

# Rescuing the 1948 Palestinian Mind is Crucial to Achieving Justice for All

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Theme: [Police State & Civil Rights](#)

In-depth Report: [PALESTINE](#)

*We often hear from Palestinians from Gaza and the West Bank on the struggle for freedom from occupation. One group of Palestinians who are not heard from as often is the 1948 Palestinians, those who after the 1948 Nakbe were able to remain within what became the State of Israel. While 750,000 -800,000 Palestinians were ethnically cleansed from their homes during the Nakbe, a very small number were allowed to remain or return [1]. Those Palestinians who were able to remain or return had Israeli citizenship forced upon them and became known as 1948 Palestinians. My lineage descends from these 1948 Palestinians, in the small village of Ilabun, in the north of historic Palestine.*

I have spent most of my life in the United States. The journey to understanding my origin as Palestinian was a long one. This experience has profound implications for people trying to understand the best strategy for pursuing justice for Palestinians. Despite my recent activism and writing, I have not always understood my own identity. The educational system in the United States, while growing up, was in general, quite biased against the Palestinians and our history. The media, for the most part, also did little to educate one on these issues. Having United States citizenship and Israeli citizenship did not in any way promote my understanding of who I am, and where I come from. The summer visits while growing up to Ilabun to see family did little to further my education. The process of true education on this issue began in 2011 and continues today. All of it was done due to my own interest.

Prior to this self-education process, I made many mistakes when discussing the Israeli-Palestinian issues and history. In my defense, I knew next to nothing of my own history and repeated platitudes about peace without any honest understanding of the reality. I felt that somehow I had some kind of confused identity, which everyone around me referred to as "Israeli-Arab." I didn't understand what that meant. Why were we in Israel? Why are "they," referring to Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank, Palestinians, and we, being fellow Arabs, referred to as "Israeli Arabs."

It took a lot of self-education from 2011 onward to finally understand what had happened. Part of the issue that blinded me for so long is that much of the discussion of the issue looks at the problem as if it began in 1967. This history totally ignores the basis of the problem, which is Zionism. The roots of the conflict therefore began long before 1967, and actually long before even 1948, with the early Zionist ideas beginning in the 1880s.

As I devoured material on the history, I finally understood my identity. My questions and feelings which were so confused and conflicted finally were resolved. I finally understood that I was Palestinian. I was just as Palestinian as the Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank. I was just as Palestinian as the refugees and just as Palestinian as the diaspora. We

were all the same people. There is no difference in terms of identity. The only difference is location.

After much time spent in Ilabun and discussing these issues with people, I began to understand what had happened. The program of Zionism requires racism as a prerequisite to create a Jewish majority state in land which is majority non-Jewish. The 1948 Palestinians (my grandparents and their parents, etc) were the first victims during the Nakbe, along with the refugees. Those remaining were put under martial law from 1948-1966. A systematic erasure of our identity has been organized and implemented on all levels (media, education, etc). The suppression of the idea of us being Palestinians was and continues to be the cornerstone of Israeli government policy. The creation of the term "Israeli-Arab" was intended to separate our identity from our fellow Palestinians in the rest of historic Palestine and the Palestinian refugees. I no longer accept this term, which is a colonialist creation intended to further the Zionist aim of ethnically cleansing the maximum amount of land. This is pure divide and conquer strategy.

In the decades since 1948, the Israeli government has continued to maximize isolation of the 1948 Palestinians from the rest of our Palestinian brothers and sisters. In my discussion with fellow 1948 Palestinians who retained their identity (more common in the older generation), and with additional historical self-education, I discovered a disturbing pattern of propaganda and control. The education system has long been the target of the Israeli government, with teacher selection tightly controlled and anti-Zionist teachers excluded as much as possible. Textbooks also have been screened to minimize any possibility of teaching 1948 Palestinians their identity and history. Although the various forms of suppression did not remain the same over the past 67 years, and occasionally became more or less strict, the overall goal of isolating 1948 Palestinians remains the same today as it was in 1948.

Nakbe denial was common and continues today, although it has lessened slightly since the "new historians" of the 1980's and onward. A bit more disturbing is the replacement of some Nakbe denial with Nakbe justification, which seeks to justify the ethnic cleansing of 50% of the population of historic Palestine during the Nakbe.

Through martial law for the 1948 Palestinians from 1948-1966 (very similar to the policies of the occupation in the West Bank today), and a systemic attempt to eliminate the Palestinian identity through government, media, and educational propaganda and control, the 1948 Palestinians have gone through much and continue to suffer greatly.

When coming from the United States to visit Ilabun, I immediately, upon entering historic Palestine, sense that something is wrong. I feel that I am entering a prison. There is something disturbing in the air. I remember, when I was a young child in the 1990s, being questioned in the airport in Tel Aviv about what language I spoke at home. The security official looked at me and with hate-filled eyes, asked me "Do you speak Arabic at home?"

