

1945-1949, A Collection of Reasoned Views for the dysfunctional state of the Palestinian Arab's political state of affairs

1. 1946 ---“The [Palestinian] Arabs are divided politically by the personal bickering of the leaders, which still center round the differences of the Husseinis and their rivals; and socially by the gap which separates the small upper class from the mass of the peasants—a gap which the new intelligentsia is not yet strong enough to bridge. Consequently they have developed no such internal democracy as have the Jews. That their divisions have not been overcome ... is in part the result of a less acutely self-conscious nationalism that is found today among the Jews. It is, however, also the outcome of a failure of political responsibility. The Arab leaders, rejecting what they regard as a subordinate status in the Palestinian State, and viewing themselves as the proper heirs of the Mandatory Administration, have refused to develop a self-governing Arab community parallel to that of the Jews. Nor, so far, have they been prepared to see their position called in question by such democratic forms as elections for the Arab Higher Committee, or the formation of popularly based political parties. This failure is recognized by the new intelligentsia which, however, is unlikely to exercise power until it has the backing of a larger middle class.” As quoted in "Jews, Arabs, and Government," Chapter VIII, of The Report of the Anglo-American Commission of Inquiry, Lausanne, April 1946, p. 36.
2. 1940s forward ...”decades of social change clearly contributed to [the Palestinian Arab] communal collapse and flight in the months of 1948- that is, rapid and chaotic breakdown and disintegration of village and urban political and social organization and leadership. In the context of an absent Palestinian national authority, the early flight of thousands among the upper and middle classes, and a colonial government that was hurriedly evacuating the country, there was no body that could coordinate and organize resistance and maintain basic public services to avert the widespread collapse of communal institutions and authority.” Dr. Issa Khalaf, “The Effect of Socioeconomic Change on Arab Societal Collapse in Mandate Palestine,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, vol. 29, No. 1 (February 1997), pp. 93-112.
3. 1949 - “In the first phase the fundamental source of our [Palestinian Arab] weakness was that we were unprepared even though not taken by surprise, while the Jews were fully prepared; that we proceeded along the lines of previous revolutions, while the Jews proceeded along the lines of total war; that we worked on the local basis, without unity, without totality, without a general command, our defense disjointed and our affairs disordered, every town fighting on its own and only those in areas adjacent to the Jews entering the battle at all, while the Jews conducted the war with a unified organization, a unified command, and total conscription. Our arms were poor and deficient; the arms of the Jews were excellent and powerful. It was obvious that our aims in the battle were diverse; the aim of the Jews was solely to win it. These same weaknesses were the source of weakness in our defense in the second phase, that of the Arab armies: disunity, lack of a unified command, improvisation, diversity of plans, and on top of all a slackness and lack of seriousness in winning the war. Just as we failed in the military sphere, so we failed in the political. Our actions were improvised, our conduct of affairs a chain of enormous mistakes: we had no clear objective and no fixed policy. The natural result of all this was disaster and the loss of Palestine.” Musa Alami, “The Lesson of Palestine,” *Middle East Journal*, October 1949, Vol 3, No. 4, pp. 373-405.

4. Note to the reader—Professor Rashid Khalid is the author of paragraphs 3 and 4 here, published separately. The first was published in 1997, the second in 2001. Their contents are very similar, and yet a sufficiently different for both to be included. As the author, it was of course Khalidi's prerogative to paraphrase himself. The publication sources of both entries reveal his candid assessments of reasons why the Palestinians lost the 1947-1949 war against Israel.

”Thus the nakba, the "catastrophe," of 1947-49 was both the outcome and the conclusion of a series of failures, a series of defeats. The Palestinians, with a divided leadership, exceedingly limited finances, no centrally organized military forces, and no reliable allies, were facing a Zionist movement and a Jewish society in Palestine which, although small, was politically unified, had centralized institutions, and was exceedingly well led and extremely highly motivated—the horrors of the Holocaust had just been revealed, if any further spur to determined action to consummate the aims of Zionism were needed. As we have seen, the Zionist leadership had long since achieved territorial contiguity via land purchases and settlements which gave them holdings in the shape of an "N," running up the coastal strip, down the Marj Ibn 'Amir/Vale of Jezreel, and the finger of eastern Galilee. They benefited as well from international backing—both the U.S. and USSR supported the partition of Palestine and immediately recognized the new state of Israel—and finally had understandings with the key Arab military power, Jordan, whose ruler's ambition was to control the Arab portions of Palestine that were not absorbed into Israel, and who also commanded the Iraqi forces sent to Palestine in 1948.

In view of this almost unbroken chronicle of failure on the part of the Palestinians, it was perhaps understandable that their enemies might assume that their rhetoric had been correct all along, and that there were indeed no Palestinians. In fact, it should have been understandable that in spite of the disparity in numbers in favor of the Palestinians, a larger economy (by 1948, the Jewish economy of Palestine was larger than the Arab one), greater firepower, superior organization, and considerable support from the great powers of the age would enable the new Israeli state to triumph over the poorly led and mainly rural, mainly illiterate Palestinian population of 1.4 million.” Professor Rashid Khalidi, *Palestinian Identity: The Construction of Modern National Consciousness*, Columbia University Press, 1997, pp. 190-191.

5. “Thus the Palestinian catastrophe of 1947-49 was predicted on a series of previous failures. The Palestinians entered the fighting which followed the passage of the UN Partition resolution with a deeply divided leadership, exceedingly limited finances, no centrally organized military forces or centralized administrative organs, and no reliable allies. They faced a Jewish society in Palestine which, although small relative to theirs, was politically unified, had centralized para-state institutions, and was exceedingly well led and extremely highly motivated. The full horrors of the Holocaust had just been revealed, if any further spur to determined action to consummate the objectives of Zionism was needed. The Zionists had already achieved territorial contiguity via land holdings and settlements in the shape of an ‘N’, running north up the coastal strip from Tel Aviv to Haifa, south-east down the Marj Ibn ‘Amir (the Jezreel Valley), and north again up the finger of eastern Galilee. This was the strategic core of the new state, and the springboard for its expansion. The outcome of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict of 1947-48 was thus a foregone conclusion. The Palestinians had superior numbers, but as we have seen, the Yishuv had more important advantages: a larger and far more diverse economy, better finances, greater firepower, superior organization, and considerable support from the United States and the Soviet Union. All of

these factors enabled the nascent Israeli state to triumph over the poorly led, poorly armed, and mainly rural, mainly illiterate Palestinian population of 1.4 million.” Professor Rashid Khalidi, “*The Palestinians and 1948: the underlying causes of failure,*” in *The War for Palestine: Rewriting the History of 1948*, eds. Eugene L. Rogan and Avi Shlaim, Cambridge University Press, 2001, p. 30.