



ERASING THE NAKBA, UPHOLDING APARTHEID

ATROCITY DENIAL IN THE U.S. MEDIA

GREG SHUPAK

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COVER PHOTO

The 1948 Palestinian Nakba (the catastrophe), refers to when more than 750,000 Palestinians were forcibly expelled from their homes by Zionist paramilitary forces and later by the Israeli army during the 1948 Arab-Israeli War. These forcible expulsions were a part of 'Plan Dalet', a policy of ethnic cleansing against the Arab inhabitants of historical Palestine.

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INTRODUCTION

MEDIA COVERAGE HAS COMPRISED a crucial terrain of struggle for Palestinians since the inception of their national movement. Palestinians have long articulated how their history, culture, and resistance to Israeli occupation have been fundamentally misrepresented in Western media. And yet, while large media corporations pay lip service to issues of representation and attempt to ameliorate challenges facing communities and groups that they have marginalized in the past, representations of the Palestinians' identity and their struggle against systemic racism remain largely taboo. This is by no means accidental.

In "Permission to Narrate," Edward Said elucidated how a "disciplinary communications apparatus exists in the West both for overlooking most of the basic things that might present Israel in a bad light, and for punishing those who try to tell the truth" about Israeli apartheid.¹ Indeed, one of the Israeli government's most successful propaganda achievements has been to utilize complicit American news media to launder its continued ethnic cleansing of Palestine, and help garner unconditional diplomatic protection and military funding from the U.S. government.

Palestinians and their allies also face what Said identified as the "superior force of the ideological consensus."² This ideological consensus and subsequent imbalanced news coverage of Palestine was further entrenched in the post-9/11 era, which firmly consolidated the regional strategic goals of the U.S. and Israel. This era also allowed for an exacerbation of simplistic discourse whereby resistance against injustice, discrimination and occupation is coded as "terrorism" in news coverage, drawing a stark dichotomy of the 'civilized' and 'rational' state of Israel juxtaposed against the Palestinian Other.

Western mainstream news media still overwhelmingly operates within this dichotomy, where Israel can do no wrong, and the resistance of Palestinians is readily condemned, irrespective of its motivations, context, or righteousness. While there has been a groundswell of support for Palestine emanating from grassroots movements over the last few decades – most recently seen in the global protests supporting the Jerusalem Uprising in the Spring of 2021 – it is often disheartening that not much has changed in Western news media coverage. There have only been a handful of exceptions when Israel's actions have been particularly egregious. Even direct attacks on the media by Israeli occupation forces – such as the bombing of the Associated Press building in Gaza, or the assassination of Shireen Abu Akleh – have resulted in deafening silence on the part of most major Western outlets.

In this installment of the Institute for Palestine Studies' *Current Issues in Depth* series, Greg Shupak brings to light a fundamental problem in the misrepresentation of Palestine in U.S. media; the systemic denial of a seminal event: the Nakba. The Nakba, or "the catastrophe," was the forceful expulsion of at least 750 thousand

1. Edward Said, "Permission to Narrate" *Journal of Palestine Studies* 13, No. 3 (1984): 30

2. Said, "Permission to Narrate," 38

native Palestinians from their lands in 1948, and the theft of their property, which enabled the violent founding of the State of Israel. Shupak illustrates here how media coverage is almost devoid of historical context for the Palestinian situation as it stands today and demonstrates how this atrocity denial and lack of historical context uphold racist structures of apartheid in occupied Palestine.

If Western-based audiences are to have more than a cursory understanding of the Palestinian question, the media must uphold its responsibility to inform the public accurately, without capitulating to the bullying of advocates for Israel. While major human rights organizations – from Human Rights Watch to Amnesty International to B’Tselem – acknowledge the apartheid imposed by the Israeli regime, much of the general public is still (mis)served by a news media that allows itself to be abused by false accusations of anti-Semitism, which work to debase the very real resurgent threat of right-wing fascism.

This installment of Current Issues in Depth is part of our collaborative series with Against Apartheid and Racial Discrimination (AARDi) in which we aim to further uncover the systemic racism of the Israeli apartheid state. It analyzes one of the foundational problems of media representations of Palestine, and, in doing so, helps chart a path forward for more fair and balanced coverage.

ERASING THE NAKBA, UPHOLDING APARTHEID: ATROCITY DENIAL IN THE U.S. MEDIA

Greg Shupak

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UNDERSTANDING THE PALESTINIAN QUESTION, even at the most elementary level, necessarily entails familiarity with the Nakba. A basic comprehension of the outstanding issues in Palestine requires knowing that the creation of the Israeli state involved ethnically cleansing more than 750,000 Palestinians¹ and that these expulsions created the refugee problem. The Nakba is arguably the seminal event in the history of contemporary Palestine and its people. For Nur Masalha, it is “the root cause of the Palestine conflict.”² Yara Hawari describes it as “the single event that connects all Palestinians to a specific point in history, whether living in exile as refugees, as nominal citizens of Israel, under military occupation in the West Bank, or under siege in Gaza.”³ Therefore, one might expect media coverage of Palestine to frequently communicate information about the Nakba to audiences. That, as I show in this paper, is far from the case.

Even as the struggle between the Palestinians and Israel garners voluminous attention in the American news media, very little of it takes the Nakba into account. In this essay, I examine twenty-first century coverage of Palestine in the four highest circulation newspapers in the United States: the *Wall Street Journal*, *USA Today*, the *New York Times*, and the *Washington Post*.⁴ Between January 1, 2000 and the time of writing, May 29, 2021, the four papers have combined to publish 80,583 pieces that contain both the word “Israel”—or forms of it such as “Israeli”—and a form of the word “Palestine,” including variations like “Palestinian.” Of these articles, 478, or 0.6%, contain the word “Nakba.”⁵

Throughout this essay, I contend that both the dearth of attention the Nakba receives in my dataset, and the distorted way the Nakba is portrayed in the rare cases that it is talked about, provide Israel and its American patron with an alibi for the racist regime that they inflict on Palestinians.

The first section of this paper outlines my argument that the infrequency of references to the Nakba in media is tantamount to mass atrocity denial. In this portion of the paper, I consider the implications of suppressing the Nakba in popular discourse about Palestine and contend that obscuring the Nakba is an act of racial domination, one that leaves audiences ill-prepared to make sense of present-day Palestine.

