Special Document File

THE ERASURE OF THE NAKBA IN ISRAEL'S ARCHIVES

SETH ANZISKA

A 2019 investigation by the Israeli NGO Akevot and *Haaretz* newspaper has uncovered official suppression of crucial documents about the Nakba in Israeli archives. The *Journal of Palestine Studies* is publishing print excerpts and a full online version of the buried "migration report," which details Israel's depopulation of Palestinian villages in the first six months of the 1948 war, a document that clearly undermines official Israeli state narratives about the course of events. In methodical fashion, this report provides contemporaneous documentation of Israeli culpability in the expulsion of Palestinians from their homes and the systematic depopulation of so-called Arab villages in the first six months of the war. Alongside a discussion of key revelations in the newly available document, this introduction situates the broader pattern of erasure within historiographical debates over 1948 and questions of archival access. It examines how accounts of Israel's birth and Palestinian statelessness have been crafted in relation to the underlying question: who has permission to narrate the past?

IN JULY 2019, the Israeli newspaper *Haaretz* published a startling feature story about ongoing efforts by officials within Israel's Ministry of Defense to suppress public access to sensitive files in various state archives relating to the 1948 war, known to Palestinians as the Nakba.[1] Among the revelations, published in conjunction with a detailed report by the Israeli NGO Akevot Institute for Israeli-Palestinian Conflict Research[2] (or simply Akevot), was the existence of a key Israeli intelligence document that contradicts the longstanding Israeli narrative about the making of the Palestinian refugee population in the opening months of the Nakba. Rather than leave their homes at the behest of Arab leaders who encouraged Palestinian "flight," as Israeli propaganda efforts have long argued, Israel's own intelligence service documented in real time how military operations by Jewish combatants were the major cause of Palestinian displacement during the early months of the war.

The twenty-nine-page document, prepared by the "Arab Section" of the "Intelligence Service," is euphemistically titled *Migration of* Eretz Yisrael *Arabs between December 1, 1947 and June 1, 1948.* In methodical fashion, the author provides contemporaneous documentation of Israeli culpability in the expulsion of Palestinians from their homes and the systematic depopulation of so-called Arab villages in the first six months of the war. The document outlines the variety of means

Zionist forces employed—from "whispering operations" to "ultimate expulsion orders" and "fear of Jewish [retaliatory] response"—with the specific form of expulsion identified in each locality during a period in which three hundred thousand to four hundred thousand Palestinians were forced out of their homes in areas surrounding Jerusalem, Jaffa, Jenin, Haifa, and Acre. A similar number would depart Jewish-controlled areas in the remaining months of the war, from localities that included Lydda, Ramla, the Galilee, and the Naqab. While these methods of depopulation have long been discussed and written about by scholars drawing on oral history sources and a variety of primary material—including work published in this journal—many historians and every Israeli government since 1948 have routinely denied Israeli agency in the making of the refugee population. The battle over responsibility for the 1948 Nakba thus remains at the heart of a reckoning with the genesis of Israel's birth and Palestinian statelessness, and it includes questions of intentionality, moral and financial responsibility, as well as which voices get to narrate the tragedy of displacement itself.

In an accompanying online-only supplement to this introduction, the *Journal* is publishing the first English translation of the original Hebrew document (produced by Akevot), given the crucial nature of this source for historians and the wider public investigating the Nakba and the legacy of Palestinian dispossession. An officer of Shai, the forerunner to the Shin Bet, wrote the "migration report" as a contemporaneous effort to explain why so many Palestinian villages were being emptied of their Arab inhabitants during the opening months of the war that culminated in the establishment of the State of Israel. As his introduction plainly states, the overview is an "attempt to evaluate the intensity of the migration and its various development phases, elucidate the different factors that impacted population movement directly and assess the main migration trajectories."[3] The phases of migration are broken down by month, with a detailed annex providing a village-by-village account of the proximate cause of depopulation and the consequences. As the section of the annex titled "Causes of Arab Migration" makes clear, the primary factors that drove Palestinians out of their localities included: "direct Jewish hostile actions against Arab communities"; the related fallout from the "impact of our hostile actions against communities neighboring where migrants lived"; "actions taken by the Dissidents [Irgun, Lehi]"; and "Jewish Whispering operations [psychological warfare] intended to drive Arabs to flee." Other listed reasons included "orders and directives issued by Arab institutions and gangs," as Arab fighters are described, and "evacuation ultimatums."[4]

