

## The Internally Displaced Refugees

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A number of Palestinians in Israel are internally displaced refugees, or "refugees within their own homeland"<sup>1</sup>. These are those Palestinians who were forced from their own towns and villages, and stayed in neighbouring towns and villages that fell under Israeli control in the aftermath of the Nakba. In 1950 the UNRWA (United Nations Relief and Works Agency) estimated the number of internally displaced refugees at 46,000. According to this estimate, the internally displaced constitute thirty percent of the 156,000 Palestinians that remained in the area that came to be called Israel. This figure was derived from the UNRWA's lists of people receiving relief assistance, amongst whom there were non-refugees, even if only in small numbers. On the basis of this figure, the number of internally displaced refugees in Israel today is estimated to be over 250,000 people, approximately twenty-five to thirty percent of the Palestinian minority (Wakim, 2000; Wakim, 1992).

The figures below are based on Jewish National Fund statistics, the archives of Josef Weiss (an Israeli official who headed the "transfer" committee) and the work of Charles Kamen. It should be noted that these statistics date from the 1950's, and even then they represented only half of the internally displaced refugees (Wakim 2001).

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<sup>1</sup> In this essay the term "internally displaced refugee" is used for those who have remained in their homeland, while the word "refugee" refers to those who have fled to other countries. For an explanation of the author's preference of the term "internally displaced refugee" over "internally displaced person" please see **The Palestinians in Israel: Historical, Social and Political Background** p 3, note 2, on the Mada al Carmel website. [http://www.mada-research.org/programs/information\\_background\\_eng.pdf](http://www.mada-research.org/programs/information_background_eng.pdf)

<b>Name of Palestinian Village/Town<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>Name of District</b>	<b>No. of Internally Displaced in 195 0's</b>	<b>Name of Palestinian Village/Town</b>	<b>Name of District</b>	<b>No. of Internally Displaced in 1950's</b>
al-Mujaydil	Nazareth	1,185	Hadatha	Tiberias	114
al-Birwa	Acre	994	Balad ash-Sheikh	Haifa	114
Saffuriyya	Nazareth	745	Jawarina	-	111
al-Damun	Acre	715	Umm az-Zinat	Haifa	101
Ma'lul	Nazareth	673	Suhmata	Acre	84
'Illut	Nazareth	577 (most returned to the village)	al-Bassa	Acre	81
Sha'b	Acre	574 (most returned to the village)	Hittin	Tiberias	77
Mi'ar	Acre	550	Al-Nahr	Acre	66
Kuwaykat	Acre	540	Indur	Nazareth	62
Tiberias *	Tiberias	527	Ayn Haud	Haifa	60
Kafr Bir'im	Safad	484	Lubya	Tiberias	58
Iqrit	Acre	409	Sirin	Baysan	57
Amqa	Acre	303	Wa'arat al-Sarris	Haifa	56
Baysan*	Baysan	217	Howsha	Haifa	55
al-Manshiyya	Tiberias	210	al-tira	Haifa	50
al-Ghabisiyya	Acre	188	Umm al Faraj	Acre	47
al-Tantura	Haifa	171	al-Faradiyya	Safad	47

<sup>2</sup> The names of villages in this table have been compiled using data from Abu Sitta, S. (2000) and Walid al Khalidi (1997). District names have been added. These sources did not include the villages of Hawasa, Umm Qabi or Jawarina. The closest name to Jawarina was Ghawarina, in the Haifa district.

Qaumiya	Baysan	158	Kafr 'Inan	Acre	43
Hawasa	-	143	al-Sumayriyya	Acre	41
al-Muftakhira	Safad	135	Ijzim	Haifa	41
al-Mansura	Acre	125	Kfar Sabt	Tiberias	41
Umm Qabi	-	110			

\* Indicates town

Hundreds of families were displaced from 22 other villages not mentioned above. These are listed below:

<b>Place of Expulsion<sup>3</sup></b>	<b>Name of District</b>	<b>Place of Expulsion</b>	<b>Name of District</b>
Safad	Safad	al-Kabri	Acre
Na'ura	Nazareth	al-Zib	Acre
al-Khisas	Gaza	Basateen Irmal	-
Ma'dhar	Tiberias	Yajur	Haifa
Qaytiyya	Safad	Khirbat al- Kasayir	Haifa

<sup>3</sup> The names of villages in this table have been compiled using data from Abu Sitta, S. (2000) and Walid al Khalidi (1997). District names have been added. These sources did not include the villages of Basateen Irmal, Halahla, Himima, Fasha or Lydd el 'Awadin. The closest name to Himima was Hamama, in the Gaza district; the closest to Fasha was Fajja, in the Jaffa district; and the closest to Lydd el 'Awadin was Khirbat Lid, in the Haifa district. For further information on the depopulated villages (such as pre-Nakba population statistics, population constitution, number of houses, occupations of the inhabitants, geographical location, land ownership and land-use and the history of the eviction, occupation and Israeli settlements) see "All That Remains: The Palestinian Villages Occupied and Depopulated by Israel in 1948" Khalidi, W. (1992).

