

State of Denial: Israel, 1948 – 2008

By Ilan Pappé

For Israelis, 1948 is the year in which two things happened, one of which contradicts the other.

On the one hand, in that year the Jewish national movement, Zionism, claimed it fulfilled an ancient dream of returning to a homeland after 2,000 years of exile. From this perspective, 1948 is a miraculous event, the realization of a dream that carries with it associations of moral purity and absolute justice. Hence the military conduct of Jewish soldiers on the battlefield in 1948 became the model for generations to come. And subsequent Israeli leaders were lionized as men and women devoted to the Zionist ideals of sacrifice for the common cause. It is a sacred year, 1948, the formative source of all that is good in the Jewish society of Israel.

On the other hand, 1948 was the worst chapter in Jewish history. In that year, Jews did in Palestine what Jews had not done anywhere else in their previous 2,000 years. Even if one puts aside the historical debate about why

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About This Issue

In their flight from Hitler's Germany in the early 1930s, Ilan Pappé's parents opted to go to Palestine, his father for ideological reasons, he was a Zionist; his mother for practical reasons, it was the least expensive. Their son was born in 1954, six years after the founding of the Jewish state, and he grew up in Haifa, an Arab-Jewish city where Ilan had Palestinian friends.

From there his journey "beyond the margins of permitted discourse" led to Hebrew University in the 1970s, where he learned what happened to Palestinians in 1948-49, then on to Oxford University in the 1980s, where his doctoral thesis became his first book, "Britain and the Arab-Israeli Conflict." Based on declassified documents in England, the United States, and Israel, his research debunked — his word — all of the lessons about Israel's creation that he had been raised on.

He returned to Israel as a professor in the history department at Haifa University. Other published works followed, including a feature article in our January-March 1998 *Link*. Later, in 1998, he organized events on his campus to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Palestinian catastrophe. The action incurred the displeasure of the university's powerful Land of Israel Studies department.

If that was a step beyond the margins, his next action in 2005 was a leap. Arguing that Hitler was able to carry out his genocide against Jews because German academics refused to protest, he called for universities outside Israel to boycott those professors at Israel's Bar-Ilan and Haifa Universities who had not publicly condemned Israel's occupation policy. Haifa University's president Aharon Ben-Ze'ev called on Pappé to resign.

In 2007, he did resign. He had been called "the most hated man in Israel," and was finding it increasingly difficult not only to teach but to live in the Jewish state. Today, he is chair of the history department at the University of Exeter in England. We are honored to welcome him back to the pages of *The Link*.

On page 9, we begin an enumeration of Palestinian towns and villages obliterated in 1948. The entire list is found in our booklet "The Colonization of Palestine." On this the 60th year of what Ilan Pappé calls the ethnic cleansing of Palestine, we will be pleased to send this recently updated booklet to any reader for the cost of postage: \$1. In addition to describing the fate of each town and village, the booklet contains photos of the refugee camps, where hundreds upon thousands of ousted Palestinians ended up. We hope our readers will order copies not only for themselves but for others.

We note on page 12 the death of Lachlan Reed, a longtime AMEU board member.

AMEU's book/video catalog is on pp. 13-15. It includes Ilan Pappé's latest book, "The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine," and a new video interview with him, "Israel: Myths & Propaganda," both of which are excellent complements to his article.

Finally, on page 16, we offer a tribute to Lucille Ablan. Long before Ilan Pappé knew about the Palestinian catastrophe—and certainly long before I did—Lucille Ablan knew. And in her gentle, effective way, she did something about it.

John F. Mahoney
 Executive Director

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what happened in 1948 happened, no one seems to question the enormity of the tragedy that befell the indigenous population of Palestine as a result of the success of the Zionist movement.

In normal circumstances, as Edward Said noted in his "Culture and Imperialism," the painful dialogue with the past should enable a given society to digest both the most evil and the most glorious moments of its history. But this could not work in a case where moral self-image is considered to be the principal asset in the battle over public opinion, and hence the best means of surviving in a hostile environment. The way out for the Jewish society in the newly founded state was to erase from its collective memory the unpleasant chapters of the past and to leave intact the gratifying ones.

Because so many of the people who live in Israel lived through 1948 this was not an easy task. That year is not a distant memory and the crimes are still visible on the landscape. Above all, there are victims still living to tell their story and when they are gone, their descendents will pass on their accounts to future generations. And, yes, there are people in Israel who know exactly what they did, and there are even more who know what others did.

The authorities in Israel, to be sure, have succeeded in eliminating these deeds totally from society's collective memory, as they struggle relentlessly against anyone who tries to shed light on them, in or outside Israel. If you look at Israeli textbooks, curricula, media, and political discourse you see how this chapter on Jewish history—the chapter of expulsion, colonization, massacres, rape, and the burning of villages—is totally absent. It is replaced by chapters of heroism, glorious campaigns and amazing tales of moral courage and military competence unheard of in the historiographies of any other state in the 20th century.