"Without a doubt," the author of the report writes, "hostilities were the main factor in the population movement. Each and every district underwent a wave of migration as our actions in that area intensified and expanded." In accounting for the number of Palestinians driven out by "Jewish military action," the report states "some 70% of the residents left their communities and migrated as a result of these actions."[5] To scan through the document's appendix is to understand the mechanism of violence that drove the exodus of Palestinian Arabs: "Threats and our whispering" in Qaitiyya; "Friendly Jewish advice" in al-Tira; "Our Whispering operation and mortars" in Zuq al-Fawqani; "Received order to leave from Haganah" in Sarkas; "Wanted to negotiate. We did not turn up. Afraid," in Salihiyya; "Harassment by Jews" in Yazur; "Attack on orphanage" in Bir Salim; and "Occupation and expulsion" in Zarnuga.[6]

The author of the report also took particular note of the influence of "dissidents' actions," highlighting events like the Irgun-led massacre in Deir Yassin: "The Deir Yassin action had a particular impact on the Arab psyche. Much of the immediate fleeing seen when we launched our attacks, especially in the center and south, was panic flight resulting from that factor, which can be defined as a decisive catalyst."[7] A similar phenomenon transpired in the wake of Irgun and Lehi abductions of Arab notables in Sheikh Muwannis, a village near Jaffa (where Tel Aviv University now stands). Under the annex listing of nearby villages and the "degree of evacuation" that resulted, a column notes the village name and how many Palestinians left. In "Arab Imrir," the column note reads "Everyone." The reason listed is "robbery and murder committed by Dissidents." Under the "Evacuation trajectory" column, the authors note where the refugees went: "to the area of Qalqiliyah and Jaljulia. The place is empty."[8]

In detailing the factors behind these "migrations," the report even seems to offer guidelines for how to indirectly facilitate mass flight, at a time when, as the historian Benny Morris explains, David Ben-Gurion and his Mapai party were being accused of "waging a 'war of expulsion' against the Palestinians," and Israeli negotiators were being pressured by UN mediator Folke Bernadotte to deal with the mounting question of the refugees.[9] "Note that it was not always the intensity of the attack that was decisive as other factors became particularly prominent—mostly psychological factors," the author of the report writes. "The element of surprise, long stints of shelling with extremely loud blasts, and loudspeakers in Arabic proved very effective when properly used (mostly Haifa!)."[10] The report also explains how an "evacuation psychosis" took hold, "like an infectious disease."[11] Refugees from Haifa would shape the reaction of Palestinians in Acre, catalyzing further departures. Beyond a clinical description of the mechanisms of violence, there is also a suggestion of how the numbers of refugees might be increased in the future. "The impact of extremely loud explosives, loudspeakers, etc., as psychological intimidation actions has on the migration movement must be highlighted (incidentally, no attempt was made to attach loud sirens to the wings of aircrafts that were bombing enemy posts—so these might have a great impact)."[12] The document is therefore also a guide to understanding the evolutionary thinking of Israeli intelligence towards the Palestinian refugees as the war was unfolding, a primary source that contributes to the related debate over premeditated population transfer.

Evidence of what transpired during the Nakba was written about in the seminal work of Palestinian historians like Walid Khalidi in the early decades after 1948, and his careful study of depopulated Palestinian villages was later published in English and relied on extensive maps, statistical data, photographs, and oral history interviews.[13] In the 1980s, document declassification within Israeli archives provided extensive evidence of expulsions, as well as incidents of rape and massacres, which led to the emergence of the "New Historians" and a historiographical revolution in Israel.[14] As the work of Israeli scholars like Avi Shlaim, Benny Morris, Ilan Pappé, Tom Segev, and several others helped demonstrate, there was a much more troubling narrative of Israeli agency in the Nakba and the conflict with the Arab world that would have to be reckoned with. Morris himself, the leading scholar in Israel to write about the making of the Palestinian refugee population, first cited a version of the "migration report" in a 1986 article that drew on newly opened archival material from 1948.[15] In his article, and the wider work that followed, Morris clarified Israeli culpability in expelling Palestinians, and preventing the return of those who fled,

while also shedding invaluable light on atrocities and war crimes committed by Israeli forces.[16] Yet in an Orwellian act of self-censorship that began in the early 2000s, the Defense Ministry's secretive security department, Malmab, spearheaded efforts to reclassify documents and methodically remove files from various archives across Israel to hide evidence of Israeli responsibility for the Nakba.[17]

