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Coexistence in Israel/Palestine By  
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Majed Al Zeer

## From the Director

The Journal of Palestinian Refugee Studies (JPRS) is a key part of the work we do at the Palestinian Return Centre and is instrumental in providing in-depth analysis of the many challenges Palestinians around the world face. For this reason, it is our privilege to bring you this 2016 Autumn issue. However, as well as being a privilege, it is also our duty. The year 2017 marks some incredibly significant and troubling dates for the Palestinian cause and it is more important than ever that we bring the Palestinian struggle to the forefront. This year we mark 50 years of illegal occupation of Palestinian land. We also mark 70 years since the UN partition plan was initially proposed, and finally, we mark 100 years since the Balfour Declaration was issued.

Today, the British government is looking to potentially celebrate the centenary of the infamous declaration, whose catastrophic effects have rippled throughout history all the way to the present day.

This is why we have launched the Balfour Apology Campaign not only to lobby the British government to avoid celebrating something which led to nothing but despair and disaster for Palestinians, but also to urge them to acknowledge their involvement by issuing an apology to the Palestinian people.

In light of its complicity, we also expect the British government's formal apology to include a commitment to resolving the conflict in a way that is fair and just for all and which compensates the Palestinians for the suffering they have endured as a result of British actions.

The misery caused by the British government can still be witnessed today. The Balfour Declaration led to the forced expulsion of over 700,000 Palestinians from their homes and these Palestinians who have been refugees since 1948 find themselves still living in dire conditions in refugee camps across the Levant today.

Palestinian refugees in Syria find themselves caught up in the Syrian Civil War and many of them have had to flee their homes again, becoming refugees for a second time in their lives. Meanwhile, Palestinians in Lebanon face some of the harshest conditions with little access to water, electricity and education, living in a country where the government is indifferent to them at best, hostile at worst.

However, the suffering is not limited to refugees and in this issue we will focus on the lives of Palestinian citizens of Israel. The Israeli state and its close allies often claim that it is the only democracy in the region, thus



overlooking the ways in which Israel denies Palestinians their basic rights and exposes them to racism, oppression and violence on a daily basis. We seek to highlight this contradiction and explore the reality of the status of Palestinians living within Israel.

Although 2017 marks some troubling anniversaries and some difficult times, it is also important to acknowledge that we are making progress. A few months ago, the United Nations Security Council passed its first resolution condemning Israeli settlements. The UN reaffirmed that Israel's settlements in the West Bank not only have no legal validity, but that they also constitute a flagrant violation of International Law.

An action like this would have been unthinkable, even a year ago. With more and more of the international community coming out in support of Palestine and with the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement growing every day, we are one step closer to peace and justice.





Sameh Habeeb

## From the Editor

This edition of the *Journal of Palestinian Refugee Studies* critically analyses the question of indigenous Palestinian minority currently citizens of Israel. Composing one-fifth of the total population in Israel, they are simultaneously exploited in the Zionist narrative as proof of the government's democratic character but at the same time are also seen as a 'demographic time-bomb' to the preservation of a Jewish majority. Palestinians in Israel lay bare one of the core contradictions of the logic of Zionism: the idea of a 'Jewish democracy' is irreconcilable since it's fundamentally a contradiction in terms.

Contrary to a widely held perception, there is no guarantee of full equality for Jewish and Palestinian citizens. The definition of Israel as a "Jewish state" makes inequality and discrimination against Palestinian citizens of Israel a reality and a political project. The pairing of "Jewish" and "democratic" both codifies discrimination against non-Jewish citizens and impedes the realization of full equality.

Inside what is the State of Israel, the most important legal instrument for seizing Palestinian land was the 1950 Absentees' Property Law, which declared Palestinian refugees from the 1948 War to be "absentees" and gave control of their lands to the state.<sup>1</sup> This law defines persons who were expelled, fled, or who left the country after 29 November 1947, mainly due to the war, as well as their movable and immovable property (mainly land, houses and bank accounts etc.), as "absentee". Property belonging to absentees was placed under the control of the State of Israel with the Custodian for Absentees' Property. The Absentees' Property Law was the main legal instrument used by Israel to take possession of the land belonging to the internal and external Palestinian refugees.<sup>2</sup>

Two articles in this issue investigate the role that the Nakba plays in the struggle against Israeli settler colonialism. Charlie Hoyle writes about the difficulties Palestinians face in commemorating the Nakba in Israel, especially following the Nakba Law of 2011. He argues that while the Nakba continues to inform the lived daily experience of all Palestinians, its memory has been suppressed in Israeli society. From schoolbooks to the physical landscape itself, Israel has redacted Palestinians from the history of 1948. The other article is authored by Hisham Naffa, originally written in Arabic and then translated into English, is titled 'Palestinian Refugees in the shadow of the demand for "Israel's Jewishness"'. The author argues that despite all the attempts to forget the Nakba, it still finds its way back into Israeli awareness.

Today, 70,000 Bedouin citizens live in 35 villages in the Naqab created prior to 1950.<sup>3</sup> The villages are deemed “unrecognized” by Israel and the inhabitants labeled as trespassers thus denying these citizens access to state infrastructure like water, electricity, sewage, education, health care and roads. Israel intends to reforest, build new settlements and build military centers on Arab Bedouin land.<sup>4</sup> Nick Rodrigo, examines Zionism’s attitude towards the Naqab desert as outlined in the diary entries of David Ben Gurion. The author explores the steady displacement of Bedouins from the area in the decades following the establishment of Israel. By examining the interplay between Israel’s foundation “knowledge culture” towards indigenous land, alongside its developing political economy, the second section of this paper will be poised to analyse the structure and ideational logic behind its current assault on Bedouins in the Naqab and how indigenous Bedouin resistance challenges the Zionist settler colonial project.

Khalid Arar, Kussai Haj Yehia and Fadia Ibrahim contribute an article titled ‘Reflections of the national narrative on the indigenous Palestinian minority in Israel: Patterns and Challenges’. In this piece they discuss the challenges that face the indigenous Palestinian minority in Israel in the struggle to develop their unique national narrative due to the absence of their national narrative in the public arena, most noticeably in the state education system and their economic dependence on and acceptance of services from government agencies.

The preparation of this issue coincided with fires spreading across Israel. Important to note that early Zionists used forestation as a political tool by planting non-native European pines to hide destroyed Palestinian villages. Jihad Abu Raya’s article examines The incitement instigated by the Israeli prime minister and members of his cabinet against Palestinian citizens of Israel as fires raged there last week has had a profound impact inside the country.

Nearly a quarter of all Palestinians who stayed within the borders of what is now considered the State of Israel cannot return to their original homes and have become considered Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs). Barbara Pilz looks through the lenses of international law to discuss those Palestinians considered Internally Displaced Persons in Israel.

Finally, Duha Almussadar writes a review of Daniel Monterescu’s book ‘Jaffa Shared and Shattered: Contrived Coexistence in Israel/Palestine’. Almussadar suggests that Daniel Monterescu utilised his knowledge of Jaffa, having lived there for decades, to unravel the complexities of mixed urban cities. Monterescu’s ethnographic study offers a new and well-argued framework that challenges the simple nationalistic and binary accounts that exist in the colonial city, dual city and the divided city paradigms.

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# ARTICLES







Charlie Hoyle\*

# Censoring the Memory of the Nakba

## Introduction

The Nakba, or “Catastrophe,” of 1948 remains the single most decisive date in contemporary Palestinian history. While the State of Israel was created that year, a nascent Palestinian nation was destroyed. As neighbouring Arab countries gained statehood and self-rule from colonial powers, Palestinian society found itself dispossessed of a historic homeland and displaced around the region. The social, political, and economic structures of yesteryear were irrevocably broken as Palestinians were recast as stateless refugees or subjects of the newly formed Israeli, Jordanian, and Egyptian states. In 1948, the Palestinian nation disappeared from the map, and the impact, and trauma, of such societal devastation remains central to Palestinian identity and collective memory. Indeed, Palestinians are still one of the world’s few stateless peoples. But while the Nakba continues to inform the lived daily experience of all Palestinians, its memory has been suppressed in Israeli society. From schoolbooks to the physical landscape itself, Israel has redacted Palestinians from the history of 1948. Prevailing Israeli historical narratives instead blame Palestinians for their own misfortune, with any atrocities absolved as unfortunate, but indispensable, acts of state-building. Commemoration of the Nakba, embodied by exile and dispossession, has become critical to Palestinian culture and nationalism, and is routinely expressed in the occupied territory and Diaspora through literature, art, demonstrations, and music. But for Palestinian citizens of Israel, such remembrance directly confronts the powerful Israeli nationalist myths which underpin state and society, and as such, is fraught with social, political, and legal obstacles.

## 1. Displacement and Dispossession

### 1.1 Rival Nationalisms in the British Mandate

1948 was a zero sum year for Israeli and Palestinian nationalism. While the Zionist movement culminated in the Israeli state - envisioned as a homeland for the Jewish people - Palestinian society was uprooted at its foundations. The conditions for such vastly contrasting outcomes had been created under the preceding two decades of British Rule, which shaped the organization, capabilities, and, ultimately, outcomes of these rival nationalisms. While Britain had committed to a Jewish state in some form

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since the 1917 Balfour declaration, Palestinians were never recognized as a national or political entity' with inherent rights to self-rule. Britain thwarted the development of Palestinian institutions and responded to the 1936-39 Palestinian revolution with such brutal force that it shattered all pre-existing economic, military, and political structures, leaving Palestinian nationalism unable to compete with its Jewish rival, which had built effective pre-state institutions with external aid and British support. By 1939, for example, the year the revolution ended, over 10 percent of the adult male Palestinian population had been killed, injured, imprisoned, or exiled<sup>2</sup> by the British.

## 1.2 The UN Partition Plan

In the following decade, ongoing communal violence in Mandate Palestine, coupled with a war-weary domestic public, led Britain to hand over responsibility for the "Question of Palestine" to the newly formed United Nations. In November 1947, the UN issued its partition plan, calling for a Jewish state on 56.47% of the mandate – with a population of 499,000 Jews and 438,000 Arabs – and an Arab state on 42%, with 818,000 Arab inhabitants and 10,000 Jewish inhabitants<sup>3</sup>. Palestinians owned 90% of private land and formed an absolute majority of the population<sup>4</sup> (over 70%), and rejected the partition, while the Jewish leadership accepted. Following Israel's declaration of independence in May 1948, war soon followed with neighbouring Arab states.

## 1.3 The Nakba and Reshaping Demographics

But before a cessation of Arab-Israeli hostilities in 1949, the Jewish leadership had expressed concerns about the demographics of the partition plan, which would leave a large non-Jewish population in the "Jewish State." Such a large Palestinian population would eventually outnumber its Jewish counterparts, therefore undermining Zionist aspirations of ethnic majoritarianism. As Israeli historian Benny Morris has noted: "large sections of Israeli society [...] were opposed to or extremely unhappy with partition and from early on viewed the war as an ideal opportunity to expand the new state's borders beyond the UN-earmarked partition boundaries and at the expense of the Palestinians<sup>5</sup>." A month after the partition plan was announced, Jewish militia attacks on Palestinian villages displaced up to 75,000 Palestinians.<sup>6</sup> The early stages of reshaping the demographics of the fledgling Jewish State had begun. According to Israeli historian Ilan Pappé, pre-state Jewish militias had adopted several military plans to expand Jewish areas beyond the proposed UN borders, the most notable of which was Plan Dalet, implemented in March 1948. By the end of April, 250,000 Palestinians had been displaced. By October, nearly 800,000<sup>7</sup> Palestinians were uprooted from land which became part of the State of Israel, now expanded to 78% of the former British Mandate. Palestinian society had been eviscerated by the time fighting ended in 1949. Of over 500 rural Palestinian villages in what became the Israeli state, over 400 had been conquered and their populations displaced.<sup>8</sup> Urban, educated, and wealthy populations, most notably in Haifa and Jaffa were also decimated, with a majority losing their property and becoming refugees. In West Jerusalem, which had been designated as part of a "corpus separatum" – a shared, internationalised capital - under the UN partition plan, around 30,000 Palestinians were displaced.<sup>9</sup> As Palestinian academic Walid Khalidi notes of the outcome of 1948, it was one of the "most remarkable colonizing ventures of all time."<sup>10</sup>

## 2. The Physical Erasure of 1948

From the ashes of the 1948 Arab-Israeli war, an Israeli state emerged on the ruins of Palestinian society. The United Nations classed some 750,000 Palestinians as refugees following the war while 150,000 managed to remain in what became the new Israeli state. With the majority of Palestinians displaced as refugees in neighbouring Arab countries, East Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza Strip (now controlled by Jordan and Egypt respectively), the new Israeli state set about consolidating both physical and ideological control over the land, which required erasing the remains of Palestinian society from collective memory.

### 2.1 Redeeming the Land

The first step required a dramatic reconfiguration of the physical landscape. Abandoned upper-class homes in urban centres like West Jerusalem, Haifa, and Lydda, were often given to Israeli officials or recent Jewish immigrants, the remnants of Palestinian rural villages still dotted the countryside; an uncomfortable reminder of the now-largely exiled Palestinian community. Of some 418 depopulated villages which remained following the Nakba, over 70% were totally destroyed and 22 percent largely destroyed<sup>11</sup> by Israeli forces. Others, notably the village of Ein Karem in West Jerusalem, were taken over by Israeli settlers while some remain fairly intact but depopulated, such as Lifta. Once rural villages had been cleared of any trace of Palestinian inhabitation, the land was often handed over to Jewish agricultural communities and for the use of Kibbutzim.<sup>12</sup> Unlike most industrialized countries which have widespread private and real estate land ownership, in Israel the state controls 93% of the land, which cannot be sold. The Jewish National Fund, set-up in 1901 to “redeem the land of Palestine as the inalienable possession of the Jewish people,”<sup>13</sup> became a quasi-state body in post-independence Israel acquiring over 78% of its landholdings – 13% of total land in Israel – between 1948 and 1953. Most of this land was considered “absentee property” of Palestinian refugees who had been displaced.<sup>14</sup> After 1948, it became a key institution in reimagining Israel’s landscape. Through a program of reforestation and tree-planting, the JNF set about concealing the presence of former Palestinian villages. According to Zochrot, an Israeli NGO that promotes acknowledgement of the Nakba, over two-thirds of JNF forests and parks – 46 out of 68 – are located on the ruins of villages destroyed by Israel.<sup>15</sup> The JNF tree-planting campaign was so effective that in Israel today only 10% of forests date from before 1948, while forests only contain 11% of indigenous species due to the choice of planting European pine and cypress trees.<sup>16</sup> As Israeli historian Ilan Pappé writes: “in these forests Nakba denial is so pervasive, and has been achieved so effectively, that they have become a main area of struggle for Palestinian refugees wishing to commemorate the villages that lie beneath them.”<sup>17</sup>

### 2.2 Hebraizing the Landscape

Once the villages had been physically removed, the Israeli state began assigning new Hebrew names to geographical sights, reinventing the land as inherently, and naturally, Israeli. In 1948, British maps of Mandate Palestine ascribed thousands of Arabic names to geographical landmarks, while only around 5% were in Hebrew.<sup>18</sup> Hebraizing the landscape was thus a crucial vehicle for reinventing a nation, and denying its Palestinian Arab heritage. The campaign was backed by the authority of a naming committee comprised of archaeologists and biblical experts.<sup>19</sup> In the Negev (Naqab),

for example - which formed nearly half of the new Israeli state - 533 new Hebrew names replaced former Arabic ones by 1951.<sup>20</sup> As Israel's first Prime Minister Ben Gurion said: "We must remove the Arabic names due to political considerations: just as we do not recognize the political ownership of Arabs over the land, we do not recognize their spiritual ownership and their names."<sup>21</sup>

### 3. The Nakba in Israeli Society

#### 3.1 Israel's Palestinian Minority

While the dramatic reinvention of the new Israeli state sought to erase Palestinian history – and therefore their claims to the land – the presence of 150,000 Palestinians presented a challenge to Jewish-Israeli nationalism. Despite waves of Jewish immigration, Palestinians comprised a fifth of the population. Israel worked quickly to depoliticize this new minority and stifle the birth of any nationalist sentiments which could challenge the legitimacy of the new state. From 1948 -1966 Palestinians lived under military rule, had up to 70% of their land seized<sup>22</sup> - ostensibly for infrastructure projects – and required permits to leave their villages and towns. They were labelled as Israeli-Arabs rather than Palestinians, or divided into sectarian identities such as Christians, Muslims, Druze, or Bedouins. The new Palestinian minority received citizenship, but was kept in a state of perpetual underdevelopment, with entrenched discrimination, as represented by over 50 different laws<sup>23</sup>, affecting housing, urban planning, the labour market, and general socioeconomic development. Furthermore, given the period of interstate conflict with neighbouring Arab states, and Palestinian resistance in the Diaspora, Israeli society viewed Palestinian citizens as a fifth column in their midst, a dangerous, ever-present threat. As such, any expression of their Palestinian identity, history, or culture, especially political events such as the Nakba, were seen as a subversive threat to the Israeli state.

