

Video: 'The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine' by Ilan Pappé

A Book Review

By [Paul Williams](#)

Global Research, October 19, 2023

[Blogging Theology](#) 18 October 2023

Region: [Middle East & North Africa](#)

Theme: [Crimes against Humanity](#), [History](#),
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In this groundbreaking book, renowned Israeli historian Ilan Pappé offers impressive archival evidence to demonstrate that from its very inception a central plank in Israel's founding ideology was the forcible removal of the indigenous population, a strategy that continues to the present day.

Brief excerpt from the book:

Before we delve into the history of the ethnic cleansing in Palestine and try to contemplate the implications it has had up to the present day, we should pause for a moment and think about relative numbers.

The figure of three-quarters of a million uprooted Palestinians can seem to be 'modest' when set in the context of the transfer of millions of people in Europe that was an outcome of the Second World War, or the disposessions occurring in Africa in the beginning of the twenty-first century. But sometimes one needs to relativise numbers

and think in percentages to begin to understand the magnitude of a tragedy that engulfed the population of an entire country. Half of the indigenous people living in Palestine were driven out, half of their villages and towns were destroyed, and only very few among them ever managed to return.

But beyond numbers, it is the deep chasm between reality and representation that is most bewildering in the case of Palestine. It is indeed hard to understand, and for that matter to explain, why a crime that was perpetrated in modern times and at a juncture in history that called for foreign reporters and UN observers to be present, should have been so totally ignored. And yet, there is no denying that the ethnic cleansing of 1948 has been eradicated almost totally from the collective global memory and erased from the world's conscience.

Imagine that not so long ago, in any given country you are familiar with, half of the entire population had been forcibly expelled within a year, half of its villages and towns wiped out, leaving behind only rubble and stones. Imagine now the possibility that somehow this act will never make it into the history books and that all diplomatic efforts to solve the conflict that erupted in that country will totally sideline, if not ignore, this catastrophic event. I, for one, have searched in vain through the history of the world as we know it in the aftermath of the Second World War for a case of this nature and a fate of this kind. There are other, earlier, cases that have fared similarly, such as the ethnic cleansing of the non-Hungarians at the end of the nineteenth century, the genocide of the Armenians, and the holocaust perpetrated by the Nazi occupation against travelling people (the Roma, also known as Sinti) in the 1940s. I hope in the future that Palestine will no longer be included in this list.

Watch the video below for the full review.

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