



76 Years of The Nakba

May 2024



London | Washington

Contents

01

The Nakba of 1948

3

02

**Massacres of Palestinians
Since 1948**

5

03

**The Nakba Since
7 October 2023**

9

04

The Nakba Ongoing

11

*

Footnotes

13

01

[← BACK TO CONTENTS](#)

The Nakba of 1948



© Bettmann/Getty Images

01

The Nakba of 1948

On 15 May, Palestinians commemorate Al-Nakba, meaning ‘the catastrophe’ in Arabic.¹ Al-Nakba refers to the violent expulsion of roughly three quarters of all Palestinians from their homes and homeland by Zionist militias and the new Israeli army during the establishment of the state of Israel, from 1947 to 1949.²

Although 15 May 1948 became the official day for commemorating Al-Nakba, armed Zionist groups had launched the process of displacement of Palestinians much earlier.³ In fact, by 15 May 1948, half of the total number of Palestinian refugees had already been forcefully expelled from their country.⁴

Al-Nakba was a deliberate and systematic act intended to establish a Jewish majority state in Palestine.⁵ The roots of Al-Nakba lie in the emergence of political Zionism in the late 1800s when some European Jews decided that the solution to antisemitism in Europe and Russia was the establishment of a state for Jews in Palestine.⁶ They began emigrating to Palestine as colonists, where they started dispossessing indigenous Palestinians.⁷

Between 750,000 and one million Palestinians were expelled from their homeland and made refugees by Zionist militias and the new Israeli army during

Israel’s establishment (1947-49), amounting to approximately 75% of all Palestinians.⁸

Many massacres of Palestinians were carried out by Zionist militias and the Israeli army in 1948.⁹ For example, over 100 Palestinians were massacred in Deir Yassin on 9 April 1948 by Zionist militias, led by future Israeli prime ministers Menachem Begin and Yitzhak Shamir.¹⁰ Other Zionist massacres of Palestinians during 1948 included the Abu Shusha Massacre, Tantura Massacre, Lydda Massacre, Saliha Massacre, and Al-Dawayima Massacre.¹¹

More than 400 Palestinian cities, towns, and villages were systematically destroyed by Zionist militias and the new Israeli army or repopulated with Jews between 1948 and 1950.¹²

As a direct result of Al-Nakba, there are over 7.2 million Palestinian refugees today, most of whom are Nakba survivors and their descendants.¹³ These refugees are displaced across the occupied West Bank, East Jerusalem, and Gaza, and neighbouring Arab countries such as Lebanon, Jordan, and Syria.¹⁴ These Palestinian refugees have been denied their right to return to their homes and homeland since 1948.¹⁵

02

[← BACK TO CONTENTS](#)

Massacres of Palestinians since 1948



02

Massacres of Palestinians Since 1948

The Israeli occupation forces have regularly engaged in massacres of Palestinians since 1948 and watch idly as Israeli citizens carry out pogroms and attacks.

Timeline

1953 Qibya Massacre

Between 250 to 300 Israeli soldiers, led by Ariel Sharon, launched an assault on the village of Qibya in the occupied West Bank.¹⁶ Israeli forces used explosives to demolish dozens of buildings throughout the village, and massacred over 69 Palestinian villagers, two-thirds of whom were women and children.¹⁷ The devastating attack also resulted in the destruction of 45 houses, a school, and a mosque.¹⁸

1956 Kafr Qasim Massacre

On 29 October 1956, the Israeli government and military decided to impose a curfew on the Arab villages near the border with Jordan.¹⁹ At 16:30 that day, a border police sergeant informed the mayor of the village of Kafr Qasim that a curfew would be imposed starting at 17:00 the same day.²⁰ Hundreds of villagers who had left home in the morning to go to work had no way of knowing about the curfew until they returned home.²¹

The soldiers tasked with carrying out the order in Kafr Qasim were informed that they “should shoot to kill at any person seen outside their home after 17:00, making no distinction between men, women, children and those returning from outside the village”.²²

