



Palestine Betrayed

Efraim Karsh

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The 1947 UN resolution to partition Palestine irrevocably changed the political landscape of the Middle East, giving rise to six full-fledged wars between Arabs and Jews, countless armed clashes, blockades, and terrorism, as well as a profound shattering of Palestinian Arab society. Its origins, and that of the wider Arab-Israeli conflict, are deeply rooted in Jewish-Arab confrontation and appropriation in Palestine. But the isolated occasions of violence during the British Mandate era (1920–48) suggest that the majority of Palestinian Arabs yearned to live and thrive under peaceful coexistence with the evolving Jewish national enterprise. So what was the real cause of the breakdown in relations between the two communities?

In this brave and groundbreaking book, Efraim Karsh tells the story from both the Arab and Jewish perspectives. He argues that from the early 1920s onward, a corrupt and extremist leadership worked toward eliminating the Jewish national revival and protecting its own interests. Karsh has mined many of the Western, Soviet, UN, and Israeli documents declassified over the past decade, as well as unfamiliar Arab sources, to reveal what happened behind the scenes on both Palestinian and Jewish sides. It is an arresting story of delicate political and diplomatic maneuvering by leading figures—Ben Gurion, Hajj Amin Husseini, Abdel Rahman Azzam, King Abdullah, Bevin, and Truman —over the years leading up to partition, through the slide to war and its enduring consequences. *Palestine Betrayed* is vital reading for understanding the origin of disputes that remain crucial today.

Palestine Betrayed Details

Date : Published April 27th 2010 by Yale University Press (first published March 30th 2010)

ISBN : 9780300127270

Author : Efraim Karsh

Format : Hardcover 336 pages

Genre : History, Cultural, Israel, Politics

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From Reader Review Palestine Betrayed for online ebook

Jonathan says

A good study of the arab inflicted nakhba of the Palestinian Arabs. A must read.

Alex says

Impeccably researched and extremely factual. These facts are just displayed with an extreme bias.

Starts off good but focuses on minute details too much to be keep you interested for long.

Phillip says

The entire time I spent reading this book I kept asking myself one question, "So what's the author not telling us?". Because of this I've taken the book with a very slight pinch of salt. However, as practically all of the one star reviews appear to utterly ignore (naturally a book portraying a positive narrative of Israel is going to get slated), there is an impressively comprehensive index of government reports, statistics, interviews, news paper articles, and television broadcasts to support the vast majority of Eifraim's narrative. All of which paint some pretty ugly pictures of Arab leadership (or lack thereof) and raise some pretty damning questions.

I now have a plethora of notes to go back and re-read, as well as diving further into the extensive references used throughout the book, but I have to admit that I enjoyed reading it, so four stars it is! I can't go and give it five because that would really show just how biased I am, wouldn't it?

Phoenix says

Tragedy, Victory + Time

Other than in Barry Rubin's *The Arab States And The Palestine Conflict* I don't think I've read a better resource for understanding the transitional and conflicting allegiances within the Arab community of the Palestine Mandate in 1947/48. Karsh takes on a district by district tour that I found enlightening every step of the way.

On the Arab side Karsh selects a number organizational actors, not any one of which was primary representative of the population as a whole. In no particular order:

The Arab Higher Committee (AHC), formed in 1946 as a political instrument of the Grand Mufti Hajj Amin Al-Husseini, who's previous organization had received funding from the Nazis during WWII. Husseini, indicted as a war criminal in Yugoslavia, does not enter British held Palestine, but directs his efforts remotely from Cairo and through extended family (ie: Jamal Husseini). At best he has the allegiances of 25% of the urban Arab population (my estimate), but his leadership collapsed as events progress. In major urban

centers the AHC formed National Committees (NCs) to co-ordinate local military activity, shore up morale and represent civilian interests.

Aside from the Mufti the religious leadership seemed to be more or less ambivalent. Arabs with money and close relatives outside the conflict zone left early and urged others to follow, hoping to return once the various Arab armies had.

Of the local Arab element there was an equally large base that favored Jordanian monarch King Abdullah, who was interested in ruling a Greater Syria, having previously proposed to incorporate the Jewish Yishuv as an autonomous internal republic to serve as his primary economic engine. (pp202-204) This group included a large contingent of educated and modernized Arab "notables" such as Mayor Yusuf Heikal and lawyer Muhammad Hawari, founder of the Najada militia/police which stressed co-existence and in 1947 had patrolled streets preventing attacks on Jews. This group tended to ignore the Arab League's call boycott of Jewish businesses.

