

Ben Gurion's "Plan D": Massacres of Palestinians Were "Indispensable" to the Creation of the State of Israel

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As Israeli leaders and the Trump regime grotesquely celebrated the moving of the U.S. embassy to Jerusalem on the 70th anniversary of Israel's declaration of independence, May 14, just 40 miles away Israeli troops were massacring unarmed Palestinians trapped inside Gaza. At least 61 Palestinians were killed, and more than 2,700 wounded, over a thousand shot by snipers firing military grade ammunition against unarmed protestors who were demanding an end to their isolation and the right to return to their homeland.

There was a bitter historical irony in the juxtaposition of these events

Most of the two million residents of Gaza are refugees and their descendants (who also have refugee status), driven from other parts of Palestine in 1948. Altogether, more than 750,000 Palestinians were expelled in 1948-49 to make way for the creation of the Israeli state. Another 300,000 were driven out after the Six Day War in 1967. Today, there are seven million registered Palestinians refugees, many still living in 59 refugee camps in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, Egypt, the West Bank and Gaza. None have ever been allowed to return to their stolen homes, farms and shops, in blatant violation of their rights.

For many decades, Israeli leaders and their American apologists maintained the fiction that the Palestinians who left did so at the urging of their leaders. Even if that had been the case, it would have in no way invalidated their right of return, an inalienable right under international law.

But it was not the case. As has been irrefutably documented by numerous Israeli as well as Palestinian historians, mass ethnic cleansing was carried out by means of massacre and other forms of terror. It could not have accomplished otherwise.

The Israeli colonial state was not, of course, the only one that employed terror and massacre to subjugate the indigenous population. All of the colonizers utilized such tactics, including the United States, Britain, France, Belgium, Japan, Netherlands, Italy, etc., to establish their empires.

"Transfer" - Zionist leaders' intention from the start

The leaders of the Zionist movement that manifested itself as the Israeli state in 1948 had often been quite open about their intention to conquer all of Palestine and to force the indigenous population out. Their code word for ethnic cleansing was "transfer." In 1937,

David Ben-Gurion, a reputed “moderate” in the Zionist leadership who would later become Israel’s first prime minister wrote:

“Now a transfer of a completely different scope will have to be carried out. In many parts of the country new settlement will not be possible without transferring the Arab fellahin...Jewish power which grows steadily, will also increase our possibilities to carry out this transfer on a large scale.”

In 1940, another key Zionist leader, **Josef Weiz**, director of the Jewish National Fund charged with acquiring as much land as possible, wrote:

“Among ourselves it must be clear that there is no room for both people in this country . . . and there is no way besides transferring the Arabs from here to neighboring countries, to transfer them all, except maybe for Bethlehem, Nazareth and Old Jerusalem, we must not leave a single village, a single tribe.”

On November 29, 1947, the United Nations voted to partition the British colony of Palestine: 55% for a Jewish state, 44% for an Arab state, and 1% for an international zone. In true colonialist fashion, there was no consultation with the Palestinians before the vote. Widespread fighting broke out immediately.

A month after the vote, Ben-Gurion, said in a speech:

“In the area allocated to the Jewish state there are not more than 520,000 Jews and about 350, 000 non-Jews, mostly Arabs. Together with the Jews of Jerusalem, the total population of the Jewish State at the time of its establishment will be about one million, including almost 40 percent non-Jews. Such a [population] composition does not provide a stable basis for a Jewish state. This fact must be viewed in all its clarity and acuteness. With such a composition, there cannot event be absolute certainty that the control will remain in the hands of the Jewish majority . . . There can be no stable and strong Jewish state so long as it has a Jewish majority of only 60 percent.”

Ben-Gurion hailed ethnic cleansing

The ethnic cleansing of Palestine that began almost immediately after the fateful UN vote delighted Ben-Gurion. In a February 8, 1948 speech to the governing council of his Labor Party, he gloated:

“From your entry into Jerusalem, through Lifta, Romema [an East Jerusalem neighborhood] ... there are no Arabs. One hundred percent Jews. Since Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans, it has not been as Jewish as it is now. In many Arab neighborhoods in the west one sees not a single Arab. I do not assume that this will change ... What has happened in Jerusalem ... is likely to happen in many parts of the country ... in the six, eight to ten months of the campaign there will certainly be great changes in the composition of the population in the country.”

But what so heartened Ben-Gurion in early 1948 was not yet reflected in most of the country. The much better armed and financed Zionist militias prevailed in most, though not

all, battles. But in most areas, the objective of driving out the Palestinian population was not being achieved. Palestinian villagers would retreat during active combat, but only to nearby villages or towns, waiting for the fighting to stop so they could return to their homes and farms.

At the time, the majority of Palestinians were peasant farmers who could not leave their land and livestock for any extended period of time without disastrous consequences. The contention that they would have voluntarily abandoned their farms based on the call of some far-off “leader” is simply ludicrous.

By March 1, 1948, less than 5% of the Palestinian population had been driven out, which was viewed by the Zionist leaders as serious threat to their plan.