The next segment of this essay examines the references to the Nakba that are in

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1. Yara Hawari, “Palestine Sine Tempore?” *Rethinking History* 22, no. 4 (2018): 166.
 2. Nur Masalha, *The Palestine Nakba: Decolonising History, Narrating the Subaltern, Reclaiming Memory* (London: Zed Books, 2012), 256.
 3. Hawari, “Palestine Sine Tempore?” 167.
 4. William Turvill, “Top Ten U.S. Newspaper Circulations: Biggest Print Titles Have Lost 30% of Sales Since 2016 Election,” *Press Gazette*, October 22, 2020, <https://www.pressgazette.co.uk/top-ten-us-newspaper-circulations-biggest-print-titles-have-lost-30-of-sales-since-2016-election/>.
 5. News articles that invoke the 1947–48 ethnic cleansing without using the word Nakba are beyond the scope of this paper. In my estimation, media texts that approach the subject in such a fashion do not undermine the central arguments I put forth. News articles that allude to a mass atrocity without using its proper name, the one used by the victims, are poorly positioned to provide readers with a clear sense of what happened. Arguably, talking about the Nakba without using the word is euphemistic and trivializes, if not outright erases, the victims.

“Giving the Nakba so little attention is a dehumanizing form of media racism: omitting the Nakba from the overwhelming majority of Palestine coverage suggests that Palestinians are not worthy of having crimes committed against them acknowledged or mourned.”

my dataset. In this section, I show that much of the coverage that mentions the Nakba fails to provide a reliable account of the catastrophe. The ways that the Nakba is mischaracterized in my dataset can be grouped into eight categories; some of the examples I discuss could fit into more than one of these classifications. The first Nakba mystification I survey is the coincidence trope. This approach clouds the relationship between the catastrophe and Israel’s founding by making it sound as though the two events merely coincided; this framing leaves out that ethnically cleansing the majority of the Indigenous Palestinian population was the way that there came to be a Jewish majority in Palestine. A second

misrepresentation is the *cava lingua* (hollow language) method, wherein a journalist mentions the word Nakba but provides scant information about the racist terror that Zionist forces enacted in 1947–48. The third faulty manner of describing the Nakba is agentlessness, where the audience is given some sense of the immensity of the Palestinian cataclysm but not of who is responsible for the injustice. The Israel-centric view, which defines the Nakba in terms of Israel’s birth rather than of Palestinian dispossession, is the fourth flawed way the Nakba is presented. The fifth relates to euphemisms about the Nakba and the undercounts of the Palestinians affected; I put euphemisms and undercounts in the same category because both entail vagueness that underplays the magnitude of the violence Israel and its pre-state militias inflicted on Palestinians in 1947–48. Denigration is the sixth problematic form of Nakba discourse, one that criticizes Palestinians for keeping memories of the tragedy alive and seeking restitution. Overt atrocity denial, or formulations very close to it, is the seventh objectionable mode of writing about the Nakba in the media. Victim-blaming is the eighth: a means of discussing Nakba that admits that Palestinians have suffered but attributes this to Palestinian choices or to the actions of Arab peoples in general. This racist narrative is evident in, for example, journalists who make the ahistorical assertion that the Nakba happened because of the 1948 war.

Finally, this essay looks at a selection of the small minority of Nakba descriptions in my dataset that are in accord with the historical record. These counterpoints to most of the material in my dataset, I point out, are demarcated as opinion pieces. Thus, Nakba narratives that withstand scrutiny are seldom presented as facts, while those that cannot are regularly afforded the veneer of objective truth typically ascribed to supposedly neutral reporting.

Atrocity Denial

That a mere 0.6% of the articles in my dataset mention the Nakba effectively constitutes atrocity denial. Persistent failure to acknowledge ethnic cleansing and mass killing where they are germane to the subject being discussed is functionally equivalent to refusing to recognize that they happened. In this regard, American news outlets are among what Rosemary Sayigh describes as the “concatenation of forces” silencing the suffering that is a “core element in the modern history of the Palestinian people.” This silencing “is itself a cause of suffering, deepening the pains and losses”⁶ of the Palestinian experience in this century and the last one. By virtue of such coverage, U.S. media take part in what Masalha terms the “politics of denial” through which the Nakba continues, in that “there are millions of Palestinian refugees around the world, all of whom are denied their internationally recognised ‘right of return’ to their homes and land.”⁷ Giving the Nakba so little attention is a dehumanizing form of media racism: omitting the Nakba from the overwhelming majority of Palestine coverage suggests that Palestinians are not worthy of having crimes committed against them acknowledged or mourned; nor, this feature of the coverage suggests, is it necessary to take steps to remedy the wrongs done to Palestinians.

Obscuring the Nakba as most major U.S. media do obscures related information and concepts. Media audiences are poorly positioned to understand the Palestinian refugees’ right to return to their homes if these audiences do not realize that Palestinian refugees exist at all; lack a sense of how many refugees there are; and have little understanding of how there came to be Palestinian refugees in the first place. As Sayigh notes, “Western complicity in the erasure of Palestine—a complicity that pervades majority politics, educational systems, publishing, and the media—has supported the dominance of the Israeli narrative and the silencing of the Palestinian one.”⁸ U.S. media outlets help to uphold racist policies against Palestinians, including the denial of their right of return, by occluding the origin of the refugee issue in fora that help shape how Americans see Palestine. This point is salient because U.S. support undergirds Israeli apartheid.

The infrequency with which the Nakba enters into Palestine coverage must also be situated in the broader media discourse about Palestine. Media narratives do not proliferate in discrete categories. They overlap and feed into one another. Airbrushing the Nakba from most media coverage enables other narratives that bolster Israeli apartheid. For example, American newspapers frequently frame events in Palestine using what I call the both sides narrative.⁹ This untenable approach has it that Palestinians and Israelis have caused each other comparable degrees of suffering and share roughly equal responsibility for the absence of a resolution to the question of Palestine. Such a view benefits from expunging the Nakba from the record: the notion that the struggle for Palestine is between two political entities

6. Rosemary Sayigh, “Silenced Suffering,” *Borderlands* 14, no. 1 (2015): 1.

7. Masalha, *The Palestine Nakba*, 254.

8. Sayigh, “Silenced Suffering,” 6.

9. Greg Shupak, *The Wrong Story* (New York and London: OR Books, 2018), 9–48

who have wronged one another to a similar extent is more difficult to defend to audiences who know that one party ethnically cleansed the other and has consigned them to more than seventy-four years of statelessness than it is to audiences who do not know this part of the story. Another widespread U.S. media narrative about Palestine is that Israeli violence can be understood as self-defense.¹⁰ This deeply flawed perspective has a greater chance of seeming plausible to readers who are unaware that creating the state of Israel entailed the mass expulsion of Palestinians. The claim that Israel is exercising self-defense becomes weaker when it is clear that this supposed defense is against the population that Israel expelled for being not Jewish, displacing Palestinians into exile and into refugee camps that often have quite poor living conditions. Excising the Nakba from almost all of this century's media coverage of Palestine is racist not only on its own terms—in that it sends the message that the harms done to Palestinians either did not happen or that Palestinians are an inferior group deserving of such violence—but as ideological scaffolding for other rationalizations for the apartheid system.

