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PALESTINE LIBERATION ORGANIZATION
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NAKBA



THE RECOGNITION AND APOLOGY OF THE NAKBA
IS A STEP TOWARD JUSTICE

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Introduction

Since the Palestinian Nakba of 1948, Israel and its Zionist militias have been perpetrating mass deportation and displacement against indigenous Palestinians, who were forcibly expelled and dispossessed of their homes and property and saw their lands taken by the force of arms. Many of them were killed, their villages destroyed, and their lands and property confiscated. These persons were later replaced with Jewish settlers and suffered from an apartheid regime that prevents them from enjoying their basic and inalienable right of return. The international community recognizes the illegality of these acts, which were criminalized by international covenants. These crimes are prohibited under international human rights law, international humanitarian law, and international criminal law. For example,

Article (147) of the Fourth Geneva Convention defines these crimes as grave violations punishable under the law. The said actions are also considered war crimes and crimes against humanity under the international criminal law, which strongly prohibits deportation, forcible transfer, expulsion, destruction of property, persecution, racial segregation, and others.

This publication summarizes the crimes committed by Zionist militias and the Israeli occupation army before, during, and after the Nakba of 1948 and their continuation to this very day. It also includes confessions and testimonies by Israeli leaders, who deliberately committed such crimes, thus confirming the genuineness of the Palestinian Nakba narrative.



Forcible Transfer



Deportation and forcible transfer are a crime against humanity (7/1/d) and a war crime (8/2/a/7) according to the Rome Statute,¹ as well as being a grave violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention (147).²



After the British Mandate ended in Palestine, the Zionist movement intensified the commitment of large-scale crimes against the Palestinian population, whose number totaled about 1.4 million at the time.³ This led to the forcible expulsion of about 957,000 Palestinians.⁴ During the period between 1949-1956, Israel expelled more than 20,000 Bedouin Palestinians from their places of abode, as well as seizing about 700 square-kilometers of lands belonging to Palestinians who never left their homes.⁵ During that period, Israel expelled between 35,000-45,000 Palestinians, and by the mid-1960s, they had expelled 15 percent of the Palestinians who remained in the country.⁶ The number of Palestinians who did not leave their homeland was estimated to be only 154,000 at that point.⁷ It is also worth noting that, in 1948, Yosef Weitz⁸ established a "Transfer Committee", whose aim was to prevent Palestinians from returning to their homes by causing as much destruction as possible in their villages during military operations (...), and by preventing them from cultivating any part of their land or harvesting crops and picking olives.⁹

In 1967, Israel continued its deportation and forcible transfer operations, thereby expelling more than 433,000¹⁰ Palestinians. This happened after the June 5 occupation of the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, as well as the Gaza Strip, Sinai Peninsula, and Golan Heights.

In many cases, the expulsions of 1967 were carried out in a much faster and

more orderly manner compared to the 1948 Nakba. Convoys of thousands of refugees headed to the east on foot, and buses were sometimes used to transport them eastwards beyond the Jordan River, as seen in Qalqilya, Tulkarem, and Anabta. Two weeks after the 1967 war, bulldozers came to the ethnically cleansed areas to complete the destruction of villages after expelling local residents. Six days later, tractors of nearby kibbutzes entered the fields.¹¹

Forcible transfer operations and the prevention of refugee return paved the way for other waves of Israeli settlement after 1967, which mainly focused on building colonies on "absentee" lands, i.e., the lands of Palestinian refugees. In parallel with systematic expulsions during and after the 1967 war, far-reaching actions were taken in the occupied West Bank until 1968 and also in the Gaza Strip, in different forms, until at least 1972.¹²

In order to expand its colonial settlements and clear the lands seized from the indigenous Palestinians, Israel, the occupying Power, committed forcible transfer activities in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. For example, from the beginning of 2009 until 17 May 2023, the occupation forces expelled 14,000 Palestinians,¹³ including children and women, after destroying their homes and establishments in the occupied West Bank, including Jerusalem. Among these operations is the forcible transfer of Palestinians from Sheikh Jarrah, Silwan, Masafer Yatta [in Hebron], and other Bedouin villages and communities.