Alongside the censoring of interviews with military veterans describing war crimes in 1948, and the sealing of documents that provide evidence of the extent to which the military government controlled the lives of Palestinian citizens of Israel in the first decades of the state's existence,[18] Malmab officials have entered unannounced into the reading room of various archives since 2002 and pressured professional archivists to hand over documents about 1948 without legal authority. This practice continues today, in contravention to existing Israeli law.[19] In an interview with *Haaretz*, Yehiel Horev—the former head of the Malmab department tasked with censoring material—was asked why material was systematically hidden, especially when several key documents had already been cited in a variety of published historical works. "Isn't concealing documents based on footnotes in books an attempt to lock the barn door after the horses have bolted?" the interviewer asked. In his response, Horev made a case for undermining evidence and attacking the very concept of truth. "If someone writes that the horse is black, if the horse isn't outside the barn, you can't prove that it's really black."[20] The troubling suggestion that the removal of a document can retroactively discredit the work of a historian is indicative of a much broader and pernicious effort to distort the past, one that Akevot is fighting in Israeli courts and through public campaigns that provide primary sources to Arabic-, Hebrew-, and English-speaking publics.[21]

The very act of reproducing documents like the "migration report" takes on increasing urgency in this environment of elision and mitigates the harmful effects of digitization and selective declassification.[22] Hosting original replicas of crucial documents in online venues like Akevot or in the *Journal* (as has been the case with recent efforts to reproduce material on the Sabra and Shatila massacre[23]) provides vital archival resources to those who cannot access original material in Israeli archives, whether due to restrictions on movement or the very fact of plunder in 1948, and again during the siege of Beirut in 1982.[24] There remain ethical questions to consider in the sharing of original material from Israeli archives, including the legacy of privileged access for Jewish researchers, a discriminatory practice that has its own troubling lineage.[25]

At the heart of the "migration report" and its "rediscovery" remains the central issue of how the past is narrated and who is believed.[26] For decades, survivors of the Nakba sought to tell others about what they experienced and the nature of their dispossession: in photographs and interviews, poetry and art, historical writing and a variety of memorial practices.[27] Yet the eyewitnesses to and survivors of the 1948 tragedy were often discredited, their reliability undermined, and the veracity of their recollections called into question. In the case of Palestine, the danger that fetishizing documents gives succor to the victor's version of history has particular resonance. The limits of the New Historians and revelations within the Israeli archives are perfectly clear: there must be a broad range of narrators delving into the Palestinian (and Zionist) past. When taken together, the historiographical innovations within Palestinian scholarship alongside new empirical work drawing on Israeli sources like the "migration report" can help inform the crafting of capacious and

textured narratives around 1948, linking together the actions and voices of those responsible for the expulsions and the refugees that have been unable to return to their homes ever since.

About the Author

Seth Anziska is the Mohamed S. Farsi-Polonsky Associate Professor of Jewish-Muslim Relations at University College London. He is the author of *Preventing Palestine: A Political History from Camp David to Oslo* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2018).

Migration of *Eretz Yisrael* Arabs between December 1, 1947 and June 1, 1948*

[*Intelligence Service* (*Arab Section*)]   June 30, 1948

Contents

1. General introduction
2. Basic figures on Arab migration
3. National phases of evacuation and migration
4. Causes of Arab migration
5. Arab migration trajectories and absorption issues

Annexes

1. Regional reviews analyzing migration issues in each area [Missing from document]
2. Charts of villages evacuated by area, noting the causes for migration and migration trajectories for every village

1. GENERAL INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this overview is to attempt to evaluate the intensity of the migration and its various development phases, elucidate the different factors that impacted population movement directly and assess the main migration trajectories. Of course, given the nature of statistical figures in Eretz Yisrael in general, which are, in themselves, deficient, it would be difficult to determine with certainty absolute numbers regarding the migration movement, but it appears that the figures provided herein, even if not certain, are close to the truth. Hence, a margin of error of ten to fifteen percent needs to be taken into account. The figures on the population in the area that lies outside the State of Israel are less accurate, and the margin of error is greater. This review summarizes the situation up until June 1st, 1948 (only in one case—the evacuation of Jenin, does it include a later occurrence).

[. . .]

---

* English translation by Akevot Institute for Israeli-Palestinian Conflict Research. Original record's source: Hashomer Hatzair (Yad Yaari) Archive, file 95-35.27(3). This document has been reproduced without editing to conform to *JPS* style or spelling.

3. PHASES IN THE ARAB MIGRATION

The six-month Arab migration (December 1947 to May and beyond) has four distinct phases:

First phase: Begins in early December and lasts until late February.
Second phase: The month of March.
Third phase: The month of April.
Fourth phase: The month of May.

The phases in detail:

First phase: The main feature of this stage is that, at this time, the migration movement is only beginning. It occurs in few places. In all fronts throughout the country, movement is extremely small. Only in the Central Region, movement takes place at the end of this phase, that is, mostly in February, when movement there begins and its intensity, per se, is medium.

