



Al Nakba 1948 - Nahr Al Barid Refugee Camp © FREEPAL



A Resource Toolkit on
**60 YEARS OF
PALESTINIAN SUFFERING**
(1948-2008)

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INTRODUCTION

Dear Activist,

May 15th marks the establishment of the state of Israel, a day of celebration for some and deep sorrow for others. Sixty years ago, the new state resulted in the dispossession of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians who inhabited the land.

The Palestinian legacy of this “Nakba” or “Catastrophe” is the scattered lives of refugees, forced to live in squalid camps in the West Bank, Gaza, Lebanon, Syria and Jordan. Many still hold on to the hope of returning to their homes and villages, even though the Israelis have successfully wiped out many reminders of the original and rightful owners of the land.

In addition, those Palestinians who remained in Israel (often referred to as “Israeli Arabs” in an attempt to strip them of their identity as Palestinians) live as second class citizens in Israel. In the West Bank, where Jewish settlers are given rights denied to the local population, Palestinians live under an apartheid system. Illegal settlement activity continues apace. Restrictions on movement prohibit normal living, affecting all levels of society.

The common Israeli practice of using collective punishment against innocent people has reached a level that many thought impossible as the siege against Gaza continues unabated. By cutting off supplies of fuel and other basic necessities, Israel has reduced the life of Gazan families to that of caged animals.

Palestinian families are left to struggle with staggering poverty; over two-thirds of Palestinians live on less than \$2 a day. Rising rates of malnutrition and anemia reflect this dire situation; hundreds of thousands of Palestinians are now dependant upon food assistance. The continuous deprivation of a population of over 6 million people in the West Bank Gaza and Israel proper is hardly cause for celebration.

The Nakbah deserves to be commemorated by giving voice to those who have lost everything and continue to suffer. Without hope for relief from 60 years of misery, the cycle of violence will only continue.

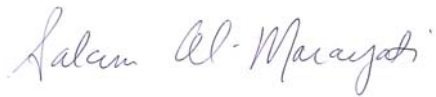
In the U.S., the Palestinian narrative continues to be marginalized and denied. The just resolution of the conflict in the Middle East can only be achieved through fair representation of all sides. As individuals committed to justice who are called to speak out on behalf of those who are oppressed, American Muslims and others can play an important role in raising awareness about both the past and present suffering of the Palestinians.

You can help. On May 15th, 2008 - recognize the significance of Al Nakba. Hold a community event, educate others on the impact Israeli policies have had on the Palestinian people. Urge your community to sign onto the End the Palestinian Crisis Petition, ask your Congressional representatives to ensure humanitarian aid reaches the Palestinian people.

This Toolkit will help you to do the following:

- Educate yourself and others on the impact of the Israeli occupation of Palestine.
- Facilitate an event in your community; inform others of Al Nakba and its impact on Israeli-Palestinian peace negotiations.
- Take action; send a petition to your Congressional representative demanding that the humanitarian crisis affecting the Palestinian people be immediately addressed.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Salam Al-Marayati".

Salam Al-Marayati
Executive Director

A HISTORICAL TIMELINE OF THE ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN CONFLICT

