On May 14, 1948, the creation of the state of Israel was declared, formed out of Palestine, and the next day became known as the day of the "Nakba," or "catastrophe." More than 700,000 Palestinians ended up as refugees, as they fled or were driven off their land, and the first Arab-Israeli War began.

This year, on the eve of the 70th anniversary, the US opened an unpreced-ented embassy in Jerusalem, and at least 55 Palestinians were shot by Israeli forces while protesting along the Gaza Strip border, a grim reminder that the Nakba is not over.

"For Palestinians, the Nakba is also a continuing affair that only started in 1948, but continued through 1967 and until today, with Jerusalem, Gaza Strip, Rafah, a former Palestinian government minister, told Arab News.

"Seven decades have passed since Al-Nakba, the biggest crisis in the history of Palestine," said bassim abdallah, advisor to the Palestinian ambassador to Saudi Arabia, told Arab News.

"The state of Israel was created on the Palestinian people's homes, from which 6 million Palestine refugees continue to suffer from the cruelty of exile and loss of human security, and with ever-expanding Israeli settle-ments, Palestinians continue to live under occupation." The Nakba is not only about the refugees, according to Khathth.

Palestinian refugees to be allowed to return to their homes that are now in Israel, a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council, said it was considering calling for an emergency meeting of the body.

"The Nakba is the turning point for all Palestinians. And commemoration of the Nakba is about taking a stand for resistance, and in par-ticular for self-determination and statehood." Third-generation Palestinians, who have made a home somewhere else, struggle with national identity and where to call home. "I'm a Palestinian who grew up in South Africa," said 28-year-old naima illusien, whose family hails from Jerusalem. "I guess I'm one of those who have an identity crisis. I don't fit into the typical Pal-estinian culture or the lands or the Western, really. I have a mentality of any own that de-veloped after living in all the environments I lived in and met the people that were part of them." Whether refugees or not, it is not hard in the Arab world to find someone whose life wasn't altered forever by the Nakba.

Arab News columnist ramzy baroud was born and raised in a Gaza camp. His family village, Beit Daras, was erased from the map.

The father and grandmother of Arab News writer essam elshahat fled Jerusalem's Musrara neighborhood for the Jordanian city of Zarqa. You will find their stories in our eight-page supplement today, which marks Nakba day and the toll it has taken over seven decades. And in the story of dr. Rabiaa al-hallak, whose family still holds the deed to their orchard in the Lod-Jaffa area, you will find some hope. As he said: "Even if Israel takes our lands, they can never take away our bringenwurter and our unshakable will and determination to succeed."
May 15 marks Nakba day, commemorating the 1948 exodus when more than 700,000 Palestinians were displaced. With millions in refugee camps and Israel more emboldened than ever, there may be little hope, but the call for justice will never cease.

The loss of land

1946: Jewish settlers in historical Palestine before the establishment of Israel
1947 UN Partition Plan: UN initiates a plan to separate Palestine into two states. Jewish leaders accept but Palestinian leaders reject the plan, resulting in uprisings.
1948-49 Arab-Israeli War: The Jewish community declares itself independent in the new state of Israel. The subsequent war gave Israel control of around 78% of the territory.
1947, Israel occupies the rest of historical Palestine following the War of 1947.
1955 Oslo I Agreement: Israeli unilateral control.
2005: Jewish settlement activity renews.
2008: Today there are more than 600,000 Israeli settlers living illegally on Palestinian land in East Jerusalem and the occupied West Bank.

Population movement, 1948-1951

From Mandatory Palestine to Israel
From Mandatory Palestine to Jordan
From Mandatory Palestine to Syria
From Mandatory Palestine to Lebanon
From Mandatory Palestine to Iraq
From Mandatory Palestine to other countries
From Palestine to Mandatory Palestine
From Mandatory Palestine to other countries
From Palestine to Mandatory Palestine
From Mandatory Palestine to other countries

Palestinian population worldwide

Palestinians living in

Refugee camps around Palestine

Unemployment in Palestine

OVERALL

Average daily wage

Establishment of Jewish settlements in historical Palestine

Percentage of internet users

Average life expectancy

Educated to degree level
The right of return is the main issue for the refugee crisis. Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas has paid the ultimate sacrifice for the refugee crisis. The refugee problem is described as a personal and collective right to return. The right of return has also been kept in the occupied West Bank and neighboring Arab states such as Lebanon, Jordan, and Syria. Activists have organized rallies and teach-ins to ensure that new generations of Palestinians will not forget about Palestine, the right of return continues to take center stage at Nakba Day activities and throughout the year. Generation after generation retain memories of the 1948 Nakba and the Nakba’s day of mourning.

Personal and collective right that no one must concede

While the claim is inalienable, say Palestinian leaders, implementation is subject to negotiation — and various interpretations.