It would be useful, therefore, to begin this essay with a short reference to the denied chapters of those events that took place 60 years ago.

The Erased Chapters

The 1948 war's diplomatic maneuvers and military campaigns are well engraved in Israeli Jewish historiography. What is missing is the chapter on the ethnic cleansing carried out by the Jews in 1948: 500 Palestinian villages and 11 urban neighborhoods were destroyed, 700,000 Palestinians were expelled from their homes, and several thousands more were massacred. Why did it happen?

In November 1947, the U.N. offered to partition Palestine into a Jewish and an Arab state. The scheme was problematic from its inception for three reasons.

Firstly, it was presented to the two warring parties not as a basis for negotiation but as a *fait accompli*, even though the U.N. knew the Palestinian side would reject it. Palestinians regarded the Zionist movement as the Algerians regarded the French colonialists. Just as it was unthinkable for the Algerians to agree to share their land with the French settlers, so was it unacceptable for the Palestinians to divide Palestine with Zionist settlers. The cases were different, to be sure—even the Palestinians recognized this; but the better option, as a few U.N. members had proposed, and as the U.S. State Department later recognized, would have been a longer period of negotiations.

Secondly, the Jewish minority (660,000 out of two million) was offered the larger part of the land (56 percent). Thus the imposed partition was to begin with an unfair proposal.

Thirdly, because of the demographic distributions of the two communities—the Palestinians and the Jews—the 56 percent offered to the Jews as a state included an equal number of Jews and Palestinians, while few Jews resided in the remaining 44 percent designated for an Arab state. Zionist leaders, from left to right, all concurred on the need to attain a considerable Jewish majority in Palestine; in fact, the absence of such a solid majority was regarded as the demise of Zionism. Even a cursory knowledge of Zionist ideology and strategy, should have made it clear to the U.N. architects that such a demographic

reality would lead to the cleansing of the local population from the future Jewish state.

In May 1947, the Jewish Agency, which functioned as the Jewish government within the mandatory government, had already drawn a map which included most of Palestine as a Jewish state, apart from the West Bank which had been granted to the Transjordanians.

On March 10, 1948, the Hagana, the main Jewish underground in Palestine, issued a military blueprint preparing the community for the expected British evacuation of Palestine. On that same day, a plan was devised to take over the parts earmarked by the Jewish agency, which constituted 80 percent of Palestine.

The plan, called Plan D (or *Dalet* in Hebrew), instructed the Jewish forces to cleanse the Palestinian areas falling under their control. The Hagana had several brigades at its disposal and each one of them received a list of villages it had to occupy and destroy. Most of the villages were destined to be destroyed and only in very exceptional cases were the forces ordered to leave a village intact.

In between December 1947 and well into the 1950s, the ethnic cleansing operation continued. Villages were surrounded from three flanks and the fourth one was left open for flight and evacuation. In some cases it did not work, and many villagers remained in the houses—here is where massacres took place. This was the principal strategy of the Judaization of Palestine.

The ethnic cleansing took place in three stages. The first one was from December 1947 until the end of the summer of 1948, when Palestinian villages along the coastal and inner plains were destroyed and their population evicted by force. The second stage took place in the autumn and winter of 1948/9 and included the Galilee and the Naqab (Negev).

By the winter of 1949 the guns were silenced on the land of Palestine. The second phase of the war ended and with it the second stage of the cleansing terminated, but the expulsion continued long after the winds of war subsided.

The third phase was to extend beyond the war until 1954, when dozens of additional villages were destroyed and their residents expelled. Out of about 900,000 Palestinians living in the territories designated by the U.N. as a Jewish state, only 100,000 remained on or nearby their land and houses. Those who remained became the Palestinian minority in Israel. The rest were expelled or fled under threat of expulsion; a few thousand died in massacres.

The countryside, the rural heart of Palestine, with its picturesque one thousand villages was ruined. Half of the villages were erased from the face of the earth, run over by Israeli bulldozers at work since August 1948 when the government decided either to turn them into cultivated land or to build new Jewish settlements on their ruins.

A committee for naming gave the new settlements Hebrewized versions of the original Arab names—thus Lubyia become Lavi and Safuria was turned into Zipori. David Ben-Gurion, the first prime minister of Israel, explained that this was done as part of an attempt to prevent future claims to these villages. It was also an act supported by the Israeli archeologists who had authorized the names not as a takeover of a title but rather as poetic justice which returned to “ancient Israel” its old map. From the bible they salvaged geographical names and attached them to the destroyed villages.

Urban Palestine was torn apart and crushed in a similar way. The Palestinian neighborhoods in mixed towns were cleansed, the emptied homes left to be populated later by incoming Jewish immigrants from Arab countries.