#### 3.1 Memory of the Nakba in Israel

Despite the dramatic shattering of Palestinian society, Palestinians in the West Bank, Gaza, Jerusalem, and the Diaspora commemorated the Nakba with demonstrations, strikes and visits to the graves of those killed during fighting as early as 1949.<sup>24</sup> Inside Israel, however, policies directed against the Palestinian minority made similar actions near impossible for decades, and large-scale commemorations mainly developed in the 1990s, with a central focus on the March of Return, which sees mass processions to the depopulated villages of 1948. The suppression of such commemorations until relatively recently was largely a product of powerful state institutions which worked to reinforce an Israeli nationalist narrative and purge Palestinians from the memory of 1948. Independence Day in Israel, for example, is a crucial non-religious expression of powerful nationalist sentiments, which allows no space for narratives which could weaken its unifying authority. A critical institution in this process was also the state education system. In a country like Israel, where history, memory, and national identity all intersect, the national curriculum became a powerful tool to shape the national narrative. The Ministry of Education in Israel, for example, only authorizes school books if they reproduce the state-sponsored version of 1948. As Israeli academic Nurit Peled-Elhanan notes, such dominant narratives "still promulgate the story that Palestinians fled out of unfounded panic, and present expulsion and massacres as esoteric transgressions or rare cases of necessary evil."<sup>26</sup> The Nakba is thus absent from the historical narrative taught to Jewish-Israelis, though in 2007 the term briefly appeared in Palestinian schools within the public education sector for the first time, before being removed two years later.

### 3.4 Freedom of Expression and 1948

There is no institutionalized system to commemorate the Nakba within Israeli state structures, with most stories and memories of 1948 preserved and disseminated through the oral story-telling of those who survived. There are no placards to mark the location of massacres, no officially recorded database of victims' names, and no monuments to commemorate pre-1948 Palestinian society. The Nakba is denied in the memory of the state. Civil society organizations working to raise awareness of the Nakba have likewise had their voices silenced. In 2011, the Israeli parliament passed the Nakba Law, authorizing the Israeli Minister of Finance to reduce funding or support provided by the state for any public institution that holds activities which contradict the State of Israel as a Jewish and democratic state, or which commemorate "Israel's Independence Day or the day on which the state was established as a day of mourning."<sup>27</sup> In effect, the bill criminalizes the commemoration of the Nakba in state funded institutions such as schools, research centres, civil society organizations, and political groups. As such, it suppresses Palestinian historical memory in Israeli society and infringes on the basic freedoms to express cultural identity. In 2011, Human Rights Watch described the law as a government tool to silence Palestinian-Israeli municipalities about the Nakba or face funding cuts which could jeopardize programs and services.<sup>28</sup> For civil society, the law has also suppressed public commemoration activities. In 2015, for example, Haifa's mayor withdrew funding for a film festival in the city about the Nakba<sup>29</sup> which had been organized by Israeli NGO Zochrot. In 2012, the University of Haifa cancelled a scheduled Nakba event just three hours before it was due to begin, ostensibly to prevent "agitation" on campus,<sup>30</sup> while another rally that year at Tel Aviv University was forced to pay for its own security at the event after the board said the Nakba Law prohibited them from funding such activities. In early 2016, another law was proposed by right-wing culture minister Miri Regev to cut funding for cultural activities that express disloyalty to the state. Named the 'Loyalty in Culture' bill, if passed it would further suppress Nakba commemoration events and any action deemed to undermine Israel's "Jewish democratic" identity.<sup>31</sup>

### Conclusion

As a nationalist movement, Palestinians have faced unprecedented obstacles to achieving statehood, dreams which, as yet, remain unfulfilled. Physically and ideologically removed from the map in 1948, memory takes on critical importance for Palestinian identity and nationalism. The Nakba is a unifying symbol for all Palestinians, but especially so for the Diaspora population, most of whom to this day live out the consequences of that year in refugee camps. For this reason, Palestinian collective memory is a threat which must be suppressed. But the Nakba was not a finite event, and, in that way, 1948 is an ongoing battle. Censoring the Palestinian memory of 1948, therefore, aims to suppress the past while also controlling the future. In the ongoing battle of nationalist narratives, by denying the Palestinian national experience of the Nakba, and indeed all pre-1948 society, Israel can subvert political demands such as the right of return, and manipulate the historic basis for discussing final status issues such as Jerusalem and borders, which are as yet all undetermined.

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Hisham Naffa\*

## Palestinian Refugees in the shadow of the demand for “Israel’s Jewishness”

Despite all the attempts at escaping or avoiding the Nakba, it still finds its way back into Israeli awareness. Facing locked doors, the Nakba enters through unofficial windows, and wedges itself deep into the Israeli public awareness. It is a matter of accumulation - quantitative, at first, then qualitative. For example, the word “Nakba” has been employed in Hebrew, using the Arabic lexeme, in the context of the last elections; this is a curious issue, surely, but it is also a serious one. A certain Israeli writer described the final elections’ results as “a Nakba to the peace camp”. Another wrote that the surprise of the last elections and the increased power in the hands of the already-governing Likud party was “a Nakba to pollsters”. A newspaper ran the following headline: “The Nakba of Polling Institutes - A Catastrophe Foretold.” Yet another commentator spoke of “the media’s Nakba”. Just like “Intifada”, the Nakba as a lexeme and as an idea is bound to sink into the Hebrew language and the Israeli awareness.

The Israeli political right wing has come up with many laws aimed at preventing the idea of the Nakba from infiltrating into the Israeli public awareness. In November 2014, the ministry of culture called to halt all economic support to a movie theater in Tel Aviv, because it had hosted the “Nakba Film Festival”, organized by Zochrot (“Remembering” in Hebrew, an NGO working to promote acknowledgement and accountability for the ongoing injustices of the Nakba).<sup>1</sup> Even the Supreme Court, in January of 2012, ratified the Nakba Act<sup>2</sup>, which had been part of a dirty flow of racist laws brought forth by the school of settler MKs. The Nakba Act gives the finance minister the authorization to impose fines on institutes receiving money from the state, in case said institutes organize any events commemorating “Israel’s day of independence or the creation of the state as a day of mourning” or any activities denying “the definition of the state of Israel as a Jewish and democratic state.”

After repeating the “recognition of Israel as a Jewish state as a prerequisite for a settlement agreement” mantra for so long, Benjamin Netanyahu confessed: Palestinians must give up on the right of return (November of 2013).<sup>3</sup> Therein lies the deepest political meaning of “the state’s identity”: a mere veneer hiding the imposition of policies, and a new manifestation of the Israeli logic of no-ism. It is as though he was composing a new opus of separation barriers between the reality of ongoing occupation, colonisation and dispossession of refugees, and any possibility for an agreement that would be permanent and just (or, rather, semi-just; no one will rebuild the destroyed Palestine). All these infinite no’s: “No!” to ending the occupation and dismantling its militaristic, colonialist, political and

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economic apparatuses; “No!” to the return to the borders of 1967 and all that this entails in terms of sweeping all settlements away and retreating from occupied East Jerusalem, and “No!” to respecting or implementing any of the refugees’ legitimate rights, as stipulated in Resolution 194 of the General Assembly.<sup>4</sup>

What does it even mean for any state to demand that a foreign party in a negotiation process take part in determining its own character, as a prerequisite for any settlement with said party? We could argue, with a hint of irony, that by demanding the aforementioned, the Israeli government is giving up on some of its sovereignty, assuming the matter of sovereignty is a decision to be taken exclusively by a state as an internal affair. Any state’s character is a sovereign decision, an internal affair - the Israeli authorities themselves doubt the legitimacy of their own state, and they will continue to do so even if they get recognition from Palestinians (and all Arabs). Casting this doubt away requires that the state face its own history and the crimes perpetrated as it was created over the debris of Palestine. There are two available options: the state can either confess and face its own actions, which might stop many of the monstrous, psychopathic, continuous behaviors symptomatic of the Sisyphean escape from the crimes perpetrated; or it can refuse to confess and keep on searching for impossible legitimizations for the crimes.

In the first scenario, if Israel were to officially recognize the perpetrated crimes, it would be contributing considerably to the path of reconciliation - the reconciliation with the Palestinian people, its victim, and perhaps even with its own self. However, this sadly remains way beyond the horizon, seeing as the state’s institution still has a colonialist tendency and practice: it is surrounded by the Arab orient, but imagines it is located right across from Los Angeles. Ehud Barak, former commander in chief, put it this way: Israel’s situation can be likened to a ‘villa in a jungle.’<sup>5</sup> For this pompous, war-profiteering millionaire, the surrounding Arabs are, at best, wild beasts or groups of savages. In the second scenario, if Israel refuses to recognize that which it has perpetrated, the ruling Israeli circles might as well demand that the Palestinian people take part in this act of denial and disavowal of the atrocities committed against their own selves. Demanding that Palestinians recognize a Jewish Israel is equivalent to demanding they give legitimacy to the institutional Zionist narrative - “an historic right” to Palestine, a (Jewish) people in a land without a (Palestinian) people; the criminal is essentially demanding that the victim sign his decree of innocence.<sup>6</sup> However, hidden behind this idiotic device is a concrete and direct political aim, carefully and meticulously planned. It is obvious that the issue that most haunts the official Israeli institution is that of the refugees. The mere act of delving into this issue, let alone recognizing the responsibility for it, would implode the larger part of the official Israeli narrative, filled with holes that it has accumulated over the last decades. The cover usually provided by the institution’s spokespeople, justifying why they would not even venture anywhere near this core issue is a “demographic” one - that is, the one directly linked to this divine belief that grants the state certain divine identities.

It is important to be aware of what hides behind the Israeli demand - its rulers are not satisfied with the recognition of Israel’s sovereignty; they seek to blackmail and enforce a sovereignty of a very specific kind -namely an ethnic, or rather a religious sovereignty- as they continue their efforts of transforming Jewish culture and traditions into distorted political tools, which they use to justify mortal sins. This is precisely what Zionism has done to Judaism (two different ideologies, we must always remember). In the past 8 years, the Israeli government has made the point of “recognizing Israel’s Jewishness” a pivotal point. In the beginning of November of 2016, the right-wing government stated it considered the denial of the “state’s Jewishness” to be the essence of the conflict! This is what we should call “a preemptive condition”: imposing the outcomes of a negotiation process before it even starts. This condition is exceptional and quite bizarre in the matrix of international relations. Not only is it a result of a radical, racist and bigoted auto-seclusion practiced in the Israeli situation,

essentially excluding anyone who is not Jewish, but it is also an extremely clever political tactic. The official Israeli approach to the state's definition as "Jewish" is not a mere cultural or symbolic issue - it is an actual mathematic issue, measured using demographic tools: the number of Jews versus the number of Palestinians. This institution is not content with demanding recognition of the state as "embodying the right of Jewish self-determination" - self-determination being the most common justification, generally, for modern nation states; instead, it demands that the whole world recognize its own ideological definition of itself. Put another way: the institution seeks to impose the basic tenets of the Zionist movement - an ideological movement - as if they were universal rights that must be recognized by all.

This gives rise to two major things: first, it allows the Zionist movement to clean its hands of the ethnic cleansing perpetrated by its different institutions during and after the Nakba of 1948<sup>7</sup> and, second, it gives it a chance to argue that implementing the rights of Palestinian refugees is not possible because it would harm the state's Jewishness. The issue of the state's Jewishness, then, goes beyond the symbolic battlefield; it is part of the planned and strategized Israeli policies. Ever since the Nakba, at every stage, there has been one issue that has troubled and haunted the Israeli institution, namely that of the rights of Palestinian refugees, whom it expelled from their homes by force with weapons and whose villages it destroyed by the hundreds. History, with its many political twists and turns, has forced the Israeli institutions to officially recognize the existence of the Palestinian people, thereby recognizing its right to self-determination in an independent state. Before the early 1990's, the Palestinian cause mainly appeared in this institution's discourse whenever it discussed annexing some of the Palestinian lands it had occupied in 1967 to Jordan or Egypt, as if the conflict was a mere matter of redrawing borders. However, the national Palestinian struggle, blooming in the form of a popular Intifada in December of 1987<sup>8</sup>, imposed with unprecedented quality and force an official Israeli recognition of this people's self-determination.

Thus, ever since the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations began, the Israeli institution admits (only in discourse, it should be noted) the possibility of the creation of a Palestinian entity (of some sort). If we scan the current Israeli political map briefly, we would see that most of its constituents state this, however begrudgingly. Even Benjamin Netanyahu does. Of course, a mere statement is of no use; the actual Israeli practices cast very serious doubts over the intentions and aims hidden beneath all the protocol statements made. This is most obvious in its disrespect towards any of the agreements it signs, and in all the brutal and recurring military incursions, whose political aim is to destroy the institutional infrastructure of Palestinian politics, whether in the West Bank in the beginning of this century, or later on in the Gaza strip. The objective, of course, is to prevent the establishment of even the tiniest nucleus of an independent Palestinian entity. Although the Israeli institution argues and claims to officially accept the creation of an independent Palestinian entity, we need to break through this declaratory sound barrier and get to the content, the content being the official and actual Israeli stance regarding the rights of Palestinian refugees. To this day, the Israeli approach has been based on disintegrating, or even scattering, the Palestinian cause: on the one hand, the Israeli institution insists on a step-wise formula, which has infamously become known as "Gaza and Jericho first".<sup>9</sup> On the other hand, it scatters the different issues encompassed in the Palestinian cause across different time points in the future, then diligently postpones them using militaristic and colonialist powers. This, of course, is besides the fact that it deals with the whole ordeal as if it began in June of 1967, in order to shelve the oldest and most difficult files - those of 1948, and especially the refugees file.

There are two forms for the proposed political settlement of what is termed the Palestinian-Israeli conflict (a misleading term, since it presupposes and imposes a power balance between the two sides, despite the fact that one side expelled the other, then occupied and colonized the land, while the other side was a victim of these violent practices). The first form is the creation of two,

independent states; the second is the creation of a single, shared state. There are different debates in that respect. Some are dichotomous in nature ("either this or that"), while others prefer to put the matter in its historical context, calling for the need to first end the occupation of the lands occupied in 1967 and the creation of an independent Palestinian state, and to then achieve conciliation (which is not the same as settlement) between the two peoples, a step which could perhaps lead to living in a future shared state. However, no matter how diverse these debates are, it is holding on to the rights of refugees that keeps things in perspective and contributes to shaping a solution that is clearer and more implementable. Holding on to the rights of refugees is a prerequisite for any form of conciliation, no matter how impossible such conciliation seems to be at the moment.

It is thus important to deal with the issue of ambiguity in the form of settlement that stipulates creating two states. It is an issue that came about as a result of the changes in the politico-historical process. The Israeli institution rejected this settlement outright for years, even though it is a variation on a formula agreed upon globally, in the form of the Partition Plan.<sup>10</sup> When it had to accept the Plan, albeit diplomatically, it changed the content, or rather undermined it completely, by transforming the equation and deleting its major variable: refugee rights. This is where different parties started using the term "the two-state solution", which led to a state of ambiguity and borderline confusion, since different speakers mean different things by it. The content of these "two states", as declared by the PLO, is radically different from that proposed by the major Zionist parties in Israel. Neglecting this gap in the intentions of different parties with respect to the settlement formula has led to many a (controversial) debate, even among those championing the same, single cause - Palestinians, namely. Rather than having a debate based on serious intellectual or practical attempts at clarifying the different possibilities given the actual reality, and building a political vision accordingly, the debate digressed into purely theoretical margins. Rather than viewing the debate between the two settlement formulae from an historical perspective that would enable us to lay the matters clearly on the ground, the debate/controversy has been ideologized to a near-absolute dichotomy, far removed from the necessary political reading of reality.

The important matter is to pose the following question: how can the rights of Palestinian refugees be achieved and implemented in each case, or in each phase of the proposed settlement agreements? Many were right to consider that the first step should be an Israeli recognition of the cause, and of the responsibility of being the causer and, in consequence, a recognition of the cause's implications and its responsibility to contribute to its resolution. Some think this is "impossible" in the two-state framework. We could argue that perceiving this as an impossibility is perhaps a result of not noticing the substantial difference that would take place if the Israeli institution were to reach an advanced state of political growth, by assuming and acknowledging responsibility. Every political project may seem a dream in its first phase; the same was true for decades, for example, regarding the recognition of the right for an independent Palestinian state. But history is always a complicated process, and though it constantly begets more complexities, it does open new horizons as well. It should be made clearer, on a popular level, that there is no contradiction between achieving the rights of the refugees and the settlement according to the two-state view, except in the official Israeli framework, which insists on Israel's Jewishness. Changing perspectives could clarify the fact that the struggle for changing the ideological identity of this state is tightly linked, in the long term, to opening a real horizon and resolving the refugee file, and vice versa. The two processes are intertwined. This also applies to a possible, subsequent phase of the settlement, such as living in a single state after achieving a reconciliation that goes beyond official agreements. The question remains: how will all this be implemented in practice? Therein lies the role and the need for political negotiation. It is high time we pull this process out of its old quadrangular cells, marked by postponement and avoidance of venturing into dangerous waters. Here, it is worth mentioning that to argue that "the Israeli institution

will simply reject this” is controversial, since it sequesters the Palestinian will preemptively, thereby nullifying the struggle! Nothing has ever been achieved in the context of the cause of the Palestinian people except through its struggle, even when the Israeli institution was at its most adamant. We need to reformulate the Palestinian dream/project, which by now suffers from broken bones, the most urgent of which is that internal fracture.