Source: United Nations

- The Israel-Palestine problem became an international issue towards the end of the First World War with the disintegration of the Turkish Ottoman Empire.
- Palestine was among the several former Ottoman Arab territories which were placed under the administration of Great Britain under the Mandates System adopted by the League of Nations pursuant to the League's Covenant (Article 22).
- All but one of these Mandated Territories became fully independent States, the exception was Palestine where the Mandate sought to implement the "Balfour Declaration" issued by the British Government in 1917, supporting "the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people".
- During the years of the Palestine Mandate, from 1922 to 1947, large-scale Jewish immigration from abroad, mainly from Eastern Europe took place, the numbers swelling in the 1930s with the notorious Nazi persecution of Jewish populations.
- Palestinian demands for independence and resistance to Jewish immigration led to a rebellion in 1937, followed by continuing terrorism and violence from both sides during and immediately after World War II.
- Great Britain tried to implement various formulas to bring independence to a land ravaged by violence. In 1947, Great Britain turned the problem over to the United Nations.
- The UN proposed the partitioning of Palestine into two independent States, one Palestinian Arab and the other Jewish, with Jerusalem internationalized (Resolution 181 (II) of 1947).
- In 1948, one of the two States envisaged in the partition plan proclaimed its independence as Israel.
- In the subsequent 1948 Arab-Israeli war, Israel expanded to occupy 77 % of the territory of Palestine. Israel also occupied the larger part of Jerusalem.
- Over half of the indigenous Palestinian population fled or were expelled. Jordan and Egypt occupied the other parts of the territory assigned by the partition resolution to the Palestinian Arab State which did not come into being.
- In the 1967 war, Israel occupied the remaining territory of Palestine, until then under Jordanian and Egyptian control (the West Bank and Gaza Strip). This included the remaining part of Jerusalem, which was subsequently annexed by Israel.
- The war brought about a second exodus of Palestinians, estimated at half a million. UN Security Council resolution 242 (1967) of 22 November 1967 called on Israel to withdraw from territories it had occupied in the 1967 conflict.
- In 1974, the UN General Assembly reaffirmed the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people to self-determination, national independence and sovereignty, and to return.
- The following year, the General Assembly established the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People. The General Assembly conferred on the PLO the status of observer in the Assembly and in other international conferences held under United Nations auspices.
- In June 1982, Israel invaded Lebanon with the declared intention to eliminate the PLO. A cease-fire was arranged. PLO troops withdrew from Beirut and were transferred to neighboring countries after guarantees of safety were provided for thousands of Palestinian refugees left

behind. Subsequently, a large-scale massacre of refugees took place in the camps of Sabra and Shatila.

- In September 1983, the International Conference on the Question of Palestine, which was widely attended, adopted inter alia the Geneva Declaration containing the following principles: the need to oppose and reject the establishment of settlements in the occupied territory and actions taken by Israel to change the status of Jerusalem, the right of all States in the region to existence within secure and internationally recognized boundaries, with justice and security for all the people, and the attainment of the legitimate, inalienable rights of the Palestinian people.
- In December 1987, a mass uprising against the Israeli occupation began in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (the intifada). Methods used by the Israeli forces during the uprising resulted in mass injuries and heavy loss of life among the civilian Palestinian population.
- On 30 October 1991, a Peace Conference on the Middle East was convened in Madrid with the aim of achieving a just, lasting and comprehensive peace settlement through direct negotiations along 2 tracks: between Israel and the Arab States, and between Israel and the Palestinians, based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) (the "land for peace" formula).
- A series of subsequent negotiations culminated in the mutual recognition between the Government of the State of Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization, the representative of the Palestinian People, and the signing by the two parties of the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements in Washington on 13 September 1993, as well as the subsequent implementation agreements, which led to several other positive developments, such as the partial withdrawal of Israeli forces, the elections to the Palestinian Council and the Presidency of the Palestinian Authority, the partial release of prisoners and the establishment of a functioning administration in the areas under Palestinian self-rule.
- In 2000 and 2001, Israelis and Palestinians held talks on a final status agreement, which proved inconclusive.
- In 2000, the controversial visit by Ariel Sharon of the Likud to Al-Haram Al-Sharif (Temple Mount) was followed by the outbreak of the second intifada. A massive loss of life, the reoccupation of territories under Palestinian self-rule, military incursions, extrajudicial killings of suspected Palestinian militants, suicide attacks, rocket and mortar fire, and the destruction of property characterized the situation on the ground.
- Israel began the construction of a West Bank separation wall, located within the Occupied Palestinian Territory, which was ruled illegal by the International Court of Justice in 2004. In 2002, the Security Council adopted resolution 1397 affirming a vision of two States, Israel and Palestine, living side by side within secure and recognized borders.
- In 2003, the Middle East Quartet (US, EU, Russia, and the UN) released a detailed Road Map to a two-State solution, endorsed by Security Council resolution 1515.
- In 2005, Israel withdrew its settlers and troops from the Gaza Strip as part of its "Disengagement Plan," while retaining effective control over its borders, seashore, and airspace.
- Following the Palestinian Legislative Council elections of 2006, the Quartet concluded that future assistance to the Palestinian Authority would be reviewed by donors against the new Government's commitment to non-violence, recognition of Israel, and acceptance of previous agreements.

