

NAKBA

The Process of Palestinian Dispossession



The UN Conciliation Commission estimated that 726,000 Palestinians (75% of the Arab population of Palestine) had fled outside Palestine ("1948 refugees") while 32,000 remained within the armistice lines. Some 531 villages and towns were destroyed or resettled with Jews. The total losses of destroyed or confiscated Palestinian property is estimated at US\$209 billion. In addition to the refugees, there are internally displaced Palestinians who were expelled from their villages – located in what became Israel – during the 1948 War. At the end of the war, they numbered some 30-40,000 people within Israel who were not allowed to return to their homes and were placed under military rule to facilitate the expropriation of their land. Until today, Israel does not recognize internally displaced Palestinians, whose number is estimated today at 263,000-300,000.¹⁹

In 1950, 914,221 refugees were registered with UNRWA. In 1967, some 300,000 Palestinians were displaced from the West Bank and Gaza Strip ("1967 displaced persons"), including approximately 175,000 already-registered UNRWA refugees who became refugees for a second time.

Today, the total 1948 refugee population is estimated at 5.5 million, including 4 million registered with UNRWA and 1.5 million who either simply did not register or who did not need assistance at the time they became refugees. In addition, there are 263,000 internally displaced (of 1948) and some 773,000 1967 displaced persons.²⁰



19 BADIL Center, Bethlehem.
20 PLO Negotiations Affairs Department, Factsheet on Palestinian Refugees, May 2003.

Unfulfilled Commitment

Israel was admitted into the UN on 11 May 1949 upon the condition that it would implement UN Resolution 194, which was passed by the General Assembly in December 1948:

"The refugees wishing to return to their homes and live at peace with their neighbors should be permitted to do so at the earliest practicable date, and... compensation should be paid for the property of those choosing not to return and for loss of or damage to property which, under principles of international law or in equity, should be made good by the Governments or authorities responsible."

Anxious for membership to the United Nations, Israel agreed to the repatriation of 100,000 Palestinian refugees. In keeping with its traditions of abiding by an agreement until it becomes irrelevant to their need and then ignoring their obligations with total impunity, the Israeli government never fulfilled these requirements once its position in the UN General Assembly had been secured.

