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- **Re-Constructing Palestine: Reversing Ethnic Cleansing Right of Return Conference**

Re-Constructing Palestine: Reversing Ethnic Cleansing Right of Return Conference

Dr. Salman Abu Sitta
Boston University, 6-7 April, 2013
Tufts University, 8 April, 2013
Northeastern University, 9 April, 2013



Thank you Zena, Max, Jamil, Sofia and the rest of the wonderful team who organized this conference. Thank you, great and lively audience, for coming here today. By your presence you have underscored many points.

This conference is the second after the first historic conference about the Right of Return held in this university in April 2000. I acknowledge and recognize the initiative and the work of Naseer Aruri, Elaine Hagopian and Nancy Murray in organizing the first conference. Our thanks are extended to them. Since then, we lost many Palestinian giants, Edward Said, Ibrahim Abu Lughod, Haidar Abdel Shafi, Shafiq al Hout and others. But the struggle goes on.

Al-Awda conferences were held in USA annually ever since. Tens of Right of Return conferences were held in Europe, Palestine and Arab Countries.

You, your selves, who were probably ten years old at the time of the first conference, are a living witness that the "the young will (not) forget", as Ben Gurion had hoped. You have self confidence, more determination and more education. Your education is probably the only asset which Israel cannot steal from you.

There is a basic undeniable fact: Palestine is the patrimony of Palestinians. No amount of spin, Hasbara, or Za'bara, myths, bombs, F16s, roadblocks, siege, walls, ethnic cleansing and Apartheid will change that. Remember that.

The Zionist conquest of the land of Palestine was not the only battle. There is another, more vicious battle, raging all over the world until now. That is, the occupation of the minds. This is what Edward Said called "imperialism where navies could never reach."

Some four or five decades after al Nakba, the works of Benny Morris, a historian with racist tendencies, and Ilan Pappé, a historian with integrity, revealed to the West the secret Israeli files about ethnic cleansing and massacres during al Nakba. These works created a splash. They exploded the long-propagated myth that Palestine was empty, that the refugees left their homes for a holiday and that the Israelis enjoyed a high moral ground, depicted as the few righteous defenders outnumbered by the savage cruel attackers. Hence, their victory was an act of Divine Providence and a victory for civilization.

They cheated you for half a century. They deceived you all this time. They built an iron wall of silence about the truth in Palestine. If someone tried to pierce this wall, he was cast as anti-Semite. The Western politicians played to this tune and supported Israel by money, arms and UN veto.

But nothing Pappé, and especially Morris, told you, was not spoken, published, even screamed from hilltops, by the Palestinians since 1948, in newspapers, books, petitions and eye witness accounts. It was all there.

Now you have the world open to you: Satellite TV, internet, you tube and social media. Use it. Use it. Pierce the wall of silence. Beat the powers of darkness. Seek the facts. Examine them. Your opinion then will be your valuable possession.

Let me now establish some parameters which are essential to understanding the facts which I am about to present to you.

First of all, let me assume you are not advocates for colonialism, that is, foreign soldiers attack another county, enslave its people and rob their natural resources. I also take it you are against racism, that is, people designate themselves as superior to others and treat them accordingly. I also take it you are against ethnic cleansing, in which a heavily armed group, attack defenseless people, because they have a different religion or a different nationality or they simply covet their land and property, expel them from their homes and take over their property.

Let me add one more parameter. I am not against mythology or private beliefs. You are free to believe in Greek gods of fertility and war. You are free to have your own religious beliefs, what to eat and where to pray. You are also free to think that God had ordained you as a special person who deserves a special property. These are private convictions. I hope you agree with me that these convictions are not, and will never be, the basis of international law. Above all, you cannot impose these convictions on other people, especially by force.

If you agree to these parameters, then we have something to talk about today, because I am not going to argue about the virtues of these principles. They should be taken for granted.

