

## THE INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION FOR THE ELIMINATION OF ALL FORMS OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION (EAFORD)

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### The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine

It is both momentous and pressing today to remember that even before the end of the British Mandate, the Zionist leadership claimed, without reserve, the whole of the Palestinian land through the total expulsion of the indigenous population and that a purely Jewish state had been the focal point of Zionist ideology. This fact has a profound relevance to the past, present, and the future of Israeli-Palestinian relations. One cannot grasp the essence of this historic tragedy unless this taboo subject is openly discussed, coupled with its twin fact that, until the British occupation of Palestine at the end of the First World War, the Jews made up not more than five percent of the country's total population, and that the percentage of their land possession was even less than that.

Zionist politicians like Israel's first Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion (1886-1973) mastered the plans for ethnic cleansing, brutal combatant units like Menachem Begin's (1913-92) *Irgun Zvai Leumi* slayed whole villagers, regular army detachments of General Yitzhak Rabin (1922-95) unsparingly overran Arab territories, and the biblical experts, in conjunction with some archaeologists, helped Hebraize Palestine's geography.

The ethnic cleansing of the Palestinians was the product of the Zionist ideology that eventually aimed at an exclusive Jewish state in Palestine. The pluralism that one may find in the Jewish religion is absent in the ethnic character of Zionism. Since "*Eretz Israel*", the name for Palestine in the Jewish religion, has been cherished by generations of Jews only as a land for holy pilgrimage, many Orthodox adherents of this faith are either non- or anti-Zionist. The Zionist propagandists redefined, on the other hand, this biblical belt as a new 'Moses basket' for an emerging nationalist movement. This land seemed to the incoming Jews as if it was either occupied by some 'alien' Palestinians, or was simply an empty countryside.

The United Nations Partition Resolution (29 November 1947) was a recipe for unending hostility and bloodshed. The ethnic cleansing of Palestine started immediately after that Resolution. The UN plan, which had designated the coast, eastern valleys, lower Galilee and the Negev for the Jews, was not enough. Starting with the Ben-Gurion Administration, the occupation of the whole country became the ultimate aim.

In the 'Red House', a typical early Tel-Avivian edifice, now demolished to make room for a car park serving the new Sheraton Hotel, about a dozen Zionist leaders met, on 10 March 1948, to finalize their plan for the ethnic cleansing of this land. This fourth and final "Plan D" (for *Dalet* in Hebrew) entailed siege, bombardment, demolition, intimidation, murder, and expulsion of the native Palestinians as well as setting fire to homes and planting mines to prevent return. In consequence, within the ensuing six months after the final plan, about half of the Palestinians were uprooted, their villages destroyed, and urban areas emptied. Although the early Jewish attacks were sporadic, causing nevertheless the exodus of a substantial number of Palestinians (75,000), full cleansing operations ensued. Several massacres, most notably the one at Deir Yassin, followed. Beginning with the bloodbath in Tiat Haifa (11 December 1947) and ending with Khirbat Ilin (19 January 1949), there have been at least thirty-one aggregate exterminations only during the "*Nakba*" period (the Palestinian version for the Jewish *Holocaust*) of about thirteen months. They were followed by the slaughters at Kfar Qassim (1956), Qibya (the 1950s), Samoa (the 1960s), Galilee (1976), Sabra-Shatila (1982), Kfar Qana 81999), Wadi Ara (2000), and at the Jenin Refugee Camp (2002).

In the meantime, the Israeli Government was quick to exploit in June 1967 Gamal Abdel Nasser's

brinkmanship diplomacy to triple its land possession. When the Israelis reached the fishing village overlooking the Red Sea, then Umm Rashrash, now the city of Eilat, the southern Negev also became a part of the Jewish state. The whole of Galilee also fell in Jewish hands. Israel invaded southern Lebanon in 1967, in 1978, and again in 1982. The Jewish forces were abusive and exploitative in southern Lebanon as the same castigating attitude had been most perceptible in the whole of occupied Palestine.

While the Jewish forces were busy committing the early atrocities, including mass murders, poisoning of water supplies and rapes, the Zionist leaders disseminated the myth that the Palestinians were abandoning their lands and dwellings “voluntarily” to make way for the approaching Arab armies. The martyrdom and the torment of the Palestinians, since then, were thoroughly brushed off, but the senior officers of the armed Jews, who were ostensibly protecting themselves against “hostile Arab invaders”, later headed several Israeli governments.

For the Israeli Jews, the Palestinians were, and are, those living in the West Bank, the Gaza Strip and in the diaspora, as if the ‘Israeli Arabs’ do not belong to the same nation. The Palestinian Arabs married to Israeli citizens have to go to the West Bank or to Gaza, even though they might have lived in Israel for years. The Israeli Supreme Court rejected the appeals of the protestors against this recent fascist law.

The earlier stages of ethnic cleansing went unnoticed. Zionist writers invented a new language. The conflict is no longer only a matter of “occupation”. The Palestinians are now being dislocated even from the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. The living conditions of most Palestinians are worse than the predicaments of mere occupation. The notorious Oslo accords of the 1990s created a lawless way of life in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Today’s so-called “peace process” totally cold-shoulders the heart of the matter. Presently, Israel is reactivating its cleaning program in on-going attempts to preserve its absolute Jewish majority. According to the recent polls, close to 70 percent of Israeli Jews expressed their wish to see the Palestinians of Israel transferred. Those living near the ‘*apartheid* wall’ are the first to go.

Privatisation of land ownership, accelerated under Benjamin Netanyahu (1996-99) and Ariel Sharon (2001-03, 2003-06) may serve Capitalism more than the Zionist-created Jewish National Fund, but the Palestinians do not stand to benefit in either case. As unequivocally stated in several resolutions, for instance in Resolution 47/80 on 16 December 1992, the United Nations (G.A.) strongly rejects policies and ideologies aimed at promoting ethnic cleansing in any form. But the future of Palestine is being shaped in another way. Palestine will be a better land only if all rights of the Palestinians are acknowledged.

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