AL NAKBA – EYEWITNESS ACCOUNTS OF 'THE CATASTROPHE' AND OTHER EFFORTS

EYEWITNESS ACCOUNTS

- Read first hand testimonies of those that lived through Al Nakba by visiting:
<http://www.nakba-archive.org/testimony.htm>

OTHER AL NAKBA COMMEMERATIONS

- Below please find a link to an effort in the West Bank to fly 21,915 black balloons over Jerusalem during one of the official Israeli independence celebrations (21,915 is the number of days in 60 years). Learn more about this endeavor at: <http://www.60yearsofnakba.org/>.
- In New York City, students at Columbia University in New York have been commemorating *Al-Nakba* by posting flyers depicting decimated Palestinian villages around their campus, and the Morningside Heights neighborhood in New York City. You can read more about this (and download the signs they created) on their website : <http://www.columbianakba.com/>.

4 STEPS TO HOSTING AN AL-NAKBA VIGIL OR EVENT

1) CHOOSE A TIME AND PLACE

- Decide on a location to host your event, a public park, local community center or mosque may be a good choice.
 - Estimate how many people may attend based on how the event is publicized and the reason for it. Make sure you have enough room to accommodate the crowd.
 - If you decide on a vigil - keep in mind that most vigils are held outside and include candlelight. Be mindful of weather conditions and have an alternate location lined up in case of inclement weather.
- Once you have secured permission to use the space, select a time.
 - Keep in mind that May 15th falls on a Thursday, so it may be a good idea to hold the event around 6 or 7 PM, when most of your attendees have returned from work and/or school.
- If you choose a vigil, inform local police. Check to see if you need a permit or what other city ordinances apply if you are using public property.

2) PUBLICIZE YOUR EVENT

- Contact the local media and give them the details of the event. They may announce it on their newscast and even send a reporter out to cover it. Make sure they have the correct details.
 - Use the Al Nakba - Sample Press Release template (included on Pg. 9 of this Kit) as an example.
- Spread the word. Post fliers, send emails and make calls. Most vigils occur spontaneously or by word-of-mouth, so get the word out.
 - Use the Al Nakba - Sample Flyer (included on Pg.10 of this Kit) as a template.

3) GET EVENT SUPPLIES

- If you choose an indoor event, light refreshments are always a nice touch. Provide drinks, healthy snacks, cups, plates, and napkins.
- If you choose a candlelight vigil, provide extra candles and plastic cups.
 - Create signs and placards for attendees to hold.
 - Use the suggested Al Nakba - Sample Slogans (on Pg. 11 of this Kit) for signs and placards.

4) PLAN THE PROGRAM

- Prepare a short program. Open with a brief introduction to Al Nakba and your program, put on your main event (this can include a speaker/entertainment/discussion with Q&A/moment of silence) and then close by thanking your audience for attending.
 - Your main event can include music, singing, talks and/or speeches.

- Whatever you decide, keep the program short - people usually do not stay focused for long programs.
- If you choose to feature a discussion, use the Al Nakba – Historical Timeline (provided on Pgs. 3-4, of this Kit); the Al-Nakba – Eyewitness Accounts (provided on Pg. 5 of this Kit); and the Al- Nakba Talking Points (provided on Pgs. 7-8 of this Kit) to create your own personal talking points and discussion guide.
- What ever you decide, ask event attendees to sign the End the Palestinian Crisis Petition to be sent to your Congressional representative. Use the End the Palestinian Crisis Petition template on Pg. 12 of this Kit.

SUGGESTED TALKING POINTS ON THE CONFLICT

ISRAEL

- Centuries of anti-Semitism in Europe lie at the heart of the political Zionist movement and the creation of the state of Israel.
- Before the Holocaust, Zionists were not welcomed by the Reform Movement in Europe, and were repeatedly told by Reform leaders to take their dreams of a national homeland elsewhere.
- The Holocaust was one of the worst crimes against humanity in modern history. Jewish immigration to Palestine was at its highest after the rise of Hitler in 1933, when the subsequent harsh oppression against Jews began in earnest.
- Israel declared its independence on the evening of May 14, 1948.

AL NAKBA

- Al Nakba, (“the catastrophe”) refers to the 1948 flight or expulsion of an estimated 700,000 Palestinian refugees, and the destruction and depopulation of at least 418 Palestinian villages due to Israeli independence and the ensuing Arab-Israeli War.
- Israel is widely acknowledged as a viable, independent and sovereign state whose citizens have the right to live in peace within secure borders; however, MPAC views Israel's occupation of all Palestinian territory captured as a result of the June 4, 1967 war as illegal and unacceptable in accordance with U.N. Security Council Resolution 242, which affirmed the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by war, and calls for Israeli withdrawal from the territories occupied in the recent conflict including the West Bank, Gaza Strip, East Jerusalem, and the Syrian Golan Heights in exchange for peace.
- MPAC reiterates its support for the creation of an independent, sovereign Palestinian state with full access to all resources, as a necessary step towards peace.

