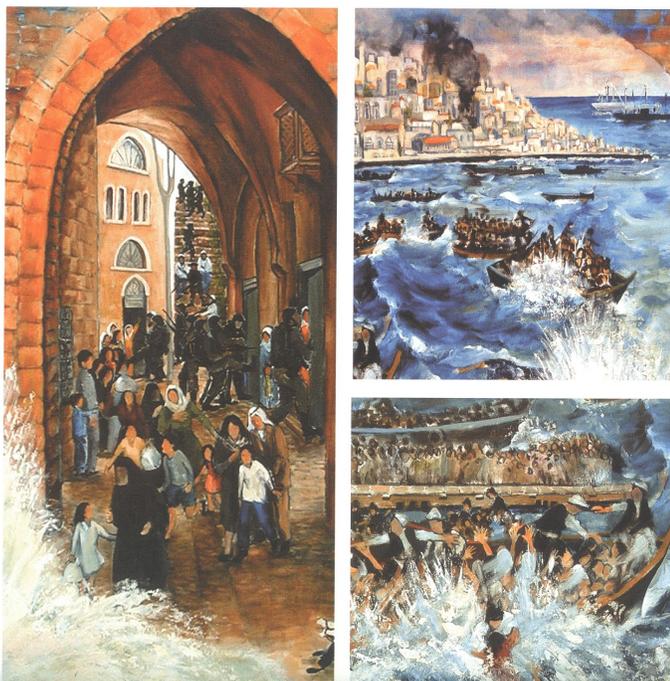


Clarifying Essential Questions

- Do Palestinians want to “drive Israeli Jews into the sea?”
- What about Palestinian terrorism and its threat to Israel’s security?

Question: Do Palestinians want to “drive Israeli Jews into the sea?”

Answer: The persistent appearance of this question obscures the reality: who *has already* been pushed into the sea? In 1947-1948 Zionist militia forced over 750,000 Palestinians from their ancestral homes using terrorist tactics to induce panic. City dwellers and villagers alike felt their only choice was to flee or be killed. Zionist forces committed over 30 massacres designed to drive out the



local inhabitants.

Orders given by Mordechai Maklef (who later became the Israeli army Chief of Staff) to the Carmeli Brigade in Haifa were typical: “kill any Arab you encounter; torch all inflammable objects and force doors open with explosives.”¹ Over 85,000 Palestinians living in Haifa and Jaffa were forced to exit their cities through the local seaports. Some tried to escape on small fishing boats while the Zionist militia attacked with rockets and guns. An eyewitness reported: “Men stepped on their friends and women on their own children. The boats in the port were soon filled with living cargo. The overcrowding in them was horrible. Many turned over and sank with all their passengers.”² Others found no place in a boat and

¹ Ilan Pappé (2006) *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine*, Oneworld Publications, 95.

² Walid Khalidi, “Selected Documents on the 1948 War,” cited in Pappé, 96. See also <http://www.palestineremembered.com/Jaffa/Jaffa/>

“were literally pushed into the sea.”³ The paintings above are by Palestinian artist Tamal Akham.

Question: What resources did refugees manage to bring with them?

Answer: Palestinian bank assets were frozen by the British Mandate Authority immediately before the Zionist offensive against the Palestinians, leaving fleeing Palestinians without their funds to support themselves. Families became impoverished and dependent upon the newly established United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) for food, housing, and schooling for children.

Question: How did the world react to this expulsion?

Answer: In 1948 and the years following, Palestinians who attempted to return were frequently killed by the Israeli military.⁴ Israel has failed to implement Article 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention, UN Resolution 338, or other UN resolutions that ensure the right of war refugees to return to their own homes. These Palestinians, having reasonably assumed they would return to their homes when the conflict had abated, were reduced to perpetual refugee status.

Question: How did Palestinians themselves react to this expulsion?