Second phase: At this stage, a small amount of movement is felt in most fronts, and in fact, there is a slight reduction compared to the first phase. In some fronts, it seems that migration is waning. This is particularly true with respect to the Central Region, where activity was felt during the first phase. However, where the national trend is a decline, the Jaffa front, as well as the Sea of Galilee area, exhibit an increase with a stronger intensity than the intensity of evacuation in the first phase.

Third phase: This phase is marked by a moderate increase in almost most fronts, moderate increase in the Sea of Galilee area with the evacuation of Tiberias. Moderate increase in the Haifa area with the evacuation of Haifa. Moderate increase in the Tel-Hai district with increased activities on our part. No change in the state of migration in the Negev, which had yet to begin evacuation. Balanced situation in terms of the evacuation of Jaffa—i.e. slight increase from the previous phase and as a continuation thereof. Decrease in migration movement in the Gilboa area. However, a major increase in the Central Region, which peaks in this month, both on the national level and in terms of movement in the region itself. In conclusion: the third phase shows a moderate general increase with one peak point and one downward trend.

The fourth phase: This stage spans the month of May. It is the principal and decisive phase of the Arab migration in Eretz Yisrael. A migration psychosis begins to emerge, a crisis of confidence with respect to Arab strength. As a result, migration in this stage is characterized by:

Major	increase	in	migration	trajectory	in	Tel-Hai	district.
" "	" "	" "	" "	" "	" "	Gilboa	" " .
" "	" "	" "	" "	" "	" "	Jaffa	" " .
" "	" "	" "	" "	" "	" "	Western Galilee	" " .

Evacuation in Negev villages takes place in this month. On the other hand, the Central Region enters this phase having peaked already, with most villages having been evacuated. Therefore, for the Central Region, this phase is the "final stretch." Because the number of remaining villages in the Central Region was small, the seemingly significant decrease felt here is no more than the final touch. The only place where a true decrease is felt in this month is the Sea of Galilee area.

Conclusion: The mass migration of Eretz Yisrael Arabs took place in April–May. May was a climax and recorded as the month during which most of the Arab migration took place, or, more precisely, the Arab flight.

4. CAUSES OF ARAB MIGRATION

a. General

It is reasonable to assume that this migration was not financially motivated—be it a shortage of employment, food or any other financial distress. So long as residents remained where they were, the Arab economy was not harmed in such a way that broke the population's ability to support itself. The financial factor was a motivator in migration only during the very initial phases of the migration movement, when the wealthy among the Arabs, wishing to secure their property and factories, were quick to emigrate. A fluctuation in Arab economic stability was felt in the cities, a fluctuation that was a migration catalyst for some social strata, but this fluctuation—such as the migration of the wealthy, is not a major factor when discussing the mass migration of Eretz Yisrael Arabs.

It is also reasonable to assume that the population movement was not the result of "purely" political factors, meaning: political decisions, in the narrow sense of the word, had no effect whatsoever on the migration movement. Although the massive Arab migration proliferated particularly in the month of May, this should not be taken to be the result of the political significance of that month. Here, it should be noted, that inasmuch as there were locales where the political factor was a motivator for migration movement, this was confined to the cities, and there too, in very limited strata and on a minute scale. These numbers are so small, compared to the general wave of migration and its intensity, that it can be assumed, with certainty, that political factors had no effect whatsoever on the movement of the Arab population.

In reviewing the factors that affected migration, we list the factors that had a definitive effect on population migration. Other factors, localized and smaller scale, are listed in the special reviews of migration movement in each district. The factors, in order of importance, are:

1. Direct Jewish hostile actions against Arab communities.
2. Impact of our hostile actions against communities neighboring where migrants lived (here—particularly—the fall of large neighboring communities).
3. Actions taken by the Dissidents [Irgun, Lehi].
4. Orders and directives issued by Arab institutions and gangs.
5. Jewish Whispering operations [psychological warfare] intended to drive Arabs to flee.
6. Evacuation ultimatums.
7. Fear of Jewish retaliation upon a major Arab attack on Jews.
8. The appearance of gangs and foreign fighters near the village.
9. Fear of an Arab invasion and its consequences (mostly near the borders).
10. Arab villages isolated within purely Jewish areas.
11. Various local factors and general fear of what was to come.

b. The Factors in Detail

Without a doubt, hostilities were the main factor in the population movement. Each and every district underwent a wave of migration as our actions in that area intensified and expanded. In general, for us, the month of May signified a transition into wide-scale operations, which is why the month of May involved the evacuation of the maximum number of locales. The departure of

the English, which was merely the other side of the coin, did, of course, help evacuation, but it appears that more than affecting migration directly, the British evacuation freed our hands to take action.