Suppressing the Nakba in popular discourse about Palestine is an act of racial domination: it is an assertion that Palestinians' pasts, presents, and futures are insignificant. Indeed, far from being exclusively a historical event, the Nakba continues to be central to the Palestinian experience of the last seventy-four years. Masalha writes:

For Palestinians, mourning sixty-three years of al-Nakba is not just about remembering the “ethnic cleansing” of 1948; it is also about marking the ongoing dispossession and dislocation. Today the trauma of the Nakba continues: the ongoing forced displacement of Palestinians caused by Israeli colonisation of the West Bank, land confiscation, continued closures and invasions, de facto annexation facilitated by Israel's 730-kilometre “apartheid wall” in the occupied West Bank, and the ongoing horrific siege of Gaza. Palestinians in Gaza, the West Bank and East Jerusalem are denied access to land, water and other basic resources.¹¹

Burying the Nakba in media coverage leaves audiences ill-prepared to make sense of the present, to understand the continuity between the racist dispossessions of 1947–48 and those of today. Journalists are not historians and news articles' brevity constrains the amount of contextual background a piece can provide. However, even in a limited space it is possible to communicate that approximately three-quarters of a million Palestinians were ethnically cleansed in the 1947–48 Nakba. Doing so is arguably essential because, as Masalha writes, “for the millions of Palestinian refugees the past is still present and the sense of displacement remains heightened. The processes of ethnic cleansing and transfer in Palestine continue.”¹² For Sayigh, “There is little understanding in the ‘international community’ or even the Arab world, of how the original Nakba created conditions for the Palestinian people that they name ‘the ongoing Nakba,’ a state of crisis that continues to mutate

10. Shupak, *The Wrong Story*, 103–34.

11. Masalha, *The Palestine Nakba*, 254.

12. Masalha, *The Palestine Nakba*, 251.

into new forms.”¹³ These mutations take place with the help of an American media system that all but covers up the roots of Palestinians’ apartheid present, the organs of which the United States props up.

Nakba Misrepresentation 1: The Coincidence Trope

While I have thus far focused on the shortage of media references to the ethnic cleansing of Palestine, much of the coverage that does mention the Nakba fails to provide a reliable account of the Palestinian catastrophe. Such material downgrades, denies, misdescribes, or endorses the violence the Zionist movement carried out against the Palestinians during the Nakba, or suggests it is the Palestinians’ fault that they were ethnically cleansed and remain under apartheid rule. In these ways, the small portion of attention that the Nakba gets in my dataset handles the subject in ways that provide Israel, and by extension its American patron, with an alibi for the racist regime they inflict on Palestinians.

One form this exculpation takes is the coincidence trope, the first of eight recurring misrepresentations of the Nakba in my dataset. The coincidence trope says that the Nakba and the creation of Israel happened concurrently, but it obfuscates the sense in which the Nakba is Israel’s sine qua non. The oldest reference to the Nakba in the dataset appears in a *New York Times* article from May 2000 that describes demonstrations marking “the anniversary of what the Palestinians term the ‘nakba’ or ‘catastrophe,’ that accompanied the birth of Israel.”¹⁴ Characterizing the Nakba as “accompan[ing] the birth of Israel” is misleading in that it is no historical fluke that the Palestinians’ catastrophe happened in the same period as Israel’s creation: in 1947–48, the mass ethnic cleansing of Palestinians, which the article does not mention, was the necessary condition for creating a state with a Jewish majority in Palestine. Deborah Sontag is not the only author to indicate that the Nakba and the birth of Israel happened at the same time without providing any information about how these two events are related. A *Wall Street Journal* piece says that “Palestinians marked the ‘Nakba’ or ‘catastrophe’ that befell them following Israel’s establishment in 1948.”¹⁵ This phrasing is ahistorical. Much of the Nakba did take place after “Israel’s establishment in 1948,” but it began before the state’s founding on May 15, 1948. For example, on December 31, 1947, Haganah units in Haifa expelled Palestinian residents of the Wadi Rushmiyya neighborhood and blew up their houses in what “could be regarded as the official beginning of the ethnic cleansing operation in urban Palestine.”¹⁶ Furthermore, Zionist leaders adopted Plan Dalet, their blueprint for ethnic cleansing, on March 10, 1948, and between that date and the end of April 1948, “about 250,000 Palestinians were uprooted,” a phase “that was accompanied by several massacres,” most notably the slaughter in Deir Yassin.¹⁷ The Nakba did not incidentally “bef[all]” Palestinians “following

13. Sayigh, “Silenced Suffering,” 2.

14. Deborah Sontag, “Palestinian Forces Exchange Gunfire with Israeli Troops,” *New York Times*, May 16, 2000, <https://www.nytimes.com/2000/05/16/world/palestinian-forces-exchange-gunfire-with-israeli-troops.html>.

15. *Wall Street Journal*, “Photos of the Day: May 13,” May 13, 2011, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424052748703730804576321483611354162>.

16. Ilan Pappé, *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine* (London: Oneworld, 2006), 59–60.

17. Pappé, *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine*, 40.

U.S. media outlets help to uphold racist policies against Palestinians, including the denial of their right of return, by occluding the origin of the refugee issue in fora that help shape how Americans see Palestine. This point is salient because U.S. support undergirds Israeli apartheid.

Israel's establishment": the Nakba is at once the precondition for Israel, the method by which it was built, and the instrument by which it refines and maintains its project of racial supremacy.