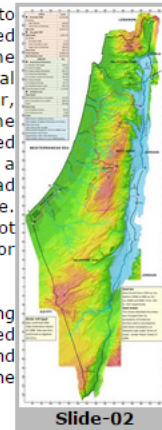
I am presenting today some relevant facts which would probably help you to make a decision as to whether there is a crime, the nature of this crime and whether the criminal should be punished and the robber should return the stolen goods and if so, what remedy should be applied. That is what I am asking you to do today.

My case is clear and simple. *They took away my home by force, at gun point, and I want it back. I became homeless. They prevented me from returning to my home for 64 years, or to be precise, I was not allowed to sleep in my bed for 23,700 nights. I am determined to return to my home.*

I am not a politician; but I have a case which became a cause for 12 million Palestinians and probably many more millions of the good people around the world who support justice.

Slide-02

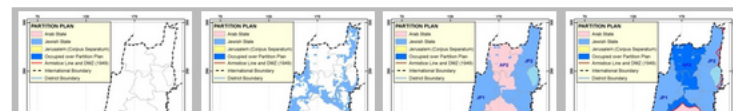
This is my home land, this is Palestine which Allenby found when he came to conquer it in 1917. It has a rich coastal plain; it has highly cultivated mountainous hinterland and has river Jordan and the Dead Sea. Allenby came to conquer Palestine at a time when Europe started to roll back its colonial soldiers from many parts of Asia and Africa. At this very moment, Balfour, British foreign minister introduced a new colonial project under a new name from the back door. He betrayed the "Sacred Trust of Civilisation", as stated in the Charter of the League of Nations regarding Palestine, to bring a democratic government and independence to the people of Palestine. Instead he conspired with rich European Jews to facilitate their entry into Palestine. His Declaration is a false promissory note, given by a party which does not own to a second party which did not have title, without the knowledge or consent of the owner, the natural inhabitants of Palestine.

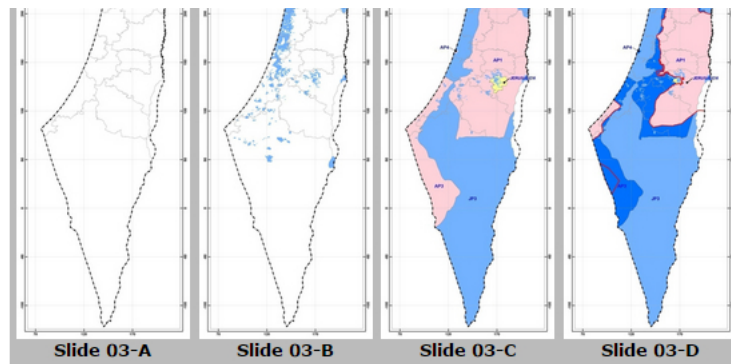


In its 30 years tenure, the British Mandate, which was supposed to bring Palestine to be an independent and free country, did the opposite; it allowed European Jewish immigration to Palestine. In spite of British collusion and Jewish wealth, Jewish immigrants were unable to acquire more than 7% of the county.

Slide-03

But the open immigration policy allowed them to grow to 30% of the population. At the end of the Mandate, Britain threw the case of Palestine into the lap of the United Nations, the successor to The League of Nations. The United Nations, through great pressure from the United States, voted narrowly to suggest a solution: that the European Jewish immigrants establish a government in 54% of the Palestine, without dispossessing any of the Palestinians who lived there, making up half of the population and that the Arab national majority in Palestine would be allocated less than half of the country. Soon after, in March 1948, the US changed its position and abandoned the partition scheme when it realized that this will bring death and destruction to the region. The UN Security Council abandoned the partition proposal and established UN Trusteeship on Palestine. Count Folke Bernadotte was appointed as UN mediator.





