

# Review: Ilan Pappé

## The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine

### Die Ethnische Säuberung Palästinas

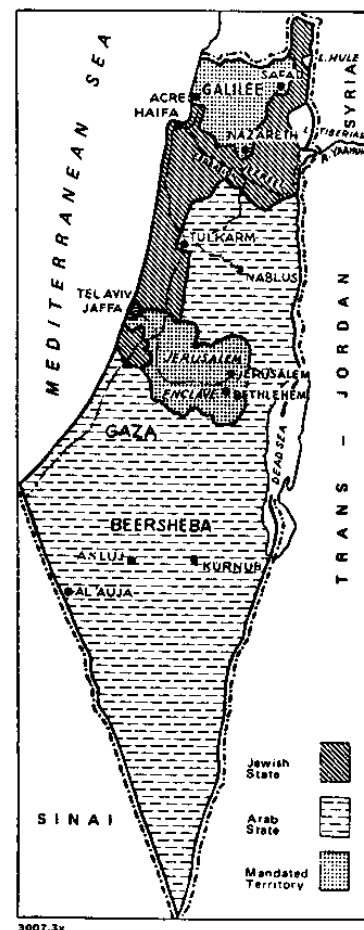
Ilan Pappé is an Israeli historian, and that gives this marvellous presentation extra weight, since it breaks with the official Israeli tale of the creation of their state. It is very painful, but also necessary to read about, how that succeeded. This story, as told by Prof. Pappé, shall be briefly summarized.

The creation of the Jewish state was a key issue of the Zionist movement towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. The Zionists considered Palestine a country, vacant for their settlement, only there were some 'strangers' to be removed. They, on the other hand, had through 2000 years been accustomed to foreign domination and remained totally unprepared for independence.

Only few of the original inhabitants had noticed the intentions of the newcomers, accelerated 1917 through the Balfour Declaration, which during the 1<sup>st</sup> war promised the Jews a state in Palestine, by then a province in another reign. Slowly the amount of Jews increased, in particular after the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War. However, most of these lived in the cities and in 1947, only 5.8% of the now (since 1923) British mandate was owned by Jews. In contrast, various plans largely promised more to them. Nevertheless, they were not satisfied with that and probably only formally accepted the UN partition plan while the Arabs refused. At the right you see a partition plan from 1938, but it remained a dream.

The Jewish leader (and first Prime Minister), David Ben Gurion, planned the conquest of Palestine long before the partition-plan was approved in the end of 1947, to be valid from May 15, 1948. He had organized an army of some 50,000 soldiers and started the ethnic cleansing already in December 1947; by the official end of the British mandate, 200 Palestinian villages were conquered and ¼ million Palestinians uprooted. How many were killed, is nowhere noted, but it must have been measured in the thousands, possibly even more. Ben Gurion adopted Plan Dalet for what the Zionists call 'transfer,' – and the other aspects of ethnic cleansing. Long before the atrocities, list with names, which man from each village was going to be executed, were elaborated. To these were added those who had resisted – and perhaps some more. In some villages, virtual massacres were carried out, preferably involving male persons between approximately 10 and 50 years. The houses were destroyed and mines attached to prevent the inhabitants from returning, which should then serve as a warning to nearby cities and villages. The book describes in terrifying detail some of these war-crimes.

In the beginning of May, Israeli forces extended their operation to areas, meant to remain under Arab control. With roughly ten times as many soldiers as Palestine's, including their Arab supporters but excluding Jordan's 'Arab Legion,' the Israeli (in contrast to their own tales) were never in danger and in possession of enough forces to deal with both the continuing ethnic cleansing and deal with possible invasion from neighbouring countries. With the Jordanians, the matter was a different. Already in January 1948, King Abdullah made an agreement with the Jewish forces, involving the present West Bank, including East-Jerusalem which were later included in his state. His troops were the only factor which posed a match to Ben Gurion's forces. They came to



prove that ability when the Jewish brigades did not respect the agreement, e.g. in the old city of Jerusalem, which they successfully defended. However, the Arab League, other than the Jewish counterpart, held their territorial agreements and in 1949 delivered Wadi Ara without fight to the Jewish Nation.

Two ceasefires were formally negotiated. They gave some peace to the foreign troops, while the Jewish forces concentrated on further ethnic cleansing of the already conquered areas. The Druze communities were considered allies and participated therefore in the action. Christian Palestinians were offered similar advantage, which they usually refused. Moslems were usually thrown out of their homeland, as far as they survived the conquest, the succeeding massacre and the difficult migration. In the coming state Israel's territory, only few villages and Nazareth in Galilee remained Palestinian while 530 villages were completely destroyed and the bigger cities (Haifa, Jaffa and Akko) largely cleansed of their Arab majority. That the Arab population by any means went away by their own motivation, deliberately or through persuasion by their Arab allies, is a straight lie.

South Lebanon up to the Litani River was a new target for the Israeli forces in October 1948. Thirteen villages were conquered and several massacres carried out. One commander, responsible for the mass execution of 35 people was indicted and sentenced to 7 years in jail but soon pardoned by the president and later fulfilled high governmental posts. In April 1949, Israel withdrew from Lebanon.

More than a million of Palestinians were expelled to Syria, Lebanon, Jordan and Egypt but those resting in their homes were not necessarily better off. Some 8,000 remained in prison over the year 1949 – camps were only erected after Israel's formal creation. The author describes convincingly how this ethnic cleansing continues even today, both in Israel itself, where Arabs are condemned to a life as second class citizens, and in the West Bank, where the settlements are flourishing year after year. Also the Golan Heights have been subjected to massive uprooting of the original population. Wherever it occurs, land expropriated from the Palestinians is given by the state of Israel to the Jewish National Fund, which either makes a park on it or sells it, then exclusively to Jewish settlers. The Apartheid Wall, the many roadblocks on the old Palestinian roads and the 'Jews-only' highways to the Jewish settlements speaks a similar language of racism. Jews shooting Palestinians are, at most, given suspended sentences. The book summarizes the latest ethnic cleansing up to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Lebanon War in 2006. Without taking responsibility for the Nakba (1947-now) peace is impossible while peace negotiations only provide the Zionists with further excuse for postponing a real solution.

Permit a personal comment from the reviewer:

Yes, the ethnic cleansing goes on, and we are naive to think that the Israeli government is serious about peace agreements. They have ignored all UN resolutions from 1948, when Resolution 194 called for the return of all Palestinian refugees – or even the economical compensation. Instead, the Western World declares its support of this state, where the vast majority of the inhabitants live on stolen land. The enormous support of the United States, only a fraction of 1% of what is used of it for corruption of most American politicians of both parties, ensures the survival of the racist state.

Be aware of the desperate situation in the Gaza Strip: Billions of dollars were promised at a donor's conference after the Israeli warfare against the Ghetto in the preceding January. Now, in September 2009, nothing has been delivered since Israel maintains the blockade.

Therefore, any solution must start with abolishing this support. The official support should vanish with the recognition, that a people which was itself victims to a holocaust, little later continued with a similar racist act, as convincingly described in this book. Certainly, it will then be a more difficult way than the successful fight against the South African Apartheid – but it bears the satisfaction (fortunately, also with the support of many Jews) of not acting along with the racists. It will be a long way, and the enemy is strong and has proven to be ruthless.

John Schou  
13.09.09

(A day a new settlement in the West Bank was erected)