The Palestinian refugees spent the winter of 1948 in tent camps provided to them by voluntary agencies; most of these locations would become their permanent residence. The tents were replaced by clay huts that became the familiar feature of Palestinian existence in the Middle East. The only hope for these refugees, at the time, was the one offered by U.N. Resolution 194 (December 11, 1948) promising them a quick return to their homes—one of but numerous international pledges made by the global community

to the Palestinians that remains to this day unfulfilled.

This tragedy would be remembered in the collective memory of Palestinians as the Nakba—the catastrophe—and it would restore their national movement. Its self image would be that of an indigenous population led by a guerilla movement wishing to turn back the clock, with little success.

The Israelis' collective memory would depict the war also as a national liberation movement, one fighting both British colonialism and Arab hostility, and winning against all odds. The loss of one per cent of the Jewish population would cloud their joy, but not their determination to Judaize Palestine and turn it into the future haven for world Jewry.

Israel, however, turned out to be the most dangerous place for Jews to be living in the second half of the 20th century. Most Jews preferred to live outside the Jewish state, and quite a few did not identify with the Jewish project in Palestine, nor did they wish to be associated with its dire consequences.

But a vociferous minority of Jews in the United States continued to give the impression that the majority of world Jewry condoned the cleansing of 1948. This illusion dangerously complicated the status of Jewish minorities in the Western world, particularly in those places where public opinion since the first Intifada in 1987 has grown increasingly hostile towards Israel's policies in Palestine.

The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine

NATO Spokesman Jamie Shea said all reports reaching NATO indicated that what was happening in Kosovo was a well-organized master plan by Belgrade. He said the reported pattern of violence was that Serb tanks were surrounding villages, then paramilitaries are going in rounding up civilians at gunpoint, separating young men from women and children. The women and children are then expelled from their homes and then sent forward towards the border. After they have left the villages, the homes are looted and then systematically torched.

CNN, March 30, 1999

Those operations can be carried out in the following manner: either by destroying villages (by setting fire to them, by blowing them up, and by planting mines in their debris) ... or by mounting combing and control operations according to the following guidelines: encirclement of the villages, conducting a search inside them. In case of resistance, the armed forces must be wiped out and the population expelled outside the borders of the state.

Plan Dalet, March 10, 1948

Until recently the Israeli-Zionist narrative of the 1948 war has dominated the academic world and, probably for that reason, it has influenced the public's general recollection of the Nakba.

This meant that the 1948 events were described as an overall war between two armies. Such an assumption calls for the expertise of military historians, who can analyze the military strategy and tactics of both sides. Actions and atrocities are part of the theater of war, where things are judged on a moral basis quite differently from the way they would be treated in a non-combat situation. For instance, within the context of warring armies, the death of civilians—collateral damage, we call it—is accepted as an integral part of the overall attempt to win the war (although even within a war there are exceptional atrocities which are treated as illegitimate in military historiography).

Such a view also entails the concept of parity in questions of moral responsibility for the events unfolding on the ground, including, as in our case, the massive expulsion of an indigenous population. Using the two-army paradigm, the moral balancing between the two sides seemed to be "academic" and "objective." However, using the Palestinian narrative, namely, that there were in 1948 not two equally armed and equipped armies, but rather an expeller and those expelled, an offender and the victims, the two-army paradigm is seen as sheer propaganda.

I suggest that the events that unfolded after May 1948 in Israel and Palestine should be viewed from within the paradigm of ethnic cleansing and

not only as part of military history. Historiographically, this means that the deeds were part of domestic policies implemented by a regime against civilians. Indeed, in many cases, given the fact that the ethnic cleansing took place within the designated U.N. Jewish state, these were operations conducted by a regime against its own citizens.

This was not a battlefield between two armies, it was a civilian space invaded by military troops. Ethnic ideology, settlement policy and demographic strategy were the decisive factors here, not the military plans. Massacres, whether premeditated or not, were an integral, not exceptional, part of ethnic cleansing, although, in most cases, expulsion was preferred to killing.

The ethnic cleansing paradigm explains why expulsions and not massacres are the essence of such crimes. As in the 1990s' Balkan wars, within the act of cleansing, sporadic massacres were motivated more by revenge than any clear-cut scheme. But the plan to create new ethnic realities was assisted by these massacres no less than by systematic expulsions.

The Jewish operation in 1948 fits the definition of ethnic cleansing offered in the U.N. reports on the Balkan wars of the 1990s. The U.N. Council for Human Rights linked the wish to impose ethnic rule on a mixed area—the making of Greater Serbia—with acts of expulsion and other violent means. The report defines acts of ethnic cleansing as including separation of men from women, detention of men, explosion of houses and repopulating with another ethnic group later on. This is precisely the repertoire of the Jewish soldiers in the 1948 war.