1956 Kafr Qasim Massacre cont.

When villagers returned to their homes after 17:00, border police stopped them on the western side of the village.²³ Soldiers made them get out of their vehicles and cars, or off their bicycles, and began shooting at them at close range.²⁴ They killed forty-nine residents of Kafr Qasim (including children) in just one hour.²⁵

When the Israeli government and military command learned that such a huge number of villagers had been killed, including men, women, and children, they used a variety of tactics to attempt to cover up the horrific massacre.²⁶

1956 Khan Yunis Massacre

On 2 November 1956, Egyptian forces lost all control of the Sinai Peninsula.²⁷ After a heavy bombing campaign on the town, Israeli infantry and tanks entered Khan Yunis the next day to “root out” the presence of the fedayeen (guerrilla fighters).²⁸

Residents were woken up to loudspeakers of the occupation military vehicles, calling for all the men ages 16 to 50.²⁹ The occupation forces were reported taking these men to public squares in a gruesome

Massacres of Palestinians Since 1948 continued...

1956 Khan Yunis Massacre cont.

display of violence, shooting them all.³⁰ Hundreds were killed on the first day of the massacre.³¹

The indiscriminate killings continued until November 12 as the Israeli occupation forces continued their massacres against those in Khan Yunis, its refugee camp, and its villages.³²

The corpses were left for hours, sometimes overnight, before the families were permitted to recover the bodies.³³ UNRWA later assembled a list it regarded as ‘credible’ of the names of 275 people.³⁴ Yet after the withdrawal of the occupation forces from Gaza in March 1957, a mass grave was discovered in the vicinity of Khan Yunis, containing the bodies of 40 Palestinians who had been shot in the back of the head.³⁵

1982 Sabra and Shatila Massacres

Between 16 and 18 September 1982, Palestinian refugees living in Shatila and Sabra refugee camps in Lebanon – along with Lebanese civilians – were attacked by a right-wing Lebanese militia, in coordination with the Israeli army.³⁶ Between 2,000 and 3,500 people were killed.³⁷

An Israeli investigation said the Lebanese Forces militia was directly responsible for the massacre but also held Sharon “personally responsible for ignoring the danger of bloodshed and revenge” and recommended his resignation.³⁸ Sharon resigned from his post but was elected prime minister in 2001.³⁹

In February 1983, the UN commission found that “Israeli authorities or forces were involved, directly or indirectly in the [Sabra and Shatila] massacres”.⁴⁰ The United Nations General Assembly passed a resolution declaring the massacre an “act of genocide”. No Lebanese or Israeli fighter or official was punished for the crimes committed.⁴¹

1990 Al-Aqsa Massacre

The Al-Aqsa Massacre, also known as Black Monday, took place in the Al-Aqsa compound in October 1990, during the third year of the First Intifada.⁴² This tragic event was instigated by Israel’s decision to lay the cornerstone for the presumed Israeli Temple.⁴³ In the ensuing confrontations, Israeli security forces killed 17 Palestinians, and injured more than 150.⁴⁴

1994 Ibrahimi Mosque Massacre

On 24 February 25 1994, a US-born Israeli walked into the Ibrahimi mosque in Hebron armed with an assault rifle.⁴⁵ It was early morning during the holy month of Ramadan, and hundreds of Palestinians were gathered inside, bowed in prayer.⁴⁶

As worshippers kneeled, the attacker opened fire. He reloaded at least once, continuing his barrage for as long as possible before finally being overpowered and eventually beaten to death.⁴⁷ By the time he was stopped, 29 worshippers were killed, and more than a hundred had been injured.⁴⁸

The 29 people killed inside the mosque were not the only Palestinians killed – after the initial attack inside the mosque, more Palestinians were killed by the Israeli army during protests outside the mosque, outside Hebron’s Ahli hospital, and in the local cemetery as the dead were being buried.⁴⁹ Locals estimate the final number of deaths at between 50 and 70 – and around 250 were injured over the course of the day.⁵⁰

2002 Jenin Refugee Camp Massacre

In 2002, Israeli soldiers killed at least 52 Palestinians in the Jenin refugee camp.⁵¹ To cover up their crimes, the Israeli military enforced a siege so that journalists and human rights observers were not able to enter.⁵²

Massacres of Palestinians Since 1948 continued...

