This tragedy in Palestine, which unfolds day by day, has been carried out according to a premeditated plan outside our country, meticulously executed, and supported by the same colonial powers that created the tragedy in the first place. It has been carried out, not in the era of bow and arrow on a distant continent, but in the

era of camera and TV, in the era of the UN, the guardian of international law, in the heart of the ancient Arab and Islamic world.

Yet, the cries of the victims are silenced and denied, and the calls for justice are framed as acts of hatred. In the colonial courts, telling the truth and speaking on behalf of the victims are punishable as criminal acts. Indeed, this is unsurpassed in history.

The First World War and Balfour's 67 Words

Palestine was an integral part of the Levant's history before and during the Christian era. In the 7th century, it became part of the largely Muslim state under the Guided Khulafa, the Umayyad Dynasty, followed by the Abbasids, and then for a brief period under the Crusades, followed by various Mamluks Dynasties. The last rule was superseded by the Ottomans' longest rule for 400 years, from 1517 to 1917. This rule ended in the First World War when the Ottoman lost the war, and most Arab countries fell under European colonial rule. In all this history, Palestine was no different from Syria or Egypt. It had the same people, culture, and religion.

According to Ottoman records, at the beginning of the First World War, the population of Palestine (1914-1915) was 722,143, of which 602,377 were Muslims, 81,012 were Christians, and 38,754 were Jews.¹ Roughly a third of Jews were Ottoman subjects; the remainder were recent European im-

migrants. The latter had a secret plan to colonize Palestine and remove its Palestinian people from their patrimony, either by expulsion or massacre. They created the myth that “Palestine is a land without people for a people without land.” The myth was actually a plan to empty Palestine of its people.

This plan found an important ally in the opportunist Arthur James Balfour, the British Foreign Minister during the First World War. In 1916, Balfour was part of a big scheme to deceive the Arabs by telling them that they would be free from Ottoman rule if they joined him in pushing the Turks out of Arab provinces.

The Arabs, convinced by his assurances, joined forces with Balfour. To reinforce Balfour’s commitment, allied aircraft distributed leaflets over Arab lands, reiterating these pledges. Simultaneously, Balfour’s confidant, Mark Sykes, along with French diplomat George Picot, were secluded in a dimly lit room, unfurling a map of the Middle East across a table. They were partitioning the Arab region among themselves, debating the delineation of Palestine’s borders in relation to those of Syria, Lebanon, and Iraq.

The British and the French were fighting over war spoils on the dead bodies of the Arab nation. Balfour’s maneuvers were motivated by Zionist aspirations who wanted to extract more land and more water in Palestine, provided there were no people in it. They wanted an empty Palestine. Nevertheless, it was not empty; it was

The cries of the victims are silenced and denied, and the calls for justice are framed as acts of hatred. In the colonial courts, telling the truth and speaking on behalf of the victims are punishable as criminal acts

rich and fertile, full of its people. It had 1,200 ancient towns and villages.

At 7 PM on Wednesday, October 31, 1917, the British forces took Beer Sheba. It was the first British victory in the First World War, after defeats in Gaza, Kut in Iraq, and Gallipoli in Türkiye. The next morning, on November 1, Allenby sent a telegram to London, saying, “Beer Sheba is in our hands; Jerusalem will be your Christmas present.” On November 2, 1917, Balfour received the telegram from Allenby. Following this, he announced what would notoriously become known as the Balfour Declaration. This declaration emerged from an agreement between him and rich European Jews, where it was stated that:

His Majesty’s Government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people and will use their best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and

The Balfour Declaration was the promise of those who did not own to those who have no title, giving away the property of the absent lawful owners

religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine, or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country.²

Since then, 106 years have passed, and Palestinians have witnessed 106 years of death and destruction. The Balfour Declaration was the promise of those who did not own to those who have no title, giving away the property of the absent lawful owners. Indeed, Balfour was fully aware of this outcome. When challenged in November 1918 about the injustice of his declaration, Balfour said:

For in Palestine, we do not propose even to go through the form of consulting the wishes of the present inhabitants of the country... The four great powers are committed to Zionism and Zionism, be it right or wrong, good or bad, is rooted in age-old tradition, in present needs, in future hopes, of far profounder impact than the desires and prejudices [not the rights] of the 700,000 Arabs who now inhabit this ancient land.³

