

What Leading Israelis Have Said About the Nakba

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David Ben-Gurion, Israel's first Prime Minister (1948-1953):

"We must expel Arabs and take their places...and, if we have to use force-not to dispossess the Arabs of the Negev and Transjordan, but to guarantee our own right to settle in those places-then we have force at our disposal." (from Nur Masalha, Expulsion of the Palestinians, p. 66)

"The compulsory transfer of the [Palestinian] Arabs from the valleys of the proposed Jewish state could give us something which we never had, even when we stood on our own during the days of the first and second Temples. We are given an opportunity which we never dared to dream of in our wildest imaginings. This is more than a state, government and sovereignty, this is national consolidation in a free homeland." (from Benny Morris, Righteous Victims, p. 142)

"In many parts of the country new settlement will not be possible without transferring the [Palestinian] Arab fellahin. it is important that this plan comes from the [British Peel] Commission and not from us. Jewish power, which grows steadily, will also increase our possibilities to carry out the transfer on a large scale." (from Righteous Victims, p. 143)

"With compulsory transfer we [would] have a vast area [for settlement]. I support compulsory transfer. I don't see anything immoral in it." (from Righteous Victims, p. 144)

"Just as I do not see the proposed Jewish state as a final solution to the problems of the Jewish people, so I do not see partition as the final solution of the Palestine question. Those who reject partition are right in their claim that this country cannot be partitioned because it constitutes one unit, not only from a historical point of view but also from that of nature and economy" (from Simha Flapan, The Birth of Israel: Myths and Realities, p. 22)

"After the formation of a large army in the wake of the establishment of the [Jewish] state, we shall abolish partition and expand to the whole of the Palestine" (from The Birth of Israel: Myths and Realities, p. 22)

Chaim Weizmann, Israel's first President:

"[the indigenous population was akin to] the rocks of Judea, as obstacles that had to be cleared on a difficult path." (from Expulsion of the Palestinians, p. 17)

Moshe Sharett, Israel's second Prime Minister (1953-1955):

"We have forgotten that we have not come to an empty land to inherit it, but we have come to conquer a country from people inhabiting it" (from Righteous Victims, p. 91)

On partition: "The [Palestinian] Arab reaction would be negative because they would lose everything and gain almost nothing ...They would lose the richest part of Palestine; they would lose major Arab assets, the orange plantations, the commercial and industrial centers and the most important sources of revenue for their government which would become impoverished; they would lose most of the coastal area, which would also be a loss to the hinterland Arab states...It would

mean that they would be driven back to the desert." (from Expulsion of the Palestinians, p.59)

"With regard to the refugees, we are determined to be adamant while the war lasts. Once the return tide starts, it will be impossible to stem it, and it will prove our undoing. As for the future, we are equally determined to explore all possibilities of getting rid, once and for all, of the huge [Palestinian] Arab minority [referring to the Palestinian Israeli citizens of Israel] which originally threatened us. What can be achieved in this period of storm and stress [referring to the 1948 war] will be quite unattainable once conditions get stabilized. (from The Birth of Israel: Myths and Realities, p. 105)

Yosef Weitz, director, Jewish National Fund Land Settlement Committee (1932-1948):

"...the transfer of [Palestinian] Arab population from the area of the Jewish state does not serve only one aim--to diminish the Arab population. It also serves a second, no less important, aim which is to advocate land presently held and cultivated by the [Palestinian] Arabs and thus to release it for Jewish inhabitants." (from Expulsion Of The Palestinians, p. 94-95)

"It must be clear that there is no room in the country for both peoples...If the Arabs leave it, the country will become wide and spacious for us...The only solution is a Land of Israel...without Arabs...There is no way but to transfer the Arabs from here to the neighboring countries, to transfer all of them, save perhaps for [the Palestinian Arabs of] Bethlehem, Nazareth, and the old Jerusalem. Not one village must be left, not one tribe." (from Benny Morris, The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem, p. 27)

"Once again I come face to face with the land settlement difficulties that emanate from the existence of two people in close proximity...only population transfer and evacuating this country so it would become exclusively for us is the solution. " (from Expulsion Of The Palestinians, p. 132)

Moshe Dayan, chief of staff, Israel Defense Forces and Minister of Defense during the 1967 war:

"Jewish villages were built in the place of Arab villages. You do not even know the names of these Arab villages, and I do not blame you because geography books no longer exist, not only do the books not exist, the Arab villages are not there either...There is not one single place built in this country that did not have a former Arab Population." (from *Ha'aretz*, April 4, 1969)

"We shoot at those from among the 200,000 hungry Arabs who cross the line [to graze their flocks]...Arabs cross to collect the grain that they left in the abandoned villages and we set mines for them and they go back without an arm or a leg. [It may be that this] cannot pass review, but I know no other method of guarding the borders." (from Righteous Victims, p. 275)

At the funeral of an Israeli farmer killed by a Palestinian in April 1956:

"Let us not today fling accusation at the murderers. What cause have we to complain about their fierce hatred to us. For eight years now, they sit in their refugee camps in Gaza, and before their eyes we turn into our homestead the land and villages in which they and their forefathers have lived...We should demand his blood not from the Arabs of Gaza but from ourselves...Let us make our reckoning today. We are a generation of settlers, and without the steel helmet and gun barrel, we shall not be able to plant a tree or build a house." (from Avi Shlaim, The Iron Wall, p. 101)

Yigal Allon, commander, Palmach (elite force of Zionist militia Haganah) (1945-1948), Lieutenant General, Israeli army (1948-1949):

"The confidence of thousands of Arabs of the Hula [Valley] was shaken...We had only five days left...until 15 May [1948]. We regarded it as imperative to cleanse the interior of the Galilee and create Jewish territorial continuity in the whole of the Upper Galilee...I gathered the Jewish mukhtars [Kibbutz chiefs], who had ties with the different Arab villages, and I asked them to whisper in the ears of several Arabs that a giant Jewish reinforcement had reached the Galilee and were about to clean out the villages of Hula, [and] to advise them as friends, to flee while they could. And rumour spread throughout Hula that the time had come to flee. The flight encompassed tens of thousands. The stratagem fully achieved its objective." (from The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem, p. 122)

Yitzhak Rabin, Prime Minister of Israel (1974-1977, 1992-1995)

"We walked outside, Ben-Gurion accompanying us. Allon repeated his question, What is to be done with the Palestinian population. ' Ben-Gurion waved his hand in a gesture which said 'Drive them out!'" (from *New York Times*, October 23, 1979)

Ariel Sharon, Prime Minister of Israel (2001-2006)

"It is the duty of Israeli leaders to explain to public opinion, clearly and courageously, a certain number of facts that are forgotten with time. The first of these is that there is no Zionism, colonialization, or Jewish State without the eviction of the Arabs and the expropriation of their lands." (from Agence France Presse, November 15, 1998)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Legal definition of ethnic cleansing: <https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/ethnic-cleansing.shtml>

Based on your understanding of the legal definition of ethnic cleansing, can the statements above be considered support for ethnic cleansing? Reference the legal definition of ethnic cleansing in your answer, along with two reasons for your position. For example: "The statements above do/do not meet the legal definition of ethnic cleansing because (reason #1, reason #2)."

Legal definition of genocide: <https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/genocide.shtml>

Based on your understanding of the legal definition of genocide, can the statements above be considered support for genocide? Reference the legal definition of genocide in your answer, along with two reasons for your position. For example: "The statements above do/do not meet the legal definition of genocide because (reason #1, reason #2)."
