

Sixty Years of Palestinian Displacement, Occupation and Suffering

By [Stephen Lendman](#)

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In-depth Report: [PALESTINE](#)

On May 14, Israelis will commemorate the 60th anniversary of their “War of Independence” and founding of the Jewish State. It also marks 60 years of Palestinian Nakba suffering. The web site www.alnakba.org recounts the history:

- from the late Ottoman empire period; to
- the birth of Zionism; to
- the early Jewish colonization of Palestine; to
- the 1917 Balfour Declaration support for a “Jewish national home in Palestine;” to
- the simultaneous British betrayal of the indigenous Arabs; to
- the British occupation; to
- its delayed promised end; to
- the founding of the Haganah underground military organization; to
- the first British (1922) Palestine census showing a population of 757,182 - 78% Muslim, 11% Jewish and 9.6% Christian; to
- the official 1923 establishment of the British Mandate period; to
- the 1920s Jewish population increase to 16% on 4% of Palestinian land; to
- the terrorist Irgun (IZT) National Military Organization established in 1931; to
- the terrorist Stern Gang founded in 1939; to
- the 1945 Jewish population growth to 31% of the total; to
- the October 1947 US endorsement of partitioning Palestine at a time Palestinians comprised two-thirds of the population and Jews one-third; to
- the November 1947 UN General Assembly Resolution 181 to end the British Mandate by August 1, 1948 and partition Palestine - 56% to Jews, the remainder to Palestinians, and for Jerusalem to be an international city; to
- Britain recommending (in December) an end to Mandate Palestine on May 15, 1948 and independent Jewish and Palestinian states to be established two weeks later; to

- Harry Truman secretly meeting Chaim Weizmann at the White House on March 25, 1948 and pledging support for the declaration of Israel on May 15; to
- the State of Israel established at 4PM on May 14, 1948; to
- the official end of the British Mandate on May 15; to
- Harry Truman recognizing the Jewish State on the same day.

David Ben-Gurion was Israel's first prime minister. On March 10, 1948, he met with leading Zionists and young Jewish military officers in Tel-Aviv's "Red House." They finalized plans to ethnically cleanse Palestine through a process of siege, intimidation and terror - to bomb and depopulate villages and cities; massacre innocent people; burn homes, property and goods; and prevent expelled Palestinians from returning.

Dalet (Plan D) was the final master plan. It was for war without mercy - mass slaughter, targeted assassinations, rapes, other atrocities, displacement and destruction. It was to establish an exclusive Jewish State without an Arab presence.

It took six months to complete, consider the toll, and understand the Nakba's meaning. It displaced 750,000 to 800,000 people - men, women, children, the elderly and infant civilians. Many hundreds or thousands of others were killed. Sweeping destruction was carried out. It erased 531 villages and 11 urban neighborhoods in Tel-Aviv, Haifa, Jerusalem and other cities.

The plan's roots went way back:

- to the birth of Zionism;
- the 1901 Jewish National Fund (JNF) beginning; it was to compile a detailed registry of Arab villages so later Zionists knew what to colonize and where; it was also to buy and occupy Palestinian land;
- by the late 1930s, it was a detailed topographic blueprint of every Arab village and urban area; its information included husbandry, cultivated land, number of trees, quality of fruits, crops, average amount of land per family, number of cars, shop owners, Palestinian clans and their political affiliation, description of mosques and names of their imams, civil servants and more;
- by 1947, it also included "wanted" persons, by villages, to be targeted for elimination - leaders to be arrested and summarily executed in cold blood to create a power vacuum;
- the process began in December 1947, five months before the British Mandate ended; Britain did nothing to deter it; David Ben-Gurion led it from the 1920s to the 1960s; after ethnically cleansing Palestine he said: "We have come and we have stolen their country....We must do everything to insure they never do return." Ten years earlier he wrote to his son: "We will expel the Arabs and take their places....with the force at our disposal;"
- other Israeli leaders expressed the same mindset; two were former prime ministers - Golda Meir said: "There are no Palestinians" and Menachem Begin and Nobel Peace Prize recipient called Palestinians "two-legged beasts" and said Jews were the "Master Race" and "divine gods on this planet;"
- Labor Party leader Haim Herzog was more discreet in expressing disdain for

the Arabs; in 1972, he said “I am not prepared to consider (Palestinians) as partners in any respect in a land that has been consecrated in the hands of our nation for thousands of years. For the Jews of this land there cannot be any partner.”