As others have shown, the massive expulsion of Palestinians was the inevitable outcome of a strategy dating back to the late 19th century. This ideology of transfer emerged the moment the leaders of the Zionist movement realized that the making of a Jewish state in Palestine could not be materialized as long as the indigenous people of Palestine remained on the land.

The presence of a local society and culture had

been known to the founding fathers of Zionism even before the first settlers set foot on the land. Theodore Herzl, the founding father of Zionism, already predicted that his dream of a Jewish homeland in Palestine would necessitate expulsion of the indigenous population as did the leaders of the Second Aliya, a kind of a Zionist Mayflower generation.

Two means were used to change the reality in Palestine and to impose the Zionist interpretation on the local reality: the dispossession of the indigenous population from the land and its re-population with newcomers—i.e. expulsion and settlement.

This colonization effort was pushed forward by a movement that had not yet won regional or international legitimacy and had to buy land to create enclaves within the indigenous population. The British Empire was very helpful in bringing this scheme into reality. Yet from the very beginning the leaders of Zionism knew that settlement was a very long and measured process, which would not be sufficient to realize the revolutionary dreams of the movement to alter the realities on the ground and impose its own interpretation on the land's past, present and future. For that, the movement needed to resort to more meaningful means such as ethnic cleansing and transfer.

Transfer and ethnic cleansing as means of Judaizing Palestine had been closely associated in Zionist thought and practice with "historical opportunities," i.e., times in history when the world would be indifferent to what happened in a foreign land, or "revolutionary conditions" such as war.

This link between purpose and timing had been elucidated very clearly in a letter David Ben-Gurion had sent to his son Amos in July, 1937: "The Arabs will have to go, but one needs an opportune moment for making it happen, such as war." This notion will reappear in Ben-Gurion's addresses to his MAPAI party members throughout the Mandatory period, up until an opportune moment arises—in 1948.

And, as we shall see, the idea of ethnic cleansing—or transfer, to use the preferred euphemism—is alive and well in today's Israel as still offering the

best way of dealing with the Palestinian “problem.”

The Struggle Against Nakba Denial

The Nakba denial in Israel and the West was helped by the overall negation of the Palestinians as a people—the notorious declaration by Israel’s Prime Minister Golda Meir in 1970, “There are no Palestinians,” epitomized this attitude.

Towards the end of the 1980s, as a result of the first Intifada, the situation improved somewhat in the West with the humanization of the Palestinians in the media and their introduction into the field of Middle Eastern Studies as a legitimate subject matter.

In Israel, Palestinian affairs in those years, academically or publicly, were still discussed only by those who had been intelligence experts on the subject, and who maintained close ties with the security services and the Israeli Defense Force. This perspective erased the Nakba as a historical event, preventing local scholars and academics from challenging the overall denial and suppression of the catastrophe in the world outside the universities' ivory towers.

The mechanisms of denial in Israel are effective because they cover the citizen’s life from cradle to grave. They assure the state that its people do not get confused by facts and reality, or view reality in such a way that it does not create moral problems.

Cracks in this wall of denial first appeared in the 1980s. Since 1982, with Israel’s invasion of Lebanon, the wide exposure of Israeli war crimes raised troubling questions in Israel and the Western media about the Jewish State’s self-image of being the only democracy in the Middle East, or as a community belonging to the world of human rights and universal values.

But it was the emergence of a critical historiography in Israel in the late 1980s, known as the “new history,” which re-located the Nakba at the center of academic and public debate about the conflict, legitimizing the Palestinian narrative after it had been portrayed for years as sheer propaganda by Western

journalists, politicians and academicians.

The challenge to the Zionist presentation of the 1948 war appeared in various areas of cultural production: in the media, academia and popular arts. It affected the discourse both in the U.S. and Israel, but it never entered the political arena. The “new history” was no more than a few professional books written in English, only some of them translated into Hebrew, which made it possible for anyone wishing to do so to learn how the Jewish State had been built on the ruins of the indigenous people of Palestine, whose livelihood, houses, culture and land had been systematically destroyed.

In Israel, only in the media and through the educational system were people directed hesitantly towards taking a new look at the past; the establishment did everything it could to quash these early buds of self-awareness and recognition of Israel’s role in the Palestinian catastrophe.

Outside the academic world, in the West in general, and in the U.S.A. and Israel in particular, this shift in the academic perception had little impact. In America and in Jewish Israel, terms such as “ethnic cleansing” and “expulsion” are still today totally alien to politicians, journalists and common people alike. The relevant chapters of the past that would justify categorically such definitions are either distorted in the recollection of people, or totally absent.

In several European countries, new initiatives appeared in the 1990s by pro-Palestinian N.G.O.s to recast Israel’s role in the plight of Palestinian refugees; their effect on government policies is still too early to judge.