To sum up, the resolution of the Palestinian issue will remain impossible as long as the colonialist structure imposed by the Israeli institution remains in place. Therefore, any settlement that does not include, in its core, granting refugees their rights, according to the wishes and choices of each refugee, will be a mere formality, subject to the prevailing colonialist structure. It is also important to note that dismantling this colonialist structure serves the Jews as well, since it would liberate them, both politically and morally, from taking on the role of human and economic shield to this project based on domination. Dismantling the colonialist structure is what would make the Israeli Jews’ presence in this part of the world natural. The Palestinian cause is about liberation, and not only for the Palestinians!

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Nick Rodrigo\*

# The Naqab: Zionist designs, neoliberal machinations and Bedouin resistance

For Israel, the Naqab desert is an important site for a Zionist political thought to be enacted. Hebracised to “Negev” in 1948, the area would be a zone for Jewish redemption and the conversion of the land into a showcase for Jewish creative excellence. The presence of a centuries old Bedouin community, whose birth rate is one of the highest in the world, represents an existential “demographic threat” to a Jewish majority state, another key pillar of Zionism. For the Bedouins their relationship to the land is profound. The establishment of the state of Israel, and the ensuing Nakba, was an unmitigated catastrophe for them, and one which continues today.

This paper will examine the historic ideational and structural logic which lies behind the Zionist perspective on the Naqab and the manner in which it would be an area for the redemption of Jewish life through labour and the reinvigoration of the desert. This logic will then be applied to Israel's contemporary designs on the Naqab, particularly as a site for its flourishing cybersecurity industry. By examining this burgeoning sector with Zionism's structural logic, this essay will be able to present the new threats which the Bedouin face, in the intersection of colonial logic and neoliberal perspectives on the “good citizen” and their place within neoliberal economic structuration. This essay will conclude on the manner in which these developments continue to impact Bedouin communities and how their resistance manifests itself.

## The desert in Zionist eyes:

### A blazing crucible for redemption through labour

For Zionist thought, expansion into the Naqab is a deeply existential project—fundamentally key to Israel's security, but also prosperity and national self-esteem. David Ben Gurion, one of Israel's founding fathers, noted in a 1955 speech:

“It is in the Negev that the people of Israel will be tested – for only with a united effort of volunteering people and a planning and implementing state will we accomplish the great mission of populating the wilderness and bringing it to flourish.”<sup>1</sup>

In the same speech, Ben-Gurion noted “it is in the Negev that the creativity and pioneer vigour of Israel will be tested and this will be a crucial test”<sup>2</sup> Ben Gurion was a deeply avowed secular Zionist, and seized on the socialist

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principles, popular within Jewish communities in Eastern Europe, channelling them into a state building project “we call for an independent existence of a working people, at home on the soil and in a creative economy.”<sup>3</sup>

These romantic and utopian views of Ben Gurion were mirrored by Aharon David Gordon, considered one of the most influential thinkers on the Jewish Labor question in a nascent Jewish state in Palestine. Gordon was some decades older than Ben Gurion, but moved to Palestine, like Ben Gurion, during the Second Aaliyah, with a wave of settlers who viewed Jewish Labour as a condition for redemption from exile.<sup>4</sup> Through toiling the desert, the new “Sabra” would be engaged in a total individual and communal revolution, which would be in a constant state of agitation and recreation in Israel.<sup>5</sup> For all Palestinians this ethnocentric perspective on labour resulted in the exclusion of Arab labour across British Mandated Palestine, as ethnocentric labour unions spread under the Histadurt, under Ben Gurions direction. By 1948, despite being less than 10% of the population, the nascent Yishuv was in a position, thanks to its organised and disciplined labour, and in effect its paramilitary units, to engage in the forced expulsion of the country’s Palestinian population, and fight on numerous fronts.<sup>6</sup>

### The displacement of the Bedouin: A continuing Nakba

During the Nakba the Bedouin population was reduced to 15-20 percent of its pre-1948 size. In the wake of these events only 19 of the original 95 Bedouin tribes remained, confined to a restricted area in the north-eastern Naqab region, representing on 10% of their historic land.<sup>7</sup> The Nakba was followed by a complete topographical overhaul of the Palestinian landscape under Israeli control, with centuries-old villages bulldozed, and Israeli “development towns” built in their place.<sup>8</sup> During Ottoman control and in the decades of the British Mandate the Bedouin were not subject to the same models of land registration, following a more traditional form of land ownership.<sup>9</sup> The establishment of the state of Israel, and the Nakba, was of unprecedented rupturing for centuries of established relationship with the land for the Bedouin. The expansion of Jewish development towns in the Naqab, often where Jewish refugees from Muslim and Arab countries were dumped, grew into large metropolitan cities such as Arad and Dimona, relying on cheap Bedouin labour for their service and



construction industries. According to data collected by Israeli historian Ilan Pappé, only 0.15 per cent of land expansion on state-owned territory was granted to Arab communities in the 1980s, of which a vast majority was used to build shantytowns for the rapidly urbanising Bedouin community.<sup>10</sup> Today, around 220,000 Bedouin live in the Naqab desert and 60,000 in northern and central Israel – comprising 3.5 percent of the country's total population.<sup>11</sup> According to statistics collated by Inter Agency Task Force on Israeli Arab Issues, of the 400 localities in Israel, the lowest-ranking local councils are the Bedouin townships of Lakiya, tel-Sheva and al-Batuf, with a socioeconomic status of 1/10 for its citizen's.<sup>12</sup>

From the 1950's – 1990's the Naqab was considered a backwater to dump new Jewish refugees and immigrants from the Arab and Muslim world. By the 1990's the idea of a revivalism through labour, and the view of the desert as the area for this project came hurtling back into the Israeli national project, colliding with the market logic of the time to create a new dynamic to the continuing displacement of the Negev Bedouins.

### Israel's cybersecurity economy and the new digital settler

By the mid 2000's the Naqab was being eyed by the Israeli government, business and property sectors as a region for economic and settlement expansion.<sup>13</sup> In 2005 the "Daroma" association submitted "Negev 2015" plan – the first comprehensive strategy for investment in the desert.<sup>14</sup> This project contained a national strategic element, and an economic development element – a dualism which blended Israel's crystallising neoliberal economic model with its established settler colonial designs on historic Palestine. The central crux of the "Negev 2015" plan was to attract some 200,000 new residents to the area through high calibre transport infrastructure and attractive housing whilst invigorating middle class community options.<sup>15</sup> "Negev 2015" planners wanted to attract a certain model of Israeli to planned development towns – they would be economically mobile and Jewish – a move which would assist in rolling back the demographic threat posed by the Bedouin population.<sup>16</sup> In order to bring in the optimum "class of people" specialised military bases would be developed and constructed in order to ensure that a diversified military sector could expand and the Zionist project could be solidified with a modern 21<sup>st</sup> century twist. This would be accomplished by the transferring of IDF cybersecurity bases to the South from which a high tech cluster could be formed, attracting well salaried professionals to take up and advance the cybersecurity sector.

By 2013 the IDF's cybersecurity division in the desert was well established. Various other sectors linked to this trade emerged such as, the Ben Gurion University's graduate program in cybersecurity projections, all contributing to estimates that within the next ten years there will be 20,000 to 30,000 cyber related jobs in Beersheba.<sup>17</sup> The jewel in the crown is the CyberSpark industrial, a sprawling industrial park, which already caters to the needs of Deutsche Telekom, IBM and Lockheed Martin. CyberSpark is set to have two more complexes, comprising of 27 buildings in the coming year. In December 2015 Israel poured 100 million NIS<sup>18</sup> into its Kidma programme, a project designed in 2012 to boost Israel's cybersecurity competitiveness, and develop security fields.<sup>19</sup> The fact that this project has been expanded indicates the important role this sector plays for Israel's economic future.

The expansion of development towns and the cyber security hub in Beersheba is a modern twist on Ben Gurion's aforementioned perspective on the desert – it was to be an area of technological achievement and a showcase for Jewish intellectual thought. The neoliberal age has quantified citizenship, and imprinted onto it a social good, in which the citizen is more productive, the closer their status is to the professional class (employees of international finance and IT companies). Jewish labour now accords special privileges within this; the continuing project of emancipation for Israel

now has a new front, connected to the logic of the current socioeconomic global system. If the mobile professional Israeli class represents the zenith of Israeli society, then it is the Bedouin who represent the opposite of this. Living in either impoverished shanty towns or in unrecognised villages, these communities stand directly in the line of fire of the new Israeli projects of development in the Naqab.<sup>20</sup>

## Resistance in the Naqab from 1948 and onwards

As noted, the primary experience of the Bedouin in the Negev since 1948 has been displacement. This has continued into the twenty-first century. Perhaps the most perilous episode for the Naqab Bedouins of the past decade has been the Prawer Plan of 2012.<sup>21</sup> This plan was developed by Likud Knesset Member, Benny Begin during Netanyahu's third administration, through which the Israeli state was slated to take over 250,000 dunams, resulting in around 40,000 people losing their homes from such a plan.<sup>22</sup> The plan was shelved after sustained, grassroots resistance by Bedouin communities. In alliance with Palestinians across all of historic Palestine, they managed to build a broad based coalition of resistance, utilising traditional methods developed within the Naqab, and bringing in Palestinian methods of resistance from across the country.<sup>23</sup> Indeed, Bedouin resistance to displacement is as old as Israel itself. Communities which were swept over the border after the Nakba often re-entered from Egypt and Jordan, itself an act of resistance perceived so dangerous, that the IDF reintroduced a shoot to kill policy.<sup>24</sup>

This existence as resistance model, has manifested itself in recent decades through the rebuilding of unrecognised villages, often after being demolished for the tenth time, or more. Throughout the 1990's new models emerged, there was an expansion of human rights based organisations which resulted in the proliferation of organisations. Collaborative efforts between sympathetic Jewish Israeli lawyers and Bedouin community leaders emerged to protest the displacement of the Bedouin through Israel's courts.<sup>25</sup> This has been an important and indispensable tool in providing these communities with the language to channel their grievances not only to domestic human rights mechanisms, but also on the international level. This has happened with an assortment of Negev Bedouin civil society organisations submitting shadow reports critiquing Israel's compliance with the International Covenant on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination,<sup>26</sup> and the International Convention on Economic Social and Cultural Rights.

In addition to this, the establishment of the Regional Council of Unrecognised Villages has put forward alternative development plans in the region, many of them were rejected, but it indicates the dynamism of Bedouin resistance.<sup>27</sup> In the realm of party politics the United Arab list, a Palestinian Israeli political party established in 1996 to win seats in the Israeli Knesset. Often a marginalised force, the need to meet a higher threshold in the 2015 elections forced the United Arab list to join together with Ba'lad, Hadash and Ta'al, the three other Palestinian/Arab political parties, in order to contest that election. The results were an unprecedented victory for Palestinian parties, as they won 13 seats, becoming a major political force.<sup>28</sup> Despite comments that their union would descend into factionalism, due to ideological differences, the Joint Arab List has managed to maintain a strong position on issues facing all Palestinians in Israel, from education and citizenship status rights, to leading demonstrations for unrecognized Bedouin villages in the Naqab. All of these varying resistance strategies are highly institutionalised and formed over years of interconnectivity throughout Palestinian communities within Israel, however more recently, youth, organising along informal routes.

## Conclusion

According to a report by the Negev Coexistence Forum, 982 structures were demolished in 2015, making the number at 2,452 structures demolished in Bedouin communities in the Negev between 2013 to 2015.<sup>29</sup> The project to domesticize the desert for the redemption of Jewishness through labour is an age old tradition of Zionist political thought. This tradition has adapted to the new labour/market realities of Israel's political economy, with a highly mobile technocratic class set to move to the Naqab in the coming decades to develop a cybersecurity industry. As the twenty-first century progresses and cold geopolitical wars warm, the lucrateness of this industry is set to intensify, with project growth for 2020 being USD 170 billion. The Naqab is a frontline for a war of ideas and values, on the one side is the rapacious and exclusivist Zionist project, on the other is the communal based resistance of the Naqab Bedouin – the result of this war will set the pace for Israeli colonial practices for the coming decades.

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# Reflections of the national narrative on the indigenous Palestinian minority in Israel: Patterns and Challenges

## Introduction

A narrative is a description and interpretation of reality through a cultural perspective, and it usually expresses a collective memory that is shaped by key images and symbols of a collective-national past (Connerton, 1989). Prominent strategies for the conservation of collective memory, include conducting memorial ceremonies (Anderson, 1991). These ceremonies represent the fundamental principles of a nation and create an emotional experience that arouses the commitment of individuals towards the nation to which they belong (Smith, 1991). It is mostly traumatic experiences that compose the collective memory that inspires cohesion and influences the making of different decisions in the present (Keinan, 2015). This article uses critical analysis to describe changes in the way in which the indigenous Palestinian population in Israel has coped with its narrative discourse since the Nakba and the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948 until today. Moreover, the article discusses changes that have taken place in the consideration of the Palestinian minority regarding fundamental events in their national struggle in Israel, for example: Nakba Day, and Land Day of 1976 in the face of oppositional reactions through the turning point introduced by the Oslo Peace Process, and the Al-Aqsa and Alquds Intifada (including the events of October 2010). These events and the challenges that they brought have influenced the development of a national narrative among the Palestinian minority in Israel.

In this article we discuss the challenges that face the indigenous Palestinian minority in Israel in the struggle to develop their unique national narrative due to

- (1) the absence of their national narrative in the public arena, most noticeably in the state education system and
- (2) their economic dependence on and acceptance of services from government agencies.

However, despite Israeli government efforts to suppress the Palestinian narrative, we note that there are recognizable signs of an oppositional discourse that opposes the official one provided by government institutions, a discourse that the Palestinian minority is developing to maintain its national historical capital, and to undermine and challenge the Israeli nationalizing narrative that would deny their Palestinian identity. The article ends with some conclusions and insights regarding the topics that have been presented here.



## The first challenge: The narrative missing from the government sphere

### The Palestinian Arab minority in Israel is defined as an indigenous minority

Palestinian should be eligible to enjoy collective rights (Jabarin, 2012) due to it having been the majority in the area under the British Mandate of Palestine before the establishment of the State of Israel - which became a minority as a result of the Palestinian Nakba (disaster) in 1948. The 1948 war brought the expulsion or flight of the majority of Palestinian Arabs beyond the borders of the new state, and/or to villages close to the borders of Israel (Morris, 2004). Moreover, many Palestinian villages within the borders of Israel were not officially recognized by the new state or its residents were recognized solely as residents and not full citizens (Abu-Saad, Yonah & Kaplan, 2000). Israeli citizenship was imposed on all other Palestinian Arabs who remained within the state's borders (Jamal, 2009).

The State of Israel was established as the realisation of the Zionist dream for the Jewish people. And as such the preference of Jewish nationality over Palestinian nationality was reflected in its definition, symbols and laws. This included the definition of the goals of the state education system, so that the value of nationality was given precedence over democratic values (Arar, 2012). Two main considerations dictated the character of relationships between the Jewish state and its Palestinian minority, security and Zionism (Ghanem, 2001). Zionist ideology supported the "attainment of maximum territory with minimum Palestinians" (Khoury et al., 2013), leaving the Palestinians to struggle to resist massive land appropriations, a struggle that constitutes a major component in Palestinian-Jewish relations in Israel until today (Yiftachel, 2011). Palestinian citizens have therefore suffered from continuous exclusion, discrimination and structural inequality (Agbaria et al., 2015). Against this background, the perception that the Palestinian national narrative competes with the Jewish/Zionist narrative constitutes one of the main characteristics that have directed and continue to direct the education system over the years. This perception is expressed in various operational methods that aspire to prevent or to minimize the development of the Palestinian minority in Israel as a community with its own unique national identity. In consideration of this perception the education system in Israel has demonstrated an avoidant approach towards the presentation of the cultural heritage of the Palestinian minority in Israel.

The exclusion and discrimination towards the Palestinian minority also relates to its collective memory and narrative. Over the years and in different ways there has been a concerted attack on the collective memory of the Palestinian minority and the symbols of its national identity, and excluding Palestinian culture from public spaces (Agbaria et al./ 2015; Haj-Yehia & Lev Tov, 2015). This memory is composed of fundamental events that took place since the establishment of the state, such as Nakba Day, which is seen by the Palestinians as a day of national mourning, commemorating the ethnic cleansing of the Palestinian people (Ghanem, 2001; Golani & Manna, 2011). There is a legal prohibition against the holding of Nakba Day ceremonies in school or denoting the day in other ways. Schools that transgress this ruling, are liable to lose the budgetary support of the Treasury (Zaher, 2010). Similar consideration is given to "The massacre at Kfar Qasem in 1956" by Israeli Defence Forces; "Land Day" which constituted a definitive landmark in the Palestinian minority's struggle against land appropriation and began a process of organized resistance (Khoury et al., 2013); and the Al-Aqsa and Alquds Intifada, including the events of October 2010 when Israeli Defence Forces and police shot and killed 13 Palestinian civilians. Of all the traumatic events that the Palestinians have undergone in Israel, the Nakba is considered the most dramatic and radical trauma. It was felt by previous generations and influences the present generation affecting the relations between the Palestinians and the State of Israel (Keinan, 2015).