A *Washington Post* article offers this explanation: "The Nakba refers to the displacement of Palestinians surrounding the 1948 creation of the state of Israel."¹⁸ Yet, far from merely "surrounding" Israel's creation, the Nakba was the prerequisite for building a state in Palestine wherein the Indigenous Palestinian majority became a minority. Another *Washington Post* article says that the 2018 Great March of Return demonstrations in Gaza "galvanized

people around a call to protest the loss of Palestinian homes and villages when Israel was formed in 1948."¹⁹ In this sentence, the relationship between Israel being established and the destruction of Palestinian residences and communities is ambiguous. It is written as though Israel materialized from nowhere rather than from the process of the Zionist movement taking Palestinian homes and destroying their villages. It absolves Israel of blame for the Palestinians' dislocation and makes it harder for those who rely on news media to understand the world to see the basis of Palestinian calls for redress.

Nakba Misrepresentation 2: Cava Lingua

Many articles²⁰ that mention the Nakba do so using *cava lingua*, hollow language that does not indicate what the Nakba was, why it was a catastrophe for Palestinians, or who carried it out and why. The *New York Times* describes Palestinians marching on the "anniversary of the founding of Israel, a day the Palestinians call 'al nakba,' or 'the catastrophe.'"²¹ This approach compels readers to

18. Valerie Strauss, "More U.S. Academic Groups Join Boycott of Israel—and Critics Push Back," *Washington Post*, January 18, 2016, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/answer-sheet/wp/2016/01/18/more-u-s-academic-groups-join-boycott-of-israel-and-critics-push-back/>.
19. Loveday Morris and Hazem Balousha, "Israelis Kill More Than 50 Palestinians in Gaza Protests, Health Officials Say," *Washington Post*, May 15, 2018, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle_east/gaza-protests-take-off-ahead-of-new-us-embassy-inauguration-in-jerusalem/2018/05/14/eb6396ae-56e4-11e8-9889-07bcc1327f4b_story.html.
20. Sontag, "Palestinian Forces Exchange Gunfire," 2000; *Wall Street Journal*, "Photos of the Day, 2011; and Ishaan Tharoor, "For Israel, There's Little Political Cost to Killing Palestinians," *Washington Post*, April 2, 2018, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2018/04/02/for-israel-theres-little-political-cost-to-killing-palestinians/>.
21. Greg Myre, "Israel Lets Palestinian Police Carry Guns in Most West Bank Cities," *New York Times*, May 16, 2005, <https://www.nytimes.com/2005/05/16/world/middleeast/israel-lets-palestinian-police-carry-guns-in-most-west.html>.

fill in the gaps about why Palestinians see Israel's founding as catastrophic: it fails to include even rudimentary information such as how establishing Israel meant turning three-quarters of a million Palestinians into refugees. A *USA Today* piece says that 1948 "was the year 750,000 Palestinians became refugees in neighboring Arab countries"²² without clarifying how that happened. The *Washington Post* describes "what Palestinians call their 'nakba,' or catastrophe, a reference to their displacement during Israel's 1948 war of independence."²³ The article declines to specify either the displacement's size or who did the displacing.

Nakba Misrepresentation 3: Agentlessness

Agentless descriptions of Palestinians' dispossession appear throughout my sample. The *New York Times* ran a report discussing the anniversary of "Israel's creation, which Palestinians mark as the Nakba or 'Great Catastrophe' of their uprooting from towns and villages in the first Arab-Israeli war."²⁴ This formulation requires audiences to guess at the source of that uprooting, as well as its nature and scale. In the same vein, the *New York Times* notes that every May "many Palestinians observe what they call 'the nakba,' or catastrophe, the anniversary of Israel's declaration of independence in 1948 and the war in which hundreds of thousands of Palestinians lost their homes through expulsion and flight."²⁵ The article does not say who carried out the expulsions. Another piece describes "the 'nakba,' or 'catastrophe' that overtook [Palestinians] after Israel's independence"²⁶; in this rendering, the Nakba "overtook" Palestinians as though it were a demonic possession, a force unto itself. A *Washington Post* article says, "The anniversary [of Israel's declaration of independence] is marked by Palestinians as the 'nakba,' or catastrophe, that led to the displacement of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians."²⁷ This phrasing points to a relationship between the Nakba and Israel's becoming a state but tells audiences nothing about what that relationship is or about the Zionist actions that "led to" Palestinian exile. Using the word "Nakba" but supplying readers with few particulars about it affords audiences so little insight into this moment in Palestine's history that it operates much like coverage that leaves out the Nakba altogether: in both cases, the newspapers are not telling readers that Israel was created by the Zionist movement forcing 750,000 Palestinians from their lands and their homes. This approach buttresses the pro-Israel narrative by leaving out facts likely to increase the chances of audiences questioning the legitimacy of creating an ethnocracy in Palestine or the apartheid system that currently prevails from the river Jordan to the Mediterranean.

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22. Martin Patience, "Professors' History Project Opens New Chapter for Israeli, Palestinian Students," *USA Today*, October 12, 2005.
 23. Joel Greenberg, "Building on History," *Washington Post*, June 27, 2011, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/building-on-history/2011/06/26/AGpeZmmH_story.html.
 24. Reuters, "Israelis Knock Out Arafat's Armor at Gaza Security Site," *New York Times*, May 14, 2001, <https://www.nytimes.com/2001/05/14/world/israelis-knock-out-arafat-s-armor-at-gaza-security-site.html>.
 25. Ethan Bronner, "Israeli Troops Fire as Marchers Breach Borders," *New York Times*, May 16, 2011, <https://www.nytimes.com/2011/05/16/world/middleeast/16mideast.html>.
 26. Steven Erlanger, "Reality Overtakes the Illusion of Unity in Gaza," *New York Times*, May 16, 2007, <https://www.nytimes.com/2007/05/16/world/middleeast/16mideast.html>.
 27. *Washington Post*, "Palestinian Dies After Clash in E. Jerusalem. Officials Postpone Sentence of Blinding. One-Dog Policy Set to Start in Shanghai," May 15, 2011.

Nakba Misrepresentation 4: The Israel-Centric View

Israel-centric descriptions of the Nakba as only the point at which Israel was born are also common in my dataset. For example: a *Wall Street Journal* piece has it that the Nakba is what “Palestinians call the day of Israel’s founding”²⁸; a *Washington Post* book review says “the Nakba [Arabic for catastrophe: the founding of Israel]”²⁹; the *New York Times* gives an account of a video of “Palestinian protesters rallying at the border near the Lebanese town of Maroun al-Ras to mark the anniversary of what they call the ‘nakba’ or the ‘catastrophe’ of Israel’s founding”³⁰; the *Washington Post* says that the term “refer[s] to the founding of Israel in 1948.”³¹ Reducing the Nakba to the moment of Israel’s creation is racist, both in that it erases Palestinian dispossession and in that it tells the story from the colonizers’ point of view: the Nakba is defined as a Zionist triumph rather than the ethnic cleansing of the vast majority of the Indigenous population of Palestine.

