

Stripped of Their Rights: Understanding the Gaza Strip

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Many wonder why Israel continues to persecute the Palestinians in Gaza with such brutal repression.

The answer is simple; Palestinians in Gaza pose a demographic and, indeed, an existential threat to the Jewish state, which created the inferno that is Gaza today in order “to exist” as such.

The Russian Zeev Jabotinsky [described](#) his position on the Zionist colonization of Palestine in 1923 by saying:

“I am reputed to be an enemy of the Arabs, who wants to have them ejected from Palestine, and so forth. It is not true. .. There will always be two nations in Palestine—which is good enough for me, provided the Jews become the majority.”

And if “the Arabs” did not consent to the colonization of their homeland by foreign Jews? Well, then, by hook or by crook.

The Gaza Strip’s population is approximately 1.9 million people, including some 1.4 million Palestine refugees (approximately 73% of the population). Almost 600,000 Palestine refugees in Gaza live in the eight recognized Palestine refugee camps, which have one of the highest population densities in the world. The area of the strip of Palestine land called Gaza is 139 square miles.

Here is their story:

They ended up on the Gaza Strip as a result of the ‘cleansing’ perpetrated by Jewish militia/terror gangs on Palestinian Muslims and Christians, who, in 1948, outnumbered Jews in Palestine, the motivation being for the Zionist movement to empty areas of Palestine they seized by force of their non-Jewish inhabitants to achieve a demographic majority for their Jewish state.

[Palestine Under The British Mandate](#) comprised what are now Israel, the West Bank, Gaza Strip and Jordan. The Mandate lasted from 1920 to 1948. In 1923 Britain granted limited autonomy to Transjordan, now called Jordan.

By the end of the fighting in 1948, when the British Mandate officially ended, only 20% of Palestine remained in Palestinian Arab hands—the high ground west of the River Jordan and

a small strip on the south coast around the city of Gaza, which the Egyptian army, coming to the aid of the Palestinians, had managed to hold onto.

The population of what had become 'the Gaza Strip' trebled from 80,000 to nearly 240,000, creating massive problems of accommodation exacerbated by winter rains. Gaza families took in refugees for weeks and sometimes months at a time. Relief efforts by Quakers along with Palestinian and Egyptian volunteers helped abate some of the hardships in large tent cities that soon evolved into Gaza's eight refugee camps. These continue to exist to this day and are provided basic services by the United Nations Relief Works Agency (UNRWA).

In the first year after 1948, people's energies were focused on survival—food, shelter, scratching a living. King Farouk of Egypt made it clear he wouldn't tolerate any political activity from the Palestinians. He disbanded the national committees which had been set up all over Palestine in 1948, installed a military administration in Gaza with the Minister of Defense in Cairo responsible for the whole of the Gaza Strip—all 139 square miles of it. Arms were confiscated, activists jailed and communists, especially, were singled out for repression. The Egyptian press orchestrated a smear campaign against the Left, falsely accusing it of collaborating with the Zionists.

After the 1952 revolution in Egypt, which ousted King Farouk and ushered in the Arab Nationalist Jamal Abdel Nasser, hopes were up in Gaza that Nasser would help Palestinians recover Palestine and that they would be afforded more administrative autonomy.

However, Nasser understood that the thousands of refugees crowded into a tiny area with nothing on their minds except how to return and recover their lands and property was potentially explosive and he feared provoking Israel as much as his predecessor had. Palestinian refugees were stealing back into the villages Israel had not yet destroyed and sometimes raiding Jewish settlements bordering the Strip. Israeli reprisals for this activity was escalating.

When, in 1954, Nasser, in conjunction with UNRWA, proposed to move Palestinian refugees from the Gaza Strip to Sinai, the refugees vehemently opposed any such move, which suggested their stay was permanent. Thousands demonstrated, led by the newly-formed leftist dominated Teachers' Union. The demonstrations also unified Nasser's ideological enemies—the communists and the Muslim Brotherhood.

At that point, the story becomes very familiar to us today. Israel's punitive raids into Gaza began resulting in mounting Palestinian and Egyptian deaths. With each raid by Israel, the call for weapons on the part of the sitting-duck Palestinian refugees became louder. Not long afterwards, a small Palestinian battalion was created in Gaza, the first stage in the growth of Palestinian armed resistance.

In the meantime, Nasser declared his aim to regain control of the Suez Canal. Britain, France along with their Israeli allies took this opportunity to invade Egypt to punish the rising star of Arab Nationalism, and, in the process, Israel hoped to expand its southern border. After the attack, Israel occupied the Sinai and the Gaza Strip for four months, until forced back by U.S. pressure.

Israel's occupation of Gaza, 1956–57, was characterized by brutality and viciousness.

The worst atrocities of the period were the massacres of Rafah and Khan Yunis, in which

hundreds of Palestinians were killed. As with the 1948 massacre of Deir Yassin (a Palestinian village near Jerusalem), the motive was to terrorize large sections of the Palestinian community into abandoning their homes. The Israelis had every intention to keep what Zionists believe is an integral part of what Zionists called “Eretz Israel”.

With the withdrawal of Israel in 1957, and Palestinian rejection of the proposal that the Gaza Strip be governed by the UN, relations between the Palestinians in Gaza and Egypt warmed up. Several Palestinians were given membership in the executive council and Gaza became a tax-free zone. A National Union and Legislative Council was created in 1961, but it was dysfunctional from the beginning with Left-Right divisions and not enough autonomy.

In 1964, largely due to Nasser’s efforts, the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) was created in Gaza, impacting its political development. The Palestinian battalion in Gaza became the Palestine Liberation Army, with military training under the supervision of the Egyptians.

Popular organization committees in the camps and villages were set up and elections held. The Nationalists adopted a bourgeois ideology and the line of the expulsion of Jews from Palestine, as Palestinians themselves had been expelled. The Left adopted a social platform and a return to the partition plan of 1947. Nasser backed the Nationalists and suppressed the Left. The Nationalists won, but before they could take any action, the Palestinians suffered the second catastrophe in their history, the 1967 Israeli invasion and occupation of Gaza and the West Bank.

After the Nakba of 1948, the United Nations General Assembly adopted [resolution 194 \(III\)](#),

“resolving that ‘refugees wishing to return to their homes and live at peace with their neighbors should be permitted to do so at the earliest practicable date, and that compensation should be paid for the property of those choosing not to return and for loss of or damage to property which, under principles of international law or equity, should be made good by the Governments or authorities responsible.”

By denying Palestinians their right of return, Israel continues to preserve itself as a Jewish majority state.

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Source

Stateless in Gaza by Paul Cossali & Clive Robson, Zed Books Ltd., 1986.

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