In order to reinforce its citizens' national identity, the nation state uses a strategy of construction of collective memory that is shaped in the form of a narrative, with key images and symbols from the common national past (Connerton, 1989). The main strategy is the holding of national memorial ceremonies (Anderson, 1991). They embody the basic principles of the nation and constitute an emotional experience which stimulates individuals' commitment to the nation to which they belong (Smith, 1991).

The avoidance and eradication of the memory of the Nakba from the public space in general and in schools in particular stems from the fear that exposure of Jewish youth to the Palestinian narrative might arouse doubt regarding the Jewish-Zionist narrative (Yona, 2015:39). Thus too, over time, the education system has served as the main tool for "nationalization" with the aim of educating the Palestinian students to become Israeli citizens and to obliterate their own national identity, by imposing a pure dominant culture with a competing narrative with continuous close supervision (Arar, 2015; Crossley & Tily, 2004) by an intelligence network among the Palestinian minority in general and in particular in the schools (Khouri et al., 2013). Indeed there is a lack of symmetry between the Jewish and Palestinian education systems. While in the Palestinian system the students are taught mainly universal values and contents alongside Jewish and civilian values and their own values are pushed aside, in the Jewish education the students acquire their own national values in an outstanding manner and universal values to a lesser extent (Jubran & Agbaria, 2014). Thus the Palestinian education system serves as a tool for control and merger of the Palestinian minority (Al-Haj, 1996; Arar & Keinan, 2015).

The regulation of the Palestinian narrative should conform to the international declarations of human rights and economic, social and cultural rights, which indicate that the right to education should be based on four principles: adaptability, availability, accessibility and acceptability. (Jabarin, 2014). These principles are hardly noticeable in the Palestinian education in Israel because of the majority's policy of control over the Palestinian education system both in terms of educational content and examination of school decisions. Tracing the learning programs in the Palestinian education system in Israel shows a lack of compatibility between the contents included in these programs and the above-mentioned principles (Jabarin, 2014), since the main purpose of these programs is to educate Palestinian youth to be subservient without a clear independent identity (Yona, 2015). For example, civics studies are planned to teach Palestinian students to become Israeli citizens, emphasizing the teaching of the history of the Land of Israel and Zionism and completely ignoring the Palestinian narrative and the national-cultural identity of the Palestinian student (Al-Haj, 1996; Arar 2012; Knaana, 2015). The basic premises of civics studies are reflected in the text book "Being Israeli citizens" that underlines the two basic foundations of the state's nature: Jewish and democratic (Knaana, 2015).

An additional example is the learning program in geography, which clearly denies any affinity of the Palestinian minority to the land, while highlighting the Hebrew names given to different locations (Khamaisy, 2014). The learning program in Arabic is void of any contents with a national hue, and Palestinian students are not exposed to literary works of Palestinian authors (Jaber, 2014); in contrast, the Jewish education system that sees language as a major component in the development of national identity and a national self-identity for its students invests serious efforts in the promotion of the Hebrew language and literature (Jabarin & Agbaria, 2014). Despite the separation that exists between Palestinian and Jewish education systems and schools, Palestinian students are forced to study Jewish history, and Hebrew literature and poetry.

In the Palestinian education system, after the establishment of the state, Palestinian teachers were forbidden to discuss political issues that might stimulate national feelings among the students. The establishment expected the teachers to depress any tendency among students to the reinforcement of a Palestinian identity, to educate them in the spirit of Israeli citizenship, to the extent of self-denial and self-negation towards the Jewish majority. On the other hand, the Palestinian minority community expected their teachers to educate future generations to their own national values and Palestinian culture. This demand from the Palestinian community is supported by international declarations of human rights (Al Haj, 1996; Mi'ari, 1978) which Israel has endorsed and which grant the Palestinian minority the right to realize their collective rights, and primarily to maintain the characteristics of their culture and national identity (Agbaria et al., 2015).

On this foundation, some of the teachers and principals in the Palestinian education system have invested time and effort in constructing a covert education program undermining the official values and narratives. Additionally, they recognize that national memorial ceremonies constitute a strategy for the construction of collective memory and the fostering of national identity and try to find ways to use this strategy without breaking the law (Arar & Ibrahim, 2016).

The state's efforts to impose the Jewish-Zionist narrative and collective Jewish identity on the Palestinian education system have not ceased. A striking example of this is the corpus of "100 concepts in Zionist Heritage and Democracy" that was introduced into the learning program in 2003. According to Agbaria and Mustafa (2013) this "official knowledge" has given birth to "opposing knowledge" that is expressed in a reactive program: "Identity and affiliation: A project proposing fundamental concepts for Palestinian students". The "Identity and affiliation" program contributed significantly to the decision to annul the "100 concepts program" in 2006 and represented the legitimization of civil action that could disrupt the colonialist relations expressed in the imposition of the Jewish narrative on Palestinian pupils.

Moreover, the higher education sphere also provides fertile ground for the construction of national consciousness. On the higher education campuses students are exposed to an academic discourse that is largely enlisted for the Jewish national narrative relating to the history of the violent dispute with the Palestinian students' nation. However, this discourse often reinforces the old circles of identity and inspires the Palestinian students to clarify their sources for ownership of their own personal and national history, identity and culture (Arar, 2015; Arar & Haj-Yehia, 2016),

Having examined the way in which narrative is used by the government in the field of education, we now examine the use of narrative in the public sphere.

## **The second challenge: Economic dependence and acceptance of services from government agencies**

The development of a collective identity and establishment of a Palestinian narrative constitutes a challenge which is not easy for the Palestinian minority in Israel. This is a minority that mostly avoids political and national involvement and is financially dependent on the Jewish majority, enduring poverty and marginality in the allocation of resources, especially since the Palestinian family that traditionally made a living from agriculture, found itself deprived of its lands, and thus family members were forced to search for a living in Jewish towns (Ghanem, 2001).

In addition to the economic factor, the daily contact between the two national groups has accelerated the process of "Israelization" among members of the Palestinian minority and connected them to the state in various life domains, so that they have become bilingual and bicultural (Smouha, 2013). This rapid process delays concern for the national facet including the development of a national narrative.

These changes have led the Palestinian minority to undergo at least partial “modernization” of their lifestyle and in their thinking as a result of their exposure to Israeli living standards and the Jewish majority acts as a reference group for them. Smouha (2013) claims that the Palestinians see their integration as an opportunity to access resources and a less traditional lifestyle without needing to assimilate into Jewish society. Additionally, the Palestinians have to receive basic services from government agencies, i.e. medical and welfare services etc.

Overshadowed by the above-described official government discourse and the economic dependence of the Palestinians on state services, Palestinian public discourse has developed an oppositional narrative as described in the next section.

## Recognizable signs of an oppositional discourse

Reviewing the factors that delay the maintenance of cultural-national identity and collective memory of the Palestinian minority in Israel, we find a reality of intentionally structured exclusion of this culture from the public sphere in Israel (Haj-Yehia & Lev-Tov, 2015).

Is it possible to preserve these identities in the two main channels: formal and informal? As we saw formal discourse is dictated by and serves the supremacy of the Jewish majority narrative, while systematically pushing aside the Palestinian narrative (Arar & Ibrahim, 2016), for example: there has been fierce public dispute regarding the study of the poetry of the Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish. In the informal channels, initiatives such as public museums, libraries, and cultural centers have continuously discriminated against and ignored or excluded Palestinian heritage in terms of policies and budgets, and Palestinian initiatives in this field are required to express loyalty to the state in order to receive state budgets (Haj-Yehia & Lev-Tov, 2015). The present Minister of Culture, for example, cancelled the budget for Palestinian artists, whom she claimed were undermining state security with their artistic work.

Nevertheless despite these factors and the competing Jewish-Zionist narrative, the Palestinians have been able to exploit the sparse resources available to them in order to preserve their cultural heritage and history and especially to commemorate the Nakba, thus raising awareness to its existence and consequences (Keinan, 2015). This responsibility was borne independently by the Palestinian society and has helped to promote the maintenance of Palestinian identity with all its components (Haj-Yehia & Lev-Tov, 2015).

In the 1960s, Palestinian researchers undertook the leadership of this project and began to invest efforts to research and preserve Palestinian cultural heritage in research institutes in Palestinian universities in the West Bank, especially in Beir Zeit University (Jarad, 2006). During the 1970s education foundations and associations were established by public organizations in Palestinian society in Israel and consequently Palestinian political and cultural awareness grew, especially after the events of Land Day on 30<sup>th</sup> March, 1976. Yet the main engagement of Palestinians in Israel took place in the 1980s, led mainly by local researchers who found an academic base in the Palestinian universities in the West Bank (Rabinowitz & Abu-Baker, 2002). There were also some authors and poets who contributed to this project and enlisted their creative work to the preservation and organization of Palestinian culture including Samih AlQasem, Tawfiq Ziad, Rashid Hussein, Emil Habibi, Emil Tuma, Salman Natur and others. Their public works helped to advance the revival of folk and traditional culture and to preserve the collective Palestinian national memory (Jamal, 2010).

In the 1980s, new heritage centers aspired to document, preserve and foster the values of Palestinian culture while helping to raise awareness among Palestinian society in Israel to this heritage (Haj-Yehia & Lev-Tov, 2015); these included:

- (1) The “Mahmoud Darwish Cultural Center” in Nazereth, established and managed by the municipality (but with no political affinity) in memory of the Palestinian Poet Mahmoud Darwish. The center aims primarily to foster cultural activities and promote all aspects of Palestinian culture in Nazareth and its hinterland, including activities to preserve verbal and material Palestinian heritage;
- (2) The Taibe Center for Heritage Revival was established at the beginning of the 1980s to maintain the cultural infrastructure of Palestinian society in Israel and to prevent its distortion or disappearance. It focuses on several activities: (a) planning and performing broad cultural festivals with abundant cultural content devoted to Palestinian heritage preservation through creativity (b) Conferences and seminars dealing with the state of Palestinian culture in Israel (c) Research and publication on the Palestinian heritage, in addition to the publication of the Knaan journal dealing with political, literary and heritage issues.
- (3) The Sakhnin Municipal Museum for Palestinian Arab Heritage and Culture was established in Sakhnin in 1990 and it was the first museum dedicated to Palestinian cultural heritage. The museum is unique since it was established in a history building founded during the Ottoman period for the regional governor Mussa Abu-Ria as a result of the cooperation between the Center for Cultural Revival in Taibe, the Sakhnin municipality and the Knaan Institute. The museum’s goals include the conservation of Palestinian heritage and emphasis on its national and cultural character, and guidance for researchers and students in their writings on subjects connected with Palestinian heritage. The museum houses 25,000 historic items divided into several departments representing the traditional Palestinian Arab home (Shay, 2008).

From the 1990s, a socio-political awakening was observed, lasting till the present, and bringing an increased awareness of the need to document and maintain Palestinian cultural heritage. This was expressed in the establishment of civil associations and organizations dealing with the development of education, social and cultural services (Rabinowitz & Abu-Baker, 2002) and tracing the sources of Palestinian heritage. The First Intifada in the occupied territories in 1987 and the Israel-Palestine Peace Process in 1993 played a major role in the Palestinian minority’s coping with the issue of their national and cultural identity.

The end of the 1990s brought technological developments that allowed Palestinians to access their historic, cultural and national heritage through the Internet and direct contact with the Arab world, through computer programs, testimonies, pictures, films and music (Jamal, 2010). The events of the “Second Intifada” had a most profound effect, sharpening Palestinian national consciousness and leading to the publication of the Palestinian Arab “Vision” document by four Palestinian public organizations in Israel, setting out their vision for the future of the Palestinian minority and including the demand to recognize the “Nakba”, or in other words the Palestinian narrative (Ussitzki-Lazar & Kabha, 2008). Thus too, since the 1990s several Palestinian galleries, museums and private collections have opened in Israel including:

- (1) The Modern Arts Gallery in Um-al-Fahem, established in 1996 in the town of Um-al-Fahem by a group of local residents and artists, headed by the present director of the gallery, the artist Said Abu-Shaqra. The establishment of the gallery was inspired by the aspiration to bring modern high-quality art to the town and its inhabitants and to present authentic Arab and especially Palestinian Arab art. The gallery conducts research, documentation and preservation of the historic Palestinian heritage. Its historical activities have guided Palestinian researchers, including wide-ranging projects using filmed historical interviews and collections of historical pictures.

- (2) The Tawfiq Ziad Institute for National Culture and Creativity established in 1996 in Nazareth in memory of the famous poet, member of Knesset and mayor of Nazereth Tawfiq Ziad. The Institute deals with the conservation of Palestinian cultural heritage and promotes various activities and projects such as: the collection, recording, and publication of the work of Tawfiq Ziad that represents an important part of the difficult history of the Palestinian people in Israel, and support for the performance of research on Palestinian literature, song, thinking and history. The Institute awards prizes to encourage writing in the fields of local and international creativity and has established a Palestinian library that includes all works of Palestinian Arab writers and poets through all periods of the Palestinian people that constitutes an academic resource for researchers and all those who take an interest in this field.
- (3) The Association for Arab Culture was established in 1988 by Palestinian intellectuals, academics and political activists to reinforce and consolidate Palestinian national and cultural identity among Palestinian Arabs in Israel. The association's projects include the "Identity and Belonging" project which holds identity summer camps; tours get to know the country and to revive the memory of the Nakba; seminars on the subject of national and democratic identity; workshops and conferences to reinforce the Arabic language as a central component of Arab culture; and training tour guides for familiarization tours of the uprooted villages.
- (4) The Mada alCarmel Center for Applied Social Research was established in 2000 in Haifa, in order to encourage and further theoretical and applied research in Palestinian society in Israel. One of its main goals is to supply a data base and intellectual environment suitable for the learning needs of Palestinians in Israel for their collective future and their relations with the state, with the Palestinian people and with the Arab nation.
- (5) The Shuhadaa Museum – Kafr Qasem was established in Kafr Qasem in the Triangle region of Israel in 2006 as a public initiative under the auspices of the local government, 50 years after the massacre at Kafr Qasem. The purpose for the museum was to increase awareness among the Palestinian community in Israel concerning the massacre of 49 of the village's residents including women and children by the Israeli Border Guards in Kafr Qasem during the period of the military regime on 29<sup>th</sup> October 1956. The museum collection includes important historical testimonies concerning the massacre. The museum also exhibits a collection of art works by artists from Kafr Qasem and other villages, portraying the massacre and art in commemoration of the Nakba, presented by the Palestinian architect Fuad Azzam "Panorama of the Massacre".

In addition to the establishment of these museums, galleries and cultural centers, various smaller, private centers and institutions have sprung up such as: the Fatma Gallery for Palestinian Arab Heritage, established in 2000 in Um-al-Fahum in Wadi Arah as a private initiative by one of the village's residents. Who had built up a private varied collection of historical items, focusing especially on work tools of traditional Palestinian farmers before the introduction of modernization in agriculture (Shay, 2008).

Another important factor that significantly helps the formulation of a national narrative among the Palestinian minority in Israel is the rapid development of the Internet and its deep penetration into the life of Palestinian society in Israel. Virtual networks opened up to the leading groups of young Palestinian population in Israel, offering new broad and effective possibilities in conservation, documentation and endowment of the legacy of their oral history and cultural heritage. Today, Palestinian students in Israel have an expansive choice of online alternatives to connect and engage with content and materials reflecting their culture and their unique national identity.

## Concluding remarks

Since the Nakhsba and the establishment of the State of Israel, the basic social and cultural infrastructure of Palestinian society was almost entirely destroyed. The Palestinian minority in Israel found itself isolated from the former leaders of Palestinian culture and cut off from the culture of the Arab world. The Palestinian minority that remained within Israel's borders were unable to continue with the development of their national narrative due to lack of civil, cultural centers and the absence of the Palestinian elite after the Nakhsba. In contrast, the Israeli government exploited this opportunity in order to expose its Palestinian citizens to Israeli, Jewish and Zionist motives through the formal education system and other institutions. Over time, these governmental acts distanced many Palestinian citizens from the connection to their national narrative as well as their culture and history. However, in the late seventies, in the years following various tragic national incidents, especially Land Day in 1976, there has been an inner awakening among the Palestinian minority, providing the context for conservation activities, documentation and endowment of a national narrative and cultural heritage among its members. The peak of this awakening, we find in recent years as a result of concerted efforts of private organizations and civil associations. The common denominator of these organizations is their informal private enterprise and lack of contact with the Israeli authorities.