A similar movement emerged in the United States, where in Boston in April 2000 the first ever American Right of Return Conference was convened with over 1,000 representatives from all over the country in attendance. But so far their message has failed to reach Capitol Hill, The New York Times or the White House. The events of September 11, 2001 have put an end to the new trend and have revived

the old anti-Palestinianism in America.

The Peace Process

Even before the U-turn in American public opinion after 9/11, the new history of 1948's ethnic cleansing had no impact on the Palestine/Israel peace agenda.

At the center of these peace efforts was the Oslo Accord that began in September 1993. The concept behind this process was, as in all previous peace endeavours in Palestine, a Zionist one. The Oslo Accord was conducted according to the Israeli perception of peace—from which the Nakba was totally absent. The Oslo formula was devised by Israeli thinkers from the Jewish peace camp, people who ever since 1967 were playing an important role in the Israeli public scene. They were institutionalized in a popular movement "Peace Now" that had several parties on their side in the Israeli parliament. In all their previous discourses and plans they had totally evaded the 1948 issue and sidelined the refugee questions. They did the same in 1993 and this time with the dire consequences of raising hopes of peace as they seemed to have found a Palestinian partner to a peace plan that buried 1948 and its victims.

When the final moment came, and the Palestinians realized not only that there would be no genuine Israeli withdrawal from the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip, but that there would be no solution to the refugee question, they rebelled in frustration.

The climax of the Oslo negotiations—the Camp David summit meeting between then Prime Minister of Israel Ehud Barak and Yasir Arafat in the summer of 2000—gave the false impression that it was offering an end to the conflict. Palestinian negotiators had put the Nakba and Israel's responsibility for it at the top of their list of demands, but this was totally rejected by the Israeli team that succeeded in enforcing its point of view on the summit.

To the Palestinian side's credit, we should say that at least for a while the catastrophe of 1948 was brought to the attention of a local, regional, and to a certain extent global, audience. Yet its continued de-

nial in the peace process stands as the main explanation both for its failure and for the ensuing second uprising in the occupied territories.

Indeed, the Nakba had been so efficiently kept off the agenda of the peace process that when it suddenly appeared on it, the Israelis felt as if a Pandora's box had been pried open in front of them. Their worst fear was that Israel's responsibility for the 1948 catastrophe would now become a negotiable issue. The "danger" was immediately confronted. In the Israeli media and parliament, a consensus was reached that no Israeli negotiator would be allowed even to discuss the Right of Return of the Palestinian refugees to the homes they had occupied before 1948. The Knesset passed a law to this effect, and Barak made a public commitment to it on the stairs of the plane that was taking him to Camp David.

Now, after the events of September 11, 2001 and the outbreak of the second Intifada with its waves of suicide bombers, an unholy coalition of neo-conservatives, Christian Zionists and the pro-Israeli lobby in the States has maintained a firm grip over the American media's presentation of the conflict in Palestine. This coalition helps Israel to get away with policies, past and present, which, if pursued by other nations, would brand them as pariah states.

Looking Ahead, As We Look Back

As one who has been personally involved in the struggle against the denial of the Nakba in Israel, I look back over the attempts that I and others have made to introduce the Nakba onto the Israeli public agenda with mixed feelings.

I detect cracks in the wall of denial that surrounds the Nakba in Israel, cracks that have come about as a result of the debate on the "new history" in Israel and the new political agenda of the Palestinians in Israel. This atmosphere has also been helped by a clarification of the Palestinian position on the refugee issue towards the end of the Oslo peace process.

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THE ETHNIC CLEANSING OF PALESTINE

A'AQER, located 5.6 miles SW of Ramlah. Pop. 5,000. Obliterated in 1948. Jewish settlement of QIRYAT EQRON built on its 3,305 acres.

A'LAAR, located 12.4 miles west of Bethlehem. Pop. 40. Obliterated in 1948. Jewish settlement of MATTA' built on its 3,089 acres.

ABDAH, located 31 miles south of Beersheba. Pop. 150. Obliterated in 1948. Jewish settlement of SEDE BOQER built on its 133 acres.

ABEL AL QAMH, located 20.5 miles NNE of Safad. Pop. 330. Obliterated in 1948. Jewish settlement of Yuval built on its 829 acres.

ABU AL FADL, located 7.5 miles NW of Ramlah. Pop. 510. Obliterated in 1948. Jewish settlements of NAHALAT YEHUDA and NETA'IM built on its 718 acres.

ABU SHOUSHAH, located 5 miles south of Ramlah. Pop. 870. Obliterated in 1948. Jewish settlement of BET UZIEL built on its 832 acres.

ABU SHOUSHAH, located 3 miles NNW of Tiberius. Pop. 1,240. Obliterated in 1948. Its 2,250 acres were added to the Jewish kibbutz GINNOSAR.