Earlier in 1969, Israeli Defense Forces Chief of Staff Moshe Dayan described the 1947 - 49 success: “Jewish villages were built in place of Arab (ones). You do not know the names of these Arab villages (because they) no longer exist....There is not one single place built in this country that did not have a former Arab population.” Like other leading Israelis, Dayan expressed scorn for all Palestinians and told his Labor Party colleagues that they “shall continue to live like dogs....”

The Palestinian Holocaust

Alnakba.org recounts the toll. It lists the destroyed villages in 14 Palestinian Districts, including Gaza, Jerusalem, Haifa, Jaffa, Nazareth and Hebron. One was Deir Yassin in the Jerusalem District. On April 9, 1948, it was the site of an infamous Nakba massacre. Israeli soldiers entered the village, machine-gunned houses randomly and killed many inside them. The remaining villagers were assembled and murdered in cold blood. Included were children, infants, the elderly and women who were first raped. The total number killed is uncertain but best estimates place it between 93 and 120. In addition, dozens more were killed in the fighting that ensued, and many other villages met the same fate in the systematic cleansing plan - to seize as much Palestinian land as possible leaving the fewest number of Arabs on it.

In December 1947, Jews in Palestine numbered 600,000 compared to 1.3 million Palestinians. Ben-Gurion ordered them removed with commands like: “Every attack has to end with occupation, destruction and expulsion.” He meant depopulation; obliteration; homes blown up, burned or bulldozed; their inhabitants inside killed; shooting anything that moved, especially fighting-age men and boys who might pose a combat or resistance threat; and leaving behind rubble, a forgotten landscape and a proud history erased.

The Lifta ruins can be seen from Jerusalem. All that was left in Dayr Aban were piles of rubble, collapsed roofs and part of some standing walls. Only two houses remained in Barqa. One is deserted. The other is a warehouse. Jura became the city of Ashqelon. Its Jewish population is now about 117,000. The only Arab remains in al-Faluja are the village mosque foundations and fragments of walls. The Israeli town of Qiryat Gat now stands on land between al-Faluja and Iraq al-Manshiyya and on al-Faluja land as well. Hundreds of other Arab villages have similar stories. They were erased and replaced by Jewish-only development.

An eye witness to the Deir Yassin massacre recounts the horror:

“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.

We had no aid or support....They took about 40 prisoners....After the battle was over, they took them to the quarry where they shot them dead and threw their bodies in the quarry....they took (other) prisoners and killed them....they killed the youths.”

Other accounts spoke of shootings, bombs exploding and a mother being killed with her husband, son and brother. A nurse was shot dead as well as the daughter of a friend and her baby. “Whomever tried to run away was shot dead.” It was cold-blooded murder.

After the battle, “the Jews took elderly men and women and youths, including four of my cousins and a nephew. They took them all. Women who had on them gold and money, were stripped of their gold. After the Jews removed their dead and wounded, they took the men to the quarry and sprayed them all with bullets.” One woman watched her son shot to death. “They later poured kerosene on his body and” burned it.

The men were fighting. “Eyewitnesses were only women. The elderly men were (used) to remove the dead, Arabs and Jews.” The Arab ones “were thrown in a well in the village center.” It all happened five weeks before the State of Israel was founded. Arabs died and were displaced to make Plan D a success. It worked because western powers supported it, and Arab neighbors were indifferent. Their intervention held off until May 15, five and a half months after the UN partition. When it began, it was with an inferior force that was no match against Israeli superiority, despite popular myth to the contrary.

It recounts how an outnumbered and outgunned Jewish force prevailed against overwhelming odds. Pure rubbish. In fact, the Jews held a clear advantage. As long as the British stayed out (and they did), the outcome was never in doubt. Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq held off intervening as long as possible, then reluctantly stepped in with token forces. It was too little, too late, and, for its part, Jordan (with its potent military) stayed out entirely in return for most of the West Bank as a payoff.