With all the importance of this variety of channels, including innovative informal initiatives and activities in the field of history and cultural heritage of the Palestinian minority in Israel, which we have presented, they cannot act as a substitute for the full enablement provided by formal education. They also cannot act as a substitute for government recognition and funding of Palestinian public museums and cultural centers and their impact on the most capital intensive impressive displays.

It is clear that the integration and strength of any social group, relies on its affinity to an alternative and distinct cultural system which creates its unique cultural identity. Therefore, formal education in schools and informal educational activities in local community are both significant channels for the construction and strengthening of national narrative and cultural identity of youth.

Despite the beneficial activities of various informal cultural centers in conserving the Palestinian national narrative in Israel, various other varieties of formal and informal education of the Palestinian youth in Israel could also bring them to reveal the main elements of Palestinian culture, highlighting its originality and focusing on rooted beliefs and values that can enrich all aspects of their lives.

In order to accomplish this, there is a need to follow up on the issue of equality of the Palestinian citizens in Israel, emphasizing the need for equality for the Palestinian collective, creating the necessary conditions for an effective partnership at the national as well as the different collective levels. Equality will ensure the Palestinians self-management in the field of education, especially cultural aspects of education, thus ensuring the rights of the Palestinian minority to deal with particular issues which have seemingly disappeared historically, such as their national narrative.

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Jihad Abu Raya\*

## Israel pays the price for its incitement over fires - but who is really getting burned?

The incitement<sup>1</sup> instigated by the Israeli prime minister and members of his cabinet against Palestinian citizens of Israel as fires raged there last week has had a profound impact inside the country.

A quick search of Israeli social media reveals thousands of comments calling for Arabs to be burned alive and for gangs to torch their houses and burn down their villages.

“For each one who has been involved in setting fires, we should burn their village and send all their residents one-way tickets to Gaza,” said one Facebook post last week.

It’s a scene that reminds us of 16-year-old Muhammad Abu Khdeir<sup>2</sup> and of 18-month-old Ali Dawabsheh<sup>3</sup> - both were burned alive by settlers in recent years, driven by incitement campaigns run by their leaders. Saed and Reham, Ali’s parents, died later from wounds sustained in the fire that had already killed their child.

It’s not at all surprising Israeli authorities have not arrested a single one of these social media provocateurs or even questioned any of them.

This is despite the fact that their pages are publicly available for all to see and read.

Clearly, any arrest would inevitably lead some to point the finger of blame at the even bigger provocateurs - those leading the country.

Now that the fires have been extinguished, it turns out that there was no foundation for accusations that Palestinians started them. The only thing that can be proven is the Israeli leadership’s desire to ignite tensions between Jews and Arabs and to increase hatred.

### A Google Translation

The Israeli police’s insane detention campaign, which has seen around 30 Palestinians citizens of Israel arrested and later released without charge, was political. It was designed to provide a cover for the Israeli leadership and its racist incitement.

One of the detainees was Anas Abu Daabis<sup>4</sup>, from the Negev. His detention won extensive Israeli media coverage, accompanied by a campaign of incitement calling on people to set fire to him, his family and his village.

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The ironic thing is that, just before he was arrested, Anas published a Facebook post (later deleted) that sharply criticised those who expressed jubilation at the forest fires. One of his posts was written in satirical Arabic prose.

However, Israeli police used Google Translate, which distorted his original meaning, and he was arrested and brought to trial, based solely on the Facebook post.

When the truth became clear to the court, it ordered his release. Anas had spent several days in prison and was subjected to hateful calls for people to burn him; all of this because the Israeli police simply did not understand the meaning of what he actually wrote in his post.

### **No one charged with hostile motives**

Five teenagers from the village of Deir Hanna in the north of Palestine were also detained and accused<sup>5</sup> of setting fires for terrorist motives.

Israeli Interior Minister Aryeh Deri himself took part<sup>6</sup> in the incitement campaign against the youngsters, accusing “these terrorists” of torching Jewish houses and lands in the Provincial Council of Mesgaf. He threatened<sup>7</sup> to strip them of their Israeli nationality.

Then, after an investigation, four of them were released without any charges. The fifth was charged with burning some grass inside his Arab village. However, it should be noted that the charge did not accuse him of doing so with any nationalistic motives.

The closest Jewish settlement to the location where he was accused of starting a fire is several kilometres away.

Yet after all that, we have heard no apology from Deri for the incitement campaign he launched.

In the Palestinian village of Aljdaideh near Acre, as the main fires raged, six young men were sitting and smoking nargilah (a tobacco pipe) in scrubland close to their village. A strong wind blew a few embers onto the grass, setting it on fire.

Israeli media outlets reported that the security agencies were chasing a “terrorist cell” that was trying to burn the settlement of Ahihud, built on the remains of the al-Barwah village whose original (Arab) inhabitants had been forced out.

The six young men were arrested and questioned. Four of them were released without charges. The other two were also released, but the police decided to charge them with igniting a fire out of negligence.

Many of the Palestinians who were wrongly arrested and detained have similar stories.

But as for the major fires that broke out in Haifa and Zakhron Yaakoub, which caused extensive damage to hundreds of homes, no one was arrested<sup>8</sup>, and no charges have been levelled against anyone for acting with nationalistic or “hostile” motives.

### **Compensation kerfuffle**

According to Israeli law, the state is responsible for compensating citizens for damage incurred as a result of “hostile” actions. Alternatively, such citizens whose properties are damaged may turn to insurance companies if they are insured.

But as it turned out, more than half of the houses that burned down had no insurance. And according to first estimates, the damage from the fires totals around one billion shekels<sup>9</sup> (\$260 million).

When the fires were extinguished, property owners started going to local property tax offices to apply for compensation, on the grounds that they had been victims of “hostile terrorist” actions.

Tax officials refused to accept their compensation claims, as there has so far been no evidence that the fires were caused by “hostile” actions, nor has anyone been found guilty of these actions.

In response, victims pointed the tax officials to statements made by Israeli government ministers in which they accused Arabs of setting the fires due to nationalistic motives.

The reply from the tax officials was unequivocal: the only body authorised to make such a statement is the Israeli Intelligence Department, which has yet to issue any communique about the matter. Therefore, the statements made by Israeli government ministers have no legal bearing.

Meanwhile, insurance companies have refused to compensate their clients on grounds that their insurance does not cover “hostile” or “terrorist” actions.

### Who will take responsibility?

The Israeli government sought to incite and sow hatred, but it didn’t intend to end up paying compensation. Nor did it mean to relieve insurance companies from compensating victims.

So this situation has caused considerable embarrassment for the government and placed it in a huge predicament<sup>10</sup>. Critically, it has exposed the utterly unfounded claims politicians make against Arabs.

Consequently, earlier this week a deal was struck between the Israeli government and the insurance companies. It was agreed that both parties would pay part of the compensation claimed by victims.

The part being paid by the Israeli government will be paid as a price for its racist incitement, and not as a price for hostile actions by Arabs against it. The decision to pay compensation in this way is not based on any legal foundations and is nothing but a bribe offered by the Israeli government in order to silence its critics.

Meanwhile, despite the truth, what lingers in many minds is that Arabs and Palestinians were involved in these fires. Who will take responsibility for this hatred that has been unleashed? Who will extinguish these flames of incitement?

\*This article previously appeared on Middle East Eye

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## PALESTINIAN REFUGEES IN THE ARAB WORLD

### REALITIES & PROSPECTS

This book, *Palestinian Refugees in the Arab World: Realities and Prospects* looks at the most significant aspects of the Palestinian refugee and explores the future possibilities of their plight through studies and papers presented by a group of experts and researchers. The papers were presented during a seminar organised by Al Jazeera Centre for Studies in cooperation with the Palestinian Return Centre on 14 and 15 April 2012 in the Qatari capital of Doha.

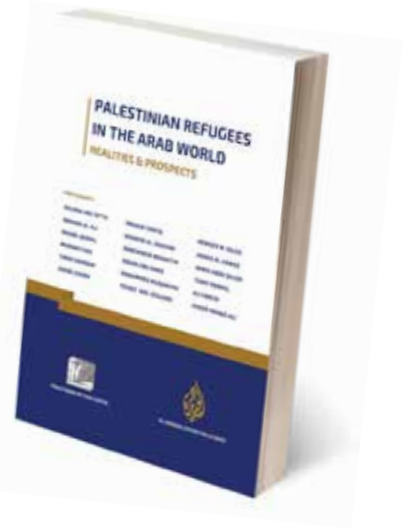
There are more than eight million Palestinian refugees in the world. The vast majority live in Arab countries, mainly neighbouring Palestine, with smaller numbers scattered in different parts of the world. They all live under extremely challenging conditions that differ according to the host country's socio-economic conditions and political climate; but include inadequate access to provisions, general treatment and attitudes and protection of human rights.

More than six decades have passed since the displacement of these refugees from their homes under Zionism. However they still continue to suffer and live under miserable conditions with no respite. So far, Arab and international efforts have failed to bring this suffering to an end due to Israel's intransigence compounded by American assistance to Israel and support for its occupation. Arab countries have also failed to address this historical injustice and take a balanced commensurate response to the severity of the refugee question, including the Palestinian cause in general.

This book, *Palestinian Refugees in the Arab World: Realities and Prospects* looks at the most significant aspects of the Palestinian refugee and explores the future possibilities of their plight through studies and papers presented by a group of experts and researchers.

#### Participants

Salman Abu Sitta, Mounir Chafiq, Mohsen M. Saleh, Ibrahim Al-Ali, Basheer Al-Zoughbi, Jawad Al-Hamad, Magda Qandil, Abdenmour Benantar, Hanin Abou Salem, Mariam Itani, Adnan Abu Amer, Terry Rempel, Tarek Hamoud, Mohammed Mushanish, Ali Hweidi, Adeeb Ziadeh, Yousef Abu Ossuood, Yassir Ahmad Ali



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Barbara Pilz\*

# International Law and Palestinian IDPs in Israel

Within the several natures of discussion surrounding Palestinians and their long-standing struggle for recognition and rights, a minority remains sidelined. The Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) of Palestine are also denied basic rights and subject to discriminative policies and hostility. Adding to the longstanding and ongoing human rights violations undertaken by the government of Israel, this article will bring a brief depiction of the status of Palestinian IDPs, their entitlement to protection, and prospects.

Similar to every topic related to the Arab-Israeli conflict, the situation of Palestinian IDPs in Israel is a multifaceted, intricate issue. The Zionist colonisation of Palestine, facilitated by Britain and the international community as a whole, gave birth to the State of Israel. Since 1948, Palestinians have been forcibly displaced from their homes, seeking refuge both in other countries and in locations within historical Palestine. Nearly a quarter of all Palestinians who stayed within the borders of what is now considered the State of Israel<sup>1</sup> cannot return to their original homes and have become considered Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs).

In the case of Palestinians and their unique status, the distinction between IDPs and refugees is usually left aside. Even though distinct categories before international law, refugees and IDPs are usually included in the same framework of analysis. This short article is an attempt to clarify the specific rights and entitlements of IDPs, in particular the Palestinians, and highlights how the Israeli government is contributing to worsening their living conditions.

The confusion around the rights and regulations relating to IDPs is usually a result of misinformation. Consequently, in order to accurately review the conditions of Palestinian IDPs in Israel, it is fundamental to go back to the basics. Understanding the relevant international standards that define Internally Displaced Persons and the guiding principles on internal displacement will help us discuss more consistently the challenges of Palestinian IDPs in Israel.

## I. International standards of protection and Internally Displaced Persons

The United Nations Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement (UNGPID) is the most complete document providing guidance to States, authorities, and organisations on the subject.<sup>2</sup> From this document<sup>3</sup> comes the formal

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definition of IDPs, which considers as such, every individual who was unwillingly displaced due to a violence-related reason or disaster has “not crossed an internationally recognised border” (p.1).

Israel's claim of permanent sovereignty over the Palestinian territory has been changing the jurisdictional status of the region. However, even though Palestinians who remain in the region of historical Palestine are technically in another country they have not actively crossed any borders and therefore are considered IDPs.

Unfortunately there are many other barriers to recognition and rights of Palestinians in Israel other than defining their status. In terms of legally binding instruments, as explained by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)<sup>4</sup>, there is no universal legislation exclusively addressing the rights of IDPs. Nonetheless, the ICRC highlights that the international community has largely supported the constitution and provisions of the Guiding Principles, positively contributing for advancement in international regulations on the subject.

According to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)<sup>5</sup> the creation of the UNGPID, in 1998, was an attempt to produce a single document comprising the most relevant standards of human rights and international law related to internal displacement. Among the series of rights and entitlements, the UNGPID emphasises the necessity of equally providing IDPs with the same rights and freedoms guaranteed under international and domestic law to other persons living under the same jurisdiction. Furthermore, it prohibits displacement aimed at altering the ethnic, religious, or racial composition of a population.<sup>6</sup>

In this sense, it is important to observe the underlying reasons why the State of Israel denies acknowledging the status of Palestinian IDPs as such. Israel's denial to “deal with the IDP issue separately” is an indicator of Israel's will to erase the Palestinian struggle within its borders.<sup>7</sup> Consequently, preventing IDPs to return to their original homes and ignoring their existence as a distinct group can be also seen as an attempt to suppress their identity in order to alter the ethnic and religious composition of the State of Israel.

Regarding formal legal directives concerning IDPs, the ICRC shows that together with customary international law, the IV Geneva Convention and its Protocols are the main sources of law concerning prevention of displacement and the protection of IDPs<sup>i</sup>. The Committee lists the main provisions that, according to the Convention<sup>8</sup>, should be taken into account when shaping national legislation on the subject. Among others, the ICRC highlights the subjects of: forced displacement and right to return; non-discrimination; civilian status; life and freedom; conditions of living and assistance; families; documentation; property; employment; education; children's rights.<sup>9</sup> Unfortunately, Palestinian IDPs in Israel are not yet granted all the above-mentioned rights, especially when it comes to the right to return and property.

The United Nations High Commissioner For Refugees (UNHCR) together with members of the Global Protection Cluster released in 2008 a Handbook<sup>10</sup> to support effective operational protection for IDPs. When it comes to the foundations of IDP protection, the Handbook<sup>11</sup> introduces key concepts such as the definition of protection itself, an overview on IDPs categorisation, the logistical aspects of protection, and specially the distribution of responsibilities. In the case of Palestinian IDPs the subject of responsibility is particularly problematic. This is because in 1952 UNRWA changed its definitions of “Palestine refugee” and areas of operation, stopping giving assistance to Palestinians in Israel<sup>12</sup>.

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<sup>i</sup> Given that the scope of application of the IV Geneva Convention is restricted to cases of declared war or armed conflict, the publication of the United Nations Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement (UNGPID) was fundamentally necessary because it reinforced the necessity of guaranteeing the rights of IDPs both in times of war and peace.

At the same time, Israel does not recognise the distinctive rights of Palestinians in Israel as IDPs nor grants them the same rights as their fellow Israeli citizens of Jewish origin.

Moreover, both in the Handbook and in its section on Questions and Answers about IDPs, UNHCR emphasises the national character of IDP protection. In sum, UNHCR asserts that the responsibility to protect Internally Displaced Persons relies on the national authorities governing the country/territory: a “function of its sovereignty”. This provision confirms the responsibility of Israel of protecting and assisting Palestinian IDPs within the borders of its sovereign government.

In sum, the legislation on IDPs is mainly expressed in the form of “soft law” or no legally binding recommendations. Even though the guidelines and principles establish a solid ground for protection under a rights-based approach, they do not offer any mandatory standards under international law. Consequently, Internally Displaced Persons are subject to the will of States, exposed to vulnerability and neglect. Accordingly, it seems urgent to escalate the recommended standards of IDP protection to the constitution and ratification of universal mandatory treaties recognised under International Law.

In the case of Palestinian IDPs the complexity of their situation is aggravated given the conflict over territory and the consequent disputes over their status, jurisdiction, and responsibility.

## II. The Palestinian Case

Mapping the influencing factors when it comes to the levels of assistance received by Internally Displaced Palestinians in Israel is not a simple task. Referring back to the political context in the region throughout the decades is not enough. The attempt of universalising international legislation while providing general human rights safeguards has made international law incapable of clearly addressing the issues of the unique Palestinian case.

After almost 70 years of conflict the state of affairs between Israel and Palestine has passed through diverse phases. Colonisation, expulsion, and armed conflict are only a few examples. The applicability of international law is usually defined by set circumstantial characteristics. Some provisions only apply in the case of an armed conflict, some others within a defined territory or under a determined authority. In the case of the Arab-Israeli conflict, opposing perspectives give conflicting definitions on the above-mentioned topics. This is also true when defining the status of Palestinians living inside Israel who were expelled from their homes but have not yet returned.

According to a Forced Migration Review article<sup>13</sup> by Dina Abou Samra and Greta Zeender, it is very clear that the categorisation of IDPs applies to several groups of Palestinians living in Israel. The authors bring up the destruction of communities during the armed conflict of 1948 and recurrent waves of expulsions as the main cause for internal displacement. As per data of year 2000, Badil Resource Centre<sup>14</sup> estimates a population of around 250,000 Palestinian IDPs living in Israel.

