

Even after the declaration of the State of Israel, many people from the Palestinian villages near the city of Jaffa assembled in the two towns of Lydda and Ramla. That was after the end of the armistice in July. The Israelis surrounded the two towns where all those who had fled from the villages were assembled. They told them: 'In 12 hours, if you do not leave, we will shoot you.' I was among these people.

– 'Abd Aziz Saqr, Wihdat Refugee Camp in Amman, Jordan (originally from Salama near Jaffa)



Photo courtesy of UNRWA

Palestinian refugees and internally displaced Palestinians (IDPs) represent the largest and longest-standing case of forced displacement in the world today. On the 60th anniversary of the Nakba (or 'Catastrophe'), the destruction of Palestine and the massive displacement of Palestinians by Israel in 1948, two out of every five refugees in the world are Palestinian. At the beginning of 2007, there were approximately seven million Palestinian refugees and 450,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs), representing 70% of the entire Palestinian population worldwide (9.8 million).

Palestinian refugees include those who became refugees following the first Arab-Israeli war in 1948 and the second Arab-Israeli war in 1967, as well as those who are neither 1948 nor 1967 refugees, but outside the area of former Palestine and unable or unwilling to return owing to a well-founded fear of persecution.

The largest group of Palestinian refugees is made up of those who were displaced or expelled from their places of origin as a result of the Nakba. IDPs include Palestinians who were displaced within Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory (OPT).

Internal displacement continues unabated in the OPT today. Thousands have been forcibly displaced in the Jordan Valley as a result of closure, home demolition and eviction orders, and the threat of displacement hangs over those who re-

Quick Facts

- ▶ More than 7.4 million Palestinians (70%) are refugees or IDPs
- ▶ 6 million Palestinians, 4.5 million eligible for UNRWA assistance, have been refugees since 1948
- ▶ 950,000 Palestinians have been refugees since 1967
- ▶ 80% of refugees live outside of UNRWA's 59 camps
- ▶ More than one-third of registered refugees are under the age of 15
- ▶ Average registered refugee fertility rates are 3.2 children per woman, highest in Gaza and lowest in Syria and Lebanon
- ▶ Labour force participation for refugee men is approx. 70% and 9-19% for refugee women
- ▶ Unemployment ranges from 11% (in Jordan) to 34% (Gaza Strip)
- ▶ Annual per capita income ranges from \$450 (Syria) to \$600 (OPT)
- ▶ Overcrowding is a serious problem for refugees, with many living more than 3 to a room (34% in Jordan to 16-14% in the OPT)
- ▶ 45% of Palestinians in camps and 40% of refugees out of camps in the OPT experience food insecurity



main. Similar patterns of forced displacement are found in Israel, where urban development plans for the exclusive benefit of Jewish communities are displacing indigenous Palestinian communities in the Naqab (Negev) and Galilee.

Palestinian refugees in host countries are also vulnerable to forced displacement. For instance, as a result of the US-led aggression and occupation of Iraq since 2003, persecution has forced over half of the approximately 34,000 Palestinian refugees residing in Iraq to leave the country. Over 31,000 people were displaced from Nahr al-Bared camp in Lebanon in 2007 and most have not returned.