Note that it was not always the intensity of the attack that was decisive, as other factors became particularly prominent—mostly psychological factors. The element of surprise, long stints of shelling with extremely loud blasts, and loudspeakers in Arabic proved very effective when properly used (mostly Haifa!).

It has, however, been proven, that actions had no lesser effect on neighboring communities as they did on the community that was the direct target of the action. The evacuation of a certain village as a result of us attacking it swept with it many neighboring villages.

The impact of the fall of large villages, centers, towns or forts with a large concentration of communities around them is particularly apparent. The fall of Tiberias, Safed, Samakh, Jaffa, Haifa and Acre produced many large migration waves. The psychological motivation at work here was "If the mighty have fallen. . ." In conclusion, it can be said that at least 55% of the overall migration movement was motivated by our actions and their impact.

The actions of the Dissidents and their impact as migration motivators: The actions of the Dissidents as migration motivators were particularly apparent in the Jaffa Tel-Aviv area; the Central Region, the south and the Jerusalem area. In other places, they did not have any direct impact on evacuation. Dissidents' actions with special impact: Deir Yassin, the kidnapping off five dignitaries from Sheikh Muwannis, other actions in the south. The Deir Yassin action had a particular impact on the Arab psyche. Much of the immediate fleeing seen when we launched our attacks, especially in the center and south, was panic flight resulting from that factor, which can be defined as a decisive catalyst. There was also panic flight spurred by actions taken by the Irgun and Lehi themselves. Many Central Region villagers went into flight once the dignitaries from Sheikh Muwannis were kidnapped. The Arab learned that it was not enough to make a deal with the Haganah, and there were "other Jews," of whom one must be wary, perhaps even more wary than of members of the Haganah, which had no control over them.

The Dissidents' effect on the evacuation of Jaffa city and the Jaffa rural area is clear and definitive—decisive and critical impact among migration factors here. If we were to assess the contribution made by the Dissidents as factors in the evacuation of Arabs in Eretz Yisrael we would find that they had about 15% direct impact on the total intensity of the migration.

To summarize the previous sections, one could, therefore, say that the impact of "Jewish military action" (Haganah and Dissidents) on the migration was decisive, as some 70% of the residents left their communities and migrated as a result of these actions.

Orders and directives issued by Arab institutions and gangs: This evacuation, which may be termed "orderly evacuation" was carried out for strategic reasons, at the demand of the gangs, the Arab Higher Committee or the Transjordan government—whether as a result of a plan to turn the village into a base from which to launch attacks on Jews, an understanding that the village could not be defended, or fear that it would become a fifth column, especially if it had made an agreement with the Jews. The impact of this factor was mainly felt in the Gilboa area (threats to the Zu'biya), the Sea of Galilee area (Circassian villages), the Tel-Hai area (border villages), the center (isolated cases) and the Jerusalem area (Legion orders to evacuate a string of villages to serve as bases in northern Jerusalem, and the order issued by the Arab Higher Committee to the

village of Esawiyah). However, compared to other factors, this element did not have decisive weight, and its impact amounts to some 5% of all villages having been evacuated for this reason.

Jewish psychological warfare to make Arab residents flee: This type of action, when considered as part of the national phenomena, was not a factor with a broad impact. However, 18% of all the villages in the Tel-Hai area, 6% of the village in the central region, and 4% of the Gilboa region villages were evacuated for this reason.

Where in the center and the Gilboa regions such actions were not planned or carried out on a wide scale, and therefore had a smaller impact, in the Tel-Hai district, this type of action was planned and carried out on a rather wide scale and in an organized fashion, and therefore yielded greater results. The action itself took the form of "friendly advice" offered by Jews to their neighboring Arab friends. This type of action drove no more than 2% of the total national migration.

Our ultimatums to Arab villages: This factor was particularly felt in the center, less so in the Gilboa area and to some extent in the Negev. Of course, these ultimatums, like the friendly advice, came after the stage had been set to some extent by hostilities in the area. Therefore, these ultimatums were more of a final push than the decisive factor. Two percent of all evacuated village locales in the country were evacuated due to ultimatums.

Fear of reprisals: This evacuation, which can also be termed "organized evacuation" came mostly after actions against Jews had been launched from inside the village or its vicinity. An Arab attack on a Jewish convoy (the "Ehud" convoy on route to Ahiam, for instance), or a Jewish Arab battle (the Mishmar HaEmek front, the Gesher front, the attack on Lehavot, etc.), automatically impacted the evacuation of nearby villages. One percent of evacuated Arab locales left due to this factor.

