

The US Campaign to End the Israeli Occupation works for the application of human rights and international law to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. The Campaign's member groups have identified five priority areas for education and mobilization to end the occupation and realize equal rights

and the Occupied Palestinian Territories—who were forced to leave their homes during and after the first Arab-Israeli War in 1948. Two-thirds of Palestinians today are refugees. They make up one-third of the world's refugee population and are one of the world's oldest

the pre-state Zionist militias. The militias sent a message to its men: "As in Deir Yassin so everywhere." Word of the massacre spread terror among Palestinians, thousands of whom fled to neighboring countries. Thousands fled the war itself, believing the fighting would

The Palestinian Right of Return

ACHIEVING JUSTICE 50 YEARS ON

for all: supporting the Palestinian right of return, ending sales of Caterpillar bulldozers to Israel, bringing down the separation Wall, highlighting the links between the US occupation of Iraq and the Israeli occupation of Palestine, and divesting from companies that support the occupation.

WHO ARE THE PALESTINIAN REFUGEES?

They are the indigenous Arab inhabitants of Historic Palestine—the area that now comprises Israel

refugee populations. Today there are approximately 3.8 million Palestinian refugees from 1948 and their descendants registered by the United Nations. Another 1.5 million refugees from 1948 and their descendants are not registered by the UN. An additional 250,000 Palestinians are internally displaced within Israel while another 250,000 became refugees in 1967 following the second Arab-Israeli war. The total Palestinian refugee population is thus estimated around 5.8 million.

end within a few weeks and they would return home. Many carried with them the keys to their houses, believing their return was imminent, and the key has become a symbol of Palestinian refugee rights. The one million or so Palestinians inside Israel today, who constitute just under 20% of the population, are those that remained and their descendants. The second exodus of an additional 250,000 Palestinians came in 1967, during the third Arab-Israeli war that led to the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

HOW DID THEY BECOME REFUGEES?

The Palestinian refugee crisis began when Israel was created as a state in 1948. During the ensuing Arab-Israeli war, 750,000 indigenous Palestinians, whose families had lived in Palestine for hundreds of years, were forcibly expelled by, or fled in terror of, the powerful militias that would soon become the army of the State of Israel. Some were physically driven out, others heard stories of massacres, such as that at the village of Deir Yassin in April 1948, in which 254 Palestinian civilians were killed by soldiers from

WHERE DO PALESTINIAN REFUGEES LIVE?

The majority of Palestinian refugees live within a 100 mile radius of their original homes and villages. Of the 3.8 million refugees registered by the UN, 33 percent live in 59 overcrowded and under-resourced camps administered by the UN throughout the West Bank, Gaza Strip, Jordan, Syria and Lebanon. The other 67% are scattered throughout the Middle East and other countries around the world.



**END THE
OCCUPATION**
US CAMPAIGN TO END THE ISRAELI OCCUPATION

The US Campaign is a diverse coalition of over 200 groups working for freedom from occupation and equal rights for all by challenging US policy towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The Campaign is based on human rights and international law, providing a non-sectarian framework for everyone who supports its *Call to Action*. Its strategy is to inform, educate, and mobilize the public so as to change the US role in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

WHAT ARE THE BASIC RIGHTS OF PALESTINIAN REFUGEES?

The right of return is part of international law, and Palestinians are specifically guaranteed that right by UN Resolution 194 of December 1948, which states that “refugees wishing to return to their homes and live at peace with their neighbors should be permitted to do so at the earliest practicable date, and that compensation should be paid for the property of those choosing not to return.” In addition, other international laws and conventions including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Fourth Geneva Convention, the Hague Convention, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and several regional conventions all support the right for refugees to return and compensation.

WHY HAVE PALESTINIAN REFUGEES NOT BEEN ABLE TO RETURN TO THEIR HOMES AND VILLAGES?

Despite international law and specific UN resolutions, Israel has not allowed Palestinian refugees to return. This is in spite of the fact that Israel’s admission to the UN in 1949 was conditioned on its willingness to abide by General Assembly resolution 194 calling for repatriation and compensation. Today, 56 years later, Israel maintains that allowing the Palestinian refugees to return would change its demographic balance, more than doubling Israel’s current 19% Palestinian population. Israel also claims that there is no space to accommodate Palestinian refugees seeking to return to their homes.

However, around 80% of the Israelis currently live in approximately 15% of Israel. The remaining 85% of the land is mostly land that once belonged to the Palestinian refugees and most of it is not used. In other words 90% of depopulated Palestinian villages could be repopulated without displacing Israelis or affecting their livelihoods.

WHAT HAS THE US DONE TO SUPPORT THE PALESTINIAN RIGHT OF RETURN FOR REFUGEES?

The US has not been an equal broker in its involvement in peace negotiations between the Israeli government and the Palestinian Authority. Despite the fact that it is bound by its constitution to support human rights and freedom, the US has turned a blind eye to Israel’s violations of international law and continues to supply Israel with massive financial and military support. We believe however, that the US could use the financial support it gives to the State of Israel to hold it accountable to international law. There can be no lasting peace in the region of the rights of Palestinian refugees are not recognized.

WHAT CAN I DO TO SUPPORT PALESTINIAN HUMAN RIGHTS AND THE IMPLEMENTATION OF INTERNATIONAL LAW?

Join the US Campaign to End the Israeli Occupation and promote a just resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Challenge US policies through public education, legislative and media advocacy, grassroots organizing and mobilizing.

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