

Palestinians refugees in 1947-48

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Palestinians became refugees in 1947-48 because of many factors, all of which stem from a single event: The United Nations Partition Plan. The United Nations in 1948 recommended and voted upon a plan that would partition the area formerly known as the Mandate of Palestine into an Arab state, a Jewish state, and leave Jerusalem and Bethlehem as international areas (Benin & Hajjar). The partitions, however, placed Arab settlements in the areas of Jewish control, and Jewish settlements in areas of Arab control (Price, 2003). Despite heavy Arab opposition to the plan, it was approved and almost immediately fighting broke out between the two sides, both of whom were deeply attached to their homes and saw no reason to abandon it to the other (Price, 2003). Claims are in dispute over why almost 700, 000 Arabs from Palestine became refugees, and from both sides accusations are contested even to this day. Arabs maintain that they were driven from their homes by Jewish forces which started out as fellow citizens of Palestine, but would later come from the recognized Jewish state of Israel (Price, 2003). Israel claims that no one ever forced Palestinians to abandon their homes; they left instead on instructions from trusted Arab leaders (Price, 2003). Regardless of the reasons, once-revered citizens were becoming refugees in great numbers.

There is evidence that massacres and scare tactics were used on Arab settlements to drive out its inhabitants, causing them to become refugees. Threats were issued via posters and notecards by Jewish forces, soon followed by grenades and buildings being exploded on the pretense that they were being used as Arab military sites (Krystall, 1998). The city of Jerusalem and its surrounding villages were the site of many of these tactics, with 28, 000 Arabs soon fleeing in order to avoid more fighting or the loss of

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their lives (Krystall, 1998). 50, 000 Arabs were expelled from the villages of Lydda and Ramle (Benin & Hajjar). The town of Dayr Yasin saw the worst massacre, as on April 9, 1948, Jewish forces killed everyone in the village, even after they proclaimed surrender (Krystall, 1998). Thereafter, the name of the village was used as another scare tactic against Arabs, as loudspeakers proclaimed day and night “ Unless you leave your homes, the fate of Dayr Yasin will be yours!” (Krystall, 1998, 10).

Arabs were not alone in their refugee status. Jewish citizens became refugees as well, but under different circumstances. Theirs was a better fate as they had a new nation bordering the old one to go to (Price, 2003). The state of Israel was formed in 1948, and within minutes had been recognized by more than one nation, including the United States of America (Price, 2003). Many Jewish people were forced to leave areas controlled by Arab forces, and some with “ only the clothes upon their backs” (Price, 2003, 55). These included areas that held prominent Jewish communities, such as East Jerusalem and the West Bank (Price, 2003). They were then barred from visiting any Jewish holy sites in the area that they had fled (Price, 2003). Though they were not subjected to scare tactics, there was no shortage of Arab forces waiting to fight (Price, 2003). In the end, neither side won nor lost, as the partition plan of the United Nations only succeeded in perpetuating the feeling of displacement among Jewish and Arab citizens alike.

It should be noted, however, that there are vast differences between the fate of Jewish refugees and Arab refugees. First and foremost, there are still Arab refugees today, living in camps and what could be determined as slums, while those of Jewish heritage have all been granted citizenship into regions

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that they settled (Price, 2003). The other difference is that Arab refugees who remained in the area that became Israel were granted Israeli citizenship; compensation was also offered to those Arabs that could prove that they were displaced, while no compensation was offered by Arab leaders to those of Jewish heritage that left their homes in Palestine (Price, 2003). Regardless of their citizenship status, both sides dream of the day they will be allowed to visit or take up residence in the land of their ancestors.

References

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