Slide 03-A

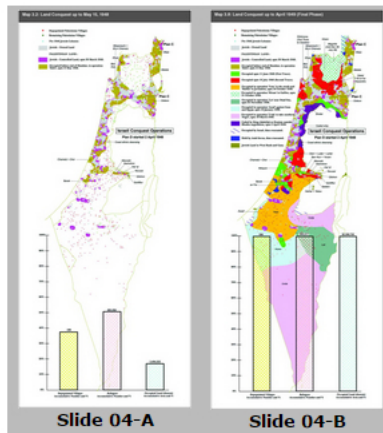
Slide 03-B

Slide 03-C

Slide 03-D

Slide-04

However the Zionist forces were very well prepared to take over the country, many of them were veterans of WWII. Look at the map of Palestine when Ben Gurion declared his state on May 14, 1948. At that moment, Ben Gurion forces occupied only 13% of Palestine. Their 120,000-strong army attacked defenseless Palestinian villages. They conquered 78% of Palestine, and the inhabitants of 675 localities became homeless, TO THIS DAY. I am one of them.



Slide 04-A

Slide 04-B

Slide-05

Let us now consider carefully a very critical period in the conflict which will shed light on al Nakba and explode many of the myths propagated by the Zionists. This period will help you to understand your newspaper's headlines today. In the six weeks, from early April 1948 to May 14, Zionist soldiers occupied 220 heavily populated villages and expelled their population, making up half of the total refugees today. That was while the British were there, supposedly to protect the population. That was before Ben Gurion declared his state and before any Arab regular soldier set foot on Palestine's soil.

The red areas denote areas occupied by Zionist forces in this period. You will notice that they even violated the Partition Plan, which is advertised as the legal basis of founding Israel. There is no such legal foundation. The blue dots are the depopulated villages. There is more to it than that.

Jabotinsky Zionist doctrine of 1923 was applied. Jabotinsky understood that the Palestinians will never accept foreign intruders. The only way he saw was to crush them mercilessly and build an iron wall around the colonists.



Slide 05

Thus, the massacres became a weapon of ethnic cleansing. Deir Yassin is the well known infamous case. Today is its 65th anniversary. But there were at least 3 dozen others. See the drop of blood marks. In every one of the 31 Zionist military operations to conquer Palestine, there were at least 2 massacres of village inhabitants. The advancing Zionist soldiers and the

trail of blood they left behind created what I call "Spheres of Influence", (black line circles) within which villages were depopulated due to this effect.

This was not an accident. It was a pattern, constantly used in the following months, indeed in the following years.

Slide-06

This slide shows the depopulation of Galilee in the same period. It is the same pattern. Let me remind you again. This was before the state was declared and while the British were watching. So the story of little courageous David wins a war of self defense against the mighty vicious Goliath is a patent lie. The worst part is that it was used to justify many more crimes yet to come. The brand name for this is "Israel's security". That is the basis of founding Israel and that is the why the conflict in the Middle East still active today.

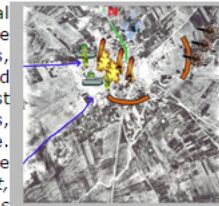


Slide 06

Why did Arab regular soldiers enter Palestine after 15 May 1948 when the British left Palestine? There were great demonstrations in Arab cities, calling for the rescue of Palestinians from massacres and expulsion. Arab regular soldiers came to rescue what was left of Palestine and they failed.

Slide-07

The massacres were the weapon of ethnic cleansing. This is the aerial photo of a village called Bureir, not far from the Gaza Strip. The standard way of depopulation was to surround a village from 3 sides, leaving the 4th open for the survivors to leave. Bureir was blocked from the south, attacked by artillery from the east. From the west tanks attacked and burnt the village. They threw grenades into houses, killing father, mother and children. Then the village was set ablaze. One hundred people were killed. And that was only 48 hours before Ben Gurion declared the state of Israel. *The largest, longest, premeditated and continuous ethnic cleansing in modern history was set in motion.*



Slide 07

Slide-08

This is Tantoura

The men were taken to dig their graves. About 220 were killed. This pattern was repeated . in almost every village, anywhere between 20 to 200 farmers from a village were murdered. The rest were taken prisoners.