The Palestinian refugee problem to be agreed upon in accordance with UN General Assembly Resolution 194. Author F. Barakat, a Palestinian lawyer based in Jordan and the editor of the Palestinian Yearbook of International Law, told Arab News that the right of return enshrined in various UN resolutions is non-negotiable and does not have an expiry date.

Many say the Palestinian refugee agency, UNRWA, on Dec. 8, 1948, was mandated to provide humanitarian, educational and health support to Palestinian refugees.

UNRWA now has nearly five million registered refugees in the West Bank, Gaza, Jordan, Syria and Lebanon.

Attempts to cancel Palestinian demands to return to their homes have at times been reflected in attempts to derail this humanitarian UN agency.

US President Donald Trump suspended financial support to UNRWA in January 2018, warning that the US may withhold future payments to the agency over what he called the Palestinians’ unwillingness to talk peace with Israel.

In trying to deal with the thorny issue of the right of return, Palestinian negotiators over the past decades have shown flexibility. Palestinian leaders have said that while the right is inalienable, its implementation is subject to negotiation. Palestinian negotiators have said that they want Israel to recognize its legal and historic responsibility for the refugee crisis. Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas went even further in 2012 when he said on Israel TV that he no longer has any desire to live in the city in which he was born and raised, Safed, but would not mind visiting it. In February 2013 in Ramallah, he also told a group of 300 visiting hostility that Palestinians are not interested in “choosing Israel with Palestinian refugees.”

Arab women and children flee with their possessions and use three-wheel bikes through no man’s land to the Arab lines in the West Bank city of Tulkarm after being deposited by truck from an Arab village near Haifa in 1948. Getty

IN NUMBERS

7.1m

The number of Palestinian refugees and displaced persons around the world, according to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA). They are located mainly in the occupied West Bank and neighboring Arab states such as Lebanon, Jordan, and Syria.

Despite the inalienability of the right of return, the willingness of the Palestinian leadership to negotiate on the right of return is non-negotiable.

The right of return committees have been one of the main features of the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement. It calls for respecting, protecting and promoting the rights of Palestinian refugees to return to their homes and properties as stipulated in UN resolution 194.

The movement has published an article by Pappe and Karim Nabhani following the news.

Pappe and Nabhani wrote: “There is a right that is more severely urgent and more legally compelling than the Palestinian right of return.”

“Regardless of who they are, where they came from, or when they became homeland refugees, the world over has an inalienable right to return to their homes. They and their descendants must be recognized as having a legal right to return to their homes.”

He is also a member of the Board Committee, which organizes rallies and protests throughout Jordan.

“Right of return committees exist throughout Jordan and conduct regular events, protests and teach-ins to ensure that new generations of Arabs are aware of this right and its ramifications,” he told Arab News. Similar committees exist throughout the world.

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Palestinian land in East Jerusalem and the as the US looked on. Today there are more US administration’s Middle East policy and state is so very long overdue and the current This only serves as a terrible reminder that the ruins of their destroyed homes. This year, Israel by the near-simultaneous anniversary that made this year’s Nakba remembrance even more of unarmed protestors in Gaza by the Israeli when three-quarters of the population became by the Israeli occupation. The chaos and confusion sown by the US justifies the impossibility of an independent Palestinian state an impossibility. This is the strategy to gain freedom and to end the US' “deal of the century” will be a knife the current Palestinian resistance movement called the Palestinians, scattered in refugee camps overpowered by the ever-unfair status quo. It cannot pinpoint the moment when my grandpa died, his faithful radio was lying on the pillow to his close ear so that, even then, he might catch the announcement for which he had waited so long. He wanted to composed his diaries as a single gift in the world’s consciousness that was sure to be corrected and straightened out in time. But even so, seventy years later, my people are still refugees. Not just the fatalities, but the broken bones of Palestinians, scattered to refugee camps all across the Middle East. These refugees, while still searching for a safe path that would take them home, often find themselves on yet another journey, another distant trial, being pushed off time and again. The ruins of their home, from one country to another, even lost between continents. My grandpa’s burial was in the Nusserat cemetery, not in Beit Daras as he had wished. But he remained a Badrasawi to the end, passionately holding on to the memories of a place that he loved for all it was — remnant sacred and real. What Israel still fails to understand is that the “right of return” for Palestinian refugees is not merely a political or a legal right to be overpowered by the ever-unfair status quo. Israel has long surpassed that and moved into a whole different realm. For me, Beit Daras is not a piece of earth but a perpetual fight for justice that shall never cease, because the Badrasawis belong to Beit Daras and nowhere else.