ILLEGAL ISRAELI SETTLEMENTS

- MPAC calls for the dismantling of all Israeli settlements in the West Bank, Jerusalem, and Golan Heights.
- These settlements are illegal Jewish colonies that have been established in the West Bank and Golan Heights.
- The settlements divide Palestinian land physically through the use of bypass, Jewish-only roads, checkpoints, and military outposts wherever a settlement exists, justifying an intense Israeli military presence in the Occupied Territories under the pretense of "protecting Israeli civilians" (who should not be there in the first place).
- MPAC believes that the frequent argument that settlements are necessary to promote Israel's security is demonstrably false.

THE WALL

- Israel's wall has now cut into Palestinian lands in the West Bank, cutting off Palestinian towns from each other, and in effect creating Palestinian bantustans.
- While the pretense to erect the wall was to prevent terrorism, the actual route of the wall shows that its real purpose is to allow Israel to annex large tracts of Palestinian land.
- This has led to the engulfment of large sections of Palestinian lands and diversion of water, actually fueling more despair among Palestinians; the wall separates people from their land, the route severely breaches their right to freedom of movement, their right to property and their right to gain a livelihood.

- Furthermore, the International Court of Justice ruled that the sections of the wall's route that were set with the objective of defending the settlements are illegal. The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights are designed to protect those under occupation with rights to health, education and family life. The wall clearly breaches these cornerstones of international law.
- This wall will continue to damage the Middle East peace process as well as devastate the lives of already poverty-stricken Palestinians.

INTERNATIONAL CONSENSUS

- The Saudi Initiative of 2002, one of the most promising peace agreements proposed, offered full normalization of diplomatic relations between Israel and all Arab states in exchange for full withdrawal to 1967 borders but was completely ignored by Israel and the international community.
- MPAC affirms United Nations Resolutions 181, 242, and 338 and the international consensus that East Jerusalem is occupied territory, and that any claims Israel makes of "annexation" or the so-called "indivisibility" of Jerusalem should not be recognized.
- People of all three faiths represented in Jerusalem should have full and equal access to their holy sites, which must be respected, maintained and protected.

RIGHT TO RESIST

- MPAC recognizes, based on the Geneva Convention, the right of occupied people to resist occupation and applies this same principle to the Palestinians.
- In short, the Palestinians have the moral and legal right to resist the Israeli occupation and MPAC supports that right.
- MPAC recognizes that there are and should be limitations to various forms of resistance and has therefore taken a stance against the targeting of innocent civilians and non-combatants for several years. In particular, we have consistently opposed suicide bombers, because the traditional understanding of Islam prohibits suicide and killing civilians.
- Realizing the futility of a military solution for the conflict, MPAC believes that nonviolent resistance is the most recommended course of action. Indeed, the majority of Palestinians engage in non-violent resistance on a daily basis.

RIGHT TO RETURN

- MPAC recognizes, in accordance with U.N. resolution 194, the right of return for all Palestinian refugees to the land from which they were expelled.
- The principle of the right of return cannot be negotiated – it is not only a moral right, but a practical right.
- Additionally, it will be the responsibility of the Israeli government to provide adequate compensation to Palestinian refugees who have been dispossessed of their land.
- Good faith negotiation is the proper method to handle this difficult issue.

HUMANITARIAN CRISIS

- In 2006, the Palestinians successfully completed the most free, fair and transparent elections in the Middle East.
- Israel and the U.S. responded to this democratic election by immediately refusing to negotiate with the elected government and shortly thereafter began a policy of punishing the Palestinian people for having elected the people of their choice.
- This collective punishment came in the form of cutting off aid and depriving people of wages and desperately needed humanitarian aid.