On another occasion, Balfour described these Arabs as “wholly barbarous, undeveloped and unorganized black tribes.” In saying so, Balfour,

learned well the teachings of your tutor and friend, Chaim Weizmann, the leader of the Zionist movement in the making. Indeed, in a letter from Weizmann to Balfour telling him on May 30, 1918, that “The Arab is treacherous... superficially clever, worships one thing only: power and success... dishonest, uneducated, greedy, inefficient, shifty...”⁴

Balfour himself was not free from anti-Semitic feelings towards the Jews. In the introduction to Sokolov’s *History of Zionism*, Balfour wrote that “[it was] a serious endeavor to mitigate the age-long miseries created for Western civilization by the presence in its midst... of an alien and hostile Body [i.e. Jews], [it is] unable to expel or absorb.” In 1905, Balfour passed the Aliens Act, prohibiting Jews from immigrating to England. He found it useful to get rid of the Jews by implanting them in Arab countries to serve as its Western imperialist base.

Herbert Samuel and the British Mandate

In 1920, three years after the infamous Declaration, Balfour entrusted the administration of Palestine, under the League of Nations Mandate system, to a Zionist Jew, Herbert Samuel. Samuel was the same person who, a few years back, had presented a paper to the British government to colonize Palestine. Under his powers as the first High Commissioner for Palestine, Samuel thus started the implementation of the Zionist policy of taking over Palestine under the pro-

tection of Balfour's 67-word Declaration. The Mandate for Palestine both incorporated and expanded upon the promise that Balfour had given to the Zionist movement. It was the only mandate, moreover, in which the League of Nations endorsed a settler colonial project, a decision that the UN would repeat, albeit through partition, some two-and-a-half decades later.

Not all the measures taken by Samuel were authorized by the mandate terms. The League of Nations, however, only ratified the Mandate on July 24, 1922, two years after his appointment. The Mandate could not have fully acquired its proper legal form before August 1924 in Lausanne, when Türkiye signed a peace agreement with the Allied powers. The early appointment of Samuel thus created a legal irregularity, which he used to benefit the Zionist movement. Also, this was before the Permanent Mandates Commission (PMC), the oversight body, began work; hence, Samuel could carry out his work without worrying about PMC review, notwithstanding the fact that the PMC subsequently came to share Samuel's pro-Zionist persuasion.

In his 5 years of tenure, from 1920 to 1925, Samuel promulgated about 100 laws, essentially founding Israel, waiting to be announced 28 years later. Samuel created separate Jewish institutions for education, banking, power, and public works. Furthermore, he created laws favoring Jewish European immigrants yet to arrive,

such as the citizenship and land legislation enabling colonization and, as a consequence, dispossession and displacement. The most critical was forming a Jewish legislative council and an embryonic Jewish army. The Palestinians, the people of the country, were denied the establishment of their institutions. As a result of these policies during Herbert Samuel's tenure, immigration shot up from 5,514 in 1920 to 33,801 in 1925, the year he left.

The 1936-1939 Revolt

As many British officials had begun to realize the obvious, the Mandate had created an impossible situation as these officials unsuccessfully tried to reconcile the legal obligation to assist Palestinians in building an independent Palestine with the contrary political promise to build a Jewish national home on the same land. The Palestinians revolted in 1921 and 1929, but the biggest revolt was in 1936-1939. The last was triggered by massive Jewish immigration from Europe in the mid-1930s. By 1939, the number of Jewish immigrants had increased eight times from 1917, the year of the British occupation of Palestine. In 1939, they constituted 30 percent of the total population (445,000 out of 1,501,000). As Palestinian resistance increased, the British administration adopted increasingly brutal measures to quell the revolt. It was in this period, just before the Second World War, that the British Mandate government physically destroyed the fabric of Palestinian

society and made it easy prey for the Israeli conquest of Palestine that was to come in 1948.

It dissolved all Palestinian political parties. Its leaders were either imprisoned or fled the country. New British army reinforcements were brought in. The Royal Air Force (RAF) showered bombs on villages. Collective punishment was applied. Houses were demolished. Provisions were destroyed. Able-bodied men were rounded up and put in cages. Summary trials led to quick execution. Possession of a simple pistol led to a death sentence, and possession of a knife led to life imprisonment. The British executed the 80-year-old leader, Sheikh Farhan al-Sa'di, who was hanged while fasting in Ramadan on November 22, 1937.

