

# Refugees - Introduction

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Palestinians – thanks to the creation of the state of Israel in 1948 – make up the longest standing and largest group of refugees in the world. In fact, Palestinians account for 70 percent of the world's refugees.

It all started in 1948 with the creation of the state of Israel, which was carved out of 78 percent of historic Palestine. In the months leading up to the birth of Israel and for several months afterward, the Zionist paramilitary group the Haganah, the forerunner to today's Israeli military, and terrorist groups like the Stern Gang and the Irgun depopulated and/or destroyed more than 500 Palestinian villages. More than 750,000 Palestinians became immediate refugees when they were forced into exile.

During the Six Day War in 1967, another 350,000 Palestinians were forced into exile when Israel invaded and occupied the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

Today, because generations born to refugees also are considered refugees, the number of Palestinian refugees has surpassed the 7 million mark, according to the human rights organization the Badil Resource Center.

Palestinian refugees or internally displaced persons make up 74 percent of the total Palestinian population of more than 9 million. One-third of the registered Palestine refugees, nearly 1.4 million, live in 58 recognized refugee camps in Jordan, Lebanon, the Syrian Arab Republic, the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem.

Despite United Nations Resolution 242, which guarantees the refugees' right to return and remuneration for their lost property, Israel refuses to allow the refugees to return or to compensate them for their lost land and property.

Current Israeli military laws are created to displace even more Palestinians. In this way, Israel makes the path clear for its further expansion and colonization of Palestinian land.

Although military invasions and home demolitions tend to be the most common method used to displace Palestinians, the Israeli government also revokes Palestinian residency rights and establishes illegal Israeli settlement systems that force indigenous Palestinians to leave their lands behind, according to the Norway-based Internal Displacement Monitoring.

Some Palestinians are even refugees in their own land: More than 455,000 Palestinians are considered Internally Displaced Persons. They've been forced from their home villages, only to find themselves living in refugee camps in the West Bank or the Gaza Strip. In another cruel irony, the internal refugees became 'present absentees,' and as such had to relinquish control of their land to Israel.

~ American Muslims for Palestine, 2012