- If the United States was able to deal with the Communist regime of the former Soviet Union for over 50 years, then the U.S. should be able to deal with any democratically elected government in the world.
- The Palestinian people should never face collective punishment for voting democratically. Instead, they have been starved and brutally attacked by the Israeli government and its military.
- While Zionism may have saved many Jewish lives, it destroyed many Palestinian ones, and permanently disrupted the equilibrium of the Middle East while denying the inhabitants of Palestine the chance to form their own nation-
- The American Muslim community not only finds this inequitable, but more importantly, believes that this attitude will hamper successful negotiation.
- Jews and Muslims will only make peace on the basis of mutual respect. A key aspect of this necessary respect is to first acknowledge that the Palestinians have suffered a historical calamity.

SAMPLE PRESS RELEASE ON AL-NAKBA

For Immediate Release
[DATE HERE]

Contact:
[NAME, EMAIL, PHONE #]

[HEADLINE HERE]

[CITY, STATE, DATE HERE] — [GROUP NAME HERE] will be holding a **[TYPE OF EVENT HERE]**, at **[TIME AND ADDRESS HERE]**, to commemorate the 60th anniversary of Al Nakba. Members of the public and the media are invited to attend.

May 15th is a date marked by Israelis as the establishment of a homeland for the Jewish people. For Palestinians, Al Nakba (or “the catastrophe”) is a day that represents the dispossession of hundreds of thousands. This event tells the story of Palestine, and a people made homeless by the birth of a Jewish nation.

As result of over 60 years of conflict, thousands of Israelis and Palestinians have been killed, tens of thousands more have been injured. Thousands of Palestinian homes, farmlands and businesses have been destroyed by Israeli bulldozers and tanks. Government curfews and travel restrictions have resulted in a Palestinian unemployment rate of over 60%. Without jobs, Palestinian families are left to struggle with staggering poverty; over two-thirds of Palestinians live on less than \$2 a day. Rising rates of malnutrition and anemia reflect this dire situation; hundreds of thousands of Palestinians are now dependant upon food assistance.

Join **[NAME OF GROUP HERE]** for a **[TYPE OF EVENT HERE]**, featuring **[DESCRIBE THE NATURE OF THE EVENT HERE]**.

WHAT: **[TITLE OF EVENT]**
WHEN: **[LOCATION OF EVENT]**
WHERE: **[TIME OF EVENT]**

For additional information contact: **[CONTACT INFORMATION HERE]**

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SAMPLE SLOGANS ABOUT AL-NAKBA

- REMEMBER THE VOICES OF PALESTINE - REMEMBER AL NAKBA
- 60 YEARS OF CONFLICT = 60 YEARS OF SORROW
- REMEMBER PALESTINE – SIGN THE PETITION
- SHINE A LIGHT INTO THE DARKNESS - GIVE VOICE TO THE SILENT
- THE SILENCE MUST BE BROKEN – REMEMBER AL NAKBA

'END THE PALESTINIAN' CRISIS PETITION

END THE PALESTINIAN CRISIS PETITION

Dear Senator:

In Spring of 2008, Israel closed all crossings to the Gaza Strip, preventing the delivery of vital humanitarian supplies as well as fuel to the Gaza power station. As of now, international aid workers from organizations such as the United Nations report the rapid growth of a Palestinian food and fuel crisis. As concerned American voters, we insist on immediate US humanitarian aid to Palestine. We ask that you, and fellow members of Congress, put pressure on the Bush administration to use what ever influence possible to facilitate emergency food and fuel delivery to the Palestinian people.

As a result of over 60 years of Israeli/Palestinian conflict, thousands have been killed, tens of thousands more have been injured. Thousands of Palestinian homes, farmlands and businesses have been destroyed by Israeli bulldozers and tanks. Government curfews and travel restrictions have resulted in a Palestinian unemployment rate of over 60%. Without jobs, Palestinian families are left to struggle with staggering poverty; over two-thirds of Palestinians live on less than \$2 a day. Rising rates of malnutrition and anemia reflect this dire situation; hundreds of thousands of Palestinians are now dependant upon food assistance. It is crucial that the US support an immediate end to the collective punishment of the 1.5 million Palestinian residents of the Gaza Strip.

Urge the Bush administration to pursue whatever means at its disposal to bring emergency aid to the Palestinian people. In ending this humanitarian crisis, the US may help to avert another 60 years of violent bloodshed and suffering in Palestine.

Signed,

[SEE REVERSE]

END THE PALESTINIAN CRISIS PETITION

| | FIRST NAME | LAST NAME | CITY | STATE | ZIP | EMAIL |
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