Although figuring a significant amount of Israel's population, Palestinian IDPs are spread around the country. They are not entitled to any tailored assistance given that the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) does not operate in Israel. As pointed out by Terry M. Rempel, no recognised international organisation or mechanism has an ‘explicit mandate to provide comprehensive protection for Palestinian IDPs’<sup>15</sup>.

The main challenges for Palestinian IDPs in Israel are related to property and right to return. While the government of Israel provides neither adequate housing nor adequate means for Palestinians to return to their properties/land after displacement, it has instead enacted laws to prevent such restitution. As per the Absentees' Property Law<sup>16</sup> passed by the Knesset on the 14<sup>th</sup> of 1950, any

property located in the area now considered Israel, whose Palestinian or Arab citizen owner left during the 1947-48 hostilities, should be under custody of the Ministry of Finance. According to Joseph Schechla<sup>17</sup>, the confiscated properties are administered by the Jewish National Fund (JNF) and used as assets to benefit the settlement of Jewish immigrants in Israel.

The enactment of the Absentees' Property Law was mainly aimed at Palestinian refugees, who were forced to leave Palestine during the state of emergency proclaimed by the Provisional Council of State during the creation of the State of Israel. In the case of IDPs, who differ from refugees who have not crossed international borders, the ironic term 'present absentees' is applied.<sup>18</sup>

For Joseph Schechla<sup>19</sup>, who is a specialist in housing as a human right, the permanent confiscation of property and land (from the Palestinians who have not left what is today known as Israel) is a confirmation that the forced removal of Palestinians during armed conflict was not a protection measure for civilians but a governmental strategy for property hijacking. Such practice is a clear violation of the provisions set by the United Nations Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement (UNGPID), in particular the prohibition against arbitrary deprivation of property<sup>20</sup>.

According to Nihad Boqa'i<sup>21</sup>, the involvement of Israeli authorities in resettling IDPs is mainly related to assisting IDPs on renting shelters or registering property in marginalised new villages in exchange for giving up their landlord rights in villages of origin. As mentioned by Boqa'i, other factors such as the location of family and friends, religion, and economic conditions influence the geographical distribution of Palestinian IDPs in Israel.

The demographics of Palestinian IDPs show again the provision of rights being deteriorated by the extension of a supposed to be temporary situation. Internal Displacement of Palestinians in Israel is no longer a consequence of conflict but a deliberate policy. As explained by Areej Sabbagh-Khoury<sup>22</sup>, the fact that Palestinian IDPs were granted Israeli citizenship under the Israeli Nationality Law (1952) has not guaranteed an equal treatment. On top of being systematically deprived of returning to their homes and recovering their property<sup>23</sup>, the citizen status of Palestinians in Israel is also a justification to refuse to observe them as a unique group within Israeli society, denying their struggle and refusing their rights.

## What is there to be done?

Decades of political discussion and research have come to the common conclusion that the underlying starting point to ameliorate the situation of Palestinians all over the world seems to reside in the recognition of their right to self-determination and their right to return. However, such recognition should not only reside on the realm of discourse.

Within the many layers that surround the Arab-Israeli conflict the plight of a minority should not be left aside. As highlighted by Terry M. Rempel, Palestinian IDPs in Israel still lack effective national and international protection particularly related to prevention from displacement, provision of human rights during displacement, assistance, and durable solutions.<sup>24</sup> Practical action needs to come in the shape of formal regulations.

Although attention and action from the international community is essential for the creation of universal legally binding instruments related to Internally Displaced Persons, it is necessary to highlight Israel's responsibility over Palestinian IDPs under its jurisdiction.

Recalling the foundations of assistance to internal displacement expressed in UNHCR's Handbook<sup>25</sup>, the responsibility to support IDPs relies on national authorities. Consequently, it is the role of national actors to 'reinforce not replace national responsibility'.

Essentially, both international leaders and the Israeli government play a fundamental role in shaping new policies. Even though International Humanitarian Law needs to be respected and used as a basic framework of protection, the priority should be the development of national policies and regulations inside Israel. This will be able to fulfil the need for assistance, ceasing discrimination, providing rights and compensation for its internally displaced citizens.

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PRC prepared a set of very useful materials on the Palestinian cause.

A3 Leaflets were prepared to cover the issues of the Separation Wall, Right of Return, Palestinian Refugees, Palestinian Prisoners and Israeli "Settlements".



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Roua Naboulsi\*

# The Israeli State: Earnest Democracy or Perfunctory Façade?

## Introduction

Palestinian citizens of Israel can participate in elections. They are allowed to show up to a polling booth on election day and cast their ballots for whomever they choose. They can also serve in the Knesset or even on the Supreme Court. But does allowing its citizens basic access to their fundamental rights in one aspect of life truly earn Israel its reputation as a shining beacon of democracy in the East and the only one of its kind in the region? What other factors contribute to determining if Israel is in fact a democracy?

Although the word “democratic” does not appear in Israel’s Declaration of Independence, it does however promise “complete equality of social and political rights to all its inhabitants irrespective of religion, race or sex” as well as “freedom of religion, conscience, language, education, and culture”.<sup>1</sup> Despite this, the main emphasis of the declaration is on the founding of Israel as a Jewish state. The establishment of Israel as a state for Jewish people, as well as a democracy that treats all people equally at the same time, could be considered a contradiction. A state cannot favour one ethnicity or religion over another and yet simultaneously treat all citizens equally. Nevertheless, Israel is defined as a free and democratic state by many, and is ranked as “free” on the Freedom House Index of Global Political Rights and Civil Liberties.<sup>2</sup> Because Palestinian citizens do have the right to vote, it is important to look at the ways in which Israel does favour its Jewish-Israeli citizens in order to determine whether it truly is a democracy.

## Inside Israel

During the 2015 elections, when three Arab parties and one Jewish-Arab party came together to form the Joint List, a high number of Palestinian voters showed up to exercise their voting rights for this newly created coalition.<sup>3</sup> As a result, the Joint List became the third biggest party in the Knesset. That there is Palestinian representation in government is surely a strong sign that democracy in Israel is alive and well, and that the third biggest party in the Knesset is a Palestinian coalition is even more remarkable. However, the context in which this has taken place is perhaps more nuanced.

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Palestinians make up 20 percent of the population of Israel, yet a 2016 poll carried out by Israel's Army Radio found that 45 percent of Jewish-Israelis do not feel that Palestinian citizens of Israel should have equal rights.<sup>4</sup> When the unusually high Palestinian voter turnout became apparent during the 2015 elections, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu warned his supporters that Palestinians were showing up in "droves" to polling booths.<sup>5</sup>

In utilising the threat of Palestinian voters as a campaigning tactic, Netanyahu inadvertently highlights the limitations of Israel's version of democracy, which although allows Palestinian citizens of Israel a right to vote, is problematic in the sense that almost half of the population believes Palestinians are not entitled to equal rights to Jewish citizens, an issue which is perhaps reflected in the Declaration of Independence which stresses Israel as a state for the Jewish people. It is further complicated by the notion that it is acceptable for political leaders to capitalise on this and use terms such as "droves" when referring to one-fifth of its population, and that the use of such language can get you re-elected as was the case with Netanyahu.

Another issue that arises when analyzing Israeli democracy and its shortcomings is the State's use of laws and legislation to discriminate against its Palestinian population. For example, within a year of the election, the Knesset had voted in favour of an amendment to the Basic Law. This amendment, brainchild of Netanyahu himself, would allow the Knesset House Committee to suspend a Member of the Knesset (MK), provided that over 90 MKs vote in the plenum. A party or person can be banned for incitement to violence or racism, support for armed conflict against Israel or negating Israel as a Jewish and democratic state. Netanyahu openly stated that this move is "meant to remove MKs who stand against Israel and for terrorism."<sup>6</sup>

The notion that elected representatives can be banned for expressing certain views – such as the view that all citizens should be allowed equal rights whether they are Jewish or not – surely brings into question the very existence of Israeli democracy. This is further exacerbated by the fact that there are only 13 Palestinian representatives and 107 Jewish-Israelis.<sup>7</sup> This means that it is Palestinian MKs, who are most likely to advocate for equality for Palestinians, who will be most affected by this amendment, bringing to attention the tension between Israel's two somewhat contradictory goals: to be both a Jewish and democratic state.

Another example of how Israel's attempt to maintain its Jewish identity negates its democratic aspects is the law in place from The Declaration of the Establishment of the State of Israel which emphasise "the exclusive connection of the state to the Jewish people" be read in the opening of the Knesset.<sup>8</sup> This outright excludes – and perhaps to some extent even threatens – its non-Jewish members by emphasising the Jewish nature of the state which does not leave room for its non-Jewish members to be treated equally.

Laws that inhibit freedom of speech also exist in Israel. For example, institutions can be penalised for commemorating "Israel's Independence Day or the day on which the state was established as a day of mourning."<sup>9</sup> In short, this law prohibits Palestinians from memorialising the 1948 Nakba which led to death of hundreds of Palestinians and the expulsion of over 700,000 from their homes.<sup>10</sup> This suppression of freedom of speech severely impedes Israel's ability to call itself democratic. Other laws that highlight this problem include the banning of citizens and organisations from boycotting Israeli settlement goods despite their illegality according to International Law, and the law which (rather vaguely) stipulates that the government may revoke Israeli citizenship due to "breach of trust or disloyalty to the state."<sup>11</sup>

## The Occupied Territories

To fairly analyze the extent to which Israel can be referred to as democratic, we must also look at the over 4 million Palestinians living in areas outside Israel that are under some degree of Israeli control. Whilst it is true that the Palestinians living in East Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza can elect Palestinian officials that have limited power to govern them, it is more often than not the Israeli Knesset that makes the final decisions on the major issues affecting their lives.<sup>12</sup>

Although International Law does not require that people living under temporary military occupation be able to vote, Israel's occupation of Palestinian land has existed for fifty years and has shown no signs of dissipating, with current Prime Minister Netanyahu boldly promising voters that there would be no Palestinian state at all as long as he is in power.<sup>13</sup> That Palestinians cannot elect the Israeli officials whom determine many aspects of their lives and whom will continue to do so for the foreseeable future, could be considered fundamentally undemocratic.

This problem is further aggravated by the fact that illegal Israeli settlers that are living on state-sanctioned settlements built on occupied Palestinian land in these very same areas, are in fact allowed to vote in Israeli elections.<sup>14</sup> Policies that allow people of a certain religion and race to vote, and which simultaneously ban others from voting despite living within the same area, can be described as racist and discriminatory, two characteristics which cannot exist in a true democracy.

## Conclusion

It is clear then that although Israel permits its Palestinian citizens to vote, the criteria for terming it a democratic state is much more extensive, and Israel fails to meet the necessary requirements by inhibiting freedom of speech and adopting discriminatory policies. In its attempt to protect its Jewish identity, it therefore compromises its democracy. This should come as no surprise when the Declaration of Independence is studied. If the document representing the very pillars on which the State of Israel was created omits the word democracy and yet focuses on its Jewish identity, one must conclude that Israel's priority first and foremost is to create a Jewish homeland, and a democracy second. These demonstrated limitations to Israeli democracy are perhaps best summarised by Israeli Constitution and Justice Committee Chairman Nissan Slomiansky who declared that "democracies give important rights to all citizens, but every same democracy must know there are limits, or else people will take advantage of democracy to undermine democracy."<sup>15</sup>

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Hannah Bowler\*

# Giving Away Other People's Land

## The Making of the Balfour Declaration

### Introduction

No document in Middle Eastern history has had as much influence as the Balfour Declaration on the current plight of the Palestinian people. It has been suggested that 'The Balfour Declaration may be the most extraordinary document produced by any Government in world history'<sup>1</sup>. The origins of Israeli settler colonialism can be traced back to this document which therefore calls for the continued critique of its origins, content and implementation. The Declaration was quite simply just a letter from the Foreign Secretary Arthur Balfour to Lord Lionel Walter Rothschild, a Jewish banker, which was made public in November 1917 for the Zionist Federation of Great Britain and Ireland. Despite the document initially having no legal legitimacy, Zionists consider the Balfour Declaration their charter for colonising Palestine.<sup>2</sup> Later when it was incorporated into the 1922 Mandate of Palestine, what was initially just a political sentiment was transformed into British policy.<sup>3</sup> The declaration was a promise made by the British Government to facilitate the establishment of a national home for the Jewish people. The Imperial Government promised them the Holy Land which was at the time an integral part of Syria and belonging to the Ottoman Empire, of which Britain had no legal right to give away.<sup>4</sup>

By exploring the archival documents it is possible to show the British Government's continual support of Zionism. The documents held in the National Archives in Kew Gardens detail the vast oversights, insincerity of British motivations and a complete lack of consideration for the Palestinian people that has ignited and fuelled decades of violence and injustice in the region. It is essential that we review these documents and continue to evaluate the role Britain has played in establishing the current Israeli regime of settler colonialism. Historian Elizabeth Monroe has described the declaration as 'one of the greatest mistakes in our [British] imperial history.'<sup>5</sup>

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This is an excerpt of research project that is available at [www.prc.org.uk](http://www.prc.org.uk)

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2 November 1917, Foreign Office

Dear Lord Rothschild,

I have much pleasure in conveying to you, on behalf of His Majesty's Government, the following declaration of sympathy with Jewish Zionists aspirations which has been submitted to, and approved by the Cabinet.

'His Majesty's government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavour to facilitate the achievement of this object, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country'

I should be grateful if you would bring this declaration to the knowledge of the Zionist federation.

Yours sincerely,

Arthur James Balfour.

BL Add MS41178 A The Balfour Declaration 1917.

The following chapters will display extracts of archival evidence narrated and then analysed, documents from the years pre-and post-declaration. Balfour historian Robert John demonstrates how crucial it is to examine documents from the past, he writes:

'Attempts to review historical records impartially often reveal that blame, culpability, or dishonour are not to be attached wholly to one side in the conflicts of the last hundred years. To seek to untangle fact from propaganda is worth study, for it increases understanding of how we got where we are and it should help people resist exploitation by powerful and destructive interests in the present and future, by exposing their working in the past'.<sup>6</sup>

Historical propaganda has continually been used as a political weapon to justify the denial of basic rights to the Palestinian people. Over the last one hundred years colonial discourse has constructed the history of this conflict and written its dominant narrative. Colonial discourse within historiography, and academia as a whole, has proven to be powerful tool which manipulates our understanding of the conflict. To quote Chomsky: 'to dive into the ocean of words found in the political and diplomatic documents in the various national archives understands how precarious is the story extracted from these heaps of documents, left behind by the chattering classes that shaped our lives over the last two centuries'.<sup>7</sup> This work will attempt to do just that, however precarious it might be.

This research is divided into thematic sections. The following chapters will critique the Balfour Declaration by taking the various objections voiced by British Jewish anti-Zionists as a point of departure. Chapter one will commence by examining the Jewish anti-Zionist movement, the form it took, its key figures and its main arguments. First I will analyse the primary evidence to explore the perceived impact of the Balfour Declaration on the Jewish people, both in Britain and across the globe. The successive chapters will then extend upon three core themes advocated by the anti-Zionists breaking these down to form three more chapters. Chapter two will therefore analyse the charge that the British Government held ulterior motivations for promoting Zionism. The insincere reasons behind the Declaration are widely known by academics and hold a firm grounding within the historiography of the Balfour debate. The evidence in the archives proves that government ministers used political Zionism to advance their own ambitions, firstly to help them gain an advantage in World War One but also to pursue their imperial interests in the region. The third chapter will scrutinise the accusation that the British ruling elite were anti-Semitic and thus driven by an age-long ambition to humanely expel their Jewish communities. It will also investigate how the Zionists were aware of Western governments' anti-Semitism, and used this to their advantage. The final chapter will assess the allegation that the declaration was proclaimed with a total disregard for the inhabitants of Palestine. It will critique both the British Government and the Zionists justifications for the domination of Palestine by exploring their application of both Orientalist and Colonialist ideologies.