Israeli Confessions/ Testimonies

Yosef Weitz: *"There is no way but to transfer the [Palestinian] Arabs from here to the neighboring countries, to transfer all of them, save perhaps for [the Palestinian Arabs of] Bethlehem, Nazareth, and the old Jerusalem. Not one village must be left, not one [Bedouin] tribe. The transfer must be directed at Iraq, Syria, and even Transjordan [east of the Jordan River]. For this goal funds will be found . . . And only after this transfer will the country be able to absorb millions of our brothers and the Jewish problem will cease to exist. There is no other solution."*¹⁴

Yosef Weitz

Ralph Bauman, soldier in the "Haganah" and "Palmach" paramilitary groups: *"We went from one house to another and forced everyone to go out and walk barefoot across the border with Lebanon. They were barefoot, as we did not give them time to put on their shoes or take their families' belongings. If anyone tried to go back to take things from his family's house, we would consider him an "infiltrator" and would shoot him immediately."*¹⁵

Ralph Bauman

On 26 September 1948, David Ben-Gurion wrote in his memoirs about the Palestinian refugees who were expelled from their villages during the Nakba. He documented a conversation he had with Yosef Weitz: *"There are cases in which refugees from Ramla and Lod reached Gaza via Ramallah because they think it is easy for them to return from Gaza to Ramla and Lod. What shall we do?!... We must hunt them down ceaselessly... Also, we must pursue the refugees in the south and push them eastwards, as they should not go towards the sea and Egypt will not allow them to enter"* (here he was referring to pushing them towards Jordan). Afterwards, Ben-Gurion asks in his memoirs: *"Who will carry out the persecution?"* and the answer was: *"Shiloah,¹⁶ with the assistance of the Weitz Committee"*

David Ben-Gurion

Historic documents presented by Israeli historian Gadi Algazi show that the implementation of a plan to expel the Bedouins of Naqab (“Negev”) started in November 1951. This was led by officer Moshe Dayan, who was at the time the Southern Area Commander of the Israeli army. The said plan was devised to displace and forcefully isolate the Bedouins from their territories. In a letter sent by Dayan on 25 September 1951 to the Israeli Army General Staff, Dayan notes that *“It is now possible to transfer most of the Bedouins located near Kibbutz Shoval to lands south of the Hebron-Beersheba Road. This will enable the seizure of 60,000 dunums in order to cultivate them and establish towns. After this transfer, there will not be any Bedouins north of that road.”* Also, in a correspondence between Dayan and the Israeli military and political leadership at the time, Dayan states that *“If the Bedouins are not voluntarily transferred from their lands, the Israeli army will have to [violently] move them with the use of force.”*¹⁷

Gadi Algazi

Amnon Neumann from the Second, Eighth, and Ninth Battalions of the Palmach commenting on the battles in Gaza’s surrounding villages: *“In the last day of the break in the fighting, we were told that the Egyptians smuggled 20mm cannons to the villages Kawfakha and al-Muharraqa and tomorrow they would act with them and we need to destroy these villages. We drove there ... The men would run away first, leaving the women and the children, and then ... (silence) we would expel them, right? [Yes]. We (...) started shooting in the air, and everybody started to scream, yes, and ... and we drove them out. The women and the children went to Gaza. Nobody would have dared go into an inhabited village. We never entered villages to stay there but only to expel them. Someone asked earlier how they were expelled. This is how it was. Then the same thing happened with Bedouin tribes. That was half a year later. (...) We once met a soldier who had fought in Beersheba, and he told us that they shot people who had fled from Beersheba, people ran away and soldiers shot them, shot civilians. Yes, yes, yes. They ran away to the east and the south and they were shot. This is what happened, I saw it... ok, and I did that too.”*¹⁸

Amnon Neumann

During a governmental meeting held in August 1967, Former Prime Minister **Levi Eshkol** admitted that Israel created the Palestinian refugee problem during the 1948 Nakba and prevented them from returning to their homes. He stated that *“Twenty years ago, we did something that led to the existence of refugees, and now there are other refugees once again, and we want to get rid of them again. But we do not say anything about this subject.”*¹⁹

Levi Eshkol

Amos Kenan, a soldier in the Latrun area during the 1967 war: *"More cohorts arrived (meaning the Palestinians expelled from their villages) until their numbers reached hundreds. They did not understand why they were told to return (to their homes) but were not allowed to enter. It was hard not to respond to their pleas. The battalion commander decided to go down and inquire on whether there are written instructions on what can be done with them, where to send them, and what to do if it was not possible to arrange a vehicle for the people and their children and provisions. The Commander came back and said that there are no written instructions, so let us expel them... and we did.. They roamed the streets like stray sheep. The weak among them would die from exhaustion. In the evening, we discovered that they had lied to us. Also, bulldozers started demolishing [the village of] Beit Sira, and people were not allowed to go there."*²⁰

Amos Kenan

Micha Lin – Palmach, Fought for Golani Brigade, 14th Battalion "Dror": *"The instructions were to kick out Arabs from the entire area around Mishmar HaEmek. We attacked this area, expelled the Arabs, and drove them out from Ghubayya al-Tahta, Ghubayya al-Fawqa, Mansi, and Nagnaghiyya towards Marj Ibn-Amer (Jezreel Valley), particularly in the direction of Jenin. There were clear instructions to "wipe out" these villages in Marj Ibn Amer until Wadi 'Ara within one day, and the instructions came from Ben-Gurion."*²¹