Halahla		Sa'sa	Safad
Dallata	Safad	Qaddita	Safad
Qabba'a	Safad	al-Murassas	Baysan
Ayn al-Zaytun	Safad	Lydd el 'Awadin	
Himime	-	Nimrin	Tiberias
Mirun	Safad	Fasha	-

### **Places of Refuge**

Most of the evicted Palestinians sought refuge in neighbouring Arab villages. Internally displaced refugees from one village did not all go to the same place. Rather, we find them dispersed across a number of different towns and villages, with the majority concentrated in the North, principally in Galilee. Of 162 completely destroyed villages in Galilee and the North, refugees from only 44 villages remained in the land that came to be called Israel. In other words, not a single person from 118 of those 162 destroyed villages stayed in their homeland.

<b>District</b>	<b>Villages that survived</b>	<b>Destroyed villages</b>	<b>Destroyed villages were some dispossessed stayed on</b>
Safad	5	68	12
Acre	30	21	13
Tiberias	3	20	5

Baysan	2	17	3
Haifa	8	32	8
Nazareth	19	4	3
Overall total	67	162	44

Only eleven of these forty-four villages saw the majority of their population remain in Palestine. These were: al-Mujaydil, al-Damun, al-Birwa, Iqrit, Kafr Bir'im, al-Ruways, Hadatha, Ma'lul, al-Muftakhira, al-Mansura and Qaumiya. Between only one and seventeen percent of the inhabitants of the other thirty-three villages remained.

Sixty-nine Arab villages in Galille survived the Nakba. Forty-seven of these villages absorbed the internally displaced refugees, as did Lydda, Jaffa and Abu Ghosh. The list of villages and towns that absorbed the internally displaced includes: Nazareth, Mughar, Tamra, Judeiada, Deir El-Asad, Kabul, Kafr Yasif, Shafa Amr', Rama, Bi'na, Jish, Tarshiha, Kafr Kanna, Deir Hanna, 'Akbara, Reina, 'Ilhut, Mashhad, Fureidis, 'Arraba, Fassuta, Daliyat El-Carmel, Mi'ilya, al-Mazra'a, Dannun, Abu-Sinan, Maker, Majd al-Kurum, I'billin, Eilaboun, Acre, Umm El Fahem and Fureidis.

In some villages internally displaced refugees constitute a high proportion of the inhabitants. For instance, one-third of the inhabitants of Majd al-Kurum, Jish and Tamra, and a quarter of the inhabitants of Nazareth and Kafr Yasif, are internally displaced refugees. The internally displaced make up more than half of the population of Yaffa, Maker, and Judeiada.

### **Legal Status of Internally Displaced Refugees**

The Israeli authorities used a number of laws to prevent the internally displaced refugees from returning to their homes, and to confiscate their lands. The most important of these were the **1948 Emergency Regulations Concerning Absentee Property** and the **1950 Absentees' Property Law**. On the basis of the **1948 Emergency Regulations Concerning Absentee Property** all property of the refugees was placed under the

control of the Custodian of Absentees' Property. According to these regulations the definition of "absentees" included internally displaced refugees who had been forced from their native villages. However, these emergency regulations only gave the Custodian temporary control over the property of the "absentees" (Jiryis, 1976; Wakim, 2001), so the legal establishment worked to complete the "legitimation" of the land seizures, and in 1950 the **Absentees' Property Law** was enacted. This law entrusted the Custodian of Absentees' Property with the care and administration of absentees' property, and the eviction of its residents. On the basis of this law the Custodian was considered to be the owner of that property until the absentee could prove that he was not absent, or was not considered to be absent in the eyes of the law. By virtue of previous laws dealing with this issue, this was a near impossible process (Jiryis, 1967; Cohen, 2000; Wakim, 2001; Musaliha, 2003). The law therefore did not permit the "absentee", be he/she refugee or internally displaced refugee, to return to his/her property. It was drawn up specifically to include the internally displaced, in order to prevent them from returning to their villages and homes, classifying them as absentees despite the fact that they had stayed in their homeland.

### **Association for the Defence of the Rights of the Internally Displaced (ADRID)**

Amongst the civil society political activities of Palestinians in Israel, there are a number of local committees for the internally displaced, working with various objectives, though ultimately to return the refugees and the internally displaced to their villages. In 1995 most of these committees came together in the framework of the **Association for the Defence of the Rights of the Internally Displaced (ADRID)**. This association commemorates the depopulated villages by organising processions to them during the annual remembrance of the Nakba. The fact that this remembrance day falls on the Israeli independence day highlights the other side of Israeli independence, the tragedy of the Palestinian people (Cohen, 2000; Wakim 2001). The association arranges conferences at schools and various other institutions with the aim of making people politically aware of the Nakba and of the refugee issue. It also works to maintain holy sites in the depopulated villages. The association calls for the repeal of Israeli laws which label the internally

displaced refugees as “absentees” and campaigns for the internally displaced refugees to be allowed to return to their villages and towns.

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