By 1939, Palestinian society was utterly devastated. All the while, the Zionists were watching the British do their bidding while they were building their army to 20,000 soldiers, soon to increase six times. The British forces trained the Jewish militia, created elite units known as SNS (Special Night Squad), gave them uniforms, and shared intelligence with them. The British helped create the Haganah, the future army of Israel. The British brutality was copied and greatly refined by modern-day Israel.

With the Second World War looming on the horizon, Great Britain was eventually forced to reconsider its heavy-handed approach towards the Arabs to gain their support for the

war effort. It was too little, too late. The Zionists, led by David Ben-Gurion, were preparing for the takeover of Palestine. Four hundred Zionist leaders met in Biltmore (U.S.) in May 1942, where Ben Gurion announced the Zionist plan "that Palestine be established as a Jewish Commonwealth." Zionists established "Village Files" to document everything about every village in preparation for its attack and takeover.

In 1944, a reliable estimate of the official area acquired by Jews in the Mandate period from 1920-1944 was 927,165 dunums (1944) [dunum = 1000 m²]. The Jewish-acquired land in the Ottoman period was very small. The final figure of Jewish ownership in Palestine on the eve of creating the state of Israel was 1,429,062 dunums, assuming that the claimed ownership in the Ottoman period of 454,860 dunums is correct. Of the official area of Palestine of 26,323,000 dunums, 24,893,937 dunums are Arab Palestinian. The location of the Jewish land, not its area, is extremely important. It is located in the most fertile coastal part of Palestine and along the River Jordan; it has abundant water resources.

The Second World War, Terrorism, and Invasion in April 1948

At the end of the Second World War, the Zionists rewarded Britain, which had supported the settler colonial movement, by starting a terror campaign against their erstwhile benefactors. They bombed the British

headquarters in Jerusalem, hanged British soldiers, and kidnapped British judges. In 1945, Britain had to fly the 6th Airborne Division to Palestine to fight Zionist terrorism. The aim, however, was not to save Palestine, but to save British soldiers. Some three years later, several months into the 1948 war, Zionists assassinated Count Folke Bernadotte, the UN Mediator appointed to bring peace to Palestine. The Security Council (Res. 57, September 18, 1948) described the Zionist assassination as a cowardly act of terrorism.

Under U.S. pressure and Western countries' support, the UN passed a nonbinding resolution (Res. 181, November 29, 1947) in favor of dividing Palestine into Arab (Palestinian) and Jewish (immigrant) states. This resolution proposed that 55 percent of Palestine would be under the Jewish immigrants' government, while their ownership under the British Mandate was only 6 percent. Moreover, half of the population of the would-be Jewish state was Palestinian. There were 174 Jewish colonies in the proposed Jewish state as compared to 467 Palestinian Arab villages and three cities. Conversely, the Arab states would have only a tiny number of Jews (about 8,000). Jerusalem, designated to be a separate international entity (*corpus separatum*), would have an equal number of Jews and Palestinians.

Naturally, the Palestinians rejected it, and the Jews accepted it as an interim measure. Soon after, in April 1948, the Jewish militia, known as

By the middle of May 1948, Zionist forces had expelled the Palestinian inhabitants from the main cities and 220 villages and conquered approximately 3,500 km² of territory, or 13 percent of Palestine, an increase of 2,000 km² over land previously held. This area was the richest and most fertile part of Palestine

the *Haganah*, started Operation Plan D to invade the rest of Palestine, depopulate it, expel the inhabitants, and destroy their villages. Plan D was detailed: it called for the “encirclement of the villages and searching for [them] it. In the event of resistance, the armed forces must be wiped out, and the population must be expelled outside the borders of the state.”⁵ In cities, the plan called for “occupation and control of all isolated Arab neighborhoods [and] encirclement of Arab municipal areas and termination of their vital services (water, electricity, fuel, etc.). In case of resistance, the population will be expelled.” The plan called for the “destruction of villages (setting fire to, blowing up and planting mines in the debris)” to prevent the return of refugees.

