

In 1948, *al-Nakba* (the Catastrophe in Arabic) befell the people of Palestine. The Zionist project of colonizing Palestine, seeking to create an exclusionary, European colonialist "Jewish state" - at the cost of the lives and independence of the indigenous Palestinian Arabs, Muslim, Christian and Jewish - reached its culmination as British colonial control of Palestine passed into Zionist colonial hands. The United Nations passed Resolution 181, without consultation with the Palestinian people - a resolution that divided their land and required they forsake their right to 55 percent of their nation. Promised self-determination and independence by the British and the Western powers represented in the UN since the dawn of the British colonial mandate (under its predecessor, the League of Nations) following World War I, the Palestinian Arab people instead were officially made victim to a racist



Palestinian refugee children, expelled from their towns and villages. in 1948.

ideology, Zionism, that sought to control the entire land of Palestine through the expulsion and oppression of its indigenous people. Zionist forces used this resolution to intensify their ongoing assaults upon the people of Palestine. In the colonial war waged against the people of Palestine, 800,000 Palestinians were made refugees, forced to flee their homes and lands. Over 400 Palestinian villages were destroyed and depopulated entirely by Zionist forces, while Palestine's major cities were attacked and huge numbers of their Palestinian citizens driven out.

Since that time, the colonial assault upon the Palestinian people has only continued. Those 800,000 Palestinian refugees have become five million, the world's largest refugee population. In defiance of all standards of human rights and international law, these refugees are forbidden from returning to their homes and lands to which many still hold the keys and deeds - simply because they are Palestinian. The racist ideology of Zionism considers them a "demographic threat" to the state of Israel, founded as it was upon the dispossession and

exclusion of the people of Palestine. In 1967, the Zionist state extended its military occupation to the rest of historic Palestine - the West Bank and Gaza Strip, where millions more Palestinians live under brutal military occupation. Those Palestinians still living in the lands occupied in 1948 - the 150,000 that remained in 1948 have become nearly 1.2 million, 59 years after *al-Nakba* - live under a discriminatory regime similar to that of apartheid South Africa. A wall that further divides Palestinians from each other and their land is imprisoning Palestinian cities and towns as if inside giant prisons, while thousands of Palestinian political prisoners are held in Zionist jails, held



Palestinian refugees, as they were forced from their homes and lands, carrying all they could take with them.

captive for demanding freedom for their land and their people. Palestinian homes are demolished daily, often by Caterpillar bulldozers made in the United States - just as the fighter jets, helicopters, rifles and other weaponry used by the Zionist military machine were all too often made and financed by the United States government and corporations. All of this is made possible by \$15 million daily in U.S. tax dollars expended for the maintenance of an apartheid colonial settler state in Palestine.

On this, the fifty-ninth anniversary of *Al-Nakba*, as on many previous anniversaries, the Zionist regime holds up a façade of "seeking peace" at the same time that it continues to murder and oppress Palestinian Arabs in their own land. The continuing *Nakba* - the continuing existential assault upon Palestinian existence, Palestinian identity, Palestinian culture and Palestinian people - puts the lie to the deception of the "peace process." It is hidden, and attempts are made to silence its memory even as its reality continues on a daily basis, because the *Nakba* is the reality of the Zionist state - an illegitimate, colonial-settler state that has always been built upon the dispossession of the Palestinian Arab people and the denial of Palestinian exis-