2008-2009 Attacks on Gaza

In late 2008, Israel launched its first major assault on the enclave, Operation Cast Lead. At least 920 Palestinian civilians were killed.⁵³

2012 Attacks on Gaza

In 2012, Israel launched another offensive, called Operation Pillar of Defence, which included air attacks and a ground operation.⁵⁴ Over eight days, 87 civilians were killed, including 35 children and 14 women.⁵⁵

2014 Attacks on Gaza

In July 2014, the Israeli military killed more than 2,100 Palestinians in Gaza in a seven-week attack.⁵⁶

2018-2019 Attacks on Gaza

In 2018, Palestinians in Gaza engaged in protests known as the Great March of Return at Israel's border wall around Gaza.⁵⁷ More than 170 Palestinians were killed in several months of protests.⁵⁸

2021 Attacks on Gaza

In May 2021, over 260 Palestinians were killed in Israeli attacks on Gaza.⁵⁹

03

[← BACK TO CONTENTS](#)

The Nakba Since 7 October 2023



© Ibraheem Abu Mustafa/Reuters

03

The Nakba Since 7 October 2023

The genocide in Gaza since 7 October, which has killed over 35,000 Palestinians, is the largest massacre in Palestinian history since the 1948 Nakba.⁶⁰ The genocide has also destroyed many Palestinian homes and displaced over a million Palestinians, even resulting in some Palestinians fleeing to Egypt to escape the attacks. These events bear many resemblances and parallels with the Zionist genocide of Palestinians in 1948.⁶¹

Over 20 United Nations independent experts reiterated their concerns about “grave violations committed by Israel against Palestinians in the aftermath of 7 October 2023, particularly in Gaza, point to a genocide in the making”. They illustrated evidence of increasing genocidal incitement by Israeli officials and a public, overt intent to “destroy the Palestinian people under occupation”, along with loud calls for a “second Nakba”.⁶² Such remarks clearly demonstrate Israel’s deliberate intention to replicate the trauma and devastation of 1948 today.⁶³

04

[← BACK TO CONTENTS](#)

The Nakba Ongoing



© Ahmad Salem/Bloomberg via Getty Images

The Nakba Ongoing

While the Zionist project fulfilled its dream of creating “a Jewish homeland” in Palestine in 1948, the process of ethnic cleansing and displacement of Palestinians never stopped.⁶⁴ Israel has committed systematic and continuous massacres against Palestinians since 1948, both inside Palestine and abroad, such as against Palestinian refugees in Sabra and Shatila refugee camps in Lebanon.⁶⁵ In addition, the Israeli Mossad organised the assassinations of many Palestinian ambassadors and intellectuals abroad.⁶⁶

Therefore, the current genocide in Gaza – although unique in intensity due to Israel’s military technology – should not be seen as a second Nakba, but rather part of an ongoing Nakba since 1948.⁶⁷ Zionism, and the continuation of the state of Israel is predicated upon an ongoing Nakba that kills and displaces Palestinians, destroys their homes and land, and forcibly prevents them from returning to their land.⁶⁸