Micha Lin – Palmach

Yigal Naor served in the Palmach, Harel Brigade, 4th Battalion. He spoke about the ethnic cleansing of Jerusalem villages, such as Beit Mahsir, Qastal, Beit Surik, Biddu, Beit Iksa, Nabi Samwil, Qalunya, and Deir Ayyoub. He notes that: *"With the exception of Biddu and Deir Ayyoub, all houses were blown up in the villages that we occupied. In Biddu, we did not have explosives to blow up the houses, so we were not able to destroy them. This led to the return of its inhabitants later on. The instructions were to evict the Arab residents and blow up the houses... What happened in Deir Yassin helped us a lot in other villages."*²²

Yigal Naor





Wilful Killing

Wilful Killing is a crime against humanity (7/1/a) and a war crime (8/1/a/1) according to the Rome Statute. It is also a grave violation according to the Fourth Geneva Convention (147) and a violation of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (6/1).²³

The massacres committed by Zionist militias in 1948 aimed at eliminating the Palestinian existence and ensuring that the indigenous Palestinian population would not return to their lands and homes. The conquest by Zionist militias and the Israeli army over Palestinian cities and villages was accompanied by mass killings and massacres, as about 51 different massacres have thus far been documented. These ethnic cleansing operations lead to the death of about 15,000 Palestinians.²⁴

After Israel occupied the rest of Palestine in June 1967, the Israeli occupation forces killed Palestinian refugees who tried to cross the Jordan River in an attempt to return to the occupied West Bank.

Israel has been committing mass killings to this very day. The number of Palestinian martyrs from the Nakba of 1948 until today is approximately 100,000.²⁵ Moreover, Israeli settlers are carrying out organized terrorism activities with the help and protection of the Occupation army. Examples include the burning of 16-year-old Mohammad Abu-Khdeir, in 2014 and the Dawabsheh family in 2015, the burning of houses and cars, and attacking peaceful inhabitants,

as seen in Huwwara at the beginning of 2023. Also, since 2008, the Israeli military aggression and the killing of innocent civilians in the Gaza Strip have not ceased. This is one of the forms of deliberate murder perpetrated continuously against Palestinians. For example, during the Israeli aggression on Gaza in 2014, Israel killed 2,147 persons, including 581 children and 302 women, along with injuring more than 11,231 Palestinians, including 3,258 children, many of whom who will live with permanent disabilities for the rest of their lives. Israel also annihilated 94 families during that aggression,²⁶ such as the massacre of Hilu family in Shuja'iyya, Najjar family in Khan Yunis, and Bakr family in Al-Shati' Refugee Camp in Gaza.²⁷ Moreover, during their military aggression on the Gaza Strip in 2021, Occupation forces killed 240 Palestinians, including 59 children and 38 women, as well as injuring 1,972 civilians.²⁸

The Negotiations Affairs Department confirmed that, in the years 2020-2022, a total of 615 Palestinians were killed by Israel, the Occupying Power. Also, Israel killed 207 Palestinians from the beginning of 2023 until the end of July²⁹ including 38 children under 18 years old.

Israeli Confessions/ Testimonies



Source: The Palmach archive (1948), pikiwiki

Yaacov Shafrir, who served in the Haganah forces, stated the following: *"When I entered the village (Deir Yassin), I saw an uncountable number of corpses, scores of dead people inside homes. They were all killed from close range. Almost all of them were murdered in their houses. There was no sign of a battle because, according to what the Regional Commander told me, this village was the only one that did not fight us. There was no battle when they entered and killed people inside their homes at point black range... yes, children, women, and elderly persons too."*

Yaacov Shafrir

Communist Israeli politician and Knesset member Shmuel Mikunis demanded clarification from David Ben-Gurion about the atrocities committed by the underground Irgun militia in the village of Meron in Jabal al-Jarmaq (Mount Meron) northwest of Galilee: *"A. They annihilated with a machine gun 35 Arabs who had surrendered to that company with a white flag in their hands. B. They took as captives peaceful residents, among them women and children, ordered them to dig a pit, pushed them into it with long French bayonets and shot the unfortunates until they were all murdered. There was even a woman with an infant in her arms. C. Arab children of about 13-14 who were playing with grenades were all shot. D. A girl of about 19-20 was raped by men from Altalena [an Irgun unit]; afterward she was stabbed with a bayonet and a wooden stick was thrust into her body."*³⁰

Shmuel Mikunis

Confessions of Israeli officers and soldiers revealed the horrific killings and rape crimes committed against Palestinian civilians during the Tantura massacre. This massacre took place on the 23rd of May 1948, where *“about 200 civilians were murdered and buried in a mass grave that took about a week to dig next to Tantura Beach at the nearby parking lot [“Dor Beach Parking Lot”].”*³¹ The following are some testimonies and confessions presented by Adam Raz in his article in Haaretz:³²