Nakba Misrepresentation 5: Euphemisms and Undercounts

Euphemistic descriptions of the Nakba, and vague counts of the Palestinians affected, also appear in my sample. In the *Wall Street Journal*, Brett Stephens calls the Nakba “the Palestinian departure from their homes in what was to become Israel in 1948.”³² “Departure” is a remarkably anodyne term for people being forced to flee their homes so that a settler colonial movement could take them. Other coverage similarly downplays the catastrophe. The caption of a photo accompanying a *Wall Street Journal* article defines the Nakba as “when thousands of Palestinians lost their homes with the creation of Israel.”³³ Saying that Palestinians “lost” their homes makes the Nakba sound accidental, benign even, and gives readers no sense of how that loss took place or of who is responsible for the dispossession. “Thousands” is also a gross undercount considering that there is a broad scholarly consensus³⁴ that approximately three-quarters of a million Palestinians were driven from their homes during the Nakba. Writing that the Nakba entailed “the displacement of hundreds of thousands of their forebears who were expelled or fled from their homes”³⁵ functions similarly: this wording can generate a serious underestimate of the number of Palestinians driven from their homes. These

28. James Taranto, “Best of the Web Today,” *Wall Street Journal*, May 17, 2002.

29. Mike O’Connor, “Crossing Mandelbaum Gate,” *Washington Post*, April 25, 2010.

30. Robert Mackey, “Video of the ‘Nakba Day’ Protest in Lebanon,” *New York Times*, May 20, 2011, <https://thelede.blogs.nytimes.com/2011/05/20/video-of-the-nakba-day-protest-in-lebanon/>.

31. Adam Taylor, “Trump’s ‘Buy Now, Pay Later’ Foreign Policy,” *Washington Post*, May 14, 2018, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2018/05/14/trumps-buy-now-pay-later-foreign-policy/>.

32. Brett Stephens, “Now They’ll Know What It’s Like,” *Wall Street Journal*, September 13, 2001.

33. *Wall Street Journal*, “Clashes Mar Palestinian Catastrophe Remembrance,” May 15, 2013, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424127887324767004578485153901120768>.

34. Pappe, *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine*, xiii; Masalha, *The Palestine Nakba*, 2; Janet Abu-Lughod, “Palestinians: Exiles at Home and Abroad,” *Current Sociology* 36, no. 2. (1988): 63; Honaida Ghanim, “Poetics of Disaster: Nationalism, Gender, and Social Change among Palestinian Poets in Israel after Nakba,” *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society* 22 (2009): 25; Rashid Khalidi, “Revisionist Views of the Modern History of Palestine: 1948,” *Arab Studies Quarterly* 10, no. 4 (1988): 427.

35. Iyad Abuheweila and David M. Halbfinger, “Plan to Storm Fence Gets Bloody Preview in Gaza,” *New York Times*, April 28, 2018.

euphemistic phrasings and imprecise counts of Palestinians driven out in 1947–48 underplay the harm inflicted on Palestinians during the Nakba, and that assists Israel’s defenders because it muddies the racist violence on which Israel is built.

Nakba Misrepresentation 6: Denigration

In my dataset, Palestinians are also denigrated for memorializing the Nakba and seeking restitution. For instance, they are criticized for teaching their children about this touchstone event in their history. John Kifner writes in the *New York Times*:

Unlike other refugee groups that eventually dispersed, many of these people, at the direction of the Palestinian leadership, have remained clustered in the camps, which serve as incubators of irredentist nationalism. Here the schools teach about al-Nakba, the disaster, as the Arab world calls Israel’s founding, and pass on wondrous tales of the beauty of their former olive groves and orange trees.

It is these people, with their myths and unassuaged grievances, who are emerging, in the wake of President Bill Clinton’s last-ditch proposals for a comprehensive settlement, as perhaps the most difficult element in the Middle East peace puzzle.³⁶

Kifner presents Palestinians’ desire to exercise their right to return to homes that they were forced to leave as unreasonable. The “peace puzzle,” for him, remains unsolved because the refugees want to go home and not because they are being prevented from doing so. The solution his view points to is to stop educating Palestinian refugee children about why they are refugees and about where and how their people lived before Zionist and Israeli forces compelled them to leave. A James Taranto *Journal* article says:

Any conceivable peace deal will create too many bitter losers (Palestinians who can’t go “home” to pre-1967 Israel and Israeli settlers who will have to give up their homes and their “Greater Israel” dream) to work as easily and smoothly as the compromise in Northern Ireland. Nobody gave up a home in Northern Ireland³⁷; nobody was stuck in a refugee camp.

Here’s a simple way of summing that up: Yesterday Arabs celebrated al-Nakba, Arabic for “the catastrophe.” This “catastrophe” is not the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza in 1967, but rather Israel’s establishment as an independent state almost two decades earlier. Peace in the Middle East would require the Palestinians and other Arabs to give up the dream of destroying Israel.³⁸

36. John Kifner, “The Price of Peace Will Be Paid in Dreams,” *New York Times*, December 31, 2000.

37. This remark is misleading. See Brendan Ciarán Browne and Casey Asprooth-Jackson, “From 1969 to 2018: Relocating Historical Narratives of Displacement during ‘the Troubles’ through the European Migrant Crisis,” *Capital and Class* 43, no. 1 (2019): 24. They write that “anywhere between 45,000 and 60,000 civilian families were displaced as [‘the Troubles’] erupted in [Northern Ireland in] 1968.”

38. James Taranto, “Those Sophisticated Frenchmen,” *Wall Street Journal*, May 16, 2011, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424052748703509104576327244249314846>.

