



## THE NAKBA: 71 YEARS OF LONGING FOR HOME



Today Palestinians throughout the West Bank, Gaza, East Jerusalem, Israel and the diaspora commemorate the 71st anniversary of Nakba Day with demonstrations and marches across the world including occupied West Bank and the Gaza Strip. This is the dark day that every Palestinian remembers as hundreds of thousands of Palestinians were killed and expelled in the war that led to the establishment of Israel in 1948. 71 years ago when more than 700,000 Palestinians were forced from their homes in the Palestinian War and over 400 Palestinian towns and villages were deliberately destroyed. Palestinians in Gaza staged a strike, a mass walk-outs where store owners and employees stopped work and joined demonstrations.

A Palestinian resident in Gaza remembers the day as "It's a very sad day for Palestinians, it's a black day for our people. Seventy-one years have passed, and God willing we'll return to our homeland soon or later"



Israel is preoccupied with Eurovision song contest festivities to distract the reality on the ground. The protestors carry banners reading "boycott Eurovision" and "songs and glitter cannot hide homeland being occupied". They are also calling on supporters of the Palestinian cause to at least temporarily deactivate their Airbnb accounts to protest against its listings in settlements in the occupied West Bank as part of the BDS movement advocating boycott, divestment and sanctions against Israel.

Nakba is not a thing of the past, ethnic cleansing and apartheid still continues as Palestinians are attacked, besieged, and driven out of their homes by the Israeli military, and as the Great March of Return continues and Israel shoots down unarmed Palestinian protestors. Nakba is an ongoing catastrophe for Palestinians who continue to experience land confiscation to make way for illegal Israeli settlement expansion, home demolitions, destruction of their homes, and the denial of their right of return. The horrors of the Nakba, which we commemorate on this day, are compounded by Israel's systematic attempts to erase and falsify the memory of Palestinian expulsion in 1948, including through the enactment of legislation criminalizing the mere commemoration of Nakba Day on May 15<sup>th</sup> as a day of mourning.

The events of the Nakba were already unlawful under international law at the time of the Nakba, with dispossession and expulsions of civilians having already constituted violations of the laws and customs of war. The illegality has moreover been perpetuated for decades, with Palestinians systematically denied their inalienable right to return, as mandated by international law and reaffirmed in over a hundred United Nations resolutions.

Although hundreds of UN General Assembly Resolutions reaffirm Palestinians rights with the right of return or compensation none of the resolutions have been implemented, nor has the State of Israel been held to account for denying Palestinians the right of return that is enshrined in them.



Since last March Palestinians have created synergy to galvanize their call for their right to return to their home and end Israeli occupation and an end to the eleven-year Israeli blockade of Gaza. This peaceful protest have been met with direct attack with life ammunition by the Israeli forces, 195 Palestinians-including well-identified medics, journalists and 41 children-have been killed and another 29,000 people injured.

ICSFT is particularly concerned for the well-being of more than 5 million registered refugees in the Occupied Territories, including those in East Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip who are dealing with a double whammy- in addition to being exposed to Israel's apartheid regime, they are exposed to the devastating impact of the recent elimination of all aid to Palestinians by the Trump administration-including funding to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). 71 years later Palestinians did not forget and abandon the rights to which they are entitled

Today we urge Israel to account for the crimes the State has never redressed, we echo the voices of Palestinians calling for dignity and rights and the realization of their right to return home.

How much longer can Palestinian be expected to be condemned to a life of suffering, deprivation and discrimination simply because of their origin?

We call for an end to imperialism, colonialism and Zionism. For a free, liberated Palestine!