Slide 08

Slide-09

Here you can see captured civilians of al Ramla in July 1948. It was Ramadan, it was very hot, they were thirsty, they pleaded for water, a boy was allowed to get some water to drink for them.





Slide 09

Slide-10

Then they were forcibly taken to forced labour camps. Yes, forced labour camps. Only after 3 years after they were closed in Nazi Germany. Not only men, even boys.



Slide 10

Slide-11

This boy in circle, only 14 at the time, is called Darwish; he is now living in San Francisco; he gave me this picture. In forced labour camps they were ordered to dig trenches for the army, carry ammunition, bury the dead and carry the loot from Arab homes. According to Geneva Conventions, it is forbidden to employ captured soldiers in the enemy's war effort. Civilians should not be captured, detained or of course forced to work.

This revelation is startling in view of the great many movies we saw about the German and Japanese forced labour camps, none about Palestinian camps.

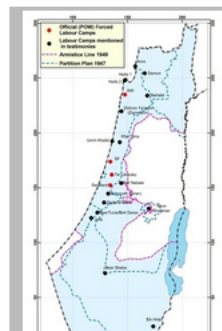
I found this when I discovered about 500 documents in the Red Cross archives in Geneva. The Red Cross visited only 5 of labour camps.

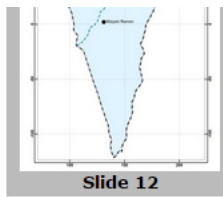


Slide 11

Slide-12

But when I interviewed several survivors, I found that there were 17 other forced labour camps all over occupied Palestine, not visited by the Red Cross.



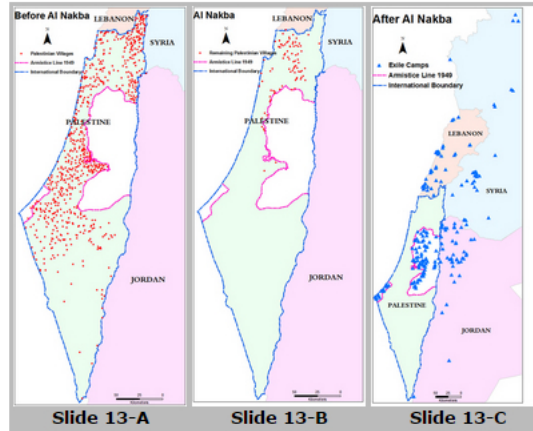


Slide 12

Slide-13

Here we have al Nakba.

Before al Nakba, Palestinians lived peacefully in about 1000 towns and villages. In al Nakba, Palestine was emptied of its population. Where did the survivors go? They became refugees in the remainder of Palestine and the neighbouring Arab countries.



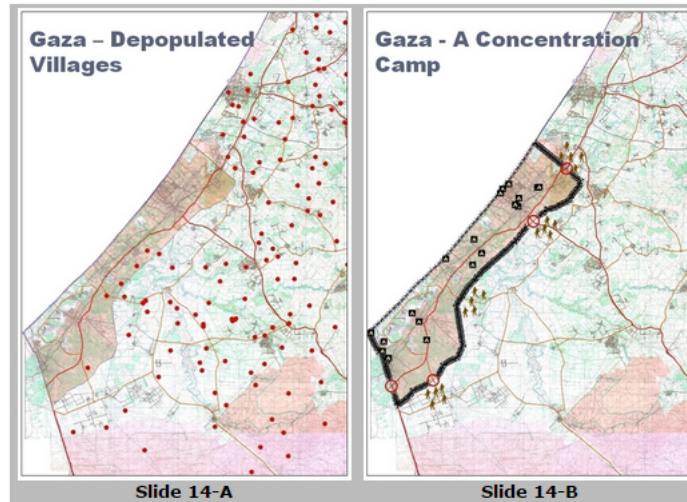
Slide 13-A

Slide 13-B

Slide 13-C

Slide-14

Take the case of Gaza, for example. All these red dots you see are depopulated Palestinian villages, now they are crammed in Gaza Strip. Why is Gaza heavily crowded? because that is where the people from 274 villages in southern Palestine were driven into 8 refugee camps.