Two additional factors made this a crisis-in-the-making for Ben-Gurion and his cohorts. One was a shift in Washington. While the Truman administration had played a key role in ramming the partition plan through the UN, it was now evidencing second thoughts. The partition plan had not brought peace — just the opposite, and much of the anger in the Arab world and beyond was directed at the U.S.

The State Department was floating a proposal to scrap partition and replace it with a five-year trusteeship. The Zionist leaders rejected it outright, but were acutely conscious of the importance of maintaining support from the United States.

And, the approach of May 15, 1948, the date the British colonizers had set for withdrawing their troops from Palestine was fast approaching.



An Israeli soldier stops Palestinians in Nazareth, 1948, for traveling after the imposed curfew

Plan Dalet - terrorist violence on a mass scale

Confronted with what they viewed as multi-front crisis, Ben-Gurion and his commanders

began to implement a new military doctrine under the name Plan Dalet, or Plan D. Under the plan, the official Zionist army, the Haganah, along with its supposed rival militias, Irgun and Lehi (Stern Gang), both of the latter self-proclaimed terrorist organizations, began attacking “quiet” Palestinian villages, those not involved in fighting.

The progressive Israeli historian **Ilan Pappé** asserts in his book, *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine*, that Ben-Gurion actually viewed the “quiet” villages as a bigger problem than those that resisted, as the latter provided a pretext for carrying out harsh repression and removal.

Among the directives of Plan Dalet were:

“Mounting operations against enemy population centres located inside or near our defensive system in order to prevent them from being used as bases by an active armed force. These operations can be divided into the following categories:

“Destruction of villages - setting fire to, blowing up, and planting mines in the debris - especially those population centers which are difficult to control continuously.

“Mounting search and control operations according to the following guidelines: encirclement of the village and conducting a search inside it. In the event of resistance, the armed force must be destroyed and the population must be expelled outside the borders of the state.”

Plan Dalet escalated the level of violence directed against the Palestinian civilian population to an extreme. A typical operation carried out by Zionist military units would involve planting explosives around Palestinian houses in the middle of the night, drenching them with gasoline and then opening fire. The point was to terrorize and expel the population. Arbitrary executions became routine, particularly targeting men and boys simply deemed to be of “fighting age,” regardless of whether they were actually engaged in combat.

Deir Yassin massacre - a turning point

Deir Yassin, on the outskirts of Jerusalem was one of the “quiet” villages. On April 9, 1948, the Irgun led by **Menachem Begin**, wiped out nearly its entire population. The Irgun blew up houses with the inhabitants inside, executed others in their homes. Many of the women in the village were raped before being killed. The Irgun paraded the few survivors in a truck through Jerusalem where they were jeered and spit on.

Deir Yassin raised Plan Dalet to a new level of brutality. The Jewish Agency, which a few weeks later would become the Israeli government, officially condemned the massacre but on the same day brought Irgun into the Joint Command with the Haganah, and Lehi, led by another future prime minister, Yitzhak Shamir.

The massacres in Deir Yassin, Tantura and other villages were widely publicized by the Zionists themselves, for maximum effect. Pappé has documented at least 29 additional massacres by Zionist forces between December 1947 and January 1949.

Twelve days after the Deir Yassin massacre, on April 21, 1948, the British commander in Haifa, a major city in the north with a mixed population, advised the Jewish Agency that he

would immediately begin withdrawing his forces. He did not inform the Palestinians. The same day, Hagahah forces launched a major attack on the Palestinian neighborhoods of the city, rolling barrel bombs filled with gasoline and dynamite down narrow alleys in the heavily populated city while shelling the same areas with mortars.

Haganah army loudspeakers and sound cars broadcast “horror recordings” of shrieks and screams of Arab women, mixed with calls of, “flee for your lives, the Jews are using poison gas and nuclear weapons. By early May, only 4,000 Palestinians of 65,000 remained in Haifa.

Irgun commander Menachem Begin, provided most vivid description of how well the slaughter at Deir Yassin was instrumental in the expulsion of the Palestinians from Haifa and other cities, towns and villages. In his book *The Revolt*, Begin wrote:

“Panic overwhelmed the Arabs of Eretz Israel [sic]. Kolonia village, which had previously repulsed every attack of the Haganah (the underground Jewish military organization that became the Israeli Army), was evacuated overnight and fell without further fighting. Beit-Iksa was also evacuated. These two places overlooked the road and their fall, together with the capture of Kastel by the Haganah, made it possible to keep open the road to Jerusalem. In the rest of the country, too, the Arabs began to flee in terror, even before they clashed with Jewish forces ... The legend of Deir Yassin helped us in particular in the saving of Tiberias and the conquest of Haifa ... All the Jewish forces proceeded to advance through Haifa like a knife through butter. The Arabs began fleeing in panic, shouting ‘Deir Yassin!’”

Three decades later, in an article for *The American Zionist*, Mordechai Nisan of the Truman Research Centre of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem expressed his concern about the failure to understand the major significance of terrorism in the struggle for Jewish sovereignty. He wrote:

“Without terror it is unlikely that Jewish independence would have been achieved when it was.”

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*(Much of the historical material in this article can be found in the book, [Palestine, Israel and the U.S. Empire](#), by **Richard Becker**. PSL Publications, 2009)*

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