All other factors listed as the appearance of gangs and foreign fighters in the vicinity of a village, fear of the consequences of an Arab invasion that could turn the village into a battlefield, especially on the borders of the country, and the fact that certain villages were isolated inside purely Jewish areas, were also motivators for evacuation, depending on the locale. In some areas they had a greater impact than in others, just as in other areas, they had almost no impact at all. All these factors together account for no more than 1%.

General fear: Although this factor is listed last, it did have a sizeable impact and played a significant part in the evacuation. Still, given its generality, we chose to conclude with it. When the war began, various reasons caused general fear within the strata of the Arab public, which chose to emigrate for no apparent, particular, reason. However, this general fear was the primary manifestation of the "crisis of confidence" in Arab strength.

It is reasonable to assume that 10% of all villages evacuated for this reason, such that, in effect, the impact of the "crisis of confidence" was the third most important factor following our actions and the actions of the Dissidents and their impact. Local factors also had a rather marked impact on migration movement: failed negotiations, plans to impose restricted settlement, inability to adjust to certain realities, failed negotiations for maintaining the status-quo or non-aggression agreements—all had an effect in certain areas (for instance, the south), but fail to have any presence in other areas. It can be said that 8%–9% of the evacuated villages in the country were evacuated because of various local factors. These factors are listed by locales in the regional reviews attached herein.

General Comments:

1. Evacuation psychosis:

   The pace of evacuation often increased as a result of the emergence of an evacuation psychosis that surfaced like an infectious disease. So, for instance, it is reasonable to assume that, in Acre, the mass arrival of Haifa refugees who instilled the evacuation psychosis in Acre residents had a decisive impact. Given minor attacks and a push by various catalysing factors, a mass immigration movement from Acre has also started, with this psychosis having its fair share in it. In considering the factors for evacuation, it appears that this "unseen" factor cannot be disregarded.

2. The Typhus plague, where it appeared, was a catalyst in the evacuation—more than the disease itself, the panic that erupted due to rumors about the spread of the disease in the area, was the evacuation motivator.

3. The impact of extremely loud explosives, loudspeakers, etc., as psychological intimidation actions had on the migration movement must be highlighted (incidentally, no attempt was made to attach loud sirens to the wings of aircrafts that were bombing enemy posts—so these might have a great impact).

4. In places where a serious Arab fighting force was present, the village did not evacuate easily, and only a direct, serious action, took down this force and led to an evacuation.

5. In the early stages of the evacuation, when the scope was still small, Arab institutions tried to counter flight the evacuation and restrain the migration waves. The Arab Higher Committee decided, at the time, to take measures to depress flight by imposing restrictions and penalties, using threats and propaganda in the press, on the radio, etc. On this issue the Arab Higher Committee tried to enlist the help of neighboring countries, which often shared the same interests on this point. They mostly tried to prevent the flight of young men of conscription age. However, none of these actions were at all successful as no positive action was taken that could have restrained the factors that motivated and pushed the migration. The actions taken by the preventative mechanism simply led to corruption, and permits were issued in return for bribes. When the mass flight took place, this mechanism also collapsed, leaving only sporadic propaganda which yielded no real results.

5. ARAB MIGRATION TRAJECTORIES

a. General

One of the central questions in the discussion of Arab migration in Eretz Yisrael is the new centers where they are concentrated. On this issue, villagers and urban migrants are two different discussions. As a rule, it can be said that the origin of a group largely determined the migration destination. Most residents of Haifa originate from Lebanon and Syria, and so, the migration trajectory of most Haifa residents was toward Lebanon and Syria. Similarly, the people of Faluja, in Jaffa, returned to their village. However, it should be noted that most of the wealthy urban dwellers and people of means in the cities emigrated abroad.

Urban Arab dwellers markedly showed a more decisive migration trend. The road to the urban dweller's "final destination" was much shorter than that of the villager. While the urban dweller did not move around between stops along the way, the villager often had to move from one place to

another multiple times. This affair, of the villager's wanderings, stems from several reasons, but mostly, the family origin of villagers determined the migration routes taken by those fleeing. For instance, in the first phase of the evacuation and flight, migrants tended to move from the planes to the mountains, or from the south to the coastal region.

Another factor that impacted migration trajectories in rural areas in the early stages was villagers fleeing to the nearest, largest Arab urban center—even if they had no family connections, work connections or acquaintances there. Here, security was the decisive factor. This factor was largely integrated with previous factors, and in other cases, in the absence of other factors, it was the decisive one. For these reasons, a villager had to divide his migration trail, unbeknownst to him, to multiple phases, multiple stops—as indeed, these factors did not always take him to a safe area.

