

How Israel Was Absolved of Deir Yassin and All Other Massacres

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Global Research, April 12, 2015

[Electronic Intifada](#)

Region: [Middle East & North Africa](#)

This week we commemorated the massacre of [Deir Yassin](#).

On the anniversary's eve, I went with a group of Palestinians, Israelis and visitors from abroad to a tour in the village organized by [Zochrot](#), the Israeli group that continues relentlessly to remind Israelis of the crimes committed during the [Nakba](#).

Last year such a visit ended with a violent attack by a local resident of Har Nof — the Jewish ultra-Orthodox neighborhood built on the village's ruins — so two sulky policemen accompanied us to the site (mainly there to make sure we did not deviate from the path allocated to us). The very hot day probably deterred the usual suspects from a repeat of last year's aggression.

Three buildings are still standing there: the school, now a *yeshiva*, and two houses. The rest is covered by ugly cubic buildings, forcing memory and imagination to work hard if you wish to reconstruct the beautiful village standing at the very top of the western slopes of the [Jerusalem](#) mountains.

It was one of the first targets of the [ethnic cleansing](#) of Palestine that began weeks before the village was attacked.

On 1 April 1948, the Zionist forces that had been given the instruction to cleanse dozens of Palestinian villages from the western side of Jerusalem received a large bundle of orders.

Among them was a directive from the intelligence service of the Hagana depicting every village as an enemy base and anyone above the age of ten as an able fighting male. The villages and the men and children in it were thus considered legitimate military targets to be destroyed and killed.

Dehumanization

In Deir Yassin, women and babies were also not spared. But the importance of the directives lies in the dehumanization of the Palestinians that was integrated into the orders dispatched to troops that in the next ten months or so would massacre thousands of Palestinians and expel almost a million of them (half of the country's population), demolish their villages and destroy their towns.

This dehumanization also explains why the so-called non-aggression pact the villages signed with their Jewish neighbors and military command in Jerusalem was sinisterly brushed aside once the order to cleanse the region was given to the troops on the ground.

Jews are not different from any other people on this planet. Almost every group of people can be indoctrinated to dehumanize another group of people.

This is how normal Germans were recruited into the death machine of the Nazis, Africans into the genocide in Rwanda and farmers to the killing fields of Cambodia. Even people who claimed to be victims of such dehumanization, as were the Zionist troops of 1948, very keenly engaged in the business of killing babies, as well as old men, in Palestine.

This dehumanization appears now daily in [Syria](#), [Iraq](#), [Libya](#) and [Yemen](#).

Journey of Destruction

The world is divided roughly into three responses to the present-day dehumanization. The first is characterized by cynical manipulation of the tragedy by political and economic elites in the West, [China](#) and [India](#). There you can find arms traders, financial mavericks and cold-blooded politicians calculating daily how this is going to empower them politically or financially.

The second approach is indifference exercised by the majority of people who could not care less one way or another.

The third approach is genuine human concern and solidarity shown by the conscientious sections of society who wish to do something and get involved.

For all these groups, it is important to stress the link between what happened this week 67 years ago in the village of Deir Yassin and the present day barbarism.

The massacre of Deir Yassin, by no means the worst or the last in the history of Palestine, symbolized what was so unique about the Palestinian plight. Immediately after it occurred, the people who initiated it (the Zionist leadership) blamed their extreme wing for doing it and apologized.

At the same time, they published as widely as possible the news in order to frighten those living at the next locations in their journey of expulsion and destruction. They were about to assault the cities of Palestine and they hoped that the massacre would cause people to flee. It did not work that well; they had to massacre and expel by force the people of the towns throughout the month of April 1948.

Absolving Israel

But the propaganda about the massacre bore success elsewhere. The new state, Israel, was absolved from this and similar massacres — in fact, it has been let off from all the crimes it committed in 1948 and ever since. The immunity granted in April 1948 remains today.

Elsewhere in the Middle East, a different kind of exceptionalism was exercised. Pro-American regimes, unless they went wild, could abuse human and civil rights, while those who were not on the right side were condemned as rogue states.

Those which had other assets coveted by the US were punished more severely. But even those with an exceptional status in the eyes of Washington were not received as members in the community of civilized nations in the way Israel has been. The exceptionalism there is unique.

It is this exceptionalism that prevents good people in the West to participate in any significant way in the urgent conversation about human and civil rights in the rest of the Middle East.

Everyone should take part in this conversation about barbaric acts committed against the innocent. But everyone who commits such acts should also be targeted in this conversation.

The criminals who have attacked [Gaza](#), the [Yarmouk](#) refugee camp, the Yazidi villages in the north of Iraq and the bombardiers of [Aleppo](#) and operators of [drones](#) in [Pakistan](#) should not be exonerated in any way; they should all be brought before the [International Criminal Court](#), or similar tribunals.

Justice should be demanded for all their victims.

When this will happen we could come back to Deir Yassin, knowing that some sort of justice was served to people who have been victims of crimes not yet acknowledged, let alone punished.

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