

**WHY DID THE PALESTINIANS
LEAVE PALESTINE IN 1948 ?**

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The Arab Mass Exodus which started in April 1948 is a really grave phenomena which lead to the present refugee problem. The U.N. Mediator in 1948 was fully alarmed by it and demanded a statement of policy from the New Israeli government which was responsible for what happened in Palestine.

Why and how did this Exodus happen? Why did thousands of Arabs flee from Palestine and take refuge in neighbouring Arab countries? The late William Zukerman, editor of the Jewish Newsletter, answered this question when he wrote "the flight of the Palestine Arabs which created the Arab refugee problem was not a spontaneous act nor due to the propaganda call of the Arab leaders as the Zionists have claimed all along. It was a coldly calculated plan executed by the Irgun but with the knowledge of the Hagana of the Jewish Agency of the time."¹

The motives for such calculated plans were obvious. As soon as the United Nations General Assembly voted in favour of the partition of Palestine into two separate states, a Jewish State and an Arab State, "the Zionists switched their campaign of terror from the Mandatory Government to the unarmed Arab population. They wanted to maintain Jewish dominance over the fifty percent Arab inhabitants living within the limits of the proposed Jewish State and to expand those limits so as to include the greatest possible area if not all Palestine before Britain withdrew from the country in May 14 1948."² A conversation between a British officer of the Jordan Arab Legion Glubb Pasha and a Palestine Government Jewish official reveals the intention of the Zionist plans. Glubb asked the government official whether the new Jewish State would not have many internal troubles in view of the fact that the Arab inhabitants of the Jewish State would be equal in number to the Jews. The latter replied "Oh no! That will be fixed. A few calculated massacres will soon get rid of them."³

On April the 9th 1948, Menachem Beigin led a "deliberate and unprovoked attack"⁴ on the village of Deir Yassin. They butchered, stripped and mutilated over 250 old men, women and children. This incident had its

¹Jewish Newsletter, 3 October 1960.

²Hadawi Sami, *Bitter Harvest*, July 1967, New World Press, New York, p. 104.

³Glubb, *A Soldier with the Arabs*, p. 81.

⁴Joseph Dov, *The Faithful City: The Seige of Jerusalem 1948* (New York Simon and Schuster, 1960), p. 71.

utmost importance in accelerating the panic flight of the Arab inhabitants. Jon Kimche, author and correspondent who was in Jerusalem at the time said that "this incident is historically important because it was to become the beginning of a second legend with which the terrorists sought to serve their cause and justify their deeds just as they claimed credit for the British decision to leave Palestine as being the result of the terrorists attacks on British troops so later they justified the massacre of Deir Yassin because it led to the panic flight of the remaining Arabs in the Jewish State."⁵

Arnold Toynbee, the British historian, described the massacre as "comparable to crimes committed against the Jews by the Nazis."⁶

But Menachem Beigin, the leader of the athade, said: "The massacre was not only justified but there would not have been a State of Israel without the victory at Deir Yassin."⁷ After the massacre, the Zionist underground forces roamed the streets of cities using loud speakers warning the Arab inhabitants: "The road to Jericho is still open." "Remember Deir Yassin." They told the Jerusalem Arabs "fly from Jerusalem before you are killed."⁸ This is enough evidence to show that the Arabs did not leave Palestine spontaneously. Glubb Pasha says it rather (bluntly) "The story which Jewish publicity at first persuaded the world to accept that the Arab refugees left voluntarily is not true. Voluntary emigrants," he pointed out, "do not leave their homes with only the clothes they stand in. People who have decided to move house do not do so in such a hurry that they loose other members of their family; husband loosing sight of his wife or parents of their children. The fact is that the majority left in panic flight to escape massacres. They were in fact helped on their way by the occasional massacres not of very many at a time but just enough to keep them running."⁹

Israel on the other hand, claimed that the Arabs left because they were ordered to and deliberately incited into panic by their own leaders who wanted the field cleared for the 1948 war. Specifically Israel claimed that there had

⁵Kimche Jon, *The Seven Fallen Pillars* (New York, F.A. Praeger 1953), p. 228.

⁶Toynbee Arnold, *A Study of History* (London: Oxford University Press, 1953-1954), Vol. VIII, p. 290.