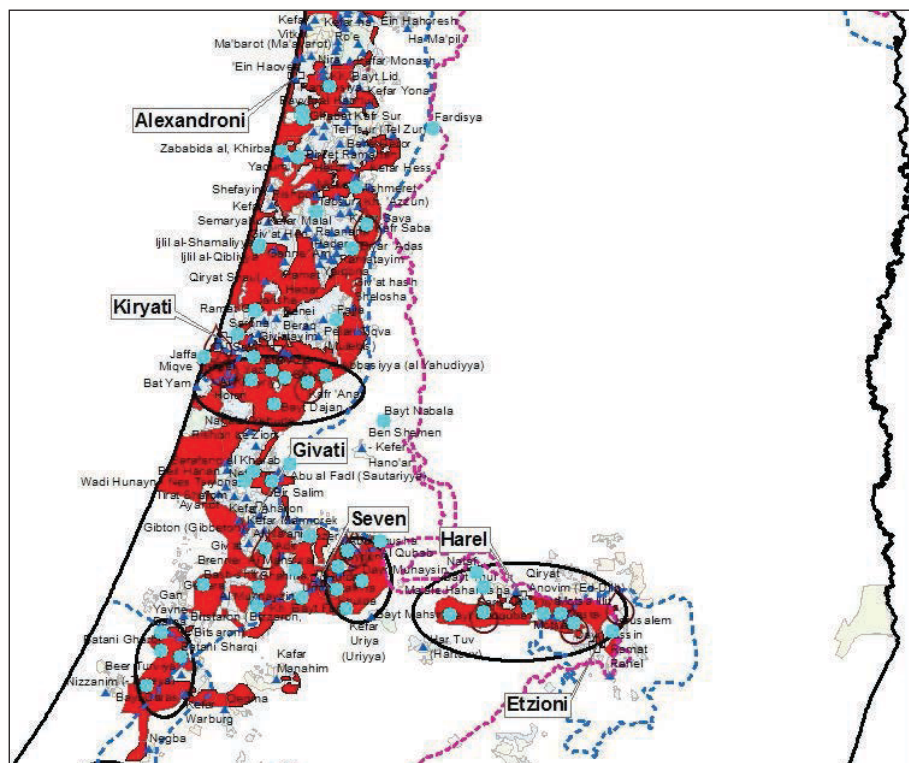
In the remaining six weeks of the Mandate, the Zionists attacked and depopulated 220 Palestinian villages

and committed massacres; the most infamous was Deir Yassin. As can be seen in Map 1, in April 1948, the Zionist militia (the *Haganah*) started the invasion of Palestine under Plan D, with a force that eventually reached 120,000 trained soldiers and attacked and depopulated 220 main Palestinian cities and villages, making up half of all refugees. That was before Israel was declared a state, before the British Mandate ended, before any regular Arab soldier entered Palestine to save Palestinians from massacres like Deir Yassin. Israel was the aggressor; it was not in self-defense. The map shows the land Israel occupied in this period in red, the name of the Is-

raeli brigade, the depopulated village in blue, and the area of influence in which villages were depopulated as a result of a massacre in the black circle. At this point, contrary to their duty, the British Mandate forces did not protect the Palestinians from massacres and expulsion. At the same time, regular Arab forces were not allowed to enter Palestine to protect Palestinians from massacres.

By the middle of May 1948, Zionist forces had expelled the Palestinian inhabitants from the main cities and 220 villages and conquered approximately 3,500 km² of territory, or 13 percent of Palestine, an increase of

Map 1: Zionist Invasion before Israel State



Source: Abu Sitta, Palestine Land Society

2,000 km² over land previously held. This area was the richest and most fertile part of Palestine.