Intervening Arab forces performed poorly. They overstretched their supply lines, ran out of ammunition, mostly used antiquated weapons, and had no effective command and control. It was a testimony to their lack of commitment, not their ability to fight had they wished to.

Jews, in contrast, were supplied effective armaments from Soviet Russia and other Eastern bloc countries. They easily outgunned the Arabs and outclassed and outnumbered them as well. The outcome was never in doubt that a new Jewish State would emerge. On May 14, 1948, Israel signed separate armistice agreements with its four major warring adversaries. It gave Israel 78% of British Mandatory Palestine, 40% above its UN allotment. Palestinians got the other 22% comprising the West Bank and Gaza.

On December 11, 1948, a historic General Assembly resolution passed - UN Resolution 194 consisting of 15 articles. Four were most important. Article 7 protected and provided free access to the Holy Places. Article 8 demilitarized Jerusalem and placed it under UN control. Article 9 called for free access to Jerusalem, and Article 11 is most remembered for granting Palestinian refugees the right of return or to be compensated for their loss if they chose not to. From 1948, to the present, Israel defied the UN mandate and got away with it. It was because of western support and Arab indifference. As a result, it was able to terrorize remaining Arabs inside Israel, and set in motion the eventual Gaza and West Bank occupation.

The War Ended - State Terrorism Was Just Beginning

Throughout 1949 in the war's aftermath, Israel pursued another one - a war of terror against the remaining Arab population. It set a six decade precedent. Israel now belonged to Jews. Arabs were unwelcome. State security forces cracked down to show how much.

Thousands of displaced Palestinians were rounded up and imprisoned. Others were targeted, harassed and abused. They lost everything - their land, homes, fields, crops, places of worship, freedom of movement and expression, and any hope for fair treatment in the new Jewish State.

Naked and undisguised racism confronted them. They were issued identity cards with penalties up to 1.5 years in prison and immediate transfer to an "unauthorized" and "suspicious" Arab pen if caught without them.

Persecution was relentless, much the way it is today. Roadblocks and checkpoints went up, curfews imposed, violators shot on sight, and systematic abuse inflicted. In addition, thousands of Palestinians were conscripted, sent to labor camps, and forced to help build the new Jewish state. Conditions there were deplorable. Quarry laborers performed arduous work, carried heavy rocks, and had to live on one potato and half a dried fish for daily sustenance. Complainers or slackers were beaten, many severely. Others, considered a threat, were simply shot.

Other Arabs weren't treated much better. Human rights abuses were appalling. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) documented them. Palestinians (now Israeli citizens) got no protections and were afforded no rights. They were subjected to relentless abuses. Their mosques were profaned, schools vandalized, homes robbed and at times stripped bare in broad daylight. Palestinians reported that not a single home or Arab shop escaped the onslaught. Authorities did nothing to deter it. They made things worse.

Palestinians (inside Israel) were transferred from their homes, moved to undesired locations, crammed into confined ghettos, they became open-air prisons, and treatment there was horrific. The ICRC and UN reported beatings, rapes and other abuses. Israel was undergoing transformation. Its Arab character was being erased. It affected about 150,000 remaining Arab Israelis in the new Jewish State.

Formal ethnic cleansing ended in 1949, dispossession and displacements nonetheless continued, and a new Committee for Arab Affairs was established to defuse growing international pressure to enforce UN Resolution 194, especially the right of return under Article 11.

Arab Israelis lost all their rights and were placed under military rule. In addition, discriminatory laws were passed, like the Law of the Land of Israel. It stipulated that the Jewish National Fund (JNF - the Jewish State landowner) was forbidden to sell or lease land to non-Jews.

From inception, Israel has had no formal constitution. It's governed instead by its Basic Law. Nine laws were passed between 1958 and 1988, all of which pertained to the institutions of state. No basic rights were enacted until 1992. That year, the Basic Law: Human Dignity and Freedom was passed authorizing the Knesset to overturn laws contrary to the right to dignity, life, freedom, privacy, property and to leave and enter the country. The law states:

“There shall be no violation of the life, body or dignity of any person. All persons are entitled to protection” of these rights, and “There shall be no deprivation or restriction of the liberty of a person by imprisonment, arrest, extradition or otherwise.”