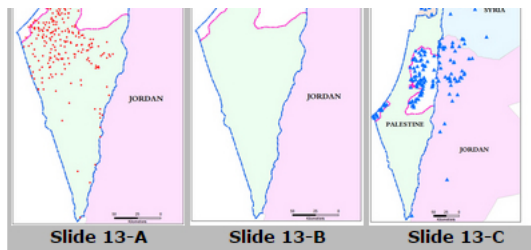


Slide 14-A

Slide 14-B

They never had a peaceful moment in their exile in Gaza.





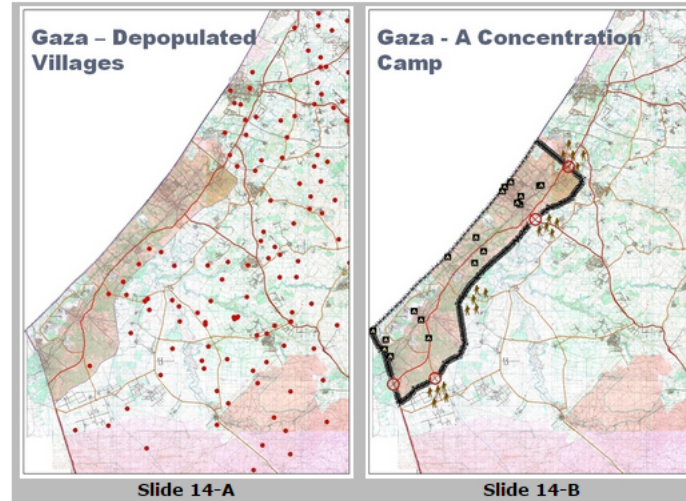
Slide 13-A

Slide 13-B

Slide 13-C

Slide-14

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Slide 14-A

Slide 14-B

They never had a peaceful moment in their exile in Gaza



Slide 16-A
Confined to
Cantons

Slide 16-B
Captive Villages

Slide 16-C
The Apartheid
Wall

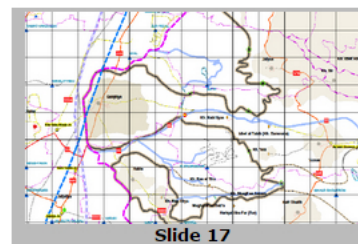
Slide 16-D
500 Road Blocks

Slide 16-E
Jews-Only Roads

In the West Bank, Israel built the Apartheid Wall. As you know, the Apartheid Wall has been condemned by the whole world. A crime is committed before your eyes. It was condemned by the highest court in the world, the International Court of Justice. Its Advisory Opinion on the 9th of July 2004 stated that this Apartheid Wall is illegal, must be demolished and compensations must be paid.

Slide-17

In the Middle Ages walls were built around cities to protect people from outsiders. Here the Apartheid Wall is built to lock people inside. It is unbelievable that, in the 21st century, this evil wall is built around cities today. This is city of Qalqilya.



Slide 17

As you can see it is surrounded from all sides and has only one gate, I repeat only one gate, from which people, 50,000 of them, can enter and leave, BY PERMISSION.

Slide-18,19

During this process, from 1967 till today, 40% of all Palestinian males, including children, were jailed by Israel. If that was in USA, it would be 75 million Americans imprisoned at one point.



Slide 18



Slide 19

Slide-20

Would any decent human being accept these evils?? Of course not

Would YOU accept these crimes to continue?? No. I do not think so. But the crime still goes on.



Slide 20

Slide-21

This cartoon sums it up. The Israeli Law of return says: those who are not from here, welcome from Russia, USA, North Pole, Amazon River and Mars. And those who are from here, go back to where you don't come from.

This is the continuous crime we have to fight against today. And there will be no peace in Palestine, in the Middle East or anywhere in the world until this great injustice be corrected. Can any decent person accept Russians marching in to live in Palestinian homes while the rightful owners are looking on?