⁷Beigin, Menachem, *The Revolt, Story of the Irgun* (New York: Henry Schuman, 1951).

⁸Glubb, *A Soldier with the Arabs*, p. 99.

⁹Glubb, *A Soldier with the Arabs*, p. 251.

been Arab radio broadcasts ordering the evacuation but it did never back this accusation. Mr. Erskine Childers says in this context: "Examining every official Israeli statement about the Arab exodus, I was struck by the fact that no primary evidence of evacuation orders was ever produced. The charge Israel claimed was "documented"; but where were the documents? There had allegedly been Arab radio broadcasts ordering the evacuation; but no dates, names of stations, or texts of messages were even cited. In Israel in 1958, as a guest of the Foreign Office and therefore doubly hopeful of serious assistance, I asked to be shown the proofs. I was assured they existed, and was promised them. None had been offered when I left, but I was again assured. I asked to have the material sent to me. I am still waiting."

Next, Mr. Childers decided to test the undocumented charges that the Arab evacuation orders were broadcast by Arab radio. Mr. Childers was the first one to think of this. He could test the charge by going back to the B.B.C. which monitored all Middle Eastern broadcasts throughout 1948. "The records and companion ones by a United States monitoring unit can be seen at the British Museum." Mr. Childers found out that "there was not a single order, or appeal, or suggestion about evacuation from Palestine from any Arab radio station inside or outside Palestine in 1948. There is repeated monitored record of Arab appeals, even flat orders, to the civilians of Palestine to stay put. To select only two examples: on April 4, as the first great wave of flight began, Damascus Radio broadcast an appeal to everyone to stay at their homes and jobs. On April 24, with the exodus now a flood, Palestine Arab leaders warned that:

'Certain elements and Jewish agents are spreading defeatist news to create chaos and panic among the peaceful population. Some cowards are deserting their houses, villages or cities . . . Zionist agents and corrupt cowards will be severely punished'. (Al-Inqaz—the Arab Liberation Radio, at 12:00 hours). Even Jewish broadcasts (in Hebrew)," Erskine Childers continues, "mentioned such Arab appeals to stay put. Zionist newspapers in Palestine reported the same; none so much as hinted at any Arab evacuation orders."¹⁰ What actually happened in Palestine was truthfully disclosed by Nathan Chofshi, a Jewish immigrant from Russia who arrived in Palestine in 1908 in the same group with Ben Gurion. He wrote in rebutal of an American Zionist rabbi's assertion.

¹⁰From an article by Erskine Childers entitled "The Other Exodus," published in the Spectator (London) Magazine, 12 May 1961.

"If Rabbi Kaplan really wanted to know what happened, we old Jewish settlers in Palestine who witnessed the flight could tell him how and in what manner we, Jews, forced the Arabs to leave cities and villages . . . some of them were driven out by force of arms; others were made to leave by deceit, lying and false promises. It is enough to cite the cities of Jaffa, Lydda, Ramleh, Beer Sheba, and Acre from among numberless others. Here was a people who lived in its own land for 1,300 years. We came and turned the native Arabs into tragic refugees. And still we dare to slander and malign them, to besmirch their name. Instead of being deeply ashamed of what we did and of trying to undo some of the evil we committed by helping those unfortunate refugees, we justify our terrible acts and even attempt to glorify them."¹¹

This quotation is not only a sincere Jewish account of the Arab Exodus but it also comply a Message to the conscience of the Jews of today.

Professor Eric Fromme, the noted Jewish writer and thinker had this to add: "It is often said that the Arabs fled, that they left the country voluntarily, and that they therefore bear the responsibility for losing their property and their land. But, in public international law the principle holds true that no citizen loses his property or his rights of citizenship, and the citizenship right is de facto a right to which the Arabs in Palestine have much more legitimacy than the Jews."

"Just because the Arabs fled?" Professor Fromme asks: "Since when is that punishable by confiscation of property and by being barred from returning to the land on which a people's forefathers have lived for generations?"

Thus, Fromme adds "the claim of the Jews to the land of Israel cannot be a realistic political claim. If all nations would suddenly claim territories in which their forefathers have lived two thousand years ago, this world would be a mad house."

¹¹Jewish Newsletter, 9 February 1959.