- Former combat soldier Haim Levin testified that *“a member of the unit went over to a group of 15 or 20 prisoners of war (POWs) and killed them all.”*
- Former combat soldier Micha Vitkon talked about an officer *“who in later years was a big man in the Defense Ministry. With his pistol he killed one Arab after another.”*
- Another combat soldier, who was kept anonymous by Haaretz newspaper, noted that *“It’s not nice to say this. They put them [i.e., the civilians] into a barrel and shot them in the barrel”* with a machine gun. He remembered the blood spilling through the holes made by bullets in the barrel. Another soldier summed up by saying that his comrades-in-arms *“simply didn’t behave like human beings in the village”* and that *“the grave was dug especially for this purpose, and the burial went on for more than a week.”*
- When asked about how many Arabs he killed outside the framework of the battles, ex-soldier Amitsur Cohen noted the following: *“I didn’t count. I had a machine gun with 250 bullets. I can’t say how many.”*
- Yosef Ben-Eliezer from Alexandroni Brigade wrote, some two decades ago: *“I was one of the soldiers involved in the conquest of Tantura. I was aware of the murder and killings in the village.”*

In the village of Al-Dawayima (today Moshav Amatzia) near Hebron, troops of the 8th Brigade committed a massacre. A soldier who witnessed the events described to Mapam (United Workers Party) officials what happened: *“There was no battle and no resistance when the 8th Brigade massacred 100 people. The first conquerors killed 80 to 100 Arab men, women and children. The children were killed by smashing their skulls with sticks. There wasn’t a house without people killed in it.”*³³

Yitzhak Tishler from Palmach military organization presented a testimony on the Mishmar HaEmek³⁴ battles under the leadership of Rehavam (Gandhi) Ze’evi: *“We were ordered by the military command to take out the men in the town and kill them... These instructions were not executed; they did not knock the doors and take the men out. Rather, explosive grenades were being thrown inside every house, leading to destruction; whoever died died and whoever didn’t die didn’t die... I had a 52-inch mortar. Our job was to shoot Arabs from a distance of 400 meters, and that’s what I did. The aim of these killings was to scare the Arabs and force them to leave... Under Gandhi’s command, we didn’t always act ethically. Gandhi thought that we should either kill Arabs (first priority) or have them run away... The goal of the Palmach in these operations was to kill so that the Arabs would no longer exist here... What I saw in Lod [al-Lid] reminded me of Jewish history – a history of massacres and expulsion.”*

Yitzhak Tishler

Israeli Soldiers' Testimonies on the Siege of Fallujah Village

"During the siege of Fallujah, an old man (about 80 years old) passed in front of us. We were asked, in the presence of the "Yiftah" unit, to interrogate him. But before Gandhi (Rehavam Ze'evi) left to meet some leaders, he asked me to spill that man into the valley."

"The Jewish narrative that Arabs left due to the instructions of their Arab leadership is incorrect. Although there were some cases of this sort (Arabs telling Arabs to leave and we return together), this was not the decisive factor. The real factor was the killing and murder that took place."



Israeli Soldiers' Testimonies on the Massacre at Safsaf Village Near Safad

Soldiers from the 7th Brigade killed dozens of innocent civilians. This unit was later classified as a secret brigade by "Malmab" (Director of Security of the Defense Establishment). According to one witness: *"52 men were captured and tied together. Then a pit was dug and the men were shot there. Ten of them were still alive and trembling. The women came and asked for mercy. The corpses of 6 elderly men were found. There were 61 corpses there and 3 cases of rape."*

In August 1967, Israeli Chief of Staff Moshe Dayan admitted, in a report submitted to the Israeli government, that they were killing the refugees who were trying to return home after the 1967 War: *"We prevent them from crossing during the day by shooting above their heads, then they return at nighttime and we shoot at them. In some cases, there were women and children with them. In spite of that, on Friday or Thursday, i.e., two or three days before the government meeting, we returned another 500 persons who managed to cross the Jordan River but were caught by our patrols between the Jordan River and Nablus after crossing certain distances on foot. We put them in busses and sent them back to the other side of the Jordan River."*³⁵

Prominent leader of the "Labour Unity" (Ahdut HaAvoda) party, Yigal Allon, once noted that the Six Day War constituted the last phase of the 1948 War. Nevertheless, he affirmed, during a meeting with the United Kibbutz movement held two weeks after the 1967 War, that *"as long as the country is not fully in our hands, the 1948 War is still not over yet."*³⁶

After several years from the June 1967 War, a published testimony of an Israeli soldier confirmed Dayan's confession that: *"They told to us that if a convoy of refugees returning from Jordan to the West Bank passes by us, we must shoot it immediately. I asked the officer: "Shall I shoot fire also if I heard children crying?!" His answer was: "Do not be a woman!." We were four soldiers armed with "Uzi" guns. We heard the noises of people as they came in our direction and kept hiding until they came close. Then we raised our flashlights and started shooting at them. Below us we saw dozens of refugees about 70 meters away. We also saw clearly the baggages that they were carrying. We shot heavy fire at them."*³⁷

