THE CATASTROPHE

This growing violence culminated in Israel’s ruthless 1947-49 "War of Independence," in which at least 750,000 Palestinian men, women, and children were expelled from their homes by numerically superior Israeli forces – half before any Arab armies joined the war. This massive humanitarian disaster is known as ‘The Catastrophe,’ al Nakba in Arabic.\(^8\)

Zionist forces committed 33 massacres and destroyed 351 Palestinian towns. Author Norman Finkelstein states: "According to the former director of the Israeli army archives, 'in almost every village occupied by us during the War... acts were committed which are defined as war crimes, such as murders, massacres, and rapes'. Uri Milstein, the authoritative Israeli military historian of the 1948 war, goes one step further, maintaining that 'every skirmish ended in a massacre of Arabs.'"\(^9\)

INJUSTICE CONTINUES

Over the 60 years since Israel's founding on May 14, 1948, this profound injustice has continued. Palestinian refugees are the largest remaining refugee population in the world.

1.3 million Palestinians live in Israel as "Israeli citizens," but despite their status as citizens, they are subject to systematic discrimination. Many are prohibited from living in the villages and homes from which they were violently expelled, and their property has been confiscated for Jewish-only uses. In Orwellian terminology, Israeli law designates these internal refugees as “present absentees.”\(^12\)

In 1967 Israel launched its third war and seized still more Palestinian (and other Arab) land. Israel also attacked a U.S. Navy ship, the USS Liberty, killing and injuring over 200 Americans, an event that remains largely covered-up today, despite efforts by an extraordinary array of high-level military officers and civilian officials to expose it.\(^13\)

Israel occupied the West Bank and Gaza Strip – the final 22% of mandatory Palestine – and began building settlements for Jewish Israelis on land confiscated from Palestinian Muslims and Christians. It has demolished more than 24,145 Palestinian homes since 1967. In 2005 Israel returned Gazan land to its owners, but continues to control its borders, ports, and air space, turning Gaza into a large prison, where 1.5 million people are held under what a UN Human Rights Commissioner described as “catastrophic” conditions.

Over 7,000 Palestinian men, women, and children are imprisoned in Israeli jails under physically abusive conditions (many have not even been charged with a crime) and the basic human rights of all Palestinians under Israeli rule are routinely violated. Some prisoners tortured by Israel have been American citizens. In the violence that began in fall, 2000 through Feb. 5, 2009, Israeli forces killed 6,348 Palestinians; Palestinian resistance groups killed 1,072 Israelis. Israel’s military, the fourth most powerful on earth possesses hundreds of nuclear weapons.\(^14\)

AMERICAN INVOLVEMENT

American taxpayers give Israel more than $10 million per day\(^b\) even though surveys reveal that 72% of Americans oppose taking sides on Israel-Palestine. Because of Israel’s powerful US lobby, Congress gives far more money to Israel than to all of sub-Saharan Africa put together. In its 70 years of existence, Israel, the size of New Jersey, has received more U.S. tax money than any other nation. While most Americans are unaware of these facts (studies have shown that media report on Israeli deaths at rates up to 13 times greater than they report on Palestinian deaths) governmental actions are making Americans responsible for a continuing catastrophe of historic proportions – and which is, in addition, creating extremely damaging enmity to the US itself. Israel partisans have played a significant role in promoting US attacks on Iraq and Iran.\(^16\)

As more Americans learn the facts, there is a growing bipartisan, multi-ethnic movement to counter Israel’s US lobby, which has long held a vice grip on American Mideast policies.

* Footnotes online at IAMericansKnew.org