A review of the migration trajectories of villagers reveals multiple stops, a much less apparent trend in the migration of city dwellers. So, for instance, some residents of the village of Beit Susin in the south, migrated to al-Mughar and from there to Yavneh, from Yavneh to Ashdod and from Ashdod to Gaza. For this reason, villages that served as destination points in the first phase of the flight, turned into points of escape in the second phase, and so forth. Many migrated to Beit Shean from neighboring villages, and had to flee from there when residents of Beit Shean themselves fled.

It is also important to note that given that villagers' migration routes were initially rather short (in terms of how far they got from the village), and given that a village was evacuated without our stationing a unit there permanently, there was also a movement of return to villages that had been evacuated, which forced us to engage, on more than one occasion, in expelling residents of a certain village.

There are no "national centers" of migration absorption to speak of, not only because no one organized the migration movement and took care to direct it in certain trajectories, but also because of the trajectories the Arab migration movement took. True, we ultimately do find centers where many Arab migrants remain, many who came from different parts of the country. This is the outcome of a long trail with many stops along the way, which was random, created solely by the security criterion. In this respect, Syria, Lebanon, Egypt and Transjordan abroad, the Arab Triangle, the Ramallah and Birzeit area and the southern coastal plain of Eretz Yisrael do form the main centers that absorbed Arab migration in Eretz Yisrael. However, this should not be taken as an indication on the national level.

One of the main questions, which we cannot answer, is: How many migrated abroad and how many to centers inside Eretz Yisrael? On this issue, we can only make several assumptions:

1. The wealthy among city dwellers migrated primarily to Arab countries.
2. Many villagers, including those lacking means, who came mostly from border areas, migrated to Syria and Lebanon.
3. The main migration to Egypt came from Jaffa, the south, Haifa and Jerusalem.
4. The main migration to Transjordan came from the Sea of Galilee communities, the Yizrael district, the Gilboa district, Acre, Jaffa and Jerusalem.
5. It appears that Syria and Lebanon received most of those who migrated abroad, followed by Transjordan, and lastly, Egypt.

[. . .]

ENDNOTES

1   Hagar Shezaf, "Burying the Nakba: How Israel Systematically Hides Evidence of 1948 Expulsion of Arabs," *Haaretz*, 5 July 2019, https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/.premium.MAGAZINE-how-israel-systematically-hides-evidence-of-1948-expulsion-of-arabs-1.7435103.

2   *Silencing: DSDE's Concealment of Documents in Archives*, Akevot Institute for Israeli-Palestinian Conflict Research, Tel Aviv, July 2019, https://www.akevot.org.il/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Silencing-Akevot-Institute-Report-July-2019.pdf.

3   Intelligence Service (Arab Section), *Migration of* Eretz Yisrael *Arabs between December 1, 1947 and June 1, 1948*, 30 June 1948, Hashomer Hatzair (Yad Yaari) Archive, file 95-35.27(3), English translation (used here) by Akevot Institute for Israeli-Palestinian Conflict Research, https://www.akevot.org.il/en/article/intelligence-brief-from-1948-hidden-for-decades-indicates-jewish-fighters-actions-were-the-major-cause-of-arab-displacement-not-calls-from-arab-leadership/?full#popup/15413e71e82f9865d9e05c83102c4751.

4   *Migration of Eretz Yisrael Arabs,* Akevot, p. 4 (brackets in the original).

5   *Migration of Eretz Yisrael Arabs,* Akevot, p. 5.

6   *Migration of Eretz Yisrael Arabs,* Akevot, pp. 13–29.

7   *Migration of Eretz Yisrael Arabs,* Akevot, p. 5.

8   *Migration of Eretz Yisrael Arabs,* Akevot, p. 22.

9   Benny Morris, "The Causes and Character of the Arab Exodus from Palestine: The Israel Defence Forces Intelligence Branch Analysis of June 1948," *Middle Eastern Studies* 22, no.1 (January 1986): p. 6.

10   *Migration of Eretz Yisrael Arabs*, Akevot, p. 5.

11   *Migration of Eretz Yisrael Arabs*, Akevot, p. 7.

12   *Migration of Eretz Yisrael Arabs*, Akevot, p. 7.

13   Walid Khalidi, ed., *All That Remains: The Palestinian Villages Occupied and Depopulated by Israel in 1948* (Washington, DC: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1992). On oral history, see Nahla Abdo and Nur Masalha, eds., *An Oral History of the Palestinian Nakba* (London: Zed Books, 2018); and the online collection of the Palestinian Oral History Archive, American University of Beirut, https://libraries.aub.edu.lb/poha/.