Destruction of Property



Destruction of property is a war crime (8/2/a/4) according to the Rome Statute and a serious breach of the Fourth Geneva Convention (147) and the Convention on the Non-Applicability of Statutory Limitations to War Crimes and Crimes Against Humanity (1/a/b).³⁸

During the Great Catastrophe (Nakba) of 1948, Zionist Militias and the occupation army took control of 744³⁹ Palestinian cities and villages, as well as destroying 531 villages and expelling their population. Whatever remained of these locations was turned into Jewish settlements and parks. Israel also seized a total of 5.5 million dunums (1.359 million acres)⁴⁰ of refugee private property and real estate, as well as their crops, without any compensation. After expelling the original inhabitants, Israeli authorities built Jewish settlements on ethnically cleansed lands, as they “built more than 109 settlements, most of which were built on lands in the vicinity of depopulated villages.”⁴¹

Within the process of destruction and erasure, a special committee was established to rename the Arab sites with Hebrew names by geographic appropriation through language. Hence, the “Naming Committee” was formed to designate Hebrew names to the Palestinian topography, in order to create a new map for various locations.

During the June 1967 War after Israel occupied the West Bank, including Jerusalem, and Gaza Strip, “Israel seized 6,020 square-kilometers of the

West Bank including Jerusalem, and about 85% of East Jerusalem’s territory was appropriated from Palestinians. Israel also demolished more than 8,500 dwellings and residences in Occupied Jerusalem, as well as obliterating the Mughrabi (Moroccan) Quarter on 11 June 1967, which included houses, schools, mosques, and other facilities (totaling 135 buildings and homes). Occupation forces also destroyed 3 villages in the Jerusalem governorate, namely the “Latrun villages” of Imwas (Emmaus), Yalo, and Beit Nuba, respectively, which had more than 5,000 buildings and homes.”⁴²

The Israeli occupation authorities are still confiscating lands, demolishing homes, and displacing residents in different parts of the occupied West Bank, including Jerusalem, especially in the areas targeted for settlement expansion and the places isolated by the annexation and apartheid wall. The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) reported that since 1 January 2009 until 17 May 2023, the occupation forces demolished 9,479 buildings, thus affecting 175,694 persons and 1,656 establishments funded by the European Union had been destroyed.⁴³



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Regarding the construction and expansion of colonial settlements in the occupied West Bank, including Jerusalem: *“By the end of 2021, there were 483 Israeli occupation sites and military bases in the West Bank, including 151 settlements and 25 inhabited outposts that were considered as neighborhoods belonging to established settlements, in addition to 163 settlement outposts, and 144 classified as other sites (industrial, touristic, service areas and Israeli army bases). As for the number of settlers in the West Bank, it reached 719,452 settlers by the end of 2021.”*⁴⁴ Also, in the Gaza Strip, Israeli military attacks and intensive bombardment of Palestinian civilian homes during the aggression of 2021 led to damaging 7,680 housing units fully or partially.⁴⁵

In a stark example on demolishing Al-Araqeeb Bedouin village numerous times since the early 1950s, Historian Gadi Algazi recently exposed an elaborate Israeli plan to carry out a military operation to expel the Bedouins of Naqab. This plan was partially unveiled in the 1,037-page correspondence between the Military Governor and the Israeli court, which included a report of the Acting Military Governor of Naqab Moshe Bar-On in 1951. In this report, it was emphasized

that Bedouins refused to leave their lands, as the Military Governor stated that: *“We received orders from the Southern Area Commander (meaning Moshe Dayan) to exert pressure on Bedouin tribes so that they would relocate voluntarily. Otherwise, the army will have to move them away [by force].”*⁴⁶ But when Israel failed to push them away from their lands, it desperately attempted to erase Al-Araqeeb village from existence by demolishing it dozens of times.

Until today, Al-Araqeeb village is among the 35 Bedouin towns and villages that are not legally recognized by the Israeli authorities, who refuse to connect most of these localities to national electricity and water networks. Also, they deprive them of basic infrastructure, such as paved roads and sewage networks. It is also worth noting that Israel demolished more than 10,000 houses belonging to the Bedouins of Naqab between 2013-2019. The village of Al-Araqeeb was bulldozed and destroyed more than 200 times from the beginning of 2010 until today.⁴⁷ However, the occupation authorities never succeeded in uprooting the people of Al-Araqeeb from their dwellings (in which they have been living for decades).