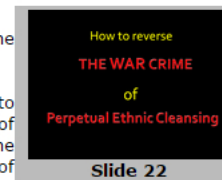


Slide 21

Slide-22

Of course not. We must fight it. Fight it by all our strength. We should now look for the remedy, for the salvation of the oppressed. WE MUST RESTORE JUSTICE. But how?

We must reverse ethnic cleansing. We must let the refugees return to their homes. Well-meaning people may say: the country is now full of new inhabitants, the Palestinian villages are destroyed and the refugees are dispersed. If this is true, it does not diminish the Right of Return in any way. A criminal must not be rewarded. The thief must not run away with stolen goods. But it is not true.

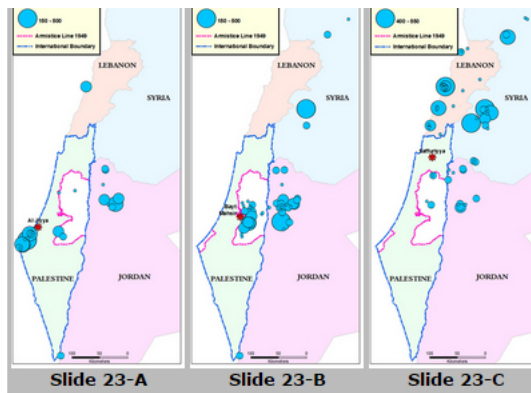


Slide 22

Slide-23

First of all we know the people of every village in Palestine and where they were exiled. This is the village of Jiyya. They are exiled in the camps shown by blue circles. Here is the village of Beit Mahsir, just west of Jerusalem, this is where they are exiled. This is the village of Saffuriya in Galilee, this is where they are exiled.





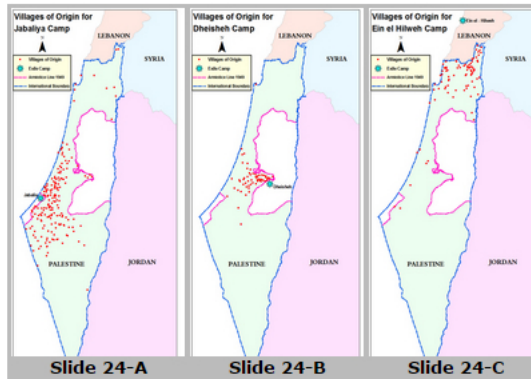
Slide 23-A

Slide 23-B

Slide 23-C

Slide-24

But more importantly, we know where the refugees in any camp come from originally. This is Jabaliya camp in Gaza Strip and the red dots are the villages where they come from. This is Dehaisha camp, just south of Jerusalem. This is Ein El Hilweh camp in Lebanon. Can we get them back? There are lots of Israelis who say: no, you cannot let them back, because the country is already full. They are replaced by immigrants from all around the world. This is not true.



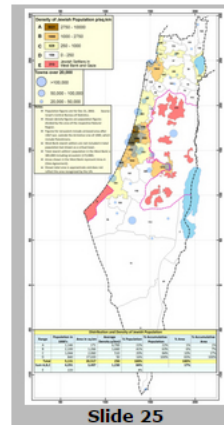
Slide 24-A

Slide 24-B

Slide 24-C

Slide-25

Look at this analysis we made for Israel. You will find that 84% of the Israeli Jews live in only 17% of Israel.



Slide 25

Slide-26

Here is a detailed analysis of Jewish population distribution in Israel. Eighty percent of Israeli Jews (4,366,000) live in the blue area shown here. Its area is 4 % of Israel's area (20,600 km2). They live in 49 localities out of about 1000 tiny settlements, mostly kibbutz.