Answer: Palestinians initially sought to recapture their lost homes and land by armed resistance, but since 1988, when Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat made his historic announcement to accept the right of Israel to live in peace within secure and recognized boundaries, most Palestinians have concurred. What Palestinians have not relinquished is the right of return of refugees, a legal right granted to individuals that cannot be eliminated by the actions or decisions of any state. The right of return calls for either physical restoration to one’s former residence or financial compensation for the losses.

At least two Palestinian groups, Hamas and Islamic Jihad, claim the right to establish an Islamic theocracy in all of Palestine—almost a mirror image of the Zionist goal of de-Arabizing all of “the Land of Israel.” Given the reality of Israeli military power and the willingness of all the member states of the Arab League to accept a peace based on the pre-1967 borders, the realization of the goals of Hamas and Islamic Jihad are highly unlikely.

Question: Do Palestinians have the capacity to push the Israelis into the sea?

Answer: No. Israel’s claim that the Palestinians seek to push the Jews of Israel into the sea has been made so often and over generations, that it may have become an embedded “truth” in the minds of Americans. Myth has become reality; but the fact is: it is Palestinians who have been driven out of their homes

³ Pappé, 103. See plates 8 and 12 for pictures of Palestinians in the sea.

⁴ Pappé, 189.

and off their property. While the phenomenon began in 1947, it continues to the present day.

What about Palestinian terrorism and its threat to Israel's security?

Question: What is terrorism and who has engaged in it in Israel/Palestine?

Answer: Terrorism is the systematic use of violence or the threat of violence to create a general climate of fear in a population and thereby to bring about a particular objective. Both Israelis and Palestinians have committed terrorism against each other.

Question: How have Israelis been terrorists?

Answer: Zionism has had as its ultimate objective the cleansing of the land of Palestine, known as Eretz Israel (the Land of Israel). Initially, the three Jewish underground paramilitary groups, Haganah, the Stern Gang, and Irgun terrorized Palestinians to flee prior to the founding of the Israeli state. Terrorism was also used by the Israeli military to drive the indigenous non-Jewish Palestinians—Christians and Muslims—from their homes, villages, towns, cities, and farm land. In the years since 1948, many observers have described Israeli military actions as “state terrorism” in that violence is used—with far greater weaponry and resources than is available to Palestinian armed combatants—to terrorize civilians for political ends.

Question: Why has not more been said about this?

Answer: Not wishing to acknowledge that they had forcefully expelled some 750,000 Palestinians (75% of the population in the part of Palestine that became the state of Israel in 1948-1949), the Israelis claimed that Palestinians left their homes of their own free will, sometimes in response to their leaders' directions. This common myth has been generally discredited and discarded, but it continues to emerge as an unfounded assertion. In any case, international law ensures refugees' right to return, regardless of the reasons for their original flight. When displaced Palestinians attempted to return, they were prevented, as the young Jewish state sought to maximize both territorial and demographic gains for the Jewish population. A majority of the displaced Palestinians ended up living in refugee camps in the West Bank, Jordan, Gaza, Lebanon, and Syria.

Question: How have Palestinians been terrorists?

Answer: International law gives Palestinians the right to defend themselves against an occupying power. Armed struggle to drive out what they consider to be European invaders or colonialists is not terrorism. But international law does not sanction attacks on Israeli civilians, either by suicide bombings or Qassam rockets. The armed struggle has not been successful. Instead, Palestinians

have continually lost more and more of their land to Israeli settlers who since 1967 have built and expanded settlements in the West Bank. Israel also built settlements in Gaza which they abandoned in 2005, resettling these Israelis on confiscated Palestinian land in the West Bank. Only a negotiated peace that is just will bring an end to terrorism.

Additional Resources

Jeff Halper (2008) *An Israeli in Palestine*, Pluto Press.

Adam LeBor (2006) *City of Oranges: Arabs and Jews in Jaffa*, Bloomberg.

Saree Makdisi (2008) *Palestine Inside Out*, Norton.

John B. Quigly (1990) *Palestine and Israel: A Challenge to Justice*, Duke University Press