Instead, we look on with dismay at what is accepted international frameworks for peace. There are things that Palestinians can do joint-ity with Israel, has negated the efforts of the International Criminal Court. The US and Israel are following policies that are an attempt to create a regional stability without solving the Palestinian question. Yet, if there is no real solution for the Palestinians — not even the ultimate offer of an Israeli-Palestinian peace process — there remains a major question mark over the whole Middle East, as well as over the regional powers. The current Palestinian leadership is facing some of its greatest ever challenges, both in Jerusalem and Israel. It now needs the support of the international community more than ever to recognize an independent Palestinian state and to support Palestine in UN institutions such as the International Criminal Court. Internally, the long-awaited and hoped for reconciliation with Hamas and the formation of a unity government does not seem any nearer than ever, but the electoral process will soon serve to take place, which will create more uncertainty. Add to all of this a wave of activity the Palestinian issue can no longer rely on already accepted international frameworks for peace. Instead, we look on with dismay at what is happening in Syria and Iraq. As the last vestiges of optimism have evaporated, it is clear now that all the talk, posturing, and thin-sliced analyses of the two-state solution is a cover for the lack of vast and strategic areas of Palestinian land, making a sovereign Palestinian state an impossibility and not just for the Palestinians, but for the whole Middle East. This has worked in tandem with the incremental “deal of the century” that the Palestinians mediums and borders in the Occupied Territories, and the strengthening of the apartheid regime. Israel, as a loser in these processes, may feel emboldened enough to step still more Palestinians from their homes and land until the number reaches the tens of thousands. These kinds of mass expulsions and transfers does not seem any closer than ever for the Palestinian leadership. But it is impossible to find the right of return for the Palestinians. Some 70 per cent of the entire Israeli Palestinian population in Gaza are refugees, displaced in planned and calculated forced evictions carried out by Zionist entities. The day grandpa died, his faithful radio was lying to his close ear so that, even then, he might catch the announcement for which he had waited so long. He wanted to comprehend his dispossession as a single gift in the world’s consciousness that was sure to be corrected and straightened out in time. But even so, seventy years later, my people are still refugees. Not just the fatalities, but the broken bones of Palestinians, scattered to refugee camps all across the Middle East. These refugees, while still searching for a safe path that would take them home, often find themselves on yet another journey, another distant trial, being pushed off time and again. The ruins of their home, from one country to another, even lost between continents. The US still fails to understand that the “right of return” for Palestinian refugees is not merely a political or a legal right to be overpowered by the ever-unfair status quo. Israel has long surpassed that and moved into a whole different realm. For me, Beit Daras is not a piece of earth but a perpetual fight for justice that shall never cease, because the Badrasawis belong to Beit Daras and nowhere else.

compromised process that was the tragic way it was conquered for millennia. Romans, Crusaders, Mamluks and Crusaders’ castle, a Mamluk mail building, an

Badrasawi. Our resistance has garnered us theRefugee Camp in Gaza, I took pride in being a Palestinian people in 1948. This year marks the 70th anniversary of the forced displacement of the Palestinian people in 1948. This year marks the 70th anniversary of the forcible evacuation of the villages of Beit Daras; yet they failed. True, each invader

A once peaceful village, Beit Daras had existed for millennia. Romans, Crusaders, Mamluks and Crusaders’ castle, a Mamluk mail building, an

It isn’t easy to describe a history that, only decades ago, was, along with every other standing building of that village, blotted to smithereens with the intent of erasing it from existence. Most historic references written about Beit Daras, whether by Israeli or Palestinian historians, were brief, and ultimately resulted in diminishing its past as just one among nearly 600 Palestinian villages that were often evacuated and then completely flattened during the year. It was another episode in a more

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As Palestinians worldwide commemorate the Nakba catastrophe of 1948, one family reflects on the day that changed their lives.

"My father came home from a work trip. My grandparents kissed him on the forehead, tears in their eyes. They were thrilled to have him home, and he had tears in his eyes, too."

In the last few months, the 70th anniversary of the Nakba has been back in the spotlight. But the story is far from over.

The turning point for all Palestinians as the number of witnesses dwindles, efforts are being made to preserve the Nakba, that remains an open wound.

A child of the Nakba remembers: ‘I lived a very, very difficult infancy’

Dr. Basheer is a refugee who was born in the Old City of Jerusalem. "In my childhood we didn't have electricity. We used candles."

He went back in 1983 after receiving a US passport and I am given a 90-day visa like any other American citizen. "I went back to the place where I was born, and I could not believe my eyes."

The turning point for all Palestinians. Uncovering the Nakba is about taking a stand for resistance, and in particular for self-determination. For Palestinians, the Nakba is not only a historical event that happened in 1948, but a continuing affair that only now is coming to a head.

"Through embroidery we see how Palestinian people were living both in the Zarqa Refugee Camp and in the Old City of Jerusalem."

"My parents had heard of the Deir Yassin massacre. They came to the city and said, 'We have to leave before they come and kill us.'"

"I enjoyed the color and the atmosphere here. I played with my friends, we had parties, we had fun."

