

The Nakba, the Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine, and the Nature and Role of Israel Today

النكبة
"Nakba" in Arabic

May 15 is commemorated as the anniversary of the Nakba—the ethnic cleansing of Palestine that was accomplished through Zionist massacres and terror. This year, the Nakba was marked with unprecedented protests by thousands of Palestinians and others on four of Israel's borders. The Israeli military killed at least a dozen of these courageous unarmed protesters.

In the United States, hardly anyone has even *heard* of the Nakba. By December 1947, the Zionist settlers in what is now Israel began mass expulsions of Palestinians. This wave of terror (Nakba is Arabic for "catastrophe") continued into the early months of 1949. During the Nakba almost a million Palestinians were brutally forced from their land, villages and homes, fleeing with only the possessions they could carry. Many were raped, tortured and killed (see *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine* by Ilan Pappé). Hundreds of villages were destroyed, and given Hebrew names. On the blood and bones of such massacres, the state of Israel was built.

The Nakba is not "ancient" or even just "modern history." It frames the daily life of every Palestinian today. The flurry of activity between Israel and the U.S. is the latest saga in what is called a "peace process." But that "peace process," and its rhetoric of "two-state solutions" and "compromises on both sides" covers up and essentially turns upside down the basic questions of justice and injustice, right and wrong. Its underlying assumptions are the legitimacy of a Zionist state, and the permanent removal of the Palestinian people from their country. It is based on the assumption that the state of Israel is basically one of the "good guys" in the world, at least for everyone but the Palestinians. That is profoundly *not* the case.

Israel has been a catastrophe for the Palestinian people. They have suffered an all-out murderous war against them in which hundreds of Palestinian villages have been obliterated and massacres of civilian populations have taken place. They have been exiled from their homeland and subjected to an attempt to write their very national existence as a people and culture out of existence. For generations they have been penned in and confined in refugee camps, living under military occupation in the few territories that they managed at first to hold onto. They face constant humiliation, daily aggression and murder, savage political repression and torture, and periodic murderous military assaults.

Israel has been a catastrophe for the people of the world. Look up Israel's "special relationship" with apartheid South Africa when that openly racist regime was isolated and exposed. Look up the role of Israel in the "dirty war" of terror waged by Argentina's fascist (and virulently anti-Semitic) junta against radicals and dissidents from 1976 to 1983. Or Israel's role in backing the Shah of Iran. Or look up what happened in Guatemala, from 1978 to 1984 when the Christian fundamentalist butcher Ríos Montt killed at least 180,000 Mayan peasants. Villagers were beheaded, systematically raped, pregnant women were slaughtered, and Mayan children were sold or given as slaves to functionaries of the fascist Guatemalan regime. In 1982, as exposures of these massacres were coming to light, the *New York Times* reported that U.S. "Secretary of State Alexander M. Haig Jr. prompted Israel to do more in Guatemala." Israel played an essential and central role in the epic slaughter—supplying transport to remote villages, war planes, military training, "advisors," and 10,000 Uzis. In 1982, under the direction of the U.S. military, Israeli commanders devised and helped implement a scorched earth policy (burn all, kill all) for the Guatemalan highlands.



May 15, 2011, protesters at the Rafah border crossing between Egypt and the Gaza Strip. Some 1.5 million Palestinians driven from what is now Israel, and their families, live in Gaza.

From 1981 to 2004, the U.S. sent \$1.8 billion a year in military support to Israel; since 2004 that number has been raised to \$2.4 billion. Part of the bargain is that **the U.S. often utilizes Israeli military and intelligence as a proxy to distance itself from some of its most odious and barbaric crimes around the world.**

Israel has been a catastrophe for Jewish people. The Holocaust was one of the great crimes of modern history. "Never Again" *should* mean that "never again shall it be allowed that crimes against humanity can go on and people will be able to plead ignorance or impotence as an excuse for doing nothing to stop those crimes." Instead, Zionism and the state of Israel express and are used to indoctrinate and enlist Jewish people in the outlook of "never again will my people be fucked over, and *anything* that is justified as preventing that is allowable." There is a world of moral difference between those two outlooks.

The U.S. & Israel: Shared Values, Common Interests. Whenever you hear representatives of the U.S. ruling class talk about Israel, you will always hear them invoke the "special relationship" and "shared values" between the United States and Israel. One of the "shared values" that they don't mention is that both countries were founded on the basis of ethnic cleansing, and in the case of the USA the genocide of the indigenous peoples. And the ongoing subjugation of oppressed peoples remains foundational to both societies. Today, the essence of the "shared values" and "common interests" of the U.S. and Israel is maintaining the domination of U.S. imperialism over a world of sweatshops and environmental disaster, poverty and prostitution, torture, genocide, and unjust wars.

The interests of the vast majority of the people of the world—of all nationalities and religions—do not lie with the imperialist system, with the USA at the head of it, and Israel as a key enforcer. The interests of the vast majority, and ultimately of all humanity, can only be served through overthrowing that system.

See online resources and documentation at revcom.us/israel... and/or look up the assertions here yourself.

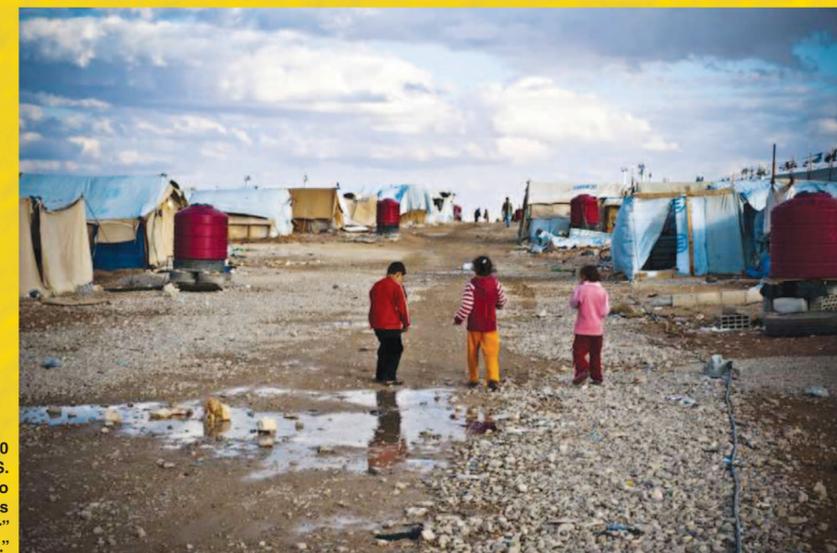


A young Palestinian looks out on Israeli-destroyed buildings in Gaza, 2009. More than 1,000 people were massacred in Israel's one-sided war on Gaza.

Right: Al Tanf Refugee Camp in Syria near the Iraq border. More than 1,000 Palestinian refugees fleeing targeted violence in Iraq in the aftermath of the U.S. invasion lived in tents in summer temperatures of 100 degrees and near zero winter weather—for four years. The camp was closed in 2010, with residents relocated to yet another refugee camp in Syria that the UN calls "slightly better" but "not sustainable."



Palestinians forced from the city of Haifa by Israeli forces in 1948—nearly a million Palestinians were driven from their homeland during the "Nakba."



After the Holocaust, the worst thing that has happened to Jewish people is the state of Israel.

Bob Avakian, *Basics* 5:12