## Background to the Balfour Declaration

For centuries the core European powers have actively sought to extend their influence in the Holy Land. Back then the vision was the reclamation of Palestine, an age long ambition for Christian and Jewish Europeans alike; Zionism therefore only represents one of the many European movements dedicated to these ambitions.<sup>8</sup> The age of Empires brought a renewed interest in the Levant as Europeans squabbled for power and influence in the rapidly developing geostrategic region. Unfortunately for the European Empires the region was already colonised by the old Turkish Empire. When the region was under the control of the Ottomans it prevented any form of territorial colonisation, meaning that the Europeans had to look for other more creative ways of penetrating Palestine. As Scholch identifies they did this primarily through the pursuit of protecting non-Muslim minorities in the Ottoman Empire<sup>9</sup> as a way of infiltrating the Holy Land. Britain was one such country that perceived the region as strategically important to them, they had long term ambitions of establishing political and economic hegemony in the Arab world. They also looked to Palestine for interests relating to protecting their trade routes to India - the affectionately known Jewel in their crown - as well as seeking ways to gain advantage in the Great War. These national interests were coupled with age long Christian aspirations in the Holy Land. The desire to gain a foothold in the region was then synthesised with Christian messianic teachings that the return of the Jews to the Promised Land was a prerequisite for the second coming of Christ. Back then the very notion of Palestine was romanticised beyond all recognition.<sup>10</sup>

For a while British designs for the Holy Land remained latent in colonial policy and Middle Eastern strategy that was until it came in direct contact with modern Political Zionism. This new Zionist movement emerged in Europe in the late 19th century, largely in response to the rise of nationalism and growing anti-Semitism. The movement was championed by Theodore Herzl, an Austrian-Hungarian journalist and activist, who published his work *der Judenstaat* (The State of the Jews) in 1896. His work advocated that the Jews should leave Europe and establish their own national home, preferably in Palestine, as the only viable answer to anti-Semitism. 'I shall therefore clearly and emphatically state that I believe in the practical outcome of my scheme, though without claiming

to have discovered the final shape it will assume. The Jewish State is necessary for the world; consequently it will come about.<sup>11</sup> He gained notoriety and the movement flourished amongst Jews and Christians alike. Just a year after *der Judensataat* was published he founded the First Zionist Congress in Basel, Switzerland, in which the delegates created the World Zionist Organisation. The Basel Declaration was signed during the conference which established its ambitions of the Jews returning to its biblical home in Palestine. As modern Zionism gained momentum across the continent, it picked up steam in Britain, the British Zionist Federation being formed in 1899. The campaign in Britain was spearheaded by chemist Chaim Weizmann who met with Arthur Balfour for the first time in 1906 - who at the time leader of the opposition. Weizmann was joined by Jewish MP and Minister Herbert Samuels and banker Lord Lionel Walter Rothschild, the cause gained strong support from within the government but it initially remained a sub-issue.

Meanwhile the events of the First World War were having an impact on the Jewish quest for the Holy Land. In 1914 Britain declared war on the Ottoman Empire, and since Palestine was under the remit of the Ottomans the task was to liberate Palestine from the Turks and carve up the remnants of their Empire. As Britain's strategic wartime interests began to align with the Zionists, British statesmen picked up the issue and began to debate its potential political rewards.

The territory of Palestine has a rather apt historical name: 'the Promised Land'. As Keay explains the: 'Hashemites thought it had been promised to them, Sykes-Picot promised it international jurisdiction, the British promised it to the Zionists and the League of Nations finally mandated it to the British'.<sup>12</sup> In the years preceding the publication of the Declaration the British Government had already entered into two very opposing agreements in the Levant territory. The first being the notorious Sykes-Picot Agreement,<sup>13</sup> in which British statesman Sir Mark Sykes and French politician François Georges-Picot drew with pencils and carved up the map of the Middle East between France and Britain, assuming that the Ottoman Empire would fall.<sup>14</sup> They agreed that Iraq and the overland route in Southern Palestine and Transjordan would come under the British sphere and the French would have Syria and Lebanon.<sup>15</sup> Under this agreement it was decided Palestine would be internationalised in order to provide a buffer zone between the two competing States. The Second agreement was named the Hussein-McMahon agreement. The Agreement comprised of a series of correspondences and formal pledges made between Hussein bin Ali, the Sherif of Mecca and Sir Henry McMahon, the High Commissioner for Egypt.<sup>16</sup> As the Great War commenced Britain realised that Arab nationalists could be of benefit to them, they therefore solicited their loyalty to fight the Ottomans and in return McMahon promised to Hussein Arab independence - on the advent of the Turkish Empire being defeated. The British had therefore already double crossed and betrayed two peoples before a third agreement on the destiny of Palestine had even been declared.

## Chapter 1

**'I have never heard it suggested even by their most fervent admirers, that either Mr. Balfour or Lord Rothschild would prove to be the Messiah.'**<sup>17</sup> –  
Edwin S. Montagu

Included in the War Cabinet files relating to the Balfour Declaration are various letters written by Edwin Samuel Montagu a Jewish Government Minister; who was at the time Secretary of State for India. Contained in the letters are Montagu's objections to the declaration which are varied and far reaching. Alongside his protests is a list of forty-five prominent British Jews, representing those who vehemently opposed the impending declaration and abhorred Zionism. The list Montagu provides is accompanied by figures from the Zionist Federation that show that just six percent of the Jewish

population of Great Britain supported Zionism. It is important to acknowledge that the Government's policy, which was declared in the name of its Jewish citizens, did not represent the views of the majority of Jewish people, and the promise of the Holy Land was imposed upon the community despite its advice and objections. The evidence found in the War Cabinet documents shows a distinct lack of consideration for the views of distinguished Jews who opposed Zionism. Very few letters of anti-Zionists make it into the files; and in fact there is evidence to suggest that the War Cabinet limited circulation of the draft declaration, in order to restrict anti-Zionists being able to convey their criticisms. The vast majority of all other correspondence comes from members of the Jewish community who were themselves Zionists.

I have obtained a list of a few prominent anti-Zionists. It will be noticed that it includes every Jew who is prominent in public life, with the exception of the present Lord Rothschild, Mr. Herbert Samuel, and a few others.

Dr. Israel Abrahams, M.A., University of Cambridge.

Sir Lionel Abrahams, K.C.B.

Professor S. Alexander, M.A., University of Manchester

D.L., Alexander, Esq., K.C., J.P.

Captain O.E., d'Avigdor-Goldsmid.

Leonard L. Cohen, Esq.

Robert Waley Cohen, Esq.

Dr. A. Eichholz.

S.H. Emanuel, Esq., B.A., Recorder of Winchester.

Ernest I. Franklin, Esq.

Professor I. Gollanez, M.A., Secretary of the British Academy.

Michael A. Green, Esq.

P.J. Hartog, Esq., M.A., Registrar University of London.

H.S.Q. Henriques, Esq., M.A.

Sir Charles S. Henry, Bart., M.P.

J.D. Israel Esq.

Benjamin Kisch, Esq.

Rev. Ephraim Levine, M.A.

Joshua M. Levy Esq., Chairman of the Council of Jews' College.

Major Laurie Magnus. Bart., M.P.

Sir Alfred Mond, M.P.

Fig. NA CAB21/58 extract from a letter to the War Cabinet titled 'The Future of Palestine' by Montagu, October 1917.

(League of British Jews)

C.G. Montefiore, Esq., M.A.

A.R. Moro Esq.

Sir Matthew Nathan, G.C.M.G.

J. Prag. Esq., J.P.

The Right Hon. Viscount Reading, G.C.B., K.C.V.O.

Captain Anthony de Rothschild, New Court, St. Swithin's Lane, E.C.

Captain Evelyn de Rothschild, New Court, E.C.

Major Lionel de Rothschild, New Court, E.C.  
Captain I. Salmon, L.C.C.  
Sir Harry S. Samuel, M.P.  
Sir Marcus Samuel, Bart.  
Edmund Sebag-Montefiore, Esq.  
Oswald J. Simon, Esq.  
Dr. Charles Singer, M.A., & c., 33 Upper Brook Street, W.  
Sir Isidore Spielman, C.M.G.  
Marion H. Spielman, Esq.  
Meyer A. Spielman, Esq.  
Sir Edward D. Stern.  
Lord Swaything.  
Sir Adolph Truck, Bart.  
Philip S. Waley, Esq.  
Professor A. Wolf, M.A., University College, London.  
Lucien Wolf, Esq.  
Albert M. Woolf, Esq.

The Jewish men listed above ardently resented Zionist efforts to convince Jews that they were an ethnic-racial group whom constituted a nation. They believed it was an injustice to turn over control of a land to those who then constituted only 7 per cent of the population;<sup>18</sup> they also distinguished that the Holy Land is Holy to Jews, Christians and Muslims insisting that the Jews do not have religious privilege. Montagu and others further articulated the practical implications of Zionism, and the challenge those who immigrated would face. And, what appears to be their overarching argument against Zionism is the threat assimilationist Jews would face if it was declared their national home was now in Palestine.

Now will you forgive me for saying that if I am right in thinking that Jews of British birth are the main anti-Zionists, if I am right in thinking that Anti-Zionism is a belief held by at least half of the Jews in this country, what can be the motive for our government in the midst of its great preoccupations and perplexities to do anything in this matter?

CAB 21/58 Montagu

Just one week after the Balfour Declaration was publicly announced three high profile British Jews Lionel Nathan de Rothschild, Sir Philip Magnus and Lord Swaything came together to found the League of British Jews. Their principle aim was to publicly oppose and denounce Zionist ideology which advocated the idea that Jews constituted a political nation.

Their work largely consisted of reaffirming that Judaism is a religion, not a race or a nation. These Jewish men resented the Zionist effort to convince Jews that they were an 'ethnic-racial' group and on its preliminary announcement to the press it was proclaimed: 'resist the allegation that Jews constitute a separate political nationality'. At its inaugural meeting 400 of Britain's most influential Jews attended, demonstrating the extent of the movement which was working to oppose Zionist aspirations in Palestine. Following on from the founding of the League of British Jews, the prominent ideologues of the movement

began to express their views in writing by establishing a newspaper to counter the Jewish Chronicle, the leading Zionist publication. They created the Jewish Guardian that sought to uphold liberal and reformist Jewish views and which actively criticised the ideology of Zionism and the British Government's policy of promoting it. The Jewish anti-Zionist campaign in Britain was strong and represented by impressive names from within high Jewish circles. The most influential in the movement were the likes of Rabbi Israel Mattuck, Claude Montefiore, Lucien Wolf, and Laurie Magnus.

## Prominent British anti-Zionist profiles

Despite the Rothschild family being the most prolific supporters of the Zionist movement there were several who became key members in the anti-Zionist movement – members like Evelyn de Rothschild, Lionel de Rothschild and Anthony de Rothschild.

Rabbi Israel Mattuck was arguably one of the most influential members of the Liberal Jewish movement. He wrote many publications and held sermons primarily advocating that the Jews in the modern world no longer constituted a nation, and that religion by its very nature lends to universalism. 'The idea of nationality apart from its intrinsic error holds no promise for the future of the Jews, but that of a weak ineffective national existence for a small fraction of them, while the large number of them are left in the world thence to choose between remaining for all time alienated or separated from the Jewish people'.<sup>19</sup>

Claude Montefiore was another prominent Jewish anti-Zionist. He was highly revered philanthropist and scholar within the Jewish community, with his portrait hanging in the National Portrait Gallery. Montefiore was the founding President of the World Union for Progressive Judaism, the intellectual founder of Liberal Judaism and a leading figure in the Anglo-Jewish Association. Alongside this he has published numerous books, pamphlets and teachings. In his work Race, Nation, Religion and The Jews and Nation or Religious Community?<sup>20</sup> Claude G. Montefiore states:

The establishment of a 'National Home for the Jewish Race' in Palestine presupposes that the Jews are a nation, which I deny, and that they are homeless, which implies that the countries where they enjoy religious liberty and the full rights of citizenship, they are separate entities, unidentified with the interests of the nations of which they form parts, an implication which I repudiate.

CAB21/58 letter from Leonard Cohen October 1917.

There is further evidence from anti-Zionist Jew Leonard Cohen who concurs that key objection to the Balfour Declaration. His main arguments, were outlined by Montagu in his letters to the War Cabinet, but were completely ignored by the British Executive and dismissed by Zionists. His key argument advocates that Jews should not be looking to find a nation of their own as they already belong to a nation. He writes 'in Italy, Holland, France and, above all England, a fatherland is not denied to the Jews... there fatherland is Italy, Holland, France and England respectively'.<sup>21</sup> Being a strong patriot he proudly declared himself to be an Englishman of the Jewish persuasion.

Before the publication of the Balfour Declaration there was a movement to internationalise Palestine in order to protect it and preserve it in the interests of all three faiths. Montagu goes on to testify that the Jewish people have no more a religious claim to the Holy Land than the Christians or Muslims.

Zionism was seen by many Jews, and primarily by rabbis, as an anti-Jewish rebellion comparable to Luther's challenge to the Church of Rome. Looking outside the British Jewish community Montagu

also gives the testimony of Jewish politicians from France and Italy who cite the same objections based on the debate about nationality. Luigi Luzzatti (1841-1927), Italy's second Jewish prime minister, declared:

"Jews must acquire everywhere full religious liberty as existing in the United States and in Italy. In Palestine, delivered from the Turks, Jews will live, not as sovereigns but as free citizens, to fertilise their fathers land. Judaism is not a Nationality but a Religion"

Fig. CAB21/58 booklet from Edwin Samuel Montagu titled 'Zionism', 1917.

And prominent French Deputy, who gained notoriety in the Dreyfus Affair, wrote in 1917:

"Patriotism is the first of our duties. It is the duty of every country to accord the same rights to all citizens without regard to their beliefs."

"I am resolute adversary to Zionism. Jerusalem belongs to all the religions. We know its history for 3,000 years. The Jewish Kingdom endured scarcely five centuries"

"Judaism is a religion"

"The absolute duty of the Jews, as of the Catholics, Protestants and Orthodox is to serve their country as good citizens and loyal soldiers. Zionism has been a dream."

Fig. CAB21/58 Booklet from Edwin Samuel Montagu titled 'Zionism', 1917.

The objections from the Jewish community went further than just the philosophical debate centred on questions of Jewish nationality and race. Montagu in a booklet titled 'Zionism', which he circulated round the government, he provided practical and geographical implications that the Zionists would encounter if they settled in Palestine.

Who knows that there is room in Palestine for a large extension of the population? What part of the existing population is it proposed to dispossess? Having regard to the geographical, geological and climatic conditions of Palestine, is it worth while jeopardising the position of all Jews who remain in other countries for the insignificant fraction of the Jewish population that can conceivably find a home in Palestine? I would beg the Cabinet to consider this a matter as a practical proposition.

Fig. CAB21/58 booklet from Edwin Samuel Montagu titled 'Zionism', 1917.

He goes on to warn of the religious fanaticism of Weizmann and how this drive is blinding him from the impracticalities of choosing the Holy Land as a Jewish homeland:

But on this matter he is near to being a religious fanatic. His enthusiasm for this cause has been the guiding principle of at any rate a large part of his life. It is his overwhelming enthusiasm. How often do such enthusiasms lead to complete disregard of practical potentialities! How little likely is such an enthusiasm to take into account the susceptibilities of those who differ from him among those of his own religion, or of those other religions whom his activities, if successful, would dispossess!

Fig. CAB21/58 booklet from Edwin Samuel Montagu titled 'Zionism', 1917.

This example also shows how these prominent Jewish activists recognised the threat of Zionism to those which it would dispossess. Archival evidence demonstrates that despite the colonialist context of the era in which the Balfour Declaration evolved, there were many vocal Jewish objections based on an understanding that Zionism would harm the local population.

Montefiore's similarly and quite rightly predicts the practical problem of choosing Palestine by writing '[Palestine] might involve them in the bitterest feuds with their neighbours... and would find deplorable echo's throughout the Orient'.<sup>22</sup>

In files dated after the Balfour Declaration was made public, there is evidence of the Cabinet suppressing the communications during the Declarations drafting stages. This alludes to a series of issues, the British government not wanting the Jewish community's protests to be known and its insincere motivations to not be publicly revealed.

Although the request for the publication of the Balfour Drafting documents was requested by a pro-Zionist member of the Jewish community, the government's response leads us to question why the government did not want the public to see the communications.

Dr. Hertz,

With further reference to my letter of the 6th of December, I have now had an opportunity of consulting the Ministers concerned on your request to publish the letter which I addressed to you on behalf of the War Cabinet in October 1917 in regard to the proposed announcement of the attitude of His Majesty's Government towards the Zionist movement in general and the future of Palestine in particular, together with your reply.

I regret to inform you that your request cannot be acceded to. The Balfour Declaration in the form finally agreed upon, was made public to the world, and it is considered that it would be undesirable to publish correspondence containing the tentative draft or drafts of a document of that nature.

Believe me,

Yours very truly,

(signed) M.P.A. HANKEY.

There were further objections from the Anglo-Jewish community which speculated that the creation of a Jewish State would harm the rights of Jewish people who did not leave for Palestine. It was postulated that if a Jewish national home was brought to existence it would undercut the claim of Jews to civil rights in the countries where they lived.<sup>23</sup> This meant that it would only benefit the small minority of Jews who left for Palestine, while leaving Jewish people who decided to stay vulnerable to further anti-Semitism. These objections were the very few to be taken into consideration by the British Government during the drafting of the Declaration, largely because they were voiced by Zionists and anti-Zionists alike. The final copy of the Balfour Declaration laid acknowledgment to Jewish fears: 'it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice... the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country'.<sup>24</sup>

It is beneficial to review how the protests from the Jewish community who opposed the Zionist movement as their reasons against a Jewish settlement in Palestine still apply to the conflict today. In a majority of cases the anti-Zionists predicted the catastrophic issues and developments that have arisen from the Balfour Declaration. They foresaw and advocated that the Jewish population would not fit into the territory of Palestine and thus the indigenous population would be disposed; they provided the argument that mass Jewish immigration would be deplorable across the Orient as the newcomers would struggle to keep peace with their Arab neighbours; they listed practical geographical reasons like lack of access to water and economy tied to limited agricultural produce that has harmed the economies of both Palestinians and Israelis. These arguments were all submitted to the War Cabinet advising the British Government not to proceed - yet they were not acted upon. The dispossession of the Palestinian people in the Nakba of 1948 could have been averted, the destabilisation of the Levant and the Arab World could have also been avoided had these prominent Jews had their protests listened to. When reviewing such a profoundly important document which changed the course of history for millions of people 'the richest and most influential Jews in the United States and England, with the exception of the Rothschild's... were opposed to the political implications of Zionism'.<sup>25</sup>

Zionist ideology distinguishes that the Holy Land belongs to the Jewish people as promised to them God in the Bible. This principle has remained a fundamental aspect of Israeli thinking towards the conflict and drives their commitment to the Jewish State. Contained within the archives are various accounts of objections from members of the Jewish community who debunk Zionist ideology that the land belongs to the Jews, instead perceiving that three faiths have a religious and historical claim to the same land. Palestine has a wholly unique history being a melting pot of different cultures and religions all of whom have had their histories intersect one another over the past few thousand years. It is a region in which three of the world's religions have cultural ties, religious buildings, symbols and icons but most importantly a spiritual connection to the land.