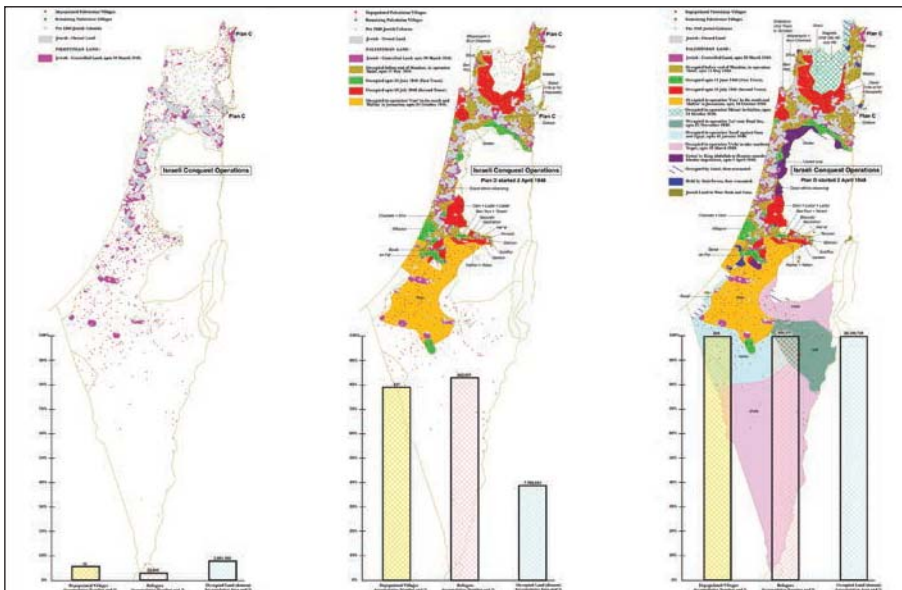
Al-Nakba

The *Haganah* formed what became the Israel Defense Forces (IDF). It was composed of 120,000 soldiers, many of whom were veterans of the Second World War. They started the invasion of Palestine on a large scale in April 1948 and continued after the declaration of the state of Israel on May 14, 1948, until the beginning of 1949, when Armistice Agreements were signed with Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria. These Arab countries came to rescue Palestinians from Jewish-inflicted massacres but were unprepared and operated under different commands.

Map 2 shows the progress of the Zionist invasion of Palestine, in which the Zionist/Israeli army carried out 31 military operations to occupy Palestine. As can be seen, the Zionist/Israeli forces occupied 80 percent of Palestine in successive stages in 1948, starting from 6 percent of Palestine, the Jews controlled by British collusion. Finally, Israel depopulated 560 towns and villages, which are home to 9 million Palestinian refugees today.

Furthermore, Table 1 shows an approximate number of different kinds of war crimes committed by Israel in the period 1947-1953, as referenced in detail in the Atlas of Palestine 1917-1966. The table lists 356 war crimes, of which 156 were massacres, atrocities, and cases of killing civilians. In total, 530 towns and villages were depopulated, and 900,000 Pal-

Map 2: Israel's Occupation of Palestine



Source: Abu Sitta, Palestine Land Society

estinians, or two-thirds of the whole population, were made refugees.⁶

As a result, Israel was occupied by a military force covering 20,500 km²,

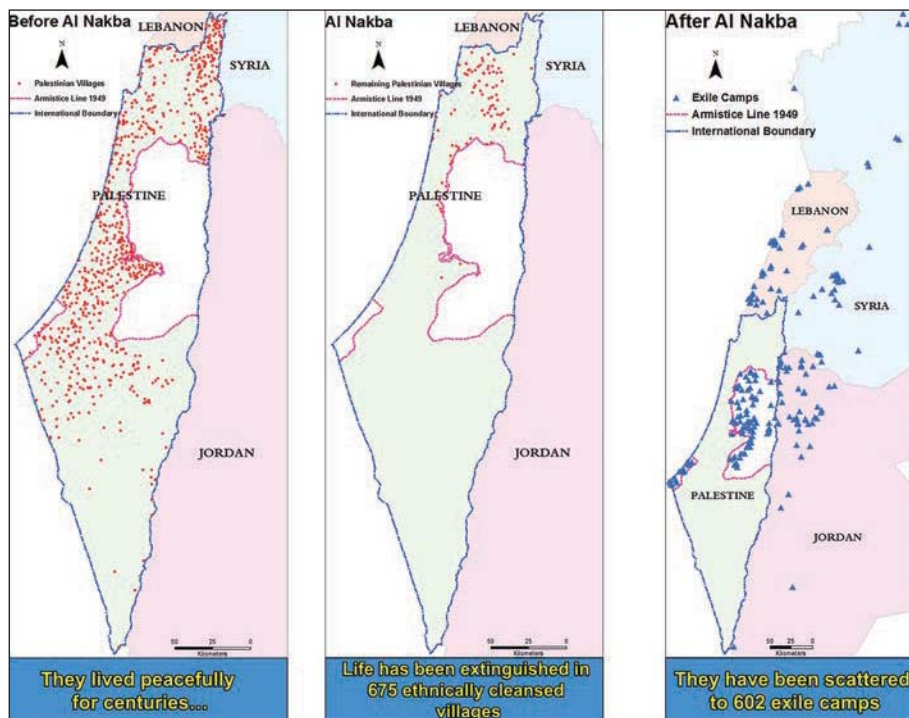
or about 80 percent of Palestine, in contravention of many UN resolutions. The three maps below represent the stages of al-Nakba before and after 1948 (Map 3).