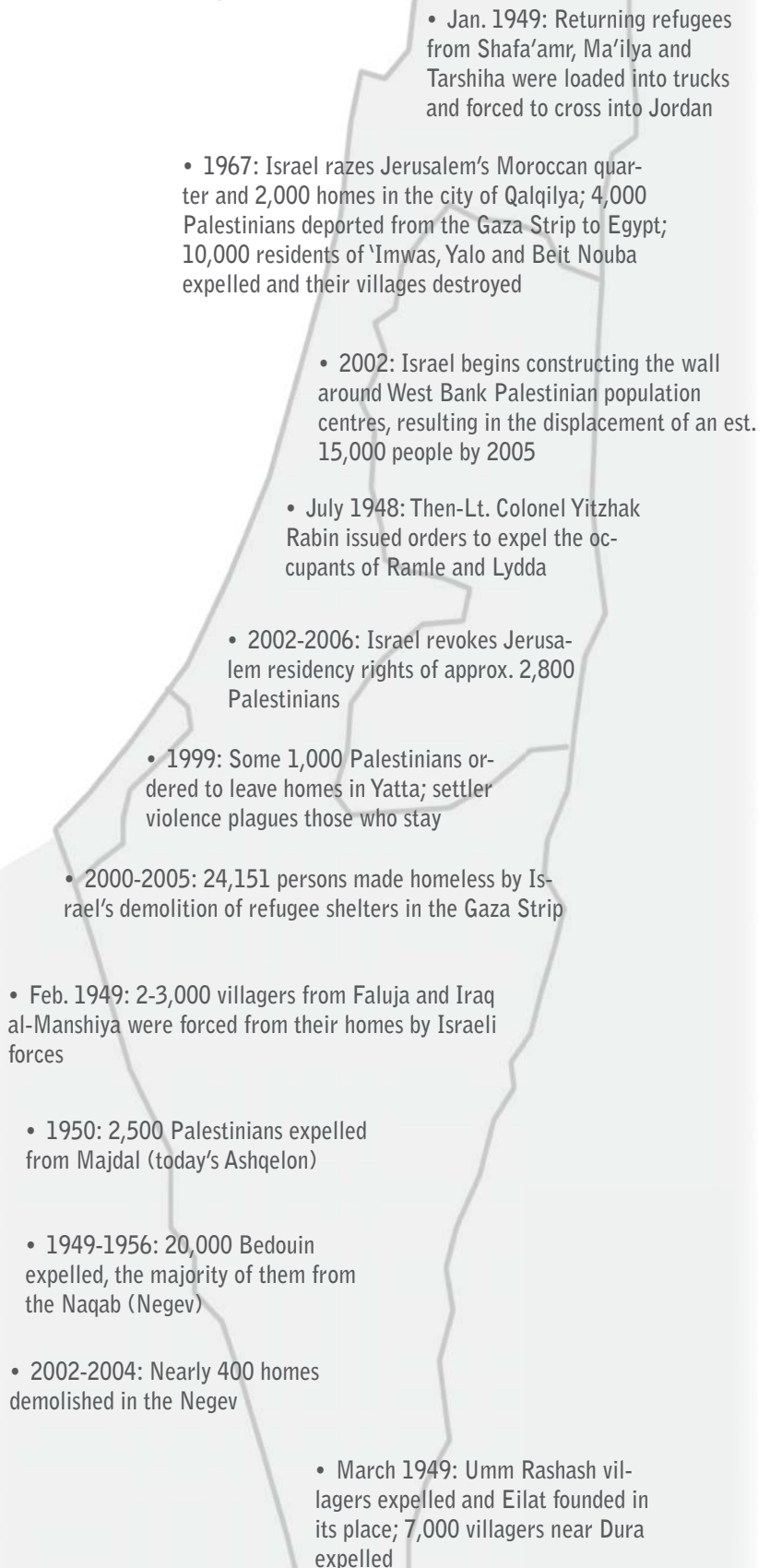
Six decades after their initial forced displacement from their homeland, Palestinian refugees and IDPs still lack access to voluntary durable solutions and reparations (which include return, restitution, compensation) based on international law, UN resolutions and best practice.

“ In Plan Dalet, adopted in March 1948 by the high command of the Hagana (the main Jewish underground in the pre-state days), the Israeli objective of 1948 is clear. The goal was to take over as much as possible of the territory of Mandatory Palestine and remove most of the Palestinian villages and urban neighbourhoods from the coveted territory which would constitute the future Jewish state.... All these characteristics... can only be attributed to an Ethnic Cleansing policy; namely a policy that, according to the UN definition, aims at transforming a mixed ethnic area into a pure ethnic space, where all means are justified. Such a policy is defined under international law as a crime against humanity which the [US] State Department believes can only be rectified by the repatriation of all the people who left or were expelled as a result of the ethnic cleansing operation. ”

– Israeli historian Ilan Pappé

A Map of Displacement

The forced displacement of Palestinians that began in 1948 continues today. Below are a few documented examples.

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- Jan. 1949: Returning refugees from Shafa'amr, Ma'ilya and Tarshiha were loaded into trucks and forced to cross into Jordan
 - 1967: Israel razes Jerusalem's Moroccan quarter and 2,000 homes in the city of Qalqilya; 4,000 Palestinians deported from the Gaza Strip to Egypt; 10,000 residents of 'Imwas, Yalo and Beit Nouba expelled and their villages destroyed
 - 2002: Israel begins constructing the wall around West Bank Palestinian population centres, resulting in the displacement of an est. 15,000 people by 2005
 - July 1948: Then-Lt. Colonel Yitzhak Rabin issued orders to expel the occupants of Ramle and Lydda
 - 2002-2006: Israel revokes Jerusalem residency rights of approx. 2,800 Palestinians
 - 1999: Some 1,000 Palestinians ordered to leave homes in Yatta; settler violence plagues those who stay
 - 2000-2005: 24,151 persons made homeless by Israel's demolition of refugee shelters in the Gaza Strip
 - Feb. 1949: 2-3,000 villagers from Faluja and Iraq al-Manshiya were forced from their homes by Israeli forces
 - 1950: 2,500 Palestinians expelled from Majdal (today's Ashqelon)
 - 1949-1956: 20,000 Bedouin expelled, the majority of them from the Naqab (Negev)
 - 2002-2004: Nearly 400 homes demolished in the Negev
 - March 1949: Umm Rashash villagers expelled and Eilat founded in its place; 7,000 villagers near Dura expelled