

ISRAEL'S "INDEPENDENCE", ERASING THE HISTORY OF PALESTINE: The Nakba: Before and After

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May 15 marks Israel's 64th independence day. This year's Jewish calendar commemorated it on April 25.

For Palestinians, May 15 represents 64 years of Nakba suffering. Survivor testimonies bare witness. No words adequately explain their catastrophe. An unnamed Jew said:

"I am writing through tears. I wept when I saw the photo of the ruined village of al-Sanbariyya because it was my former brother-in-law who helped destroy the village and the lives of those who lived there."

"My now deceased brother-in-law was born in Los Angeles and after World War II decided he wanted to live in Palestine. He met his wife-to-be at a training camp somewhere in the midwest."

"While at the camp many of the people decided they wanted to build a kibbutz in then Palestine. I am not sure that they gave a thought to the fact that they would be taking the lands of others. But then, I don't know. I wasn't there."

"As a Jew who was raised to believe in justice for all peoples, I believe that it is my obligation to speak out about Israel and to try in whatever way possible to bring about a better life in Palestine for the people who belong there... The people who were so cruelly evicted from their lands."

A Palestinian also shared memories, saying:

"I cannot forget three horror-filled days in July of 1948. The pain sears my memory, and I cannot rid myself of it no matter how hard I try."

"First, Israeli soldiers forced thousands of Palestinians from their homes near the Mediterranean coast, even though some families had lived in the same houses for centuries."

"My family had been in the town of Lydda in Palestine at least 1,600 years. Then, without water, we stumbled into the hills and continued for three deadly days."

“The Jewish soldiers followed, occasionally shooting over our heads to scare us and keep us moving. Terror filled my eleven-year-old mind as I wondered what would happen.”

“I remembered overhearing my father and his friends express alarm about recent massacres by Jewish terrorists. Would they kill us, too?”

“We did not know what to do, except to follow orders and stumble blindly up the rocky hills. I walked hand in hand with my grandfather, who carried our only remaining possessions—a small tin of sugar and some milk for my aunt’s two-year-old son, sick with typhoid.”

Survivors remember Deir Yassin. On April 9, 1948, Israeli soldiers entered the village violently. They machine-gunned houses randomly. Many inside were slaughtered.

Remaining villagers were assembled and murdered in cold blood. Among them were children, infants, the elderly and women who were first raped. Estimates place the death toll up to 120.

An eyewitness said:

“I was (there) when the Jews attacked....(They) closed on the village amid exchanges of fire with us. Once they entered the village, fighting became very heavy in the eastern side and later it spread to other parts, to the quarry, to the village center until it reached the western edge.”

“The Jews used all sorts of automatic weapons, tanks, missiles, cannons. They enter(ed) houses and kill(ed) women and children indiscriminately. The (village) youths....fought bravely.”

The ensuing fighting killed dozens more. Many other villages met the same fate. It was well planned, systematic slaughter. It was about seizing as much land as possible, leaving behind the fewest number of Arabs.

In December 1947, Palestinians outnumbered Jews more than two to one. David Ben-Gurion ordered them removed, saying:

“Every attack has to end with occupation, destruction and expulsion.”

He meant slaughter, displace, and depopulate. Erase a proud history. Replace it with a Jewish one.

Mass killing, dispossession, and destruction followed. From Jerusalem, Lifta ruins are visible. Rubble piles only were in Dayr Aban. Except for two houses, Barqa was destroyed.

Jura became Ashqelon. In al-Faluja, only wall fragments and the village mosque foundation remain. Hundreds of other Arab villages met similar fates. Jewish-only development replaced them.

Across Palestine, survivors recounted gruesome horrors. Arabs were shot in cold blood. Women were raped. Hundreds of thousands were displaced. One day they hoped to return. Those alive still wait.

The Nakba's untold story reflects a cultural catastrophe. More on it below.

On May 15, [Haaretz](#) called Nakba "part of Israel's history," saying:

Netanyahu doesn't understand that Israel's national anthem "addresses only one people, the Jewish one."

Few Israelis know or remember the Nakba catastrophe. For Palestinians, it reflects "the tragedy of hundreds of thousands of refugees and their millions of relatives, for whom May 15 - the day the establishment of the State of Israel was announced - symbolizes the day they lost their land, property and status."

Israelis never accepted responsibility for Palestinian suffering. "But washing our hands....should not mean revoking the right to remember it. Nor is it supposed to prevent us from empathizing with the suffering of the other nation living in Israel."

The effort put into "wiping out the Nakba's memory is astonishing and outrageous." It's suppressed in textbooks. Israel's Nakba Law bans commemorations.

Enacted as the Budget Foundations Law, Israel's finance minister may reduce or eliminate funding for any institution or entity engaging in activities contrary to Israel's definition as a "Jewish and democratic" state.