Israeli Confessions/ Testimonies

In 1969, former Israeli Defense Minister **Moshe Dayan** stated that: *“Jewish villages were built in the place of Arab villages. You do not even know the names of these Arab villages. I do not blame you because geography books [related to this] no longer exist. But it is not only the geography books that ceased to exist, but the Arab villages as well.”*⁴⁸

Meron Benvenisti, who served as Deputy Mayor of Jerusalem at the time, stated after 1948 that: *“The country turned into a white board on which the Committee can put names as they wish.”*⁴⁹

Amnon Neumann stated on the battles in Gaza’s surrounding villages: *“In the south, houses were destroyed immediately after occupation and the departure of residents. Their obliteration was not a problem. These houses were made out of mud and clay. It is enough for an armored vehicle to pass by and strike it and then it would become history. The people that were in Gaza wanted to return to their villages. They would aim to return at night... and we waited for them. It was impossible to let them hang around there; while waiting, we would snipe and kill them. That was part of the horrible things we did (...) and it was not hard...”*⁵⁰

Author and Professor at Tel Aviv University **Aron Shai** confirmed that, in Spring 1965, a clear policy was adopted to level the depopulated villages in order to “purify” the country. As noted by an Israeli Foreign Ministry official, they tried to stop tourists from “unnecessary” questions about the witnessed scenes of destruction. Aron Shai also points out that the land settlement plan extended from the Galilee Panhandle southwards to include every hill, mound, and hut in order to clear the land. And as mentioned by one of the interviewees, this was done *“to prevent the Arab villagers (i.e., Palestinians) from claiming their trees and villages one day since there would not be any trees or villages left.”*⁵¹

While comparing the outcomes of the 1948 Nakba with those of the 1967 War, **Moshe Dayan** admitted, in the summer of 1973, that: *“In 1948, about 80 percent of Arabs residing in the areas controlled by Israel became refugees, and Israel seized 4 million dunums of land (...) On the other hand, during the June 1967 War, 20 percent of the West Bank population became refugees, and Israel seized only few tens of thousands of dunums of their lands.”*⁵²

Also, when French government spokespersons tried to make a comparison between the 1967 refugees and 1948 refugees, the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs tried to justify his position by stating that the discussion does not only involve the refugees of the 1967 War, but also local people who are poor and unemployed, adding that “this was the case in 1948 as well.” In order to avoid international criticism, the Israeli Minister of Education at the time, Zalman Aran, said that some of the 1967 refugees should be allowed to return. However, **Yisrael Galili**, who was an ardent supporter of settlements, criticized ministers’ responses, noting that whoever calls for returning the 1967 refugees expresses a “negative moral judgment”, including against Israel’s legitimacy over the June 4 [1967] borders. Galili pointed out that: *“All the moral and humanitarian justifications that apply to the refugees of the six-day war also apply to refugees prior to that war.”*⁵³

There are numerous testimonies and confessions by Israeli soldiers and officers regarding the occupation’s crimes on Palestinian soil, including during the period of the Oslo Accords and the

Second Intifada, all the way to the current Israeli hostilities against Palestine and Palestinians. These testimonies and confessions are available and ever-increasing, and there is no need for any “secret archives” to expose them. Among these soldiers is Noam Chayut,⁵⁴ who served in the Israeli occupation army during the Second Intifada and participated in carrying out attacks against the occupied West Bank in 2002. In his memoirs titled *“The Girl Who Stole My Holocaust”*, Noam writes about crimes committed by Israeli forces against Palestinian civilians living under occupation.

Eran Efrati⁵⁵ was a sergeant and combat soldier in the Israeli army. But today he is an outspoken critic of the occupation of Palestine and the Israeli apartheid regime. This happened after he witnessed a great number of illicit acts, which he described as terrorism against Palestinian civilians, especially during the Israeli aggression on Gaza in 2014. Among his famous statements are: *“Palestinians have the right to resist the occupation”* and *“I was the one who is a terrorist.”*

Also, the Breaking the Silence website⁵⁶ includes hundreds of testimonies and confessions by Israeli soldiers and officers who participated in serious violations and crimes against humanity during Israeli aggressions on Palestinian people and territory.



The Nakba is an Ongoing Crime that Requires Accountability and Redress for Victims

International law, with its three components, prohibits forcible transfer and deportation to other countries' territories. It also forbids states to transfer all or part of their civilian population to lands that they occupied. This means that it is illegal to replace the original Palestinian inhabitants with Jewish settlers. It is also unlawful to amend the laws of occupied Palestinian territory (oPt) and deprive persons of protection. International law outlaws murder, torture, cruel treatment, and unnecessary destruction of (civil and non-civil) property. Furthermore, it is strictly prohibited to use a country's military arsenal to bombard cities and villages and perpetrate looting and plundering actions. The law also criminalizes institutionalized discrimination (apartheid), persecution, and systematic violations of Palestinian civil, political, economic, and cultural rights, such as contravening the right to movement, right to an adequate standard of living, right to enjoy resources, etc. Also, customary international law criminalizes the seizure of other peoples' lands by force, forbids the denial of peoples' right to self-determination, and grants peoples the right to defend themselves against any force of armed aggression.