"Yes," I answered, all the while perceiving his eyes as if he had just gotten me to confess to a murder. It was the strangest thing, and at such a young age, with no historical understanding, I simply brushed it off as a strange occurrence. But today, I look back upon it as something deeply disturbing. It was an intentional method to cause the indigenous inhabitants of Palestine to feel unwelcome and hated. The government wanted us to feel that, by letting us in, Israeli security was doing us a favor, allowing us into our homeland. The incident, with that feeling of being hated for admitting to speaking Arabic, has stuck

with me since then.

In 2012, upon leaving to go back to the United States, I experienced the worst airport screening experience in my life in Tel Aviv airport. I remember the security officer stating "We don't care about your health, we only care about security." I remember thinking as I left, "I will never come back here." Later on, when I processed that thought in a historical context, I realized that this is exactly what the Israeli government wants. The government wants to encourage Palestinian emigration. They want to make sure you get that last bit of humiliation and suffering on your way out, just to keep fresh in your memory, in case you ever consider visiting or living in Palestine. On recent trips, I have avoided the Tel Aviv Airport and used the Amman, Jordan airport instead whenever possible.

The point of all of this is to highlight some current issues which I believe are relevant to the struggle for Palestinian rights. There is a unique history of suppression and identity removal that the 1948 Palestinians have experienced which requires significant efforts to overcome. Although I speak mainly from experience in Ilabun, I believe that this unique history has resulted in many 1948 Palestinians not knowing their identity and history. It has led to increasing numbers of 1948 Palestinians being Zionist in their outlook. It has led to rising numbers of 1948 Palestinians hating themselves (self-hating Arabs/Palestinians). It has led to more 1948 Palestinians enlisting in the Israeli army, something which is quite problematic. We have been taught to hate ourselves and to believe that we are inferior to Jews. Obviously, the truth is that all human beings are all equal. There are also many 1948 Palestinians who today celebrate independence day in Israel. The level of self-hatred and/or ignorance of one's history and identity is stunning in such scenes. These people are essentially celebrating their own ethnic cleansing. It will take a lot of effort to reverse the effects of the Zionist propaganda machine of the Israeli government.

In particular, in the last 15 years, I can see some of the indirect effects of all this propaganda on people in the 1948 Palestinian community. While there are many in our community who are struggling valiantly for Palestinian rights and justice, there has been a cumulative effect on many people's psyche. Many people have left (emigrated), feeling hopeless. There are dozens of laws that distinguish between Jews and non-Jews in Israel. [2]. And in terms of the supposedly "democratic" nature of living in Israel, it is illegal for any political party to run for the Knesset unless it believes in the "democratic and Jewish" nature of the state. Basically, this implies that it is illegal for a political party to run for the Knesset unless it is Zionist, and therefore racist.

The sky-high poverty rate among 1948 Palestinians (approximately 53%), combined with constant incitement to hate one's own people from the Zionist media, and the confusion of one's identity, have resulted in numerous psychological and social effects. Crime and organized crime have become an issue, egoism has increased, with a loss of caring about neighbors and the community around them. Principles and ethics have been reduced dramatically, with people more likely to look at economic issues as more important than any other issue. Capitalism has become more common as a guiding force for people in their daily interactions, with price being considered more important than environmental, labor, and ethical standards.

All of these issues have occurred concurrently with the slow loss of the Arabic language. The older 1948 Palestinian generation speaks a relatively complete Arabic. Many Arabic vocabulary terms have been lost in today's generation, which occasionally finds it difficult

to find the words in Arabic, as they only know the word in Hebrew. Other 1948 Palestinians stubbornly hold on to their language as an act of cultural self-preservation in the context of the settler-colonialism of Zionism.

Learning the Hebrew language, and as many languages as possible, is a positive development. I do, however, find it disconcerting that in the context of our Palestinian history, a history that involves ethnic cleansing, occupation, colonialism, and cultural oppression, that many 1948 Palestinians no longer have the ability to speak the complete Arabic language. I am concerned about the deteriorating Arabic vocabulary and saddened at the slow loss of our language, and believe that a revival in our language would be a positive development.

We also have an environmental crisis in some areas where 1948 Palestinians reside. The continual effect of propaganda on people's psyche has resulted in a casual attitude toward polluting the land and littering. People have lost their identity as Palestinians, and they have lost their deep connection with the land which is traditional in Palestinian culture. As more and more of the land has been stolen by the Israeli government, people have become more and more unconcerned with taking care of the Earth and the land of our ancestors. In general, we, as the 1948 Palestinians are losing our connection with the land and the environment, becoming more capitalistic, more individualistic, and more materialistic. Consumerism is becoming more common as well. The combined effects of poverty, ethnic cleansing, environmentally-induced neurological damage, consumerism, capitalism, the destruction of our heritage and connection with the land, the destruction of our identity and self-esteem, have all combined to cause severe environmental problems, particularly in the past 15 years.