14   On the "New Historians," see Zachary Lockman, "Review: Original Sin," *Middle East Report* 152 (May–June 1988): pp. 57–64; and Avi Shlaim, "The Debate about 1948," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 27, no. 3 (August 1995): pp. 287–304.

15   Morris, "The Causes and Character of the Arab Exodus," pp. 5–19.

16   For an expansive discussion, see Benny Morris, *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem Revisited* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003). Morris later justified acts of ethnic cleansing and expulsion, telling one interviewer, "I don't think that the expulsions of 1948 were war crimes. You can't make an omelet without breaking eggs. You have to dirty your hands. . . . A Jewish state would not have come into being without the uprooting of 700,000 Palestinians. Therefore, it was necessary to uproot them. There was no choice but to expel that population. It was necessary to cleanse the hinterland and cleanse the border areas and cleanse the main roads. It was necessary to cleanse the villages from which our convoys and our settlements were fired on." See "Survival of the Fittest: An Interview with Benny Morris," interview by Ari Shavit, *Haaretz*, 8 January 2004, https://www.haaretz.com/1.5262428.

17   This formal effort to block access to official material about 1948 has deep parallels in the erasures that accompany mapping and memorialization practices, urban planning, and architecture in Israel. See, for example, Noga Kadman, *Erased from Space and Consciousness: Israel and the Depopulated Palestinian Villages of 1948* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2015); Sharon Rotbard, *White City, Black City: Architecture and War in Tel Aviv and Jaffa* (London: Pluto Press, 2015); and the short film *Mirror Image,* directed by Danielle Schwartz (Israel, 2013 [screened at

48 mm—The International Film Festival on Nakba and Return]). Palestine Open Maps is developing an online digital platform for open source mapping of pre-1948 Palestine. See About page, Palestine Open Maps, https://palopenmaps.org/about. The Israeli NGO Zochrot has worked to raise awareness of the Nakba through a variety of activities, including walking tours, interviews, and online resources that are available on their website at https://zochrot.org/en/content/17.

18   For an invaluable study of Palestinian citizens living under military rule—using many buried sources as well as oral history interviews—see Shira Robinson, *Citizen Strangers: Palestinians and the Birth of Israel's Liberal Settler State* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2013).

19   See Akevot, "Silencing."

20   Shezaf, "Burying the Nakba." See also Benny Morris, "Israel's Concealing of Nakba Documents Is Totalitarian," *Haaretz*, 15 July 2019, https://www.haaretz.com/opinion/.premium-israel-s-concealing-of-documents-on-the-nakba-is-totalitarian-1.7495203.

21   See the Akevot website, https://www.akevot.org.il/en/.

22   For a vital report on these developments, see Shay Hazkani, "Israel's Vanishing Files, Archival Deception and Paper Trails," *Middle East Report* 291 (Summer 2019): pp. 10–15.

23   This includes the secret appendix to the Kahan Commission of Inquiry's report on the massacre, available online in English and Hebrew. See Rashid Khalidi, "Sabra and Shatila Massacre: New Evidence," *Palestine Square*, 25 September 2018, https://palestinesquare.com/2018/09/25/the-sabra-and-shatila-massacre-new-evidence/; and Mouin Rabbani and Sherene Seikaly, "Archive Documents: The Kahan Commission and the 1982 Sabra-Shatila Massacre," *Jadaliyya,* 28 February 2019, https://www.jadaliyya.com/Details/38277.

24   On plunder, see Rona Sela, "The Genealogy of Colonial Plunder and Erasure – Israel's Control over Palestinian Archives," *Social Semiotics* 28, no. 2 (April 2018): pp. 201–29; Hana Sleiman, "The Paper Trail of a Liberation Movement," *Arab Studies Journal* 24, no. 1, (Spring 2016): pp. 42–67; and Gish Amit, *Ex-libris: Chronicles of Theft, Preservation, and Appropriating at the Jewish National Library* [in Hebrew] (Jerusalem: The Van Leer Jerusalem Institute and Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 2014).

25   See, for example, Musa Budeiri, "Controlling the Archive: Captured Jordanian Security Files in the Israeli State Archives," *Jerusalem Quarterly* 66 (Summer 2016): pp. 87–98.

26   See Amjad Iraqi, "Don't Wait for Israeli Archives to Prove What Palestinians Already Know," *+972 Magazine*, 7 July 2019, https://972mag.com/dont-wait-israeli-archives-prove-palestinians-already-know/142201/.

27   See Ahmad H. Sa'di and Lila Abu-Lughod, eds., *Nakba: Palestine, 1948, and the Claims of Memory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007).