ABU SHOUSHAH, located 15.5 miles SE of Haifa. Pop. 720. Obliterated in 1948. Its 2,240 acres were added to the Jewish settlement of MISHMAR HA'EMEQ.

ABU ZURAIQ, located 14 miles SE of Haifa. Pop. 550. Obliterated in 1948. All 1,623 acres confiscated.

AJJOUR, located 15.5 miles NW of Haifa. Pop. 3,730. Obliterated in 1948. Jewish settlements of AGUR, GIV'AT YESHA'YAHU and ZAFRIRIM established on its 14,544 acres.

AJNAJOUL, located 9.3 miles SE of Ramlah. Pop. 140. Obliterated in 1948. All 2,850 acres were confiscated.

AL ABBASIYAH, located 15.5 miles NE of Safad. Pop. 830. Obliterated in 1948. All 3,857 acres were confiscated.

AL ABBASIYAH, located 8 miles east of Jaffa. Pop. 5,650. Obliterated in 1948. All 3,857 acres were confiscated.

ALASHRAFIA, located SW OF Beisan. Pop. 230. Obliterated in 1948. All 1,300 acres were confiscated.

AL BARRIAH, located 4.7 miles SE of Ramlah. Pop. 510. Obliterated in 1948. Jewish settlement of AZARYA built on its 708 acres.

AL BASHTEWAH, located 3 miles NE of Beisan.

Pop. 1,560. Obliterated in 1948. Jewish settlement of NEWEUR built on its 4,625 acres.

AL BASSAH, located near the Lebanese border. Pop. 4,000. Obliterated with its two churches in 1948. Jewish settlement of NAHAL BEZET built on its 6,315 acres.

AL BIRAH, located north of Beisan. Pop. 260. Obliterated in 1948. All 1,717 acres were confiscated.

AL BIRWAWH, located 5.6 miles east of Acre. Pop. 1,460. Obliterated in 1948. Jewish settlement of AHIHU built on its 3,346 acres.

AL BURAIJ, located 15.5 miles WSW of Jerusalem. Pop. 720. Obliterated in 1948. All 4,770 acres were confiscated.

AL BURAIKAH, located 24 miles south of Haifa. Pop. 290. Obliterated in 1948. All 725 acres were confiscated.

AL BURJ, located 2 miles NW of Ramlah. Pop. 480. Obliterated in 1948. All 1,177 acres were confiscated.

AL BUTAIMAT, located 21 miles SE of Haifa. Pop. 110. Obliterated in 1948. All 1,080 acres were confiscated.

AL BUTAYHA, located 8 miles SSE of Safad. Pop. 650. Obliterated in 1948. Its village lands are now used by the Jewish settlement of ALMAGOR, established in 1961.

AL BUWAZIYAH, located 18.6 miles NE of Safad. Pop. 510. Obliterated in 1948. All 3,655 acres were confiscated.

AL DALHAMIYAH, located 9.3 miles SSE of Tiberius. Pop. 390. Obliterated in 1948. All 627 acres incorporated into the Jewish settlement of ASHDOT YAAQOV.

AL DUHAYRIYYA/KHIRBAT, located 4 miles NE of al-Ramla. Pop. 100. Depopulated in 1948. Its 335 acres are fenced to serve as animal pasture.

AL DAMOUN, located 6.8 miles SE of Acre. Pop. 1,310. Obliterated in 1948. All 4,768 acres were confiscated.

AL DARBASHIYYAH, located 12.4 miles NE of Safad. Pop. 310. Obliterated in 1948. Jewish settlement of GONEN built on its 721 acres.

The remaining 423 towns and villages are found in our booklet **The Colonization of Palestine: Lest the Civilized World Forget**. To order, please see Book Catalog on page 13.

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As a result, after more than 60 years of repression, it is today more difficult in Israel to deny the expulsion and destruction of the Palestinians in 1948. This relative success, however, has brought with it two negative reactions:

The first reaction has been from the Israeli political establishment, with the Sharon government, through its minister of education, beginning the systematic removal of any textbook or school syllabus that refers to the Nakba, even marginally. Similar instructions have been given to the public broadcasting authorities.

The second reaction has been more disturbing and has encompassed wider sections of the public. Although a considerable number of Israeli politicians, journalists and academics have ceased to deny what happened in 1948, they continue to justify it publicly, not only in retrospect but also as a prescription for the future. The idea of "transfer" has entered Israeli political discourse openly for the first time, gaining legitimacy as the best means of dealing with the Palestinian "problem."

Indeed, were I asked to choose what best characterizes the current Israeli response to the Nakba, I would stress the growing popularity of the Transfer Option in Israeli public mood and thought.

The Nakba now seems to many in the center of the political map as an inevitable and justifiable consequence of the Zionist project in Palestine. If there is any lament, it is that the expulsion wasn't completed in the early years.

