

The Truth Is Out About Israel's Cover-up of Nakba Facts

By [Asa Winstanley](#)

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In light of the 73rd anniversary of the Nakba, we repost this article first published in 2019.

Recent news reports have shed light on the lengths to which Israel's security establishment is going in order to cover-up the history of the country's war crimes against Palestinians. A [long piece](#) in Haaretz earlier this month [2019] explained that for the best part of two decades, Israel has had a special military department dedicated to removing certain kinds of documents from publicly accessible archives. The department's name is Malmab, a Hebrew acronym for “Director of Security for the Defence Establishment”.

The documents targeted for the official cover-up seem to include anything related to the Nakba —Catastrophe — of the creation of the state of Israel on Palestinian territory, which saw the forced expulsion by Zionist militias of some 800,000 Palestinians from 1947 onwards. Ever since then, Palestinian refugees have been telling their stories to anyone who will listen.

However, due in large part to typically colonial attitudes towards indigenous peoples, Palestinian refugees' stories were and remain all-too-often unbelievably in the West. Part of the typical racist stereotype imposed upon Palestinians – and indeed Arabs in general – is that they are almost genetically predisposed towards telling lies. One [common racial slur](#) is to accuse someone of being a “lying Arab”.

Israel, a settler-colonial nation seeking to endear itself to the West (and indeed to portray itself as a “Western” nation) has always done its best to propagate this smear. Former Prime Minister Ehud Barak (who's currently seeking a return to politics) once [claimed that lying was a cultural trait of Arabs](#).

They “don't suffer from the problem of telling lies that exists in Judaeo-Christian culture,” he claimed.

Such dehumanising myths about Arab people have consequences. Palestinians were for

decades usually not believed in the West when they told of being subjected to ethnic cleansing in 1948, despite the overwhelming, documented evidence there was of the Nakba, including the work of pioneering Palestinian and other Arab historians such as Walid Khalidi, Constantin Zureiq and Nur Masalha.

The Israeli propaganda lie that the Palestinians left their own country voluntarily in the late forties, often at the behest of Arab leaders, was predominant in many Western histories for decades. Then, in the late 1980s when Israeli historians began to look into newly-opened official Israeli archives, what they found essentially confirmed the Palestinian and Arab narrative. The expulsions did happen; the Palestinians did not leave by choice.

While some of these “New Historians”, such as Benny Morris, for example, claimed that the expulsions were almost an accident of war, others like Ilan Pappé pointed to official documents covering “Plan Dalet” and the “Village Files” to prove that there was a more systemic, intentional operation to remove as many Palestinians as possible from Palestine.

Whatever the full reasons, no one disputes the fact that Israel has always made it a primary aim to prevent the refugees and their offspring from returning. In the [words of Israel's first Prime Minister, David Ben Gurion](#),

“We must do everything to ensure that they never do return.”

Morris – [a proud racist](#) – approves of this goal, while Pappé – an anti-Zionist – does not. It was only after these Israeli historians began to write their histories, that the facts about the Palestinian Nakba started to become more widely accepted in the West.



Al-Shati refugee camp in northern Gaza is home to scores of Palestinians who owned acres before they were forced out of their homes in the Nakba of 1948 [Mohammed Asad/Middle East Monitor]

The lesson that should be learned from this is that indigenous peoples should be believed when they are trying to narrate the facts of their own dispossession. We should not wait for

the oppressor societies to admit, even partially, to their own guilt.

Now, though, even that always partial and conditional admission is being systematically covered up by Israel. As [Ilan Pappé himself explained](#) last week, the Malmab military archives cover-up unit is removing many of the documents that he and the other “New Historians” relied on to reveal the secrets of how Israel perpetrated the Nakba, including the massacres of children, the mass graves and the rapes.

The content of these documents has almost all been reported in books and articles already, and in many cases they have been copied, scanned or preserved digitally. However, as *Haaretz* noted after interviewing the former head of the cover-up unit, the aim is to “undermine the credibility of studies about the history of the refugee problem. In [the unit’s] view, an allegation made by a researcher that’s backed up by an original document is not the same as an allegation that cannot be proved or refuted.”

Although the *Haaretz* investigation has brought Malmab’s efforts to hide the truth to our attention, this has in fact been going on for the best part of two decades.

“Those of us working with Nakba documents,” Pappé pointed out, “... were already aware of the removal of these documents. For many years, for instance, historians were unable to revisit ‘the village files’, which formed an important proof in my argument that the 1948 war was an act of ethnic cleansing.”

In attempting to hide the truth, Israel must know that it is too late. The truth is out about its cover-up of Nakba facts, and it’s not going back into the shadows anytime soon, no matter what the Zionist state and its dirty tricks departments get up to.

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Articles by: [Asa Winstanley](#)

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