The overall world trend of increasingly toxic environments (toxic chemicals, heavy metals, plastics, genetically modified foods, synthetic pesticides/herbicides/insecticides, and electromagnetic fields-blood brain barrier damage from microwave radiation from wireless devices, for example), has strongly contributed to impaired brain activity, among many other negative health, environmental, and social consequences [10, 12-15]. Another contributor to this brain damage and other health problems is the current vaccination program [8-10]. Corrupt multinational corporations which produce these vaccines have severely biased the science on this topic in pursuit of profits at the expense of health. A proper, safe, and effective vaccination program for infants, toddlers, children, adults, and seniors could be designed based exclusively on homeoprophylaxis, which could provide very solid protection with essentially no side effects. A massive study in Cuba related to Leptospirosis demonstrates the potential for such a program based on homeoprophylaxis [7]. Instead, children with undeveloped blood-brain barriers and immune systems (under the age of 2) are given toxic vaccines, causing post-vaccine encephalopathy and autoimmune problems, among other negative results. This brain damage which is increasing due to the toxic environment, particularly, in the younger generation, is contributing to a "carefree" attitude toward everything. Such an attitude does not think twice before dumping a television onto the land. This attitude does not consider the toxic effects of such behavior on the community, and ultimately, themselves. Everyone worldwide is effected by these issues and problems. There are differences in degree of effects based on local and national differences in policies/exposure/legal framework/etc. Certainly, 1948 Palestinians are affected severely by these increasing environmental and health problems.

As I recently walked the path toward my family's ancestral olive grove north of Ilabun, I was

shocked and dismayed by the televisions, computers, electronics, trash, plastics, and other toxic materials thrown on the ground. The toxicity of such dumping is incredibly destructive to our people's health and well-being. We must reverse these negative influences on our health and environment, and reclaim our connection with the land in order to recover as a people. There are encouraging signs on this front in terms of Palestinian cooperative organic farming booming in the West Bank. Unfortunately, the same level of organic fair-trade cooperative movement has not yet occurred among 1948 Palestinians.

I believe strongly in the Boycott Divestment Sanctions (BDS) movement as a method to advance Palestinian rights, and I follow the guidelines to the best of my ability. I call on everyone worldwide to join the BDS movement and promote justice for all. I use the research center [whoprofits.org](http://whoprofits.org) to avoid any company involved with violations of Palestinian human rights [16]. It is essential that all people worldwide, including Arabs, Jews, and all others who care about human rights use their financial resources to promote positive change in the world. Every penny removed from the hands of people involved in abusing Palestinians is a victory for humanity as a whole.

I feel that the enthusiasm for BDS would be higher if 1948 Palestinians were reminded or taught for the first time about their own history and identity. BDS is a positive movement because it moves us toward justice and equal rights for everyone, whether that be in the context of a one-state, two-state, bi-national solution, etc. The name doesn't really matter, whether one calls it Palestine or Israel or some combination of the two. What matters is substance. Equal rights and justice for everyone, including all refugees, is the goal, regardless of race, religion, ethnicity, etc.

If one looks at what has happened to 1948 Palestinians in the past 67 years, it gives an idea of the goals of Zionism for the rest of the Palestinians. Despite making up approximately 20% of the population, 1948 Palestinians only control 2-3% of the land. What this reflects is a massive land theft that occurred not only during the 1948 Nakbe, but long afterwards [6]. Massive land theft occurred to the point that today only 2-3% of land is owned by 1948 Palestinians. 600 Jewish settlements have formed since 1948, while there have been zero new Palestinian settlements [17]. Remember, we are talking about "Israel proper/pre-1967 Israel" here, not the West Bank or Gaza.

Despite the obvious atrocious history and the fact that approximately 53% of 1948 Palestinians suffer under the poverty line today, we have a continued ignorance among many 1948 Palestinians, who having been brain-washed by Zionist propaganda, do not speak the truth. Until we reverse the profound effects of the brain-washing campaign of 67 years, we will not have the full measure of self-Palestinian support for our rights. What is necessary is a massive counter-educational campaign, done on all fronts to reach the 1948 Palestinian. I am concerned that the path that is occurring with 1948 Palestinians will be followed by Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza.

We must remind 1948 Palestinians (or teach them for the first time) of our shared history and identity with all Palestinians. Zionist media, news, and education must be overcome. Fear must be overcome, as many 1948 Palestinians fear speaking out. Whether as a result of ignorance, fear, or a combination, reigniting our common Palestinian heritage will be incredibly helpful, and potentially necessary, in achieving justice in the long struggle for Palestinian rights. This includes restoring our connection with the land and natural environment. We cannot ignore the 1948 Palestinians, call them "traitors," or simply view them as a lost cause after suffering for 67 years of Zionist propaganda. Our pursuit of



righteousness must include all issues, including environmental, cultural, health, social, and economic. Rescuing the minds of 1948 Palestinians is a missing piece in the quest for this justice.

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