3. I deny that Palestine is to-day associated with the Jews or properly to be regarded as a fit place for them to live. The Ten Commandments were delivered to the Jews on Sinai. It is quite true that Palestine plays a large part in Jewish history, but so it does in modern Mahommedan history, and after the time of the Jews, surely it plays a larger part than any other country in Christian history. The Temple may have been in Palestine, but so was the Sermon on the Mount and the Crucifixion.

CAB21/58 Montagu

The documents also reveal truths that those who were critiquing the prospect of a declaration, and later opposed its incorporation into the British Mandate of Palestine, were kept in the dark as if

to silence their dissent. It is clear from the primary evidence that once the decision to cede to Zionists demands had been taken, those instrumental in its creation attempted to keep discussions limited to a small pro-Zionist circle in order to successfully push through with their scheme. Many of Balfour's commentators claim that it is one of the most important documents in world history, arguably reshaping international order, yet such a defining document was denied the opportunity to be appropriately critiqued before publication. Only a handful of Jewish anti-Zionists were sent the initial draft for their views and modifications.

Wolf: 'we were apparently being kept in the dark as to what was taking place... we were all much disturbed at the probability of some transaction with the Zionists which would be extremely detrimental to the general interest of the Jewish community'

DEPs C11/12/54 May 1917 telephone conversation to FO.

From the Political Report of the XII

Zionist Congress 1921.

"In view of the divergence of opinion expressed on the subject by the Jews themselves, they would like to receive in writing the views of representative Jewish leaders, both Zionist and non-Zionist"

This letter was sent to the following gentlemen:

Sir Stuart M. Samuel

Mr. Leonard H. Cohen

Mr. C.G. Montefiore

Sir Philip Magnus, M.P.

Dr. Hertz, the Chief Rabbi of England.

Mr. N. Sokolow, Chief Representative in England of the International Zionist Executive.

Dr. Weizmann, President of the English Zionist Federation

C0733/248/19 Report from the Zionist Conference 1933.

Dear Lord Rothschild,

I beg to acknowledge your letter suggesting that Mr. Herbert Samuel, M.P., and Dr. Gaster should receive copies of the letter addressed to four Zionist leaders and to four Non-Zionists.

There are obvious objections to submitting the draft declaration to any large number of people, but I shall be glad to submit a copy to Mr. Herbert Samuel for his remarks. There would be no objection to your showing, confidentially, Dr. Gaster a copy of the draft declaration but if copies are addressed to further well-known Zionists, I think it might be demanded that other non-Zionists should be asked to submit their views.

CAB21/58 letter to Rothschild 9<sup>th</sup> October 1917

## JUDAISM AND POLITICS

### Views of the late Chief Rabbi

The Very Reverend Dr. Hermann Adler.

'When we dwelt in the Holy Land we had a political organisation of our own: we had judges and kings to rule over us. But ever since the conquest of Palestine by the Romans, we have ceased to be a body politic; we are citizens of the country in which we dwell. We are simply Englishmen, or Frenchmen, or Germans, as the case may be, certainly holding particular theological tenets and practising special religious ordinances; but we stand in the same relation to our countrymen as any other religious sect, having the same stake in the national welfare and the same claim on the privileges and duties of citizens. To Mr. Goldwin Smith's question, What is the political bearing of Judaism? I would reply that Judaism has no political bearing whatever. The great bond which unites Israel is not one of race, but the bond of a common religion. We regard all mankind as brethren. We consider ourselves citizens of the country in which we dwell, in the highest and fullest sense of the term, and esteem it our dearest privilege and duty to labour for its welfare. Is there aught incompatible with our devotion to humanity and with our patriotism, if at the same time, we feel sympathy for those who profess the same religious faith and practise the same religious ordinances, whether they inhabit this country or other lands?'

Nineteenth Century, July 1878

CAB21/58 'Judaism and Politics' Views of the Chief Rabbi Dr. Hermann Adler July 1878.

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## BOOK REVIEWS

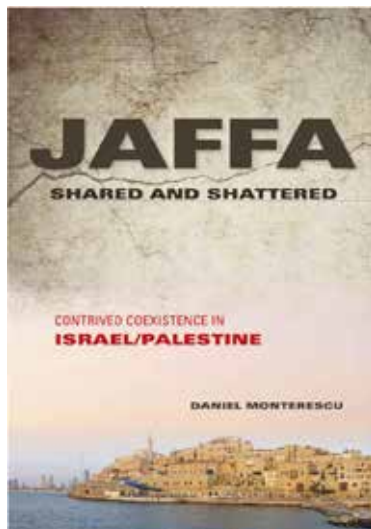




Duha  
Almusaddar\*

## Jaffa Shared and Shattered: Contrived Coexistence in Israel/Palestine By Daniel Monterescu

Daniel Monterescu utilised his knowledge of Jaffa, having lived there for decades, to unravel the complexities of mixed urban cities. Monterescu offers a new and well-argued framework that challenges the simple nationalistic and binary accounts that exist in the colonial city, dual city and the divided city paradigms. This ethnographic study and Monterescu's concept 'relational urbanism' provide a nuanced picture of not just mixed cities but also of the Palestinian/Israeli conflict. By including class, gender and identity, Monterescu broadened the scope of how mixed



cities should be examined. This approach also highlights the struggles of these groups which are often excluded from the ethnic and nationalist analysis.

The Palestinian/Israeli conflict has always been, and continues to be framed in a nationalistic sense, in which both parties fight over their national and territorial claims. However, this narrative masks the struggles which people, particularly in mixed cities, face. By tracing the community's relations and processes such as gentrification and the change to a neoliberal economy, Monterescu uncovers class divisions which excluded both Palestinians and poor Jews, the failure to establish strong communities and the dependence of the Palestinians on the Jewish population for political activism. Therefore, the book unravels the various contradictions that exist in Jaffa. For example, the cooperation between the Palestinians and the Jewish community is somewhat better than the cooperation among Palestinians that failed to materialise, which goes against the nationalist assumption. The tension between the Palestinian activists is demonstrated between Rabita and the Islamic Movement who have completely different visions for the city that made it very difficult to join forces. Nonetheless, the 2011 cooperation between the Jewish and the Palestinians, which were motivated by the Arab Spring, reflects the divisions and lack of coherence between the groups who joined together to challenge the state's housing policy.

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\* Duha Almusaddar is a Palestinian, who holds a MRes in Security, Conflict and Justice and BSc in International Relations with Law. Duha's background resulted in her interest in the refugee cause. This motivated her to engage in voluntary work to support asylum seekers and refugees as well as the advocacy for Palestinian rights.



Monterescu demonstrates the relevance of gender that is manifested in the contradictory experiences of Jday, a Palestinian-Christian, and Rabbi Bachar, a Jewish-Bulgarian immigrant, who both romanticised Old Jaffa and are discontent with current affairs. While, Assis, a Jewish-Zionist woman, and Abu Ramadan, a Palestinian-Muslim woman, both maintain that the present is a lot better than how things were during and post 1948. The cause of this is due to their gendered experience and not national or ethnic reasons. In fact, due to her experience, Abu Ramadan, challenges the common Palestinian narrative as she identifies herself and her children as Israelis not Palestinian. Like Abu Ramadan, Assis is satisfied with her life in Jaffa, although her husband is not and prefers to move. The four perspectives provided by [Jday, Rabbi Bachar, Abu Ramadan and Assis] offer an interesting insight to people's experiences and dissatisfaction which supports the author's argument of the complexity of the Arab-Jewish relations. It also highlights the issue of identity and citizenship which is not as clear cut as the main paradigms suggest. This is due to the fact that interaction between the two groups in a mixed urban space constantly constitutes and reconstructs the 'other', which is demonstrated by providing historical perspectives from 1948 onwards based on individual accounts.

Another issue the book addresses is gentrification, which also reveals the multifaceted dimensions involved in this process. Monterescu explains the dilemma faced by the Palestinians who are likely to face divestment if they refuse the gentrification. However, if they do not challenge it then they risk losing the cultural and historical character of the place. Similarly, for the gentrifiers fulfilling their desire for a sense of place will come at a cost of living in a historically contested and economically underprivileged area. The author attempts to deconstruct the unified unidimensional process of middle class settlement led by ethnocentric motivations. This is done by looking at key actors involved in the process: the architect, who attempts to depoliticise the process and emphasise the professional knowledge; or the real estate agent, who shared with the author his concerns over the humanitarian consequences of the process

"It overwhelms me not from the sociological side but from the humanitarian aspect of it. When I see a policeman arresting people whom I know and letting them stand two hours in the sun-I can't accept it. It drives me crazy..... once you start getting to know people, you suddenly understand that this is a person to whom I give a sea of respect who's being treated in an awful manner and it hurts. When you think about it humanely it's appalling. To think that in our state there are two levels of people" (Monterescu, 2015, p. 151)

Yet, he defends the process stating its benefits to the city

"I think the entry of Jews in here has its advantages. First, in terms of property value and the upscaling of everybody's level. It improves the level of infrastructure, of schools and education. It's healthy for everyone..... want to be here because it's right, because it's important for me as a humanitarian person, because it's important to the area. Because the fact that I'm in here makes a difference. And I can help." (Monterescu, 2015, p. 152)

The third type is the organised gentrifiers, who seek to implement liberal agenda and advocate for rights and coexistence. This group consists of middle class Jews who, according to one member, are separate from the right wing tenants in gated communities and the lower class Arab haters in the Jewish neighbourhood. In addition, the Chair of the Jaffa - Belle of the Seas - claims their relationship with the Arabs is better than that with Jews. The final actors - Radical gentrifiers - engage in gentrification for their interest in living in a mixed city, by the sea or to live in a community. Nonetheless, those radical gentrifiers oppose the process on ideological grounds. Such close examination of the players shows that while all those actors participate in the same process they

vary across the political, class and ideological spectrum. Thus, this supports the author's argument as their motivations for engaging in this process was not solely for nationalist reasons, moreover most have acknowledged the sensitivity of the situation.

The author also tackles the issue of class hierarchy. The class gap is evident in the gated communities which are exclusive for wealthy Jews. By being portrayed as secure areas protected from crimes and violence, gated communities have legitimatised class-based exclusion and segregation, thus creating social inequalities. Monterescu uses the case of Andromeda Hill, which is advertised as a 'city within a city' as it establishes a place for tourists and wealthy Jews within one of Tel-Aviv's poorest Arab neighbourhoods. The class distinction is clear in the statements given by interviewees, showing the class hierarchy both in the small Arab group - professionals and businessmen- and the wealthy Jews. The author brilliantly includes an exchange between a Palestinian advocate, Chabaita, and Ben Shachar, an elderly resident, at the beginning of the chapter; as well as an exchange between Chabaita and the Andromeda manager at the end, which shows the consequence of this social inequality that prevents Palestinians from having equal rights and access to such neighbourhoods. At the end Chabaita expresses this frustration to the Andromeda Project manager:

"I was driven out of my house because I'm Arab and to you they give a closed neighbourhood." To which the manager replied coldly, "You were driven out of the house not because you're Arab. You were driven out of your house because you

have no money!" (Monterescu, 2015, p.207)

Such a statement highlights the importance of economic power which is one of the reasons why Palestinians have failed to challenge and advocate for their rights. Indeed, despite attempts by political activists to ensure social justice, these attempts have failed to produce any significant progress, in particular the Palestinians still are not protected, this being evident in the housing crisis, where they are subjected to evictions.

The main theme is the feeling of strangeness that is felt by many of Jaffa's residents. This feeling is apparent in many of the interviews conducted where people do not feel a sense of belonging to the community; such as the case with Rabbi Bachar, Jday, the radical gentrifiers, and the new Jews. As a result, the reputation of Jaffa as mother of the stranger holds true. The marginalisation of the Jewish and Palestinians in Jaffa by the state has drawn both to each other, thus blurring the nationalist sentiment.

The book concludes by addressing the utility of taking a relational approach that focuses on the horizontal networks that cuts across communities. This approach reveals how each of the three groups [Old Jews, Gentrifiers and Palestinians] have been defined by their relationship with the Municipality. The Old Jews who dissolved and is now an aging and underprivileged population that has been denied of 'urban development', seek to maintain the Jewish presence in the eastern mixed neighbourhood. The Gentrifiers succeeded into transforming Jaffa into a bourgeois place. The Palestinians have been attempting to establish a community and develop an active civil society. However, due to internal divisions they have failed to address the community's needs. Most importantly, such approach challenges the ethnocratic rationality of the state by focusing on the relational rationality at a community level that seeks to disrupt the State's narrative. As such the book offers an admirable and original perspective that could be utilized in addressing the conflict, rather than only concentrating on the political issues.

# THE PALESTINIAN RETURN CENTRE

## KEEPING THE ISSUE ALIVE



Organisation in consultative status with  
the Economic and Social Council since 2015

PRC was established in 1996, following the Oslo negotiations, which failed to address the plight of Palestinian refugees. Since its founding it has strived to defend the rights of Palestinian refugees, raise awareness of their plight and bring the issue of refugees back into the political agenda. It has also strived to preserve Palestinian identity and culture, especially across Europe. The work of PRC covers many arenas including academia, media and communications, consultancy, advocacy, lobbying and many more.

### OUR GOALS

- 1 - Defend and Promote the Right of Return
- 2 - Raising Awareness
- 3 - Preserve Palestinian Identity
- 4 - Support Palestinian Refugees

### OUR ACHIEVEMENTS

#### UN Accredited NGO

PRC is an organisation in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council since 2015. The centre is also an accredited NGO with the United Nations Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People since 2003.

#### Support Palestinian Refugees

The Palestinian refugees are diverse and face many different challenges. More recently 35,000 Palestinian refugees fled violence and persecution in Iraq. Many of them took refuge in camps on the borders between Syria and Iraq. PRC coordinated a cross party delegation from the UK and coordinated with UNRWA, UNHCR and Syrian government for temporary resettlement.

#### Putting Palestinian Refugees in the Political Agenda

PRC ensures that all relevant institutions are made aware of the plight of refugees. In addition to its accredited role in the UN, PRC guarantees that its message is delivered to the EU and other national parliaments.

PRC has sponsored seminars in the EU, lobbied MEPs in Brussels including former and current EU presidents. PRC lead a very high profile delegation to the European Parliament to meet the president at the time Javier Solana and the Turkish Prime Minister Tayyip Erdogan.

Nationally PRC holds public meetings in Westminster in partnership with mainstream political parties.



## RAISING AWARENESS

There is a great deal of misinformation about Palestinian refugees, including the birth of their plight in 1948, their status under international law, their current composition and their position within national law and the political process. PRC seeks to rectify this and address the refugee issue in its proper historical context.

### Conferences

PRC organises conferences every year to highlight different aspects of the refugee issue. Our conferences draw a wide range of people including academics, politicians, ministers, human rights organisations and activists.

### Publications

The centre has conducted and sponsored a wide range of studies. Our publications include, books, documentary films, exhibitions, research papers and educational CDs, in both English and Arabic.

### PRC Online

PRC's online work has grown over the years and now includes a website, Facebook, Twitter and Youtube. The PRC website contains up to date news, information and studies about refugees.

### Conference of Palestinians in Europe

PRC founded the European Conference which is now in its eighth year. This conference held in major cities in Europe, brings together up to 10,000 people in order to preserve Palestinian identity and to show solidarity with the people in Palestine.

### Advocacy and Public Relations

The centre has developed strong relationships with MPs in the UK and in Europe. We regularly hold public seminars in the Houses of Parliament and European Parliament. Our strong relationship has encouraged PRC to embark on many joint initiatives with British and European MPs.

### Exhibitions

We have held a number of exhibitions, including on the issues of Gaza, prisoners, apartheid and the Nakba. Our exhibitions are held at universities, conferences, PRC events and also offered to other organisations.

### Delegations

PRC successfully coordinated a number of delegations from Europe and the UK to Syria, Lebanon and Palestine. Its most high profile delegation was in 2011 when over 50 European parliamentarians visited Gaza.



[www.prc.org.uk](http://www.prc.org.uk)



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