The Palestinian Nakba: Land Dispossession from 1948 to Present

Govornik: Al Jazeera
Izvor: https://minbarlive.com/videos/histoy-of-palestine-occupation

> This technical analysis documents the systematic land dispossession of Palestinians from 1948 to the present, tracing the legal mechanisms—including the 1950 Absentees Property Law and contemporary registration systems—through which Palestinian property was confiscated and Palestinian displacement was institutionalised.

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The content provides a detailed examination of Palestinian land loss across multiple periods. Before 1948, Palestinians owned approximately nine times more land than the Jewish minority (13,000 vs. 1,500 square kilometers). The UN partition plan allocated 55% of Palestine to a future Jewish state despite Jews representing only one-third of the population. During the 1948 war, Zionist military operations displaced over 750,000 Palestinians and depopulated 530 villages. The speaker details how Israel's 1950 Absentees Property Law classified Palestinians who left after November 1947 as absentees, and even those who remained as "present absentees," enabling mass property transfer to the Jewish National Fund. By 1954, this mechanism had reallocated over 10,000 shops, 5,000 buildings, and nearly 60% of fertile land. The analysis also covers the immediate freezing of Palestinian bank accounts (over $24 million in 1948), and documents how approximately 80% of land in destroyed villages remains uninhabited. The speaker then demonstrates how identical legal mechanisms are being applied in the occupied West Bank as of 2026, with new land registration systems enabling state claims on undocumented Palestinian plots—mirroring 1948 methods. Current conditions in Gaza show 86% of farmland and 81% of buildings damaged or destroyed, yet classified as state land.

KLJUČNE PORUKE

- In early 1948, Palestinians owned approximately 13,000 square kilometers compared to 1,500 square kilometers owned by Jews, yet within two years the Jewish minority had acquired 78% of historic Palestine.

> The UN partition plan of November 1947 allocated 55% of Palestine to a future Jewish state despite Jews comprising only one-third of the population, with most being recent European immigrants.

> During the 1948 war, Zionist forces conducted 31 military operations and at least 70 massacres, displacing over 750,000 Palestinians and depopulating 530 villages and towns.

> Israel's 1950 Absentees Property Law classified any Palestinian who left their home after November 1947 as an absentee, and Palestinians who remained in-country as "present absentees," enabling transfer of their property to the Jewish National Fund.

> By 1954, the Absentees Property Law mechanism had reallocated more than 10,000 Palestinian shops, 5,000 buildings, and nearly 60% of the country's fertile land, with approximately 70% of the state's territory potentially having Palestinian claimants.

> On June 20, 1948, Israel froze the bank accounts of Palestinian customers, locking up more than $24 million (equivalent to over $300 million in current currency).

> As of February 2026, Israel's cabinet approved a land registration mechanism for the occupied West Bank using identical methodology to 1948: any Palestinian plot without paper documentation can now be claimed by the state; in Gaza, 86% of farmland and 81% of buildings have been damaged or destroyed yet are classified as state land.

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Land Ownership Before and After 1948

In early 1948, Palestinians owned almost nine times more land than Jews in Palestine. Within two years, that Jewish minority—representing only 6% of the population—had taken 78% of the country. Before the Nakba, Palestinians owned approximately 13,000 square kilometers while Jews owned 1,500 square kilometers. In November 1947, the United Nations partition plan allocated 55% of Palestine to the future Jewish state, despite Jews comprising only one third of the population, with most being recent European immigrants.

Military Operations and the Transformation of Territory

During the 1948 war, Zionist forces carried out 31 military operations and at least 70 massacres. By the 1949 armistice, Israel had taken 78% of historic Palestine. More than 750,000 Palestinians had been displaced, and 530 villages and towns were left

empty. This massive shift in territorial control fundamentally altered the demographic and geographic landscape of the region.

Legal Mechanisms for Property Confiscation

In 1950, Israel passed the **Absentees Property Law**, which defined any Palestinian who left their home after November 1947 as an absentee. Even Palestinians who never left the country were classified as "present absentees" under this law. Their property was transferred to the Jewish National Fund. By 1954, more than 10,000 Palestinian shops, 5,000 buildings, and nearly 60% of the country's fertile land had been reallocated through this mechanism. Approximately 70% of the state's territory may have Palestinian claimants.

Financial Seizure and Abandoned Land

Beyond land confiscation, Israel also targeted Palestinian financial assets. On June 20, 1948, Israel ordered every bank in the country to freeze the accounts of Palestinian customers. More than $24 million was locked up overnight, equivalent to more than $300 million in today's currency. Palestinian researcher Salman Abu Sitta found that about 80% of the land in those destroyed villages remains uninhabited today, consisting of open ground, forest, or farmland. Palestinian historians draw the same conclusion from this pattern: the Nakba was not a war for living space, but rather a war engineered to create a state with a Jewish majority.

Contemporary Applications of Historical Methods

Decades later, the same mechanisms are being applied to Palestinian territories. In February 2026, Israel's cabinet approved a land registration mechanism for the occupied West Bank. Under this system, any plot that a Palestinian cannot document with paper records can now be claimed by the state—the same method used to absorb Palestinian property in 1948. A record 54 illegal Israeli settlements were approved in 2025. In Gaza, where most refugees from 1948 ended up, 86% of the farmland and 81% of buildings have been damaged or destroyed. Despite this extensive destruction and the ongoing displacement, Israel classifies all of this as state land for Palestinians, nearly eight decades after the Nakba. The numbers and the legal justifications do not align with the documented historical record.

#Palestinian land dispossession #1948 Nakba #Israeli legal mechanisms for property confiscation #Absentees Property Law #Palestinian displacement and refugee crisis #Occupied West Bank land registration #Gaza destruction and land ownership