The fact that even an Israeli "new historian" such as Benny Morris now subscribes to the view that the expulsion was inevitable and should have been more comprehensive helps to legitimize future Israeli plans for further ethnic cleansing.

Transfer is now the official, moral option recommended by one of Israel's most prestigious academic centers, the Center for Interdisciplinary Studies in Herzeliya, which advises the government. It has ap-

peared as a policy proposal in papers presented by senior Labor Party ministers to their government. It is openly advocated by university professors, media commentators, and few now dare to condemn it. Even the former leader of the majority in the U.S. House of Representatives, Dick Armey, said he believed that Palestinians living in the West Bank should be removed.

A circle has thus been closed. When Israel took over almost 80 per cent of Palestine in 1948, it did so through the ethnic cleansing of the original Palestinian population. The country's politics are now dominated by three parties, Likud, Labor and Kadima, all of whom share the same view about what to do with the rest of Palestine. They wish to strangle the Gaza Strip and annex half of the West Bank, while bisecting the other half into small cantons into which the Palestinians from the annexed part would eventually be transferred.

This is ethnic cleansing by other means, and it seems that all the politicians who subscribe to it enjoy wide public support. Judging from the most recent actions taken by the Israeli Knesset, such as prohibiting married Palestinians who come from both sides of the Green Line to settle in Israel, and the new legislation aimed at denying citizenship to anyone who doubts the Jewish character of the state, it seems that the politicians sense, and they may not be wrong in this, that the public mood in Israel would allow them to go even further, should they wish to repeat the ethnic cleansing of 1948.

And this ethnic cleansing extends not only to the Palestinians in the occupied territories but, if necessary, to the one million Palestinians living within Israel's pre-1967 borders.

Since the 40th anniversary of the Nakba in 1988, the Palestinian minority in Israel has associated its collective and individual memories of the catastrophe with the general Palestinian tragedy in a way that it never did before. This association has been manifested through an array of symbolic gestures, such as memorial services during Nakba commemo-

ration day, organized tours to deserted or formerly Palestinian villages in Israel, seminars on the past, and extensive interviews with Nakba survivors in the press.

Through its political leaders, NGOs and media outlets, the Palestinian minority in Israel has been able to force the wider public to take notice of the Nakba. All this public debate cannot help but undercut future peace plans built on denial of the Nakba, such as the Annapolis summit, the Road Map, the Ayalon-Nusseibah initiative, and the Geneva agreements.

Call It What It Is

For many years, the term Nakba seemed a satisfactory term for assessing both the events of 1948 in Palestine and their impact on our lives today. I think, however, it is time to use a different term: the Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine.

The term Nakba does not imply any direct reference to who is behind the catastrophe—anything can cause the destruction of Palestine, even the Palestinians themselves. Not so when the term ethnic cleansing is used. It implies direct accusation and reference to culprits, not only in the past but also in the present. More importantly, it connects policies such as the ones that destroyed Palestine in 1948 to an ideology which is still the basis of Israel's policies towards the Palestinians.

Ethnic cleansing is a crime and those who perpetrate it are criminals. In 1948, the leadership of the Zionist movement, which became the government of Israel, committed a crime against the Palestinian people. That crime was ethnic cleansing.

This is not a casual term but an indictment with far reaching political, legal and moral implications. Its meaning was clarified, as we have noted, in the aftermath of the 1990s civil war in the Balkans. Any action by one ethnic group meant to drive out another ethnic group with the purpose of transforming a mixed ethnic region into a pure one is ethnic cleansing. An action becomes an ethnic cleansing policy regardless of the means employed to obtain it. Every

method—from persuasion and threats up to expulsions and mass killings—justifies the attribution of the term to such policies. Consequently, the victims of ethnic cleansing are both people who left out of fear and those forced out as part of an on-going operation.

The above definitions and references can be found in the American State Department and United Nations websites. These are the principal definitions that guided the international court in the Hague when it was set to try those responsible for planning and executing ethnic cleansing operations as people who perpetrated crimes against humanity.

The Israeli objective in 1948 was clear and was articulated without any evasions in Plan Dalet that was adopted in March 1948 by the high command of the Hagana. The goal was to take as much land as possible from the territory of Mandatory Palestine and the removal of most of the Palestinian villages and urban neighborhoods from the coveted future Jewish State.

The execution was even more systematic and comprehensive than the plan anticipated. In a matter of seven months, 531 villages were destroyed and 11 urban neighborhoods emptied. The mass expulsion was accompanied by massacres, rape and imprisonment of men (defined as males above the age of ten) in labor camps for periods over a year.

Such a policy is defined in international law as a crime against humanity which the U.S. State Department believes can only be rectified by the repatriation of all the people who left, or were expelled, as a result of the ethnic cleansing operations.

The political implications of such a statement is that Israel is exclusively blameable for the making of the Palestinian refugee problem and bears legal as well as moral responsibility for the problem.