Since 1948, Israel has been practicing the crimes of persecution and apartheid against the Palestinian people, while depriving them of exercising the inalienable right to self-determination and the right of return. This includes seizing and confiscating territories, demolishing houses, and expelling people from different Palestinian locations, leading to forcible

transfer in favor of Jewish settlers. Additionally, Israel commits crimes and massacres; performs military raids into Palestinian cities, villages, and refugee camps; and commits attacks against Christian and Muslim holy sites. The occupation also commits arbitrary arrests against civilians, and its army protects and supports terrorist settler groups to attack and burn Palestinian villages and terrify their peaceful residents. These are practices that amount to war crimes and crimes against humanity which require accountability and punishment.

There is abundant evidence showing the perpetration of large-scale crimes after the 1947-1949 War. This includes the forcible transfer of many Palestinians from the occupied West Bank (including Jerusalem) and the Gaza Strip after the 1967 occupation and the ongoing ethnic cleansing of Palestinians until today. These facts confirm that the Nakba is not an event that ended with the 1947-1949 War. Rather, it is an ongoing process aimed at wiping out Palestine's original inhabitants and replacing them with Jewish settlers. This is supported by weak intellectual claims which try to justify the denial of the Palestinian people's existence and their connection to their historic homeland.

Amidst the ongoing Nakba after 75 years of the Great Catastrophe and 56 years after the 1967 occupation, the international community has a political and legal responsibility to hold Israel, the Occupying Power, accountable for its crimes. World countries must also oblige Israel to recognize the Palestinian Nakba and apologize and make reparations to achieve international

justice and provide effective remedies to victims. Recognizing and addressing Israel's crimes and injustices is a first step towards ending settler-colonialism. It's only then that

a just, lasting, and long-awaited peace will be achieved in accordance with human rights, international law, and relevant United Nations resolutions.



Endnotes

- 1 Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. Available on: <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/en/ihl-treaties/icc-statute-1998>
- 2 Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949: <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/en/ihl-treaties/gciv-1949>
- 3 Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS), *Dr. Ola Awad, [President of PCBS] reviews the conditions of the Palestinian people via statistical figures and findings, on the 74th Annual Commemoration of the Palestinian Nakba*. 15 May 2022. See the following link: <https://www.pcbs.gov.ps/post.aspx?lang=en&ItemID=4236>
- 4 The second United Nations estimate of the number of Palestinian refugees in 1950, *Ibid.*
- 5 See "Investigation Report" Simon and Vermeersch, UNA DAG-13/3.3.1-18, cited in Morris, *Israel's Border Wars*, supra note 45, 170.
- 6 ICBS (Israel Central Bureau of Statistics), "Statistical Abstract of Israel – 2001", available at: <https://www.cbs.gov.il/en/publications/Pages/2001/Statistical-Abstract-of-Israel-2001-No52.aspx> See Table 2.18-The Population of Palestine by Religion, 1870 to 1946 in McCarthy, *The Population of Palestine*, supra note 15,37.
- 7 According to the report of the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS) on the eve of the Nakba commemoration in May 2022.
- 8 Weitz was the prime mover behind the first and second Transfer Committee and was the director of the Jewish National Fund's Land Settlement Department. For more information, please see: [Transfer Committees](#).
- 9 (Arabic source) Saree Makdisi, *Ecological Injustice and the Landscape of Denial in Palestine*, Institute for Palestine Studies, 2018: <https://www.palestine-studies.org/en/node/226485> , excerpted from: Irus Braverman, *Planted Flags: Trees, Land and Law, in Israel/Palestine* (Cambridge University Press, 2009), p.100.
- 10 Raed Abu Badawiya, *Palestinian Refugees and the Peace Process in the Middle East in the Balance of International Law*, 2018. p. 111. for new figure 433,000
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- 12 Al-Qashtini, *Op. Cit.*, p.79.
- 13 United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA), available on the following link: [Breakdown of Data on Demolition and Displacement in the West Bank](#).
- 14 Palestine remembered, Yosef Weitz-A Brief Biography, cited in (Benny Morris, p. 27 & [Expulsion Of The Palestinians](#), 131-132), available at: <https://www.palestineremembered.com/Acre/Famous-Zionist-Quotes/Story644.html>
- 15 [Arabic source] Johnny Mansour (2022), *Israel's Massacres and Crimes: Apologies and Confessions*, MADAR Center, Ramallah, p.78. Excerpted from testimonies from the database of Zochrot organization, who conducted several interviews with Israeli soldiers who participated in the events of the Nakba. Available at: <https://zochrot.org/he/testimony/all>
- 16 Shiloah, i.e., Reuven Shiloah, was one of the main chiefs of intelligence and the first Director of the Mossad. The "Deportation Committee" was established at the height of the Nakba to examine the Israeli public policy towards the issue of Palestinian refugees, and more precisely: to find ways to push them to leave the country.
- 17 Johnny Mansour, *Op. Cit.*, p.75.
- 18 *Ibid.*, p.79.
- 19 Gadi Algazi, *Op. Cit.*, Minutes of the Israeli government meeting of 20 August 1967.
- 20 Johnny Mansour, *Op. Cit.*, p.83, excerpted from the National Library of Israel in the following link: <https://bit.ly/3uOgC3W>
- 21 Johnny Mansour, *Op. Cit.*, from testimonies from the database of Zochrot organization, who conducted several interviews with Israeli soldiers who participated in the events of the Nakba. Available at: <https://zochrot.org/he/testimony/all>
- 22 *Ibid.*
- 23 Article (6) – Clause (1) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/international-covenant-civil-and-political-rights>
- 24 According to the report of the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS) on the eve of the Nakba commemoration in May 2022.
- 25 *Ibid.*
- 26 Palestinian Ministry of Health.
- 27 *Ibid.*
- 28 The Palestinian [Human Rights] Center issues a report on the [Israeli] aggression on Gaza during the period of 10-21 May 2021. <https://tinyurl.com/32aun8mk>
- 29 Palestinian Ministry of Health.