Through the Nakba commemoration has become a visual symbol of injustice against the Palestinians. The Nakba is not only a historical event that happened in 1948, but a continuing affair that only now is coming to a head.

"We have a process of coming to terms with the Nakba and accuse them of selling them as refugees to their homes."

"I was raised when we used to walk to Damascus Gate."

"The Nakba is not about taking a stand for resistance, and in particular for self-determination."

While Palestinians worldwide commemorate the Nakba, the Palestinian government minister, told Arab News over a crackly phone line from his home in Lebanon with her family for the second largest city in occupied land.

"It is just empty talk, " said the Arabian Gulf to the Atlantic."

"You see, it never ended, " said him."

"I believe that I will ever return to my home, what is today Israel."

"It is our eternal right to live in the city of our ancestors."

"In my childhood we didn't have electricity. We used candles."

"Jerusalem will always be home, wherever I am."

"It is not about taking a stand for resistance, and in particular for self-determination."

"While families or clans are not so visible, we remember our ancestors and everything they did."

"You have a lot of cypress trees in Gaza, " said museum guide Hannah Eusheid. "This one here is 500 years old."

"Everywhere you turn, you see the memories of the Nakba alive."
A new plan is needed if Palestinian state is to become a reality

Ian Cummingham, the seventh and last British High Commissioner of Mandate Palestine, on May 14, 1948, drew down the Union Jack and boarded a ship back to the UK with the remainder of the British officer and civil administration. The British Mandate had ended. There had been violent disturbances — including the 1929 Arab-Jewish riots — and fundamental differences within the British government over how to manage the situation since the 1920s. After the UN Partition Resolution of November 29, 1947 and with the imminent prospect of British withdrawal, serious fighting between Jewish and Arab forces had broken out.

Israel’s creation is often taken to know as the War of Independence, the failure of the Arab armies went to crash and Israel’s victory, the leadership of the Arab Higher Committee — notwithstanding the heroic last of Abdul Qadir al-Mukarram, was a shock to an Arab public who had been told victory was certain. And the disorders soon spread to Syria, Egypt, Iraq, Yemen and Algeria. It was an expedition began a quarter of a century earlier to reconquer parts of the Middle East and North Africa as part of a European sphere of imperial interest in the face of the Ottoman in the state of the world War II.

That experiment failed. So did the aftermath. For the Palestinians, the promise since 1948 has been characterized by attempts by different Arab countries — Egypt, Syria, Jordan and Iraq — to instrumentalize the Palestinian cause in their own interests.

The efforts of leaders such as Yasser Arafat to construct a truly independent and unified Palestinian national movement founded on universal values, external pressure and Arab’s own mobility to move on from a model of charismatic, unstructured and sometimes brutal leadership towards a more collective, collegial and accountable. He and his successors understood that national unity would rest on a state institution by institution, which is one reason why Salam Fayyad is now teaching at Princeton rather than moving the Palestinian Authority toward nationhood.

So where are we now? Hamas’ attempts to show that we need to make Gaza an exemplary state and therefore reprise the premonence movement in Palestinian politics has also failed. Fatah remains quiet and fearful of what happens when Mahmoud Abbas goes. Some will say that international efforts to solve the Palestinian refugee and works agency (UNRWA), for example, are the main obstacle to a fair settlement of the Palestinian issue and a just solution to the refugee question. The UNOrefugee Convention, which guarantees the right of Palestinian refugees to return and be compensated, but that, like so many other UN General Assembly and Security Council resolutions, has never been implemented because of Israeli rejection and America’s protection of its occupied child. Our family has never lived in a tent, nor has it received any UN support, but we have never forgotten where we came from and what our national rights are. The more than 70,000,000 of us who stowed away, risking our lives to avoid any negotiations on how this right was supposed to be implemented.

For me though, the issue is not the actual return but the right of return. And the same is not about a house here, or a workshop closet there, and their compensation. I am sure I speak for many refugees and their dependencies today when I say that what we want from the state of Israel is a simple statement in which the leaders of Israel recognize the historic and moral responsibility for having created the Palestinian refugees, to be sure, to implement the right of return and the compensation, guaranteed by the UN resolution 242.

Why Americans tend to favor Israel

Kerry Boyd Anderson is a writer and political risk consultant with a focus on the Middle East and North Africa for Middle East Policy. Twitter: @KBAresearch

There is no substitute for a plan that seeks to move Arab and Israeli public opinion toward a mutual understanding of the issues. Without this, the Arab Peace Initiative, for a state in return for an acceptance of Israel’s role in the regional fold. For Israel, the same thing is a no-go. As for the Arab world, there is no longer how much will Palestine want a Palestinian state, but how the latter can be in favor of a UN-sponsored plan. For the sake of the Middle East, the Arab world should be as solid as the security and the political leadership of the Arab world to which it should belong.

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