



Al-Bassa
The Destroyed Villages of Palestine

Israel at 70

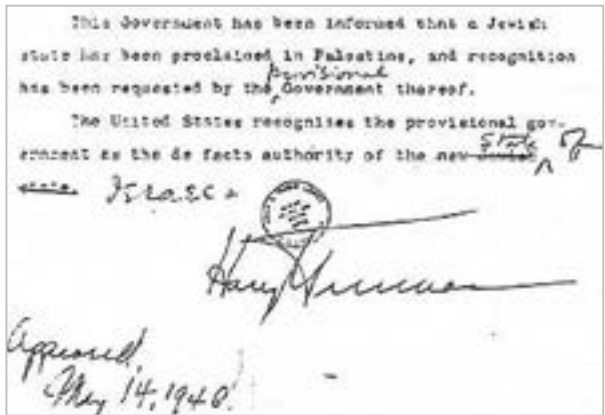
A Darkness

unto the

Nations



By Sam Bahour



U.S. Letter of Recognition of the State of Israel, with the words "Jewish state" crossed out by President Truman.¹

Several years ago, the late Polish mathematician from Youngstown State University (my alma mater in Ohio), Dr. Zbigniew Piotrowski, walked up to me at the Youngstown Arab-American Community Center and shared a bold observation after I delivered a talk on the Palestinians' desire for freedom and independence. He said the silver lining of the WWII tragedy, and in particular the Jewish loss thereof, was that the world reset how it operates; post-WWII, international law became



Artwork by Sliman Mansour.

the order of the day to avert a repeat of history. It was as if all the nations of the world pressed the reset button and rebooted with this new operating system, one that obligated all states to respect a set of collective rules and regulations. Dr. Piotrowski rightly questioned how Israel, which claims to be built on Jewish values, could be so utterly disrespectful of this new reference point.

This disrespect was exemplified by one of Israel's founding ministers of education and culture, Professor Ben-Zion Dinur (1954), when he

boldly claimed: *"In our country there is room only for the Jews. We shall say to the Arabs: Get out! If they don't agree, if they resist, we shall drive them out by force."*⁷¹ With this theme as the explicit backdrop of the newly established state, it is no wonder that Israel, 70 years later, has had little chance of being a normal member of the community of nations, let alone a light unto anything.

Individual Israeli achievements in fields such as science and technology are impressive. However, for all modern intents and purposes, the State of



Artwork by Asad 'Azzi'.

Israel, as a state-building model, is a failed experiment – ideologically, religiously, politically, socially, and, if US-favored-nation status were removed, possibly economically as well. Without immediate and decisive intervention from the international community to stop the ongoing Israeli aggression towards Palestinians, Israel's intransigence and US-equipped regional hegemony will not only fuel another generation of Palestinians willing to sacrifice their lives to achieve their freedom and independence but will also further jeopardize Israel's future as a state.

Israel was founded on the infamous fallacy of *"a land without a people for a people without a land."* Israel's attempt to persuade the world that this was a valid premise for statehood has been a colossal failure, even among a growing number of Jews worldwide. Given the fact that historical [British-mandated] Palestine was inhabited prior to Israel's creation, Israel has gone to great lengths, at huge costs, to bury this racist fallacy.

The lead-up to the establishment of Israel witnessed the expulsion of well over half the indigenous Palestinian population by May 1948, not to mention the scores murdered in the process. Ever since, Israel has assumed a policy of structural discrimination, political imprisonment, torture, deportations, beatings, collective punishment, political assassinations, settlement building, economic dominance – the list is endless; and measures were intensified after the Israeli military occupation of the West Bank, Gaza Strip, and East Jerusalem in 1967. This "empty" land that was filled with Palestinians overwhelmingly complicated the efforts to implant a Western state in the midst of the Middle East.