- 30 https://www.akevot.org.il/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/2021-12-10_Haaretz_EN_cabinet-meetings48.pdf (Akevot.org.il)
- 31 A historical brief on the village of Tantura (Haifa District), Walid Khalidi book (Not to forget), available at: <https://www.palestineremembered.com/Haifa/al-Tantura/Story26580.html> For more information, visit: <https://www.palestineremembered.com/Haifa/al-Tantura/index.html>
- 32 Haaretz newspaper, *There's a Mass Palestinian Grave at a Popular Israeli Beach, Veterans Confess*, Adam Raz, available at: <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/2022-01-20/ty-article-magazine/highlight/theres-a-mass-palestinian-grave-at-a-popular-israeli-beach-veterans-confess/0000017f-f230-d223-a97f-ffdbd5b0000>
- 33 Akevot Institute in cooperation with Haaretz Newspaper, *Murder by the Army*, Adam Raz, December 2021, available at: https://www.akevot.org.il/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/2021-12-10_Haaretz_EN_cabinet-meetings48.pdf
- 34 Mishmar HaEmek is a kibbutz located at the side of the main road between Haifa and Jenin.
- 35 Minutes of the Israeli government meeting of 6 August 1967 (Op. Cit.). Foreign Minister Abba Eban denounced the intimidation actions and asked to stop them. However, he suggested to push towards solving the refugee issue by means of "emigration".
- 36 (Arabic source) Gadi Algazi (2018). *The Refugee Issue: Between the 1948 Nakba and the 1967 War*. Institute for Palestine Studies. Volume 29. 2018. Issue 113, p.102. (see: <https://www.palestine-studies.org/en/node/226483>)
- 37 Gadi Algazi, Op. Cit., p.96. Excerpted from: *Eyal Erlich, Ambush on the Jordan River, "Koteret Rashit"*, 14 August 1985.
- 38 Convention on the Non-Applicability of Statutory Limitations to War Crimes and Crimes Against Humanity (see the following link): <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-non-applicability-statutory-limitations-war-crimes>
- 39 According to the report of the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS) on the Eve of the Nakba Commemoration of May 2022.
- 40 Article by Dr. Nasser Qudwa, *Palestinians can now see their stolen property in the database we've made public*, Middle East Eye, 11 December 2020: <https://www.middleeasteye.net/opinion/refugee-property-database-highlights-severe-injustices-done-palestinian-people>
- 41 (Arabic source) Wakim Wakim, *Refugees in Their Homeland: The 'Present Absent' Refugees in Israel*, Institute for Palestine Studies, 2001, p.97 (see: <https://www.palestine-studies.org/en/node/34758>)
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- 48 (Arabic Source) Nizar Ayoub (2012), *Ethnic Cleansing in Jerusalem*, Institute for Palestine Studies, Issue 13 (See: <https://www.palestine-studies.org/en/node/43168>)
- 49 (Arabic source) Saree Makdisi, *Ecological Injustice and the Landscape of Denial in Palestine*, Institute for Palestine Studies, 2018, p.116: <https://www.palestine-studies.org/en/node/226485>
- 50 Johnny Mansour, Op. Cit., p.79.
- 51 [The Fate of Abandoned Arab Villages in Israel, 1965-1969 on JSTOR](#).
- 52 Article written in 1998 by Israeli author Gideon Levy in Haaretz newspaper.
- 53 [Arabic source] Salim Tamari (2020): *Historiography of the Nakba: New Research Trends*. Journal of Palestine Studies, Institute of Palestine Studies, Issue 121, p.129.
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