It also prohibits mourning Israel's Independence Day. In other words, Arab history, culture, and right to express, teach, or disseminate it freely is violated. Discrimination faces anyone not Jewish.

Palestinians won't forget. Neither should Jews. Something this important can't be swept aside or forgotten. Nor can those with painful memories be denied the right to remember and mourn.

Nakba remains embedded in Palestinian consciousness. Israeli laws and ruthlessness won't erase it.

On May 15, [AFP](#) headlined “Palestinians Mark NAKBA with protests, strike,” saying:

Early Tuesday, clashes broke out between police and demonstrators. Ramallah held a large rally. Others followed throughout the West Bank and Gaza.

“The Higher Arab Monitoring Committee (representing Israeli Arab communities) called for a general strike and for Arab-Israelis to visit the sites of former Palestinian villages.”

Extra Israeli security forces confronted demonstrators. In 2011, clashes caused deaths and injuries.

[Maan News](#) followed events throughout the day. Regular updates were posted. In Ramallah’s Clock Square, sirens commemorated the day. Thousands throughout the Territories demonstrated and marched. Palestinian flags were prominently displayed.

Israeli extremists clashed with Tel Aviv University students. They held a Nakba day memorial service in commemoration. On Sunday, efforts to stop it failed.

Hamas released a statement, saying:

“Countries which contributed to the Nakba of Palestine, namely Britain, must do penance for their sin by stopping Israeli aggressiveness.”

Clashes erupted outside Ofer Prison. Security forces fired tear gas and rubber bullets. Over 80 injuries were reported.

Nakba’s Untold Story

On May 15, the Palestine News Network published [“Nakba - the Untold Story of a Cultural Catastrophe.”](#) It remains an unhealed wound. Palestinians lost more than homes, land, and personal possessions. They lost their homeland and way of life.

Collective memory recalls pre-1948 days. Palestine’s culture thrived. Its economy was one of the region’s most prosperous. Tourism flourished. In 1944 and 1945, the Arab Bank paid shareholders a 24% dividend.

In 1919, Falastin became a daily newspaper. The same year, Miraat Al-Sharq was established. It was published until 1939 when British authorities shut it for printing an “inciting poem.” The Palestine Broadcast Service was relied on. By the mid-1940s, Jerusalem had 24 bookshops.

From 1911 to 1948, 161 newspapers, magazines, and other publications covered news, literary topics, the arts, humor, sports and medicine.

In 1914, Palestine had 379 private schools, including 95 elementary and three secondary ones. During the 1919-20 school year, 10,662 Palestinian students were enrolled in public schools. In 1922-23, it was 19,331.

By 1942, Palestine had the second highest regional elementary school enrollment. Lebanon ranked first. In 1947-48, 868 Palestinian schools, staffed by 4,600 teachers, taught 146,883 students.

Except for a law school and teacher's college, Palestine had no universities. Instead, students went abroad for higher education. Thousands took advantage.

In 1927, 23 printing establishments published dozens of books. Topics included literature, history, economics, politics, the sciences, and other fields.

Palestinian musicians and singers performed. So did other regional ones and theater groups. In 1896, the French Lumiere brothers produced a film in Palestine. Other European filmmakers followed them.

In 1937, the Arab Cinema Company offered shares to the public. In 1945, Ibrahim Sirhan founded the Palestine studio. He and Mohamad Kayali established the Arab Film Company.

In 1935, the first Palestinian film was produced. It was a 20-minute documentary about the Saudi Arabian king's visit to Palestine. Other productions followed.

From 1922 - 1948, at least 43 theater companies performed dozens of plays. So did schools. Jerusalem alone had around 30 theater groups.

Palestinian drama, literature, poetry, literary criticism, other writing, and arts productions flourished.

The Nakba catastrophe destroyed a vibrant, prosperous way of life. Besides slaughter, displacement, and destruction, soldiers, militias and civilian volunteers collected books and other culturally significant items.

The National Library of Israel documented them as AP (Abandoned Property). Access to them requires special permission. For Palestinians, it's not easily obtained.

A project called "The Great Book Robbery" sought to include them in a virtual library. A documentary recounted the tragedy. It covered a 100 years from the mid-19th to 20th

century. Topics include history, literature, poetry, language, religion, foreign books, technology, medicine, and a government report on the 1947 school curriculum.

For Palestinians, the Nakba reflects an ongoing journey of pain, loss and injustice. Collective memory remains. Fundamental rights weren't restored. Daily life replicates a tortured past.

Assaulting Palestinian culture continues. In March and April 2002, Israeli forces destroyed at least 30 libraries and other information collections. Lost were government archives, public and academic libraries, and others belonging to NGOs and private institutions.

Palestinians once lived in peace with neighbors. Britain and Zionist extremists changed what's so far not restored. A collective dream never died. It won't until fulfilled.

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