Since its inception, Israel has arrogantly refused to address the most crucial prerequisite of its establishment as a conventional state: accepting the Palestinians – those people who just happened to be inconveniently living in that "empty" land. As a matter of fact, Israel's membership in the UN was



It was totally in the hands of Israel – the occupying power – at the time of the signing of the Oslo Accords in 1993, as it is today, to end the military occupation of the Palestinian territory and start the bitter process of reconciliation.

pre-conditioned on respecting past UN resolutions, including the one calling for Palestinian refugees to be allowed to return home, as well as the one calling for Israel to define its borders.ⁱⁱⁱ To date, Israel has respected neither, to its own detriment.

After nearly seven decades of conflict, and after two decades of explicit Palestinian political recognition of Israel on part of their lands, Israel continues to choose to sustain the conflict. The Palestinians, those who were forcefully expelled from their homes in 1948, 1967, and more recently, have ever since been living in squalid refugee camps throughout the region. Those Palestinians who did not flee Israel proper in 1948 are today fourth-class Israeli citizens. The Palestinians in the West Bank, Gaza Strip, and East Jerusalem who have lived under Israeli military occupation for 50 years, and counting, will continue to haunt the international community until justice is served and the Israeli occupation is ended, in its entirety.

As recently reported in the Associated Press,^{vi} Israel's leading demographics expert, Sergio Della Pergola, a demographer at Hebrew University, defended Israeli military figures indicating that the number of Arabs will soon equal that of Jews between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River. Thus, any Israeli illusion that Palestinians will one day vanish into thin air is merely a hallucination of a people driving drunk on power.

Today, Israel seems more determined than ever to forcefully prove the original fallacy of its statehood – an Israel with expandable, unilaterally defined borders and a Jewish-only population. Twelve Israeli prime ministers before Netanyahu, six of them after the signing of the Oslo agreements, all failed. If Israel cannot produce a leader to move the country from a rogue state to a member state of the Middle East, no one but Jewish-Israeli citizens themselves will be to blame for the consequences, no matter how severe.



Survival-Return, artwork detail by John Halaka.

It should be no surprise that the late Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin rushed to sign the infamous Oslo Peace Accords after calculating the historic ramifications of the political earthquake that took place when the late Palestinian representative, Yasser Arafat, politically recognized the State of Israel. Rabin paid for that signature with his life, which was taken by one of his own citizens, a fanatic Jewish student. This was as close as Israel has ever been to overcoming its never-ending birth pangs.

Every step of the way, the United States has rewarded Israel as it further entrenched its illegal occupation of the Palestinian territory. Israel has been propped up financially, politically, and diplomatically by every single US administration at the expense of US taxpayers. The entire US political system has been fully obedient to the far-reaching Israeli lobby and narrow electoral and commercial interests. What started as a US strategic ally in one of the most sensitive spots

in the world during a Cold War that marred common sense has rapidly digressed into a liability in an age of globalization that the United States alone is spearheading.

Today, on the 70th remembrance of the Palestinian *Nakba* (Catastrophe), Israel must choose between continuing an illegal occupation and preserving itself as a state. To think that both can peacefully co-exist is utter ignorance of history and human development. Also, for Israel to believe that the United States will always be willing to jeopardize its own strategic interests for the sake of fulfilling an Israeli illusion of Palestinian submission is a miscalculation to the *n*th degree.

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ⁱ *Truman: Timeline*, Truman Library Institute, available at <http://www.trumanlibraryinstitute.org/truman/timeline/>.

ⁱⁱ Cited in Jeff Halper, "Palestinian displacement: a case apart? – The message of the bulldozers," *Forced Migration Review*, FMR 26, August 2006, available at <http://www.fmreview.org/palestine/halper.html>.

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://unispal.un.org/DPA/DPR/unispal.nsf/0/0B3AB8D2A7C0273D8525694B00726D1B> and <https://unispal.un.org/DPA/DPR/unispal.nsf/0/83E8C29DB812A4E9852560E50067A5AC>.

^{iv} Aron Heller/AP, "Israeli demographer: Arabs nearly equal Jews in Holy Land," *Los Angeles Times*, March 29, 2018, available at <http://www.latimes.com/sns-bc-ml--israel-palestinians-20180327-story.html>.