Table 1: Israeli War Crimes

Code	Explanation	No Listed
1	Expulsion, Flight of Population	15
2	Killing People. Atrocities, Massacres	159
3	Looting and Plunder	15
4	Destruction of Houses and Villages	124
5	Detention and Forced Labour Camps	7
6	Maltreatment, Starvation, Rape	18
7	Suffering after Expulsion as a Refugee	2
8	Other Wrongdoing	16
Total	Note: These numbers are not exhaustive	356

Source: Abu Sitta, Atlas of Palestine 1917-1966

Map 3: The Stages of al-Nakba



Source: Abu Sitta, Palestine Land Society

Israel has no recognized boundaries, neither by its own admission nor by international law. The present boundaries are merely the Armistice Lines of the 1949 Agreements. According to these agreements, these lines are not boundaries. The Armistice Agreement states that the Armistice Lines do not confer or deny the rights of any claimants. Until today, Israel has refused to define its boundaries. Its purpose is to occupy and claim more Palestinian and Arab land, such as after 1967 in the West Bank, the Golan Heights, and South Lebanon. At the time of writing, Israel waged yet another war on the Gaza Strip to re-occupy and seize the land and to expel the population or destroy them.

An Ongoing Nakba: Attacking Refugees in Camps

The ethnic cleansing did not stop in 1948. Israel has attacked Palestinian refugees in their camps of exile, wherever they are located, for the last 75 years, with the aim of eliminating them in a complete genocide operation. The phenomenon of chasing and attacking the refugees, even in their exile, is unique in the history of ethnic cleansing. The following illustrates this. Palestinian refugees were attacked in the camps in Gaza, the West Bank, Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria. Annual United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) reports describe time-wise such attacks. In the early years, villagers were killed in Qibya and Bureij in 1953, and

In each major Israeli assault since 2008-2009 on Gaza, the number of Palestinians displaced within Gaza and the level of destruction have increased exponentially

massacres were committed in Khan Younis and Rafah in 1956. Thereafter, attacks were carried out in the Jordan Valley during the 1967 War, in Gaza in 1971, in Lebanon from the early 1970s, including the 1982 Sabra and Shatila massacres, in the First (1987) and Second (2000) Intifadas, in the West Bank, and Gaza. The Gaza Strip has been under a complete Israeli blockade since 2005.

In each major Israeli assault since 2008-2009 on Gaza, the number of Palestinians displaced within Gaza and the level of destruction have increased exponentially, e.g., some 50,000 were displaced and some 60,000 homes were damaged or destroyed in 2008-2009; close to half a million displaced in 2014, and some 100,000 homes were damaged or destroyed. At the time of writing (November 2023), Israel had killed 15,000 Palestinians, with 4000 still unaccounted for under the rubble, destroyed at least 56,000 housing units, and dropped more bombs on the tiny Gaza Strip in 46 days than on Afghanistan in 20 years. Israeli savagery will remain marked in its history.

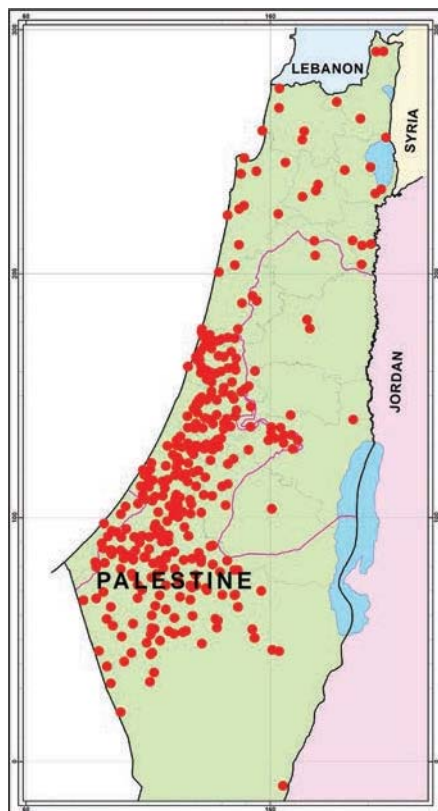
The Gaza Strip Refugees Today: Who Are They?