Israeli Basic Laws are for Jews only. Arab Israelis have no rights under them with one exception – the right to run for public office in the Knesset, become a nominal legislative member, but have no power beyond a public stage for their views to be shouted down and ignored.

Palestinians have endured six decades of shattered hope and dreams. They were uprooted from their homes, denied their basic rights, given little outside recognition or aid, blamed for Israeli crimes, terrorized without mercy, falsely promised peace, yet condemned to a state of siege under which nothing will change without outside pressure to force it.

Since 1948, Palestinians have lived in a state of limbo. Their Nakba never ended. What’s left of their country is occupied. They have no recognized nation and no power over their daily lives. They live in constant fear. They’re economically strangled; dispossessed of their land and homes; isolated under siege; collectively punished; denied free movement; casually murdered; ruthlessly arrested, imprisoned and tortured; afflicted by random curfews; invaded, bombed, and shot at; extra-judicially assassinated; and constricted by roadblocks, checkpoints, electric fences and the Separation Wall that the World Court ruled illegal.

Israel: The World’s “Worst Brand”

That’s according a 2006 National Brands Index (NBI) study. On November 22, 2006, Israel Today reported the findings. They were compiled by “government advisor Simon Anholt and powered by global market intelligence solutions provider GMI (Global Market Insite, Inc.).”

The survey polled 25,903 “online consumers” in 35 countries across the world. It was to measure respondents perceptions “across six areas of national competence,” including governance, people, culture, heritage and immigration.

“Israel’s brand (was) by a considerable margin the most negative we have ever measured in the NBI, and (came) at the bottom of the ranking on almost every question (asked about 36 countries).”

Israel was ranked the least desired country to visit. Its people were ranked the “most unwelcoming in the world.” Surprisingly, Americans were as negative as others. They “ranked Israel slightly above China in terms of its conduct in the areas of international peace and security.”

Other recent opinion surveys report similar results. It’s encouraging to know that well over half of all Europeans rank Israel “the biggest threat to world peace” according to a 2003 European Commission poll. Israel is a pariah state. That’s the view of millions around the world in spite of dominant media efforts to say otherwise. Israel calls it growing anti-Semitism. That, of course, is rubbish. Jews and Israelis aren’t being singled out – only their criminal leaders. World public opinion justifiably condemns them.

Commemorating the Unforgivable

Jews in Israel and around the world will commemorate May 14. It’s the 60th anniversary of

the State of Israel's founding. Thousands of other Jews everywhere along with everyone of conscience stand with the Canadian Palestine Support Network (CaPalNet). They cannot celebrate. They will not celebrate. They remember the Nakba. They know it continues. They condemn 41 years of occupation; the starving and bombing of Gaza; the oppressive Separation Wall; the theft of Palestinian land; the building of illegal settlements; the denial of the right of return; the killings, torture, imprisonment and harassment; the denial of basic human rights; and Israel's disdain for international law.

They "can (and) will continue (their) efforts to end these injustices, uphold international law," and support every UN resolution demanding it. "This is the only road map to peace." They, with millions of others, won't ever stop working for it.

Global Research Associate Stephen Lendman lives in Chicago and can be reached at lendmanstephen@sbcglobal.net.

Also visit his blog site at sjlendman.blogspot.com and listen to The Global Research News Hour on RepublicBroadcasting.org Mondays from 11AM to 1PM US Central time for cutting edge discussion with distinguished guests.

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Articles by: **[Stephen Lendman](#)**

About the author:

Stephen Lendman lives in Chicago. He can be reached at lendmanstephen@sbcglobal.net. His new book as editor and contributor is titled "Flashpoint in Ukraine: US Drive for Hegemony Risks WW III."

<http://www.claritypress.com/LendmanIII.html> Visit his blog site at sjlendman.blogspot.com. Listen to cutting-edge discussions with distinguished guests on the Progressive Radio News Hour on the Progressive Radio Network. It airs three times weekly: live on Sundays at 1PM Central time plus two prerecorded archived programs.

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