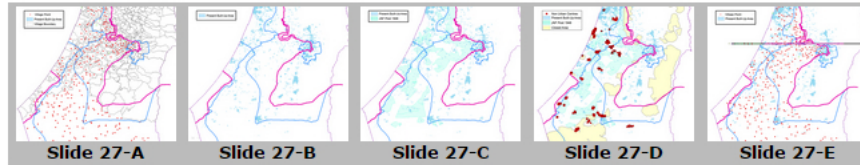


Slide-27

Let us look in greater detail at the area from Tel Aviv – Jerusalem corridor down south to Gaza, the red dots are the depopulated villages. The blue line is the partition plan. What happened when those villages were depopulated? The Israelis built the blue areas instead. As you can see, most of the village sites are still vacant.

Who took them over?

The Jewish National fund took over this stolen property and built Qibbutzim on them. Remember, this Jewish National Fund is the one that organizes Gala dinners, with men in Tuxedos and bejeweled women in evening dresses, collecting tax-exempt funds for stolen property to be used by immigrants. Qibbutzim population, holding refugee land, is less than 2%. In the area shown, there are probably no more Jews than fill one refugee camp.

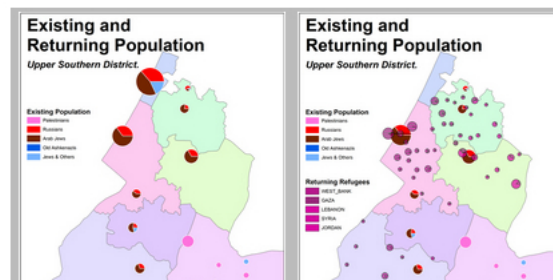


So what did Israel do with this whole area? They used it for military purposes. All these are the military or strategic points and the yellow area are military areas, totally taken over by the army. So 83% of Israel is taken over by 2% Israeli Jews and the larger part by the Israeli army, which controls about ¾ of the land in Israel. Israel is a huge military base, the largest in one place from Paris to Beijing.

If the war mongering in Israel is terminated, we still can re build the Palestinian villages back in their original place. With the abolition of the war and the restoration of justice, we do not need Israel's war machine.

Slide-28

Let me give you another example, in the Southern District. With the exception of 3 Palestinian towns which are expanded, namely Beer Sheba, al Majdal, and Isdud, there are very few Jews living there. These dots are Qibbutz, each Qibbutz has only 300 people. When the Palestinian refugees in Gaza return, they will return to their empty land.



No	Description	Phase 1		Phase 2		Phase 3		Phase 4		Phase 5		Phase 6		Phase 7		Total
		By+Lab	R.V.	Gate	R.V.	WB	R.V.	Jordan	R.V.	G2	R.V.	G3	R.V.	G4	R.V.	
1	Population Number	100,000	680,000	380,000	1,150,000	540,000	950,000	950,000	950,000	950,000	950,000	950,000	950,000	950,000	950,000	4,800,000
2	Number of Families + Apts	100,000	136,000	76,000	230,000	108,000	130,000	130,000	130,000	130,000	130,000	130,000	130,000	130,000	130,000	960,000
3	Construction area (mil m ²)	15.0	20.4	11.4	34.5	18.2	19.5	27.0	27.0	27.0	27.0	27.0	27.0	27.0	27.0	144.0
4	Cost: \$ billion	4.50	4.92	3.42	10.35	4.95	5.38	8.10	8.10	8.10	8.10	8.10	8.10	8.10	8.10	43.00
5	No. of Villages	86	117	66	198	48	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	536
6	Village Population	100,000	680,000	380,000	1,150,000	540,000	950,000	950,000	950,000	950,000	950,000	950,000	950,000	950,000	950,000	4,800,000
7	No of Housing Units	100,000	136,000	76,000	230,000	108,000	130,000	130,000	130,000	130,000	130,000	130,000	130,000	130,000	130,000	960,000
8	Construction area (mil m ²)	15.0	20.4	11.4	34.5	18.2	19.5	27.0	27.0	27.0	27.0	27.0	27.0	27.0	27.0	144.0
9	Number of Labour	15,000	20,400	11,400	34,500	18,200	19,500	27,000	27,000	27,000	27,000	27,000	27,000	27,000	27,000	137,700
10	Number of Contracts	150	204	114	345	182	195	270	270	270	270	270	270	270	270	897

Note: (1) 540,000 includes 200,000 unorganized citizens. Cities are excluded from stage housing.