The 2.3 million Palestinians who reside in the Gaza Strip – 1.3 percent of Palestine – originate from 247 villages in the Southern half of the country before they were expelled by Israel in 1948 (Map 4). They have been held hostage in the Gaza Strip ever since, denied the right to return to their homes, lands, and villages.

Young men, third-generation refugees, crossed the formidable fence on October 7 to return home. Home is within sight. They can, quite literally,

walk home. In the Southern district of Palestine, where the refugees from Gaza originate, there are currently around 150,000 Jewish settlers, who reside in 212 colonies set up after the 1948 War. Many of these settlers have dual citizenship, mostly from Eastern Europe. They are the aggressors who occupy the refugees' land. Comparatively, the number of settlers in the south of the country is less than the population of a single refugee camp in Gaza. The population density of the settler population is about 5 persons/km². This compares with a Palestinian population density of 8,000 persons/km² in the Gaza Strip.

Map 4: The Origin of Gaza Refugees



Source: Abu Sitta, Palestine Land Society

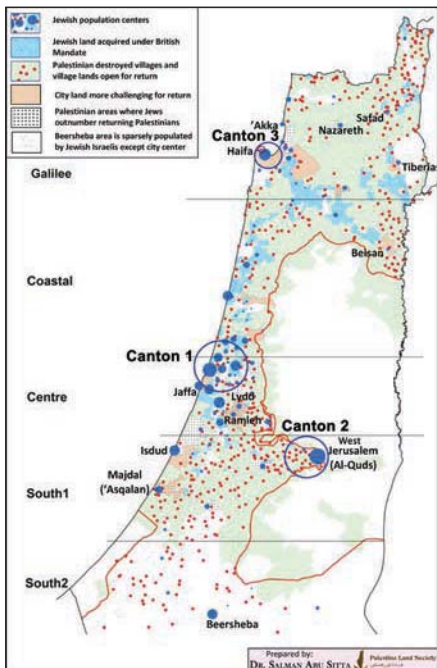
Right of Return

Resolution 194 (1948), which resolves that refugees wishing to do so should be permitted to return to their homes, has been affirmed by the General Assembly more than 130 times, the longest in UN history. International law and a myriad of international (and regional) conventions enshrine return as a basic right. These include the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Fourth Geneva Convention, the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, and the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, to name just a few. Palestinians were not allowed to return because the Zionist movement and the settler colonial state of Israel enabled by the Western states – the U.S. in particular – remained committed to the objective of building Israel on Palestine's ruins.

How Can We Reverse the Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine?

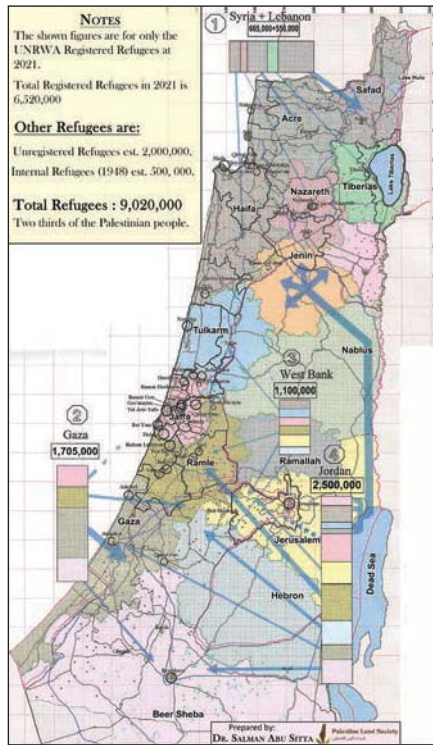
We have addressed the question of how international law can be implemented. As Map 5 shows, we know where the refugees are and what their original villages were. A detailed study we made found that 88 percent of Israeli Jews live in only 12 percent of Israel. This means that most rural Palestinians can return to their land without a major displacement of Jews if they wish to remain in Palestine. The refugee land is now occupied by the Kibbutz, which compose 1-2 percent of the Israeli population. Vast areas of the refugees' land in Israel are still vacant or used by the army for its purposes (Map 6).