The moral implication is that the Jewish State was born out of sin—like many other states, of course—but the sin, or the crime, was never admitted. Worse, among certain circles in Israel, it is acknowledged and, in the same breath, advanced as a future policy against Palestinians wherever they are.

All these implications were totally ignored by the Israeli political elite and instead a very different lesson was derived from the 1948 events: you can, as a state, expel most of Palestine's population, destroy half its villages and get away with it. The consequences of such a lesson were inevitable: the continuation of the ethnic cleansing policy by other means. In Israel proper, between 1948 and 1956, Palestinian citizens were expelled from dozens of villages, 300,000 Palestinians have been transferred to the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, and a measured, but constant, cleansing is still going on in the Greater Jerusalem area.

As long as the political lesson is not learned, there will be no solution for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The issue of the refugees will fail any attempt, successful as it may be in any other parameters, to reconcile the two conflicting parties. This is why it is so important to recognize the 1948 events as an ethnic cleansing operation, so as to ensure that a political solution will not evade the root of the conflict: the expulsion of the Palestinians.

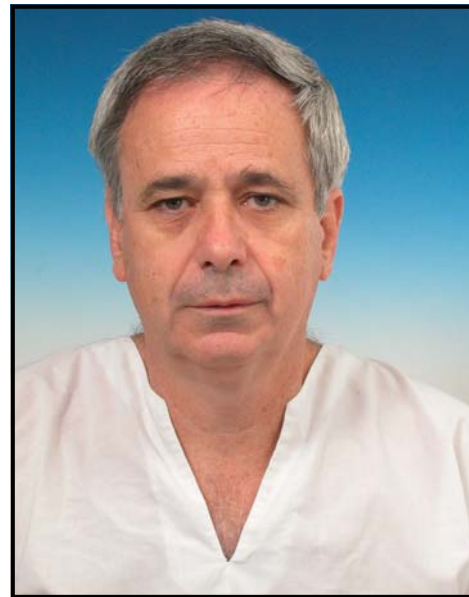
The acknowledgement of past evils is not done in order to bring criminals to justice, but rather to bring the crime itself to public attention and trial. The final ruling will not be retributive—there will be no punishment—but rather restitutive—the victims will be compensated. The most reasonable compensation for the Palestinian refugees was stated clearly in December 1948 by the U.N. General Assembly in its resolution 194: the unconditional return of the refugees and their families to their homeland (and homes where possible).

As long as the moral lesson is not learned, the state of Israel will continue to exist as a hostile enclave at the heart of the Arab world. It would remain the last reminder of the colonialist past that complicates not only Israel's relationship with the Palestinians, but with the Arab world as a whole.

When and how can we hope for these lessons to be learned and absorbed into the effort to bring peace and reconciliation in Palestine? First, of course, not much can be expected to happen as long as the

present brutal phase of the occupation of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip continues. And yet alongside the struggle against the occupation—with the positive development of the B.D.S. option (Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions) being adopted as the main strategy forward by civil society in the occupied territories and by the International Solidarity Movement—the effort to relocate the 1948 ethnic cleansing at the center of the world's attention and consciousness has to continue.

On the 60th anniversary we—Palestinians, Israelis and whoever cares for this land— should demand that Israel's 1948 crime against humanity be included in everyone's history books so as to stop the present crimes from continuing before it is too late. ■



Link author
Ilan Pappé

In Memoriam

We are saddened to announce the death of Lachlan Reed, an AMEU board member since 1994. An entrepreneur, educator, and philanthropist, Lach also served as a trustee of the American University of Cairo and the International College in Beirut.

He was an imposing man, with imposing ideas, and the energy to see them to completion — as the minutes of our meetings will attest.

We will miss him.

—John Mahoney

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Chomsky, N.	The Fateful Triangle	1999	578	\$22.00	\$16.95	United States, Israel, and the Palestinians.
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Eldar, A. & Zertal	Lords of the Land	2007	531	\$29.95	\$15.50	Inside account of Israel's settlement policy.
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Lucille M. Ablan

Lucille Ablan was born in 1928, in Minnesota, the only child of Lebanese immigrants. For most of her life she suffered from ataxia, a painful neuromuscular disease. Her father founded a successful linens and clothing import business and, when he died in 1962, Lucille, through hard work and determination, built on that success. Lucille also received from her father awareness of the plight of the Palestinians and an ability to advocate persuasively for their rights.

Our records show that she first subscribed to *The Link* in 1984 and that she maintained her subscription until her death in October 2004. My regret is that, during those 20 years, while we exchanged letters, I never got to know her. By all accounts, she was a gentle, compassionate, thoughtful person. And generous. That she remembered AMEU in her will causes us to reflect on a bedrock truth: our work is possible only through the hard work and magnanimous spirit of others.

John F. Mahoney

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