General Data	Present Data	Without Data
1. No. of family	5	5,800
2. Aft area, m ²	100	40,320
3. construction cost m ² , \$/m ²	300	1,160
4. No. of months for the works (1:2:4)	24	9,948,000
5. Factor (1:3)	18	2,714.4
6. Villages km ² , 5000-6000	5,800	10.2
7. No. of villages / project (50-70)	52	154
8. Contract area, m ²	100,000	40,320
9. No. of streams	1	1,160
10. Total Labour Participation	20%	15,000
11. Construction Labour Participation	20%	20,400
12. No. of labour capt. A&MF		

HousingConstruction.com 008/002

Slide 31

Slide-32

So from all this we come to the question: if the UN reaffirmed the Right of Return 135 times, if we have no problem of return from either logistic, legal, population, land, property, economics, geography or history, and if we know the whole world supports the return, with the exception of Israel and United States, then the obvious question is:

WHY DON'T THEY RETURN?

They did return in Bosnia, Herzegovina, Kosovo, Abkhazia, Uganda, Iraq, Kuwait, but not in Palestine? The answer is in my introduction. If you don't believe in racism, apartheid, colonialism and other evils, you will support the return. And to do so, you have to fight to abolish Zionist laws and practices in Palestine. We all have to struggle to reverse ethnic cleansing.



Slide 32

This is admittedly a difficult task, but not impossible. These are the reasons why it is not impossible.

First, Zionism has been based on a huge pile of mythology, fabrication and religious ideology. Mythology cannot be the basis of any rights in the modern age.

Second, Zionism is a colonial project, conceived and implemented outside Palestine with the support of the colonial powers. Colonial projects cannot last.

Third, Zionism, employing Jabotinsky's doctrine, relies solely on brutal force, without the need for any moral or legal justification. It depends on waging constant wars, all of which must be victorious. Living by the sword cannot offer permanence.

Fourth, Zionism has implemented the largest comprehensive ethnic cleansing in modern history. In return, the Palestinian population remains largely in Palestine and along its borders, almost equally divided between the two. Therefore, the owners of the land who have never given up their right of return are a physical reality on the land.

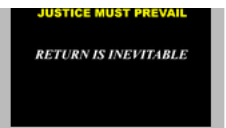
Fifth, Israel continued to implement the ethnic cleansing and confiscation of land wherever possible. So here we have a case of on-going ethnic cleansing, not confined to the historical crime of 1948.

Sixth, although the Israeli narrative has dominated the western media for decades, Israeli practices, through better world communications, have now revealed the true face of Israel and vindicated the Palestinian narrative of 1948. That meant that most of the world, with an increasing number of popular human rights movements in Europe and America, consider Israel a threat to world peace.

Thus I believe that this constant horrendous violation of every article in human rights charter will eventually come to an end.

Slide-33

We should never lose hope in justice. There is no question that justice will ultimately prevail. That is what history teaches us. Let us work together to make this time sooner, rather than later.



Slide 33

Thank you very much.

Speeches

- **Re-Constructing Palestine: Reversing Ethnic Cleansing Right of Return Conference**
April 6-7, 2013
April 8, 2013
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Boston University
Tufts University
Northeastern University

- Veteran Palestinian academic describes 'land swap' as a farce
June 1, 2011
MEMO

- Mechanics of Expulsion: The Perpetual Ethnic Cleansing
January 15, 2011
SOAS

- Mapping Palestine: For its Survival or Destruction?
November 11, 2010
November 12, 2010
November 13, 2010
January 17, 2011
January 19, 2011
April 28, 2011
April 30, 2011
May 3, 2011
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