For Taranto, commemorating the Nakba is evidence of the Palestinian and Arab intransigence that is a major obstacle to a “peace deal”: by putting the word “home” in scare quotes when he is describing Palestinians returning to land that has been taken from them, and not using scare quotes to refer to illegal Israeli settlers’ “homes,” he implies that the latter would have a more legitimate grievance than the former. Similarly, a *Wall Street Journal* editorial says that Palestinians “celebrate [the anniversary of Israel’s founding] with the holiday they call Nakba Day, or the Catastrophe. As long as this bitterness animates Palestinian society, its suffering will continue.”³⁹ For this paper’s editorial board, Palestinians commemorating their national tragedy is both deplorable and the reason that their racial oppression continues. Maligning Palestinians for Nakba remembrance degrades the dead, the survivors, and their ancestors, sending the message that the harm done to them need not be rectified.

Nakba Misrepresentation 7: Atrocity Denial

The dataset I studied contains material that verges on explicit atrocity denial. A *Wall Street Journal* article says the Nakba was “when hundreds of thousands of Palestinians fled what became the nation of Israel.”⁴⁰ This telling wipes the deliberate, mass expulsion of Palestinians from the narrative and exonerates Zionist forces. The same is true of a 2014 piece in the *New York Times* by Anne Barnard. The author writes of Palestinians in Lebanon who treasure the rusting keys to homes they “lost when they fled what became Israel in 1948.”⁴¹ That Palestinians were expelled from their homes is absent from Barnard’s version, and the word “lost” obscures that the homes were taken. She says that the Nakba is “Palestinians’ term for the 1948 displacement.” At no point in her article does Barnard make clear that Palestinians were expelled. Nor does she note that what they were fleeing, and that what displaced them, was Zionist violence. By whitewashing the ethnic cleansing of Palestine, Barnard and Schwartz do what atrocity denialists always do: they cover up the crime, dishonor the victims, and devalue the lives of survivors and their descendants. Cheapening Palestinian life in these ways helps make it broadly acceptable to continue to subject them to apartheid.

The dataset I examined also contains a soft denialism that suggests that, despite the historical record, it is a matter of debate whether Israel and the pre-state Zionist militias intentionally expelled Palestinians from their homes. Brett Stephens writes in the *Wall Street Journal* that, “what Palestinians call al-Nakba, the catastrophe, refers to the 1948 exodus of Arabs from the land that would shortly become Israel. The reasons for their departure are controversial, but the fact remains that there are now several million refugees living in camps throughout the region who demand ‘the right of return.’”⁴² The reasons for Palestinians’ “departure” cannot reasonably

39. *Wall Street Journal* Editorial Board, “From Washington to Jerusalem,” May 14, 2018, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/from-washington-to-jerusalem-1526338677>.

40. Felicia Schwartz, “Kushner-Led Mideast-Peace Plan Faces Growing Difficulty Even before Arrival,” *Wall Street Journal*, March 4, 2018, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/kushner-led-mideast-peace-plan-faces-growing-difficulty-even-before-arrival-1520164801>.

41. Anne Barnard, “Inside the Camps of Lost Hope,” *International New York Times*, November 29, 2014.

42. Brett Stephens, “Palestine: The Dream and the Nightmare,” *Wall Street Journal*, September 20, 2000.

“**Suppressing the Nakba in popular discourse about Palestine is an act of racial domination: it is an assertion that Palestinians’ pasts, presents, and futures are insignificant.**”

be seen as “controversial.” At the time the article was written, there was a clear body of scholarship documenting that Israel carried out a mass expulsion of Palestinians from their homes in 1947–48. To cite only a very small portion of this material, in 1988 Rashid Khalidi wrote of “the expulsion of over 700,000 Palestinians”⁴³ in the peer-reviewed journal *Arab Studies Quarterly*. Multiple Israeli historians had arrived at similar conclusions. For instance, Benny Morris demonstrated that Israeli Prime Minister David

Ben-Gurion gave the “direct order” for “the expulsion of the Arab populations of Lydda and Ramle in July 1948,”⁴⁴ towns with a combined civilian population of fifty thousand to seventy thousand.⁴⁵ Similarly, a 1995 article from Israeli historian Avi Shlaim notes that, in 1948, Israel had a “policy of expelling the Palestinians,”⁴⁶ which he characterizes as “brutal expulsion and dispossession.”⁴⁷

Stephens is not alone in treating the Nakba this way. In the *Washington Post*, Jennifer Rubin says that “nakba” is a word “used mostly by Arabs to described [sic] the ‘tragedy’ of Israel’s birth.”⁴⁸ Putting scare quotes around tragedy signals that Rubin does not think the Nakba is a tragedy. She does not specify what term she would use to characterize people being expelled en masse because of their ethnicity, but the clear implication is that she thinks the creation of Israel, and hence also the ethnic cleansing it entailed, was a welcome historical development. Isabel Kershner of the *New York Times* writes that “Israeli Jews describe the houses of Ein Hod as ‘abandoned’ Arab properties. But for Arabs, 1948 was the ‘nakba,’ Arabic for ‘catastrophe,’ and they consider the houses stolen.”⁴⁹ Kershner implies that it is as valid to say that the Nakba—during which Palestinians were forced from their homes and prevented from returning—did occur as it is to say that it did not and that the Palestinians left of their own accord.

Nakba Misrepresentation 8: Victim Blaming

To say Palestinians are roughly as liable as the Israelis for the Nakba is to blame Palestinians for their own ethnic cleansing. Carlo Strenger writes in the *New York Times* that it’s necessary to allow Palestinians to voice their rage and pain about

43. Khalidi, “Revisionist Views of the Modern History of Palestine,” 427.

44. Benny Morris, “Operation Dani and the Palestinian Exodus from Lydda and Ramle in 1948,” *Middle East Journal* 40, no. 1 (1986): 82.

45. Morris, “Operation Dani,” 83.

46. Avi Shlaim, “The Debate about 1948,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 27, no. 3 (1995): 289.

47. Shlaim, “The Debate about 1948,” 292.

48. Jennifer Rubin, “Saturday People, Sunday People,” *Washington Post*, December 16, 2012, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/right-turn/wp/2012/12/16/saturday-people-sunday-people/>.

49. Isabel Kershner, “Arabs and Israelis, United by Flames,” *New York Times*, December 14, 2010.

Burying the Nakba in media coverage leaves audiences ill-prepared to make sense of the present, to understand the continuity between the racist disposessions of 1947–48 and those of today.

what they have gone through and to express their need for Israel to recognize its part in the Nakba. In the same way patients progress by talking about their traumas, a therapeutic process may lead the Palestinians to realize that they have not just been passive victims, that they have made decisions, ranging from rejection of the American partition plan in 1947 to the use of suicide bombers since the 1990s, that have driven back the possibility of peace.⁵⁰

By asserting that Israel played only a “part” in the Nakba, when it is Israel that carried it out, Strenger says that Palestinians are partially culpable for being expelled from their homes and their land. In conflating Palestinian counterviolence⁵¹ with Israeli violence, and in implying that Palestinian exile is a consequence of perversely opposing their homeland’s partition, the author suggests that Palestinians have a significant share in responsibility for the Nakba’s continuity.