Representing the Egyptians and the Arab League, Abdel Rahman Azzam Pasha (pp191) lamented that the Mufti "had learned very little" during his years of exile and that his extremism was "at least, if not more, harmful to the Arabs as to the Jews". but he "had captured the imagination of the Arab Masses and the League could not, therefore drop him But when the UN asked for a truce in March 1948, it was Azzam who essentially demanded a Jewish surrender, saying that he would only acquiesce if this included a cessation of Jewish immigration, the disbanding of the Haganah, the annulment of Partition and the establishment of a Palestinian Arab State, to which the AHC added the expulsion of all "terrorist Jews" and the repatriation (expulsion) of all Jews "smuggled into Palestine".

In contrast to Azzam, Ismail Sidqui who had been Egyptian Prime Minister a year earlier noted that the Egyptian army was unready for war. This didn't stop Egypt from launching its aerial attack against the Tel Aviv Central Bus station the day after Israel announced its independence.

The presence Iraqi soldiers under the command of Iraqi General Ismail Safwat, head of the polynational Arab Liberation Army (ALA) is interesting. re, in the Galilee and in the West Bank. In Feb '48 Jaffa's Iraqi command said "I do not mind destruction of Jaff if we secure destruction of Tel Aviv.", and ALA troops used Arab Jaffa as a base to pummel nearby Tel Aviv, Holon and Bat Yam. In Jaffa as discipline broke down they were responsible for puncturing the car tires of every Jaffa dignitary (to prevent them from fleeing? - April 1948, pp155) and went on a looting spree.

As to the general Arab population the mood swung not so much out of conviction but out of opportunism. Individual truces were signed and honoured with the various Arab villages and side by side Jewish communities but were broken when Arab forces approached and seemed to have the ascendancy. One notable example (pp213-219) Tel Aviv Karsh discusses is the famous "gesture" by Ben Gurion to Yigal Allon and Yitzchak Rabin that signaled the only significant forced expulsion of urban Arabs during the war. The Etzel (IDF) forces had achieved the surrender of Lydda (Lod) and Ramle in a brutal battle to secure the road between Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, however as Arab Legion forces approached they reneged on the agreement and started fighting again. From the POV of the Yishuv it was essential to clear the Tel Aviv-Jerusalem corridor of enemy forces as the 100,000 Jews of Jerusalem were close to starvation and surrender. A second example (Ch 8) would be between Jewish and Arab communities in the environs of Jerusalem.

There are also the British, officially neutral but in action biased towards the Arabs, blockading the Yishuv until the end of the Mandate and supplying the Arabs directly and indirectly on the outside. The most successful actions against the nascent Jewish State came from the Jordanian Legion, commanded by British

officer John Glubb Pasha.

And so it goes...

On the downside Karsh does not offer the same level of detail to the relationships within the Jewish leadership. Some readers may be disappointed that the degree of focus on the Irgun and even tinier Lehi is proportional to the size of the mainstream Haganah which was 20x larger. IMHO their significance is often overdone.

It's a well researched and well written book making good use of British, Arab and Israeli archives. The footnotes at the back were a great enhancement the narrative of the text. There are three additional appendices - a well organized "Dramatis Personae" organized by nationality, a table of abbreviations used and list of Arab villages along with estimates of when and ranges of how many fled during the war leading up to an estimate of 583-609,000 Palestinian refugees.

The book delivers all sorts of fascinating details and linkages, much more than I've touched on here. Highly recommended for both personal and library purchases and well suited for those interested in the key events of the 1948 War of Independence.

Lucas says

Explosive. Most certainly one of the best works of historical research that I have ever read. Continuing to move against the current, Karsh annihilates every thread of the tapestry of lies peddled by the anti-Israel contingent. One can easily be taken away by the narrative and transported into the world of this titanic conflict. It should not be forgotten that there is another side to the story, but the scholarship presented in this book puts the Arab sympathizers on very shaky ground.

Adam Morris says

Although certainly a book written with some bias. However, the overall theme of the book - that Syria, Jordan, Egypt, Iraq and other Arab states cared nothing about the inhabitants of Palestine and were merely jockeying for position at the expiration of the Mandate - is clearly presented. The Zionists come off perhaps a little too clean and today's Palestinian leadership a little too dirty but it is nevertheless a worthwhile read for anyone studying teh origins of the conflict.

Roma says

Not an easy read, but worth the trouble. This book is thoroughly researched and annotated.

Maciej Lewandowski says

An incredible piece of primitive anti-Arab propaganda posing as a historical book

Charles Lindsey says

Good, well-researched history of the pivotal period in which Palestine was depopulated of Palestinians. Karsh lays out extensive evidence that the narrative blaming the Jews for forcing out the resident Arabs is false and simplistic, and that Zionist leaders tried not only to persuade Palestinians to stay (for the most part; there are some post-battles in 1947-48 where the Israeli forces agreed that certain villages should be emptied out) but expressed willingness over and over for a two-state solution. But both sides had their non-negotiables: Israel insisted on existing, the Arab world insisted on it not. Sounds like today.