Map 5: Return Plan 1



Source: Abu Sitta, Palestine Land Society

Map 6: Return Plan 2



Source: Abu Sitta, Palestine Land Society

The Jews of Israel are concentrated in three cantons: Tel Aviv, Haifa, and West Jerusalem. Assuming the Jews would like to live as normal citizens, they can enjoy cultural and religious freedom, like in any other country. An essential condition for peaceful coexistence is that racism, colonialism, occupation, apartheid, and Zionism must be completely abolished.

What Should We Do?

The recent genocide in Gaza has taught the world many lessons. The ugly crimes of Zionism have been fully exposed to the world for the first time. The Zionist/Western mo-

Those who are injured or displaced and those who suffered for so long deserve to gain their inalienable right of return to their home and to live in a free, democratic Palestine

nopoly on the news and silencing the voice of the victim have been broken. There are two reasons for this: the horrendous scale of Israeli crimes, which has been too vast to hide, and the power of social media among the young. In addition, the courage and fortitude of the caged Palestinians in Gaza, without tanks, airplanes, or access to the world, have moved the consciences of ordinary people around the world. But this could fade with time. We all have a duty to overcome that. Academics should write to display the hidden facts and expose war crimes. Students, labor, and active sections of society should demonstrate and cause their politicians to take action. Active society should boycott the products of war criminals. Every possible effort must be made to end the genocide in Gaza and bring the criminals to court for punishment and remedy.

The people in Gaza, and indeed in all of Palestine, need immediate help. Those who are killed are buried, but behind them are children and dependents who are subject to starvation

under the complete blockade still present. The injured children without a family need a great deal of care until they grow up. Not only do their physical scars need healing, but their mental health will also need a great deal of care until they recover.

Above all, those who are injured or displaced and those who suffered for so long deserve to gain their inalienable *right of return* to their home and to live in a free, democratic Palestine. This Palestine will be the home of its natural people, Muslims, Christians, and non-Zionist Jews, as they were before. A cardinal principle is that Zionism, the Ashkenazi ideology and practice, must be abolished, just like Nazism in Germany. Returning Palestinians should recover all their looted property and receive compensation for their use for 75 years, according to UN resolutions. For justice to be fully made, all perpetrators of war crimes and genocide must be brought before the International Criminal Court. Also, the history of their crimes must be recorded, displayed, and taught in schools. Our world must be made a better place after all this manifest evil is removed. ■

Endnotes

1. Salman H. Abu Sitta, "Palestinian People: Hundred Years of Struggle to Survive," in Habib Tiliouine and Richard J. Estes (eds.), *The State of Social Progress of Islamic Societies*, (Springer Cham: 2016), p. 506.
2. "Balfour Declaration 1917," *The Avalon Project: Documents in Law, History and Diplomacy*, (1917), retrieved from https://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/balfour.asp.

3. Sharif Nashashibi, "Balfour: Britain's Original Sin," *Al Jazeera*, (November 4, 2014), retrieved from <https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2014/11/4/balfour-britains-original-sin>.

4. Salman Abu Sitta, "A Palestinian Address to Balfour: In Honor of Truth, Memory, and Justice," *Mondoweiss*, (November 30, 2022), retrieved from <https://mondoweiss.net/2022/11/a-palestinian-address-to-balfour-in-honor-of-truth-memory-and-justice/>.

5. "Explainer: Plan Dalet & The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine," *Institute for Middle East Understanding*, (March 8, 2023), retrieved from <https://imeu.org/>

article/explainer-plan-dalet-the-ethnic-cleansing-of-palestine.

6. The table is a summary list of war crimes as recorded in the books by Israeli, Palestinian, international historians in the 5 years around 1948. The list is not exhaustive, but it illustrates the extensive range of crimes in number and type. This illustrates the changing nature of the crime from ethnic cleansing, i.e. removal of people from their homes to outright Genocide, i.e. annihilation of people altogether. Although Israel denied this for years, supported by the West, the recent war on Gaza exposed the extent of long hidden crimes.

Türkiye'nin en iyi gazetesi

SABAH

LOOK CLOSELY AT THE WORLD

We write the truth, solely the truth, without mincing any words. Whatever is happening, we bring it to you as it happens. To us, the world is small, but the power we derive from you is huge.