Victim blaming takes other forms in the sample I examined. In the *Washington Post*, Richard Cohen writes that, for Palestinians, the disaster of the Nakba “has only been compounded by an Arab intransigence and belligerence that has played into Israel’s territorial ambitions, particularly the annexation of East Jerusalem.”⁵² Here Palestinians and all other Arabs are part of an undifferentiated mass that is guilty of unnamed, inexplicable “intransigence and belligerence” that supposedly drives Israel’s colonization of Palestine.

A *Wall Street Journal* piece describes the Nakba as “the Palestinians’ flight from present-day Israel in 1947.”⁵³ Using the word “flight” in this way makes it sound as though Palestinians left voluntarily. In the *Wall Street Journal*, Alan M. Dershowitz outright blames Palestinians for the 1947–48 Nakba and for its persistence, saying that their “leadership still insists on calling the self-inflicted wounds caused by its rejection of a two-state solution the ‘nakba,’ meaning the catastrophe.”⁵⁴ For Dershowitz, it is the Palestinians’ fault that they are stateless because they should have agreed to give away more than half of their territory, which is what the United Nations’ partition plan he calls a “two-state solution” advocated.⁵⁵

Similarly, a *Wall Street Journal* editorial the following year criticized Mahmoud

50. Carlo Strenger, “Talking-Cure Diplomacy,” *New York Times*, February 26, 2010, <https://www.nytimes.com/2010/02/26/opinion/26strenger.html>.

51. Charmaine Seitz, “Coming of Age: Hamas’s Rise to Prominence in the Post-Oslo Era,” in *The Struggle for Sovereignty*, eds. Joel Beinin and Rebecca L. Stein (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006), 112–29.

52. Richard Cohen, “A Square for a Murderer,” *Washington Post*, March 16, 2010.

53. Joe Lauria and Charles Levinson, “U.N. Slams Israel for Lethal Reply to Protesters along Lebanese Border,” *Wall Street Journal*, July 7, 2011.

54. Alan M. Dershowitz, “The Palestinians’ U.N. Agenda,” *Wall Street Journal*, September 13, 2011.

55. Rashid Khalidi, *The Iron Cage* (Boston: Beacon, 2006), 1.

Abbas, head of the Palestinian Authority, for referring during a UN speech to the “unprecedented historical injustice inflicted on the Palestinian people since al-Nakba [the catastrophe] of 1948.” The editors write, “That would not have happened had the Arabs not sought to murder Israel in its crib by invading it.”⁵⁶ Even if one accepts the dubious premises that Palestinians and the Arab states can be viewed as one and the same, and that creating a state with a Jewish majority in Palestine was justified, the 1948 war between Israel and the Arab states started May 15, 1948, while Zionist forces conducted a mass ethnic cleansing on December 31, 1947.⁵⁷ Ergo, the war cannot accurately be described as the cause of the Nakba.

This trope, however, is common in my dataset. A *Washington Post* article says that, on Nakba Day, Palestinians “mourn the flight and expulsion of about 700,000 Palestinians during the war and hostilities that accompanied the creation of the state of Israel in 1948.”⁵⁸ The *New York Times* defines the Nakba as “the Palestinian exodus during the Arab-Israeli war.”⁵⁹ Dissolving the Nakba into the 1948 war—apart from being ahistorical—makes it sound as though the ethnic cleansing was the byproduct of a regional conflict rather than a choice that Israel’s founders made in advance of it, as Plan Dalet evinces.⁶⁰ Instead, the Nakba is presented as a consequence of the war rather than an essential part of constructing a state with a Jewish majority in a land where most of the population was not Jewish. Writing as though the Nakba were an offshoot of the 1948 war minimizes the responsibility of the Zionist movement, and of the Israeli state it created, for the horrors of the Nakba.

These euphemistic phrasings and imprecise counts of Palestinians driven out in 1947–48 underplay the harm inflicted on Palestinians during the Nakba, and that assists Israel’s defenders because it muddies the racist violence on which Israel is built.

56. Wall Street Journal, “The Palestine Mirage,” *Wall Street Journal*, December 1, 2012.

57. Pappe, *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine*, 59–60.

58. Ernesto Londoño, “Hagel Gets Warm Welcome in Israel,” *Washington Post*, May 21, 2014, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle_east/in-israel-hagel-is-welcomed-warmly-in-first-senior-us-visit-since-peace-talks-collapse/2014/05/16/5875cebe-dd28-11e3-8009-71de85b9c527_story.html.

59. Steven Erlanger and Isabel Kershner, “Palestinians Flee Gaza’s North as Cease-Fire Seems Elusive,” *New York Times*, July 14, 2014, <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/07/14/world/middleeast/israel-gaza.html>.

60. Pappe, *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine*.

61. Elias Khoury, “For Israelis, an Anniversary. For Palestinians, a Nakba,” *New York Times*, May 18, 2008, <https://www.nytimes.com/2008/05/18/opinion/18khoury.html>; Mahmoud Abbas, “The Long Overdue Palestinian State,” *New York Times*, May 17, 2011, <https://www.nytimes.com/2011/05/17/opinion/17abbas.html>; Richard Cohen, “Israel’s Open Wound,” *Washington Post*, December 10, 2013; Jodi Rudoren, “Abbas Meets in London with Israeli Negotiator,” *New York Times*, May 17, 2014, <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/05/17/world/middleeast/abbas-meets-with-israeli-peace-negotiator-in-london.html>; Peter Beinart, “Palestinian Refugees Deserve to Return, Too,” *New York Times*, May 13, 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/05/12/opinion/israel-palestinian-refugees-right-of-return.html>.

62. Raja Shehadeh, “The Nakba, Then and Now,” *New York Times*, October 16, 2012, <https://latitude.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/10/16/the-nakba-then-and-now/>.