The author elides over atrocities, though. He mentions Deir Yassin and offers no excuses for the killing of Arab civilians by Jewish forces, but he protests that it was only the Irgun and other "irregulars" who were guilty. Yet he does very, very little to untangle the likes of the Irgun and the Stern Gang from the blameless Haganah. Or did Menachem Begin settle for a quiet retirement in the 1950s? For that matter, language: "gang" is used only for Arab irregulars, never for Jewish ones. Karsh throws in the occasional car bombing of Arab police stations or civilian locations without grappling with its emotional impact. He also needed to slug it out with some of the modern Israeli revisionists.

Overall, a workmanlike book that, if read, would force the reader to go beyond glib narratives of twentieth-century Palestine. In that sense, it feels like Holocaust history -- certain facts are undeniable, and yet the world denies them. Israel was not set on genocide or ethnic cleansing. The Arab world could have had peace on better terms than it ultimately achieved. Arab nations surrounding Palestine cared little for its occupants, and quite a lot about its territory and their own ambitions. The British were indifferent and short-sighted. And, ultimately, military strength will create its own facts -- and nations.

George Polley says

Howard Sachar, author of "A History of Israel", calls Efraim Karsh's book "A work of meticulous, even exhaustive scholarship. . . Indeed, any student of modern Israel will ignore at their peril its sheer cornucopia of factual revelations" (from the dust jacket of the hardback edition). There is one problem with what Howard Sachar says, and it is this: in the bibliography professor Karsh does not include references that question his conclusions. Professor Karsh's purpose is to prove that the Israeli's are the victims, and Palestine's Arab population are the aggressors who wish to wipe "the Jews" from the land.

On page 1, he has this quote from David Ben-Gurion, seen as modern Israel's founder: "We do not wish and do not need to expel Arabs and take their place. All our aspiration is built on the assumption . . . that there is enough room in the country for ourselves and the Arabs." Yet he misses a quote from Mr. Ben-Gurion that says just the opposite: "With compulsory transfer we [would] have a vast area [for settlement] . . . I support compulsory transfer. I don't see anything immoral in it" (source: Benny Morris: "Righteous Victims", page 144). If Professor Karsh is a scholar, that should have sent him on an exhaustive search of that side of the story. That it didn't is very telling, and the telling is not good.

Instead, on the final page of his book (page 257) just before his extensive bibliography, Professor Karsh makes this statement: “And so it goes on. More than six decades after the Mufti and his followers condemned their people to statelessness by rejecting the the UN partition resolution and waging a war of annihilation against their Jewish neighbors, their reckless decisions are still being re-enacted by the latest generation of Palestinian leaders,” ending his statement with this shocking declaration: “Only when Palestinian and Arab leaders change these dispositions and eschew their genocidal hopes will the refugees and their descendants be able to leave the squalid camps where they have been kept by their fellow Arabs for decades, and will the Palestinians be able to look forward to putting their self-inflicted ‘catastrophe’ (Palestinians call it “the Nakba”) behind them.”

Is the book worth reading anyway? Definitely. His disrespect for Palestine’s Arabs is a crystal clear as is his pro-Israeli bias. Stern, dismissive of other points of view, and very much interested in convincing his readers that what he says is the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, he sounds like an abusive husband who points to his wife and says that her suffering is all her doing. His “exhaustive scholarship”, being so one-sided, gives the truth of the matter away: all along it has been the Palestinians who have been defending themselves against an aggressor that has sought to obliterate them from their ancestral homeland. And this Professor Karsh does not want people to know.

Professor Karsh has an undergraduate degree in Arabic and Modern Middle East History from Hebrew University (Jerusalem), and an MA and PhD in International Relations from Tel Aviv University. He is currently Professor and Head of the Middle East and Mediterranean Studies Programme at King’s College in London.

Bachir says

Remarkable effort; extremely misleading analysis and conclusions.

The ideological, highly-politicized, and selective approach made this well-written study a grave insult to history, historical facts and to academia.

Seth J. Vogelmann says

An excellent book that belies the false claims of expulsion of the Palestinians. Rather, it shows how they were encouraged to leave by their own leadership, either directly or indirectly.

The book does cover the few cases of Palestinian expulsions, but mostly the efforts by the Jewish community to get its Arab citizens to stay.

The expulsion of the Jews, a fact ignored by many, is also covered.