Footnotes

- 1-2 ‘Quick Facts: The Palestinian Nakba (“Catastrophe”)’ *IMEU* (5 April 2023) available at <https://imeu.org/article/quick-facts-the-palestinian-nakba>
- 3-4 ‘The Nakba did not start or end in 1948’ *Al Jazeera* (23 May 2017) available at <https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2017/5/23/the-nakba-did-not-start-or-end-in-1948>
- 5-10 ‘Quick Facts: The Palestinian Nakba (“Catastrophe”)’ *IMEU*
- 11 ‘A history stained with innocent blood: A chronicle of Israel’s massacres in Palestine’ *Ahram Online* (3 November 2023) available at <https://english.ahram.org.eg/News/510520.aspx>
- 12-15 ‘Quick Facts: The Palestinian Nakba (“Catastrophe”)’ *IMEU*
- 16-18 ‘A history stained with innocent blood: A chronicle of Israel’s massacres in Palestine’ *Ahram Online*
- 19-26 ‘Kafr Qasim, 1956: Israel’s Army Massacres Its Own Peaceful Citizens’ *PalQuest* available at <https://www.palquest.org/en/highlight/14334/kafr-qasim-1956>
- 27-35 ‘Khan Yunis: Remembering the Forgotten Palestinian Massacre’ *Palestine Chronicle* (9 November 2021) available at <https://www.palestinechronicle.com/khan-yunis-rememberingthe-forgotten-palestinian-massacre/>
- 36-41 ‘Sabra and Shatila massacre: What happened in Lebanon in 1982?’ *Al Jazeera* (16 September 2022) available at <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/9/16/sabra-and-shatila-massacre-40-years-on-explainer>
- 42-44 ‘A history stained with innocent blood: A chronicle of Israel’s massacres in Palestine’ *Ahram Online*
- 45-50 ‘Remembering the Ibrahimi Mosque massacre of 1994’ *Wafa: Palestinian News and Info Agency* (25 February 2022) available at <https://english.wafa.ps/Pages/Details/128189>
- 51-52 ‘We must never forget Israel’s massacre in Jenin’ *Middle East Monitor* (14 April 2020) available at <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20200414-we-must-never-forget-israels-massacre-in-jenin/>
- 53 ‘Timeline: Israel’s attacks on Gaza since 2005’ *Al Jazeera* (7 August 2022) available at <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/8/7/timeline-israels-attacks-on-gaza-since-2005>
- 54-55 ‘The Gaza Strip: Under siege, at war with Israel’ *Al Jazeera* (27 October 2023) available at <https://www.aljazeera.com/gallery/2023/10/27/the-gaza-strip-under-siege-at-war>
- 56 ‘Timeline: Israel’s attacks on Gaza since 2005’ *Al Jazeera*
- 57-58 ‘Six Months on: Gaza’s Great March of Return’ *Amnesty International* (19 October 2018) available at <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/campaigns/2018/10/gaza-great-march-of-return/>
- 59 ‘Timeline: Israel’s attacks on Gaza since 2005’ *Al Jazeera*
- 60-61 ‘Palestinians mark 76th year of the Nakba amid potentially even larger catastrophe’ *The Business Standard* (15 May 2024) available at <https://www.tbsnews.net/hamas-israel-war/palestinians-mark-76th-year-nakba-amid-potentially-even-larger-catastrophe-851386>

Footnotes continued...

- ⁶²⁻⁶³ ‘Palestine: Preventing a Genocide in Gaza and a New “Nakba”’ *United Nations* (21 November 2023) available at <https://unric.org/en/palestine-preventing-a-genocide-in-gaza-and-a-new-nakba/>
- ⁶⁴ ‘The Nakba did not start or end in 1948’ *Al Jazeera*
- ⁶⁵ ‘Israel, 75 years of massacres, abuse and displacement’ *Middle East Monitor* (11 May 2023) available at <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20230511-israel-75-years-of-massacres-abuse-and-displacement/>
- ⁶⁶ ‘A history of violence: Israel’s targeted assassinations’ *The New Arab* (28 November 2018) available at <https://www.newarab.com/analysis/history-violence-israels-targeted-assassinations>
- ⁶⁷⁻⁶⁸ ‘The Nakba did not start or end in 1948’ *Al Jazeera*