Counterpoints

While the portion of Palestine coverage that mentions the Nakba at all is vanishingly small, and while that which does frequently misrepresents the ethnic cleansing of Palestine, my dataset also contains accounts of 1947–48 that faithfully represent the period.⁶¹ In a *New York Times* piece, Raja Shehadeh⁶² writes that “the Nakba refers to the expulsion of the Palestinians from the newly minted state of Israel” and praises the Israeli group Zochrot for organizing a trip to Lydda, “a city where some of the Nakba’s worst atrocities occurred” in an attempt to make Israelis more aware of, and willing to recognize, the Nakba. A *USA Today* article gives voice to a similarly accurate assessment:

Many Palestinians mark Israel’s independence with Nakba Day—translated as “Catastrophe Day” ... “Israeli independence means for Palestinians the displacement from their homes, their lands, their villages, from any space that they have emotional attachment to,” said Manar Makhoul of Bidal, a group that promotes the rights of Palestinian refugees.⁶³

A Hanan Ashrawi⁶⁴ piece in the *New York Times* likewise says, “In total, about 800,000 Palestinians were dispossessed and expelled. Because of the Nakba, or catastrophe, of 1948, those Palestinians and their descendants are refugees scattered across the region and the world, dreaming of their right to return.” In the *Washington Post*, Noura Erakat and Mariam Barghouti point out that Israel’s threats to evict Palestinian residents in the East Jerusalem neighborhood of Sheikh Jarrah “are part of what Palestinians describe as their ‘ongoing Nakba,’ because the removal and forced exile of 80 percent of historic Palestine’s native population between 1947 and 1949 was not a singular event.”⁶⁵ Thus, consistent, diligent readers of major American newspapers are occasionally exposed to accurate information about the Nakba. Such coverage, however, represents a minute fraction of the negligible volume of media writing on Palestine that mentions the Nakba.

Moreover, the articles that offer a tenable account of the Nakba are typically opinion pieces. This feature of the coverage is significant because it means that when readers are presented with the documented facts of what happened during the Nakba, these are flagged as debatable points of view. In contrast, in the scarce articles in my dataset that refer to the Nakba at all, the faulty descriptions are the ones most commonly presented in the detached voice of a journalist writing purportedly objective reports.

Conclusion

Nakba denialism is one of the few forms of mass atrocity denial that remains socially acceptable in Anglo North America. Between January 1, 2000 and the time

63. Vanessa O’Brien, “Celebrations Mark Israeli Independence,” *USA Today*, April 17, 2013.

64. Hanan Ashrawi, “How the 1967 War Came Home to Me,” *New York Times*, June 5, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/06/05/opinion/how-the-1967-war-came-home-to-me.html>.

65. Noura Erakat and Mariam Barghouti, “Sheikh Jarrah Highlights the Violent Brazenness of Israel’s Colonialist Project,” *Washington Post*, May 10, 2021, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2021/05/10/israel-sheikh-jarrah-palestinians-jerusalem-violence-evictions-settlers/>.

of writing, May 29, 2021, 0.6% of material published on Palestine in America's four highest circulation newspapers—the *Wall Street Journal*, *USA Today*, the *New York Times*, and the *Washington Post*—refers to the Nakba. The nearly full-scale absence of the Nakba from these outlets' Palestine articles amounts to collective atrocity denial: when an event is left out of coverage of an issue to which it is central, the newspapers making the omission are writing as though the event did not take place and encouraging the history to be misunderstood in this way. As Masalha contends, "Refugees' struggle to publicise the truth is a vital means of protecting their rights and keeping alive the hope for peace and justice. Peace will remain elusive as long as Israel's approach to Palestinian refugees is to erase them from history."⁶⁶ Historiography is not the journalist's role. Yet contemporary events are inseparable from the histories that shape them. Accordingly, reporting and commenting on the present in a manner that positions media audiences to thoroughly comprehend it necessitates a truthful rendering of the past, however cursory. The paucity of discussion of the Nakba in the U.S. media outlets that I have examined is evidence that journalists covering Palestine have mostly failed to equip readers in this way. This shortcoming abets the erasure to which Masalha refers and obfuscates how the Palestinians have been subjected to ethnic cleansing, settler colonialism, occupation, and apartheid.

The minuscule portion of my dataset that does refer to the Nakba includes few accounts of the Palestinian catastrophe that reflect the extensive body of evidence showing that Israel and the pre-state Zionist militias forced some 750,000 Palestinians from their homes, took their land, and prevented them from exercising their UN-sanctioned right of return. In the majority of the cases that the newspapers in my sample mention the Nakba, they do so by excusing, underplaying, or obscuring Israeli apartheid and Zionist forces' racist violence.

Such news outlets are influential, but they do not have totalizing control over popular debate and have not kept the Palestinians' experiences of racism entirely out of the public discussion, including in rare instances in the corporate media. Hawari, Masalha, Pappe, and Sayigh are among the many scholars, teachers, and cultural workers nourishing memories of the 1947–48 Nakba and popular awareness of its contemporary unfolding, as are Palestine solidarity organizations and activists, and independent media outlets like Electronic Intifada and Mondoweiss. Such persons, groups, and publications have a dialectical relationship with corporate media, sometimes operating as a counterpoint to them and sometimes penetrating prominent news sources to nurture consciousness of the 1947–48 ethnic cleansing, its present forms, or both. This interplay will likely continue for the foreseeable future to be the terrain of struggle in the narrative battle for Palestine.

66. Masalha, *The Palestine Nakba*, 253.

ERASING THE NAKBA, UPHOLDING APARTHEID ATROCITY DENIAL IN U.S. MEDIA

GREG SHUPAK

IN THIS INSTALLMENT of the Institute for Palestine Studies' *Current Issues in Depth* series, Greg Shupak brings to light a fundamental problem in the misrepresentation of Palestine in U.S. media; the systemic denial of a seminal event: the Nakba. The Nakba, or "the catastrophe," was the forceful expulsion of at least 750 thousand native Palestinians from their lands in 1948, and the theft of their property, which enabled the violent founding of the State of Israel. Shupak illustrates here how media coverage is almost devoid of historical context for the Palestinian situation as it stands today and demonstrates how this atrocity denial and lack of historical context uphold racist structures of apartheid in occupied Palestine. This monograph is also a part of our collaborative series with Against Apartheid and Racial Discrimination (AARDi) in which we aim to further uncover the systemic racism of the Israeli apartheid state. It analyzes one of the foundational problems of media representations of Palestine, and, in doing so, helps chart a path forward for more fair and balanced coverage.

CURRENT ISSUES IN DEPTH

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